



Issue 2 - August 2012

Lambeth Council Worker

A Workers' Liberty local government bulletin

www.workersliberty.org • awl@workersliberty.org • 0207 394 8923

Cop-out council outsourcing leaves Lambeth's Adventure playgrounds closed in school summer holidays

Seven Adventure Playgrounds in Lambeth closed without warning last week at the height of the busy summer holiday period following their botched outsourcing last year.

One has subsequently re-opened staffed by directly employed council staff. Lambeth Council terminated its contract with the charitable company running them with immediate effect. The council terminated its contract over a number of breaches, understood to relate to the vetting of staff.

The Council said the breaches involved Lambeth Play Association failing to 'follow proper employment procedures'.

Commenting on the shock closures a spokesperson for Lambeth Save Our Services, the local anti-cuts organisation who have been fighting the Council's cuts and outsourcing in Children's Services said:

"We didn't want to have to make this I told you so. At council meetings, public meetings and demonstrations last year hundreds of residents, including children who use the adventure playgrounds and their parents, called on the council not to

dump its adventure playgrounds on the community or to outsource them. Time and time again the people of Lambeth told them they wanted the staff they had, the hours they had and the council to run them. Councillors made empty promises to the children of this borough that the services wouldn't close. They claimed the community would step in and run the services co-operatively, but the Co-operative management never emerged and now without any warning Lambeth Play Association are no longer running the service and doors of the Adventure Playgrounds are locked."

"The people of Lambeth deserve to know why this has happened, why such a vital service can be closed with no notice. The council should bring the adventure playgrounds back under council control and run them as a public service.

We can only hope that these closures serve as a wake up call to the council to listen to the community on One O'clock clubs, youth centres and Libraries. The Co-operative Council amounts to glossy leaflets and PR on one side and the fragmentation and destruction of our services on the other.



Greek Myths

The press has peddled myths to stop us feeling solidarity with Greek workers. It's time to bust those myths and link up with our sisters and brothers struggling against austerity.

Myth # 1. "Greeks are lazy, ouzo swilling, retire at 50". That's a racist stereotype. In 2008, Greeks worked 467 more hours a year than the average worker here. Greeks get an average 23 days holiday, compared to the UK's 28. Greek public sector workers can retire at half pay at 53, but the average retirement age is 61.7; higher than Germany, France or Italy.

Myth # 2. "Greece is suffering because their public sector was too fat". In fact, the Greek public sector is the same percentage of the Greek economy as the European average.

Myth # 3. "Greece's economy was too weak, relied too much on credit. It needs deep cuts to make it competitive". Before the crisis, Greece's economy grew more than any European country other than Ireland and Finland but state revenue fell because the rich did not pay tax. The Greek rich pay roughly 5.7% of GDP less in tax than the European average.

Myth # 4. According to David Cameron, "the Greeks have had too much 'help' already". The EU, IMF and European Central Bank bailouts have 'helped' the banks that invested in Greece, not Greek workers. Greeks have suffered cuts to their welfare, pensions, workers' rights and the minimum wage. There are now 20,000 homeless, 30% unemployment and 50% youth unemployment. Greek debt has gone from 120% to 160% of GDP.

So we see a picture of cuts imposed to meet the demands of international banks and the rich. Workers suffer, while the super-rich do not pay tax. Sound familiar?

Workers' Liberty is a revolutionary socialist organisation active in the British labour movement fighting for an alternative to capitalism and Stalinism based on common ownership, democracy and workers' control. To get involved with producing the bulletin, or to take copies for your workplace, email awl@workersliberty.org with the subject line 'Lambeth Council Worker'.



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Why are the GMB and Unison opting for a 'YES' vote and rolling over on pensions?

From the moment that our leadership failed to follow up on our efforts to prevent Labour switching from RPI to CPI in 2008, we have begun to expect little from our union leaders.

Nevertheless, we committed ourselves to action over the pensions robbery on November 30th, 2011. In doing so, many workers might have expected to be listened to. We have made it clear that we want to fight the coalition government as they continue to strip away our rights and entitlements. Have we been met with support? The mere fact that our union leadership has left it until now to follow up on our activity, has left us feeling unsupported.

Many members feel that the material around the LGPS 2014 deal has been deliberately opaque, and in many areas that debate has been closed down. So, with the GMB ballot already closed, and the Unison ballot set to

close this Friday, we are struggling to understand what to do and where we stand in relation to this dispute.

For a start, compliance with LGPS 2014 relies on a further fight to defend a universal state pension age of 65. Do we have the confidence in our union leaders to build for this? In addition, career average schemes work unfavourably towards those with gaps in service i.e. members who have needed to take breaks from work to care for their children. With increasing privatisation of our workplaces, many members will also expect to have to fight in the face of casualisation and redundancy; a large number may find that they are unable to stay in service for long periods of time, thus affecting their career average.

We should reject this deal and kick off in our branches over how this dispute has been run into the ground.

Who runs the union?

You might have heard a union official, or even a rep, talk about 'the union' as if it was some outside force (like a superhero) that workers can call upon when they're in trouble.

Our unions are. For the most part, run by people on a circuit of well-paid jobs and flashy conferences. These people have a vested interest in keeping things the way they are. The term Marxists use to describe this group is 'the bureaucracy.' Radical action, mass involvement in how decisions are made and democratic discussion of how best union resources, facility time and full-time positions could be used, threaten their comfortable existence.

The kind of trade union movement we want to see is one run by the 'rank-and-file' – ordinary workers who are able to discuss openly with each other how best to organise themselves and their union – one that is capable of providing an alternative to how workplaces are run and what they do.

Sometimes the biggest fights we have are against those 'on our own side'

End repression and the deaths of black men at the hands of police!

An Inquest has reached a damning conclusion about the death of Sean Rigg at the hands of the police. The case raises serious concerns about mental health services and the use of restraint on those with mental health problems, as well as police being used in the situations.

Detention rates under the Mental Health Act are 44% higher among people from

the UK's African Caribbean communities than their white counterparts, they are also more likely to be referred to those services from the police.

Cuts will mean there will be more incidents of violence as staff and service users are left frustrated by lack of resources, waiting etc. It will also mean that the police will be called more as there won't

be the staff to deal with violent incidents.

SLAM are cutting staff at the same time as the inquest ruled their failures in this case. More young black men will die as the result of these cuts.

The police who murdered Rigg should face more than an internal 'slap on the wrist' – We want justice!

