CAMDEN LABOUR BRIEFING

CAMDEN'S 87/88 BUDGET: FIGHT, DON'T FIDDLE !

Borough conference voted 79 to 21 in favour of a budget based on implementing the manifesto, coupled with no cuts and no job losses. This and all the conference's other decisions were ratified by the LGC. So far so good.

However, beneath this apparently broad unity of purpose there remain unresolved questions as to how to deal with the budget gap. Whatever borrowing or creative accountancy measures are adopted, it is clear that in practice there will be huge pressure to reconcile the deficit through cuts. These cuts may appear as 'savings' or 'efficiency', as in the case of freezing job vacancies or delaying them, but they would still be cuts.

Secondly, the chances of the election of a genuinely sympathetic labour government are slim according to most estimates. Any other alternative would be a disaster for local government. But simply waiting in the hope that, on a wing and a prayer, Niel Kinnock will help out - would also be a disaster. We wont get anything out of him unless we mobilise and fight for it.

All this adds up to one thing. The need for the left to prepare a strategy of confrontation with central government, as it will almost certainly happen. And as the government would confront us by making our present expenditure proposals illegal, that confrontation will have to include illegality. Otherwise there will be little chance of maintaining a budget gap as big as ours without cuts.

Taking into account the combined effects of privatisation and the legal financial restrictions - local government faces the high possibility of wholesale dismemberment and its reduction to a token local discussion forum over the next year or two. In this context, talk of 'keeping socialists in power at all costs' and 'dented shields' is largely irrelevant - there wont be any shields to take hold of.

The borough conference effectively postponed these questions. This isn't to argue for a junking of its decisions - simply the need to recognise that there may be different interpretations as to how they should be implemented. If we are to remain faithful to working class interests we will have to fight - not fiddle.

That will mean using the monthly review through the LGC as a mobilising point for the party, the unions and the community for policy of defence of jobs, services and local government - the election commitments of the Labour group - if necessary breaking the law in order to do so.

Piers Mostyn (Somers Town)

NEXT CAMDEN LABOUR BRIEFING MEETING :

MONDAY 16 MARCH, 8pm,

TOWN HALL, BASEMENT STUDY ROOM

For further details of Camden Labour Briefing, phone Fran on 431 0357, or Fred on 387 1361

BOYCOTT THE POLICE CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE LOBBY THE LABOUR GROUP ON MONDAY 23 FEB.

Borough Conference voted overwhelmingly to boycott the Police Consultative Cttee .. Hopefully, this will end a particularlty sordid affair where councillors crossed picket lines of their own unions and communities . Those arguing for participation showed an almost wilful political naivety . Vicious poloitical attacks by the Tories on local government cannot be seperatyed from the growing politicisation of the role of the police at Wapping, against gay bars or the BBC . They are part of the same political attack on the working class as a whole . You can not vote to defy the former, and then co-operate with the latter . This is not only naive, it is cynical . It is like saying "we want your help in our fight, but we are not prepared to help you in yours !" Few people even believe that any good can come about particip ation, but want to spend a year gathering statistics about the po ce . But would this tell us anything that we do not already know ? Such inconsistencies not only undermine any fight against rate-caping by antagonising large sections of the local community, they also give the police a public relations forum which they will not hesitate to use against the Council's own Police Cttee .

Fran Rayner, Hampstead & Highgate .

We still need all the support we can get to maintain the fortnightly Briefing. In the lead up to the Election there is all the more need for a left paper which unites workers, Labour Party activists, councillors, and militants fighting against special oppression and imperialism.

Support Labour Briefing! Together we can turn the tide!

Bankers Order form for Labour Briefing 500 Club

Please complete every section of this form, and then return it to: Labour Briefing, c/o Jane Kelly, 26 Crofton Rd, London SE5.

Bankers Order

To: .....

..... (bank name, sort code)

At (address) .....

.....

From: .....(your name)

(your address) .....

.....

My account number is: .....

Please debit from my account each month the sum of £4, in favour of Labour Briefing No 2 account, Co-operative Bank, Stratford E15, Code 08-90-76, Account No. 50349957.

Starting on .....(date)

Thereafter on .....(date) of each month

Signature .....

Dated .....

SUBSCRIBE TO BRIEFING

Make sure of your copy of the fortnightly Labour Briefing. For an annual subscription send £12 to Labour Briefing, 26 Crofton Road, London SE5 (cheques, etc., payable Labour Briefing).

Name .....

Address .....

.....

NEXT CAMDEN LABOUR BRIEFING MEETING :

MONDAY 16 MARCH, 8pm

TOWN HALL, BASEMENT STUDY ROOM .

For further details of Camden Labour Briefing, phone Fran on 431 0357 or Fred on 387 1361 .

