



Save Our Services!

THE ConDem budget is a declaration of war on working class people across the country with an announcement of £82 billion of cuts in annual public spending. This budget will hit the average household by an equivalent of £5,000 a year by 2014-5. It will hit the poor families, who are more dependent on public services and benefits, even harder. Two facts show the mentality behind this budget.

- **Corporation tax is to be reduced by 4% over four years whilst VAT has been raised by 17.5% to 20%.**
- **They threaten vital services like housing and children's services, whilst keeping Trident and other astronomical military spending.**

This government is robbing from the poor to give to the rich and we must stand together and fight back. The government tells us that these cuts aren't their choice, that their hand is forced by the recession and the deficit. That is not true; these cuts are an ideological attack on the welfare state not a financial necessity.

Until growth and employment have fully recovered, the government should use public debt to finance necessary spending. Rushing to 'balance the books' would be totally counterproductive as well as causing hardship to millions. Most job cuts are a false economy – 92% of the cost of employing a public service worker is recouped by the state through increased tax revenues and reduced benefit payments. On top of this the government is being incredibly reckless about the prospect that its cuts will lengthen or worsen the

economic depression and mass unemployment.

The millionaire cabinet ministers add insult to injury by telling us we're 'all in it together' that cuts will be necessary but fair. Where is the fairness? Young people leaving education unable to get a job and public sector workers thrown into the dole queue will be living in poverty. Cuts in housing will see people's homes fall into disrepair and people facing homelessness.

When a council deletes the Ethnic Minority Achievement team and the Special Educational Needs literacy team it's not just jobs that go. For the children they work with it will effect their education, their future employment prospects, their health and the way they view themselves for the rest of their life.

This government does not have a mandate to do what it is doing and going to do.

The Tories won more parliamentary seats than any other party, but they did not win a majority.

Communities and trade unions must take on the government and win. We must fight for our services, our jobs and our communities against this vicious attack.

A spokesperson for Lambeth GMB said *"it is really important that the trade unions work together and that all Council workers join a trade union – we will be encouraging our members to support lobbies of the Council on Monday 19 and Monday 26 July."*



Join a Trade Union today! Contact

UNISON 0845 355 0845 GMB 020 8397 8881 NUT 020 7926 2497

Budget Misery for Millions



Ellen Lebethe, *Lambeth Pensioners' Action Group*, reports

The £40bn Emergency Budget will hit the most vulnerable hard - Pensioners, people on benefits, the young, the sick, the disabled. The Coalition Government is talking about £6bn worth of cuts. This will make a huge difference to those living on low incomes and have a devastating effect on front line services on which many of us depend. According to Chancellor George Osborne, we will have to endure years of economic pain due to the budget deficit.

Although the state pension will rise by either inflation or earnings of 2.5%, this will be nowhere near the official level of £171 a week. From April next year Pension Credit will also no longer rise as a percentage of average earnings, but instead will go up by the same amount of cash increase in the basic state pension. The government intends to reduce the winter fuel payment to its 2008 level which means cutting the £250 for households under 80 to £200 and reducing the over 80s payment from £400 to £300. Housing benefit will be capped at £300 per week or 2 bedrooms. All this and the rise in VAT to 17.5% in January 2011 will further erode our incomes and increase the poverty gap.

The predicted £6bn cuts in spending will have a negative effect on the health and well being of millions of older people receiving care in a system which is already in crisis. It will be disastrous for people depending on state supported care services. Faced with these onslaughts on the quality of our lives, we cannot afford to remain complacent. We need with one voice to reject these cuts and join forces with the ordinary workers, the unemployed, lone parents, teachers, students, school children and say no to the attacks on our welfare system, to our public services and to having to pay for an economic crisis brought about by the mistakes of bankers, speculators and an unregulated free market.

Defend your education at Lambeth College

Dave Esterson, *University and Colleges Union (UCU)* reports on the fight against cuts in Further Education

A lot of people in Lambeth have studied at Lambeth College or know a family member or friend who has been there. For many it has been a place where they can study a subject that will help with work or as a stepping-stone to further study. The college has also provided courses for the elderly and there were courses designed to enable disabled people to have a greater degree of independence or to give them more confidence.

Over a number of years the college has seen cuts in its budget, with a cut of £3.5 million this year. This has resulted in some courses being scrapped altogether, course fees rising, class sizes increasing and the cost of nursery provision going up. At the same time college workers were made redundant. These cuts were introduced before the new coalition government came into office. We can only imagine the situation will get worse in the next few years unless we do something about it.



The impact of these cuts is to restrict education options and worsen the quality of education for local people. 16-18 year olds who want to study after school often rely on such courses. For those over 18, further education has been the place where people were able to return to education later in life - a second chance. With restriction in courses offered and fees reaching unaffordable levels this avenue is being closed off.

The unions in Lambeth College, Unison and

University College Union (UCU), have fought against these cuts. We organised strikes against redundancies and local demonstrations through Clapham and Brixton to defend education services. We do not believe that local people or public sector workers should pay for the economic problems in this country by seeing our services destroyed, whether they are health, local government, education or any other services used by ordinary people. We will be joining the united campaign against public service cuts and we urge you to do the same.

Lambeth Housing in Crisis?

A UNISON member reports

Lambeth Living (the Housing Arms Length Management organisation. ALMO) started in a blaze of publicity two years ago. Glossy posters and leaflets promised new kitchens, new bathrooms improved insulation all under the flag of Decent Homes and a bright future for the tenants of Lambeth. The Council accepted a minority yes vote by ignoring the "don't knows" and the reality since then has been anything but what they promised.

But even as these glossy propaganda posters were going out the problems were clear to see if anyone scratched below the surface. The ALMO from the start was run by consultants earning as much as a £1000 a day. Millions of pounds were being spent on agency and consultancy staff, whilst much needed repairs weren't being carried out. Front line services such as concierge services, emergency repairs service and estate cleaning services to name but a few were being lined up for privatisation. The repairs services that were already privatized were being packaged up for a ten year contract worth up to £1 billion, despite the huge problems the repairs services have faced since they were privatized. Councillors and directors were not only refusing to bring the repairs service back in-house to be run on a not for profit basis they were and are lining up any remaining front line services to be packaged up for private companies to make a profit. This is despite the huge problems the repairs and maintenance service have faced since being privatised.

Two years later we are now in a situation where the repairs budget has been slashed, rent rises and services charges hugely increased and Lambeth Living is still awash with consultants, whose huge wages and perks have been highlighted in the local press. The Decent Homes money, promised by government, providing Lambeth Living achieve two star rating, seems to be a far off promise and with cuts galore by this so called government who knows if Lambeth living will ever see the £223 million promised. Consultants fill their pockets with tenants money while Rome burns, comes to mind.

One reason services have suffered is because posts in Lambeth Living have been reduced from over 500 to less than 450. Further cuts are now being proposed and another 50 to 80 posts are to go. If this goes through Lambeth Living will have faced cuts of nearly a third of all posts since it was set up. Already over stretched services and staff will be put on even more pressure and services will suffer even more.

UNISON is campaigning:

- To bring the ALMO in-house immediately.
- To remove all the consultants and spend the £100,000s saved on services
- To demand that decent homes money is provided by central government
- Against privatisation.
- That the outsourced repairs service is brought back in-house and a not-for-profit Direct Labour Organisation is set up.
- To provide affordable council housing for all, no increase in rent and service charges
- To stop all council housing sell offs, for investment in new housing.



Right to Work Campaign

Lambeth UNISON members who attended the Branch Meeting on 5th July voted overwhelmingly to affiliate to and support the Right to Work Campaign and to work to build and support locally and nationally the Lobby of the Tory Party Conference being held in Birmingham on 3rd October this year. David Cameron and the 23 other millionaires in the Cabinet say they will be sharing our pain! What do they know about trying to survive on benefits, how do they know how it feels to fear losing your job with no prospect of finding another?

Transport is being organised to get supporters, Trade Unionists and community campaigners to Birmingham for the Conference.

For more details contact: Lambeth UNISON, 6a Acre Lane, Brixton, Tel: 0207 926 5833, or, r.lewis450@btinternet.com

Children's services under attack

Ray Sirotkin, National Union of Teachers, reports the scale of job losses in Lambeth Children's and Young People's services.

As part of their 'strategic financial planning exercise' Lambeth Children's and Young Peoples' services will be cut by £20 million over a two years. Their rationale is loss of government grant.

- In the last academic year, 72.5% of Lambeth children achieved 5 GCSE A-C's. That success was not just due to the immense skills of Year 11 teachers, but the whole education service.
- For example, 80% of Lambeth children are from the minority communities (or better termed global majority). A high proportion of households do not speak English at home. Yet the Ethnic Minority Achievement Team (EMAT) are being closed down as a result of this 'exercise'. EMAT provides support from early years through to school leaving age with specialists in many areas.
- How can this cut help improve the service. Are they saying that the cost of the service is not money well spent?
- Equally, areas relating to access and inclusion will be reduced. We wouldn't deny that this is an expensive provision—after all we are talking about children excluded from mainstream, here. However, ask yourself the question—is the cost greater than that of the youth justice system who see disaffected youngsters continually hauled through the probation service?

- Teachers are a small minority of the 340 plus council employees due to lose their jobs. Most of those who will be affected are low ranking council employees, some however with many years of dedicated service. Most are members of UNISON or GMB unions, with whom we shall be working closely to take joint action and provide alternative proposals to cuts.

Jeremy Drinkall, Lilian Baylis Technology School UNISON shop steward adds;

I am a learning support assistant at a community school in Vauxhall. We have students with a number of learning difficulties. We attempt to provide a safe environment, where every student can reach their full potential.

The proposed cuts will decimate our chances of doing this job. The Ethnic Minority Achievement and English as Another Language teams are to be abolished, forcing schools to go private to fill the gap or offer a worse service. Why should ethnic minorities, who already suffer racism, feel the brunt? Similarly, we rely on subject support, for example in English and Maths. This too is under threat.

Inevitably, in such circumstances, head teachers are applying for Academy status to cushion the blow. But this won't stop the disintegration of school services – it will encourage it, as every school competes with each other for a diminishing amount of money.

Schools will close. Others will succeed only by cherry-picking middle class parents for admission. For millionaire public schoolboys, like David Cameron and Nick Clegg, this may seem a price worth paying, but for those who work in schools, it is not!

Why We Won the Whittington



Cuts can be defeated – local people in North London united to stop the planned closure of Accident and Emergency at the Whittington Hospital. This letter from Shirley Franklin tells the tale

There is no doubt that the victory over the U-turns of the Labour Secretary of State for Health is very largely the result of our non-party campaign to Defend and save the Accident and Emergency, Maternity, Trauma and Paediatric Services at the Whittington Hospital, and to oppose privatisation and cuts in any other NHS hospital.

Our role was crucial for the following reasons: it was a united non-party campaign of residents, hospital workers and other trade unionists – Our Hospital, Your Jobs – and representation from other local campaigns and political parties. Almost everyone we spoke to supported our campaign. We got at least 16,000 signatures through leafleting and talking to thousands of local people. The local press supported the campaign and the Islington Tribune, in particular, played a huge role in helping us to build for our march.

We organised a stunning march on 27th February, where 5,000 people demonstrated their opposition. This was the biggest local march for decades, and probably the biggest ever march for a hospital. This was also the major turning point as it got massive media coverage. We organised a public meeting

to launch our forthcoming day of action and rally, on Thursday 29th April, one week before the general election. Having asked several leaders of political parties and their spokespeople to speak, only Andrew Lansley, Tory Shadow Health Minister accepted the invitation.

At this point the Conservatives, Greens and Liberal Democrats had said that they wanted to scrap the review. Emily Thornberry is in a marginal seat. She has supported the campaign and been pressurising Andy Burnham, Labour Health Secretary, who had previously supported the PCT review. After Andrew Lansley accepted our invitation, Andy Burnham told Emily Thornberry on Tuesday 27th April that he had changed his mind, that he did not wish the A and E to close (Since then Shirley has received (on 29th April) an email from Mike O'Brien who claims that he too supports the A and E, and that the papers were only part of a discussion not proposals (a term used by Rachel Tyndall, chief Exec of the north Central London PCT).

We won because we established a mass campaign, one that was initiated by Jeremy Corbyn in Islington and later by Lynne Featherstone, in Hornsey and Wood Green, which also included hospital workers. We won because we timed it right during the election period. We won because we are cross-party, we got the right political and people. We won because we worked our guts out, we talked to loads and loads of people, had a great website, Facebook and email list and visual identity.

10 reasons why we are right to consider strike action

Jeremy Drinkall, Lilian Baylis Shop Steward offers a point of view

Lambeth Unison will be asking all council and Lambeth Living members in a consultative ballot in the near future, "Are you prepared to take industrial action, up to and including strike action, to defend jobs and services?" Here's why.

5 reasons council employees should support industrial action

1. At least 500 council workers face losing their jobs at a time of *mass unemployment*. No matter what redundancy packages are offered anyone who loses their job will join 2.5 million on the dole with, according to the government, another 1.3 million to follow.
2. Even if you are not one of those directly affected or in a targeted department, we all need to show *solidarity* with those under the cosh. Our strength is our unity. Our motto is, "An injury to one is an injury to all".
3. This is just the beginning of an onslaught on all our jobs and services. *Further job cuts* will certainly follow – if we don't fight now. The Budget slashed funding to councils and education; the Comprehensive Spending Review in October threatens departmental cuts of 25-40%. Best to stop the Tories in their tracks, rather than give them an early victory.
4. "Downsizing" is a rather horrible euphemism for making life hell in the office, school, depot or library. Fewer workers doing the same amount of work means *bigger workloads*, higher levels of stress and a greater risk of falling ill. Inevitably it will mean us having to explain to the public why their services are deteriorating. And the culture of management bullying will certainly be boosted.
5. On top of all this, the government is freezing our pay for the next two years – at a time when inflation is rising at a rate of 5.1% – and attacking public sector pensions, i.e. the wages we have put aside for our retirement. The best way to protect our *pay and pensions* tomorrow is to defend our jobs and services now.

5 reasons local Lambeth people should support us

1. It's not just jobs we are defending but *vital local services*. Everyone needs One O'Clock Clubs, Adventure Playgrounds, school and housing services – or they know someone who does. Our strategy involves uniting with service users to protect jobs and services.
2. The knock-on effect of so many local job cuts is that *other jobs will suffer*. Even the Office for Budget Responsibility reckons 600,000 public service job cuts will lead to 700,000 private sector job losses nationally, as money is taken out of circulation.
3. The job cuts are directly linked to *privatisation* – with profit making companies, sometimes disguised as the “voluntary sector” moving in. Suddenly, there is no accountability when things go wrong and the community is lumbered with a cost-cutting firm milking the system – and if it goes bust, we still pick up the tab.
4. As council employees, we serve the *community*. This may be a glib electioneering phrase for some, but for us, it's part of our working lives. People won't sit idly by while our jobs are destroyed – so long as we involve them in a fight to save their services.
5. Other public services are also under attack – JobCentres, the Fire Brigade, healthcare, etc. Unison, with other trade unions and local activists has initiated the Save Our Services Campaign and is working with Lambeth Trades Council to say, “*Our fight is your fight*” and to link our struggles together.

Let's deliver a massive “Yes” vote and give the lead against the cuts. A vote for strike action allows us to take control of our own destiny – the branch is committed to giving the entire membership the right at every turn to decide whether we take action, when and for how long to strike. If we don't fight, we will lose. But if we do, we have got a fighting chance of saving jobs. Together we can win!

Dates for your Diary



**Lobby Lambeth Children's and Young People's Scrutiny Committee –
Monday 19 July 6.30pm
Lambeth Town Hall, Brixton**

**Lobby Lambeth Council Cabinet
Monday 26 July 6.30pm
Lambeth Town Hall, Brixton**

This bulletin has been produced by Lambeth UNISON, GMB and NUT to inform local people about the scale of proposed cuts. Opinions expressed in this bulletin are the views of the individual authors and do not necessarily represent the official policies of the trade unions. Contact Lambeth UNISON, 6a Acre Lane, SW2 5SG.