CAMDEN LABOUR BRIEFING

24 APRIL 1989.

DISTRICT HOUSING OFFICE STRIKE : SUPPORT NALGO

Nalgo members in the Housing Department have been on strike since 10 April following the suspension of five workers. Nalgo had submitted a claim for the reinstatement of 14 posts deleted last year to cope with the extra workload. The strike is now official and support from NUPE and Tenants Associations has been magnificent.

The claim for 14 staff (one per estate team) is one that must be supported. Over the last year, nearly half the posts in the Housing Department have gone, yet the workload went up by 30%. The result is that tenants suffer as the council has asked that the staff's priority be rent arrears and Right to Buy applications, while repairs, harassment, and general management is seen as secondary.

As the Council was avoiding negotiations on the claim, Nalgo boycotted work on Right to Buy applications and Councillors' enquiries. The result was still not negotiations but a lock-out!

Ken Hulme, the vice chair of Housing, denounced the strike as being political and lead by left-wimngers. This red-baiting and tough "Murdoch" style approach to industrial relations means that council workers and tenants will mean that the Labour Group is more and more isolated as it is seen as acting like the Tories.

Socialists in the Labour Party should pass resolutions calling on the Laboiur Group to enter into immediate negotiations and meet the claim. Invite speakers to your ward , union or TA by phoning Nalgo on 860-5634.

STRIKE WAVE HITS TORIES

The two one day unofficial strikes on London Underground are now being followed by strikes in the BBC, engineering, British Rail and most certainly the dockers. These strikes must be supported in order to beat back the Tory blues. Even the judges beat back the Tory goverment by threatening an unofficial one day strike.

However, it is certainly the dockers strike which most worries the goverment. 70% of all trade still goes thgrough the "scheme" ports and the DTI has admitted that a strike would certainly cripple the economy. At stake is the abolition of the "right for a job for life" and the introduction of casualisation. We should defend the right to a job, just like in any other industry or service where we would not expect arbitrary hiring and firing.

A victory for the dockers would mean the end of all the undemocratic anti-union legislation and the end of the Tories. A solid all-out strike with solidarity across from the labour movement would be the best guarantee that the law would not be used, and the threat of casualisation defeated.

At the 1987 conference, Neil Knnock wondered how to win over dockers to labour who earned £400 a week and went on holiday to Spain. The answer is simple : support the dockers in their strike!

CAMDEN LABOUR BRIEFING

NEXT MEETING :

TUESDAY 2 MAY, 8pm

Town hall, Cttee Room 4

AGENDA :

The EURO-ELECTIONS AND 1992 : what is it all about, and what is in it for socialist ? Discussion introduced by Steve Cowan, ILEA councillor and from the Socialist Conference European Policy Group.

THE LABOUR GROUP AGM : what should the left in Camden Labour Parties fight for ?

THE HOUSING STRIKE : What is it all about? Hear first hand from a striker.

For further details, contact Fred Leplat, 24 Godwin Court, NW1 1NN, 387 1361.

STOP THE POLL-TAX

Neither the Labour Group nor the Council has discussed the poll-tax, the most swingeing attack on local government from the Tories. Too much for a democratic and accountable Labour Group! Yet registration notices are likely to be issued after May 22.

To protest against the tax is one thing, but we should all ask ourselves how can we stop it. The first thing is to support the local campaign which at least is trying to explain why the poll-tax is such a vicious attack. By doing this, it may be possible to build a mass campaign of non-registration and non-payment. Some wonder wether the campaign should break the law. If it is alright for Camden to break the law over its Homeless Persons Unit and environmental health standards on some estates, then we could consider it. We should certainly envisage breaking unjust laws. By not co-operating with them, they immediately become obsolete. In Scotland, Campbell Christie, the Secretary of the STUC, publicly tore up his payment notice at the Edinburgh demo. Maybe Tony Dykes will do the same ?

In the area with the highest poll-tax, on the 8 April - the national day of action by the Labour Party against the Tax - the streets of Camden were noticeably empty of Labour members campaigning against the Poll Tax. Unfortunately, it has been left to a small group of socialists to carry on the campaign. But you to can help.

Contact CAMDEN AGAINST THE POLL TAX, phone Dave Grace on 485 3690. Next meeting on 27 April. Public Meeting in Kilburnon 18 May and London Demo gainst the Poll Tax on 4 June.

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NUPE STRIKES TO DEFEND JOBS

On 26 April, camden NUPE will be staging a one-day strike to protest at the threat of loosing 80 jobs. Camden has been merging Departments to form a super "Direct Services" Department run by a management board like a private firm. The services concerned are all infact under threat of privatisation.

Labour councillors have often stated that they would defend staff, in particular low-paid manual staff against the threat of privatisation. However, the council has recently lost several tenders. In order to win tenders in-house, the council is shedding staff, increasing the workload on those remaining, and attacking conditions. This is exactly what the Tories intended with privatisation : to drive down the conditions of council workers to that of the private sector. Nobody wins from privatisation.

But rather than blaming the Tories, the Labour Group has clearly decided to blame the workers for the present crisis. Ken Hulme declared in a DMC that caretakers "spent most of their time in pubs and betting shops". Caretakers are now absolutely solid behind the strike on the 26 April. All socialists should back NUPE.

LABOUR GROUP AGM : MOVING DECKCHAIRS ON THE TITANIC AGAIN !

The Labour Group AGM on May 8 will produce nothing new. The cuts budget was set in March, and the Dykes/Woods and Hulme/Shaw wings of the Labour Group have both promoted and pursued anti-working class policies over the last couple of years. They have savagely cut services, attacked conditions of council workers, and without protest implemented every legislative attack from the Tory government.

The forthcoming AGM will be totally unrelated to any political initiatives, campaigns or struggles in the borough. It will be up to the Manifesto Group of councillors to offer a real alternative to both wings of the right in the Labour Group. This alternative is that of struggle, with the community, unions and other labour councils, to obtain the resources necessary for Camden and defending existing services rather than waiting for the next general election.