

Voluntary Organisations and the 1981–6 Greater London Council

David Dahlborn
St John's College, Cambridge
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This thesis is submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

This thesis is the result of my own work and includes nothing which is the outcome of work done in collaboration except as declared in the preface and specified in the text. It is not substantially the same as any work that has already been submitted before for any degree or other qualification except as declared in the preface and specified in the text. It does not exceed the prescribed word limit for the History Faculty Degree Committee.

Abstract: David Dahlborn, 'Voluntary Organisations and the 1981–6 Greater London Council'

This dissertation answers the question of how 1981–6 Greater London Council (GLC) used grants to voluntary groups. In doing so, it makes visible part of an unnoticed history of how London was remade in the 1980s and creates an introduction for future studies of both the GLC and the organisations it supported. Part of this history is a vision for what London might have been created by the labour movement and the Labour Party's last GLC administration. Asking how the money that the last GLC's Labour administration spent on what it called 'voluntary and community groups' means understanding how it imagined that the labour movement would transform local government in its own image to extend democracy from politics to all civil society. The particularities of this vision were largely forgotten as London's labour movement and its relationships with non-state groups have been overlooked in histories of the late twentieth century. Therefore, this dissertation describes four important areas of the city's social and economic life where the London Labour Party tried to implement its socialist vision by using grants to non-state organisations: public transport for people with disabilities, health and medicine, under-fives childcare and education, and policing. Although the GLC was abolished by Margaret Thatcher's government in 1986, these attempted policy implementations by London's labour movement created a long-running and widespread legacy. Examples of this include the creation of the dial-a-ride public transport service for people with disabilities and of London's democratically accountable police authority. But by tracing the archival sources from the GLC into the bodies it funded, this dissertation also pays particular attention to the political work and ideas of the people who constituted organisations in these four policy areas. They frequently belonged to networks or institutions connected to either the labour movement or other political or religious tendencies. In each of the four policy areas studied here, there were contrasts and overlaps in thought and action between, on the one hand, people in (or aligned to) the labour movement, and, on the other, groups from different non-labour-movement organisations. They used the grants they received for different imagined purposes even when their actions looked similar from the outside. This dissertation describes in various ways how the non-labour-movement side tended towards dominance in each sector after the GLC's abolition. The fact that multiple alternatives existed, however, is key to understanding London's history and how change and continuity in small democratic organisations, caused by the everyday work of the people who ran them, created many of the trends which, in retrospect, looked like large, impersonal forces. This can make the course of history seem obvious or necessary, as in the assumption that the labour-movement vision for London described here – of industrial democracy and state developmentalism – would inevitably diminish. Although the 1980s have been remembered and, partially, historicised as the decade of the labour movement's unavoidable defeat, in London and at the GLC the labour-movement alternative existed and was a viable political option until 1986 – for two thirds of the decade. Although the last Labour GLC's overall vision for London was never fully implemented, its attempts changed the city forever.

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List of Abbreviations

AEU Amalgamated Engineering Union
ASRA Asian Sheltered Residential Accommodation
AWARE Action for Women's Advice, Research and Education
BBC British Broadcasting Corporation
BCODP British Council of Organisations of Disabled People
BLF Black Liberation Front
BGSTC Bethnal Green and Stepney Trades Council
BSSRS British Society for Social Responsibility in Science
BUFP Black Unity and Freedom Party
CAITS Centre for Alternative Industrial and Technology Systems
CAPA Community Alliance for Police Accountability
CHC Community Health Council
CIO Confederation of Indian Organisations
CIS Confederacy of Independent Systems
CLPD Campaign for Labour Party Democracy
CND Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament
CPC Communist Party of China
CPGB Communist Party of Great Britain
CRE Commission for Racial Equality
CSE Conference of Socialist Economists
CTQ Community Transport Quarterly
DaR Dial-a-ride
DoE Department of the Environment
ECT Ealing Community Transport
EGA Elizabeth Garrett Anderson Hospital
EOC Equal Opportunities Commission
EVT Edinburgh Voluntarily Transport
FoLDaR Federation of London Dial-a-Rides
GAD Greenwich Association of the Disabled
GALOP Gay London Police Monitoring Group
GLC Greater London Council
GLEB Greater London Enterprise Board
GP General Practitioner
HBPA Hackney Black Peoples Association
HCT Hackney Community Transport

HE Health Emergency
HIPC Haringey Independent Police Committee
HPMG Hayes Police Monitoring Group
ILEA Inner London Education Authority
IMG International Marxist Group
IS International Socialists
I&E Industry and Employment Branch
KC King's Counsel
LBGU London Boroughs Grants Unit
LAMDAR Lambeth Dial-a-Ride
LCC London County Council
LDaRUA London Dial-a-Ride Users Association
LEWRG London Edinburgh Weekend Return Group
LH Labour Herald
LHE London Health Emergency
LIS London Industrial Strategy
LLB London Labour Briefing
LLP London Labour Party
LMA London Metropolitan Archives
LPMG Lambeth Police Monitoring Group
LRT London Regional Transport
LT London Transport
Met Metropolitan Police
MI5 Military Intelligence, Section 5
MP Member of Parliament
MSC Manpower Services Commission
MT Marxism Today
NAC National Abortion Campaign
NALGO National and Local Government Officers' Association
NCCC National Childcare Campaign
NCCL National Council for Civil Liberties
NCNE National Campaign for Nursery Education
NF National Front
NHS National Health Service
NKLC North Kensington Law Centre
NMP Newham Monitoring Project
NUM National Union of Mineworkers

NUT National Union of Teachers
PACE Police and Criminal Evidence bill
PIRA Provisional Irish Republican Army
PMG Police Monitoring Group
POHG Politics of Health Group
PPA Pre-School Playgroups Association
PR Public relations
PRC People's Republic of China
QC Queen's Counsel
RFSC Roach Family Support Committee
SAD Sisters Against Disablement
SAS Special Air Service
SCETV South Carolina Education Television
SCF Save the Children Fund
SDP Social Democratic Party
SERTUC South East Region Trades Union Congress
SLFC Stephen Lawrence Family Campaign
SOGAT Society of Graphical and Allied Trades
SPG Special Patrol Group
Sus' Suspected person laws
SWP Socialist Workers Party
SYM Southall Youth Movement
TfL Transport for London
TUC Trades Union Congress
US United States of America
USSR Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
WEDA Wandsworth Enterprise Development Agency
WHIC Women's Health Information Centre
WHRRIC Women's Health and Reproductive Rights Information Centre
WLM Women's Liberation Movement
WoW War on Want
WPC Wandsworth Policing Campaign
WRRIC Women's Reproductive Rights Information Centre
WTC Women's Therapy Centre
WWC Working Women's Charter
WWHG Women and Work Hazards Group
YMCA Young Men's Christian Association

1 Introduction

‘While we are willing to help every sort and kind of effort to alleviate social misery, we cannot and will not accept charity as a substitute for social justice’.

George Lansbury, speech to Parliament, 1932.¹

*I don’t want to live on charity
Pleasure’s real or is it fantasy?*

Blondie, ‘Deaming’, 1979.

How did the 1981–6 Greater London Council use grants to voluntary groups? To answer this question, this dissertation presents part of an overlooked history of how London became the city it was in the early twenty-first century. It also presents a forgotten imaginary future that envisioned a very different city.

Twenty-first-century London evolved both because of people who chose to imagine this future and the people who chose to reject it. It evolved because of many, many other people too, and my point is to show how uncountable options and unintended consequences can arise from people’s deliberate thoughts, actions, and best laid plans. I realised this by asking how the money the last Greater London Council (1981–6) granted to what it called ‘voluntary and community groups’ was used. This required understanding how people in its London Labour Party (LLP) administration envisioned that the labour movement would remake local government in its image and extend democracy from politics to all of civil society. In practice, the LLP tried to implement this imaginary future all over London and I describe how this changed four important areas of the city’s social and economic life: public transport for people with disabilities, health and medicine, under-fives childcare and education, and policing. In the year 2000, most Londoner were likely to come into, at least some, direct or indirect encounter these areas in various ways. Long after 1986, when Thatcher’s second government abolished the GLC, the knock-on effects of the Labour Council’s funding strategy – both its successes and failures – remained.

Because I followed archival sources from the GLC into the bodies it funded, I noticed how the individuals who comprised organisations in these four areas thought and acted politically, and often belonged to networks or institutions that constituted either the labour movement or other political or religious tendencies. In each of these four sectors, I found contrasts and overlaps in thought and action between, on the one hand, people in (or aligned to) the labour movement and organisations they created, and, on the other, groups from different non-labour-movement

¹ *Hansard* (House of Commons), 5th ser., vol. 269, col. 2130 (4 November 1932).

organisations, and how they used the grants they received for different imagined purposes even when their actions looked similar.

The following chapters describe in various ways how the non-labour-movement side tended towards dominance in each sector after the GLC's abolition. In retrospect this was often remembered as obvious or necessary, but it came at the expense of the labour-movement vision for London of industrial democracy and state developmentalism which Ken Livingstone's (1945–) GLC administration (henceforth 'Livingstone's GLC' or 'Livingstone's administration') proposed in 1981. By the 1990s, the 1980s were remembered and historicised as the decade of the labour movement's inevitable defeat. But in the LLP and, subsequently after May 1981, at Livingstone's GLC, the labour-movement alternative existed and was a viable political option from 1980 until 1986 – for two thirds of the decade – and although its overall vision for London was never fully implemented, its attempts changed the city forever.

Before moving on, I will specify the definitions of a few terms that I use throughout this dissertation. Firstly, I will use *emic* to describe when a word is used to mean what it meant from the particular perspective of an analysed person. *Etic*, on the other hand, designates when a word is used from a contemporary analytical, outside perspective.² By *the labour movement* I mean the unions, the Labour Party, and the smaller parties who traced their descent from nineteenth-century social-democratic parties, as well as cooperatives, associations, and societies linked, through shared goals, affinities, or personnel, with these organisations.³ When I use *civil society* etically, I will mean it in its classical sense, as defined through Ferguson, Smith, Hegel, and Marx, as society beyond the family and the state, which includes business and many other areas of social activity.⁴ I will explain below why I have preferred to use *non-state organisations* to etically categorise most of the groups mentioned in this dissertation below. Furthermore, I have, perhaps unorthodoxly, preferred to say *union*, etically, to mean what in US English is called 'labor union'. This is a broader but preciser term than 'trade unions' because it allows categorical sub-distinctions between types of unions, in the sense that industrial unions are unions that unite all workers within one industry regardless of their skills, unlike craft unions or trade unions, which unite workers according to skill or trade regardless of industry. Industrial unions, although unusual in the UK (and rarely labelled as such) were in some cases, arguably, gaining power during the 1980s, not least in the public sector (like the Confederation of Health Service Employees, which represented various NHS workers).

I also want to note how reports by GLC staff to grant-making committees are named in my notes. Reports by GLC staff presented to committees typically carried titles like 'Report (17.2.82) by

² Kenneth L. Pike, *Language in Relation to a Unified Theory of the Structure of Human Behavior*, second revised edition (1967), 37-9.

³ 'Labour Movement', in John Scott & Gordon Marshall (eds.), *A Dictionary of Sociology*, fourth edition, online version (2014), DOI: <10.1093/acref/9780199683581.001.0001>, accessed 17 January 2024.

⁴ Edward Shills, 'The Virtue of Civil Society', in Virginia Hodgkinson & Michael W. Foley (eds.) *The Civil Society Reader* (2003), 294-5.

the Director-General'. The date of the report is given in the brackets in this title in a dd/mm/yy format, so I have not duplicated this in the footnotes. This title would be accompanied by a reference number, by which reports were referred to in committee minutes, consisting of an abbreviation for the committee's name ('T' for Transport Committee or 'W' for Women's Committee, etc) and a number. In combination with the archive reference code for the bound volume wherein the presented reports are stored, the date of the meeting where a report was presented (usually the next meeting following the date of the report) and the document's reference number are key to finding the source within the GLC archive's thick bound volumes of committee papers.

1.1 Keeping Books: A literature review

Douglas Adams pointed out that it is 'an important and popular fact that things are not always what they seem'.⁵ For instance, many basic empirical facts about the GLC's funding programmes remain unknown. Yet understanding what Livingstone's administration and its relationship with non-state organisations were like is currently becoming increasingly relevant and riveting, given the growing attention that Council-funded groups have recently received from historical researchers (myself included). How many organisations did it fund? Answers are disparate. Livingstone said three thousand in his memoir, but also 2,073 thirty-five pages later.⁶ The two thousand figure was also referenced in GLC documents, but Livingstone's biographer Andrew Hosken conservatively estimates 'more than a thousand' while Lucy Robinson writes '25,000'.⁷

How big was the grants budget? Both £50 million and £38 million annually, writes Hosken.⁸ £38 million was roughly what the Council could legally spend under Section 137 of the Local Government Act (1972) – two per cent of its income from rates. Yet, in 1984, £26 million of this 'two-penny rate' went solely to the GLC's Industry & Employment Branch and its Greater London Enterprise Board which funded some non-profit organisations, but mainly for-profit businesses and workers' cooperatives.⁹ There were also many other laws the Council used to make grants without having to declare the total sum, such as section 64 of the Health and Public services Act 1968, which was used for health-related organisations.¹⁰ The London Voluntary Service Council estimated that £47

⁵ Douglas Adams, *The Hitch Hiker's Guide to the Galaxy: A trilogy in five parts*, collected edition (1995 [1979]), 113.

⁶ Ken Livingstone, *You Can't Say That: Memoirs* (2011), 213, 248.

⁷ Jennifer R. Wolch, *The Shadow State: Government and voluntary sector in transition* (1990), 157; Andrew Hosken, *Ken: The ups and downs of Ken Livingstone* (2008), 152; Lucy Robinson, *Gay Men and the Left in Post-war Britain: How the personal got political* (2013), 144.

⁸ Hosken, *Ken*, 148, 152.

⁹ Bill Morrison, 'London: Current trends and future policies', *Built Environment*, vol. 8, no. 1 (1982), 74; Daniel Egan, *The Politics of Economic Restructuring in London, 1981–1986* (2001), 112. See also, GLC, *The London Industrial Strategy* (1985), 40-5.

¹⁰ Committee on Voluntary Organisations, *The Future of Voluntary Organisations: Report of the Wolfenden Committee* (1978), 232-7

million was spent on grants in 1984–5, while Jennifer Wolch cited ‘unpublished grants data’ in 1990 to arrive at £101 million for the same year.¹¹ Yet, the GLC archive occasionally gave an impression that the Council itself never made or saved a full and final count before its abolition.¹²

My research is hopefully a starting point for finding the facts. I managed to compile an incomplete database of roughly 650 funded organisations (see page 22), meaning there were more, but no fewer, than that. (Future researchers might be able to complete this by counting the names of grant recipients in the Council minutes.) However, I also have enough evidence to conclude that £101 million and 25,000 groups are overestimates. Wolch’s grand totals, for instance, do not match the tallies I did find in the GLC’s archive.¹³ History becomes interesting when it helps us find alternatives to things we thought we knew and maybe this dissertation can be a gateway to the discovery of this at the GLC.

This research is therefore not a definitive history of Livingstone’s GLC, nor of the organisations it funded, nor of the relationship between the two. However, it uses qualitative and some quantitative data in four areas of the LLP’s social policy with the aim of showing what this relationship could be like and what its origins, causes, and legacies could be, to provide a starting point for broader future GLC studies. Before reviewing the existing literature on the Livingstone administration and the groups it funded I will briefly describe my own starting points, to contrast them to previous conclusions and assumptions on the topic. I will note that: (1) The GLC’s grants left a substantive legacy in London; (2) Livingstone’s administration must be analysed within the setting of the wider labour movement, particularly its unions; (3) Labour used grants for decades prior to Livingstone’s to implement a similar range of social policies and, contrary to their assumed novelty, Livingstone’s administration shared much in common with its predecessors in regional and national Labour politics; (4) Livingstone’s GLC used a broad definition of voluntary organisations that included unions.

(1) For all the negative things said about Livingstone’s GLC, many contemporaries appreciated how the growth among state-funded organisations accelerated by its grants schemes was long-term. Adrienne Talbot, the chairman of Ealing Voluntary Services Council, described in her 1986 annual report how ‘The funding policies of the ex GLC have acted as a sizable “Trojan Horse” within

¹¹ The National Archives (TNA), HLG 12/3311, letter from R. J. Brown to Pickup, 14 November 1984. Wolch, *Shadow State*, 158.

¹² For instance, a statistical report on grants in 1985–6 was mentioned in the minutes of the last meeting of the GLC’s Women’s Committee but I could not find a copy among the papers presented there. London Metropolitan Archives (LMA), GLC/DG/PRE/223/061.

¹³ For instance, a GLC report in 1986 stated that grants made by the Arts and Recreation Committee and its sub-committees in 1984/5 totalled £9.7 million, whereas Wolch concluded £21 million. LMA, GLC/DG/PRE/223/061, Report (4.3.86) by Head of the Women’s Committee Support Unit, W1369, p. 3; Furthermore, compare: Wolch, *Shadow State*, 158 to LMA, GLC/DG/PRE/225/055, Report (09.10.85) by Head of the Womens Committee Support Unit, W1259. It appears as if Wolch, on at least one occasion, presented the grand total number of grants approved by the GLC Women’s Committee since May 1983 at the end of a given year as the number of grants approved *during* that year, thus counting many grants twice or thrice, which inflated her annual totals.

the Borough and the nature and character of the voluntary sector has changed considerably.’ The ‘vast majority’ of GLC-funded organisations represented by her federation had, despite abolition, successfully switched from regional to borough money and ‘the “paid” voluntary sector has increased by almost four times in as many years’.¹⁴ Civil servants in Whitehall, as they worked to abolish the GLC realised that the Council ‘made a considerable number of grants to voluntary bodies ... the value of whose work is widely accepted’, although they did not mind if ‘some of the more idiosyncratic’ organisations it funded went ‘to the wall’.¹⁵ They created the London Boroughs Grant Committee which, alongside replacement funding to borough councils, kept many organisations going, including many iconoclastic ones, as the following chapters demonstrate. The results were borne out in the longevity of former GLC-funded groups: at least sixty per cent of them were active in some capacity a decade after abolition. There was perhaps a slightly higher drop-off rate among the newest groups, founded in the early 1980s, but over half of them remained in the year 2000 (see table 1.2 below). The GLC had been a remarkably successful ‘startup’ incubator. It had inflated its grants programmes from below £5 million in 1980 to the tens of millions, but like a papier-mâché balloon, this budget did not collapse when punctured.¹⁶

(2) Secondly, contemporary non-state organisations noticed that London’s Labour-controlled councils were inseparable from local unions. The Federation of Independent Advice Centres’s London newsletter advised its members, in 1984, that, to secure council grants, they should court the unions: ‘Crucial. You will get nowhere with a Labour authority unless the Town Hall unions are with you. The party is based on the unions, and councillors who cross the unions are reported to their own parties who have union reps.’¹⁷ The South East Region Trades Union Congress (SERTUC) had a representative on the LLP’s GLC manifesto-writing committees and, as the following chapters will show, it maintained a close relationship with the Livingstone administration. With SERTUC’s approval, the LLP’s 1981 manifesto promised the GLC’s, London Transport’s, and Inner London Education Authority’s 130,000 employees that ‘industrial democracy must start at the bottom by giving the Union Work representative an active role’. In return, to support its position for ‘the necessary finance to maintain and improve all council services’, the LLP, expected ‘the Labour and Trade Union movement to take action, including industrial action’.¹⁸ Pending that, the same manifesto section explained, the LLP would ‘meet deficiencies in the provision made by Tory Councils ... by funding and assisting independent or voluntary agencies (e.g. Co-operative Development Agencies,

¹⁴ Ealing Community Transport company archive, Greenford Depot ECT offices, uncatalogued, file: ‘Old Applications Grant/Finance’, Ealing Voluntary Services Council, *Annual Report 1986* (1986), 3.

¹⁵ TNA, HLG 120/3325, letter from A. P. Wilson to Diane Phillips, 23 August 1983.

¹⁶ Wolch, *Shadow State*, 157.

¹⁷ *London Mole*, ‘Labour Lobbying’, no. 4 (1984), 23.

¹⁸ GLC, *Minority Party Report: A socialist policy for the GLC*, agenda paper appendix, 3 March (1981), 42, 83. Submitted as a motion to the GLC before the election by the Labour group to make the Council print it, this was Labour’s full 1981 manifesto (available at the LSE Library and the LMA [GLC/DG/PUB/01/354]), although a draft version from 1980 has often been misidentified as such: Greater London Regional Council of the Labour Party, *A Socialist Policy for the GLC: Discussion papers on Labour’s G.L.C. election policy* (1980), 6.

Housing Associations or Co-operative Community Action Groups, Law Centres, etc)'.¹⁹ Surrounding this was the Livingstone GLC's paramount political objective to create jobs and, thereby, labour-movement power. Once elected, Labour funded union-related organisations, including twenty-three 'Trade Union Resource Centres' run by trades councils to develop jobs in 'socially useful production and services'.²⁰ The GLC expressed the significance of its industrial strategy in 1986: 'unemployment ... weakens the collective response of the workforce through trade unionism. Trade union membership suffers, as does trade union finance'.²¹ Although the Council's relationship with the unions was often invisible – implicit understandings needed no rearticulation (illustration 1.1) – it was a fundamental assumption whereunder GLC grants came about. This is exemplified in various ways in each of the following chapters.

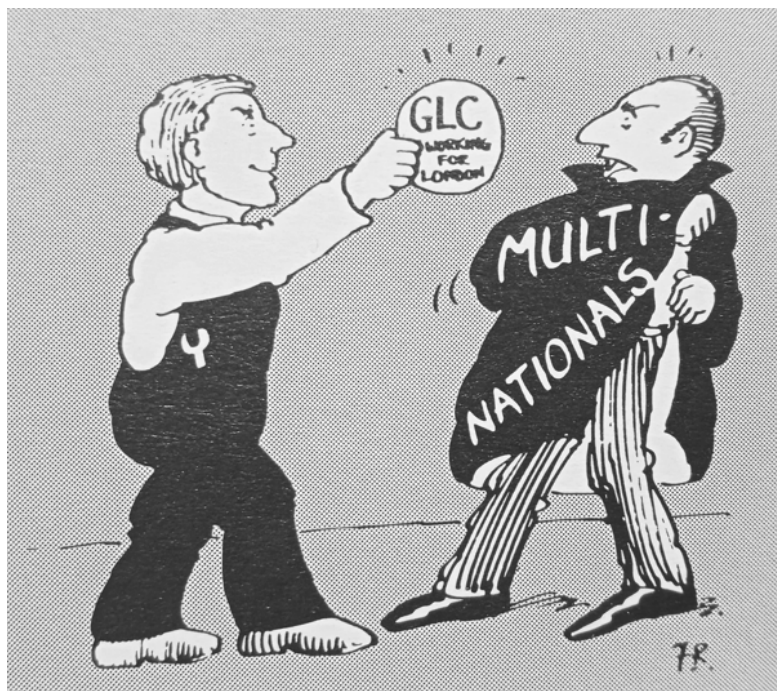


Illustration 1.1: Man-with-a-Van Helsing. Uncaptioned illustration in the margin of the GLC booklet *There is An Alternative* (1984), evoking the Marxian metaphor that purchasing labour-power is vampiric.²²

(3) In fact, during the decade leading up to May 1981 the unions had already accelerated the growth of central government grants to non-state organisations to end unemployment, discrimination, and poverty. In the 1950s and 1960s the London County Council's (LCC) Labour majority made several small grants to non-state organisations who provided healthcare, education, and playgrounds. These were interventions against particular local problems and, albeit small, connected Labour to

¹⁹ GLC, *Minority Party Report*, 82.

²⁰ GLC, *There is an Alternative: How the GLC is backing Londoners in the struggle around jobs* (1984), 21.

²¹ GLC, *The London Labour Plan* (1986), 191.

²² GLC, *There is an Alternative*, 18; Karl Marx, *Capital: Volume 1*, trans. Ben Fowkes (1976 [1867]), 415-6.

places that saw bursts of community organising, like Notting Hill. There the LCC financed an adventure playground and there local Labour connections led to the Party providing money and members to create the law centre movement in the 1970s (see chapter six).²³ (Both were later assisted by Livingstone's GLC.) But it was unions and the Trades Union Congress (TUC) who, in national politics, prompted Labour's grants to evolve in the 1970s. To reduce unemployment, they persuaded Heath's Conservative government to create the Manpower Services Commission (MSC) and Wilson's Labour governments to expand its grants programmes.²⁴ In 1975–7, this tripartite public body sent £31.5 million to 'voluntary organisations, charities, and community groups' to employ teenagers, and was tasked by Labour's governments to prevent discrimination of women and minority groups and their 'disadvantage' in the labour market.²⁵ Meanwhile, in 1978, the new Commission for Racial Equality (CRE) developed anti-discrimination practices for unions while providing £800,000 in 'self-help' funds to 276 organisations, mostly non-state groups. Within studies of labour relations and employment 'disadvantage', and later 'double disadvantage' were concepts developed in the 1960s and 1970s to improve state-led programmes for full employment, describing the position of teenagers, racialised minority groups, women, or people with disabilities, as well as others, such as offenders who, when entering or reentering a labour market were less likely to find work due to discrimination or other factors, including the skills or accreditation required by employers.²⁶

Accordingly, and similar to the MSC and CRE, the Urban Aid programme, created by Wilson's second government, was given a three-year £125 million cash boost in 1977, targeting inner-city poverty by investing in 'nursery schools, adventure playgrounds, housing aid centres, legal advice centres, family planning units, community centres and workers' holiday schemes'.²⁷ Led by

²³ *The Times*, 'L.C.C. Aid For Notting Hill Proposed', 2 November 1959, 6; LMA, ACC/1888/161, Notting Hill Adventure Playground Association, 'Report for the Year Ended 31st March 1961', 1961; LMA, 4314/04/053, North Islington Infant Welfare Centre, *Forty Seventh Annual Report, 1960–1961* (1961); see also Tank Green, 'Digging at Roots and Tugging at Branches: Christians and 'Race Relations' in the sixties', PhD thesis, University of Exeter (2016), 132, 163.

²⁴ David Renton, 'Skills for Life or Skills for Work? The Manpower Services Commission 1974–1988', *History of Education Researcher*, no. 74 (2004), 87.

²⁵ MSC money was, for instance, allocated to the Luton Campaign for Homosexual Equality, Luton Women's Aid, and the Afro-Caribbean Education and Cultural Organisation. Renton, 'Skills for Life', 88; Brendan Evans, *The Politics of the Training Market: From Manpower Services Commission to Training and Enterprise Councils* (1992), 21–38; Committee on Voluntary Organisations, *Future of Voluntary Organisations*, 255–6; Keith Harper, 'Golf Courses from Pit Tips to Help Jobless', *The Guardian*, 10 October (1975), 20; Sex Discrimination Act 1975, digitised Act of Parliament, <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1975/65/pdfs/ukpga_19750065_en.pdf>, accessed 5 February 2023, pp. 29–30; *The Guardian*, 'Sidelines', 21 March (1977), 9; *Hansard*, House of Commons (HoC), 5th ser., vol. 940, cc. 756–7 (7 December 1977). Re 'disadvantage', cited in University of Cambridge Radzinowicz Library, pamphlets collection, PAM-1-220, letter from Marjorie Kingsland to unknown recipients, n.d. (1978?).

²⁶ Charles C. Killingsworth, 'The New Technology is Shaping a New Labor Force', *New York Times*, 24 April (1966), section 11, pp. 8–9; Cynthia Fuchs Epstein, 'Positive Effects of the Multiple Negative: Explaining the Success of Black Professional Women', *American Journal of Sociology*, vol. 78, no. 4 (1973), pp. 912–35; Nicholas Hinton, 'Jobs for the Disadvantaged', *The Times*, 4 March (1978), 15; J. S. Cassels, 'Opportunities for Youth', *The Times*, 13 March (1978), 19.

²⁷ Similar to the MSC, Urban Aid, in 1978, sponsored Manchester's first gay centre. *The Guardian*, '£6,200 Grant for Gay Counselling', 6 April (1978), 6; Judy Hillman, 'Urban Aid Given a 'Beefing-up'', *The Guardian*, 7 April 1977, 1; Richard Batley & John Edwards, 'The Urban Programme: A report on some programme funded

labour-movement leaders born in the 1910s and 1920s, these programmes constituted a UK-wide Labour policy pivot, away from moving people and workplaces into new towns, towards reindustrialising city dwellers.²⁸ In 1975, Reg Goodwin, the GLC's 67-year-old Labour leader, had told the Council: 'We need to reverse the disastrous decline of industrial employment in London.'²⁹ During the following years, grants for training and jobs seemed to be working.³⁰ Both the TUC and Callaghan boasted of their effectiveness and Labour prepared to make 'industrial democracy' one of its 1979 manifesto headlines.³¹ The LLP modelled its strategy in the setting of these national Labour policies; developing the manufacturing economy, maintaining full employment while preventing crises, and, thus, expanding unionisation and workers' control.³² Grant continuities were literal: dozens of groups in London funded by the CRE between 1977 and 1979 (including North Kensington Law Centre, Southall Youth Movement, and others) received GLC money after 1981, as did many others sponsored by the MSC (like the Lewisham and Deptford Women's Centre).³³ During this same period, state funding for the arts also increased rapidly: the Arts Council gave out £80 million in grants in 1982, an increase of £9.3 million in 1970.³⁴ The GLC's grants strategy did not come from nowhere and was not random. It often targeted areas already connected to the labour movement, be it the LCC, unions, or Labour governments. Each of the following chapters will show in different ways how, in every policy area studied, the GLC's policy was preceded by similar existing ideas or practices in various parts of the labour movement. In some ways, Livingstone's GLC was what Lucy Robinson called 'an example in miniature of how the new Labour Left might run things'. But, more profoundly, it was a local version of how Labour governments had already run things.³⁵

(4) Accordingly, the way the Livingstone administration defined 'voluntary organisations' broadly enough to include unions is interesting for what it reveals about the term's history and how to use it today. In August 1981, Livingstone's GLC advertised that it would 'consider requests for grants from voluntary and community groups'. Applicants were expected to 'be working for the benefit of Londoners'. The only other criteria listed in the council's classified adverts were that groups should

projects', *The British Journal of Social Work*, vol. 4, no. 3 (1974), 306; *Hansard*, HoC, 5th ser., vol. 936, c. 609 (27 July 1977).

²⁸ Michael Cassell, 'Bid to Revive Centres of Big Cities', *Financial Times*, 18 September (1976), 1.

²⁹ Quoted in Christopher Warman, 'Mammoth Cog in Wheel of Bureaucracy' Charge', *The Times*, 24 September (1975), 4.

³⁰ David Raffe, 'Special Programmes in Scotland: The first year of YOP', *Policy and Politics*, vol. 9, no. 4 (1981), 482.

³¹ TUC-Labour Party Liaison Committee, *The Next Three Years and into the Eighties* (1977), 16; British Film Institute National Archive, 523668, Thames Television, *This Week*, 'An Interview with the Prime Minister', digitised video recording, broadcast 20 July 1978. Labour's 1979 general election manifesto said: 'Industrial democracy – giving working men and women a voice in the decisions which affect their jobs – is an idea whose time has come.' Labour Party, *1979 Labour Party Manifesto* (1979), 4.

³² Nick Buck, Ian Gordon, Ken Young, John Ermisch & Liz Mills, *The London Employment Problem* (1986) 143.

³³ At least twenty-seven CRE-funded groups, by my limited preliminary study. The full overlap is yet unknown. CRE, *Annual Report 1977* (1978), 41-5; CRE, *Annual Report 1978* (1979) 41-51; CRE, *Annual Report 1979* (1980), 42-7.

³⁴ Robert Hutchinson, *The Politics of the Arts Council* (1982), 171.

³⁵ Robinson, *Gay Men*, 139.

have objectives that could (1) ‘be justified as being in the interests of London, its inhabitants, or fulfilling a specific local need’, (2) that they would be able to ‘continue on a viable basis’ if funded, that their ‘self help and voluntary assistance’ were ‘maximised’, and that (3) their ‘affairs, both general and financial’ were ‘properly conducted’.³⁶ As the Council’s work on grants became more structured a few months later, this definition was formalised in its overall grants criteria for ‘voluntary bodies’, as ‘bodies operating to the benefit of London or its inhabitants with aims and objectives which can be demonstrated to be of real benefit to the community.’³⁷ The legal powers that allowed local authorities to make grants, which the GLC identified, varied from allowing ‘funds to any body which provides any public service’ (such as in section 137 of the Local Government Act 1972) to paying for the ‘expenses of any voluntary organisation in providing a wide range of recreational facilities and assistance’ (Local Government [Miscellaneous Provisions] Act 1976).³⁸ Grant-making committees added specific conditions to this, such as having objectives ‘in the interests of women in London’, but the basic definition of the groups this could apply to remained broad. ‘Bodies’ served the LLP’s politicians well – it was vague enough to fund many policies they wanted to implement, from housing to childcare.

This idea of ‘voluntary organisation’ was shared by some contemporaries in the 1980s but differs from how the term is commonly understood in the 2020s. The social policy lecturer Norman Johnson explicitly called ‘trade unions’ and ‘professional organisations’ alike ‘voluntary organisations’ in 1987.³⁹ This followed an existing trend, at least as old as G. D. H. Cole’s and William Beveridge’s work in the 1940s wherein the meaning of ‘voluntary action’ included ‘trade unions, co-operative societies, building societies and so forth’.⁴⁰ Even the Committee on Voluntary Organisations chaired by John Wolfenden (The Wolfenden Committee, 1974–8), although it assumed without elaboration that it should not consider ‘churches, universities, trade unions, [and] political parties’ also believed it ‘should not exclude activities which they undertake or sponsor’ within the fields it investigated.⁴¹ Wolfenden’s lack of an explicit or consistent justification for excluding these organisations from his study partially continued a separation that Cole called a nineteenth-century attempt by philanthropists to displace labour-movement mutual aid with charity by limiting the meaning of charities and voluntary agencies to exclude ‘subversive movements’, thus distancing themselves from ‘the leaders of the working classes’. The latter being ‘suspicious of the help offered

³⁶ E.g., *New Society*, ‘The GLC Has Made Limited Funds Available for Voluntary and Community Groups’, advert, vol. 57, no. 977 (1981), 231.

³⁷ LMA, GLC/DG/PRE/223/001, Report (17.2.82) by the Director-General, W6, Appendix C.

³⁸ ‘Bodies’ or ‘voluntary organisations’, in turn, were not legally defined. *Ibid.*, Appendix B.

³⁹ Norman Johnson, *The Welfare State in Transition: The theory and practice of welfare pluralism* (1987), 95.

⁴⁰ G. D. H. Cole, ‘Mutual Aid Movements in Their Relation to Voluntary Social Service’, in A. F. C. Bourdillon (ed.), *Voluntary Social Services: their place in the modern state* (1945), 118; William Beveridge, *Voluntary Action: A report on methods of social advance* (1948), 9.

⁴¹ Notably, the committee was organised by two *philanthropic* trusts. The Committee on Voluntary Organisations, *Future of Voluntary Organisations*, 11.

to their followers *de haut en bas*'.⁴² Since the 1980s, sociologists and political scientists have tended towards the philanthropic definition of voluntary organisations and this has become the standard etic definition for historians of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.⁴³

Etic categories can be useful, not least for describing the evolution of something by thinking backwards in time to find that in the past which matches a present-day definition. Historians almost inevitably use anachronistic words to describe things in the past that resemble later phenomena because language changes, including the meaning of 'voluntary organisations'. Here, for instance, I have used the broad etic term 'non-state' to label all organisations that were constitutionally separate from the state because it has a simple definition that encompasses all the groups that fell within the GLC's definition of 'voluntary organisations' without getting confused by the latter term's present-day meaning. I can do this because I realised that I had to analyse the funding relationship between state and non-state organisations and what came of it rather than 'voluntary organisations' as such. To aid this, starting in the past and thinking forwards, through the eyes of past people has the benefit of seeing the world as they imagined it – emically – shows, in the following chapters, the world and the options of Livingstone's GLC. It reveals that their important distinction was not necessarily statutory or voluntary, or profit or non-profit, but labour-movement or non-labour-movement. The labour movement was too important to leave out of an etic, present-day definition of 'voluntary organisations'. Excluding the labour movement, as contemporary definitions tend to do, makes it invisible to historical analysis, creating a blind spot over the networks of relationships that constituted it in 1980s London.

The following chapters show how often the labour movement was virtually indistinguishable from many organisations that acquired different labels. The law centres, which opened in the 1970s (and return for analysis in chapter six) exemplify this blurred boundary. In the law-centre movement, Labour members acted in accordance with Labour policy by running free local legal services with money from a Labour government. Swaths of what is often imagined as 'the voluntary sector' in transport for people with disabilities, healthcare, under-fives care and education, and police reform similarly became what they were because of, or *were of*, the labour movement. There were certainly movements that could organise independently of the labour movement – notably religious, nationalist, liberal, or anarchist movements. But in 1970s and 1980s London they too, as the following chapters show, frequently overlapped with labour-movement organisations or were dependent upon labour-movement institutions for money. A significant theme throughout these chapters is seeing the labour movement as a living movement and viable political option. Before moving on to outlining

⁴² Cole, 'Mutual Aid', 118-9. I know not whether Cole, in 1945, regretted his 1941 comment that, economically, 'it would be better to let Hitler conquer all Europe short of the Soviet Union ... than to go back to the pre-war order of independent Nation States'. G. D. H. Cole, *Europe, Russia and the Future* (1941), 104.

⁴³ Matthew Hilton, Nick Crowson, Jean-François Mouhot & James McKay, *A Historical Guide to NGOs in Britain: Charities, civil society and the voluntary sector since 1945* (2012), 1-10; Colin Rochester, *Rediscovering Voluntary Action: The beat of a different drum* (2013), 37-9.

these chapters I will review how the Livingstone GLC's grant to non-state organisations have been described in the existing literature on the topic.

Two historiographical paradoxes occurred to me early in my research that I became unreasonably motivated to resolve. Firstly, in contrast to the many firm opinions on the Livingstone GLC and the organisations it funded that have been expressed over the past four decades in academic and non-academic texts, relatively little historical or other scholarly research has been made on the topic since the 1980s, when its long-term historical significance was not known. Secondly, I could not understand how Livingstone's GLC – with the exception of Livingstone's biographers – was so often described in the vocabulary of former members or allies of the Communist Party of Great Britain (CPGB) despite the fact that there were significant political differences between the Communists and the London Labour Party and the Leninists (also called Trotskyists), and ex-Leninists who allied with Livingstone.⁴⁴ Chapter two investigates the second issue in greater detail, and in this section I will first review what historians have written about GLC-funded organisations in the past decade, what historians of London have said about the GLC and its relation to non-state bodies, and review the four general interpretations of this relationship that have been dominant in scholarly literature since the Council's abolition. These reviews will lead me to discuss the methods and sources I used to research how the 1981–6 Greater London Council used grants to non-state groups.

In contrast to the GLC itself, there have been many studies of such groups during the past decade, on the basis of analysing them individually or in small batches.⁴⁵ Most of these studies are not about relations with the GLC but intervene into conversations about theories or communities of 1980s Britain. Using them to establish a general historical interpretation of what their relationship with the

⁴⁴ Livingstone, *You Can't Say That*, 135, 237.

⁴⁵ E.g., Robinson, *Gay Men*, 139–46; Lucy Delap, 'Feminist Bookshops, Reading Cultures and the Women's Liberation Movement in Great Britain, c. 1974–2000', *History Workshop Journal*, no. 81 (2016), 175; Evan Smith & Daryl Leeworthy, 'Before Pride: The struggle for the recognition of gay rights in the British Communist movement, 1973–85', *Twentieth Century British History*, vol. 27, no. 4 (2016), 641; Stephen Brooke, 'Space, Emotions and the Everyday: The affective ecology of 1980s London', *Twentieth Century British History*, vol. 28, no. 1 (2017), 110–142; Diarmaid Kelliher, 'Contested Spaces: London and the 1984–5 Miners' Strike', *Twentieth Century British History*, vol. 28, no. 4 (2017), 614; Paul Bloomfield, 'Labour's Liberalism: Gay rights and video nasties', in Jonathan Davis & Rohan McWilliams (eds.), *Labour the the Left in the 1980s* (2018), 77–8; Judith R. Walkowitz, 'Feminism and the Politics of Prostitution in King's Cross in the 1980s', *Twentieth Century British History*, vol. 30, no. 2 (2019), 242; Owen Hatherley, *Red Metropolis: Socialism and the government of London* (2020), 107–43; Phoebe Patey-Ferguson, 'LIFT and the GLC versus Thatcher: London's cultural battleground in 1981', *New Theatre Quarterly*, vol. 36, no. 1 (2020), 10; Mathilde Bertrand, 'Cultural Battles: Margaret Thatcher, the Greater London Council and the British community arts movement', *Revue Française de Civilisation Britannique*, vol. 26, no. 3 (2021), <<https://doi.org/10.4000/rfcb.8435>>, accessed 28 February 2023; Lucy Delap, 'Feminist Business Praxis and Spare Rib Magazine', *Women: A cultural review*, vol. 32, nos. 3–4 (2021), 264–7. See also, Vicky Randall, *The Politics of Child Daycare in Britain* (2000), 81–3. Alongside studies of GLC-funded groups there has also been publications on non-state organisations funded by a few similar Labour-controlled local authorities, notably in Sheffield. E.g. Daisy Payling, '“Socialist Republic of South Yorkshire”: Grassroots activism and leftwing solidarity in 1980s Sheffield', *Twentieth Century British History*, vol. 25, no. 4 (2014), 619; Christoph Laucht & Martin Johns, 'Resist and Survive: Welsh protests and the British nuclear state in the 1980s', *Contemporary British History*, vol. 33, no. 2 (2019), 233–7; Sarah Kenny, 'A “Radical Project”: Youth culture, leisure, and politics in 1980s Sheffield', *Twentieth Century British History*, vol. 30, no. 4 (2019), 584.

GLC was like or what it meant for London's evolution is difficult. While they can exemplify specific instances and operations or form the basis for theoretical arguments or hypotheses, abreast some two thousand GLC-funded organisations even twenty high-quality examples leave too many unknown factors that make them hard to interpret without the help of the quantitative data needed to support paradigm case studies. For instance, so far, many of the analysed GLC-funded organisations have been groups active in the sphere of arts and culture. In many cases these analyses have also privileged the perspective of either the funder or (more often) the funded body, potentially limiting the account to one side of the story, as seen under (b), below. What remains to be analysed (with the assumption that funded and funder are two inevitable parties in the grant relation) is a large majority of organisations, and how those studies will change the overall view of Livingstone's GLC remains to be seen. My dissertation is unable to solve this problem, which requires more time. (See methods below.) Although I do not cover a majority of funded bodies either, using a wide range of empirical findings and the perspectives of both the GLC and the funded organisations, I have attempted to describe part of the un- or under-explored area where the LLP's social policies were implemented through grants.

As obvious as this connection may seem, a casualty of the piecemeal approach to the history of the Livingstone GLC's grants has been its connection to the wider labour movement, in particular the unions. The Council's abolition meant it vanished from plain sight and perhaps because most political histories and politics research is written about existing institutions there is a monograph on London's thirty-two boroughs, but not the GLC.⁴⁶ At an aggregate level, there is no scholarship that gives an extensive historical overview of what Livingstone's administration was like by considering its economic, cultural, and social politics as a whole. The first two areas have been analysed by Daniel Egan and Hazel A. Atashroo, respectively, although I have never seen Egan's work cited by a historian.⁴⁷ In the field of economics and social policy, two members of the GLC's Industry and Employment planning staff – Maureen Mackintosh and Hilary Wainwright – in 1987, edited a collection of essays on its employment initiatives, covering areas that will be analysed in this thesis, namely public transport, health and childcare. These essays are by people close to Livingstone's administration and must be read as retrospective primary sources self-critically recollecting five euphoric, fast-paced years that had recently ended in defeat.⁴⁸ They do, however, show the administration's emphasis, in close collaboration with local and regional unions, on creating jobs and reindustrialising Londoners, which was quickly forgotten after 1986, leaving only an emphasis on its cultural policies to be remembered.

Furthermore, during and since the 1980s, ideas that organised labour was a spent force became paradigmatic for how the Livingstone GLC's period and aftermath have been remembered and interpreted. This argument was presented by both Thatcher and influential historians, like E. H.

⁴⁶ Tony Travers, *London's Boroughs at 50* (2015).

⁴⁷ Egan, *Politics*; Hazel A. Atashroo, 'Beyond the 'Campaign for a Popular Culture': Community art, activism and cultural democracy in 1980s London', PhD thesis, University of Southampton (2017).

⁴⁸ Maureen Mackintosh & Hilary Wainwright (eds.), *A Taste of Power: The politics of local economics* (1987).

Carr and Eric Hobsbawm (although for different reasons). In the late 1970s, Carr went so far as to say that ‘the organized workers in industry – is not a revolutionary, perhaps even a counter-revolutionary force’, while to Hobsbawm, in 1994, globalisation decreased union power and ‘[e]ven the British Left was eventually to admit that some of the ruthless shocks imposed on the British economy by Mrs. Thatcher had probably been necessary.’⁴⁹ By the 2000s, based on their apparently unimportant role for the future, unions’ pasts had been downgraded.⁵⁰ Consequently, the unions and their function and place in the Labour vision for London – constantly present and vivid throughout Mackintosh and Wainwright’s collection – have been virtually absent in later histories, even in accounts sympathetic to Livingstone’s administration.⁵¹ Again, I cannot offer a full solution. This thesis does not provide the elusive overall history of Livingstone’s GLC (and even less the GLC as a whole), but hopefully it helps do two things: firstly, to unite the existing scholarship to a new synthesis by taking the administration as part of the established labour movement – which many people, in 1981, still believed was yet to reach peak union power; and, secondly, to analyse archivally four major areas of the Council’s social politics at the level of its support for non-state organisations. Throughout the following chapters, I try to show how, in each area, GLC-funded non-state projects were preceded by or coincided with demands or similar actions from the Labour Party or unions.

A GLC delinked from the unions has been implied almost wherever Livingstone’s administration has been mentioned (or omitted) in histories of London. Since the Council’s abolition, historical accounts of 1980s London have treated the administration briefly and superficially (if at all), and, following Livingstone’s biographers, newspaper reports, GLC literature, or memory, interpretations of it have by and large remained the same for thirty years. There has been a dismissive tendency: Roy Porter called the GLC an overall ‘failure for the twenty-odd years of its existence’ in 1994. It was ‘not much more than a mitigated failure’ to Jerry White, and Jeremy Black concludes that ‘once the GLC had gone support for it fell’.⁵² Kenneth O. Morgan remembered the Livingstone GLC’s supporters as ‘middle-class zealots’ in 1990. Yet Stephen Inwood’s history of London from 1998 remarks that ‘much of its [the Livingstone GLC’s] work for voluntary organizations, small business and metropolitan services gave good value to London.’⁵³ Perhaps these are all unsurprising views, since histories written in the 1990s and 2000s could not access archive material and political

⁴⁹ E. H. Carr, *What is History?: The George Macauley Trevelyan lectures delivered in the University of Cambridge January–March 1961*, second edition (1987 [1961]), 178; Eric Hobsbawm, *The Age of Extremes: A history of the world, 1914–1991* (1994), 412–4.

⁵⁰ Notable in textbooks, e.g. Robert Taylor, ‘The Rise and Disintegration of the Working Classes’, in Paul Addison & Harriet Jones, *A Companion to Contemporary Britain 1939–2000* (2005), 384–6. See also, Kenneth O. Morgan, *The People’s Peace: British history 1945–1989* (1990), 463.

⁵¹ E.g. Hatherley, *Red Metropolis*, 107–43.

⁵² Although Black contradicts this later, writing that the Greater London Assembly’s (GLA) creation meant ‘the GLC was in large part restored’. The GLA was approved in a regional referendum by a supermajority of those who voted. Jeremy Black, *London: A history* (2009), 380, 395; Roy Porter, *London: A social history* (1994), 1; Jerry White, *London in the 20th Century: A city and its people* (2001), 400; see also, Francis Sheppard, *London: A history* (1998), 350–5; Richard Tames, *Political London: A capital history* (2007), 180–1; Lindsey German & John Rees, *A People’s History of London* (2012), 281–2.

⁵³ Morgan, *People’s Peace*, 462; Stephen Inwood, *A History of London* (1998), 929.

wounds from the recent past were still fresh. Remarkably, however, even the most recent mass-market accounts of London's evolution give no more attention to this period's politics than did earlier histories, indicating that the academic interest and scholarship of the GLC and its funded groups in the 2000s and 2010s is yet to filter into how the city is widely understood. The brief narrative is still superficial and focused on imprecise labelling and failure: the GLC had a 'militant' leader, failed to cut public transport fares, and was abolished.⁵⁴ Hopefully, new histories of the GLC will soon reach the critical mass where even widely available books on London take into account not only how its opinionated contemporaries described or remembered it but also get to the facts of its actual role and function. This thesis is only a part of this process but I hope it can help see the Livingstone GLC and the groups it funded more clearly.

Even so, most academic interpretations (most of them brief) on the specific topic of the Livingstone GLC's relations with non-state organisations, have also tended to reiterate one or more of four dominant ways in which it was interpreted in the 1980s. None have been fully satisfying as historical explanations for why and how these relations evolved and I hope that my perspective of labour-movement continuity can contribute in this regard. I will detail these interpretations and explain ways that they clarify or confuse histories of 1980s London. In the most general terms, these four interpretations are that the grants made by the GLC to non-state organisations were: (a) political corruption or support to political allies for electoral gain, (b) the cause of dependence, deviation, stagnation, bureaucratisation, or collapse in previously viable and dynamic local organisations, (c) part of an attempt to replace the working class as Labour Party's main organisational and electoral constituency with new supporters, or (d) part of an attempt to create a unified working class. What all these interpretations have in common is that none are the result of analyses of archival sources and they are all as old as Livingstone's administration.⁵⁵ Nevertheless, many scholars have taken one or more of them for granted.

Interpretation (a) proposes that Livingstone's GLC was 'corrupt', as Thatcher's biographers maintain.⁵⁶ John Campbell alleges how the administration 'used the award of grants to all sorts of pressure groups and social-support groups as a blatant means of buying votes'.⁵⁷ Dominic Sandbrook says grants were Livingstone's way to 'pander to his most strident supporters'.⁵⁸ Similar claims were made in the 1980s. In 1983, the historian John Vincent speculated that 'the GLC's main function these

⁵⁴ Simon Jenkins, *A Short History of London: The creation of a world capital* (2020), 287-8; Jeremy Black, *A Brief History of London* (2022), 214. This is not repeated in neither Nazneen Khan-Østrem, *London: Immigrant city*, trans. Alison McCollough (2021 [2019]), nor Panikos Panayi, *Migrant City: A new history of London* (2020) but they do not mention the Livingstone GLC at all, despite the many immigrant organisations it supported.

⁵⁵ Jennifer Wolch's study (see above) is a borderline case, as it used as few original GLC documents not yet accessible in archives.

⁵⁶ John Campbell & David Freeman, *The Iron Lady: Margaret Thatcher, from grocer's daughter to prime minister* (2009), 321; see also Jenkins, *London*, 288.

⁵⁷ John Campbell, *Margaret Thatcher: Volume two: The iron lady* (2003), 377.

⁵⁸ Dominic Sandbrook, *Who Dares Wins: Britain, 1979-1982* (2019), 598.

days is to pay people to re-elect it'.⁵⁹ Yet, the lack of hard evidence backing these accusations stands in contrast to their severity. Not even Thatcher herself went that far and stopped at recalling an unspecified number of GLC-funded groups as 'subsidized front organizations'.⁶⁰ Shortly after Livingstone's administration, Anne Sofer – a Labour GLC member who defected to the Social Democratic Party in 1981 – conversely, claimed grants were made due to 'political favouritism'.⁶¹ It is important to notice, as the following chapters will attempt to do, the politics of the GLC-funded non-state organisations. Many were tied to broad political or religious movements, including the labour movement, but also (and not limited to) Christian, Muslim, Jewish, Hindu, liberal, or anarchist movements. However, the 'political corruption' arguments, as the following chapters also show, confuse the nature of politics. Certainly, all governments can be used by politicians for conspiracies of patronage or fraud, but this must be proven rather than asserted. A few fraudulent applicants also slipped past the Council's controls.⁶² But they were a tiny minority of grants and Livingstone's GLC had very different motives. Making grants to non-state organisations was, first and foremost, part of the GLC Labour group's political strategy for implementing its 1981 election manifesto and meeting the needs it identified – a duty it felt towards Londoners. Furthermore, as later chapters will show, many organisations funded by the GLC had also already been supported by Thatcher's government and many grants were continued after the Council's abolition by non-Labour authorities. These organisations were funded by, for instance, the CRE, during Thatcher's first government before or at the same time as they received GLC money. This included overtly political groups, like the Southall Youth Movement and Indian Workers Association, as well as those with a less political profile, like the Family Welfare Association and Society of Black Lawyers.⁶³ It would be dishonest to argue that these grants were policy implementation when paid by the government but corrupt favouritism when coming from the GLC.

Secondly (b), many scholars and other writers have concluded since the GLC's abolition that its grants were in various ways harmful to non-state organisations. Again, they focus primarily on openly political organisations, including liberation groups. Using interviews with organisers in such GLC-funded organisations, Adam Lent argued that the work associated with applying to grants and meeting funding criteria ended up 'quenching the flame' of groups related to liberation and socialist movements.⁶⁴ Similarly, Lucy Robinson suggests that gay and lesbian organisations were 'distracted' from their main objectives, became 'dependent clients to the council', and 'sacrificed their independence and energy' in pursuit of GLC cheques.⁶⁵ Regarding gay and lesbian liberation, Daisy

⁵⁹ John Vincent, 'Best Buy Basics on Livingstone's Voting List', *The Times*, 9 March (1983), 12; see also John Gyford, *The Politics of Local Socialism* (1985), 64.

⁶⁰ Margaret Thatcher, *The Downing Street Years* (1993), 305.

⁶¹ Anne Sofer, *The London Left Takeover* (1987), 104.

⁶² E.g. Paul Lashmar, 'Activist in Cash Probe', *The Guardian*, 16 December (1984), 2.

⁶³ Commission for Racial Equality, *1982 Annual Report* (n.d., 1983?), 29-32.

⁶⁴ Lent, *British Social Movements*, 174-7.

⁶⁵ Robinson, *Gay Men*, 145.

Payling also interprets Livingstone's GLC as aiming 'at the co-option of grassroots activists'.⁶⁶ It is also common to see positions arguing roughly that GLC-funded women's and black liberation groups 'became reliant on state funds' and 'were simply forced to close' not long after March 1986.⁶⁷ More generally and not only in relation to liberation groups or the GLC, there is a broader historical and political science thesis that state funding compromises the independence and flexibility of thought and action of non-state organisations.⁶⁸ These conclusions become somewhat one-sided in that they seem to imply an automatic process where groups lost their own agency when they became funded. As this dissertation shows, such processes were often less straightforward.

These conclusions were also restatements of claims made during and shortly after Livingstone's administration. The Islington Action Group for the Unemployed complained that complying with GLC grant conditions meant keeping their advice centre open every day and that '[r]eceipts had to be kept for every pen bought'.⁶⁹ Members of the GLC-sponsored Southall Black Sisters wrote in 1990 of how grants 'transformed political activists into paid service providers' and of their 'loss of autonomy through dependence on government funding'.⁷⁰ Former GLC senior race relations advisor Herman Ouseley, around the same time, also expressed how 'Black and ethnic minority communities entered into the competitive spirit' over GLC funds, causing division and 'a huge diversion'.⁷¹ Such sentiments influenced the first and most detailed scholarly study of the effect of GLC grants on the operations of non-state organisations, which summarised the funding programmes as 'prevent[ing] the potentially explosive strategy of mobilizing the voluntary sector from going any further' – a warning against being dependent on the state.⁷² But the argument that non-state organisations were dependent on the GLC was also a case that the Council and its supporters

⁶⁶ Daisy Payling, 'City Limits: Sexual politics and the new urban left in 1980s Sheffield', *Contemporary British History*, vol. 31, no. 2 (2017), 259. See also, Tracy L. Fisher, 'Shifting Ideologies, Social Transformations: Black women's grassroots organization, Thatcherism, and the flattening of the left in London', PhD thesis, The City University of New York (2001), 224-7, 302-303.

⁶⁷ Bonnie J. Morris & D-M Withers, *The Feminist Revolution: The struggle for women's liberation 1968–1988* (2018), 200; see also, Adam Lent, 'Labour Local Authorities and Social Movements in Britain in the Eighties', *Contemporary Politics*, vol. 7, no. 1 (2001), 16-7.

⁶⁸ E.g. Frank Prochaska, *Christianity and Social Service in Modern Britain: The disinherited spirit* (2006), 166-7; Anandi Ramamurthy, 'The politics of Britain's Asian Youth Movements', *Race and Class*, vol. 48, no. 2 (2006), 56; Joyce Rothschild, Katherine K. Chen, David H. Smith & Omar Kristmundsson, 'Avoiding Bureaucratization and Mission Drift in Associations', in David Horton Smith, Robert A. Stebbins & Jurgen Grotz (eds.), *The Palgrave Handbook of Volunteering, Civic Participation, and Nonprofit Associations* (2016), 1007-24. Although social scientists have recently presented evidence that challenges this thesis. See, Christopher William Damm, 'The Relationship between State Funding and the Organisational Characteristics of Third Sector Organisations: an exploratory data analysis', PhD thesis, University of Birmingham (2017), 242.

⁶⁹ Campaign for Real Life, *Unwaged Fightback: A history of Islington Action Group of the Unwaged 1980–86*, second version (1987), 8-9.

⁷⁰ Rahila Gupta, 'Autonomy & Alliances' in Southall Black Sisters (eds.), *Against the Grain: A celebration of survival* (1990), 55.

⁷¹ Herman Ouseley, 'Resisting Institutional Change', in Wendy Ball & John Solomos (eds.), *Race and Local Politics* (1990), 141; see also, Mike Phillips, 'The State of London', in Joe Kerr & Andrew Gibson (eds.) *London: From Punk to Blair*, second edition (2012 [2003]), 155-6.

⁷² Wolch, *Shadow State*, 183.

made forcefully to prevent its own abolition.⁷³ Selma James, an organiser involved with several groups based at the King's Cross Women's Centre, in 1985, accused the GLC of funding the wrong organisations: 'many groups that deserved funding didn't get the money they needed'. The groups that did (some of which she called 'racist, sexist, separatist and anti-working class') 'now constitute an Establishment within the movement'.⁷⁴ However, like James (who had made her criticisms of the British labour movement clear years earlier), many who critiqued the GLC's grants in the 1980s and early 1990s were people with notable political disagreements with Livingstone's administration.⁷⁵ For instance, the Islington Action Group for the Unemployed were suspicious of all political parties.⁷⁶ Frequently, these critics (including those quoted above) valued a liberal independence from the labour movement even when they chose to approach it for money. This dissertation pays attention to the very interesting facts of these choices and how people in groups had the agency to decide how they used the money they received.

Notably, the choices faced by grant-funded groups are also evident in the accounts of people involved with GLC grants. Julia Chinyere Oparah warned, in 1998, that anyone wanting to organise against the state should think twice about asking it for money, but also argued that 'Black women's groups which obtained funding under these programmes gained stability and were able to reach more women' and provided 'organisational longevity which many unfunded groups ... could not sustain'.⁷⁷ A former GLC employee recalled a similar dilemma among women's liberation organisations:

there seemed to be a watering down of autonomous and radical women's liberation politics in order to meet grant conditions set by a male dominated bureaucracy. On the other hand local government funding gave groups a stability they could not have had while they depended solely on the political commitment of volunteer women who would just get burnt out.⁷⁸

This balance between independence and state support was certainly something grant applicants were aware of. Femi Otitoju, a volunteer at London Lesbian Switchboard and – after 1983 – a GLC employee, recalled the vivid discussions she and her fellow gay, lesbian, and feminist activists had in the pub in 1982. Some were suspicious of 'being co-opted', 'accountable to the council', or becoming 'organizations filled with dead wood drawing hefty pay cheques'. Others chose to accept capital funding rather than backing for wages or overhead costs, to avoid growing beyond their means. Another position Otitoju related from an organiser of counselling for lesbians and gays was 'let's take

⁷³ Barry Knight & Ruth Hayes, *Government and the GLC: Views from voluntary organisations* (1984).

⁷⁴ Selma James, 'Postscript', in Selma James (ed.), *Strangers & Sisters: Women, Race & Immigration* (1985), 228-30.

⁷⁵ Selma James, *Women, the Unions and Work, Or ... What is Not to be Done and The Winning Perspective* (1976 [1972]).

⁷⁶ Campaign for Real Life, *Unwaged Fightback*, 5-6.

⁷⁷ Julia Sudbury, 'Other kinds of dreams': *Black women's organisations and the politics of transformation* (1998), 12, 84.

⁷⁸ Quoted in Joni Lovenduski & Vicky Randall, *Contemporary Feminist Politics: Women and power in Britain* (1993), 207.

their money and work towards the day when we won't need the grants because such [counselling] services are provided directly by the council'.⁷⁹

I will take this latter approach seriously over the course of this thesis. Becoming dependent upon or part of the state was not necessarily the moment that a movement was defeated. It could be a moment of victory and was rarely an unconscious or unmeditated decision. Although they have been the most clearly remembered, such conversations were not unique to overtly political organisations. In the community transport movement, which I will return to in chapter three, becoming regular service providers for a council was debated and celebrated in a similar way.

Thirdly (c), a reading of the Livingstone GLC's grants that has become common and significant, in terms of political theory, in scholarly analyses is the view that they, in theory or in practice, facilitated Labour's abandonment of what is called the 'traditional working class'. The town planning professor Michael Hebbert, for instance, wrote in 1998 that 'Livingstone shifted Labour's traditional male trades unionist constituency into a populist rainbow coalition of community and tenant groups, women's movements, gays, lesbians, blacks and rights organisations'.⁸⁰ This position is still taken for granted in urban studies analyses of Livingstone's GLC.⁸¹ Similarly, historian Lise Butler using similar sources, argues that Livingstone wanted a 'restructured left coalition oriented around activists and ethnic minority groups rather than trade unions'.⁸² Likewise, a vaguer version of this interpretation involves going 'beyond' the 'working class' or 'traditional working class'. This was the assumption in the most influential recent historical analyses of the Livingstone administration's grants, although it is unclear if 'beyond' means considering the 'traditional working class' less important to Labour's support base or leaving it behind altogether.⁸³ Nor is it clear exactly who falls under the category of 'traditional working class'. Were they, as in Hebbert's view, male union members, or, as Stephen Brooke implies, both men and women who were not 'the homeless, disabled, gypsies ... [t]he inner city poor and low paid non-unionized workers and "minority groups" – such as gays and blacks'.⁸⁴ When speaking of London, this is confusing since Labour's support had, by 1981, for decades come from people who could uncontroversially be given a diverse range of demographic labels. The Labour group elected to the London County Council in 1958 had a higher proportion of women and immigrants than Livingstone's Labour group in 1981. Since as early as 1861, a majority

⁷⁹ Quoted in Femi Otitoju, 'The Should We, Shouldn't We? Debate', in Bob Cant & Susan Hemmings (eds.), *Radical records: Thirty years of lesbian and gay history, 1957–1987*, Taylor & Francis e-Library edition (2010 [1988]), 136–41.

⁸⁰ Michael Hebbert, *London: More by fortune than design* (1998), 115.

⁸¹ Tim Joubert, 'Bridging Bureaucracy and Activism: Challenges of activist state-work in the 1980s Greater London Council', *Urban Studies*, online article, 29 July (2022), <<https://doi.org/10.1177/00420980221104594>>, 7, accessed 28 January 2023.

⁸² Lise Butler, 'Jeremy Corbyn in Historical Perspective', in Andrew S. Roe-Crines (ed.), *Corbynism in Perspective: The Labour Party under Jeremy Corbyn* (2021), 155.

⁸³ Geoff Eley, *Forging Democracy: The history of the left in Europe, 1950–2000* (2002), 461; Brooke, 'Space, Emotions and the Everyday', 118.

⁸⁴ Brooke, quoting Peter Hain and Simon Hebditch in 1978, 'Space, Emotions and the Everyday', 118. This quote is taken out of context, see n. 89 below.

of London's workforce had always been in the tertiary sector of the economy and, since at least 1931, the proportion of women in the London workforce had always been higher than in the UK workforce as a whole.⁸⁵ It should be unsurprising that this meant the city's labour movement had certain characteristics that were different from areas where primary or secondary sector workers were a larger share of the workforce. As seen above, unions were central to Livingstone's GLC. However, confusingly for historical analyses, this is not considered within arguments that the LLP distanced itself from the unions in the 1980s. This is perhaps because such views follow assertions made by political scientists in long-past political debates.

Of such assumptions, John Gyford's 'new urban left' thesis from 1983 is a notable example. It assumed that young, local Labour politicians in London were on 'a search for a surrogate proletariat' because the 'manual working class, core of the traditional socialist labour parties is today contracting'.⁸⁶ Chapter two will discuss why this assumption is confusing for understanding the Livingstone GLC's own ideas. However, four assumptions in Gyford's thesis should be made explicit here to explain why it can pose general problems for historians of London: Firstly, it assumes the narrow understanding that being 'working class' is more or less equivalent to being a manual worker or being in a manual workers' union. Secondly, it assumes a 'homogenous working class' (presumably culturally, religiously, sexually, occupationally, or sectorally), which, by 1981, might not have existed in London for most several decades.⁸⁷ Thirdly, it assumes that Labour's core supporters in London were this homogenous group of manual workers. Fourthly, it assumes that Labour politicians and organisers were actively courting or creating alternatives to these imagined workers, rather than adapting to already-existing changes. Nevertheless, it became a popular interpretation among contemporary commentators who had the last words on the GLC, meaning that this view would echo down the decades.⁸⁸ Today, the 'new urban left' thesis is ripe for review using a historical analysis.

Lastly, interpretation (d) of the Livingstone GLC's grants policy contends it was a way not to abandon, but to unite the 'working class'.⁸⁹ James Curran, in 2005, argued that saying emphatically that

⁸⁵ Gerry Holloway, *Women and Work in Britain Since 1840* (2005), 149; White, *London in the Twentieth*, 193; Peter Congdon, 'Gender and Space in London in the 1980s', *Espace, Populations, Sociétés*, vol. 89, no. 1 (1989), 27; P. G. Hall, *The Industries of London Since 1861* (1962), 22.

⁸⁶ Gyford followed Eric Hobsbawm's 'forward march of labour halted' thesis, John Gyford, 'The New Urban Left: A local road to socialism?', *New Society*, vol. 64, no. 1066, 21 April (1983), 91-2; Eric Hobsbawm, 'Observations on the Debate', in Martin Jacques & Francis Mulhern (eds.), *The Forward March of Labour Halted?* (1981), 181.

⁸⁷ White, *London*, 98-100, 123-9; Catherine Dunne, *An Unconsidered People: The Irish in London* (2003), 194-6; Panayi, *Migrant City*, 75-83.

⁸⁸ Beatrix Campbell & Martin Jacques, 'Goodbye to the GLC', *Marxism Today*, April (1986), 8-9; Franco Bianchini, 'GLC R.I.P.: Cultural politics in London 1981-1986', *New Formations*, no. 1 (1987), 115.

⁸⁹ Michael Tiechler, in different places, uses both the third and fourth interpretations, saying that Livingstone's GLC and Herbert Morrison's 1934 London County Council were alike for uniting 'working-class' and 'middle-class' voters, but also that the GLC was 'merging traditional class politics with an emphasis on the politics of personal identity'. He also evokes the 'new urban left' thesis, calling the GLC's strategy a 'rainbow alliance'. Michael Tiechler, *Why London is Labour: A history of metropolitan politics, 1900-2020* (2020), 46, 54-9.

the administration sought a “rainbow coalition” was ‘generally a misleading caricature’. Rather, most ‘leading members of the urban left were attempting to extend Labour’s core base of organised, white working class by adding to it, not replacing it.’ Meanwhile, the Council’s job-creation strategy was ‘a continuation of a social democratic tradition in national economic management.’⁹⁰ Richard Barbrook, around the same time, etically described Livingstone’s GLC as contributing to the labour movement’s ‘historical mission’ of ‘accelerating the evolution of capitalism’ – a Marxian way of saying it sought to increase labour-movement power.⁹¹ Both these points were asserted with no further argument, but Daisy Payling’s work has, more recently, supported Curran’s assumption in the case of Sheffield City Council in the 1980s (although she, like Gyford, describes it as ‘building new constituencies’, rather than reacting to already-existing ones).⁹² If this counter to Gyford’s thesis is to mean anything in relation to the GLC, London ought to be researched in a similar way to Sheffield. Although this was not originally the main purpose of my work, I realised that it was necessary for understanding how and why the Livingstone administration awarded grants. Analysing contrasts between the labour movement, the ‘alternative’ movements, and other religious, political, or social movements is a theme throughout the following chapters.

Again, these interpretations posed the risk of rehearsing debates from the 1980s. Curran was correct that calls for the ‘expanding not replacing’ strategy came from Labour Party members before and during Livingstone’s GLC. Gyford’s original thesis did, to some extent, accurately describe a ‘community movement’ in the mid-1970s that explicitly sought politics that were ‘not necessarily class-centred’.⁹³ But these organisers were not the Livingstone GLC’s leaders. Furthermore, by 1978, former Young Liberals, like Peter Hain and Simon Hebditch, who had promoted community politics in 1975, had become born-again union supporters and Labour Party members. ‘We believe that capitalism will only be overthrown by mobilising workers at rank and file level’, they asserted, adding that ‘to pretend that this can be done from outside the labour movement is to ignore political and industrial realities.’⁹⁴ Two years later, Hain’s view was that ‘youth politics’ were ‘in disarray’ and that Labour’s ‘objective must be to involve the working class as a whole in the Party’. To this end ‘the [Labour] Party at local level must forge links with single issue campaigns and community groups, not necessarily seeking to embrace these groups formally, but ensuring that they see us as their *natural* political allies’.⁹⁵ Gyford, briefly adapted his ‘new urban left’ thesis to reflect this, but in his most famous work on the 1980s Labour left-run councils the full extent of these Labour member’s commitment to the unions and labour-movement democracy was vague to readers who did not already

⁹⁰ James Curran, ‘A New Political Generation’, in James Curran, Ivor Gamer & Julian Petley (eds.) *Culture Wars: The media and the British left* (2005), 19.

⁹¹ Richard Barbrook, *The Class of the New* (2006), 38.

⁹² Daisy Payling, ‘Socialist Republic of South Yorkshire: Activism in Sheffield in the 1970s and 1980s’, PhD thesis, University of Birmingham (2015), 282.

⁹³ Jim Radford ‘The Community Movement’, in Peter Hain (ed.) *Community Politics* (1976), 71.

⁹⁴ Peter Hain & Simon Hebditch, *Radicals and Socialism* (1978), 11.

⁹⁵ Peter Hain, *Refreshing the Parts that Others Cannot Reach* (1980), 3, 7-8.

understand it.⁹⁶ Chapter two argues that positions on the unions similar to Hain's were shared among leaders in Livingstone's GLC who were in Labour or were Leninists or ex-Leninists. Realising this early on during my research, I increasingly noticed significant links between the GLC and unions which had an important influence on my subsequent assumptions and methods for understanding why grants were made.

1.2 Principal: Methods and sources

Before describing my sources and how I discovered and read them I will list the presumptions that I will make with little or no argument: Firstly, the primary agents of history and politics are individual persons (often acting in groups), as opposed to gods, machines, nature, or abstract things, forces or categories. Secondly, studying history has a purpose, which is to use facts to understand both how the past was and how it could have been different, based on the alternatives available to individuals at any given time and place. Thirdly, in the absence of positively asserted or probable change, continuity is likely. Hence, I assume that people in movements who call their ideas 'new' are likely reimagining old ideas and this can be a predictor of their actions.⁹⁷ Equally, I take for granted a living and changing labour movement during the 1980s and avoid labelling it as generally 'old' or 'traditional' and presuppose that its character was mainly an adaptation to changes among the people who supported it rather than something that changed its supporters, although this was a feed-back loop, so the latter happened too. (For instance, it would support non-state under-fives childcare and education because an increasing number of its supporters were parents, not to gain the new support from mothers, although that might have been a side effect). I think this helped me notice things about Livingstone's GLC that have not been immediately obvious.

Similarly, I also write on the basis that the aims and actions of organisations follow from their leaders' or members' broader ideas. This does not mean that every non-state organisation is a front group, but no one helps others or themselves for no reason and these reasons interest me because they explain people's actions, even if they are nothing but individuals' short-term desires, such as to enjoy sports or arts. That said, very often members of groups established to provide or lobby for certain activities or services or people have a vision of a world they want to create, be it political or religious. Many people in political and religious movements do establish front organisations to engage in particular activities or services. A clear case is the predecessor to the charity Shelter, whose Presbyterian founder aided homeless people 'to make Christianity visible'.⁹⁸ Even if this Protestant mission was later secularised, organisations do not simply 'emerge' or 'mushroom' – they exist

⁹⁶ John Gyford, 'From Community Action to Local Socialism', *Local Government Studies*, vol. 10, no. 4 (1984), 8; Gyford, *Politics of Local Socialism*, 52.

⁹⁷ Since the 1960s many contemporary observers have pointed out that many ideas in what was called the 'new left' in the UK and US were, in fact, old. Simon Hebditch, 'Ideology of Grass Roots Action', in Peter Hain (ed.) *Community Politics* (1976), 52; Daniel Tarschys & Carl Tham, *Den Nygamla Vänstern* (1967), 31.

⁹⁸ Quoted in, Colin McGlashan, 'Honest Anger Pays Off', *The Observer*, 27 December (1964), 5.

because of work motivated by their founders' sincere, wider objectives. In this I follow Mathew Hilton and his colleagues' attention to organisations' origins.⁹⁹ Granted my earlier presumptions, however, I did not begin my research assuming that non-governmental organisations as such can be considered the agents of a new paradigm of history.¹⁰⁰ What comes first must be the people who constitute these organisations, and they, as the following chapters show, are often in several different groups and movements at once.

In this way, seeing the close ties between the London Labour Party and the unions on GLC policy, which the following chapters detail, convinced me to pay attention to the political theory and strategy behind the Council's grants (including those to non-state organisations that were not themselves explicitly political) both within the council and the sponsored groups. The results were diverse and interesting. I discovered that organising dial-a-ride organisations were socialists, arguing for art therapy in health newsletters were existentialists, founding playgroups were Christians, and lobbying for police reform were anti-colonial nationalists. Furthermore, I could see that Livingstone's GLC did not support them all randomly or because it liked everything that could be vaguely called 'progressive'.¹⁰¹ Rather, they all served specific imagined purposes for bringing Londoners into the labour movement and, thereby, increasing union power.

I did not begin researching this dissertation with the plan to necessarily focus my analysis or argument on the grant-making side of the grant equation and, thus foregrounding the politics of the London Labour Party. I realised, as I reviewed the sources they and their administration produced, that the unions were everywhere and that the Council's grant policies were not as haphazard as they originally seemed. Paying closer attention to the politics of the funded organisations overall, I began to see a distinction between groups within or aligned with the labour movement and those linked to other movements. When I put the Livingstone GLC's leaders' texts and the archival documents from their grant programmes together, I saw a picture that differed from what I saw in previous scholarship. I made it my task to overcome the confusion this caused me by presenting a new interpretation of the Council's relationships with non-state organisations.

I decided, therefore, to concentrate on the one thing I had found that I believed to be a new and relevant discovery: the Livingstone GLC's labour-movement politics. I wanted to think this through as thoroughly as I could, leading to my historiographical focus. I decided that if I was going to finish this dissertation, it would at least be an opportunity to check whether I could communicate my findings and see if others would see what I had seen in the sources.

⁹⁹ Hilton *et al.*, *Historical Guide*, 347-8; see also Camilla Schofield & Ben Jones, "'Whatever Community Is, This Is Not It': Notting Hill and the reconstruction of 'race' in Britain after 1958", *Journal of British Studies*, vol. 58, no. 1 (2019), 142-173.

¹⁰⁰ Matthew Hilton & James McKay, 'Introduction', in Nick Crowson, Matthew Hilton & James McKay (eds.), *NGOs in Contemporary Britain: Non-state actors in society and politics since 1945* (2009), 4.

¹⁰¹ A word that is often vague unless everyone using it has the same idea of what they are progressing towards.

These research findings largely follow the sources I gathered from the GLC collection at the London Metropolitan Archive (LMA). Livingstone's GLC probably funded over two thousand organisations during five years with an even larger amount of grants and, unable to analyse all of them, I reviewed 717 grants to roughly 650 organisations. This sample was drawn from applications approved by the Council's grant-making committees in the months of October during the years 1981–5. I chose October semi-randomly as a month outside of the summer vacation that would include data from the Labour administration's first calendar year in office so I could understand how the first grants were made before analysing the GLC's final years. Although I could not say how representative this sample was, it reflected a large share of all council-funded groups and I used it to identify quantitative and qualitative trends.

I originally planned to make a comprehensive list of every organisation funded by Livingstone's GLC. This seemed plausible in late 2019, but I had to downscale my ambitions when public-health quarantine measures in early 2020 meant that the LMA became closed for an indefinite period and later only allowed limited access to visitors. Hence, I worked with the limited sample of grants and organisations used in this study. Nevertheless, this provided me with ample material to discuss several ways that the GLC used its grants to fund various welfare projects, based on which I drew wider conclusions regarding the Livingstone administration's ideas and methods. It does not allow me to make statements about the full breadth of the Council's work in these areas. For instance, I could not say precisely what proportion of the GLC's grants were spent on health-related organisations. This made it impossible to select chapter topics by ranking their relative importance based on how much funding they received. I also could not draw similarly definitive general statements about the organisations' sizes, longevity, locations, or budgets. Instead, I used the sample that I had had time to collect with the caveat that it did not represent a full picture, to my great dissatisfaction.

Quantitatively, I made a smaller sample of one hundred randomly selected organisations, representative of the larger sample, for more detailed analysis. Using the resources available to me at the time, I could identify the year that half of these groups were founded as well as an estimated year for when they were last mentioned in a digitised newspaper, journal, book, or on a website. This gave me a hypothetical estimate of the age and minimum longevity of GLC-funded organisations (tables 1.1 & 1.2). Three results were notable. Firstly, almost eighty per cent of groups that received GLC grants were no older than fifteen years and a third were founded during the lifespan of Livingstone's administration. The GLC was mainly attracting young organisations and encouraging the creation of new groups. Secondly, organisations that had been around for over a decade in 1981 could carry on without GLC money, as the large majority still existed three decades after the Council's abolition. Thirdly, far more of the younger groups, conversely, left no traces that I could find beyond their grant applications, but half of those that did also survived for at least a decade after 1986. Due to the

incompleteness of my database, however, these results, and statistics drawn from it in later chapters must be treated as working hypotheses.

Table 1.1: Decades when GLC-funded groups in my sample were founded, 1880–1986.

Decades Established	Number of groups	Percentage
1800–1939	4	7.7%
1940–1949	0	0.0%
1950–1959	2	3.8%
1960–1969	3	5.8%
1970–1979	19	36.5%
1980–1986	24	46.2%
Total	52	100%

Table 1.2: GLC-funded groups in my sample by years of last known activity, since 1987.

		Groups' years of last known activity								Total
		1987 or earlier	1988–1992	1993–1997	1998–2002	2003–2007	2008–2012	2013–2017	2018–	
Groups founded	1970 or earlier	1	0	0	1	1	0	0	8	11
	1971–1980	1	4	4	2	0	1	0	9	21
	1981–1986	7	2	0	0	1	1	0	7	18
	Total	9	6	4	3	2	2	0	24	50

Qualitatively, I imagined themes among the funded groups based on what they said they organised. Their diversity was considerable, ranging from the Home Counties Cricket Association to the Rastafarian Advisory Centre, but I narrowed my attention by deprioritising arts-related organisations in my analysis, given Atashroo's recent research on their work, and sports groups, partially because I wanted to focus on the GLC's social policies and partially because I thought they deserved their own research project. Almost immediately I spotted grants to union organisations, as discussed above. Subsequently, my attention was drawn to the frequent recurrence of groups receiving grants for minivans or with 'dial-a-ride' or 'community transport' in their names. Neither could I ignore the many groups providing various health services – often counselling – such as Phobic Action

or the YMCA's Just Ask Advisory and Counselling Service, or groups that provided information about health treatments, like the Camden Women and Health Project. Another of the most common themes was education or daycare for children under five. Lastly, although far fewer, I was intrigued by why the GLC funded 'police monitoring groups' alongside a range of centres that offered free legal advice. Here were four classes of organisations in my sample that could all be justifiably called noteworthy and that corresponded to four of the significant areas of social policy in the post-war state: public transport, healthcare, education, and policing. The recent origins and longevity of many GLC-funded organisations suggested by my quantitative statistics helped me realise that by researching each of these themes in four chapters and analysing their 'whos', 'whys', 'hows', and 'whats' I might be able to write a history of both the Livingstone administration's social policies and the long-term relations between non-state organisations, the state, and the labour movement.

I divided my 717-grant sample into smaller lists according to these four classes to study their components. To know who the groups and their members were, why they wanted to use GLC money, how they used it, and what happened next, I needed more than the LMA documents. The amount of detail about an organisation that I could gather from a group's grant applications or the Council staff's report about it, or both (where they existed), was mixed. Some provided extensive accounts of a group's origin, leaders, ideas, and activities, whereas others stuck to listing the bare necessities. From an early stage I knew that the LMA documents only ever provided part of the story and had to be supplemented with facts about the groups drawn from other sources. Significant facts about organisations were not recorded in their grant applications and reports. It would seldom be possible, for instance, to know which members of a group's committee were Labour Party members or union representatives by reading an application alone and therefore often impossible to judge its proximity to the labour movement from these sources alone. Therefore, these other sources included local newspapers, newsletters, interviews with former members, secondary literature, and, at best, the organisation's own archives and literature by their members. In each class I found at least one organisation or individual that had left an archive detailed enough to give me a better idea of what went on inside the funded organisations. This led me to several additional archives: the Bishopsgate Institute (BI) to read the letters that Dave Wetzel – chair of the GLC transport committee – exchanged with the groups he funded; the unarchived documents kept at Ealing Community Transport of the company's foundation; the Wellcome Collection and British Library Sound Archive for the archives of the Women's Therapy Centre and Women's Health Information Centre; the Cadbury Research Library and Institute of Education Special Collections for the Save the Children Foundation and the Pre-school Playgroup Association; and back to the LMA to see papers from the North Kensington Law Centre collected by the charitable trusts that funded it and by its committee member Pansy Jeffrey. This also had to be supplemented with texts that explained the London Labour Party's perspective on the issues they were funding, drawn primarily from the arguments published in the monthly magazine of the Labour left – *London Labour Briefing* – and other Labour left or Leninist

publications. Where I could complement this with relevant material from other sources, including the BI's pamphlets collection or the National Archives, I did.

Throughout this dissertation I used transcripts or recordings of interviews that discussed topics I investigated retrospectively.¹⁰² Most of these sources are transcripts published in scholarly journals or on publicly available websites.¹⁰³ The remainder are audio or audiovisual recordings, available in audio archives created specifically for the use of future researchers or on publicly available websites. I searched these sources for evidence of what the time and place I was researching was like and to test various hypotheses that I used throughout this work, in the same way I used published or other archived sources. Like many of the other retrospective published or unpublished sources cited in this dissertation (like memoirs), these materials pose the problem of the extent to which they are accurate accounts of events. In retrospect, a source creator might, for numerous reasons, give an account that differs from what happened. People who recollect may, deliberately or unintentionally, misremember, remember partially, exclude details they consider unimportant, make things up, or interpret events with a retroactive continuity that was not apparent in the past. Furthermore, interviewees often speak more spontaneously and with less preparedness than if they had written an independent account. Their thought process is prompted by the interviewer, whose questions lead the direction of the interview. Sources based on interviews are, thus, co-creations between the interviewee and interviewer. Since I was not analysing memories of the 1981--6 GLC but the time and place itself, I treated these sources carefully to extract empirical knowledge from them.

Something said in hindsight, especially about the retrospective person's opinions in the past, are not, as such, proof that something happened. Therefore, I tried to use claims from such sources only when I could corroborate them with other primary sources. As with any evaluation of a historical source, this process involves understanding when, where, and how the source was created and the philological and semantic element of understanding the meaning of its words, with particular attention to the dialogical nature of the record's creation in the micro-moment between the interviewer and interviewee, wherein words may have been given particular meanings. Concurrently, the benefit of retrospective sources is that they may recall something that was not written down in the past. Corroborating a claim from a retroactive source does not mean finding independent sources that make identical claim, but describing a setting wherein it is at least plausible, if not believable beyond

¹⁰² Convinced by Barbara J. Fields that a distinction should be made between 'oral history' and oral evidence because evidence is not history until it has been processed and interpreted, I have chosen to be as precise as possible by describing these sources as transcripts or recordings or interviews, rather than oral history sources. Karen E. Fields & Barbara J. Fields, *Racecraft: The soul of inequality in American life* (2012), 78.

¹⁰³ Because the interview transcripts and recordings I used were either published, archived, or created precisely to be read and cited I have not taken a position on the ethical dilemmas faced by historians who use materials from interviewees who originally agreed to have their words recorded for a particular past research project or who might disagree with later interpretations of their testimonies (the 'reuse' question). April Gallwey, 'The Rewards of Using Archived Oral Histories in Research: The case of the Millennium Memory Bank', *Oral History*, vol. 41, no. 1 (2013), 38-9.

reasonable doubt. Although I have tried to avoid resting my premises on a single retrospective source there may have been cases where this was unsuccessful.

During my research, I spoke to many people who remembered London or even the GLC during the 1980s. Some of these conversations were interviews I conducted. However, in the final analysis, no premises in this dissertation follow from these conversations. Similarly, the sources I decided to cite here are only a fraction of the huge amount of the published, archived, and unarchived materials that I came across during this project. My approach in writing this dissertation was, with a few exceptions of items from my private collection (which I can share to those interested), to use sources that are publicly available to other researchers and that can, therefore, be independently verified.

Although my use of evidence based on interviews was part of my effort to look at a broad and diverse range of sources, I do not know what I do not know. Even at the GLC not everything was archived, as its former staff officer Tony Bunyan (who returns in chapter six) recalled when interviewed twenty-one years after the GLC's abolition:

the London Met archive, has all the committee minutes. What it doesn't have, all the research files and everything else, as they weren't considered valuable. We have some with us. At the end of LSPU [London Strategic Planning Unit] we had ten four door filing cabinets, and I wanted to buy them I bought them from Camden [Council] ... they said ten filing cabinets were £160. What about the content? That didn't have value, so I bought the cabinets to keep the contents.¹⁰⁴

But even this account does not give the full story of what was archived. Mountains of GLC documents were duplicates of originals, making the content of a filing cabinet or archive boxes hard to judge by volume alone. It is even harder to tell which documents from individual groups are lost or still exist in private collections. Archives, as my list above indicates, have a bias towards well-established, long-lived organisations who provided regular services and whose leaders are professionals, university-educated, or especially committed or well-organised. Chance sometimes decided what survived. The Women's Therapy Centre deposited their archives to the Wellcome Collection just as my research began, but this was because the organisation had run out of money. The GLC's transport committee chair Dave Wetzel (who will feature in chapter two) left a large amount of correspondence to the Bishopsgate Institute. But in another instance, I 'arrived too late' and a private collection of personal papers of a deceased former GLC official had recently been disposed of. Other individuals generously provided me with documents from their private or company collections. Countless small everyday events and coincidences, the totality of which no one can predict, go into the making the sources that make history.

¹⁰⁴ Zakeera Suffee, 'Tony Bunyan', *The GLC Story*, digital interview transcript, 2 March 2017, 12, <<http://glcstory.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/TonyBunyantranscript.pdf>>, accessed 28 February 2023.

Mine has therefore been a ‘low-hanging fruits’ method – I researched the organisations in my subsections that left the most obvious archival footprints at the expense of long-vanished groups whose papers and members are gone. It may still be possible to learn about non-archived organisations through oral evidence and private collections, but this was largely detective work that I was unable to conduct this time. Nevertheless, I hope the thousand-piece puzzle I could assemble from the diverse sources necessary for answering my questions shows that even for groups with few archived documents it is possible to learn an unexpected amount of information. I will now proceed to explain how I organised and interpreted this information in a brief chapter outline.

1.3 Current Account: Chapter outlines

With these sources at my disposal I tried to explain who was involved, why they were motivated to do what they did, how they did it, and what came of it. The organisations I was able to research the most thoroughly had, to some extent, to become illustrative examples of what *could* happen within groups in their respective policy areas. After chapter two, chapters are written around these organisations and their related themes. Each provides a short literature review on the chapter’s theme, a description of what non-state organisations in its respective social policy field did before, during, and (to varying extents) after my main groups were funded by the GLC.

Chapter two, rather than following this pattern, answers the question of what motivated Livingstone’s GLC. It does this by returning to the ‘new urban left’ thesis as well as the interpretations that the Council’s leadership was abandoning class politics for identity politics. The chapter became a necessary starting point for what follows for two reasons. Firstly, the lack of consensus over a detailed empirical description of the LLP leadership’s politics suggested that it ought to be analysed. Secondly, to take ideas and intentions seriously in historical causation requires this description and it helps explain why the LLP chose to create the grant programmes it established. Carefully reading interviews with the GLC’s leading politicians and staff members, their books, essays, and their articles in the London Labour left publications *London Labour Briefing* and *Labour Herald*, and elsewhere, I found that this was down to a strategic decision to (as I conceptualise it) reindustrialise Londoners, which in turn could be traced to both Keynesian and Marxian interpretation of politics and economics. Employing more Londoners, the LLP’s leading individuals assumed, would not only solve many social problems related to unemployment, it would also lead workers into unions and the Labour Party, which could function as a network of para-state organisations that would, in the event of a major political and social crisis, be able to assume responsibility for running the country and the economy. Although this imagined future never came true it motivated the ‘Labour left’ and their Leninist or ex-Leninist allies to cooperate with people whose main goals were motivated by anti-colonial national liberation, gay and lesbian liberation, or Christianity. Perhaps most significantly, I found that the LLP’s GLC leaders spoke in two different ways about class. On the one hand they

used it as a signifier of narrow categories of employment or culture, but on the other their own etic, often Marxian, view of class as a shorthand for social relationships to the means of production meant that they acted upon a broad technical understanding of the concept. If people are workers not due to the type of work they do or their habits, but because of whether they are in the labour market or work to reproduce the labour market (unpaid care, household work, etc) it means imagining the working class as a broad and diverse category of people. That the LLP leadership, by funding associations run by women or people categorised into minority groups, believed that they were funding the organisation of a broadly defined working class was an influential reason why the GLC's grants programmes became so large.

The theme of chapter three is public transport for people with disabilities. Its focus is the creation of dial-a-ride, which, with GLC finance, grew from a small local initiative to a London-wide service that was eventually incorporated into Transport for London as a statutory service. The chapter argues that this form of bureaucratisation could represent a movement's greatest triumph. I describe the origins and growth of dial-a-ride, as transport services for people with disabilities, in London and the parallel rise of Community Transport organisations, which pooled minibuses for an incredibly diverse range of local bodies. Dial-a-ride's creation was seen as a significant act of liberation, perhaps chiefly by the elderly women who constituted most of its users. I found, through the archives of Dave Wetzel, the public transport campaigner Keith Armstrong, and the unarchived documents of two community transport groups, that the organisers who, by investing great effort, built dial-a-ride from the ground up, arrived at the conclusion that they wanted the state to either provide or fund the service, rather than see it run on a charitable basis. However, it was to be run on the terms set by its users, and the dial-a-ride organisers created a large user-representation organisation to fulfil this role much like a union at a workplace. As the GLC was abolished, this movement successfully lobbied Thatcher's government to continue financing dial-a-ride. However, the medium-term cost of central government funding was the gradual diminishing of the user democracy enabled by Labour and a corresponding demobilisation of the dial-a-ride movement, even as it achieved its main long-term goal of step-free and door-to-door public transport.

Chapter four turns to health, finding contrast in aims and methods between labour-movement-affiliated health organisations and their non-labour-movement peers, as well as in how they deal with their respective post-GLC funding situations. The chapter shows how different organisations could choose different paths according to their strategies and beliefs and chose between different strategies and beliefs. To illustrate labour-movement organising for health I describe the growth of the unions' interest in health and safety and the creation of groups monitoring occupational hazards in the 1970s. I use the Health Emergency campaign groups (many supported by union branches) as an example of a labour-movement organisation that became unviable without GLC support. Parallel to this, I outline what I loosely call an 'alternative-health movement', which drew on Anarchist, Maoist, and eventually also spiritual and existentialist influences. The Women's Health

Information Centre, as its state financing was cut, shows an example of how an organisation changed itself from a labour-movement health group concerned with occupational health to an alternative-health group which instead concentrated on the individual's inner feelings and consumer actions. Finally, the Women's Therapy Centre exemplifies how an organisation whose grants increased could, nevertheless, voluntarily changed its ideas in a similar way, from seeing its role as supporting the feminist movement to focusing on more narrowly defined groups and individuals. Without giving an exhaustive history of either the labour movement's or the alternative movement's practices for health, these are important examples for understanding the 'fate and free will' of the small organisations that chose between these movements.

The care and education of children under five is spotlighted in chapter five. This chapter argues that the GLC's grants were part of the significant England-wide increase in under-fives care and education seen during the 1980s. Many of the nurseries it supported carried on long after abolition. Again, this shows a contrast between providers who were not rooted in the labour movement and those that were, although there were significant overlaps. Labour-movement-adjacent groups stressed the need for mothers to overcome social isolation by becoming part of the labour force or participating in politics, such as through creches at unemployed workers centres. These strategies corresponded to the GLC leadership's broad class politics. They were unlike earlier organisations for under-fives education and socialisation, like the Save the Children Fund and Preschool Playgroups Association, which did not expect the mothers of the children they saw to be wage earners. I find, however, that there were also instances where Save the Children playgroups adapted to local demand from parents to become full-time day nurseries, which the GLC later funded. The GLC imagined an extensive network of nurseries, creches, toy libraries, toy factories, and unemployed workers groups to help industrialise mothers, but with its abolition the mainstays of this strategy were removed.

Lastly, chapter six is about how the LLP used funding for non-state organisations to democratise control over London's policing. I find that unions and Labour politicians had been concerned about policing for decades, notably for fear that the state would intervene in industrial disputes but increasingly, during the 1980s, to maintain faith in the police in local communities. Concurrently, Labour councillors and organisers in Leninist and Black Power groups saw it as their task to spread as much information about police misconduct as possible. For Labour this would help swing public opinion towards democratic accountability, and, in collaboration with local organisers, it created a London-wide network of police-monitoring groups. Similar to its strategy on childcare, LLP politicians tried to formulate a broad-based argument. Although it cooperated with groups who were far more hostile towards the police than the unions, such as Hackney Black Peoples Association, the weight of the labour movement's presence within the police-monitoring movement dissuaded such groups from employing their most divisive tactics. This dynamic is exemplified in two detailed studies of the Campaign Against the Police Bill and the Roach Family Support Campaign. The latter also illustrated the investment by senior union leaders in policing issues for the sake of rebuilding

trust in the police, thus hoping to prevent uncontrolled street violence. While the effects of these efforts are still hard to assess, it is likely that GLC grants had a direct influence on establishing the network of activists and lawyers who during the 1990s successfully campaigned for public inquiries into the Metropolitan Police that resulted in reforms towards accountability and anti-discrimination – notably the establishment of the Metropolitan Police authority – while the annual death rate of Londoners in police custody plummeted. Ironically, the field where Livingstone’s GLC had made some of its most controversial and derided interventions, by the 2020s, looked like the site of one of its most significant legacies.

This dissertation, however, is not solely about the long-term influence of the GLC’s grants. One of its main contributions is helping to see the 1980s from the perspective of the council’s leaders, showing how, as late as 1985, a local authority strongly influenced by Marxian economics and labour-movement politics could be a viable alternative even when, only two years later, this option looked entirely unfeasible. The GLC used grants to implement its social policies and a particular kind of broad class politics for Londoners. Along the way this work involved uncountable political alliances with a hugely diverse range of people and groups. Meanwhile, the influence of unions in London’s voluntary sector was too considerable to ignore, although it required much work to detect in retrospect. But, to not risk sounding as if this dissertation is trying to give easy answers, perhaps most importantly, this perhaps lifts a curtain on the sheer amount of empirical work that still needs to be conducted in the LMA’s GLC records before anything can be taken for certain, setting the stage for an unashamedly London-centric GLC history research programme. Before jumping the gun, it is time to discover what complexity this history may have in store.

2 Seeing like the GLC

A fig for your feuds and vendettas! Germans and Frenchmen, Irishmen and Englishmen, Jews and Russians – into the Crucible with you all! ... Here shall they all unite to build the Republic of Man and the Kingdom of God.

Israel Zangwill, The Melting Pot (1908).

'Now, who here at this table can honestly say that they played any finer or felt any better than they did when they were with the Blues Brothers?'

'We're putting the band back together.'

Jake Blues and Elwood Blues, The Blues Brothers (1980).

2.1 Grand Coalition: What was Livingstone's GLC?

This chapter tries to give an introduction to the intentions of the top leadership of the Livingstone GLC and their significant allies at the beginning of their term at County Hall, and a summary of several alternative intellectual positions with which they rubbed shoulders throughout those years.

Answering the question of what Livingstone's GLC leadership thought they were trying to achieve requires resolving a historiographical problem introduced in the previous chapter. In line with the 'new urban left' thesis discussed in chapter one, during the past two decades many historians who have mentioned or analysed Livingstone's GLC have interpreted it as characterised by 'identity politics' as opposed to 'class politics'. However, describing Livingstone's administration, its leading politicians, and the staff it hired requires reviewing and moving beyond this assumption. Furthermore, like John Gyford, many historians have interpreted it in the vocabulary of its critics in the Communist Party of Great Britain (CPGB), favouring their implicit assumptions over the Labour left's own theorists. Using interviews with and texts by Labour GLC politicians, organisers, theorists, and staff from the 1970s and 1980s, I use this chapter to show how their ideas were more complex and historically interesting than these interpretations have suggested.

In the 1981 GLC election, Labour won a majority on the Council. Of the new members, a plurality of twenty-two thought of themselves as being part of what they called the 'Labour left' and they formed an alliance with a smaller group of Labour members, who they thought of as 'centrists'.¹ The 'left' was thus the decisive group for the election of committee chairs and policy decisions. Unable to analyse the opinions of all twenty-two 'left' members, this chapter concentrates on a few GLC committees chairs who were the most important for its policies on economic investment and grants, and a few of their close political allies and advisors, to give an impression of the positions of

¹ Andrew Hosken, *Ken: The ups and downs of Ken Livingstone* (2008), 88.

London's 'Labour left'. I call this group the Livingstone administration's leadership since they could set the agenda of the administration's work. They are Ken Livingstone (GLC leader and Ethnic Minorities Committee chair), Valerie Wise (Women's Committee chair Industry and Employment Committee vice chair), Mike Ward (Industry and Employment Committee chair), John McDonnell (deputy GLC leader and chair of the Finance and General Purposes Committee and its Grants Sub-committee), and Paul Boateng (Police Committee chair and Ethnic Minorities Committee vice chair). Alongside these individuals, I have included Chris Knight, who, as a theorist of the Chartist faction within the London Labour Party and of the journal *London Labour Briefing*, articulated a Leninist political that was reflected in Livingstone's practice, and Robin Murray, who was an economic adviser appointed by the leadership. The analysis of this leadership group in this chapter concentrates on how they expressed political principles on class in 1981 and 1982, to give an idea of what its intentions were at the beginning of its term in office. I will return to this topic in chapter seven with a brief analysis of how they maintained these concepts until mid-1986. In contrast to the leadership and its advisors' positions and to indicate the complex diversity of opinions among the people that it attracted to County Hall or worked with in London, the second half of this chapter gives a brief introduction to people with other political positions that could be found in or working closely with the 'Labour left' throughout the period of Livingstone's administration.

What the Livingstone administration's leadership group and its theorists had in common was the belief that they were implementing class politics, based on several different underlying Marxian or Marxist theories or a religious sense of justice (or all three at once), although they often spoke of this publically in non-technical terms. Understanding the Livingstone GLC's funding policies requires having an idea of the way it saw London. It housed diverse politics, including socialist feminists, anti-colonial nationalists, Leninists (Troskyists), and Christians, united under an overarching class-based worldview and this informed who it funded and why. Livingstone's administration has, etically, been described as 'social-democratic' because it raised and spent taxes.² The administration never described themselves in these terms although I find that, if social-democratic is to be used etically, Livingstone's Council matched an older meaning of the word in a more specific way: its aim was to expand its citizens' equal rights from the political to the economic sphere. This analysis is important for the remaining chapters since the grants the GLC made to non-state organisations followed from its political priorities.

What is 'identity politics'? Diarmaid Kelliher's recent work had highlighted and questioned how '[a]ccounts of the 1980s urban left, particularly in London, frequently emphasise its espousal of allegedly marginal causes, distinct from the expected preoccupations of labourism'.³ Although I am hesitant to label London's labour movement as 'labourism', if this is taken to mean the interests of

² Although taxes are not unique to social-democratic politics. Brooke, 'Space, Emotions and the Everyday': The affective ecology of 1980s London', *Twentieth Century British History*, vol. 28, no. 1 (2017), 120.

³ Diarmaid Kelliher, *Making Cultures of Solidarity: London and the 1984–5 Miners' Strike* (2021), 200.

organised workers, Kelliher has pointed out a need for looking beyond received interpretations of politics in 1980s London and identifying the labour movement's continuing significance. It draws attention to how most historians who use the term 'class politics' have described the Livingstone GLC in opposition to class politics; often described as 'old', 'outdated', or 'traditional'. Those said by many historians to embrace identity politics are called 'new'; 'new left' or 'new social movements'. This echoes a distinction similar to that seen in John Gyford in the previous chapter. To Gyford, writing in 1985, there was a clear divide between 'some of the new issues' and 'the more traditional Labour priorities'. The "'old left'" in Liverpool, who would 'subordinate issues of sexuality, women's rights and race to the imperatives of class politics', were contrasted to Livingstone's GLC, where he emphasised conflicts between local labour politicians and unions.⁴ However, 'identity politics' is an analytical, or *etic* with regard to early 1980s London. As seen in Gyford's analyses from the mid-1980s, whereas words like 'alternative', 'single-issue', 'social movements', or 'social forces' were generally used to describe non-labour-movement politics (including pacifism or environmentalism), 'identity politics' was not.⁵ Significantly, however, as an *etic* analytical term, it is generally used to imply that the agent of politics and history are not individuals or classes, but groups united by an identity that is either felt by or ascribed to them, imagined, for instance, around ideas of genders, sexes, races, nations, cultures, sexualities, or classes (culturally defined).⁶ Members of the group are considered uniquely placed to advance history. Conversely, a class-political analysis imagines categories of people, regardless of their identities, based on their position in the economy. Those who use it stress that this position is what gives a certain class of people the power to have political agency.

Identity politics and class politics can thus analyse the same people in two very different ways. The way these theories overlap is distinct from an intersectional analysis, which is a method for analysing causes of discrimination based on multiple overlapping ascribed identities, and therefore is applied entirely within an identity-politics system. Conversely, categorising people according to their position in the economy in a class-political analysis does explain discrimination but an individual's relationship to wealth or value production.⁷ In Adam Smith's class analysis, for example, someone can be described as a merchant regardless of whether or not they identify as such. Furthermore, it is possible to have identity politics based on people who feel part of class X and a class-political

⁴ John Gyford, *The Politics of Local Socialism* (1985), 51-2, 63.

⁵ Cressida Heyes, 'Identity Politics', in Edward N. Zalta (ed.), *The Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy* (2020), online encyclopaedia, <<https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2020/entries/identity-politics/>>, accessed 28 February 2023.

⁶ Christine Louis-Dit-Sully, *Transcending Racial Divisions: Will you stand by me?* (2021), 146-50.

⁷ Coined in 1989, intersectionality would also be an *etic* concept if applied to Livingstone's GLC. Kimberle Crenshaw, 'Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A black feminist critique of antidiscrimination doctrine, feminist theory and antiracist politics', *University of Chicago Legal Forum*, no. 1 (1989), 151. For a discussion on how class-political categories can become imagined as an identity-political category by unimagining the economic system it the class politics originally analysed, see also Karen E. Fields & Barbara J. Fields, *Racecraft: The soul of inequality in American life* (2012), 266-73.

analysis that simultaneously categorises the same people in class Y. This is important for how class-political analyses and identity politics are used concurrently in practice. A politician's class politics might mean that they try to speak either to certain people's identity or class politics. As this chapter finds, talking about subjective identities does not necessarily mean an abandonment of class politics.

Nevertheless, with regard to 1980s London, these two ways of thinking have become considered mutually exclusive by many historians. For instance, Lucy Robinson's work, discussing the GLC, concludes that, in politics, activists 'are constrained by *either* class *or* identity'.⁸ Yet, this distinction implies a narrow, cultural interpretation of class, suggesting that identity politics cannot be analysed as the result of class politics.⁹ In this binary, class also cannot be a meta category for people with diverse subjective identities.¹⁰ Yet, historians have established this problematic dichotomy for explaining Livingstone's GLC, one consequence being that its position within London's labour movement and relationship with the unions are overlooked.

Accordingly, like Gyford, Robinson and Daisy Payling contrast Livingstone's administration to northern Labour cities. Payling argues the GLC 'fully embraced' identity politics: its "'new urban left," were trained in the activism of the 1960s and counter-culture – rather than Marxism and Methodism.'¹¹ To Robinson, Liverpool's Militant-led council represented a 'traditional leftist line', whereas Livingstone moved 'away from the outdated and unsuccessful models of traditional class struggle'.¹² Hazel Atashroo notes the Council's grants strategy reflected its 'identity politics'.¹³ Furthermore, the Labour left's position is portrayed as the CPGB's; Colm Murphy writes, for instance, that Livingstone 'reiterated' Eric Hobsbawm and Stuart Hall's theories of declining working class power and that the "'new urban Left'" formed a "'rainbow alliance'".¹⁴ James Alwyn Turner says the GLC's 'identity politics' later 'shaped Blair's programme'.¹⁵ The influence of John Gyford's original 'new urban left' thesis, thus remains strong among historians of the 1980s, although it is never

⁸ Emphasis in original, Lucy Robinson, *Gay Men and the Left in Post-War Britain: How the personal got political* (2007), 194.

⁹ Adolph Reed Jr, *Class Notes: Posing as politics and other thoughts on the American scene* (2000), xxii.

¹⁰ Social democrats from Rosa Luxemburg to Rudolf Meidner argued this. Notably also GLC Art and Recreation Committee Chair Tony Banks's position. Bhaskar Sunkara, *The Socialist Manifesto: The case for radical politics in an era of extreme inequality* (2019), 66-7, 114-6; Phoebe Patey-Ferguson 'LIFT and the GLC versus Thatcher: London's cultural battleground in 1981', *New Theatre Quarterly*, vol. 36, no. 1 (2020), 10.

¹¹ Daisy Payling, "'Socialist Republic of South Yorkshire': Grassroots activism and left-wing solidarity in 1980s Sheffield", *Twentieth Century British History*, vol. 25, no. 4 (2014), 605; Daisy Payling, "'Socialist Republic of South Yorkshire': Activism in Sheffield in the 1970s and 1980s", PhD thesis, University of Birmingham, 2015, 6; Sarah Kenny, 'A 'Radical Project': Youth Culture, Leisure, and Politics in 1980s Sheffield', *Twentieth Century British History*, vol. 30, no. 4, (2019), 562. Cronin makes this comparison but says the GLC supported women and minority groups because the working class had been 'reconfigured' – a more nuanced position. James E. Cronin, *New Labour's Pasts: The Labour Party and its discontents* (2004), 258, 306-7.

¹² Robinson, *Gay Men*, 140-2.

¹³ Hazel A. Atashroo, 'Weaponising Peace: The Greater London Council, cultural policy and 'GLC peace year 1983'', *Contemporary British History*, vol. 33, no. 2 (2019), 172, 182.

¹⁴ Colm Murphy, 'The 'Rainbow Alliance' or the Focus Group?: Sexuality and Race in the Labour Party's Electoral Strategy, 1985-7', *Twentieth Century British History*, vol. 31, no. 3 (2020), 297-8, 315.

¹⁵ Alwyn W. Turner, *A Classless Society: Britain in the 1990s* (2013), 7.

identified as a normative analytical category, which implied abandoning class, and thus, labour-movement politics (see chapter one). Notably, historians who describe the GLC as characterised by identity politics also often, like Gyford, etically, themselves follow theories associated with the CPGB's magazine *Marxism Today* (MT) – including Hall's 'Thatcherism' and Hobsbawm's 'forward march of Labour halted'.¹⁶ In contrast to these assumptions, by reviewing the primary sources, this chapter finds that Livingstone's GLC happened because of organisers, politicians, and officials trained in Marxism or Methodism (or both); what differentiated London from Liverpool was not a lack of commitment to class politics; the Council's grants policy reflected these politics; and the London Labour Party (LLP) left followed its own theorists. Seeing Livingstone's GLC, the LLP left, and their allies' own perspective, through their own articles and interviews (including their publication *London Labour Briefing*) makes their attention to class analyses and the labour movement evident. It was their intellectual starting point for why and how they funded non-state organisations.

Without this perspective significant contradictions arise. If the LLP left had abandoned class struggle, why did Tony Banks (later Labour's GLC Arts and Recreation Committee chair) argue in 1980 that '[t]he financial and organisational power of County Hall must be used as never before to defend working class interests'?¹⁷ If the GLC followed the CPGB's politics, why did its officials and supporters criticise leading Communist theorists, the way Hilary Wainwright and Doreen Massey did in 1984? Wainwright and Massey – influential Labour-appointed staff in the GLC's Industry and Employment (I&E) Branch and Greater London Enterprise Board (GLEB) – spared Hobsbawm no criticism. They interpreted his strategy of distancing Labour from the unions and allying with other parties as seeking coalition with the SDP-Liberal Alliance. This 'capitulation', they asserted, would 'attack the work of the left in the unions and the Labour Party' and 'completely ignore the radical message of feminism'.¹⁸ Hall's Thatcherism theory, they argued, was 'pessimism', overstating Margaret Thatcher's connection to 'basic undercurrents of British opinion'.¹⁹ Hobsbawm's Eurocommunist faction of the CPGB and arguments that the working class should no longer be considered history's protagonist, produced no reconciliation with Labour's left.²⁰ Like Wainwright and

¹⁶ Hall in Payling, 'Activism', 6; Hall and Hobsbawm in Hazel A. Atashroo, 'Beyond the 'Campaign for a Popular Culture': Community art, activism and cultural democracy in 1980s London, PhD thesis, University of Southampton (2017), 70-1; Hall in Brooke, 'Space, Emotions and the Everyday, 137; Beatrix Campbell in Alex Campsie, 'Populism and grassroots politics: 'New Left' critiques of social democracy, 1968–1994,' *Renewal*, vol. 25, no. 1 (2017), 69.

¹⁷ Tony Banks, 'Lessons from the 1973–77 Labour G.L.C.', *London Labour Briefing*, no. 5 (1980), 6.

¹⁸ Doreen Massey, Lynne Segal & Hilary Wainwright, 'And Now for the Good News', in James Curran (ed.), *The Future of the Left* (1984), 213-4; also, Ann Pettifor, 'Women and the Labour Party', *Marxism Today*, May (1984), 44-5. Pettifor worked with the Campaign for Labour Party Democracy.

¹⁹ Massey, Segal & Wainwright, 'Good News', 211.

²⁰ Eric Hobsbawm, 'Observations on the Debate', in Martin Jacques & Francis Mulhern (eds.), *The Forward March of Labour Halted?* (1981), 178-9; Stuart Hall followed Hobsbawm's earlier work, finding similar conclusions, Stuart Hall, Chas Critcher, Tony Jefferson, John Clarke & Brian Roberts, *Policing the Crisis: Mugging, the state, and law and order* (1978), 363, 395; James Eaden & David Renton, *The Communist Party of Great Britain since 1920* (2002), 170-2.

Massey, Leninists, ex-Leninists and others in Labour's left networks around 1980 regarded Eurocommunism as 'the old project of holding back the working class from revolution'.²¹ Seeing the Livingstone GLC perspective on its own politics resolves these apparent paradoxes.

Some non-academic accounts of Livingstone's GLC have been less hasty to dismiss its class politics. Ken Livingstone's biographers John Carvel and Andrew Hosken detail the network of socialists, including Leninist Trotskyists, who surrounded and were part of the GLC, although they focus their analyses on the GLC leader himself.²² But it was precisely this network, within the unions and the LLP, that journalists, academics, and Labour members in the early 1980s described as characterised by an 'unremitting appetite for industrial conflict' and 'any intensification of class conflict' for the sake of 'rule by the masses through workers' councils'.²³ Subsequently, Andy Beckett has centred Labour's GLC industrial strategy as its political mainstay alongside its gender equality work. Although, he too, marks it as a birthplace of identity politics, he argues this transition began during 1982, after Tony Benn's deputy leadership election defeat.²⁴ Owen Hatherley's book on London's government, like Livingstone's biographers, emphasises the role of Marxists and Trotskyists in the Livingstone administration and foregrounds its economic policies. However, he separates its 'industrial' programme (influenced by the Lucas Plan and Grunwick strike, 1976–8) from what he calls a 'propagandistic' (cultural) programme.²⁵ By concentrating on architecture and cultural politics, however, Hatherley risks understating the administration's union-focused class-formation politics. Meanwhile, Daniel Egan's thorough, but overlooked, work analyses how the LLP's industrial programme, following Benn's Alternative Economic Strategy, shunned Labour's national strategic mistakes in the 1970s.²⁶ But this account has not yet been cited by historians.

This chapter makes a deeper analysis of the people in the networks that surrounded Livingstone and what their ideas and intentions meant for his GLC. I find that its industrial and cultural policies were both part and parcel of its class politics, that a basic class-political approach permeated its work until its abolition, and that persons with diverse opinions, within and beyond Labour and Trotskyist groups, contributed to this. Leo Panitch long argued this regarding the 1970s and early 1980s Labour left generally. I show how it also applies to Livingstone's administration.²⁷ During the next four chapters, I will describe how these politics informed why Livingstone's GLC

²¹ Ros Tyrrell, 'Whats New About Euro-communism?', *Chartist*, no. 75 (1979), 22; Eaden & Renton, *Communist Party*, 173.

²² John Carvel, *Citizen Ken* (1984), chs. 4, 9; Hosken, *Ken*, 32-6. Hosken describes Livingstone's strategy as a 'rainbow coalition'; possibly anachronistically. See also Tom Bower, *Dangerous Hero: Corbyn's ruthless plot for power* (2019) 64-6 (although the heated political setting wherein this book was produced and its lack of source attributions means it must be treated with caution as a reliable source).

²³ David Webster, *The Labour Party and the New Left* (1981), 2-3; David Kogan & Maurice Kogan, *The Battle for the Labour Party* second edition (1983 [1982]), 80.

²⁴ Andy Beckett, *Promised You a Miracle: Why 1980–82 made modern Britain* (2015), 147-51, 348-66.

²⁵ Owen Hatherley, *Red Metropolis: Socialism and the government of London* (2020), 109-14.

²⁶ Daniel Egan, *The Politics of Economic Restructuring in London, 1981–1986* (2001), 69-84.

²⁷ Leo Panitch & Colin Leys, *The End of Parliamentary Socialism: From New Left to New Labour*, second edition (2001 [1997]), 10-37, 208-15.

intervened in each of the analysed policy areas, and why it supported a strategy that favoured the labour movement to achieve what Panitch (using Marx's words), in 1976, called 'the formation of the proletariat into one class'.²⁸

The GLC crossed the imagined dichotomous divide between class and identity because it used 'class' as an etic category for people of any subjective identity. To LLP left theorists and activists and their allies, recognising people's different self-conceptions and acting accordingly *was* class politics. Furthermore, these class politics meant uniting the proletariat, regardless of identities, around lowest common denominators. Naturally, ideas and practice differ, but in my focus on how individuals' theory informed their policies, these philosophies and strategies were an important causal factor. In the remainder of this chapter, I will explain Livingstone and his colleagues' own ideas of class politics on their Marxian and non-Marxian bases, and how they were manifested in the GLC's work through an urgent desire to unite workers. I also compare this to the thought of other political traditions represented among GLC politicians and staff – socialist feminists (also including former Leninists), Black Power (anti-colonial nationalists), and Christian socialists – finding that they shared many class-political assumptions in common, and that even when they differed they nevertheless cooperated within the LLP left's broadly conceived labour-movement.

2.2 Readies: When class politics are interpreted as identity politics

Distinguishing class politics from an identity politics centred on class identities is often confusing since 'class' is used both emically and etically, and to mean cultural, occupational, or economic categories, switching from one meaning to another without warning. Geoff Eley's oft-cited, but selective, use of quotes from Livingstone exemplifies this ambiguity. Eley argues that Labour, in 1981, was 'no longer able to rely on traditional "solidarity communities" among a shrinking working class' and had seen 'four hundred thousand paper members' replaced by 'a activist cohort' drawn from 'new social movements'.²⁹ Exemplifying this, he writes: 'For ... Livingstone, Labour had to go beyond "the organized working class" to "articulate the needs of the minorities and the dispossessed"'.³⁰ Thus, Livingstone is presented in a context whereby he appears to have chosen to abandon working-class political agency. However, Livingstone argued not that 'working class' as an etic category was irrelevant or that organised workers should be forgotten, but that the working class's composition had changed.

The original context of the Livingstone quotes used by Eley clarify the semantics that underlay the GLC leader's use of 'class'. Livingstone spoke the words quoted above while he was interviewed by *MT*, in late 1981. The communist Jeff Rodrigues had sceptically asked him whether

²⁸ Leo Panitch, *Working Class Politics in Crisis: Essays on Labour and the state* (1986), 48-51.

²⁹ Geoff Eley, *Forging Democracy: The history of the left in Europe, 1850–2000* (2002), 460-1.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 461.

Labour could hope 'to regain its mass base', implicitly evoking Hobsbawm's 'forward march of Labour halted' hypothesis that economic change had extinguished the working class's (and thus the Labour Party's) political function.³¹ Yet, Livingstone disagreed with this premise by presenting his own interpretation:

London ... is composed of skilled middle class people ..., the poor and the single parents, the immigrant families, and the unskilled working class labour force. ... It's a question of building on this new sort of alliance that is there ...³²

He added: 'these people ... can be reached by approaching them on an issue basis rather than a simple class approach.' Crucially, because of this he believed, etically, that 'we have to ... really make the Labour Party represent the working class living in inner London, to be seen to carry on fighting for those positions'.³³

Emically, Livingstone understood that: 'Increasingly people see themselves aligned to ... smaller groupings rather than ... broad class concepts'.³⁴ Although seemingly congruent with Eley, his conclusion was, conversely, that: 'this ... is a potentially very dangerous weakness for the movement ... because those groups can be reached by Social Democrats and Liberals'. However, liberals 'can't in the long term deliver what those groups want, simply because there isn't a class based approach to politics from the people that are leading those movements'.³⁵ As discussed in chapter one, young, radical, and influential former Liberals, like Peter Hain, had recently switched parties to Labour, convinced of the 'necessity both for a socialist programme and for working within the trade unions'.³⁶ Implicitly, Livingstone reiterated this approach. Furthermore, speaking of Paddington's 'working class Irish Catholic community' indicates that immigrants and religious minorities composed his etic idea of the working class. For the GLC leader, choosing to occasionally not speak of 'class' was class politics. The danger to his movement, Livingstone predicted, was liberal politicians peeling away individuals from the class unity he wanted.

Throughout his administration, Livingstone maintained these 'class-based' politics. Shortly after Labour's 1981 victory, his column in *Socialist Organiser* declared: '[w]e're trying to get back to the identification of the Labour Party as the party that is fighting for working class interests'.³⁷ A month earlier, he argued: '[a] revolutionary base can only exist in industrial struggle'.³⁸ In other words, he did not believe this base stemmed from 'the council chamber or from Parliament'. He

³¹ Jeff Rodrigues, 'Interview with Ken Livingstone', *Marxism Today*, November (1981), 16-20; Eric Hobsbawm, 'The Forward March of Labour Halted?', *Marxism Today*, September (1978), 279-86.

³² Rodrigues, 'Interview', 17.

³³ *Ibid.*

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 18.

³⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁶ Peter Hain & Simon Hebditch, *Radicals and Socialism* (1978), 10.

³⁷ Ken Livingstone, "'We Need More Labour Activists'", *Socialist Organiser*, 30 May (1981), 3.

³⁸ *Socialist Organiser*, 'The Next Step for the Left?', 4 April (1981), 5.

maintained this position in 1985. Again interviewed by *MT*, he worried that once the union movement ‘moves away from the work base it becomes basically a revolutionary body, not a participatory one’.³⁹ Should the GLC be abolished, he warned, ‘you’re really back into the shell which the labour movement is’.⁴⁰ Although he had no illusions about the unions, he was convinced they were the movement’s foundation and that they were what remained once the GLC superstructure vanished. He told Beatrix Campbell, who had criticised his politics:⁴¹ ‘[t]he Labour Party should really be the parliament of the British Left and it should be open to everybody to participate’.⁴² In 1986, he told an *MT* conference that Labour ‘should be the main working-class party, and I use that in the very widest definition of the sense of class’.⁴³ This wide definition evoked a Marxian working class – constituted by women, black people, and other wage earners. Occasionally dropping rhetorical uses of class did not mean going beyond the working class, organised or not.

Was Livingstone ‘a Stalinist, Trotskyist, or Social Democrat?’ Forced to choose in 1983, he told John Carvel during an interview: ‘you’d most probably end up forced to put me down as a Trot by process of elimination’.⁴⁴ This oversimplified his ideas which followed anthropology and biology, alongside a common-sense Marxism, to interpret the world.⁴⁵ But it illustrates the influence of his allegiances, which included the Leninist Labour councillor Ted Knight. Livingstone insisted he never read Marx, and told the researcher Katarina Katz he liked the anarchist Pyotr Kropotkin. Yet, to this, Livingstone added that politics depended on women and black people ‘strengthening their positions within the labour movement’; how soon ‘the working class’s self-confidence returns’; and, ‘fundamentally – as Marx would put it – on social and economic forces beyond our control.’⁴⁶ His politics were consistently class-based; inspired by Marxists, more than by *Marxism Today*.

2.3 Wedge: The parliament of the working class

Moreover, calling Labour the ‘parliament of the British Left’ indicates a very specific understanding of class politics. In 1969, before exiting Militant, Chris Knight (1942–), who co-founded *London Labour Briefing (LLB)* eleven years later, imagined a revolution in Britain through an analogy to the Russian Empire after March 1917. The Labour Party, with its local party and union branches, he proposed, could function in the same way as the All-Russian Congress of Soviets of Workers’ and Soldiers’ Deputies, which united socialists and social democrats as delegates from workers’ councils

³⁹ Beatrix Campbell, ‘Rate-Capping and Realignment: An interview with Ken Livingstone’, *Marxism Today*, May (1985), 10.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

⁴¹ Beatrix Campbell, ‘Politics, Pyramids and People’, *Marxism Today*, December (1984), 26.

⁴² Campbell, ‘Rate-Capping’, 10.

⁴³ Ken Livingstone, ‘The GLC’s Arts Experience’, *Art Monthly*, no. 100 (1986), 3.

⁴⁴ Quoted in Carvel, 180.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 42-3.

⁴⁶ Quoted in Katarina Katz, *London Mot Thatcher: Kommunalpolitik för samhällsomstörtare* (1988), 235. Retranslations to English are mine, following Katz’s translations to Swedish.

(*soviety*). ‘Given workers’ power,’ he argued, ‘both forms could become whole “Parliaments” ... of the entire working class and a premise and “constitutional” basis for complete freedom for a limitless multiplicity of political parties possessing the power not only to talk ... but to act’.⁴⁷ With a majority government, Labour’s annual party conference would be the ‘parliament’ where workers should directly decide state policy. Echoing the Russian Social Democratic Labour Party (Bolsheviks)’s call for ‘all power to the soviets’, Knight summarised his strategy in the slogan ‘all power to the Labour government’. He criticised Wilson’s Labour government and the union leadership for preventing this direct extra-parliamentary participation and para-state dual power within the Party, through which a more democratic workers’ state would emerge. Knight and Livingstone met in the 1970s Lambeth and planned Labour’s GLC victory.⁴⁸

During Livingstone’s administration, Knight’s theory became *LLB*’s slogan ‘Labour – take the power!’ Although *LLB* was a small magazine with a simple, mildly post-punk layout, the arguments it printed were influential. Its ‘Briefing network’ included Livingstone, Knight, and key representatives who organised Labour’s manifesto and candidate selections ahead of the May 1981 GLC election, and heavily overlapped with the Campaign for Labour Party Democracy (CLPD).⁴⁹ In 1980, the GLC National and Local Government Officers’ Association branch’s chair advised *LLB* readers that a ‘genuine involvement in the [town] planning process can be achieved by London’s working class’ through the involvement of ‘[t]he unions and trades councils ... [and] tenants’ and community groups’. This would enable an incoming Labour administration to ‘use the GLC as a weapon in the class struggle’.⁵⁰ Four out of six chairs of Labour’s policy working groups during its 1980 manifesto-writing process contributed articles to *LLB* before the election. By May 1982, so had half of all GLC committee chairs. ‘The task isn’t to force people to think the way we do’, Knight wrote in 1981, ‘[i]t is to facilitate their own self-organisation. ... to discover how strong they really are as their collective forces combine’.⁵¹ Hence, Labour was an ‘umbrella-organization ... for *all* sections of the oppressed, including black people and women’.⁵² Having been developed as criticism of Labour governments in the 1960s, these strategies were premised on the idea that the right of the Labour Party were the primary obstacle to democracy. Looking back, after the GLC’s abolition, Livingstone told Katz, ‘the left has thought that “we’ll win control over the state apparatus and then administer people”. We were the first administration that spoke ... of making it possible for people to administer

⁴⁷ Private collection, Chris Knight, ‘All Power to the Labour Government’, 1969, photocopy of unpublished paper, 12. Online transcript of the original text: Chris Knight, ‘All Power to the Labour Government’, blog post, 13 October 2009, <<http://www.chrisknight.co.uk/power-labour-government/>>, accessed 18 January 2024.

⁴⁸ Hosken, *Ken*, 35, 74.

⁴⁹ Crucial organisation of Labour’s left and Benn’s supporters.

⁵⁰ John Plant, ‘G.L.C.: View from the inside’, *LLB*, no. 1 (1980), 4.

⁵¹ Chris Knight, ‘Why “Labour – Take the Power”’, *LLB*, no. 12 (1981), 18a.

⁵² Emphasis in original, *ibid.*

themselves.⁵³ This anti-authoritarian strategy was defined against what Livingstone called the ‘Labour right’.

This applied across the GLC leadership. Its strategy to democratise council services was implemented through class politics, in opposition to its predecessors. In early 1981, Michael Ward (1949–), who would become chair of the I&E Committee quoted a report by four trades councils to say ‘working class people will have to build up their own forms of political power based on the material power of producers as the people on whom the distribution of goods and services depends’.⁵⁴ Since Callaghan’s government, he saw the need for options to the idea of ‘the use of central State structures as a means of facilitating socialist change in economic organisation’. He based his hopes for this on new ‘[c]hanges in the socialist and labour movement [that] have helped create a climate of opinion responsive to the need for an alternative’. This included the Lucas Plan by workers at an arms factory to transform how their plants were run and what they produced and new activity by trades councils, which the GLC would go on to support.⁵⁵ ‘Economic planning ... needs to be based on elected representatives working with trades unionists’, he argued, in contrast to how he imagined that nationalised firms were run previously.⁵⁶ In 1984 Wainwright, similarly, argued that socialist councillors could only ‘defend local government if they ... [made] services responsive to people’s expressed needs.’ Therefore, the GLC developed ‘economic planning based on ... initiatives from working-class and community organizations’.⁵⁷ To this end, the main thrust of the GLC’s Greater London Enterprise Board (GLEB), the council’s *London Industrial Strategy*, explained, was to turn the capital’s private business into fully unionised workplaces or workers’ cooperatives.⁵⁸

During the first years of Livingstone’s administration, Valerie Wise (1955–) was an active contributor to *LLB*. In February 1982, in reaction to the legal ruling in December 1981 that the GLC could not make an instant twenty-five per cent cut to London Transport fares, Wise and Livingstone declared on *LLB*’s front page that ‘[t]here must be full support from the [GLC] Labour Group for any industrial action taken by L[ondon] T[ransport] workers to ensure that the [Law] Lords’ decision cannot be implemented.’⁵⁹ Contextually, *LLB*’s editorial that month made clear that this was one aspect of a general agenda: ‘We are interested in the class struggle and in our own class power, and that power means *class unity before all else*.’⁶⁰ Subtextually, this was an allusion to the Leninist idea of the ‘united front’: the belief that the ‘working class’ should be organised on the basis of common

⁵³ Quoted in Katz, *London*, 230.

⁵⁴ Michael Ward, *Job Creation by the Council: Local government and the struggle for full employment* (1981), 13.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 15.

⁵⁷ Massey, Segal & Wainwright, ‘Good News’, 217–8.

⁵⁸ GLC, *London Industrial Strategy* (1985), 40–5.

⁵⁹ Ken Livingstone & Valerie Wise, ‘All-out Industrial and Political Action to Defy the Lords!’, *London Labour Briefing*, February (1982), 1.

⁶⁰ Emphasis in original, *London Labour Briefing*, ‘Party Unity – an alternative view’, February (1982), 3.

class enemies.⁶¹ Wise elaborated on this idea, alongside *LLB*'s co-founder and producer Chris Knight, in March. They wrote that, by the next general election, Labour

must have gathered into our hands a massive popular force and machinery covering London and the country: a women's movement/ethnic/community/trade union/labour movement umbrella so wide and so broad that virtually the whole country ... can feel at home in it and experience our strength as theirs.⁶²

This 'umbrella' was a metaphor for the 'united front'.

This idea of politics in the Livingstone GLC's leadership dovetailed with a particular Marxian idea of economics. To oversee I&E, GLEB, and its *London Industrial Strategy*, Livingstone's administration appointed Robin Murray (1940–2017) to head the I&E Branch as its chief economic advisor. In 1973, he had defended Marx's theory of the 'tendency of the rate of profit to fall'. This is a Marxian idea central to the 'breakdown' theory according to which, because the relative advantages of new investment in technology diminish during competition between businesses, a capitalist economy will produce crises until it either collapses into barbarism or, through organised class struggle, is replaced by a new mode of production. By the 1970s, this was a theory rejected by many Marxists in favour of a Keynesian idea that crises were linked to consumption cycles. Murray, however, belonged to the Conference of Socialist Economists (CSE), who, in the 1970s, translated and published the work of Henryk Grossman (1881–1950) – the main Marxian economist behind modern breakdown theory. Before 1914, Grossman was an organiser in the Jewish Social Democratic Party of Galicia and believed that communism would not automatically follow from capitalism. Therefore, avoiding civilisational collapse required actively organising for a new society.⁶³ This idea that cyclical downturns would get worse and worse before capitalism finally gave way was re-presented in the GLC's description of London's economic crisis, which evoked the Long Depression of the late nineteenth century to support its call for workers' power: 'Not for a hundred years have want and waste stood so clearly facing each other in London as they do today.'⁶⁴ Through Grossman and Murray, Livingstone's GLC justified an activist theory of proactive investment in terms that were arguably more Marxian than Marx.⁶⁵

⁶¹ Paul Le Blanc & Kunal Chattopadhyay, 'Workers' United Front: Against fascism and reformism', in Paul Le Blanc & Kunal Chattopadhyay (eds.), *Leon Trotsky: Writings in exile* (2012), 88.

⁶² Valerie Wise & Chris Knight, 'Editorial: Talking to the streets', *London Labour Briefing*, March (1982), 3.

⁶³ Robin Murray, 'Productivity, Organic Composition and the Falling Rate of Profit', *Bulletin of the Conference of Socialist Economists*, spring (1973), 53-5; Henryk Grossman, 'Archive: Marx, Classical Political Economy and the Problem of Dynamics Part I', *Capital & Class*, no. 2 (1977), 32-55. See also, Michael Roberts, *The Long Depression: How it happened, why it happened, and what happens next* (2016), 15. Murray co-founded the CSE. Hugo Radice, 'A Short History of the CSE', *Capital & Class*, vol. 4, no. 1 (1980), 45.

⁶⁴ GLC, *London Industrial Strategy*, 18.

⁶⁵ Murray repeated the 'tendency of the rate of profit to fall' as a motivation for the GLC's industrial policy in 1984. See: Robin Murray, 'New Directions in Municipal Socialism', in Michael Rustin (ed.), *Robin Murray: Selected political writings* (2020), 93-4.

Before the 1981 election, the LLP's Manifesto, accordingly, asserted that its alternative to a Conservative GLC was 'as commitment to the extension of democratic control over decisions about new investment, and within the workplace.'⁶⁶ Its principal priority before and during its administration was increasing employment. Hence, a crucial pledge on grants was a trade union resource centre, meeting union demands for '[f]ull participation by Trades Union Branches in the economic life of London'.⁶⁷ Later, the I&E Committee gained a budget far larger than any other grant-making committee.⁶⁸ Further discoveries from Marxian theory during the 1970s included Friedrich Engels's remarks on the Paris Commune's (1871) revolutionary reform of factories into workers' cooperatives and the LLP's GLC manifesto, in turn, promised to fund local cooperative development agencies.⁶⁹ As Londoners' unemployment and deindustrialisation increased, investing in jobs was, to Labour's Marxists, a reform for increasing the working-class unity necessary for turning the threat of barbarism into socialism.⁷⁰

2.4 Interest: Turning Londoners into workers

This emphasis on transformation through labour permeated Livingstone's GLC in witty slogans: 'jobs for a change' or 'GLC – Working for London'. Jobs were also the lowest common denominator for uniting Labour's left and right. Labour GLC members who opposed funding the feminist Sheba publishing collective were eventually won over as grants were motivated not by literary criticism but job creation.⁷¹ While funding Sheba, who published erotic lesbian poetry, could be interpreted as identity politics, the LLP's economic programme puts this in a different class-politics setting. Likewise, when the Council announced that it would fund the Brent Bookshop Co-operative, Michael Ward stressed how it would operate in an area with 'high level of unemployment'.⁷² Whereas in the 1970s feminist bookshops had been places where both socialist feminists and radical feminists worked to grow their movements, Murray and the I&E Committee, who funded several booksellers, also celebrated them as 'publishing and projects encouraging the recording and distribution of working class history and writings'.⁷³ In such ways and in many others, leading GLC officials and Labour

⁶⁶ GLC, 'Minority Party Report: A socialist policy for the GLC', agenda paper appendix, 3 March (1981), 6.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 34.

⁶⁸ Egan, *Economic Restructuring*, 112, 141-2.

⁶⁹ GLC, 'Minority Party', 31; Frederick Engels, 'Introduction', in Karl Marx, *The Civil War in France*, Progress Publishers (1972 [1891]), 11.

⁷⁰ Ralph Miliband, *Marxism and Politics* (1977), 164, 188-9; Leo Panitch, 'The Development of Corporatism in Liberal Democracies', *Comparative Political Studies*, vol. 10, no. 1 (1977), 75.

⁷¹ Katz, *London*, 54.

⁷² London Metropolitan Archives (LMA), GLC/DG/PRB/33/039, 'GLC add Support to Bookshop in Brent', press release, no. 367, 10 August 1982.

⁷³ Lucy Delap, 'Feminist Bookshops, Reading Cultures and the Women's Liberation Movement in Great Britain, c. 1974–2000', *History Workshop Journal*, no. 81 (2016), 183; LMA, GLC/DG/PRE/49/015, Report 19.9.83 by Director of Industry and Employment and Chief Economic Advisor, IEC1089, 3.

politicians and theorists who held or advised the key leadership positions at Livingstone's administration *thought* class all around London.

Livingstone GLC's often expressed these class politics implicitly. Words like 'community', 'London' and 'Londoners', and images of people working conveyed the message. Before the 1981 election an LLP policy group proposed 'community areas', for receiving more public funds. This meant '[a]reas of Inner and Outer London with a predominantly working class population'.⁷⁴ Frequent subsequent uses of 'community areas' in funding policies, thus, meant areas where 'working-class people' lived. Similarly, 'London' or 'Londoners' mean people the administration believed constituted 'the working class'. 'The Council's spending is related to the *needs of London*, and particularly the need to ... give ratepayers decent homes, decent jobs, and ... cheap and reliable public transport', wrote John McDonnell (1951–), Finance and General Purposes Committee chair, for his 1984 annual report (titled *Working for London*).⁷⁵ Regarding 'the needs of Londoners', Livingstone concurrently listed his top-three accomplishments: transport fare reductions, GLEB's job-creation scheme, and a factory construction programme.⁷⁶ All Londoners arguably benefitted from reduced unemployment too, but the subtext was that those paying lower rates (taxes based on property valuations and, therefore, disproportionately paid by businesses) gained more. 'Out of a current rate product of £19 million per penny rate, £3 million comes from Westminster and £2.7 million from the City of London', a delighted Livingstone told two interviewers in 1984, '... it makes the GLC the best redistributor of wealth we've ever been able to take control of'.⁷⁷

Meanwhile, people at work illustrated these policies, depicting how they benefited Londoners in all their diversity. Celebrating its track record on planning in 1984, the Council displayed a double-page spread on 'equality': 'remov[ing] the causes of disadvantage experienced by the ethnic minorities ... [and] promot[ing] the interests and welfare of women'.⁷⁸ It featured photographs of nine people, all working various jobs, from carpentry to law. This reflected the Livingstone administration's theory that 'working class' was not bound to particular cultures or to blue-collar jobs; it imagined a broad 'working class'.⁷⁹ Sections on ethnic minorities' and women's 'current needs' frontloaded eliminating workplace discrimination, unemployment, and increasing women's job opportunities by, for instance, expanding factory and office creches. Likewise, when the Women's

⁷⁴ Bishopsgate Institute Special Collections and Archives (BI), Dave Wetzel papers, Wetzel/444, Jeremy Corbyn, 'Planning/Environment/Recreation Candidates' Policy Group: Report to the meeting of candidates', 21 March 1981.

⁷⁵ Emphasis in original. Quoted in GLC, *Working for London 1983/84: Greater London Council annual report* (1984), 49.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 5.

⁷⁷ Quoted in Martin Boddy & Colin Fudge, 'Local Socialism: The way ahead', in Martin Boddy & Colin Fudge (eds.), *Local Socialis?: Labour councils and new left alternatives* (1984), 265.

⁷⁸ GLC, *Planning for the Future of London* (1984), 16-7.

⁷⁹ White-collar workers' 'proletarianisation' was of increasing interest to many 1970s analysts. Miliband, *Marxism and Politics*, 37-8; Steven P. Vallas, 'White-Collar Proletarians?: The structure of clerical work and levels of class consciousness', *The Sociological Quarterly*, vol. 28, no. 4 (1987), 523-4.

Committee was established Livingstone's newspaper *Labour Herald* emphasised that it 'centres on improving job opportunities for women'.⁸⁰ Throughout the committee's final 1986 'record of achievement', images and discussions of women working – manual labourers, office workers, domestic work, or childcare – featured prominently (illustration 2.1).⁸¹

The GLC's anti-racist work followed this theme too. The council's employees included seven thousand firefighters and it wanted to end discriminatory recruitment practices in the fire brigade. Emblazoned 'London Against Racism', its newspaper adverts for fire-brigade recruitment training depicted two heroic-looking firefighters under the statement: 'more women and black men are coming forward for training' (illustration 2.2). This followed research in the USA by a GLC delegation. Seeing US firefighters unionised in 'separate ethnic labour organisations representing a minority group and involved in separate negotiations' troubled the Labour politicians. London's solution, they concluded, should be 'encouraging minority firefighters to be represented within the existing union'.⁸² To the GLC, feminism and anti-racism were realised through workplaces and integration.



Illustration 2.1: Fair trades. A page from the GLC Women's Committee's *The GLC Women's Committee 1982-6: A record of change and achievement for women in London* (1986), depicting women working a variety of skilled jobs thanks to the Council's equality policies.⁸³

⁸⁰ *Labour Herald*, 'Labour's stand on women's rights', 30 April (1982), 5.

⁸¹ GLC, *The GLC Women's Committee, 1982-6: A record of achievement for women in London* (1986), 4-5.

⁸² LMA, GLC/DG/PRE/223/001, Report (16.7.82) by Members of the study tour of America, PSFB340, p. 47.

⁸³ Linda Hunt, *The GLC Women's Committee 1982-6: A record of change and achievement for women in London* (1986), 63.

The Livingstone GLC supporters' promotional materials also depicted Council grant recipients as what would have been considered unmistakably culturally working-class at the time. Campaigning against abolition, Albany Video's 1985 documentary *Beyond Our Ken* depicted several GLC-funded organisations, from pensioners' clubs to lesbian and gay groups. It emphasised GLC support for new jobs and vocational education, at a training centre and workers' cooperative. Every group presented would have been considered mixed in terms of either gender, culture, or disability.⁸⁴ By depicting diversity, the GLC's and its allies emphasised shared interests. Critiquing Hobsbawm's 'march of labour halted' thesis, Labour-left analyst Leo Panitch maintained in 1985 that workers' industrial and economic democracy was central to 'the revitalization and reconstruction of a political and cultural working-class identity'; industrialisation and labour organisation would lead to class unity.⁸⁵ The GLC's politics elaborated here might be interpreted as pursuing this integrationist course of turning Londoners of all genders, cultures, sexualities, and abilities into service users or workers.

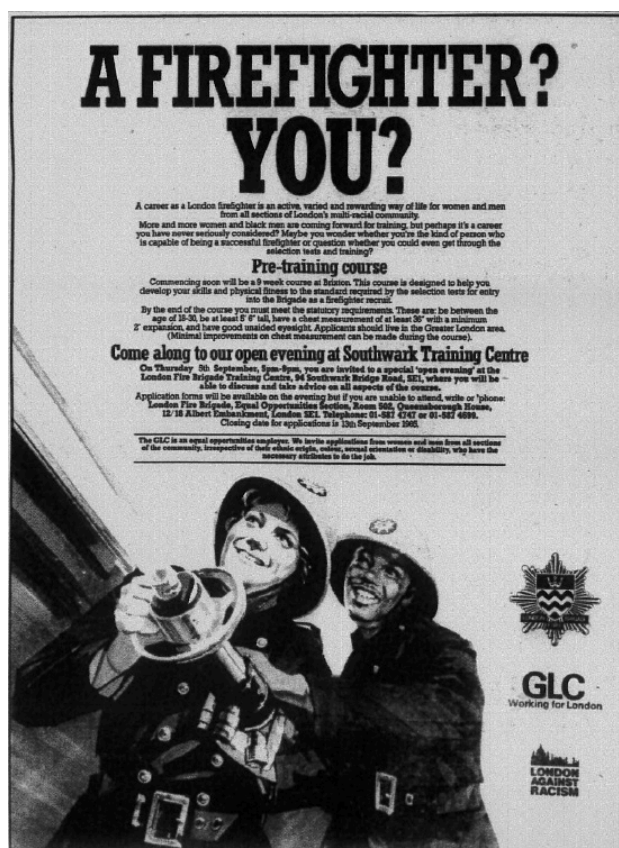


Illustration 2.2: De-lighted. A GLC advert for pre-training for aspiring fire brigade job applicants placed in local newspapers in 1985.⁸⁶

⁸⁴ British Film Institute National Archive (BFI), 127215, Albany Video, *Beyond Our Ken*, video cassette, Channel Four, broadcast 12 May 1985.

⁸⁵ Panitch, *Working Class Politics*, 48-51.

⁸⁶ GLC, 'A Firefighter? You?', classified advert, *Hounslow & Chiswick Informer*, 16 August 1985, 12.

2.5 Carried Forward: Ideas of time and power in the London Labour Party

Furthermore, what distinguished the Livingstone GLC's class politics was its interest in power, haste, and options. Beyond expanding and trusting citizens participation in the labour movement and state, two further themes in the Livingstone GLC's politics in 1981 echoed Chris Knight's theory from 1969: action before rhetoric and revolutionary time. Firstly, Knight saw political messaging as secondary to people thinking and acting for themselves. 'The masses vote for power and for action, not for good ideas', he wrote in 1969.⁸⁷ This emphasis on action pervaded Livingstone's GLC; from drastic fares cuts to grant policies. Supporting the GLC's community radio investments in 1983, Knight and the Labour member Richard Barbrook argued: 'nobody wants "correct" information or entertainment ... We want real choice.'⁸⁸ Wilson's governments, they said, had prevented the diversity of cultural and political opinions the airwaves needed. This expressed the concept that if Londoners were given the right options they would act and vote based on their interests and coalesce around labour-movement power.

Secondly, the early Livingstone administration believed the future was up for grabs. The potential for transforming the state by funnelling mass political participation through Labour's local branches and affiliated unions signalled, to Knight, an onrushing 'pre-revolutionary situation'.⁸⁹ Evidence supporting this perception increased during the 1970s: miners forced Heath's resignation, unions increasingly voted for radical Labour conference resolutions, and (until 1981) Benn edged closer to Labour's deputy leadership.⁹⁰ With this sense of growing power, the Labour left could even interpret defeat in 1979 as signalling that working-class people found the party too moderate. (This was Benn's criticism of Hobsbawm's 'march of labour halted' thesis.)⁹¹ Accentuating this, between 1969 and 1981, elections and defeats of labour or Marxist movements internationally indicated instability and that socialists had all to play for. Chile's People's Unity (1970–3), Gough Whitlam's Australian Labor (1972–5), Heath's dramatic defeat, Francois Mitterrand's election (1981), and Poland's Solidarity (1980–1), all told Labour's left that its combined electoral and union-action strategy could work, but also that they had to be prepared that, once elected, the military, monarchy, or civil service could sabotage their chances.⁹² For instance, After Heath's defeat, a newspaper run by Chris Knight and his fellow *LLB* founder Graham Bash in the 1970s warned: '[t]he ruling class ... will

⁸⁷ Knight, 'All Power', 3.

⁸⁸ Richard Barbrook & Chris Knight, 'A "Briefing" on the Airwaves', *LLB*, no. 31 (1983), 17.

⁸⁹ Knight, 'All Power', 17.

⁹⁰ Panitch & Leys, *End of Parliamentary Socialism*, 187.

⁹¹ Tony Benn, 'An interview with Eric Hobsbawm', in Jacques & Mulhern, *Labour Halted?*, 96-7.

⁹² Following Whitlam's dismissal, *LLB* founders Graham Bash and Chris Knight argued he had 'every possibility' of winning his next general election. Graham Bash, 'Australian Labour Government Sacked', *Chartist*, no. 37 (1975), 7.

rapidly dispense with democracy if it has to. That is the lesson of ... Chile'.⁹³ Therefore, in 1981, when Livingstone imagined scenarios where 'the army chose to step in' during a 'general upheaval', he assumed politics might swing suddenly between extremes.⁹⁴ Michael Ward recalled expecting 'a Labour government within two or three years', where 'the ideas and policies we developed would have a major influence'.⁹⁵ Livingstone later recalled that, in 1981, Thatcher's three election victories were 'inconceivable'.⁹⁶ Unlike the declinist 'forward march of labour halted' or monolithic 'Thatcherism' theses promoted in *MT*, Livingstone's GLC, especially where furnished with Grossman's breakdown theory, imagined rapid turbulence and was prepared to seize the opportunities they expected.

Therefore, anticipating these accelerating class politics and expecting victory in 1981, Livingstone wrote to Labour's GLC election candidates in January of that year about how to run the Council differently. 'Those who have read "Poplarism" or "Red Bologna"', he said, 'will be aware of how local authorities were able to build up public support by adopting an open and participatory approach'.⁹⁷ Noreen Branson's *Poplarism* described a 1920s London Labour council that broke the law to avoid raising rents and to pay men and women equally. It taught that councillors could gain national prominence by refusing compromise with Westminster. However, Branson quoted a Poplar councillor to say that only 'workers through their national organisations' could 'end Capitalism', not politicians.⁹⁸ Another argued that if Ramsay MacDonald's first government (1924) 'attack[ed] ... the Capitalist system, it may lose a whole world of Liberal and Liberal-Labour supporters ... but it may also find its soul'.⁹⁹ These were words reminiscent of *LLB* in 1984. Although Branson was a CPGB stalwart, her narrative appealed more concretely to Labour's left than to *MT*.¹⁰⁰ As did *Red Bologna*, which recounted how Italian Communist councillors in Bologna had broadened their policy-making process on childcare, transport, and schools to involve locals' direct participation.¹⁰¹ Livingstone's GLC, admired the expansion of democracy, but did not necessarily espouse the CPGB's politics. It tailored and implemented Bologna's lessons to its own theory of change and participation while *MT*, later, provided a running commentary.¹⁰²

⁹³ *Chartist*, 'Who Rules Britain?', no. 17 (1974), 6.

⁹⁴ Quoted in Terry Coleman, 'The Law Lord's Judgement Shifts the Balance of in Local Government Massively against Expenditure', *The Guardian*, 21 December 1981, 11.

⁹⁵ Quoted in Beckett, 141.

⁹⁶ Ken Livingstone, 'Foreword', in David Featherstone & Joe Painter (eds.), *Spatial Politics: Essays for Doreen Massey* (2013), xv.

⁹⁷ Ken Livingstone, *If Voting Changed Anything They'd Abolish It* (1987), 351; for the original see, BI, Wetzell/444, Ken Livingstone, 'Labour's First Year and the Tory Response', n.d. (January, 1981?).

⁹⁸ Noreen Branson, *Poplarism, 1919–1925: George Lansbury and the councillors' revolt* (1979), 166.

⁹⁹ Quoted in *ibid.*, 213.

¹⁰⁰ Simon Temple, 'How Poplar Council Fought the State', *Socialist Organiser*, no. 11 (1979), 7.

¹⁰¹ Max Jäggi, Roger Müller & Sil Schmid, *Red Bologna*, trans. Aidan Clark (1977); Marzia Maccaferri, 'The English Way to Italian Socialism: The PCI, 'Red Bologna' and Italian Communist culture as seen through the English prism', *Modern Languages Open*, vol. 4, no. 1 (2018), <<https://doi.org/10.3828/mlo.v0i0.172>>, accessed 28 February 2023, 8–10.

¹⁰² Raphael Samuel, 'The Lost Worlds of British Communism', *New Left Review*, vol. 1, no. 154 (1985),

Urgency and class struggle shaped LLP policies. Implementing them, Livingstone told Labour candidates, should have ‘an immediate favourable impact ...’ on Londoners’ ‘daily lives so that before the Government can move against us we have won popular support’.¹⁰³ This meant prioritising transport, unemployment, and housing. Furthermore, to replace grant cuts to ‘Law Centres, Community Relations Councils, Tenants and other community organisations’, Labour should ‘... take over the funding of these bodies.’ Significantly, ‘[o]ften what local people want is achievable for a small cost providing it remains under the control of the local community group’.¹⁰⁴ The objective, as in Branson’s Poplar, was to ‘play a major role in speeding the defeat of the government and in winning respect for the Labour party and support for socialist policies.’¹⁰⁵

2.6 Charge: Feminists and the GLC

Many theories of working-class politics used by Livingstone’s GLC were developed by socialist feminists in the labour movement. The mentality of being ‘in and against the state’, which Livingstone’s administration adopted, followed work by Cynthia Cockburn (1934–2019), Sheila Rowbotham (1943–), and Wainwright (1949–), and united party members from diverse political backgrounds. These included Leninists – the International Marxist Group (IMG) and the International Socialists (IS; after 1977, the Socialist Workers Party, SWP), where Rowbotham and Wainwright had, respectively, been members – and many feminist organisations, community action groups, and liberation groups, with a wide range of politics.¹⁰⁶ A group of members of the CSE, including Cockburn, wrote *In and Against the State* in 1979, where they argued for a ‘mass, class-based movement for socialism’.¹⁰⁷ In line with the CSE’s studies of pre-1914 social democracy, this was a reaction against the labour movement’s senior leaders who, they thought, by implementing Keynesian economic theories, were not doing enough to organise workers. CSE members and ex-Leninists wanted to unite feminist and liberation theories within working-class politics.

Cockburn’s critique of paternalistic councils and workplace-focused manufacturing unions argued that class struggle included rent, and women’s unwaged labour.¹⁰⁸ Analysing council administrations’ cybernetic organisational methods, she concluded that state control increasingly depended upon working-class people’s participation in local government services.¹⁰⁹ Therefore, ‘a linking up of the workers within the state and the serviced population, also now “in” the state, would

19–26.

¹⁰³ Livingstone, *Voting*, 350.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁶ Panitch & Leys, *End of Parliamentary Socialism*, 26–31.

¹⁰⁷ This was the first edition’s closing assertion. London Edinburgh Weekend Return Group (LEWRG), *In and Against the State*, second edition (1980 [1979]), 107.

¹⁰⁸ Cynthia Cockburn, *The Local State: Management of cities and people* (1977), 165–7.

¹⁰⁹ Cybernetics is the study of control in animals, machines, and organisations and has been influential in both computing and management theory by providing a vocabulary for describing systems.

threaten [the state's] control'.¹¹⁰ As in Knight's 'parliament of the working class' theory, an increasing number of points of contact between councils and the people they served could trigger a sudden watershed when the state would flip from enabling bourgeois control to proletarian control. To Cockburn these relationships extended beyond Labour's party democracy and existed wherever groups shared common relationships with local authorities, including parents to school children, or social workers. This represented 'new phases in class struggle', where local government could serve as an arena for labour-movement politics.¹¹¹

Rowbotham and Wainwright – who were both appointed to the GLC's I&E Branch under Robin Murray – similarly proposed: 'uniting the social power of the community with the industrial power of those in production'; retaining the 'experiences of each movement' while creating 'a political rather than single issue movement'.¹¹² This had in mind 'the women's movement, ... many shop stewards' ... committees, the anti-fascist movement, theatre groups, alternative newspapers, militant tenants, squatters and community groups'; all 'fragmented working-class activities'.¹¹³ They rejected Communists' attempts to 'restrict ... trade unions, organs of grassroots democracy, the women's movement, etc ... to their own "specific problems"'.¹¹⁴ Wainwright later recalled the Women's Liberation Movement (WLM) made her trust member-led organisations more than the state, but what defined the class politics she and her co-authors imagined (in opposition to the Communists' 'static categories of certain limited forms of oppression') was unity around common lowest denominators and groups coming together.¹¹⁵

To these theorists, the people they considered working-class were disillusioned with Labour and the state because politicians had overlooked their diversity and networks, making the welfare state belittling and inflexible. Wainwright argued that Thatcher had, conversely, realised this and won. However, what the 1970s had demonstrated, argued *In and Against the State*, was that socialists and feminists should drop 'the narrow concept of "if it is socialist it must always be the state"'.¹¹⁶ Following 'the squatting movement, the women's movement ... Rock Against Racism and community publishing', direct action should prefigure state policies.¹¹⁷ To Rowbotham, feminism should also infuse the labour movement and the WLM should support women in unions: its 'vital

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 101.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.* Cockburn reached the same revolutionary conclusion as the cyberneticist she criticised. Five years earlier, in Chile, Stafford Beer helped Salvador Allende apply the same organisational principles to create economic democracy. Stafford Beer, *The Brain of the Firm: The managerial cybernetics of organization* (1973), 292; Eden Medina, *Cybernetic Revolutionaries: Technology and politics in Allende's Chile* (2011).

¹¹² Hilary Wainwright, 'Introduction', in Sheila Rowbotham, Lynne Segal & Hilary Wainwright, *Beyond the Fragments: Feminism and the making of socialism*, second edition (1980 [1979]), 4, 11.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, 9-10.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 8; Fernando Claudín, *Eurocommunism and Socialism*, trans. John Wakeham (1978 [1977]), 125.

¹¹⁵ Hilary Wainwright, *Arguments for a New Left* (1994), 79-80; Sheila Rowbotham, 'The Women's Movement and Organizing for Socialism', in Rowbotham, Segal & Wainwright, 128-30.

¹¹⁶ LEWRG, *In and Against the State*, 139.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 143-6; David Renton, *Never Again: Rock Against Racism and the Anti-Nazi League 1976-82* (2019), 172-3.

feature' was its ability to unite people 'over innumerable resentments and sufferings which were not even seen as political by socialists'.¹¹⁸ Similarly, Cockburn and her colleagues said this might counter how 'the capitalist state individualises people ... [denies] we have a common problem'.¹¹⁹ Significantly, their conclusion was to create class unity beyond identity lines: 'people *are* divided. People are racist and sexist ... We cannot write people off for turning against each other, pensioners for hating punks We have to find ways of bringing them into a shared struggle'.¹²⁰ This approach differed from strategies proposed by radical and revolutionary feminists, and may have inspired *MT* contributors' charges that the Livingstone GLC's ideas of class struggle were 'unreconstructed' and 'fundamentalist'.¹²¹

Similarly to Chris Knight's arguments, *In and Against the State* and Rowbotham, Segal, and Wainwright's *Beyond the Fragments* strategy also rejected the idea that any single group or person could hold a monopoly on truth or power within the labour movement. Contrasting herself to Leninists or Marxist-Leninists, Wainwright recognised 'many sources of socialist initiative, organisation and theory'.¹²² Unions were central to this reimagining of an older social-democratic vision. She spent much of the 1970s showing how their growing diversity and innovativeness proved how they were more than pale, male, and stale. This included studying the Lucas Plan (1976) and Network of Trade Union and Community Resource Centres (1979).¹²³ Similarly, as a Trade Union Congress employee in the late 1970s, McDonnell (who was made chair of the GLC's grants panel in 1981) witnessed how such policies were being developed for unions to support law centres and similar local initiatives. These assumptions permeated the GLC's industrial and funding policies.

Meanwhile in the LLP, around 1980, women did not necessarily fit the analytical distinction drawn in 1995 by Sarah Perrigo between '[t]hose ... in Trotskyist groups' who 'opposed ... positive action' on women's representation and those 'who did identify with a wider feminist agenda ... [but] lacked experience of the internal [party] politics'.¹²⁴ Women with experience of the 1960s and 1970s WLM, or Leninism, or both increasingly joined Labour in the late 1970s and early 1980s. Wainwright estimated that they included most of the WLM's 'socialist-feminist current'.¹²⁵ Some, like Rowbotham, having been in Labour Party Young Socialists in the 1960s, were returning to Labour.¹²⁶ Like ex-IMG member Sarah Roelofs, many joined, or re-joined, because the CLPD and Labour left's

¹¹⁸ Quoted in *Socialist Challenge*, 'Questioning the Fragments', 11 October (1979), 12.

¹¹⁹ LEWRG, *In and Against the State*, 144.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*

¹²¹ Quoted in Campbell, 'Politics', 26; Lucy Delap, *Feminism: A global history* (2020), 233-4.

¹²² Quoted in *Socialist Challenge*, 12.

¹²³ Huw Beynon & Hilary Wainwright, *The Workers' Report on Vickers* (1979), 177; Hilary Wainwright, 'Hilary Wainwright', in Jacques & Mulhern, *Labour Halted?*, 134-5.

¹²⁴ Sarah Perrigo, 'Gender Struggles in the British Labour Party from 1979 to 1995', *Party Politics*, vol. 1, no. 3 (1995), 411.

¹²⁵ Exact numbers may be unverifiable, Wainwright, *Parties*, 164, 174; Sue Bruley, 'Jam Tomorrow?: Socialist women and women's liberation, 1968-82: An oral history approach', in Evan Smith & Matthew Worley (eds.), *Against the Grain: The British far left from 1956* (2014), 169.

¹²⁶ Bruley, 'Jam', 160-2.

actions for democratic reforms increased the influence they could hope to leverage.¹²⁷ Former IS member Linda Bellos (1950–) re-joined Labour in 1983 and led the GLC Women’s Committee’s equalities and grants monitoring staff in 1984. She recalled discovering Marxism before feminism and, in 1986, like Livingstone, described ‘working-class people in Lambeth’ as ‘black and white, men and women’. She opposed ‘using liberal feminist politics as a cover for ... retreat on class and gender issues’.¹²⁸

These socialist feminists thus also created Labour’s class politics, especially with an emphasis on the representation of issues that mattered to women. In 1980, CLPD members proposed creches for party meetings, affirmative action, and other reforms to increase women’s power. Councillor and *LLB* contributor Jane Chapman reported that Frances Morrell (future Inner London Education Authority leader) supported this because Labour ‘ought to be the political means by which the excluded groups in our society – the working class, women, and ethnic minorities – see emancipation’.¹²⁹ Earlier, Morrell had worked on Labour’s Alternative Economic Strategy and (alongside Livingstone) the Rank and File Mobilising Committee, which backed Benn’s deputy leadership bid.¹³⁰ In 1984, Labour economist Ann Pettifor summarised this approach as ‘the political organisation of the women of our class’.¹³¹ This theme will be revisited later in this dissertation and is particularly strong in chapters four and five.

However, there were disagreements that separated Pettifor from non-socialist feminists. To many non-socialist feminists, working within Labour appeared risky. They feared non-feminist organisations undermining women’s autonomy.¹³² Following the London Women’s Liberation Workshop’s late 1970s split between radical and socialist feminists, ex-IMG member Val Coultas argued that radicals should join Labour because ‘[t]o keep the zest in modern feminism we must ... [reach] the largest possible number of women’.¹³³ Nonetheless, studying councils’ women’s committees in 1984, Sheila Button saw ‘tension between feminists working in or with local

¹²⁷ Kate Allen, Mildred Gordon, Sarah Roelofs & Clara Mulhern, ‘The Women’s Movement and the Labour Party: An Interview with Labour Party Feminists’, *Feminist Review*, no. 16 (1984), 76. Roelofs wrote for the IMG’s newspaper in 1979 and for *LLB*.

¹²⁸ Quoted in *LLB*, ‘Local Election Results Prove: Socialism wins the votes’, June (1986), 1; Aviah Day, ‘Linda Bellos’, *The GLC Story*, digital interview transcript, 7 March 2017, 2–3, <<http://glcstory.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/LindaBellostranscript.docx-1.pdf>>, accessed 28 February 2023.

¹²⁹ Jane Chapman, ‘Open the Floodgates!’, *LLB*, December 1980, 8. CLDP member Chapman had supported founding the Socialist Campaign for a Labour Victory. Patrick Seyd, ‘The Labour Left’, PhD thesis, University of Sheffield, vol. 2 (1986), 377; Panitch & Leys, *End of Parliamentary Socialism*, 154; Tony Travers, ‘Francis Morrell Obituary’, *The Guardian*, 14 January 2010, <www.theguardian.com/politics/2010/jan/14/frances-morrell-obituary>, accessed 28 February 2023.

¹³⁰ Tony Benn, *The Benn Diaries: 1940–1990* (1995), 489.

¹³¹ Pettifor, ‘Women’, 45.

¹³² Sue Bruley, ‘Consciousness-Raising in Clapham: Women’s Liberation as ‘Lived Experience’ in South London in the 1970s’, *Women’s History Review*, vol. 22, no. 5 (2013), 729.

¹³³ Val Coultas, ‘Feminists Must Face the Future’, *Feminist Review*, no. 7 (1981), 45; Eva Setch, ‘The Face of Metropolitan Feminism: The London Women’s Liberation Workshop, 1969–79’, *Twentieth Century British History*, vol. 13, no. 2 (2002), 186–9.

government and those who wish or remain outside it.’¹³⁴ Other feminists feared that non-hierarchical women’s committee meetings, like the GLC’s, would neglect ‘inner city working-class areas’.¹³⁵ Yet, when radical, revolutionary, and liberal feminists did work with the GLC, as seen in later chapters, it was after the Labour left changed its party and the Council to match its inclusive and participatory class-political strategy.

2.7 Bonds: Anti-fascists, anti-colonial nationalists, Black Power, and the GLC

Alongside Marxists, socialist-feminists, Leninists, and ex-Leninists around Livingstone’s administration, other Labour members and GLC staff based their politics on anti-fascism, anti-colonialism, Black Power, and Christianity. However, these approaches frequently used or followed class politics and can rarely be straightforwardly labelled as identity politics. Recognising this diversity of opinion within the GLC again matters for understanding how and why certain organisations that were supported by the Council.

As Satnam Virdee argues, Britain’s organised anti-fascist movement after 1977 (which inspired *Beyond the Fragments*) was thoroughly linked to the labour movement, Leninist groups, and Labour’s left.¹³⁶ ‘Anti-fascism’ or ‘anti-Nazism’ linked the Anti-Nazi League and Rock Against Racism to earlier European social-democratic traditions: racial thinking should not split the labour movement.¹³⁷ Labour left MPs, like Benn and Audrey Wise (Valerie Wise’s mother), as Anti-Nazi League supporters, imagined that people who constituted a culturally diverse working class should, and did, unite around common pop-music references and shared political demands.¹³⁸ Equally, Jane Ansell exemplified this position in *LLB*, reminding readers that Labour’s failure to oppose the 1981 British Nationality Bill would ‘lead to a divided labour movement’.¹³⁹ The GLC’s position on firefighter unionisation, described above, was also typical of this approach. For GLC politicians who assumed a diverse working class and sought labour-movement unity, anti-racism followed from class politics.

Elsewhere, however, this caused contention. In Katz’s observations, as an outsider looking in at London’s politics, the spectrum of class politics and identity politics spanned from Militant’s hostility to anything but class to postmodern dismissals of an economic class analysis. However, her

¹³⁴ Sheila Button, *Women’s Committees: A study of gender and local government policy formation* (1984), 41.

¹³⁵ Sue Goss, ‘Women’s Initiatives in Local Government’, in Martin Boddy & Colin Fudge (eds.), *Local Socialism?: Labour councils and new left alternatives* (1984), 127.

¹³⁶ Satnam Virdee, ‘Anti-racism and the Socialist Left, 1968–79’, in Evan Smith & Matthew Worley (eds.), *Against the Grain: The British far left from 1956* (2014), 221–5.

¹³⁷ Jack Jacobs, ‘Marxism and Anti-semitism: Kautsky’s perspective’, *International Review of Social History*, vol. 30, no. 5 (1985), 404.

¹³⁸ Virdee, ‘Anti-racism’, 221–3; Renton, *Never Again*, 111–2.

¹³⁹ Jane Ansell, ‘Here to Stay!’, *LLB*, no. 10 (1981), 8.

research concluded in 1988, when class and identity divisions had arguably hardened after debates over Black sections in Labour increased.¹⁴⁰ Illustrating this, she contrasted the LLP activist Unmesh Desai to Labour's British Guiana-born Haringey councillor Bernie Grant, who became council leader in 1985. During the Wapping strike, Desai, said:

[The GLC] showed that the working class isn't a homogeneous class, but has different parts, for example the Irish and blacks ... parts that need to work together to create a strong and united working class. That's what the GLC achieved. ... [Print workers] have always been very racist ... [But] defeat for the print workers is a defeat for blacks, a defeat for the working class's self-confidence.¹⁴¹

Conversely, Grant argued, 'first we [black politicians] must win positions where we can take part in decisions and ensure we get what we want, and not what whites – in particular white men – think we want.' Then, 'we must create alliances with other disadvantaged groups like women, gays, lesbians – all the people who've been ... oppressed, particularly by white men'.¹⁴² Desai, whose mother was an organiser at the Grunwick strike, in 1987 imagined class as an economic category, whereas Grant, who as a union official long battled workplace discrimination, foregrounded identity-based groups as his political agents.¹⁴³

A distinct tradition of emphasising the agency of identity-based groups, which was also an intellectual descendant of class politics, was the adaptation of Marxist humanism, anti-colonialism, and Mao Zedong Thought into Black Power in the UK. Ansel Wong (1945–) exemplifies how these ideas underpinned a politics based on forming Black identity and agency. A Trinidadian with Chinese and African ancestors, Wong was hired as the GLC's deputy race relations adviser after May 1981, later succeeding Herman Ouseley to become its principal race relations adviser, in whose name grant reports to the Ethnic Minorities Committee would be signed off.¹⁴⁴ In his youth he had been part of a movement to create new national identities in former British colonies. At London's West Indian Student Centre in the 1960s, students from newly independent Caribbean states (e.g. Trinidad and Tobago, 1962; Guyana, 1966) learnt, he recalled, 'to see what it is that united us ... how we could see ourselves as a united community.'¹⁴⁵ He was also influenced by Paulo Freire (whose decolonial theory followed Liberation Theology), Frantz Fanon, and Mao. The latter had adapted Marxism-Leninism to conditions of anti-imperial guerilla warfare in the 1920s and 1930s.¹⁴⁶ He also met Eric Williams and the leading Marxist humanist C. L. R. James – whose studies of enslaved Africans and Trinidad's

¹⁴⁰ E.g., *Marxism Today*, 'Black Sections: Radical demand or distraction?', September (1985), 31-6.

¹⁴¹ Quoted in Katz, *London*, 184-5.

¹⁴² Quoted in *ibid.*

¹⁴³ Mike Phillips, 'Bernie Grant', *The Guardian*, 10 April (2000), 20.

¹⁴⁴ Rob Waters, *Thinking Black: Britain 1964–1985* (2018), 4-8, 90.

¹⁴⁵ Windrush Foundation, 'Windrush Foundation/Ben TV Interviews – Ansel Wong Pt01 Ep17', digital video, 28 September 2018, <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8qpg0lOsZp0>>, accessed 28 February 2023.

¹⁴⁶ Rob Waters, 'Student politics, teaching politics, black politics: An interview with Ansel Wong', *Race and Class*, vol. 58, no. 1 (2016), 21; Waters, *Thinking*, 147-9.

working class had shaped national liberation narratives in the English-speaking Caribbean.¹⁴⁷ After 1970, inspired by US Black Power, Wong helped the Black Liberation Front (BLF) which, finding inspiration in Mao Zedong Thought, supported an abstention from class struggle in Britain – ending capitalism, it argued, was up to the ‘native working class’.¹⁴⁸ Instead, the BLF focused on ‘build[ing] an infrastructure for community’; establishing Ujima Housing Association, after-school education, and bookshops to support a Pan-African political blackness identity.¹⁴⁹ Although they drew on thinkers who drew on Lenin, Londoners whose primary interests lay in national liberation sent grant applications to the GLC and processed them to help organise their political agent: the nationally conscious, often racialised, activists of the former colonies and their children.

There were certainly times when these politics overlapped or cooperated with the labour movement. Exemplifying this, the Southall Youth Movement (SYM), which was funded by both the Commission for Racial Equality and the GLC, took a decolonial approach similar to the Black Power organisers while also maintaining ties to labour-movement politics. It was founded as an anti-racist, self-defence organisation against the National Front (NF) by first and second-generation immigrants of South Asian descent, in 1976. Like the BLF, it established a youth centre and education projects in 1981 to ‘undertake community development’ and ‘develop an improved understanding of the young peoples’ own cultural backgrounds and those of their fellows’.¹⁵⁰ Its leaders sought to provide alternatives to ‘propaganda’ in ‘media and the schools’ and, in 1984, one member told the BBC that he rejected integration into ‘English society’: ‘different people need to work towards their own interests, and forget about the interests of other people’.¹⁵¹ Nevertheless, Anandi Ramamurthy and Jasbinder S. Nijjar argue that, to SYM, creating a politically black identity transcended narrower religious or cultural identities.¹⁵² Meanwhile, SYM, within the Asian Youth Movement, also worked with the labour movement and anti-fascist campaigns, especially following the Grunwick strike.¹⁵³ They had, whatever their differences, common enemies: the NF and the police. The importance of people and groups informed by these perspectives like Wong’s and the SYM’s will be evident not least in chapter six.

A third strand of anti-racist and anti-colonial politics drew on Christian ideas. Paul Boateng (1951–), Labour’s GLC Police Committee chair and Ethnic Minorities Committee vice chair, worked with SYM as a lawyer around 1980, to defend protesters arrested at anti-NF demonstrations. His

¹⁴⁷ C. L. R. James, *A History of Pan-African Revolt* (2012 [1938]), 98-102.

¹⁴⁸ The BLF left the British Black Panthers after it became dominated by Leninists. Rosalind Eleanor Wild, ‘Black was the colour of our fight’: Black Power in Britain, 1955–1976’, PhD thesis, University of Sheffield (2008), 104-9.

¹⁴⁹ Windrush Foundation, ‘Wong’; Waters, ‘Student politics’, 22-4.

¹⁵⁰ LMA, GLC/DG/PRE/56/005, ‘Grants to Voluntary and Community Groups Application for Financial Assistance: Southall Youth Movement’, 10 September 1981.

¹⁵¹ Ian Walker, ‘Three Young Men of Southall’, *New Society*, 24 September (1981), 516; BFI, 579857, BBC 1, *Asian Magazine*, video cassette, broadcast 10 June 1984.

¹⁵² Jasbinder S. Nijjar, ‘Southall: Symbol of resistance’, *Race and Class*, vol. 60, no. 4 (2019), 67; Anandi Ramamurthy, ‘The Politics of Britain’s Asian Youth Movements’, *Race and Class*, vol. 48, no. 2 (2006), 45-6.

¹⁵³ Anandi Ramamurthy, ‘The Asian Youth Movements: Racism and resistance’, *Soundings*, no. 63 (2016), 76.

father was a government minister under Ghana's first president, the Pan-Africanist Kwame Nkrumah. His maternal great-grandfather was a London County Council member.¹⁵⁴ Around 1977, at Paddington Law Centre he campaigned against suspected persons laws, arguing that they (in the words of a journalist who paraphrased him) gave 'the black community an extremely jaundiced view of the courts and the police'.¹⁵⁵ He also led the Afro-Caribbean Education Resource Project, but in contrast to national-liberation groups, a journalist describing it in *The Guardian* called it no 'effort at creating black studies' since it was 'designed to be of benefit to black and white children alike'.¹⁵⁶ This characterised Boateng's 1982 radio lecture on Rastafarianism. He analysed the Pan-Africanist movement which followed black separatist Marcus Garvey – a man admired by Nkrumah and many Black Power supporters.¹⁵⁷ Boateng carefully expressed his view that the Rastafarians' 'return to Africa' beliefs should not be taken literally and that the movement filled 'a vacuum created by our society's failure to come to grips with its ethnic diversity or tackle the inequalities that continue to deny blacks a meaningful role in it'.¹⁵⁸ His interpretation that this religious national-liberation movement was the result of inequality suggested a belief that, in the absence of injustice, integration or assimilation in the UK was possible. Furthermore, as a parliamentary candidate in 1983, he said: 'Politics is not just race, it's class struggle.' He elaborated:

I'm a socialist. I'm also black. I'm trying to bring about a socialist transformation ... I've never held myself up as a specifically black leader. I see my role as ... helping all the people – white, Asian and black'.¹⁵⁹

This followed his Christianity. In one of his television broadcasts in February 1985, Boateng explained: 'Love demands a reaction to injustice and oppression, not passive acceptance. ... Love expects us to recognise the divisions and disfigurements that racism imposes on our society, and, having done so, to accept our responsibility for applying the doctrine of love in practical ways ...'.¹⁶⁰ Although he used the word 'love', he spoke of 'faith' and 'the will of God' as making the same demands.¹⁶¹ Recalling his political development soon after the GLC's abolition, he described how he

¹⁵⁴ Arlen Harris, 'Radical Black Champion', *The Observer*, 16 June (1985), 4.

¹⁵⁵ Lindsay Mackie, 'The spreading taint of suspicion', *The Guardian*, 21 September (1977), 13.

¹⁵⁶ *The Guardian*, 'Head Cases', 13 February (1979), 10; Kieran Connell, *Black Handsworth: Race in 1980s Britain* (2019), 47-9.

¹⁵⁷ Michael O. West, 'Decolonization, Desegregation, and Black Power: Garveyism in another era', in Ronald J. Stephens & Adam Ewing (eds.), *Global Garveyism* (2019), 274.

¹⁵⁸ Paul Boateng, 'Rastafari: Black redeemer', *The Listener*, vol. 104, no. 2743, 14 January (1982), 7.

¹⁵⁹ Quoted in *New Life*, 'Paul Boateng: Labour prospective parliamentary candidate for Hemel Hempstead', 13 May (1983), 10.

¹⁶⁰ TVARK, 'LWT Closedown', digitised video recording including an episode of the programme 'Night Thoughts', originally broadcast on London Weekend Television on 16 February 1985, <<https://tvark.org/lwt-closedown-15-2-1985>>, accessed 18 January 2024. Broadcast date independently verified by comparing the programme continuity announcements following this episode of 'Night Thoughts' and the television programme guide for 16 February 1985. Sandy Smithies, Television Programme Guide, *The Guardian*, 16 February (1985), 28.

¹⁶¹ South Carolina Education Television (SCETV), 'SCETV "Paul Boateng" 1987', digitised recording of undated television programme, 17 March 2018, n.d. (1987?),

had realised, in the 1970s, that '[s]ocialism, underpinned by materialism had not delivered the goods', but required the Spirit of God to overcome alienation.¹⁶² He explained: 'For me Christianity underpinned and undergirded politics in a way that made politics something in which I wanted to be involved'.¹⁶³ His model for unity was his Methodist church in Walworth. There, 'all of us, black and white ... united in the Spirit'.¹⁶⁴ Christian and socialist universalism underpinned Boateng's politics. Meanwhile, with his experience of anti-colonial liberation, police harassment, and legal practice he was sympathetic towards seeing agency in both non-state organisations and the state.

The emphasis on political diversity here, from Garveyism to democratic socialism, complicates a clear-cut answer to what politics characterised Livingstone's GLC. In the LLP and among the GLC's new members and staff there were those who held that solving racist discrimination was a question for working-class unity, or liberation around identities that could be defined nationally, racially, regionally, or according to the experience of being a first or second-generation immigrant. There were also mixed positions or Christian socialist perspectives which saw communities of faith as overarching categories which could accommodate class-political analyses. Depending on these political theories, Londoners imagined various different groups of people as important agents and, therefore, priorities for grant funding.

2.8 Balance: Methodists, Marxists, and the GLC

Arguably, Christianity also influenced several other key GLC individuals' politics and deserves a brief analysis, suggesting a further similarity between London and Sheffield City Council. At least two Labour GLC members were Methodist lay preachers; Boateng and Peter Dawe and both saw their faith as prompting their political action.¹⁶⁵ Theologically, Boateng told South Carolina Education Television's Listervelt Middleton in 1987 that Christianity 'demands an economic system where greed and avarice are not seen as the prime movers of the system'. It also required action, as he described how 'the Christian message says ... "do not try and escape the world". ... you have specific responsibilities as a Christian'.¹⁶⁶ Although non-religious in adulthood, Rowbotham said her Methodist upbringing had, similarly, instilled 'a sense of the purpose of life being more than simply making money'.¹⁶⁷ Wainwright's background was similar: a Methodist family and a Quaker boarding school.¹⁶⁸ Boateng's Police Committee staff director, Martin Ennals (who will return in chapter six),

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4xPfxky_wJc>, accessed 28 February 2023. Broadcast shortly after Boateng's election to parliament in 1987.

¹⁶² Paul Boateng, 'Faith and Politics', *The Way Supplement*, no. 60 (1987), 42.

¹⁶³ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 50.

¹⁶⁵ Deborah Grayson, 'Peter Dawe', *The GLC Story*, digital interview transcript, 9 January 2017, 2, <<http://glcstory.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/PeterDawetranscript.docx.pdf>>, accessed 28 February 2023.

¹⁶⁶ SCETV, "'Boateng'".

¹⁶⁷ Quoted in Bryan D. Palmer, 'Bread and Roses: Sheila Rowbotham', *Left History*, vol. 2, no. 1 (1994), 125.

¹⁶⁸ Simon Gunn & Rachel Bell, *Middle Classes: Their rise and sprawl* (2002), 110-1.

experienced daily Baptist prayers throughout his childhood that ‘inculcated the belief that a moment’s idleness was synonymous with grave sin’.¹⁶⁹ A Protestant ethic, directly or indirectly, to some extent inspired morals at the GLC – a legacy, perhaps, of prior overlaps between Christian and labour thinking and organising.¹⁷⁰ Precisely how far one factor fully informs someone’s ideas is often indiscernible. However, if Sheffield’s labour movement in the 1980s was influenced by Christianity, and particularly Evangelicalism, this might also be said of London’s.¹⁷¹

Something socialists, Leninists, ex-Leninists, feminists, and Methodists (practising and lapsed) did share was trust in the power of experience to transform ideas. Wainwright later attributed the IS/SWP’s attention to ‘learning from struggle and working-class experience’ to Leon Trotsky’s and Rosa Luxemburg’s ‘real understanding’ of working people’s ‘creative potential’.¹⁷² Rock Against Racism, led by many SWP members and formative for many members of Livingstone’s GLC, likewise assumed that direct experiences of punk and reggae concerts organised for all young people, regardless of their origins or ancestry, would change minds more than political propaganda.¹⁷³ Livingstone maintained, decades later, that an NF member who assaulted him in 1981 apologised for this attack after his child was born because ‘[l]ooking at the black and Asian babies in the [maternity] unit’ he ‘realised the stupidity of racism.’¹⁷⁴ Moreover, these theories of knowledge meshed with rejecting intellectual vanguard mentalities within Labour and the CPGB’s belief in ‘ideological control’.¹⁷⁵

For instance, Rowbotham described how experiences of face-to-face meetings inspired action. In 1973, she depicted nineteenth-century Methodist meetings as akin to feminist conscious-raising groups. While potentially projecting 1970s feminism onto the past, her lesson for the present was that Robert Owen’s Methodists ‘believed people learned through the way they lived’. Remaking the world meant to ‘attack the means by which its values were maintained’.¹⁷⁶ Boateng considered worship equally transformative: people who ‘go to church of a Sunday and ... see and live and experience the power of Christ’ and understood that when ‘that power ... goes out into the wide world, then there’s nothing that you can’t do.’¹⁷⁷ Faith in consciousness through action and the power of experience – although not necessity for the creation of political identities – also contributed to Livingstone’s GLC taking small organisations seriously, funding those that would give experiences of the society it imagined. Throughout the following chapters there will be many examples of GLC-funded

¹⁶⁹ Tam Dalyell, ‘Lord Ennals’, *The Independent*, 19 June (1995), 14.

¹⁷⁰ Peter Catterall, *Labour and the Free Churches, 1918–1939*, (2016), 213–4.

¹⁷¹ Payling, ‘Socialist Republic’, 12; David W. Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain: A History from the 1730s to the 1980s* (2003), 446–98.

¹⁷² Wainwright, *Arguments*, 97–8.

¹⁷³ Renton, *Never Again*, 63–4.

¹⁷⁴ Ken Livingstone, *You Can’t Say That: Memoirs* (2011), 188.

¹⁷⁵ CPGB, *The British Road to Socialism: Programme of the Communist Party* (1978), 10.

¹⁷⁶ Sheila Rowbotham, *Hidden from History: 300 years of women’s oppression and the fight against it* (1973), 44–5.

¹⁷⁷ SCETV, “‘Boateng’”.

organisations whose work created the experiences that this perspective might assume would win hearts and minds to the cause of labour.

2.9 Bread and Roses: Conclusion

The Livingstone GLC's commitment to 'class-based' politics informed every aspect of its programme and theory of history, from women's employment and anti-racism to funding non-state organisations. Its key theorists considered Labour 'the parliament of the entire working class' and believed that creating jobs and organising the labour movement was an alternative to economic crises or capitalist 'breakdown'. They trusted Londoners to follow their class interests and organise themselves if given the right opportunities. Hence, 'class-based' politics did not necessarily correlate with mentioning class – it could be implicit. 'Class struggle' was action, not just rhetoric. Above all, in Livingstone's GLC, 'class' was used as an etic, technical category of analysis, although it was actually used in an emic sense. Saying that Livingstone's GLC was informed by identity politics notices a part of its work, but cannot reflect how significant the labour movement and classical Marxian thinking was to its outlook. Certain GLC-supported tendencies focused on fostering particular communities, which they believed played a central political role, could warrant an etic 'identity politics' label from historians. But this was not the Livingstone administration's main stream and it must be interpreted within a project that overwhelmingly pursued a 1980s iteration of class struggle, informed by the unions, socialist feminism, Marxism, or Christianity – all of which were far more universalist approaches for uniting people across identity lines. This matters because politicians motivated by either class or identity politics act differently and prioritise different people depending on who they think can change history. The Livingstone GLC's apparently disparate funding programmes – ranging from unions to the arts and karate clubs – becomes more consistent and comprehensible if viewed, from Panitch's perspective, as ultimately intended to benefit what was considered to be the organising of the whole 'working class', rather than separately imagined identity groups. Although never acknowledged as such at the time, there was something strikingly Londonian about this: By 1981, ideas defined by Marx – an immigrant in St Pancras in the 1860s – appeared to several of the GLC's leading theorists and associates, to be reimbued with meaning, having returned via Poland and Grossman to London, where they were applied in response to the cultural and social diversity that characterised the city.

Before moving on to the analysis of the GLC's grants, it is worth noting how it is possible that this chapter might also help loosen some historiographical assumptions about the UK's labour-movement politics. For instance, John Callaghan's assertion that '[t]he [post-1960s] Trotskyism that seemed to matter belonged to the Militant Tendency', can be diversified to account for how people informed by Leninist ideas and surroundings were central to the way Livingstone's

GLC came about and developed.¹⁷⁸ Emily Robinson and others argue that ‘various sections’ of the ‘Bennite’ left ‘remained entrenched in an increasingly out-dated view of “workers”’.¹⁷⁹ The Bennites at Livingstone’s GLC, however, was highly concerned that its class analysis and rhetoric should be in touch with what it, in fact, saw in London: workers of a significant diversity of emic identities.

To say that this administration was social-democratic is also etic and anachronistic. It was never a term its leaders used for their opponents rather than themselves. Peter Dawe, for instance, recalled how Livingstone’s predecessor as GLC Labour group leader, Andrew McIntosh ‘represented a sort of Fabian social democratic approach’, whereas ‘Ken [Livingstone], the group of us were very diverse, were broadly on the left’.¹⁸⁰ However, regarding their basic economic theories, some of the Livingstone GLC’s important theorists compared their situation in 1980s London to that of European Social Democratic parties from before the October Revolution, or from the interwar years, with a strong desire to avoid their fates by becoming neither dictatorial nor Keynesian. These ideas of the past informed the options they saw in their present and future for reindustrialising and democratising Londoners through the labour movement’s para-state institutions in workplaces and local communities.

As a background context for the following chapters, this analysis has introduced thinkers and ideas that were important to or that illustrate the Livingstone GLC’s politics. This is a setting for understanding why and how they funded organisations in the policy areas that I will now proceed to analyse. I have also tried to describe differences between labour-movement politics and alternative movements and how people using these various theories might prioritise different actions or groups of people (or similar actions for different reasons), and a tension that existed between separatist and integrationist strategies. The alternatives posed by these movements will continue to be a theme in the next four chapters. It is possible that this political-theory interpretation of Livingstone’s GLC also has its limitations, perhaps by privileged political or philosophical motives at the expense of other factors. Nevertheless, I have found that a person’s political theory, if they apply it consistently, can be a strong predictor of their actions. In the next chapter, the first policy area where I will put this approach to the Livingstone GLC’s ideas to the test is public transport for people with disabilities and the creation of dial-a-ride.

¹⁷⁸ John Callaghan, ‘Engaging with Trotsky: The influence of Trotskyism in Britain’, in Smith & Worley, *Against the Grain*, 40.

¹⁷⁹ Emily Robinson, Camilla Schofield, Florence Sutcliffe-Braithwaite & Natalie Thomlinson, ‘Telling Stories about Post-war Britain: Popular individualism and the ‘crisis’ of the 1970s’, *Twentieth Century British History*, vol. 28, no. 2 (2017), 289.

¹⁸⁰ Grayson, ‘Peter Dawe’, 6.

3 Transport organisations and the GLC

[S]o-called Municipal Socialism is limited to those States and social organizations where universal suffrage in the municipality rules. ... To be sure, the proletariat may find the municipal government in the individual industrial communities in their hands ... and carry through individual betterments which could not be expected from a bourgeois regime. But ... [m]any a municipal government which has been captured by socialists, or so-called socialistic reformers, has been taken away from them because of the taxation question, in spite of the fact that their actions have been exceedingly efficient. This was true in London and also in Roubaix.

Karl Kautsky, The Social Revolution, 1902.¹

*The emancipation that's sweeping the nation
When it seemed the world was sunk
You can bet your boots on your own pursuits
History is bunk*

Ian Dury & the Blockheads, 'Dance of the Crackpots', 1980.

3.1 The Minibuses of History: Introduction

Why did the Livingstone GLC fund dial-a-ride organisations and what did they do? In 1981, dial-a-ride in London was a tiny voluntary initiative run by a handful of committed organisers to provide mobility for people with disabilities unable to use public transport. Before there were lifts to underground stations or air-adjustable suspension on buses, travelling by public transport was virtually unfathomable for tens of thousands of Londoners, and almost impossible for many more. Labour had not considered this as an election issue but inherited an £8,000-per-year funding scheme for a pilot minibus service for people with disabilities in a single borough. By 1986, Livingstone's GLC had made the annual budget for dial-a-ride services for people with disabilities over £5,000,000. This set a standard not only for continued funding by the Conservative government but also the future merger of what was a non-state scheme into Transport for London. Through analysing public transport for people with disabilities this chapter describes an example of how non-state organisations in the 1980s piloted an expansion to the welfare state which turned into an established, London-wide statutory service because of GLC investments. It also describes how, parallel to this, various models for how the service should be organised were considered: voluntary or professional; user-controlled or management-controlled.

¹ Karl Kautsky, *The Social Revolution*, trans. A. M. Simons & May Wood Simons (1902), 71-2.

Thanks to research by historians of disability, journalists, and activists, it is impossible to explain the history of rights for people with disabilities in postwar Britain, or even definitions of disability, without reference to non-state organisations.² However, with a few notable exceptions, the approach most contemporary historians have taken recently has emphasised organisations with nationwide memberships whose aim is lobbying Westminster on central government policy.³ From this perspective it is easy to overlook that, by 1990, one of the UK's largest and most influential organisations controlled by people with disabilities was the London Dial-a-Ride Users Association (LDaRUA), with over 5,000 members in 1990 and 15,000 in 1992, by their own count.⁴ The association operated alongside twenty-nine local, borough-based disability transport organisations called dial-a-rides, which operated transport services for their combined membership of over 50,000 people.⁵ In each local dial-a-ride users could also elect their local management committees to represent how they wanted their services to treat them. Meanwhile, LDaRUA acted as a London-wide union for these users in negotiations with the state, which funded the dial-a-ride associations.

The system had been developed during the 1980s by local volunteers and organisers and Livingstone's GLC with remarkable results. 'Dial-a-Ride', wrote LDaRUA's former chair, Alan Walker, in 1988, 'constitutes the single greatest improvement in quality of life for people with disabilities – in London at least – in the last 15 or 20 years'.⁶ Keith Armstrong, LDaRUA's chair in 1991, recalled how 'Dial-a-ride in London was started as a direct result of Londoners campaigning for a door to door bus service and being prepared to participate in the management and democratic structure of the locally based Dial-a-Rides'.⁷ An outcome of this work had been money from the Livingstone GLC and, later, the Department of Transport. Demonstrating the importance of this

² Jameel Hampton, *Disability and the Welfare State in Britain: Changes in perception and policy 1948–79* (2016), 8; Tom Shakespeare, 'The Social Model of Disability', in Lennard J. Davis, *The Disability Studies Reader*, fifth edition (2017 [1997]), 196–7.

³ Hampton, *Disability*, passim; Frances Ryan, *Crippled: Austerity and the demonization of disabled people* (2019), 84–5; Gareth Millward, 'Social Security Policy and the Early Disability Movement – Expertise, Disability, and the Government, 1965–77', *20th Century British History*, vol. 26, no. 2 (2015), 296–7; Monika Baár & Paul van Trigt, 'British and European Citizenship: Entanglements through the Lens of Disability', *Contemporary European History*, vol. 28, no. 1 (2019), 50–52; Jonathan Toms, 'Citizenship and Learning Disabled People: The Mental Health Charity MIND's 1970s Campaign in Historical Context', *Medical History*, vol. 61, no. 4 (2017), 492–4.

⁴ Bishopsgate Institute Special Collections and Archives (BI), Keith Armstrong papers, Armstong/2, London Dial-a-Ride Users Association, *Annual Report 1990* (1990), 3; Armstong/1, Dial-a-Ride and Taxicard Users Association (DaRT), *Annual Report 1992* (1992), 8. Until 1986 the organisation that became LDaRUA was called the Federation of London Dial-a-Rides (FoLDaR). In 1991, LDaRUA, on the recommendation of its new funder the London Borough Grants Committee, merged with the London Taxicard Users' Association, becoming the Dial-a-Ride and Taxicard Users' Group (DaRT). See, Armstong/1, London Dial-a-Ride Users Association, *Going Places: Annual report 1991* (1991), 3.

⁵ In 1988. BI, Armstong/2, London Dial-a-Ride Users' Association, *Annual Report 1988* (1988), 9.

⁶ BI, Armstong/2, Alan Walker, 'Defending the Public Image of Dial-a-Ride', *Go By Bus: The newsletter for dial-a-ride users*, no. 12 (1988), 3.

⁷ BI, Armstong/1, London Dial-a-Ride Users' Association, *Going Places: Annual Report 1991* (1991), 3.

project to the London Labour Party, Dave Wetzel, the chair of the Council's Transport Committee, continued supporting it after the GLC's abolition, as LDaRUA's director, 1989–1994. Dial-a-ride, as they envisioned it, was the creation of a democratic institution.

The origins of this service is an example of how voluntary entrepreneurs made something out of nothing and convinced the state to pay for and, eventually, run it. Additionally, it shows how services created under the Labour GLC were organised differently compared to what came before and after, because of its emphasis on user control. Even after the GLC's abolition, the user-run organisational model of dial-a-ride imagined in the early 1980s survived because of the actions of LDaRUA. Control shifted towards state managers in the mid-1990s, but the survival of an element of a user-democracy system throughout the 1990s was an indication that managerial control of public services was an option, rather than a given outcome of state support. Still, by the time that dial-a-ride was fully integrated into Transport for London (TfL), in the mid-2000s, most organisers in the field had also stepped back from the idea of a confrontational mass-membership movement representing users in negotiations with the state. This was partially because one of their main long-term aims of creating accessible door-to-door public transport had actually been achieved, but also because they adapted to an environment where industrial democracy was no longer a common-sense assumption.

Prior to dial-a-ride, using public transport in London was very difficult or impossible for many people with disabilities. In 1981, a leaflet from Camden Dial-a-Ride, which ran the local service in their borough and was one of the first in London, described the situation: 'London Transport is completely inaccessible to people in wheelchairs. Even for those disabled people who can physically manage them, taxicabs are too expensive'.⁸ Even for people able to walk short distances, stepping onto buses or down the stairs to the underground could be impossible. A representative of the British Association of Retired People told Wetzel in 1983: 'Many of our members complain that they find increasing difficulty in boarding London Transport buses – especially single-deckers, where there is no conductor to assist them.'⁹

3.2 Meaning Busness: The origins of dial-a-ride

Dial-a-ride, as a concept, was originally introduced in the UK on an experimental basis by the Ford Motor Company as a new general, demand-responsive public transport system in New Towns. It coincided with the peak of the developmental state in the early 1970s and a British imaginary future

⁸ BI, Dave Wetzel papers, Wetzel/328, letter from Bryan Heiser to Dave Wetzel, 14 January, 1982. See attached leaflet.

⁹ BI, Wetzel/256, letter from Frederick L. Bussey to Dave Wetzel, 1 June, 1983.

that promised planned wealth and leisure.¹⁰ Passengers could telephone the system and a minibus would pick up or leave them at their front doors rather than follow a fixed route. Budget cuts after 1973, both at Ford and in the councils which had funded these trials, meant it never replaced fixed-route buses.¹¹ Subsequently, however, during the creation of voluntary dial-a-rides in the late 1970s, the techniques and hardware used by Ford were adapted for new purposes by innovative volunteers.

For a few years between 1969 to 1974, dial-a-ride looked like a new technological solution for saving British cities from the chaos of mass car ownership.¹² Eleven local trials, organised by Ford and local authorities, were overseen by Philip Oxley (1935–2019), a former head of transport planning at the GLC.¹³ He hoped that using minibuses could reverse the decline in bus links between places like Old Harlow and Harlow New Town and ‘would provide a socially valuable service which cannot be assessed in purely financial terms’.¹⁴ This project was in certain regards highly representative of the expert-led, post-war developmental state. The brand-new Transit minibuses Oxley used were built by Ford’s at a former RAF aeroplane factory in Southampton. A Labour politician in Harlow Town who funded a local trial, believed that improving public transport with dial-a-ride was part of his council’s ‘socialist objectives’.¹⁵ Yet, to the surprise of contemporary experts, exactly when funding cuts appeared to have made the public-transport model of dial-a-ride obsolete soon after 1975, it was embraced by disability rights campaigners.¹⁶ They would develop the concept to provide for people with disabilities what the welfare state had neglected – democratically controlled, wheelchair-accessible public transport.

The people who brought about dial-a-ride as a public transport system for people with disabilities in London were people with disabilities and without disabilities, women and men and young and old. They were of many different cultures, and subcultures. Some were university-educated, some were not, and, whereas many were born Londoners, many key persons had made the city their home. In short, they looked a lot like the people you would meet in an average London town centre in 1981 and a description of their movement does more to explain non-state

¹⁰ David Edgerton, *The Rise and Fall of the British Nation: A twentieth-century history* (2018), 306-8, 404. Concerns over transport were central to these visions. Guy Ortolano, *Thatcher’s Progress: From Social Democracy to Market Liberalism Through an English New Town* (2019), 103.

¹¹ Terence Bendixson & John Platt, *Milton Keynes: Image and reality* (1992), 160.

¹² Alisdair Aird, *The Automotive Nightmare* (1974 [1972]), 283.

¹³ J. C. Sutton, ‘Transport Innovation and Passenger Needs: Changing perspectives on the role of dial-a-ride systems’, *Transport Reviews*, vol. 7, no. 2 (1987), 169-70.

¹⁴ Philip Oxley, ‘What is Dial-a-Ride?’, in Roger Slevin (ed.), *Papers Presented to the First British Dial-a-Ride Symposium* (1974), 19.

¹⁵ Open University Digital Archive, T341; 03; 1976, BBC Open University, ‘Student Activity’, 23 March 1976, digitised video, <https://www.open.ac.uk/library/digital-archive/program/video:00525_5272>, accessed 28 February 2023.

¹⁶ John Sutton & David Gillingwater, ‘The History and Evolution of Community Transport’, in John Sutton and David Gillingwater (eds.), *Community Transport: Policy, planning, practice* (1995), 24-5.

organisations and the politics of the GLC than most generalising theoretical categories. Although they borrowed the name, the phone-up, demand-responsive scheduling model, and radio-controlled minibuses of Oxley's transport system, the organisations they established served only people with disabilities and started out as a diverse range of groups.¹⁷

The first dial-a-ride service for people with disabilities was started by Edinburgh Voluntarily Transport (EVT) in 1976 and over the next six years at least eleven other local services were established around the UK. Out of these, only two were run directly by local councils. One was a self-funded private taxi company and eight were voluntary organisations. Only the council-funded services in Stockport and Milton Keynes did not receive at least some money from either the Department of the Environment or the Manpower Services Commission (MSC).¹⁸ Often they operated one or two minibuses, which might have been custom-converted minivans or shared with the local council or other groups.¹⁹ The do-it-yourself (DIY) sensibility with which their members modified their vehicles so they could safely transport wheelchair users as well as their largely democratic instincts were shared with the community transport movement.

As concepts, community transport and dial-a-ride were distinct, but dial-a-ride for people with disabilities owed much to the former and by the mid-1980s some local groups were almost indistinguishable or had fused. The first organisation to call itself 'community transport' was a Christian charity set up in Birmingham around 1964 to help homeless people in need of second-hand furniture or removals.²⁰ After the mid-1970s, an increasing number of community transport groups were formed around the UK with the specific purpose of pooling minibuses owned by local clubs or associations. Buses owned but seldom used by scout clubs, for instance, could be rented to a common vehicle pool and used weekly by a pensioners' group, a day care centre for disabled children or a church to gather their members or go on trips. In some cases, as with Ealing Community Transport (ECT) in 1978, they were run by local voluntary services councils and grew in reaction to councils reducing their own services for such organisations.²¹ Others, such as Hackney Community Transport (HCT), were founded and run by entrepreneurial individuals with an interest in technology.²² Unlike dial-a-ride, community transport organisations provided journeys for groups rather than single passengers. However, by the mid-1980s this distinction often waned. EVT was originally a

¹⁷ Martin Bould, *Reflections on Dial-a-Ride* (1983), 1-2.

¹⁸ Graham Lightfoot, *Getting There: Some recent developments in door-to-door transport for people with disabilities* (1982), 3-13.

¹⁹ Lothian Community Transport Services, *A History & A Celebration: 1971-2016* (2016), online booklet, <[https://www.lcts.org.uk/PDFs/LCTS%20\(History\).pdf](https://www.lcts.org.uk/PDFs/LCTS%20(History).pdf)>, accessed 28 February 2023, 2.

²⁰ Private collection, Community Transport, *Community Transport*, folder, n.d. (1974?).

²¹ Ealing Community Transport company archive, Greenford Depot ECT offices (henceforth ECT), File: 'Old Applications Grant/Finance', Letter from Adrienne Talbot to John Wood, 9 January 1981.

²² Donald Robertson, 'Disk Drive', *Community Transport Quarterly*, winter (1985), 28.

community transport group and others also offered varying degrees of services to individuals.²³ HCT, for instance, ran Hackney's GLC-funded dial-a-ride from 1984 to 1987 and ECT took over the operations of a small, formerly GLC-funded dial-a-ride in Southall in 1990.²⁴

The staggeringly diverse nature of the passengers served by vehicle-pooling community transport groups inclined them towards adopting democratic constitutions, familiar to many small community groups and associations. The membership lists of Ealing Voluntary Services Council and HCT in the early 1980s both contained well over one hundred organisations, ranging from Rotary clubs to Southall Black Sisters in Ealing, and from Britannia Squash Club to the Socialist Workers Party in Hackney. Anglicans, Baptists, Haredim, Hindus, Methodists, Muslims, Pentecostals, and Seventh Day Adventists were all represented, united around a common need for transit.²⁵ Accordingly, the norm was that constitutions were written to resolve matters through a delegate system, elected committees, and voting.²⁶ This was common sense to leading organisers, like Bould, who answered the question 'what is community transport?' in 1981 by describing it as a means 'whereby people can take control over an area of their lives which is important to them. ... [In cities it] is to be expected that their [member organisations'] representatives would control it, through a democratic procedure'.²⁷ Democracy was embedded in the community transport movement's DNA, accommodating people of all ages, faiths, politics, cultures, and genders around transport needs. As local organisations became central nodes of community activity in a sharing economy they necessitated means of power sharing.

Furthermore, the community transport movement of the early 1980s displayed a certain youthful do-it-yourself and new-wave ethos, which was shared with elements of dial-a-ride. Early issues of the movement's magazine *Community Transport Quarterly* (CTQ) and its predecessor, *Roadrunner*, had a zine-like, home-made production quality. Its typesetting and layout were simple and cartoon illustrations, like comedic illustrations in other early community transport handbooks, had a cheeky, Beano-esque style (illustration 3.1).²⁸ It was perhaps no coincidence that the second issue of *Roadrunner* in 1981 featured a report of EVT taking a group of young people with disabilities to see Ian Dury, who met them backstage.²⁹ Dury, who lived with polio paralysis and who, two years earlier, had released the chart-topping album *Do It Yourself*, represented the fresh confidence young people

²³ Lothian Community Transport Services, *A History*, 2.

²⁴ They also cooperated with Ealing Dial-a-Ride from 1983. ECT, File: 'Passenger Service Grant Cut', Ealing Community Transport, *Annual report*, 1991.

²⁵ ECT, File: 'Old Applications Grant/Finance', Ealing Voluntary Services Council, *Annual Report* (1982), n.p.; Private collection, Hackney Community Transport, *Annual Report 1984* (1984), 54-60.

²⁶ ECT, File: 'ECT Constitution etc. History', Camden Community Transport, 'Articles of Association of Camden Community Transport', n.d. (1985?). Camden's constitution served as a model for ECT.

²⁷ Martin Bould, 'CT: Some thoughts', *Roadrunner*, no. 2 (1981), 15.

²⁸ *Roadrunner* was published by EVT. John Taylor, 'The "Chairlock"', *Community Transport Quarterly*, vol. 1, no. 4 (1982), 15.

²⁹ *Roadrunner*, 'Sex and drugs and...', no. 2, December (1981), 5.

with disabilities expressed in punk and new wave, where normative beauty standards did not prevent their generation from shaping their own destinies.³⁰ Keith Armstrong, who in the early 1980s was a dial-a-ride activist self published his own single under the label Old Knew Wave Records in 1978, exemplifying how these cultures overlapped.



Illustration 3.1: Driving on the right side of the law. A small cartoon from an early issue of *Community Transport Quarterly*.³¹

The people whose names occurred frequently in the early days of London dial-a-ride and the debates about its future were predominantly born after 1940. A brief overview of nine leaders who appear in this chapter gives an impression of the persons involved. They included Keith Armstrong (1950–2017), Martin Bould, Elizabeth Copsey (c. 1936–1998), Alan Desborough (1947–2008), Bryan Heiser (1946–2013), Stephen Sears, Rachel Hurst (1939–), Alan Walker (b. 1945) and Dave Wetzel (1942–). During the 1980s – the decade when dial-a-ride was established in London – most of these individuals were in their thirties or early forties. Apart from Bould, Sears, and Wetzel, all were people with disabilities and all nine believed that people with disabilities should control the service organisations they used. Hurst, for instance, who established and chaired Greenwich’s dial-a-ride group between 1983 and 1989, was an organiser for the British Council of Organisations of Disabled People (BCODP), a federation set up in protest of the power of able-bodied people in disabled people’s organisations.³² Similarly, Armstrong co-founded the Liberation Network of People with Disabilities in 1979, and he and Desborough wrote for its journal. Desborough, Heiser, and Walker helped establish the capital’s first dial-a-ride service in Islington in 1978, while Heiser and Armstrong

³⁰ Matthew Worley, *No Future: Punk, politics and British youth culture, 1976–1984* (2017), 194.

³¹ *Community Transport Quarterly*, ‘Legal Matterszzzz’, vol. 1, no. 4 (1982), 13.

³² BI, Armstrong/15, Interview with British Council of Organisations of Disabled People (BCODP) and Greenwich Association of the Disabled (GAD), 30 April 1987, 1.

(after 1983) later worked together for the third, Camden Dial-a-Ride. Furthermore, Desborough and Walker were, respectively, the press officer and chair for FoLDaR, where they employed Bould, after it was established in 1983. After FoLDaR became LDaRUA in 1987, Copsey became its chair. She was succeeded, in 1989, by Armstrong, who recruited Wetzel to be the organisation's executive director. All of them were, thus, involved with more than one voluntary organisation. Some had experience of the labour movement, like Sears, who was a local chair for the Association of Clerical, Technical and Supervisory Staff union and later became a Labour councillor. Armstrong had been a trades council representative for the Musicians' Union. He was actively involved in over a dozen organisations between leaving school and joining the Camden Dial-a-Ride committee in 1983, including Rock Against Sexism in 1979 and Paddington Law Centre (where Paul Boateng worked), and lived as a squatter after first moving to London in the mid-1970s.³³

Perhaps partially due to the nature of the available archives and the regional and national debates, most – but certainly not all – of the predominant persons who shaped the direction of dial-a-ride with regards to public transport and user democracy were men. Nevertheless, in local organisations women such as Alison Lowe, an organiser at HCT, and Ruth Mackenzie, the chairman of Lambeth Dial-a-Ride (LAM DAR), were also indispensable to their operations. Moreover, as I will detail below, in London elderly women constituted most of the user demand for dial-a-ride. It was within networks formed by such individuals that London's dial-a-rides were established.

At the GLC, Dave Wetzel was a main point of contact for the dial-a-ride organisers. His election as Transport Committee chair had been almost accidental in May 1981, but the bus conductors' son turned out to be well-prepared for the role.³⁴ He was not a university graduate and, like many young London Labour Party representatives, had been a union organiser, having risen through the ranks of the transport industry from college student engineer to London Transport (LT) bus driver, roster officer at British Airways, and finally to political organiser for the Co-op.³⁵ When defending the GLC's policy to cut LT fares he would recall how his father had always supported the same line, and he never failed to sign off his letters with 'yours for socialism'.³⁶ For Wetzel a background in workshops, garages, and the labour movement was no contradiction to making transport for people with disabilities one of his committee's main priorities.

Even before Wetzel, however, the GLC had funded dial-a-ride in London since its inception, but only because of action by organisers like Desborough, Heiser and Walker. In 1979, the London

³³ BI, Armstrong/12, Keith Armstrong, Untitled CV document, n.d. (1984?); John Gulliver, 'Keith Armstrong, a one-man machine fighting for people with disabilities', *Camden New Journal*, 21 September 2017, <<http://camdennewjournal.com/article/keith-armstrong-a-one-man-machine-fighting-for-people-with-disabilities>>, accessed 28 February 2023.

³⁴ Ken Livingstone, *You Can't Say That: Memoirs* (2011), 157, 167.

³⁵ BI, Wetzel/404, Dave Wetzel, 'Biographical note', n.d. (1981?).

³⁶ BI, Wetzel/21, letter from Dave Wetzel to Richard Milner, 8 April 1984.

Borough of Islington received funding from the Department of the Environment's (DoE) Inner Cities Programme to run a dial-a-ride service for people with disabilities. Like the MSC, seen in chapter one, the Inner Cities Programme had evolved out of the Wilson and Callaghan governments' industrial strategy, and the original dial-a-ride proposal was made by a person with disabilities and its implementation was planned with the Islington Disablement Association.³⁷ The previous year, the Conservative GLC leader Horace Cutler had stated 'no objection to your pursuing the suggestion that London Transport take over the [proposed dial-a-ride] service'.³⁸ The GLC followed this measured approach by limiting itself to making a one-off £24,000 grant, for a three-year period, to support Islington's pilot trial. But fundamentally, the Council's controller of transport stressed that '[n]o commitment is given for the longer term or for wider based schemes'.³⁹

But Heiser persisted. Having founded and moved his work to Camden Dial-a-Ride, soon after Livingstone's Labour administration took office, he wrote Wetzel a letter. 'I wonder whether you have a view on your responsibility to people such as myself who are excluded from London Transport?' he asked, before suggesting a small budget for minibuses.⁴⁰ Labour's GLC pre-election discussions or manifesto included virtually no mention of disability and certainly not of dial-a-ride.⁴¹ Nevertheless, Wetzel was highly receptive and during the following months, GLC transport officers, on his instructions, began investigating accessible transport options, ruling out lifts and ramps at underground stations as 'prohibitively expensive'.⁴² In January 1982, Heiser repeated his request on behalf of Camden Dial-a-Ride, emphasising its user-run principles: 'ours is largely based on voluntary effort in that we, people with disabilities, are ... organising the project ourselves'.⁴³ Although attitudes among the GLC's senior transport staff towards dial-a-ride were unchanged since 1979, the achievements and rapid growth of Islington's and Camden's dial-a-rides were evaluated and in June 1982 their funding requests were approved.⁴⁴ Once the dial-a-ride organisers had their foot in the door with the GLC their demands were soon followed by sympathetic councillors ordering officers to increase resources.

³⁷ Bould, *Reflections on Dial-a-Ride*, 3; BI, Wetzel/328, GLC, London Transport Committee, Report (19.3.79) by Controller of Planning and Transportation, LT164; Murray Stewart, 'Ten Years of Inner Cities Policy', *The Town Planning Review*, vol. 58, no. 2 (1987), 131.

³⁸ Quoted in BI, Wetzel/328, letter from Paul Hughes to James Swaffield, 7 December 1981.

³⁹ BI, Wetzel/328, GLC, London Transport Committee, Report (19.3.79) by Controller of Planning and Transportation, LT164.

⁴⁰ BI, Wetzel/219, letter from Bryan Heiser to Dave Wetzel, 21 July 1981.

⁴¹ London Labour Party, *A Summary of Labour's GLC Election Proposals* (1981); Greater London Regional Council of the Labour Party, *A Socialist Policy for the GLC: Discussion papers on Labour's G.L.C. election policy* (1980), 129-47.

⁴² BI, Wetzel/326, Memorandum from Martin Foulkes to Yvonne Sieve, 18 September 1981.

⁴³ BI, Wetzel/328, letter from Bryan Heiser to Dave Wetzel, 14 January 1982.

⁴⁴ BI, Wetzel/432, letter from Bryan Heiser to Dave Wetzel, 24 June 1982.

Since most of the earliest dial-a-rides were funded by the DoS or MSC, transport organisers initially approached Wetzel as one funding alternative among many, but MSC cuts soon pushed more organisations further into the GLC's arms. Heiser informed Wetzel in November 1982 that rates for drivers employed with MSC funds would see their pay drop to £60 per week and workers would have to be replaced annually, conditions which Camden Dial-a-Ride rejected outright.⁴⁵ Concurrently, John Taylor, a leading figure in the community transport movement, argued in an editorial for *CTQ* that reliance on the MSC and local council social services departments should be dropped entirely in favour of 'mainstream funding for properly established projects through the transport subsidy programme'.⁴⁶ Steve Sears, transport organiser at ECT and a local union branch chair, rejected the Conservative's new MSC regime as 'a devious wage-cutting exercise ... by a cynical Government bent on manipulating the unemployment figures'.⁴⁷ Hence, organisations which had not previously sought GLC support approached Wetzel. This included ECT, who used a Transport Committee grant to replace their MSC funding, after that was discontinued in 1983, to pay for two mechanics.⁴⁸ While access to central government transport funds were restricted, Wetzel's transport committee was a second-best option in London, especially before abolition became a certainty after 1984.

Wetzel's Transport Committee, for its part, almost immediately recognised dial-a-ride as 'a service ... worth gaining further experience of'.⁴⁹ Clearly satisfied by the results, it hugely scaled up dial-a-ride funding, giving out £773,997 to ten dial-a-rides across London by September 1983.⁵⁰ By October 1985 the Transport Committee had helped the service explode from a few spread-out voluntary efforts to a network of GLC-funded organisations in thirty-one boroughs with thirty radio control centres.⁵¹

This sequence of events – popular demand, followed by letters to officials and, later, policy change – was typical. Another example can be found in the GLC's decision to open bus lanes to dial-a-ride minibuses. During 1983, both the Southwark Disablement Association's general secretary, Mary Marshall, and Keith Armstrong made written proposals to the Council and LT to let minibuses with fewer than twelve passenger seats use bus lanes. Neither LT nor GLC officers responded favourably. Yet, following further representations by Armstrong (as a member of LT's Passengers

⁴⁵ BI, Wetzel/431, letter from Bryan Heiser to Dave Wetzel, 10 November 1982. Average weekly wages for over 21s in 1982 were £154.3 for men and £98.9 for women.

⁴⁶ John Taylor, 'Ending the Alms Race', *Community Transport Quarterly* (henceforth *CTQ*), vol. 1, no. 4 (1982), 3.

⁴⁷ Richard Armitage, 'Ealing', *CTQ*, vol. 2, no. 1 (1983), 38.

⁴⁸ London Metropolitan Archives (LMA), GLC/DG/MIN/217/098, Report (4.10.84) by Controller of Transportation and Development, T1329.

⁴⁹ LMA, GLC/DG/MIN/217/064, Report (21.9.83) by Controller of Transportation and Development, CA1801.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

⁵¹ BI, Armstrong/2, *Go by Bus! The newsletter for dial-a-ride users*, no. 3 (1985), 1; GLC, *Public Transport in London: The next ten years* (1985), 37.

Committee) – who met with Wetzel to discuss the topic in November – and by Bould (for FoLDaR) in April 1984, the GLC’s assistant chief transport planner, Martin Foulkes, became much more amenable to ‘aim to agree a proposal with FOLDAR’. Finally, in June 1985, the GLC granted dial-a-ride buses access to the same priority lanes used by LT buses.⁵² According to the documentary evidence, however, the initiative clearly came from the people in non-state organisers and was proposed through their personal networks.

As of late 1982, things were already clearly moving in the direction of accessible transport, but further objectives for the dial-a-ride organisers was guaranteeing that it would be user-controlled and a public transport service. The next section will describe how user control in dial-a-ride mirrored the labour movement’s model of workers’ control.

3.3 The Latest Bus: Democratising dial-a-ride

The impulse for user control among transport organisations stemmed from the marriage of the co-operative practice of the community transport movement with an ethos for democracy and do-it-yourself direct action among London’s key dial-a-ride organisers. This foundation for user control meshed with and was cemented by the Livingstone GLC’s underlying democratic labour-movement politics.

Many people who helped set up or shaped the direction of the earliest dial-a-ride organisations had prior experience of or were deeply committed to organisational models based on member participation. Keith Armstrong’s experimental single recorded in 1978 before joining the Camden Dial-a-Ride committee, came with a note explaining his ideals to listeners: ‘It is important that their [sic] is mutual communication between musicians and people who like music’.⁵³ This aphorism reflects a politics where the distinctions between producers and consumers, or between service providers and users, should diminish. Armstrong had also been a campaigner against homelessness in the early 1970s and Desborough – remembered by friends as a ‘lifelong socialist’ – sat on the advisory board of the centre for independent living on King Henry’s Walk in Islington, where he resided in the late 1970s.⁵⁴ Prior to joining ECT, Sears, who was also a Labour Party activist, worked

⁵² BI Wetzel/45, Letter from GLC Transport Department to Mary Marshall, 15 February 1983; BI Wetzel/78, Letter from J. B. Gent to Rufus Barnes, 28 October 1983; BI, Wetzel/332, telephone log, message left on 14 November from Keith Armstrong; BI, Armstrong/4, letter from Martin Bould to D. Findon, 2 April 1984; BI, Armstrong/4, Letter from Martin Foulkes to Keith Armstrong, 6 April 1984; BI Wetzel/326, Maurice Stonefrost, The Greater London (Bus Lanes), Traffic Orders (Amendment No.) Order 198, 10 June 1985.

⁵³ Original in capitals. Private collection, Keith Armstrong, *An Amazing Grace*, Old Knew Wave Records (1978), vinyl single.

⁵⁴ BI, Armstrong/12, Keith Armstrong, Untitled CV document, n.d. (1984?); Alastair Levy, ‘Alan Desborough’, *The Guardian*, 16 June (2008), <www.theguardian.com/theguardian/2008/jun/16/5>, accessed 28 February 2023.

for the Student Community Action Resources Programme, a network for encouraging self-organisation on several issues, including homelessness.⁵⁵ In many cases, by working for FoLDaR/LDaRUA, like Armstrong and Desborough, or travelling to national conferences, like Godsall and Sears, their influence spread far beyond their local organisations.⁵⁶

These organisers, steeped in such politics, made early dial-a-ride groups accountable to their members. While Camden Dial-a-Ride was being set up under Heiser's watch, its literature emphasised that '[o]verall responsibility will be vested in an elected Management Committee whose members will be users of the service'.⁵⁷ Having studied the Camden model closely, and as a fieldworker for FoLDaR, Martin Bould later advised new dial-a-rides accordingly as they were set up.⁵⁸ Thanks to Hurst's involvement, Greenwich Association of the Disabled changed its constitution to ensure that its committee would consist of a majority of people with disabilities when it commenced its dial-a-ride service in 1983.⁵⁹

Alongside these user-democracy structures, however, FoLDaR/LDaRUA itself was perhaps the most remarkable proponent and example of user control. For local dial-a-ride groups to affiliate (and all but one did) they needed committees with a majority consisting of people with disabilities. It celebrated and facilitated general meetings and votes by members in local organisations. Furthermore, after September 1986, FoLDaR was reconstituted as LDaRUA to provide a representative structure parallel to the state, with a users' council and general meetings, 'to facilitate the involvement of people with disabilities in the transport service they use'.⁶⁰ Like Armstrong, who thought music lovers and renters should participate in making their own culture and housing, FoLDaR, and later LDaRUA, would let dial-a-ride passengers run their own services.

FoLDaR and the GLC were central to this vision of dial-a-ride. Soon after the federation was founded in 1983, its chair, Alan Walker, approached Wetzel 'to ensure that we are working in harmony both with other aspects of your transport strategy and with the GLC's socialist intentions generally'.⁶¹ He also argued the case for FoLDaR passionately during the GLC's last months to secure finance from the Council's successor bodies, London Regional Transport (LRT) and the London Boroughs Grants Unit (LBGU). Without funding for the federation, he told Livingstone in November

⁵⁵ Graham Wade, 'The Heart and the Matter', *The Guardian*, 17 April (1979), 11.

⁵⁶ Private collection, Hackney Community Transport, *Annual Report 1984* (1984), 13.

⁵⁷ BI, Wetzel/328, Camden Dial-a-Ride, Untitled information sheet (1981).

⁵⁸ BI Wetzel/291, Promotional material for the Hammersmith Community Transport Project conference on 15 March 1984; Bould, *Reflections on Dial-a-Ride*, 1-3.

⁵⁹ BI, Armstrong/15, Interview with British Council of Organisations of Disabled People (BCODP) and Greenwich Association of the Disabled (GAD), 30 April 1987, 2.

⁶⁰ BI, Armstrong/4, *Go By Bus! The Newsletter for Dial-a-ride Users*, 'It's YOUR Dial-a-Ride' no. 1 (1984), 2; Armstrong/2, *Go By Bus! The Newsletter for Dial-a-ride Users*, 'The London Dial-a-Ride Users Association', no. 6 (1987), 3.

⁶¹ BI, Wetzel/94, Letter from Alan Walker to Dave Wetzel, 7 May 1983.

1985, 'the initiatives your administration took on transport for people with disabilities will wither and die'.⁶² To FoLDaR, ensuring that dial-a-ride users' spokespeople were accountable to users was not just a question of principle; in the absence of 'a Federation and ... a central, democratically controlled office, ... users will have no defence against bureaucrats and politicians concerned only with reducing public expenditure ...'.⁶³ Once funds for LDaRUA were approved by the LBGU, its primary means of campaigning became lobbying MPs. But it also provided a newsletter and an annual conference where the local dial-a-rides – who elected members for the service management committees in their boroughs – could share ideas and coordinate. At the users' association's launch in March 1987, the television presenter Rosalie Wilkins told attendees at the 'largest gathering of dial-a-ride users' ever in the UK that '[a]s members of Dial-a-Ride Users' Association we need to be active and vigilant just to maintain our services and safeguard our funding'.⁶⁴ In the same way workers defended themselves against employers in unions, dial-a-ride users would, through LDaRUA, present a corresponding counterbalance to the state.

When the Livingstone GLC increased its funding for dial-a-rides it set its standards according to these politics of user control. Principally, as it seed-funded new dial-a-rides after 1983, the council made it a prerequisite. For Kingston, Richmond and Merton Dial-a-Ride (one of the first cross-borough services), who received funding for start-up costs, including an office and twenty-three staff, the Transport Committee stipulated that:

The service would be organised in such a way that each Borough would have its own dial-a-ride users' committee, representatives from which would serve on a central management committee, responsible for determining policy for the service as a whole.⁶⁵

Furthermore, this plan had 'considerable support from local groups within these Boroughs such as Merton Disablement Association, Richmond Community Volunteer Service and Kingston Community Volunteer Service'.⁶⁶ By funding FoLDaR, the Livingstone GLC also enabled these groups to form a federation that could, in theory, set policies for a London-wide service.

Similar provisions were attached to all grants, thus also ensuring that the GLC could act on users' behalf if their interests were compromised. For instance, when senior staff at Bexley Dial-a-Ride decided to dismiss their assistant coordinator, council staff intervened. Mick Veale of the Transport Department wrote to ask that she be reinstated, with the reprimanding introduction:

⁶² BI, Wetzel/326, Letter from Alan Walker to Ken Livingstone, 15 November 1985.

⁶³ *Ibid*, attached briefing paper.

⁶⁴ 250 people attended. BI, Armstrong/2, *Go By Bus: The Newsletter for Dial-a-Ride Users*, 'Speech by Rosalie Wilkins at the Royal Festival Hall', no. 7 (1987), 1-2, 7.

⁶⁵ LMA, GLC/DG/PRE/297/098, Report (4.10.84) by Controller of Transportation and Development, T1389.

⁶⁶ *Ibid*.

the Council's view [is] that the responsibility for taking all decisions relating to the conditions of all staff ... and termination of employment ... rests with the Management Committee of Voluntary Groups, and that it must not be delegated to anyone else ...⁶⁷

This was a form of regulation where a public authority ordered its funded organisations to obey their members. Once money from the GLC was sent to start-ups, this did not mean that pressure from local groups for democratic constitutions stopped, however. The chair of Dagenham Physically Handicapped Association wrote to the Council in April 1985, for example, as he was concerned that invitations for the meeting to establish the Barking and Dagenham Dial-a-Ride steering committee had not been circulated widely enough to ensure enough user participation. 'Many of us with years of active service in the voluntary sector', he wrote, 'are concerned about the Constitution in an area in which the disabled take a somewhat passive role and rely very heavily upon the able-bodied members of the community'. Therefore, he and other local organisers 'take the view that the G.L.C. should become involved in its future ... to ensure that ... the Management Committee is established in a proper and democratic way'.⁶⁸ By convincing the Livingstone GLC to adopt their model of user control and appealing to officers for enforcement, dial-a-ride organisers could spread it.

Retrospectively, in 1987, after the GLC's abolition, as the local dial-a-rides renegotiated their position with LRT, Heiser described this relationship as 'interdependence': '[l]ocal management committees needed support of a helpful and friendly Funding Agency. When the committee is suffering from fatigue or a particular problem, a supportive bureaucracy is vital.' Worried that LRT's 'traditional management style and structure' might not respect user control, he argued:

... the principle and reality of user involvement is not to be cast away lightly. In under 8 years, user-led initiatives have taken public transport for people with disabilities from a dream to a reality of a unit within London Regional Transport funding 30 schemes with over 100 buses.⁶⁹

As chapter one and two showed, the Livingstone GLC was strongly inclined towards this democratic organising model. It was familiar to the labour movement by replicating the function of a union for service users and aligned with Labour policies defined during the 1970s to increase democratic representation throughout the welfare state, as in Community Health Councils (see chapter four). The GLC's headline policies would unite people around their need for full employment, to which Wetzel was proud that dial-a-ride had contributed: 'a progressive transport policy will create more jobs than

⁶⁷ Emphasis in original. BI, Wetzel/257, letter from Mick Veale to M. Webb, 25 February 1985.

⁶⁸ BI, Wetzel/220, Letter from Brian Walker to GLC Director General, 1 April 1985.

⁶⁹ Stephen Potter & Bryan Heiser, *The Development of Dial-a-Ride and other Forms of Transport for People with Disabilities in London*, (1987), 21-2.

road building', he wrote in preparation for the Council's 1985 annual report, celebrating that dial-a-ride had 'created over 300 jobs'.⁷⁰ Perhaps even more significantly, the labour-movement approach to dial-a-ride complemented this by emphasising the common necessity of unity, democracy, and user control.

The Livingstone GLC and the London Labour Party were steeped in this conviction. Kirsten Hearn, who had been an associate of the International Marxist Group's student organisation, became the GLC Women's Committee's disability outreach officer in 1982.⁷¹ Around the same time, she founded Sisters Against Disablement (SAD).⁷² It targeted Labour, saying the party could 'assist us in our struggle' if it made 'Dial-a-ride ... run by and for disabled people'.⁷³ However, dial-a-ride was only a transitional demand, while waiting for 'a fully accessible public transport system'.⁷⁴ SAD's objective was the elimination of disability, which would remove obstacles to unity within the movements its members joined.⁷⁵ In 1984, Hilary Wainwright at the GLC Industry and Employment Branch used dial-a-ride in London to exemplify how 'the confidence to live creatively ... cannot be separated from the push towards real democracy.' As 'local experiments', they would be 'the starting-point for a much wider debate about the institution of political democracy'.⁷⁶ Some *London Labour Briefing* (LLB) contributors, like Labour member Linda Clarke, evoked the idea of users owning public services for an argument against GLC abolition (and the threat to dial-a-ride funding it implied): 'How dare those rich, able-bodied Tories try to take my mobility away from me, how dare they take away our right to vote for London, for *our* services!'⁷⁷ Shifting from the particular, individual question of dial-a-ride to the general, common issue of democracy in one breath emphasised their mutual dependence within the GLC's London. When LLB published a photograph of the Labour GLC member Andy Harris with a dial-a-ride bus and its passengers in 1985 it was captioned 'working for socialism on the G.L.C.'. ⁷⁸ The Transit minibus had become part of the GLC route to socialism (illustration 3.2).

⁷⁰ BI, Wetzel/381, Memorandum from Dave Wetzel to Di Parkin, 30 October 1985.

⁷¹ Margaretta Jolly, *Sisterhood and After: An oral history of the UK Women's Liberation Movement, 1968–present* (2019), 137.

⁷² Kirsten Hearn, 'Oi! What about Us?', in Bob Cant & Susan Hemmings (eds.), *Radical Records: Thirty years of lesbian and gay history, 1957–1987* (1988), 76.

⁷³ Sisters Against Disability, 'S.A.D. Fightback', *London Labour Briefing*, no. 22 (1982), 29.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

⁷⁵ As seen also in its critique of the Lesbian Sex and Sexual Practice Conference in 1983. Amanda Cornu, 'Open Letter to the Organisers of the Lesbian Sex and Sexual Practice Conference, April 1983', in Hannah Kanter, Sarah Lefanu, Shaila Shah & Carole Spedding (eds.), *Sweeping Statements: Writings of the Women's Liberation Movement 1981–83* (1984), 304.

⁷⁶ Doreen Massey, Lynne Segal & Hilary Wainwright, 'And Now for the Good News', in James Curran (ed.), *The Future of the Left* (1984), 219.

⁷⁷ Emphasis in original. Linda Clarke, 'Disaster for the Disabled!', *LLB*, no. 39 (1984), 17.

⁷⁸ Bryn Davies & Andy Harris, 'Why We Will Resign in May', *LLB*, no. 47 (1985), 8.



Illustration 3.2: Just the ticket. Labour GLC member Andy Harris poses with a group of dial-a-ride users in a photograph for the Council's booklet *Funding a Caring Society* (c. 1984).⁷⁹

The London Labour Party's concern for making dial-a-ride available to all Londoners provides an illustrative example of this focus on common needs. In response to a monitoring report on Ealing Dial-a-Ride, the group's local Labour GLC member, Gareth Daniel, told Wetzel in August 1984 that he was worried about the service's 'ethnic take-up' and that 'no systematic record was kept of the area of origin of service users ...'.⁸⁰ The group, he thought, was not promoting itself enough in areas with 'large working class and black populations', such as Greenford, Northolt, and Southall, and needed 'active encouragement to serve the whole community ...'.⁸¹ Ealing Dial-a-Ride responded by detailing their efforts to recruit 'New Commonwealth and Pakistani' members, and how it 'remains committed to extending its service to all disabled members of the community who would benefit from it'.⁸² Ensuring that passengers of particular demographic categories were not disproportionately underrepresented might be interpreted as an effort to guarantee an equality of outcomes. However, as seen in chapter 2, an underlying objective for the Livingstone GLC was to include the broadest possible base of people with disabilities in what I call their project of user (and class) formation.

Representatives of some dial-a-ride organisations alleged that aspects of the GLC's funding were discriminatory, but the Council emphasised that it supported groups based on materially defined

⁷⁹ GLC, *Funding a Caring Society*, n.d. (1984?), 25.

⁸⁰ This was a separate organisation to ECT, run by the Ealing Association for Disabled People.

⁸¹ BI, Wetzel/220, Letter from Gareth Daniel to Dave Wetzel, 3 August 1984.

⁸² BI, Wetzel/326, Letter from Dave Strachan to Jan Wickham, 30 November 1984.

needs. To run small dial-a-ride services tailored for the needs of elderly South Asian Londoners, in addition to its borough-based services, the GLC funded four organisations in October 1984 – the Confederation of Indian Organisations (CIO), Anglo-Indian Circle, Asian Sheltered Residential Accommodation (ASRA) and North London Bangladesh Welfare Association. Its motivation was meeting specific needs. For instance, a GLC report deemed that ‘existing community transport and dial-a-ride services are not accessible to many Asian people because they are rarely operated by people who speak Asian languages’. Furthermore, these services were unable ‘to meet the needs of many eligible Asian people to go to their community centres or places of worship on a regular basis’.⁸³ The council did not intend these services as only for South Asians and their vehicles would be available to all local dial-a-ride members during periods of low demand. This policy closely echoed the language of the CIO’s coordinator Vijay Amin, who sent Wetzel a funding application in May. Yet, the council did not explicitly agree that its policy prior to this had been ‘discriminating against non English speaking people’, as Amin proposed.⁸⁴ J. Thakerar, the chair of ASRA, went further by contrasting the large grants made to Southwark Dial-a-Ride and Kingston, Richmond and Merton Dial-a-Ride to a smaller request from his organisation. He called these groups ‘a few examples of white dial-a-rides’ in June 1985 and asked Wetzel how they could be funded while ASRA was still waiting for an increase to its grant.⁸⁵ However, it was not necessarily possible to substantiate a distinction between ‘white’ and other dial-a-rides. As seen above, regarding HCT, the local organisations who constituted community transport and dial-a-ride groups were diverse. In 1985, staff at HCT’s office could take bookings in at least twelve different languages, including Gujarati, Hindi, Punjabi, and Urdu.⁸⁶ Similarly, Barnet Dial-a-Ride was chaired, since it first received GLC funds in 1984, by Frederick George, a Sri Lankan Baptist pastor, and Lambeth Dial-a-Ride published its leaflets and membership forms in South Asian languages.⁸⁷ Far from funding organisations based on particular identities, the GLC’s dial-a-ride project, in theory and in practice, favoured mixing people regardless of their identity. Where specifically South Asian organisations were funded to run dial-a-rides this was focused on the need to bridge language barriers, which, in many cases, were already coming down. Their example demonstrates that what ultimately mattered to the GLC was turning Londoners with disabilities, in all their diversity, into dial-a-ride users.

⁸³ LMA, GLC/DG/PRE/217/100, Report (25.10.84) by Controller of Transportation and Development, T1417, 7.

⁸⁴ BI, Wetzel/292, Letter from Vijay Amin to Dave Wetzel, 22 May 1984.

⁸⁵ BI, Wetzel/258, Letter from J. Thakerar to Dave Wetzel, 24 June 1985.

⁸⁶ Private collection, Hackney Community Transport, *Annual Report 1985* (1985), 6; Hackney Community Transport, *Directory of Services 1987* (1987), 12.

⁸⁷ BI, Wetzel/257, *Barnet Press*, ‘All Systems Go for Dial-a-Ride’, 8 November (1984), press clipping; Rebecca Lowe, ‘“Visionary” East Barnet pastor retires after record 40 years’, *Barnet & Potters Bar Times*, 14 November (2009), <www.times-series.co.uk/news/4740188.visionary-east-barnet-pastor-retires-after-record-40-years>, accessed 28 February 2023; BI, Wetzel/260, Letter from Gill Whitworth to Musa Razui, 16 May 1984.

3.4 Vanturing out: Dial-a-ride users' experiences

The typical experiences of dial-a-ride in 1980s London were those of retired women, who constituted the vast majority of the demand that made the service a success. For the generation that came of age before and during World War Two, dial-a-rides finally realised the promise of lifelong freedom made to them when they were young and able-bodied by William Beveridge and by Attlee's Labour Party. The promise failed those who became old and disabled, but the Livingstone GLC would rectify this. As dial-a-rides expanded across London between 1982 and 1988, survey after survey showed that most passengers were women over sixty. They constituted fifty-two per cent of users in 1987, while women overall made up eighty-two per cent. Most of them were over seventy-five years old and perhaps as many as forty per cent lived alone.⁸⁸ Although men and other age groups were not insignificant, older women's need for the service and use of it was the base of its growth to over 50,000 users in 1990. Since between a third and half of dial-a-ride passengers' trips were social or recreational it is clear that, much like the younger pioneers, they considered the minibuses a new means to their right to freedom.⁸⁹

Descriptions of liberty abound among the accounts and testimonies left by dial-a-ride users, not least in letters sent to the GLC or local transport associations. 'The sense of freedom that Dial-a-Ride gives me is indescribable', wrote Claudia Jones, a user in Camden who had been physically disabled for fourteen years, when thanking Camden Dial-a-Ride in October 1982. She explained how '[s]ince Dial-a-Ride started I have been able to do things that were not possible before, for instance, I have been able to visit friends, go to the theatre and I have been able to join two classes'.⁹⁰ "'Dial-a-Ride" has now ... opened up a new world', said another user. 'One can now go out to buy clothes'. (Catalogues, she added, had been 'useless and frustrating – only for the young'.)⁹¹ Similarly, the ability to do her own shopping equaled sovereignty to Miss D. Simpson, another Camdenite. She wrote to her local dial-a-ride to thank them just after her first trip to Waitrose, where she 'spent a jolly good hour choosing anything I fancied', noting how 'it means so much, to go out and buy food for ourselves, rather than relying on others'.⁹² This mobility was contrasted to being trapped at home prior to local investments in accessible transport. In 1985, Miss L. N. Overton told

⁸⁸ Greater London Association for Disabled People, *Transport for People with Disabilities* (1984), 30; Stephen Potter, *Who Uses Dial-a-Ride?* (1987), 4-5.

⁸⁹ BI, Armstrong/5, Camden & City Dial-a-Ride, Dial-a-Ride statistics, 12 September 1987.

⁹⁰ BI, Wetzel/431, letter from Claudia Jones to John Wiggins, 14 October 1982. Heiser attached several such glowing reviews to Camden Dial-a-Ride's grant application to Wetzel the following month.

⁹¹ BI, Wetzel/431, letter from Dorothy D. to John Wiggins, 18 October 1982.

⁹² BI, Wetzel/431, letter from D. Sampson to John Wiggins, 26 October 1982.

Dave Wetzel that she was ‘unable to get out until it [dial-a-ride] started in Croydon thanks to the G.L.C.’⁹³ Edith O’Shea, hoping to help save the GLC from abolition in 1985, told Ken Livingstone:

[t]his scheme means so much to us severely handicapped and O.A.P. [old age pensioners] ... so many of us ... never got outside our front door until this scheme came along it’s such a great thing to be able to visit a friend and do our own shopping ...⁹⁴

Younger people with disabilities celebrated this independence too. In 1983, 36-year-old Alan Desborough remembered the first time he could control when and where he travelled, after he moved into a centre for independent living in Islington: ‘It was marvellous at the time to be able to pick up Time Out and just say “I’m going to that concert”’.⁹⁵ Thanks to dial-a-ride, he wrote a year later, ‘[t]eenagers can go out for the first time to have a hamburger with their mates without their boring parents tagging along’.⁹⁶



Illustration 3.3: Advancing liberty. A GLC-funded dial-a-ride van in operation, depicted in the Council’s 1983/4 annual report.⁹⁷

⁹³ BI, Wetzel/81, letter from L. N. Overton to Dave Wetzel, 21 August 1985.

⁹⁴ BI, Wetzel/81, letter from Edith O’Shea to Ken Livingstone, 18 February 1985.

⁹⁵ BI, Wetzel/326, Alan Desborough, ‘Dial A Ride: Equal status with the able-bodied’, *In from the Cold*, Spring (1983), 18-9.

⁹⁶ BI, Armstrong/4, Alan Desborough, ‘Editorial’, *Go By Bus! The Newsletter for Dial-a-ride Users*, no. 1, June (1984), 4.

⁹⁷ GLC, *Working for London 1983/4: Greater London Council Annual Report* (1984), 37.

When organisers and representatives in LDaRUA, dial-a-ride associations, disability rights groups and the GLC said transport for people with disabilities meant freedom or liberation, they were, hence, reflecting widespread sentiments among users. In 1984, Camden Dial-a-Ride's chair Bryan Heiser celebrated a year of growth and what it meant for people with disabilities: 'These trips are freedom: they give us new horizons. As we become used to travelling beyond hospitals and day centres our expectations have changed, as have the way we regard ourselves.'⁹⁸ Wetzel, although acknowledging that demand outstripped supply in a 1985 GLC pamphlet on accessible transport, wrote: 'There is a need for more resources ... if our first steps are to lead to complete liberation for everyone in London.'⁹⁹ As LDaRUA's chair in 1990, Armstrong summarised these sentiments as a general principle: 'we see freedom to travel as a basic human right'.¹⁰⁰

Dial-a-ride's popularity was easily measured by its growth and the pressure this put on local groups. The local dial-a-rides allowed all residents with disabilities in their respective boroughs to join the organisations, after which they could telephone to book a minibus.¹⁰¹ Between 1980 and 1988, the number of people with disabilities who were members of a local dial-a-ride association grew annually from zero to 51,000.¹⁰² Local dial-a-ride officers frequently wrote to GLC representatives to say that their services were oversubscribed, during the peak years of the council's funding and growth acceleration. Writing to call for higher funding, Alison Lowe, an organiser for HCT's dial-a-ride service, reported that despite 850 monthly passenger trips her organisation could 'not begin [to] match the amount of need for this type of service in Hackney which is so poorly served by accessible public transport'.¹⁰³ Other organisers even became angry at Wetzel for not funding them enough. Ruth Mackenzie, the chairman of LAMDAR, for instance, wrote in 1985 to say that 'LAMDAR is at crisis point'. Despite ten to fifteen new applications every week, she felt forced to cap their membership file at 1,300 as '[o]ur service is now solidly booked for ten days ahead with no possibility of a member getting a journey in under two weeks'. With the frustration of her members bearing down on her, she protested that '[y]ou claim that you have financed Dial-a-Ride across London but this is not true'.¹⁰⁴

But this was a symptom of success. Lowe, remembered being 'bowled over' by the progress her dial-a-ride made during 1984.¹⁰⁵ In early 1985 the chair of Wandsworth Community Transport, Audrey Lees, called on Wetzel to allow them to hire more staff to take pressure off her coordinator, Val. The summer, she wrote, would see 'Val's workload [increase] even more, and it could be that

⁹⁸ BI, Wetzel/392, Camden Dial-a-Ride, *Annual Report 1983-4* (1984), 1.

⁹⁹ GLC, *Transport for People with Disabilities – The GLC's initiatives* (1985), 3.

¹⁰⁰ Quoted in, BI, Armstrong/2, *Go By Bus: The Newsletter for Dial-a-Ride Users*, 'Mobility as a human right', no. 16 (1990), 1.

¹⁰¹ BI, Wetzel Archive, Wetzel/328, letter from Bryan Heiser to Dave Wetzel, 14 January, 1982.

¹⁰² Gina Harkell, *London Dial-a-Ride Review '88* (1988), 4.

¹⁰³ BI, Wetzel/326, letter from Alison Lowe to John Carr, 31 May, 1985.

¹⁰⁴ BI, Wetzel/326, letter from Ruth Mackenzie to Dave Wetzel, 1 August 1985.

¹⁰⁵ Private collection, Hackney Community Transport, *Annual Report 1985* (1985), 20.

without additional help she could break under the strain'.¹⁰⁶ Relations with other groups were more cordial, as when Haringey Dial-a-Ride's co-ordinator praised Wetzel for their third minibus, which could 'carry another 352 passengers per month'. He thanked the Transport Committee's staff in particular, noting how 'it never ceases to amaze me how unfailingly helpful they are'.¹⁰⁷ Such accounts, nevertheless, reveal how the rapid growth in demand for accessible transport forced staff in cash-strapped organisations to push themselves to the limit, including the women who did many difficult and stressful jobs needed for organising the service.

But the GLC's money had only scratched the surface, a fact recognised by the Conservative MP Robert Hughes while arguing for continued dial-a-ride funding in 1987:

previously housebound [persons] have seen their horizons extended and their lives transformed. Because of that, Dial-a-Ride has become the victim of its own success. It simply cannot keep up with the demand.¹⁰⁸

Reaching this level of national debate would become one of the dial-a-ride movement's greatest political achievements to date and is the topic of the next section. Significantly, it was at first accomplished without sacrificing its principle of user control. However, later, when the GLC was not there to guarantee this ideal, the service was gradually cut off from its democratic roots.

3.5 Driven to Succeed: Winning the debate on professional status and government funding

GLC funding allowed dial-a-ride organisers to establish that dial-a-ride should have the status of a public transport service with professional drivers, rather than volunteers. None of these assumptions was taken for granted in the original community transport dial-a-ride concept. However, while grants were paid for implementing these ideas they were not the guaranteed outcome but rather the result of a debate among dial-a-ride and community transport organisers, disability organisations, and the government. This combination of funding and agency shaped how dial-a-ride came to be taken for granted, as an institution, in the long term, despite the end of its social-democratic organising model.

To transport organisers like John Taylor, Alan Desborough and Alan Walker, it was obvious from an early stage that for dial-a-ride to receive an equal standing to existing public transport they had to convince both politicians and other members of their movement to not regard minibuses as charities or social services. As noted above, Taylor argued in 1982 for 'mainstream funding' on par

¹⁰⁶ BI, Wetzel/295, letter from Audrey Lees to Dave Wetzel, 30 January 1985.

¹⁰⁷ BI, Wetzel/326, letter from Colin Akers to Dave Wetzel, 21 November 1985.

¹⁰⁸ *Hansard* (House of Commons), 6th ser., vol. 122, col. 667 (12 November 1987).

with nationalised British Rail and the National Bus Company, as opposed to the short-term responsibility of council social services departments or the MSC.¹⁰⁹ The GLC Transport Committee's support had, thus, offered some hope, but seemed precarious. *CTQ*'s editor Peter Cann worried in 1983 that, were the GLC to be abolished, 'community transport may be forced back into the area of social services after fighting for so long to get into the transport area'.¹¹⁰ Releasing this threat, FoLDaR made it an objective to 'ensure any proposed London Region Transport Authority has a duty to finance dial-a-rides'.¹¹¹ As far as FoLDaR, chaired by Walker, was concerned '[t]he government's proposal that dial-a-rides should be funded by local authorities on a voluntary basis is wrong in principle and in practice ...'. It would, the federation said, create 'a risk that only a marginal service for the most severely disabled people will be funded, some boroughs will not fund dial-a-ride at all'.¹¹² FoLDaR's newsletter, *Go By Bus*, made it clear in March 1985 that this was a question of parity: 'We want a dial-a-ride network which will take us anywhere in London on much the same terms as buses and tubes take everyone else.'¹¹³ As editor, Desborough added:

I wonder why it's taken all the 1980s to establish a public transport service for people with disabilities. The simple answer is people look on us as charity cases and they couldn't imagine us as independent people within the community. I remember two or three years ago when the first few dial-a-rides were just getting off the ground, people were actually raising money to buy vehicles, and I thought, how strange, for the able bodied don't raise money for buses and tubes ... Dial-a-ride is not a charity service — it is an essential part of the public transport system ...'¹¹⁴

The threat to freedom and equal status that came from relying on borough councils' social services departments was also tied up with becoming relegated to the position of charity. But refusing this option was to send ripples throughout Whitehall.

Dial-a-ride's success meant Thatcher's second government felt obliged to react when the GLC's abolition threatened the future of the service after a crisis at the Home Office in June 1985. A secretary of state was required to approve the GLC's grants during its final year, notably delaying a £900,000 investment – to be paid across several years – in new minibuses for London's dial-a-rides agreed by the GLC in March. The Department of Housing and Local Government's uncertainty

¹⁰⁹ Taylor, 'Ending the Alms Race', 3.

¹¹⁰ Peter Cann, 'Editorial', *CTQ*, vol. 2, no. 4 (1983), 4. Since *CTQ* covered both community transport and dial-a-ride, 'community transport' was often a shorthand for both systems.

¹¹¹ *CTQ*, '1983 Revisited', vol. 2, no. 4 (1983), 37.

¹¹² BI, Wetzel/326, FoLDaR, 'Dial-a-Ride and the Public Transport Mix: A position statement for London', October (1984).

¹¹³ BI, Armstrong/2, *Go By Bus: The newsletter for dial-a-ride users*, 'Who Pays for Dial-a-Ride?', no. 2 (1985), 1.

¹¹⁴ BI, Armstrong/2, Alan Desborough, 'Editorial by Des', *Go By Bus: The newsletter for dial-a-ride users*, no. 2 (1985), 2.

regarding which department or quango would assume responsibility for taking on this bill left several dial-a-rides at risk, since they were already in debt from purchasing the vehicles the GLC wanted to reimburse them for.¹¹⁵ Writing for FoLDaR, Martin Bould told Minister of State for Transport Lynda Chalker that dial-a-rides were ‘being hampered’ by the delay and that a new group in south London was ‘in jeopardy’.¹¹⁶ The letter coincided with a GLC press release where Wetzel said ‘[m]any disabled and elderly people are unable to leave their homes’ because of the government’s inaction.¹¹⁷ Chalker told the local government minister Kenneth Baker that she was ‘quite determined that dial-a-ride must continue’. Forwarding Bould’s letter to Baker, she urged him to clear the GLC funds quicker, concerned that the Council ‘will certainly be seeking to make political capital out of this issue’.¹¹⁸ With this concern she researched whether there really was a technical legal reason for postponing approval and, concluding that there were not, urged Baker again to take her advice. At the end of July he did, putting FoLDaR a step closer to securing their legacy.¹¹⁹

The next move was gaining parity with public transport, but as autumn arrived the Treasury resisted moving the annual £5,000,000 cost of GLC dial-a-ride spending to LRT and Baker, now secretary of state for the environment, was hesitant.¹²⁰ The alternative was funding the service through the boroughs’ social security departments or their new, shared grants budget for non-state organisations. However, by September, this had been rejected by the London Boroughs Association, which, as Harrow Council explained to the GLC, had decided to follow FoLDaR’s line that LRT should be responsible.¹²¹ By persuading the boroughs to reject taking on the task of funding dial-a-ride, FoLDaR checkmated the government and, on 9 October, Chalker announced that LRT would succeed the GLC by making these grants in 1987. In a remarkable move she wrote a front-page column for *Go By Bus* in January 1986, accepting FoLDaR’s social model of disability: ‘For too long it [transport for people with disabilities] has been regarded as a welfare problem, or worse still, a medical problem. Now we have established it is firmly part of public transport.’¹²² What the members of FoLDaR’s successor LDaRUA celebrated when Rosalie Walker told their first conference in 1987 that the GLC’s abolition ‘turned out to be our most significant victory’, was that the size of the

¹¹⁵ The National Archives (TNA), HLG 120/3358, C. J. Griffin, ‘Dial-a-Ride’, 21 June 1985.

¹¹⁶ TNA, HLG 120/3358, letter from Martin Bould to Lydia Chalker, 3 July 1985.

¹¹⁷ LMA, GLC/DG/PRB/35/049/579, GLC, ‘Government Delay Dial-a-Ride’, 4 July 1985.

¹¹⁸ TNA, HLG 120/3358, letter from Lydia Chalker to Kenneth Baker, 9 July 1985.

¹¹⁹ TNA, HLG 120/3358, letter from Lydia Chalker to Kenneth Baker, 29 July 1985; HLG 120/3358, letter from Kenneth Baker to Lydia Chalker, 5 August 1985.

¹²⁰ TNA, HLG 120/3358, letter from John MacGregor to Nicholas Ridley, 6 August 1985; HLG 120/3358, letter from Kenneth Baker to John MacGregor, 12 September 1985.

¹²¹ TNA, HLG 120/3358, letter from K. W. Bilton to S. A. McAvoy, 23 September 1985.

¹²² BI, Armstrong/2, Lynda Chalker, ‘We are Public Transport’, *Go By Bus: The newsletter for dial-a-ride users*, no. 4 (1986), 1.

Transport Committee's grant commitment to dial-a-ride had, for the moment, convinced Thatcher's government to continue Wetzel's work.¹²³

3.6 All change: Conclusion

In 1987 the London Strategic Planning Unit (LSPU, a successor body to the GLC), having read a survey produced by FoLDaR and spoke to several local dial-a-rides, produced a draft report reflecting on the past decade:

Only ten years ago, elderly and disabled people were regarded as a welfare problem not a transport one and as such ... did not feature in the minds of transport operators and planners. Since then, there has been a changing attitude [sic] ... and the assumption that they did have the need or desire to travel in the way that other people do is slowly becoming a thing of the past.¹²⁴

The foot in the door the GLC gave the disability transport organisers helped reprioritise accessible public transport in London for decades to come. But there was also continuing support from London's labour movement for democratic dial-a-ride. Keith Armstrong, having advised Wetzel's committee, became a consultant for the South East Region Trades Union Congress (SERTUC) Economic Working Party on Transport in the South East in late 1986 and was hired to be a transport officer at the LSPU in 1987.¹²⁵ Following Armstrong's recommendations in 1988, SERTUC produced a report on public transport in south-eastern England, proposing that London's dial-a-ride services should be 'be accountable to their users' and that they should be funded by the Department of Transport. This was set in a context where SERTUC argued that '[a]ccountability is increasingly a touchstone of Labour Movement thinking' and that 'institutions responsible for the [public transport] service[s] must ... develop industrial democracy in appropriate ways to ensure trade unions are party to key corporate decisions'.¹²⁶ Although the Livingstone GLC was gone, the unions maintained its line on user and workers' control.

For a few years, this remained how dial-a-ride associations functioned in practice. LT, however, wanted to change this and during the early 1990s implemented a 'regionalisation' whereby the twenty-nine local dial-a-rides were amalgamated into six larger service areas, at the cost of a large

¹²³ BI, Armstrong/2, *Go By Bus: The Newsletter for Dial-a-Ride Users*, 'Speech by Rosalie Wilkins at the Royal Festival Hall', no. 7 (1987), 7.

¹²⁴ BI, Armstrong/13 152413 Clement Obojememe, 'Dial-a-Ride – Resource Needs', *Strategic Transport Policy for People with Disabilities Working Paper No. 1*, April (1987), 1.

¹²⁵ BI, Armstrong/13, letter from Tracy Paterson to Keith Armstrong, 19 December, 1986; letter from Keith Armstrong to Michael Gerard, 14 March 1987.

¹²⁶ London Metropolitan University, Trades Union Congress Library Collections, SERTUC Transport Working Party, *Transport in the South-east* (1988), 14, 19.

share of user democracy. Local associations and LDaRUA resisted this initially. Regionalisation would mean ‘loss of power and control over the service by the users’, wrote the chair of Camden Dial-a-Ride in 1988.¹²⁷ As chair of LDaRUA in 1990, Armstrong pledged that ‘we must make sure dial-a-ride remains user controlled’.¹²⁸ Individual users contacted Armstrong to complain about the direction dial-a-rides were going: ‘LT’s deliberate policy of non-consultation with Users, except perhaps cosmetically to rubber-stamp the final product, means ... that the proposed changes in Regionalisation would be changed for the worse for Users’, wrote the chair of Waltham Forest Dial-a-Ride on 4 April 1990, fearing ‘London Transport’s autocratic attitude’.¹²⁹ In Wandsworth, one of the last boroughs to be regionalised in the summer of 1993, the local user Josie Fincham complained that ‘most people have found it absolute chaos’ and that the ‘very personal and friendly service we received from Wandsworth is just not possible over such a large area’.¹³⁰ A few years later another letter writer in West Kensington described how ‘is in the hands of accountants who are obsessed by their balance sheets and have no empathy, compassion, or understanding about how their constant demands negatively, but directly, affect the quality of the users’ lives’. She feared that ‘[t]he original idea behind Dial-a-Ride has long since been forgotten’.¹³¹ For many users the brief moment of democracy and local association in their public transport had mattered profoundly. Regionalisation did not end user representation entirely, but it was greatly limited. Members of Camden Dial-a-Ride as an independent organisation could elect their entire management council at an AGM, but as members of the Central London Dial-a-Ride, under a new company structure, their AGM elected only four out of the fifteen board directors who oversaw their service in 1994.¹³² In 1996, Wandsworth Access Association wanted to see dial-a-ride in their borough ‘returned to a locally managed and accountable service’, but nothing came of it.¹³³ Coupled with a more distant system and pressure for a more cost-effective service, fewer and fewer users could involve themselves in the management of their local minibuses.

LDaRUA, or DaRT as it was known after 1991, declined too, but did not vanish. A fierce and bitter internal dispute almost broke the organisation in 1995.¹³⁴ In the aftermath of this, it was maintained, as a charity and company limited by guarantee, by an annual grant of over £124,000 from

¹²⁷ BI, Armstrong/5, Camden Dial-a-Ride, *Annual Report 1987/88* (1988), 1.

¹²⁸ BI, Armstrong/2, London Dial-a-Ride Users Association, *Annual Report 1990* (1990), 3.

¹²⁹ BI, Armstrong/1, letter from D. Harris to Keith Armstrong, 4 April 1990.

¹³⁰ BI, Armstrong/2, letter from Josie Fincham to unknown recipients, 14 January 1994.

¹³¹ BI, Armstrong/1, letter from A. K. Cleaver to various recipients (including Terrence Higgins Trust and Tony Blair), 21 April 1996.

¹³² BI, Armstrong/3 Minutes of the Third Annual General Meeting of Central London Dial-a-Ride Ltd, 24 November 1994; Armstrong/5, Camden Dial-a-Ride, *Annual Report 1984/5* (1985).

¹³³ BI, Armstrong/1, *DaRTabout: Newsletter for Dial-a-Ride and Taxicard users*, ‘Access Group’, summer (1996), 4.

¹³⁴ BI, Armstrong/1, Minutes of the DaRT Extraordinary General Meeting, 23 October 1995.

the London Boroughs Grant Committee, even as its membership fell sharply. It had only seven or eight thousand paid-up members in 1995, down from a supposed 15,000 three years earlier.¹³⁵ From 1997 to 1998 the membership subscriptions DaRT received were halved from £14,816 to £7,202.¹³⁶ Its work in this period focused on the ‘production of well informed lobbying material’, ‘long-term media campaigns’, ‘meetings with service operators, funders, and planners’, and ‘providing specialist advice and information’ to people with disabilities, including via a telephone helpline and by surveying members, as well as sending ‘responses to ... numerous Government consultation exercises.’¹³⁷ This was similar to FoLDaR’s work, but there was a sense that the aspiration to be a mass-membership body campaigning against the state was demobilised, partially because with New Labour in government and the prospect of a restored regional authority for London, it sought a closer working relationship with the departments it once treated antagonistically. In January 2003, Dave Wetzel, now as vice chair of TfL under Ken Livingstone’s first mayoralty, announced how dial-a-ride would be made part of the statutory public transport network and that the new Greater London Authority (which had regained some of the powers over public transport the had GLC lost in 1984) was supporting DaRT in its publication *Transport for All*.¹³⁸ Perhaps indicating the close links between DaRT and Livingstone’s TfL, the organisation changed its name (for a third time) to Transport for All around the same time, reestablishing itself more fully in the think-tank and lobbying sphere.¹³⁹ This history, however, will have to be described in greater detail in the future.

There were many other ways in which the GLC worked to make public transport more accessible for people with disabilities, not least through its Taxicard programme, which alongside the modification of buses and underground stations in a step-free direction changed how London could be traversed by hundreds of thousands of people who had previously been shut out of public transport. This will all hopefully provide the topic of thorough future historical research. For now, analysing the relationships between the GLC’s grants and their recipients, this chapter has focused narrowly on the creation and evolution of dial-a-ride in London, both because it became a new expansion of the welfare state created by non-state organisations and since it illustrates the influence of a democratic organisational model for public services. The dial-a-ride movement shared this ambition for

¹³⁵ BI, Armstrong/1, letter from unknown sender to Graeme Keirle, 29 October 1995; Dial-a-Ride and Taxicard Users Association (DaRT), *Annual Report 1992* (1992), 8.

¹³⁶ BI, Armstrong/1, DaRT, *Annual Report 98* (1998), 8.

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*, 2, 5.

¹³⁸ London Borough of Hounslow, minutes of the Disability Community Forum, 27 January 2003, online minutes, <<https://democraticservices.hounslow.gov.uk/mgAi.aspx?ID=2227>>, accessed 28 February 2023.

¹³⁹ Wetzel called it DaRT in January 2003 and in September 2004 it was referred to as Transport for All. London Borough of Tower Hamlets, notes of the Accessible Transport Consultative Forum, 16 September 2023, digital minutes, <[https://democracy.towerhamlets.gov.uk/Data/Accessible%20Transport%20Consultative%20Forum/20041118/Minutes/\\$Minutes.doc.pdf](https://democracy.towerhamlets.gov.uk/Data/Accessible%20Transport%20Consultative%20Forum/20041118/Minutes/$Minutes.doc.pdf)>, accessed 28 February 2023.

expanding democracy from the political to the social and economic arena with the labour movement and it is unsurprising that they overlapped and worked together during and after Livingstone's GLC. Yet, this was not a guaranteed outcome, as I have tried to suggest by pointing out where the dial-a-ride organisers had to argue against the position that public transport for people with disabilities should be run on a charitable basis or a social service. Nevertheless, the attachment to user control in the dial-a-ride movement meant that not even Thatcher's third government could eliminate it, although both user control of local services and user representation through LDaRUA/DaRT declined during the 1990 for several different reasons. The next chapter will use health-related non-state organisations to notice how the Livingstone GLC's labour-movement politics informed its investments in health-service provision and pro-NHS campaigns, but also how this perspective sat alongside or overlapped with alternative movements which some organisers chose to turn towards as the power of the London Labour Party and the unions diminished.

4 Health organisations and the GLC

‘There is indeed, still today, an over-powerful lord that governs working humanity: capital. But its form of government is not despotism but anarchy.’

Rosa Luxemburg, ‘Introduction to Political Economy’, 1910.¹

‘[M]any of the truths we cling to depend greatly on our own point of view. The truth is often what we make of it; you heard what you wanted to hear, believed what you wanted to believe.’

Obi-Wan Kenobi, Return of the Jedi, 1983.

4.1 The Matter, Forme and Power of a Commonhealth: Introduction

How and why did Livingstone’s GLC fund groups concerned with health and what became of them? Answering this question involves giving examples of how a labour-movement option for responding to health-related issues was sidelined in London after the GLC’s abolition, and how this process involved some bodies choosing to focus their treatments and advice on unorganised individuals instead. Like transport for people with disabilities, health and healthcare became markedly prominent policy areas for the Livingstone GLC and its funding policies. The Council was not a health authority, but this did not stop the London Labour Party from using it to campaign for changes to the NHS, to stop cuts to the service, or to research London’s health issues, as its 1981 manifesto promised.² This was partially undertaken by the Health Panel it created in September 1982.³ However, expanding health services, education, and campaigns was predominantly done by its Grants Panel, Ethnic Minorities Committee, and Women’s Committee. Alongside other committees, they funded many organisations whose main purpose was providing information about health and healthcare, as well as groups that directly ran their own health services or classes (either as their sole focus or alongside other activities). By the end of 1981, roughly one in ten organisations funded by the Grants Panel matched this description (table 4.1). Taken across my sample months (see chapter one), so did eight per cent of the roughly seven hundred grants I studied. Many more were made to organisations that provided a range of other activities that included health information and advice, notably women’s centres and community centres. This made health, after arts, sports, and childcare, one of the policy areas most frequently funded through grant-making committees. As this work, unforeseen before May 1981, grew, the Women’s Committee defined a specific policy on funding health projects. Health and

¹ Rosa Luxemburg, ‘Introduction to Political Economy’, trans. George Shriver, in Peter Hudis (ed.) *The Complete Works of Rosa Luxemburg: Economic writings*, vol. 1 (2013), 134.

² GLC, *Minority Party Report: A socialist policy for the GLC*, agenda paper appendix, 3 March (1981), 85

³ London Metropolitan Archive (LMA), GLC/DG/PRB/35/039/401, ‘GLC sets up Health Panel’, press release, no. 401, 15 September 1982.

care work became a central section of the GLC's *London Industrial Strategy*. This chapter begins investigating the Council as a funder of healthcare watchdogs and providers.

Table 4.1: Organisations funded by the GLC Finance and General Purposes Grants Panel in October–December 1981 that provided health information as their primary activity, directly or indirectly helped provide at least one health service, or campaigned on health issues.⁴

Name	Service or campaign	Grant	Founded
Crossway Day Centre (Institute of Social Psychiatry)	Mental health care, rehabilitation centres.	£4,000	1946
London Council on Alcoholism	Counselling, training, information.	£3,000	1975
London Brook Advisory Centre	Contraception, counselling, pregnancy testing, abortion advice.	£2,000	1964
Westminster Advisory Council on Alcoholism	Women's rehabilitation hostel, counselling, advice.	£2,796	1975
Accept Services UK	Alcoholism counselling, advice, therapy.	£25,000	1975
Greenwich Association for Mental Health	Therapy groups.	£3,000	1972
Hounslow Hospital Community Project	Establishing a community hospital with Hounslow Trades Council.	£4,000	1980
Croydon Marital and Sexual Dysfunction Clinic	Counselling, education, therapy.	£500	Unknown
Ealing Chinese Group	Supporting members to visit GPs and receive sick leave.	£2,000	1979
Community Health Group for Ethnic Minorities	Health conferences, information, education	£6,500	1978
Pregnancy Advisory Service	Pregnancy and abortion support.	£15,000	1968
North London Phobic Trust	Phobias therapy, relaxation therapy, education.	£600	Unknown
Lamp-Post Trust (Bermondsey)	Health information, welfare advice.	£3,000	1972
Toynbee Hall Settlement	Counselling, health advice.	£1,000	1884
Women's Therapy Centre	Psychoanalysis, counselling.	£2,500	1976

Unlike dial-a-ride, no single institution can represent the GLC's investments and legacy in healthcare. Therefore, this chapter will analyse three examples to develop a hypothesis of how the movements they constituted changed. They are the Health Emergency groups (HE), the Women's Health Information Centre (WHIC), and the Women's Therapy Centre (WTC).

⁴ LMA, GLC/DG/PRE/056/1, GLC/DG/PRE/056/2, GLC/DG/PRE/056/3, GLC/DG/PRE/056/4.

When they were established they all assumed political surroundings created, largely, by the labour movement, Labour Party governments, and Women's Liberation Movement (WLM). Their history from the 1970s to the 1990s shows how the GLC helped stabilise their development. Around 1986, however, their ideas and methods changed. After the GLC's abolition the local HE groups which campaigned for NHS democratisation soon vanished, leaving behind the shell of their national organisation. The WHIC's grant was also cut, but it chose to shift its focus from occupational health and scientific research in an overlap with labour-movement politics to a depoliticised faith in private actions and emotions. The WTC, conversely, saw no funding reductions but nevertheless traded its collective organising model for hierarchical management and swapped its politics of class and NHS reform for a non-political position and racialising theory. Individual examples like these do not prove the existence or causes of larger trends as such, but they can exemplify the options available to health-related organisations after the GLC's abolition. Notably, despite their contrasting funding situations, the political evolutions of the WHIC and WTC, who both chose to change their theories, had more in common than the evolutions of the WHIC and the HEs, who both had their grants cut. These organisations chose what to do with the resources they had and changes to their funding situation did not predetermine their politics. While Livingstone's GLC existed, its grants maintained a common sense that united the many diverse movements engaged in health issues within the labour movement under the common purpose of democratising London's public economy but, in its absence, groups opted to increasingly focus on private individuals.

These organisations were also a sliver or, perhaps, a cross section of what the scholarly literature on health-related organisations has treated as two largely distinct movements; one for growing the public NHS, the other for developing private alternative therapies.⁵ The former includes campaigns to maintain abortion rights, improve occupational health at work, stop hospital cuts, and democratise the NHS. It was organised largely on a labour-movement model around unions, councils, the Labour Party, and state reform. The latter covers health groups aiming to diversify health services and public information inside or outside the NHS, which often followed liberal, anarchist, Maoist, or

⁵ Examples describing a division: Lesley Hoggart, 'Socialist Feminism, Reproductive Rights and Political Action', *Capital & Class*, vol. 24, no. 1 (2000), 144 (95-125); Nicholas Owen, 'Men and the 1970s British Women's Liberation Movement', *The Historical Journal*, vol. 56, no. 3 (2013), 814.

Examples describing the former category: Stephen Brooke, *Sexual Politics: Sexuality, family planning, and the British left from the 1880s to the present day* (2011), ch. 7; Joseph Melling, 'Labouring Stress: Scientific research, trade unions and perceptions of workplace stress in mid-twentieth-century Britain', in Mark Jackson (ed.), *Stress in Post-War Britain, 1945-85* (2015), 171-3; Jennifer Crane, "'Save Our NHS': Activism, information-based expertise and the 'new times' of the 1980s", *Contemporary British History*, vol. 33, no. 1 (2019), 54-7; Kirstin Hay, "'More than a Defence against Bills": Feminism and national identity in the Scottish abortion campaign, c.1975-1990', *Women's History Review*, vol. 30, no. 4 (2021), 601-2.

Examples describing the latter category: Roberta Bivins, *Contagious Communities: Medicine, migration, and the NHS in Post War Britain* (2015), 344-357; Jennifer Crane, *Child Protection in England, 1960-2000: Expertise, experience, and emotion* (2018), 175; Sarah Crook, 'The Women's Liberation Movement, Activism and Therapy at the Grassroots, 1968-1985', *Women's History Review*, vol. 27, no. 7 (2018), 1157-9; Jesse Olzynko-Gryn, 'The Feminist Appropriation of Pregnancy Testing in 1970s Britain', *Women's History Review*, vol. 28, no. 6 (2019), 874-883; Zoe Strimpel, 'Spare Rib, The British Women's Health Movement and the Empowerment of Misery', *Social History of Medicine*, vol. 35, no. 1 (2022), 4, 19.

anti-colonial nationalist-inspired lines around communities of interest, local groups and centres, and alternatives to state or party politics (despite many of them being funded by the state). This division is familiar to the labour and alternative movements described in chapter two and reoccurs in later chapters. The examples analysed below indicate that these movements, to varying degrees, cooperated and exchanged ideas during the early 1980s, but increasingly deviated after 1986, albeit not completely. This happened partially because the GLC tried to bring these tendencies together within the labour movement. It supported both union-run community hospital campaigns and yoga classes, briefly creating a remarkable overlap that offered a fleeting but tangible vision of what was possible when their work was channelled into the same plan.

The 1970s saw increasing organisation of both union campaigns against cuts to NHS budgets – which involved many feminists – and non-state alternative medicines and therapies, such as yoga.⁶ Scholars of the US politics of alternative medicine have argued that ‘alternative therapeutic regimes often forged integral connections to oppositional political cultures’.⁷ But the way the labour movement, WLM, and alternative health movement overlapped during the GLC was in itself a political project. It was not predetermined; in 1978, for instance revolutionary feminists argued that psychoanalytic therapy could never serve feminists goals.⁸ Yet the GLC, and the groups that influenced it, made using psychotherapy for the WLM part of the future it imagined for London, not least since many Londoners did. Simultaneously, decisions made within health-related organisations were crucial and they reacted to both the GLC’s abolition and the general setback for the labour movement. My analysis begins, therefore, with the labour movement and the alternative-health movements in the 1970s.

4.2 All Health Breaks Loose: 1970s labour-movement health organising

Since the mid-1970s, unions, as Hilary Wainwright put it in 1981, increasingly participated in an ‘unprecedented wide-ranging initiatives on social and political issues’.⁹ She particularly noted their growing interventions in health politics and local plans for increasing democratic accountability within the NHS. The unions’ central role in organising local hospital campaigns was, at least in London, a significant part of efforts to stop hospital closures and NHS cuts in the 1970s and 1980s.¹⁰

⁶ Lesley Doyal, ‘Women, Health and the Sexual Division of Labour: a Case Study of the Women’s Health Movement in Britain’, *Critical Social Policy*, vol. 3, no. 7 (1983), 24-5; Suzanne Newcombe, *Yoga in Britain: Stretching spirituality and educating yogis* (2019), 178.

⁷ Robert D. Johnston, ‘Introduction’, in Robert D. Johnston (ed.), *The Politics of Healing: Histories of alternative medicine in twentieth-century North America* (2004), 2.

⁸ Sheila Jeffreys, ‘The Aims of Therapy’, *Spare Rib*, no. 69 (1978), 21.

⁹ Hilary Wainwright, ‘Hilary Wainwright’, in Martin Jaques & Francis Mulhern (eds.), *The Forward March of Labour Halted?* (1981), 134.

¹⁰ An account with less union emphasis: Crane, “Save our NHS”, 54-6.

Local unions were central to this. In 1977, Camden Trades Council supported saving the Elizabeth Garrett Anderson Hospital (EGA) – a women’s hospital in central London. But it also sent a delegate to discuss plans for a new screening and advisory clinic at the site. They helped form a committee including local union branches and voluntary groups to plan ‘how the clinic could be run’.¹¹ Additionally, it supported the nurses who occupied the hospital to keep it open, an action agreed upon by the nursing unions.¹² Concurrently the Hounslow Hospital Occupation Committee organised a London-wide ‘Fight-Back Conference ... on how to fight cuts in the NHS’. Alongside ‘other London work-ins’ it gathered branches and trades councils into a ‘national’ movement. Elsewhere, it explained, ‘Trades Councils, hospital joint union committees and community organisations’ were all nodes connecting local campaigns.¹³ Similarly, with some eighty affiliated union branches, Bethnal Green and Stepney Trades Council called itself ‘deeply involved in the fight for Bethnal Green Hospital’ in 1979.¹⁴ In 1982 it intervened in council politics, to (unsuccessfully) prevent the replacement of a closed-down NHS hospital with a private hospital, which shop stewards said reflected the government’s ‘plan to leave our health service as pickings for profiteers’.¹⁵ Across London, unions, as the democratic organisations of the labour movement, were buzzing to decide how state health services should operate.

Furthermore, unions were increasingly involved in health issues in and beyond workplaces. The most high-level signs of this included the TUC’s opposition to the abortion-restricting Corrie Bill (1979) and its statement that the government’s Black Report (1980) demonstrated ‘the need for a radical improvement in the living standards of many manual workers and their families’.¹⁶ The report on differences in health between socio-economic groups, commissioned by Callaghan’s Labour government, recommended that unions be directly involved in setting national health and safety standards and ‘devote more attention to preventive health through work organisation, conditions and amenities’.¹⁷

This all happened a decade after Labour’s grandest attempt at a social-democratic NHS reform – the Community Health Councils (CHC). In 1969 they represented, Alex Mold argues, ‘moves to enhance citizen and consumer representation within public services’, under Labour’s secretary of state Richard Crossman (who in 1947 proposed the ‘wholehearted extension of industrial

¹¹ Bishopsgate Institute Special Collections and Archives (BI), FL/Barker/19, letter from Pam Jones and Candy Udwin to unknown recipients, October 1977; untitled minutes, n.d. (16 November 1977?).

¹² BI, FL/Barker/19, ‘EGA Stays OK!’, flyer, n.d. (1976?).

¹³ BI, FL/Barker/19, Hounslow Hospital Occupation Committee, ‘Conference’, *Fightback*, n.d. (November 1977?).

¹⁴ BI, BGSTC/70, letter from Dan Jones to Frank, 26 April 1979.

¹⁵ BI, BGSTC/52, letter from Dan Jones to Tower Hamlets Borough Council, 3 February 1982; Tower Hamlets District Joint Shop Stewards Committee, ‘The London Jewish’, flyer, 15 February 1982.

¹⁶ BI, FL/Barker/43, TUC, ‘The Unequal Health of the Nation: A TUC summary of the Black Report’ (1981), 2.

¹⁷ Department of Health and Social Security, *Inequalities in Health: Report of a research working group* (1980), 349.

democracy').¹⁸ Their implementation was watered down by Crossman's Conservative successors to consist of appointees from voluntary organisations rather than elected members. Nonetheless, some CHCs, like in Central Birmingham, emphasised their role to directly represent the public will on NHS policy well into the 1980s (illustration 4.1).¹⁹ Years after the CHCs failed, some socialists maintained hopes for increasing workers' and patients' control.

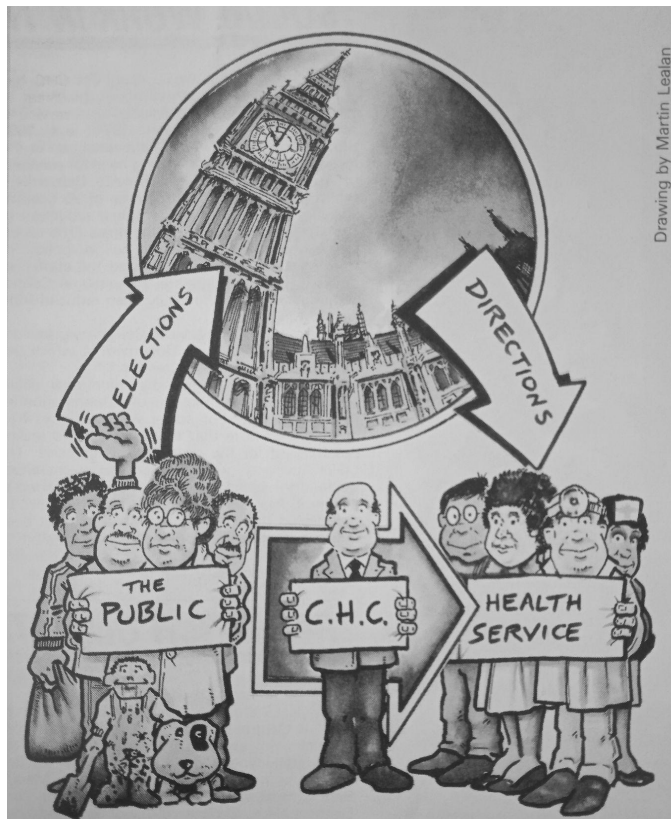


Illustration 4.1: Hypotenurse. Central Birmingham Community Health Council's model of user democracy from its 1982/3 annual report (1983).²⁰

Overall this assumed a theory that responsibilities for health should be delegated to organisations; the state, the NHS, employers, or unions. The TUC celebrated the 1974 Labour government's Health and Safety at Work Act (taking effect 1978) and unions could use workplace safety representatives to prevent members from being exposed to conditions that caused illness.²¹

Correspondingly, the *Hazards Bulletin* launched in 1976 to inform workers about industrial pollution and illness caused by workplace contamination. Its founders were three members of the British Society for Social Responsibility in Science (BSSRS), based at 9 Poland Street in Soho, a

¹⁸ R. H. S. Crossman, Michael Foot & Ian Mikardo, *Keep Left* (1947), 24-5; Alex Mold, *Making the patient-consumer: Patient organisations and health consumerism in Britain* (2015), 43-8.

¹⁹ Mike Gerrard, *A Stifled Voice: Community Health Councils in England 1974-2003* (2006), ch. 4.

²⁰ BI, Woodward/106, Central Birmingham CHC, 'Report 1 April 1982 - 31 March 1983', 1983.

²¹ Trades Union Congress, *TUC Handbook on Safety & Health at Work*, revised edition (1978).

thirty-minute walk from County Hall. Their aims and objectives in 1976 included to ‘provide “technical” assistance to working class struggles’.²² The bulletin focused on employers’ obligations to provide safe workplaces under Labour’s new legislation and how poor health was caused by work environments.²³

This work developed into the BSSRS-associated Women and Work Hazards Group (WWHG, 1977–1990), whose ten or so members investigated the health effects of women’s working conditions to produce information and advice. This covered topics ranging from stress caused by irregular hours to toxic sprays in hairdressing salons and dangerous correcting fluids in offices. Their pamphlet *Danger Women’s Work* was reproduced in *Spare Rib* in 1978, informing readers: ‘Many of us have through self-examination and self-help learnt ... to identify “women’s complaints”, and sometimes cure them with natural remedies. But we’ve made little of the necessary link between women’s health and work.’ They believed ‘sickness is related to work’ was ‘preventable’ and lauded the 1974 Health and Safety act for ‘put[ting] the onus of responsibility [for prevention] on to producers’; safety representatives now had ‘the same status as shop stewards and even more legal power ... to inspect the workplace’.²⁴ They encouraged readers to become safety representatives through union training, something the GLC Women’s Committee later supported by sponsoring the group’s documentary film for union members (broadcast on Channel 4 in 1985).²⁵ WWGH member Barbara Harrison recalled how, within the women’s health movement, the group redirected ‘health activism away from individual problems and health services to an analysis of why people got sick in the first place’.²⁶

The GLC adopted the WWHG’s labour-movement model of organisational responsibility for health. But before analysing the GLC’s position I will describe part of the organised movement for alternative medicine and therapies that composed the traditions that the WWHG were reacting to.

4.3 Acute Pun Cure: The 1970s alternative-health movements

Alternative-health movements is a broad label to apply to many diverse, and often uncoordinated, people and activities. Being etic and anachronistic, the term should not necessarily imply extensive unity compared to the community transport or playgroups movements seen in other chapters. Nevertheless, it can describe the people who, during this period shared a common aim of diversifying health services and questioned medical science outside of the state or labour movement. As seen in other chapters, the 1970s alternative movements are often imagined as new and vaguely defined although their actual intellectual ancestry was old. Alternative treatments themselves have a long

²² King’s College London Archives, K/PP178/11/1/5, *BSSRS Newsheet: Bulletin of the British Society for Social Responsibility in Science*, May 1976, p. 6.

²³ E.g., *Hazards Bulletin*, no. 1 (1976?).

²⁴ Women and Work Hazards Group, ‘Danger Women’s Work’, *Spare Rib*, no. 78 (1978), 41–2.

²⁵ British Film Institute National Archive, 128869, Audrey Droisen (director), ‘Bitter Wages’ (1984), video.

²⁶ Barbara Harrison, *Not Only the ‘Dangerous Trades’: Women’s work and health in Britain, 1880–1914* (1996), 1–2.

history (not least homoeopathy within the nobility). Equally, since at least the nineteenth century, many people who have opposed governments, whether for anti-colonial, anti-patriarchal, anarchist, or religious motives, have often embraced alternatives to their enemy's preferred tradition of medical expertise as a means of contesting sovereignty.²⁷ Since roughly 1970, immigration and the importation of therapies from former British colonies, the People's Republic of China (PRC), and continental Europe rapidly expanded the range of alternative traditions that UK critics of the state could draw on. What set this alternative-health movement apart was arguably how popular it became and how far it went to assert its parity with the medical science practised in universities and the NHS. Here I will highlight examples of how these intellectual traditions could differ from the labour movement.

That said, labour and alternative movements shared some spaces and resources prior to May 1981. In early 1974 the BSSRS's 9 Poland Street hosted a group called Action for Women's Advice, Research and Education (AWARE). The group planned research groups on both 'Women & their health' and 'Women & Unions'.²⁸ (Two of its three patrons were remembered as socialists.)²⁹ Its health group, led by Jill Rakusen, organised surveys of GPs' attitudes towards women's health and of women's healthcare experiences. Having studied US rape crisis centres, AWARE launched in September at the squatted South London Women's Centre in Lambeth. Yet, by December, jumble sales had failed to buoy its 'desperate' finances.³⁰ Its fall, however, coincided with the growth of the UK's alternative-health movements. In 1977 Rakusen co-edited the British edition of *Our Bodies, Ourselves* and women's health groups were proliferating.

For instance, in 1972, Lynne Segal joined the York Way Women's Centre in Islington which, she recalled seven years later, was 'taking up many of the ideas of the women's health movement in the States'.³¹ Having been a 'student anarchist' in Australia, she joined London's 'libertarian left'. This tendency shared many ideas and methods with the US New Left; positioning itself against the labour movement and following the doctrine that 'you organize around your own oppression', rather than around one's position and relationships within the economy.³² Short-lived, York Way was 'never given any real support by the Trades Council' and the union-supported Working Women's Charter – which would establish the National Abortion Campaign (NAC) – 'was never very popular' with its activists.³³ The US-inspired women's health groups maintained, at best, an uneasy alliance with the unions' health-and-safety model.

²⁷ Amy Sue Bix, 'Engendering Alternatives: Women's health care choices and feminist medical rebellions', in Johnston, *Healing*, 145-7.

²⁸ BI, FL/EPH/Z/176, AWARE, 'AWARE', leaflet, n.d. (January 1974?).

²⁹ BI, FL/EPH/Z/171, AWARE, 'Action for Women's Advice, Research and Education', booklet, n.d. (1974?); Lena Jeger, 'Baroness Phillips', *The Independent*, 17 August (1992), 12; Caroline Benn, 'Dame Margaret Miles', *The Independent*, 30 April (1994), 45.

³⁰ BI, FL/EPH/Z/172, AWARE, 'AWARE – Action for Women's Advice, Research and Education', leaflet, n.d. (December 1974?).

³¹ Lynne Segal, 'A Local Experience', in Sheila Rowbotham, Lynne Segal & Hilary Wainwright (eds.) *Beyond the Fragments: Feminism and the making of socialism*, second edition (1980 [1979]), 168.

³² *Ibid.*, 161.

³³ *Ibid.*, 172; Brooke, *Sexual Politics*, 197, 207.

This approach matched theories that rejected the state and ‘old left’ was adapted from equally old ideas used in the US and in China; anarchism and Mao Zedong Thought. At the conference ‘Towards a Radical Feminist Theory’ in 1977 (a founding moment for UK revolutionary feminism) a paper on ‘The Libertarian Alternative for Women’s Liberation and for Social Revolution’ proposed developing women’s health centres so that ‘more people will ... relate to the idea of a totally restructured society’.³⁴ These would be ‘alternative family planning, gynaecological & eventually abortion clinics.’ Rather than delegating certain responsibilities to experts or ‘all-knowing leaders’, everyone should take an individual responsibility ‘by means of a self-discipline nourished by conviction and understanding.’ This meant that ‘concern with life-style is not merely a preoccupation with our own integrity, but with the integrity of the revolution itself’.³⁵ The author was strongly anti-state and anti-Leninist; ‘large sections’ of the paper’s theory were ‘lifted without apology from Murray Bookchin’s “Post Scarcity Anarchy”’.³⁶

According to Bookchin, who in 1969 wrote for a US New Left audience, the working class had become bourgeois and could not be trusted as the protagonist of history.³⁷ His firm opposition to the labour movement instead embraced Russian nineteenth-century anarchists, whose theoretical focus on peasants could be exchanged for a more broadly defined protagonist: ‘the oppressed’. In Bookchin, notably ‘domination’ and ‘hierarchy’, to replace Marxists’ ‘exploitation’ and ‘class society’ and terms used by British radical and revolutionary feminists echoed this.³⁸ Assuming Bookchin’s theories, British radical or revolutionary feminists criticised the people who they considered had been patronising them and ignoring their needs within healthcare and politics, arguing for solutions to women’s problems independent of state and labour-movement institutions.

In this vein, Rakusen’s edition of the best-selling US feminist self-help health guide *Our Bodies, Ourselves* (1978) was cautious towards the labour movement in healthcare. Rakusen’s additions for British readers argued that, while unions were important, they were too narrowly focused on ‘only the economic aspects of the [health] service’ and ought to ‘broaden to look at health care and the people it serves’.³⁹ The unions’ participation in saving the EGA was unmentioned.⁴⁰ ‘Many feminists avoid trade unions and socialist organizations because they see them simply as organs of male power ...’, Rakusen’s edition added, although ‘a ... growing number of us ... want to inject feminist principles into socialist politics’.⁴¹ Similarly, the NAC was critiqued for including

³⁴ BI, FL/HARRIS/55, ‘The Libertarian Alternative for Women’s Liberation and for Social Revolution’, n.d. (1977?); Finn Mackay, ‘Reclaiming Revolutionary Feminism’, *Feminist Review*, no. 106 (2014), 97. (pp. 95-103)

³⁵ BI, FL/HARRIS/55, ‘Libertarian Alternative’.

³⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁷ *Post-Scarcity Anarchism* was written in the US in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Murray Bookchin, *Post-Scarcity Anarchism*, third edition (2018 [2004]), 112-5.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 161.

³⁹ Angela Phillips & Jill Rakusen, *Our Bodies, Ourselves: A health book by and for women*, UK edition (1978), 542-3.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 560.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 566

‘traditional’ organisations with ‘hierarchical structures and tactics’. This suggests that the authors assumed, unlike the WWHG, that feminists were outside the labour movement and that readers were not health workers. The book’s contact list of suggested organisations’ included the libertarian group Big Flame and the Working Women’s Charter Campaign, but no unions.⁴² Similar to the second edition of its precursor, Rakusen’s edition presented myriad alternative medicines and holistic therapies focused on the individual and the self, from acupuncture to hypnotherapy, with none of the scepticism it reserved for ‘hierarchical’ organisations.⁴³ When the WWHG criticised health activism for targeting ‘individual problems’ this was likely what they had in mind.

Besides anarchism, Mao and national liberation provided a source of ideas and organisational methods to anyone in the UK disillusioned with the existing healthcare system or labour movement. During the 1970s in the US, one of the most influential accounts of Mao’s Communist Party was William H. Hinton’s *Fanshen*, which followed research from 1940s rural China, where Mao pursued a national liberation wherein the urban working class was not the primary protagonist of politics. Mao’s theory, albeit Marxist-Leninist-inspired, was thus not necessarily contrary to Bookchin’s anarchism in practice.⁴⁴ Carol Hanisch, author of ‘The Personal is Political’, later recalled how many US feminists adapted Mao’s concepts into consciousness raising, self-criticism, self-help, and direct action.⁴⁵ Mao’s influence was also directly relevant to particular remedies proposed within the alternative health movement. Acupuncture, as a Chinese method, was adapted in London following Mao’s promotion of folk remedies over ‘bourgeois’ medicine.⁴⁶ Similarly, Yoga’s popularisation in Britain assumed an exotic rejection of the perceived unbalance of industrial society, but one that matched an individual ‘moral duty’ to good health.⁴⁷ Whether read through US feminists or drawn directly from the east, many feminists in the UK used these ideas as a fresh way to continue organising separately from the labour movement and its institutions.

These contrasting traditions for approaching health issues had political implications; the NAC’s split in 1983, for instance, was precisely between those who desired retaining ties to the labour

⁴² *Ibid.*, 570-1.

⁴³ Bix, ‘Engendering Alternatives’, in Johnston, *Healing*, 148-51; Phillips & Rakusen, *Our Bodies, Ourselves*, 131-5. However, the first US edition was relatively light on alternative therapies. Boston Women’s Health Book Collective, *Our Bodies, Ourselves: A book by and for women* (1971). See also, Joyce Antler, *Jewish Radical Feminism: Voices from the Women’s Liberation Movement* (2018), 116-122.

⁴⁴ William H. Hinton, *Fanshan: A documentary of a revolution in a Chinese village* (1966), xii; Mao Tse-Tung, ‘On Tactics Against Japanese Imperialism’, in *Selected Works of Mao Tse-Tung*, vol. 1 (1965), 168; Nick Knight, *Rethinking Mao: Explorations in Mao Zedong’s thought* (2007), 134-5; Geroge Katsiaficas, *The Imagination of the New Left: A global analysis of 1968* (1987), 25-6.

⁴⁵ Carol Hanisch, ‘Impact of the Chinese Cultural Revolution on the Women’s Liberation Movement’, *Women of the World, Unite!: Writings by Carol Hanisch*, digitised script, <<http://carolhanisch.org/Speeches/ChinaWLMSpeech/ChinaWL.pdf>> (1996), accessed 28 February 2023; Lucy Delap, *Feminisms: A global history* (2021), 225-6.

⁴⁶ Suzanne Tang, ‘From Outcast to Inboard: The transmission, professionalisation and integration of acupuncture into British Medical Culture’, *Asian Medicine*, no. 2, vol. 2 (2006), 256-60.

⁴⁷ Newcombe, *Yoga*, 122-5.

movement and those who considered it a hindrance.⁴⁸ The latter founded the Women's Reproductive Rights Information Centre (WHIRRC), which I will return to below. That the 1981–6 GLC funded both sides was characteristic of its strategy to synthesise these traditions under a labour-movement vault.

4.4 A Clean Bill: The GLC's health strategy

As in several other policy areas, the core of the GLC's health strategy involved funding or otherwise supporting union-related initiatives and the NHS, but it would integrate alternative organisations and therapies into these projects. There was a clear continuity between these campaigns and the unions' increasing involvement in social policy in the 1970s and the GLC's position on healthcare was strongly informed by the organisations created during that movement.

These included the BSSRS and its affiliates, the Politics of Health Group (POHG, 1977–1986) and the Agricapital Group, both based at 9 Poland Street. They consisted mainly of intellectuals but included health service workers, organisers, and workplace activists, who argued that preventative regulation should apply to many other areas of society too, including the food industry. Theorising the ideas behind their shared strategies Lesley Doyal and Imogen Pennell, strongly influenced by POHG, argued in 1979 that '[a] large component of adult physical pathology and death must be considered ... a measure of the misery caused by our present social and economic organisation'.⁴⁹ The same was argued with regard to psychological health with reference to the 'forms of stress ... inherent in capitalism'.⁵⁰ The Rowntree Foundation-funded Agricapital Group was particularly concerned with food production and had links with Labour left MPs, including the former vice president of the National Union of Agricultural Workers and Campaign Group member, Joan Maynard. It studied both the quality of bread and bread factory working conditions, including strikes by the Federation of Bakers in 1977 and 1978.⁵¹ Many other contemporary experts also paid attention to food quality and environmental matters, but the BSSRS groups notably did this from a labour movement perspective.⁵² If work and the 'environment' were the main causes of poor health, focusing on organisations that could minimise these risks by delegating individual responsibility to representatives was a sound strategy.

This network had close ties with Livingstone's GLC. At least one POHG member was employed by the GLC's economic advisor Robin Murray; the Agricapital group's Tim Lang,

⁴⁸ Joni Lovenduski & Vicky Randall, *Contemporary Feminist Politics: Women and Power in Britain* (1993), 226–7, 247.

⁴⁹ Joseph Eyer & Peter Sterling, quoted in Lesley Doyal & Imogen Pennell, *The Political Economy of Health* (1979), 27. Other POHG associates made similar arguments, e.g. Jane Salvage, *The Politics of Nursing* (1985), 103–8.

⁵⁰ Doyal & Pennell, *Political Economy*, 94–5.

⁵¹ Wellcome Collection (WC), SA/BSR/B/1, BSSRS Agricapital Group, *Our Daily Bread*, n.d. (1970s).

⁵² Claas Kirchhelle, *Pyrrhic Progress: The history of antibiotics in Anglo-American food production* (2020), 218–9.

appointed to the Council's London Food Commission. The Commission outlived the GLC and in 1988, at least two other POHG members worked on its staff and management council.⁵³ The BSSRS's influence at the GLC would become evident in the number of groups based at 9 Poland Street that received grants from the Council – the WWHG, Libertarian Research and Education Trust, Comedia Publishing, and the BSSRS itself, to name a few. Sheila Rowbotham, editor of the Industry and Employment (I&E) Branch's *Jobs for a Change* newspaper, read the BSSRS's and Doyal and Pennell's research and the GLC's *London Industrial Strategy (LIS)*, produced by the I&E Branch in 1985, consequently, identified the 'social causes of ill health' – seeing 'widespread agreement that the emphasis should now be on prevention'.⁵⁴ The GLC's position on healthcare was in line with POHG's, with the difference that it evolved under the influence of the other health-related groups it encountered after May 1981.

The GLC Women's Committee's first meeting on 21 May 1982 established seven working groups, including one on women's health. The group's report in July 'welcomed the idea of a general service like the Women's Health Information Collective [WHIC], which badly needs grants for extra workers to specialise in particular aspects of women's health, eg occupational, mental, reproductive'.⁵⁵ WHIC had been formed by sixteen women in POHG in early 1982, and later included both Lesley Doyal and Jill Rakusen. As detailed below, it was closely related to the labour-movement and WWHG's perspective on health.⁵⁶ Later that year, the working group agreed that its focus should be precisely 'health care in the community, preventive medicine, and a women's health information centre'.⁵⁷ The Committee had already acted on this position on the NHS at its meeting on 22 June 1982, when it passed a motion to condemn the 'Government's refusal to pay the health workers enough to compensate for inflation'. The committee resolves to 'support the strikers' at London's hospitals and join 'a meeting called by SERTUC on 29 June to co-ordinate support for the strike in the South East'.⁵⁸ When it began making large grants to health-related organisations in October, £4,000 were sent to the North Paddington Women's Centre, whose main work was drug rehabilitation with the organisation Release (see chapter six) while also running free classes on yoga and women's self-defence – two methods recommended by the US edition of *Our Bodies, Ourselves*.⁵⁹ However,

⁵³ Tim Lang, 'Going Public: Food campaigns during the 1980s and early 1990s', in David F. Smith (ed.), *Nutrition in Britain: Science, scientists and politics in the twentieth century* (1997), 245; Tim Lang, 'The Food Problem & the GLC', Robin Murray, August (2020), blog post, <<https://robinmurray.co.uk/food-problem-the-lfc>>, accessed 28 February 2023; *The Food Magazine*, vol. 1, no. 2 (1988). The LCF included eleven unions, trades councils, and professional organisations as members.

⁵⁴ Maureen Mackintosh & Hilary Wainwright, *A Taste of Power: The politics of local economics* (1987), 440. (The book was based on research for the *LIS*); GLC, *London Industrial Strategy* (1985), 232-233.

⁵⁵ LMA, GLC/DG/PRE/223/001, 'Minutes of GLC Women's Committee Open Meeting Held on 9 July 1982', n.d. (July, 1982?).

⁵⁶ Women's Health Information Centre, *The Newsletter* (WHIC), no. 2 (1984), inside front cover; Barbara James, Lisa Saffron & Marge Berer, 'Ten Years of Women's Health: 1982-92', *Feminist Review*, No. 41 (1992), 40.

⁵⁷ WC, SA/PAT/C/52, minutes of the Women and Health group meeting, 7 December 1982.

⁵⁸ LMA, GLC/DG/PRE/223/001, Report (21.6.82) by the Chair of the Committee, W10.

⁵⁹ LMA, GLC/DG/PRE/223/001, Report (30.9.82) by Director-General, W26, 2.

this grant was dwarfed by the Committee's contributions to organisations aligned with the labour movement; the NAC and the Maternity Alliance. The NAC was founded by the Working Women's Charter (see chapter five) and the Maternity Alliance's origins was a 1979 campaign to support a Labour MP's bill to increase maternity allowance payments. Its founders included the Amalgamated Union of Engineering Workers and it published information for union representatives on pregnant workers and poverty and motherhood.⁶⁰ They received £21,613 and £10,546 respectively.⁶¹ The labour-movement approach to health remained high on the Committee's agenda, as in November 1983, when it spent £20,000 on a public meeting to prevent the closure of South London Hospital for Women, not least, Wise argued, because of the work and training opportunities it provided women.⁶²

This was part of the GLC's overall support for the NHS and employment, which also involved creating a network of local organisations to monitor the NHS. In June 1980, one of the co-authors of *In and Against the State* who would be employed by the GLC, Jeannette Mitchell explained a strategy for NHS campaigns:

Our fantasy is that between the trade unions, the women from the health course, the pensioners, people who've been involved in the community hospital struggle and all groups which supported it (about 50 including the Methodist Church and the tenants' associations) we have a growing connection.⁶³

Following strikes against London-wide NHS budget cuts in 1982, the result of such plans was that campaigns to save small, local hospitals organised themselves into 'Health Emergency' groups. They were intended to function as local watchdogs to organise campaigns against hospital closures or cuts, and coordinate voluntary patients' groups and local activists with the NHS unions.⁶⁴

The first was Hackney HE, created in January 1983 by the local CHC, Hackney Council, and Hackney trades council. Helped by the NHS unions the National Union of Public Employees and the Confederation of Health Service Employees, and trades councils, others were formed to prevent hospital closures, as in Wandsworth and Hillingdon, where John McDonnell picketed with staff to save Hayes Cottage Hospital.⁶⁵ Once established, the I&E Committee funded them and ensured they had a regional coordinating and research centre; London Health Emergency (LHE), whose committee included union representatives. Rowbotham imagined in 1985 how HE groups were at the centre of

⁶⁰ WC, SA/FPA/C/B/2/11/1, The Maternity Alliance, *Annual Report 1981-82* (1982), 2, 15. Increasing the maternity allowance was also a recommendation of the Black Report (see above).

⁶¹ LMA, GLC/DG/MIN/223/001, Women's Committee minutes, 15 October 1982, pp. 21-2.

⁶² LMA, GLC/DG/PRE/223/12, Report (8.11.83) by the Chair of the Women's Committee, W480. On the solidarity between this campaign and the miners' wives in 1984-5, see Lynn Beaton, *Shifting Horizons* (1985), 202.

⁶³ Quoted in Sue O'Sullivan, 'Vision and reality: Beyond defence of the NHS', *Spare Rib*, no. 95 (1980), 34.

⁶⁴ Sheila Rowbotham, 'Our Health in Whose Hands?: Health emergencies and the struggle for better health care in London', in Maureen Mackintosh & Hilary Wainwright (eds.), *A Taste of Power: The politics of local economics* (1987), 347.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 331; John Lister, *Cutting the Lifeline: The fight for the NHS* (1988), 120-1; *Hansard*, (House of Commons), 6th ser., vol. 442, col. 293WH (8 February 2006).

the vision to ‘democratise the access to information about policy and to enable people to develop their own alternatives’.⁶⁶ By 1986, one hundred and fifty local campaigns, community groups and union branches were affiliated to LHE; HEs operated in several boroughs and represented the GLC’s labour-movement strategy of responding to needs identified by the unions as a means to creating full employment; the I&E Committee supported LHE – which Rowbotham called an ‘information network’ – with the expressed objective of saving jobs.⁶⁷

The *LIS* represents the GLC’s synthesis of NHS employment and democracy and new, alternative health methods. On the one hand: ‘Within the labour movement there has long been a call for democracy in the health service. ... directly elected bodies, control by local councils, or representation from trade unions and community bodies’⁶⁸ On the other, it recognised that ‘there is considerable enthusiasm among health service users and workers for new approaches which involve self-help, education and alternative medicine’. Furthermore, it understood that ‘local groups are likely to want to put more into developing and running new health initiatives if they have been involved directly in devising them’ – something learnt during years of working with alternative organisations.⁶⁹ A worker at the Hackney HE told Rowbotham in 1985 that ‘that people from different backgrounds and different cultures ... are still not using the National Health Service because it doesn’t provide the health service they want’. Rowbotham described how some Cypriots, West Indians, and pensioners in Hackney preferred ‘herbal remedies and homeopathic medicine’ and ‘the holistic approach of alternative health’. The problem, to Rowbotham, was that they were ‘paying twice over’ for their healthcare since their preferred treatments were unavailable on the NHS.⁷⁰ She believed, through her experience of 1970s feminist health groups, that healthcare was formative for the British Women’s Liberation Movement and that, starting with abortion rights, ‘alternative health needs’ would make the NHS democratic.⁷¹ While she cautioned in 1989 that the ‘[f]eminist suspicion of technology can lead to an idolization of folk methods’, the demand for health service diversification could be fused with the expansion of democracy from the political to the social sphere.⁷² In contrast to Rowbotham’s image of ‘a middle class patient earnestly consulting *Our Bodies, Ourselves*’, the health service needed a patients’ ‘feed-back system’ to increase ‘the democratising of the NHS’ for users.⁷³

The GLC followed this approach in its funding decisions. When its I&E Committee funded Tower Hamlets Health Workshop, a project developed by two osteopaths and an acupuncturist, Murray’s report stated:

⁶⁶ Rowbotham, ‘Health’, 340-1.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 338, 341.

⁶⁸ GLC, *Industrial Strategy*, 230-1.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 238.

⁷⁰ Rowbotham, ‘Health’, 355.

⁷¹ Sheila Rowbotham, *Our Past Is Before Us: Feminism in action since the 1960s* (1989), 77.

⁷² *Ibid.*, 71.

⁷³ Rowbotham, ‘Health’, 358.

The growth in alternative medicine, health food shops, sports activities, magazines and TV programmes in this area are evidence of the growing popularity of new ways of improving health. Unfortunately, however, the National Health Service has been slow to adapt its service to consumer demand. ... The role of innovative projects is to point the way to forms of everyday health provision which will provide jobs and more satisfying work in ways which better meet the needs of Londoners.⁷⁴

‘Ideally’, he believed, ‘complementary and alternative medicine should be available within the NHS’. In the meantime, however, GLC-funded projects would ‘[encourage] people to recognise and act on issues to do with low incomes and hazardous working conditions’ and would pilot ‘new models for the organisations of preventive care’.⁷⁵ To the GLC, funding alternative medicine was part of its general plan for democratic public services, full employment, raising Londoners’ quality of life, and organising workplaces and neighbourhoods.⁷⁶

After abolition, this alternative faded when the HEs quickly vanished. Campaigns by NHS workers’ unions around London had a mixed record; not always preventing budgets from becoming overstretched but holding their own on pay, at least until the early 1990s. In 1986, several HE groups existed in several boroughs. Some, like Harrow, were kept alive by union money for a few years, supporting campaigning ambulance workers and organising protests until at least 1991.⁷⁷ Hammersmith HE, however, having worked closely with health unions at the local hospital, did not leave a record to suggest it outlasted the GLC for very long.⁷⁸ Hillingdon HE may also have lasted until 1991, when it joined the NHS Support Federation for a candlelight vigil at the Department of Health and Social Security.⁷⁹ Meanwhile, LHE, without what its co-founder John Lister called a ‘network of local [HE] campaigns in London’, became a spider without a web.⁸⁰ Although saved by new grants from borough councils it shrunk to an office with a handful of staff, hence resorting to a function that offices are well-suited for; collecting and disseminating information.⁸¹ Once imagined to unite and coordinate the labour movement in and around the NHS, over the three subsequent decades it operated much more like a think tank.

Another LHE worker, retrospectively criticised the HE strategy for bridging union and non-union activists:

⁷⁴ LMA, GLC/DG/PRE/111/049, Report (24.10.85) by Director of Industry and Employment and Chief Economic Adviser, IEC2401.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

⁷⁶ GLC, *LIS*, 230, 62-4.

⁷⁷ *Harrow Leader*, ‘Sack Hospital Caterers’ Call’, 22 August 1986, 7; *Harrow Informer*, ‘Health Without Wealth: Protests over opt-out plans’, 5 April (1991), 3; *Pinner Observer*, ‘Gestures of Sympathy for Ambulance Workers’, 25 January 1990, 2.

⁷⁸ Its last mention in local newspapers was in June 1986. *Hammersmith & Shepherd’s Bush Gazette*, ‘Threat to Boycott Hospital’s Car Park’, 27 June 1986, 6.

⁷⁹ *Uxbridge & W. Drayton Gazette*, ‘Hillingdon Health Emergency Campaign’, classified advert, 9 October (1991), 35.

⁸⁰ Lister, *Cutting*, 120-1.

⁸¹ Crane, ‘Save Our NHS’, 59-63.

Union branches were urged to broaden their appeal ... The theory was developed that the more non-Labour supporters that could be roped in, the more 'successful' a campaign would be. Unions were urged to cast off their old, confrontational, 'class-oriented' image ... This strategy of embracing the wider community had the effect of alienating most NHS workers from the campaigns that were set up: as a consequence the campaigns lacked teeth and were condemned to failure.⁸²

The proof of the pudding, he argued, was Labour's 1987 election defeat. Whether or not this interpretation was correct, its irony was that the HEs intended precisely to create class unity. As seen in chapter two, the authors and readers of *In and Against the State* did not imagine class as an identity or image. Mitchell, Murray, Rowbotham, and Wise believed the unions' function could be expanded when other organisations joined their movement. Looking back, events often appear to have had only one possible course, but the GLC's strategy was not doomed from the outset. Abolition, however, made it impossible to say whether its long-term execution would have failed. In contrast, the following two examples of organisations funded by the Livingstone administration reveal that, without the Council, certain organisations adjacent to the labour movement faced a choice and decided, for reasons that I will describe, to distance themselves from the movements wherein they were established. Where there was choice there was not predetermination.

4.5 WHRRIC, QUEEN!: The Women's Health Information Centre

How was industrial and social democracy distilled out of the blend the GLC tried to create between the labour and alternative-health movements? One example is the evolution of the WHIC, which this section analyses.

The WHIC described themselves as drawing a 'radical consciousness ... from a greater or lesser involvement in left-wing politics, trades unions, and the women's liberation movement.'⁸³ They believed 'that there is a lack of information on health issues that affect women' and the knowledge that existed was hard to find.⁸⁴ The centre would, therefore, 'collect, collate and make available what information there is and to identify areas where knowledge is inadequate.'⁸⁵

It was established in 1982 with grants from War on Want (WoW) and the Equal Opportunities Commission (EOC).⁸⁶ (Harold Wilson co-founded the former in 1951/2; his fourth Labour government established the latter.)⁸⁷ The GLC Women's Committee, following its funding priorities (detailed above) in 1983, made one of its earliest grants to WHIC. In 1984, upon approving WHIC's

⁸² David Shields, 'Campaigning for the NHS: "The worms turn"', in Lister (ed.), *Cutting the Lifeline*, pp. 208-9.

⁸³ WHIC, 'The Origins of WHIC', *Women's Health Newsletter*, no. 14 (1992), 4. This republished article was originally written circa May 1983.

⁸⁴ WC, SA/PAT/C/52, letter from Lisa Saffron to W. E. Acheson, December 1982, and attachments.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

⁸⁶ The EOC gave £7,000 and WoW £5,000 annually for three years. WHIC, 'The Origins of WHIC'.

⁸⁷ Matthew Hilton, Nick Crowson, Jean-François Mouhot & James McKay, *A Historical Guide to NGOs in Britain: Charities, civil society and the voluntary sector since 1945* (2012), 248.

fourth funding application, it called the centre ‘a resource for women in health groups, self-help groups, community groups, trade unions and other women’s groups’; exactly the way WHIC described itself. With this remit, WHIC would ‘support self-help groups’ and ‘work for improvement in the health services for women’.⁸⁸ It collected information on women’s health for its library, published a newsletter and information sheets and answered health-related post or telephone enquiries from women. Its policy, the Women’s Committee, noted, was ‘formed by 2-monthly meetings of the whole collective’ and administrative tasks were shared while the full-time workers ensured the ‘daily running of the centre’. Moreover, it expected WHIC to prioritise the ‘the needs of doubly-disadvantaged women’.⁸⁹ As seen in the introduction, ‘doubly-disadvantaged’ was not a concept from an anarchist or Maoist tradition but had rather been developed for labour market studies, with a particular concern for solving unemployment.⁹⁰ At the GLC it was used to justify finding new demand for health resources that the labour movement could meet.

This was reflected in WHIC’s biannual newsletter (1983–1988). Fulfilling its function as a network and information hub, every issue promoted contact details for women’s health groups around the country and listings for health-related events. Its reviews of books and new health science took a firmly biomedical perspective. Common themes were the safety, benefits, side effects, or dangers of contraceptive methods or hormone therapies, including the pill, Dalkon Shield, and Depo-Provera – all assessed using conventional scientific methods and research.⁹¹ At the same time, out of ten issues only two did not include at least one item on occupational hazards or unions’ involvement in women’s health and only one of them – a themed issue on health in China – was published during the GLC period.⁹² Interlaced with studies of Mao’s legacy, WHIC could bring both labour-movement and alternative models of health to new readers.

In 1985 its fifth issue was themed entirely around workplace health. It reviewed the WWHG’s broadsheet *Danger Women at Work* and profiled the London Hazards Centre. Combatively, it encouraged women that the ‘growth in interest in occupational health provides fertile ground to raise the more general issues of women’s health’, preferably as part of a union and local women’s health group (illustrations 4.2 & 4.3).⁹³ The following issue included an article on how National Association of Local Government Officers branches had convinced employers to pay for workforce breast cancer screening.⁹⁴ Other issues highlighted films on health and safety, from the US and by WWHG, and the

⁸⁸ LMA, GLC/DG/PRE/223/027, Report (.10.84) by Director General, W854; Women’s Health Information Centre, *The Newsletter* (WHIC), no. 3 (1983), inside front cover.

⁸⁹ LMA, GLC/DG/PRE/223/027, Report (.10.84) by Director General, W854.

⁹⁰ See chapter 1, notes 22-3.

⁹¹ E.g., WHIC, ‘Depo Provera’, *The Newsletter* (WHIC), no. 1 (1983), 6; Gill Yudkin, ‘A Month in the Life of a General Practitioner – or how the pill scare wasn’t scary enough’, *The Newsletter* (WHIC), no. 1 (1984), 13-4.

⁹² E.g. *Morning Star* ‘Health Checks at Work’, quoted in WHIC, *The Newsletter* (WHIC), no. 1 (1983), 16; WHIC, ‘Scottish Women’s Health Fair’, *The Newsletter* (WHIC), no. 2 (1984), 17;

⁹³ Sheila McKechnie, ‘Workplace Women and Health’, *The Newsletter* (WHIC), no. 5 (1985), 4.

⁹⁴ Tess Woodcraft, ‘Cancer Screening and NALGO’, *The Newsletter* (WHIC), no. 6 (1986), 12-3.

Morning Star featured as a source for newspaper clippings.⁹⁵ WHIC's earliest self-published folders covered 'Women's Health & Work Stress' and 'Women's Health and Unemployment', alongside 'Women's Health & Smoking' and 'Women's Health & Food'. They were released in mid-1983, four years before WHIC's first booklet on alternative medicine, indicating the focus on the environmental and political model of preventative health it shared with POHG.⁹⁶

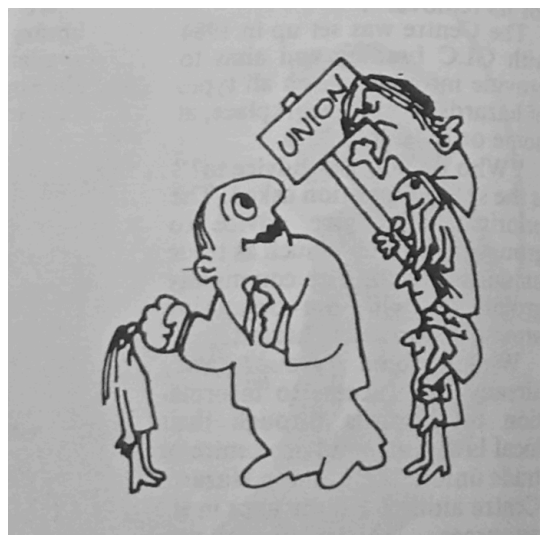
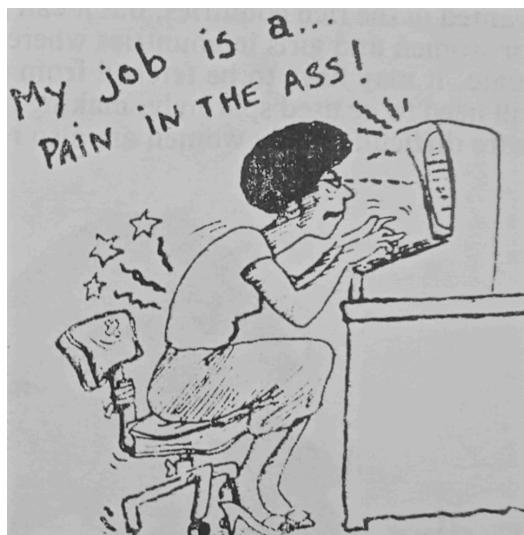


Illustration 4.2: Monitoring hazards. Uncaptioned illustration of a workplace hazard in the Women's Health Information Centre newsletter, 1985.⁹⁷

Illustration 4.3: A WHICed remedy. Uncaptioned illustration of a union backing up a member in the Women's Health Information Centre newsletter, 1985.⁹⁸

However, what was remarkable was not how WHIC chose either occupational health and safety *or* alternative medicine, but how it conceived their interaction. The centre's first newsletter in 1983 promoted a slideshow on 'the basic inequalities in health' from WoW (led by George Galloway, former Labour Party chair in Scotland). The same page promoted a lecture on 'Alternative Medicine – Political Perspectives' by POHG member and GLC employee Jeannette Mitchell. (Mitchell had covered a national nurses' strike in mid-1982 as a correspondent for *The Times*.) Similarly, WHIC's work hazards issue profiled WWHG and the Women's Natural Health Centre – who provided acupuncture, homoeopathy, massage, osteopathy, psychotherapy, and osteopathy in Kentish Town – side by side.⁹⁹ This matched the GLC's strategy, exemplified by the I&E Branch's 'Jobs for a Change'

⁹⁵ *The Newsletter* (WHIC), no. 2 (1984), 6; *The Newsletter* (WHIC), no. 3 (1984), 6, 7, 20.

⁹⁶ The five broadsheets were produced after a conference entitled 'The Social Causes of Women's Ill Health', supported by the European Parliament Socialist Group. See, Women and Work Hazards Group, *Women's Health, Work & Stress*, n.d. (1981?); WHIC, 'Resources' *The Newsletter* (WHIC), no. 1 (1983), 4; BI, FL/EPH/Y/8, Vicki Carroll, 'Alternative Medicine', *Women's Health Information Centre Fact Sheet*, no. 6 (1987).

⁹⁷ WHIC, *The Newsletter* (WHIC), no. 5 (1985), 9.

⁹⁸ WHIC, *The Newsletter* (WHIC), no. 5 (1985), 4.

⁹⁹ WHIC, 'Women's Health Groups', *The Newsletter* (WHIC), no. 5 (1985), 2.

festival on 10 June 1984. WHIC member Jenny Harding reported that the festival saw striking hospital cleaners, LHE, and the Radical Nurses Group rub shoulders with groups representing 'herbalism, homeopathy, osteopathy, acupuncture and other holistic approaches'. Before The Smiths took to the stage, others taught yoga alongside exhibitions by workers' cooperatives on reducing unemployment.¹⁰⁰

Although WHIC's newsletter rarely dedicated items to alternative medicine prior to 1987, this changed in the 1990s.¹⁰¹ This shift coincided with the centre's departure from the labour movement and a depoliticisation of its work. After April 1986, the London Boroughs Grants Unit (LBGU) continued WHIC's funding. In 1988, WHIC merged with the Women's Reproductive Rights Information Centre (WRRIC), forming the Women's Health and Reproductive Rights Information Centre (WHRRIC, renamed Women's Health in 1991).¹⁰² Both groups were 'told by funders that either we merge or one group would lose its grant'.¹⁰³ WHIC and WRRIC had been neighbours for most of their existence and had cooperated over the years, but the merger was remembered several years later by the former WHIC member Barbara James as 'a cut, and a major one'. It was 'a threatening thing in that way', she added – 'chaos'.¹⁰⁴ A few years later the LBGU grant constituted half of Women's Health's budget. In comparison, the GLC had provided eighty-five to ninety percent of WHIC's and WRRIC's incomes in 1984–5 respectively.¹⁰⁵ The group's viability increasingly depended on multiple funding sources.

The merger changed WHIC's political character. Marge Berer of WRRIC, perhaps expressing herself diplomatically, recalled how the two groups differed politically: 'We were worried about losing our identity if we merged. It was the information versus the reproductive rights approach.'¹⁰⁶ For WHIC, it also meant the complete turnover of its original membership was concluded. In September 1988, the WHRRIC collective was down to eleven women, and only Lisa Saffron (one of WHIC's first employees) had been a founding member of WHIC.¹⁰⁷ When she left in 1989, only one WHRRIC collective member (now down to six) had been in WHIC in 1986. No original POHG

¹⁰⁰ Jenny Harding, 'A GLC Festival', *The Newsletter* (WHIC), no. 3 (1984), 13; see also, John Hoyland, 'Reggae on the Rates: The 'Jobs for a Change' festivals', in Mackintosh & Wainwright, *A Taste of Power*, 373, 381; *Aberdeen Evening Express*, 'Action Call to Health Workers', 25 June 1984, 1.

¹⁰¹ In 1984 the newsletter reported that Chinese scientists had developed 'a safe, convenient, effective and economical medicine to induce abortions' using the herb trichosanthes. *The Newsletter* (WHIC), no. 2 (1984), inside back cover.

¹⁰² WRRIC voted to merge in October 1987. BI, FL/EPH/C/1445, WRRIC, 'Notice to Members', n.d. (1987?).

¹⁰³ Women's Health, 'Editorial', *Women's Health Newsletter*, no. 14 (1992), 1.

¹⁰⁴ Quoted in James, 'Ten Years', 42, 45. The newsletter's editorial after the merger discussed none of the disadvantages that members raised later: WHRRIC, 'So What's New Around Here?', *Newsletter* (WHRRIC), no. 1 (1988), 1.

¹⁰⁵ LMA, GLC/DG/PRE/223/027, Report (11.10.84) by Director of Finance, W854; WC, SA/CCD/K/6, WRRIC, 'Annual report 1985', 15; *Women's Health Newsletter*, no. 14 (1992), inside front cover.

¹⁰⁶ Quoted in, *ibid.*, 42.

¹⁰⁷ *The Newsletter* (WHIC), no. 2 (1984), inside front cover; *Newsletter* (WHRRIC), no. 2 (1988), inside front cover.

members, who Saffron said were ‘socialists’ in 1982, remained.¹⁰⁸ The London Hazards Centre stood a representative for the WRRIC management committee in 1988 but its politics within the organisation were fading.¹⁰⁹

Under LBGU and Section 28 of the Local Government Act 1988 (1988–2003) – which prohibited councils from publishing materials that promoted homosexuality, funding became increasingly conditional on self-censorship. To keep its grant, WHRRIC decided to stop selling Saffron’s popular book *Getting Pregnant Our Own Way: A Woman’s Guide to Self-insemination*.¹¹⁰ Meanwhile ‘funders’, similarly, approached James to suggest removing ‘feminist’ from the centre’s list of goals.¹¹¹ Yet, a major shift in WHRRIC’s core policy appears to have happened without outside coercion; WHIC’s explicit commitment (noted and echoed by the GLC) to work with unions was not restated in WHRRIC’s aims and objectives. Working with organisations were frontloaded when WHIC described itself as ‘a resource for, women in health groups, self help groups, community groups, trade unions and other women’s groups.’ Its ‘goals’ included ‘work[ing] for improvements in the health services for women’ and to ‘campaign on women’s health issues’.¹¹² In contrast, the new ‘aims and objectives’ adopted by WHRRIC after the merger were to ‘empower’ and ‘inform women’ through providing information but without reference to the organisational networks stressed by WHIC’s repeated use of ‘groups’. WHRRIC pledged to ‘support self help and the sharing of experiences among women’; activities that could be entirely private.¹¹³ Likewise, dropping WHIC’s ambition for NHS reform represented changing political horizons.

WHRRIC was increasingly pessimistic about political change and favourable of individual responsibility. This followed a similar sentiment in WRRIC’s final newsletter issue. WRRIC members who had been present at a TUC demonstration against an Abortion Amendment Bill noted: ‘energy seemed very low to many of us – perhaps the weekly marches against the NHS crisis, clause 28, the education bill etc. are taking their toll on our hearts’.¹¹⁴ Although WRRIC, three years earlier, encouraged readers to pass motions in their union branches to oppose similar abortion restrictions, its advice in 1988 was limited to ‘write letters to sympathetic MPs’.¹¹⁵ An early WHRRIC newsletter editorial expressed concern for dangerous drugs, but low hopes that they could be banned, in contrast to WHIC and WWHG’s calls for regulation.¹¹⁶ Coverage of occupational health continued after 1988, but occasional items on the dangers of computer monitors to pregnancies, radiation at a British

¹⁰⁸ *The Newsletter* (WHIC), no. 4 (1985), 1; *The Newsletter* (WHIC), no. 6 (1986), inside front cover; *Newsletter* (WHRRIC), no. 6 (1989), inside front cover; James, ‘Ten Years’, 40.

¹⁰⁹ BI, FL/EPH/C/1445, WRRIC, ‘Notice to Members’, n.d. (1987?).

¹¹⁰ James, ‘Ten Years’, 46.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, 44.

¹¹² E.g. *The Newsletter* (WHIC), no. 4 (1985), inside front cover;

¹¹³ Women’s Health, ‘Editorial’, *Women’s Health Newsletter*, no. 14 (1992), 1.

¹¹⁴ WRRIC, ‘Alton - The latest’, *Women’s Reproductive Rights Information Centre Newsletter*, January-March (1988), 1.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 4; WRRIC, ‘What You Can Do to Say No to Gillick’, *Women’s Reproductive Rights Information Centre Newsletter*, April-May (1985).

¹¹⁶ WHRRIC, ‘Editorial’, *Newsletter* (WHRRIC), no. 3 (1989), 1.

Telecom factory, or public sector cuts appeared alongside lists of ‘contacts for improving the NHS’ that included no health workers’ unions.¹¹⁷ The low morale felt by demonstrators in 1988 corresponded with the workplace ‘demoralisation’ in the NHS unions noted by David Shields (see above). In this mood WHRRIC proceeded to make the political private.

By September 1989, WHRRIC advice largely hinged on private individuals speaking up, coming out, debating GPs, considering their diets, or attending counselling. An article on problems faced by ageing lesbians presented organising as private and personal: ‘Through housing, a network of lesbian women’s support could be spread throughout the community to each of us as individuals – our careers, our concerns, our closeness.’¹¹⁸ Indicative of this private turn was art therapist Mary Lynne Ellis’s column on therapy for lesbians who ‘looked to humanistic therapy in the hope that unlike traditional psychoanalytic therapy, their sexuality will not be pathologised’. She acknowledged that therapy’s ‘individualistic approach risks denying the complexity of social structures and power relationships’. Nevertheless, she presented no alternative, concluding that ‘[t]hrough finding her own voice ... a lesbian in therapy can open out new possibilities on being-in-the-world, and begin to break the confines of our patriarchal culture’.¹¹⁹ Her use of Martin Heidegger’s term ‘being-in-the-world’ (*in-der-Welt-sein*) was remarkable. Although Ellis’s meaning in this existentialist-therapy context might have seemed vague to many non-specialists, it indicated a reliance on theories concerned primarily with an individual’s internal anxieties. Being at peace with one’s existence could be considered a first step towards political action. But unlike the health organisations of the early 1980s, this primary focus on inner peace, or in Heideggerian terms authenticity (*eigentlichkeit*), and living for oneself, implied a rejection of politics. Heidegger’s philosophy had political implications, as his former student Karl Löwith argued in 1946: namely that the fundamental emphasis on one’s own being was a refutation of the nihilism the existentialist imagined in Europe’s political mass movements (nationalism and socialism), both individually and nationally.¹²⁰ For the GLC, supporting alternative therapies was a means towards socialist and labour-movement ends, but a Heideggerian mindset made them ends in and of themselves.

Without a social-democratic project, the job of meeting the demand for alternative therapies followed this trend. WHRRIC’s first issue dedicated to alternative medicine was the result of a readers’ poll (based on ninety respondents).¹²¹ Its articles, overall, praised acupuncture and how

¹¹⁷ WHRRIC, ‘Contacts for Improving the NHS’, *Newsletter* (WHRRIC), no. 4 (1989), 11.

¹¹⁸ Marigold, ‘Ageing’, *Newsletter* (WHRRIC), no. 6 (1989), 8.

¹¹⁹ Mary Lynne Ellis, ‘Counselling for Lesbians’, *Newsletter* (WHRRIC), no. 6 (1989), 7.

¹²⁰ Karl Löwith, ‘The Political Implications of Heidegger’s Existentialism’, trans. Richard Wolin, in Richard Wolin (ed.), *The Heidegger Controversy: A critical reader* (1993), 184-5. Heideggerian thinking was established in London’s existentialist or humanistic therapy scene by the mid-1980s. Hans W. Cohn, ‘Existential Aspects of Group Therapy’, *Group Analysis*, vol. 18, no. 3 (1985), 217-220. Ellis perhaps adapted this theory through the phenomenologist Maurice Merleau-Ponty. Mary Lynne Ellis, ‘Women: The mirage of the perfect image’, *The Arts in Psychotherapy*, vol. 16, no. 4 (1989), 263-276.

¹²¹ *Newsletter* (WHRRIC), ‘Newsletter Questionnaire Feedback’, no. 8 (1990), 1. Another readers’ survey by Women’s Health in 2001 gave similar results. Women’s Health, ‘Newsletter Survey’, *Women’s Health Newsletter*, no. 48 (2001), 9.

herbalism, homoeopathy, gestalt therapy, and Bach flowers, provided the remedies that eluded GPs' 'tranquillisers'.¹²² Osteopath and naturopath Carol Smith presented the sceptic's argument, warning that alternative medicines were 'not our salvation'; mainly because 'nothing ever is', but she also pointed out their price. Nonetheless, their popularity stemmed, she argued, 'from a place of desperation, of mal-treatment from the NHS'. But she was agnostic towards whether alternative medicine should be 'incorporated into the NHS', as long as they were held to the same standards as other treatments. She concluded that being an osteopath and naturopath is 'politically ... one of the best things you can do in relation to giving yourself some kind of self-empowerment'.¹²³ WHRRIC's editorial agreed that alternative medicines should be 'one of many treatment options', because '... it provides the opportunity to experience some control over our health and to know that our input is essential to our treatment'.¹²⁴

During the 1990s, *Women's Health* discussed alternative therapies as individual action with increasing frequency. In 1996 a newsletter contributor asked whether ending harmful pollution is an 'individual or collective' matter, concluding that '[c]onsumers do have, in fact, a great responsibility and power to act on this issue [of chemicals in food] and to force politicians and the industry to change'. This meant not buying 'millions of plastic products, detergents, cosmetic articles, pesticides, ... and so on. It would finally be an entire change in our lifestyles'.¹²⁵ However, without political organisation, the question of individual or collective responsibility ultimately had the same answer. Even if millions of individuals simultaneously acted 'collectively' the absence of an organisation or state required everyone to become their own expert within the evermore bewildering field of medical science. Rowbotham referenced these options of individual or organisational responsibility with her depiction of the *Our Bodies, Ourselves*-reader contrasted to a democratic NHS that covered alternative therapies. During the decade after 1986, an organisation that partially originally constituted the GLC's project to organise politically for citizens' or workers' control of the state and industry had turned to private control over emotions and consumption.

The causes indicated by this analysis were a combination of four factors. Most obviously, the original socialist women who founded WHIC gradually all left. Secondly, the political defeats of the mid-to-late-1980s, including the GLC's abolition, Labour's third consecutive election defeat, and Section 28, combined with repeated attempts to curtail abortion rights and the perpetual effort required to keep women's health issues on party and unions agendas, dampened the morale of those who remained. Thirdly, facing grants cuts and stricter criteria, political voluntary organisations self-censored and made do with less money, or new funders. Fourthly, activists with theoretical approaches that privileged individual, private action above public political organisation became

¹²² Rosalind Caplin, 'Healing through Alternatives', *Newsletter* (WHRRIC), no. 9 (1990), 2-3.

¹²³ Carol Smith, 'Not Our Salvation', *Newsletter* (WHRRIC), no. 9 (1990), 4-5.

¹²⁴ WHRRIC, 'Editorial', *Newsletter* (WHRRIC), no. 9 (1990), 1.

¹²⁵ Regina Stolzenberg, 'Dealing with Disease: An individual or collective approach', *Women's Health Newsletter*, no. 30 (1996), 12.

dominant. In the next example, the Women's Therapy Centre shows how organisations could choose to exchange politics for privacy without a grant cut.

4.6 *Freud de Suite*: The Women's Therapy Centre

In the third and final example of this chapter, the WTC remained a viable and well-funded provider of psychoanalysis between 1976 and the 1990s. (And following the period studied here, it remained active until closing for financial reasons in 2019.) However, although psychoanalysis by nature focuses on individuals' inner feelings and thoughts, the following evidence suggests that the reasons and methods the WTC used for applying it changed around 1986. Whereas in its earliest work, the centre categorised its clients by class, in the late 1980s and 1990s it did not use such terms explicitly and instead spoke more frequently of discrimination based on racialising categories. Its theory of discrimination also changed, from implicitly following a materialist explanation, to one based more explicitly and solely on individuals' ideas. Correspondingly, the WTC's work shifted from being a public campaigning intervention within the WLM (which it hoped to unite) and the NHS (which it hoped to reform) to concentrating primarily on the wellbeing of private individuals. The centre adapted to post-GLC funding streams but that evolution, in turn, can be described as the result of how proponents of new theories of change assumed leadership positions within the group.

The WTC, the UK's first psychoanalytical surgery wholly dedicated to women's psychology, was founded in 1976 by Susie Orbach (1946–) and Luise Eichenbaum (1952–) as part and parcel of London's socialist-feminist milieu in theory and in practice. Orbach, the daughter of the Labour trade unionist and MP Maurice Orbach, recalled growing up in a deeply political household, surrounded by Marxist writers and her fathers' socialist Labour friends.¹²⁶ She and Eichenbaum met as women's studies students at New York's Richmond College between 1969 and 1973, where they joined feminist, socialist, and Marxist study groups and organisations.¹²⁷ Looking back, Orbach recalled preferring the PRC over the USSR and found like-minded comrades in the organisation Students for a Democratic Society as a self-described 'Marxist feminist'.¹²⁸ It was, she later argued, her reaction to New York's separatist feminists' theories of a 'hierarchy of oppression', criticisms of organising with men, and sectarianism – 'the horror of that situation' – that led her to psychology. The separatists, she believed, 'were holding women back'.¹²⁹ Hence, she and Eichenbaum transgressed the *zeitgeist* by studying and critiquing Sigmund Freud, becoming convinced that the separatists represented, she later

¹²⁶ Margaretta Jolly, *Sisterhood and After: An Oral History of the UK Women's Liberation Movement, 1968-present* (2019), 80-1; British Library Sound Archive (BL), C1420/25, Susie Orbach, interviewed by Polly Russell, *Sisterhood and After*, digital recording, track 1, 6 June 2011.

¹²⁷ Leeat Granek, 'Interview with Louise Eichenbaum', Psychology's Feminist Voices Oral History and Online Archive Project, September 2009, digital transcript, <<https://feministvoices.com/files/profiles/pdf/Luise-EichenbaumTranscript.pdf>>, accessed 28 February 2023, 2.

¹²⁸ Jolly, *Sisterhood*, 82, 86; BL, C1420/25, Susie Orbach, interviewed by Polly Russell, track 7, 4 July 2011.

¹²⁹ BL, C1420/25, track 7.

called, a ‘narcissism of small differences’ caused by ‘internalised oppression acted out on other people’.¹³⁰ This explained ‘the difficulties that prevented people from acting in what ... one might consider their best self-interest’.¹³¹ Much like how the GLC could use alternative medicine as a means towards democratisation, this objective of uniting women motivated the establishment of the WTC within a socialist setting where unity served a greater purpose. Psychoanalysis would grease the wheels of an epochal political movement. Back in London, this was signified by the slogan, borrowed from the Communist Party of China (CPC), emblazoned on the centre’s early logo: ‘women hold up half the sky’ (illustration 4.4).



Illustration 4.4: ‘妇女能顶半边天’ (trans. ‘Women can hold up half the sky’). Logo of the Women’s Therapy Centre, c. 1977.¹³²

This mission soon became largely implicit, but underpinned the WTC’s work for its first decade. Although CPC slogans quickly vanished from official publications, the leaflet that bore one around 1977 or 1978 explained to its readers how the WTC’s work was ‘based on an understanding of the underlying social causes that produce these themes for women.’¹³³ Hence: ‘Feminist therapy combines the ideals of the women’s movement with the creative use of psychotherapy.’¹³⁴ Orbach’s best-selling book on compulsive eating, *Fat is a Feminist Issue* (1978), focused on individuals’

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*; Granek, ‘Eichenbaum’, 5.

¹³¹ Susie Orbach, ‘Therapy from the Left: Interview with Susie Orbach’, *European Journal of Psychotherapy, Counselling & Health*, vol. 6, no. 1 (2003), 75.

¹³² BI, FL/HARRIS/63, Women’s Therapy Centre, ‘Women’s Therapy Centre’, leaflet, n.d. (1977/8?). These words were received in the US as the CPC encouraged women to join the workforce and western socialists promoted their participation in workplace struggles. Xueping Zhong, ‘Women Can Hold up Half the Sky’, in Ban Wang (ed.), *Words and Their Stories: essays on the language of the Chinese Revolution* (2011), 227-248.

¹³³ BI, FL/HARRIS/63, Women’s Therapy Centre, ‘Women’s Therapy’.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*

self-perceptions, bodies, and emotions, but also on a materialist line to explain the ‘underlying *social* cause of distress’ that was expressed through eating disorders.¹³⁵ ‘[T]he basis on which to divide unequally women and men’s labor, power, roles and expectations’, Orbach argued, was ‘ideological’.¹³⁶ By following the Marxist-inspired art historian John Berger, who she cited, ‘ideology’, for Orbach, would have meant ‘a way of seeing the world ... ultimately determined by new attitudes to property and exchange’, that is to material relations.¹³⁷ Consequently, eradicating women’s eating disorders, she argued, required ‘a major reorientation of medical and scientific education, organization and practice based on the demands of the women’s health movement’.¹³⁸ Orbach considered individual one-on-one therapy insufficient for compulsive eating and saw the formation of a movement of non-professional self-help groups as essential. They could, she suggested, be established through local women’s centres without a therapists’ involvement.¹³⁹ She did not consider her ideas separate from the ‘fertile soil’ of the WLM, where they were ‘nurtured and developed in countless consciousness-raising groups, in mass marches and demonstrations, [and] in organized political campaigns’.¹⁴⁰ In both ends and means she thus shared common ground with London’s labour movement. She later recalled: ‘our aim was totally to change mental health services for women if not for the whole population’, not by duplicating the WTC but by ‘transform[ing] mental health services and GP practices’.¹⁴¹

Early on, Orbach categorised her clients by class. They were, she later noted, ‘totally across the class mix’, and especially recalled the centre seeing ‘a lot of working-class lesbians’.¹⁴² Similarly, an early booklet about the centre described clients as ‘women ... from a variety of social class backgrounds’, and highlighted their diverse marital statuses, sexualities, and WLM involvement.¹⁴³ This was perhaps accentuated when the WTC gained new premises in mid-1980, tucked in between purpose-built, interwar nurses’ accommodation blocks and Royal Mail’s expansive sorting office in the Edwardian Beaux Arts Building, around the corner from the Royal Northern Hospital in Holloway. It was situated near large numbers of working women.

The centre met ‘overwhelming’ demand, increased by Orbach’s growing fame, and sought funding to meet it. In 1981 it had eight staff and a two-year waiting list. During the year leading up to April it recorded 171 women attending long- or short-term therapy and its workshops attracted 907.¹⁴⁴

¹³⁵ Emphasis added. Susie Orbach, *Fat is a Feminist Issue: The anti-diet guide to permanent weight loss* (1978), 185.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*, 18.

¹³⁷ John Berger, *Ways of Seeing: Based on the BBC television series with John Berger* (1972), 86-7.

¹³⁸ Orbach, *Fat*, 185. Criticising the food industry, Orbach cited the New Left journal *Science for the People*, available from the BSSRS at 9 Poland Street.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*, 128-9.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 11.

¹⁴¹ BL, C1420/25, Susie Orbach, interviewed by Polly Russell, track 10, 15 August 2011.

¹⁴² BL, C1420/25, Susie Orbach, interviewed by Polly Russell, track 9, 15 August 2011.

¹⁴³ WC, Acc 2488, SA/WTC, Box 17, WTC, ‘The Women’s Therapy Centre’, booklet, n.d. (1979?), uncatalogued item accessed 2021.

¹⁴⁴ LMA, GLC/DG/PRE/056/004, Women’s Therapy Centre, Application for Financial Assistance, 28 September 1981.

As in the case of the Women's Health Information Centre, early money came from the Equal Opportunities Commission, as well as the Camden and Islington Area Health Authority (AHA) and a couple of minor funders. Clients' fees (to the psychoanalytic establishment's horror) ran on a sliding scale of zero to ten pounds depending on what they could afford.¹⁴⁵ Nevertheless, unlike WHIC, over two-thirds of WTC's income for 1980 (£43,500) was self-generated from consultancy and lecture fees.¹⁴⁶ Still, the 1980 AGM complained that expansion stalled because a public sector grant arrived late.¹⁴⁷ The AHA caused a crisis in late 1981 by requesting a report to reconsider its funding, for which WTC required 'all our administrative resources'.¹⁴⁸ Four of WTC's applications to private foundations were refused.¹⁴⁹ Nevertheless, it was as a viable organisation with experience of dealing with public and private funders that WTC approached the new GLC administration in September 1981 in a state of rapid growth.

Although Eichenbaum left the centre in 1980 and Orbach soon thereafter, their original plans informed its work throughout the GLC period. Its presentation of its work to the GLC in October 1981 continued Orbach's materialism, attention to class, and the connection between politics and psychology:

Women living in the inner city areas are subject to particular emotional, social and economic stress. ... While there is often some general awareness of the social and economic characteristics of life in the inner city ... there is less recognition of the *resultant* emotional stress and strain.¹⁵⁰

The centre also showed that local women from Islington represented forty-four per cent of its workshop and therapy attendees.¹⁵¹ In October 1985 the GLC funded the centre so it could gain more clients among 'women who are particularly disadvantaged in society'; 'women with disabilities, ethnic minority women and working-class women'.¹⁵² In line with its strategies for class unity and preemptive health care, the Council was pleased that the WTC recognised it had to do more to bring women of these categories to therapy and would 'provide a comprehensive preventative service' against mental illness.¹⁵³

¹⁴⁵ According to Orbach. Eichenbaum recalls it being two to six pounds. BL, C1420/25, track 9; Granek, 'Eichenbaum', 8.

¹⁴⁶ WC, uncatalogued, Acc 2488, SA/WTC, Box 17, 'Women's Therapy Centre Limited Statement of Accounts at 31 December 1980'; BL, C1420/25, Orbach, interviewed by Polly Russell, track 9.

¹⁴⁷ WC, uncatalogued, Acc 2488, SA/WTC, Box 17, file: 'AGM 81-88', WTC 'Annual General Meeting', 5 October 1981.

¹⁴⁸ LMA, GLC/DG/PRE/056/004, letter from Sheila Ernst to Margaret Lally, 29 October 1981.

¹⁴⁹ LMA, GLC/DG/PRE/056/004, WTC, Application for Financial Assistance, 28 September 1981, appendix.

¹⁵⁰ Emphasis added. *Ibid.*

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁵² LMA, GLC/DG/PRE/223/055, Report (10.10.85) by Head of Women's Committee Support Unit, W1260, Appendix B, 'The Women's Therapy Centre'.

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*

Given its common interests with the WTC, the GLC increased the size of its cheques rapidly after 1982, becoming the centre's principal funder (figure 4.1). Between 1982 and 1986, GLC and other public-sector grants came to constitute almost two thirds of the WTC's income, allowing the centre to expand its staff to twelve workers, including two full-time administrators. Meanwhile the WTC's members focused on consolidating their activities around psychotherapy and workshops. They developed an educational programme for care workers so they could 'take care of themselves in their professional capacity', helping their position at their workplaces.¹⁵⁴ Furthermore, to the GLC such workshops would disseminate skills 'particularly relevant to women organising in the community'.¹⁵⁵ While the GLC guaranteed its financial stability the centre evolved the educational projects its founders envisaged.

The centre's members changed their management to a 'self-managing' and 'non-hierarchical' collective with equal pay to all staff and monthly staff meetings to replace trustees. Therapist Carol Sturdy – previously a member of 'libertarian left-wing groups' – recalled, in 1987, that this derived from 'socialism, anarchism, syndicalism ... and the cooperative movement'.¹⁵⁶ This system predated GLC funding but ended when Sturdy and other therapists reimagined the centre's purpose after April 1986.

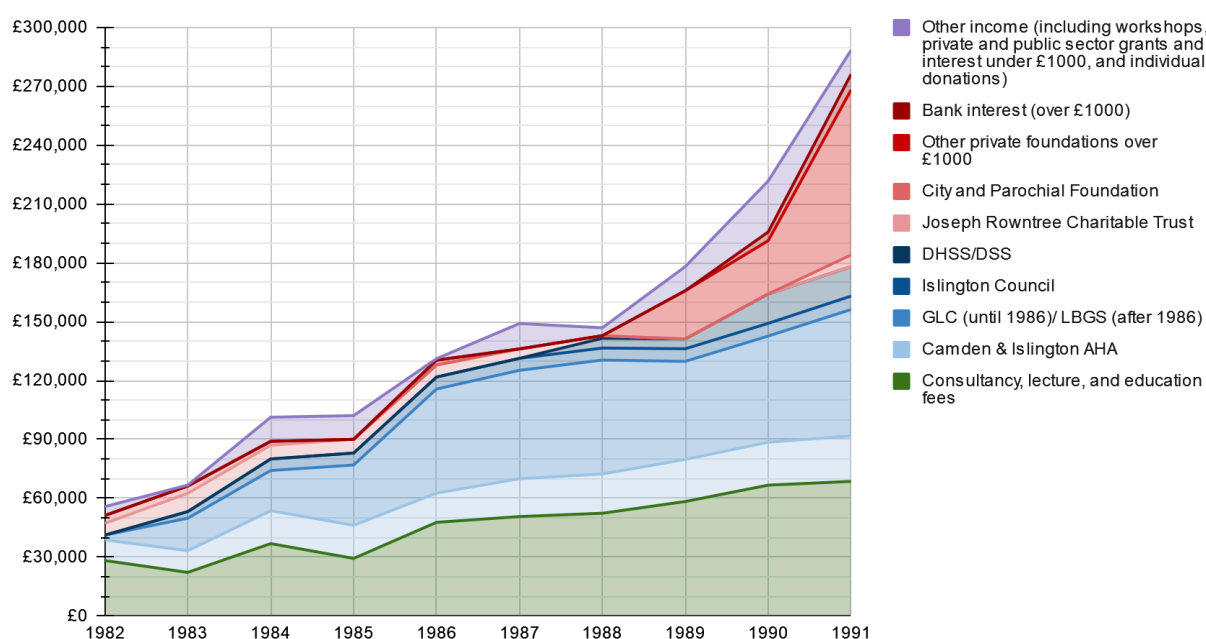


Figure 4.1: Proportions of total Women's Therapy Centre income from self-generated, public, private, and other sources, 1982–1991.¹⁵⁷

¹⁵⁴ WC, uncatalogued, Acc 2488, SA/WTC, Box 17, file: 'AGM 81-88', WTC 'Minutes of the Women's Therapy Centre Annual General Meeting', 1 December 1983.

¹⁵⁵ LMA, GLC/DG/PRE/223/055, Report (10.10.85) by Head of Women's Committee Support Unit, W1260.

¹⁵⁶ Carol Sturdy, 'Questioning the Sphinx: An experience of working in a women's organisation', in Sheila Ernst & Marie Maguire (eds.), *Living with the Sphinx: Papers from the Women's Therapy Centre* (1987), 32-3, 265.

¹⁵⁷ WC, uncatalogued, Acc 2488, SA/WTC, Box 17, WTC, Report and accounts at 5th April 1982; WTC Accounts, Year end 5 April 1984; WTC, Accounts for the y/e 1986; WTC, Reports and accounts for the y/e 5 April 1988; WTC, Accounts for the year ended 5 April 1990; ETC, Accounts for the year ended 5 April 1992.

Much like WHRRIC, WTC staff members began to cast doubts over their founders' political ideas. The WTC's AGM minutes from 1986, for the first time, documented organisational issues; some were 'hard for the centre to resolve on its own in the staff group collective, ie questions of pay and conditions'.¹⁵⁸ Concurrently, Sturdy considered how Orbach's original view of the WTC as 'a mainly campaigning organisation' had been informed by its founders' 'rhetoric, argument and charisma' as opposed to making therapy its 'main work'.¹⁵⁹ Reading the organisation theorists Charles Landry and Charles Handy, she argued that becoming an increasing service-providing group 'produces a correspondingly greater need for effective management'.¹⁶⁰ She questioned whether any 'organisational structure ... is inherently "feminist"'.¹⁶¹

The centre's whole approach to psychology was questioned. WTC therapists Sheila Ernst and Marie Maguire's starting point was the labour movement's recent defeats: 'If changes we might want to make in ourselves and the outside world cannot simply be brought about through will power and collective political struggle, then the relationships between politics and individual struggle begins to appear much more complex.'¹⁶² Orbach's model was inverted: political change would not cause psychological change.

Margaret Green, another psychotherapist, agreed, in particular regarding antisemitism and racism. Racism, to her, could not be explained by theories of 'economic power, tyrannical dictators, [and] totalitarianism' given that racist ideas had persisted despite significant postwar social and economic changes. Rather, racism 'rooted in the unconscious' and fed by individuals' 'neuroses' had to be 'unlearned' through therapy and training.¹⁶³ The collective's anti-racism statement in January 1988 added the need to 'challenge racist attitudes, remarks and behaviour'.¹⁶⁴ During this new focus on treating racists and people subjected to racism the centre attracted several hundred pounds from the J. Paul Getty Jr Charitable Trust.¹⁶⁵ These developments became important during a financial crisis later that year that convinced the psychoanalysts to shift their organisation and funding sources towards the private sector.

Certain liabilities and almost £10,000 in tax were discovered to have been unpaid. In December, a male fundraising advisor attended the WTC's AGM to tell the collective they had to raise £16,000 in a 'VERY limited' time period. He added, the minutes related, that 'for an Appeal to work,

¹⁵⁸ WC, uncatalogued, Acc 2488, SA/WTC, Box 17, file: 'AGM 81-88', WTC 'Minutes of the Women's Therapy Centre Annual General Meeting for the year 1985/6', 6 July 1987.

¹⁵⁹ Sturdy, 'Questioning', 37.

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 46.

¹⁶² Sheila Ernst & Marie Maguire, 'Introduction', in Ernst & Maguire, *Sphinx*, 14.

¹⁶³ Margaret Green, 'Women in the Oppressor Role: White racism', in Ernst & Maguire, *Sphinx*, 180-1, 197.

¹⁶⁴ LMA, A/KE/C/43/04/143, WTC, 'Women's Therapy Centre Anti-Racist Statement', January 1988.

¹⁶⁵ WC, uncatalogued, Acc 2488, SA/WTC, Box 17, WTC, 'Reports and Accounts for the y/e 5 April 1988'.

we have to say publicly that the centre will CLOSE unless the Appeal works'.¹⁶⁶ Drastically a psychotherapist was appointed as acting director to lead the rescue. The trustees diplomatically acknowledged 'how difficult it must have been for Staff Meeting to take the courageous step of relinquishing the collective process'.¹⁶⁷ A year later they reported how a management consultant had couched 'that our non hierarchical structure had become too unwieldy'.¹⁶⁸ Meanwhile 'tough and upsetting decisions' involved redundancies and increases in sessional staff. In 1991, the director was proud that the '[administrative] structure is now more centralised and efficient'.¹⁶⁹

This emergency was avoidable. The crisis was no grant cut; the WTC's grants from the GLC's successor, the LBGU, had increased (figure 4.1). Rather, the centre had chosen to live beyond its means (figure 4.2). Yet the solution after 1988, the organisation agreed, was more income. In 1990 the centre declared a small surplus again, but as its income boomed, so did running costs. Rent (paid to another charity, the Manor Gardens Centre) and services, for instance, multiplied from £7,540 in 1989 to £21,854 in 1994.¹⁷⁰ After 1991, its education programmes – vital to Orbach's political vision but questioned by Sturdy – continued to be cut. Trustees wanted the centre 'more geared to the needs of our clients and more viable financially'.¹⁷¹ The centre accumulated large cash reserves, reimagining its services, from meeting the WLM's needs to catering for a new audience.

Following the centre's near demise in 1988–9, it saw an explosion and diversification of income from central government and private funds (figure 4.1), whose interests it needed to oblige while pursuing its new objectives. Between 1983 and 1988 the collective had relied upon three public sector funders and two private sources (alongside the clients' fees they collected) for the vast majority of their income (figure 4.1). In 1990, its trustees, the director wrote, had 'put in a tremendous amount of work to obtain funding through Trusts'.¹⁷² By 1991, while public bodies still provided thirty-eight per cent of its income, another thirty-five per cent was drawn from twenty-five private organisations. Each required courting and satisfying particular interests.

This diverse crowd supported the WTC's revision of Orbach's politics and included Sotheby's, Nationwide Anglia building society, the King's Fund, and the Lord Ashdown Charitable Settlement.¹⁷³ The last two were among the largest donors and, alongside Getty, shared an interest in the centre's therapy for black women. The J. Paul Getty Jr Charitable Trust donated £7,500 in 1989 to

¹⁶⁶ Capitals in original. WC, Acc 2488, SA/WTC, Box 17, file: 'AGM 81–88', WTC 'Minutes of the Women's Therapy Centre AGM', 8 December 1988, uncatalogued item accessed 2021.

¹⁶⁷ WC, Acc 2488, SA/WTC, Box 17, file: 'AGM 81–88', WTC, letter from WTC trustees to staff meeting, 8 December 1988, uncatalogued item accessed 2021.

¹⁶⁸ WC, Acc 2488, SA/WTC, Box 17, WTC 'The Women's Therapy Centre Annual Report 1989–90', 1, uncatalogued item accessed 2021.

¹⁶⁹ WC, Acc 2488, SA/WTC, Box 17, WTC 'The Women's Therapy Centre Annual Report 1990–91', 2, 4, uncatalogued item accessed 2021.

¹⁷⁰ WC, Acc 2488, SA/WTC, Box 17, WTC, 'Women's Therapy Centre Limited Report and Accounts 5 April 1994', uncatalogued item accessed 2021.

¹⁷¹ WC, Acc 2488, SA/WTC, Box 17, WTC 'Annual Report 1990–91', 2, uncatalogued item accessed 2021.

¹⁷² WC, Acc 2488, SA/WTC, Box 17, WTC 'Annual Report 1989–90', 2, uncatalogued item accessed 2021.

¹⁷³ *Ibid.*, 8.

pay for the WTC's first worker dedicated to contacting 'ethnic minority groups ... to find out their needs' and suggesting how the WTC could meet them.¹⁷⁴ The GLC had encouraged the centre to do similar 'outreach work', but this had also been accompanied by an ambition 'to reach ... working-class women'.¹⁷⁵ In the GLC's imagination, many women fell into both categories, but the WTC of 1989 chose to narrow and racialise 'class'. The Getty Trust's donation got the centre going on its 'Brief' psychology project for 'priority groups'. These were defined as including 'black women', 'Irish women', 'women with disabilities', 'lesbians', and 'white working-class women', although this was shortened in advertising as 'prioritised groups of women, and in particular Black women'.¹⁷⁶ Meanwhile, attendance data from this project labelled many of these clients 'White Caucasian'.¹⁷⁷ Similarly, when the King's Fund's grants officer wanted guarantees that the WTC would treat 'not just the "worried well"', Sturdy explained what proportion of the twenty-six women seen by the centre's black psychotherapist were 'black or women of colour'.¹⁷⁸ A decade later, in 1999, the WTC defined itself to potential funders with the statistic that almost half of its clients 'describe their ethnic origin as black, African, or Asian'.¹⁷⁹

In contrast to how Orbach imagined its clients principally by class, profession, or locality around 1980, the post-GLC WTC preferred racialising terminology. 'White working-class women', implicitly unlike other 'white' women,¹⁸⁰ were distinguished from 'black women', who in turn were cast as needy regardless of their actual cultural or economic circumstances. Sympathetic donors aided the work and presentation made to focus on racialising categories but the centre's new theories preceded this money. In contrast to Orbach's view in 1978 that the response to patriarchy or sexism was political, in 1988 racism was an 'attitude' or stemmed from a 'neurosis' that could be ended through therapy. In a decade, ideology had become pathology.

Furthermore, the WTC's changed role in relation to the NHS was also reflected in funders' expectations. The Lord Ashdown Charitable Settlement was 'particularly interested' in the 'Brief' project's outcome; a trustee who was a GP in Bayswater, near North Kensington, told the centre he 'will find it very helpful to know that such a service does exist.' He added: 'I will attempt to not swamp it!'¹⁸¹ An external psychiatrist advisor to the King's Fund questioned if the WTC's 'provision of one trained black psychotherapist will do more than place a sticking plaster on a gaping wound', but noted that the Fund was not considering any alternatives.¹⁸² 'There are many other organisations

¹⁷⁴ LMA, A/KE/C/43/04/143, letter from Sheila Ernst to David Costain, 12 July 1989.

¹⁷⁵ LMA, GLC/DG/PRE/223/055, W1260.

¹⁷⁶ BI, FL/EPH/C/1431, WTC, 'Annual General Meeting', n.d. (1990?); WC, Acc 2488, SA/WTC, Box 17, WTC 'Annual Report 1989-90', 4, uncatalogued item accessed 2021.

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 8.

¹⁷⁸ LMA, A/KE/C/43/04/143, letter from Carol Sturdy to Christine Davies, 18 April 1989.

¹⁷⁹ BI, FL/EPH/J/630, WTC, 'Support the Women's Therapy Centre', leaflet, n.d. (1998/9?).

¹⁸⁰ Angela Phillips, 'Undoing all the Good Work', *The Guardian*, 7 February (1989), 35.

¹⁸¹ WC, Acc 2500, SA/WTC, Box 3, Fundraising Applications, binder: 'A', letter from [Lord Ashdown Charitable Settlement] to [WTC], 26 June 1990, uncatalogued item accessed 2021. (Personal names anonymised according to the archive's request.)

¹⁸² LMA, A/KE/C/43/04/143, letter from Colin M. Parkes, to Christine Davies, 10 May 1989.

and professionals who look to the centre for support', said an NHS psychiatrist during the 1989 crisis.¹⁸³ Here, during one decade, the WTC went from a campaign for NHS reform to an external resource for unburdening the state.

Orbach's original plan had unintended outcomes. Likewise, it is unclear that the WTC's post-GLC funders necessarily intended to hasten this development. In 1990, the Getty Trust's representatives wished the centre would 'get right the way that the black and white workers can co-operate ... to offer the best service to the community, and especially the black community.'¹⁸⁴ Meanwhile the billionaire's heir John Paul Getty Jr – a supporter of 'unpopular causes' – was notorious for aiding the National Union of Mineworkers's downfall by bankrolling its breakaway areas in late 1985.¹⁸⁵ This was the political opposite to the GLC's vision. Yet the WTC chose to accept Getty's patronage, having already decoupled itself from left labour-movement politics.

The WTC's first fifteen years could suggest that where funding created opportunities that matched the group's new theories, they were taken. But membership turnover and changes in the outside world that the WTC belonged to, as with WHIC, preceded this. The GLC ended, and the WLM in London demobilised just before the psychotherapists rethought their politics. By 1995, the 1970s spirit they carried until 1987 must have seemed antiquated. Not only were they accountable to millionaires' endowments rather than the labour and feminist movements; their physical surroundings had changed. The Royal Northern Hospital, whose nurses lived opposite the WTC's back garden, closed in 1992 and in 1995 Royal Mail's sorting office across the street was redeveloped into luxury flats (the centre eventually relocated there).¹⁸⁶ Moreover, the centre's success as a pioneering service provider inspired several private competitors who offered therapy or counselling for women, against which it needed to maintain an edge.¹⁸⁷ Unlike LHE and WHIC, its generous grants were continued by the LBGU. But all three organisations lost the movements wherein their original needs and functions were imagined. Like alternative medicines, psychoanalysis focuses on an individual's private needs and emotions. While this was unchanged over the decades, the WTC originally envisioned itself within the political setting. Without this setting changing the meaning of their therapy from a preparation for politics to attending one's inner life – making the political private – looked like a viable alternative.

¹⁸³ Quoted in Phillips, 'Undoing', 35.

¹⁸⁴ WC, Acc 2500, SA/WTC, Box 3, Fundraising Applications, binder: 'F-K', letter from [J. Paul Getty Jr Charitable Fund] to [WTC], 24 July 1990, uncatalogued item accessed 2021. (Personal names anonymised according to the archive's request.)

¹⁸⁵ *The Times*, 'Getty Gives 150,000 Pounds to Rebel Miners', 23 September 1985; John Pearson, *Painfully Rich: J. Paul Getty and his heirs* (1995), 271.

¹⁸⁶ *Irish Independent*, 'Ballymore in £25m London Scheme', 16 June 1995, 15.

¹⁸⁷ E.g., BI, FL/EPH/J/69, Ruth Finer, 'Humanistic Counselling and Psychotherapy for Women', leaflet, n.d. (1996?); BI, FL/EPH/L/42, The Sanctuary, 'Celebrating the Whole Person through Holistic Counselling', folder, n.d. (1994?).

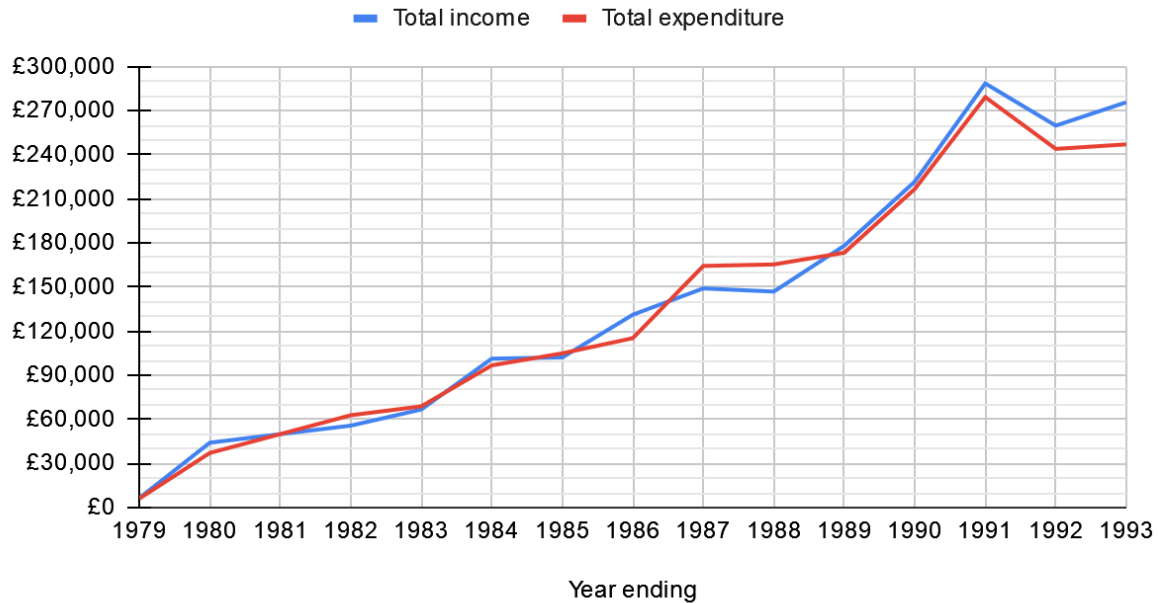


Figure 4.2: Women's Therapy Centre, income and expenditure 1979–1993.

4.7 Drawing the Nurse Strings: Conclusion

The Livingstone GLC's health strategy and these examples of how three organisations it funded evolved emphasises, alongside the other chapters, the fork in the road between labour-movement and non-labour-movement politics. The GLC's abolition made non-NHS alternative-healthcare options (although often state-supported) look like one of the few remaining directions for new kinds of therapies. This chapter cannot make a general statement about the popularity of alternative health treatments in this period or how it was connected to the decline of labour-movement power. But the varying fates of the HE groups, WHIC/WHRRIC, and the WTC do show that this was one direction that distrust of existing healthcare – particularly within the WLM – could go when the labour-movement option was deselected. During the early-to-mid-1980s, both Livingstone's GLC and the alternative-health movement had been attentive to and supported the same demand for something new, but for different reasons. What the examples discussed here is that this difference in overarching strategy mattered not only to which bodies were funded but to the ideas and actions they expressed within the networks those groups joined.

1986 marked a turning point, but for several different reasons. The HE groups decided to not continue without the GLC, because they could not find alternative sponsors, but others could choose which way to turn. Consequently, what ended up characterising the WHIRRC and the WTC by the 1990s was the replacement of politics (action in the public sphere through the state or labour movement) with private solutions. These individual examples might be used to hypothesise that other people thought and acted like their members. It would be easy to say that this was a result of the labour and socialist-feminist movement's setbacks, but it should also be remembered that – at the

same time – the many people who changed their ideas away from this movement *was* the setback. Funding streams were never a sole determinant of future directions.

Part of this hypothesis of the active refutation of labour-movement politics, which future historians might investigate, might also be how expertise and responsibility was shifted, away from organisations, onto the private individual, perhaps broadening the view that non-state organisations were at the forefront of ‘the growing authority of expertise’ during the late twentieth century.¹⁸⁸ Similar to the dial-a-ride pioneers in chapter three, health organisers in the WLM wanted to be or to define their own experts. This was taken further, however, as in the case of the WHRRIC and the WTC, by those who rejected the authority of the unions, employers, and the state to prevent or resolve problems, and who saw the cause and solution of many health issues in the private mind. When there is no organisation with experts to shoulder responsibility through politics, whether a union or the state, responsibility falls on private individuals who must become their own experts. Whereas the WWHG model wanted to use unions and the state to prevent illness, the methods proposed by WHRRIC’s contributors in the early 1990s required individuals to spend their own time learning what was in their food, attend therapy, or consider other options.

Although it is tempting to interpret this change as what Jürgen Martschukat calls the 1990s ‘age of fitness’ replacing the state, it could equally lead to questioning Foucauldian interpretations that individual responsibility for health was instilled by the state or intensified by democratisation.¹⁸⁹ Rather, this chapter suggests it was chosen, in these cases, at a time when the state became less significant for its funded organisations. At the same time, the Foucauldian academics imagined a history wherein the state looked all-powerful, at a moment when it appeared to them that viable political alternatives to the state (the labour movement) had been vanquished. Nikolas Rose may be correct to an extent that imagining away organisation and delegating responsibility to individuals limits personal freedom. But it does not necessarily follow that the solution to this, as Rose proposes it, is to go further by imagining away ourselves as individuals.¹⁹⁰ What this perspective misses is that the state does not encompass all of politics and that there are alternatives to it. The Livingstone GLC’s approach to health was about showing that individual freedom could be achieved through labour-movement politics, which existed both inside and apart from the state. As much as it overlapped with the state, the London Labour Party’s leaders considered the labour movement to be another route for individuals to achieve the power and freedom to influence society through their

¹⁸⁸ Matthew Hilton, James McKay, Nicholas Crowson & Jean-François Mouhot, *The Politics of Expertise: How NGOs shaped modern Britain* (2013). 269.

¹⁸⁹ Jürgen Martschukat, *The Age of Fitness: How the body came to symbolize success and achievement*, trans. Alex Skinner (2021 [2019]), 131; Nikolas Rose *Governing the Soul: The shaping of the private self*, second edition (1999 [1989]), 165; K. K. Barker, ‘A ship upon a stormy sea: The medicalization of pregnancy’, *Social Science & Medicine*, Vol. 47, No. 8 (1998), 1074; Bethany L. Johnson & Margaret M. Quinlan, *You’re Doing it Wrong!: Mothering, Media, and Medical Expertise* (2019).

¹⁹⁰ Nikolas Rose, *Inventing our Selves: Psychology, power, and personhood* (1996), 167, 189-97.

unions, parties, or other affiliated groups.¹⁹¹ The next chapter will describe how the GLC funded organisations related to the care and education of small children as a means to give mothers the option to do this.

¹⁹¹ Hilary Wainwright, 'A New Kind of Knowledge for a New Kind of State', in Gregory Albo, David Langille & Leo Panitch, *A Different Kind of State?: Popular power and democratic administration* (1993), 113-4, 119-20.

5 Childcare and education organisations and the GLC

[E]ndeavours completely to ban the work of women and juveniles in industry, or to maintain the patriarchal matter of life that ruled out such work, would be reactionary and utopian. By destroying the patriarchal isolation of these categories of the population who formerly never emerged from the narrow circle of domestic family relationships, by drawing them into direct participation in social production, large-scale machine industry stimulates their development and increases their independence, in other words, creates conditions of life that are incomparably superior to the patriarchal immobility of pre-capitalist relations.

Vladimir Lenin, *The Development of Capitalism in Russia*, 1899.¹

*It's obvious
So obvious*

Au Pairs, 'It's Obvious', 1981.

5.1 Mothers of Invention: Introduction

This chapter investigates why and how the GLC funded organisations related to the care and education of young children. A large share of this is related to pre-school-age children, but many groups also provided daycare or education for older children (such as adventure playgrounds and latchkey groups). This chapter describes how, as in chapters four and six, the London Labour Party (LLP) followed labour-movement policies established in the 1970s regarding the care and education of children who could not be left unsupervised (many, but not all of whom, were under the age of five). The LLP was concerned with ending what it called 'isolation' – a situation wherein mothers were separated from the labour movement, thereby weakening its aggregate power. This involved both giving mothers opportunities to work, but also organising new means for them to work flexibly and learn new skills and trades. In the early 1980s, the strategy adopted by the Livingstone GLC was not a foregone conclusion. Large non-labour-movement organisations, such as the Save the Children Fund (SCF) and the Pre-School Playgroups Association (PPA), as this chapter will describe, wanted mothers to be closely involved in their children's development, encouraging this through playgroups, which required parental involvement. Meanwhile, in parts of the labour movement and Women's Liberation Movement debates still raged over whether women were better served by being part of the workforce or organising themselves in unions or not.² However, at Livingstone's GLC the argument,

¹ V. I. Lenin, *The Development of Capitalism in Russia: The process of the formation of a home market for large-scale industry*, trans. anonymous (1956 [1899]), 601.

² Selma James, *Women, the Unions and Work, Or ... What is Not to be Done and The Winning Perspective* (1976 [1972]), 14-6; Stuart Hall, Chas Critcher, Tony Jefferson, John Clarke & Brian Roberts, *Policing the Crisis:*

proposed by theorists such as Irene Brugel, that women's jobs could and should be defended by the labour movement and that working mothers should join unions would predominate.³

In this chapter, I will review the development of childcare ideas within the 1970s labour movement, show how the Livingstone GLC's policy was very similar to it, and use several cases of funded organisations to exemplify how this gave childcare a special meaning and function within the LLP's plan for London. As in the contrast between the labour-movement and the alternative approaches to health, the end of the GLC meant that its approach was largely put on hold. I briefly contrast the labour-movement vision for childcare with contemporaneous approaches centred more on children and mother's education and socialisation, represented by the SCF and PPA. But these groups too encountered the labour movement and were to varying extents dependent upon it. Although the focus of this chapter is how non-state organisations served a labour-movement strategy, this also draws particular attention to fields of under-fives education which future historians might be able to analyse in far greater detail. Starting with a clear understanding of Livingstone's GLC, however, is important given the contribution that it made to the substantial increase in under-fives care and education during the 1980s, on the foundation of which would stand later growth from government investments in this area during the late 1990s.

The history of post-war childcare or early-years education cannot be written without non-state organisations. Its focus (like most of this chapter) has been on the under-fives, where Angela Davis's work has made important bottom-up inroads in diversifying perspectives on this with qualitative data of parents', carers', and educators' motives and experiences and the use of childminders.⁴ Nevertheless, Amy Palmer has, more recently, called the history of policy on under-fives education 'severely neglected',⁵ and Lynn Abrams makes the same assertion regarding the 'do-it-yourself women's organisations' that have helped shape the field since the 1960s.⁶ Much of the scholarship on childcare has consisted of mapping the existence of under-fives care and education. Historians and other scholars have described persistently low levels of daycare and pre-school education between 1945 and 2004 (compared to other European countries), but this discussion has often centred on

Mugging, the state, and law and order (1978), 380-1, 390; Michèle Barrett & Mary McIntosh, 'The 'Family Wage': Some problems for socialists and feminists', *Capital and Class*, vol. 4, no. 2 (1980), 69; Sheila Rowbotham, *The Past Lies Before Us: Feminism in action since the 1960s* (1989), 42-7.

³ Irene Brugel, 'Women as a Reserve Army of Labour: A note on recent British experience', *Feminist Review*, no. 3 (1979), 19-20; Irene Brugel, 'Local Economic Strategies and Service Employment', *Local Economy*, vol. 1, no. 4 (1987), 40; Sheila Rowbotham, 'Cleaners' Organizing in Britain from the 1970s: A personal account', in Luis L. M. Aguiar & Andrew Herod (eds.), *The Dirty Work of Neoliberalism: Cleaners in the global economy* (2006), 190.

⁴ Angela Davis, *Pre-school Childcare in England, 1939–2010: Theory, practice and experience* (2015), chs. 4-5.

⁵ Amy Palmer, 'Nursery schools or nursery classes? Choosing and failing to choose between policy alternatives in nursery education in England, 1918–1972', *History of Education*, vol. 45, no. 1 (2016), 106.

⁶ Lynn Abrams, 'The Self And Self-help: Women Pursuing Autonomy In Post-war Britain', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, vol. 29 (2019), 202.

services provided directly by the state, notably councils and local education authorities.⁷ A full picture of the situation is still emerging, especially regarding London and the voluntary provision of care and education there, where we do not yet know the limits to how far Davis's qualitative sources, often drawn from towns or rural areas, can be extrapolated into general conclusions.

Childcare in the 1980s was, overall, patchy and scarce, but during this decade there was a slow shift towards provision levels in the direction of average European rates. State policy in Westminster and local government to expand provision during the 1980s was to fund non-state organisations and, as a result, this decade saw a remarkably fast expansion in the number of formal under-fives childcare and education places.⁸ Based on the Medical Research Council National Survey of Health and Development – a large, UK-wide epidemiological cohort study begun after World War Two – the proportion of children born in the 1960s and 1970s with no experience of pre-school education or playgroups had already plummeted to eighteen per cent (compared to eighty-five per cent of their baby-boomer parents).⁹ The PPA's surveys in the 1970s and 1980s also showed that the percentage of parents of young children who had used neither childcare, pre-school education, nor playgroups and mother and toddler groups in England and Wales dropped from sixty-eight to twenty-four per cent between 1974 and 1983.¹⁰ In 1983, forty-five per cent of these parents had at some point used some form of pre-school childcare or education, and sixty-four per cent had used a playgroup or mother and toddler group.¹¹ Undoubtedly, many children spent short spells in nursery schools or playgroups and local situations differed from the national aggregate. Nevertheless, by 1980 pre-school childcare or education were, to some extent, becoming normal.

In fact, if Blair's governments were a period of a significant growth in under-fives provision, then the same is true of the 1980s.¹² Aggregate statistics from official publications or research in the 1990s for children under five in daycare or nursery education vary depending on which ages they count, whether they include part-time and full-time places, whether they cover state-funded places only, and other factors. Therefore, definitive figures on the changes during this period cannot yet be ascertained, but various datasets indicate significant increases in provision during the 1980s. In

⁷ Vicky Randall, *The Politics of Child Daycare in Britain* (2000); Amy Palmer, 'Nursery Schools for the Few or the Many?', *Paedagogica Historica*, vol. 47, no.1-2 (2011): 153; Jane Lewis, 'The Failure to Expand Childcare Provision and to Develop a Comprehensive Childcare Policy in Britain during the 1960s and 1970s', *20th Century British History*, vol. 24, no. 2 (2013), 249-74, 259; Helen McCarthy, 'Social Science and Married Women's Employment in Post-war Britain', *Past & Present*, no. 233 (2016), 300-1; Palmer, 'Nursery schools'; Anna K. Danziger Halperin, '“Cinderella of the Education System”: Margaret Thatcher's Plan for Nursery Expansion in 1970s Britain', *20th Century British History*, vol. 29, no. 2 (2018); Helen McCarthy, *Double Lives: A history of working motherhood* (2020), 336-8, 378.

⁸ Randall, *Politics*, 80-1.

⁹ M. E. J. Wadsworth, 'Social Class and Generation Differences in Pre-School Education', *The British Journal of Sociology*, vol. 32, no. 4 (1981), 568.

¹⁰ Sue Mastel & Marjorie Dykins, 'The Role of the Pre-school Playgroups Association in England and Wales after Twenty-five Years', *Early Child Development and Care*, vol. 27, no. 3 (1987), 413.

¹¹ *Ibid.* There was overlap between these two categories.

¹² McCarthy, *Double Lives*, 378.

England, between 1980 and 1991, the National Commission on Education, in 1993, counted a 42.7 per cent increase in places for under-fives with childminders, playgroups, and day care (full-time and part-time), from 853,000 to 1,218,000.¹³ According to the Department for Education and Science, the increase of English children aged two to four in nursery education between 1979 and 1990 was smaller in real terms, but proportionately just as fast; 463,000 to 655,000.¹⁴ Between 1981 and New Labour's 1997 victory the proportion of two to four-year-olds in part or full-time education in the UK increased annually.¹⁵ In contrast, with regard to day care, the existing research for the New Labour years (using Department of Education and Employment statistics) suggests that the rise of childcare places in England between 1997 and 2008 was roughly twenty per cent, from 943,000 to 1,136,000.¹⁶ These statistics from the Department for Education and Employment appear to have counted slightly different categories of provision compared to the statistics for the 1980s used by the National Commission on Education in its 1993 study, since the latter are far higher. Nevertheless, what is significant is comparing, not the real-term, but the relative increase. Compared to the 1990s, a large proportion of 1980s provision was part-time, but based on these statistics the 1980s saw a relative growth in places similar to, if not higher and faster than, the 2000s.¹⁷

In both these periods the sharp rises in attendance were with private, voluntary, or otherwise independent providers.¹⁸ The PPA estimated that playgroups alone stood for half of the provision for three and four-year-olds in England and Wales in 1983.¹⁹ The fastest growing category of provision relative to its size during the 1980s was, by far, 'private nurseries' not run by the state.²⁰ Meanwhile, childminders stood for the single largest expansion of places in real terms. What distinguished the 2000s from the 1980s was the replacement of the playgroups (which became relabelled as 'sessional care' in official statistics) with full-time care or education. In this way, the baseline for the peak in provision during the 2000s was provided by growth that occurred ten to twenty years earlier, despite the fact that Thatcher's and Major's governments did not increase funding for the sector.²¹ Indeed, my

¹³ Rounded to the nearest '000. National Commission on Education, *Learning to Succeed: A Radical Look at Education Today and a Strategy for the Future* (1993), 128.

¹⁴ Rounded to the nearest '000. Department of Education and Science (DoES), *Education Statistics for the United Kingdom, 1982–1991* (series); Department for Education (DfE), *Education Statistics for the United Kingdom* (1992).

¹⁵ DoES, *Education Statistics for the United Kingdom, 1982–1991* (series); DfE, *Education Statistics for the United Kingdom, 1992–1994* (series); Department for Education and Employment, *Education and Training Statistics for the United Kingdom, 1995–1997* (series).

¹⁶ Rounded to the nearest '000. Kitty Steward, 'Labour's Record on the Under Fives: Policy, spending and outcomes 1997–2010', *Social Policy in a Cold Climate Working Paper*, no. 4 (2013), 35. Note also that Steward's statistics are problematic as they do not separate out childminders who cared only for children older than four, but they give an approximate picture. Also note that in the 2000s the ratio of places to children under five fell slightly faster compared to the 1980s, but this was in large part due to a shrinking child population.

¹⁷ Randall, *Politics*, 2.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ Mastel & Dykins, 'Pre-school Playgroups Association', 401.

²⁰ National Commission on Education, *Learning to Succeed*, 128.

²¹ David Crook, 'L'Éducation Collective Des Jeunes Enfants en Grand Bretagne: Une perspective historique', *Histoire de l'éducation*, no. 82 (May 1999), 38.

sample of GLC-funded organisations (see chapter one) shows a direct continuity between the Livingstone GLC's work and the continuing childcare boom in the 2000s; at least one third of the fifty-six GLC-funded childcare and education-related organisations in my sample were still providing or supporting such services in the 2000s (table 5.1).

Table 5.1. GLC-funded childcare and education-related organisations from my sample active in the 2000s or later.²²

Organisation	Most recent verified date of activity
Ravensbourne Toy Library for Handicapped Children	2023
Contact a Family	2023
Invicta Hall Pre-School Playgroup	2018
North Islington Welfare Centre (Manor Garden's Centre)	2020
Notting Hill Adventure Playground	2023
Attlee Foundation (Attlee Adventure Playground)	2022
National Childcare Campaign	2023*
Wellington Gardens Playgroup	2004
King's Square Playgroup	2023
New Studio Playgroup	2023
Latin American Community Nursery, MAFALDA	2010
Beatty Road Nursery	2004
Rainbow Nursery	2023
Lubavitch Nursery	2015
Yesodey Hatorah Nursery	2019
Croydon Play Council	2006*
Crumbles Castle Adventure Playground	2023
Islington Play Association	2023
Clapham and Larkhall Under Fives Organisation (CLUFO)	2014

* Replaced by a successor organisation.

²² See appendix for sources.

Kevin J. Brehony and Kristen D. Nawrotzki argue that non-state organisations reacted to government inaction on under-fives childcare and education during the 1960s and 1970s by establishing playgroups.²³ Two notable cases were the PPA's and the SCF's under-fives playgroups, both of which expanded fast in these decades. Concurrently, councils and education authorities interpreted Secretary of State for Education and Science Margaret Thatcher's 'Education: A Framework for Expansion', as a go-ahead for cooperating with local non-state organisations.²⁴ The PPA consisted of thousands of local groups by 1976, although they focused entirely on learning through play and did not relieve mothers from caring duties.²⁵ In the 1970s there were also over one hundred SCF playgroups. Roughly thirty were in London, of which several provided full-day care.²⁶ Brehony and Nawrotzki argue these movements, although they did largely not free up mother's time, 'took pressure off local authorities' to provide council-run childcare and education.²⁷ However, many, if not most, of these groups were also funded by local governments.

The GLC archive of grant applications and reports can thus explain a microcosm of this burgeoning field of care and education for the under-fives and other children in the capital, as well as exemplify an alternative view to the playgroup approach. The Livingstone GLC made itself a significant supporter of this expansion, funding at least 250 voluntary organisations in the field at the cost of £14 million or more, over the course of its term in office.²⁸ These groups were sometimes also funded by borough councils and local education authorities and operated alongside the day nurseries, nursery schools and nursery classes already run directly by local governments. They often supported the PPA's educational objectives, but central to the LLP's strategy was giving mothers the option to participate in politics. The GLC's economist Maureen Mackintosh, looking back in 1987, called this 'the most successful area of GLC funding relevant to women's work'.²⁹

The rest of this chapter will describe how this strategic focus on employment was the Livingstone GLC's primary reason for supporting nurseries, creches, childminders' organisations, toy libraries, playgroups, adventure playgrounds, and other childcare-related groups. Aims related to children's education and 'development' and, perhaps most persistently, anti-sexism and anti-racism were also of great importance in funding considerations too. However, this chapter concentrates its

²³ Kevin J. Brehony & Kristen D. Nawrotzki, 'From Weak Social Democracy to Hybridized Neo-liberalism: Early childhood education in Britain since 1945', in Karen Hagemann, Konrad Hugo Jarausch & Cristina Allemann-Ghionda (eds.), *Children, Families, and States: Time policies of childcare, preschool, and primary education in Europe* (2011), 241-2.

²⁴ Danziger Halperin, "Cinderella", 297.

²⁵ Brehony & Nawrotzki, 'From Weak Social Democracy', 242; Mastel & Dykins, 'Pre-school Playgroups Association', 395.

²⁶ University of Birmingham Cadbury Research Library (CRL), SCF/HW/4/PLG/2/2, Save the Children Fund, 'Save the Children Fund Playgroups Policy', folder, n.d. (1970?).

²⁷ Brehony & Nawrotzki, 'From Weak Social Democracy', 242.

²⁸ Maureen Mackintosh, 'Women's Work', in Maureen Mackintosh & Hilary Wainwright, *A Taste of Power: The politics of local economics* (1987), 112-3; the figure of 250 is by my own count and is larger than Mackintosh's as it covers other committees besides the Women's Committee, but is still likely an underestimate.

²⁹ *Ibid.*

analysis on childcare motivated by employment to hopefully establish, for future analyses of all aspects of the Council's funding programmes, the background of the Livingstone administration's overarching political objectives from its perspective as part of the labour movement. As I have suggested, this was a contrast to the PPA and SCF who, although they offered some daycare, were primarily concerned with educating and socialising pre-school children. For the rest of this chapter, I will concentrate on introducing the labour-movement approach to childcare and education and how efforts were made to implement it at Livingstone's GLC, but first I will also give a brief account of the SCF's and the PPA's alternative approach and how they were, nevertheless, also influenced by Labour members and unions.

5.2 Mummy Makes the World Go Round: The Save the Children Fund and Preschool Playgroup Association

Playgroups, since the 1960s, presented themselves as a movement by mothers, for mothers and their children, characterised by a high degree of parental involvement in sessions. This conception remains predominant in the scholarly history of childcare.³⁰ In fact, the boundaries between the playgroup movement and the labour movement, and between the playgroup movement and nursery schools in London, were often blurred.

Voluntary organisations in a Christian charitable tradition were early playgroup pioneers. The SCF claimed, in the 1960s, to have created playgroups in 1954.³¹ But even prior to this, the North Islington Infant Welfare Centre had opened a toddlers playroom in 1950, where play would train small children 'in the behaviour which makes living with them so much easier', while providing a 'respite for mothers' while they went shopping or took courses.³² The SCF operated dozens of playgroups in London in the 1960s and 1970s with an educational mission. They ran groups in inner cities, sometimes in connection with homelessness hostels, and in contrast to the early PPA, who preferred volunteer organisers, they employed play leaders and 'trained nursery nurses'.³³ At their playgroups, they said, 'the child develops physical health and skills; he builds relationships with adults which give him security and confidence'; in short 'the behaviour expected in our society'.³⁴ The implication was that these children would lack this without the SCF's intervention.

This, and the PPA, was paid for with grants from Labour-controlled local authorities. The North Islington centre's toddler room was possible because of a large new grant from the

³⁰ Davis, *Pre-school Childcare*, 180-1.

³¹ CRL, SCF/HW/4/PLG/2/1, Save the Children Fund, *Somewhere to Play*, folder, n.d. (1969?).

³² The centre closed every annual report with a quote from the Episcopal pastor Phillips Brooks. LMA, 4314/04/042, North Islington Infant Welfare Centre, *Annual Report, 1950-51* (1951), 5; North Islington Infant Welfare Centre, *Thirty-Seventh Annual Report, 1951-52* (1952), 6.

³³ CRL, SCF/HW/4/PLG/2/1.

³⁴ *Ibid.*

Labour-controlled London County Council (LCC).³⁵ In July 1963, PPA founder Belle Tutaev and an SCF representative met Labour's LCC Education Committee chairman Marjorie McIntosh, establishing long-running 'massive support' (as the PPA later described it) for both organisations from the council and its successors – the Inner London Education Authority (ILEA), and the GLC.³⁶ By 1979 there were thirty-six SCF-operated playgroups in London, out of which thirty-one received funds from Labour-run borough councils or the ILEA Labour administration.³⁷

For its part, the PPA developed detailed tactics and advice for grant applications. It gave its member groups a detailed guide on *Grants and How to Apply for Them* in January 1975, with step-by-step guides on how to write grant application letters and highlighted which legislation local government bodies should use to fund playgroups.³⁸ In London relations with local authorities were already well-established as the following year PPA playgroups across the inner-city boroughs reported the receipt of £324,625 from twelve councils. Besides £25,520 from Westminster and from Kensington and Chelsea, everything was paid by Labour councils and Urban Aid.³⁹ In total, that year, 344 out of Inner London's 378 playgroups received public funds.⁴⁰

The labour movement's influence did not end there; at an individual level many other crossovers existed. Tutaev's husband was a Labour LCC member the year she initiated the PPA.⁴¹ In 1976, Islington's PPA groups invited Labour MP Joan Lestor to their under-fives conference.⁴² The PPA London Region's training and development officer, Liz Chambers, was an organiser for the Hackney Under-Fives Campaign, whose membership also included Sheila Rowbotham and which received support from the local trades council as well as branches of the National Union of Teachers (NUT) and the Union of Construction, Allied Trades and Technicians.⁴³ Similarly, for the SCF cooperation with Labour politicians did not end with funding. Out of its three dozen playgroups in London in 1979, four had been established on the advice of a local Christian leader, but eight were created in response to suggestions by Labour administrations at the LCC, GLC, or ILEA.⁴⁴ As in many other non-state movements in London at the time, the playgroups became what they were through their organisers' cooperation with the labour movement.

³⁵ LMA, 4314/04/042, North Islington Infant Welfare Centre, *Thirty-Seventh Annual Report, 1950–51*.

³⁶ University College London Institute of Education Library and Archives (IoE), PLA/PPA/2/49, Pre-School Playgroups Association, *The Story of the Inner London Pre-School Playgroups Association*, booklet, n.d. (1987?), 2. McIntosh's sister was Barbara Castle.

³⁷ CRL, SCF/HW/4/PLG/8/2, SCF, *Notes on S.C.F. Community Playgroups*, February, 1979.

³⁸ IoE, Pre-school Playgroups Association, *Grants and How to Apply for Them* (1975), 14.

³⁹ Inner London Pre-school Playgroups Association, *Playgroups: A shared adventure* (1976), 13–4.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 9.

⁴¹ *The Times*, 'Complete results of London County Council elections' 18 April (1958), 8.

⁴² IoE, PLA/PPA/2/49, Margaret Hanton, *Inner London Pre-school Playgroup Association Chairman's Report*, n.d. (1976?), 1. Dated by its reference to a publicity stunt in the Tower of London's moat in June 1976.

⁴³ IoE, PLA/PPA/2/37, Liz Chambers, *You and Your Local Authority*, May 1977, 6; *Socialist Challenge*, 'Nearly 300 children ...', 25 May (1978), 5.

⁴⁴ CRL, SCF/HW/4/PLG/8/2, SCF, *Notes on S.C.F. Community Playgroups*.

Finally, the London playgroups exemplify how their format was not necessarily limited to short sessions involving both mothers and children. In 1979, all the SCF's playgroups hired staff to organise them and nine were either explicitly full-time ('extended day') services or ran for five hours straight or longer without sending children away for lunch.⁴⁵ Others were conscious of their surroundings and had adapted their provision according to when nearby nursery classes opened or closed. Even descriptions of certain part-time playgroups implied that children attended without their parents.⁴⁶ At least fifteen SCF playgroups, like the one on Bellenden Road, were later funded by Livingstone's GLC, in many cases replacing borough council or Urban Aid money. Additionally, the SCF was not alone in turning playgroups into full-time provision; in Hackney, the Market Nursery started as a playgroup run by local parents in 1975 that became a community nursery with help from the National Union of Public Employees. It, too, like many PPA groups, became GLC-funded.⁴⁷ The Livingstone GLC's grants to London's pre-school childcare or education groups, as in other fields, was a continuation of work begun by other Labour authorities and governments – in this case the growth of playgroups and their evolution into supporting full-time childcare.

Regarding the evolution of childcare in post-war Norway, Arnlaug Leira has called the mothers who organised voluntary childcare provision the 'innovators and change agents' whom the welfare state followed.⁴⁸ This description could summarise mothers in 1960s and 1970s London too – the playgroup organisers convinced the state to fund them. This was a deliberate strategy on their part; the PPA's leaders believed that to become as popular as they wanted to be they needed paid staff, especially to attract local women in poor, inner-city boroughs.⁴⁹ The SCF's aims were to socialise their children to prepare them for school. But where it considered part-time playgroups insufficient for local mother's needs it asked for money to run them full-time. But SCF groups were in the minority. In contrast, what is notable about Livingstone's GLC and the rest of London's labour movement, as the remainder of this chapter will detail, is that, based on the labour movement's needs, they had their own agenda of utilising grants for the sake of increasing women's employment and, thus, uniting the workers.

5.3 Punder Fives: The labour movement's focus on employment

Although Randall, in 2000, characterised childcare in the 1970s as 'strikingly ... undertheorised', the socialists and socialist feminists who promoted it in London had a clear idea of what they were doing,

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

⁴⁷ Sheila Rowbotham, *Daring to Hope: My life in the 1970s* (2021), 278.

⁴⁸ Arnlaug Leira, *Welfare States and Working Mothers: The Scandinavian experience* (1992), 177.

⁴⁹ Lynn Abrams, 'The Self And Self-help: Women Pursuing Autonomy In Post-war Britain', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, vol. 29 (2019), 218-221.

and the GLC's position followed from their work.⁵⁰ The GLC united two central ideas in its policy; day care and education would benefit working mothers and the labour movement, but also achieve what Audrey Wise called 'community control'.⁵¹ In this section I will describe the theoretical continuity between the labour movement's involvement in childcare provision and its strategy since the 1960s and the Livingstone GLC's policy on funding non-state organisations two decades later.⁵²

In childcare, as in other areas, the 1970s Labour left's aim was to overcome what it considered a welfare state economy which had reached the limits of 'authoritarian' and top-down control.⁵³ Without 'Community control ...', union organiser and former Labour councillor Audrey Wise explained in *Socialist Woman* in 1970, 'the child-care facilities which might be provided might well be a trap'.⁵⁴ Rowbotham later recalled this as a criticism of a 'traditional labour-movement approach' focussed primarily on getting mothers into employment. Additionally, paying attention to the quality or content of childcare and education was a means towards 'democratizing control over everyday life'.⁵⁵

However, this critique and new proposal was in itself made by people within the labour movement. The TUC Women's Advisory Committee had been lobbying for nurseries for the two-to-fives since 1963.⁵⁶ Labour's 1969 Social Strategy, which recognised the need for equalising childcare provision across local authorities, hoped to commit the party to 'community organisations under community control', or the 'effective participation' of welfare service users in the management and oversight of schools and the NHS; measures that would 'combat growing alienation'.⁵⁷ This discussion paper was produced under the purview of Labour's Research Department, led by Terry Pitt, a young, CND-supporting union appointee, and used 'community' to mean 'society' or a local geographical area.⁵⁸ As I noted in chapter four, the hopes of this strategy can be seen in new institutions such as Community Health Councils. Although it was watered down by the party's national leadership, its aims were throughout the 1970s carried forward or echoed by labour-movement campaigns and organisers into GLC policy.

The labour movement's involvement in full-time pre-school education increased during the 1960s. While playgroups were well-represented nationally through the PPA, local organisations for five-day-a-week, full-time nursery schools and classes gained UK-wide platforms through close links

⁵⁰ Randall, *Policy*, 124.

⁵¹ Quoted in Rowbotham, *The Past*, 131.

⁵² For an example of an account of this period without this context see, Helen Penn, 'Round and Round the Mulberry Bush: The balance of public and private in early education and childcare in the twentieth century', in Richard Aldrich (ed.), *Public or Private Education? Lessons from history* (2004), 89-94.

⁵³ London Edinburgh Weekend Return Group, *In and Against the State*, second edition (1979), 9.

⁵⁴ Quoted in Rowbotham, *The Past*, 131.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

⁵⁶ McCarthy, 'Social Science', 302.

⁵⁷ The Labour Party, *Labour's Social Strategy* (1969), 60, 78-9, 107.

⁵⁸ Jonathan Aitken, *The Young Meteors* (1969), 116; Patrick Bell, *The Labour Party in Opposition 1970-1974* (2004), 150.

with the labour movement or, in the 1970s, directly inside the TUC. The National Campaign for Nursery Education (NCNE), founded in 1965, demanded the implementation of the Plowden Report (1967), which recommended part-time nursery education provision for any three to four-year-olds whose parents wanted it and full-time places for fifteen per cent of under-fives in England.⁵⁹ Chaired by the former Christian missionary Betty Osborn, it was outwardly an all-party coalition. In 1972 its four vice presidents included both a Liberal and a Conservative MP. But the two other vice presidents were Joan Lester and the former NUT general secretary Ronald Gould, whilst its president for at least fourteen years following its creation was the left-wing Labour MP Renée Short.⁶⁰ (The NUT had joined the TUC in 1970.) Locally, the NCNE's Birmingham branch was chaired by the lifelong CPGB loyalist Irene Rickman.⁶¹ In Crawley too, it was the CPGB branch that instigated a local nursery campaign.⁶² Furthermore, from its inception and at its rallies during the 1970s the campaign emphasised its support from union representatives.⁶³ In 1972 *The Guardian's* education correspondent credited it for convincing Wilson's Labour governments to expand nursery provision through its new Urban Aid programme, which funded provision by non-state organisations. During the 1970s, non-state groups running their own full-time nurseries and union childcare campaigns for full-time day nurseries would increase their activity.⁶⁴ While user control was not central to the NCNE, the new links between the labour movement, state funding and voluntary groups alongside Labour's Social Strategy meant it could be raised to prominence.

Although not all, or even most, of the earliest non-state groups that planned for or provided their own full-time nurseries were formally linked to the labour movement in the 1970s, as with the SCF and PPA, there were notable links through funding or cooperation between local parents, women's liberation groups, social workers, housing trusts, or community organisations and

⁵⁹ *The Birmingham Post*, 'Demand for Nursery Schools', 14 September (1968), 9; Department of Education and Science, *Children and their Primary Schools: A report of the Central Advisory Council for Education (England)*, vol. 1 (1967), 127, 469.

⁶⁰ Short, who also became president of the Nursery Schools Association in 1966, was described by *The Telegraph* after her death as 'The Matriarch of the Hard Left'; Vicky Hurst, 'Betty Osborn: Children's champion', *The Guardian*, 29 December (1990), 21; E. M. Osborn, 'National Campaign for Nursery Education', *International Journal of Early Childhood*, vol. 5, no. 2 (1973), 162; *The Times*, 'Mrs. Renée Short', 16 October (1966), 14; Richard Bourne, '350,000 Want More Nursery Education', *The Guardian*, 25 April (1972), 5; D. O. Dixon, 'Children Will March to No. 10', *Westminster & Pimlico News*, 13 April (1979), 4.

⁶¹ *The Birmingham Post*, 'Mothers and Children in March on the Council for more Nursery Schools', 2 October (1968), 1; Annie Banham, 'In Loving Memory of Irene Rickman: 1931–2016', *Morning Star*, 12 May (2016), 9.

⁶² Joyce Challice, 'The Story of a Campaign', *Comment: Communist fortnightly review*, vol. 3, no. 17 (1965), 264–5.

⁶³ The campaign's original name in 1965 was the Nursery Schools Campaign Committee. Its creation was facilitated by the National Assembly of Women, set up, in turn as per the Marxist-Leninist 'mass organisation' strategy, by the CPGB. *Comment: Communist fortnightly review*, 'A 21 Year Old Promise', vol. 3, no. 17 (1965), 265; see Sophie Skelton, 'From Peace to Development: A re-constitution of British women's international politics, c. 1945–1975', PhD thesis, University of Birmingham (2014), 122; Bourne, '350,000 Want More Nursery Education'; Dixon, 'Children Will March'; Osborn, 'National Campaign for Nursery Education', 162.

⁶⁴ Bourne, '350,000 Want More Nursery Education'; Davis, *Pre-school Childcare*, 124; Danzinger Halperin, 'Cinderella', 287.

Labour-controlled authorities or unions. Rowbotham joined a six-person nursery campaign in Islington in 1971 and recalled having no success.⁶⁵ Yet within a few years this early ‘do-it-yourself nursery’ movement was making gains in cooperation with local authorities. It included organisations like Camden Women’s Group’s Dartmouth Park Hill Children’s Community Centre (1972), Edinburgh Women’s Liberation Group’s nursery campaign (1973), the Westway Nursery Association in North Kensington (1973), the first two being explicitly feminist organisations. The Camden group was funded by its local Labour-run borough. The North Kensington parents not only sought Urban Aid money but their constitution also allowed the local NUT branch to nominate a member of its executive committee.⁶⁶ In 1973, a women’s centre in a squatted shop in Brixton wanted to run a playgroup where ‘parents can look after each other’s children on a rota system’ and were given more permanent premises by Lambeth’s Labour council.⁶⁷ Ken Livingstone was a member of the council and had promoted an active policy towards cooperating with squatters.⁶⁸ At the time, Rowbotham saw in Dartmouth Park a model for a small, user-controlled ‘community nursery’, preferable to both playgroups and the *kinderladen* invented by revolutionary German students because they would not exclude ‘working-class parents’.⁶⁹ The campaigns and organisations by and for working mothers would only increase throughout the 1970s, gathering momentum into the GLC period.

Through the efforts of socialist feminists and union members the demand for childcare and do-it-yourself nurseries became an explicit labour-movement issue. In 1974, the London Federation of Trades Councils adopted and launched the Working Women’s Charter (WWC), committing it to organising for ‘local authority day nurseries, free of charge, with extended hours to suit working mothers’.⁷⁰ The campaign for the WWC formed a Nursery Action Group in 1975, and had eight

⁶⁵ Rowbotham, *The Past*, 129.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 134; Sarah Browne, *The Women’s Movement in Scotland* (2014), 73; Maxilla Archive, Westway Nursery Association, ‘First Annual Report’ (1974), digitised copy of original document, <<http://maxillaarchive.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/WNA-First-annual-report-1974.pdf>>, accessed 28 February, 2023, p. 31.

⁶⁷ Bishopsgate Institute Special Collections and Archives (BI), FL/EPH/Q/34, South London Women’s Centre Newsletter, 2 January (1973).

⁶⁸ Ken Livingstone, *If Voting Changed Anything They’d Abolish It* (1987), 22.

⁶⁹ Sheila Rowbotham, ‘Problems of Organising’, in Sheila Rowbotham (ed.), *Dreams and Dilemmas: Collected writings* (1983), 74. Originally written in 1972.

⁷⁰ It has often been reported that it was founded by the ‘London Trades Council’. By my best estimations this is erroneous because by the 1970s there existed only an organisation called the London Federation of Trades Councils. Its name was frequently misreported in national newspapers and in regional newspapers outside London. For instance, Michael Levene unequivocally told a parliamentary select committee that he was secretary of the ‘Federation of London Trades Councils’ in 1968, but was nevertheless called the secretary of ‘London Trades Council’ by the *Daily Mirror* on 6 December 1971. This matters because it means the WWC was not launched by one trades council but by the representative body of *all* of London’s trades council-affiliated union branches. (The federation may have changed its name to Greater London Association of Trades Union Councils by this point, but I cannot confirm this.) See also, Penny A. Weiss & Megan Brueske, *Feminist Manifestos: A global documentary reader* (2018), 25; George Stevenson, *The Women’s Liberation Movement and the Politics of Class in Britain* (2019), 38-9.

branches in London by 1977.⁷¹ Its campaign convinced the TUC to revise its own Charter for Working Women in 1975 to call for ‘nurseries open throughout the day to assist working mothers’.⁷² This meant a considerable presence within London’s workers’ movement.

Locally in London during the following years nurseries were discussed by unions in relation to the WWC and subsequent nursery campaigns were clear about their role for women’s employment within the labour movement. Helen Penn, who was a council worker in South London in the mid-1970s, later recalled that staff from her Under Fives Team founded both the National Childminders Association and the Wandsworth Childcare Campaign in the context of the ‘Red Republic of Wandsworth’, where Mike Ward (later chair of the GLC Industry and Employment Committee) was a councillor.⁷³ When Stepney and Bethnal Green Trades Council ran a conference on ‘Women and Work in East London’, they included a workshop on ‘facilities for the under fives’.⁷⁴ In 1976, several local groups calling for an ‘All London Nurseries Campaign’ gave four reasons for why nurseries were ‘a fundamental necessity in the struggle against women’s oppression’. Prominently, it argued that a woman had to ‘sacrifice her job’ to care for her child and was forced into the ‘cheap unorganised labour pool’. Notably, they also emphasised, much like the contemporaneous and later arguments in *Chartist* and *London Labour Briefing* detailed below, that:

because a woman is tied to the home, she becomes an isolated individual, loses contact with the outside world which becomes, in her eyes, the “man’s world”, loses her self confidence and can no longer fully participate in Trade Union, political or other community activity, and the facts about the extremely high rate of depression and dependence on drugs among young mothers at home tell the rest of the story.⁷⁵

Similarly, in 1979, the campaign group Tower Hamlets Under Fives contrasted ‘900,000 children under five whose mothers are at work’ around the UK to the far lower number of childcare places. Furthermore, they believed that ‘trades unions, tenants organisations, parents groups, women’s groups and community organisations all have important parts to play in the fight for a better deal for children and parents’.⁷⁶ Its cover illustration depicted east enders of different ancestries and religions uniting for childcare by coding parents and children as black, white, and Haredi (illustration 5.1). In 1978 the TUC presented an Under Fives Charter. The following year the South East Region Trades Union

⁷¹ Rowbotham, *The Past*, 135; *Womens Charter: The paper of the National Working Women’s Charter Campaign*, no. 3 (n.d., 1977?), 4.

⁷² South London Gallery Archive, SLG-EX-1975-4-95-4, Trades Union Congress, ‘12 Aims for Women at Work’, folder (1975), digitised copy of original document, <<https://slgarchive.org/index.php/tuc-pamphlet-4>>, accessed 28 February 2023.

⁷³ Helen Penn, *‘Be Realistic Demand the Impossible’: A memoir of work in childcare and education* (2019), 38-40.

⁷⁴ BI, BGSTC/23, Bethnal Green and Stepney Trades Council, ‘Women and Work in East London’, leaflet (n.d., 1975?).

⁷⁵ BI, FL/EPH/T/152, ‘Why Nurseries Now?’, booklet of stapled A4s (n.d., 1976?).

⁷⁶ BI, BGSTC/70, Tower Hamlets Under Fives, ‘Under 5’s in Tower Hamlets’, folder, (n.d., 1979?).

Congress (SERTUC, which, as other chapters show, later worked closely with the GLC in several fields) ran a conference on under-fives care. A group of attendees met to create the National Childcare Campaign (NCCC), with the help of SERTUC's mailing list.⁷⁷ Mackintosh later credited this 'established network of groups campaigning on childcare' for making the issue 'a priority for the GLC'.⁷⁸ It is clear from this history that not only was childcare already on the labour movement's agenda in 1981, but political theories, strategies, methods, and messaging were already firmly concentrating on the issue of community-controlled facilities for the benefit of women's employment and working-class unity.



Illustration 5.1: A parent unity. The cover of Tower Hamlets Under Fives's folder 'Under 5's in Tower Hamlets', c. 1979.⁷⁹

⁷⁷ Penn, 'Be Realistic', 48-9.

⁷⁸ Mackintosh, 'Women's Work', 112-3.

⁷⁹ BI, BGSTC/70, Tower Hamlets Under Fives, 'Under 5's in Tower Hamlets', folder, (n.d., 1979?).

5.4 Friends and Material Relations: The Livingstone GLC's theory of childcare

The idea of 'isolation' expressed by the All London Nurseries Campaign became central to the London Labour Party's theory of childcare. To the theorists who informed the Livingstone administration on childcare, 'isolation' was not a feeling or emotion, but the description of a social relation (or lack thereof). This section will describe how ending women's 'isolation' from the labour movement provided a starting point for socialist-feminist and Marxian thinkers in and around the London Labour Party to expand state-funded childcare.

In 1979, Ann Bliss wrote an article titled 'The Architecture of Women's Oppression' for *Chartist*, the Trotskyist-leaning journal of the Socialist Chartist group.⁸⁰ She proposed that physical architecture made it possible for individual men to oppress women: 'To me it's perfectly obvious that men wouldn't abuse, oppress or batter their wives so much if they weren't able to do it within the privacy of their own four walls'.⁸¹ The relationship between people in a neighbourhood and its organisation was integral to her interpretation:

If women had a ready community of neighbours – for example through helping each other's children – men might think twice before throwing their weight around ... If it was taken for granted that children could run into their neighbours' homes a bit more, and if responsibilities for child minding were more shared we wouldn't have so many children battered by parents in the privacy of their homes. ... we can all think of examples where women are oppressed mainly because they are so isolated in the home.⁸²

To Bliss, the opposite to being 'isolated' in high-rise flats was social organisation, which had been easier in streets of terraced houses before planners began to 'divide and rule'; 'smashing up working class communities in inner city areas' by replacing 'thriving communities' with tower blocks.⁸³ She concluded that women 'can only discover forms of solidarity and collective strength by going to work, meeting people, joining a trade union and so on. Consequently at the moment it seems that the strongest lever for change lies here'.⁸⁴ As factories became ever-more automated, this would eventually parallel a breakdown of the separation between public and private life, organising homes and making them 'into real centres of community life and power; places 'where we help with each other's children, where we organise production and so on'.⁸⁵

⁸⁰ Ann Bliss, 'The Architecture of Women's Oppression', *Chartist*, no. 75 (1979), 23-6.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 23.

⁸² *Ibid.*

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 24.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 25.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

The central concept of organising mothers and of childcare in Bliss's revolutionary vision was a reoccurring theme in the network surrounding the Livingstone administration's leadership prior to and throughout its term in office. *Chartist* was co-edited by Chris Knight – Bliss's comrade and ex-husband – with whom Ken Livingstone co-founded and sold copies of *London Labour Briefing (LLB)* in 1980.⁸⁶ *LLB* emphasised the importance of Bliss's article by republishing it in August 1984, by which time Bliss and Knight's ideas were influential and representative of the thinking behind the GLC's childcare strategy.⁸⁷ In 1980, Bliss and Knight had written candidly, as socialist-feminists, about their love, sex life, marriage, and abandonment of monogamy.⁸⁸ They believed, as Knight put it in 1971, that 'social conditions determine social consciousness', but also knew that social conditions could be changed and organised through human action and politics.⁸⁹ Writing in the same *LLB* issue as Bliss's republished article on mothers' organisation, Knight imagined 'Shared friends ... who take responsibility for each other's children, each other's domestic lives, each other's relationships – this, for me, is a part of what words like "socialism" and "communism" must mean'.⁹⁰ Following both paleoanthropological theories of early human communal living – Knight's scientific attempt to find prehistoric communism – and socialist union organising, changing the conditions of social relations were thus the core of their political strategy. Soon after the GLC's abolition, Knight finished his anthropological book on a theory of the origins of human culture wherein prehistoric mother's solidarity during monthly sex strikes was the social organisation that let *homo sapiens* transcend primate patriarchy and enter an egalitarian hunter-gatherer culture. He and Bliss had evidently been thinking along similar lines for some time, given that in 1979 Bliss cited the same evidence that he later used to argue that early-human communal camps were based around mother's needs for childcare.⁹¹ As I described in chapter two, the GLC leadership's overall strategy on job creation was a means towards the organisation of the working class as a prerequisite for reforms or revolution. Similarly, to the influential circle of socialists around Livingstone and Valerie Wise, organisation to unite politically 'isolated' mothers was, philosophically and practically, a crucial component to this, both for preventing violence against women and to further their overall class politics.

This aligned with a view among London's socialists that there were strong tendencies in post-war capitalist societies that would make the people of the working class 'isolated' from each other unless they struggled hard to stay united. Self-emancipation, wrote Guy Debord in 1967, could 'be carried out neither by the isolated individual nor by atomised and manipulated masses, but only

⁸⁶ Ken Livingstone, *You Can't Say That: Memoirs* (2011), 149.

⁸⁷ Ann Bliss, 'The Architecture of Women's Oppression', *London Labour Briefing*, no. 42 (1984), 14.

⁸⁸ Ann Bliss, *Our Sex Lives, Our Strength* (1980); Chris Knight, *My Sex Life* (1980); see also Marshall Colman, 'Cudgelling the Emotions', *LLB*, no. 4 (1980), 8.

⁸⁹ Bliss, 'Women's Oppression', *Chartist*, 26; private collection, Chris Knight, 'Draft Notes on the First Revolution', Young Chartist discussion paper (1971), 1.

⁹⁰ Chris Knight, 'Taking Down the Fences', *LLB*, no. 42 (1984), 16.

⁹¹ Bliss, 'The Architecture of Women's Oppression', *Chartist*; Chris Knight, *Blood Relations: Menstruation and the origins of culture* (1991), 153, 322.

and always by the class that is able to dissolve all classes by reducing all power to the de-alienating form of realised democracy'.⁹² Similarly, in 1979, Sheila Rowbotham saw the demand for childcare as a contest for 'the use, control and distribution of social resources ... between sexes and between classes'.⁹³ She considered this strategic vision 'vital' given 'the present economic crisis ... Otherwise isolated struggles will sink into exhaustion and despair'.⁹⁴ She considered post-war Britain as characterised by this problem; after 1945 women had returned 'to the private sphere of isolated child care as many nurseries had been closed' – a place cut off from 'the public world of work'.⁹⁵ In 1981, Rowbotham described 'community-controlled nurseries' as part of a network of other political organisations: unions, claimant unions, and law centres.⁹⁶ 'Community control', she made clear, was the version of worker's control appropriate for community nurseries.⁹⁷ 'It must be', Rowbotham wrote in 1982 on the topic of 'planning from below', 'working-class women who change the labour movement to fit their needs'.⁹⁸ This could not happen if women were divided. In theory, the 'community', where childcare was a central function and nurseries a central place, was the new frontline for overcoming, politically and organisationally, the isolation antithetical to class unity.

This was how childcare was often discussed in *LLB* and, as the next section describes, the GLC's grant-making committees. In 1985, Labour member Monica Slade wrote for *LLB* on the social relations of motherhood: 'we mothers are isolated, barred from unifying and organising, not by any laws, but by the very nature of our work'.⁹⁹ The context of discussing how mothers with small children could cooperate or participate in Labour meetings or demonstrations, juxtaposed to 'unifying and organising', suggests that 'isolated' here meant something like being unable to organise. The crux of the problem was isolation from political or social organisation since, to Slade, '[d]efiant Labour Councils need all the grassroots support they can get'; 'if mothers find it difficult to impossible to go to meetings, how can we discuss what is to be done, how can we organise to protect our services, how can we make a significant political stand?'¹⁰⁰ Childcare for London Labour Party (LLP) campaigners had a very tangible organisational function of getting more mothers into politics through Labour, unions, and other groups.

⁹² Guy Debord, *The Society of the Spectacle*, trans. by Ken Knabb (1992 [1967]), 119. Available in English in the UK since 1977 at least.

⁹³ Sheila Rowbotham, 'Who's Holding the Baby?', in Rowbotham, *Dreams and Dilemmas*, 128. Originally published in *Leveller* in August 1979, a few months after Bliss's *Chartist* article.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

⁹⁵ Sheila Rowbotham, 'The Women's Movement and Organizing for Socialism', in Sheila Rowbotham, Lynne Segal & Hilary Wainwright, *Beyond the Fragments: Feminism and the making of socialism* (1980 [1979]), 124.

⁹⁶ Sheila Rowbotham, 'Women, Power and Consciousness: Discussions in the Women's Liberation Movement in Britain 1969–1981', in Rowbotham, *Dreams and Dilemmas*, 155. Talk from 1981.

⁹⁷ Sheila Rowbotham, 'Mother, Child and State', in Rowbotham, *Dreams and Dilemmas*, 133. Originally published 1981. Valerie Wise's mother, Audrey Wise, made the same point eleven years earlier; Rowbotham, *The Past*, 131.

⁹⁸ Sheila Rowbotham & Charlie Owen, 'Planning from Below', in Rowbotham, *Dreams and Dilemmas*, 344.

⁹⁹ Monica Slade, 'Mind Our Children', *LLB*, no. 46 (1985), 18.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*

5.5 *Kinder, Gentler Politics: The GLC's childcare policy and women's employment*

Throughout her term as Women's Committee chair, Valerie Wise consistently supported the LLP and GLC's overall job-creation strategy. As soon as her committee was established in April 1982, she told *LLB* that the GLC was preparing a conference on 'women and employment' to 'deal with all facets of this question including ... the lack of child care facilities, poor training and job opportunities'.¹⁰¹ In 1986 she maintained that '[t]he discrimination that all working mothers face when attempting to work and care for their children without adequate resources is a major contributory factor when considering that most women are in low paid and unskilled jobs'.¹⁰² Wise was also vice-chair of the GLC Industry and Employment Committee and most likely saw this as a means towards broader ends.

As I discussed in chapter two, the LLP's industrial strategy sought to improve Londoners' living standards, economic productivity, and participation in the labour movement. Even prior to the Women's Committee's establishment County Hall regularly hosted the Action Committee for a Woman's Right to Work, a campaign group which included women from both the Labour left and the socialist-feminist group Big Flame. The group argued, in December 1981, that women's unemployment would 'push women out of jobs and back into the home'. Unemployment, they thought, would 'divide the Labour Movement and weaken its ability to mount any threatening protests to the Tories'.¹⁰³ Their call for action was supported by the LLP.¹⁰⁴ Furthermore, these politics were closely echoed in the GLC newspaper *Jobs for a Change* (edited by Rowbotham) a year later, where point six of the council's ten-point plan to 'strengthen working people' argued that the government had 'emphasised divisions between different groups of workers: women, black people, young people, the employed and the unemployed'. The resulting 'cheap labour' was 'a quicksand for growth'. Therefore the plan would lend 'support for trade unions, and groups such as women and black people in the labour market'. Creating 'jobs from need' in this context meant that '[m]ore extended childcare facilities are an urgent need'.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰¹ Valerie Wise, 'GLC Backs Women', *LLB*, no. 20 (1982), 22.

¹⁰² Valerie Wise, 'Preface', in GLC Women's Committee, *Childcare Our Way: A report by the GLC Women's Committee with the Black and Ethnic Minority Committee Childcare Group* (1986), 2. See also, Valerie Wise, 'Foreword', in GLC Women's Committee & Matrix, *Building for Childcare: Making better buildings for the under-5's* (n.d., 1986?), 4.

¹⁰³ *LLB*, 'A Woman's Right to Work', no. 16 (1981), 15. See also, Jill Daniels, "'A Sort of Women's ANL'", *Workers Power*, no. 16, September (1980), 2; Rachel Lever, 'Don't Just Celebrate – Protest', *Spare Rib*, no. 119 (1982), 18; David Kogan & Maurice Kogan, *The Battle for the Labour Party* (1982), 88.

¹⁰⁴ Ann Bliss, 'Labour Women Fight', *LLB*, no. 18 (1982), 9.

¹⁰⁵ *Jobs for a Change: Special edition the London Industrial Strategy*, 'Our Future in the Balance', September (1983), 7.

Unions and their links to voluntary organisations were a significant component of this strategy throughout the GLC period. Writing in *LLB* in April 1982, Valerie Wise celebrated the ‘many signs of trade union organisations and community based groups making the kind of alliances across industries, across the private and public sector and across the workplace and community which will provide the basis of planning for social need’. This included the NCCC, which had ‘been organising discussions on the employment implications of the need for more and better childcare facilities’.¹⁰⁶ Mike Ward, chair of the Industry and Employment (I&E) Committee, likewise, argued in 1983 that the Council’s jobs plan for London ‘cannot become a reality without collective organisation through trade unions, and through groups outside the workplace organised around issues such as housing and childcare’.¹⁰⁷ When the Women’s Committee was established several of its Labour members had experience of working for the TUC, unions, or union-affiliated organisations, and SERTUC was soon given the right to nominate one of its co-opted members.¹⁰⁸ This setting and the importance of organisation as the antidote to isolation, explains the significance of the first list of priorities for Women’s Committee funding in September 1982, which favoured ‘projects enabling women with young children to go out to work and lead a full and active public and social life; e.g. creche facilities’.¹⁰⁹

Wise’s expressed aims and motivations bore a strong resemblance to Bliss’s and Rowbotham’s. At the September 1982 meeting, Wise told the Women’s Committee that its ‘first stage in or longer term strategy to assist in the development of a comprehensive network of essential resources for women in London’ included ‘[s]everal projects aiming to enable women to participate fully outside the home would be funded, including a latchkey project and several estate-based groups’.¹¹⁰ Her report noted that ‘a high proportion [of projects] are located in areas of recognised deprivation’ and stressed that ‘estate-based groups and organisations assisting single parent families should assist women who are especially disadvantaged’. The Committee’s criteria for granting funds used similar words.¹¹¹ This corresponded to the idea of overcoming political or organisational isolation referred to by Slade, Bliss, and Segal, and particularly with Rowbotham’s vision of childcare facilities as one part of the basis of meeting needs and ‘community control’. In line with the general directives of Labour’s strategy, her focus was on the material facts of social organisation.

Across the rest of the GLC, childcare was also being considered for what it could bring to the organisation of workers and communities too. In a strategy document from September 1983, the GLC’s Economic Policy Group considered childminders: ‘From the child-minders point of view ...’ it said, ‘there is a need for employment’. Approvingly, it noted the establishment of the Tower Hamlets Child-minders Association in 1976, since ‘without an established minimum rate of pay, one

¹⁰⁶ Valerie Wise, ‘Workers’ Plan for London’s Needs’, *LLB*, no. 19 (1982), 19.

¹⁰⁷ *Jobs for a Change – LIS special issue*, September 1983, ‘Our Future in the Balance’.

¹⁰⁸ LMA, GLC/DG/MIN/223/002, Women’s Committee minutes, 31 May 1983, 7.

¹⁰⁹ LMA, GLC/DG/PRE/223/001, Report (16.9.82) by Chair, W29.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*

child-minder may find one day she has no child to look after ... the parent has whisked it off down the road to a cheaper minder'. By uniting, childminders would avoid undercutting each other and the report spotlighted how a similar scheme in Wandsworth 'provides support services to overcome the isolation of child-minding'.¹¹² When the Ethnic Minorities Committee ran a consultation workshop on 'Black and Ethnic Minority Childcare' in 1985, it described

the sense of powerlessness and isolation that racism fosters and encourages, which can be overcome when workshops, such as those organised by the GLC, give black people the opportunity to discover the commonality of experience, and to devise strategies for overcoming racism.¹¹³

The GLC's proudest publication, its developmentalist apex, the *London Industrial Strategy* (*LIS*), spoke in 1985 of childcare in terms similar to Bliss's and the Bethnal Green trades council's description of women's situation. It asked whether care work was carried out 'in isolation, or can it be better done collectively with other households'.¹¹⁴ A societal paradox, it said, was 'that while private companies and states grow ever larger and more centralised in their planning of labour, domestic work and consumption are becoming ever more isolated'. The solution 'require[d] major changes not only in the economy of care but also in the economy of paid work'.¹¹⁵ The *LIS* addressed both 'private' and 'public' care work, the former including that done by women in their own homes. Discussing care for adult dependents, but also comparing it to childcare, it noted that carers and dependents 'can be isolated at home'. This meant that 'caring for adult dependents traps women in a cycle of low paid, insecure, often part-time employment'. The same was true for 'private' childcare, the main concern being that mothers would 'take part-time work which is less skilled or do not return to work'; 'an obvious loss to society as a whole'.¹¹⁶ The political and organisational meaning of 'isolation' appears in the *LIS* explicitly with regard to cleaners, who were 'employed either early in the morning or late in the evening, when other workers are at home. This isolates cleaners from other workers and any union organisation on the premises'.¹¹⁷ 'Isolated' meant cut off from the labour movement, whose task it was to increase efficiency by moving private concerns into the public realm of politics.

5.6 Creche Course: The Labour strategy in practice

The demand for this strategy and its results were evident in the applications sent to the GLC and the Council's reports on its grants. In a random sample of ten groups drawn from all the childcare and

¹¹² GLC, 'Child Care: Meeting needs and making jobs', *Economic Policy Group Strategy Document*, no. 14, September (1983), 13.

¹¹³ LMA, GLC/DG/PRE/223/060, Report (5.2.86) by Head of the Women's Committee Support Unit, W1362.

¹¹⁴ GLC, *London Industrial Strategy* (1985), 20.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 21.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 205-6.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 449. A similar point was made about homeworkers; *ibid.*, 419.

education-related organisations in my general sample (see chapter one), funding for six was motivated on grounds related to employment. In every case where groups described their own work they saw the need for childcare arising from local mother's need for organisation. Many of the first grants made by the Livingstone GLC in 1981 supported organisations for unemployed people. Others wanted to provide mothers with childcare so that they could work, take training courses to learn new skills for their future workplaces, or participate in political activities, the way Monica Slade described it in *LLB*.

When the Women's Committee funded the Hillside Common Ownership Day Nursery in October 1982, its staff report emphasised not only that it was a 'workers co-operative' that would create job opportunities for local women. It also highlighted that the nursery's aim was 'enabling mothers who do not have access to other nursery facilities to engage in full time employment'.¹¹⁸ Soon after abolition, former GLC economic analyst Mandy Cook recalled how the I&E Committee's funding for several workplace nurseries would 'assert to employers the issue of childcare costs and needs'.¹¹⁹ Accordingly, the I&E Committee funded workplace nurseries, like the Kingsway nursery in Wesley House – founded in 1977, Mackintosh wrote, by 'well organised trade unionists' – not to mention the GLC establishing its own in-house workplace creches.¹²⁰ The Women's Committee was especially proud of Kingsway even though its parents paid fees; it discovered that Wesley House in 1912 hosted what was possibly 'the first full time creche in Britain' and used this to present itself within a long history of 'service for working parents'.¹²¹

Livingstone's GLC decided that while parents retrained or searched for jobs, one of the functions it would provide for them was childcare. For instance, funds from the I&E Committee went to the Centre for the Unemployed in Lambeth and the Islington Action Group on Unemployment, who considered themselves part of a new movement of unemployed workers centres (UWC).¹²² Intending to organise the jobless, the first post-war UWC was founded by the Newcastle trades council in 1977 and quickly inspired similar projects.¹²³ As the national unemployment rate rose from 5.4 per cent to 9.6 between mid-1979 and mid-1981 some fifty UWCs had, according to journalist Joy Melville, by July 1981, 'sprung up out of necessity'.¹²⁴ Here too, the TUC played an active role, following its new

¹¹⁸ LMA, GLC/DG/PRE/223/001, Report (14.10.82) by Director-General, W35.

¹¹⁹ Kingsway was a nursery shared by six employers in central London. Quoted in Mackintosh, 'Women's Work', 116-7.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*

¹²¹ *Newsletter* (GLC Women's Committee), 'Wesley House from Past to the Present', no. 1, July (1985). Parents paid for one third of the costs while their employers covered the rest; see, Penny Junior, 'Double Life', *The Guardian*, 30 June (1981), 10.

¹²² Campaign for Real Life, *Unwaged Fightback: A history of Islington Action Group of the Unwaged 1980-86*, second version (1987), 1-2.

¹²³ Keith Forrester & Kevin Ward, 'Organising the Unemployed? The TUC and the Unemployed Workers Centres', *Industrial Relations Journal*, vol. 17, no. 1 (1986), 47.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, 48; Joy Melville, 'How the Jobless Can Help Each Other', *New society*, vol. 57, no. 975 (1981), 142; Office for National Statistics, *Labour market statistics time series*, 11 October 2022, digital statistics, <<https://www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peopleinwork/employmentandemployeetypes/datasets/labourmarketstatistics>>, accessed 28 February 2023.

position on organising the unemployed. In October 1980, seven months before Livingstone's administration was elected, it adopted the line that, once established by trades councils, UWCs should advise unemployed people so they would maintain their links to the unions, as well as convince the Manpower Services Commission (MSC) and local authorities to create schemes or discounts for those on the dole. It imagined that scores of UWCs would form a 'national network' and funding from councils was integral to this.¹²⁵

The Centre for the Unemployed in Lambeth was founded in exact accordance with the TUC strategy by Lambeth Trades Council, helped by SERTUC and MSC money, shortly after the Brixton riots in April 1981. With the GLC's support it hoped to set up shop on Brixton's Atlantic Road, where unemployed and literacy classes would run alongside an 'after school collection service' and 'facilities for women to leave children whilst taking part in the activities of the Centre'. It also sought provision for evening babysitting.¹²⁶ The Islington group meanwhile, was more rebellious towards the TUC's guidelines, insisting that its centre be controlled by local unemployed people (rather than union representatives) and spend more time campaigning, for instance by supporting striking job centre workers. Nevertheless, it too found support from SERTUC and the Labour left on the Islington Trades Council.¹²⁷ Its first GLC grant application in the autumn of 1981 asked for £200 to run a creche. Although this was a tiny fraction of the overall £5,100 budget it received for a permanent UWC at 355 Holloway Road in Islington, 'childcare facilities' was one of its 'main aims'.¹²⁸ Identical facilities had proven popular at Basildon's UWC, where the creche was used thousands of times by children, and in Peterborough researchers deemed they contributed to making the UWC a community 'focal point'.¹²⁹ Such attention to mothers searching for employment was a built-in part of UWCs and unions' responses to unemployment and Livingstone GLC recognised it as such. Unlike most post-war labour-movement organising the UWC and the GLC wanted to retain links between unemployed people and their unions. Furthermore, since the Livingstone GLC's leaders did not presumptively gender unemployed people as male, this applied to both men and women.

Other prongs to the GLC's unemployment-reduction efforts concerned adapting working life to families' needs. Since the late 1970s, various voluntary groups with a specific focus on women's employment and training had worked to change the labour movement. By 1981 the Job Sharing Project, based near Elephant and Castle, had, since 1977, successfully pushed the Labour manifesto to commit to job sharing and more part-time positions and worked with employers, workers, and unions with an aim of creating 'more options for part-time working in the London area, and ... making equal

¹²⁵ Allan Barker, Paul Lewis & Michael McCann, 'Trades Unions and the Organisation of the Unemployed', *British Journal of Industrial Relations*, vol. 22, no. 3 (1984), 400; Melville, 'How the Jobless', 142.

¹²⁶ LMA, GLC/DG/PRE/056/001, Report (9.9.81), IEC67.

¹²⁷ Because the CPGB trade-union representatives in Islington adhered to the TUC line the IAGOU experienced them as hostile to their work. Campaign for Real Life, *Unwaged Fightback*, 21-2.

¹²⁸ LMA, GLC/DG/PRE/056/003, Report (20.10.81) by Director-General, IEC 98.

¹²⁹ Forrester & Ward, 'Organising the Unemployed?', 51.

opportunity in employment, particularly for parents, a more paractical reality [sic]'.¹³⁰ They did this 'in some depth' with borough councils, numerous unions in London and alongside Hackney Job Sharing Project, Haringey Women's Employment Group, the Low Pay Unit, the London Women's Employment Group, and the Lewisham Women's Employment Group.¹³¹ It also established local groups and its partner, the Lewisham Women's Employment Group, began in April 1979. Two years later its members believed they had 'witnessed changes in the Trades Union movement towards reconsidering how to work with the non-organised' – which had left 'an opening to push for innovative approaches around organising women'.¹³² Besides conducting and sharing research on women's work, they offered local mothers advice 'on employment rights, training, childcare, etc'.¹³³ The I&E Committee began funding the Job Sharing Project in September 1981 and its Project Development Unit supported the Lewisham group in 1982 to strengthen women's positions at work.¹³⁴ The Women's Committee later sponsored the Kentish Town Women's Workshop, who 'ran a carpentry course and a co-operative course designed to help women start up their own businesses' with a daily creche from 10am to 6pm.¹³⁵ Contemporaries noted how its 'Return to Work' course had 'proved very successful for older women who have not perhaps worked for several years'.¹³⁶ Similar groups organised mothers in Greenwich, Lambeth, Ealing, Fulham, and outside London. This network was created through the cooperation of local organisers, unions, statutory agencies, and the LLP. Not only was it first developed in a pre-Thatcher Britain, it was also conscious of expanding the labour-movement defence of full employment and skills for women, not least to mothers.

Many such organisations were also created to synergise with groups dedicated entirely to childcare. In June 1981, the women's group of the Greenwich Action Group on Unemployment created the Greenwich Creche Project 'to provide much needed mobile child care facilities'. It had the backing of fifty groups in the borough, 'mostly Mothers and Toddlers Groups and Parents Associations'. Evaluating the funding application for its minibus and staff wages in November 1981, the Grant Panel's staff focused on the benefits for unemployed women and working mothers. The creche was needed because 'unemployed and lone parents ... are often unable to take advantage of part-time education and training opportunities because of the lack of child care provision'. But

¹³⁰ LMA, GLC/DG/PRE/056/001, Job Sharing Project, 'Report on the Job Sharing Projects work as funded by the Equal Opportunities Commission for the period February 1980 – March 1981', n.d. (June 1981?); Adrienne Boyle, 'Job Sharing – A new pattern in employment', in Ann Curno, Anne Lamming, Lesley Leach, Jenny Stiles, Veronica Ward & Trisha Ziff (eds.), *Women in Collective Action* (1982), 65.

¹³¹ *Ibid.*

¹³² Sue Emerson, Heather Macrae & Madeline Dickens, 'London Women's Employment Projects', in Curno *et al.* (eds.), *Women in Collective Action*, 64. (pp. 55-64)

¹³³ *Ibid.*, 63.

¹³⁴ Will Baker & John Mawson, *Local Economic Initiatives study: The Greater London County Council* (1985), 27.

¹³⁵ Emerson, Macrae & Dickens, 'London Women's Employment Projects', 60-1.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*

furthermore, they wanted to ‘benefit those people in work who are unable to attend, for example, union meetings after normal working hours because of the lack of creche facilities’.¹³⁷

The leaders and members of London’s tertiary-sector unions were delighted by this. Around 1983, a folder from SERTUC on women and Labour’s Alternative Economic Strategy praised the GLC’s childcare policy for ‘developing its own “model” equal opportunities policies’, which included the childcare the Council provided at its own day nurseries at County Hall and Bellenden Road.¹³⁸ Like the GLC, it called for creche facilities at union meetings.¹³⁹ At a conference about raising women’s pay co-organised by SERTUC and the GLC on 13 July 1985, the solutions to low wages proposed included childcare facilities. Union members and organisers at a session on ‘black and minority ethnic women’s experiences of low pay’ concluded that ‘Trade Unions should agitate for the development of state funded and workplace nurseries’.¹⁴⁰ Livingstone’s GLC provided these demands with an example for how it could be done.

This diverse range of nurseries, workplace creches, employment projects, other childcare-related organisations, and council financing constituted a coherent and established strategy with several interdependent components. The Hillside nursery had been established thanks to the Wandsworth Enterprise Development Agency (WEDA), Wandsworth Borough Council’s body for supporting ‘common ownership’.¹⁴¹ In Hackney, the local toy libraries association, where children could borrow toys, was organised with the support of Hackney Borough Council.¹⁴² Having started in 1974 it operated seventeen branches ten years later, to the delight of one local childminder who, when asked on camera, said the children she cared for ‘love it’ for the diversity of new toys it provided.¹⁴³ When the I&E committee funded Toys for Lambeth Ltd. a year later it gave the seven women who ran the cooperative toymaker a creche and working hours that matched school timetables.¹⁴⁴ Together Toys for Lambeth, local childcare groups, and municipal seed-funding represented the GLC’s vision for industrial London; London-based cooperatives would manufacture commodities to meet demand from the childcare sector, including council-funded nurseries, schools, toy libraries, and other

¹³⁷ LMA, GLC/DG/PRE/056/004, Grants Panel: 25 November 1981, ‘Grants 191, report’.

¹³⁸ London Metropolitan University, Trades Union Congress Library Collections (LMU), South East Region Trades Union Congress, ‘*What’s in it for Us?: Women and the alternative economic strategy*’, n.d. (1983?), 24. See also, LMA, GLC/DG/PRE/223/012.

¹³⁹ LMU, South East Region Trades Union Congress, ‘*What’s in it for Us?: Women and the alternative economic strategy*’, n.d. (1983?), 25.

¹⁴⁰ LMU, SERTUC Women’s Rights Committee and the Unemployed Women’s Working Party, *Women’s Work and Low Pay: A Report* (1985), 24, 30.

¹⁴¹ Commission of the European Communities, *Programme of Research and actions on the Development of the Labour Market: Local employment initiatives: An evaluation of support agencies* (1985), 103-5;

¹⁴² LMA, GLC/DG/PRE/223/026 Report (9.10.84) by Director General, W846.

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*; Quoted in, Liberation Films, *Toy What?*, DVD (1981).

¹⁴⁴ Also known as Lambeth Toys Ltd. GLC, *Jobs for a Change* (1983), 42-3; Katarina Katz, *London Mot Thatcher: Kommunpolitik för samhällsomstörtare* (1988), 119.

organisations, creating an economy for local factories. When the Labour left spoke of reversing London's industrial decline, this was what it envisioned.¹⁴⁵

Although significant nodes of this network vanished or saw their influence and organisational capacity reduced after the GLC's abolition. As a sign of things to come Wandsworth's Conservative-led council abolished WEDA in 1984. Around the same time IAGOU fell out with the GLC because of differences over bookkeeping and politics and saw its grant suspended, leading to its demise in 1986.¹⁴⁶ Later that year, as budget cuts were imposed on daycare, nurseries, and toy libraries, Toys for Lambeth struggled to find customers and without money for its creche the six mothers who remained there adopted a three-day week.¹⁴⁷ More generally, the number of UWCs peaked at roughly 210 nationwide (of which at least eighteen were GLC-funded) in early 1986. They then declined almost as fast as they had risen, along with any creches they would have provided, to 140 in 1990, when the TUC followed many local authorities by cutting their financial support to save money. Further local government funding cuts reduced their numbers further and, in 1996, 104 remained, but nonetheless they remained the third largest network of advice organisations in the country.¹⁴⁸ Women's employment groups waned too; Haringey Women's Employment Project ended in 1991 after borough council cuts and Hackney Job Sharing Project disappeared a few years later, but only after having produced a host of booklets and videos promoting job sharing.¹⁴⁹ But this was not the end for attempts to combine childcare with a labour-movement focus on full employment. Some groups survived this point. Hammersmith Unemployed Workers Centre, for instance, was still running women-only computer classes in 1997 and many of Hackney's toy libraries continued into the twenty-first century under council management.¹⁵⁰ But if these local employment-oriented groups were hit the hardest, along with the political vision they represented, the umbrella organisations they formed in the 1980s retained some prominence albeit with changed methods.

¹⁴⁵ GLC, *London Industrial Strategy*, 211-4.

¹⁴⁶ IAGOU had made stickers depicting a stylised lynching and the GLC alleged they had not controlled its spending sufficiently. Campaign for Real Life, *Unwaged Fightback*, 25-7.

¹⁴⁷ Katz, *Mot Thatcher*, 120.

¹⁴⁸ TUC, *Congress 1996: General Council Report* (1996), 134; Baker & Mawson, *Local Economic Initiatives*, 28; Seumas Milne & Celia Weston, 'TUC Weighs Big Cuts in Work and Budget', *The Guardian*, 11 October (1990), 2; Seumas Milne, 'TUC Approves £1.2m Cuts in Face of Union Opposition', *The Guardian*, 25 October (1990), 3.

¹⁴⁹ Marjorie Mayo, *Communities and Caring: The mixed economy of welfare* (1994), 78-9; see this website dedicated to documenting Hackney Job Sharing Project's work: Anonymous, 'An Exhibition', n.d. (2010s?), website, <<http://www.pxmzeo.xara.hosting/hackney/afterword.htm>>, accessed 28 February 2022.

¹⁵⁰ E.g., *Hammersmith & Shepherds Bush Gazette*, 30 May (1997), 17.

5.7 Parent Company: The National Childcare Campaign and Job Sharing Project after the GLC

In the mid-1990s, Vicky Randall argued that the NCCC changed its line on free childcare to favour childcare fees, childminders, and workplace nurseries because of ‘Thatcherism ... altering the terms in which policy change was envisaged’.¹⁵¹ However, the erosion of the local network of labour movement creches and employment projects gives a different explanation for why the campaign shifted its approach. In 1983, the question of a grant to the campaign from the Department of Health and Social Security (DHSS) led to a ‘split’. This has been remembered as a division between those in the organisation who feared state ‘cooption’ (‘feminist anarchists and some of the Marxists’, according to Helen Penn) against those in favour of a more ‘professional’ organisation.¹⁵² Yet the NCCC members who left and created the Workplace Nurseries Campaign (WNC, renamed Working for Childcare in 1990) received GLC money, just like the original campaign had.¹⁵³ Adverts for a WNC worker in November 1984, hoping to employ someone until August 1986 with GLC money, were placed in the NCCC’s name and said they would work as part of a ‘team to promote development of workplace nurseries’ by providing ‘advice, information and support’ to groups including ‘trade unions and private industry’.¹⁵⁴ GLC grants had supported professional workers at the NCCC since late 1982.¹⁵⁵ Furthermore, the council was convinced that the concessions made by DHSS to the NCCC, including the under-fives agenda following which it received central government funding, were the result of the campaign’s efforts.¹⁵⁶

If the NCCC, with the help of the paid staff provided by the GLC, was changing the government’s line on early-years childcare, the received conception of a grassroots organisation becoming less radical because of contact with the state can be reconsidered. Especially since, as I have detailed, promoting workplace nurseries or childminders was not necessarily the result of ‘Thatcherism’ or ‘the appeal of neoliberal thinking’, as Randall argued.¹⁵⁷ Rather, it might just as much have been continuous with the Livingstone GLC’s policies and actions. This is a clear example of how an archival approach to the GLC’s history can see the significant involvement of a labour movement in childcare politics that was quickly forgotten after 1986.

¹⁵¹ Vicky Randall, ‘The Politics of Childcare Policy’, *Parliamentary Affairs*, vol. 49, no. 1 (1996), 183.

¹⁵² Luc Turgeon, ‘Tax, Time and Territory: The development of early childhood education and child care in Canada and Great Britain’, PhD thesis, University of Toronto (2010), 134; Penn, ‘*Be Realistic*’, 58; see also, Vicky Randall, ‘Feminism and Child Daycare’, *Journal of Social Policy*, vol. 25, no. 4 (1996), 489.

¹⁵³ LMA, GLC/DG/PRE/223/012, Report (12.10.83) by Director-General, ‘National Childcare Campaign Development Worker – Grant Application’, W[446], report.

¹⁵⁴ E.g. *The Guardian*, ‘Public Appointments’, classified advert from National Childcare Campaign, 7 November (1984), 16.

¹⁵⁵ LMA, GLC/DG/PRE/223/012, Report (12.10.83) by Director General, W445, pp. 3-4.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁷ Vicky Randall, ‘Child Care in Britain, or, How Do You Restructure Nothing?’, in Sonya Michel & Rianne Mahon (eds.), *Child Care Policy at the Crossroads: Gender and welfare state restructuring* (2002), 474.

Describing the NCCC and WNC's changes in the late 1980s as 'neoliberal thinking' also does not explain why they maintained close links with unions and a network of people linked to the Labour left at least until the mid-1990s (if not beyond). In 1990, Joan Lester relaunched the WNC after its successful campaign to abolish a tax placed on workplace nurseries in 1985, to which many trade unions had contributed.¹⁵⁸ Concurrently, the NCCC founded and rechannelled most of its activities through the Daycare Trust in 1986. Its director from 1989 to 1994 was Marion Kozak, the Holocaust survivor and socialist activist whose husband was the theorist Ralph Miliband, and whose son David Miliband was a management intern at Livingstone's GLC.¹⁵⁹ In 1993, its report *Becoming a Breadwinner* aimed to influence policy that would incentivise single parents to become workers, much like the GLC's strategy a decade earlier.¹⁶⁰ However, for a campaign that, in 1983, had 'representatives, individual members or affiliated groups in all the London boroughs', it was the hollowing out of its organisational base by 1994 that would have made it appear to have, what a 1990s dictionary of organisations called, 'primarily a function of providing information via publications, conferences, etc'.¹⁶¹ Although 'community control' was no longer a central part of the Daycare Trusts proposals, the changes to its organisational base and the legacy of the GLC's politics through its networks, explains more than 'neoliberalism'.

A similar trend can be seen in the Job Sharing Project, which without local groups concentrated its efforts on information production, advice provision, and lobbying politicians and employers – something it after considerable organisational and funding overhauls and continued to do in 2022. In 1982 it changed its name to New Ways to Work and it merged with Parents at Work (formerly the Working Mothers Association) in 2003 to become Working Families. In 2021 it was a unitary charity with no affiliate organisations and twenty-three employees. Its GLC funding had been long-replaced with a range of corporate sponsors, including the international law firm Baker McKenzie, as well as the Eleanor Rathbone Foundation and the National Lottery.¹⁶² While it was more successful at attracting sponsors than London Health Emergency (see chapter four), the tendency for the 'umbrella organisation' to find a particular advocacy niche, and become a lobbying group, is similar. The defeat of the GLC's vision of locally based networks of voluntary organisations left behind a few central nodes whose options became limited to further specialisation in office-based campaigning.

¹⁵⁸ Teresa Hunter & Susan Tirbut, 'Little Joy for Working Mothers', *The Guardian*, 22 March (1990), 13; Working for Childcare, 'Thank You', *The Guardian*, 21 March (1990), 11.

¹⁵⁹ Marcus Dysch, 'But His Mum Has Made Her Mind up', *The Jewish Chronicle*, 1 October (2010), 2; Andrew Hosken, *Ken: The ups and downs of Ken Livingstone* (2008), 41; see also, Marion Kozak, 'How it all Began: A footnote to history', *Socialist Register*, vol. 31 (1995), 264-285.

¹⁶⁰ Sally Holtermann, *Becoming a Breadwinner: Policies to assist lone parents with childcare* (1993), 71.

¹⁶¹ LMA, GLC/DG/PRE/223/012, Report (12.10.83) by Director General, W445, 3; Chris Cook & David Waller, *The Longman Guide to Sources in Contemporary British History*, vol 1 (1994), 219.

¹⁶² Working Families, *Annual Report & Accounts, 2020–2021* (2021).

Despite this decline in the federal non-state organisations that had worked with the labour movement on childcare, many unions by themselves carried on the Livingstone GLC and LLP's position on supporting women in their organisations. In the late 1980s, the Greater London Trade Union Resource Unit and the SERTUC Women's Committee continued monitoring and making recommendations for union's policies on childcare at meetings. The GLC had helped create the Greater London Trade Union Resource Unit and it continued to be funded by its Greater London Enterprise Board even after the Council was abolished. They noted in particular how the large public-sector industrial unions, the vast majority of whose members were women, like the National Union of Public Employees (NUPE) and the Confederation of Health Service Employees provided creches for representatives at their regional council meetings. In 1989, even NUPE's local branches in London provided expenses for the childcare costs so that mothers could attend meetings.¹⁶³ These unions and Livingstone's GLC had moved in sync on the question of increasing workplace democracy by using childcare in unions and, in the labour movement, abolition was not the end of the road. Further research will have to be done to describe the legacy of this work in the 1990s.

5.8 A Whole Tot More: Conclusion

This chapter has used the example of non-state organisations dedicated to the care or education of small children to describe how the Livingstone GLC applied its theory of expanding and developing the labour movement in practice. During the movements for playgroups and nursery education of the 1960s (including those supported and partially led by labour-movement representatives) teaching and socialising children was the main aim and support for working mothers, if it existed, was a secondary consideration. In contrast, the socialist- and Marxist-feminist arguments developed during the 1970s placed a greater emphasis on mother's work and relations to the unions, as seen in the arguments made by the Working Women's Charter Nursery Action Group and trades councils. They used the term 'isolation' to describe the situation of mothers who were not in waged work and the labour movement and considered it their job to overcome this. This was particularly important to theorists at *London Labour Briefing*, who considered working mother's participation in politics as paramount for the working-class unity they wanted to create.

There were many ways in which non-state nurseries and playgroups carried on and developed their aims for educating and socialising children in this period that future researchers will be able to analyse. Alongside the organisations described here, the GLC funded religious nurseries, such as the Hasidic Lubavitch Nursery and the Rastafari One Love Children's Centre. Other nurseries, such as the Latin American Community Nursery MAFALDA, were established by immigrants so that children

¹⁶³ LMU, SERTUC Women's Committee, *Moving Towards Equality* (1987), 11; SERTUC Women's Committee, *Still Moving Towards Equality: A survey of progress towards equality in trade unions* (1989), 48.

would grow up bilingual and with an understanding of their parents' culture. Additionally, perhaps the most frequently appearing descriptions of nurseries' educations in GLC grant reports were that they would be anti-sexist and anti-racist. A large amount of theorising was done in this field during the 1980s, including by nursery teachers at GLC-funded nurseries and the ILEA.¹⁶⁴ As the number of parents and educators who demanded anti-sexist and anti-racist educations increased, the results of ideas developed in the WLM and in anti-colonial and anti-racist movements during the 1970s and the practical pilots and programmes that followed from them came to influence almost every aspect of the Livingstone GLC's and ILEA's education-related work, as well as the PPA and other voluntary organisations, whose archives are full of material on these themes. The GLC-funded First Neighbourhood Co-operative Nursery in Walthamstow produced a promotional video in 1986, emphasising how its 'atmosphere is deliberately multi-racial, multi-lingual and anti-sexist', while showing small girls using woodwork tools, which also echoed the GLC's emphasis on training women in manual trades.¹⁶⁵ The Inner London PPA wrote an anti-racist statement in October 1986, saying how: 'As it is now recognised that early childhood is an important time for developing social attitudes, parents and playgroup leaders have a vital role to play in encouraging positive racial attitudes in the young children in their care'.¹⁶⁶ The long-term influence of this work in London was remarkable and by the mid-1990s it was, for instance, completely normal for pre-school children to share and learn about the customs of their own and their peers' parents as a way to prevent future prejudice.¹⁶⁷ The future will hopefully see historical analyses of the Livingstone GLC's legacy in all these areas.

Virtually every project of educating small children is seen as the opportunity to instil the values of a future society, meaning that studying them potentially offers unique and important perspectives on the visions that parents and political movements sought to implement. Although this chapter has concentrated on the why and how of child-related projects from the perspective of the Livingstone GLC's vision of mothers becoming part of London's labour movement, hopefully it will provide a helpful background for future analyses of the content of the care and education provided for the children involved.

¹⁶⁴ E.g. Namia Browne & Pauline France, 'Untying the Apron Strings: Introduction', in Namia Browne & Pauline France (eds.), *Untying the Apron Strings: Anti-sexist provision for the under fives* (1986), 1-7.

¹⁶⁵ BI, DIO/1/1/23/1, First Neighbourhood Co-operative Nursery, 'Publicity Film', digitised VHS (1986).

¹⁶⁶ IoE, PLA/PPA/2/49, Inner London Pre-school Playgroups Association, 'Anti-racist Statement', October 1986.

¹⁶⁷ Personal experience; private collection, untitled Dahlborn family home video, n.d. (1997?), VHS cassette.

6 Police-monitoring organisations and the GLC

I see absolutely no difficulty in carrying out this revolution over a period, i.e. gradually. The fact that our working men are up to it is borne out by their many productive and distributive associations which, whenever they have not been deliberately wrecked by the police, are managed equally well and far more honestly run than the joint-stock companies of the middle classes.

Friedrich Engels, letter to Otto Von Boenigk, 1890.¹

*I got down to London and what did I see?
A thousand policemen all over the street
The people were shouting and looking at me
They said 'the Colin Roach's family demand an enquiry'
The Specials AKA, 'Bright Lights', 1984.*

6.1 Why the Fuzz?: Introduction

The London Labour Party's (LLP) 1981 GLC manifesto had clear intentions for democratically controlled policing and effective law enforcement, which characterised Livingstone's administration. Paul Boateng drafted the manifesto's policing policy, partially based on his experience of opposing 'suspected person laws' (sus' laws), and defending protesters in court. However, policing was carefully presented as a broad political issue:

Other cities have police committees, ... a direct local link between the police and the communities they serve. In London the Metropolitan Police are answerable only to the Home Office, despite the fact that the police raise £240 million from the London ratepayer. ... there is no democratic control of the Police in Greater London, and ... there is no adequate method of dealing with complaints against the Police.²

This first principle was broad; any Londoner could support value for money and democracy. To implement it, Livingstone's GLC created its own Police Committee. Although this committee took its name from existing local government bodies, it had no statutory powers. Nevertheless, the London police authority it envisioned would consist 'solely of elected members of the GLC, and London Boroughs' and 'allocate the resources to the various police functions'.³ In the meantime, the Police Committee would 'investigate complaints against the police and publish reports' and 'monitor the

¹ Frederick Engels, 'Engels to Otto Von Boenigk in Breslau', in Karl Marx & Frederick Engels, *Collected Works*, vol. 49 (2001 [1890]), 18-9.

² GLC, *Minority Party Report: A socialist policy for the GLC*, agenda paper appendix, 3 March (1981), 85.

³ *Ibid.*

work of the Police Force *as a prelude* to it gaining power to control the Police'.⁴ Collecting and disseminating facts about the Metropolitan Police (Met), it assumed, would win over enough hearts and minds to convince the home secretary to hand London's police authority to the GLC. Central to this strategy was funding non-state organisations to monitor the police and report on their activities.

Once established, the Police Committee's funding criteria, defined by Martin Ennals (1927–1991), a former director of the National Council for Civil Liberties (NCCL), would state that it supported organisations committed to the 'collection and dissemination of information to be made available to the appropriate bodies at borough and/or metropolitan levels' and to giving advice on 'the handling of complaints or other problems relating to police matters'.⁵ The groups it funded, like the Community Alliance for Police Accountability and other police-monitoring groups (PMGs), followed this ideal. (I will use *PMG* to mean groups solely committed to monitoring police activities and *police-monitoring organisations* as a category for all bodies that did such work even if it was not their primary focus, such as law centres and civil rights groups.)

Unions were central to this Labour vision. With a democratic police authority, said the manifesto, 'The Special Patrol Group, Special Branch and Illegal Immigration Intelligence Unit, should be disbanded'.⁶ These measures were narrower, but would satisfy Black Power supporters, anti-racists, libertarians, Irish republicans, and certain trade unionists alike, who considered these departments the most violent and oppressive to their respective movements. Notably, however, the only interest group specifically mentioned by name in the manifesto's policing section was the unions: 'Surveillance of political and trade union activity must end and all files collected for non-criminal reasons should be destroyed'.⁷ Additionally, it promised 'police officers ... the right to join unions and to take industrial action'.⁸ Once elected, and with the 1981 riots in fresh memory, Police Committee Vice Chair Steve Bundred explained the significance of this: 'The majority of police recruits', he argued, 'come from working-class backgrounds but after entering the force are very quickly cut off from their origins'. Being 'denied access to the Labour movement through prohibitions on their participation in party politics' meant constables 'may have been persuaded [sic] by the Tory "law and order" lobby'. But this could be undone by a restoration of 'their civil rights' to strike and join parties, thereby increasing locals' trust in the Met.⁹

During the 1960s and 1970s, Leninists and Maoists in London (like their role models in the US) believed that provoking violence would shock 'the masses' into joining their urban guerrilla war against the police and capitalism.¹⁰ In contrast to this, the GLC's strategy was based on the slow,

⁴ Emphasis added. *Ibid.*

⁵ LMA, GLC/DG/PRE/161/003, Report (5.11.82) by Head of Police Committee Support Unit, PC73.

⁶ GLC, 'Minority Party Report', 85.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 85-6.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 86.

⁹ Steve Bundred, 'Accountability and the Metropolitan Police: A suitable case for treatment', in David Cowell, Trevor Jones & Jock Young (eds.), *Policing the Riots* (1982), 80.

¹⁰ Robin D. G. Kelley & Betsy Esch, 'Black Like Mao: Red China and black revolution', in Fred Ho & Bill V. Mullen (eds.), *Afro Asia: Revolutionary political and cultural connections between African Americans and*

diligent collection and study of observations and testimony with which no reasonable person could disagree. It was a lawyer's strategy, but one aimed at convincing the millions of voters Labour needed at the next general election. Thus, the GLC Police Committee, as imagined in 1981, reflected an agenda set during the 1970s, but far from using insurrectionary Leninist or Maoist arguments its reforms were presented for 'the London ratepayer' and for union members and organisers, the principal audience whom the LLP manifesto addressed. The labour movement meant democratisation for better public services.

This chapter will describe how Livingstone's GLC, alongside the unions, represented a distinctly labour-movement approach to police reform by analysing several of the police-monitoring organisations it funded. I will begin by showing how this is an overlooked but potentially significant part of understanding London's politics of law and order since 1981 in a brief literature review. Next, I give a broad summary of the evolution of policing and crime in the 1970s, setting the scene for a description of the concurrent origins and development of concerns and theories within the labour movement that the police and the Security Service posed a risk to ascendant union power. Based on this, I will give an account of the first police-monitoring organisations Livingstone's GLC funded, including PMGs, law centres, and civil rights campaigners, showing that although they were influenced by previous single-issues anti-police movements the LLP and its members pushed for the labour movement's emphasis on broad class politics (see chapter two) to characterise their work. Lastly, I present detailed analyses of two organisations that exemplify these trends: the Campaign Against the Police Bill (1983–4) and the Roach Family Support Committee (1983–8). As seen in previous chapters, labour-movement politics existed alongside or overlapped with alternative tendencies, often trying to incorporate the latter. The GLC's abolition, once again, was a major detriment to this labour movement vision, many PMGs dissolved in the later 1980s, and the union's involvement often either went unnoticed or was quickly forgotten. Nonetheless, the long-term effects of the work by people in the networks established through Livingstone's administration was, plausibly, that the arguments for a devolved police authority for London and for taking racist discrimination in policing seriously were won. Ironically, the policies which, in 1986, might have looked like the Livingstone GLC's biggest failures, might, in retrospect, have left some of its longest legacies.

Getting to the facts on this needs to begin by noting how, as with many other aspects of Livingstone's GLC, the way the Labour administration was remembered was strongly influenced by what its contemporaries said about it. The PMGs have been interpreted and remembered as created by the Livingstone GLC. Its contemporary critics believed, as have later historians, that they were

Asian Americans (2008), 107-115; Huey Newton, 'The Correct Handling of a Revolution', in David Hillard & Donald Weise (eds.), *The Huey P. Newton Reader* (2002), 145; Robyn C. Spencer, *The Revolution Has Come: Black Power, gender, and the Black Panther Party in Oakland* (2016), 55; Joshua Bloom & Waldo E. Martin, Jr., *Black against Empire: The history and politics of the Black Panther Party* (2016 [2013]), 50; Rob Waters, *Thinking Black: Britain, 1964–1985* (2019), 117-123.

‘established’ by the Council.¹¹ In fact, such groups predated Livingstone’s administration, both in and outside of the labour movement. This includes London’s law centres, many of which were saved by the GLC. However, the PMGs did become closely tied to achieving specific Labour manifesto pledges and a vision of creating a democratic police authority for London.

Furthermore, seeing the labour movement in this history provides part of an alternative perspective on the evolution of policing in London. Histories of British policing and the Met mark the Scarman report (1981) and Macpherson report (1999), and the violent events that preceded them, as stark turning points in police culture and management.¹² This is a sound argument, but focusing on reforms prompted by state inquiries and moments of intense violence, has meant that what day-to-day work non-state police-monitoring organisations did before and between these reports has been analysed far less. Some scholars note the existence of this work – often implying their influence or lack thereof – while others make no mention of their presence.¹³ Yet the Macpherson inquiry came about following a committed campaign supported by organisations and people previously linked to the GLC and the Labour Party.¹⁴ Notably, Stephen Lawrence’s parents’ solicitor, Imran Khan (1964–), before training to become a lawyer, worked with the Newham Monitoring Project in 1987, which had been funded by the GLC and its successors since 1982.¹⁵ In 1993, one of the reasons why Khan was in the right place at the right time for the Stephen Lawrence case was Livingstone’s GLC. This alone indicates that what led up to the Met’s reforms during the 1990s and 2000s did not follow solely from judicial recommendations.

That said, police-monitoring organisations have not been entirely ignored by scholars. To criminologist Eugene McLaughlin, PMGs, such as those the GLC funded, ‘gave voice to the special needs of victims of sexual, domestic, racial and homophobic violence’, forcing police and politicians to reallocate resources accordingly and recognise ‘social and communal factors’ behind crime.¹⁶

¹¹ Marion Roe, *The Labour Left in London: A blueprint for a socialist Britain?* (1985), 9; David D. E. Regan, *Local Government Versus the Police: The rise and fall of police monitoring in Britain* (1991), 13; Timothy Brain, *A History of Policing in England and Wales from 1974: A turbulent journey* (2010), 71.

¹² Philip Rawlings, *Policing: A short history* (2002), 218-222; Jerry White, *London in the Twentieth Century: A city and its people* (2008 [2001]), 295-303; Brain, *Policing*, 73-4, 430; Clive Emsley, *The Great British Bobby: A history of British policing from the 18th century to the present* (2009), 265-7.

¹³ Examples of the former: Rawlings, *Policing*, 202, 217-21; Eugene McLaughlin, *The New Policing* (2007), 174-9; Brain, *Policing*, 37-8, 71;

Example of the latter: Emsley, *British Bobby*, ch. 10.

¹⁴ Including, especially, Marc Wadsworth, Diane Abbott, the Anti-Racist Alliance, the Society of Black Lawyers, and the National Assembly Against Racism. Doreen Lawrence, *And Still I Rise: A mother’s search for justice* (2007), 79-80, 90.

¹⁵ A.k.a. Newham Monitoring Unit. Steve Platt & Charly Beckett, ‘Self-help Answer to Race Violence’, *New Society*, vol. 81, no. 1290, 18 September (1987), 5; Jon Robins, ‘It Didn’t Just Change Things for the Black Community, It Changed Things for Everyone’, *The Justice Gap*, 29 May (2013), <<https://www.thejusticegap.com/the-lawrence-case-didnt-just-changed-things-for-the-black-community-it-changed-things-for-everyone/>>, accessed 28 February 2023. See also, Newham Monitoring Project, *Report January 1983* (1983), 13.

¹⁶ Gordon Hughes & Eugene McLaughlin, ‘Together We’ll Crack It’: Partnership and the governance of crime prevention’, in Caroline Glendinning, Martin Powell & Kirstein Rummery (eds.), *Partnerships, New Labour and the Governance of Welfare* (2002), 154.

Similarly, in a detailed study of the organisation Inquest, established following the killing of the union member and anti-National Front campaigner Blair Peach by a police officer in 1979, Mick Ryan concluded that the London-based organisation ‘had a very real impact’ on changing suicide prevention in prisons.¹⁷ In this chapter, I analyse a network of people in voluntary, union, and state organisations (including the police) centred on the GLC. I try to go beyond assessing ‘impact’, showing how all these organisations changed during their encounters with each other, thereby contributing to London’s evolution, in what I call a feedback loop, during a rise and fall of labour movement power.¹⁸

These non-state PMGs cannot be fully explained without the labour movement. Here, this chapter continues where Kate Bradley’s description of how law centres were labour-movement creations leaves off, showing how their work overlapped with police monitoring.¹⁹ I also suggest that the reasons why the labour movement has become a lost part of this story can also be found in the years following the GLC’s abolition. The link between civil liberties, police monitoring, and the trade unions that was obvious to London’s Labour left in 1981 rapidly faded from view after 1986. This may partially explain why the relevant scholarly literature (to the extent that it exists) and other interpretations of the history of police monitoring have almost entirely concentrated on describing these movements as centred on political blackness or anti-racism. References, if they arise, to the labour movement are limited to Labour Party politicians while unions are not a part of the analysis.²⁰ This chapter shows that, in fact, they were an integral part of the police-monitoring movement in London.

6.2 Busted: The evolution of policing and crime in the 1970s

Policing was one of the most poignant political issues of the 1970s. The decade’s rise in violent crime was no moral panic. The Home Office estimated that the average annual increase in recorded offences involving violence against a person was roughly nine per cent between 1969 and 1979 in England and Wales.²¹ Between 1975 and 1980 the number of annual reported incidents of ‘violence against the person’ rose from approximately 71,000 to over 97,000 and the total reports of ‘serious offences’ from 2.1 million to almost 2.7 million.²² Regarding burglaries in the early 1980s – of which civil servants

¹⁷ Mick Ryan, *Lobbying From Below: INQUEST in defence of civil liberties* (1996), 170-2.

¹⁸ In the cybernetic sense of systems (such as organisations) reacting to their outside worlds. Stafford Beer, *Brain of the Firm: The managerial cybernetics of organization* (1972), 35-50; Iain Channing, *The Police and the Expansion of Public Order Law in Britain, 1824–2014* (2015), 16-7.

¹⁹ Kate Bradley, *Lawyers for the Poor: Legal advice, voluntary action and citizenship in England, 1890–1990* (2019), 85-6.

²⁰ Eugene McLaughlin, *Community, Policing and Accountability: The politics of policing in Manchester in the 1980s* (1994), 53-5; Liz Fekete, ‘Total Policing: Reflections from the frontline’, *Race & Class*, vol. 54, no. 3 (2013), 71; Joanna Gilmore & Waqas Tufail, ‘Justice Denied: Police accountability and the killing of Mark Duggan, in David Whyte (ed.), *How Corrupt is Britain?* (2015), 99.

²¹ Home Office, ‘Serious Offences Recorded by the Police and England and Wales in 1979’, *Home Office Statistical Bulletin*, no. 4 (1980), 1.

²² *Ibid.*, 3; Home Office, ‘Serious Offences Recorded by the Police and England and Wales in 1980’, *Home Office Statistical Bulletin*, no. 5 (1981), 3.

believed there were some 500,000 annually – people living in terraced houses were thirty per cent more likely to recall having been victims in 1981 than those in detached or semi-detached homes. Residents of flats or bedsits were twice as likely.²³ As the LLP took over the GLC not only was criminal violence increasing, but the rich were suffering from it less than people on middle or low incomes.

Non-violent crime also went up. The sale and possession of illegal drugs was particularly significant, since it became the reason given for more and more police searches and raids. Cannabis, although only a minority of Londoners used it, was the most popular substance and an increasing number of people consumed and supplied it during the 1960s and 1970s. As they multiplied, the number of people arrested related to cannabis use grew too, and their most organised defenders were the group Release, who developed several tactics to assist them against prosecution.²⁴ The active proponents of the freedom to consume and sell cannabis without persecution were relatively few, but they would become influential in key local areas and anti-police networks, notably North Kensington, which was a crossroads for several movements who considered the Met their enemies.

Four consequences of these rises, and of an increase in political violence, became apparent. Firstly, throughout the 1970s a series of high-profile corruption scandals in the Met were revealed and popularised by journalists.²⁵ Secondly, as more people were arrested, the number of people who died in police custody increased, particularly in London. Figure 6.1 shows that around 1980, just about one person for every million inhabitants in England and Wales was reported annually as having died in police custody. In London, this rate was invariably twice, if not three or four, times as high. In 1979, the government, for the first time, published national statistics on such fatalities and Labour MP Michael Meacher called for a debate and inquiry into their causes – a move with particular poignancy given the death of Blair Peach at an anti-National Front (NF) street protest in Southall that year.²⁶ Concurrently, the Labour MP Jack Straw responded by proposing motions for creating a democratically controlled police authority for Greater London.²⁷

Thirdly, public order measures allowed for greater violence and surveillance. From the Public Order Act 1936 to the Public Order Act 1986, new police powers were implemented in hindsight, rather than in anticipation of street violence.²⁸ The Met entered each period of street violence that led to new legislation with powers invented with the past in mind. In the late 1960s the Met had reacted to new forms of crime and street protests. During the 1970s, they changed again to counter terrorism and

²³ Home Office, 'Unrecorded Offences of Burglary and Theft in a Dwelling in England and Wales: Estimates from the general household survey', *Home Office Statistical Bulletin*, no. 11 (1982).

²⁴ James H. Mills, *Cannabis Nation: Control and consumption in Britain, 1928–2008* (2013), 133–8.

²⁵ James Morton, *Bent Coppers: A survey of police corruption* (1993), ch. 5, *passim*; Brian Cox, John Shirley & Martin Short, *The Fall of Scotland Yard* (1977).

²⁶ Peter Evans, 'Police Federation Accuses MPs of Smear Campaign to Arouse Anxiety over Deaths in Custody', *The Times*, 27 December (1979), 3.

²⁷ Ian Loader & Aogán Mulcahy, *Policing and the Condition of England: Memory, politics and culture* (2003), 277–8.

²⁸ Channing, *Expansion of Public Order Law*, 16–7.

crime, but also the labour movement. As the Angry Brigade and Provisional Irish Republican Army (PIRA) escalated their violence in the context of increasing international terrorism the state, unsurprisingly, responded.²⁹ The number of Special Branch officers at a national level almost doubled to roughly 550 after 1969, when the Angry Brigade's campaign began.³⁰ Concurrently, in January 1971, the Security Service became anxious about what it called 'the recent tendency toward the use or threat of industrial action as a political weapon ... on the extreme left' and could imagine even the TUC encouraging this trend.³¹ Consequently, it redefined 'subversion' to cover actions 'intended to undermine or overthrow Parliamentary democracy by political, industrial or violent means'.³² During the early 1970s, this also became the definition that informed Special Branch and SDS and in response to the mining union organiser Arthur Scargill's flying pickets in 1972, preventive and increasingly paramilitary public-order tactics were introduced alongside the infiltration of political organisations.³³

Lastly, Londoners were increasingly stopped and searched or arrested at demonstrations by the Met. Disliking this treatment, not least if they were not guilty, if they were stopped repeatedly, or both, many Londoners subjected to sus' or public order laws campaigned against these powers. They included Cecil Gutzmore, who in 1984 was secretary of the GLC-funded London Campaign Against the Police Bill.³⁴ Each revolution of this police-crime feedback loop therefore entailed increasingly serious political implications.

Alongside this, the police, the courts, and their perceived repressive function were frequently satirised in popular culture throughout the 1970s and 1980s. In *2000 AD* the weekly Judge Dredd comic (1977–) personified the criminal justice system in the character of merciless judges with a licence to summarily execute. The Clash's Joe Strummer complained of 'police on my back' on *Sandinista!* (1980), mixing support for third-world revolution with London's street life. Alan Moore imagined a fascist Britain in *V for Vendetta* (1982–5) where the secret police covered up gruesome state secrets. Rick Priestley's *Warhammer 40,000* depicted imperial space cops harassing space punks, in a clear homage to the north of his youth (illustration 6.1). From newsagents to jukeboxes, satire of the criminal justice system showed how assumptions of brutality, corruption, and conspiracy were widespread among consumers of popular literature and music. The LLP inhabited this world.

²⁹ Brain, *Policing*, 25.

³⁰ Tony Bunyan, *The History and Practice of the Political Police in Britain* (1976), 133–4; Rupert Allason, *The Branch: A history of the Metropolitan Police Special Branch 1883–1983* (1983), 149, 162; Clive Bloom, *Violent London: 2000 years of riots, rebels and revolts, revised edition* (2010 [2003]), 426–9.

³¹ Quoted in Christopher Andrew, *The Defence of the Realm: The authorised history of MI5* (2010), 590.

³² *Ibid.*, 591.

³³ Bloom, *Violent London*, 378–9; Rob Evans & Paul Lewis, *Undercover: The true story of Britain's secret police* (2013), 15–20.

³⁴ *The Guardian*, 'Middle-aged Blacks Worry Continually about Their Children Being Picked up by Police', 17 March (1979), 13; Paul Ferris, 'The Police: An investigation', *The Observer*, 1 November (1970), 25; People's History Museum Archive & Study Centre, CP/ORG/MISC/4/6, letter from Cecil Gutzman, n.d. (1984?).

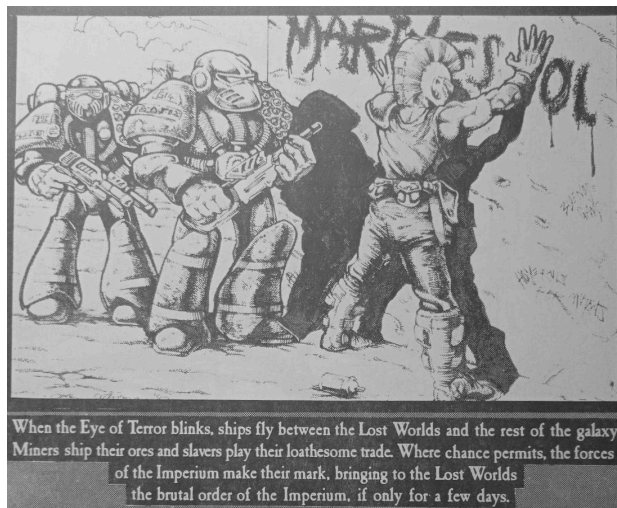


Illustration 6.1: Imperialism in Space. A frame and caption depicting science-fiction law enforcers stopping and searching a space punk in Rick Priestley's *Warhammer 40,000*, imagined c. 1987. Permission to use gratefully acknowledged to Games Workshop Plc.³⁵

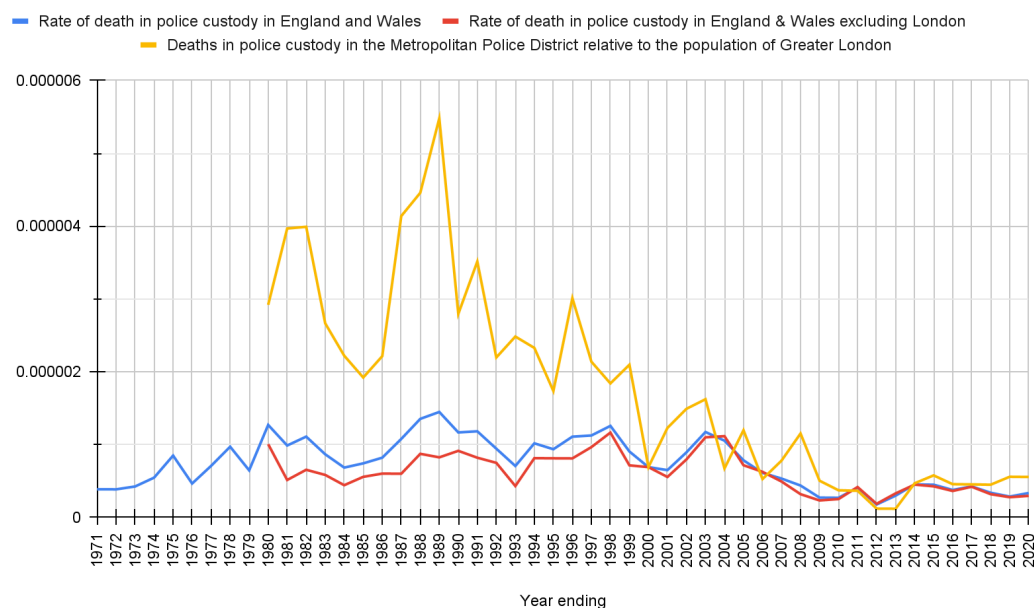


Figure 6.1: Deaths in police custody in England and Wales, 1971–2020, and in London's Metropolitan Police District, 1980–2020. Note: The rate of deaths in police custody in London is calculated based on the number of deaths in the Metropolitan Police District relative to the population of Greater London. The former area did not include the City of London and some outlying parts of Greater London.³⁶

³⁵ Rick Priestley, *Warhammer 40,000: Rogue trader* (1992 [1987]), 226.

³⁶ England & Wales & Greater London population: Office of National Statistics, 'Source dataset: Population estimates time series dataset', <<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/populationandmigration/populationestimates/timeseries/ewpop/pop>>, digital statistics, 21 December (2022), accessed 28 February 2023; 1970s England & Wales deaths: Steven Box, *Power Crime and Mystification* (1983), 84; 1980s England & Wales and London deaths: Home Office, *Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Constabulary*, 1981–9 (series); Metropolitan Police, *Report of the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis for the year 1987* (1987); Metropolitan Police, *Report of*

6.3 Cheques and balances: Law centres, unions, and police monitoring in the labour movement

Several early police-monitoring organisations in 1960s and 1970s London were vanguardist and inspired by Mao Zedong Thought or Leninism, including North Kensington's Black Eagles, who followed the US Black Panther Party, and the Leninist International Marxist Group's (IMG) 'Red Defence Groups', which invoked the 1918 German Revolution. However, later groups organising themselves with the LLP would seek a broader united front.

Indeed, by 1981, the broad labour movement had also monitored police activity for decades. Since 1934, the NCCL had watched policing at demonstrations.³⁷ It became increasingly Labour-aligned after 1960 under the leadership of Ennals, a veteran of the anti-apartheid Boycott Movement Committee.³⁸ Meanwhile, the unions and the Labour Party themselves warded their movement against police intervention. Labour politicians and union members repeatedly warned of a 'police state' or decline in public trust for the police.³⁹ Centralising police control in Whitehall was impossible 'without undermining the confidence of people in their local [police] force', argued Joseph Hoy, Labour chairman of the Association of Municipal Corporations's Police Committee in 1963, in opposition to what would become the Police Act 1964.⁴⁰ The Amalgamated Engineering Union (AEU) – the UK's second largest union – wanted the 1964 Act reviewed, questioning why complaints against the police were investigated by other police forces.⁴¹ Why, the union asked, should police police police when, prior to 1964, democratic watch committees had more power over regional forces (besides London, where the police authority was the home secretary). Furthermore, unions opposed measures that could be used to blacklist union organisers or campaigners, and criticised police violence at strikes, as the Stockport AEU did in 1967.⁴²

After 1969, Labour Party activists and their associates, as their party's social strategy proposed, also created law centres to provide free legal advice and representation.⁴³ The UK's first

the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis for the Year 1988, vol. 2 (1989), p. 28; John Carvel, 'Baker Blamed for Deaths', *The Guardian*, 30 August (1991), p. 6; 1990–2020 England & Wales and London deaths: Inquest, 'Deaths in police custody', <<https://www.inquest.org.uk/deaths-in-police-custody>>, website, n.d., accessed 28 February 2023.

³⁷ Janet Clark, 'Sincere and Reasonable Men? The Origins of the National Council for Civil Liberties', *20th Century British History*, vol. 20, no. 4 (2009), 526; Alan Smith, 'NCCL Calls for Demo Observers', *The Guardian*, 14 August (1974), 5; Aileen Ballantyne, 'NCCL Critical of NUM on Violence', *The Guardian*, 6 December (1984), 2.

³⁸ Roger Fieldhouse, *Anti-apartheid: A history of the movement in Britain* (2005), 13-6.

³⁹ *Hansard*, (House of Commons), 5th ser., vol. 571, col. 1461 (6 June 1957); *The Times*, 'Union Concern at Wire Tapping', 8 June (1957), 4.

⁴⁰ *The Times*, 'Watch Committee Powers Defended', 20 November (1963), 7; Chris A. Williams, 'Rotten Boroughs: The crisis of urban policing and the decline of municipal independence 1914–64', in James Moore & John Smith (eds.), *Corruption in Urban Politics and Society, Britain 1780–1950* (2007), 167-72.

⁴¹ Amalgamated Union of Engineering and Foundry Workers, *Report of Proceedings of the Fifty-second AEU National Committee* (1970), 67-8.

⁴² *The Times*, 'Witch-hunting' in Factories', 8 June (1957), 4; Brian Cox, *Civil Liberties in Britain* (1975), 45.

⁴³ The Labour Party, *Labour's Social Strategy* (1969), 107.

such initiative, North Kensington Law Centre (NKLC), was founded by lawyers and Labour members Peter Kandler and Anthony Gifford (who was a baron, and later also a QC).⁴⁴ In 1969, its first potential charitable sponsors at the Pilgrim Trust were warned by a judge that it might be ‘too much a (Labour) party venture’ to support.⁴⁵ Despite the odds, the NKLC survived, serving, as Kandler recalled, clients who were ‘West Indian and white working class’.⁴⁶

In North Kensington, and elsewhere, law centres funded by Labour-controlled authorities worked with veterans of the Black Power movement and organisers of the group Release.⁴⁷ Release was created in 1967 to defend drug users caught by the police, frequently with the counterargument that the drugs had been planted on suspects.⁴⁸ Influenced by both, the NKLC defended people charged with possessing illegal drugs if they believed there had been ‘a fit-up by the police’ and monitored ‘issues of concern to the community ... e.g. race, police harassment, etc’.⁴⁹

Similarly, organised legal defences for protesters became an increasingly routine part of the Labour Party and law centre network. As a solicitor, Boateng defended people charged in 1979 after an anti-NF protest in Southall and saw cases against arrested protesters fall apart in court when challenged.⁵⁰ During the 1970s other Labour Party members became involved in establishing law centres. At Brent Law Centre, Harriet Harman defended women arrested at the Grunwick strike picket.⁵¹ John McDonnell and his local party established another in Hayes.⁵² Funds from a Labour lord chancellor kept the NKLC and the thirty-or-so law centres it had inspired by 1978, in business between 1974 and 1979.⁵³ Yet, crises struck after the GLC and Parliament swung Conservative; cuts were made and Hillingdon Law Centre closed.⁵⁴

The first detailed history of the UK’s secret police and how they could interfere with politics and unions was published in early 1976. Its author, former *Time Out* news editor Tony Bunyan, was later considered ‘a trail-blazer’ for a time when MI5’s director-general’s identity was secret.⁵⁵ Bunyan became convinced that the police ‘historically opposed, and do contemporary oppose, the interests of

⁴⁴ Peter Kandler, ‘The last straw for lawyers’, *The Guardian*, 1 March (2001), <<https://www.theguardian.com/theguardian/2001/mar/01/guardianletters>>, online article, accessed 28 February 2023.

⁴⁵ LMA, 4450/C/05/0114, letter from Harry Fisher to Edward Ford, 13 May 1969.

⁴⁶ Peter Kandler, ‘North Kensington Law Centre’, in Helene Curtis & Mimi Sanderson (eds.), *The Unsung Sixties: Memoirs of social innovation* (2004), 157.

⁴⁷ LMA, 4462/P/01/047/001, Minutes of Crime Panel Meeting, 29 June 1977.

⁴⁸ Mills, *Cannabis Nation*, 138.

⁴⁹ LMA, 4462/P/01/047/001, ‘Introductory Paper on Work Done in the Field of Crime by the North Kensington Law Centre’, 19 May 1977.

⁵⁰ The Asian Health Agency & digital:works (producers), *Young Rebels – The story of Southall Youth Movement* (2014), <<https://vimeo.com/95551885>>, digital documentary video, accessed 28 February 2023.

⁵¹ Harriet Harman, *A Woman’s Work* (2017), 18–22.

⁵² *Harrow Observer*, ‘“Set Up Housing Advice Centre” - council urged’, 22 December (1972), 20; Seth Wheeler, ‘Interview with John McDonnell’, in London Edinburgh Weekend Return Group, *In and Against the State: Discussion notes for socialists*, third edition (2021), 136.

⁵³ LMA, 4450/C/05/0114, The Pilgrim Trust, ‘North Kensington Law Centre’, draft report, n.d. (1973?); Diana Geddes, ‘Worst-off Law Centres Get Year’s Reprieve’, *The Times*, 9 July (1975), 3.

⁵⁴ Bradley, *Lawyers*, 160–1; Bob Roshier & Harvey Teff, *Law and Society in England* (1980), 194.

⁵⁵ Bernard Porter, *Plots and Paranoia: A history of political espionage in Britain 1790–1988* (1989), x.

the working class as a whole'.⁵⁶ Unless vigilance was maintained, the UK, he believed, risked 'a slow transition ... to a more authoritarian way of life' as the state reacted to the labour movement and 'greater social and economic unrest'.⁵⁷ He described how the Met's Special Branch surveyed Leninist organisations and used criminal sanctions against political targets. Its new Special Patrol Group (SPG), he suggested, stopped and searched 'young people or blacks' and were trained to break strikes.⁵⁸ Given the recent miners' strikes, this was 'preparation for a potential class war'.⁵⁹ In 1981, Boateng's Police Committee made Bunyan senior research assistant at its staff unit, under Ennals.

Alongside Bunyan, Ralph Miliband's interpretation of the state summarised many policing ideas on the labour movement left. 'Where there is a strike', he asserted, 'there are also police, and occasionally the military, as regulating and possibly repressive forces, and in the case of the military, as a strike-breaking agency'.⁶⁰ Rather than being a planned long-term project of oppression, he saw how 'the policing function undertaken by the state ... is further enhanced by economic crisis and the social tensions which crisis generates'.⁶¹ But his theory assumed that 'it is their political superiors who give them that power'.⁶² This nuanced perspective, followed by John McDonnell and Bunyan, is important to how the labour movement could consider itself a primary political agent.⁶³ Mao-inspired Black Power organisers expected the masses would automatically react to police violence by rising up. But labour-movement Marxists identified the opposite causation; electoral legitimacy provided a route towards gradually assuming policing powers, as Labour had done on local watch committees. Likewise, in 1980, *In and Against the State* highlighted 'the SPG and SAS' as the state's solutions, alongside 'the development of nuclear energy' and surveillance, to 'new problems of control' under monetarism since they would clip the labour movement's wings.⁶⁴

In *London Labour Briefing* (LLB) in 1982, Chris Knight – a Leninist theorist who had Ken Livingstone's ear – developed 'The Fight for Workers' Law and Order'. He noted 'the level of general hooliganism, vandalism and violence occurring on some of our streets'; examples included a Labour member being 'mugged', and another attacked by 'racist thugs'.⁶⁵ People had a 'legal right to live in peace', but the police 'virtually everyone in the neighbourhood agrees' were 'at best irrelevant and incompetent and at worst simply part of the same problem of harassment and criminality'.⁶⁶ His solution:

⁵⁶ Bunyan, *Political Police*, 289.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 290, 88.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 136, 88, 96-7.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 272-3.

⁶⁰ Ralph Miliband, *Capitalist Democracy in Britain* (1982), 110.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 112.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 113.

⁶³ Bunyan used Miliband's theory of the state from 1969. Bunyan, *Political Police*, 2; John McDonnell, 'Strategy for the GLC against Rate-capping', *London Labour Briefing*, no. 44 (1984), 2.

⁶⁴ London Edinburgh Weekend Return Group, *In and Against the State*, second edition (1980 [1979]), 126.

⁶⁵ Chris Knight, 'The Fight for Workers' Law and Order', *LLB*, no. 18 (1982), 30.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

with the participation of *all sections* of the community – black and white, women and men – a patrolling and information network could ... enable those of us who have to live with the problems to set about solving them ourselves, peacefully and within the law, but with an effectiveness which seems ... beyond the scope of the police.⁶⁷

Knight was thus not opposing policing, or even the police, on principle – some officers ‘certainly *are* well-meaning’, he stressed.⁶⁸ Rather, ‘*real* law and order’ should prevent racist and sexist violence for ‘ordinary law-abiding people, white and black’.⁶⁹ Demanding law enforcement, Knight dared both the labour movement and the police to prove themselves worthy of trust from ‘all sections of the working-class population’.⁷⁰ The analysis of the Roach Family Support Committee below shows how this latter concern was also shared by the TUC leadership.

Other *LLB* contributors proposed similar labour-movement approaches to policing before May 1981. Haringey Labour councillor Jeremy Corbyn (1949–), in 1980 explained ‘the increased use of the Special Patrol Group and the opposition it has met in Lambeth’. The answer was ‘democratic control of the police’, and the LLP and NCCL were already campaigning for it.⁷¹ Narendra Makanji, another Labour member, described racist attacks and ‘police reluctance’ to prevent them, although local authorities financed the Met and should demand that ‘citizens are adequately protected’. He stressed: ‘Blacks are not the only victims of fascist violence’, there was also ‘assault and abuse on Jewish people’, and a pub ‘frequented by gays, punks and left-wing groups’ had been attacked ‘by NF sympathisers’.⁷² These arguments were made while the LLP’s manifesto was drafted. For *LLB* readers, opposing police violence meant democratic control over the Met. They also emphasised the shared interests between Londoners, which would characterise the Livingstone GLC’s policing policy.

Correspondingly, union members and Labour politicians’ practical understanding of the dangers posed by the police to union power increased. As the National Union of Mineworkers (NUM) demonstrated new heights of political influence after Heath’s resignation, onlookers feared the TUC’s strength would be countered by violence and subterfuge. In 1974 the Amalgamated Society of Boilermakers, Shipwrights, Blacksmiths and Structural Workers warned members of becoming ‘victimised’ by employers with secret blacklists.⁷³ Audrey Wise’s arrest at the Grunwick picket in 1977 again prompted warnings of a ‘police state’.⁷⁴ The NCCL alerted union members to court rulings that gave the police powers to limit picket lines.⁷⁵ It decorated its 1980 guide to workers’ rights with a

⁶⁷ Emphasis in original. *Ibid.*, 31.

⁶⁸ Emphasis in original. *Ibid.*, 30.

⁶⁹ Emphasis in original. *Ibid.*, 31.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 30.

⁷¹ Jeremy Corbyn, ‘Fighting Racism in ALL its forms’, *LLB*, no. 5 (1980), 5.

⁷² Narendra Makanji, ‘Rising Tide of Fascist Violence’, *LLB*, no. 7 (1980), 9.

⁷³ *The Guardian*, ‘Firms Attacked over “Blacklist”’, 30 May (1974), 7.

⁷⁴ *The Guardian*, ‘... Counter-allegations of Impending Anarchy and the Developing Police State Emerged’, 25 June (1977), 9.

⁷⁵ Lawrence Grant, Patricia Hewitt, Christine Jackson & Howard Levenson, *Civil Liberty: The NCCL guide to your rights*, third edition (1977 [1972]), 209-10.

joyful gathering of diversely coded workers who braved a cartoon Thatcher riding a police officer (illustration 6.2). This represented labour leaders' attention to unionisation and the police's reaction. Both concerns predated Thatcher, but the tangible impression was that whenever police could legally prevent picketing, unions became weaker.

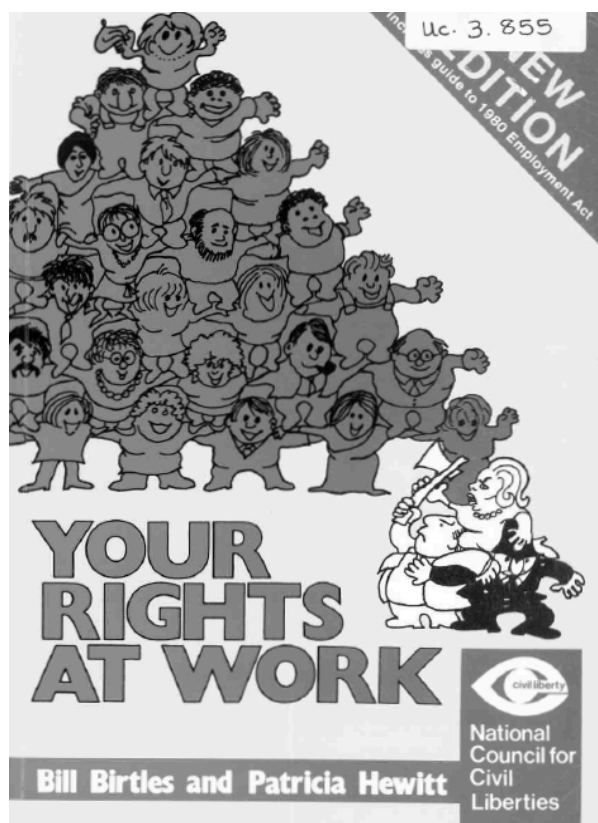


Illustration 6.2: Judging by the cover. The front of the NCCL's guide to rights at work depicting a late-twentieth-century leviathan, 1980.⁷⁶

Elsewhere, unions criticised the Met for not preventing racist violence. Prompted by National Union of Teachers members, Bethnal Green and Stepney Trades Council (BGSTC) analysed local racist skinhead assaults, with the TUC's support. Alongside the Bangladesh Youth Movement and Tower Hamlets Law Centre, they studied '110 attacks on Asians and their property' and how police investigated them during 1977.⁷⁷ In one case, the student Mustafa Siddiqui was stabbed in public but the arrested suspect was released without charge.⁷⁸ The Society of Graphical and Allied Trades's (SOGAT) general secretary Bill Keys commented that here 'the survival of political democracy' was at stake and, thus, 'the increased democratic powers of the masses.'⁷⁹

⁷⁶ Bill Birtles & Patricia Hewitt, *Your Rights at Work: A practical guide*, second edition (1980 [1978]).

⁷⁷ Bethnal Green and Stepney Trades Council, *Blood on the Streets: A report by Bethnal Green and Stepney Trades Council on racial attacks in east London* (1978), 16, 8.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 8.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 1.

The BGSTC's secretary was Dan Jones (1940–), a Labour member and son of the Labour lord chancellor who funded the first law centres after 1974, Frederick Elwyn Jones.⁸⁰ The trades council stated that it sought no 'confrontation with the Police as a substitute for an attack on racism', yet noted 'doubt within the immigrant community as to the interest and impartiality of the Police in handling complaints of racist attacks'.⁸¹ After the murder of its member Ishaque Ali in 1978, the National Union of Tailor and Garment Workers condemned 'any arbitrary attempt to divide worker from worker'.⁸² In 1981, the Tower Hamlets Labour Party and the Community Alliance for Police Accountability (CAPA) continued BGSTC's work. CAPA, was founded just after Labour's 1981 victory and the GLC gave it £12,400. It became a model for London's subsequent PMGs.⁸³

East of BGSTC, in Newham, a similar united front created the Newham Monitoring Project (NMP) in January 1980.⁸⁴ Its founders said they were 'concerned members of the Asian and Afro-Caribbean communities' responding to 'a frightening escalation of attacks on themselves, their children, their homes, their children, [and] their property'.⁸⁵ They expanded to include 'white anti racist groups', clergy, councillors, teachers, and social workers, and enjoyed 'the support of local trade unions'.⁸⁶ It had ties with the IMG. Tariq Ali spoke alongside a Labour MP at one of its public meetings in 1981.⁸⁷ Its secretary by February 1982, was Carolyn Sikorski, a local IMG member and trade-union organiser, whose branch of the National and Local Government Officers' Association (NALGO) printed its newsletter. Sikorski signed off its first application for a GLC grant, for making 'recommendations on the appropriate response by police and local authority' on how to preempt violence.⁸⁸ With the GLC's cheques it hired Unmesh Desai, whose mother, Jayaben Desai, had led the famous strike at Grunwick's five years earlier.⁸⁹

⁸⁰ Dan Jones a.k.a. Daniel Elwyn Jones. His maternal grandfather was an Eastern European Jewish immigrant and his father served the Nuremberg trial prosecution. See, Jamal Iqbal & Ansar Ahmed Ullah, 'Mr. Dan Jones', interview with Dan Jones, transcript, 6 March (2006), Swadhinata Trust, <<https://www.swadhinata.org.uk/interviewee-profiles-full-transcripts-strand-2/>>, digital transcript, accessed 28 February 2023.

⁸¹ Bethnal Green and Stepney Trades Council, *Blood*, 9

⁸² *Ibid.*, 34.

⁸³ LMA, GLC/DG/PRE/162/003, letter from Dan Jones to Bob Ashkettle, 10 February 1982; Martin Kettle, 'Monitoring the Police', *New Society*, vol. 58, no. 992 (1981), 324.

⁸⁴ It was said a decade later, including by the NMG, that the group was established in July 1980 after the racist killing of Akhtar Ali Baig. However, archival records say January. Newham Monitoring Project & Campaign Against Racism and Fascism, *Newham: The forging of a black community* (1991), 44.

⁸⁵ LMA, GLC/DG/PRE/161/002, *Newham Monitor*, 'Where We Come From', summer (1981), 8.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

⁸⁷ LMA, GLC/DG/PRE/161/002, *Newham Monitor*, 'Public Meeting', summer (1981), 8.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 4; LMA, GLC/DG/PRE/161/002, Newham Monitoring Project, Application for Financial Assistance, 10 February 1982; Carolyn Sikorski, 'Local Government Staff back Lambeth Conference', *Socialist Challenge*, no. 167 (1980), 15. Later, Sikorski remained in the IMG's successor organisation, Socialist Action, which entered Labour.

⁸⁹ LMA, GLC/DG/PRE/161/002, NMP, Application for Financial Assistance; Newham Monitoring Project, *Report January 1983* (1983), 4; Frances Perraudin, 'Labour Must not Ignore BAME Base in Rush to Rebuild Red Wall, Activists Warn', *The Guardian*, 24 February (2020), <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2020/jan/24/labour-bame-base-rush-rebuild-red-wall?fbclid=IwAR3Zna0WMQg0mBpcxq6UDWpKAwmeB_2y_lTaUfWG_gZMz2Hin9_sKujxVAg>, online article, accessed, 28 February 2023.

Alongside opposing violence, unions also criticised policing methods introduced because of PIRA terrorism. By 1975, several trades councils and Labour MPs supported the Troops Out Movement (TOM).⁹⁰ The Hammersmith-based Trade Union Committee against the Prevention of Terrorism Act, in 1976, called anti-PIRA legislation ‘a weapon to harass and intimidate Irish people in Britain so they remain silent’. It counted ‘nearly 2000 innocent people’ arrested under such laws and believed they might be used to ‘screen many active Irish trade unionists’.⁹¹ It cooperated with TOM, Release lent it its telephone, and several trades councils joined.⁹² Meanwhile, the Belfast Ten Defence Committee – as a PIRA front – gained no such support, but *was* backed by the IMG.⁹³ However, two of the ‘ten’ were defended by the barrister Michael Mansfield (1941–), who, although he had stood for Labour in an election as a student, represented Angry Brigade members as a lawyer.⁹⁴ Overall the labour movement’s large, mainstream sections avoided urban guerrillas, but consistently opposed the blanket surveillance and suspicion of union members.

This description of labour-movement-related police monitoring argues that prior to Livingstone’s GLC there was already an established pattern of seeking to bring broad alliances into the movement. Furthermore, it is notable how first and second-generation immigrants who wanted action against violence often led the PMGs supported by Livingstone’s GLC. They worked in and with law centres, unions, the Labour Party, and certain non-Labour organisations; institutions needed for researching and disseminating information supporting policing reform. Like many voluntary projects, PMGs, including CAPA and NMP, were piloted before major state investment but blossomed after it. This investment will be the focus of the next section.

6.4 Coppers and nickels: The police-monitoring organisations the GLC funded

In early 1981, Labour’s GLC members and candidates understood the worsening funding situation for London’s many young law centres and singled them out as funding priorities once in office. Livingstone wrote to other Labour candidates ahead of the election emphasising grant cuts to ‘Law Centres, Community Relations Councils, Tenants and other community organisations’ and that the GLC ‘should step in and take over funding of these bodies’, to make it ‘identified with’ their ‘major

⁹⁰ *Red Weekly*, ‘The British Labour Movement and Ireland’, no. 98 (1975), 4.

⁹¹ The latter according to a Special Branch spy who witnessed its conference. Undercover Policing Inquiry (UCPI), UCPI0000012373, ‘Special Branch report on a meeting to form the Trade Union Committee Against the Prevention of Terrorism Act’, 28 April 1976; Susan O’Halloran, ‘Police Terror Act’, *Big Flame*, no. 44 (1976), 4.

⁹² *Class Struggle*, ‘TUC Hatchet Men’, vol. 4, no. 7 (1980), 8; David Pallister, ‘Eggs Thrown at Marchers’, *The Guardian*, 31 January (1977), 20.

⁹³ Seán McConville, *Irish Political Prisoners 1960–2000: Braiding Rage and Sorrow* (2021), 521–2.

⁹⁴ Anne Cadwallader, ‘For the Defense’, *Irish America*, June/July (2001), 33.

local impact in terms of fighting on behalf of local people'.⁹⁵ Reflecting the importance of this pledge, the Finance and General Purposes Committee quickly reopened Hayes's Hillingdon Law Centre with a £48,400 grant.⁹⁶ In September, the very first funds approved by McDonnell's grants panel was for the North Kensington Law Centre.⁹⁷ Grants to law centres in Brent, Tower Hamlets, North Lewisham, Southall, Westminster, Notting Dale, Barnet, and Newham, and to several other advice centres, followed during the next two months, as promised in Labour's manifesto. The law centres and the police-monitoring work they did had once again been bailed out. Meanwhile, the groups fully designated to police monitoring were dealt in.

In June, Boateng wrote to Labour groups in London's boroughs, suggesting that they set up police committees.⁹⁸ He envisioned the GLC police committee as a regional umbrella, collecting information from local branches. CAPA was funded weeks later, having described its desire to 'work closely with the GLC Police Committee'.⁹⁹ Haringey Labour members were inspired and wanted to 'establish ourselves as a local police committee along the lines envisaged in Paul Boateng's circular', as they told the GLC.¹⁰⁰ They were 'preparing to start work as soon as the GLC grant is assured'. They added: '[w]e wish Haringey to participate in the lead towards Police Accountability given by the Labour Party in their GLC manifesto of March 1981'.¹⁰¹ These references to Boateng's letter and the GLC manifesto reveal the interactions between local demand and state investment. The manifesto was written with knowledge of this local demand, as expressed by Boateng, Corbyn, and Makanji, and once Labour took office it was rapidly met (table 6.1).

Like CAPA, most early GLC-funded PMGs were created by existing local campaigners who saw the GLC as an expansion opportunity. In early 1981, the Camden Committee for Community Relations ran a Racial Harassment Monitoring Group whose functions included 'record[ing] and monitor[ing] information about police practice'. The Camden PMG arose from combining this with immigrant organisations and the labour movement.¹⁰² Haringey's committee followed defence committees in Finsbury Park, Wood Green, and Hornsey.¹⁰³ The same was true in Croydon, where a defence committee by Croydon Black Peoples Action Committee assisted several people charged in connection with a murder trial.¹⁰⁴ This, they told the GLC, 'taught us the need for the continued

⁹⁵ Bishopsgate Institute, Wetzel/444, Ken Livingstone, 'Labour's First Year and the Tory Response', n.d. (March, 1981?).

⁹⁶ LMA, GLC/DG/PRE/056/025, 'Report (21.10.83) by Director-General', Grants 696.

⁹⁷ LMA, GLC/DG/MIN/056/001, Grants Panel minutes, 8 September 1981, 3.

⁹⁸ I am unsure if original copies of the letter remain, but it was referenced in Haringey Police Committee's funding application, found here: LMA, GLC/DG/PRE/056/005, Haringey Police Committee, Application for Financial Assistance, 28 September 1981.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁰ A.k.a. Haringey Independent Police Committee. *Ibid.*

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰² LMA, 4550/05/04/041, Camden Committee for Community Relations, *Policing the Police....: Campaign for police accountability in Camden*, booklet, n.d. (autumn, 1981?).

¹⁰³ LMA, GLC/DG/PRE/161/001, Haringey Independent Police Committee, Application for Financial Assistance, 3 February, 1982.

¹⁰⁴ Stuart Malcolm, 'Murder and Pub Rampage Bring Fears of Another Brixton', *The Guardian*, 3 June (1981).

monitoring of police behaviour'.¹⁰⁵ Lambeth Police Monitoring Group (LPMG) was supported by two local defence committees and five youth centres and explained its foundation in relation to how 'aggressive [sic] policing (use of "Sus", stop & search, arbitrary arrests, Criminal Attempts Act, non-observance of the Judge's Rules) has led to a breakdown of community-police relations'. It described its coordinating function:

the three Law Centres, C[ouncil for] C[ommunity] R[elations] L[ambeth]¹⁰⁶ and the Citizens' Advice Bureaux have a limited brief to gather information about and deal with cases of abuse of police powers and racial attacks. Very much lacking, however, is the pooling and handling centrally of this information. LPMG can fill this role ...¹⁰⁷

The Gay London Police Monitoring Group (GALOP) likewise took on the 'London-wide' advice and monitoring work begun by Gay Switchboard and Gay Legal Advice.¹⁰⁸ The PMG vision for London, reflected local campaigners' needs, following pre-existing police-monitoring projects to unite their various experiences.

Organisationally, 'London-wide' was a key phrase. The GLC's coordinating function would synergise local efforts. Aggregating local knowledge of policing, LPMG hoped to 'feed in to the GLC on proposals in the interest of the community', acting as a conduit for 'Youth Clubs, Community Centres, Neighbourhood Councils, Trades Unions, Schools etc.'¹⁰⁹ Recognising the symbiosis between such local networks and a regional movement, Hayes's PMG (HPMG) described how it 'was set up ... following a local campaign and resultant contact with the London-wide development of police monitoring groups'.¹¹⁰ Croydon's group described how 'it was still not yet fashionable to talk of Police Monitoring Units' in 1981. However, 'Through "Release" we learned of the Conference at County Hall on 20 February 1982 organised by a number of police monitoring groups.' This convinced them to found 'an independently constituted organisation to be primarily concerned with policing the police'.¹¹¹ Uniting a regional movement made sense if everyone did it simultaneously, and the GLC was the cue.

¹⁰⁵ LMA, GLC/DG/PRE/161/002, Croydon Police Monitoring Unit, Application for Financial Assistance, 11 June, 1982.

¹⁰⁶ GLC Principal Race Relations Adviser Herman Ouseley's former employer.

¹⁰⁷ LMA, GLC/DG/PRE/161/001, Lambeth Police Monitoring Group, Application for Financial Assistance, 14 February 1982. (Inexplicably, February and March in this application and its supporting letter are written in Roman numerals).

¹⁰⁸ LMA, GLC/DG/PRE/056/019, Report (21.9.82) by Head of Police Committee Support Unit, PC 68.

¹⁰⁹ LMA, GLC/DG/PRE/161/001, Lambeth Police Monitoring Group, Application for Financial Assistance, 14 February 1982.

¹¹⁰ LMA, GLC/DG/PRE/161/006, Hayes Police Monitoring Group, Application for Financial Assistance, 4 August 1982.

¹¹¹ LMA, GLC/DG/PRE/161/002, Croydon Police Monitoring Unit, Application for Financial Assistance, 11 June 1982.

Table 6.1: Dates when the ten first PMGs supported by the GLC were founded and funded.¹¹²

Name	Founded	Funded
Newham Monitoring Project	January 1980	April 1982
Community Association for Police Accountability	May 1981	July 1981
Haringey Independent Police Committee	July 1981	March 1982
Lambeth Police Monitoring Group	May–September 1981	March 1982
Croydon Police Monitoring Unit	October 1981	July 1982
North Kensington Police Monitoring Group	November 1981	July 1982
Camden Policing the Police	December 1981	July 1982
Wandsworth Policing Campaign	c. May 1982	May 1982
Gay London Police Monitoring Group	June 1982	September 1982
Hayes Police Monitoring Group	June 1982	September 1982

Release and law centres gave this cause support, staff, and premises. CAPA adopted the twenty-four-hour telephone line pioneered by Release (and Black Power organisers), so locals could report violence or discrimination. North Kensington’s PMG wrote they wanted a “‘bust card” simmlar [sic] to that available from Release’.¹¹³ The card contained information for anyone ‘busted’ by the police, like solicitors’ telephone numbers. The idea was adopted by GALOP, which Release helped to co-found.¹¹⁴ GALOP was also supported by Gay Legal Advice and the other nine of the first ten GLC-funded PMGs were backed by local law centres. Some centres vouched for the PMGs as a required referee on funding applications. In Hayes, Wandsworth, and Brixton they provided PMGs with premises. In North Kensington, an NKLC employee also worked for the PMG. Tottenham Neighbourhood Law Centre employed Martha Osamor, who was a campaigner against sus’ laws in the 1970s and who chaired the local Haringey Independent Police Committee (HIPC), which also used the

¹¹² LMA, GLC/DG/PRE/056/007; GLC/DG/PRE/056/019; GLC/DG/PRE/161/001; GLC/DG/PRE/161/002; GLC/DG/PRE/161/003; GLC/DG/PRE/162/002.

¹¹³ LMA, GLC/DG/PRE/161/002, letter from Tim Midgley to Claire de Mouthe, 4 June 1982.

¹¹⁴ LMA, GLC/DG/PRE/056/019, Report (21.9.82) by Head of Police Committee Support Unit, PC 68.

law centre's address.¹¹⁵ Wandsworth Policing Campaign (WPC) told Ennals how 'extensive contact' with 'youth workers and play workers', alongside the use of a local adventure playground's 'mobile disco equipment', helped them 'reach wider circles of young people'.¹¹⁶ The PMGs were shaped by a decade's state-funded legal and social work.

Yet greater were the PMGs' labour-movement links. Most were founded in close collaboration with local unions or Labour Parties, or were led by Labour members. The Labour MP Alf Dubs put his name down as a reference for Wandsworth PMG's funding application.¹¹⁷ In Hayes, in addition to the local Labour Party, the British Airways branch of the Union of Construction, Allied Trades and Technicians vouched for the PMG, emphasising 'a need for an organisation such as the H.P.M.G. to operate in the public interest in these days of rising unemployment'.¹¹⁸ The North Kensington PMG's funding application was supported by Kensington & Chelsea Labour Party. Its Steering committee was chaired by a local Labour councillor, and included two other Labour members.¹¹⁹ Similarly, in 1982 Camden Policing the Police's twelve-person management committee included three Labour members, one local Labour councillor, a trades council representative, and two employees at Labour-controlled police committees, one of whom was Martin Ennals.¹²⁰ HIPC was founded at a meeting organised by Hornsey Labour Party and the NCCL. Its chair, Osamor, was a Socialist Workers Party member in the 1970s and a Labour member in the 1980s.¹²¹ The prominence of the Labour Party and unions in the early-1980s police-monitoring movement meant that their support base and target audience widened.

Like the LLP's manifesto, PMGs emphasised how their work benefited all Londoners. In mid-1981 CAPA wanted the Met to be 'made accountable to the citizens of London'.¹²² That autumn, the Camden Committee for Community Relations, shortly before establishing its PMG, defined this as:

Police harassment is not confined to blacks. Many sections of the white community also encounter police hostility and prejudice – battered women, prostitutes, gays, trade union pickets, political activists, unemployed youth and sections of the Irish community. This is because the police, more than any other government agency reflect the class, sexual and racial

¹¹⁵ Tony Moore, *The Killing of Constable Keith Blakelock: The Broadwater Farm riot* (2015), 49; *The Guardian*, 'Haringey Independent Police Committee', classified advert, 31 March (1982), 18;

¹¹⁶ LMA, GLC/DG/PRE/161/006, letter from Gerry Lyseight to Martin Ennals, 5 July 1983.

¹¹⁷ LMA, GLC/DG/PRE/161/002, Wandsworth Policing Campaign, 19 April 1982.

¹¹⁸ LMA, GLC/DG/PRE/161/006, letter from G. Wanstall to Hayes Police Monitoring Group, 8 September 1983.

¹¹⁹ LMA, GLC/DG/PRE/161/002, North Kensington Police Monitoring Group, Application for Financial Assistance, 6 May 1982.

¹²⁰ LMA, GLC/DG/PRE/161/006, Camden Policing the Police, *Annual report 1982–3* (1983).

¹²¹ Harmit Athwal & Jenny Bourne, 'Martha Osamor: unsung hero of Britain's black struggle', *Institute of Race Relations*, 17 November (2015),

<<https://irr.org.uk/article/martha-osamor-unsung-hero-of-britains-black-struggle/>>, accessed 28 February 2023.

¹²² LMA, GLC/DG/PRE/161/001, Community Alliance for Police Accountability, 'Application to Greater London Council for Funding for Year 1981/2', n.d. (June/July, 1981?).

prejudices of the establishment and are mostly isolated from the community they are supposed to serve.¹²³

This emphasis on shared interests between people outside ‘the establishment’ characterised 1980s PMGs because of the labour movement. HIPC initially addressed racism against immigrants and their children, but also told the Police Committee: ‘Haringey Trades Council have asked us to [run] a special study of harassment of Haringey’s substantial Irish community by police under the ... Prevention of Terrorism Act’.¹²⁴

Likewise, while GALOP originally reacted to ‘a disproportionate amount of [Met] time policing areas where gay men socialise’, its leaders stressed broad collaboration.¹²⁵ On 10 November 1982, one of them, told the pirate-radio programme *Gaywaves*, how the policing of gay people ‘must be brought to the attention of those other straight organisations who are campaigning for democratic police accountability in order that our findings may be linked up to the findings of these other organisations’. This meant that ‘although we stand as a gay organisation there is a distinct platform for liaison and coordination with other groups’.¹²⁶ Later GALOP assisted a campaign to prevent gay men from being arrested while hooking up at public toilets in Notting Hill. The Met, according to *LLB* contributor Paul Canning, used “‘agent provocateurs”, dressed in ripped jeans and leather jackets’. He motivated Labour’s support for the campaign in universalist terms: ‘It is the duty of every socialist to support the slogan “an injury to one is an injury to all”’.¹²⁷

Other PMGs echoed Knight’s ‘workers’ law and order’. A GLC-funded project by the WPC’s Jill Radford interviewed sixty women in Wandsworth, many of whom desired more police in areas where they were attacked by men. However, they also wanted qualitatively different policing, Radford emphasised. She quoted one woman: ‘More police on the streets would stop gangs of youths harassing women’. Another said, ‘My daughter and her friend were harassed by the police because they are black. But we do need policing of some sort’.¹²⁸ This conclusion resembled the views of CAPA and NMP regarding the policing of racist violence. GLC officers identified more generally applicable conclusions from this work, calling it ‘relevant to WPC’s other work, e.g. in relation to policing of the black community and of prostitution’.¹²⁹ Although not all local PMGs presented their work as explicitly concerning class solidarity, the GLC paid attention to where it could help many different people.

¹²³ LMA, 4450/05/04/041, Camden Committee for Community Relations, ‘Policing the Police...’, n.d. (1981/2?).

¹²⁴ LMA, GLC/DG/PRE/161/001, Haringey Independent Police Committee, Application for Financial Assistance, Appendix C, 3.

¹²⁵ LMA, GLC/DG/PRE/161/011, GALOP, *1st Annual Report* (1984), 4.

¹²⁶ British Library Sound Archive, C586/358, Phillip Cox, *Gaywaves*, digital copy of programme, originally broadcast 10 November 1982.

¹²⁷ Paul Canning, ‘Gays Fight New Threat’, *LLB*, no. 36 (1984), 19.

¹²⁸ Jill Radford & Cabby Laffy, ‘Violence against Women: Women speak out’, *Critical Social Policy*, vol. 4, no. 11 (1984), 116-7.

¹²⁹ LMA, GLC/DG/PRE/161/006, Report (9.9.83) by Head of Police Committee Support Unit, PC156, 4.

Such unity underpinned the GLC's official publications and statements. The Police Committee's journal *Policing London* launched in July 1982, describing 'distrust, scepticism and even hostility' towards the Met; widespread throughout London particularly among the young and black communities'.¹³⁰ It frequently highlighted racism from the police and the 'conflict between the Met and the black communities'.¹³¹ However, throughout Livingstone's administration, it covered the same broad range of police-related issues as the PMGs to expand Labour's general democratisation argument. Its target audience was imagined as wide, concerned, like Labour's manifesto, with taxpayers' value for money and crime rates. *Policing London's* first issue also emphasised that a seventeen per cent crime clear-up rate was causing low confidence in the Met. 'Most of the reported crimes are those that affect *all sections of the community*', it said.¹³² Likewise, reports of Met corruption or misuse of resources were other common themes – issues that, in theory, would annoy any Londoner.¹³³ GLC members emphasised this, proclaiming 'no taxation without representation'. Bundred wrote that the American Revolution's slogan evoked how London lacked its own police authority: 'the same issue remains unresolved in a city of seven million people'.¹³⁴ Boateng repeated it in the GLC's thirty-minute educational pseudo-documentary *Policing London* (1985), recorded to encourage discussion at schools, youth clubs, and meetings. Boateng said:

the police should be a service, like social services, housing, any other service that Londoners pay for through the rates ... And the way you get the best possible service is by bringing it under democratic control ... there should be no taxation without representation.¹³⁵

The GLC consistently sought the widest possible common ground on policing. When the Met's commissioner published his 1982 annual report, the journal *Policing London* said it should have mentioned Special Branch's enforcement of the Prevention of Terrorism Act and 'the surveillance of political and industrial activities', as well as 'racial attacks on members of the black and Asian communities' and 'sexual and physical assaults on women'.¹³⁶ These three concerns, alongside GALOP's critique of the policing of gays and lesbians, reflected what PMGs noticed and reoccurring over the course of the Police Committee's work.¹³⁷ The VHS *Policing London* centred on the same theme. Blending scripted violence with real interviews, it depicted a naive, fictional journalist witnessing a black driver being stopped, searched, and arrested for a faulty rear light. He learns of how

¹³⁰ Its first few issues were monthly. *Policing London*, 'A Crisis of Policing in London', no. 1 (1982), 1.

¹³¹ *Ibid.*

¹³² Emphasis added. *Ibid.*

¹³³ E.g., *Policing London*, 'Police Corruption in London', no. 2 (1982), 2; *Policing London*, 'Public Confidence in the Police Weakened', no. 3 (1982), 4; *Policing London*, 'New Allegations of Police Corruption', no. 4 (1982), 5.

¹³⁴ Bundred, 'Accountability', 58.

¹³⁵ LMA, GLC/DG/PRB/11/01/021, 'Policing London', digital copy of video recording. The film's producer, Sally Hibbin, in 1988, adapted Chris Mullin's *A Very British Coup* for television.

¹³⁶ *Policing London*, 'GLC Police Committee Rejects Commissioner's Report', no. 3 (1982), 1-2.

¹³⁷ *Policing London*, 'GLC Reports on Racial Harassment', vol. 2, no. 11 (1984), 51; *Policing London*, 'Violence against Women - Wandsworth study', vol. 2, no. 11 (1984), 52-3.

an incident where men in black bomber jackets cause a mess in a South Asian man's corner shop while hurling racist abuse is disregarded by officers. He listens to a CAPA officer describe how the Met ignored reports of assaults on Bangladeshi women and hears a woman argue that police should do more to prevent sexual assaults. Finally, he tries to visit a strike at the docks but is turned back by a police roadblock.¹³⁸ By insisting on addressing all these topics together the GLC unified what might have been considered distinct single-issue matters.

Including the trade-union perspective was characteristic of the LLP's work, showing the continuity of the commitments made in its manifesto and understanding of its political base. The notion of Special Branch's surveillance, following Bunyan's research, continued long-running union concerns over political surveillance, and was another recurring theme.¹³⁹ After the 1984–5 Miners' Strike began, the journal *Policing London* described police violence against the National Union of Mineworkers's (NUM) members extensively. It was 'reminiscent of the inner cities of 1981' and as foreshadowing powers that could be used against Londoners.¹⁴⁰ In the film *Policing London*, CAPA's representative likened stop-and-search arrests in London to 'scenes we've experienced on the picket lines in Nottinghamshire'.¹⁴¹ Likening the strike to London's public order and crime policing intended to create solidarity with the NUM.

Like the early law centres, the first PMGs were collaborations between Labour and union organisers and people from alternative movements. As with NKLC, they might not have operated under a Labour Party banner, but they were led by Labour members, in line with a Labour policy, and were funded by Labour-approved grants. However, there was an overall pattern in the Police Committee's funding work that sought to bring together the many separate organisations concerned with policing-related issues into this coalition. In many cases, as seen with GALOP, this was desired and supported by the groups themselves. The Miners' Strike exemplifies a very clear moment of where this coalesced to support the labour movement. But there were less obvious instances of this unity within London's labour movement even prior to this, in the Campaign Against the Police Bill (CAPB) and the campaign for an inquiry into the death of Colin Roach, which the next two sections will describe.

6.5 Bobbies and the Bill: The Campaign Against the Police Bill

The first Police and Criminal Evidence (PACE) bill fell before the 1983 election and the second was published by Thatcher's second government later that year. It was debated extensively and became law in November 1984. It was a final step in replacing the sus' laws with more structured and

¹³⁸ LMA, GLC/DG/PRB/11/01/021, 'Policing London'.

¹³⁹ *Policing London*, 'The Data Registrar and Police Records', vol. 2, no. 12 (1984), 70; *Policing London*, 'Policing the Pits - Dangers for us all', vol. 2, no. 13 (1984), 81 (pp. 77-82); *Policing London*, 'Special Branch Monitor Anti-racist Groups', vol. 3, no. 16 (1985), 19.

¹⁴⁰ *Policing London*, 'Policing the Pits', 82.

¹⁴¹ LMA, GLC/DG/PRB/11/01/021, 'Policing London'.

regulated stop-and-search powers, and codified many police practices related to dealing with suspects and criminal investigations.

The GLC Police Committee discussed the first bill in December 1982. They instantly interpreted it as a novel threat, emphasising its proposed codification of police powers to search people and vehicles for ‘prohibited articles’ and establish road checks.¹⁴² A report from Ennals signed by Bunyan imagined the bill would have ‘far reaching implications for the concept of “policing by consent”’ and argued that it was ‘in the interests of the people of London’ to be made aware of it.¹⁴³ January’s issue of *Policing London* was fully dedicated to conveying this position, warning of ‘a massive assault on traditional and treasured human rights and freedoms’.¹⁴⁴ It claimed the police would have ‘[n]ew powers of arrest for *any* offence on certain grounds’ without ‘new proposals to either increase accountability of the police or to curb their abuse of existing powers’.¹⁴⁵

The Police Committee emphasised powers listed in the bills for arrests without warrants, road checks, and stop and search, but downplayed that the police could already do this legally, making the legislative proposal appear to be a dramatic change.¹⁴⁶ For instance, in January, the Police Committee summarised the first bill, saying that it allowed ‘detention without charge for up to 4 days’.¹⁴⁷ In reality, the bill would regulate this existing practice, alongside many other police powers, by restricting it to defined circumstances and making police officers log or account for their actions.¹⁴⁸ This included making the police complaints process slightly more open to independent oversight and requiring constables to write detailed notes of who they stopped and searched and why.¹⁴⁹ The bills would also entitle anyone in police custody ‘to consult a solicitor privately at any time’.¹⁵⁰ (Formalising this right was a significant result, Peter Kandler later argued, for the law centre movement.)¹⁵¹ *Policing London* overlooked this in favour of imagining an imminent danger to individuals and unions.

Moreover, the bills were presented as the Conservative government’s authoritarian reaction to protests, despite the fact that their evolution was less straightforward. The bills likely responded primarily to the police corruption crises of the 1970s and the corresponding Royal Commission on

¹⁴² LMA, GLC/DG/PRE/161/003, Report (30.11.82) by the Director of Administration and Solicitor to the Council, PC78, 1.

¹⁴³ LMA, GLC/DG/PRE/161/003, Report (8.12.82) by Head of Police Committee Support Unity, PC82.

¹⁴⁴ *Policing London*, ‘Policing by Coercion: The new police bill and London’, no. 5, January (1983), 1.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁶ *Policing London*, ‘Police and Criminal Evidence Bill: Summary of provisions, no. 5, January (1983), 6-9; Grant, *et al.*, *Civil Liberty*, 36-40. The Road Traffic Act 1972, for instance, allowed any constable to stop any vehicle at any time.

¹⁴⁷ *The Guardian*, ‘Policing by Coercion’ classified advert, 13 January (1983), 4.

¹⁴⁸ According to the NCCL. Grant, *et al.*, *Civil Liberty*, 51-2;

¹⁴⁹ House of Commons, *Police and Criminal Evidence Bill [As amended by Standing Committee J]*, n.d., (1982?), 2-3, 55-6.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 38. Prior to this it was often allowed but not guaranteed. Grant, *et al.*, *Civil Liberty*, 49-50.

¹⁵¹ Oliver Lewis, ‘Radical Lawyers, Law Centres and an Uncertain Future’, *The Justice Gap*, 28 March (2013), <<https://www.thejusticegap.com/radical-lawyers-law-centres-and-an-uncertain-future/>>, online article, accessed 28 February 2023.

Criminal Procedure established under Callaghan's Labour government. This commission included a former law centre director and Jack Jones, general secretary of the Transport and General Workers' Union.¹⁵² By 1982, however, the Labour Party was strongly opposed to proposals based on the investigations it initiated a few years earlier.¹⁵³ None of this deterred the GLC and the CAPB, for whom courting the unions to reject the bills became vital.

The CAPB arose from an overlap between the GLC and Labour and Black Power-adjacent voluntary organisations. In January 1983, the Police Committee organised a conference addressed by Darcus Howe, Paddy Hillyard (researcher for the NCCL's Cobden Trust), Paul Crane (co-author of Release's arrestee advice book), and Gareth Peirce (solicitor at B. M. Birnberg, the law firm Boateng belonged to).¹⁵⁴ The conference discussed 'Campaigning Against The Bill' and the National CAPB was established soon thereafter, followed by its London branch.¹⁵⁵ The original address of both organisations at 50 Rectory Road in Hackney was shared with the Hackney Black Peoples Association who during 1983 were vigorously involved in the campaign surrounding Colin Roach's death (described in more detail below).¹⁵⁶ Another sign of CAPB's Black-Power ancestry was Cecil Gutzmore of *The Black Liberator*; secretary of both the National and London CAPBs.¹⁵⁷ By October 1984 the GLC would have given them £75,328 to employ staff, rent premises, and organise its campaign – the vast majority of their income.¹⁵⁸

The LLP was eager to make the anti-bill campaign conducive to union interests. 'The left', insisted the vice chair of Camden council's police committee, should campaign for 'the accountability of the police to the community' to 'increase public confidence in the police and thereby improve the effectiveness of the police in detecting and deterring crime'.¹⁵⁹ This was essentially the position taken by the TUC and the large manufacturing unions on policing, which they expressed during the Roach case (see below). Louise Christian, a lawyer and Labour member at the GLC's Police Committee Support Unit was commissioned to write a book on the first bill, which aptly summarised the Council and CAPB's position in mid-1983. The bill, Christian argued:

would not only affect black people disproportionately. The young, the unemployed and the homeless who are out on the streets will become "targets" for the police. Trade unionists and political activists would find powers to stop and search and road blocks used to control and/or

¹⁵² *Hansard*, HoC, 5th ser., vol. 33, col. 150-1 (30 November 1982); Michael Zander, 'Police under inquisition', *The Guardian*, 14 February (1978), 17.

¹⁵³ Another irony was that the paperwork required by the PACE act would provide the statistics about the use of stop-and-search powers that became the mainstay of campaigns against the Met.

¹⁵⁴ *The Guardian*, 'Policing by Coercion' classified advert, 13 January (1983), 4; Kevin Boyle, Tom Hadden & Paddy Hillyard, *Ten Years on in Northern Ireland: The legal control of political violence* (1980); Ian Cameron, Paul Crane, Sarah Hart, Sol Picciotto, Anne Stanesby & Christian Wolmar, *Trouble with the Law: The Release bust book* (1978).

¹⁵⁵ LMA, GLC/DG/PRE/161/011, Report (11.10.84) by Head of Police Committee Support Unity, PC273, 2.

¹⁵⁶ *The Guardian*, 'Campaign Against the Police Bill', classified advert, 10 August (1983), 19.

¹⁵⁷ Cecil Gutzmore, 'Mugger's Charter', *Socialist Action*, 20 January (1984), 3; Waters, *Thinking Black*, 184-8.

¹⁵⁸ LMA, GLC/DG/PRE/161/011, Report (11.10.84) by Head of Police Committee Support Unity, PC273, 3.

¹⁵⁹ Robert Latham, 'A Charter for Harassment', *LLB*, no. 27 (1983), 13.

prevent political protests or pickets. Gay men and lesbians could be singled out for extraordinary powers of arrest on the grounds of “affronting public decency”. Women could be subjected to “intimate body searches” in police stations, especially if classified as prostitutes.¹⁶⁰

As in the PMGs and the Police Committee’s later publications and the LLP and GLC’s overall strategy, Christian’s argument hinged on the common interests to oppose the bill shared by all the groups she listed.

Although Gutzmore, like other vanguardist Black Power leaders, theoretically prioritised the political agency of the ‘defensive resistance of the black working class (employed and unemployed)’ in its ‘subtler and more deadly forms’ to state ‘aggression’, he too joined this united front.¹⁶¹ In May 1983, he addressed a National CAPB conference alongside Ambalavaner Sivanandan of the Institute of Race Relations, Alf Dubs, and the National Union of Sheet Metal Workers and Coppersmiths’s general secretary.¹⁶² The PACE bill, he said later, represented a ‘massive increase in police militarisation’.¹⁶³ This matched his theory – expressed in the journal *Race & Class* in 1983 – that growing police powers ‘almost inevitably ... increased physical resistance to the British state’, which he imagined coming from ‘the black communities’ and ‘Irish national movement’ against the police.¹⁶⁴ But his militarisation comment also aligned with fears within part of the labour movement of the police state. In early 1984, Gutzmore also expressed his desire to ensure the CAPB ‘includes national organisations like the trade unions’ and proposed that ‘blacks, trade unionists, Irish nationalists, gays, Greenham women are the groups most at risk’ from the bill.¹⁶⁵ Gutzman, by seeking cooperation with the labour movement, appeared, in practice, to hope that a broad church would reduce the state’s ‘militarisation’ to make ‘almost inevitable’ violence evitable.

The commitment to this strategy was strong enough to carry on even after the campaign had no feasible means of stopping the bill. In May 1983, it came close to succeeding as Labour adopted the PACE bill’s cancellation as a general election pledge.¹⁶⁶ Yet even after the election the effort to unite all the people on Gutzman’s list behind the CAPB cause continued, carrying its message far beyond London. In October, at Labour’s conference in Brighton, Boateng spoke alongside Scargill of

¹⁶⁰ The book analysed the first PACE bill but was published to anticipate its sequel after it fell in 1983. Christian overlooked that the ‘intimate body searches’ the first bill provided for could only be applied to someone suspected of ‘serious arrestable offence’ and if there was ‘a person of the same sex as the person searched’ or a medical practitioner present to conduct the search. Serious arrestable offences meant predominantly violent crimes, serious economic crimes, and threats to the security of the state. Louise Christian, *Policing by Coercion* (1983), 3; HoC, *Police and Criminal Evidence*, 36, 65.

¹⁶¹ Cecil Gutzmore, ‘Capital, ‘Black Youth’ and Crime’, *Race & Class*, vol. 35, no. 2 (1983), 29.

¹⁶² The union voted to merge with the AUE in October 1983. *The Guardian*, ‘National Conference against the Police Bill’, classified advert, 11 May (1983), 27.

¹⁶³ Quoted in Janet Loveless, ‘Campaign Against the Police Bill’, *Socialist Action*, no. 34 (1983), 4.

¹⁶⁴ Gutzmore, ‘Capital’, 24-5.

¹⁶⁵ Gutzmore, ‘Mugger’s Charter’, 3.

¹⁶⁶ Labour Party, *The New Hope for Britain: Labour’s manifesto* (1983), 22.

how the PACE bill could be used to arrest union picketers.¹⁶⁷ Facing the second PACE bill, the CAPB became increasingly a means for organising a movement in the long term rather than stopping a law in the short term.

In February 1984, the Police Committee produced leaflets ‘explaining how the [PACE] Bill will affect women, black people, trade unionists and gay people’.¹⁶⁸ They were GLC-branded but intended for CAPB branches, who readers were encouraged to join and who could order free copies in large quantities. Each leaflet provided information on the bill and campaigning against it but variants carried copy tailored to different target audiences. ‘The Police Bill will not mean that women will feel safer on the streets’, said the women’s leaflet. Targeting black people, another depicted three constables restraining a man and warned the police would ‘[s]top and search you in your street’. ‘Remember the humiliation?’ it asked to evoke the personal experiences it assumed its reader had. The union version frontloaded ‘risks of police interference in industrial disputes’ as a ‘threat to trade unionists’. Stirring solidarity, it contained a model anti-PACE resolution for workers to pass at union meetings, reflecting high expectations that they would mobilise the action seen during the Colin Roach campaign (see below).¹⁶⁹ In Sheffield, where a CAPB branch existed, the flyers were adapted for local needs. During the Miners’ Strike, Sheffield Trades Council affiliated to CAPB, which had borrowed the GLC’s layout, copy, and messaging to warn miners of being ‘forcibly prevented from peaceful picketing’.¹⁷⁰

This evoked Livingstone’s theory of class politics: approaching people ‘on an issue basis rather than a simple class approach’ (see chapter two). The CAPB understood itself in such terms. For instance, it organised a workshop on 30 June 1984, which was joined by fifty people from ‘various organisations including Women’s Groups, Youth Groups, Black organisations, the Labour Party and Trade Unions’. With these groups in attendance, the campaign reported to the GLC that this event had addressed ‘the state’s anti-democratic and anti-working class strategies’.¹⁷¹

Ultimately, these intentions could not change the parliamentary arithmetic of 1984. Boateng ended the campaign pessimistically, writing that, with the bill enacted during the Miners’ Strike, ‘all the ingredients are present for a transformation, not only of policing, but of society itself’. The characteristics of ‘a police state’, he proposed, was a government’s ‘all-pervasive police power ... within a context in which legitimacy stems ... [from] the acquiescence of the Judiciary and the powerlessness of a largely quiescent public, for whom the ballot box has ceased to provide

¹⁶⁷ Terry Coleman, ‘To Brighton, Where Passion Rules Reason’, *The Guardian*, 6 October (1983), 17.

¹⁶⁸ GLC, *Policing London - By coercion* (1984).

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁰ Sheffield City Archives, SYCC/NALGO/8/5, Sheffield Campaign Against the Police Bill, ‘Policing Yorkshire by Coercion’, n.d. (April, 1984?); SYCC/NALGO/8/5, Sheffield Trades Council, *Trades Council Bulletin*, June/July (1984?).

¹⁷¹ LMA, GLC/DG/PRE/161/011, Campaign Against the Police Bill, Application for Financial Assistance, 8 August 1984.

alternatives'.¹⁷² Choosing to imagine the bill as an urgent threat to freedom and democracy gave the CAPB energy. But as sincere as the campaign and the GLC were in their apocalyptic interpretations, high expectations also precipitated a steep collapse. What they demonstrated for posterity, however, was how to organise a campaign about police reform through both the state and non-state organisation using class politics. The CAPB's failure does not prevent such strategies around the broad direct common interests of a popular majority from succeeding in the future. But how such lessons were remembered beyond depressing defeat is a different matter. Before discussing that, the campaign following the death of Colin Roach will exemplify how cooperation between the Black Power and labour movements has had long-running and unforeseen outcomes for policing.

6.6 In whose best inquest?: The Roach Family Support Committee

The campaign following Roach's death arose from both the labour and Black Power movements, but it operated on terms acceptable to the unions, who made clear that their interest in supporting it was to make the Met more trusted. On 12 January 1983, twenty-one-year-old Colin Roach was found in the outer lobby of Stoke Newington Police Station, a shotgun having been fired inside his mouth. His family, locals, and campaigners became convinced this was not suicide. On 17 January, they created the Roach Family Support Committee (RFSC) at a meeting to expose an alleged 'cover up' by demanding a public inquiry.¹⁷³ Hackney Black Peoples Association (HBPA) promoted the meeting, asking: 'Do you believe that a black man will go into a police station to commit suicide with a sawn off shotgun?'¹⁷⁴

Boateng was involved at this early stage, speaking the Met's district chief superintendent alongside protestors within hours of this meeting.¹⁷⁵ To organise the logistics for the RFSC's first demonstration on 22 January (also attended by Boateng), RFSC was aided by an organiser from the Revolutionary Community Party.¹⁷⁶ Its chairman, meanwhile, was the Labour Party member and HBPA's chair Lester Lewis (1945–2007).¹⁷⁷ Other Labour members volunteered to help it convince Hackney's Labour council to withhold its share of the Met's rates.¹⁷⁸ The borough's police committee

¹⁷² Paul Boateng, 'Crisis in Accountability', in John Baxter & Laurence Koffman (eds.), *Police, the constitution and the community: A collection of original essays on issues raised by the Police and Criminal Evidence Act* (1985), 244.

¹⁷³ Independent Committee of Inquiry into Policing in Hackney, *Policing in Hackney 1945–1984: A report commissioned by the Roach Family Support Committee* (1989), 19, 94–101.

¹⁷⁴ Original in capitals. The National Archives (TNA), HO 325/572, Hackney Black Peoples Association, 'Public Meeting', leaflet, n.d. (January, 1983?).

¹⁷⁵ TNA, HO 325/572, letter from George W. Rushbrook to J. G. Pilling, 19 January 1983.

¹⁷⁶ Roy Kerridge, 'Bad Day for Mr Boateng', *The Spectator*, 5 February (1983), 14–5; UCPI, UCPI0000016951, 'Special Branch report on a private meeting of the Organising Committee of the Roach Family Support Committee', 2 February 1983.

¹⁷⁷ A.k.a. Breen L. Lewis, a.k.a. Prince Ntum ba Azah. Lester Lewis, 'Demonstration Called by Roach Campaign', *Socialist Organiser*, no. 131, 12 May (1983), 6.

¹⁷⁸ Connect Hackney, *Windrush: Stories of a Hackney generation* (2018), 7, digital booklet, <<https://www.connecthackney.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/1212-Connect-Hac-Windrush-booklet-draft-24-web.pdf>>, accessed 28 February 2023.

chairman, Brynley Heaven, swiftly wrote to the GLC to secure a grant. The cause should be funded, he argued, ‘in view of the dramatic further deterioration of relations between police and black people in Hackney’.¹⁷⁹ The GLC Labour group acted fast and approved £1,500 on 28 January, although a Conservative challenge delayed the cheque until 17 March.¹⁸⁰ Yet, in the meantime, the RFSC received at least £800 in donations. Before January was over, the Hackney NUT branch issued a statement of support and donated £50 to the committee.¹⁸¹ The sums recorded in the RFSC’s ledger in early March were round numbers, predominantly above £100, meaning that they were likely similar gifts from other organisations.¹⁸² Thus, by the time the GLC cheque was delivered, the campaign was already kickstarted. Furthermore, as the donations arrived, so did formal resolutions of support for the RFSC’s demand from three nationwide manufacturing unions, and on 28 March, remarkably, from the TUC itself.¹⁸³ What had drawn their attention to one death in east London?

Like Heaven, the unions motivated their interventions on the grounds of maintaining peace and of maintaining public ‘confidence’ in the Met. On 21 January, the Commission for Racial Equality’s (CRE) deputy chairman told Scotland Yard that his non-departmental public body wanted to see a public inquiry into Roach’s death because of Hackney’s ‘troubled police/community relationships’.¹⁸⁴ The CRE, established under Callaghan’s government in 1976, was probably the first household-name organisation to declare its support for the RFSC. Five days later, on BBC television, Stoke Newington’s Labour MP Ernie Roberts said an inquiry was necessary in reference to ‘the breakdown in faith that exists locally in the police’.¹⁸⁵ This was seconded by NALGO’s Hackney branch in mid-February, who added ‘concern over this case is not confined to the black community’.¹⁸⁶ The first manufacturing union to state its support for the RFSC’s demand to the Home Office was the National Union of Tailors and Garment Workers’s London Central Branch, who had called for an end to racist violence in Tower Hamlets in 1978.¹⁸⁷ On 9 March, the Bakers, Food & Allied Workers’ Union’s general secretary impressed on Home Secretary William Whitelaw that: ‘an inquiry would help ... restore the confidence of Hackney people in the police which would be of benefit to all’.¹⁸⁸ This was repeated almost verbatim two days later by SOGAT’s general secretary Bill Keys.¹⁸⁹ The following week the general secretary of the AUE’s Foundry Section told Whitelaw that an inquiry

¹⁷⁹ Quoted in, UCPI, UCPI0000018697, *Bulletin of the Roach Family Support Committee*, n.d. (January/February, 1983?).

¹⁸⁰ LMA, GLC/DG/PRE/161/011, Roach Family Support Committee, Application for Financial Assistance, 6 September 1984.

¹⁸¹ UCPI, UCPI0000018697, *Bulletin of the Roach Family Support Committee*, n.d. (January/February, 1983?).

¹⁸² LMA, GLC/DG/PRE/161/011, Roach Family Support Committee.

¹⁸³ TNA, HO 325/572; HO 325/575; HO 325/576. See details below.

¹⁸⁴ TNA, HO 325/575, letter from Clifton Robinson to W.H. Gibson, 21 January 1983.

¹⁸⁵ TNA, HO 325/572, ‘BBC Nationwide 26 January 1983’, transcript of television programme, n.d. (26 January 1983?).

¹⁸⁶ TNA, HO 387/3414, letter from Alan Badman to William Whitelaw, 13 February 1983.

¹⁸⁷ TNA, TNA, HO 325/575, letter from B. Shuster to William Whitelaw, 15 February 1983; Bethnal Green and Stepney Trades Council, *Blood*, 34.

¹⁸⁸ TNA, HO 325/575, letter from Joe Marino to William Whitelaw, 9 March 1983.

¹⁸⁹ TNA, HO 325/575, letter from W. H. [Bill] Keys to William Whitelaw, 11 March 1983.

would ‘restore the confidence of the local populace in the integrity of the police force, whom we appreciate have a most difficult and often thankless task to perform’.¹⁹⁰ Similarly, the letter to Whitelaw from TUC General Secretary Len Murray referenced the CRE’s position, hoping that ‘a speedy public enquiry [sic]’ would ‘establish a base for improving the confidence of the ethnic minority community in justice and in the local police’.¹⁹¹ These letters did not change Whitelaw’s mind; he was convinced an inquiry would be superfluous once a coroner’s inquest was completed. But these messages represent how the broad labour-movement line to oppose division while ensuring the police could be trusted, seen in late 1970s Tower Hamlets and the GLC, was widespread from councillors to the TUC, even on non-workplace-related issues.

Simultaneously, the RFSC itself also existed because of the Black Power movement. However, the committee’s mixed ancestry with the large institutions of the labour movement explains why it did not encourage violence like 1970s Black Power groups. Before joining Labour, Lester Lewis belonged to the tiny Mao-inspired Black Unity and Freedom Party (BUFP).¹⁹² To its journal *Black Voice* in the early 1970s, the police and judges were ‘pigs’ who defended ‘fascism’.¹⁹³ The party asserted that ‘unlike the Jews in Germany, we have no intention of lying idily [sic] by. We shall resist and counter attack every inch of the way to the gas chambers’. This let readers’ imaginations vividly evoke how the police should be dealt with.¹⁹⁴ In 1975, the party signed a statement supporting the demands of the armed hostage-takers at the Spaghetti House siege.¹⁹⁵ Throughout the early 1970s the BUFP’s principal ‘short-term aim’ was ‘an immediate public enquiry into the brutal and racist activities of the police against Black people’.¹⁹⁶ During the 1970s the BUFP repeatedly questioned official verdicts on deaths in police custody, choosing to interpret them as murder.¹⁹⁷ The RFSC did not repeat the BUFP’s justifications for an imagined urban guerrilla war. Although there was some violence from both demonstrators and police at the three earliest demonstrations following Roach’s death, at the RFSC’s own march on 12 March 1983, Lewis repeatedly requested peace on his megaphone.¹⁹⁸ Meanwhile, its central insinuation that Roach was murdered and the demand for a public inquiry were familiar slogans.

¹⁹⁰ The Foundry Section was a national union within the AEU. TNA, HO 325/576, letter from Robert Garland to William Whitelaw, 17 March 1983.

¹⁹¹ TNA, HO 325/572, letter from Len Murray to William Whitelaw, 28 March 1983.

¹⁹² Rosalind Eleanor Wild, ‘Black was the colour of our fight’: Black Power in Britain, 1955–1976’, PhD thesis, University of Sheffield (2008), 93–4.

¹⁹³ *Black Voice*, ‘We Make no Excuses for Being Here’, vol. 2, no. 2 (n.d., 1971?), 10; Waters, *Thinking Black*, 120–1.

¹⁹⁴ This overlooked the resistance that actually occurred against the Nazis. Black Unity and Freedom Party, *Who Killed Aseta Simms?: She was murdered* (1972), 12.

¹⁹⁵ Jenny Bourne, ‘Spaghetti House Siege: Making the rhetoric real’, *Race & Class*, vol. 53, no. 2 (2011), 4.

¹⁹⁶ *Black Voice*, ‘Black Unity and Freedom Party Manifesto’, vol. 2, no. 2, n.d. (April 1971?), 2. The issue is not dated but carries news from 31 March 1971.

¹⁹⁷ *Ibid.*; *Black Voice*, ‘The Parents and Family of Stephen Mc.Carthy are Courageous People’, vol. 2, no. 2, n.d. (April 1971?), 12.

¹⁹⁸ LMA, 4550/05/04/041, *Islington Gutter Press*, ‘We Demand a Public Enquiry - Now!’, March (1983), 7.

Besides insinuating police cover-ups and demanding an inquiry, other characteristics of Black Power anti-police campaigns compatible with the large labour movement institutions were also evident in the RFSC's work. When it applied for a new grant from the GLC in September 1984 it emphasised the information it has disseminated as its main achievements during the past eighteen months.¹⁹⁹ This included the video *Who Killed Colin Roach?*, produced to pass on knowledge of the campaigns work and strongly insinuate the Met's responsibility for Roach's death. Once the GLC and Hackney Borough Council money arrived in March 1983 the committee had been able to produce larger print runs of its leaflets. After arrests occurred at its demonstrations it also branched out to form legal defence campaigns for those activists as well as pickets outside their trials.²⁰⁰ This and further demonstrations gave impetus for continuing the campaign and remaining in the streets until the inquest into Roach's death began in June.²⁰¹ At the inquest, the Roach family's *pro bono* lawyer Michael Mansfield dramatically vivified the coroner's proceedings. Pouncing on minor inconsistencies between police officers' statements, he implied that they had hidden evidence from Colin Roach's father and argued the family 'are very disturbed about the [police] investigation and want to know whether it was a truthful investigation.'²⁰² Even after the inquest returned a suicide verdict, hopes of an independent inquiry, backed by the GLC and Hackney, and of petitioning the European Parliament to consider the case (aided by the LLP), kept the committee busy.²⁰³ Like the most visible UK Black Power groups of the 1970s, the RFSC relied on disseminating its version of events to discredit the police, focus dramatic protests around legal processes, and appeal to supranational organisations. These tactics, as long as they were not combined with the more-or-less overt undertones of armed violence or separatism, were all compatible with the large labour-movement institutions.

The labour-movement and Black Power sides of the campaign following Colin Roach's death wanted the same thing, but for different reasons. Those who fundamentally believed in the police as an institution could demand an inquiry as it would exonerate the Met. Those who distrusted every aspect of the police thought they could expose the Met for what they believed they really were. For Labour, the Roach case exemplified why it should advance democratic police authorities in the 1983 general election, and the RFSC became a model for future campaigns around police operations. The GLC Police Committee's support for the RFSC coincided with the release of its detailed proposal for how the Met's police authority would be democratised and, as the campaign grew, Bundred wrote that 'Labour's Home Affairs spokespeople have announced that legislation for police accountability in London will be a priority of the next Labour government'.²⁰⁴ Following the GLC's lead, Labour's

¹⁹⁹ LMA, GLC/DG/PRE/161/011, Roach Family Support Committee, Application for Financial Assistance, 6 September 1984.

²⁰⁰ LMA, 4550/05/02/001, Roach Family Support Committee Defence Campaign, n.d. (March, 1983?).

²⁰¹ Lester Lewis, 'Colin Roach: Mobilise for May 14!', *LLB*, no. 29 (1983), 8.

²⁰² Independent Committee of Inquiry into Policing in Hackney, *Policing*, 109-10, 120.

²⁰³ Lester Lewis, 'Colin Roach Campaign Continues', *LLB*, no. 32 (1983), 13.

²⁰⁴ Steve Bundred, 'Policing: Seize the time!', *LLB*, no. 26 (1983), 8.

1983 manifesto promised this, as well as limiting stop and search because it argued, in line with the unions, that ‘the police should have the support of the community’.²⁰⁵ Regardless of the facts of the matter, Roach’s death became an opportunity to turn a particular event into a general theory and debate on the broader issues of democracy and establishing trust through transparent government.

The RFSC, on the other hand, became determined to find ‘truth’. But this thinking always resembled a conspiracy theory. Fundamentally, it assumed a police conspiracy would unravel if only a judge questioned the right witnesses. ‘You have produced no evidence to suggest that Colin [Roach] had a gun when he walked into the Police Station’, Lewis told a Superintendent in Hackney on 24 January 1983, adding: ‘It is up to you to produce that evidence.’²⁰⁶ Yet, the more facts appeared to indicate that Roach’s suicide was plausible, the less they satisfied committed sceptics. By August, Lewis suggested the whole inquest – unable to specify where Roach acquired his shotgun – was ‘proof indicative WITHIN ITSELF that Colin was murdered’.²⁰⁷ Increasingly, this argument hinged on circumstantial and conjunctural details; the position of Roach’s corpse’s legs or the absence of fibres from a towel that may have covered the shotgun – facts that could have resulted from coincidence or Roach’s last actions. Even the GLC-funded Independent Committee of Inquiry, which finally reported in 1988, could affirm no alternative cause of death, despite casting every conceivable, scrutinising doubt on the suicide verdict.²⁰⁸ This, notwithstanding the fact that it was also unable to escape its own bias against considering evidence contrary to its hypothesis, including Roach’s father’s testimony that his son threatened to jump from a window on 29 December 1982.²⁰⁹ The RFSC were trying to turn a general theory into a particular event.

Choosing to insist that suicide was impossible, rather than probable, dug a hole that could never satisfy committed truth-seekers and increased the distrust in the police. Nevertheless, a decade later, for the Stephen Lawrence Family Campaign (SLFC), an insistence on this distrust would result in a public inquiry into London’s policing. Like the RFSC, they called for detailed investigations, were supported by high-ranking Labour Party figures, and were represented by Michael Mansfield. Unlike the RFSC, the SLFC was correct that there were perpetrators to be found and it saw a Labour

²⁰⁵ Labour Party, *New Hope*, 22.

²⁰⁶ TNA, HO 325/575, letter from Lester Lewis to Superintendent Moore, 24 January 1983.

²⁰⁷ Capitals in original. He quoted these words from another commenter to convey this. Lewis, ‘Colin Roach Campaign’, 13.

²⁰⁸ Independent Committee of Inquiry into Policing in Hackney, *Policing*, 131.

²⁰⁹ Ibid., 32-3; *The Standard*, ‘Roach: Threat to Jump from Window’, 6 June (1983), 2. The committee was independent of the state, but not the labour movement. Advised by Stuart Hall and the Labour baron Antony Gifford, its six members included Abednego Bhekabantu Ngcobo (union organiser and founder of the Pan-African Congress), the Labour leader of Brent council, Merle Amory (Labour member since at least 1981), and Melissa Benn, a freelance journalist who called on *Spare Rib* readers to vote Labour in 1987. Its chair was the Methodist reverend David Moore (founder of the Campaign for the Homeless and Rootless), who in 1975 said that if people were driven to extremes in the name of justice the church should support them. Mxolisi Mgxashe, *Are You with Us?: The story of a PAC activist* (2006), 77; *The Guardian*, ‘Call to Repeal Nationality Act and widen Entry Rights for Migrants’, 29 September (1981), 4; Laura Beers, ‘10 Feminist Responses to Thatcher and Thatcherism’, in Clarisse Berthezène & Julie Gottlieb (eds.), *Rethinking Right-Wing Women: Gender and the Conservative Party, 1880s to the present* (2018), 185; *The Times*, ‘George Davis Campaign’, 10 November (1975), 2.

government meet the long-standing demand for a state-sanctioned public inquiry into ‘lessons to be learned for the investigation and prosecution of racially motivated crimes’.²¹⁰ This also evoked the calls in the 1970s for police investigations into violence against first and second generation South Asian, Caribbean, and African immigrants, like in Tower Hamlets, and as precursors to events in the 1990s, the they and the RFSC thus requires more than a fleeting mention.²¹¹ Future research will be able to compare the RFSC and SLFC historically in far greater detail, but I hypothesise that the Roach committee, helped by Livingstone’s GLC and the labour movement, kept alive networks, demands, methods, and reference points that could be used again later.

6.7 Policed with the result?: Conclusion

In 1991, Norris McWhirter, co-founder of the Freedom Foundation, and the politics professor David Regan, recalled the 1980s PMGs as stemming from ‘a bundle of utopian socialists and Marxist ideas, heavily influenced by Trotskyites’. They argued that, for their leaders, ‘[t]o destroy or transform the political and economic system in Britain must tackle one of its most fundamental bastions, the police.’²¹² The movement to Regan was a complete failure, except in ‘its long term aim of undermining public confidence in the police’, where ‘some headway’ was made.²¹³ In retrospect, since the Metropolitan Police Authority was created in 1999 to give politicians from the new Greater London Assembly the power to oversee the Met, this was a premature assessment. But even in 1991 Regan’s comments had failed to take into account the changes that had already taken place in London. Within a few years of 1986, Met commanders were already speaking of a devolved police authority and were creating policies and using language remarkably similar to the GLC Police Committee’s.

The GLC Police Committee had been ahead of its times, but only by a few years. In August 1991, the Met commander Alex Marnoch told borough councillors that his view was that: ‘An elected authority is a logical extension of the partnership and co-operation that has been going on at borough level. We would welcome such a body, which could reflect the priorities of the community’. This position, *The Guardian’s* crime correspondent claimed, was supported by the Met’s commissioner.²¹⁴ The same policy was briefly considered by John Major’s second Conservative government in 1993

²¹⁰ McPherson’s report too was preceded by an inquiry chaired by Gifford into racism and the police in Liverpool, which concluded that discrimination in the city was ‘systematic’. William McPherson, *The Stephen Lawrence Inquiry* (1999), 24; Tony Gifford, *Loosen the Shackles: The report of the Liverpool 8 Inquiry* (1989).

²¹¹ As in, Stuart Hall, ‘Scarman to Stephen Lawrence’, *History Workshop Journal*, no. 48 (1999), 188.

²¹² David D. E. Regan, *Local Government Versus the Police: The rise and fall of police monitoring in Britain* (1991), 4.

²¹³ *Ibid.*, 58.

²¹⁴ Quoted in, Duncan Campbell, ‘Met Police Call for Break with Home Office’, *The Guardian*, 8 august (1991), 1. Marnoch was commander in Lambeth, where, during the Livingstone GLC period, the council’s Leninist leader Ted Knight was said to have called him ‘by far the most progressive senior office I’ve ever met. Quoted in, Duncan Campbell, ‘Alex Marnoch’, *The Guardian*, 10 July (1999), 22.

and remained a consistent Labour demand in London throughout the 1990s.²¹⁵ The GLC Police Committee's aim of a police authority for London controlled by regionally elected politicians was achieved in 1999 when the Greater London Assembly and London Mayor were created by New Labour's Greater London Authority Act 1999. Future historians will have to describe the exact process that the Police Committee's demand was kept alive by Labour councillors and Met officers throughout the 1990s, but the fact remains that perhaps no other policy proposed in Labour 1981 GLC manifesto was, in the long run, concretely implemented as a devolved police authority for the capital.

On the issues of racist and homophobic violence the Met also adapted in the directions proposed by the GLC Police Committee. The main reasons given for this was the restoration of public confidence in the police. The Livingstone's GLC were not the only people in 1980s London who had complaints about the police and even if it had not campaigned to highlight the Met's failings it is probably that others would have criticised it anyway. The precise legacy of its work is up to future research to determine, but to some extent the criticisms levelled against the Met by the GLC and union leaders were undoubtedly part of what police leaders registered as a general dissatisfaction with their forces, to which they felt obliged to respond. As early as 1987, the Met began a campaign against racist violence in Ealing and Newham. A leaflet was distributed in multiple languages containing advice for anyone who had experienced racist violence. Although the NMP continued to criticise the Met into the 1990s, there were signs that there were more than superficial changes taking place.²¹⁶ Outside of London, the chief inspector of constabulary noted in 1991 that 'public esteem for the Service, although still high, appears to have slipped'.²¹⁷ The Met commissioner's annual report the following year similarly acknowledged that '[g]ood service delivery is essential if we are to retain public approbation'.²¹⁸ Reflecting this ambition, the report noted: 'Attacks on lesbians and gay men appears to be an area of under-reported crime which is causing anxiety to the homosexual community.' The Met's Community Involvement Branch had spoken to lesbian and gay groups and 'a project to monitor attacks was established' in certain boroughs.²¹⁹ Likewise, 'a new procedure was introduced for the recording of all incidents where there was any suspicion, no matter how slight, of racial motivation'.²²⁰ In 1993, the commissioner's annual report was proud that its 'clear-up rate for racial incidents has increased by 9% to 22%'.²²¹ To convey the Met's concern for Londoners' views the annual report in 1992 featured photographs of police officers listening to people. Illustration 6.3,

²¹⁵ Roy Hattersley, 'Home Beat', *The Guardian*, 6 February (1991), 18; Alan Travis, 'Clarke's U-turn on London Police Body', *The Guardian*, 26 May (1993), 3.

²¹⁶ Paul Gordon, 'The Police and Racist Violence in Britain', in Tore Björge & Rob Witte (eds.), *Racist Violence in Europe* (1993), 173-4.

²¹⁷ Police Counties and Combined Forces of England and Wales and the City of London Force, *Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Constabulary for the Year 1990* (1991), 3.

²¹⁸ Metropolitan Police, *Report of the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis for the Year 1991/92* (1992), xiii.

²¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 18.

²²⁰ *Ibid.*, 19.

²²¹ Metropolitan Police, *Report of the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis for the Year 1992/93* (1993), 37.

for instance, depicted officers speaking to a man with a topi outside what is implied to be his grocery shop. The image could have been a scene from the GLC's video *Policing London*, only in reverse, with the police taking the shopkeeper seriously as he reports racist violence. Whether or not these were effective responses to the problems identified by non-state organisations during Livingstone's GLC is another question for future researchers, but it did indicate that the Met was responding to similar issues in a way that seemed aware of the Police Committee's critiques of its operations regarding racist and homophobic violence. At the same time, however, many ongoing Met operations often contradicted these efforts, not least the undercover infiltration by several Special Branch officers of small political organisations in or around the left of the labour movement, using stop-and-search powers on people who were not involved in or planning crimes (as a consequence of trying to prevent crimes among those many people who were), and inability to resolve or respond to all crimes, meant that there would also be distrust and anger directed at the police irrespective of the Livingstone GLC's work.²²²



Illustration 6.3: No mean beat. Photograph from the *Report of the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis for the Year 1991/92* depicting two Met officers speaking to a man at a grocery shop.²²³

²²² E.g., Alison, Belinda, Helen Steel, Lisa, Naomi & Veronica Clarke, *Deep Deception: The story of the spycops network by the women who uncovered the shocking truth* (2022).

²²³ Metropolitan Police, *Report of the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis for the Year 1991/92* (1992), 53.

A further change among the police-monitoring organisations is worth noting. Similarly to how labour-movement politics vanished from the work of the Women's Health and Reproductive Rights Information Centre in the years following the GLC's abolition, attention to union-related policing seems to have declined among police-monitoring organisations. Part of the GLC Police Committee staff unit survived the Council's abolition, as the Police Monitoring and Research Group of the London Strategic Policy Unit. Led by Paul Bunyan, this small department continued to produce the GLC's journal *Policing London* until December 1987.²²⁴ After its reports on the printworkers' strike at Wapping ended in February 1987, the unions virtually vanished from its pages.²²⁵ Meanwhile, it did maintain frequent coverage of allegations of racist violence by the police and police investigations of racist violence.²²⁶ There have been a similar disappearance of the unions from the way PMGs remembered their past. When the NMP wrote its own history in 1991 it described the late 1970s as the time when 'the death-knell for unionism overall as a force to be reckoned with' sounded.²²⁷ It criticised the grants it had received from the GLC, saying they 'tended to promote the more cultural and less political organisations' and create a 'patron-client relationship between black groups and the council'.²²⁸ The involvement by NALGO members was remembered, not for printing its first newsletters or raising funds, but as 'thinking that we were going to be some battalion to fight for equal opportunities within the council'.²²⁹ In 1981, this chapter has argued, the unions had been an indispensable part of the GLC's policing strategy, a decade later they were more or less no longer part of the remaining movement of police-monitoring organisations.

It is perhaps hard to overstate the importance of the milieu created by the law centres for the young lawyers who passed through them on their way to becoming leading Labour politicians, including Keir Starmer who later led the Labour Party as a KC. There are many analyses about the relationship between lawyers and the labour movement yet to be written, but it is easy to get the impression that as the labour movement's power declined, the lawyers' power increased. But this is not the place to comment further on that relationship.

My closing remarks want to draw attention to three further points of change and continuity between the 1980s and 2000s that may warrant further research related to what I have described in this chapter. Firstly, the work of non-state organisations like Inquest (which has only been touched upon fleetingly here) and the National Association for Care and Rehabilitation of Offenders (NACRO) and the decline of deaths in police custody in London. The drastic decline seen in figure 6.1 corresponds with the period during which Inquest went from being treated with great suspicion by central government officials to becoming an organisation whose advice was taken seriously by the Home

²²⁴ Zakeera Suffee, 'Paul Bunyan', *The GLC Story*, digital interview transcript, 2 March 2017, 2, <<http://glcstory.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/TonyBunyantranscript.pdf>>, accessed 28 February 2023.

²²⁵ An exception being, *Policing London*, 'Wapping Inquest', vol. 5, no. 28 (1987), 4.

²²⁶ E.g., *Policing London*, 'Police and Black People', vol. 5, no. 30 (1987), 31.

²²⁷ Newham Monitoring Project & Campaign Against Racism and Fascism, *Newham*, 21.

²²⁸ *Ibid.*, 47.

²²⁹ *Ibid.*, 48.

Office. In 1983, a senior Home Office civil servant described Inquest as ‘an extreme left-wing organisation’ but in 2017 its research was cited in a Home Office report.²³⁰ How were police authorities influenced by the work of such non-state groups as they worked increasingly to prevent deaths in custody? Secondly, as mayor of London, Livingstone would implement strict policing measures to prevent crime, drawing inspiration from the New York Police Department. The labour-movement approach to policing at the GLC described in this chapter – using the police to prevent the violent crimes that mostly affect low or middle-income people – suggests that there was more theoretical continuity between Livingstone as GLC leader and Livingstone as mayor than might have been assumed. But what were the changes and continuities in Livingstone’s policing policy? That I cannot answer here. Lastly, there was no police cover up in the Colin Roach case, as far as the Home Office’s archival record shows, but the Met and the government were nevertheless anxious that public debate surrounding it be summed up as soon as possible. From the perspective of saving the Met’s relationship with Londoners it is possible to see why. But a report from a meeting between the police and the Home Office, roughly a month after Roach’s death, also mentioned that the Met were watching ‘the possibility of a “white backlash”’, particularly since windows on the street where Hackney Black Peoples Association was based had been broken.²³¹ This was a small comment amongst the overall volume of documents produced in reaction to Roach’s death, but it seemed to suggest that the Met was concerned to prevent a situation that it imagined could spiral into racist violence against the Roach Family Support Committee’s supporters. What implications lay behind this note? How does it change the interpretations of the heavy-handed policing of demonstrations that followed Roach’s death in Hackney? How far was it an attempt not to cover up, or commit, but to prevent racist violence? Future histories of London’s policing may ascertain grounds for answering these questions.

²³⁰ TNA, HO 325/575, letter from G. I. [Geoffrey Ivor] de Deney to Mrs Pallett, 9 February 1983; Giles Lindon & Stephen Roe, *Deaths in police custody: A review of the international evidence* (2017), 14.

²³¹ TNA, HO 325/572, ‘Note of a meeting held at the Home Office on Thursday 10th February 1983’, 11 February 1983.

7 Conclusion

‘[T]he great policies of world history, “the wheels of the world”, are often turned not by the Lords and Governors, even gods, but by the seemingly unknown and weak’

J. R. R. Tolkien, letter to Milton Waldman, 1951.¹

Nobody believes a word you have said about this incident. Do you know why? Because, besides being evident garbage, your stories lack the tiniest vestige of humanity. There’s no warmth, there’s no laughter, there’s no pain. There’s no remorse. Sing! Show a human heart, beating under the sordid tangle of lies you have left in your wake. For God’s sake, give the public something to believe in!

The Maniac, Dario Fo’s Accidental Death of an Anarchist, adapted for television by Gavin Richards, 1983.²

7.1 Summing Up: Livingstone’s GLC and 1980s London in history

This is not the end of a history of Livingstone’s GLC but hopefully the beginning of many future histories of that administration and its city. Over the course of the past six chapters, I have introduced some of the fundamental characteristics of the London Labour Party’s last majority in County Hall and ways that they informed how voluntary organisations in four important areas of social policy were supported by the Council. I have, following the grants Livingstone’s GLC made, used the topics of public transport for people with disabilities, healthcare, care and education of small children, and policing to give examples of what the relationship between the state, the labour movement, and other non-state organisations could mean, both for Londoners in the 1980s and for historians in the 2020s. Drawn from the broad theme of state grants to voluntary organisations, these five diverse sub-themes have had several things in common. Firstly, they have made the labour movement visible throughout the GLC and the organisations it supported. Secondly, this has accentuated some of the options for the city’s future that many Londoners envisaged and chose. Specifically, I have depicted what the labour-movement option could look like, from several different angles and in contrast to other alternative politics, with which it often overlapped. Thirdly, they have shown examples of how non-state organisations were crucial during the evolution of London at the turn of the millennium, in large and in small ways. Fourthly, I have tried to do this within an implicit but consistent argument of what history itself is. In what remains, I will give some closing reflections on these themes and

¹ J. R. R. Tolkien, ‘To Milton Waldman’, in Humphrey Carpenter & Christopher Tolkien (eds.), *Letters of J. R. R. Tolkien* (1981), 149.

² British Film Institute National Archive (BFI), 55888, Alan Horrox (director), *Accidental Death of an Anarchist*, digitised television recording, Channel Four, broadcast 14 September 1983.

propose some hypotheses that, overall, I hope will be helpful for future historians of the GLC to consider.

To answer the question of how Livingstone's administration used grants to voluntary organisations, this dissertation began by delineating the need for a new system or arrangement for analysing the last Labour GLC and its relations with non-state bodies historically. I discussed how almost all of the, frequently bold, foundational statements about this period of London's regional government, and the Labour Party's grant programmes in particular, were reiterations of political arguments from the mid-to-late-1980s. In contrast to this, I attempted to treat Livingstone's GLC as history, which required understanding what came before it, starting archivally with its earliest documents and following them forwards, branching out into the various policy areas that became apparent, and trying to argue why certain directions were taken over others and what this meant for the way London was changed in the late twentieth century. This began with describing the political theory of Livingstone's administration, analysing the ideas of its theorists and leaders and concluding that they saw their role within London's labour movement as creating a united front across the city with the aim of democratising civil society by enveloping businesses and other organisations into the labour movement and making that the main arena of politics. The networks the GLC envisioned and funded with grants from its various committees would (as I call it) form part of this para-state. The first example of this I analysed, where the plan was, for a moment, visible in action, was the establishment of dial-a-ride. With the GLC's help, this voluntary service became organised on a federal, democratic basis where user control would be analogous to industrial democracy. In the next policy area – health – I found how the Labour GLC proposed a labour-movement and socialist-feminist strategy to increase employers' responsibilities for health and broaden the NHS by incorporating alternative therapies into it. Here, however, I compared this to other options among health-related non-state organisations, alternative politics that preferred a greater individual responsibility for health, and how they chose to let go of the GLC's vision after its abolition. Subsequently, on the care and education of small children, I discovered how the Livingstone GLC used grants to a diverse range of organisations to give mothers the opportunity to be part of the labour movement, either by becoming unionised workers or by attending political meetings. Lastly, regarding the grants made to police-monitoring organisations, I described how the Council funded bodies that would put control of the Metropolitan Police in the hands of the labour movement's elected representatives, paying attention especially to how this was done by bringing together Labour-supported organisations, unions, feminist groups, gay and lesbian groups, Black Power groups, and people who supported the use of cannabis. Although what I call the GLC's labour-movement vision for London was not maintained long after the Council's abolition, all these attempts at implementing it left important legacies for Londoners and noteworthy learning points for historians.

Making the labour movement in 1980s London visible means seeing an unspoken assumption that existed in the background of swaths of the Livingstone GLC's grant programmes. Diarmaid Kelliher has recently begun the historical description of how 1980s London was not a blank spot on the labour-movement's map of the UK.³ Continuing this with regard to London's government and some of its policy areas strengthens the case that the capital was, in this regard, less exceptional and more like Daisy Payling's description of its contemporary Sheffield.⁴ To many people who remember these times, this is very obvious, but the 'rediscovery' of London's unions in this period by historians should have at least four implications for interpreting the capital in the 1980s.

Firstly, there is the fact of how dynamic, innovating, and willing to experiment it was.⁵ This dissertation has seen unions and union organisers in London lead campaigns against racist discrimination in the police force, run creches at unemployed workers' centres, encourage workers' cooperatives, and help create a regional network against NHS budget cuts. As seen in chapter six, local campaigns that alleged police racism could be supported by the highest leadership of the labour movement. Emphasising this matters since there was a perception among influential intellectuals in 1980s London, which has persisted until today, that what was called the 'old' or 'traditional' labour movement and the unions were one unchanging, uniform tendency – culturally homogenous and conservative defenders of sectoral economic interests.⁶ But such conclusions confuse the appearance of certain unions with unions in general. In contrast to this, many of London's unions consisted of the people who also organised new methods and systems in all of the policy areas studied in the past five chapters. My hypothesis here is that the more research is done into London's unions in the 1970s and 1980s, the less the labels of 'old' or 'traditional' will appear to be useful or accurate for describing them.

Secondly, for analysing voluntary groups, making this labour movement visible means seeing, besides the unions, how many non-state organisations were predominantly the direct result of policies and work by Labour and the unions, even if this is often forgotten. Clear local cases of this, analysed in the past four chapters, include the law centres, police monitoring groups, and the London Health Emergency network. This list could be extended with groups that have only been mentioned briefly but were or remained nation-wide organisations: the National Campaign for Nursery Education, Maternity Action (the successor of the Maternity Alliance), and Coram Family and Childcare (the successor of the National Childcare Campaign). The labour-movement roots of these organisations are

³ Diarmaid Kelliher, *Making Cultures of Solidarity: London and the 1984–5 Miners' Strike* (2021), 200.

⁴ Daisy Payling, 'Socialist Republic of South Yorkshire: Activism in Sheffield in the 1970s and 1980s', PhD thesis, University of Birmingham (2015), 288-9.

⁵ See also, Jack Saunders, 'The Untraditional Worker: Class re-formation in Britain 1945–65', *Twentieth Century British History*, vol. 26, no. 2 (2015), 247.

⁶ Eric Hobsbawm, 'The Forward March of Labour Halted?', in Martin Jacques & Francis Mulhern (eds.), *The Forward March of Labour Halted?* (1981), 10-2; Jerry White, *London in the Twentieth Century: A city and its people* (2008 [2001]), 392-3.

superficially invisible in the mid-2020s.⁷ This connection was made clearer in some other cases, including Abortion Rights (the successor of the National Abortion Campaign), the Food Commission (the successor of the GLC's London Food Commission), and War on Want. These groups were all created for political purposes, often, as the preceding chapters have shown, to achieve something the Labour Party would not do in its own name because it was out of government or, perhaps, because it wanted to work with people who did not normally support the party. In many cases the organisations created outlived these specific policy proposals and, taken together, a swath of what is often called the 'voluntary sector' existed, or still exists, because of the labour movement. There is a pattern reminiscent of the many charities created as Christian organisations which secularised their work but maintained an echo of their founding ethos.⁸ There are probably fewer 'secularised' labour-movement organisations than formerly religious charities, and their numbers shrunk after 1986, but they are part of the historical networks of voluntary action lit up by analysing council grant recipients' political theory and political economy, and this matters for understanding the labour movement's influence.

Thirdly, historiographically, maintaining the emphasis on the unions throughout the 1980s, and in future histories of the 1990s and 2000s, can help bridge the events around the Livingstone GLC and the Miners' Strike to the return of organised labour as a source of unavoidable political power in the 2010s. For almost three decades many historians and political commentators wrote the unions off as a political force or base of power, as newspapers got rid of their industrial relations correspondents and labour editors. But after 2010, the unions suddenly changed the direction of the Labour Party after Len McCluskey's election as general secretary of Unite the Union (the successor of both the Amalgamated Engineering Union and Transport and General Workers Union).⁹ McCluskey's intervention in the Party changed how its leader was chosen, which, he and most other Labour-affiliated union leaders believed, would make it possible to elect a potential prime minister accountable to his members.¹⁰ The former union representative Jeremy Corbyn was elected party leader in 2015, unexpectedly but – from the Unite leaderships perspective – not unintentionally. Two years later he almost achieved what the Livingstone GLC had envisioned in 1981 – the election of a Labour government heavily influenced by the unions. The former TUC official John McDonnell sounded vindicated when he argued, in 2018, that 'forty years after Eric Hobsbawm wrote of "the forward march of labour halted" ... we have an incredible opportunity to put our economy on a new and better path'.¹¹ To many people in politics, journalism, and the social sciences, these developments

⁷ E.g. Maternity Action, 'Our History', website, <<https://maternityaction.org.uk/about-us/our-history/>>, accessed 28 February 2023; Coram Family and Childcare, 'About Us', website, n.d., <<https://www.familyandchildcaretrust.org/about-us>>, accessed 28 February 2023.

⁸ Matthew Hilton, Nick Crowson, Jean-François Mouhot & James McKay, *A Historical Guide to NGOs in Britain: Charities, civil society and the voluntary sector since 1945* (2012), 40.

⁹ Alex Nunns, *The Candidate: Jeremy Corbyn's improbable rise to power* (2016), 24-5.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 41-3.

¹¹ John McDonnell, 'Introduction', in John McDonnell (ed.), *Economics for the Many* (2018), xviii.

came as a shock.¹² But Corbyn's election as Labour leader might have been less unfathomable had the unions not been forgotten.

Lastly, on a related note, London's labour movement in the Livingstone GLC and the organisations it funded shows posterity what political alternatives existed in this time and place. Historians of the 1980s have questioned the Conservative Party theory that, after 1979, there was no alternative to monetarist economics.¹³ This has been accompanied by questioning the theory that there was such a thing as 'Thatcherism', which imagined Thatcher's strategy and policies as far more coherent, monolithic, and popular than they actually were.¹⁴ This was very evident to the leaders and theorists of Livingstone's GLC. 'Thatcher's great line "there is no alternative" was a lie', Livingstone reminisced confidently to a BBC interviewer, twelve years after the GLC's abolition, 'We were demonstrating there was an alternative'.¹⁵ His administration had been so confident in its alternative that it created (probably with some tongue in cheek) its own inevitable-future slogan: 'There's only one way London fits together', it said above a map of the city cut into a jigsaw puzzle (illustration 7.1). As chapter two described, after they took office, Livingstone and his like-minded colleagues expected that the UK might, at short notice, be thrust into a pre-revolutionary state of upheaval. They were also convinced that they could reindustrialise Londoners, and do it in a way that utilised both a 'human-centred' use of high technology and industrial democracy.¹⁶ They believed these were methods to return London's (and the UK's) economy to stable growth, overcoming both the end of the post-war boom and – so their lead economists hoped – counter the tendency of the rate of profit to fall in a capitalist economy. But the industrial-democracy element was in a way the 'default' labour-movement alternative. It had been a mainstay of the Labour manifesto in 1979 and the reform James Callaghan most looked forward to implementing.¹⁷ Chapter one showed that this was not where the continuities between Callaghan's and the Livingstone GLC's politics ended. There were significant differences, which future research will be able to describe in greater detail, but the last GLC was still trying to realise the promises of the 1970s and this was true of all the strategies under which it funded non-state organisations seen in the previous chapters. For this reason, I have liked to

¹² Luke Temple & Maria T. Grasso, 'Austerity, Politics, and Partisanship in the UK', in Marco Giugni & Maria T. Grasso (eds.), *Citizens and the Crisis: Experiences, perceptions, and responses to the Great Recession in Europe* (2018), 36.

¹³ Sarah Kenny, 'A "Radical Project": Youth culture, leisure, and politics in 1980s Sheffield', *Twentieth Century British History*, vol. 30, no. 4 (2019), 584.

¹⁴ Ben Jackson & Robert Saunders, 'Introduction: Varieties of Thatcherism', in Ben Jackson & Robert Saunders (eds.), *Making Thatcher's Britain* (2012), 13.

¹⁵ Available for viewing at the BFI, from the BBC's archives: 501594, Daniel Brittain-Catlin & Tricia Lawton (producers), *Red Ken Gets the Blues*, digitised television recording, BBC, broadcast 7 April 1998.

¹⁶ Mike Cooley, *Architect or Bee: The human price of technology*, second edition (1987 [1980]), 10; Karamjit S. Gill, 'The Knowledge-based Machine: Issues of knowledge transfers', in Karamjit S. Gill (ed.), *Artificial Intelligence for Society* (1986), 16. Both Cooley and Gill were theorists at the Livingstone GLC's Industry and Employment branch.

¹⁷ BFI, 523668, Thames Television, *This Week*, 'An Interview with the Prime Minister', video cassette television recording, broadcast 20 July 1978.

think of Livingstone's GLC as a *capital state*: it was the state investing to improve its most valuable capital – human beings.

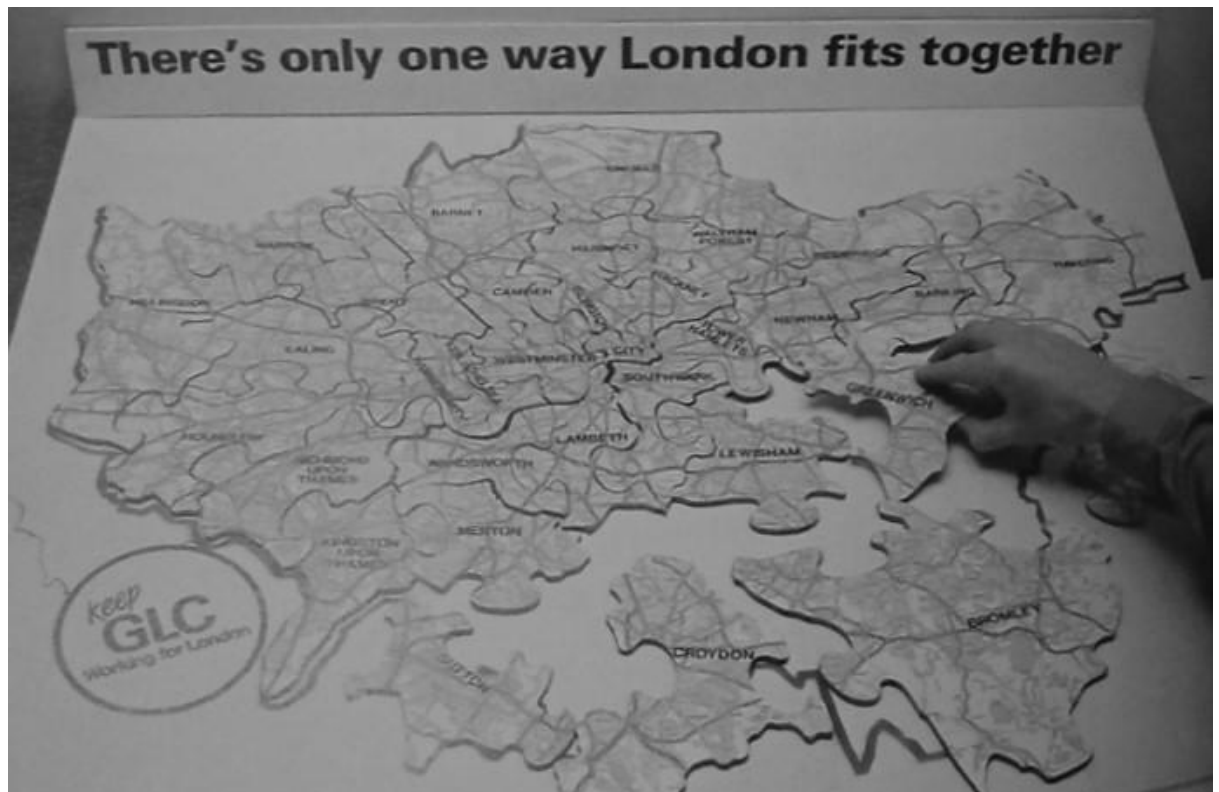


Illustration 7.1: Piece on Earth. 'There's only one way London fits together'. Photograph from the GLC's *Planning for the Future of London* (1984).¹⁸

But, moreover, describing the 'default' setting to the Conservative government as the labour movement and reindustrialisation also throws into relief other alternatives. In each chapter I have tried to give an indication of the diversity of ideas and methods that existed in each area I analysed. Within the leadership of the GLC, people from the Labour left and the various Marxists they worked with had a similar idea of uniting people imagined as 'the working class' based on their situation in the economy, but there were also those to whom groups imagined on the basis of Christian, nationalist, or anti-colonial thinking were the primary agents of politics. In the case of community transport, organisations were based around a diverse range of religious groups and many bodies of no explicit denomination or politics. The user-controlled model of dial-a-ride was also replaced by a more corporate structure as the service was integrated into the state. Regarding health-related groups, I described a revolutionary-feminist, or anarchist, way of questioning the labour movement and two examples of socialist-feminist organisations that changed their ideas in existentialist or liberal ways after the GLC's abolition. As for childcare and education, there were also alternatives of a Christian or

¹⁸ GLC, *Planning for the Future of London* (1984), 24.

liberal tradition, which placed more emphasis on education and parental involvement, than the labour movement, whose main concern was freeing mother's hands during the work day. Finally, in the field of policing, I gave a depiction of the alliance of Black Power organisers and cannabis proponents that formed within the labour-movement strategy for police reform without fully losing their identities as distinct movements. The examples I have given here are in no way exhaustive. They are merely intended to introduce a sliver of the diversity that existed among London's state-funded non-state organisations, illustrate how far an analysis of political theory can go in histories of these groups, and to accentuate the (sometimes blurry) outline of the labour movement to show what gave it a distinct identity. It appears, following the examples discussed in the preceding chapters, as though this alternative model of politics and economics presented by the labour movement's control of the state and of industry, continued to be considered viable in London roughly until the GLC's abolition. This seems to be supported by the continuity and change in the conceptions of political agency used by Livingstone administration's leadership in the mid-1980s discussed in the following section, which returns to the analysis presented in chapter two.

7.2 Spent: The Livingstone administration's leadership's political evolution

This section analyses the positions on class politics in Livingstone's GLC leadership at the end of their term, to provide a comparison to the positions described in chapter two. The way they used 'class' as a broad, analytical category, believed in working-class agency, and, therefore, positioned their politics within the labour movement appears to have remained remarkably consistent during their term in office. However, as the labour movement's failures to achieve strategic objectives during the year following the GLC's abolition stacked up, there may have been ways whereby emphases on working-class agency were diminished in favour of what I call the belief in government by experts, anti-colonial nationalism, or conspiracism.¹⁹

During Livingstone's administration, tactical disagreements tested and tore the Labour group's unity. A debate, in early 1985, over whether to refuse to collect rates to prevent government cuts to council funding, pitched Livingstone, Ward, and Wise against McDonnell, Tony Banks, Paul Boateng, Dave Wetzel, *London Labour Briefing (LLB)*, and *Labour Herald (LH)* – a weekly newspaper co-founded by Livingstone).²⁰ Livingstone's side, arguing that the GLC would not face budget cuts for 1985, voted to levy rates, and replaced McDonnell with Ward as deputy council leader. McDonnell, in turn, replaced Livingstone's on *LH's* editorial board in May 1985, where he worked with

¹⁹ Nancy L. Rosenblum & Russell Muirhead, *A Lot of People Are Saying: The new conspiracism and the assault on democracy* (2020), 2-3.

²⁰ Andrew Hosken, *Ken: The ups and downs of Ken Livingstone* (2008), 216-223.

Livingstone's former Leninist comrade Ted Knight (who also co-founded the newspaper).²¹ Livingstone's position was denounced as having 'capitulated' to the government in *LLB*.²² By mid-1985, the GLC's leadership coalition described in chapter two was sundered, but this was due to a tactical question rather than principles.

In his 1987 memoir, Livingstone described how the Labour GLC 'recognized that the narrow definition of the working class as white skilled workers was no longer appropriate to describe the diversity we saw around us; I doubt it ever was.' He elaborated:

the black youth who has never had a job, the mother working in the home harder than most men work outside it, and the gay couple whose lives are circumscribed by the ignorant fears of others, are all part of the working class as it exists in our city.²³

Crucial to this perspective was to etically categorise Londoners as constituting 'the working class' regardless of and in addition to other categories, such as 'black', 'mother', or 'gay'. These labels did not, to Livingstone, fundamentally set these Londoners apart from 'white skilled' Londoners in terms of constituting his agent of politics: they were not distinct classes or social forces. In May 1982, Livingstone had discussed 'building links with women, and gays and blacks' for 'the Labour movement to include the[se] groups'.²⁴ Throughout the first two-thirds of the 1980s, recognising Londoners' diverse social relationships remained Livingstone's means of forming the proletariat into one class.

Wise took a related position. Shortly after the GLC's abolition, she was interviewed by the journalist Katarina Katz about the Women's Committee's work on equal opportunities. Katz wanted to understand how the Committee's support for women's groups had benefited 'working-class women' told Wise that '[a]n equal opportunities policy for black and lesbian women' would not necessarily disprove allegations that the Women's Committee had mainly benefitted 'middle-class women'. Before she could finish, however, Wise interrupted her to correct this premise, irritably interjecting: 'Most black women in London are working-class women.'²⁵ Like Livingstone, she still categorised Londoners into etic class categories.

Likewise, McDonnell held a similar basic line. As an *LH* editor, McDonnell was party to the newspaper's editorial statement on 7 March 1986, calling for 'a return to class-based socialism in the partyh [sic], and campaigning in the wider working class on this basis.'²⁶ Illustrating who 'the wider

²¹ *Ibid.*, 230. Hosken's statement that *Labour Herald* ceased in December 1985 must be a mistake, since the newspaper came out until at least July 1986.

²² Kevin Veness, Lesley Seary & Steve Wylar, 'Sold Down the River', *London Labour Briefing*, April (1985), 2.

²³ Ken Livingstone, *If Voting Changed Anything, They'd Abolish It* (1987), 345.

²⁴ Quoted in Chris Knight & Nigel Williamson, 'Ken Livingstone is Interviewed by London Labour Briefing', *London Labour Briefing*, June (1982), 17.

²⁵ Quoted in Katarina Katz, *London mot Thatcher: Kommunalpolitik för samhällsomstörtare* (1987), 170.

²⁶ *Labour Herald*, 'Labour Herald', untitled editorial, 7 March (1986), 2.

working class' were, the news item printed immediately adjacent to this editorial promoted a planned demonstration 'in support of women printworkers sacked by [Rupert] Murdoch.'²⁷ After Labour's gains in the May 1986 local elections, *LH* said the party had won 'overwhelming support' in 'big, inner-city, working class wards', like Lambeth – where roughly every fourth resident was an immigrant from 'New Commonwealth' countries.²⁸ Moreover, *LH*'s editorial on 16 May 1986 proposed that 'the trade unions and the working-class communities will provide a united front' against the government.²⁹ 'United front' was a reference to 1920s Leninism and the idea that Communists should 'join with all workers ... in a common struggle to defend the immediate, basic interests of the working class against the bourgeoisie'.³⁰ Since McDonnell entered London politics in the mid-1970s, he had collaborated with Leninists within Labour, first with *Militant* and, later, with *LH*.³¹ Like Livingstone, he rarely made these alliances explicit, but by 1986, they were still there.

In April 1986, Ward, meanwhile, became the director of the Centre for Local Economic Strategies, a think tank co-founded and funded by the GLC and other Labour councils. As late as 1985, he had defended the GLC's London Industrial Strategy from accusations that it was Keynesianism, maintaining that it was 'deeply concerned with what is produced, who controls that production, with trade union rights, and improved working conditions, and with equal opportunities.'³² However, he placed less emphasis on the labour movement itself as driving these changes and this position became more pronounced in his post-GLC work. In 1987, he argued that 'it has fallen to local government to explore new ways of combining democratic control with efficiency and collective effort in areas of economic policy.'³³ Similarly, a report by the Centre for Local Economic Strategies in 1988, titled *Meeting Real Needs – Creating Real Jobs*, discussed problems familiar to Livingstone's GLC – employment and social needs – but its methods and solutions suggested an assumption that policy was for researchers and officers at think tanks and local authorities, rather than labour-movement organisations. 'Social needs', particularly, were defined by professional researchers, rather than through 'popular planning' or consulting unions, as trialled by Livingstone's administration.³⁴ The state, and its experts were the implicit agents of change in this work.

Livingstone and McDonnell suggested hints that another shift existed in the post-GLC years, in the direction of anti-colonial nationalism and conspiracism. Anti-colonial-nationalist campaigners

²⁷ *Labour Herald*, 'Women March for Women in Print', 7 March (1986), 2.

²⁸ *Labour Herald*, 'Capital Gains Tax Tories and Alliance', 16 May (1986), 2; Commission for Racial Equality, *Ethnic minorities in Britain: statistical information on the pattern of settlement* (1985), 7.

²⁹ *Labour Herald*, 'May 8 Shows United Action can Win', 16 May (1986), 2.

³⁰ Communist International, *Resolutions & Theses of the Fourth Congress of the Communist International* (1922), 31.

³¹ *The Times*, 'Mr Sandelson Defeats Party Critics', 24 January (1977), 1; Peter Shipley, *The Militant Tendency: Trotskyism in the Labour Party* (1983), 43.

³² Michael Ward, 'Not Fanciful', *New Society*, vol. 73, 5 July (1985), 32.

³³ Michael Ward, 'Foreword', in Robin Murray, *Breaking with Bureaucracy: Ownership, control and nationalisation* (1987), 5.

³⁴ Mike Campbell, Nigel Healey, Richard Stead, John Sutherland, Bob Leach & Janie Percy-Smith, *Meeting Real Needs – Creating Real Jobs* (1988), 29-51.

was a long-standing theme within the Labour left, Livingstone's comments on terrorism being particularly notorious. What changed around March 1986 was, perhaps, the relative prominence given to this compared to labour-movement politics. A month after the GLC's abolition, *LH's* editorial said it would 'build up a comprehensive coverage of international struggles, opening the pages of the paper to those in the forefront of the fight of working people across the world'. Without this 'an irreversible shift of wealth and power in favour of working people' was 'absolutely impossible'.³⁵ Previously, under both Livingstone and McDonnell, *LH* frequently reported on places like Northern Ireland or the West Bank, but editorials and front pages were typically reserved for discussing British labour-movement politics or government policy. But following this editorial, until the newspaper folded in July, over half of its front pages featured news from Jamaica, Palestine, or South Africa – the anti-apartheid being particularly prominent.³⁶

In 1987, Livingstone committed his parliamentary maiden speech to allege that a Security Service agent had 'organised' the deaths of three Irish musicians in 1975, because MI5 officers 'were prepared to murder innocent Catholics to start a wave of sectarian killing which would bring to an end the truce that the Labour Government had negotiated with the IRA'.³⁷ Chapter six showed that conspiracist thinking could feature in GLC-supported campaigns but could also be checked within the labour movement. Livingstone's post-GLC focus on conspiracies, like *LH's* turn towards anti-imperialism, indicate ways that Labour left politicians began to turn towards new politics following the labour movement's successive failures at the Miners' Strike, the Wapping dispute, and the 1987 general election. The latter probably marked a decisive turning point for anyone who believed in the Livingstone administration's project: it ended hopes that any new regional government for London could be reestablished to continue the GLC's developmentalist policies.

Similar political turns in the US are theorised by Chris Cutrone as having 'expressed the exhaustion and confusion of the New Left'.³⁸ Perhaps, when the UK Labour left failed, they projected their expectations abroad, devoting effort to debating causes they could barely influence. By the mid-1990s class politics, as expressed by the GLC leadership, had become very marginal. The transition period was probably the late-1980s to early-1990s. Cutrone characterises this as when the 'New Left became the institutionalization of the unpolitical' – 'unpolitical' because they no longer organised a movement that could fundamentally change society.³⁹

Concluding that the Labour left was defeated by external factors and therefore changed its ideas is tempting, but not necessarily a sound argument. The preceding chapters highlighted the choices available to individuals in 1980s London. People of the Labour left, in the late-1980s,

³⁵ *Labour Herald*, 'No More 'Little England'', 2 May (1986), 6.

³⁶ *Labour Herald*, 9 May 1986, 1; *Labour Herald*, 23 May (1986), 1; *Labour Herald*, 6 June (1986), 1; *Labour Herald*, 13 June (1986), 1; *Labour Herald*, 20 June (1986), 1; *Labour Herald*, 4 July (1986), 1.

³⁷ *Hansard* (House of Commons), 6th series, vol. 119, col. 235 (7 July 1987).

³⁸ Chris Cutrone, 'Afghanistan: After 20 and 40 years', in Chris Cutrone (ed.), *The Death of the Millennial Left: Interventions 2006–2022* (2023), 193.

³⁹ Chris Cutrone, 'Obama and Clinton', in Cutrone, *Death of the Millennial Left*, 51.

complained loudly of being the targets of conspiracies, ‘witch hunts’, and ‘betrayals’. But it could follow that London’s Labour left defeated itself, by being unprepared for failure. The Livingstone administration’s leadership in 1981 believed that they faced socialism or barbarism. When neither alternative materialised, many believers described how abstract forces – ‘the right’, ‘Thatcherism’, ‘capitalism’, or similar – or conspiracies were responsible, rather than poor tactical and strategic decisions, thus justifying the marginalisation of class politics. This was ironic for a movement that presented itself as the ‘alternative’ to ‘there is no alternative’. Yet, as Timothy Snyder theorises, the belief that history is always on your side can quickly give way to the belief that the world is forever against you.⁴⁰ This brings me back to the purpose of this (and perhaps any) history – to see options.

7.3 Dead Precedents: The GLC and the meaning of history

At the end of this research, this seems like an obvious conclusion. Had I really spent five years of my life to discover what was plain and evident? To reassure myself that there was a point to maintaining the conclusion of my work, I returned to Stephen Brooke’s article on the Livingstone GLC’s work on childcare and anti-racism and became worried by the implications of the history of emotions. When I began my research, this was the cutting edge of GLC studies, but for a long time I could not understand how Brooke, using Sara Ahmed’s thinking, argued that ‘emotions *do* things’ and that what he calls ‘affective ecology’ could take ‘material form’.⁴¹ Surely, it would be easier, and more precise, to argue that people felt certain things and that this motivated them to act, create certain spaces, imagine relationships with others, and so on. Reviewing the article again, I realised that its method for analysing expressions of emotions in texts had left out the labour movement. As large and omnipresent and important as the unions had become throughout my analysis, I could now also see how they could become hidden in plain sight in historians’ accounts.

Curiously, Ahmed’s theory for analysing emotions began by rejecting the labour theory of value. Affect related to something, Ahmed argues, is ‘produced only as an effect of its [own] circulation’. Citing Marx’s *Capital: Volume I*, she says that ‘the movement of commodities and money ... creates surplus value. That is, through circulation and exchange “M[oney]” acquires more value’.⁴² However, in reality, Marx argued the exact opposite – only labour creates surplus value: ‘surplus-value cannot arise from circulation, and therefore, for it to be formed, something must take place in the background which is not visible in the circulation itself’.⁴³ This ‘something’ is labour. The formula for imagining the creation of surplus-value is not, as Ahmed writes M-C-M, but M-C-M’. M-C-M without the prime symbol represents only the simple exchange of like for like. Brooke’s

⁴⁰ Timothy Snyder, *The Road to Unfreedom: Russia, Europe, America* (2018), 7-8.

⁴¹ Emphasis in original. Stephen Brooke, ‘Space, Emotions and the Everyday: The affective ecology of 1980s London’, *Twentieth Century British History*, vol. 28, no. 1 (2017), 114, 132.

⁴² Sara Ahmed, ‘Affective Economies’, *Social Text*, vol. 22, no. 2 (2004), 120; see also Sara Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*, second edition (2014 [2004]), 45.

⁴³ Karl Marx, *Capital: Volume I*, trans. by Ben Fowkes (1976 [1867]), 268.

argument about the GLC was, therefore, already premised upon an assumption that value was created through trade rather than the work of an individual. From this perspective, why would workers and their unions be important? I found that, in practice, the application of Ahmed's literary theory to historical sources kept the labour movement invisible in the Livingstone GLC's politics.

Ahmed developed her idea of circulating affect for the purpose of literary analysis, a discipline which, naturally, emphasises the power and importance of its subject: the written word. The circulation or 'affective economy' Ahmed refers to are metaphors for describing a process that takes place between a text and a reader.⁴⁴ When readers encounter rhetorical techniques they imagine connections between words to which their bodies react affectively. For instance, Ahmed writes, following Heidegger:

In anxiety, one's thoughts often move quickly between different objects, a movement that works to intensify the sense of anxiety. One thinks of more and more "things" to be anxious about; the detachment from one given object allows anxiety to accumulate.⁴⁵

The process of 'accumulation' described here takes place in the reader's imagination. The 'objects' referred to are not physical things, but the 'object' related to the subject in the grammatical sense. When Ahmed says emotions 'do things', this is within the reader's mind. However, she briefly explains how they influence the world beyond the mind when people act upon their emotions, for instance to enforce policies.⁴⁶ Accordingly, Brooke applies this theory to grant applications from non-state organisations and GLC staff reports to the Council's grant-making committees, concluding that emotional language in these documents motivated funding decisions.⁴⁷ However, this argument has to consider all the evidence in this dissertation for the theories, strategies, and politics that GLC Labour politicians took into account when making funding decisions. As the previous five chapters show, the overall political reasons why politicians made certain funding decisions were not always evident in the council's reports as such. But if the source documents are analysed using a literary theory, the degree to which the funding reports are emotionally charged can become somewhat exaggerated, at the expense of their other content. For instance, Brooke interprets references to 'isolation' in childcare-related grant applications as referring to *feelings* of isolation and loneliness. Yet, as chapter five discussed, to many people in London's labour movement and Livingstone's administration, 'isolation' was a social *state of separation* from unions and politics.⁴⁸ Assuming theoretically that the written language of committee reports were crucial causal factors for funding decisions draws historical attention away from the political reasons the labour movement had for

⁴⁴ Although from the start Ahmed makes this difficult to see by also referring to physical copies of texts that 'circulate'. This is however a different kind of circulation. Ahmed, *Cultural Politics*, 1.

⁴⁵ Ahmed, 'Affective Economies', 124.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 135.

⁴⁷ Brooke, 'Space, Emotions and the Everyday', 128.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 130.

funding, for instance, childcare, that was not expressed in those particular documents. I hope that this dissertation has shown that to find these motivations research has to go beyond the GLC's archive.

Without the labour movement all descriptions of Livingstone's GLC and its support for non-state organisations are imprecise. Brooke's description of the Livingstone GLC's political motives seems clear: 'The particular political culture of London in the 1980s saw a local state willing to encourage community groups to pursue local initiatives, an approach grounded in a deliberate intention to facilitate a decentralized democracy.'⁴⁹ But the crux of this argument is to identify the state and 'community groups' as the two sides in the process of democratisation. But there is something vague about what the role of 'community groups' in a 'decentralized democracy' would have been. How exactly would the work of these tiny, albeit numerous, groups constitute a democratisation? Who did they represent? Where would their members vote or send delegates? Without a defined system or demos there is no democracy. The piece missing here for understanding the London Labour Party's idea of expanding democracy in this period is the unions and the Labour Party. What this dissertation has tried to describe in various ways is that the key non-state movement central to understanding Livingstone's GLC was not 'community groups' but the unions and the Labour Party. This adds a consistent degree of clarity to the perspective of what Livingstone's GLC was trying to do with its grants. The extension of democracy that the London Labour Party wanted already existed in the shape of the democratic organisation of the labour movement, which extended from local workplace branches to the TUC and Labour Party congress. This was not exactly a parallel state, but it almost was and within the state this movement's political representatives allocated some of the resources the branches would need to fulfil a greater range of functions: provide childcare, retrain unemployed people, monitor the police, and so on. In parallel, a greater share of the state would be placed under the control of either politicians accountable to the labour movement or new systems that looked like labour-union democracy: including, but not limited to, community health councils, a police authority for London, user-controlled public transport for people with disabilities, and, of course, industry. I hope that if my work archives one thing, it is to reinsert the unions as the unavoidable first part of any description of the Livingstone GLC and its democratisation efforts.

I have thought of this reinsertion in the terms of an imaginary dialogue between Eric Hobsbawm and Tony Judt, two historians who thought about the labour movement in European and world history towards the end of their lives. Hobsbawm observed in 2007 that 'The old-style schools and engines of democracy, the mass parties and organisations, which once provided "their" governments ... have crumbled'. In their place would remain 'well-organised minority campaigning interests and the media.'⁵⁰ Tony Judt, in 2010, similarly recognised: 'We no longer have political movements'. But, in contrast to Hobsbawm, he concluded: 'We must do better than this'.⁵¹ As subtle

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 131-2.

⁵⁰ Eric Hobsbawm, *Globalisation, Democracy and Terrorism* (2007), 111.

⁵¹ Tony Judt, *Ill Fares the Land* (2010), 134-5.

as this difference may appear in writing, these were two drastically different visions for the function of non-state organisations. Whereas Hobsbawm was resigned to a diminishing role for people in politics, Judt kept open the alternative for something like the GLC option: growing representative organisations in neighbourhoods and workplaces that can rely on a plurality or majority of their people's support, increasing the labour movement's power and control over the economic sphere. Hobsbawm had been pessimistic about this since he proposed that the labour movement had halted in 1978. By the 2000s, he focused on evidence that would support the thesis that there had been a halt and that it had continued. He made the death of mass politics sound like a natural and foregone conclusion, for instance citing the fact that 'in the UK, no single party since 1931 has won more than 50 per cent of the [national] vote'.⁵² Yet, this trend looks far less natural to anyone considering how, in the London County Council elections, Labour still won an absolute popular majority in 1961. Making the labour movement visible in London in the first two thirds of the 1980s, when it was a vibrant, experimenting, and powerful political force, problematises Hobsbawm's declinism. If Judt was correct that 'Much of what appears "natural" today dates from the 1980s', this dissertation can hopefully begin to make things right.⁵³

To justify to myself the work that went into this dissertation I will, in the next three paragraphs, indulge in my personal reflection on what history means: turning to page 203 skips this section and goes straight to the final conclusion. In short, I have tried to write about the Livingstone GLC and the groups it funded according to my best answer to the question of what history is and should be for. I summarise this as the primary source both of all our knowledge of the real world and the lesson that no human deed is predestined.⁵⁴ I say this because it is not necessary to know history to know what to do in the future, but it helps. Tales, fables, myths, or chronicles, can fulfil most of the functions of history: They can explain the past and present, imagine and justify the future, dispense knowledge, and entertain.⁵⁵ Even stories where every premise and conclusion is true are not necessarily history, since in stories events can only ever happen in one way; their course is determined by the author. This makes stories deceptively similar to history and what distinguishes the two is not whether they are true (although where there are not facts and truth there cannot be history). The difference between history and a story or tale is that history is determined by people other than the author.⁵⁶ History is a story where everything is true but nothing had to happen the way it happened. People who say they had no choice might be making a political argument, but never a historical one. History, in the words of Jacob Katz, grants 'a better understanding of one's own situation in the present' because it is 'pregnant with implications'.⁵⁷ History, in short, should mean something like the

⁵² Hobsbawm, *Globalisation*, 111.

⁵³ Judt, *III*, 2.

⁵⁴ Timothy Snyder, *On Tyranny: Twenty lessons from the twentieth century* (2017), 125; J. R. R. Tolkien, 'On Fairy Stories', in J. R. R. Tolkien, *Tales from the Perilous Realm* (2008 [1947]), 370, 383-4.

⁵⁵ Snyder, *Road to Unfreedom*, 8-9, 69-77.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 12-3.

⁵⁷ Jacob Katz, *History and the Historians, New and Old*, trans. by Ada Rapoport-Albert (1999), 34-5

the original sense of the Ancient Greek word *ἵστωρ* – a sharer of wisdom. Wisdom presupposes multiple courses of action. Like freedom, it is not something that exists outside of human thought and action and must be made real – in the words of the poet Daniel Kahn, ‘something we must constantly become’. Only in stories does wisdom exist without deeds. In stories characters make choices because they are wise. In history, just like ‘stupid is as stupid does’, people become wise because of their choices. We can only see true wisdom in hindsight and someone who has never chosen can never be considered wise, for there is nothing to judge them by. But the more thoroughly we choose the wiser we are able to become. History should be our arsenal of alternatives.

I will illustrate what this means with two fallacies that show how the past can easily be turned into stories rather than history, even by renowned historians. Firstly, E. H. Carr famously argued that studying accidents as causal explanations in history was ‘intellectual laziness or low intellectual vitality’ in the absence of a proper causal explanation. Accidental causes ‘teach no lessons and lead to no conclusions’, he wrote, thus making them unworthy of what he called history.⁵⁸ For similar reasons, he also put much effort into denying that human behaviour could cause historical events in and of itself. Saying that milk boils over in a pot because of its chemical composition, according to Carr, is as insipid as saying that Hitler ordered the invasion of Poland in 1939 because he decided to.⁵⁹ Neither statement, he claimed, explained why the milk boiled over or why World War Two began. Yet, this was a false analogy that led Carr to disguise the fact that a human mind in deliberation differs from chemical reactions in that it has a choice. Heat milk to one hundred degrees and it will always boil, but even under the most pressing circumstances Hitler *could* have chosen to not invade Poland. Choices are certainly made under given circumstances, which can mean that many decisions are at any given time and place extremely unlikely. Nevertheless, the option to do nothing is never an impossibility. To argue that is to say that we are not human, since it perhaps is our ability to consciously and deliberately choose ‘no’ that defines us most clearly from machines, forces of nature, and from other animals.

Similarly, Eric Hobsbawm argued that, analysing the Russian Civil War and the subsequent evolution of the Soviet Union, he could ‘think of no realistic forecast which ought to have envisaged the long-term future of the USSR as very different from what it has actually become.’⁶⁰ The implications of this conclusion are very strange: the only realistic forecast would have been one where the famine in Ukraine could not have been avoided, nor the Molotov–Ribbentrop Pact, the subsequent war it enabled, and Stalin’s numerous ethnic cleansings in the USSR that followed it. Much like Carr, Hobsbawm’s mistake was to assume that the alternatives to these monumental events were restricted, in his case by what he called the ‘structures of human societies, their processes and mechanisms of

⁵⁸ E.H. Carr, *What is History?: The George Macaulay Trevelyan lectures delivered in the University of Cambridge January–March 1961*, second edition (1987 [1961]), 102, 107.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 87.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

reproduction, change and transformation'.⁶¹ This is the transition from history to story. Hobsbawm was right to think that many things are impossible, and that many others are probable or improbable (at least in theory; complexity makes the odds virtually impossible to calculate, and only ever in retrospect). But by underestimating that which is new and unforetold – a person's choices – he overlooked how he ruled out too many options as impossible and began retelling a story.⁶² Whatever the 'structures' in the USSR in 1939, Stalin *could* have chosen to not invade Poland. This is what Marx meant by saying that we make our own history even if we do not choose our own circumstances. Nevertheless, in the world today there is no shortage of intelligent and reasonable people who argue that human actions, in the past or in the present, or an individual or on a societal level, are for various reasons locked onto a fixed path, to justify any number of political arguments. History still needs to teach that no one forces us how to play the hand we are dealt and to be prepared for the unexpected.

7.4 Wealthare: Final words

Thinking historically is to recognise that the past happened the way it happened but that at every step of the way there were options and things could have turned out differently. This is why I have placed such emphasis on individual motivations, political theory, and alternatives throughout this dissertation. In chapter three, organisers in the community transport and dial-a-ride movements chose to insist that dial-a-ride services should be run professionally, rather than by volunteers. In chapter four, I tried to show how the evolution of the Women's Therapy Centre resulted from a series of decisions, although they might have been presented at the time or remembered later as economic necessity. In chapter five, the GLC chose to go against conventions on bringing down unemployment and raising union membership by trying new methods to organise mothers around care work or unemployed workers centres. In chapter six, campaigners against the police who had endorsed violence in the 1970s chose to join a broad-based non-violent campaign for police accountability in the 1980s. Most importantly, the overall argument of these chapters has been to describe labour-movement politics as an underlying political option to all these organisations. The town planning professor Michael Hebbert once characterised London's evolution as being 'more by fortune than design'.⁶³ But in effect, fortune (or accident, or fate) is never wholly separate from design (or intention, or will). Designs also created the fortune that made London the city it became, if not always for the reasons they intended.

In this way, thinking historically is also to recognise unintended consequences. Even if someone achieves what they intended for a while, in the long term, the legacy of almost every

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 38.

⁶² Dick Harrison, *Tankar om Historia* (2003), 285-8.

⁶³ Michael Hebbert, *London: More by fortune than design* (1998).

deliberate plan and action is unpredicted events. In the case of Livingstone's GLC, its leaders' political strategy was to reindustrialise Londoners in manufacturing and in new industries with support from the state, thus increasing the power of the labour movement as it assumed control over the economy through industrial democracy and planning. This plan failed, but because it was attempted it left behind all the action of the people in GLC-funded non-state organisations described in this dissertation. In the late 1990s, James C. Scott's *Seeing Like a State* criticised the great, state-led social engineering projects of the twentieth century for leading to unanticipated disasters and suffering. As he saw it, the rigidity and one-size fits all solutions of gigantic industrial social, town-planning, or agricultural systems, such as Brasília and collective farming in the USSR, had not accounted for the reactions against them from nature and the human beings who lived in or ran them. He proposed returning to small-scale forms of production – family farms or small, local manufacturing companies – which, he believed, had an inert adaptability and robustness.⁶⁴ However, Scott's analysis, like Hobsbawm's late interpretations of world history and Brooke's description of Livingstone's GLC, did not consider the labour movement and the unions. Could a democratic labour movement within large-scale production provide part of the feedback loop that would make industrial society more viable? The Livingstone GLC's Industry and Employment Branch began investing in research into organisational cybernetics and detailed studies of the economy that could have begun to answer this question empirically.⁶⁵ The GLC's abolition also meant that attempts to see how these answers would work in reality were never fully trialled. The UK in the mid-2020s is very different from the UK of the 1980s. Its labour movement is vastly smaller and weaker, making GLC's vision for London might look untimely.

Throughout this analysis I often thought of the Czech anti-imperial nationalist Tomáš Masaryk's concept of 'small work' (*drobná práce*). Attempting to organise the effort that would create an independent state within the Habsburg Monarchy, Masaryk focused on how great movements would be accomplished through people taking pride and seeing beauty in the many small but deliberate actions in their everyday work to create the free lives they dreamt of.⁶⁶ Much 'small work' went into many of the organisations studied in this dissertation. Behind every association's annual report were voluntary hours spent taking minutes, writing letters, attending meetings, arranging chairs, repairing minibuses, giving advice, cooking for children, monitoring the police, and everything else that went into creating democratic society, in the labour movement and elsewhere. In a way, most people who do 'small work', with others, and, for a reason they have chosen and to meet a need they believe in, enjoy it. Humans like contributing. There is a reason for believing that we get more out of work than we put into it and for finding the ways to hold on to it. The opposite of this is complacency, alienation, and misery. Not only did Livingstone's GLC try to find ways that would make work

⁶⁴ James C. Scott, *Seeing Like a State: How certain schemes to improve the human condition have failed* (1998), 352-7.

⁶⁵ Mike Robinson, *Groups* (1984), 310-1; GLC, *The Greater London Labour Plan* (1986), 359, 484-5.

⁶⁶ I owe this knowledge to Thomas Lorman.

pleasurable, it also redistributed resources that showed that freedom and democracy are choices and the result of work by many hands. I think we forget this at our peril.

This dissertation has only scratched the surface of the history of London's politics and voluntary organisations. Many basic facts about the Livingstone GLC's grant programmes, that I identified in chapter one, remain unknown. To complete a historical description of Livingstone's GLC and its relationships with non-state organisations alone, many other dissertations could easily be written on various aspects of the topic: describe each of the policy areas in this dissertation in the individual depth they deserve; describe the overall work of each grant-making committee in full detail (including funding for sports); describe various local perspectives on GLC grant programmes within boroughs; compare the GLC's grants to those from other councils or government departments. Researching one GLC department's work during six years does not necessarily entail less complexity or less work than researching a grand government department. There are also the long-term legacies in Livingstone's two terms as mayor and Corbyn's Labour leadership years to consider. Although London is more populous than many European countries, its history does not have the status that comes with being an independent state with a national history (at least outside of London). But the potential for GLC studies exists for those willing and able to commit years of their lives to it. Over the next few decades, another twenty PhD History students might graduate having worked on various angles of the Livingstone GLC's grants. If this dissertation means that, at the very least, most of them, agreeing or criticising, consider the way of thinking historically about the GLC presented here, I will be happy. That's all I have to say about that.

Appendix

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*We raise our voices in the night
Crying to heaven
And will our voices be heard
Or will they Break Like The Wind?
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