

COMMUNITY ACTION

No 64 60p



**INDIA
SPECIAL
REPORT
ON ICA**

**HEALTH
DAMP IN
SHEFFIELD**

**PLUS
CAMPAIGN
NEWS
INFOR
EXCHANGE**

ATTACK ON LOCAL SERVICES



Sponsor our magathon!

£££!

Form on p33

A member of the Community Action collective is dedicating his body to the cause of the magazine, by running in the London marathon in May. The point of this sacrifice is so that YOU, your friends, and any one else who cares about the magazine should sponsor his efforts by promising to give so much per mile and/or so much for finishing and/or so much for finishing in under 3 hours!

We really need every penny we can raise for our fighting fund (we don't have any other sort of fund). We set out a form on page 33 for you to complete and send to us. So please complete it without delay - and get others to do the same. You don't have to use a form - just write down what you're prepared to sponsor the run for, and send it in. If you think you can use leaflets asking for sponsorship, write to us or ring us on Monday evenings.

NEW PRICE

As you can see from the cover and the subscription form on page 34, we have increased the price of the magazine from this issue. It is our first price rise for 2 years, and it still means that the magazine costs only 60p - which compares very well with other publications that our readers may read. Existing subscribers will of course not have to pay the new rate until their subscription is due for renewal. For new subscribers there is a special offer of recent issues at bargain rates.

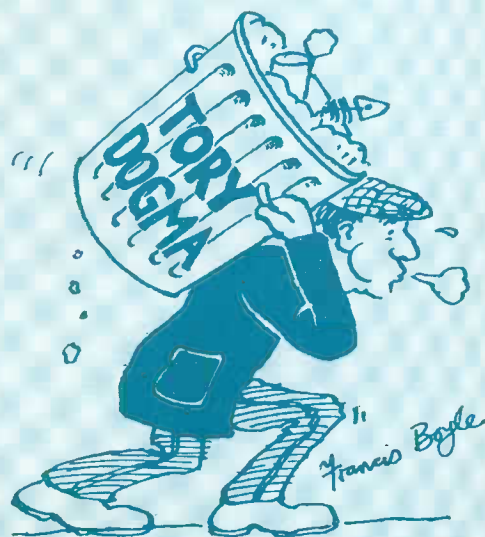
BOOKSHOP SALES

Like a lot of other magazines our bookshop distribution has been disrupted because of the liquidation of People's Distribution Co-op. We are now distributing direct to bookshops ourselves for the time being. If your local bookshop isn't stocking CA, and should be, get them to write to ask us for a regular delivery. We have favourable trade terms.

HEALTH FIGHTS

Health

We promised last issue that we would be focussing on fights for the health service in this issue. Because of the immediacy of the attack on council services, we have left health campaigns till issue 65. We already have a lot of good material, but please keep sending us details of your local campaign. We hope issue 65 will appear fairly rapidly after this one.



The end of our last magathon, in 1981: identity will be revealed after May!

NEWS

REPORTS FROM TENANTS & ACTION GROUPS, COMMUNITY CAMPAIGNS AND OTHER LABOUR MOVEMENT ORGANISATIONS

CHELTENHAM BUYING- OR SELLING?

As we went to press, the TUC's Len Murray had just encouraged all unions and workers to 'demonstrate' on February 28th against the government's ultimatum to workers at GCHQ in Cheltenham. We do not know what kind of response resulted. But the background to this half-hearted, last minute, 'general not

really a strike call' is worth spelling out.

GCHQ workers are civil servants, and like other civil servants have been encouraged to join unions. On January 25th they were suddenly given a letter which gave them till 1st March to decide between two options: accept £1,000 and sign away your right to union membership and activity, or lose your job. The supposed middle option, of transfer to another civil service job, is not in practice a realistic option for most staff.

The unions, and the TUC, saw this issue of principle as a great opportunity to test the 'new realism' advocated by Murray and others - i.e. talk to the government, don't organise too hard. With all the errors by Howe etc., and public opinion behind them, it seemed very favourable.

Two problems. Firstly, Thatcher did not want to play. Secondly, the talks depended on the workers at GCHQ risking their jobs by refusing to sign. Initially, this solidarity was forthcoming, even from an extremely 'moderate' group of workers - they hated being called traitors. But what were they being asked to risk their necks for?

A 'no-strike' deal was the answer. One contradiction in the unions approach came when a GCHQ worker asked at a rally on 14th February whether they would get a 'bonus' if such a 'no-strike' deal was made. No, was the union answer: it was a matter of principle!

Another question asked and unanswered that day was why, despite a lot of spontaneous action in the

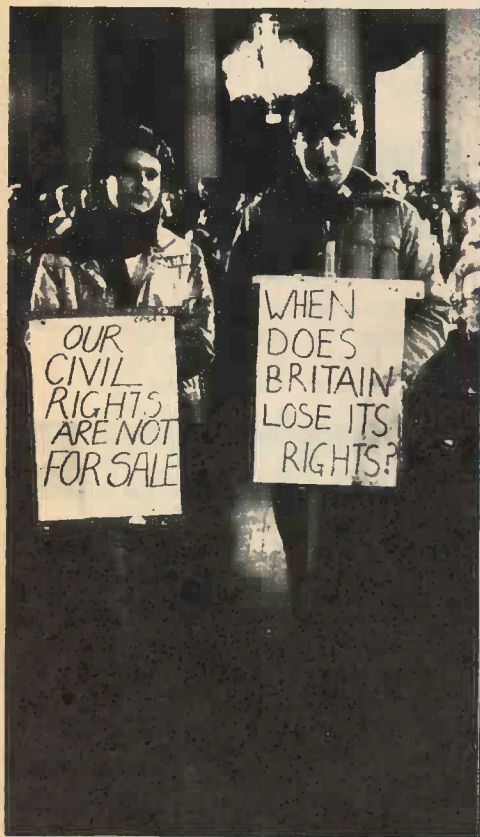


civil service immediately the ban was announced, had the unions set no date for protest action until GCHQ workers had only 24 hours left to sign? (And until Murray & co. were rebuffed by Thatcher on 23rd Feb, no more was envisaged for the 28th than lunchtime protest meetings in the civil service).

The unspoken answer was of course that the TUC did not see GCHQ as an issue of principle - as they told the GCHQ workers 'your solidarity enables us to get an agreement with the government'. Far from treating it as an issue of principle, they were aiming to use it to show their readiness to do deals at any cost - even by selling another basic right.

No, Prime Minister

CCSU



THE ONLY BROTHERS ALLOWED AT
G.C.H.Q. ARE BIG ONES

LEEDS WHOSE THUMB ON THE WORKERS?

**DO YOU REALLY WANT TO
BE UNDER WHITEHALL'S
THUMB?**



Say No To Whitehall Control

One of the councils running a prominent publicity campaign against rate-capping is Labour-controlled Leeds City Council. They have issued striking leaflets warning that rate-capping would mean that "the number of home helps in Leeds" would be fixed by government bureaucrats. Do you want to be under Whitehall's thumb?, asks the leaflet.

Great. But 3 weeks later Leeds issued another press release explaining that a new law passed by the Tories forces the council's Direct Labour Organisation to compete for much of its work against the private sector. Hundreds of the jobs of Leeds Council's own workers are threatened by this attempt to impose the discipline of private profit against their jobs and conditions.

Leeds' response? "We have therefore created a post for a general building advisor (at £15,000 per year) who will make the section more efficient... we want to bring in someone with private sector experience... the advisor will manage the section and will look at all our practices and tell us how they can be improved." After all, it is the law, and the council wouldn't want to protect their workers from the enervating employment practices of private building firms.

So if your a building worker in Leeds, just remember: you're better off under the city council's thumb. And if you're interested in how other councils are fighting against rate-capping, and for the jobs of their workforce, turn to page 15.

WESTMINSTER PRIVATE LIBRARIES

Moves by Westminster Council to close libraries, increase fines and loan charges and lay-off library staff are being met by industrial action by NALGO members who believe these are the first steps towards the complete privatisation of library services.

So far the Council have agreed to close one medical library, a children library and a main branch library, as well as to privatise the cleaning at all the branches. Even pensioners are being asked to put a little more into the coffers of London's richest borough with reservation charges increasing from 10-15p.



BRENT GOING LOCAL?

Plans by Brent Council to forge ahead with de-centralisation plans have prompted the Federation of Tenants and Residents Associations to produce a policy statement outlining their views on the proposals. First and foremost they are requesting proper consultation borough-wide before any plans begin. De-centralisation of services, and in particular of housing services, is something of a fashion in London at the moment and although they basically support the idea, the Brent Federation are anxious that they should be in on the act right from the beginning. Otherwise they fear an ill-thought



out and slap dash approach which will do little to improve the services but which may do much to disillusion local people.

The report also points out that councillors interviewed about the political implications of de-centralisation failed to give a clear commitment to 'share power'. The Federation is requesting first that the amount of money set aside and the extent of de-centralisation be made clear by the Council and that after that a steering group of representatives from interested groups-tenants, councillors, officers and trade unionists - be set up to work out a plan of action. What they do not want is a half-cocked plan foisted on them when its too late to make any input whatsoever.

Irene Bannon, a representative from the Federation, told C.A., 'The tenants will be fighting for de-centralisation, but on our terms, and in an effort to give tenants more control of local resources and over our lives.' For more information on the Brent Federation of Tenants and Residents Associations Policy Statement on de-centralisation write to them at 6 Cavendish Close, Cavendish Rd, NW6

EDINBURGH PAY PHONES

Tory-run Edinburgh Council have incurred the wrath of local tower block tenants with their latest move to make them pay the full cost of the installation and maintenance of new entry-phone systems. This is despite the fact that it is the Council themselves, not the tenants, who will recoup the money several times over in savings on repair bills.

A 'Flats Fightback' Campaign has been formed amongst high-rise tenants in Edinburgh to fight the unfair policies of the Council.

Edinburgh District Council have recently achieved some notoriety with decisions to fund the Arts Festival and local private ambulance firm to the tune of a cool £50,000 and £5,000 respectively. An application for funding from the national housing organisation, Shelter, for a miserly £500 was turned down flat.

Contact for 'Flats Fightback', Archie Stoddart, tel 031 554 7909

HULL OPEN DRAIN

Tenants on a large housing estate in Hull who have suffered the loss of four children by drowning over the past two and a half years in the open drain which runs for a mile and a half through their estate have formed themselves into an Action Group

The Holderness Drain is the responsibility of the Yorkshire Water Authority but they claim that it is not 'economically' viable to cover it over, saying that the work would cost in the region of £20 million.

The drain used to be a clean, shallow waterway but over the years increased use has turned it into a deep, fast flowing, filthy river, in places up to 10 feet deep with steep, slippery, banks. Over the past 30 years 14 people have drowned there.

Now the tenants on the estate are determined that something must be done. Understandably they are highly sceptical about the accuracy of the figure quoted by the Water Authority needed to make the drain safe. However, one of their main problems has been a lack of information about similar campaigns and little technical 'expert' help. They are anxious to contact any groups or organisations who might be able to offer any help or advice. Contact Paul Spooner, 38 Cambridge Grove, Preston Rd, Hull HU9 3 SJ tel Hull 709550

IS YOUR HOME INDUSTRIALISED?

Do You Live in an Industrialised House or Flat

SCAT (Services to Community Action and Tenants) now has details of many industrialised building systems and which local authorities use which system. For details write to SCAT, 83 Beauvale Rd, Meadows, Notts, tel 0602 865959



ASBESTOS IN HOUSING

The newly formed National Organisation Against Asbestos have described the new government leaflet, 'Asbestos In Housing' as 'irresponsible and dangerous' and are demanding that it be withdrawn immediately.



For, whilst welcoming the government's recognition of the dangers of asbestos in the home and the need for damaged asbestos to be removed, the Organisation deplores its failure to take responsibility for either the problem or its solution. Instead this leaflet seeks to push the responsibility for sealing and removing asbestos onto the individual household and further suggests a number of dangerous DIY practises to follow. At a time when it has become widely accepted that the removal of asbestos can cause serious dust hazards and can only be safely carried out by specially trained and equipped operatives, the pamphlet suggests action by householders that would increase the risks.

The National Organisation Against Asbestos are urging local Councils not to distribute the pamphlet and are demanding that the government produce another with honest and responsible information.



TOWER HAMLETS B/B PHASE OUT

The Finsbury Park Homeless Families Committee have scored a notable victory in their campaign to stop the use of bed and breakfast accommodation for homeless families by Tower Hamlets Council.

The Council, who send some 400 families a year into temporary B/B whilst they await permanent housing have agreed 'in principle' to phase out the use of these hotels altogether and are at present investigating a number of options in housing policy which would make this possible.

These include the increased use of short-life accommodation, a lettings pool and changes in the allocations system. It has further been agreed that any family considered 'intentionally homeless' under the 1977 Housing (Homeless Persons) Act should be made one 'concessionary' offer.

For further information about the comprehensive report produced by the Homeless Families Committee on the use of B/B contact Richard Backes, tel. 247 2978

SHEFFIELD TENANTS LINKS

It's not only Council tenants who get a raw deal.....it's housing association tenants too. Plagued by soaring rents, bureaucratic and unresponsive management and a second-rate repairs system, tenants in housing associations in Sheffield have formed themselves into a Federation in a bid to exercise a bit of muscle. Sharon Keefe, a member of the Sheffield Federation of Tenants and Residents Associations, recently wrote to Community Action about their campaign. She points out that for a group who are supposed to be 'politically neutral', housing associations in fact bow and scrape to their pay-masters, the government, and do increasingly little to defend the standards of living of their tenants.

Are escalating rents and rates 'just another ploy to try and force people to buy their homes instead of renting?', she asks.

The Federation in Sheffield has already made links with similar groups in Hackney and Lambeth in London but would welcome contact with other groups. Contact: Sharon Keefe, Sheffield Federation of Tenants and Residents Associations, CVS House, 69 Division St, Sheffield S1 4 EG tel 751740

NATIONAL TOWER BLOCK NETWORK

The Newham Tower Block Tenants Campaign is organising a National Tower Blocks Network. The work of gathering information about other local tower block groups began last summer and was given a terrific boost by the success of the first Tower Blocks Conference which NTBTC convened in October. Over 170 people attended, coming from all over the country and from a wide range of backgrounds - tenants, community activists, social workers, local councillors, MP's, housing officers, architects and planners.

The Newham Campaign's experience over the last two years led them increasingly to feel that national links are essential for groups like themselves.

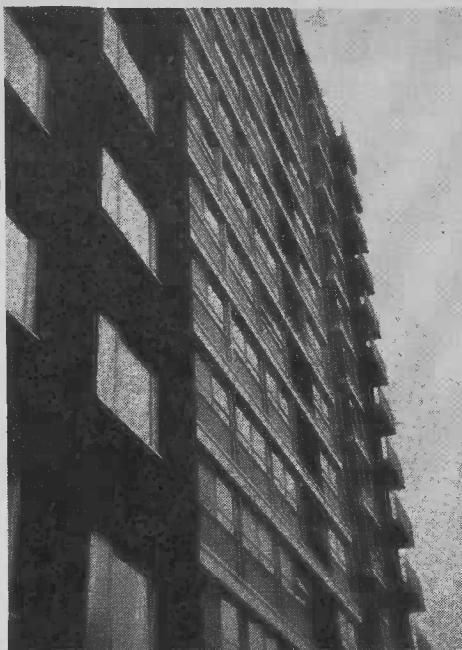
First, because the solution to many of the problems must be found at a national level. In many areas, substantial spending is required to demolish structurally unsound or socially unacceptable blocks and to radically improve those that remain. Local authorities are in no position to tackle these issues without financial assistance from central government.

Before local groups can begin to think of influencing central government to make such resources available they will need to organise together and to pool their campaigning experience.

Second, a rich variety of groups and individuals have responded to the tower block problems by setting up community projects on estates.

High rise organising

A very diverse range of people scattered all over the country are involved in promoting schemes to improve the quality of high-rise living. Schemes such as community flats, play decks, care schemes, adventure playgrounds, food clubs, pensioners' groups, play groups and after school clubs. This work illustrates the inspiring wealth of resilience and imagination in the face of concrete anonymity and in this field as well as have a lot to learn from each other. In order to develop the national network, N.T.B.T.C., in conjunction with Community Links, is compiling a National Tower Blocks Directory. This comprehensive directory will include information about groups and individuals who are involved with tower block issues in any way. It will contain information about local tower



block problems and the response to those problems. It is intended that, once completed, it will facilitate much closer links over a variety of issues, for example, contact between tenants in different parts of the country living in blocks of the same system/design, or contact between people trying to establish a community project in a block and projects already operating.

The Directory will also include a list of professionals, such as architects, who are willing to assist tenants' groups.

Newsletter

A number of other initiatives are being pursued in an effort to build links, including a quarterly national tower blocks newsletter, further regional and national meetings around specific issues (heating, play facilities etc) and training sessions, such as 'Understand Systems Building'.

The Conference proved that concern about sky blocks is widespread and the national network will include anyone who is committed to tackling the issues and improving the quality of life for tower block tenants. Tower Blocks are a major national issue, the battle that so many people have been fighting for at a local level is now moving on to the national stage.

For further information about the National Tower Blocks network, contact Frances Clarke, Community Worker, Community Links, 81 High St South, East Ham, London E6 tel. 01 472 6652

HOMELESS 'CITY'

Shelter, the National Campaign for the Homeless, estimate that up to 170,000 households - the equivalent of a town the size of Bradford - may be forced to seek help from their local Councils in 1984 because they are homeless or threatened with homelessness.

Huge cuts in housing investment coupled with high levels of Council house sales mean that local authorities will have even greater difficulty in coping with the rising tide of demand. Already less than half of those who apply for help are accepted for re-housing, the remainder are obliged to fend for themselves, often with minimum advice and assistance.

Tax payers gain

Meanwhile the government excuses cuts in housing expenditure on the grounds of 'economic necessity'. But at the same time the government increases tax relief to owner occupiers, proposes to give substantial hand-outs to better off tenants to help them buy their council homes, and continues a system in which the wealthiest households receive nearly three times as much subsidy as standard rate tax payers for the same size mortgage.



HOUSING BENEFIT OFFICE



BENEFIT?

Around one million pensioners and 600,000 families are going to suffer cuts in housing benefit of up to £16 per week if the government goes ahead with plans to lop nearly £200 million off the public spending budget.

This would be achieved by altering the tapers - in other words changing the way in which it is calculated so that many people will be cut out of the system altogether and others will have the amount they receive drastically reduced.

Comments by the prime minister to the effect that so many people now qualify for housing benefit (because they are badly off perhaps?) that something must be done to cut down the number of recipients have been greeted with outrage by government opponents and indeed by many Tory MPs.

Mounting opposition has already forced the government to moderate its proposals (originally it was suggested that £240 million could be 'saved') but unless the scheme is withdrawn altogether some of the worst off are going to be hit the hard.

FULHAM ESTATE SALE

Fulham and Hammersmith Council appear to be taking a leaf out of the book of neighbouring Wandsworth which has gained the dubious accolade of selling the largest number of Council houses of any local authority.

Hammersmith and Fulham recently voted to sell off Fulham Court Estate instead of spending the necessary £9 Million to bring it up to standard. Like Wandsworth, Fulham and Hammersmith are looking for excuses to run down their council stock and now that the demand from existing tenants has slowed down to a trickle they are having to look elsewhere. If tenants won't buy where do you look next? Why, to private developers of course.

The decision to sell off Fulham Court came out of the blue after some tenants there sought legal advice from the local law centre on how to force the Council to carry out essential repairs. So far there has been no negotiation whatsoever between the two sides. If anyone has had, or is having similar experiences with a local authority, please contact Mary Clancy tel 840 4244 or Justin, tel 969 2433.

SHEFFIELD RATES LEVY

In Community Action 63 we reported the demand of Scottish tenants for a rent levy to finance the tenants' movement. The Sheffield Federation of Tenants and Residents Associations has now succeeded in getting just such a levy after four years of pushing the Council to agree. From April 1984 Sheffield's 93,000 council tenants will be paying 2p a week in their rent to finance tenants' associations. Anyone who does not wish to pay can opt out of the scheme by notifying the Housing Department in writing. The money is paid over to recognised tenants' associations with an amount set aside for financing of the city-wide federation.

Further details from, Sheffield Federation of Tenants and Residents Associations, CVS House, 69 Division Street, Sheffield S1 4 EG tel 0742 75174



PRIVATE TENANTS RALLY AGREES DEMANDS

The first ever rally for Private Tenants's Rights, held in London at the end of last year, agreed a charter which is to form the basis of campaigns over the coming twelve months.

The Charter, which is in two main parts, covers issues such as security of tenure, harassment by landlords and the enforcement of adequate repairs and maintainance. It also lists action that local Councils could be taking.

Local authorities have been notoriously loathe to use their powers for private tenants and the charter lays down model practises, procedures and services whereby local Councils can tackle insecure and dilapidated housing whilst at the same time ensuring that the interests of tenants are protected.

Since its formation in 1982 the Organisation of Private Tenants (OPT) has made great progress. Its membership now spans the country with groups as far afield as Belfast, Dundee and Sheffield, and a great many effective and successful campaigns have been fought.

Terry Deane, a worker with OPT, said, 'The success of OPT shows just how much need there is for private tenants to fight together to get adequate security, better protection against harassment and illegal eviction, speedier methods of enforcing decent housing conditions and rents that are not inflated by subsidies to owner occupiers.'

For further information contact OPT, 19 Highbury Place, London N5, tel 359 8224.

WAKEFIELD FIGHTING FOR NURSERIES

Two daycare nurseries in Wakefield has been occupied continuously since Christmas by parents and children to prevent their closure. This bold act has put them in the forefront of the fight against the cuts in this area and has sent shock waves reverberating through the local Labour movement.

The chairperson of Wakefield District Council is Sir Jack Smart, also leader of the Association of Metropolitan Authorities (AMA). Without any prior discussion, on November 15, he announced a draconian package of £4.5 million cuts to the Council's Labour group, causing considerable alarm amongst some of the left wing councillors. The majority however, were happy to nod

through a package which includes closures of libraries, nurseries, and old people's homes.

The cuts caused widespread shock. The most drastic measures were the closures of an old people's home and of the only two day care nurseries in the District, one in Wakefield and one at South Kirby. These were not only child-minding units; they catered for children and parents under severe stress. Some of the children have suffered non-accidental injury, most need specialised and dedicated care. As the parents said in their campaign against the closure, 'closure will cause severe distress and possibly injury and death'.

Parents occupy

When the closures went ahead despite a vigorous public campaign the parents, many of whom are single mothers, decided to occupy. They were supported by local trade unionists, the local NUPE and NALGO branches, and some members of the local Labour party. The occupations have provided a vital focus for local opposition to the cuts and for the wave of disgust at the way in which leading councillors have carried them out.

Their attitude to democracy is shown by the way in which they forced a decision on the cuts on the Labour group only hours after they were first opposed. Their concern for the needs of the parents

and children is shown by their failure to obtain a report on the kind of cases dealt with by the nurseries; and it was eight weeks after the closure decision that their (entirely inadequate) suggestions for alternative provision were put forward.

It has become clear that at least part of the reason for the closures was the value which the nursery sites can realise if sold.

Labour split

The impact of this campaign on the Labour movement in Wakefield District has been dramatic. Only a year or two since Sir Jack and his allies commanded regular and large majorities on

the District Labour party the same body passed an overwhelming vote against cuts and the nursery closures. When these votes were ignored by the Labour group the DLP went on to pass a vote of no confidence in them by a similar majority.

One of the most powerful arguments within the Labour movement has been that Wakefield's cuts package directly contradicts the Labour party NEC's policies and advice to Labour groups. Many had thought that Sir Jack, being Labour leader of the AMA, might have had a particular responsibility to observe this.



A march through Wakefield last weekend against the council's closure of the nurseries

JUMP IN ARREARS LEVEL

The Department of the Environment have recently produced a new set of figures which reveal that some £176 million is owed in rent arrears to local authorities in England and Wales, some £30 up on the previous year.

Could this leap be anything to do with escalating rents imposed by the government? Or the newly introduced Housing Benefit scheme which has caused havoc in Councils up and down the country?

Evidently the DOE do not think so. They are imposing a minimum rent increase this year of 80p - bound to bring arrears down - and have produced a booklet - 'Preventing Rent Arrears' which provides handy hints for local authorities on how to prevent or reduce arrears.

PADDINGTON LANDLORD SENT DOWN

At the beginning of last month Charalambos (Charlie) Pouyiouros, a notorious West London bedsit landlord, was sentenced in Knightsbridge Crown Court to six months in prison, a £5000 fine and prosecution costs, for living off immoral earnings and keeping a disorderly house.

Tenants living in his houses have been campaigning for three years over his neglect of his properties, the use of rooms for prostitution, and harassment of sitting tenants. One said, 'He's just a modern day Rackman'.

Charlie Pouyiouros owned three properties in Clanricarde Gardens, W2, which burned down in December 1981, when eight tenants were killed. At the subsequent inquest, jurors heard that the house was in poor repair, it was a rabbit warren of interconnected houses, tenants paid very high rents for overcrowded conditions and the houses lacked basic fire precautions.

At the inquest the landlord's insurance company were represented by Dr Gagan who gave evidence that the fire was started by arson. Representatives of the tenants claimed that the electricity supplies had been in dangerous condition and fire precautions were inadequate. The jury found death by misadvent-

ure. The action of the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea on these properties was recently the subject of an Ombudsman report.

Tenants in Mr Pouyiouros' properties in Westminster had also complained to

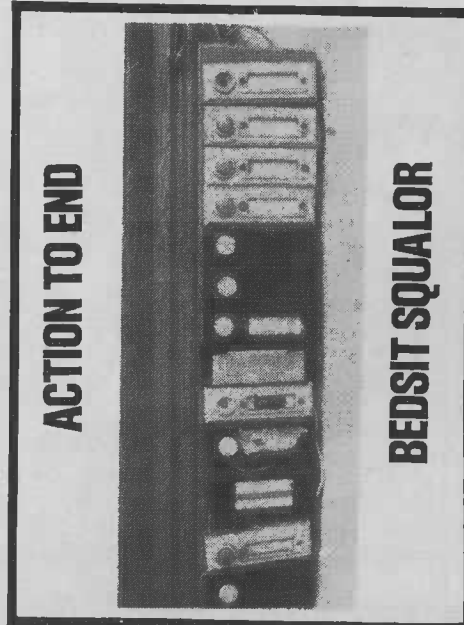
Westminster City Council over a long period concerning the conditions in the house and allegations of harassment. When the Council failed to pursue the claims of harassment, 16 tenants took civil court actions for breach of quiet enjoyment and disrepair and won damages.

Council take over

After considerable evidence was compiled by Paddington Law Centre and Paddington Federation of Tenants and Residents Associations, Westminster City Council took control of five of Mr Pouyiouros' properties for five years from March 1982. The landlord was allowing prostitution in the basement of each house. In the rest of the house, if a room became vacant it would be relet as a holiday let on a very high rent. Sitting tenants were put under considerable pressure to leave. There was evidence of serious disrepair and unsafe electrics in the houses.

Tenants in these houses in Westminster do not now want the houses to be handed back to the landlord at the end of five years, which is the City Council's intention. They propose that the property should be taken over by a housing association.

It is understood that the Inland Revenue is investigating considerable sums of rent collected by Mr Pouyiouros not declared for tax purposes.

**ACTION TO END****BEDSIT SQUALOR**

ISLINGTON RACISM FINED

Islington Borough Council in London have been successful in persuading the police to take racial harassment on estates seriously.

Recently a racist tenant was charged with threatening behaviour after he smashed the car headlights of his new Asian neighbours and pushed a racist note through their letterbox. The family took the note to the Housing Department, where a sharp-eyed officer recognised the handwriting. The police carried out investigations and eventually he was charged and fined £ 300.

With seven similar arrests in the last month it shows how a council can actually tackle racial harassment on their estates.

For more info. contact L B of Islington Press Office 226 1234.

WEST MIDLANDS HEATING ADDITIONS

We have reported before on groups who have been successful in claiming heating additions on supplementary benefit payments for tenants living in 'hard to heat' flats/houses, the most recent victory is in the West Midlands.

The West Midlands Heating Group and local tenants have been pressurising the DHSS for over two years about the high heating costs of 'no-fines' concrete dwellings. These types of homes were built by pouring wet concrete into moulds on site and was quite different to traditional brick or system built homes that were bolted together. This type of concrete is now only used for building bridges etc because it is way below allowable insulation standards. Some of these buildings can cost up to 50% more to heat than other homes.

So far DHSS officers have been instructed to pay a heating addition of £2.05 per week to tenants. But the Heating Group are worried that this news is not widespread. It is estimated that over 160 000 homes exist and yet the DHSS have been very slow to advertise the availability of this extra payment.

For more info contact Sandwell Housing Aid 021 552 2339.



FAMILY LEAFLET

The Child Poverty Action Group together with 9 major trade unions have jointly produced a leaflet called 'Family Policy is a Trade Union Issue'.

This leaflet gets away from the image of Victorian Values that the Tories have been pushing and looks at the issue as an important area for discussion within the trade union movement.

The leaflet draws together suggestions for changes in how work is organised, what people get in wages and benefits and what services are provided by the community. It is hoped that this leaflet

this leaflet will be used as a basis for discussion in groups workshops or union branch meetings

Contact CPAG 1 Macklin Street, London WC2 - 25p incl postage.

MIDDLESBOROUGH SELL OFF

Middlesborough Borough Council have recently been crowing about a recent initiative in the housing field that '...showing the way...with an interesting scheme..'

This latest answer aimed at providing for people in their area is to offer a 4 acre site to private building companies to develop low cost housing. The council will then take the hassle of getting rid of them by offering discounts to existing council tenants or those on the waiting list of £500. They are also offering an option of part rent and part buy.



Maybe the council ought to take notice of the increasing amounts of ex-council tenants who, after taking advantage of these bribes are being thrown out their homes after being thrown out their jobs by the recession only to join the waiting list yet again.

WOMEN'S DESIGN SERVICE

Are you setting up a new womens centre? Maybe a refuge or a housing co-op? Does your group need more room or repairs? Are you campaigning to improve conditions at you workplace? The WOMEN'S DESIGN SERVICE may be able to help you.

This new group of women architects funded by the GLC Women's Committee to advise groups of women in London London are offering their services free. They offer many different services including ;

helping groups find premises including carrying out surveys etc,

they can draw up plans and produce costings for funding authorities,

they can also put groups in contact with women builders and other tradeswomen.

They work with projects that promote women's interests and make a priority for ethnic minorities, disabled and working class groups.

If you want more information contact Womens Design Service, 1 Ferdinand Place NW1 tel 274 7700

TYCOON FOR LDDC

The London Docklands Development Corporation(LDDC) has just appointed Mr C. Benson, a prominent property developer, as their new chairman.

This move has caused much anger among local people because it shows that the Docklands area of London has become a free for all for property developers with only the crumbs left for the local community.

The Joint Docklands Action Group claim that there are massive

conflict of interests. Mr Benson is the Vice chair and Managing Director of MEPC the second largest property company in the UK. He also has involvement in other companies such as the Sun Alliance. JDAG claim that he has no experience of local government, no knowledge of East London and of the people who live there.

For more info contact Andy Coupland 480 5324

ASBESTOS

Following the first national conference against asbestos in November 1983, a National Organisation Against Asbestos has been formed. A working party was elected at the conference to start the work of linking local groups, preparing publicity material and drawing up a charter of demands to press on ventral and local government.

For further information contact Frances carter, National Organisation against Asbestos, c/o SCAT 31 Clerkenwell Close London EC1 Tel 01-253-3627 (day), 01-444-0975 (eves).

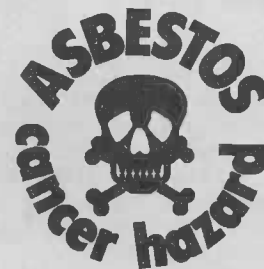


FIGURE FIGHT

A group of trade union and community activists have got together the title of 'Fighting Figures', to try and pool experience and expertise in dissecting financial information on companies, councils, etc. A one-day conference has already been held, looking at the reality behind the accounts of multinationals (Ford's being the example), and what facts and figures can reveal about private contractors hunting for public service work.

Another project is to prepare a pamphlet on the accountants and consultants who are taking over in much of the public sector, with 'value for money' studies and the like. Anyone interested in this should contact Roger Kline at Birmingham TURC, Victoria Works, 7, Frederick Street, Birmingham B1 3HE. tel 021-236-8323

COUNCILS & RATES

Further developments in the response to the government's attack on council services are emerging as we go to press.

A number of Labour controlled councils have clearly taken a tactical decision to keep rate rises as low as possible this year, to win sympathy from those moderate members of the community who are terribly concerned that the public sector should show fiscal responsibility if it is to be worth defending.

Most notably, the GLC and the West Midlands have both announced rate reductions this year. This will certainly have helped disarm Tory critics a little, and in the case of the GLC and the Met Counties it may be argued tactically that they are fighting for their very survival this year: there is to be no 1985/86 for them.

But such decisions have repercussions: in the West Midlands for example, it helps the Tories controlling Birmingham to pass on an even higher rate cut to locals, thus reducing Labour chances of capturing control in the elections in May 1984.

In the case of councils like Sheffield, who have announced a single

figure rate rise, the tactic makes sense only if it is used to buy time to mobilise local support for a fight over rate-capping in 1985. Jenkin has already made clear, by publishing lists of 17 different ways of picking councils for rate-capping, that he may not know much about services, but he knows who he hates. If he wants to get Sheffield in 1985 he will, whatever their rate rise this year. So the crunch is postponed not averted.

Some councils are in danger of undermining their natural support in the basic conflict for the sake of short-term respectability.

Hackney Council, which has run a 'high-profile' public campaign against rate-capping is one example. Community groups have been encouraged and financed to help the campaign. Council workers' unions have been asked for support. But at the same time, the council has been setting up working parties to look at cuts. We will be looking at Hackney in more detail in the next issue of CA.

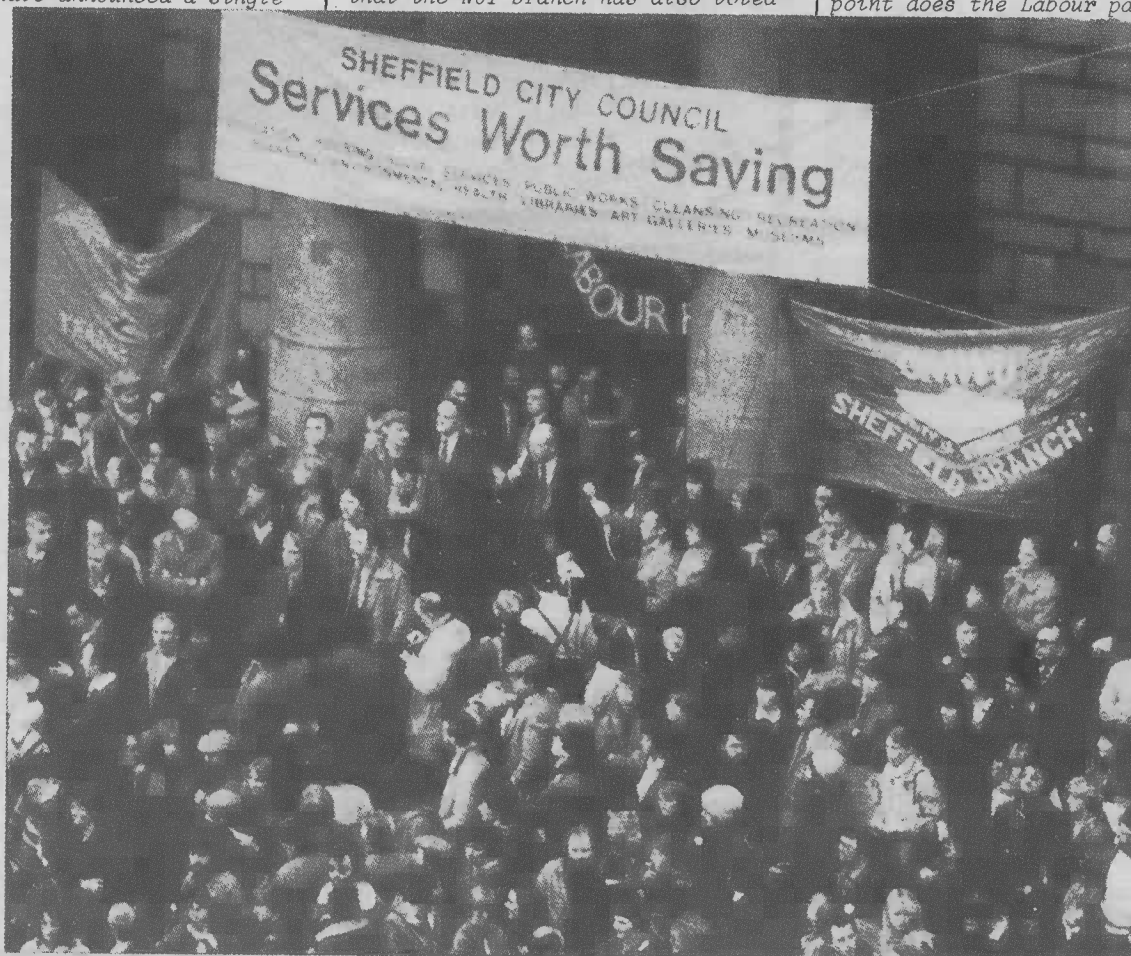
LIVERPOOL

A short update on our feature on Liverpool City's fight. As we go to press, it has already been reported that the (relatively small) NUPE branch has voted not to support the strike on 29th March; and that the NUT branch has also voted

against by a narrow majority, despite the readiness of the NUT nationally to give them official backing. (It is not known if NUPE nationally gave any advice to their Liverpool branch).

The battle has also started to get national publicity, with dark hints from the government about sending in commissioners and even troops, and Liverpool councillors predicting riots. Another government hint is that the crucial elections due in May could be cancelled (just like they are already planning to cancel the GLC and Met County elections in 1985).

The Labour party leadership has yet to come out clearly for or against the stand being taken by Liverpool: so far, Liverpool have been pathetically grateful for the fact that the Labour party did not publicly disown them from the outset. Kinnock and co may yet decide to do just that if the going gets hot. Which would have serious implications everywhere for 1985 - if nothing 'illegal' is allowed, rate-capping will steamroller local services. Ken Livingstone, who as leader of the GLC faces not being allowed to stand for election to the GLC again, has said publicly of rate-capping that if it goes through he "sees no point in anyone standing for election to local councils ever again". What point does the Labour party see?



AND NOW - LOW RATE RISES TOO!

THE ATTACK ON LOCAL SERVICES



Rates Bill

DEPARTMENT OF THE ENVIRONMENT

EXPLANATORY AND FINANCIAL MEMORANDUM

The Bill gives effect to proposals for rate limitation and of the rating system in England and Wales outlined in the White Paper "Rates" (Cmd. 9008).

Streamlining the Cities

Proposals for Reorganising Local Government in London and the Metropolitan Counties

As the Secretary of State power to prescribe a maximum rate to be made or precept issued by any local authority in England and Wales which is...

The Government's Expenditure Plans

1984-85 to 1986-87

Presented to Parliament by the Chancellor of the Exchequer by Command of Her Majesty February 1984

* This special feature looks at the government's attack on local services, and the fightback against it. *
* The introduction looks at the issues and the strategy of the fightback, and sets out the details of what the government is doing and proposing to do to councils — penalties, ratecapping, abolition of metropolitan counties and the GLC. We then give case studies of what is actually happening in various places — a mixture of good news and bad. *

ISSUES AND STRATEGY

The real attack

There are two key elements in the attack by the Tories and their business allies. The first is a financial attack on services, through their penalties on councils and their 'ratecapping' proposals. The second is a political attack on the working class, through 'ratecapping' and abolition of councils, which cuts the power of the working class to control resources for political gains. What they are not concerned with is lifting the burden of rates from people: they want businesses and the rich to pay less, and the poor to pay more.

The penalties and ratecapping are specifically targetted against councils which are 'high spenders', not against those whose rates are high. The mis-named Rates Bill spells this out: councils are to be selected simply by Jenkin

deciding if its 'expenditure' is 'excessive'. The Tory press spell it out over and over again: the target is 'high-spenders'. The CBI go further: they complain that people who vote in 'highspending' councils don't pay much in rates, while the rich residents pay big rates but only get one vote each — and businesses pay rates but have no vote. What the CBI would like to see is businessmen having extra votes; and what some right-wingers would like to see is that people only get a vote if they pay rates. The problem for the ruling class is the system of 'one person, one vote'. They want to insist that political power is restricted to those with wealth and property.

The media reinforce this line ruthlessly. An article in the *Sunday Times* claimed that most council tenants don't pay rates (write to the *Sunday Times*, not to us): and imply that they shouldn't be allowed to vote either. This is what ratecapping is meant to achieve — preventing the poor from voting for policies which would claw some of the wealth back off the rich. One clause in

the Rates Bill rams the point home: councils will be statutorily obliged to consult local businessmen, but nobody else, before they fix their budgets.

If the local council isn't interested (and as our feature shows, some aren't) then campaigns must be built without them in the first instance.

Some crucial issues

(A) Tory or Labour. The fight needs to be waged whether the local council is Tory or Labour controlled. No council should be allowed to use the excuse of ratecapping and penalties to make cuts.

(B) We must insist on real action from Labour councils to resist the government's threats. 'It hurts us as much as hurts you, but...' is not enough. Nor is bad faith — pretending to encourage a campaign and then making cuts in funds to the very groups who have campaigned.

(C) Council action must be based on sharp political action, aimed at the

government or business interests. No cuts and no rate rises is one strategy, as in Liverpool — an illegal deficit budget. Another, which will only work this year, is no cuts and a massive rate demand that spells out the Tory responsibility. A third is to make no cuts, have small rates rises — and balance the books by declaring a moratorium on interest payments to the financiers of the City. This would save a huge chunk of council spending, but a chunk that the Tories don't want cut. It would be doing just what Mexico and Brazil and Argentina did to the banks — and the patriotic bankers of London fell over themselves to roll over their debts to keep the wheels of international business working smoothly. The Thatcher government was especially keen to see Argentina helped out — but how would they respond to a similar default by Islington?

The Threat of the law

Lots of Labour councillors are primed by their officers to explain that defiance is impossible because of the councillors being surcharged and imprisoned. And so they will claim that illegal action puts them at unacceptable financial personal risk. But any illegal budget will be stopped by local Tories and judges before it can be implemented — so the money won't be spent, and there will be nothing to surcharge the councillors for. The surcharge is no excuse for ducking the issue. A political stand is needed — and a fight against the political response from the courts.

Fightback strategy

The main effort of the official Labour movement is being devoted to parliamentary action. This consists largely of pressure on Tory wets and Lords to rebel against the government. The second reading of the Rates Bill highlighted the potential impact of this strategy: over 30 Tory MPs, an unprecedented number, opposed or abstained — so the government only had a majority of 99! The most likely 'concession' to be won in the Lords is the dropping of the 'general' powers in the bill, which will be quite hollow — the 'selective' powers still enable Jenkin to ratecap just about every Labour council in the country! It should also be remembered that in 1981 a similar strategy defeated the Tories' plans to insist on a referendum before raising supplementary rates — so the Tories just scrapped supplementary rates altogether!

The fight mustn't be confined to the political position of Tory wets. Local campaigns must be mobilised with two key elements. Firstly, they must involve workers, tenants, community groups in a mass campaign. Secondly, they must be focussed on political demands for better public services — not just the preservation of the local power bases of rightwing politicians and bureaucrats.

PENALTIES for 1984

1. How they work

The government gives grants, known as the *Rate Support Grant (RSG)* to local councils. Each council is allocated a specific amount of the overall total. But if a council spends more than the target set for it by the government, the amount of grant is reduced. So councils either have to cut their services to keep in line with what the government wants — or put up the rates by a lot more. In effect, local people are penalised for electing a council which provides better services.

2. Fixing the grants

The first element is fixing the level of the RSG. The total amounts given by the government for the coming financial year, April 1984 to March 1985, were announced in December. The amounts are only slightly higher in cash terms than the grants for 1983/84 — 0.7% in England, 1.6% in Scotland, and 2.2% in Wales. With inflation expected to be about 6%, that means the real value of the grants has been cut by between 4% and 5%.

Individual councils are then allocated a specific share of this total, by a formula based on the government's assessment of local needs (known as *Grant-Related Expenditure, GRE*). Not surprisingly, these GREs favour the Tory-controlled rural councils, and fall below local judgements of needs in urban areas. So Greenwich, for example, is allocated its grant for 1984/85 based on a government GRE of £38.0m. — over £31m. below the amount that Greenwich

actually spent last year.

But councils only get the full amount of grant if their spending on services is no greater than the 'target' set for it by the government.

3. Setting the targets

These *targets* require councils to cut their spending on services compared with last year (they are completely different figures from the GREs). For 1984/85, English councils have been set targets which range from an increase of 3% in cash to a decrease of 6% in cash over their spending in 1983/84. With 6% inflation, this means real cuts of between 3% and 9%. The councils expected to make the heaviest cuts are the urban areas of London and the other conurbations.

4. Penalties on local people

The actual formula for calculating penalties imposed for spending above the government's target is savage. For the first 1% over target, grant equivalent to 2p on the rates is lost; this rises with increasing severity until a council reaches 4% over the target, when the penalty is a loss of grant equal to 23p on the rates; and every further 1% means a further loss equivalent to 9p on the rates. So a council like Leicester, which could spend 9% over the government's target just to keep the same level of services as last year, would have to put an extra 68p on the rates just because of the penalty. That would mean a rise of nearly 200%, as the government's punishment of the local electorate.

5. The Effects

The impact of these penalties is obviously massive. Even Tory-controlled shire counties, like Essex and Buckinghamshire and Surrey, are finding themselves unable to make the cuts necessary to meet the government's target — so they are having to put up the rates this year by as much as 20%. Other councils are making heavy cuts in services, in line with the Tories' requirements. Some, like Somerset, are juggling the books and the bank balances to minimise the damage. Others have not yet decided whether to accept the Tories' vicious alternatives at all — Liverpool are pledged not to do so.

Apart from the immediate impact on services and rates, the penalties have major political implications for council services next year — 1985/86. By then, the Tories' rate-capping laws are expected to be in force — and massive rate rises in 1984 resulting from the penalty system, will be a major propaganda weapon used to justify smashing councils with the new powers in 1985. The response of councils to the penalties this year is also a vital preview of responses to rate-capping in 1985. This year, the legal alternatives to political



defiance are heavy rate increases or massive cuts in services; the ratecapping legislation will reduce those options to just one — cuts. If councils do not make a stand this year against the penalties, it will be an uphill battle to get them to do so next year — against ratecapping.

RATECAPPING for 1985

The Rates Bill was published just before Christmas. The bill makes clear that the key issues it addresses are spending on services, and the interests of local businessmen — not the financial burden on local people. Its main provisions are:

★ The Secretary of State can select any council for ratecapping if he thinks that its 'expenditure . . . is likely . . . to be excessive, having regard to general economic conditions.' Selection thus has nothing to do with rates levels, and nothing to do with objective criteria. He can then set a maximum rate or precept, which a council will not be permitted to exceed. Councils spending less than £10million per year, or less than the government's assessment of their 'needs', will not be selected. This excludes nearly all Tory controlled non-metropolitan district councils, and 9 million people — so much for the supposed concern with all ratepayers.

★ The 'general' power to fix spending and rates for all councils is also in the bill. However, this adds little to the 'selective' powers, which already enable the government to select about half

the councils in England if they want to. Dropping the 'general' powers, which Patrick Jenkin has hinted as a possible concession to Tory rebels, would not therefore be a significant gain.

★ Councils are now obliged to consult bodies 'representative of industrial and commercial ratepayers' before fixing its budget. The Secretary of State will issue guidelines on who such representatives are, and what information they should be given. No other group — such as tenants, or council workers — is given such a statutory right.

The bill does not include any new powers to fine, imprison or surcharge councillors, or powers to appoint commissioners to take over the running of a council. That is because they aren't necessary. All the bill does is to say that a rate in excess of the maximum fixed by the government is 'invalid' — in other words, no-one has to pay it (and local businessmen certainly won't). If a council set such a rate, or budgeted for spending above what the government laid down, then they would be open to action from local ratepayers, district auditor or whoever in the traditional British way.

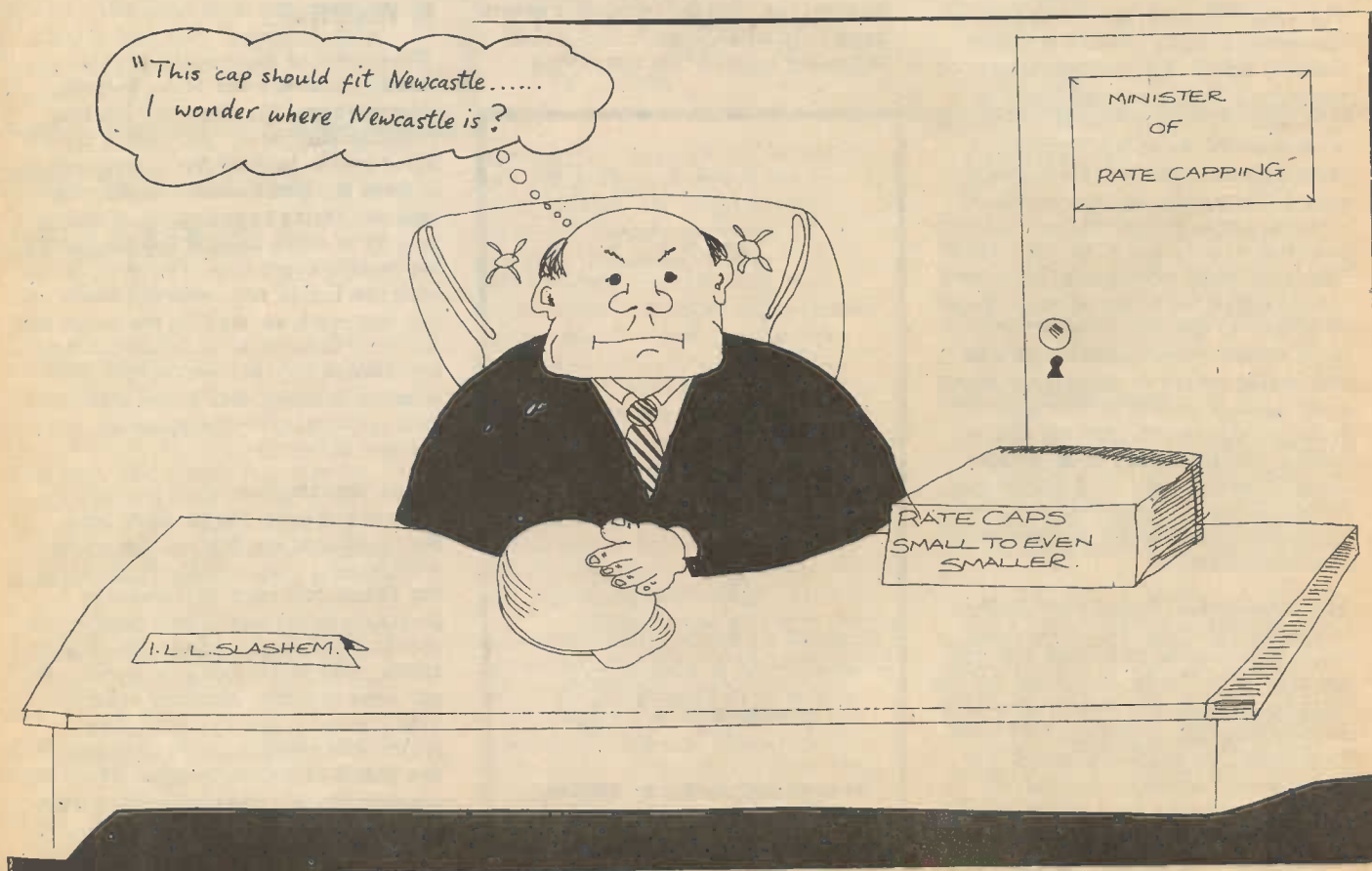
ABOLITION of metropolitan counties

The third arm of the attacks is the abolition of the 6 metropolitan counties and the GLC. The details of how this affects the GLC and London Transport

and Inner London Education Authority are set out in the separate section on London. All the met counties will be abolished, the elections due in 1985 will be cancelled, the functions of these Labour-controlled authorities will be taken over by district council nominees for a year, and then the old councils' functions will be shattered into dozens of bureaucratic fragments. These will include: 21 functions handed over to districts, 18 statutory joint boards for police, fire and transport, a special staff commission to oversee the transition, 4 functions handed over to existing bodies, 56 cases of a single district acting on behalf of others, 42 voluntary joint arrangements, and lots of functions taken over by central government. And they titled their white paper setting out all this 'Streamlining the Cities'!

The point of abolition is simple. The metropolitan counties and the GLC are all Labour controlled, and have pursued policies on transport for example which go right against the Tories' policies of charging and privatisation. And, as a leading Tory councillor on the GLC put it, Thatcher thinks that by abolishing the GLC and the met counties she will abolish Ken Livingstone and his ilk.

It would be silly to deny that met counties are bureaucratic and unresponsive to local needs. But the Tory proposals would make this problem far worse. At least the met counties provide a focus for political demands on transport policies, control of police etc. Keeping on pushing those demands means we need to keep the met counties.



LIVERPOOL FIGHTS

The first major confrontation with the government seems likely to come from Liverpool City Council. This is not an accident, but a result of (1) the political and financial circumstances of the city (2) the policy stance taken by the council (3) the political campaign built alongside that policy stance. The example of Liverpool is crucial to the battle in other areas both this year (against penalties) and next year (against rate-capping).

The issues

In the May 1983 elections the Labour party won control of Liverpool city council, after ten years of domination by the Liberals and their Tory allies. The disastrous policies of the Liberals on housing, in particular (see CA 56), were decisively rejected by local voters. The manifesto on which Labour won included clear commitments on: creating jobs and improving services by employing an extra 1,000 workers; cutting rents; building more council houses; rejecting privatisation; and not increasing the rates to make up for government penalties.

Because the elections were in May, the Liberal/Tory alliance had already fixed the budget for the financial year 1983/84 which started in April. This provided for £218million to be spent — but the services they aimed to provide cost an extra £11½million. The Liberals and Tories had simply assumed that £6million 'savings' would be found somewhere or other, and £5½million by cutting the council's workforce. So the new Labour group had to find an extra £11½million in 1983/84 just to maintain the Liberal/Tory services without making further cuts.

The crunch comes with the budget for the coming year, 1983/84. The government's grant to Liverpool is £113.9million — but this will only be paid in full if the council spends no more than the government's target — which is £216 million. But merely keeping to the Liberal/Tory budget, including their cuts, would require spending of over £228million just to keep pace with inflation. And the government's penalty would be to knock £27million off the grant, and on to the rates. If the Liberal plans were carried on without the extra cuts, the penalty would shoot up, and the rates would have to be increased by 70%! And this would be the result even if the council ignored their election man-

date and acted like the Liberals. Carrying out the policies they were elected on would mean astronomical penalties and rate increases.

(And an extra kick in the teeth has been given to the council's housing policies — the government has cut their Housing Investment Programme (HIP) by 8% from last year's allocation — compared with a bid by the council for £115million).

The penalty system, on top of the other complexities, creates what Liverpool call 'the economics of the madhouse'. Once Liverpool are spending just 4% above the government's target, every £1 spent incurs a fine of £2.22. So if the council employ an extra worker, at a cost of about £10,000 in wages and national insurance, the government imposes a penalty of £22,000: trebling the total cost to the people of Liverpool. Same with a rent cut of £2 per week; the government penalty pushes up rates by £4.44 per week.

Stark choices

This leaves the council with stark options. *Either* it completely abandons its policies and makes savage cuts — equivalent to 5,000 jobs; or it keeps



faith with the people of Liverpool by budgetting for decent services, and refusing to impose penal rate rises — which is an illegal act of defiance. Some might claim that the council could fudge it by 'trimming' jobs and services, 'shelving' plans, and 'adjusting' the financial balances. But — apart from the political objections to this — in Liverpool such fiddles would still leave them with having to impose a rate rise of 25,30, or 40%. And another third of the council come up for election in May. What kind of election campaign could be run by a council which had been elected on a radical programme, given up trying to implement it, and still landed the city with a swingeing rates rise? And the likely Liberal victory would put them back in power, able to make cuts, and having large sums left over from the rate rise to see them through the next few years of cuts policies with probably nil rate rises.

Strategy

The precise action that Liverpool council will take had not been finally decided as we go to press (and it makes tactical sense not to reveal the exact plan of action). But the core position has been clearly stated by them as follows:

'The city council either stands and fights or is crucified on the altar of implementing the government's policies. We will not make up to 5,000 council workers redundant. We will not impose a rate increase of 70% just to stand still in a city where public services suffer from a decade of neglect, and where poverty and mass unemployment are endemic The City Council's only viable option is to campaign for the defence and improvement of public services.'

(Jobs, Services and Rates: the Liverpool Case. January 1984)

Specifically, this excludes rate rises much much above the rate of inflation. And the council is already starting to implement some of the policies it was elected on. The employment of an extra 1,000 people has run into problems with the Manpower Services Commission (who were expected to fund part of it). The rent reduction has gone ahead, although in a different form: since it was discovered that actual rent cuts largely benefitted the government, through reduced housing benefit etc., it has been given to tenants in the form of a 'decoration allowance'.



Thus the council is set on a programme of services for 1984/85 that will not be fully financed by the rates they raise together with government grant. This 'deficit budget' is almost certainly illegal.

The *political* implications of this position are positive. The stand involves a direct defence of local community interests, in not cutting services or imposing massive rate rises. It involves explicit demands on the government to make up the grant that Liverpool needs and deserves — as the council put it: 'A conflict could be avoided this year if the government paid back £30million of the £120million withheld from the city since 1979'.

The *legal* implications are complex, but a few key points stand out. Firstly, the question of surcharge is unlikely to arise, since as soon as a deficit budget was set the judges would be eagerly waiting to

declare it illegal and invalid, in such a way as to prevent it being implemented. If the money is not spent then there is nothing to surcharge for. Secondly, the court action will almost certainly be initiated by local 'ratepayers' — Liberal MP David Alton has already declared his intention of rushing to court at the first opportunity. And such court action would mean that the May elections were held against a background of a popularly elected council being prevented from acting in the interests of Liverpool by judges and local Liberals. The legal block would itself be a clear political issue.

The campaign

The campaign to build support for defying the government was launched on 19th November with a demonstration by

SUPPORT YOUR CITY COUNCIL

LIVERPOOL 
a socialist council

20,000 people in the streets of Liverpool. The council has built from that start, with a clear assumption that it had only until March 1984 to win the massive popular support necessary for defying the government. There are three components to the campaign.

First is a central organisation. This is the Campaign Working Party, 70-strong, which is composed of councillors, the stewards on the council workers joint shop stewards committee, and representatives of community groups, the CRC, unemployed centres, voluntary bodies, and every trade union with members in the city. It aims to be as widely representative as possible. This group reports to the council's communications sub-committee, and is serviced by a central support unit. This central organisation of action is however in the hands of the unions and community groups themselves.

The second element is thus the council workers and their unions. Every effort has gone into a major programme of ensuring that all employees are fully briefed of the issues and the importance of the council's stand. The aim is that by March there will have been a workplace meeting held for every group of workers, at which stewards will explain the issues and call for support. The Joint Shop Stewards Committee has regular liaison meetings with the Labour group on the council.

The third element is the community. The aim is to organise public meetings in all the different areas of the city: 10 such meetings are planned for the first two weeks in February. These meetings have not been organised centrally, but by the local community organisations. Community groups are also encouraged to organise other events, which are supported by the central support unit.

LIVERPOOL IN CRISIS COME TO YOUR PUBLIC MEETING

The City Council has set up public meetings to discuss the crisis facing our City, and will explain the Council's case. The meetings are at 7.30 pm, in schools throughout the city. Miss this opportunity to hear the facts about the Council's position, and to...

Monday 6 February

- Fazakerley County Primary, Formosa Drive
- Craighurst County Primary, Craighurst Road

Tuesday 7 February

- Walton C. of E. Primary, Bedford Road
- Quarry Bank Comp. (Quarry Wing), Harthill Road

Wednesday 8 February

- Breckfield Comprehensive, Hamilton Road
- St. Hilda's C. of E. High School, Croxteth Drive
- Newsham County Primary, ... Street
- ... Comprehensive



RENTS

cut in rent 4.44

government
fine 2.00

cost to
community £6.44

REPAIRS

repair cost 30.00

government
fine 66.60

cost to
community £96.60

ECONOMY OF THE MADHOUSE



FIGHT FOR YOU

Figures based on government penalties on Liverpool

COMICS THE HOUSE



BOOKS

cost of book 5.00

**government
fine 11.10**

**cost to
community £16.10**

JOBS

cost of job 10 000

**government
fine 22 000**

**cost to
community £32 000**

OUR SERVICES

BRENT

Preparing to fight Tory cuts

In spite of the Tory/Liberal take-over of Brent Council before Christmas, there is going to be a campaign in the borough against the government's attack on the Local Authorities. Before the defection of Councillor Ambrozie Neil toppled it from power, the Labour Group agreed to support a Trades Council based campaign in defence of jobs and services in the borough. The campaign is being organised through the Local Economy Resource Unit, which is run by the Trades Council. The 'SAVE BRENT!' Campaign will be launched at a major conference at Brent Town Hall on 25th February, where speakers will include Ken Livingstone and Audrey Wise. It remains to be seen whether the new regime at the Town Hall will support it but it seems rather unlikely!

However, the Brent Tories are not going to get it all their own way. For a start off, they have to carry the Liberal minority who hold the balance of power, and early signs are that the Liberals are keen not to appear too much in the Tories' pocket. So if a lively campaign is mounted to mobilise opinion against the cuts the Tories are lining up locally, it is quite possible that they will be unable to get them through.

The first cut they have proposed is the closure of the Brent Enterprise Board (BEB) — before it has even started to operate properly. 'SAVE BRENT!' has responded promptly with a leaflet explaining the case for public investment to create and save jobs. A decision on the closure of BEB will be taken at the Council's Policy and Resources Committee on January 25th. It will be interesting to see which way the Liberal vote goes.

Similarly, the Liberals are in a position to decide what Brent Council now does to campaign against Rate Capping and the other government attacks. Early signs are that they may not oppose continued membership of the Association of London Authorities by Brent — in which case Brent will presumably continue to support the ALA's campaign against Rate Capping. (Similarly, a Tory move to end Brent's 'Nuclear Free Zone' was defeated when they failed to carry the Liberals with them).

However, it is most unlikely that the Tory/Liberal coalition will sanction serious spending on the campaign against the government's attacks. This means that the campaign waged by the Trades Council will be of strategic importance.

A programme of major events is being organised, starting with the launch conference on Feb. 25th. Also under way is a programme of visits to workplaces to drum up support for the campaign.

Street activity will feature strongly, with a motorcade planned for early February. A seminar on privatisation and how it can be fought is being organised for Council workers, and various concerts and other similar 'cultural' events will be staged.

Council committees are being carefully monitored so that cuts can be identified at an early stage, and contacts are being developed with community and user groups. This should ensure that the fight to defend and improve services takes account of the interests and views of the users as well as those of the workers who provide the services.

The Campaign will make sure that all the major political issues around the Tory attack on the Local Authorities (the penalty system on RSG, Rate Cap-

ping, GLC abolition) are properly aired in Brent. We hope also to stimulate groups throughout the Community to take up related issues as part of the broad campaign. Already, Brent Teachers' Association (NUT) reps have expressed an interest in taking these issues to the Parent Teachers' Associations.

A full time worker has been employed for a 6 month period to work on the campaign, and a second full timer is being provided by the publicity coop, Roadwork, who style themselves as the left's answer to Saatchi and Saatchi . . .

Anyone wanting further details about the Campaign should contact 'SAVE BRENT!' at 389 High Rd., Willesden, NW10, and speak to Sian Morgan (tel 459 6401).

BIRMINGHAM



The campaign against abolition of the met. counties has fallen flat in the West Midlands. Despite a series of press conferences, and the efforts of some individuals, public support for the county council is minimal.

The reasons are not hard to find. The gap between the council's 'radical' rhetoric and their performance is too vast for credibility. The vaunted Economic Development Unit is obsessed with de-industrialisation as the key to unemployment, to the exclusion of other issues, and the criteria it uses for its public investments are almost solely commercial. So far from fighting privatisation, the county has actually approved the first privately financed road project of the twentieth century. And its public transport policies are such that the Labour group has actually suspended three councillors who publicly advocated freezing fares this year — for acting contrary to party policy and embarrassing the Labour group publicly.

The demoralisation is such that council workers are already rushing to find jobs, while county councillors are equally keenly looking for seats on the district councils. The county's policies have

also harmed the fight against cuts in the district councils: an unexpected surplus in the county's pension fund has not been used for socially useful investment, but to reduce the council's contributions this year, and thus the level of rates. This has meant that in Tory-controlled Birmingham City, the rates cut announced by the Tories has been doubled by the reduction in the county's precept. Labour should have a good chance of capturing Birmingham from the Tories in the May elections, yet there is no campaign being mounted on the ratecapping issue. This is blinkered, to say the least: if Labour does take over the city's rundown services, it will undoubtedly be faced with a massive rates and spending increase in the 1985 budget to reverse the Tory damage — thus making it a prime target for rate-capping. The alternative will be for a Labour council to simply continue Tory policies. In the circumstances, assurances from the Labour group that they will not do anything unlawful beg the question that Birmingham voters will be asking — what difference will it make to vote Labour in May 1984?

SHEFFIELD

Sheffield City Council has generally been seen as being in the forefront of the fight for democratic and socialist local politics. On the latest round of attacks, the council has relied firstly on "creative accounting", to avoid massive rate rises in 1984 while also avoiding major cuts. One aspect of this has verged on the 'hyper-technical', with discussion at one point about rent increases only for those tenants whose rent is effectively 100% paid by central government through benefits. The problem with this kind of acrobatic is that it conceals rather than publicises the real issues involved. While this plan seems to have been dropped, Sheffield have still resorted to increasing rents for the first time in a number of years. The financial and technical justification for this is that a large portion of rent increases for many tenants is really borne by the government: the political perspective still needs public justification for this not to undermine more fundamental principles.

The council has also produced some very useful information sheets, which cover not only the services and jobs at stake, but also the organisational issues of what people can be doing to organise opposition to the government's attack.

Another feature of the Sheffield campaign was a one-day conference held in January, attended by 206 stewards from 16 different council unions: an independent trade union initiative. This conference not only discussed the campaign, but also the need for a joint shop stewards organisation in Sheffield council, and for regular meetings of all stewards. An interim steering group was set up from the meeting, and it was agreed to canvass support among members for (1) a joint anti-cuts campaign committee (2) a joint union co-ordinating committee, to cover any issue of common interest to unions.

4 City of Sheffield Information Pack: Rates, Services and Jobs

What To Do in Your Area

This campaign is about local control and local services. Cuts could affect everyone. For the campaign to succeed it is essential that you as a trade union branch, tenants group, church or community group involve as many people as possible. Remember - defending council services does not involve being uncritical of them, it means finding out what is going on and thinking of ways to improve and promote them.

- 1. Gather Information**
Take a close look at your ward, area, workplace, estate. Find out what the Council provides and what effects Government plans would have.
- 2. Listen and Learn**
Talk to people in shops, schools, community centres, other organisations. Find out what they think of council services, gain confidence.
- 3. Take Action**
Use the information you've got: produce leaflets, set up stalls, go back and explain the threats to services, show the council film.

Finding out
One way to start getting a picture of what the council provides in your area is to ring council departments. On sheet 5: Sources of Information is a list of council officers who have been told to answer questions about services in each area. These are the kinds of questions that you should ask:

- Details of what their department provides in your Ward, for example annual running cost of a local nursery school, how many people are employed, how many families use it.
- Amount of their budget spent in your ward.
- Effects of projected cuts in services in your ward, for example whether a cut would affect your library, swimming baths or bus routes.
- Impact of Central Government policies on your ward, for example houses that would have been improved, day-centres that would have been built.

With this information and using the census, you can build up a picture of how the Council affects the lives of those in your group, workplace, branch, and how you can start to see what the threat is to those people. An example of this for Sharrow is on Sheet 6. It will become clearer that removing services will affect everyone - not just the old and disabled - but it's also clear that those with less money will get hit hardest.



USE YOUR COUNCILLOR
They often have access to places, can get other information and material. Be prepared to go with them to meetings, surgeries or stand in for them where possible. Get them to give REPORT BACKS on what they are doing and how the City Council Campaign is going generally.

- Get more evidence from the local Tenants Association, and work closely with them.
 - Contact local Housing Action and Community Groups - especially in General Improvement Areas and Housing Action Areas to discover their concerns.
- Social Services**
- Contact your local Social Services Team and Community Worker. Get them to come and speak to your meeting about community provision.
 - Contact the Home Help Organiser for your area and ask Home Helps and Wardens about their view of the service. How many Home Helps are there in your ward and how many people benefit?
 - Find out about local luncheon clubs - how many are there? Who runs them?
 - Who are they? Who benefits?
 - Get your councillor to come with you to visit children and Elderly Person's Homes, Training Workshops, etc. Talk to the workers and users.

- Libraries and Recreation**
- Get to know local workers or groups of users. Collect information that you can publicise eg how many people used the Baths during the 8 week's holiday, how many books have been issued this year?
 - Find out if any youth clubs, churches, sports groups have had grants from the council and talk about what they've bought with the money.

- Education**
- Contact interested teachers, governors, parents and youths to find out what concerns them in schools, nurseries, youth clubs.
 - Use your Adult Education workers to put on classes about local services, local government, central government etc. Publicise them.

6 City of Sheffield Information Pack: Rates, Services and Jobs

Building Up the Local Picture

Of course, local people will know their district much better than Town Hall officials. And as someone active in the local community you will have a fair idea of local issues - the campaigns which have been won or lost. But it is often difficult to build up a complete picture of your area - its employment and housing prospects and the range of local services offered by the Council. So when the Government talks about cut backs it is difficult to estimate their local impact. Most campaigns against cuts have failed because people do not see how it affects them directly. If in the first place they are not aware of just how

extensive a range of services they and their neighbours use, then how can they be expected to respond to the threat of cutbacks?
It is essential then to build up a local picture and get it across to local residents. But it can be frustrating trying to get basic information out of the Town Hall. This is why official contacts are listed on Sheet 5. Here is how to use them to build up a local picture - call it a ward profile. Sharrow Ward is used as an example.



Sharrow: a local example
First, how do conditions in Sharrow Ward compare with the rest of the City. Ring Derek West in the Central Policy Unit and he will supply you with pink census reports. Number 5, Key Indicators for Sheffield Wards is one of the most interesting. It shows Sharrow near the top of the list for social and economic problems. On census night in 1981, over 21 percent of its male workers were unemployed and 11.5 percent of its female residents. Census Report 4 shows how the combined figure of 18.1 percent ranks Sharrow third worst in the City. Then there are a number of social and environmental problems. For example, over 40 percent of Sharrow's 4,500



Find out what Council services are provided in your area.

LONDON; THATCHER'S ATTACK

There can be no-one in London who has not at least heard about the proposed abolition of the Greater London Council, the Inner London Education Authority and London Transport. Since these ideas were expressed in the Tory manifesto at the last election, the issue has been at the top of most agendas. It's a topic that has produced more 'wet' rebels within her own ranks than Thatcher has had to face before.

The detailed proposals for abolition are contained in the White paper 'Streamlining the Cities' (cmd 9063) published in October 1983. This paper not only dealt with the GLC but also the Metropolitan County Councils in other parts of the country. Two main reasons are given for dismantling these authorities:-

The two tier system of local government has not worked effectively and is a 'recipe for conflict and uncertainty'.

The GLC and other Metropolitan Counties 'have consistently exceeded' government targets since 1981/82.

From April 1st, 1986, the government hopes that services now provided by the GLC and Met. Counties will be passed to individual boroughs (or district) councils, joint boards, quangos or central government. It also deals with passing transport to joint boards of district councils and directly to a quango in London. The Inner London Education Authority also gets the treatment as well.

THE GLC

The new system aims to pass responsibility to local borough councils for highways and traffic management, housing, art and sport, courts and probation services, recreation, trading standards, historic buildings, waste regulation and parks.

The Fire Service will almost certainly pass to a joint board made up of councillors nominated from the borough councils. Strategic Planning (i.e. producing a development plan for the whole of London) will be passed to a quango called the London Planning Commission and responsibility for 70 miles of London's trunk roads will go straight to central government.

With the changes come controls. Most of the joint boards will have the ability to raise their own finances through the rates system. But the White paper makes it clear that 'the creation of the new joint boards shall not be used as an opportunity to set up extravagant and expensive organisations'. Therefore during the first three years at least, the appropriate Secretary of State will be able to specify how much money they can spend and how many staff they can employ.

Real facts

The GLC have been swift to reply. It claims that the abolition has got nothing to do with giving more power to local boroughs; nothing to do with a cheaper, more efficient management of public affairs and nothing to do with simplifying London's local government. These measures combined with overspending penalties and rate capping, loss of control of London Transport and the abolition of the ILEA, is a clear indication that the government is committed to wiping out resistance to its policies.

In the GLC's document, 'the Future of the Greater London Council' the government's proposals are entirely taken apart and every statement disproved. Some of the main arguments are shown below:-



The government claims that the GLC is unnecessary yet it does not propose to abolish any single service currently provided. Its answer is to fragment and disperse services among a collection of boards, quangos etc. None of which will be subject to direct elections.

This fragmentation is supposed to save money. Yet the government has failed to supply any firm evidence that it will.

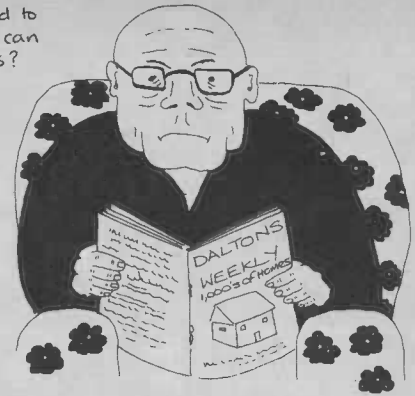
Nowhere has the government considered whether the local boroughs have the capabilities or resources to take on the new services. The GLC spends 34 million pounds on funding voluntary organisations and community groups especially those active around cultural issues. This type of funding will pass to local borough councils. Not all will take on this function with equal enthusiasm, some areas of London will be receiving little or no voluntary funding while in others, although the spirit might be willing, the money will be rate-capped out of existence!

Resistance

Resistance to these proposals is growing. Leaders of the GLC have been debating, lobbying and speaking to organisations since the plans became known.

Trade unions have launched a joint campaign called 'Democracy for London Campaign'. Their most recent event was a mass demonstration of trade unionists, community and voluntary groups in London on the 24th of January. This march attracted 26,000 people who filled the Festival Hall to hear speakers blast Thatcher for her plans. Many unions took strike action in support and pickets at County Hall claimed that only 300 people turned up for work out of a total well over 10,000. Further events are planned for March and April.

A network of local contacts/organisers is being set up by a special GLC unit. Called "Out-reach Workers", it is hoped that these will provide support and resources for initiatives at local level.



TRANSPORT

If you think the government is rushing to abolish the GLC, then they are moving even faster to sink London Transport. The White Paper outlining the 'London Regional Transport Bill' was published in July 1983 -- it hopes that by mid-1984 the responsibility of London Transport will be switched to the Department of Transport.

The main thrust of the proposed Bill is to take control of London Transport away from Londoners and give it to civil servants in Whitehall. The changes will be far reaching and the main aspects are outlined below:-

Centralising

The Secretary of State for Transport will set up a London Regional Transport Board and have the power to appoint whom he/she wants. The Secretary will also retain powerful controls over this board by being able to:-

- set the objectives of LRT i.e. decide what level of services should be provided. The Bill is constructed in such a way that this will not be challengeable in the courts.
- to direct the LRT to dispose of publicly owned assets, including buses, tube trains, stations, workshops etc if LRT refuse to privatise such services.
- control the purse strings by deciding how much the LRT gets to spend.

Fares, services

This year, the GLC will be subsidising London Transport by about £225 million. The government claimed that this should only be £125 million. This is £100 million less. It's not hard to imagine what the Secretary of State for Transport will do -- fares will rise; jobs will be cut and services slashed.

Free passes

If the GLC is abolished in 1986, the responsibility of paying for pensioners' passes will fall on Borough Councils. The government have refused to place any legal duty on them to protect concessionary fares. Many Tory councils have already indicated that they are not prepared to pay for pensioners passes on the present basis. So therefore the new Bill is likely to bring about the withdrawal of passes, their restriction only to the very poorest people and the imposition of degrading means tests.



Privatisation

The Bill makes special provision for the handing over of services and physical assets to private operators. Only the most profitable routes will be sold off -- leaving the rest of the routes and services more dependent on whatever the level of subsidy Whitehall decides should be given. Probably the most disgusting part of the whole Bill states that LRT can still give revenue subsidy, planning and managerial support to privatised companies -- provided that LRT has a handful of shares. This is a blatant attempt to use taxpayers and ratepayers money to carry the overheads of private companies so that they can make more money for their owners.

 **GLC**

Working together for London

Organising

The Campaign to Protect and Improve Transport (CAPITAL) was originally formed by London Transport unions but now includes Trade Councils, non LT unions, pressure groups, pensioner groups etc. Recently they organised a mass lobby of parliament at which over 2,000 people turned up. They have also planned a series of mass meetings at various London Transport depots explaining the issues to the workers and hopefully building up support. CAPITAL will also supply information, briefings, leaflets, speakers etc. for local meetings/events in support of London Transport.



THE ILEA

As with the GLC's services, the government does not intend to abolish the service that the ILEA provides. Instead they just plan to wreck the existing democratic structure.

The proposals

The white paper proposes to retain a unified education service in inner London administered by a new authority. This would be a joint board consisting of about 50 councillors nominated by the 12 inner London boroughs and the City of London, in numbers proportionate to the size of their electorate and to reflect the political balance in the nominating councils.

Like its predecessor, this joint board will be able to raise its own money but just to make sure they don't spend too much money, the Secretary of State will control the amount for the first three years. This is in addition to the power of being able to specify staffing levels.

Implications

The ILEA see these proposals as a disaster for inner London's education service. They will mean:-

- massive loss of teaching and non-teaching jobs;
- restricted range of subjects taught;
- bigger classes;
- abolition of welfare benefits such as school milk, clothing grants etc;
- cuts in provision of education for adults and young people over school leaving age.

It also is an attack on democracy. Whitehall bureaucrats will decide the level of services and will not be accountable to anyone. Although councillors will be sitting on these joint boards, Londoners will have no idea who will end up looking after education.

The ILEA are experienced in fighting off threats to its existence. In 1981 a Bill was put forward by the Tories outlining abolition. The 'Save ILEA' campaign was totally successful in getting this withdrawn. Not only do the teaching unions and ILEA work closely together but also well

over 1,000 Boards of Governors represent an effective and powerful organising base in the local community. All over inner London meetings and events are being organised and each of the boroughs served by ILEA has a local contact person to coordinate local actions.

CONTACTS

ILEA
'Save ILEA' Campaign, 5 Pinehurst Court, Colville Gardens, W11 2BH.
'Protect our Education', Room 59, County Hall, SE1 7PB. Telephone (01) 633 4000 for information pack and other info.

GLC
Democracy for London, tel 633 5570.
NALGO Room 35, 150 Waterloo Road, London SE1 tel 633 5570.

London Transport
CAPITAL, 308 Grays Inn Road, London WC1 tel 278 7801.
GLC Transport Hotline for all info. 633 4400.



ICA EXPOSED AGAIN!

A SPECIAL REPORT FROM INDIA

We have exposed the activities of the Insitiute for Cultural Affairs (ICA) in Britain on several occasions (see C/A Nos 32,33,34,38,52 and 57). We now report on their activities in India.

Earlier this year the ICA organised an expensive 'international exposition for rural development' in New Delhi. The following are extracts from an article by Bharat Dogra, a free-lance journalist who has been investigating the ICA's role in India together with a colleague Gurucharau. Bharat Dogra has written for several leading newspapers in India on rural development issues and has twice won The Statesman Award for Rural Reporting.

The ICA in India

One of its most widely publicized ICA projects in India is titled 'Sikror Human Development Project'. This project concerns the development of Sikror village located about 5 kms from Ghaziabad along the Meerut Road, in the Razapur Block of District Ghaziabad, Utter Pradesh. According to the ICA's brochure on this Project, during 1978-82 £2.4m was invested in this village, of which one sixth was private investment channelised through the ICA. Various government agencies and departments assisted this project. In addition 34 private agencies, foreign embassies and multinationals assisted this Project. Even the brochure "was made possible through the donated services of Frank Simoes Advertising Pvt. Ltd., Asian Printers Pvt. Ltd., Comart Lithograph Pvt. Ltd. and through the kind assistance of Ballarpur Industries Ltd., Chimanlal Paper Co and Printwell." In other words, just to develop a single village ICA managed to get aid (leaving aside the various government agencies) from 34 different agencies and to print a brochure on this village again they managed to get aid from 5 or 6 different organisations. If there was a nobel prize for collecting funds the ICA would surely deserve this.

There are no prizes for ICA, however, when it comes to utilisation of these funds, as is clear from the experience of Sikror village. Here we first describe the published claims made regarding the success of the Project by the ICA and then the impression we gathered after visiting this village.

ICA propaganda

According to an ICA brochure Sikror Human Development Project was launched in December, 1978, to test methods of grassroots development. From 1978 to 1981, the gross village product increased by 95 per cent. The growth is particularly evident in these avenues — access to bank loans, increase of agricultural income and expansion of supplementary income. The total value of 78 loans utilised by villagers reached £400,000 by July, 1981. A number of training events were organised to increase farmers' awareness of new crops and agricultural methods, and of the value of farm machinery. The result of these efforts has been an 80 per cent increase in gross agricultural income from 1978-79 to 1980-81. By the end of 1981, 68 items of farm equipment had been purchased during the Project period. Included in this total are seven new tractors. Twelve plots of hybrid rice were introduced in 1979. A centre was build, rural electrification progressed and roads were built. Caste barriers started breaking down, villagers experienced the effectiveness of working 'corporately', a wider leadership base emerged, including members of the Youth Mandli, the school building was re-decorated, a health centre was opened, and new sources of drinking water became available.

After reading this brochure of the ICA, we got the idea that as in other Projects, the ICA was mentioning all happenings in the village that occurred during the three-four years that it

considered to be in the positive direction and indirectly claiming credit for them irrespective of the extent to which it actually contributed to them. We also knew from past experiments that merely arranging loans or buying machinery can hardly be considered rural development, in fact this can occasionally create more problems for the small peasants (and the landless) than it solves. Still, we had expected that with all the money that was spent and the agencies that were involved, the ICA would have succeeded in conferring some benefits to the villagers and winning the confidence of the villagers. Imagine our surprise, therefore, when we were told by the villagers that if the ICA people came again to their village they will be chased away and beaten up. To give the factual position regarding the benefits conferred by the ICA and the villagers feelings about this organisation which 'served' them for four years, we quote some of the villagers to whom we talked — we should mention at the outset that out of the nearly 20 villagers to whom we talked, only one praised the ICA's work in the village. This villager too was unwilling to discuss the matter in detail and left hurriedly. Other villagers said that he and two others like him had been paid by the ICA and asked to praise the ICA's work before the visitors.

Broken promises

Ram Lal (28 years) is the son of the village pradhan (head). According to him, several village youths are employed in the cigarette factory in Ghaziabad. One day the manager of this factory who is a foreigner, told them that some of his friends abroad will like to develop their village. For this they will also collect donations. The youths agreed. Then the foreigners started coming to the village and saying that the village should have a school, hospital, street lights, more employment et al. They used to come here in imported cars. Some village youths also started going with them to various factories. They noticed that a lot of money was being collected in the

name of their village. The youths also noticed the glamour and glitter of their life style. However soon they learnt that the promises being made to them regarding providing jobs etc. were fake. To add insult to injury, the ICA people were all the time clicking their cameras".

According to Ram Pal the last blow came when they learnt from some papers that that £5, 300 had been spent on building the community centre. While in fact only a much lesser amount had been spent. So they were asked by the villagers to get out of their village. "We were going to 'develop' (trash) them but then they decided to go."

Beg Raj Sharma, a teacher in the village school, recalls that the ICA people took at least 60-70 photographs of his school after fixing their symbol of a peacock on the school wall. Sharma thinks that they might have used these photographs to publicise that they built or repaired the school although they had nothing to do with it.

Regarding the success of rural electrification Munshi, a harijan youth said that most families have been having problems in getting electricity connections, despite having deposited the money. Bribes are being demanded for giving connections, a fact which was confirmed by other villagers as well. According to Gaje Singh, at present electrification is also posing a serious hazard to the villagers in the form of worn out high voltage electric cables overhanging several village homes. Complaints for their replacement have been made, without any action having been taken.

More harm than good

Regarding another widely publicized achievement, Rajeshwar, a law student from this village, says that the road constructed by them (labour was donated by the villagers) has only added to the problem of dirt in the village. It has been raised above the ground level without providing proper drainage so that during the rains more dirty water accumulates in the village. In fact according to Rajeshwar this road of the ICA has ruined the village paths which existed before.

Bhimgiri, a 65 year old harijan says, "They did not do anything in our street -- no electricity, no tap, no road, not even photographs were taken. No one asked me if my torn quilt can protect me from cold or not. We harijans do not have land, what can we do without land, what development can we expect? We would have given our cooperation for

improving the street, but they were interested in only clicking photographs. For the outer road we went to work because it had been announced that otherwise we will have to pay fine of 70p. Several well to do did not go to work, but we went because we wanted to avoid paying fine. Government programmes like land redistribution and consolidation work are being implemented badly, injustice is being done to the poor. The work they (the ICA people) in fact did was to plant 100 trees but they did not pay salary to the Malkhan julaha who was appointed to guard and protect the trees. So now the trees have also vanished."

Benefits for big business

In India we see that some of the programmes they want to implement in the villages are the ones that will benefit agribusiness interests. For instance promoting the sale of farm machinery. However what is more important is the overall philosophy and outlook in rural development that is evident in their publications.

These documents do not talk about the exploitative role of agribusiness companies in distorting rural development, instead they speak of agribusiness companies as friends of villagers. ICA documents are not at all aware of the exploitation of Third World farmers by big business interests in developed countries, nor do they mention the exploitative role of foreign aid. They never say that structural changes are necessary to overcome rural poverty in countries like India. Some of them place heavy reliance on the wisdom of world bank officials and documents to make their point.

In the documents ICA India describes itself as a voluntary organisation working for 'socio-economic renewal'. To quote from one of its brochures, "The uniqueness of ICA's approach is its emphasis on human development." As a part of this 'human development' another ICA document speaks of 'division gains' and 'support forces' while describing its organisation in India.

ICA now has programmes in several areas of India; in the south Nadlapur Human Development Project, Medak District, Andhra Pradesh, began in 1977 as a co-operative venture with the Vazir sultan Tobacco Company. In the west a regional office established in a Calcutta basti has been researching and demonstrating methods for both urban and rural uplift. Over 200 training and consultancy programmes have been con-

ducted with business houses, local communities, service agencies and colleges throughout Calcutta and in Bihar, Orissa and West Bengal.

More ICA projects?

However ICA's most rapid spread has been in Maharashtra, starting with the controversial Maliwada Project. In 1977 demonstration village development on the Maliwada model was replicated in a pilot village in each of the 15 districts of Maharashtra. Beginning in 1978, training teams regularly recruited an additional 107 villages, one in each taluka. Of the 3000 volunteers who attended Majwada Human Development Training Centre, 1700 accepted village assignments for periods ranging from 6 months to 4 years.

Major accomplishment of Phases I and II: (1975-1980) ICA India are described as -- a network of 25 comprehensive single village development projects and secondly, a prototype for a voluntary service corps of village workers.

ICA now intends to expand even more rapidly specially in Maharashtra, it will now emphasise village clusters. Experiments involving groups of ten adjacent villages have been taken up in Maharashtra. In these locations the experiment will be extended from pilot clusters to encompass entire development blocks of roughly 100 villages.

At its best this exposition may lead to the preparation of big worded but useless documents which in the tradition so far of all ICA documents, do not take into account the vested interests and structural obstacles which retard and distort rural development. At its worst, the exposition will lead to further strengthening and spread of racketeers in rural development.





SHEFFIELD CITY COUNCIL
PROVIDES
**SERVICES WORTH
SAVING**

DANGER A HEALTH RISK

In many ways this is a typical story. The story of a tenants' campaign against dampness on an old estate which was once considered very desirable, but has now become a 'problem estate'. It is untypical in that the tenants carried out a survey which showed a direct link between ill-health and dampness in the flats. Bronchitis and regular coughs and colds occurred at twice the rate in damp flats — and asthma sufferers were four times more likely to live in a damp flat than a 'dry' one.

Unhealthy damp

The Bard St area of Sheffield lies in the shadows of two large deck-access developments overlooking the city centre. It consists mainly of four storey tenement-type blocks of flats, built in the late 1930's, early 1940's; housing over 1,000 people. When first built the flats, all two or three bedrooms, were highly desirable, yet today this position has reversed. The area has taken on all the characteristics of a 'priority estate'. Chronic disrepair now exists, through systematic neglect by Sheffield Housing Dept, because of the estate's uncertain future. It has also become a dumping ground for tenants that narrow housing management priorities find it difficult to house — homeless families etc. Consequently, tenant commitment to the area is itself understandably low.

In 1977 a basic modernisation programme began. Coal-fires were replaced by gas but little overall consideration given to adequate heating, heat-loss and ventilation needs. Problems of dampness became acute. Penetrating damp caused disrepair and also chronic condensation.

Bard St Area Tenants Association (BSATA) presented a petition to the Council, but inaction led, in 1980, to 7 tenants taking the Council to court under s.99 of the Public Health Act (1936). This led to remedial work on their 7 flats but the wider problems were ignored. The Council kept the experience of dampness at an individual level: tenants should 'put up their heating and open their windows'. A one

year enhancement on the rehousing list was given to families in the area, but even this backfired. It was used by housing officers to entice families onto Bard St, turning it into a transit area. Some people received a housing transfer form before the flat keys.

By late 1982 it was felt more tenant action was required. A questionnaire was devised by BSATA looking at: the extent and nature of the dampness, and population characteristics eg family types, health, dependency on benefits. It was taken around the estate in January 1983. The results unearthed nothing new about the problems of dampness on Bard St or anywhere else, but they gave clear evidence to back up the tenants' strongly held suppositions.

Population Structure of Bard St. Area

		Bard St. ¹	Sheffield City ²
% of population in age groups	0-4 yrs	14.5	5.1
	4-15	20.4	15.7
	16-59	53.3	56.4
	60-74	8.7	16.5
	74+	3.2	6.2
% seeking work as proportion of economically active		36.2	11.0
% of families that are single-parent		47.0	13.4
% of households with 4 or more occupants		35.7	8.1

1. Census 1981, Small Area Statistics, 'Castle', 100P, Enum. Distr. AFO2 & AF13.
2. Review of Census data 1981, Corporate Management Unit, Sheffield City Council.

Survey results

Responses were received from almost ¾ of all households; 90% of those completed over ¾ of the questions. The results can therefore confidently be taken as representative of the area. Using a computer, relationships between



variables were looked for, eg damp and health. The Chi Square statistical test was used and the significance level at which results were accepted was 0.05 ie. 5% or less chance that any relationship found was not a random artefact.

The results showed the extensive and disruptive nature of dampness:

62.1% of flats were damp.

Out of these damp flats:

45.6% were affected in 3 or more rooms;

72.0% had mould growth;

77.3% had peeling wallpaper and paint;

15.9% had 1 room totally unusable; one family complained of having to 'sweep the mould off'.

Other problems included the need to redecorate regularly; to wash and wipe walls, often with disinfectant; to keep furniture away from walls to stop it getting mouldy and rotting; there were problems with storage, keeping clothes and bedding dry; the powerful smell; plaster falling off; soaking carpets; ruined toys and objects going rusty.

The local myth as to the cause of the problem related to the removal of the coal-fires. Using the computer to compare types of heating used with the occurrence and severity of dampness, a clear significant relationship was found. Central heating existed in one block and this was less prone to dampness. Electricity was shown to be the most inefficient form of heating, with solid fuel being more effective than both electricity and gas, thus supporting the local myth. Because of the expense, 67.6% of flats used only 1 source of heat, usually in the living room, leaving most bedrooms, where

electric fires were the only alternative, unheated.

Effectiveness of Types of Heating in the Bard St Area

% of flats	Dampness Present	Severe Dampness
Gas heating used	71.6	32.8
Electricity used	75.4	35.4
Solid Fuel used	66.7	14.3
Central Heating	46.4	0.0

The location of flats also proved to be significant. Flats at the end of blocks and on lower, especially ground floors, were most prone to dampness. Both positions highlight the inadequacy of heating by either heat-loss through external walls or a dependency on heat coming from flats below. Insulation was nearly non-existent in the flats. Bedrooms were located on the end walls, making them prime targets for damp. In certain parts of the estate nearly one half of all bedrooms were damp.



With the blocking up of fire-places most flats were ventilated by only small air vents and the windows. Three quarters

of all flats in this position were damp. The survey results also clearly found no significant relationship between tenants not using windows and the presence of damp, counteracting the 'tenants to blame' argument.

The size of households were also found to be important. Over one third of households consisted of 4 or more people and yet the results showed that the more people there were, the significantly greater the chance of dampness occurring. Poverty was also significantly related to dampness. 88% of households received state benefits and 72.2% were totally dependent on them i.e. receiving supplementary benefit. Households on S.B. were significantly more likely to experience dampness and severe dampness at that.

The survey clearly highlighted the physical inadequacy of the flats, the need for adequate heating at a price tenants can afford, proper insulation and ventilation. It also showed the flats to be particularly unsuited in their present condition to families and people experiencing poverty, yet these were the very people council housing policy and practice determined should go there.

The consequences of damp on those who have to live with it also showed up clearly. There was the financial cost of extra heating, replacing spoilt items, re-decorating regularly, all to be met by a low income. Compensation from the council was not forthcoming.

However, the most disturbing factor was the effect on health. The survey looked particularly at respiratory ailments, asking if Bronchitis, Asthma, regular coughs and colds were suffered by any member of the household.

Respiratory Ailments

% of households with one or more members suffering	Bronchitis	Asthma	Regular Coughs & Colds
40.2	40.2	13.8	51.3

Medical research has indicated that many factors affect these conditions (see Holland et al.) such as environmental conditions of the area, social class (poverty, diet etc.), past history of respiratory conditions. This makes the above figures difficult to interpret by any comparison with other areas. But, by an internal comparison between the occurrence of respiratory ailments in damp households on Bard St and those which are 'dry' it can be assumed that most factors were relatively similar.* Any significant relationship found can therefore be assumed to be largely a result of the dampness. In doing this it was indeed found that a damp household was significantly more likely to contain one or more members suffering from respiratory ailments than a 'dry' household.

These findings back-up the clear impression of tenants, and Anti-Dampness Campaigns generally, that damp-

Respiratory Ailments and a Comparison between Damp and Dry Flats on Bard St

	Bronchitis	Asthma	Regular Coughs & Colds
Damp flats with ailments	49.5	18.2	61.4
Dry flats with ailments	28.1	3.5	28.1

ness causes, or at the very least severely aggravates, respiratory conditions. Not surprisingly there was a significant relationship between the presence of mould and Asthma.

Yarnell and St Leger found previous housing history to be important when considering respiratory ill-health. The health of households who had lived in the area more than 2 years was therefore compared with those of less than 2 years residence. Health was also compared with length of stay generally. In both cases the longer the stay the significantly greater the likelihood of a member suffering Bronchitis.

Damp housing conditions are seen, therefore, to directly affect the health of residents. Young children are particularly vulnerable with the conditions affecting their future health.

No data was collected directly on the mental stress of dampness, but from tenant's comments the stress it caused on everyday coping was quite clear. A situation where mould can return within a week of washing it off; its unsightly nature and smell; the extra financial costs it imposes; where children constantly have colds, must take its toll. A number of households reported members having left because of the dampness. One woman commented 'it's that depressing everytime I see the damp . . . it makes me want to scream'.

The findings of the survey were presented to the council in February 1983. There then followed a period of regular monitoring and pressure by the tenants, emphasizing in particular the survey findings on ill-health, gaining support from the local health centre, use of the press etc., to make sure their grievances were this time taken more seriously. This resulted in a number of commitments being achieved from the council.

On the long-term future a structural survey is to be carried out to help decide whether to rehabilitate or demolish the flats. It is due to be completed by Spring 1984. In the meantime tenants are being given slum clearance priority for rehousing, with empty flats not being relet and a disturbance allowance being paid. The first tenants were beginning to move out in the end of October.

The tenant's campaign has achieved many of its objectives, but it has been a struggle all the way and will continue to be so if the present commitments are to be kept to in spirit as well as word.



Recently there have been cases where tenants have been asked to redecorate their flats before being allowed to move out.

* No significant relationship was found between family size and the presence of Asthma and Bronchitis.

References

W.W. Holland et al. . 'Factors Influencing the Onset of Chronic Respiratory Diseases', *British Medical Journal*, - 26th April 1969, pp 205-208.

J.W.G. Yarnell, A.S. St Leger. 'Housing Condition, Respiratory Illness, and Lung Function in Children in South Wales', *British Journal of Preventive and Social Medicine*, 31, 1977 pp 183-188.

STEPHEN TODD

A worker's speech to a doctor

*We know what makes us ill.
When we are ill we are told
That it's you who will heal us.*

*For ten years, we are told
You learned healing in fine schools
Built at the people's expense
And to get your knowledge
Spent a fortune.
So you must be able to heal.*

*Are you able to heal?
When we come to you
Our rags are torn off us
And you listen all over our naked body.
As to the course of our illness
One glance at our rags would
Tell you more. It is the same course that wears us out
Our bodies and our clothes.*

*The pain in our shoulder comes
You say, from the damp; and this is also the reason
For the stain on the wall of our flat.
So tell us:
Where does the damp come from?*

*Too much work and too little food
Makes us feeble and thin.
Your prescription says:
Put on more weight
You might as well tell a bullrush
Not to get wet.*

*How much time can you give us?
We see: one carpet in your flat costs
The fees you earn from
Five thousand consultations.*

*You'll no doubt say
You are innocent. The damp patch
On the wall of our flats
Tells us the same story.*

Bertold Brecht

INFORMATION EXCHANGE

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ACCESS TO LOCAL GOVERNMENT INFORMATION — £1.00 inc post. Local Government and Health Rights Project, 152 Waterloo Rd, London SE11.

Contains a brief list and description of all known rights of the public to inspect local authority documents, plans and reports. Very useful but not always easy to read, would also be much more useful if examples of groups trying to use those laws had been given. However, every organisation should have a copy and comment on their 'Access to Information Bill' which needs strengthening.

THE PEOPLE'S PLAN FOR THE ROYAL DOCKS — Newham Docklands Forum, 6 Addington Road, London E16. £1.00.

The one danger of this document is: what if the London Docklands Development Corporation gets hold of it, changes the title and uses it to encourage multinationals to buy even more of the Docklands? This is because the image of the plan has nothing to do with community groups but more with big business. It has a 'corporate' image, big glossy photos, expensive layout. Graphics placed here and there that don't seem to have anything to do with the text. The Docklands Community Poster project was involved and yet it shows none of the class of their previous work. Then at the end, a plan is produced as if it comes from nowhere. Disappointing, is the collective's opinion — what are they playing at?

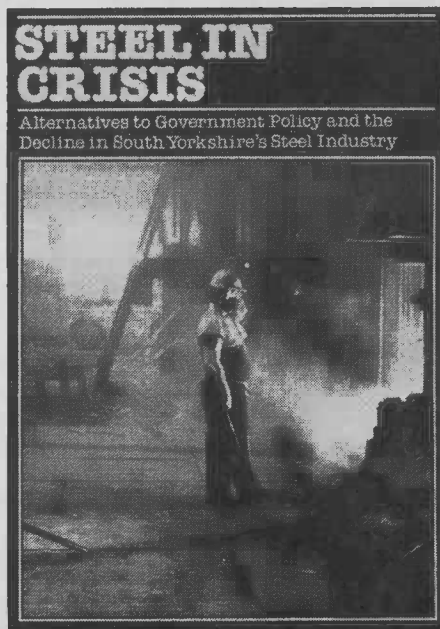
YOUR COUNCIL UNDER ATTACK 60p inc. post from LRD, 78, Blackfriars Road, London SE1 8HF.

An excellent brief guide to rate-capping, abolition of the metropolitan counties and the implications for all of us. Highlights how the rate-capping moves in particular are set up for business — not people.

Read it after this issue of CA!

STEEL IN CRISIS Alternatives to Government Policy and the Decline in South Yorkshire's Steel Industry. Free from Employment Dept, Sheffield City Council, Palatine Chambers, Pinstone Street, Sheffield S1.

This pamphlet, a summary of a larger report, examines the steel crisis which has caused a 29,000 job loss in the last ten years. It looks at the legacy of nationalisation, the crisis for private firms as well as BSC, and shows how government policy has been a major contributor to the steel crisis. It ends with a brief review of the labour movement's alternatives such as rail electrification and combined heat and power.



LOCAL TRAFFIC AND TRANSPORT (£1.00) LOCAL PLANS IN LONDON AND YOUR RIGHTS (50p) A SHORT GUIDE TO UNDERSTANDING SOME PLANNING JARGON AND THE PLANNING SYSTEM (50p)

Add 20p postage per report, from London Planning Aid Service, 17 Carlton House Terrace, London SW1.

A useful series of manuals which explain planning legislation and procedures. The transport report is particularly good as it has lots of examples, references, and contacts in order to follow up many of the ideas. The report also has numerous case studies.

Cyclists should be seen and not hurt.



REPAIRS: WHOSE BILL

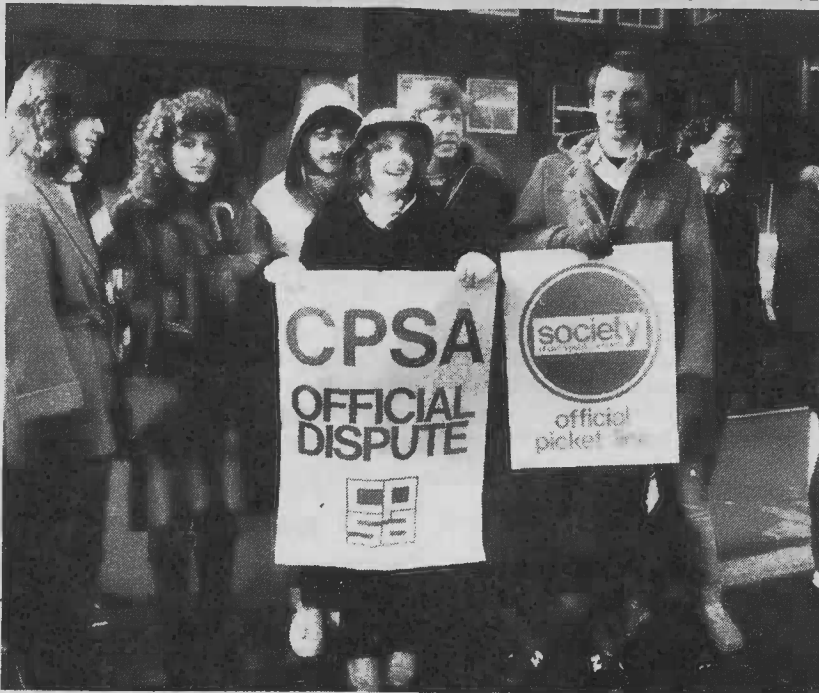
30p inc post from SCAT Publications, 27 Clerkenwell Close, London EC1 (Bulk rates available).

A six-page broadcast which examines the implications of the new Housing and Building Control Bill. It shows the drastic consequences for tenants and building workers of the new 'right to repair' scheme, more council house sales, and the privatisation of building control. An action section argues the importance of tenant-building worker links and public sector alliances.



INFORMATION EXCHANGE

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BUILDING FROM THE BOTTOM, The Sheffield Experience — David Blunkett and Geoff Green.

At a time when local authorities are under ferocious attack — both with the proposed abolition of the GLC and the metropolitan counties and the proposals for rate-capping — this booklet provides an interesting insight into how Sheffield Council has been attempting to undermine the Thatcher government's sterile view of local democracy.

Blunkett and Green outline in some detail the local economic and socialist strategies pursued in Sheffield which, they claim, provide a focus for resistance to Tory policies. To prove their point they point out that in May '83, despite reductions in government grants and subsidies amounting to £258 for every household over four years and consequent rate increases to avoid cuts in jobs and services, Labour increased its share and took an absolute majority of the vote. The reasoning behind this claim is spurious to say the least but nonetheless their belief that local authorities can provide effective pockets of resistance to sweeping Thatcherism is well argued and food for thought. It is therefore disappointing that at the end of the day — although the authors stress the importance of the national Labour Party drawing on the radical experiences of socialist councils — that there is so little said about exactly how Labour councils should challenge the swingeing cuts. Is it good enough to simply go on raising the rates and then congratulate oneself if the voters remain loyal?

THE ALTERNATIVE PRINTING HANDBOOK — Chris Treweek and Jonathan Zeitlyn with the Islington Bus Co., £3.95, Penguin Books, 536 Kings Rd, London SW10. A4 110 pages.

Jonathan Zeitlyn was the person who produced the 'Printing' Action Notes feature in CA no 62. Most people thought that it was great and very useful — this new book is much much better. Together with Chris Treweek and the Islington Bus Company, they represent the most experienced community printers around.

And all the years of experience in helping people understand printing stands out. It's not really worth going through its content — it's got everything that you need to know. The book is well laid out and is quite exciting to read, one word of advice — buy it!

GOVERNMENT GRANTS — A guide for voluntary organisations. NCVO, Bedford Square Press, 26 Bedford Square, London WC18 3HU. £3.50 (by post £3.95).

Quite expensive for its size but a reasonable coverage of all the different sources of funds that are available for groups from central, local and even the European governments. Not only does it give names and addresses etc, but also the criteria applied by the different funding agencies.

FLAT BROKE: HOW THE WELFARE STATE COLLAPSED IN BIRMINGHAM by Sally Coetzee. £1 inc. postage from Birmingham Welfare Rights Group, c/o Stilthouse Neighbourhood Centre, Block 6, Stilthouse Grove, Birmingham B45 9NN.

This booklet covers the story of the Birmingham social security strike in 1982 (reported on in detail in CA 60). It spells out the pressures leading up to the strike, and documents the explicit warnings given by the local council and the unions, ignored by ministers. It also covers in detail the impact of the government's emergency payment of flat-rate benefit on claimants, and the horrific hardship that resulted.

It should be read by all claimants' groups and others concerned with benefits, not least because the booklet points out that the DHSS is enthusiastically studying the effects of the flat-rate benefits, with a survey asking claimants questions such as 'do you think there were any advantages in getting the emergency payments compared with normal supplementary benefits?'

DRUGS, DRINK, TOBACCO — School Leavers Info Project, 318 Gladstone Street, Peterborough, £1.25.

A short, straightforward booklet that deals with addictive substances from glue sniffing, drugs, alcohol and tobacco. Maybe not one of their best publications but could be very useful for young people who are coming across such things more and more in their daily lives.

ST PAUL'S PEOPLE TALKING — To children from St Barnabas School, Bristol Broadside, 110 Cheltenham Rd, Bristol BS6 £1.25 56 pages.

Bristol Broadside are probably the most prolific producers of written material covering local history in the country — or at least the one that sends most review copies to this magazine. This new book is a series of interviews with local people carried out by school children who were involved in every stage of the process.

Those interviewed included a local midwife, lollipop woman, local baker, ex-seaman and other ordinary folk with origins from all over the world.

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HIGH AND DRY — SCAT
Publications, 27 Clerkenwell
Close, London EC1 £1.00

This is an excellent pamphlet. Written by tenants from Hull, Sheffield, Nottingham and Leeds, it is the story of campaigns fought against damp and defects in thousands of flats. It aims to pass on the experience gained and to inspire tenants groups everywhere to keep up their fight for decent living accommodation. Immediately accessible and packed with cartoons and graphics, *High and Dry* is an invaluable source of information for tenants everywhere. Buy it.

IN ON THE ACT: The Homeless Persons Act — A Guide for Single Homeless People

This thin glossy paperback is the third in the CHAR (Campaign for Single Homeless People) series of Action Guides and is an invaluable source of information for anyone interested in the controversial piece of legislation — the 1977 Homeless Persons Act. It attempts to show homeless people and all those working with them how housing authorities can be encouraged to use the Act in a just and sensitive manner. The Guide describes: how to make an application under the Act; how its sections are interpreted; local authority duties and applicants' rights and how to set about ensuring they are enforced. It is designed to be used by homeless people, those advising them, indeed anyone seeking a clear and accurate understanding of the law. A well written and clear document, this book is well worth its price — £1.80.

It also succeeds admirably in drawing attention to the continuing plight of the single homeless on whose behalf CHAR have been campaigning for more than a decade.

A REPORT ON THE NUPE BASIC SKILLS PROJECT 1979-1983. Available free from NUPE London Division, Civic House, Aberdeen Terrace, London SE3.

Written in an awful constipated committee style, this report nevertheless documents an effective programme for tackling adult illiteracy by using — and reinforcing in the process — union organisation. The experience of the project was that it worked best to run mixed classes for both literacy and 'second language' students. It needed union effort, and negotiation to persuade employers to give day release, to get it off the ground.

STARTING FROM SCRATCH!, Setting up an out-of-school scheme — Paul White, National Out of School Alliance, Oxford House, Derbyshire Street, Bethnal Green Rd, London E2. £1.00 incl. p&p.

Good booklet that's quite glossy without being over the top, aimed at helping inexperienced people set up an out of school scheme in local neighbourhoods. It reads really easily even though it has to deal with some complex matters, i.e. employing workers etc. Every section has a further reading list so if this booklet hasn't got the info you need it will tell you where you can find it.

HOUSING AND SUPPLEMENTARY BENEFITS — A RIGHTS GUIDE FOR SINGLE HOMELESS PEOPLE. £2.80 from CHAR, 27 John Adam Street, London WC2N 6HX.

This is a detailed clear guide to how the social security system affects single homeless people. Not an easy read, but a reliable tool to refer to.



PUTTING IT ACROSS — for voluntary groups in Leith getting into print and using other media. No price. Leith Community Project, 15 Windsor St., Edinburgh 7.

This is a small A5 duplicated booklet aimed at community groups in the Leith area who want to get into print or communicate their activities to their local community. It has only a short section on what all the printing jargon actually means but its main use is a comprehensive list of local resource centres and a description of facilities they offer.

PREVENTING RENT ARREARS — Department of the Environment, 2 Marsham St, London SW1P 3EB. HMSO £4.00.

'They (rent arrears) deprive local authorities of substantial financial resources which should be used to improve services and help keep down rents and they sap the morale of housing staff and tenants alike.' — Ian Gow, Minister for Housing and Construction. It's funny, we thought it was this Government that deprived local authorities of substantial resources, but who can call a Minister a liar!

Despite this slight confusion, the only reason why this book has been reviewed is to illustrate how disgustingly narrow and apologetic Tory initiatives can be. Produced by professionals for professionals, it continually states the obvious. For instance they made the startling discovery that serious rent arrears is linked with unemployment, single parents, large families, poor housing, high rents etc. All this is no news to many who have learnt these facts through direct experience.

There is no mention of economic policy, housing benefit cock-ups, cutbacks in repair and maintenance of housing. And their answers to this problem of arrears? Not a lot apart from additional advice to tenants on the different benefits rebates etc that are available. But with the Tories threatening to cut the real value of these it all becomes a joke. The real reason for this study is to ensure that as much money as possible can be wrung out of those who haven't got it so those that have can benefit.

SEND YOUR NEWS TO COMMUNITY ACTION!

This magazine depends on people involved in struggles and campaigns. We need your news. This page is for you to tell us what's happening in your area, tenants' organisation, trade union, women's group, unemployed action group or other campaigns. Your news report could focus on one or more of the following (or other issues if you wish).

- latest developments in your campaign
- successful action and demonstrations
- lessons learnt about organising
- new links made with other campaigns
- results of special investigations, surveys etc
- activities of companies, local authorities etc.

We also need people in towns throughout the country who would be prepared to be local contacts for the magazine: people we can write or phone regularly to check what's going on. Use the space below to tell us the news (add other sheets of yours if necessary). Photographs, newspaper cuttings or other items we could use for graphics would be very helpful. Indicate alongside if you're prepared to be a contact.

I'd be prepared to act as a contact point for the magazine.

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Joanna David, Dave Hall, Phil Parnham, Dexter Whitfield

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