



# ***Anti-Cuts Committees - Prepare for Class War!***

Anti-cuts committees are now being set up in areas across Britain.

The quicker, the better! Local Trades Councils, if they have any life at all, are the best bodies to initiate such committees.

The committee must, however, be broader than the Trades Council, drawing in delegates from community groups, ward and constituency Labour Parties, and workplaces, as well as trade unions.

The committee's aim should be simple: to fight every cut in jobs and services.

The first task of a committee should be to audit the effect of the threatened cuts in its area. The best format for this audit is a website, which can be used as a constantly-updated resource.

The second is to get out to the working-class public. Street stalls are a good way to do this, and a good activity to draw new people into.

Demonstrations, lobbies of the council, workplace meetings, and support for industrial and community direct action against cuts, will also be part of the committee's work as it develops.

In some meetings to set up anti-cuts committees, there has been debate about the proper relation between them and council Labour groups.

If council Labour groups call for "unity against the Con-Dem government", that is fine. But the question has to be: unity to do what?

Committees should welcome council Labour groups sending delegates, if they will do that. But they should take their own decisions based on the needs and wishes of the workers and community groups which they

represent, and measure what the councillors do by the needs of the struggle against the government.

They should organise to make Labour councillors refuse to cooperate with the cuts. If council Labour groups carry out Lib-Tory cuts, then the committees must fight them. Dissident Labour councillors who fight the cuts should of course be welcome within the committees.

## ***Force Labour Councils to defy cuts!***

About 60% of councils' income comes from central government (about 25% from council tax, and the other 15% from rents, fees, charges, etc.), and the government plans to force a freeze on council tax rates in April 2011 budgets.

What will Labour councils do? Some have been chopping away for years and are moving fast for bigger cuts to accommodate the new central government policies.

Neath Port Talbot council in South Wales, for example, has demanded big cuts in overtime pay and allowances - and threatened to sack all 7000 council staff, and re-employ them on worse terms, if they don't agree.

What about Labour councillors who say they want to join anti-cuts campaigns and fight the Tories?

We should demand that they refuse to carry out or co-operate with the cuts. Labour councillors should do what Poplar Labour council, in East London, did in the 1920s; what Clay Cross council, in Derbyshire, did in the early 1970s; and what several Labour councils talked about doing, but never properly carried through, in the mid-1980s: They should use the council as a platform to mobilise the local unions and working-class communities to defend and improve social provision.

It will be a hard fight to push any Labour council into doing this.

Local government is more undemocratic than it was, with the new "executive mayor" or "cabinet" systems. Councillors get more money. In Islington council, in London, for example, every councillor got over £10,000, the council leader £48,000, and seven other leading councillors £35,000 each, in 2008-9. Labour Party life and democracy has withered, so that very few councils have an active, energetic local Labour Party pushing them to take a stand.

In the early 1980s, several Labour councils first responded to Tory cuts by raising rates (local taxes) rather than cutting services. That option has been closed off by the Tory council-tax freeze. Central government also controls more of councils' income than it used to.

The government has greater legal powers to intervene if it considers a council's policy "irresponsible", and to impose commissioners to run the council instead.

In 1986-7 Labour councillors from Liverpool and from Lambeth, south London, were surcharged and disqualified from office. They were punished, in fact, not for running illegal budgets, but for delay in making any budget at all in the 1985-6 financial year, i.e. for irresolute gestures towards a fight against central government cuts.

Subsequent defeats mean that those penalties are seen as the result of fighting cuts, not as a result of being irresolute about fighting cuts.

All those factors exist. But the stakes now are bigger than they were in the 1980s. From the start, in anti-cuts campaigns, socialists should be arguing unequivocally that the right thing for Labour councils to do is to defy the cuts and help mobilise the local unions and working-class communities. To do otherwise is to concede half-defeat in advance.

If that argument - and mobilisation around that argument in unions, tenants' groups, and so on - pushes even a few Labour councillors

here and there to take a principled stand against cuts, those councillors can play a big role in the battle, as individual left-wing councillors did in many areas in the 1980s.

### ***Europe-wide mobilisation on 29th September: TUC must call action!***

The European Trade Union Confederation has called a "no to cuts" day of action for Wednesday 29 September.

Already Spanish unions have planned a general strike for that day. There will be a big demonstration of workers from across Europe in Brussels. Unions in other European countries will schedule actions.

British trade unionists should demand that the TUC call a day of action to link up with other workers across Europe.

In Britain, 29 September falls in the middle of Labour Party conference, in Manchester. The TUC should ask the Labour Party to suspend conference proceedings for an afternoon and have conference delegates join a trade-union demonstration against cuts through the city. If the TUC as such will not move, then the more active unions should get together to sponsor a day of action.

The work of building towards that day of action will cross-fertilise with immediate battles against cuts which are already under way.

***This bulletin was produced by activists in the Alliance for Workers' Liberty. We are a socialist group fighting in the labour movement for a democratic working-class revolution against capitalism. Get in touch: [awl@workersliberty.org](mailto:awl@workersliberty.org) Workers' Liberty, PO Box 823, London SE15 4NA / 020 7207 3997 / [awl@workersliberty.org](mailto:awl@workersliberty.org)***