



ELECTION SPECIAL

# CUTLET

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THE NEWSLETTER OF LAMBETH NALGO

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## 'DON'T CUT YOUR OWN THROAT'

This Thursday, May 6, a new council will be elected for Lambeth. Why does this matter to Lambeth NALGO members?

Local elections are about power. The power to support or oppose government policies on cuts. The power to sack you, change your job, label your work ineffective, 'non-essential' or unnecessary. The power to close children's homes, day nurseries, libraries, staff canteens; the power to raise rents, rates and charges. It is also the power to improve services to meet the needs of the community.

Many Lambeth workers also live in the borough. Those who don't will be voting on the future of

their fellow union members in other areas. NALGO nationally is advising members to vote wisely. **Don't cut your own throat.**

The branch has circulated a questionnaire to all the 208 candidates contesting the 64 seats on Lambeth Council, asking each of them eight straight questions on issues of concern to NALGO members.

There has been a fairly good response from candidates although not one Conservative candidate has replied. The results of the questionnaire are summarised overleaf. Those candidates who are quoted from their replies are identified by name.

We have also examined party manifestos and election addresses. The Conservatives are alone among the four main parties in not publishing a manifesto (their local office told me that 'an established party has no need to produce one') - this despite attacking a Liberal '10 point plan for economic recovery' as a "vague 2 page leaflet"!

However, the Conservatives held a press conference to launch their election campaign and this helped to fill the gaps left by their two page election address.

Look behind the rhetoric about 'too many staff' and tea-swilling local government bureaucrats' - that means YOU not somebody else - and decide which party will provide effective and adequate services

Hugh Williams

## General impressions

All parties except the Conservatives stress decentralisation; it is a major plank of the Liberal's platform.

All parties spotlight housing as needing improvement but surprisingly few initiatives are suggested for social services although Labour recognise that demand is increasing.

The SDP stress competent management and 'sound financing' but phrases like "we shall free resources for priority needs by severe pruning of non-essential programmes" are worrying.

The Labour manifesto states three objectives: to renew and improve the community; to redress disadvantages of class, race, age and sex; to make council services efficient, effective and responsive.

The Conservative emphasis is on lower rates and to provide a £50 refund to ratepayers in October by "stopping unnecessary expenditure" and they concentrate on housing, law and order and promoting private industry.

The Liberals manifesto sets out problems

and objectives but it was hard to identify what changes they were proposing other than decentralisation and neighbourhood councils.

## Equal opportunities

Labour has promoted an equal opportunities policy and pioneered work by setting up the Race Relations Unit. The SDP manifesto says "We will continue the important work of the Race Relations Unit" and the Liberals "will give its recommendations the highest priority".

The Conservatives slammed the Unit's establishment as "a bureaucratic nonsense and a waste of time and money" and their view does not appear to have moved form there.

Labour's manifesto states "Lambeth has been in the forefront of developing positive race relations and equal opportunities policies" and that "more positive steps will be taken" on equal opportunities for women.

The SDP on the Conservatives: "The Conservative Party in Lambeth is irrelevant and out of touch with Lambeth's real needs"

The Conservatives quote Roy Jenkins of the SDP talking about a centre party "a party based on such a rag-bag could stand for nothing positive".

The Conservatives quote Shirley Williams of the SDP: "The Liberals have as many policies as they have members"

Labour on the SDP-Liberal Alliance: "They are, in reality, another version of the Tory Party. Alliance members have voted in Lambeth for higher rents and slashing key services"

The Conservatives on Labour: "11 years of Labour administration have put Lambeth into a serious state of decline"

Labour on the Conservatives: they "pressed for the government cuts to be passed on in full, for services to be slashed and hundreds of staff to be put onto the dole queue" Labour on the SDP: "Who knows?"

Liberals on Labour: the Labour administration "which believes in expenditure for its own sake"

	<b>WHAT THE PARTIES SAY</b>			
	<b>Labour</b>	<b>Conservative</b>	<b>Liberal</b>	<b>SDP</b>
Do you want to see local government spending cut and services reduced? If so, which services would you cut?	<b>NO</b> "I don't want to see services reduced so I think it unlikely that spending can be cut by any significant amount" (Mark Stone)	<b>YES</b> "We shall reduce staffing levels by at least 10%" (election address) "an average rate refund of £50 in October" (Robin Pitt, Conservative leader) "savings on non-essential services e.g. consumer advice" (election address)	<b>YES</b> "to reduce the real cost of rates to Lambeth residents ... to reduce the number of central administrative staff" (manifesto objectives)	<b>YES</b> "We can see no reason why over the life of a council the burden of rates should not be reduced in real terms. The Direct Labour Organisation is justified only if it is truly competitive. We will explore alternative ways of providing the Consumer Advice service" (manifesto)
If you do not wish to see cuts, what positive steps are you prepared to take to fight them?	"I would be willing to actively support a continuing campaign against the Tory policy of public expenditure cuts. Lambeth has been successful in this campaign resulting in extra government money this year" (Winston Taylor)		There seemed to be nothing in the manifesto about how to cope with the "actions of the Conservative Government which substantially reduced the real level of grants to the council" except cut staff.	"We shall work with the Government and other authorities to attract resources and to make expenditure effective" (manifesto)
Do you think some services need to be improved and expanded? If so, are you prepared to fight for higher spending programmes in these areas?	<b>YES</b> Candidates stressed housing, social services and day care provision for the under fives.	<b>YES</b> "quicker council house sales .... a homesteading scheme .... road maintenance .... street cleansing .... refuse collection to improve the environment .... street lighting to combat crime ... better library services" (election address)	<b>YES</b> The manifesto generally stressed "better use of existing resources" and much greater decentralisation.	<b>YES</b> "Housing is the main priority ... Lambeth needs more small recreation areas... We will look for ways of improving support services like meals on wheels, home helps etc" (manifesto)
Do you believe in privatisation? If so, what services would you want to see privatised?	<b>NO</b>	<b>YES</b> "Many of the services provided by the council e.g. maintenance of parks and open spaces, refuse collection and estate cleansing could be provided more economically by local firms" (election address)	<b>YES &amp; NO</b> "We will examine alternative ways of providing council services whether by voluntary organisations or commercial enterprise" (manifesto) "No, I do not" (Bob Silver)	<b>YES?</b> "Direct Labour Organisation is only justified if it is truly competitive". "We would sell vacant flats on some estates .... We would also consider selling any property we found we could not let" (manifesto)
Are you prepared to fight any proposal involving redundancies of local authority workers?	<b>YES</b> "... such redundancies inevitably lead to a reduction in services." (Graham Norwood)	<b>POSSIBLY</b> Although the Tories pledge to lose 1000 jobs, the impression given at the press conference was that they think they can do this without sackings.	<b>POSSIBLY</b> No mention of redundancies but it is not clear how "ineffective services would be scrapped" or how to "reduce the number of central administrative staff"	<b>POSSIBLY</b> "a case for selective and cost-effective use of early retirement" (manifesto)
Would you oppose any compulsory redeployment of staff against their wishes?	<b>YES?</b> Generally, candidates were opposed to compulsory redeployment but several stated that they would consider it in some circumstances.	<b>NO</b> There has been no specific statement but if the Tories aim to cut 1000 jobs without redundancies, then it must mean redeployment.	<b>NO</b> "We will set clear priorities for expenditure by the Council so that resources will be directed to the areas of greatest need and unnecessary services are weeded out" (manifesto)	<b>NO</b> "We shall free resources for priority needs by severe pruning of non-essential programmes, economic use of manpower and the rooting out of waste and outdated practice" (manifesto)
Do you believe in achieving change only by negotiations with the local authority unions?	<b>A qualified YES</b> "To enforce change without such consultation would be futile .... The Labour Party is committed to consulting and involving the local community" (Bishops Ward candidates)	<b>NO</b> Lambeth Conservatives have looked to the Conservative administration in Wandsworth for inspiration. They have stated before that Lambeth NALGO is "too powerful"	<b>YES?</b> "Liberals place a strong emphasis on good management/staff relations and proper consultations with the relevant unions" Tim Clement-Jones	<b>YES &amp; NO</b> "consult staff and unions fully on matters of legitimate mutual concern, but not accept any veto on final decisions which must properly rest with elected representatives" (manifesto)
Do you believe that the pay and conditions of local government workers should keep up with those in the private sector?	<b>YES</b>	<b>NO</b> , Presumably the local Conservatives want to enforce central government's pay 'guideline' of 4%.	<b>NO STATEMENT</b>	<b>NO STATEMENT</b>