CAMDEN LABOUR BRIEFING

November 1987

CAMDEN DEPORTS HOMELESS

Camden Council has a racist housing policy . Despite public denials of Dykes and Smyth, the Labour Group has endorsed the repatriation of Irish homeless people. Any paper committment to equal opportunities has been torn up. These deportations are the direct consequence of the Labour Group staying in office and implementing Tory cuts.

Gareth Smyth argues that people will only be sent back where secure accomodation exists. He is lying. Staff are being instructed to issue travel warrants on the flimsiest of evidence.

At least nine households have been deported via travel warrants, courtesy of Camden Council. Smyth states that the Borough hasn't the power to repatriate. This is an irrelevancy, if the choice is between the ferry or sleeping rough.

What is the difference between Camden and Tower Hamlets? Honesty, perhaps. The Chair of Housing Management has circulated a petition lightly condemning the racist policies of a Liberal authority, when authorising exactly the same racism . Camden is clearly prepared to set its own legal precedents.

Camden is breaking the law, attacking homeless and Irish people , in a desparate attempt to stay 'legal'. Anything will be considered. The Labour leadership has no bottom line, not even a racist housing policy that has more in common with Enoch Powell than its own manifesto. The first attempt to abandon the homeless has failed: criminalising workers in the Homeless Persons Unit after a supposed £8m loss turned into a £I.28m one after the Council's own investigation. The incompetence is incredible, the politics disgusting.

The Labour Group has refused to discuss the issue, and ignored delegations from the Irish community. Meanwhile, at a time when the Tory government is introducing yet another vicious piece of immigration policy, the council leadership is providing ready ammunition for the Tories. Smyth accepted (literally!) back of envelope figures as an excuse to close down the service. The next week Thatcher herself, in the Commons points to this as another example of municipal socialism. Dykes and Smyth have shot the party in the foot, trying to impose cuts.

It is not enough for Smyth to resign, for the deportations to stop, or a service for the homeless to be restored. The Labour Group must stick to its manifesto and fight the Tories. Any other way means racism.

FIGHT ALTON'S BILL

David Alton's bill to impose an I8 week limit for abortions is seen by the anti-abortion lobby as the first rites in over-turning the I967 Abortion Act . It would, if passed, affect the lives of thousands of women and force them to continue an unwanted pregnancy or to turn to the back streets. Last year almost 6000 abortions were carried out after I8 weeks. It is essential that the Labour Party oppose Alton's Bill, that Labour MPs turn out to vote against it and that the NEC should apply a whip in line with party policy for all votes on the Alton Bill.

Fight the Alton Bill (FAB) groups have been set up all over London and there is now a FAB group in Camden. Activities such as a public meeting, street meetings and petitioning are planned. It is important that as many people as possible take petitions and speakers to their trade union and Labour Party meeings. Money is also needed.

Lobby TUC 8.30 - I0am 26 Nov Congress House, Gt Russel Street.
Street Meeting I2-2pm 28 Nov Inverness Street Market.
Camden FAB 7.30pm I Dec, Town Hall, all welcome.
Mass lobby of parliament 2I Jan '88.
National demonstration I9 March '88.

Contact Camden FAB c/o Women's Section at the Labour Centre or phone Jill on 387 8577.

Jill Entwhistle, Holborn & St Pancras CLP Women's Officer.

FIGHT CAMDEN'S TORY CUTS

The Labour Group has agreed a package of cuts in Camden's jobs and services that would allow a legal rate to be set for I988/89. The various budget scrutiny teams have produced the results of how the reductions are to be made "to reconstruct the Council to provide efficient and effective services to the people of Camden". This statement from the Labour leadership is reminiscent of I984 double-speak as clearly, the reduction in expenditure will mean widespread deprivation for many of the working class who voted Labour in May last year.

Those Labour councillors who are going along with the cuts, seem to believe that by retaining control of the council and cutting, they are at the same time "staying in power". But in effect, they are implementing cuts that the Tories would themselves want to see, and have turned into puppets of Central Government - traitors to the working class movement.

The leadership state that there should be no "watering down" of the commitment to Equal Opportunities as a result of the cuts. Yet grants to black and ethnic minority and womens voluntary sector groups are going to be more severely hit than the white organisations that don't protest and toe the party line on cuts. A reduction in the workforce by I,800 posts will have a greater effect on black people, women, lesbians and gays. The closure of day nurseries will mean that women will no longer be able to go out to work and will have to stay at home instead - implementation of Thatcher's Victorian values of a woman's place being in the home. There are plans for the Housing Race Unit to be smashed so that there will be less checks made on the level of racial harrassment on estates. The Homeless Persons Unit has yet to fully function again after its closure to the public, following allegations of staff corruption. Camden's racist housing rules now result in forced deportation without there even being certainty that secure accomodation will be available in Ireland.

As for cuts on council estates, repairs have been reduced to a chosen few a week, regardless of health and safety regulations, and even Ann Clarke, Director of Housing has said that one recourse open to tenants is to take the council to court.

The Labour leadership is apparently keen to rebuild "staff morale"; to improve communications with a workforce that is "in the business of providing good public services". However, how can this be so with the looming privatisation of council services, increases in council rents, selling of council estates, and the implementation of poll tax, the Labour Group's current betrayal of its one-time supporters, will lead to a lack of resistance to these further attacks.

It is therefore up to the Labour left, in unison with the trade union movement and the oppressed in Camden who will be feeling the full effects of the cuts, to continue to force the issue and to openly confront the Town Hall traitors at every turn they make, bringing out into the open their desparation of saving their own skins at the price of others, to balance the books and retain "power"(sic).

Councillor Adrian States

MARCH AGAINST THE CUTS!

SATURDAY 5 DECEMBER

Assemble I2 noon at Camden Town Hall and march to Hampstead Town Hall.

NO "GLASNOST" IN CAMDEN

The supporters of the Council leadership with the aid of the chair and secretary of Holborn & StPancras , have removed the right of branches to select the delegate of their choice to the LGC, and to mandate them on their policy . The last GMC decided to veto these delegates and require that they support GMC policy . Not satisfied with this blatant anti-democratic attack on branches, the chair and secretary are now proposing that where no policy exists, the delegation makes it up on the night of the LGC and impose a whip on all Holborn & StPancras delegates . Policy is therefore to be decided by a smaller and smaller caucus . Stalin would have approved . Maybe the LGC should be reduced to two delegates (one from each CLP) who toss a coin to see wether a resolution is won or lost .

Next Camden Labour Briefing meeting

Monday 30 November
8pm, Town Hall