

What are we up against

Some people think that if a different group of politicians were running Lambeth council, such as anti-cuts councillors, everything would be OK. But the fact is that local government has little room for manoeuvre- it is a puppet of central government which has no choice but to rubber stamp and implement national policy. Councillors who don't make enough cuts will simply be chucked out, as happened in Lambeth previously.

With the world economy in a mess the bosses everywhere are trying to make us pay for their crisis by attacking working living standards. In line with this funding of local government has been cut so that Tory, Labour, and Alliance run councils right across the country are now cutting jobs and services, increasing rents etc.

Of course these attacks are being resisted- in Haringey for instance teachers are staging strikes against cuts in the council's education budget. What's more council workers have won some victories- Haringey recently agreed to fill a vacant post after a strike by social services staff, in Camden four suspended library workers were reinstated when their colleagues took action in support of them, and strikes by Bradford nursery nurses forced the council to grant regrading.

Determined action does get results- but to really reverse the cuts means not just taking on the local councils but also the central state. To do this we need to link up with other groups of workers who are fighting back, not just other council workers but also workers in the NHS and at Fords. Our aim should be to wage a single struggle against all cuts, redundancies and 'speed-ups'.

Obviously we can't rely on the unions to organize such united action- strikes at Fords, in the NHS and on the ferries have all taken place against the wishes of the unions. We have to make the links ourselves. When we strike we should send delegations of people round to other workplaces such as other councils and hospitals. to try and organize joint action.

LAMBETH WORKER

BM BOX 3644

LONDON WC1N 3XX

LAMBETH WORKER

ISSUE NO.2

14th February 1988

NO REDEPLOYMENT
NO REDUNDANCIES

Fight the
Tory Council

The council is now implementing Thatcherism, with wholesale cuts in jobs and services. From now on we face a downhill slide with the government putting forward the Housing Bill, Clause 28, the Poll Tax etc. We must resist all of this- starting now. Every compromise opens the door to further attacks. Every resistance makes us stronger.

Engineers Update

As we go to press, Lombeth's motor mechanics are still on strike. Although a deal with management has now been agreed, the strikers are wisely staying out until the council formally gives the deal its blessing.

The strikers haven't won a complete victory, but they appear to have been successful in resisting the council's attempt to force them to accept cuts in return for a consolidated wage (where the bonus is included in their basic pay). If the deal goes through they will get consolidation as long as productivity doesn't decrease during a trial period, flexibility payments owed to mechanics will be paid and procedures started to fill a vacant cleaner's post at the Shakespeare Road depot.

Pressure on the council was increased last week when 30 people with disabilities occupied the social services HQ. Ambulances for the disabled have been hit by the strike, but the aim of the occupation was not to undermine the strike but to force the council to settle. This is an important development- in future we should make a positive effort to involve people affected by the cuts in united action with council workers.

Unions Divide and Rule

Whatever the final outcome of the strike one thing is for certain: a quick and total victory could have been achieved with more active support from other council workers. The dispute has highlighted the problem of union divisions within the workforce- some people seem to think that it has got nothing to do with them because they happen to be in a different union. An attack on one group of workers is an attack on all of us- everybody must support anybody fighting back regardless of what union they're in. Every council worker has benefited from the mechanics determined stand- while the strike's been on the council has been reluctant to provoke wider action by attacking other groups of workers, so they have held their fire, if only for a few weeks.

The machinery of the Lambeth unions has been used to isolate the strikers either by just not telling people what's going on or in some cases actually encouraging the council to organize strike-breaking. The local leadership of the TGWU, NUPE and UCATT wrote to Boss Bellos denouncing the strikers and advising her to bring in private contractors, which the council duly did.

To prevent the unions sabotaging our struggles in the future we will need to take things into our own hands. If a group of workers walk out they should immediately have mass meetings with other workers in dispute (such as the mechanics) and organize joint pickets to spread the strike as far as possible. The only place the "official channels" lead to is defeat and the dole queue.

Workers Unite

Health Workers and Council Workers have the same bosses -the bureaucrats of Central Government. Despite different structures to devolve power, the real decisions are made at the top. We can only get anywhere if we unite across all the artificial barriers set up to divide us and organise from the bottom. It is no good pinning any hopes on TUC 'days of action', as these are simply an excuse for reactionary wind-bags like Willis and Co. to bore us with their lies. Just as the Health Workers organised their own strike, we must make sure that we take up this direct approach, and leave the unions to belly crawling up to the bosses.

Gardeners Confront Little Weed



LAST MONDAY 200 COUNCIL GARDENERS OCCUPIED BELLOS'S OFFICE TO FIND OUT ABOUT REDEPLOYMENT- I.E. 80 REDUNDANCIES. UNLIKE LAST WEEK BELLOS DID NOT INVITE HORDES OF MACHO POLICE OFFICERS TO EVICT THEM!

Health Workers Take To The Streets

Health workers all over the country took strike action on February 3rd. Many more supported them both within and outside the health service. A lively rally was held in Trafalgar Square along with countless "spontaneous" marches started outside official channels and frequently in the teeth of opposition from the unions, which gave half hearted support upon realising that they couldn't stop it.

Four nurses were enough to picket out miners at Fricley Colliery in Yorkshire on the same day and a week later other workers also went on strike in support of healthworkers -North West fire brigades only answered emergency calls, while Liverpool Teachers, Car Workers at Vauxhall's plant at Ellesmere Port and ICI workers held a one day strike.