CAMDEN LABOUR BRIEFING • MAY 1987

THE GROUP ELECTIONS

Introduction

A clear majority of Labour Councillors have accepted that the Party should be involved in this year's elections to the Lsbour Group. They have accepted the formula which was put forward by the Local Government Committee. This formula is relatively simple. It involves a Special Joint Meeting of Labour Councillors and members of the Local Government Committee. This Special Meeting will form an Electoral College. Within this College, Councillors will share 50% of the vote, and LGC members the other 50%. All the major Labour Group and Council Committee positions will be elected at this Specia Joint Meeting, and the results of these elections will then be put to the Labour Group for their endorsement. The Labour Councillors who are standing for positions will be circulating information about themselves throughout the Party from the end of April onwards, and both Branches and General Committees will be able to consider the candidates at their next round of meetings.

The Present

Camden is entering a period of crisis. All sections of the Party and the wider Labour Movement agree on this. Our ability to deal with this crisis will depend upon our ability to organise and develop the support of the local parties, the trade unions and the community, in the active defence of jobs and services. In order for us to succeed in this task, the Council must be united in purpose and capable of developing this broader campaign in practice.

The Future

We urge members of the Labour Party to support candidates who are committed to a programme of defending jobs and services, and who are prepared to organise this defence throughout the Borough and within all sections of the movement. There are a number of key points which we believe form the basis of this programme and which should form the basis of how we vote in the Group Elections:

1. An active defence and implementation of the Manifesto
2. A committment to no cuts in Jobs and Services
3. No increase in Council Rents
4. Withdrawal from the Police Consultative Committee
5. The involvement of the Party in decisions about the Budget
6. The involvement of the Party in the current Group elections - and a specific endorsement of the Special Group/LGC Meeting
7. A committment to honour current Trade Union agreements
8. A committment to policies of Equal Opportunities

Conclusion

The coming year is crucial. At some stage we are going to run out of financial options and we are going to find ourselves in a position of direct confrontation with Central Government. Our success or failure depends upon our ability to begin the campaign for defending jobs and services now. This campaign cannot be confined to the Council Chamber, but must involve all levels of the Party, the trade unions and the wider community. A failure to adopt a programme of active resistance now will mean that we are unable to defend ourselves when the crunch comes. It is not only ourselves we are defending, but the people and workers of Camden. We can only do this with their support and involvement. This is why we are asking Party members to support candidates who are prepared to endorse the programme that is outlined above.

* A statement will be circulated signed by those Councillors who support the involvement of the Party in the current Group Elections

p & p CAMDEN LABOUR BRIEFING, 21 GODWIN COURT, N.W.1

THE POLICE CONSULTATIVE GROUP: Act II- Births, Deaths & Marriages

The second meeting of the Police Consultative Group, on April 22nd, was another example of the leadership's contempt for the community, trade unions and the party. By holding the meeting in an unannounced and secret venue- the Births, Deaths & Marriages section of the New Town Hall- Dykes, Hughes, & co. have demonstrated the extent they will go to to ensure that electoral politics triumphs over socialist principles. By inviting only the press and a 'select' public, those councillors on
birth the PCG clarified their positions: they would rather lick the velvet glove of the police than listen to the community and the party.

For the ad in the 'Ham & High' clearly stated that the PCG meeting would be open to the public, that it would be in the Camden Centre, and that there would be a creche and access for the disabled. For what it's worth, the PCG's constitution states that all meetings must be advertised (we now know that it's not necessary for any such information to be correct), open to the public, facilities provided, etc.. It certainly would have been difficult for a member of the public, and impossible if that person were disabled, to have got past the police and security guards, to have got through the locked doors, and to have located and gained access to the meeting. That Hugh Dykes and the PCG found it more important to have an uninterrupted meeting is indicative of the politics they're pursuing and discredits whatever legitimacy such a
death meeting might have had amongst its supporters. But the fact is that the PCG has no legitimacy, and, though they got through a rather innocuous agenda, the meeting was interrupted on several occasions.

Equally worrying is that, on instructions from Dykes and Hughes, Town Hall security guards were used against those present- some 150 people representing community groups, trade unions and the Labour party, who managed to find their way into or just outside the meeting. Surely the use of guards is a dangerous precedent and perhaps even a breach of contract since it's always been assumed that handling a demonstrative public was beyond the duty of a security guard. Additionally, neither Labour councillors not on the PCG, nor council workers, were allowed into the Town Hall. The police, when questioned at the entrance which they'd sealed-off, said they were acting on instructions from the council.

marriage It seems as though Hughes and Dykes are convinced that the key to socialism is to be found in a Tenant's Association meeting (it was noticeable that no one, other than councillors, came to the meeting as an 'invited' guest representing either CLP). An example of the politics of that particular marriage, one T.A. rep suggested, at the end of the meeting, that civil action be taken against those who were voicing their opposition to the PCG. He was seconded by a vicar who obviously had been influenced by the values of compassion as expressed by the moral majority. Hughes rather took to the idea, but, realising her mistake, said she couldn't speak for the council's solicitors, whereupon jumped up, saying, as leader, he was not about to make martyrs out of anyone, especially since he'd be committing political suicide by doing so.

Briefing will continue to oppose the PCG, and to fight for a police service that's accountable to an elected body. Everyone knows that free standing committees like the PCG aren't accountable to anyone and are unlikely to even come up with any relevant information, much less improve relations between the police and the community. Furthermore Briefing demands that Hughes and Dykes apologise to the public- including the trade unions, community groups and the local Labour party- for deliberately misleading people into thinking that this would be an open meeting, for holding it in an unannounced venue, and for using security guards against those present, including fellow trade unionists. How can any consultation take place when the only people who are allowed to attend PCG meetings are handpicked by the PCG? While being against the PCG, we demand that the next meeting, scheduled for July 1st, be open to the public, and that it be held in a specified place. Briefing urges all those opposed to the PCG to be there.