1983

NOT SOUTHAMPTON LABOUR BRIEFING

CAN LABOUR STILL WIN ?

We enter the election period in a difficult position. No amount of bluff can hide the fact that Labour faces an uphill struggle if we are to win. But it is only Labour that can offer a socialist alternative to the possibility of another Tory government, and the threat it poses to the working class and oppressed groups in society.

Labour will stand the best chance of winning if it puts to the front its socialist policies and mobilises the support of all sections of the community that will benefit from them. This means linking up with the mass popular campaigns against nuclear weapons - CND and Greenham Common. It means supporting the People's March for Jobs and the many trade union campaigns against privatisation.

Through our canvassing and leafleting we should get support for the May24 women's day of action for peace, and the June 5 demonstration in London that will greet the People's March. We must show by our actions rather than our promises that we support these campaigns. This will complement putting over Labour's case on the doorstep.

In the campaign we must put forward an unequivocal commitment to unilateral nuclear disarmament, and the removal of all nuclear bases from Britain.

Other key areas of Labour's policies that need to be highlighted are -

* a programme of nationalisation and expansion of the economy to return to full employment
* a commitment to raise working class living standards, and against incomes policies; the defence of trade union rights and the repeal of Tebbit's laws
* to campaign for positive action for women's employment, health care, and the right to abortion
* to repeal the Nationality Act and Immigration Acts, and to campaign against all forms of racism
* to protect civil liberties by obtaining accountability of the police
* a commitment to a united Ireland, the banning of plastic bullets and the repeal of the Prevention of Terrorism Act
* to adopt a socialist foreign policy that supports liberation movements in Central America, South Africa and the Middle East.

Within the Party the witch-hunt must end, and all adopted candidates be allowed to to fight the election for Labour.

Labour can break the hold of the Conservatives if it inspires people to go and persuade others to turn out in their millions to vote against the Tories and the SDP. We can do that in Southampton, and if we are successful that could return a Labour government.

Southampton Labour Briefing is produced by members of Southampton Labour Party who are in general support of the policies of the weekly newspaper Socialist Action.

For further details phone Soton 39851.

POLITICS AND ACCOUNTABILITY

If we cut into the bloated 'lifestyles' of MPs, will that ensure that they better represent their working class constituents? The LPYS seems to think so. Just at the point that John Denham and Alan Whitehead are set to get their paws on a fat salary and big meals, and betray the Southampton party, the Young Socialists rush to the rescue.

Unfortunately the comrades are missing the point. The real problem is how to make MPs accountable, a problem that left groups have been battling on for years. If Dennis Healey gets a retainer of £6000 a year from the Daily Express, we should be asking why he wants to write for such a poison sheet, rather than trying to claw his rich pickings into the Party coffers.

Comrades who want to keep MPs in touch with local workers by tightening the purse strings are dealing with a political problem by administrative means. Worse still, their bureaucratic solution could damage the ability of radical MPs to campaign effectively.

Firstly, right wing MPs (Tory or otherwise) don't look plump and pink because of their huge salary, but because they have lucrative business interests to subsidise their political hobby. Left wing MPs (and this would especially apply to working class activists who should be speaking for Labour) are at a disadvantage precisely because they have to fork out for secretaries, travel etc.. If our representative is fully accountable, then the problem of directorships and contacts with reactionary newspapers does not arise.

Secondly a Labour MP does not get seperated from his constituents or local Party because of the champagne and fast cars, but because he becomes mesmerised by the power machinery of Westminster. Rather than penalising a radical MP for entering Parliament we should be supporting him or her through continual discussion and political debate in the local Party. It will then be easier to make sure that parliamentary activity is just one aspect of the Labour MPs activity.

Does all this mean that a full two-way dialogue set les the point completely? No, because, despite their bureaucratic proposals, the LPYS plan to rifle the pockets of the careerist freeloaders, to stop them selling out, is motivated by a deeper suspicion of Parliament. This is healthy, and reflects the growing attraction among the rank and file for extra-parliamentary politics.

The PPC 'tendency' doesn't like the personal and administrative attempt to clamp down on the meagre remuneration a radical MP can expect for a double-time job. But they are a little more vague about the relationship between parliamentary and extra-parliamentary struggle.

If Parliament is inherently hostile to genuinely radical MPs who want an advance towards socialism at all levels of society, the whole balance of politics should shift out of the commons and into our own common political action.

Against the LPYS we should be saying that radical MPs need more adequate facilities and support, not less. But against the PPC 'tendency' perhaps, we should argue that stepping up political involvement of the constituency in the MP's work also involves less dialogue with Parliament, and more attention paid to building the power of the millions who will never have the dubious privilege of revolving their lives around the division bell.

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