CAMDEN COUNCIL SAYS - IT'S CUTS!

THE COUNCILLORS

We, the undersigned Councillors voted against the Labour Group's Policy & Resources Report and attempted to move the following resolution:-

"The contents of the Queen's Speech makes it clear that the re-elected Conservative Government means to relaunch its attacks on Local Government. The next 12 months are going to be a life and death struggle to maintain council services to the people of Camden. The Council therefore resolves to:
a) Organise a fightback to resist any Tory legislation which attacks Local Government, its workforce and users of its services
b) Throughout July and August we will consult with the Trade Unions, Community Groups, Self-organised Groups, Tenants Associations and the wider community in Camden
c) This Council, therefore, will make no decisions on cuts until this consultation process has been completed"

We opposed the P&R recommendations because they were brought forward as a panic measure without full consultation with the people who will be at the reciving end of the cuts.

The decisions taken by the Council are tantamount to a direct attack on both the workforce and the wider community, and have critically undermined the ability of the Labour Group to campaign against the Tory onslaught on all Labour Councils.

The refusal of the Mayor on the advice of Councillor Woods (Chief Whip) not to take our resolution on the basis that if it was discussed and if it was passed it might lead to illegality, signals to the people of Camden the weakness of the Leadership's determination to defend both jobs and services.

We will continue to urge full consultation throughout Camden to ensure that the Labour Group has the support of the workers and the community in resisting Tory legislation.

Signed: Cllrs Kate Allen, Steve Bevington, Angela Birtill, Caroline Holding, Gloria Lazenby, Karin Newbury, Sandra Plummer, Graham Shurety, Adrian States.

* AN IMMEDIATE FREEZE ON ALL VACANCIES
* AN IMMEDIATE FREEZE ON ALL GROWTH
* AN IMMEDIATE CUT IN OVERTIME WORKING
* NO RENEWAL OF TEMPORARY CONTRACTS

THE UNIONS

The following statement was issued by Camden Council Joint Trade Unions Steering Committee (NALGO•NUPE•Building Department Joint Shop Stewards Committee):-

"We have already complained about the failure of the Council to keep the workfo informed as the budget crisis developed, yet the Council went ahead and passed a cuts policy without bothering to tell the staff what was being proposed or what the effect would be on their work.

"The Council meeting took place under hig security and all staff working in the Tow Hall were told to leave at 5.00 p.m. - a marked contrast to the Council meetings o 1985 when Councillors encouraged maximum attendance

"We assume one of the reasons why the Council is so reluctant to inform staff directly is because they do not themselve have the faintest idea of the practical implications of their policy. We estimate that there are 900 vacant posts and 300 temporary staff but can only begin to guess at the chaos that will ensue when the holiday season starts, or people fall sick or go on maternity leave. This decision makes a nonsense of the Council' Equal Opportunities Policy, as well as their "no cuts" policy.

"The unions believe the Council have not acted in the best interests either of sta or service users by rushing to make cuts last week without proper consultation or consideration and we support those Councillors who called for less haste and more reflection at last week's Council meeting"

THE MEASURES AGREED AT THE COUNCIL MEETIN ARE BY NO MEANS THE END OF THE CUTS. THEY ARE SIMPLY THE BEGINNING. IN THE ABSENCE OF A POLITICAL STRATEGY OF RESISTANCE, THE COUNCIL WILL BE FORCED INTO A POSITION OF TOTAL SURRENDER - NOT ONLY ON FINANCE, BUT ON THE POLL TAX, PRIVATISATION, COUNCIL RENTS, PLANNING AND REDUNDANCIES.

IT IS THE RESPONSIBILITY OF SOCIALISTS TO DEFEND JOBS AND COMMUNITIES • FIGHTBACK

p+p CAMDEN LABOUR BRIEFING
c/o 24 GODWIN COURT NW1

NO CUTS IN JOBS & SERVICES • DEFEND CAMDEN COUNCIL • NO CUTS IN JOBS & SERVICES

THE WAY FORWARD OPEN MEETING THE WAY FORWARD

SPEAKERS WILL INCLUDE: COUNCILLORS, TRADE UNIONISTS, VOLUNTARY ORGANISATIONS
7.30 Wednesday 29 July, Teatro Technic, Crowndale Road NW1

FIGHTBACK OR CUTBACK ?

Given the lack of consultation regarding Camden's financial situation, and the way in which the debate has been manipulated, it's important to counterpose the Leadership's position with that of Briefing's. We need to consider what each position means in political terms, and what is likely to occur over the coming months. The basic premises for any fightback are obvious: the defence of jobs and services; and the recognition that local government is in the front line of the Tory assault on the working class. So far, however, the Leadership have only been able to come up with a financial strategy for dealing with the onslaught. Their position is as follows: stay in office at all costs; stay within the law, making cuts to minimise the damage, while protecting 'front-line' services; after making these cuts, consult with the unions, party, and community groups about a long term strategy.

However, with more cuts to come in the Autmn, the Leadership will inevitably move from one crisis to another, making a long term strategy difficult, if not impossible to formulate. With no political strategy, no real consultation, and making cuts at every crisis, the Leadership will inevitably find itself in a confrontational position - not with the Tories, but with its own workforce, the community, and a substantial section of its own party. To avoid any change in policy, the Leadership will attempt, as it has done with the party, to substitute the imposition of its policy onto the relevant bodies rather than actually consult with them. At the same time, the Leadership will attempt to drive a wedge between NUPE and NALGO, while adopting a 'lock-out' mentality (the Town Hall has already become Fortress Camden). Consequently, any campaign which the Leadership initiates is bound to be ineffective

Finally, as in the run-up to the General Election, the Leadership will patiently wait for a Labour Government. In the meantime, they will reluctantly accept the entire package of promised legislation - the poll tax, privatisation, increased council rents, and so on.

We believe that there is an alternative to this kind of defeatism. Our strategy is based on a direct defence of jobs and services - even at the risk of illegality - and the knowledge that an active resistance can be mobilised for this defence. Indeed, unless we are to witness the total destruction of local government, we believe that defence and resistance are an absolute necessity. If we wait for a Labour government there is every likelihood that there will be nothing left to defend.

For socialists, it comes down to the basic question: do we fight or do we capitulate? As far as we are concerned, there can only be one answer to this question.

The consultation exercise must be framed within a political strategy of resistance, working with the unions, the community and the party, in order to mobilise this resistance. The consultation must form the basis of a campaign, involving public meetings, discussion groups, and an honest appraisal of our financial position as the crisis deepens.

It is important to remember that other Labour Boroughs will soon find themselves in the same position as Camden, and the campaign must be linked to the resistance movement in these authoritie

The political bedrock of the campaign must, on the part of the Council, be a refusal to make cuts in jobs and services, and an acceptance that this will, ultimat , lead to direct confrontation with the Tory government and the likelihood of Labour Councillors being disqualified.

However, the removal of Labour Councillors from office - if this occurs - must be seen as a political weapon that can be turned against the Tories, using the by-elections as a means of mobilising workers and communities in defence of jobs and services, and the principle of local democracy. Unless we are prepared to defend that principle, and put ourselves on the line in that defence, there will be nothing left to defend in four years time. It is a stark choice, but it is a choic that must be made.

The alternative being put forward by the Leadership is no alternative at all. It is simply a policy of collusion and capitulation, and it must be resisted by everyone who believes in the defence of local democracy.

CAMDEN BRIEFING '87

All Meetings 8.00 p.m.
The Town Hall, Euston Rd

Monday 24 August
Monday 28 September
Monday 2 November
Monday 30 November

BRIEFING SUPPORTERS WELCOME

NO CUTS IN JOBS & SERVICES • DEFEND CAMDEN COUNCIL • NO CUTS IN JOBS & SERVICES

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