

# Solidarity

## Local government: time for unofficial action

With house prices and rents rocketing in London local government workers need a significant increase in pay. But the national pay deal employers are trying to impose means a pay cut in real terms. If we are going to defeat the bosses, we need a new approach to the pay campaign based on unofficial action.

The employer's offer is 7% over three years. Inflation in the year to April 2004 was 2.5%. Rising oil prices and likely rises in interest rates will push inflation higher. This means the employer's offer will leave us worse off. The employers also want to take away higher rates for overtime and shift working. This will mean a serious cut in pay for low paid care workers and others that work evenings, nights and weekends.

### Strike action

The unions' pay claim includes a pay increase of 4% plus £200 and the abolition of the bottom three spinal column points,



London Weighting dispute: ineffective official action

which will help the lowest-paid workers. Local government unions are talking about strike action. The problem is that the official action they propose is unlikely to be very effective. The last national pay strike was in 2002. One solitary day of

strike action was followed by what amounted to little more than an inflation-only rise.

### A new approach

We need a new approach based on the type of action used by the postal workers and recently by the fire-fighters. If we are going to win disputes in the future we need to follow these principles for action.

- Workers need to organise solidarity action, even if this does not have the official approval of union leaders. Local government workers who have been privatised should organise unofficial strike action

when other local government workers strike. Otherwise privatisation will split us up into small isolated units with no industrial strength.

- Members of one union should not cross the picket line of another, even if some unions have been called out officially and others have not. By doing this we can show the management that we are a united, determined workforce.

- Temporary workers should be encouraged to join the union and not to cross picket lines. Management attempts to victimise temporary workers should be met with immediate solidarity action.

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# Solidarity

for anarcho-syndicalism

## It's time to stop paying for pain



People across the trades union movement have welcomed the RMT transport union's decision to fund political parties other than the Labour Party. The "historic" decision has certainly upset Labour, which is dependent on union money for its survival. Five Scottish RMT branches have voted to support the Scottish Socialist Party (SSP) at the next election and the union has now been expelled from the Labour Party.

This will only fuel the groundswell of feeling amongst union members to follow the RMT's example. about anyone, from Ken Livingstone to George Galloway and Plaid Cymru – just as long as they were not New Labour.

Here at *Solidarity*, we view unions paying funds for Labour as the equivalent of paying someone to beat you up. However, while we welcome moves to cut the link with Labour we are concerned about where the union money will otherwise end up. At the RMT conference, amid the uproar at dumping Labour, union money was promised to just

### Same mistakes

The danger is that the union money will simply end up funding yet another "left" party, such as the SWP (or their electoral front the "Respect" coalition) or the Socialist Party (formerly Militant). The unions built the Labour Party as a means of helping workers only to end up one

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## Council housing ALMOst privatised

In May, after a rushed "consultative" ballot council homes in Islington were taken over by Homes for Islington - an Arms Length Management Organisation (ALMO). Now the ALMO has plans to sell off three estates in the borough to housing associations - Market, Packington and the Surco housing co-operative. Previously the council claimed that ALMO homes would remain owned by the council. This proves what campaigners have been saying about ALMO being two-stage privatisation.

### Tollington

Tenants on the Tollington estates were not even balloted, as Steven Hitchens, Lib-Dem Leader of the Council and the rest of his positive privateers assumed that a transfer to North British Housing Association would go ahead. Huge amounts of money were wasted on the Council's attempt to force stock transfer. Now more public funds are being misdirected into the setting up of an ALMO.

ALMOs along with stock transfers and Private Finance Initiatives are three options that Local Authorities are trying to force on tenants as an answer to all their housing problems

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Produced by the North & East London local group of the anarcho-syndicalist **Solidarity Federation**.

We seek to replace capitalism with a stateless society based on the principle of from each according to their ability, to each according to their needs. We support working class struggles towards these ends. We recognise that not all oppression is economic, but can be based on gender, race, sexuality, or anything our rulers find useful.

Our activities are based on Direct Action — action by workers ourselves not through intermediaries like politicians and union officials. Our decisions are made through participation of the membership. We welcome anyone who agrees with our aims and principles. We also welcome comments on this newsletter, and donations towards the cost of future issues (cheques payable to NELSF).

See Page 3 for contact details



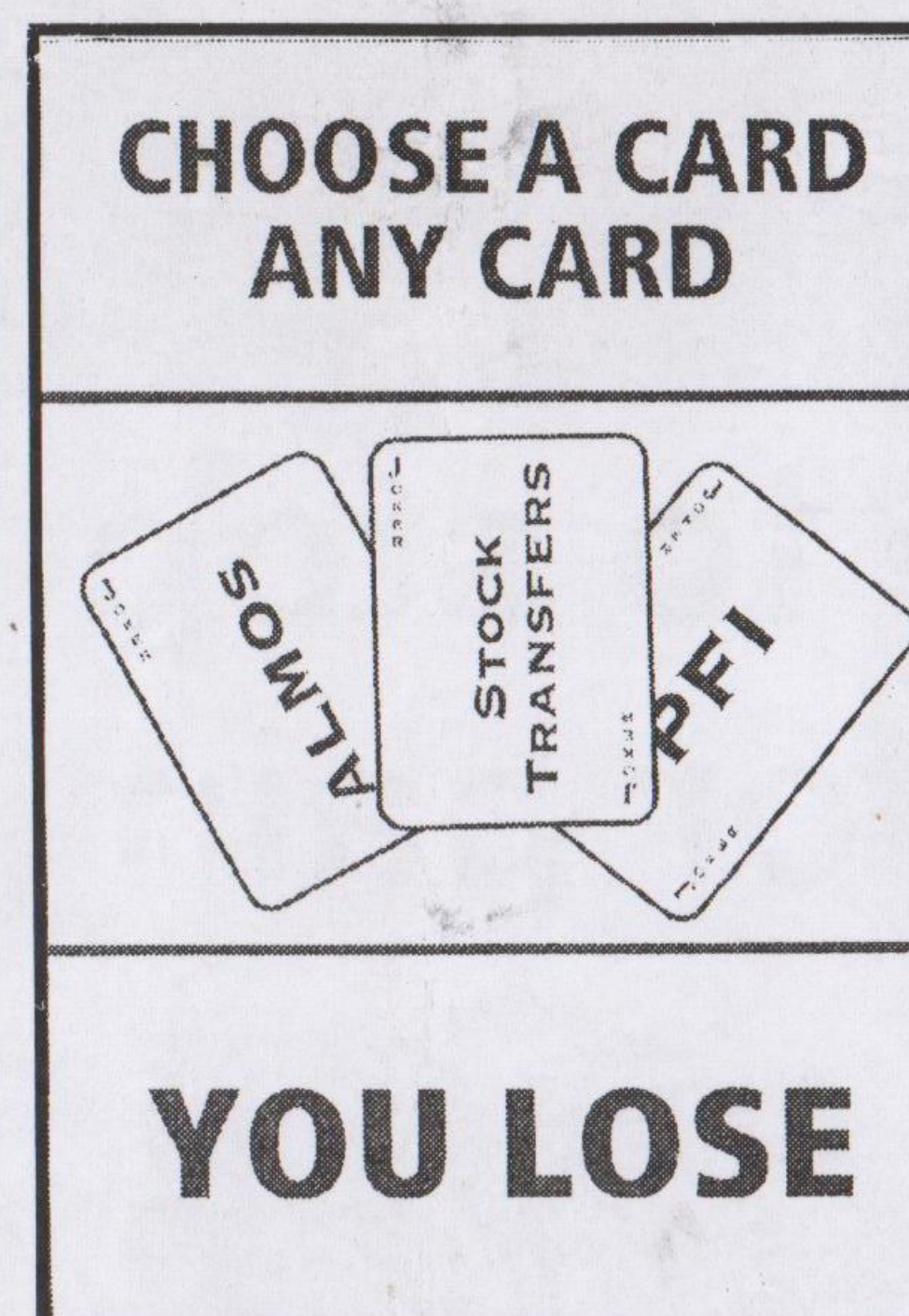
## ALMOst privatisation

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The run-down of council housing was started by previous Tory governments and has been continued by this one. All of these options will lead us down the road to privatisation, leaving tenants and residents with even less say and control than we had with the council, higher rents and less security of tenure.

As anarchists we believe that housing is a basic right. Our homes and communal environment will only improve when those directly affected bond together and organise to make vital improvements to better our lives. For decades money from council rents has been (and still is) siphoned off to fund other council expenses and not invested in our homes. Money from sale of council houses should be reinvested in maintenance, repairs and the

building of new homes. This government is sitting on billions of pounds that could be directly put back into council homes and the communal environment.



John Prescott talks about giving tenants more choice and control over their homes, but he refuses to consider direct investment in council housing, which is what many tenants

and residents are demanding! Choice to John Prescott seems to be "Like it or lump it" - not very democratic.

Tenants and council workers have set up Islington Defend Council Housing to fight the ALMO and privatisation. Members of the Solidarity Federation are supporting this campaign. Direct democracy is what anarchists encourage, from your home to your work place. Organise in solidarity and take control, to correct the things that directly affect you, your family, friends, neighbours and work colleagues.

To contact Islington Defend Council Housing e-mail [dch\\_islington@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:dch_islington@yahoo.co.uk)

### Discussion meetings

NELSF holds discussion meetings on the last Thursday of each month which are open to non-members. Next meeting: alternatives to political parties on 24th June.

## Paying for pain

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hundred or so years later with the current cold shower in the form of the Blair government. Do we really want to repeat the same mistakes again?

For years the Socialist Party (then Militant) argued that we should change Labour from within. Now they have been kicked out of the party they are saying that the unions can no longer use their affiliation to influence Labour governments.

In fact, even a cursory look at past Labour governments demonstrates that, once in power, it has always acted in the bosses' interests and not in those of the working class. This is not because the Labour Party leadership sold out the

workers; it is because of the very nature of political parties. Political parties exist outside of the economic day-to-day struggle of the working class. They are elite organisations that claim unions should limit themselves to economic struggles such as pay and conditions and leave the politics to the more sophisticated politicians. This is deeply insulting to the rest of us, but that isn't the worst of it. Time and again, we have seen that, once in power, politicians of any ilk start acting in their own interests.

### Workers' money

Workers' money should not go to the politicians. It should be used to help organise resistance to capitalism. Why is it that members taking strike action have to rely on donations when the unions are awash with money? There is a des-

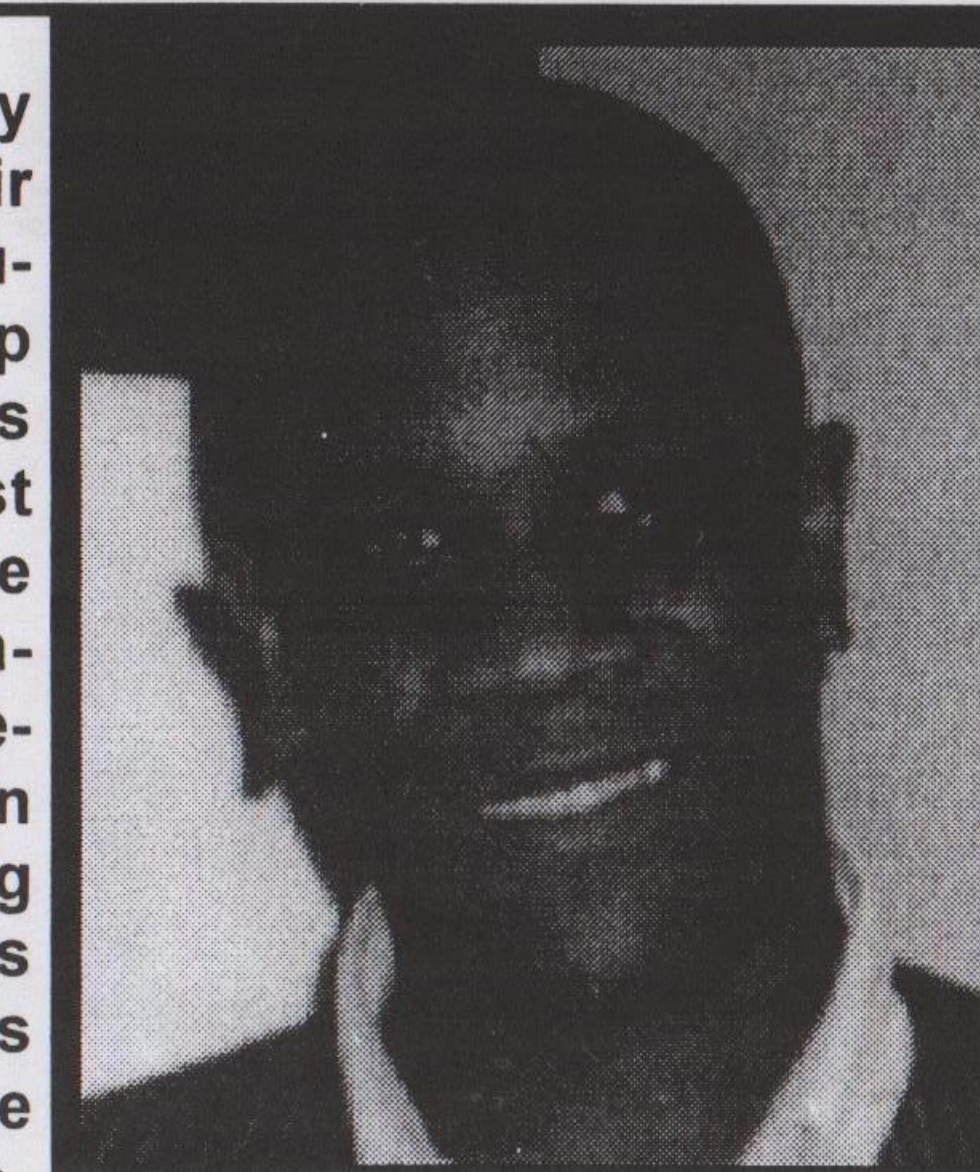
perate need for money to help workers in all sorts of ways to take action against the bosses. Support, solidarity, literature, organising, and direct actions - all are more effective if funds are made available.

### The REAL alternative

Politicians are the last thing we need. The failure of the union movement in Britain is that they have left politics to politicians instead of fighting for political alternatives as well as economic gains. Without an alternative to capitalism the unions are left stranded or, worse still, helping to impose bosses' cuts in order to keep companies afloat. Workers' organisations have to be overtly political - the struggle for a better future is the task of the workers ourselves, and cannot be left to politicians, however "socialist" they sound.

## More of what you don't want

Ken Livingstone recently called on people to use their vote in the Greater London Authority (GLA) elections to keep out the BNP. He also sponsors the annual Respect anti-racist festival. But how valid are Ken's own anti-racist credentials? He campaigned for re-election as Mayor of London on the platform of putting more police on the streets than any other candidate. This is in spite of the fact that the Metropolitan Police is still institutionally racist, and viewed with suspicion both by black people and Muslims subjected to discriminatory stop and search strategies.



**Roger Sylvester**  
"unlawfully killed"  
by police officers

### Local government

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Now the Metropolitan Police Authority, part of the GLA, is using public funds to support the police officers who are trying to overturn the coroner's verdict of "unlawful killing" in the case of the death of Roger Sylvester. Roger, a 30-year-old black man, died at the hands of the police after being forcibly restrained by 8 officers in January 1999.

After waiting for 5 years, the coroner's verdict of "unlawful killing" was finally delivered earlier this year. Roger's cousin Bernard Renwick said, "Unlawful killing was one possible verdict. The jury were there for 24 days of evidence. They weren't dumb. They were not stupid. They heard the evidence and they understood."

It's about time that the police officers were put on trial, instead the GLA trying to continue to challenge the truth.

Contact Roger Sylvester Justice Campaign, PO Box 25908  
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0793 197 0442

workers take official action, however, the law says they have to give a lengthy period of notice. This means the bosses have time to organise scabbing and bully the workers into not striking. Going on unofficial strike gives us the element of surprise and has a much bigger impact on the management.

### Rank and file organisation

Unofficial disputes require organisation by the rank and file. This means setting up a union structure at workplace level that is independent from the union leadership. This is not about being 'anti-union' because we are the union! We just want our organisation to be more effective. If you want to do this it means organising workplace mass meetings to decide on what the issues are and how to fight them.

The Solidarity Federation aims to promote workplace organisations that are controlled by the members and are prepared to use direct action, such as strike action, to win improvements in pay and conditions for the workers. If you also want to make contact with other people that want to organise in this way why not contact us.

### Effective action

Workers in unofficial disputes do not need to follow the trade union laws that prevent effective action being taken. When

For more information contact:

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[nelsfsolved@fsmail.net](mailto:nelsfsolved@fsmail.net) [email]

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