CAMDEN LABOUR BRIEFING

24 January 1989

THREAT OF REDUNDANCIES IN CAMDEN

Two measures are being pushed through by the Council which will lead to 310 jobs being lost. After last year's cuts, it took 12 months to redeploy 80 staff. It is therefore likely that the loss of 310 jobs will mean compulsory redundancies.

The first measure is the amalgamation of the old Building and Works Department into a new one. This will lead to 200 jobs being lost. The reason for this amalgamation is to allow it to become a quasi-independant section of the Council which will be able to tout for work outside the Council, and thereby (it is hoped) withstand compulsory competitive tendering. This is a joke as the Housing Department is currently using private contractors on a large scale for all sorts of work. This indicates that there is little real commitment to direct labour. This amalgamation is therefore aimed at softening up council departments to carry out competitive tendering on the Tories terms : by shedding jobs and attacking conditions.

The second measure confirms the points above : 70 jobs on the dust and 40 in street-sweeping are to go so that the Council has a chance to "win" in house the competitive tender for these services. Obvioulsy the workers concerned will not be winning anything from competitive tendering but redundancies. The irony of the situation is that NUPE, who represents the workers concerned, has not been informed of these job losses despite a promise of consultation by the Labour Group after its co-operation with the cuts last year. A NUPE mass meeting is being called to consider the action necessary to defend jobs.

By Briefing supporters in NALGO and NUPE.

NEXT CAMDEN LABOUR BRIEFING MEETING

TUESDAY 7 FEBRUARY, 8pm
Venue to announced

Debate on "Charter 88": Will it help to defeat the Tories ?
Speaker : Mike Marqusee, Labour Briefing Editorial Board and Convenor of Socialist Conference Democratic Rifghts Group

KEN HULME IS NOT A FORGER

An investigation by the Council leadership has been launched into letters sent on Council headed paper to the local press with the forged signatures of cllrs Gill, Plummer and Sumray. The typewriter used appears to be one from an office regularly used by councillors. Nobody has yet admitted to this sordid affair.

Unfortunately, a scurilous and totally unfounded rumour is going around the Camden Labour Parties that Ken Hulme, councillor and secretary to the LCC, is responsible for these forged letter. Whatever political differences we may have with Ken, we should certainly defend him from any attacks on his character and reputation, which are both beyond reproach. Ken may have in the past distributed "spoof" Briefings, but we would certainly not hold this against him. A thorough investigation will certainly clear his name. The real forger should do the honourable thing and start by resigning from the Council and Labour Party.

Fred Leplat, Somers Town

CAMDEN RENT INCREASE ATTACKS TENANTS

The promised improvement in housing mangement despite last year's cuts is seen as a sick joke by tenants who have to pay for most of their repairs and have to fight their way through piles of rubbish on their estates. The Housing Department lost 40% of its staff in a year and is desperately overstretched.

The Labour Group will probably decide to raise the rents by an average of £1.95 as requested by the Government. This is bad enough as it would be twice the level of inflation. But Gareth Smyth, Chair of Housing is considering adding an extra £1 bringing the increase to a £3 average. He claims that this is to allow for more repairs and maintenance. The real reason is to smooth in the self-financing of rents as required by the new Housing Bill and to ensure that the Poll Tax is at lower level than previously announced.

This is nothing but a kick in the teeth of tenants who have been going in their hundreds to meetings against the Housing Bill.

HEALTH SCANDAL IN LEVITA HOUSE

Levita House has been used since 1984 as temporary accomodation for homeless families. Decoration, maintenace and management is done by a London Quadrant, a housing association. But Camden is respomnsible for external repairs, caretaking, etc.. In January 1988, Camden's Environmental Health Department inspected some flats. Their report concluded that "each flat (inspected) was so far defective as to be not resonably suitable (i.e. unfit) for human habitation" ! The report has been with the Director of Housing since March 1988, and no action whasoever has been taken to alleviate the danger to the health of the families. To make things worse, the Environmental Health Department was cut by 30% last year, and its officers have been instructed not to inspect council housing ! So much for the promise of the Labour Group that the cuts would not affect health and safety !

Carolyne Holding, Councillor.