

PROTEST ON 22 JUNE: The Con-Dem coalition is unveiling its emergency budget, there will be a protest outside Downing Street in the afternoon and local protests in Camden are being planned, including one at Camden Town Hall. The message across the media and from the politicians is that savage cuts in the welfare state are inevitable. They refuse to acknowledge that the public sector deficit was caused by the bailout of the banks not by reckless public spending. Protest and defend the welfare state.

Newsletter of the Camden Unison Branch

CAMDEN EYE



Number 19 ● June 2010

Stop the Con-Dem cuts – hold Labour Council to its Pledges



On 6 May after 13 years of New Labour the Tories won the largest

share of the popular vote, but fell short of a Westminster majority. Enter the Liberal Democrats, whose leadership found the lure of cabinet seats and some concessions irresistible.

Suddenly, some £6.2bn in spending cuts, rejected as harmful by the Lib Dems during the election campaign, became not just necessary but desirable. By 20 May the Cameron/Clegg double act was in full swing. The party leaders made it plain that: 'The deficit reduction programme takes precedence over any of the other measures.'

In short, the coalition has signalled its determination to ensure that the public sector and its workforce foot the bill for the bail-out of the banking sector. In councils, the NHS, schools and colleges, we face the most serious assault on jobs, pay and conditions witnessed in more than a generation.

The coalition has 18 millionaires among its 23 member Cabinet, with a majority having received public school education and 15 of them Oxbridge graduates. All but one of the 23 is white and it is the most male-dominated Cabinet in 40 years. These are not people who need to rely on the services UNISON members provide and many of

them have a deep rooted dislike for the public sector generally.

The appointment of Eric Pickles, a notorious champion of privatisation and enemy of local government trade unions from his time as leader of Bradford District Council, as secretary for the Department of Communities and Local Government indicates that the local authority workforce is very much in this government's sights. Michael Gove's arrival as Education Secretary and the inclusion in the Queen's Speech of his proposals for hugely expanding the Academies programme is a clear attack on the remaining vestiges of democratic local accountability and must sound alarm bells among teachers and support staff alike.

Meanwhile, Camden along

with much of London bucked the trend, returning a Labour council after four years of Lib Dem-Conservative partnership. Labour benefited from the increased turnout associated with a General Election on the same day, but there can be little doubt that the vote was a rejection of some of the partnership administration's flagship policies.

UNISON certainly welcomes the decision to halt the auctions of council homes and other progressive pledges in the party's local manifesto including a commitment to introduce the London Living Wage of £7.60 across all Camden's contracts. Branch officers have been pressing the Labour group leadership to discuss this and a range of other key issues and are

committed to forging an effective opposition to the Con-Dem coalition's cuts.

We cannot, however, rely on the Labour council to shield us from the coming storm, but must build on our strength, both as trade unionists and as members of the communities that will be hard hit, to forge a coalition of resistance.

The next round of cuts will be unveiled on 22 June as George Osborne announces the long threatened Emergency Budget to be followed by a Comprehensive Spending Review in the autumn that will almost certainly deal a hammer blow to a wide range of services.

Recognising the gravity of the situation the public sector faces nationally, the 24 May UNISON branch committee unanimously approved an emergency motion calling on our union nationally to act alongside other public sector unions to stage a national protest outside Parliament to coincide with the Emergency Budget. We are also planning local activities to mark the day, whatever happens at a national level.

In the face of the huge challenges that we are going to face over the coming period, I strongly urge members across the Council and on outsourced contracts to: Recruit, Organise and Resist.

George Binette
Branch Secretary

Photo: Pete Ansley



BA Cabin crew strikers near Hatton Cross. Camden UNISON has donated £500 to the Unite union strike fund and £80 was raised at a meeting of Camden UNISON stewards and activists on 24 May.

Dogged campaigning stops the council homes sell-off

The announcement that not one more council home will be sold on the open market is the culmination of yet another successful campaign by tenants and trade unionists in Camden. For nearly two years we dogged the then Tory Lib Dem council at every step as they sold much needed homes to the highest bidder at auction.

We had high points when we organised lobbies and protests but much of the time it was less exciting, meeting to discuss and scratch our heads as to what we could do next to make sure the issue never fell out of sight.

Had the campaign not fought for those years I doubt the issue would have been so high up the agenda during the election.

Yet again we have showed that unity between tenants, residents and local trade unionists is vital if we are to defend our services. We now look forward to working with the new Labour council to defend council housing whatever attacks the future brings. That does not mean we are complacent.

On the contrary we remain ever vigilant, knowing that as tenants and trade unionists we have a proven track record of unity in struggle.

Maddy Cooper
HASC Steward

Legislation passed in November 2009 could put all school staff on a new set of national conditions. These would apply to all schools bar Academies. **Hugo Pierre**, Joint Convenor CSF, outlines the changes being considered

A separate negotiating body for school staff?

Pay, terms and conditions would be negotiated by a new body called the School Support Staff Negotiating Body. Agreements would be negotiated between the three sides:

Employers – Councils (Local Government Employers), Religious schools (both the Catholic & Church of England Education Services) and Non-religious Foundation and Aided schools (FASNA) Staff – UNISON, GMB and UNITE

Government - Department for Children, Schools & Families (now Department for Education).

At present UNISON is negotiating on a new handbook covering the terms

and conditions of staff and a new pay spine. So, for example, UNISON is proposing that the standard working year for school staff is 39 weeks plus the full holiday entitlement. Those staff that work more than this would receive additional pay which would be pensionable.

Nationally all UNISON members in schools would be balloted before any changes are made. If there was a 'yes' vote in the ballot, staff would transfer to the new conditions.

For school staff this would mean they are no longer on the 'Green Book' conditions (our current national agreement). They would retain continuous employment, their current employer and

other accrued rights such as pension rights. However there is still a long way to go in the negotiations and members will be asked to decide whether the final package of terms and conditions is in their best interests or not.

UNISON will not be balloting other members in local government on this matter even though the transfer of a very large sector of staff, away from 'Green Book' conditions could potentially reduce our strength in numbers both for national and local bargaining.

If you and other members in your school want more information UNISON would be happy to organise a meeting. Call 020 7974 8036



MP Frank Dobson, on left and Councillor Nash Ali and others celebrate the end of council homes sell-off at Maitland Park estate.

Picture: Camden New Journal

Public Meeting

NO MORE ACADEMIES • NO 'FREE' SCHOOLS • DEFEND STATE EDUCATION

Thursday 24th June, 6.30pm • Methodist Central Hall, Westminster, London, SW1H 9NH • The Government's Academies Bill is being rushed through Parliament • It proposes that all 'Outstanding' Schools are given the automatic right to become Academies, following a vote of the Governors. They will not be required to consult parents, teachers, school support staff or the local community • All other schools are also invited to apply to become Academies • At a stroke this could take hundreds of the most successful schools out of local authority control. This would leave local authorities managing the schools with the most difficulties, with diminishing budgets • More at: <http://www.antiacademies.org.uk/>

■ PCS (Public and Commercial Services union) members took three days of strike action in March, including on budget day against government plans to drastically cut civil service redundancy payments. On 10 May the High Court ruled that the previous government acted unlawfully when it introduced, without PCS's agreement, a new redundancy scheme reducing the rights staff had accrued over time. The judgement quashes a revised scheme that the government had sought to impose from 1 April. The Government must now reopen negotiations with the union if it is to agree a new arrangement that protects existing members' rights. It is a dramatic boost for the union's 270,000 public sector members. Picture: Pete Ainsley



UNISON in Bidborough House

■ Last year work was completed on the refurbishment of Bidborough House and the process of reallocating staff to the building is now almost finished. In order to rebuild a strong UNISON presence there, branch officers agreed to organise a health and safety inspection of the whole building. At the same time we tried to identify and recruit non-members.

The initial inspection was a success with most members of staff ready to talk about the pros and cons of the 'new building'. A surprisingly long list of problems was identified, passed to management and discussed with members at a report back meeting.

Subsequent negotiations with management have produced some minor improvements but bigger issues (like the problems with the air handling system) are proving more difficult to resolve. So far the general response from management has been positive.

It is clear, however, that in order to keep up the pressure UNISON will need to build up its local organisation. We have had some initial success with around half a dozen new recruits and a new health and safety rep coming forward. Also there has been a lot of interest from temporary staff who are nevertheless worried that joining the union might put their continued employment

at risk. For the first time the reps from different sections have worked together and we are determined to continue this joint approach so that UNISON has a much higher profile in the whole of Bidborough House.

In June we plan to run an 'open day' for members in which they can raise any problems and/or suggestions to a panel of local and branch reps. In the coming months we will be launching a major recruitment drive in the building and undertaking similar inspections in other council workplaces.

● John Mann, Branch Organiser, can be contacted at john.mann@camden.gov.uk

EYE VIEW

Cut, Cut, Cut. Wrong, Wrong, Wrong

Two months ago the conventional wisdom was that cuts should not take place until the economic recovery was well and truly entrenched. Now the Con-Dem coalition is positively gung-ho about cutting while the recovery is fragile.

The truth remains the same. Cuts now risk a double dip recession with reduced tax receipts and increased unemployment. One eminent economist describes it as 'utter folly posing as wisdom'. We are told frontline services will be spared. The TUC's cuts-watch is showing that cuts have already hit those with the greatest need. Camden's senior management estimate that the council will need to find from £6 to £9 million this year as a consequence of the government's £6.2 billion cuts. £60 to £80 million will need to be found by 2014.

There needs to be resistance to these attacks, nationally and locally. Resistance now needs united union action with community support.

TUC cuts-watch at: www.touchstoneblog.org.uk/category/cuts-watch

Keep the racist EDL out of Tower Hamlets

The English Defence League could be described as the BNP's street fighting arm. Its attempts to march in Newcastle and Cardiff in recent weeks were thwarted by impressive local mobilisations. Now they plan to march in Tower Hamlets on Sunday 20 June. Local people do not want to see a violent racist organisation on their streets. A demonstration will assemble at 11am at Stepney Green Park. It will be 'a peaceful protest to celebrate our diversity'. More information at: <http://uaf.org.uk/>

PUBLIC SECTOR PENSIONS TIME-BOMB IS A MYTH

Not a week goes by without an attack on the so-called “gold-plated pensions” that social workers, nursery nurses, teaching assistants, care workers and librarians working for local councils are said to enjoy.

Local authority workers could be forgiven for wondering who exactly the reports are referring to. They know that when they retire they can expect an average pension of £4,000 per year – with a woman getting on average just £2,600 – hardly gold-plated.

This is just one common myth peddled about the local government pension scheme. Sadly, it’s not the last.

Headlines often claim a “pensions time-bomb” is looming. The CBI has claimed that public sector pensions have a £1 trillion “black-hole”. In truth, there is no D-Day, when all local government workers will retire and ask to collect their pension.

These figures are designed to shock and panic the public, fuelling a pensions envy that pits public sector workers against private sector staff, sparking a race to the bottom.

The local government pension scheme (LGPS) is a funded scheme, paid into by mainly low-paid women. Of those 60% earn less than £18,000 a year, many struggle to afford their pension payments, set at 6.4% of their wages – double the average of people paying into money purchase schemes.

Further headlines are often filled with claims that, for example, 25% of council

Let’s not forget, we all pay for each other’s pensions; private companies add the cost of pensions into the cost of their goods and services

tax revenue is spent on the LGPS. Local councils get most of their revenue from business rates and central government grants. Less than 6% of council taxpayers’ rates go towards funding the pension scheme, with more than 50% coming from employee contributions and investment returns.

The recession and falling stock markets have, for some, brought the scheme into focus. It is bizarre that at a time of economic downturn, when many are struggling to save for their retirement, some commentators and pressure groups are pushing for sustainable pensions schemes, consisting mainly of low-paid workers, to be closed down.

What these commentators are forgetting is that with pensions, it’s vital to take a long-term view. The stock markets have taken a knock, but will recover, as will the value of LGPS investments. In the past, individual funds ran a healthy surplus, and some councils took “pensions holidays” from contributing – missing out on the opportunity of

making healthy profits and enriching the scheme. Staff, however, continued to pay, year in, year out.

A few years ago unions, together with the Government and employers, went through intense negotiations to reach a new agreement to make the LGPS sustainable and affordable in the long term. In exchange for increased member contributions and benefit reform, employers agreed to a scheme where councils and other LGPS employers contributed, on average, 13.6% of members’ pay each year. Some employers are paying a higher rate, due to past underfunding and contribution holidays.

The LGPS is in better shape than most other schemes. Even in the depths of the recession, investments provided nearly £3bn for the LGPS in England, nearly one third (27%) of its total income. Every year, the scheme takes billions more in contributions and investment returns than it pays out in benefits. Last year, income from member contributions to the scheme in England alone increased by 15% – outstripping expenditure by £6bn.

Also overlooked is the investment power of the LGPS fund. In 2008 the total value of combined assets in England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland was £143bn – 60% of which was invested in equities or shares. In the same year, more than £1bn was invested in each of the top four FTSE companies. Closing the scheme and



The myth of a public sector pensions time-bomb is an example of scaremongering at its worst, argues Paul O'Shea, Regional Secretary of Unison Cymru/Wales

Part of UNISON's new headquarters in London near Euston station includes the Elizabeth Garrett Anderson Hospital, now a listed building. The fully restored entrance hall and ground floor will become the Elizabeth Garrett Anderson Gallery, commemorating the first woman to qualify as a doctor in Britain. UNISON has asked for recollections of staff, visitors and patients to be included in the exhibition. Candy Udwin recollects the fight to keep the EGA open

How the EGA stayed OK!

withdrawing this investment would have a huge impact on the UK economy, hitting the private sector hard.

Decent pensions make good economic sense. Research in 2006 showed that if the LGPS did not exist – based only on current pensioners – it would cost the taxpayer £2bn a year in increased means-tested benefits and loss of tax revenue. It would also fuel increased take-up of NHS and council care services. Five per cent of GDP is already spent on state pensions, so closing the local government scheme would see that figure skyrocket.

This is the real pension's time bomb – supporting people who haven't saved for their retirement. Even with public sector schemes, millions of people are set to need help in the future. Many private companies, despite making profits, are closing their final salary schemes, leaving staff with inadequate defined contribution schemes or no pension scheme at all. These are the real villains.

And the real pensions apartheid is between the boardroom fat cats who secure generous, six-figure nest eggs for themselves, plus low retirement ages, but leave their staff to live in poverty in their retirement.

Instead of trying to bring public sector schemes down, in a dangerous race to the bottom, we should try to bring private sector schemes up to a decent level.

● Reproduced with permission



The badges said *EGA stays OK!* Thousands were produced from 1976 until

1979 when the Elizabeth Garrett Anderson hospital was saved.

The Save the EGA Campaign saw off attempt after attempt to close the hospital. It built massive support from virtually every local trade union and residents' group, as well as wider support from women's groups and the labour movement.

Trade unions across Camden struck in support of the hospital. We sat in Euston Road outside the hospital and blocked the traffic. We occupied the Area Health Authority building to stop their meeting deciding on closure. Pensioners who had taken part in protests against unemployment in the 1930s advised us on tactics!

The backdrop was the eco-

nomc crisis. The IMF (International Monetary Fund) had demanded deep cuts in return for a loan to prop up the pound. The Labour government threatened to close 100 small hospitals in London alone. A wave of opposition was unleashed and public sector unions called a series of national demonstrations.

On 15 November 1976 Nupe, Cohse and Nalgo members (the forerunners of Unison) voted to occupy the hospital. The campaign took over a waiting room at the entrance of the hospital and mounted a continuous picket to stop patients or equipment being moved. Cohse members at the Emergency Bed Service ignored instructions and continued to refer patients.

The doctors came behind the campaign and agreed to continue to look after patients. The EGA was staffed only by women doctors who were still in a minority in

the medical profession. For example there were only eight women consultant surgeons in the country and two of them worked at EGA.

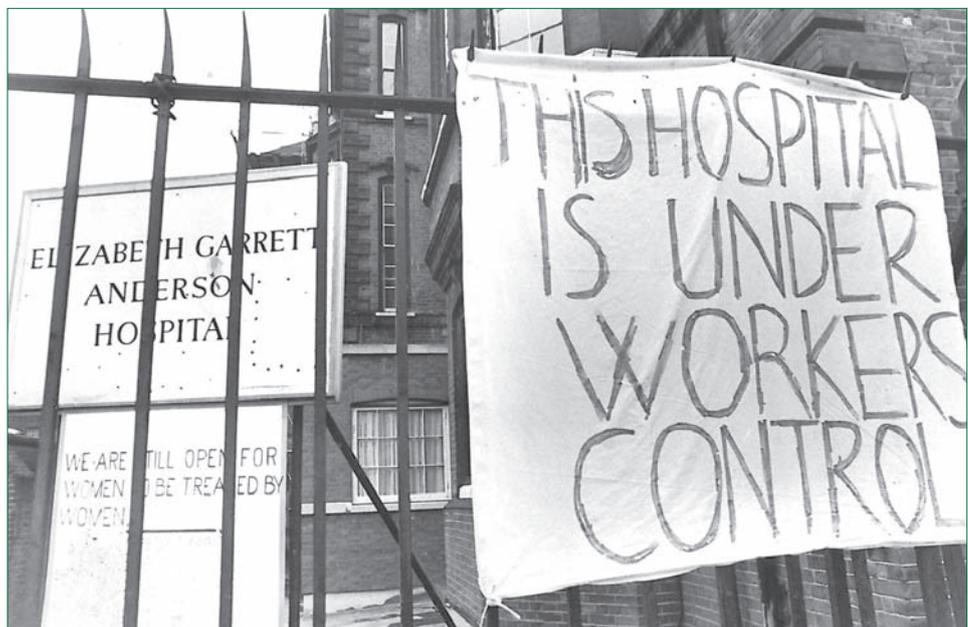
In 1979 the government finally agreed to keep the hospital open. It was the first campaign I had ever been involved in and the people I met and the lessons I learned have always stayed with me.

Candy Udwin
Secretary, Save the EGA
Campaign 1976-1979

EGA MEMORIES

If you want to share a memory please say who you are, the time you recall and why you know the hospital.

Write to
Memories of EGA Hospital,
UNISON
1 Mabledon Place
London WC1 H 9AJ
Or email: EGAmemories@
unison.co.uk



BA Cabin Crew support meeting

The meeting, called by Camden Trades Council, was addressed by a cabin crew *Unite* rep who has to remain anonymous for fear of victimisation. Sixty members, including the branch secretary and eight committee members, have been suspended during the dispute.

In the first ballot 92% of the 14,000 cabin crew voted to strike. A judge ruled it invalid because 800 had taken voluntary redundancy. He chose not to take into account that their number would have made no material difference.

The union re-balloted and management then made a concerted attempt to bully staff threatening to take away staff travel from strikers. They had recruited world-wide and told people it did not matter where they lived. Staff travel is not free though it is heavily discounted. You can only use it if there is an empty seat, so stopping staff using it costs BA money. What management were really after was a new fleet of workers on lower terms and conditions.

The result of the second ballot was injunction because, though they informed members of the full result of the ballot by meetings, notice boards and text, the emails missed out that there had been 11 spoilt ballot papers. That decision was overturned on appeal. It was too ridiculous. They were now on strike.

Speakers from the underground, buses, civil service, colleges and the post talked about the attacks on their services and various suggestions were made on raising money for the strikers, most of whom are on basic pay of just £11,000 to £20,000. One focus would be on getting a broad delegation down to Heathrow, another show of opposition on the Emergency Budget day, 22 June.



Photo: Phoebe Watkins

Emergency conference

Around 600 trades unionists, community activists and campaigners attended an emergency post election conference on 22 May to discuss and organise a response to the forthcoming government attacks.

Two speakers who received standing ovations were 'Steve' a young *Unite* cabin crew member and Tiana Andreou, an Executive member of the Greek Civil service Union.

Tiana Andreou received a huge welcome as she spoke of the developing struggles in Greece culminating in the biggest general strike in Greek history on 5 May.

Other speakers included Labour MPs Jeremy Corbyn and John McDonnell, Green Party deputy leader Adrian Ramsay, Dot Gibson of the

National Pensions Convention, Portuguese worker Tiago Gillot, NUJ journalists' union president Pete Murray, Gill Goodswen NUT President, Alan Whittaker President Elect UCU and Sonja Coquelin, a student from Sussex University.

After the morning rally the conference split up into several workshops to discuss recommendations for action

Amongst the decisions made was to have a protest outside Downing Street from 2 pm on 22 June when the Emergency Budget will be announced and a protest outside Tory Party Conference in Birmingham on Sunday 3 October.

More at: <http://sites.google.com/site/righttoworkconference/>

30 privatised home carers met up on Tuesday 25th May to discuss the many grievances they have with their new private employers. The meeting was lively and a number of grievances raised at the meeting will be taken up. It was agreed unanimously to hold regular meetings for home carers to get together in future and keep a tight union presence in homecare. Often when services get privatised, union organisation suffers. However, thanks were given for the one shop steward who has remained a steward since going through the transfer and another shop steward was elected at the meeting.

Phoebe Watkins
Camden UNISON
Co-Convenor HASC

TRADES COUNCIL WEBSITES

Camden Trades council now has a website at: <http://camdentradescouncil.org.uk> with a useful forthcoming events section alongside basic information on its role and affiliates.

There is also a new TUC (Trades Union Congress) website dedicated to the work of the trades union councils registered with the TUC. The site is called UnionsintheCommunity and the link is <http://unionsinthecommunity.org.uk/> There is a listing by region of trades councils with basic contact details and email addresses and web links where they are known. The site is still in development.

SWAN (Social Work Action Network) held a London meeting on 24 April to discuss the issues of personalisation and racism. Some 50 people attended. **Paul Ellis** (Social Worker, Shop Steward in Adult Social Care) reports

Personalisation, racism and social work

■ Mark Lymbery (Nottingham) introduced the discussion on personalisation. He pointed out the challenges facing Social Workers who are required to introduce this new way of funding social care for adults. There was a strong and energetic debate about how Social Workers can promote social work values in the face of enormous demands on their time through extra paper work involved in the new funding regime. Many expressed their fears about the possible sidelining of Social Workers – who are being replaced by (cheaper) unqualified assessors in some local authorities.

At the same time, Mark pointed out the opportunity for Social Workers to use the Personalisation Agenda to forge links with service users to demand adequate resources so that service users' lives are truly enhanced by more control and improved care from care staff (care staff whose terms and conditions are fully protected and are offered union membership!).

Only then will Social Workers truly help empower service users.

Surinder Guru (University of Birmingham), June Sadd (Equalities Consultant and SWAN National Chair) and Weyman Bennett (Unite Against Fascism) spoke about racism and how it can be challenged both in social work practice and in the wider community. Weyman spoke about the campaign (later proved successful) to stop the BNP leader Nick Griffin getting elected in Barking and linked it to the need to challenge racist stereotypes in the wider society.

SWAN is to hold further meetings in London and nationally in an attempt to develop a forum where Social Workers and others can unite against the managerialism and marketisation of social and health services as well as building alliances with service users and others to oppose cuts in welfare provision.

● For more information on SWAN see: <http://www.socialworkfuture.org/>

Library staff struggle to cope with wholesale change

■ The recent reorganisation of the Council's highly regarded Library service has led to opposition from staff and users alike. Presented by management as a make-over needed to bring the service up to date with 21st century user requirements it is now clear that the whole exercise is simply about cutting costs.

Machines have been introduced to replace staff in checking out books, a move which many users complain is turning the libraries into self-service 'supermarkets'. More worrying for staff is the way wholesale changes are being forced through against the expressed wishes of workers and library users. Individuals are being moved to different workplaces and there are major changes to jobs without the agreement of the staff concerned. The background management techniques amount to wholesale bullying with no layer of staff unaffected by the heavy handed imposition of the new arrangements.

Recent coverage in the Camden New Journal supports UNISON's view that

Library users and User Groups are far from happy with these changes to the service. Interior re-designs at Heath Library have not met with approval nor have plans to move much liked members of staff. There is also concern about a lack of new investment in book stock.

Library Stewards are also concerned that money invested in RFID machines and support systems has been inadequate. On visits to other library services in the London area, such as Westminster and Barnet, staff were shown machines of a higher quality than those purchased by Camden Council adding to concerns about the security of library stock.

The imposition of such dramatic changes to the library service, against the wishes of staff and users, suggests that senior managers may have a hidden agenda of serious future cuts, including measures that could reduce the effectiveness of the service and thereby justify a reduction in the number of libraries.

Library Stewards.

Camden Abu Dis Friendship Association

CADFA works in Camden to promote awareness about the human rights situation in Abu Dis, a small city in Palestine. As part of this work we are building friendship links between individuals and organisations in Camden and Abu Dis, and supporting a number of projects there.

Information on CADFA activities and events at: <http://www.camdenabudis.net/>



John and Sonya elected

John McLoughlin (Tower Hamlets) and Sonya Howard (Kensington & Chelsea) who were nominated by Camden UNISON have been elected to the Local Government Service Group Executive by a resounding majority.

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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Copy date for next
issue: 6 July 2010

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

Anti-fascist victory against the Nazi BNP in elections

One of the positive results of the recent general and council elections was the complete humiliation of the BNP.

In Barking, the BNP leader Nick Griffin suffered a crushing defeat to Margaret Hodge in the general election being pushed into third place, and in the local elections none of the 12 BNP councillors in the borough were re-elected. The BNP was comprehensively defeated in every ward in what was to be their stronghold. Turnout increased by 24%, indicating a big mobilisation of the anti-BNP vote. This shows that the BNP can be

defeated, even in its supposed strong areas.

The fact that Barking and Dagenham is now electorally Nazi free is the result of a huge campaign by trade unionists and anti-fascist campaigners who worked in the borough in the run up to the election, leafleting and canvassing every ward. National unions such as UNISON, PCS, RMT and the NUT funded campaigns by Unite Against Fascism and Searchlight's Hope not Hate campaign.

In Camden the BNP got derisory results in the two Parliamentary seats getting 0.6% in Hampstead and

Kilburn and 1.4% in Holborn and St Pancras.

This is an excellent result in the ongoing fight against fascism in Britain. It doesn't mean the BNP will fade away as there is still a sizeable core vote for them. But it does mean that when given the choice and the facts about what the BNP really stands for the majority of people will not vote for politics based on racism, hate and lies.

Barry Walden

Branch Chair (job share)

More at: <http://www.uaf.org.uk/> and <http://www.hopenothate.org.uk/>

Over 20,000 people marched through central London from Downing Street to the Israeli Embassy on Saturday 5 June in protest against the attacks on the flotilla of boats trying to bring aid to Gaza. Nine people were killed when the Israeli military attacked the unarmed protestors on the boats. The protestors had stated their aim as being to try to break the Israeli blockade on much needed aid reaching Gaza, but the Israeli government refused to let them pass. Sarah Colborne, from the *Palestine Solidarity Campaign* was on board one of the boats. She said 'I could hear the sounds of the bullets flying and the whirr of the helicopter blades as people were dropped down onto the boat roof. What I saw was guns being used by the Israelis on unarmed civilians. I saw a bullet wound in someone's head. It was very clear it was live ammunition.' Despite pleas in English and Hebrew, the Israeli military did not stop their assault.

With only a few hours notice on bank holiday



Protest against attack on Gaza aid flotilla

Monday, more than two thousand people gathered at Downing Street and then went on to the Israeli Embassy, showing their anger at the attacks. This led to the demonstration being called for 5 June. The protest started with a rally outside Downing Street where speakers included Tariq Ali, Ken Loach, Lindsey German, Tony Benn and the rapper Lowkey before marching to the Israeli Embassy. Around the world, thousands more demon-

strated, including 20,000 in Tel Aviv.

At a press conference on her return, Sarah Colborne was asked if the trip had been worth it. She said: 'We hope that the horrific deaths of the people will not be in vain. We are hoping this will act as a wake up call to what is happening in Gaza internationally'.

To find out about future events/meetings/protests go to www.stopwar.org.uk

Liz Wheatley
HASC Steward