



CUTLET

Number 11

THE NEWSLETTER OF LAMBETH NALGO

28 JANUARY 1982

LAMBETH'S RATE TO BE CUT - FREEZE GOES ON

Lambeth Council looks set to cut its own rate for 1982/83 by 12p in the £, although increases in the demands of the GLC, ILEA and Metropolitan Police will probably mean that the overall rate will stay the same. Lambeth's rate cut will be achieved partly by savings from the voluntary early retirement (VER) scheme - which has now been offered to manual workers along with voluntary severance - and by continuing the freeze on recruitment. It is also partly due to the unexpectedly large reserve balance of over £11 million now estimated for the end of this financial year. The council is also to rescind the GLC/ILEA supplementary rate demand and pay that part still due to ILEA from its balances.

The rate cut is based on spending forecasts outlined in a report on 'Budget Strategy 1982/83' received by the Policy and Resources Committee on January 19.

The forecasts assume that:

- 1) "Current spending programmes will continue subject to the effects of the council's voluntary early retirement scheme"
- 2) "restrictions on recruitment" - i.e. the recruitment freeze - "will continue into 1982/83", at least until June 30 1982
- 3) council rents will rise by £2.50 a week from October
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COUNCIL OFFER ON NEW TECHNOLOGY THIS WEEK

Negotiations on the New Technology agreement and our claim for improved conditions of service over the GLC transfer reopened last Tuesday, 19 January. NALGO's decision to strongly advise members to boycott work on all new systems, particularly the Housing Management Information System (HMIS) and the Local Authorities Financial Information System (LAFIS) meant that Management were anxious to come to a rapid conclusion on these issues.

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Management also intend to put before us a revised scheme of 'job flexibility'. They appear undaunted by the branch's firm rejection before Christmas of their previous scheme for 'redeployment by transfer'.

Branch negotiators agreed to

Brian Martin

Housing actions off

As previously reported in *Cutlet*, members in Housing were taking action before Christmas over a number of unfilled vacancies in Allocations and the Housing Advice Centre. Negotiations on these took place alongside negotiations over early retirement and the disputes have now been settled.

The council agreed to the filling of a couple of vacancies in Allocations.

Members in the Housing Advice Centre agreed to call off their action if the council agreed to maintain staffing levels after the early retirement exercise. Prior to this, the council had seemed intent on running down the centre altogether.

However, this still leaves six

vacancies and Management have therefore reduced opening hours to 10am-4pm every day. The strength of the action was compromised by members in the same shop wishing to take early retirement. This is one example of the contradictions of accepting redundancy schemes while still trying to protect services.

Hugh Williams

COMPULSORY LEVY

Delegates from local government branches are meeting on January 29 to discuss a national strategy against the cuts. The National Local Government Committee is recommending a strategy which includes a national compulsory levy to be introduced during this year to finance

a 'fighting fund' to support strike action in branches badly hit by cuts. The main points of the strategy are:-

- * branches which are severely affected by the cuts are encouraged to take indefinite and total strike action in defence of jobs and services.
- * there would be a compulsory levy of all local government members to maintain a national fighting fund to supplement strike pay. The levy would be £2 per member per month, but for members on spinal column points 1-11 or part/time it would be £1 a month.
- * all branches should be instructed to adhere strictly to existing NALGO policies against cuts

The full 'strategy document' was printed in NALGO NEWS No 15, 15 January 1982.

LAMBETH'S RATE TO BE CUT CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

inflation factors)

This gives a total of £105m for Lambeth's spending in 1982/83 after assuming savings of £3.5m from the VER scheme.

The government's contribution, or Rate Support Grant, should be £60.9 million. But under laws introduced by Michael Heseltine, grant is cut back if the council spends more than he thinks it should. If Lambeth spends £105m in 1982/83, it will lose £6.2m grant in penalties, and will only get £54.7m RSG. Even so, this is nearly £5m more than the RSG received for this year, 1981/82.

RECOGNITION

This seems due to a partial recognition by the government of Lambeth's needs. Their assessment of what the council should spend, or 'Grant Related Expenditure', has been set at £76.3m, the highest in London and 13 per cent higher

than the original GRE for 1981/82.

CASH TARGETS

The government is also giving each local authority individual cash targets for 1982/83. The target for Lambeth is £94,898,000, a cut of 7 per cent in real terms. The provisional estimate of £105 m is still therefore £10 m above the government's target figure. The report to the P&R committee says that to cut £10m, on top of the £11m cut from last year's budget, would mean a 10 per cent cut in services "mostly through further reduction in manpower of perhaps 700-800 people" and compulsory redundancies would be likely.

SURCHARGE

The Policy and Resources Committee resolved not to cut to meet the government's target. However, the implications

of the Law Lords ruling have not yet been fully clarified. In some quarters, the ruling has been interpreted as making it illegal for councils to budget to spend over the government's targets and thereby lose Rate Support Grant. Councillors would, they say, then be liable for surcharge for the lost grants.

GLC RATE RESCINDED

In the light of the GLC decision to cut its spending in accordance with the Law Lords ruling, Lambeth has decided to rescind the whole of the GLC/ILEA supplementary rate. That part of it due to ILEA, just over £2m, will be paid by the council out of its balances, leaving approximately £9m in balances at the end of the year. Those people who have already paid will have it credited against next year's rate demand.

Jackie Lewis

NO SEPERATE SHOP FOR CHIEF OFFICERS

A call for a seperate shop for chief officers was rejected by the branch Executive Committee at its meeting on Monday January 18. The request, for a cross-directorate shop for directors, assistant directors and some third tier officers, was made by David Thompson, director of environmental health and consumer services.

In a letter to the branch secretary, he argued that chief officers should be in a seperate shop because "although such members may in theory be members of particular constituencies, in practice they are identified by other members and shop stewards as 'management'/representatives of the employer and are thereby excluded from exercising their full rights

as members of a trade union".

DIVISIVE

The Executive, however, agreed with the Branch Convenors Committee that a seperate shop would be extremely divisive and would undermine the workplace-based shop stewards system. It was also agreed that the branch should support occasional meetings of chief officers to discuss

particular issues of concern to them, such as the chief officers pay claim. This would be in accordance with existing branch practice of calling meetings of particular groups of workers e.g. typists or residential workers.

TOUGHER ON TECHNOLOGY

The Executive agreed to take a tougher line over negotiations on an agreement for the introduction of new technology. The meeting voted to give our negotiators a reserve mandate for a meeting with Management the following day, January 19. If they refused to make any improvements on their existing offer, then an emergency branch meeting would be called to consider escalating the action. If, however, they made an improved offer, then a special Executive meeting would be called to consider it. Escalation could involve the boycott of all new technology, including existing equipment.

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ELECTIONS

Much of the Executive meeting was taken up with elections and nominations for elections to various bodies. It was decided to have a special meeting before the end of January to hear candidates for election to the National Executive Council before voting on which candidates will be supported by the branch. Candidates for election to NALGO's delegation to the Trades Union Congress will be heard at the same meeting.

There were thirteen candidates for the nine places on the branch delegation to NALGO's annual conference in Brighton in June. The following nine were elected by ballot: Simon Berlin, Wilf Domfe, Chris Gunter, Bob Lane, Jackie Lewis, Brian Martin, Jenny Nyman, Mike Tichelar and Mike Waller. Eight of the nine were delegates to the 1981 conference; three are women and one is black.

Other branch representatives and members so far elected to branch sub-committees are listed below. Branch committees are open to all members - if you are interested, please contact the relevant branch officer.

TRADES COUNCIL DELEGATES -
Simon Berlin, Ron Crosbie,
Wilf Domfe, Garry Fitzgerald,
John Hosey, Jackie Lewis, Helen
Stark and Mike Tichelar

BRIXTON LAW CENTRE -
Mike Tichelar

STOCKWELL AND CLAPHAM LAW
CENTRE - Hugh Williams

PUBLICITY COMMITTEE -
Dave Fryer, Chris Gunter, Ray
Soper, Jack Valero, Pam Walters

EDUCATION COMMITTEE -
Simon Berlin, Mike Tichelar,
Ron Crosbie

SOCIAL COMMITTEE -
Brain Martin, John Hosey, Helen
Stark, Frances Childs

Presentation to Roly Newton

Roly Newton, a past president of the branch, was presented with a NALGO plate to mark his retirement from the council. Roly was an officer and president of the Lambeth Municipal Officers Guild before it became Lambeth NALGO. He surprised many members of the Executive, some of whom are old adversaries of his, by saying that he now recognised that the 'gentlemen's club' of the Guild, which had worked on 'gentlemen's agreements' with the council had had to change

GLC transfer is just ten weeks away!

After years of legal and political arguments, the transfer of control of the GLC's 17,000 houses and flats in the borough to Lambeth Council is now upon us. The properties and the staff needed to manage and maintain them are due to be integrated by April 1 - only 10 weeks away. The transfer has implications not just for workers in Housing and Construction Services, but for all employees of Lambeth Council. HUGH WILLIAMS reports on progress so far.

BRANCH CLAIM

GLC staff have different pay and conditions than Lambeth staff. To bring the two groups of workers into line, the branch has made a claim on behalf of all members for improved service conditions. The claim is for a 35 hour week, three days additional annual leave, full implementation of the parental rights agreement only partially honoured by the council, and improved catering facilities for outposted staff. These claims are also central to the New Technology agreement. By the time this issue of Cutlet is circulated there will have been a further meeting with the council. If no progress has been made, there will be a branch meeting for members to decide whether we should boycott work on all existing new technology as well as the introduction of new systems.

LEWISHAM NALGO BOYCOTT WORK ON GLC TRANSFER

Lewisham NALGO have stopped all work on the GLC transfer because Lewisham Council is refusing to meet their claim for parity with the GLC staff who are being transferred. The claim is for a 35 hour week and Inner London Weighting. NALGO has long argued that Lewisham members should receive the allowance for Inner London (currently £915) instead of that for Outer London (currently £483).

NEGOTIATIONS IN HOUSING

Negotiations involving NALGO members in Housing are divided into seven areas:-

- 1) Caretaking officers
- 2) Reception centres and wardens
- 3) Personnel and Support Services/Secretariat/Director's Policy Support Group
- 4) Borough Valuers
- 5) District estate management
- 6) Housing Finance

Pay claim

Our 1982 pay claim was to be submitted to the employers on Wednesday 27 January. The claim is for:-

- * "an increase in pay which will both maintain and protect living standards and substantially increase the salaries of the lower paid".
- * a 35 hour week for all staff, including those currently working for more than 37 hours.
- * deletion of miscellaneous grades and transfer of staff to APT and C Grades.

CAR ALLOWANCES

The Inland Revenue has agreed to reduce the level of profit attributable to car allowances for 1981/82 because the allowances have

- 7) Central package including Assessments, Housing Advice Centre, Special Needs, Grants and Mortgages, Development, Research, Housing Associations and Right to Buy, and 'district liaison'.

Claims have been submitted in all except two areas and negotiations are under way. Three groups of workers: senior caretakers, wardens, and general duty assistants in reception centres who are presently on miscellaneous grades have been offered AP grades by integrating various allowances into their basic salary.

Even after NALGO and the council have reached agreement there is still a massive amount of work required to sort out the practical implications of some proposals. In particular, the extension of neighbourhood housing management throughout the borough in itself means that a further 20-35 neighbourhood offices will have to be opened.

not risen by as much as expected. Tax codes are due to be amended in January or February.

A provisional adjustment will be made to codes for 1982/83 which will probably be issued in January 1982, to take account of profits from the rates of car allowances payable in 1982/83.

A copy of the full letter from the Inland Revenue is available from the Branch Office.

OVERSEAS CHARGES

NALGO has reiterated its total opposition to government plans to introduce charges for overseas visitors for NHS treatment. A pilot study apparently went ahead in several hospitals with the cooperation of NALGO members.

Lambeth unemployment up 54% in year

The number of Lambeth people registered as unemployed stood at 18,464 in mid-November - a 54 per cent increase on the November 1980 figure. Notified vacancies fell by 27 per cent, to 567.

This means that there were 33 people chasing every job, compared with 15 the previous year.

One in every three under the age of 20 is now out of work. Unemployment among black people jumped 38 per cent over the year.

Lambeth's unemployment rate was 13.7 per cent, higher than that for the GLC area (8.7

per cent) and the national average (12.2 per cent).

Breakdown of the figures shows that unemployment among the 20-29 age group leapt by 69 per cent over the year, and for the over-30s by 65 per cent.

These are the official figures. But many jobless - particularly young people and married women - do not bother to register. A recent survey, partly based on research carried out in Brixton, suggested that the discrepancy among 16-20 year olds may be as high as 48 per cent.

CAB ACTION

Citizen's Advice Bureaux in Lambeth will be closed on Fridays as from February 1 due to action by CAB workers to get the council to implement a pay award.

Lambeth is one of only six boroughs not to have introduced the appropriate salary rate first recommended in 1975. This means that a CAB worker in Wandsworth earns far more than a worker in Lambeth doing the same job.

CUTLET

The closing date for contributions for the next CUTLET is Wednesday, February 3. Send them to: Jackie Lewis, c/o NALGO office, 6A Acre Lane.

STINK-BOMBS AS SDP START LAMBETH CAMPAIGN

The SDP/Liberal alliance is putting up candidates for all 64 seats on Lambeth Council at the local government elections in May. The SDP are fielding 43 candidates and the Liberals 21.

SDP hopefuls include Labour defectors David Stimpson, Patrick Mitchell and Malcolm Noble as well as Guardian writer Polly Toynbee and Financial Times deputy editor David Palmer. Eight of the 43 are women and three are black.

Shirley Williams popped into Brixton on January 19 to speak at a meeting organised by the local SDP at the start of their campaign. At least one branch member went along too.....

The word hadn't gone out until a few days before the meeting itself. Shirley Williams and a host of other

worthies were going to come to Brixton to give us a talk about the Scarman Report and our riots.

Twenty of us got into the hall and as soon as we had sat down the SDP stewards assembled behind us. We had thought that we would be searched on the way in, so we only had stink-bombs and a few eggs.

HECKLING

From the first speaker onwards we began our heckling, really good sarcastic stuff. One of the audience told us to go back to Russia, which we cheered. There were isolated hecklers elsewhere in the audience, especially some of the black people there.

When Shirley took the stage she couldn't make herself heard. Like all the speakers, she addressed us and not the rest of the audience. She told us to come up and speak, but

some of us preferred to do a little dance for the cameras!

We were getting bored, and the stewards had surrounded us but wouldn't start anything. As we walked out, we let off dozens of stink bombs and eggs were thrown (one hit Shirley in the crutch but that didn't get into the papers).

HARD TIME

Whatever people say about what it achieved, it was a good laugh, and that's important. Also, everyone knew we were anarchists, even Shirley said so, and the black people there will know who we are next time (not like the massed ranks of the left, who kept quiet throughout). It was a good night out - if only there were more public meetings in Brixton. Next time we will have paint, eggs, tomatoes and more. Seeing as the SDP will probably be our next leaders, anarchists should be out there giving the scum a really hard time everywhere.

A. Vandal



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