CAMDEN LABOUR BRIEFING

&£ 23 March 88

CARING CUTS CONTINUED

Papers presented to the last council meeting give details of the latest services to fall under the socialist axe:

Pensioners

* 10 Luncheon Clubs for pensioners, which are vital for the health and social life of many elderly people, are to be closed.
* The price of meals for pensioners, through luncheon clubs, meals-on-wheels, etc, is to be increased by 50%, from 40p to 60p.
* The waiting list for meals-on-wheels is already long. It is now to be frozen, with no more names going on it. Let them eat socialist policies?

People with disabilities

* No evening transport for people with disabilities.
* The Recreation for Housebound service provides trips for physically disabled housebound people. This service is to be axed completely.

Nurseries and care of children

* Babies' rooms in nurseries are all to be closed.
* Places in nurseries are to be available only for 'highest priority' children, meaning children at risk. This not only removes debars the service from thousands of children and parents who desperately need it, but stigmatises the service.
* Three nurseries are to be closed outright: Playgroup 152, Samuel Lithglow Nursery and one more, probably Truro Street.
* Childminders' charages to be increased, and subsidies to families using childminders reduced. The Manifesto promised to expand this service.
* The General Peripetetic Team helps families with young children in severe crisis. There has been great unmet demand for this service. 4 posts are to be cut from an already small team.

Repairs

* The council is now making very high charges for repairs. many people are figthened to report faults in case they can6t afford to pay the bill.
* Delays in carrying out essetnial repairs are anyway now very long. Councillors, voluntary organisations and tenants have been demanding list of repairs for months to no avail.
* No large capital schemes, meaning rehabilitiation costing over £50,000, are to be done for the next few years.

We have been told that the reason for not organising a fight against the government is that it is better for Labour to carry out the cuts rather than letting the Tories take over. Essential services could then be maintained, the least important services trimmed. Briefing has never accepted that a Tory takeover of the council is an inevitable outcome of fighting the government. But can anyone now claim that the services being cut are 'inessential'? **Many of the services listed above concern the most basic needs of some of the most vulnerable members of the community. Some are matters of life or death. They show that the story sold to the Party over the last six months, that a 20% cut can be carried out humanely, is a COMPLETE FANTASY.**

NEXT CAMDEN LABOUR BRIEFING :

Monday 28 March, 8pm, Town Hall.

NO RETURN TO VICTORIAN VALUES!

NO RETURN TO THE BACK STREETS!

David Alton's Bill is an attack on the 1967 Abortion Act which made abortion legal. Alton and his supporters see it as the first stage in a fight to overturn the Act altogether-Alton says that in his Utopia,abortion would be outlawed.

His Bill aims to make abortion after 18 weeks illegal.Even if this is amended in committee to 24 weeks,thousands of women could be affected. Last year there were only 29 abortions after 24 weeks-for the most desparate cases. However FAB (Fight Alton's Bill) estimate that if abortions were illegal after 24 weeks,doctors would protect themselves by imposing an actual limit of 20 or 22 weeks-which would affect 2000 to 3000 women a year.

NHS CUTS

NHS cuts are making the situation worse. Last year,a fifth of women who had abortions over 20 weeks approached their doctors before 12 weeks. Also abortion and Family Planning facilities are often some of the first things to go when cuts are made. In some areas-like Brent-there are now no NHS abortion facilities at all.

LABOUR MPs

David Alton's Bill passed its Second Reading on 22nd January. It was passed by only 45 votes. There were 36 Labour MPs who voted for the Bill and 19 who abstained or did not vote.THOSE MPs COULD HAVE ENSURED THAT THE BILL WAS THROWN OUT ON 22nd JAN.

Those who invoke conscience are saying that a handful of men have the right to curtail the rights of thousands of women. Nobody is forcing women to have abortions. Nobody is forcing staff who feel it is against their conscience to perform abortions. But this handful of male MPs are trying to criminalise women who have late abortions- Abortion being illegal has never stopped it happening- it has meant that rich women pay for it and other women are forced to the back-streets. Labour MPs should vote for Party policy- A WOMAN'S RIGHT TO CHOOSE.

NO REDUCTION IN TIME LIMITS!

Camden Fight the Alton Bill Campaign meets every Tuesday, 7pm at Kingsay Princeton College, Sidouth St, off Gray's Inn Rd, WC1. All welcome.

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Our reply to Clause 28 must be -

DEFEND LESBIAN AND GAY RIGHTS!

Clause 28 of the Local Government Bill, which has now completed its passage through parliament, is the most serious attack on lesbian and gay rights for 100 years. The clause would prohibit local authorities from 'promoting' homosexuality, and schools and colleges from 'presenting homosexuality as an acceptable family relationship'.

Because the existing law already regards lesbian and gay sexuality as against 'the public policy of the law', 'promotion' can be interpreted by the courts in an extremely broad way. **Anything which presents homosexuality as equally valid to heterosexuality, or which presents it as a normal part of human sexuality, can be counted as 'promotion'.**

This means that it will be illegal to teach school students about homosexuality except as a 'misfortune' or a 'disease'. It could be illegal for lesbian and gay local authority workers who have any dealings with the public, especially with youth, to be open about their sexuality; equal opportunity policies would go out the window. Councils would not be able to fund lesbian and gay organisations. Licencing of lesbian and gay pubs, and books treating lesbian and gay themes in libraries could be deemed illegal. Camden's Lesbian and Gay Unit and Lesbian Centre will be severely

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THE NEED TO TAKE A STAND ON BRITAIN IN IRELAND

Enniskillen, Stalker, the Birmingham 6, Gibraltar, Miltown Cemetry, Andersonstown - the names signpost a crisis in British policy on Ireland since last November. On no other issue have the Tories been in disarray with such consistency since 1979. And yet the Labour front bench has failed to present any kind of clear alternative, or point out the reactionary, repressive and sectarian reality behind the government's policy.

2½ years ago, the Party was giving full support to an Accord that has subsequently produced an assault on human liberties and human lives. Two months ago the Party's front bench was calling on the government to prosecute John Stalker for spilling the beans on dirty tricks. A fortnight ago the government were "congratulated" for operating summary executions without trial in Gibraltar. Last week end there was a call for the RUC to be allowed to make operational decisions according to what they think best.

Fortunately for Labour's standing in the Irish community, there has been an alternative voice. 60 MPs proposed a resolution in the Commons denouncing the Gibraltar shootings as capital punishment without trial. In the Party the Labour Committee on Ireland (LCI) has since 1980 consistently advocated a policy of dialogue, British withdrawal, civil liberties for all, and the right of the Irish people to decide their own future. Without the LCI's pressure, it is unlikely that the Party would be giving even formal backing to Irish unity and opposing strip searching and the PTA.

Holborn and St Pancras GC should make sure it backs that pressure, supports those campaigns, and engages in that dialogue, by reaffirming its affiliation to the LCI. The LCI is a broadly based campaign. Its supporters include, for example, Clair Short MP and members of the LCC; its AGMs have been addressed by Kevin Macnamara and Peter Archer of the Solidarity Group. There is no serious alternative in Britain to support for the policies of the LCI, other than collusion with Tory-backed British repression.

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CLAUSE 29 (continued from previous page)

threatened.

The clause, though introduced originally by Jill Knight, has been backed by the government with three line whips. *The Tories are attacking lesbian and gay people and their sexuality as part of their 'promotion' of the heterosexual family. Families (in practice, women!) are expected to pick up the pieces as the welfare state is destroyed: t take care of the sick and the elderly, take greater responsibility for child care as nurseries are closed, support the unwaged and young people as social security is cut down and the housing crisis worsens. Clause 29 is part of the attempt to break up the welfare state.*

To their eternal shame, the Labour front bench initially agreed with the basic aim of the clause, while seeking to amend it. The government has felt confident in supporting th clause because of the continuing attacks made over the last year by the Labour front benc against the lesbian and gay rights policies of 'loony left' councils. Fortunately, the tremendous support and anger harnessed by the Stop the Clause Campaign has now forced Kinnock to come out against the clause as a whole.

The council has voted to continue with the work of the Lesbian and Gay Committee. It is **vital that this position is maintained, and not, like so many other promises in the recen past, dropped when the going gets rough.** What is at stake is the existence of any rights for lesbian and gay people in local government services and employment.

There will be a meeting on Thursday, 24 March, at 7.30 pm, at the Hamden Centre, Ossulton St, NW1, to set up a Cadmen Stop the Clause Group and to plan actions in Camden on 8 Apri which is a national day of local action against the clause. For details, contact the Lesbian and Gay Unit, 388 2484 ext 2265.

Affiliate to, and get a speaker from Stop the Clause Campaign, c/o ULU, Malet St, WC1E 7HY; 580 9551 ext 227.

Next Camden Labour Briefing :

Monday 28 March, 8pm, Town Hall

NURSERY USERS FIGHT COUNCIL'S STRATEGY

Truro Street Nursery was threatened by the council with closure from April. The mothers and children occupied the nursery to protest. They have now forced the Chair of Social Services, Richard Sumry, to give a stay of execution until at least August.

Caversham Nursery parents have written to the Camden New Journal to protest against the council's cuts, not only in nruseries, but as a strategy. They point out that the Labour Manifesto promised nursery places for all under 5s; yet the waiting list is now 1,500. Nurseries are being closed, and staff cut with inevitable impact on the standard of service. The parents say that they are opposed to increased charges for nurseries and *will refuse to pay. They conclude:*

"As Labour councillors, you can't get away with passing on the Tories' cuts. You were elected to defend services, and we expect you to join us in fighting the Tories to not only fund the NHS but also council services as well."

When will the council start listening to the ordinary people of Camden?

ILEA FIGHTS....ITS WORKERS AND USERS

ILEA agreed on 1 March to make £93 million worth of cuts. This will mean 1,200 teachers, over 800 college lecturers and 4,000 support staff loosing their jobs. It will mean cuts in student grants, so that fewer working class young people have the chance to receive further educat . It will mean a cut in block grants to the Inner London Polytechnics.

Meanwhile, the service has already deteriorated badly. Many schools now have had subjects taken off their curricula altogether, and have class sizes of 30 or more. Yet ILEA has just brought out another set of figures for 'Teachers Above Authorised Numbers' to show 'overstaffing'. Both GCs are opposed to TAANS. But Fletcher has ignored Party opposition to his policies.

And what is the government's reward for Labour carrying out 'responsible' cuts in ILEA? OUTRIGHT ABOLITION!

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THE NIGHTMARE TICKET

It's a funny old game politics. Just as the local media are gearing themselves for the battle of the Titanics between Roy Shaw and Tony Dykes, we learn that Shaw has actually managed to float a crew. The full collision ticket being canvassed by the right is as follows:

Leader: Roy Shaw
Deputy Leaders: Barbara Hughes and Ken Hulme
Chair of Group: Mary Cane
Secretary of Group: Pat Denny
Chief Whip: Gill Green
Deputy Whip: Nicola Kutupan
Chair of Policy and Resources: Bob Latham
Vice Chairs of P&R: Nirmal Roy and Janet Pope

Additionally, it is being proposed that both Housing Committees should be merged under Gareth Smyth, and that the Women's, Race and Lesbian and Gay Committees be merged under Barabra Hughes. The sources for our information would seem to be impeccable, but Barabara Hughes takes a bit of believing, as does Nirmal Roy. Neither have a record of supporting the hard right in the slavish manner that would be required, and both have been solid supporters of Tony Dykes. Still, it's a funny of old game. Unless you happen to be at the receiving end of the cuts.

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DIARY

26 March Womens Section fundraising dinner. Tickets £5.00/£2.50. Caroline 485 1087
8 April Local actions on Clause 29
SWAPO Benefit. After Tonite and El Sondino de Londres. 8 till late. £4.00/£2.50. Camden Centre. Organised by Kings Cross LP
9 April London Fights Back conference. Islington Town Hall, Upper St, N1 10-4.30 £2/£1
16/17 April North London Socialist Conference, North London Poly, Holloway Rd, N7 £5/£2.