CAMDEN LABOUR BRIEFING

5 MAY 1988.

SOLIDARITY WITH THE P&O STRIKERS

THE FOUR MONTH OLD dispute in Dover with the NUS is about imposing an increase in work hours, longer shifts, worse conditions and reductions in wages. P&O are leading the attack against the NUS on behalf of the other shipping companies to make *loadsamoney* now before the Channel Tunnel comes into operation. But the dispute is not just about pay and conditions. It is about whether the shipping companies can remove all the gains the NUS have won this century and disregard safety measures for workers and passengers as if the Herald of Free Enterprise tragedy had never happened.

The employers and the state have now escalated the dispute in a connected manner by sacking all employees who refuse the new contracts and sequestring the assets of the NUS. The union, in turn, has used the only effective weapon there is: solidarity strike action. 15 ports across the country have been hit.

Socialists and trade unionists must organise solidarity with the NUS and its secretary Sam McLuskie - who is also Labour Party Treasurer. This means inviting NUS speakers to union and party meetings, arguing the case for the seafarers and raising money to support the strikers and their families.

Socialists should also be calling on the leadership of the TUC and the Labour Party to mobilise the labour movement behind the NUS. Defeat will occur if we do nothing to support the NUS, and leave them isolated.

For speakers and literature from the NUS, contact Waltham Forest Trade Union Support Unit - 521 4729. Collections should also be sent there.

Benn and Heffer — seize the time!

The Leadership fight is on in the Party with a vengeance. Whatever vote that Tony Benn and Eric Heffer get in the electoral college, the campaign has focused the debate about the way forward in the fight against the Tories and for socialism. *The centre of the debate is socialism itself.* At issue is whether the fundamental idea of socialism — a democratic and egalitarian transformation of society — has any relevance to the last decade of the 20th century.

In Britain, there is a mass force for socialism — in the Labour Party and trade unions, and in the miriad of other groups and activities organised and supported by the left. In some other European countries such a force does not exist. So we have an opportunity — and a responsibility — not to squander the forces of militant socialism which exist. The main forces for socialism are getting involved in the Benn-Heffer Campaign and the growing "Chesterfield" movement. Now, and we mean now, we have to maximise the opportunity to push forward socialism.

SUPPORT BENN & HEFFER

SOLIDARITY WITH THE P&O STRIKERS

MEETING

MONDAY 16 MAY, 8PM

CAMDEN TOWN HALL, JUDD STREET

SPEAKERS : KEITH VENESS
AND P&O STRIKER

This meeting is open to all Camden Labour Party and trade-union members who wish to set up a campaign to elect Benn & Heffer and who wish to organise solidarity for the NUS in Camden.

NO SECRET DEALS WITH DEVELOPERS:
for a public inquiry into the King's Cross redevelopment

THE 130 ACRE site is the largest inner city development in the world. The developers want to change the use of the two existing stations and build a new one at the north site along with luxury housing and offices. At the moment, it looks as if British Rail (who own most of the site) prefer the Rosehaugh Stanhope plans.

A Camden leadership clique (Dykes, Fitzgerald, Gill, Woods and Wakeham) has been secretly meeting representatives of Rosehaugh Stanhope. There has been no report backs to the Labour Group, and there has been no discussions in the Group. The collaborative attitude to the developers is part of the Labour Group's cuts strategy. They hope to obtain planning gain in the form of cash or community use to offset the cuts.

In order to obtain the planning gain, the leadership of the group intends to use a consultancy set up by John Marlowe (ex-Camden Finance Director) and John Mills. John Mills was recently sacked by the DoE as LDDC Deputy Chair for not having disclosed past criminal convictions under the Trade Descriptions and Fair Trading Acts. The offences include selling brass plated jewelry as gold plated!!

Planning gain is about negotiating on the basis of the developers' schemes and on their terms. Therefore the council does not oppose the plans, but tries to obtain 'gifts'. This ensures that there is no campaign around what the community needs as described in the 'Borough Plan'. But most importantly, planning gain is not legally binding, and many developers have reneged on deals.

The value of the development is such that there will be nothing for the local working class. There will be no 'fair-rented' accomodation as the Housing Bill will allow only 'market rents'. New jobs for local people will below-paid, part-time and unskilled as shown in Docklands. The development as it is must be stopped.

Camden must turn down the planning application, and campaign for resources from central government to develop the area according to the Borough Plan. The developers will appeal to the DoE and Ridley, who will have to grant a public inquiry. Ridley may take away Camden's planning powers for the area and impose a Simplified Planning Zone. If this occurs Camden again can obtain a Public Inquiry.

Developers always oppose Public Enquiries as it delays developments for a couple of years, putting them into jeopardy and increasing their cost. Public enquiries are also the only way that all details and strategic implications of a development are revealed.

Labour Party members must ask that the Labour Group leadership stops having secret meetings with the developers and campaigns publicly for the needs of the local community. The Labour Group must be fully informed of the proposals and state that the development is of such importance that a Public Enquiry is necessary.

Fred Leplat. (Somers Town).

WOMEN'S SECTION ATTACKED

When the LGC was disbanded under the flimsy pretext that 6 weeks notice of new delegates to the LGC was not given, the women's section lost both its delegates who were at the time the chair and assistant secretary of the LGC. The women's section has always foufght to have its own delegates to the LGC as stipulated in the rules. Hilary Lowe, now chair of the women's committee, fought for this.

After being granted one delegate at the March GMC, the women's section has had its delegate removed again. This is the result of a complaint from Chalk Farm ward that the election was not taken at the March Women's Section. Although officers of the Section offered to hold a special meeting, this was turned down by the GMC who proceeded to elect a new delegate by the women then present at the GMC without either inviting nominations from outside the GMC or giving notice of the election.

This delegate is now Celmira Salazar, the GMC women's officer, who had previously voted against the women's section having a delegate at all. This election has disenfranchised 2/3 of the members of the section who are not on the GMC. This undemocratic manoeuvre is another blow to women's self organisation.

Gill Entwistle.

WANDSWORTH COMES TO CAMDEN

There were two basic proposals before the Labour Group on the re-organisation of Camden's housing services. Phil Turner proposed a tightening of service provisions but with specific protection for aspects of the direct labour organisation. Gareth Smyth's proposed not only the virtual destruction of the DLO but the establishment of what amounts to "Camden Housing PLC".

Smyth's proposal was carried by 17 votes to 5 by the Group. Not only does this represent a major set-back for the "moderates" in the Group, but it also represents a victory for those who believe in privatisation.

From now on, Camden's Housing Department's relationship with town hall workers be the same as that of a private company which invites those workers, in competition with cowboy contractors, to bid for contract. In the face of this loaded competition, there is little chance of survival for Camden's DLO. The provision of housing services will become the domain of cowboys who have done so much in the past to undermine council housing by cost cutting and shoddy work in the past.

MORE SUPPORT FOR MANIFESTO COUNCILLORS

Hampstead & Highgate GMC voted to re-instate the eleven Manifesto councillors who have been camapigning against the cuts since July 87. This is significant victory for those who believe in the necessity to fight central government rather than surrender. It also gives the lie to the view that the eleven Manifesto councillors have no support in the Labour Party and emphasizes the broad range of support for the eleven there exists in Camden.

LGC SHUNS DEMOCRACY

Hampstead & Highgate GMC voted overwhelmingly to boycott the aggregate meeting that has been arranged by the right dominated LGC. Not only was this meeting perceived as a complete waste of time - it has no formal status and no powers of recomendation - but also the blatant manipulation of the agenda by the right means that the aggregate meeting is little more than a public relations exercise for the new realism of surrender.

Further more, in contrast to previous years, the party will have no involvment whatsoever in this year's Labour Group leadership elections. Neither the Labour Group or the LGC have made any effort to either consult or involve local party organisations. Both have also gone against the clear mandate of the constituencies that the party should be involved in Group elections.

Camden's Labour Group will be the only Labour Group in London that elects itself without any reference to the local parties.

Organise against the Poll Tax

The Tory backbench revolt against the Poll Tax reflected the profound and widespread unpopularity of this anti-democratic measure. It also demonstrated the limitations of merely parliamentary action against it. The Thatcher government has been embarrassed, but it will sail ahead anyway, determined to press to the utmost its attack on local government and the inner city Labour vote.

How to respond? Petitions, leaflets, lobbies are all necessary but insufficient on their own. The Poll Tax is a combined economic and political attack on the working class. Its effects will be far-reaching and longlasting. Once it becomes operative, the damage it will do the labour movement will not be undone simply by periodic calls for its repeal.

Of course, this is not the first time a Poll Tax has been instituted — in Britain or abroad. And history, in this matter, does have a clear lesson. A campaign of mass resistance — based on non-compliance with the law — can and must be organised.

Labour Councils should refuse to collect the tax. Trade unionists should refuse to administer it. People should refuse to pay it.

These various levels of action against the Tax need to be co-ordinated, so that one re-enforces and encourages another.

In England and Wales, concrete proposals for non-compliance should be tabled now, so that we are ready to take action when the time comes.

STOP THE CLAUSE !

At the end of this month, if the Clause is adopted, it will be illegal for Local Authorities to "intentionally promote homosexuality". A mass campaign by the Labour Party and unions must be organised to prevent the bigots smashing equal oportunities and launching a carnival of reaction.

One thing that party members can do is to adopt the following resolution for the Labour Party's National Conference. Camden as had a good record of promotion of lesbian and gay rights, so it is important that a resolution comes from our CLPs.

1) This conference notes :
a) the clear commitment made by annual conference in 1985 and 1986 to full equality for lesbian and gay men,
b) that section 28 of the Local Government Act 1987 will outlaw the work of councils combatting bigotry and discrimination,
2) Conference believes that the ending of discrimination against lesbians and gay men requires :
a) the recognition that lesbian and gay realtions are not "pretended",
b) that lesbians must have a right to bring up their children,
c) that negative images of lesbians and gay men are responsible for discrimination and violence on to them,
d) that the promotion of a positive image of lesbians and gay men will counter the bigotry that now exists.
3) Conference therefore resolves :
a) to reaffirm existing party policy on this issue,
b) to affirm that the next Labour Government will repeal section 28 and encourage private members bills to do this as soon as possible,
c) to support individuals victimised as a result of section 28,
d) to encourage Labour Authorities to reaffirm their commitment to party policy on this issue, and to defend this policy .



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