



THE SLAVE

LOCAL AUTHORITY WORKERS' NETWORK c/o 84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1.

ILEA CRISIS

WHAT'S HAPPENING?

As usual, we, the people who keep ILEA running, the kitchen workers, cleaners, electricians, technicians, painters, bus drivers, schoolkeepers, chippies, will be the last to know if we're headed for the sack - the signs are not good!

The teachers are not in a much better position - supply teachers are being used more and more as a mobile workforce to cover for intentionally vacant posts, and are often placed in the position of child-minders and prison warders.

As in the case of the abolition of the Greater London Council, rumours are flying and we've heard of mass sackings in the next year, to enable ILEA to cut its budget by 5%, as imposed by the government. To balance the accounts, many more of us on low wages will have to be sacked than if a few of the well-paid managers got the boot.

School keepers are supposed to be replaced by security guards - which will lead to school keepers and their families being evicted from their homes which adjoin schools. The numbers of cleaners, and their pay, will be cut. School meals may be provided by private catering firms, or maybe school meals will be got rid of altogether. Evening classes in schools will be reduced, if not closed down, as will the creches and canteens that complement them. Youth Clubs may be closed, leaving schools empty and useless at night.

LOCAL COUNCIL CUTS

One rumour is that, if ILEA is abolished schools will be run by local Councils. Incidentally, Tower Hamlets Council has been offered thousands of pounds by central government, if they withdraw from ILEA.

However, Labour and Tory Councils are implementing cuts already and are unlikely to want to take on schools to add to their budget crisis.

A tactic being used by ILEA and Councils is not replacing staff when they leave - 'natural wastage' in their jargon.

DID YOU KNOW?

In December 1987 high management in ILFA tried to vote through wage rises for themselves. Luckily union activists caught on, and the rises were withdrawn. Of course, considering the cash crisis, the proposed wage rises would have meant sackings further down the line - not a great worry for the managers, though! Watch out for redundancy deals these types will hustle for themselves, or setting up private companies to run services, using their experience with ILEA!

FIGHTING BACK

In the next year, local Council workers will be fighting to save the services they provide, in some cases occupying their workplaces such as libraries, playschemes and Clubs etc. The facilities belong to us, but are being closed due to a combination of Council mismanagement and Tory cuts. We can turn the tide back. School secretaries in Leeds went on strike recently, and marches like these show we are not going to take this attack on our living conditions quietly or passively.

If we are going to affect the future of ILEA, the current divisions of our membership of separate, competing, unions has to be broken down, as does the division between blue and white collar workers. We often end up competing with other workers, rather than spreading support for any group of workers threatened, and spreading any news of their plans for too fast.

Everyone should spread news of redundancy notices or offers, and press for open meetings and negotiations so we all are involved. Parents, teachers, kids and all ILEA workers need to meet and organise support for the services. Ballots funded by the parents are okay, and show the support for ILEA, but more active support is needed, and soon. The first to hear of a school being closed should let everyone know, and in some cases occupations will be necessary. Taking over what is ours, away from bureaucrats and the profiteers waiting to pounce is 'realistic'. The health workers have decided enough is enough - we've got no choice; as jobs start to disappear around us!

Meanwhile, back in the Boroughs...

Council workers are at the sharp end this year as rate-capped London Boroughs try desperately to balance the books by April and avoid surcharges and disqualification. Some, like in Hackney, hope to get lenient treatment for previous 'offences' by being more ruthless now. March is going to see some fierce battles between cuts-merchants and threatened workers as the crunch draws closer.

Also on the cards once the 1988-'89 financial year comes in is Compulsory Competitive Tendering, usually mis-named 'privatisation'. Workers in Tory-controlled areas like Wansworth and Westminster have already experienced it, and now it's coming to the 'People's Republics'. DLO's have fought it off for some years through 'contract compliance' - writing unionised workforces, equal opportunities clauses, no links with South Africa and other conditions into tenders to keep them in-house. With strong union organisation to keep watch on contractors this has worked well. Now it will become, retrospectively, illegal. This means

that to win a tender, Council Departments will have to become as bad as contractors. Complying with CCT will mean eroding your own job, working conditions, pay and union rights. The service will also decline as 'value for money' is the only reason for winning tenders, and the Secretary of State will interpret that in contractor's favour. The Tories have learnt all the lessons of the last few years, we can't beat CCT except by making it unworkable.

DON'T MOAN - ORGANISE!

These attacks do not just affect a few groups of workers, they affect all of us in the public sector, and working people who use the services we try to provide too. The Tories, and the Labour & Alliance Councillors and Trade Union officials who collaborate with their policies, seek to promote this 'newrealism' and keep us all divided and isolated under 'elected dictatorship'. They have the structure and mentality of the Trade Unions on their side. Not

only are manual and white-collar workers divided by union affiliation and prejudice (with the latter saddled with management in our unions to boot!), but we are also split up by Department, Authority and rival unions.

These are attacks on all our class, we have to fight them as a class, every victory won, every axe blunted, is a victory for all of us. We have to support all workers who resist the cuts and CCT, and mobilise the public in our support too. This means offering solidarity regardless of the divisive union structure, inviting speakers from disputes to our meetings, holding joint union meetings, leafletting and petitioning the public to gain support.

Above all it means ACTION, ultimately Authority-wide and London-wide protests, strikes and occupations. But we can't just call strikes and blame the TUC and union 'leaderships' for them not happening, have to act ourselves and draw in support. We can win if we think and act, in Haringey four libraries were saved from closure by a 24 hour occupation by a united workforce/ with public support. They had their opening hours cut, but there is something left to improve.

Even partial victories like that on a large scale will give us the confidence and experience to fight on. If we occupy services due to close we can't be locked out, we remain a problem for our bosses, and we give the public something positive to support. With massive support we can't be beaten. We can slow down and halt the Tories and their collaborators in this way, by showing them that working people will not take this lying down. If we don't fight back now it will be more difficult to halt the more vicious attacks which will follow.

SLAVES MEETING

Local Authority Workers Network's next meeting is on Sunday, March 20th starting at 1pm. It is being held at 17 Turners Road E3 (Mile End tube, off Burdett Rd). All rebellious slaves welcome. No slave-owners' spies or would-be slave-owners please!

