

# HARRIET HARMAN MP

## REPORT

JANUARY 1995

This is my first report to the new constituency of Camberwell and Peckham.

The new constituency has been created by the Boundary Commission out of

- \* 7 wards from the Peckham Labour Party  
(Liddle, Friary, Barse, Faraday, St Giles, Consort, Brunswick)
- \* 2 wards from the Dulwich Labour Party  
(Lane and Waverley)

We all fought very hard against the Boundary Changes. Moving Lane and Waverley breaks long established community ties in Dulwich. But the battle against the Boundary changes has been lost and our task now is to create a united and active Camberwell and Peckham Labour Party. I look forward to working with you all in that task.

### 1) EMPLOYMENT

As Labour's Shadow Secretary of State for Employment I will be working particularly hard on employment issues locally.

#### a) **Full Employment**

We have unacceptably high levels of unemployment in Southwark. This is particularly a problem for young black men. I recently tabled Parliamentary Questions which reveal that in London the official unemployment rate for black men under 24 years is 60%.

There is also a problem for local people who lack the skills to get work. That is why it is such a disaster that the Government have allowed the TEC to go bust and are refusing to pay its debts to training providers.

Targeted measures to create jobs together with much more effective training will be necessary in addition to our macro-economic policies to help the economy to grow.

#### b) **Minimum Wage**

Southwark is an area which suffers particularly from low wages. Not only have the full-time properly paid jobs in the print and in manufacturing gone from our area, but public services have been under attack too. Health Services, transport and even the local council have been hit by a combination of cuts, casualisation and Contracting Out. I will be launching Labour's national campaign against low pay and for the minimum wage. And I hope we can have an active campaign on low pay in Southwark. I have been liaising with the Southwark Trades Council and the Trade Union Support Unit. It is important for our campaign that we have local examples of scandalously low pay to draw attention to.

Could you help by letting me know of examples of low pay locally? It will be particularly useful if, in addition to low pay job ads, we can give examples of people stuck on low pay - people who are prepared to have their name and pay in the papers! I know most people don't like to have themselves spotlighted in this way but - as our campaign on Cedric Brown of British Gas showed - it is the individual cases that bring the statistics to life.

### c) Training

Together with the other South London Labour MPs I have been dealing with the consequences of the collapse of the South Thames TEC. The Government put them into receivership on 23rd December. The government say that as they are a private company, the Government are not responsible for the TEC's debts. They owe something like £4m. Springboard Southwark has paid out £147,000 to trainees in Training Allowances under contract to the TEC. Now the Government are saying they will not pay them back. Southwark College and many local schools are also owed money. The Government set up the TEC. They appointed the members of the Board. They were the TEC's only source of funding. It is not acceptable for them now to wash their hands of it. It may have been a private company. But it was clearly a public responsibility.

If the training providers go broke, it will take years to rebuild the training infrastructure in South London. And skills are the key to people in South London getting and staying in work.

The Government have now proposed to abolish South Thames TEC and put it in with CENTEC. I opposed this. The Government want to cut by half the number of TECs. The way to do this is to have a rational review and full consultation, not simply to abolish one because it has gone bust.

### 2) REBUILDING PECKHAM

Southwark Council have been granted £59.946m for the rebuilding of Peckham. This is a considerable amount of money which will be spent over a number of years. I am liaising with the Council to ensure that the decanting and rehousing of the thousands of Peckham people who will be affected is handled as carefully and with as much consultation as possible.

I am also raising the issue of the employment opportunities that could come out of this huge programme. As well as building local homes for local people, we need to ensure that we have local jobs for local people in the rebuilding work. We need to ensure that trade unionised firms are used and apprenticeships are built in to the programme. At the end of the many years this programme will take to complete we need to have newly trained local workers as well as new homes.

### 3) VAT ON GAS AND ELECTRICITY

I'd like to take this opportunity to thank all the local party members who contributed to our successful campaign against the increase of VAT on gas and electricity from 8% to 17.5%. We said we'd stop the Tories in their tracks - and we did!

Thousands of signatures were obtained for our petition from street stalls and through party members in local organisations. I am particularly grateful to the hard work of the pensioner members of Southwark. Grey power helped stopped the fuel bills! (though it shouldn't even have gone up to 8% in the first place!)

### 4) PRIVATE SECURITY

I am continuing with my consultation on the growth of private security firms in Southwark Estates. The consultation is not yet complete but here is a preview of some of the arguments I am hearing...

- \* The private security firms are more like caretakers used to be than police. It is privatisation, but of caretakers, not police.
- \* However much it costs and however it is carried out doesn't matter because it works...and is giving tenants peace of mind.
- \* The police are too busy with paperwork, serious crime and traffic accidents to patrol estates and make people feel safe.
- \* It ought to be done by the Special Constables, if it can't be done by the police. But it shouldn't be private.
- \* It's all very well for the estates that have got it but that puts terrible pressure on those that haven't. Because all that happens is that crime is driven off the patrolled estates onto the unpatrolled estates. Then those that didn't want it have to pay for it.
- \* Private security is nothing more than second class policing. Our most crime ridden estates need first class policing.

### 5) CLAUSE IV

We are now engaged in a debate about the constitution of the Labour Party in order to re-state our aims and values clearly before the next General Election. You will all have received a copy of Labour Party News with the consultation papers in it. I hope as well as contributing to the debate through your branches and your wards, you will fill in the questionnaire. Clause 4 is on every members card. So every member should have their say in what happens to it.

It will also be helpful to me as I will be able to see the Peckham and Camberwell responses as well as seeing the resolutions from wards and branches and it will help me in the discussion at the NEC to know what you all think. In addition to the formal consultation procedure, if anyone wants to write to me or ring me about Clause 4 please do not hesitate to do so..I will welcome your views!

6) SURGERIES

I have started a new surgery at Linden Grove Community Centre, in the South of the constituency on the edge of Barseet Ward. I am also holding, in conjunction with the Newington Labour councillors, a special surgery on the Brandon Estate. It is very important that we continue to fly the flag in Newington even though it is not going to part of Camberwell and Peckham at the next election.

7) RE-SELECTION

The timetable for the re-selection for the Camberwell and Peckham constituency is being drawn up. It has been a great honour and privilege to represent Peckham as your Labour MP. I am seeking re-selection and would like to ask you to consider re-nominating me to stand for Labour again in Camberwell & Peckham at the next election. We are determined that this will be the election that returns a Labour Government. I want to be sure that Labour delivers for Camberwell and Peckham. That is what we have all been fighting for.

Harriet Harman  
6th February 1995

Tel: 071 219 5137



HARRIET HARMAN MP

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REPORT  
MARCH 1995

1. Guys Hospital

The Secretary of State for Health announced on 4th April that Guy's Accident & Emergency Department will close by the end of 1998.

I have condemned this decision and will continue to campaign against it.

This decision is wrong. It is wrong for local people. Guy's offers an invaluable service to the local community. It is also wrong because Guy's provides important specialist services to people throughout the region and the country as a whole.

I wish to pay tribute to the support for Guys throughout the community and to the concerted campaign involving the unions, hospital staff, Community Health Council, Southwark Council and many others.

As well as sending out the petition throughout Peckham and attending and speaking at numerous meetings I made written representations at every stage of the procedure and spoke in the debate in the House of Commons on 29th March 1995. Tessa Jowell and Nick Brown also spoke for Labour, Simon Hughes for the Liberals and there were many Tory MPs who spoke - all in favour of keeping Guys open.

2. South Thames Tec

South Thames TEC which was responsible for all government training schemes in Southwark, Lewisham, Lambeth and Greenwich was put into receivership by the Government just before Christmas leaving millions of £ of debts to local organisations. The Government is insisting its debts from the TEC are paid first - as a preferential creditor - and that all the other creditors will only get what they are owed if there is any money left after the Government has been paid. There will not, of course be any money left over and the Government are holding to their position that it is not their responsibility and they are not going to compensate anyone. They will not say how much is owed to who. But we know the overall sum is about £4m. That included £400,000 owed to Southwark College, £45,000 owed to Waverley School, £170,000 owed to Springboard Southwark. I am conducting a survey to discover all the organisations owed money by South Thames TEC and how much they are each owed. The Government and the receivers are, of course, refusing to say.





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All the contracts that South Thames TEC had with training providers in Southwark have now run out. The Government are talking to CENTEC about taking over responsibility for training in Southwark but so far no agreement has been signed. There is therefore no training organisation with responsibility for Southwark at present. This is a scandalous state of affairs.

I spoke in a debate in the House of Commons about South Thames TEC on Wednesday 22nd March. I am constantly tabling Parliamentary Questions to prompt the Government to put in place the new training arrangements.

We are reviewing our policy so that TECS are made more accountable and so that there is proper financial accountability.

### 3. Southwark College

Southwark College has been hit by cuts in Government funding and by the debt owed by South Thames TEC. More than 40 teaching staff are threatened with redundancy and morale amongst staff is very low. Together with Tessa Jowell I have been trying to build a campaign involving the council, the College management and governors, students and staff to make the case for a united front against the cuts. I have met with the staff and with the Principal. However the relations between the staff and the management are so bitter that it is proving difficult to get the campaign off the ground. For many people in Southwark the chance of getting a qualification or a skill is key to them getting a job. It is a tragedy that the College is being cut back.

### 4. Divided Britain

\* The Joseph Rowntree Fund produced a report which confirmed that over the last 15 years the richest 10% have grown richer while the poorest 10% have seen their living standards fall. The report underlines our concern about unemployment and low pay. Labour called a debate on this in the House of Commons which I spoke in [see attached Hansard]





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\* While Gordon Brown continues to lead the campaign against the huge pay and perks that the heads of the privatised utilities have awarded themselves, as Shadow Employment Secretary of State I am developing our campaign on low pay. Using new Government figures I produced the Low Pay Map of Britain which shows that low pay is a problem throughout the country.

- over 300,000 earn less than £1.50 an hour
- over 1 million people earn less than £2.50 an hour.

\* The Government are now actively using the unemployed to drive down wages. Before anyone can claim the Job Seekers Allowance they have to fill in a form which includes the question...What is the lowest wage you are willing to work for? Clearly this will be a green light to employers to drive down wages.

\* We have completed new research which shows that the abolition of the Wages Councils has not increased jobs in the former Wages Council industries. The Tory justification for removing the floor under wages for 2.5 million workers was that it would allow jobs to grow. So the whole Tory justification for ending protection against very low pay has been destroyed.

\* The Equal Opportunities Commission published a report showing the effect of Compulsory Competitive tendering had been to make low paid women even lower paid and insecure. They calculated that the "savings" on CCT were outweighed by the cost of top up benefits for women whose pay had been pushed down and the future obligation to women who no longer were paying NICs and who would therefore have nothing but the basic state pension in their retirement.

## 5. Southwark Council

The Audit Commission has released findings comparing the performance of Southwark with other local councils. Southwark comes out very well, being the fastest borough in South London to re-let council homes and the best collector of the council tax. This is clear from what people say to me in my surgeries. There used to be massive concern about flats and houses standing empty and the council tax going up while some people did not pay at all. Those complaints have virtually disappeared. This is a great credit to all the Labour Councillors who have steered these improvements through.





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## 6. 5 Estates

While recognising the great strides that have been achieved in Housing Management, there still remain serious problems on the management of the 5 Estates. Moving thousands of tenants from their homes on the Sumner, Camden, Gloucester and North Peckham is a huge task. Many of the tenants have put a lot of time and money into their homes and do not want to move. It is therefore critical that the council sensitively and efficiently manage the process of transferring people to their new homes. There are problems already occurring and I am working with Councillor Chris Claridge, Vice Chair of Housing and the Liddle Ward Councillors amongst others, to get them addressed as quickly as possible, particularly where it involves the transfer of elderly people who are in sheltered housing on the estates.

## 7. Southwark Disabilities Open Day

I attended the Open Day at Braganza St on 3rd March. There was a wide array of information about local initiatives and local services for people with Disabilities. Despite the funding restraints and the increasing demand for services, there is no doubt in my mind that Southwark's approach to people with disabilities has improved markedly over the past 10 years.

## 8. Toxic Waste

Once again I joined the councillors and tenants of Brunswick Ward to oppose the proposals to increase the amount of infectious toxic waste at their Wells Way depot. A petition was drawn up and I handed it in to the London Waste Regulatory Authority together with Cllr Ian Driver.

## 9. International Women's Day

Jointly with Tessa Jowell I held a reception for women members of the Party at the House of Commons. It was packed and was very enjoyable. The same night I made a speech in the House of Commons to sum up Labour's debate on women's lives. I attended the National Labour Women's Conference in Derby and the Women's TUC in Scarborough.







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#### 10. Council Election Campaign

As a member of the Shadow Cabinet I am centrally involved in our council election campaign, including making visits to target marginals around the country.

#### 11. Clause 4

You will shortly receive a ballot on the New Clause 4. I certainly shall be voting FOR the New Clause 4. It sets out all the issues of fairness and social justice which brought me into the Labour Party.... and it highlights the importance of full employment and fair pay which are so vital for people in Southwark.

**Harriet Harman MP**  
**April 4th 1995**

