CAMDEN LABOUR BRIEFING

CAMDEN'S BUDGET: WHAT IS AT STAKE

The Budget Consultation paper circulated to branches sets out the financial position facing Camden Council . The report from the Leader of the Council explains that Camden's forecasted spending for 1987/88 is nearing £200m . In addition, the Labour Group recommend £10m growth to begin the next stage of the manifesto, leading to a total budget of around £210m . Under ratecaping, the most the Council can raise through the rates is £145m . A gap of £65m exists between the planned expenditure and ressources .

The second document in the batch of consultation papers is a report from the Director of Finances . He gives more information, including the fact that this year's expenditure is £10m more than forecast leaving the Council in a "precarious position". This report wants this £10m overspend reduced, and he warns that any growth next year will be difficult .

This view must be rejected . The manifesto which the party drew up and campaigned on in May 1986 must be implemented . The Labour Group must pursue all possible borrowing options for bridging the gap between expenditure and ressources . A defered purchase agreement has already been signed . Further capitalisation of £40m can be achieved . Other measures still remain including lease and lease-back of buildings, and other forms of using the Council's existing capital assets as security to borrow money from financial institutions .

Every option must be pursued to ensure that the manifesto is implemented . At a time of massive homelessness, continuing and devastating increases in unemployment, we must recognise that the intervention of the Council by creating employment and offering services must be extended to ensure that the Labour Party in Camden will defend working people . The start that has been made on extending equality of opportunity in employment, and in access and appropriateness of the Council's services must be continued .

What is sadly missing from the consultation papers is any recognition that a borrowing strategy must not simply be seenas an accountancy measure, or be allowed to be interpreted only as a high risj strategy - it must be explained in a political way .

We must openly and simply explain our strategy to the people of Camden . We must explain that the alternative is cuts and rent increases . People need to be informed that the responsability for the need to borrow lies with the Government . Our strategy must become an issue during the General Election explained on our terms . We must say that the return of a Tory Government would mean cuts, rent increases and privatisation .

We must increase pressure on Kinnock and Cunningham to not only end ratecaping, but to restore central government grants and restructure local authority debts . After all, Kinnock told us to be a dented shield, it is his policy we are pursuing . Camden should take a lead in bringing other London Labour Boroughs together, using the ressources of the ALA, LSPU and LGIU to politically explain our policy and show the position that much of London is in .

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Camden's Budget - continued

Already the Tories and the Audit Commission have begun the attack . Stories of potential bankrupcy of London Boroughs are appearing in news--papers, and the line is that it is the loony left again . If we don't camapign now, then we will loose the battle by default . We will face a Labour Government which will tell us to increase the rates, in Canden's case by £5 a week . This is an unacceptable solution . If we do face the return of a Tory or Tory/SDP government, we will be in no position to fight if we have not prepared the ground .

Kate Allen (Councillor)

FIGHT FOR JOBS ! FREE MIKE HICKS !

BOYCOTT NEWS INTERNATIONAL !

1st Anniversary Demonstration and Picket at Fortress Wapping :

Saturday 24 January, 8pm at Tower Hill

NEXT CAMDEN LABOUR BRIEFING MEETING :

Monday 19 January , 8pm , Committee Room 1 . All Labour Briefing supporters welcome .

MODEL RESOLUTION

This branch/CMC/LGC/Borough Conference calls on Camden Council to:
i) take all necessary steps towards meeting in full the commitments contained in the manifesto for the 1986 Council elections within the four year term of office.
ii) to finance this programme by borrowing and/or deficit budgeting.
iii) to commit itself to not allowing this strategy to penalise in any way the people of Camden, now or in the future, in the form of cuts, job losses or increased charges or rate rises.
iv) to undertake an information campaign among the council workforce and the Camden public as a whole to explain the significance and necessity of these measures.
v) to refuse to comply with the Goverrnment's privatisation measures.
vi) to join with other councils and trade unions to mount a sustained campaign against government attacks on local authorities.
vii) to support the council unions taking industrial action to defend jobs and services against rate capping and privatisation.
viii) to demand of the Shadow Cabinet and Labour Party NEC that they fully support this campaign and make preparations for the next Labour Government to provide the necessary and urgent financial assistance, including relieving them of the burden of accumulated debt. We also demand of them that they commit themselves to repealing rate capping and privatisation legislation and the 'clawback' system of penalties on the Rate Support Grant.

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CLOSE RANKS WITH COUNCIL UNIONS

TO BEAT PRIVATISATION

The Tory Government is publishing a Bill early in 1987 which will propose the compulsory privatisation of council services such as : refuse collection, street and office cleaning, catering, vehicle and ground maintenance, transport, printing, computer and other technical services and the management of sport and leisure facilities . Experience of privatisation shows that services are radically reduced, and that staff taken on by private contractors receive considerably worse pay and conditions than they did from the council. But privatisation has also shown, that when NHS or council departments have participated in "value for money" studies and submitted in house tenders, there has been job losses and a worsening of service conditions of staff so that the tender can be "commercially competitive".

This Privatisation Bill will become law by April 1988, but Camden Council should prepare itself now to protect council services and jobs . The Labour Group should re-establish a joint campaign with the council unions as existed during the fight against rate-capping. But this time the unions will have to be in a more leading position as they are the one with the power to frustrate effectively the tendering trap .

The following measures need to be taken immediately by the Labour Group to put the council in a strong position to resist privatisation :

a) **reducing** private contractors and consultants to the absolute **minimum agreed with the unions,**
b) **strict** use of contract compliance to monitor performance and conditions of employment of contractors' staff,
c) instructing managers not to develop privatisation strategies,
d) preparing, with the unions, specifications for an improvement of services without detriment to conditions of service of staff,
e) filling all vacancies
f) launching a campaign to gain the support of tenants and users against privatisation .

An effective national campaign by the Labour Party and Local Government unions , backed by industrial action, should be the framework for local councils and unions fighting back against privatisation . The sale of British Gas and the abolition of the GLC have demonstrated that a campaign based only on parliamentary lobbying, publicity, and days of "action" will not impress thr Tories .

When the Bill becomes law, frustration and industrial action by council workers with the backing of the Labour Council and Labour Parties in Camden, will give us a chance to fight off privatisation. This means that the Labour Group should state clearly now that it will refuse to submit in-house tenders, and will support council workers taking industrial action to protect council jobs and services against private contractors and consultants .

Privatisation of NHS and council services does not make the Tories popular . Council tenants and workers, and the users of services suffer from it . It is only the directors of private firms that have benefited . The Labour Front bench should therefore give an undertaking that it will immediately repeal the Tories'privatisation laws when elected to Government . This would give a tremendous boost to the campaign, and would certainly help Labour win the next general election .

Fred Leplat (Somers Town)

BOYCOTT THE POLICE CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE

LAST YEAR, community groups were asked for their opinions about joining the Police Consultative Committee. There were far more groups against than for. Those against included Black, lesbian, gay and women's groups - sections of the community that are especially affected by Police action against them.

Then, at a public meeting in September last year, at which 26 different organisations were present, the majority of speakers were critical of the scheme and spoke against Council participation. The views of both Camden Labour Parties were also sought - the two GCs passed resolutions against participation and at the LGC meeting and Manifesto Borough Conference in October, the decision not to take part was endorsed.

But at the LGC meeting in December, which was poorly attended, the decision was overturned and it was agreed to participate for a one-year trial. The manifesto committment was for the council to take part from December 1985 to December 1986 but the Committee (known as the Police Consultative Group) has not yet met.

There is mounting opposition from Camden NALGO: they are rightly concerned about the issue of confidentiality in that the Consultative Group clerk, who would be answerable to that group (including the Police), would have an office in the Town Hall and would be free to roam the council building to get access to documents that are with the Race, Women's and Civil Rights Units. This would undermine the credibility of these specialist sections. NALGO has recently passed a resolution requesting the Council not to participate.

Even though it hasn't yet met, it is, in a negative way, affecting the Council's Police sub-committee in that Black groups such as CCCR and women's groups, do not attend. The sub-committee should instead be fully representative and fight for police accountability. Consultative Groups have failed elsewhere in London, such as where police refused to discuss with community groups the reorganisation of the Met, and are mere 'shop windows' that falsely show how co-operative the police can be. These Groups only distract attention away from what London really needs: a fully democratic Police Authority that will ensure that the Police are accountable to the people that they are supposed to serve.

With the increased Police attacks on the working class, Black communities, gays, lesbians and women's groups and the erosion of personal freedoms, comrades can only say NO to Camden Council taking part, and any Consultative Group that is set up, should be strongly boycotted and picketed.

Adrian States (Councillor)

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