# CAMDEN LABOUR BRIEFING

## THE NEW COUNCIL LEADERSHIP: A VERY RIGHT WING COUP

ON THE face of it, the triumvirate of Dykes, Woods and Fitzgerald, which now comprises the new leadership of the Labour Group in Camden, may seem very similar to the Councillors who were in office prior to the May elections. All three Councillors, with varying degrees of enthusiasm, have been prepared to accept the twin principles of democracy and accountability in the past; they were prepared to follow the Party's policy during the Rate Capping campaign; and they have each played an active role in the development of the Council's strategy over the past four years.

However an examination of how these Councillors secured their authority tells a completely different story.

It is accepted within all levels of the Party that the election of Labour Group Officers and Council Committee Chairs should be open to a wider franchise, and not left entirely at the discretion of Labour Councillors. Branches who are not represented by Labour Councillors, the Womens Section, the Black Section, the Trades Unions and the Constituency Parties, each need to be involved in the elections and the subsequent development of policies.

The previous Labour Group, both CLPs, the Branches, and all levels of the labour movement in Camden, accepted that the elections should take place within the context of a joint Labour Group/Local Government Committee meeting. This practice is already followed in a large number of Labour controlled authorities: Brent, Hackney, Islington, Lewisham and other London Boroughs all accept the need and the validity of such elections.

In Camden, a joint Labour Group/LGC meeting was held for the first time on May 10th, and elections were held for all the Labour Group positions and Council Committee Chairs. The elections produced a politically balanced Council, neither left nor right achieving an overall majority of positions within the new Group.

However, at the Labour Group meeting which was held on May 12th to endorse the recommendations of the joint Labour Group/LGC, it became clear that neither the hard right, nor the centre Councillors who had failed to be elected to their prefered positions of power, were prepared to accept either the principle of democracy or accountability. Unlike the majority of Party members, and unlike a large minority of the Labour Group, these Councillors refused to endorse the Party's recommendations.

There were no reasons given for this refusal. They simply overturned, or attempted to overturn, those decisions that they did not agree with.

In all, 12 of the decisions that had been made at the election were challenged, and in 6 instances, the centre/right alliance overturned the democratic decisions that had been made by the Party. Kate Allen, the first woman Leader of Camden Council, was replaced by Tony Dykes; Satnam Gill, one of the three newly elected Black Councillors, was replaced as Chair of the key Policy and Resources Committee by Julie Fitzgerald; Kevin McDonnell was replaced as Vice-Chair of both olicy and Resources and as Assistant Chief Whip by Janet Pope; Tom Devine was replaced as Vice Chair of Housing management by Gareth Smythe; and Gloria Lazenby was

replaced as Vice Chair of Leisure by Dave Horan. Perhaps the worst insult was reserved for Satnam Gill - having been replaced as Chair of Policy and Resources, he then stood for Chair of Camden's Race Committee, the first Black person ever eligible for this position, and was defeated.

The voting throughout these bogus elections was entirely in line with a slate that had been decided in advance by the right, and there was little variation on the centre/right's overall majority in the new Labour Group, of 2.

It is worth remebering that 4 of the new Labour Councillors - Cane, Kirk, Green and Shaw - should not even have been representing the Party in the May elections after their disgraceful record during the Rate Capping campaign, and that other right candidates had only become Councillors by appealing to the Regional Executive after being deemed unsuitable by the Party. However, the most depressing aspect is not the behaviour of the right - we have come to expect a total disregard of the principles of democracy and accountability from the right - but the behaviour of the careerists and cynical opportunists who now comprise the public leadership of the council, and who have been prepared to kick the Party in the teeth in order to attain power.

STEVE TAYLOR (Hampstead & Highgate)

* * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * *

NEXT MEETING FOR SUPPORTERS OF "LABOUR BRIEFING" IN CAMDEN :

Tuesday 1st July, 8pm .
Camden Town Hall Committee Room

* * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * *

## NEWS INTERNATIONAL AFTER THE VOTE :
## DEAN MUST NOW PULL OUT FLEET STREET !

What a superb vote ! Two to one against Murdoch's paltry bribe and Brenda Deal's attempted sell-out. The strikers have made it absolutely clear they want to fight for jobs, not pay-offs .

With the vote behind it , it is necessary to break the disastrous way in which the strike has been run so far . Dean's strategy of relying on public opinion and boycotts has failed . Action is now needed to win . Fleet Street has to be brought out in support of News International strikers, and against the attacks on working conditions in the other papers that have occured since Murdoch opened the way . That is the only way to put pressure on all the newspaper barons and build effective pickets with enough numbers to close down Murdoch's scab operation at Wapping . With 30 000 workers from the whole of Fleet Street and support from other unions, Wapping could be picketed to a standstill .

At Sogat conference, pressure will be on Dean to mobilise the whole of the union behind the strike, and to provide a leadership that goes for victory . But the rest of the labour movement must fulfill its responsabilities to create effective solidarity . TGWU members driving News International lorries must be disciplined, along wit the NUJ members who are working inside Fortress Wapping . The EEPTU - whose leadershi consciously helped Murdoch set up his scab operation - must be expelled from the TUC The failure of the TUC to act on its resolution is another consolidation of the Tories' anti-union laws .

The Labour Party can also step up its support for the News International strikers . This can be done by encouraging members to picket Wapping and other depots around the country, and giving financial support to the strikers . Scab NUJ member Malcolm Withers who has just been selected as PPC in Stevenage should be expelled . In Camden the Labour Council must maintain it's boycott of News International titles in the libraries , and party members should support the activities of the Printworkers Support Group such as the pickets at Wapping and the Benefit on July 4th in the Bidborough Centre with the 'Redskins' band .

FRED LEPLAT (Holborn & St Pancras)

CAMDEN PRINTWORKERS SUPPORT GROUP meets every Monday at 6.30pm , in their offices at 102a Cromer Street, WC 1, phone: 837 7415

* * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * *

NEXT MEETING FOR SUPPORTERS OF LABOUR BRIEFING IN CAMDEN : TUESDAY 1 JULY
8pm, Camden Town Hall Committee Room

* * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * *