

Tories' secret job cuts plan exposed

ON 1 December the Daily Mirror published an article revealing secret plans by the Tory dominated Local Government Employers (LGE) group on how to sack workers using stealth tactics and to prepare for a bitter battle with unions.

Tim Cutter,
acting deputy branch secretary,
Hampshire Unison

As well as advising councils to sack thousands of low paid workers it also suggests this should be attempted without union involvement. The plans include replacing full-time staff in libraries, museums and sport centres with volunteers.

Council chiefs are urging a hard line with the unions in negotiations. These tactics expose the true anti-union nature of LGE and show that they are prepared to use any means possible to make working-class people pay the price for the crisis in their system.

Many local authorities are already applying an 'over the top' attitude to sickness absence and capability procedures in order to get rid of workers without the need to pay redundancy payments.

The trade union movement needs to expose these anti-union and anti-working class plans and organise resistance both to the cuts and the methods used to implement them.

The leaked document shows that the ruling class and their hatchet men and woman in local government are prepared to co-ordinate on a national scale to attack the jobs and pay and conditions of public sector workers. Only a similarly determined approach from the unions on a national scale will be effective in stopping this onslaught.

The bosses have always been prepared to use illegal methods such as blacklists or intimidation to get rid of trade union activists. Even where they have been shown by the courts or employment tribunals to have broken the law, employers have re-



Council chiefs are urging a hard line with the unions in negotiations.

photo Huddersfield SP

garded any cost awarded against them as being a price worth paying.

The LGE plan is just another example of how the drive to make cuts in local government has led to a total disregard for the rights of workers and their unions. Hampshire

County Council for instance has attempted to carry out cuts bit by bit as they restructure each department in turn. Often they have only given a short period of notice to the unions of their plans and attempted to present us with a fait accompli.

However, Hampshire Unison has not been prepared to accept each cut in isolation and is campaigning amongst members to resist the whole cuts package. As trade unionists we need to be prepared to do whatever it takes to fight back.

Protesters demand halt to open-cast coal mining in Bangladesh



Picketing GCM's annual general meeting on 6 December.

photo M.Thain

PROTESTERS VOICED their anger at Global Coal Management Resources Ltd (GCM), outside the mining company's annual general meeting (AGM) in central London on 6 December. The focus of the protest was GCM's aim to develop one of the world's largest opencast coal mines in Phulbari, northwest Bangladesh.

Manny Thain

Clearly nervous at the attention, they locked themselves into the building. GCM then announced the AGM's 'success' at 11.46am – just three-quarters of an hour after it was due to start!

If this project goes ahead, up to 120,000 people will be displaced and vital food-producing land will be destroyed in a country where there is widespread hunger. On top of this, water access of tens of thousands of people will be cut

while the risk of pollution to existing water sources will be greatly increased. A huge area of mangroves, which play a critical role in controlling extreme weather event devastation, will also be severely damaged.

There is mass opposition to this project. This came to a head when over 70,000 people demonstrated in Phulbari in August 2006 against the same plan by Asia Energy – as GCM was known at the time.

Paramilitary forces opened fire on that demonstration killing three young people. But the determination of that campaign and of its supporters internationally, forced Asia Energy out of Bangladesh.

The Bangladesh Awami League went on to win the subsequent general election in 2008 promising to protect the interests of the people in Phulbari.

Enjoying a massive majority, the government then broke its word. Once again, however, the government is being pushed back by the

strength of the campaign – which recently organised a long march through Bangladesh. (See Socialist Party website's interview with the leader of the National Committee to Protect Oil, Gas, Mineral Resources, Power and Ports – posted on 18 November.)

The protest in London was organised by the London branch of that campaign and its speakers were supplemented by other eye-witness reports, the London Mining Network campaign group, and the Socialist Party, among others.

GCM's plan is to ruthlessly exploit the resources of Bangladesh, exporting massive profits while leaving devastation in its wake – a new colonialism.

What is clear is that the company does not like to be put under the spotlight, as it was by the London protest. The campaign continues, as does the Socialist Party's solidarity with our sisters and brothers in Bangladesh.

Campaign stops health bosses' closure plan

THIRTY PEOPLE, including midwives, parents, children and Socialist Party members, lobbied a North West NHS board meeting that was expected to rubber-stamp the already deferred decision to close Salford Royal Hospital's maternity services.

Paul Gerrard

A major reorganisation of maternity services in Greater Manchester aims to reduce 12 units down to eight and Salford's unit, probably the best performing unit in the North West, is due to close.

But they had to move the meeting to a larger room as there were more protesters than board members. Protesters Sarah Davies and Sam, a young mother whose baby had been born in the unit, demolished the case for closure.

The CEO had to admit that the reorganisation could not proceed and the final decision is again deferred,

this time to February. This is an important, if temporary, victory and testimony to an outstanding local campaign.

Sarah Davies said: "The campaign has so far collected 40,000 signatures on petitions, held a rally which attracted 500 people, gained the support of local celebrities, such as Ryan Giggs whose pre-term baby was cared for at Hope; we have enlisted the support of the council and all local MPs.

"Fighting and having a success, as we have done this week, gives people confidence. Since the decision the mood at the hospital has lifted, and all those people who said 'I don't know what you're bothering to fight it for' have been very quiet!"

We now need to use this respite to lobby local GPs and get them to publicise their opposition to closure, and continue to mobilise opinion in the city through the trades council, the newly formed anti-cuts campaign and the Shop Stewards Network. We can win.

KEEP THE POST PUBLIC CAMPAIGN
NATIONAL RALLY AND LOBBY
WEDNESDAY 15TH DECEMBER 2010 -
CENTRAL HALL, WESTMINSTER, 11am - 2pm

