# CAMDEN LABOUR BRIEFING

26 April 1988

## BENN & HEFFER: *that's the ticket!*

**The Labour leadership contest has put socialism back on the agenda.** The present Labour leadership's response to two general election defeats has been a switch to 'new realism' - a philosphy which reflects the failure of the Labour leadership to recognise that the key to a real political victory over Thatcher lies in the mobilisation of all the most oppressed in our society.

The totally undemocratic 'policy review' and stunts like *Labour Listens* acknowledge the arguments of Thatcherism about individualism, 'efficiency' and the market economy - they are unlikely to give people the confidence to fight back.

It *is* possible to win victories - it was the action of the Manchester nurses, not the parliamentary Labour Party's interventions that forced the NHS to the top of the political agenda.

The response of the new realists was to turn their backs on the health workers by rejecting the Campaign Group's resolution to the NEc that supported the strike action.

In a bid to be 'respectable' the Kinnock leadership refused to condemn police violence in the miners' strike; did not disown Patricia Hewitt's letter blaming lesbians and gays for the Greenwich bye-election defeat; refuses to call for a strategy of not paying or collecting to defeat the poll tax in Scotland; did not condemn nuclear power after Chernobyl; and refuses to be seen dead anywhere near a picket line.

Roy Hattersley's contribution to the fight against Alton's Bill has been to say that women who died from back-street abortions before 1967 had a choice.

While the opponents of Benn and Heffer will denounce the contested election as a distraction, socialists in the labour movement should see it as an opportunity to widen out the debate around policy, to give support to people in struggle outside parliament and to put socialism back on the agenda.

Jill Entwistle

MEETING TO LAUNCH

BENN & HEFFER

ELECTION CAMPAIGN

FOR CAMDEN

TUESDAY 3 MAY, 8pm

Town Hall

All welcome.

## STOP THE CLAUSE

Camden's Lesbian and Gay unit, a significant number of library books, plays and shows being performed in Camden, funding for voluntary organisations and the rights of Camden teachers are all under threat from Clause 29 of the Local Government Bill currently going through parliament. The clause threatens a full-blooded return to bigotry and Victorian values in its claim to outlaw the supposed 'promotion of homosexuality'.

STOP THE CLAUSE

NATIONAL DEMONSTRATION : SATURDAY 30

Assemble Embankment 12.00

Rally and Festival in Kennington Par

SOLIDARITY WITH PALESTINE !

DEMONSTRATE ON SUNDAY 15 MAY

1pm at the Embankment

**ON 29 MARCH 180 teachers in five secondary schools in Camden took ½ day's unofficial strike action in response to the compulsory redeployment of 43 'surplus' teachers.** Despite the lack of support by the NUT and ILTA. It was particularly successful in that the march was supported by over 200 parents, students and non-teaching staff.

At Camden School for Girls, an emergency public meeting on 28 March was attended by over 500 parents and students who expressed their dismay and anger at the cuts. These cuts are a disaster for children - classes will get bigger, whole subject areas will no longer be offered, and support for children with special educational needs will be drastically reduced. Across Camden special educational needs and English as a second language has been halved.

In Camden School for Girls Russian, sociology, classics, special needs and PE have been drastically cut. At Hampstead School there will be no information or design technology in the lower school. It will be working class and ethnic minority children who will suffer the most - so much for an equal opportunities policy.

The effect on teachers has been devastating - hence the inclusion of non-union members on the strike, despite low morale and punitive measures threatened by ILEA. It has not escaped attention, the fact that a disproportionate number of union activists have been victimised - in Camden three union reps, 2 assistant officers and a committee member. With over 1,000 'surplus' teachers and only 50 retraining places, many teachers will be forced to leave teaching.

Una Doyle, Camden NUT.

## *A WOMAN'S RIGHT TO CHOOSE . . .*

AS DAVID ALTON'S Bill, which seeks to reduce the time limit for legal abortions to 18 weeks, approaches its third reading, the Labour leadership has left it to Labour MPs consciences as to how they will vote.

This is despite a resolution at the 1985 Labour conference against the conscience clause being passed by 5 million to 500,000 against. Were David Alton to win, it would be the first successful attack on the 1967 act (which legalised abortion) and would certainly spur the anti-abortionists on to further attacks.

If labour MPs had voted against Alton, it would have fallen at its second reading. A 3 line whip must be imposed making it compulsory for Labour MPs to vote against Alton.

**... NOT A LABOUR MP'S RIGHT TO CHOOSE!**

* ***Write*** to Labour MPs calling on them to vote against Alton.
* ***Lobby*** the NEC, Labour Party HQ, 150 Walworth Rd, on Wed 27 April 9am - 10am.
* ***Demonstrate*** on the eve of the 3rd reading. 5 May Malet St, outside ULU. 6.30pm.
* ***Contact*** Camden FAB for further information. Gill 387 8557.

## SOCIALIST CONFERENCE

380 people from all over North London met on the week-end of the 16 & 17 April at the local Socialist Conference. Tony Benn adressed the conference with his message for the Party leadership election : support workers and oppressed in struggle against the Tories, develop a programme to meet their needs and re-assert traditional socialist ideas. The conference was unanimous in believing that there was nothing new or realist about "new-realism". Reconvened Socialist Conference in Chesterfield on the 11 and 12 June. For details phone Davy Jones on 607 9729.