CAMDEN LABOUR BRIEFING

LEGLESS CHICKEN RUNS AMOCK IN CUTS FIASCO!

Take a principle, double it, divide it by seven, add three, multiply it by two, divide it by four and subtract the remaining number from the total - and you have a reasonable approximation of what is left of the Labour Group's commitment to defend (and extend) services and jobs in the Borough.

When the Tories came to power in 1979 they embarked upon a carefully calculated, strategic programme that was designed to initially demoralise and ultimately defeat the working class, their organisations and their communities. The Tories were extremely selective in choosing their initial targets. Ostensibly popular measures - such as the sale of Council housing at a reduced price to tenants who could afford to buy - were coupled with astutely directed attacks on trade unions which were already weakened or demoralised by cuts that had been inflicted by Callaghan's Labour administration. It wasn't until their second term of office that the Tories felt confident enough to take on the more powerful trade unions and commence an assault on the Metropolitan Counties and Labour-controlled local authorities. The Miners' Strike, the abolition of the Metropolitan Counties, and the various campaigns against rate-capping, have been well-documented. But in each case, the Tories were careful to prepare their ground in advance, and to ensure that resistance to their measures was on terms and conditions that overwhelmingly suited their tactics. Even before their third successive victory in June of this year, the Tories were preparing the ground for the current legislation.

Camden's financial difficulties are simply the first stage in a campaign against Labour-controlled local authorities that will be sustained for the next four years.

The question that we have asked the Labour leadership in Camden from the beginning has been: <u>What is your bottom line</u>? What measures would you consider to be totally unacceptable? What cuts in either jobs or services would be necessary to reverse the current policy of surrender? We are still waiting for an answer.

In the meantime, what the Labour Group leadership are doing, is effectively paving the way for future legislation that the Tories are planning.

The proposal to cut services by 20% and to reduce the workforce by some 1,500 jobs is suicidal. It has already created conflict between the Labour Group leadership and virtually every section of the community and the workforce. Strikes and lock-outs have become commonplace in Camden, petitions, lobbies and marches, <u>against</u> the Labour Group are weekly events.

Laws will be passed to force local authorities to make Council housing self-financing. This will mean average rent increases in Camden of £31 per week. The Labour leadership's response to this proposal is to consider immediate rent increases! This will alienate the Council tenants who we need on our side to campaign against the legislation, and it will effectively prepare the ground for that legislation.

Laws will be passed to force local authorities to dispose of

continued over



land and grant planning applications to the highest bidders. The Labour leadership's response to these proposals is to enter into immediate deals with property speculators and multi-nationals, effectively reducing local communities and organisations to spectators as their assets and their land is sold to the highest bidder.

In order to push through cuts it is also necessary for the Council leadership to play off one group against another in the fight for reduced resources. At a time when unity is of absolutely vital importance, the leadership of the Council are embarking on a policy which creates the maximum dis-unity, and again, which demoralises and defeats those who will be in the direct line of the Tories' forthcoming assaults. It is a myopic capitulation of the worst possible kind. And we find it impossible to defend or support.

We would urge everyone in the Labour Party to consider the implications of what the Labour Group are doing. They are destroying not only their own credibility, but the credibility of the Party and the hopes and aspirations of everyone who perceives the Labour Party to be in their interests. It is a suicidal path - politically, because we are engineering the destruction of our social base; socially, because we are providing for the dismantling of the social fabric; and economically because we are weakening and undermining those on whom the future of socialism depends.

There is an alternative. And unless we begin the process of resistance now, there will be nothing left to defend in four years' time.

Steve Taylor (Hampstead & Highgate CLP, in a personal capacity)

CAMDEN LABOUR BRIEFING

Next meeting :
Monday 2 November, 8pm .
Town Hall, Committee Room 3 .

AFTER THE LABOUR PARTY &
CHESTERFIELD CONFERENCES :
WHAT IS THE NEXT MOVE FOR THE LEFT ?
and
FIGHTING THE CUTS IN CAMDEN

CAMDEN CAMPAIGN AGAINST THE CUTS

meets every Wednesday at 6.30pm in the Workshops, 43 Carol Street, NW1, Near Camden Town tube .

CAMDEN PAVES THE WAY FOR TORIES

Camden Council is launching an attack on its workforce that would be the envy of any Tory employer.

Mental handicap care workers are on all-out strike following the victimisation of one of their colleagues who refused to abandon national NALGO policy. Despite the strikers' willingness to resolve the dispute, councillors and management are evidently keener on union-bashing than providing a service.

Workers in the libraries have secured a victory over the issue of vacant posts. In both disputes, individuals have been victimised and threatened with lock out.

The NUPE Executive (in favour of co-operation with the Labour Group) are supporting a strike in the Boiler Maintenance Section. The Boiler section has been threatened with re-organisation that will lead to losses in income of up to one third. Again, the council are refusing to negotiate, and are out to smash any union organisation as a prelude to privatisation.

The investigation into the Bed & Breakfast "scandal" is farcical for two reasons. First of all, the very workers sent home and effectively criminalised by the council leadership have been arguing for months that, given little resources for checks, hoteliers would find it easy to profiteer. Secondly, to close the Homeless Persons Unit in such a rough-shod way is just a cynical means by which the council hopes to wash its hands of many homeless people.

The one-day strike on 29th October by NALGO was supported overwhelmingly at a branch meeting. By itself it is not enough, but it places strike action on the agenda. Labour Party members must support this and other actions against the cuts.

Padrig Jones(in personal capacity)