

# CUTS BULLETIN

## NALGO members strike over jobs

Seventy NALGO members are on strike in Knowsley. They have been out since 14 November in support of a NALGO member who was threatened with disciplinary action for refusing to cooperate with consultants.

Initially the whole Knowsley NALGO branch - 1800 strong - walked out in support of the threatened member and stayed out for the rest of that day.

NALGO's Emergency Committee has since given official backing to the 70 strikers, who are rent collectors and cashiers from the Housing Department and telephonists at three of the Council's main offices.

Non-cooperation with agencies and consultants is NALGO policy.

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Manchester's 700 Housing Department staff - 350 of them NALGO members - have been on official strike since 4 November. They walked out in support of colleagues sacked for refusing to cover the work of unfilled posts.

Now the branch has called a demonstration against Manchester City Council on Thursday 27 November. All Manchester NALGO's 7000 members have been authorised to strike on that day. Other trade unions have been asked to support the demo.

A massive branch meeting held at lunch-time on Friday 14 November congratulated the strikers on their stand and reaffirmed support. Support was also promised to any member refusing to cross picket lines.

The branch has decided on a voluntary levy of its members to provide cash support for the strikers. Escalation of the strikes is being considered, and departments other than Housing are likely to be balloted soon.

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Over 1500 staff in the Greater London Council Architects Department walked out last week after 400 of them received letters threatening compulsory redundancy and lower redundancy payments.

The half-day strike, which involved NALGO and GLC Staff Association members, followed a break-down in talks earlier this month. Discussions are now being held in the branch on further industrial action including a work to rule and non-cooperation with voluntary redundancies.

The GLC has 'lost' 3,500 jobs in the last year or so without opposition from the staff association, who felt that they should comply if it meant avoiding compulsory redundancies.

But having been allowed to cut these posts, the GLC now wants another 4,000 jobs. Horace Cutler, Leader of the GLC, promised at the Tory Party Conference that he would "cut, cut and cut again". To cheers, he urged the Conference to ignore "soft stories" about how services are cut to the bone.

Support the march  
against mass  
unemployment  
and the cuts  
in  
Liverpool  
on 29 November



NALGO is urging  
all its members  
to attend

## Fight for 400 jobs

Avon County Council wants to get rid of some 400 non-manual posts by next April.

The branch newsheet reports administrative, advisory and support staff will bear the brunt of the 2 per cent cuts which are spread throughout all grades.

This is to achieve new manning levels by next April which represent a cut of some 420 posts on July 1980 establishments. The newsheet comments:

'The great rush to cut staffing reflects the madness of the current mentality in Government policy. It is not simply a question of cutting expenditure but of axing people's jobs by all means possible. Some Avon managers have already been told that even if they could make equivalent savings by proposals for increasing efficiency elsewhere the same number of jobs would still have to go.'

### Doctrinaire

'The Government is intent for solely doctrinaire reasons on reducing the number of people employed in the public Services whether or not they then have to pay the private sector for doing the jobs.'

'Often there is not even a reduction in expenditure. Staff in Road Construction Units have recently been told that their jobs are to finish. The work is to be transferred to private consultants but even the Government cannot point to any saving in expenditure.'

### Don't cover

The branch is reinforcing its policy of no-cover for vacant posts. All departmental representatives have been briefed on the institution of the no-cover policy in their sections. The branch newsheet comments:

'The main reason why Avon feels it can make manpower cuts without any adverse public reaction is the fact that it does not believe that they will have any real effect on the level of service offered.'

'There is therefore an implicit expectation that staff will be expected to cover vacancies on a permanent basis.'

'This is a completely different situation from that where members cover vacancies which they know management are in the process of filling.'

IT IS NALGO POLICY THAT BRANCHES SHOULD INSTRUCT MEMBERS NOT TO COVER THE WORK OF UNFILLED VACANCIES.

## Arbitrators award 13%

The arbitration tribunal considering our 1980 pay claim has awarded an increase of 13% with effect from 1 July 1980, with a further 2% to be payable from 1 April 1981. They have also awarded a basic leave entitlement of 20 days (instead of 19) and minimum annual leave entitlement of 25 days for those with 5 years or more continuous service.

The arbitrators rejected the claim for a 35 hour week but would not give a ruling on the union's claim for a minimum salary of £70 per week at age 18, nor on the removal of bar points.

The award, according to the negotiating procedure, is to be treated as if it were an agreement. But the employers have made no commitment to pay the award. When the agreement was made to go to arbitration, they would only say that they would have to consider the implications of any award before they would implement it. NALGO has not yet given its 'official' view on the award, although Mike Blick, who chairs the staff side of the National Joint Council, commented to the press that the 13% award was 'disappointing'.

The papers greeted the news in different ways. The Express and the Telegraph were torn between criticising the '15% on town hall payroll' and comforting readers that the award was a victory for Mrs Thatcher's (pay limits) attempts to keep wage rises below inflation. After all, they pointed out, when the claim was submitted, inflation was running at over 20%!

The award will be 'reported' to the next meeting of the National Joint Council on 25 November - and the employers' side will not be giving their official reaction before then.

## 3,000 jobs lost

Somerset County Council wants £8.5 million cuts over three years with 3,000 job losses. The branch is starting a programme of industrial action and a publicity campaign.

## 4m unemployed

A report from the Cambridge Econometrics group (11 November) forecasts that unemployment may double to almost 4 million by 1985 if the Government sticks to its present public spending plans.

## No cover for vacant posts

The major impact on staffing caused by the cuts is the freezing of posts. About three quarters of all local authorities have some frozen posts. Some authorities have thousands.

NALGO policy is that branches should instruct members not to cover the work of vacant posts. The no-cover policy is an essential, major plank in NALGO's action against the cuts.

If you cover the work of a vacant post then you are letting it be thought that that job wasn't needed in the first place and that it can always be kept empty.

How many members will say that their own job is useless? Or would you still expect it to be 'somebody else'?

## Early retirement

Early retirement is a good thing. Everyone should be able to retire early. But Mid-Glamorgan Council is asking 2,400 staff to take early retirement - at 50! Posts left vacant by those chosen for early retirement (management will not let just anyone retire early) are, again, kept vacant and the jobs are lost. It is just being used as another form of cut. Early retirement - yes. Unfilled vacancies - no.

## London weighting over

Formal agreement on London Weighting was reached on 11 November, and the increase, backdated to 1 July 1980, should be in wage packets in December. The following increases were agreed:

	Existing allowance £ p.a.	New allowance £ p.a.
<i>Inner London</i>		
Age 18 and over	726	915
Under 18	363	459
<i>Outer London</i>		
Age 18 and over	390	483
Under 18	195	243

The employers rejected all aspects of the union's claim in relation to the review of the national agreement, an increase in fringe area allowances, and the question of boundary anomalies. All branches in the fringe areas are being "urged to commence local negotiations".

## Voluntary redundancies

A polite way of saying redundancy, this means selling your job. But when the posts left vacant by people 'volunteering' for redundancy are kept vacant by employers, other workers will be expected to cover all the duties and responsibilities of the posts.

By selling your job you are also selling the job of one of the two million at present in the dole queues. And in the present recession it will be almost impossible for many members to get another job, anyway.

## Redeployment

In local authorities which have made cuts in staffing by means stopping short of compulsory redundancy, the choice for many members has been between 'voluntary' redundancy and redeployment. In many cases councils 'persuade' staff to take voluntary severance by offering them lousy alternative jobs.

Redeployment is like a game of musical chairs. But when the game starts, there aren't nearly enough chairs to go round. And someone has taken nearly all the professional chairs out anyway.

The game doesn't last for long before many of the players are out.

## London weighting over 'Malice' of 6%

"An amalgam of incompetence, malice and frustration" was Geoffrey Drain's description of the Government's 6 per cent public sector pay limit.

Mr Drain, who is also chairperson of the TUC Public Services Committee, has warned "Some will be earlier in the front line than others. But this is now open warfare which involves us all." He also said that "At a time when the Government should be using its power to get Britain out of recession and create jobs, it is mindlessly pursuing monetarist policies which will reduce demand and investment and lead to even greater unemployment.

"It is determined to blame the public sector for its own failures and is willing not only to cut jobs, but also to enforce reduced living standards on public sector employees."