SUMMER SPECIAL

WORLD CUP WINNER

I haven’t lost a penny!

CHARLES BUILDING ROW

I’m not interfering, am I?

CHEAPER HOLIDAY FLIGHTS

It’s the last time I fly Ryanair

RUSSIAN SPY DRAMA

It’s the cold phwoarr!
DISABLED CARE

WHERE are vulnerable and disabled people to live when even charities and social landlords treat them with callous disregard and worst of all, seek to turn them out of their homes? The Eye has learned of two shocking cases where wheelchair users have been threatened with eviction because Lambeth council and Leonard Cheshire Disability Ltd have treated them abominably. It was only thanks to an 11th-hour protest by an MP and the Eye that Paul Atherton, a 42-year-old television projector, was not ejected on to the streets last Thursday after the BSLheb and the BSLhome he has been in for many years was vacated. He had been living in the temporary accommodation since his discharge from three months in hospital suffering from a debilitating psychological condition, which has left him in a wheelchair. He had been given just seven days’ notice amid claims that he was £1,377 in rent arrears and that ‘Mr Atherton alone is responsible for these arrears’.

In fact he was not and never had been responsible for the arrears. He had been battling in vain to secure more than £2,200 in benefits he was owed by the Department for Work and Pensions, without which he had been struggling to feed and clothe himself. He had been passed from pillar to post – from the DWP to Lambeth’s hostel services, via DLR security for street offending different voluntary groups – and got precisely nowhere. The reaction of Sharon Johnson, Lambeth’s hostel service manager, was to criticise Mr Atherton’s ‘attitude toward paying his rent’ and said he had ‘chosen to ignore’ the council’s letters. It was only after the Eye raised Mr Atherton’s case with Lambeth and the MP, Clive Umansky, that Lambeth obtained a letter from the DWP in which it admitted that it owed him £3,270.80 in disability living allowance “due to an error by the department”, that Mr Johnson had ‘regretted’ the way he had handled Mr Atherton’s disability living allowance. It added: ‘But of course we regret the distress this has obviously caused him. We will be looking carefully at any lessons that can be learned from the case.’

Over at Leonard Cheshire Disability, meanwhile, lessons are not being learned. Doug Paulley, who suffers a degenerative neurological disorder, faces having to fight for his future care. Wharfe Court, his £105-per-week House care home in Wetherby where he has lived for many years because he has discovered a home in the charity’s side.

A passionate campaigner to improve the lot of disabled people, he has taken the charity to task for overcharging residents hundreds of pounds for travel, for breaching confidentiality, for failing to provide holidays and for its “inadequate” food allowances of £21 a week.

He first came to the Eye’s attention in 2006, when he criticised his landlords for “grabbing cheap headlines” when it teamed up with Barclays Bank to launch the Lion scheme to help the three charities to fund their own businesses. Laudable as it might have been, none of the 2,000-plus people living in Leonard Cheshire homes could take advantage of it because they had caught in the net.

Clearly some at Leonard Cheshire have taken exception to Mr Paulley, who has obtained internal emails in which he is described as, among other things, a “prepper”, a “guru”, a “belieber” and even a “whistleblower”. There was even a suggestion that the charity put up bureaucratic obstacles in the way of his attempts to secure a holiday. Colin Young, Leonard Cheshire’s UK director of operations, said he found that “the receiving end of the email correspondence only all been legitimate issues relating to non-compliance by staff”. But despite this it suddenly sought to end its contract with him for the local authority. In April an independent advocate and an internal review concluded the charity’s treatment of him amounted to “institutional abuse”. At the safeguarding meeting Mr Paulley agreed it might be better to live elsewhere, but has now decided to stay in the home near his friends and family.

But it seems Leonard Cheshire would rather not try to accommodate him. It said in a statement to the Eye: “Mr Paulley’s allegations, which sought to distort our attempts in good faith to achieve the best possible outcomes, have been dismissed by our independent investigations. Mr Paulley’s complaints have not been substantiated and the matter has been resolved.”

What a difference carrying a ministerial briefcase makes for the Liberal Democrats. In opposition they promised a public inquiry into the fatal shootings of four young recruits at Deepcut barracks dedicated to small business in忽略了Blake’s “review” of the deaths raised more questions than it answered (see Eves passt). Indeed, shortly before the general election, the Labour leader, Ed Miliband, said that Deepcut’s role in the army training centre should be reassessed.

But now Harvey is the acting armed forces minister, he has suddenly changed his tune. “It clear official has looked into this issue in depth,” he says. “Given the extensive investigations that have already taken place, there is no public service investigation to mount.”

Mr James is writing to ask what Harvey has now discovered that has made him change his mind. After all, as the Eye’s Deepcut Report, A Shot in the Dark: The Story of Deepcut, showed, the review seemed designed merely to silence criticism. No new witnesses were interviewed, let alone cross-examined; and gaps anomolies and inconsistencies in the circumstances surrounding the deaths remain. The review relied almost unquestioningly on a re-examination by the same police forces which had made the fundamental errors at the time of the inquiry.

Evidence gathered by them remains secret from public scrutiny. But as the Eye recently revealed, that evidence included previously undisclosed interviews with the camp’s medic at the time who was called to the scene when Cheryl’s body was found with a bullet wound to the head. Dr Alexander McClean, who was commander of the camp, told the Eye that the three commanding officers suggested to officers that Cheryl must have committed suicide. But the position of the body, the weapon and the accuracy of the shot, coupled with the fact that the officers had no intention of using the weapons to commit suicide, suggested to him that Cheryl’s death could have been murder. Contrary to usual practice, he was then excluded from the post mortem examination, and the remains recovered from Cheryl’s skull went missing. Blake did not even interview Dr McClean.

It is known that at the time of the four deaths Deepcut was out of control, with vulnerable young trainees exposed to bullying NCOs and sexual predators. Lawyers for the bereaved families believe that none of the police inquiries, inquests, or coroners’ inquests for the four young men or Blake’s review meets the standard required by the European Convention on Human Rights when someone who is under the care of the state dies. If the new coalition won’t order an independent inquiry, perhaps the high court will.

POVERTY RELIEF

The real CDC

So what did Britain’s international development fund CDC, formerly the Commonwealth Development Corporation, have to say at last month’s launch of its “development review” once the Eye had got its hands on the government’s internal document? (For the full “fuck off you little piece of shit” story, see the last Eves or www.private-eye.co.uk.)

Wine glasses full, guests were first treated to an update on the life of the 160-year-old British business in post-conflict Rwanda. When mainstream banks refused a local entrepreneur money to set up a paper bag making firm, he turned to a CDC-backed lender, who also agreed to fund a second local exporter. His company now employs 50 people, giving a real boost to the local economy.

CDC chief executive Richard Laing was at pains to explain that the microfinance investment that the British taxpayer through CDC’s $16m investment, is tax exempt for a similar period. Regular Eye readers will know only too well that more outrageous tax avoidance tricks are perpetrated by other companies in which CDC is the largest investor.

CDC no longer uses its old tagline – “investing where others are generally unwilling to do so” – since it is primarily aimed at simply making money, which explains why even though CDC recognises that agriculture is of “immense developmental value”, it has reduced its investments in this sector from 23 per cent in the last 10 years (and from 50 per cent in the last 20 years). Not that guests at CDC’s launch will suspect this as they brew up the Tanzanian tea from their goodie bags.

In 2004 CDC and KPMG teamed up to maximize profits by handing its money to private equity managers, a controversial form of investment in developed economies but prone to gross excesses in less well regulated developing ones. The Eye has reported how one such manager, US-based Emerging Capital Partners, has put millions of pounds of taxpayers’ money in privatised companies run by cronies of a corrupt government, with KPMG giving “independent assurance” on the report: “As CDC is one step removed from the companies which ultimately receive its funds, CDC is in reality limited in its ability to perform compliance checks of these companies’ performance.”