WHY WE REFUSED TO SIGN GROUP STANDING ORDERS

A statement from the "Manifesto" Councillors

ON the 8th of February 11 Labour councillors were effectively removed from the Labour group on Camden Council. We remain Labour councillors; but we will no longer be allowed to participate in the discussions that precede council meetings in the borough.

It is the first time that action of this sort has been taken against Labour councillors in Camden, and it marks a new low-point in the way that the leadership in Camden have been operating since the June 1986 General Election. The "crime" which has led to our removal from the group is nothing more than our refusal to tear up the manifesto promises that we made when we stood as Labour candidates.

Since June of last year, the Labour leadership in Camden have systematically discarded virtually every single promise that they made during the election. Services have been reduced, jobs have been cut, council rents have been increased, voluntary and community organisations have seen their grants taken away, empty properties have been sold to speculators, homeless people have been refused.

The current round of cuts being proposed by Camden will mean an overall reduction in services — in addition to cuts already carried out — of between 21 and 50 per cent. As socialists, we were elected on a manifesto which promised to improve and extend services, we have refused to vote for cuts, and we have refused to attack either our workforce or our communities. As a result of this we have now been removed from the decision-making process.

We were given a straight forward choice. Either we signed a document which would have forced us to agree with the cuts and to vote for them, or we would be removed. As far as we were concerned, this was no choice at all.

We are not prepared to attack working class communities and we are not prepared to carry out the Tories' dirty work for them. We believe that it is the duty of socialists to build opposition to these policies, and to unite with those who are at the sharp end of those policies.

We have already received massive support from people who agree that we must fight the Tories rather than surrender to them, and the opposition to the leadership's policies in Camden is growing. We will continue to align ourselves with this opposition and we call all those who are opposed to Labour controlled authorities carrying out Tory cuts to join us.

Councillors KATE ALLEN, STEVE BEVINGTON, ANGIE BIRTILL, GRAHAM GOOD, CAROLINE HOLDING, DAVE HORAN, GLORIA LAZENBY, KAREN NEWURY, SANDRA PLUMMER, GRAHAM SHURETY, ADRIAN STATES,
Members Room, Camden Town Hall,
Euston Road, NW1.