CAMDEN LABOUR BRIEFING

Camden: Labour Group Elections

HEADLESS CHICKEN TALKS TO ITSELF

The Labour Group elections were a model of sub-democracy: no branches were consulted regarding their new councillors; neither General Committee was asked for an opinion; the Local Government Committee was brushed aside.

The new Labour Group elected itself a new everything except a new way of doing things.

The Town Hall Smoking Ban ensured a shortage of smoke-filled rooms, but there was a Papal air of dispensation about the way in which positions were allocated. The Group, in absence of the Party, managed to make the worst of all possible worlds.

In the resounding silence of declared policies, where no one stands for anything and everyone stands for something, a Fitzgerald leadership with a support (sic) system comprising of Roy Shaw and Tony Dykes - respectively Deputy Leader and Chair of Policy and Resources - contains enough Machiavellian intent to transform the previous administration into an advertisement for harmony.

The corollary to this scenario is the fundamental shift to the right which was implicit in both the Manifesto and the conduct of the Labour Group prior to May 3rd.

Steve Taylor, Hampstead & Highgate LP

TORIES DOWN - BUT NOT OUT

Labour was the overwhelming victor in the local elections held on May 3rd.

The 8 per cent swing to Labour across the country would be sufficient to elect a Labour government. In many areas - from Liverpool to Bradford to Lewisham to Great Yarmouth and Brighton - the Tories had their worst drubbing for many a year.

But the fact is this wasn't quite the smashing victory we had hoped for - and when share prices rise in the City following an election Labour should always be concerned.

Despite the fact that this was by any standards a rotten result for Thatcher, she is still alive and kicking - and dangerous.

The lesson of May 3rd - which we ignore at our peril - is that we cannot rely on the Tories losing the General Election; we have to win it ourselves.

The swing recorded in the local elections was well below the swing predicted in the opinions polls.

The losses of Brent and Ealing, the Tory successes in Westminster, Wandsworth and Derby, and the Liberals surprising survival pact enabled the headline writers to exhume the Thatcherite corpse.

In the search for scapegoats, some Labour MPs are trying to revive the "London factor".

But if there is a London factor now is must be attributed to the right-wing London Council leaderships who cut jobs and services repeatedly in recent years and and then set high poll taxes.

In general, Labour's campaign was insipid and largely negative.

Our Party Political Broadcast was a naked appeal to the middle class and the only thing more striking than its lack of positive alternatives to Tory failures was its ineffectiveness.

Labour will win the next General Election by mobilising the maximum number of working class voters - which of course includes millions of relatively well-paid working class home owners who have increasingly come to hate Thatcher, her mortgage rates, and her Poll Tax.

Seventy per cent of the population is opposed to the Poll Tax, but Labour came nowhere near securing that level of the vote.

The campaign did not become the referendum on the Poll Tax which it should have been for several reasons.

The Labour leaderships at both national and local levels did everything possible to distance themselves from the grass-roots anti-Poll Tax movement.

It also did not want to be seen defending calling local government - and certainly not calling for increased resources to local Councils.

Only a mass campaign of non-payment and non-implementation, backed by the Labour Party and coupled to a Labour commitment to the full funding of local services, can foil the Tory Poll Tax trap.

Fred Leplat, Somers Town LP

Camden jobs ban over discipline

A BLANKET ban on recruitment in Camden has been agreed by the NALGO NEC, in a dispute over the council's employment policies.

Camden NALGO called for the ban to be imposed last week, when management brought in new procedures for staff.

The changes proposed by the council include new disciplinary procedures and a re-worked flexibility clause.

"This means that you have to agree to do anything, any time that they want you," said branch chair Pippa Lawrence.

"The new contracts are set out to treat staff as numbers, not individuals," she said.

New staff sit alongside existing staff, but on a different contract, under the Camden scheme.

"It's crazy," said Ms Lawrence. "You could have two people, sitting next to each other, one sacked for something the other could not be judged on.

"There is no time limit on the new disciplinary procedures. And this means you could be waiting months for a crucial decision.

"New staff have no automatic right to representation at the hearings.

"They thought they had a bad recruitment problem here before. It's unbelievable they think they'll solve it by making the contracts worse."

STOP THE POLL TAX!

ANGER AGAINST the Poll Tax is spreading throughout Britain. The 200,000 strong demonstration on 31 March was not a flash in the pan. The reality of the Poll Tax is hitting hard as bills are dropping through letter boxes and council services are cut.

Council workers in Greenwich, Newham, Southampton, York, Wandsworth, Hammersmith and other places are taking industrial action against the attack on conditions resulting from the introduction of the Poll Tax.

Workplace anti-poll tax groups are springing up to organise non-payment and demand that their employers do not deduct the tax from they wages. In Scotland, 18 months after the introduction of the tax, there are still one million non-payers.

In Camden, local anti-poll tax groups exist in Regents Park, Somers Town, King's Cross, Castlehaven, West Hampstead, Grafton and Mornington Crescent. Symbolic burnings of Poll Tax bills and payments books are taking place across the borough. Mass non-payment is becoming a reality as confidence grows that individual non-payers are not on their own.

The campaign, which is not supported by the Labour Party or national unions, has already forced the Tory government to consider emergency legislation to soften the impact of the tax. Yet the Labour Party locally and nationally is still opposed to any action against the tax.

Labour Camden Council even refused to appeal against the iniquitous poll tax "capping" the *Ham & High* accurately described this as a capitulation.

The non-payment campaign is one of the issues that is throwing the Tories into crisis. The Tories should not be let off the hook. The anger against the tax must be turned into action: non-payment and non-cooperation.

Adrian States



* * * * * * * * * *

Mass Poll Tax Bill Burning

Saturday 26 May 2pm

Talacre, Prince of Wales Road

* * * * * * * * * *

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

To join the "Camden Stop the Poll Tax Campaign" phone 081 431 2760

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