

● Don't forget to vote May 6: No cuts in jobs or services

Newsletter of the Camden Unison Branch

CAMDEN EYE



Number 18 ● April 2010

To listen to the press, radio and television you would think that the financial crisis and current recession were caused by excessive public spending. In reality it resulted from reckless borrowing and lending in the private sector, against a background of deregulation, low wage growth and insufficient public provision. However, this truth is being ignored, denied a fair hearing and marginalised. UNISON, along with other organisations has argued that there is no need for major cuts in the public sector. Some of those arguments are put here. For the full report go to: <http://www.unison.org.uk/acrobat/18887.pdf>

Congratulations Kevin Courtney



Kevin Courtney, Camden NUT Branch Secretary for 20 years, has

been elected as Deputy General Secretary of the NUT (National Union of Teachers). Kevin was a good friend of Camden UNISON and his input into Camden trades unionism will be sorely missed. Andrew Baisley has been elected as the new NUT Branch Secretary.

UNISON'S ALTERNATIVE BUDGET

The real crisis in our economy

Before the credit crunch public sector debt was less than 40% of national income – it was private sector debt that was out of control, at almost 300% of the national income. Some now talk as if public borrowing was the main problem we face today. But economists say expected debt levels are sustainable – our priority must be to tackle falling incomes and rising joblessness. Since the recession began, more than 100,000 homes have been repossessed, more than 1 million workers have lost their jobs, and more than 1 in 3 employees have had their pay, hours or benefits cut. Even after the increases of recent years, the UK still devotes a smaller share of its income to public services and social security than most other developed countries. Despite newspaper headlines suggesting that everyone now favours 'cuts', polling data suggests that voters want to see public services protected, even if that means higher taxation. Voters are particularly keen to see financial institutions, large companies and the superrich start paying a fairer share.

Making tax fair

Significant sums could be raised without affecting the incomes of the majority if we made sure the financial sector and the super-rich paid a fairer share. For example:

- £4.7bn could be raised every year by introducing a 50% tax rate on incomes over £100,000.
- £5bn could be raised every year with an Empty Property Tax on vacant dwellings which exacerbate housing shortages and harm neighbourhoods
- £10bn could be raised every year by reforming tax havens and residence rules to reduce tax avoidance by corporations and 'non-domiciled' residents
- £14.9bn could be raised every year by using minimum tax rates to stop reliefs being used to disproportionately subsidise incomes over £100,000
- £30bn could be raised every year by introducing a Major Financial Transactions Tax on UK financial institutions

Savings

£500m could be saved every year by adopting measures to improve the health and well-being of NHS staff, thereby reducing sickness absence

- £1bn could be saved every year by halving the local government agency bill, as has been achieved by high performing councils
- £1bn could be saved every year by eradicating healthcare acquired infections from the NHS – the extra cleaners would cost half this
- £2.8bn could be saved every year by ending the central government use of private consultants who bring little discernible benefit
- £3bn could be saved in user fees and interest charges every year if PFI schemes were replaced with conventional public procurement
- £76bn could be saved over 40 years by cancelling Trident.

April 10 march and rally

Up to 10,000 people marched to Trafalgar Square on 10 April to defend the welfare state and public services. Originally organised by the National Pensioners Convention the march and rally drew support from most unions including UNISON as well as anti-cuts campaigners. There was a sizeable contingent from the Coalition to Defend the Whittington Hospital.



Photo: Pete Ainsley

Defend Council Housing conference – the fight goes on

There is a wider consensus that council housing is essential to meeting high housing need and everybody should have a decent affordable housing. That is what Austin Mitchell MP told the national Defend Council Housing conference on 19 March.

Among the dignitaries present were Frank Dobson MP, Labour and Simon Hughes MP of the Liberal Democrats. The conference was well attended. There were speakers from as far and wide as Scotland, Dagenham and, of course, various charities and housing organisations.

Austin Mitchell highlighted the fact that house building is at an all time low since the 1930s. According to Frank Dobson MP, 'if you need more housing you build more'. He also said: 'the private market cannot provide the homes we need; lower borrowing and other costs mean council housing is cheaper to build, manage and maintain. Tenants should have the benefit of council housing, with proper regulated rent and the option to get rid of management if they are not satisfied.'

He talked about stopping the sell-offs of properties and highlighted examples of Camden Council's recent sale at auction of three flats which were resold a month later at a £200,000 mark up.

Jack Dromey of the Unite union said bad housing has a negative impact on the community as a whole as it holds back kids at school, breaks marriages apart and feeds racism and hence, the BNP using this as a political tool.

There are five million peo-



ple on the waiting list and the best way out of recession is to build new council homes with apprenticeships, getting builders back into work.

Simon Hughes MP supported the DCH Manifesto for Council Housing: 'If people can't have accountable management then tenants are not in control'. One other issue that all the politicians present at the conference agreed on is the cancellation of debts, which are estimated at £19 billion and should be a national issue.

It was actually suggested that they should be written off because the Government has benefitted from £billions siphoned out of tenants' rents through 'Rent Robbery', and from Right to buy receipts. Writing off historic debt would free councils to rebuild more homes and put public investment into existing council housing.

Even after debt repayment, the Treasury took £100m in 'surplus' out of council tenants' rents last year. The latest Housing Revenue Accounts reform proposals would stop the Robbery but increase the total debt burden on councils to £25 billion to appease the Treasury.

One thing that was agreed is to bring tenants, trade unionists and councillors together to keep fighting in a united campaign and organise together to defend secure tenancies and low rents.

More at: <http://www.defendcouncilhousing.org.uk/dch/>

Defend Council Housing
Report by
Adrienne Akran (HASC)

Fit Note replaces sick note

From 6th April there have been a number of changes to the sick note, or medical statement, that workers get from their GP to certify sickness absence.

Previously a sick note simply stated whether a doctor believed that a person should or should not be in work. The new medical statement will either indicate that a person is not fit for work, or that they might be fit for work under certain circumstances. There will be no change to the basic purpose of the medical statement and it will still be used by employees as confirmation of illness if claiming sick pay.

Guidance for unions and workplace representatives by the TUC is at: <http://www.tuc.org.uk/extras/fitnote.pdf>

The other Notting Hill

Camden UNISON has donated £200 to the UNISON Housing Association Branch in support of the Notting Hill Housing Trust (NHHT) strike fund.

NHHT launched a full blown assault on staff terms and conditions which will have a disproportionate impact on female staff with caring responsibilities (reducing carers' leave and ending flexi-time). The union responded with a strike and lively picket lines.

Alan Walter commemoration

Alan Walter, Camden tenant activist and one of the founders of Defend Council Housing, died unexpectedly on 11 April 2009. A park bench on the Peckwater Estate where he lived was unveiled in Alan's memory on the anniversary of his death. Tributes were paid from fellow campaigners and tenant activists.

Photo: Pete Ansley



Welcome to John Mann: our new branch organiser

The branch has recently appointed John Mann as a temporary, part time organiser. John, who was a branch member for 35 years until his retirement last September, outlines his new role.

Camden has one of the most effective UNISON branches in London but, like all the others, it faces some serious problems. The branch committee created my current role in order to explore ways of making the branch better organised and thus able to face the challenges ahead.

I spent the first few weeks meeting with convenors, branch officers and departmental stewards' committees, in order to agree a set of priorities.

Not surprisingly recruitment of new members came at the top of the list with finding more stewards a close second. Along with some more mundane tasks -like clearing the 'to be filed' paper mountain in the branch office- I now have a healthy 'to do' list.

One recent trend is a big increase in the number of individual members complaining about bullying by their managers. Stewards and branch officers are handling growing numbers of cases but the best defence against such behaviour is well organised workplaces in which UNISON members make it clear that such bullying will not be tolerated.

My main focus for the next few months will be on finding ways of engaging all our members in recruitment. Given the onslaught on public services after the election threatened by all the major parties the need for strong trade union organisation has never been greater. We need all our existing members (not just the stewards) to be



confident in encouraging fellow workers to join.

My first appeal is for everyone who reads this is to ask a colleague to join. Your local steward can supply application forms or contact the branch office (See 'Join Camden UNISON' on the back page). If you need some examples of the value of UNISON membership in Camden read this and other editions of Camden Eye for stories of how the branch protects individuals, negotiates with the Council, supports local and national campaigns, highlights health and safety problems and holds the Council to account for its actions.

● If you have any ideas about other ways of increasing our membership please let me know john.mann@camden.gov.uk or phone on (020 7974) x 1633.

Make sure you vote in these elections

Election for General Secretary

This is the most powerful full-time position in UNISON which has 1.3 million members. The ballot will start on 17th May and end at 5 pm on 11th June. The election result will be announced on 22nd June. Camden UNISON Branch committee voted to support the nomination of Paul Holmes, branch secretary of Kirklees UNISON as General Secretary.

Elections for Local Government Service Group Executive

The ballot started on 12 April and will end at 5.00 pm on Friday 14 May. The Camden UNISON Branch Committee has nominated Sonya Howard and John McLoughlin for these positions.

EYE VIEW

The real battle will be after the election

Whoever wins the General election we can expect an onslaught on the public sector. One authoritative source, CIPD, predicts 500,000 public sector jobs will be cut over the next five years. The major parties also want to hold down public sector wages with inflation at 4.4% (Retail Price Index) and likely to remain above 2.5%. The excuse for this is the need to reduce the public sector deficit. But this was caused by the bail out of the banks not by reckless public sector spending. Meanwhile bankers are still being paid their bonuses and chief executives receive fantastical salaries. We need a General Secretary who will use the full resources of the union in a determined defence of the public sector. Read the statements by the candidates for the General Secretary post carefully and cast your vote. Your job may depend on who wins.

Out of Afghanistan

One area not being cut is the £3.8 billion a year being spent on the war in Afghanistan. A recent opinion poll for the Independent on Sunday showed that 77 per cent want the troops withdrawn from Afghanistan.

If someone wants your vote ask them about Afghanistan

More at:

<http://www.stopwar.org.uk/>

Cut NSL profits—not jobs

■ CCTV staff employed by NSL Parking

Services held a lively demonstration against job cuts outside Camden Town Hall in March.

NSL management claimed they had to cut costs on the Camden contract. Yet this is the most lucrative contract ever awarded by the Council, valued at £44 million over 6 years. There were over 10 job losses in a section where the majority are UNISON members.

Our members were angry that the company gave them three weeks notice of the redundancies, with virtually no information about their employment rights and with statutory redundancy pay only on offer.

There was no consultation with UNISON about the redundancies and a meeting with NSL only took place after repeated requests from UNISON.

After a packed and lively UNISON meeting our members decided to take their protest to the Town Hall. They were determined to let NSL and Camden know of their anger about being treated so badly. Their work helped NSL win one of the most profitable parking contracts in the country that yields Camden substantial revenue and a handsome profit for NSL.



Photo: Sarah Friday

Organisational Change: (Not quite) immune to our consultations

■ A number of members have contacted the branch office concerned at what they had read or heard about significant revisions to the Council's organisational change policy and procedure. There has also been confusion about UNISON's role prior to the introduction of these changes, so it's worth reviewing consultation exercises that took place in 2009.

Last year management engaged in several meetings about amending the organisational change policy and procedure that had been agreed with UNISON and took effect from May 2007. Most of the proposed revisions were quite minor, though UNISON objected, without success, to the elimination of the right of appeal to a panel of councillors against dismissal on the grounds of redundancy.

Then, in late July 2009, far more dramatic proposals emerged that threatened to erode the 2007 provisions for redundancy/compensation payments and pay protection arrangements. If implemented the original proposals would have meant the effective end of pay protection, with provision for just one year of 'marking time' (salary frozen) at the grade and scale point of the employee's previous post, assuming that the new post was no more than one grade below the old post.

There were further changes that strengthened managerial discretion over the award of the compensation element of the redundancy/compensation package alongside the reintroduction of key aspects of the statutory redundancy scheme. These included a cap at 20 years continuous service for the calculation of the redundancy payment and a

reduction in the compensation multiplier from 0.8 to 0.25 for each year of Camden service. The 'sweetener' was an additional half a week's pay for each every birthday post-41. On the one hand management argued that the previous pay protection scheme was open to challenge on the ground that it discriminated against younger employees, while on the other hand management cited an earlier ruling that age-linked formulas for calculating redundancy entitlements were not discriminatory.

UNISON argued strenuously that simple consultation around these radical



proposals was not good enough. There had to be face-to-face negotiation. Eventually, this took place in late September, though officially management's line was that only pay protection was subject to bargaining. In practice, there were frank exchanges on both issues with UNISON securing meaningful but inadequate concessions.

On the question of pay protection management's position shifted far more substantially with an agreement to offer three years of full grade-related protection and two years of marking time. While this formula would undeniably prove detrimental in practice to long-standing employees who found themselves downgraded, it also offered a

new measure of protection to staff, who had not previously had any right to full pay protection. This was almost certainly the best position that UNISON could have achieved through negotiation, but acceptance was tied to swallowing the inferior redundancy/compensation scheme.

Again, management improved aspects of its initial proposal, increasing the multiplier from 0.25 to 0.4, and allowing consideration of all continuous local government service up to 20 years. This formula, however, still meant substantially less in compensation for a clear majority of staff than the sums available under the old formula. The biggest losers would almost certainly have been those employees with long Camden service between the ages of 50 and 55, who due to completely separate changes in the Local Government Pension Scheme were no longer entitled to early release of their pension as of 1 April 2010.

At its 18 November 2009 meeting the Council's Executive rubber-stamped the revised proposals. In the meantime, the GMB, which had not been party to the talks with management, signed up to these proposals, which UNISON had negotiated but still found unacceptable as a basis for agreement.

There is no doubt that management envisages a substantial increase over the coming period in the number of redundancies and is keen to reduce the overall spend on payments to those who've lost their jobs. But these detrimental changes to the redundancy and compensation scheme can also stiffen members' resolve to resist job cuts.

George Binette
Branch Secretary

Camden is claiming that a combination of a new funding formula for schools and the recession could see Camden schools' budgets slashed by 10% over the next three years. **Hugo Pierre**, Joint convenor CSF, argues for a campaign of opposition

WE WON'T ACCEPT CUTS



UNISON and the NUT have seen some of the calculations based on Department for children, schools and families (DCSF) circulars. The DCSF believes that Camden's schools' funding levels are much higher than its students' needs. It claims that this results in some authorities with greater needs not receiving the level of funding they require.

It is undeniable that historically Camden has spent a higher amount on schools

per pupil compared to other councils. The Government's current allocation is based on that fact.

In the 1990s UNISON and the NUT mounted a vigorous campaign to force the Council to spend all of the money the Government allocated to Camden's schools. Since then the Council has spent even more than this on educational services to children with statements of Special Educational Needs (SEN). The national trend shows a big expenditure growth for SEN across most authorities. However clo-

sure of specialist provision in the 1990s made this worse for Camden.

Camden's projections under the new formula, not checked by Government officials, show that those authorities gaining money from Camden would include councils mostly in the wealthiest parts of the country. Almost certainly some of these authorities have not spent their education allocations over the years on schools but on other things. Why should Camden schools pay for their historic funding

shortfalls?

UNISON and the NUT believe we have excellent services to defend. Together we have fought for higher salaries for school staff, which led to years of stability and the development of excellent provision. By contrast many other authorities, particularly in London, faced 'Teacher shortages' and other staffing problems.

UNISON and the NUT have jointly started a campaign amongst staff and parents to defend our services. Get involved.

Photo: Pete Ansley



Exposing the British National Party

BNP leader Nick Griffin is standing for a parliamentary seat in Barking where the BNP may increase their council seats beyond the twelve they hold already.

Unite against Fascism and Hope not Hate along with local groups have been organising days of action, some sponsored by trades unions. They have involved 100 to 200 people leafletting wards with an anti-BNP leaflet exposing them as Nazis, then following it up by canvassing people's

opinions.

Unite against Fascism has also organised in Bolton and Dudley to prevent the 'football hooligans' of the English Defence League (which has strong if concealed links with the BNP) going on a racist rampage as they did in Stoke.

In Camden a local branch of Unite against Fascism has been set up. Contact it at: camdenuniteagainstfascism@googlemail.com

Closer to home, the BNP are standing in three council wards: Belsize, Kentish

Town and Holborn & Covent Garden. They are standing in both parliamentary constituencies. Wherever they stand they need to be exposed. The last time they stood in Belsize and Kentish Town their vote was derisory. Let's keep it that way.

Camden UNISON donated £200 to UAF after they curtailed the English Defence League attempt to hold an anti-Muslim march and rally in Bolton.

● More at: <http://www.uaf.org.uk/>

Defend our NHS election candidates told

Camden Keep Our NHS Public is planning to ask all candidates standing for election on 6 May in Camden if they will oppose any further privatisation of the NHS Public. They will be petitioning on this and asking questions at local hustings.

Camden NHS has awarded the contract for the out-of-hours service to Cami-doc, the GP co-operative which provides the current service. No doubt the public pressure put on them not to award it to a commercial organisation helped.

For more information phone Maeve O'Connor on 020 7383 3092 or Candy Udwin on 07946 480 261 or visit www.camdenkeepournhspublic.org.uk

Defend the Whittington Hospital Coalition (DWHC). Following the 5,000 strong march to defend the hospital the coalition planned a day of action on 29th April. For an update on activities go to: <http://dwhc.org.uk/>

'Social Work after Baby P' is part of the new 'Hope for Social Work Series'. **Jennette Evans**, Senior Practitioner in CSF reviewed it for Camden Eye

Social Work after Baby P



This is a collection of perspectives and debates from a variety of sources – Social Workers, Academics and representatives from Trade Unions Aspect and UNISON. 'Social Work after Baby P' begins with a reprint of Iain Ferguson and Michael Lavallette's article of the same name published in the *International Socialism Journal*, and debate follows in 12 short essays.

What I found interesting was that beyond the editors' opening few paragraphs in their article, they moved away from the title theme and explored the historical context to Social Work in Britain, the link between poverty and child abuse, the care versus control issue of welfare under capitalism, and the mana-

gerialism and marketisation of social care services. These are all very important issues and essential to understanding the broader context of social work in Britain, but were not particularly well linked to the title theme of Social Work following the death of Baby Peter.

The essays that followed highlighted some common and some less acknowledged issues and discuss the realities of social work. On balance, there was less acknowledgement of the positive changes that have come about as a result of Case Reviews such as those that followed the deaths of Victoria Climbié and Peter Connelly which, with the benefit of hindsight could have been prevented 'if only they had done A, B or C'.

There are many Social Workers (and other mem-

bers of the child's network) who provide high quality service to children and families to keep children and young people safe from harm – despite public and media messages on our failings- and while we are learning the importance of 'A, B and C' and changing practice accordingly.

Catriona Grant and Colin Turbett raised this issue in their essay entitled 'Too much pessimism?' It and UNISON's '10 Point Plan for Protecting Children' by Helga Pile stood out in contrast in that they looked forward and made suggestions for a brighter future for children and the people who want to protect them instead of further reinforcing the low opinion of and the low morale felt by Social Work Departments all over Britain. It's an interesting collection which will incite

strong views and debate as a result.

Social Work after Baby P: Issues, Debates and Alternative Perspectives' edited by Iain Ferguson & Michael Lavallette. £5.95

Why not order it from your local library?

■ 'Social workers desperately want to spend more time doing what they are good at – working closely with children, adults and families – but UNISON has found that excessive caseloads and the burden of bureaucracy are making that impossible. This has got to change – we need social workers to believe that things will improve.' *Helga Pile*, UNISON National Officer for Social Work and Social Care.

■ See UNISON's 10 point plan at: www.unison.org.uk/acrobat/18035.pdf

Social Work Action Network

SWAN is a loose network of social work practitioners, academics, students and social welfare service users united in their concern that social work activity is being undermined by managerialism and marketisation, by the stigmatisation of service users and by welfare cuts and restrictions.

More at: <http://www.socialworkfuture.org/>

A million climate jobs

There were many interesting contributions and talks at the Million Climate Jobs conference on 13 March organised by the Campaign against Climate Change trade union group. Go to: <http://www.campaignccc.org/tuconference2010> for an overview, photos and video clips.



Barry Walden and Phoebe Watkins pictured in April during their strenuous 45k trek across the Catalan mountains to raise funds for UNISON Welfare.

Members can apply to the fund for financial help (supplied in the form of a grant) when things are difficult.

With the recession putting jobs at risk and making money tight, the Welfare fund has had higher than normal applications. If you would like to donate to their fund raising please contact them by email (phoebe.watkins@camden.gov.uk, barry.walden@camden.gov.uk) or via the UNISON Branch office: tel 020 7974 1633.

All monies - from £1.00 to £50 gratefully received! Please make cheques payable to 'UNISON Welfare'.

Finally, a big thank you to all those who have already donated!

Barry & Phoebe

Photo: Pete Ainsley



King's College strike

King's College staff and students held a lively strike rally in March protesting against a £27million cuts programme which threatened 205 jobs. Whole departments were set to close while 202 top earners had a combined salary bill of £29 million. The protest was not only over jobs but how universities were being turned into businesses controlled by highly paid elites.

Phoebé Watkins

Lessons from Greece

Some 100 people including bus workers, civil servants, council workers, students, post workers and lecturers came to hear Vasilis Sylaidis of the Greek trade union Intracom at a central London Right to Work meeting on 23 March.

Vasilis gave a detailed account of the struggles in Greece with the bailed out banks still profiteering. He warned of attempts to divide permanent and temporary staff, private and public sector, and so on. He said to beware of what will follow a general election – that was when the crisis hit Greece with the EU and the IMF demanding full-blooded austerity measures.

At the start a young BA cabin crew worker spoke of the enthusiastic picket lines at Heathrow and the bullying approach of Willie Walsh, the BA Chief executive. A cabin crew could not do their job if they were three down on a ten hour flight with 400 passengers. Properly trained cabin crew also saved lives in medical emergencies such as heart attacks. George Binette presented him with a £250 cheque for the Unite union from Camden UNISON.

Jim Wolfreys, President of King's College UCU, announced an 85% vote for action by lecturers to great acclaim. A Sussex University student talked of their fight against cuts and victimisations. A PCS member exposed the bogus rationale of the cuts with £175 billion of unclaimed tax and their Budget day strike the next day, Shirley Franklin from Defend the Whittington Hospital Coalition spoke of people power, the 5,000 strong march against cutting the A&E and future actions planned.

Employees whose jobs were outsourced had their right to annual pay awards protected. In an alarming development the Court of Appeal has effectively removed that right. George Binette, Branch Secretary, explains

Court ruling leaves TUPE toothless and employers grinning



In late January the Court of Appeal issued a judgment in

favour of a private contractor, Parkwood Leisure Ltd, against Alemo-Herron and 23 other former employees of Lewisham Council. The ruling effectively means that there is no longer any legal obligation under TUPE (Transfer of Undertaking Protection of Employment) legislation to honour National Joint Council (NJC) pay awards for local authority employees.

The 24 workers, who had been employed in Lewisham's then leisure department, originally transferred to a private company, CCL, in 2002. While CCL agreed to pay NJC-negotiated awards, the company was subject to takeover by Parkwood Leisure in May 2004.

From the outset Parkwood balked at honoring NJC awards. Eventually, with UNISON's backing, the workers took Parkwood to an Employment Tribunal, which ruled in the company's favour. An Employment Appeal Tribunal in 2009, however, overturned the previous decision, ruling in

the workers' favour only for the Court of Appeal to cite a European Court of Justice decision that means any collective bargaining agreements reached between council unions and employers are not binding on companies after the outsourcing of a service to the private sector.

The Court of Appeal's decision first came to Camden UNISON's attention during consultation discussions with management and Hays Recruitment over the outsourcing of the whole of Camden's recruitment function to the private employer. Hays argued that the Court of Appeal ruling applied to all TUPE transfers, not just so-called second generation transfers, and so the company had no responsibility to pay NJC rates to ex-Camden employees who had TUPE'd over. Though Camden initially differed from this interpretation, the Council now concurs with Hays' view that TUPE offers no protection of NJC awards.

There is, of course, a bitter irony in that the judges' ruling concerning the applicability of NJC awards coincided with the local government employers' announce-

ment that there would be no negotiations over the joint unions' pay claim and that a pay freeze would be in effect for 2010-11. In addition, despite the previous assumption that TUPE did cover NJC pay awards, the harsh experience of many UNISON members transferring to employers such as KGB, MITIE and Caterlink has been of the employers' repeated refusal to pay the nationally agreed increases.

UNISON's Legal Services department has drafted appeal papers for submission to the UK Supreme Court, which has replaced the Law Lords as the nation's highest judicial body. Whatever the outcome of any eventual appeal, the court ruling serves as a timely reminder that despite the occasional legal victory for workers and their unions, the courts are not neutral arbiters between the employers and us.

The ruling also gives all the more reason to resist the outsourcing of public services in the first place as the best way of halting the race to the bottom in terms of pay and conditions.

There's strength in numbers:

JOIN CAMDEN UNISON

With over 3,500 members Camden UNISON is the largest union in the council. If you are worried about your job in a re-structure, stressed by your workload, having trouble with your manager, worried about outsourcing, have health and safety concerns or are anxious that there is a decent pay settlement this year then you are better off in the union than without. Fight together with others – don't struggle alone. Phone the branch office on 020 7974 1633 or email: paul.england@camden.gov.uk More information at: www.unison.org.uk

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The views expressed
in this newsletter are
not necessarily the
views of Camden
UNISON, but the
branch will defend
the right of members
to express those
views.

UNISON
the public service union

Is our pension fund financing climate chaos?



The Camden
Local
Government
Pension

Scheme currently has around £40 million invested in BP and Royal Dutch Shell.

UNISON is supporting a nation-wide coalition of organisations in an unprecedented mobilization of pensions fund members and the public to call on their pension funds to support shareholder resolutions due to be voted on at the BP and Shell shareholder AGMs this spring.

Dave Prentis, General Secretary of UNISON said 'We're not convinced that exploitation of tar sands is a responsible choice for the future. The resolutions demand clear answers from the oil companies which our members need and deserve.'

The resolution's 142 co-filers, a diverse group of fund managers, pension funds, including the UNISON staff pension scheme, and faith groups call on BP and Shell to report on the investment risks associated with tar sands projects and their

plans to address them, reporting back to the 2011 shareholder AGMs.

Camden UNISON called on the Camden LGPS fund to vote in favour of these resolutions. The Pensions Subcommittee agreed Camden should abstain.

(With acknowledgements to Fair Pensions - The campaign for responsible investment. www.fairpensions.org.uk)

David Jones Retired
Members' Observer,
Camden Pensions Sub-
Committee

Tar sands (also known as oil sands) are deposits of sand and clay saturated with bitumen. Bitumen is oil in a solid or semi-solid state. The tar sands cover 140,000 sq km, an area larger than England, in the boreal forest of Alberta, Canada.

Tar sands exploitation is one of the biggest single factors threatening efforts to tackle climate change. Tar sands make up the world's second largest oil reserves (173 billion barrels) and the damage they can cause to the climate is even worse than conven-

tional oil. The greenhouse gas emissions from the conversion of tar sands into fuel is three times higher than for conventional oil production and roughly three barrels of natural gas are consumed to create one barrel of oil.

Tar sands also have human rights costs. The pollution, deforestation and wildlife disturbance associated with tar sands developments threaten the traditional livelihoods and well-being of indigenous communities.

Tar sands developments are not only environmentally and socially damaging, resulting in them being among the most controversial industrial projects in the world. They could also create financial risks for pension scheme members, because of expected rises in carbon-emissions costs, legal costs and other problems affecting oil companies which form a big proportion of most schemes' investment portfolios. Analysts question whether global oil prices will remain high enough to meet the increasing cost of extraction and emission taxes.



UNISON members from local government branches in East Anglia, the South East and Greater London joined a protest lobby on 30 March outside a conference organised by the Local Government Employer/Local Government Association. Along with the GMB and Unite unions, UNISON is demanding that the employers start negotiating around the joint union pay claim and reverse their decision to freeze pay for all local authority staff. Camden branch officers and local representatives will keep members informed about developments in the campaign to overturn the imposition of what is in reality a substantial pay cut.