

DEMONSTRATE 26 MARCH

Newsletter of the Camden Unison Branch

CAMDEN EYE



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Jobs axed, services slashed – we need a campaign of resistance



Camden is among the councils hardest hit by the Conservative-

Liberal Democrat (Con-Dem) coalition's programme of slashing public spending. The Con-Dem coalition has fashioned an axe for local authorities and the welfare state in general. Alas, Camden's Labour-led council has chosen to wield it, however reluctantly.

On 28 February 400 demonstrators occupied a rain-soaked Euston Road as police blocked entry to the Town Hall. The council agreed a budget that entails some £35 million in cuts this year. The overall spending programme for the next three years will chop at least £82.5 million; ultimately it may well exceed £90 million.

The cuts mean the loss of at least 970 full-time equivalent posts, nearly one in five current Camden employees, with UNISON

receiving written confirmation of up to 700 redundancies between 31 July and 31 March 2012. And this comes on top of real pay cuts and a potential 50% rise in pension contributions.

This, though, is just a part of the horrible story unfolding. The cuts budget strips the award-winning play service of 65% of its funding. Two Sure Start centres, Caversham and Acol, could also shut as part of an overall cut of £3.2 million in services for younger children. The coming three years could also see huge cuts to provision for disabled children and others with special educational needs. Nineteen of 41 central teaching posts providing vital support to such children are due for the chop.

After Camden's previous Lib-Con partnership had axed dozens of library workers' jobs, up to five of

the borough's 13 libraries may close.

Four day resource centres for older people, operated by voluntary sector organisations, face closure between this spring and October next year. A fifth centre for dementia sufferers has received a reprieve until September. In short, the very old and the very young will suffer as a result of the cuts.

The government's overarching cuts agenda, the most drastic in the western world apart from Greece and Ireland, has provoked widespread resistance.

Almost every day provides more reasons to fuel the anger of public sector workers and those who rely on the services we provide. And so we have ever more reasons to demonstrate on 26 March and make sure it marks the start, not the end, of an unprecedented campaign of resistance.

George Binette
Branch Secretary

A popular way to pay off the deficit

■ The total personal wealth in the UK is £9,000bn, a sum that dwarfs the national debt. It is mostly concentrated at the top, so the richest 10% own £4,000bn, with an average per household of £4m. The bottom half of our society own just 9%. The wealthiest hold the bulk of their money in property or pensions, and some in financial assets and objects such as antiques and paintings.

A one-off tax of just 20% on the wealth of this group would pay the national debt and dramatically reduce the deficit....

A YouGov poll found very strong support for such a proposal, with 74% of the population approving

■ From Guardian article by Glasgow Media Group Director, Prof. Greg Philo
More at: <http://www.glasgowmediagroup.org>

College lecturers striking on 24 March

■ Lecturers at universities and further education are striking nationally on 24 March to defend pensions, jobs and pay. In Camden this will involve SOAS, LSE, UCL, Birkbeck and Westminster-Kingsway. The London region of the UCU, the college lecturers' union, has issued an open invitation to trades unionists and students to join them on their picket lines and demonstration on the 24th.

Assemble at 11am
Camden meeting point:
Lincoln's Inn Fields, WC2A (Holborn tube)
March and rally Hyde Park

Everything under attack

Local Government pay

Increase 2009 and 2010 – nil
2011, 2112 and 2113 – no increase if we allow them to get away with it. This is the biggest attack on pay since the 1920s.

Price Increases

5.1% - Annual Retail Price index increase Jan 2010/11
Food 5.95%, Rail 7.3%, petrol 12.6%
Social Housing rents – 7% or more

Pensions

50% hike in contributions from 6% to 9%, possibly more from 2012
A move from final salary schemes to career average schemes which will mean lower pensions
Pensions to be uprated by lower Consumer Price Index which does not take housing costs into account

Jobs

2.53 million Britons out of work - a 17 year high
974,000 16-to-24 year olds out of work – a record
66,000 jobs lost in councils in 2010

Injustice

Bankers are still getting their bonuses
323 RBS bankers received £375m in 2010 – an average of £1.1m each.
Barclay's top five managers shared £110 million
A TUC 'Pensions Watch' report highlighted that between 2007 and 2009 the average value of a FTSE 100 director's total pension shot up from £3 million to £3.4 million
The richest 1% took 60% of all pension tax relief, worth some £10bn last year.
The EU state pension average is worth 60% of average working pay. In the UK it is 30.8%

Lone parents and single pensioners

– most of whom are women – will suffer the greatest reduction in their living standards due to public service cuts. Lone parents will lose services worth 18.5% and female single pensioners services worth 12% of their incomes

National Health Service

Lansley's proposals will fragment the NHS and lead to mass privatisation.

Fantastic Day X protest to defend the NHS

1000 people joined the 'Day X for the NHS' march from the Royal London Hospital in Whitechapel to Barts Hospital via the City on Wednesday 9 March.

The march brought the spirit of the student protests to the fight to defend the NHS. It went past RBS at Aldgate, with police lines protecting it. Protestors chanted 'put the bankers into jail, NHS not for sale'. Bishopsgate was blocked by 200 peo-

ple staging a die-in in the road.

What was most impressive was the make up of the protest, mainly of health workers and medical and nursing students. There were also delegations from local postal workers, TSSA, UCATT and UNITE.

Watch the Unite trade union video at: <http://righttowork.org.uk/2011/03/video-day-x-for-the-nhs-march/>

From Camden
United Against Cuts bulletin

Teachers striking 30 March

George Osborne promised to protect education in the comprehensive spending review. The massive cuts in Camden show this was a lie.

Camden has a deservedly high reputation for education. These cuts are a historic step backwards.

That's why Camden teachers will be striking on 30 March. We are calling on parents, students and all who care for

education to march with us on that day.

The march to Camden Town Hall assembles outside Crowndale Centre, Eversholt Street at 10.00 am Wednesday 30 March.

Andrew Baisley
Branch Secretary, Camden NUT

Final agreement for strike action on 30 March was still awaited as we went to press.

UK Uncut: making the point directly

Non-violent irreverent direct action. On a recent Saturday morning Camden Town's NatWest bank was turned into a crèche by protestors against bankers' bonuses while local nurseries close. In only a few months, from a single action in London, UK Uncut has spread to up to fifty-five towns and cities. Go to <http://www.ukuncut.org.uk>

False Economy The cuts are not necessary

The False Economy website rips apart the government big lie that there is no alternative to massive and immediate cuts. There are many alternatives. The TUC boils down its alternatives to three:

- a crackdown on tax avoidance (£40 billion or more a year)
- a Robin Hood tax on banks and finance (£20 billion a year)
- policies and time to let economic growth and full employment raise the tax that will close the deficit

For more facts and arguments go to: <http://falseeconomy.org.uk/>

Camden United Against Cuts

Camden United Against Cuts was set up as an umbrella organisation to help build and co-ordinate resistance to the cuts in Camden. The co-Chairs are George Binette and Phoebe Watkins from Camden UNISON. Andrew Baisley Secretary of Camden NUT is the Secretary. Go to the website: camdenunited.org.uk for details of meetings and activities.

Next Campaign meeting Tuesday 5 April 7pm

NUT Offices Mabledon Place WC1