CAMDEN LABOUR BRIEFING

LOCAL GOVERNMENT COMMITTEE

QUESTION: WHEN IS A MEETING NOT A MEETING?
ANSWER: WHEN THE RIGHT WING THINK THEY WILL LOSE THE VOTE!

Since the May 6th AGM this year, the LGC has suffered a series of attempts to undermine its functioning and credibility. While many of the arguments have taken the guise of differing interpretations of the Labour Party rules and the LGC standing orders, it is clear that they add up to a political onslaught on the Borough Party, designed to wreck any vestiges of accountability, involvement and consultation within Camden. At a time of such crisis and internal debate the left has continued its fight to strengthen such a structure in order to co-ordinate Labour Party involvement in the Council's decisions, and to unify Camden's Labour Movement in the face of the attack upon local democracy.

The latest development has been attempts to totally by-pass the LGC during this crucial period when the Council is deciding its political and financial priorities into the next decade. Objections to the Constitution, dating back over four years to a period when the right controlled the LGC, have been used to stop the majority view in the Borough prevailing. They have connived to stop the LGC meeting in September and tried to block the LGC Officers carrying out their duties - during a period of so-called consultation.

The Labour Group, as well as the Parties, *need* to debate these vital issues in a Borough-wide forum which can take meaningful decisions. The accepted forum for this in the past few years has been the Camden Borough Conference. Hampstead & Highgate Constituency Party and many comrades in Holborn & St. Pancras have asked for this accepted process again, and the LGC Executive, meeting during the August "recess" in place of the ordinary full LGC, agreed to convene a Borough Conference. The right wing are now doing their best to destroy the Conference, and the Labour Group Leadership are doing little to support a proper consultation process.

We ask: *If a Borough Conference is good enough to adopt the Council Manifesto, why isn't it good enough to decide whether or not it should be 'thrown out the window'???*

Una Doyle, Chair, Camden LGC

What can you do?

1: Make sure your Councillors and Branch or Section delegates support and attend a Borough-wide meeting on October 3rd.
2: Press your Branch and GC delegates to support the work and role of the Local Government Committee.
3: Support moves to make Labour Councillors more accountable during their term of office.
4: Move this as a motion at your organisation: This body resolves that a Borough Conference is the only legitimate means to consult the Party on a major issue, such as Camden's current political and financial crisis. (The above is Hampstead & Highgate CLP Policy.)

ONE MEMBER, ONE VOTE - AN ATTACK ON DEMOCRACY

The Labour Party leadership blamed the left in the Party for the third General Election defeat in a row. It has decided that the way to win next time is by attacking the power and democracy of local Party organisations. Thus this year's Labour Party Conference will probably amend the Constitution to introduce a system of "one member, one vote" for the selection of MPs. The result of this move will undermine the participatory and representative system of democracy of the Labour Movement.

If this proposal goes through, MPs will be selected by a meeting of all Party members in a Constituency which will presumably meet only once every five years. At present all members do have a say in electing delegates to a GMC where a check can be kept on an MP on a monthly basis. The new system will mean that the GMC has no power over the selection and monitoring of the MP as this will be in the hands of a meeting which is convened only once every five years!!!

It is ironic that the Labour Party Leadership is introducing aggregate meetings of members to suit its own purposes (ie: the elimination of left-wing parliamentary candidates) while it denounced this type of meeting when they were convened by the Liverpool Labour Group to consult and mobilise Party members against rate-capping in 1985.

Five-yearly aggregate meetings to select MPs will facilitate the manipulation of membership and will result in the event being turned into a rally for the sittting MP. Meanwhile, the removal of another responsibility from the GMCs will turn them into a rubber-stamping body allowing Walworth Road and full-time agents a free hand in running all aspects of the local Party.

In opposing "one member, one vote" one should not defend the inadequacies of the present structures. Delegates should be mandated and their votes recorded, and be able to be removed by the organisation that selected them. This should apply not only to the GMC delegates but also to MPs and Councillors. Votes and procedures of the NEC should be published and Regional Officials should be chosen by elected bodies and be accountable to them.

"One member, one vote" is designed to remove power and responsibilities from Local Parties and stengthen the centralist hand of Walworth Road - it should be rejected.

Fred LePlat

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c/o 24 Godwin Court, Crowndale Road, NW1.

Events

7th September
Lobby the Labour Group
Old Town Hall, Judd Streett, 6.30pm.

17th September
NALGO Met District
Black Members AGM
Walworth Town Hall,
Walworth Road, SE17
London-wide Conference - morning session on how Black Workers can fight back against cuts - Black Community Organisations welcome to attend. Details from Paul Singh on 01-871 6069 or Azim Hajee on 278 4444 ext. 2200

20th September
London-wide Conference Against Cuts in Jobs and Services organised by Camden NALGO and London Bridge. Sunday 10.00am - 5.00pm at Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, WC1. Delegates and observers welcome - details Camden **NALGO** 01-278 4444 ext. 2431

24th September
Haringey Fights Back
Launch of campaign to defend jobs and services 8.00pm at Brabant Road, Trade Union Centre.

26th September
Under 5s must survive
Assemble Caversham Children's Centre, 33-43 Caversham Road, Kentish Town. 11am march to Town Hall.

Meetings and Campaigns

Camden Against The Cuts
c/o Camden Trades Council Support Unit
102 St. Pancras Way, NW1 9NE.
Campaign linking Trade Unionists, Community Groups, Tenants Organisations, individual Camden Residents and Councillors against the cuts.

Camden Workers Against The Cuts
Campaign to resist the Cuts in Jobs and Services. Meets Thursdays at 5.00pm Committee Room 1, Old Town Hall, Judd Street, NW1. Open to all workers employed/funded by Camden Council. Further information on 01-278 4444 ext. 2431

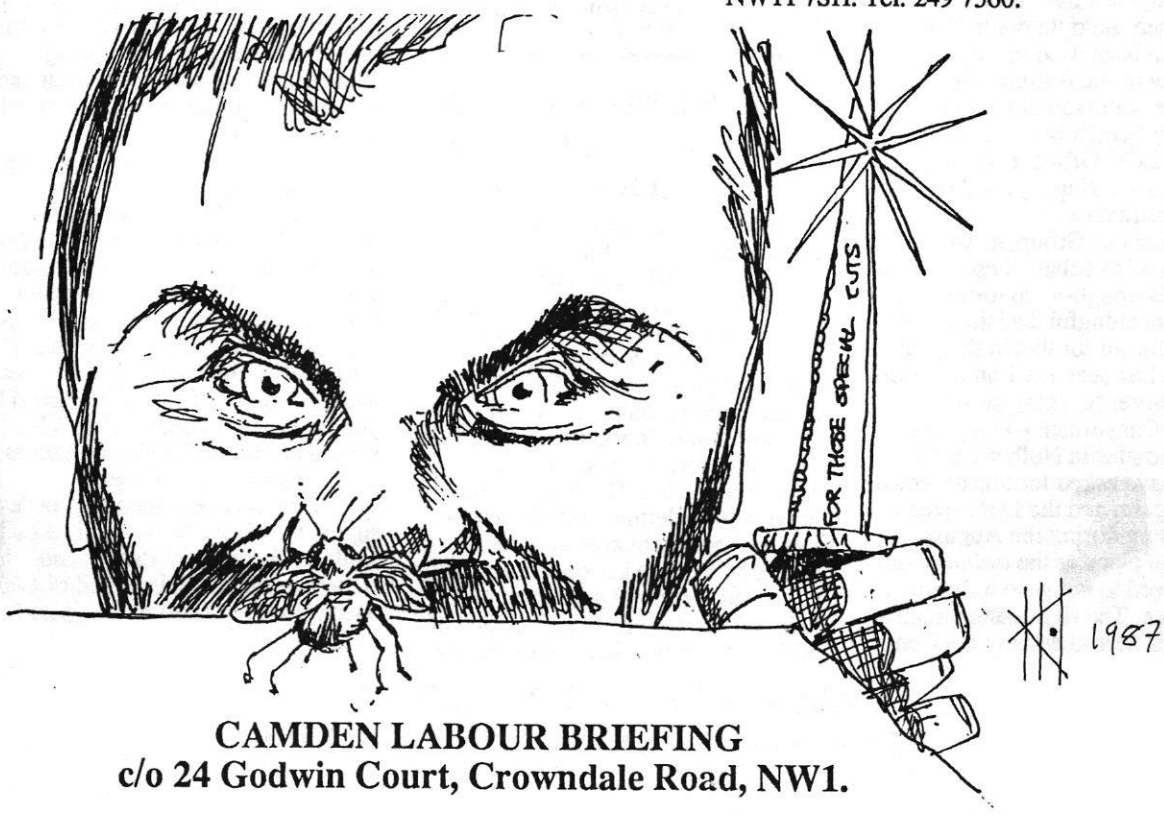
VOLCANO
Voluntary Sector Campaign for No Cuts
Meets on a Thursdays at 6.45pm in Canteen, 7th Floor Town Hall Extension contact them c/o Camden Black Workers Group Office, Ground Floor, Camden Town Hall, Judd Street, NW1. Tel: 01-278 4444 ext. 2200 or 387 1125 or 267 9421

SLATE 1987 LABOUR NEC ELECTIONS

The following is the joint slate of the Campaign Group of MPs, Labour Left Liaision, and the Campaign for Labour Party Democracy.

Constituency Section (7 places)
Diane Abbot MP
Tony Benn MP
Eric Heffer MP
Ken Livingstone MP
Jo Richardson MP
Dennis Skinner MP
Audrey Wise MP
Women's Section (5 places)
Margaret Beckett MP
Linda Bellos
Joan Maynard
Clare Short MP
Treasurer
Gavin Strang MP
Conference Arrangments Committee
CLP Section: Pete Wilsman
TU Section:
Dennis Canavan MP - COHSE
Ken Homer - NUM
John Jones - TASS
Bill Morris - TGWU
David Shaw - NUR

Details: Campaign for Labour Party Democracy, 10 Park Drive, London NW11 7SH. Tel: 249 7560.



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