

● Saturday 20 October is the date for a huge national demonstration called by the TUC against government policies demanding a 'Future that works'. Austerity is not working. It is driving up unemployment, deepening cuts, creating misery for millions and worsening the deficit. Put the date in your diary now. More information at: www.afuturethatworks.org.uk

Newsletter of the Camden Unison Branch

CAMDEN EYE

www.camdenunison.org.uk

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NSL workers strike for decent pay and dignity

**FULL
STORY:
SEE PAGES
4 AND 5**

Last October the Agency Workers Regulations came into effect.

Sharon Thompson, Assistant Branch Secretary, summarises aspects that would matter most to an agency worker

Agency Workers Regulations: know your rights

The Agency Workers Regulations give agency workers the same basic rights as a directly engaged employee after a qualifying period of 12 continuous weeks. Any work carried out in the same role for the same employer before that date cannot be taken into account retrospectively. This applies to any Agency Worker provided they are not engaged on a fixed term contract or as a consultant/professional adviser. From the first day of assignment, they should have access to all normal staffing facilities, such as the canteen, rest rooms etc. Additionally, Agency staff can apply for any internal vacancy and they must be told where to find the information and how to apply. The only exceptions are where permanent staff are facing redundancy/restructure. Camden therefore should exclude Agency workers from applying for jobs during any restructure. After a period of 12 weeks in the same role additional rights are given such as equivalent pay, paid

leave and rest breaks as permanent members of staff. A pregnant woman has the same rights to paid time off to attend ante-natal appointments after completing the qualifying period. This 12 week qualifying period applies to full time and reduced hours, but not if there is broken service unless that period is broken by certain specific circumstances. If you are sick or on annual leave it is paused and restarts from where you left off on your return. The term 'Pay' includes shift allowances for unsocial hours and overtime rates but excludes sick pay, maternity pay, access to occupational pensions (such as the LPGS at the moment) and redundancy pay. So, if you are sitting next to an agency worker, show them your copy of Camden Eye and point them in the direction of the local UNISON steward for a membership form.



First strike in 180 years

GMB union members employed by the Doctors' organisation the BMA (British Medical Association) were on strike on Wednesday 20 June at eight locations across the UK in a 24 hour strike over pay. This is the first stoppage by BMA staff in the organisation's 180 year history as the BMA failed to respond to a GMB request that talks be reopened with an improved pay offer. The strike was solid. Some BMA offices were completely closed. The London HQ was a 'ghost town'. Members were

really good on the picket line, giving leaflets out and arguing the case with the public. GMB members voted by a majority of 81.2% to take industrial action over the BMA's refusal to negotiate an improved pay offer for 2012. Anna Meyer, GMB Organiser, said 'We are very disappointed that there has been no response to our calls for more talks and for an improved offer. GMB members are striking reluctantly as this is the first strike action at the BMA in 180 years. The offer is well be-

low inflation and the BMA can well afford to make an offer in line with inflation. What GMB members find difficult to accept is that the BMA itself is embarking on industrial action over the government's refusal to reopen negotiations in their dispute.' Further days of action are planned as the dispute continues.

Matt Saywell
Branch Secretary
GMB Holborn APEX

■ Camden UNISON donated £100 to the strike. GMB members were on strike again on 18 July.

Camden Trades Council new website

Branch Officer Phill Lewis has been revamping the Camden Trades Council website. The aim is to make it the website of choice when you want to find out about local disputes, action, events and campaigns. Go to <http://camdentradescouncil.com>

Performance Related Pay: No Way!



The council's Audit & Corporate Governance Committee agreed on 24 July to change the contracts for new starters in Camden employees. It also gave the green light to radically changed conditions and pay structures for existing employees in the longer term. Following several workplace meetings, UNISON Branch Committee took the unanimous position that whilst we had gained a number of improvements through negotiations, the main principle of performance related pay, combined with the fact that nearly 25% of lower paid staff would still face a pay cut was unacceptable. Financial compensation will be offered to those who would lose out the most, but we calculated that would account for two years of the lost pay at best. In a climate where we are not sure when the next pay rise is coming, this was too great a detriment to a large number of the lowest paid. Because UNISON did not sign up to an agreement on pay modernisation, management decided to

withdraw some (not all) of the concessions they had made! The withdrawal of the concessions means that if you sign up to the new contract or are a new starter, you will be working a 36 hour week (no two-tier workforce, then!); the £250 pay award will only go to those earning less than £23,000 rather than £25,000 or less, and only on condition they sign up to the new contract; the Council may now consider imposing the new contract on all staff before 2015 despite a declared preference for voluntary sign-up. UNISON is therefore urging everyone who currently works on a Camden contract to resist any pressure to sign up to the new contract voluntarily. Already the new contract will be imposed on new starters, some of those compelled to apply for new jobs in reorganisations and those seeking promotion. Management are already trying to 'sell' this new deal to staff as a benefit. For those on SO1 and above, the 'lure' of performance related pay (PRP) after a three-year pay freeze may seem very strong. But even

members who told us they supported PRP in principle remained sceptical about 'fair' implementation. While the pattern of appraisal ratings for the past year looks very similar to that for 2010-11, there will inevitably be pressures to drive scores downwards as the Council seeks to cut more than £45 million from the pay bill over 15 years. For anyone on a PRP contract a score below three would mean a continuing absolute pay freeze. UNISON believes this new contract will prove divisive and a false promise as there will not be a bankers' pot of 'reward' money. Staff at the top of their scale will not have any 'head room' for additional pay, and finally it is a move away from any collective pay bargaining towards individual negotiation between staff and manager. So UNISON is urging all our members to: refuse to sign up to the new contract, campaign among your colleagues to do the same, and keep Performance Related Pay out of Public Services!

Phoebe Watkins
Branch Co-Chair

August 2012

CAMDEN EYE

A serious fight on pay needed

The pay freeze in local government has savagely reduced the value of peoples' pay. At the top of Scale 4 you are £3,363 worse off a year, on Scale 6 £4,051 the poorer, at SO2 £4,790 and at PO2 £5,258 compared to 2009.*

Low paid members in particular are seriously hurting but everyone is badly affected. There has to be a serious fight on pay next year. That means action, preferably striking with other unions in a programme designed to win.

* Figures from Lambeth UNISON

Olympic heroes

In the 1968 Mexican Olympics Tommie Smith took gold in the 200 metres, Peter Norman took Silver and John Carlos the Bronze. When the US national anthem was played Tommie Smith and John Carlos bowed their heads and gave a Black Power salute. It has become the most iconic image of the Olympic Games. In solidarity Peter Norman wore the badge of the Olympic Project of Human Rights.

For their stand against racism and poverty and for civil rights all three were viciously attacked by the press and establishment. This year on 21 May John Carlos received a standing ovation from a 1,000 strong audience at Friends House in Euston. Both he and Tommie Smith are now applauded and respected wherever they go for their principled stand in 1968. They deserve our praise.

● **Camden pays NSL £13 per hour for every Traffic Warden they employ but NSL only pay their staff £8.09. They seem to be making £5.91 per hour profit for every member of staff yet they say they can't afford our claim** ●

On both 11 and 12 July picket lines at all six Camden NSL workplaces were loud and lively, with action on the first day culminating in an early afternoon rally at Camden Town Hall, addressed by several members of UNISON's National Executive Council. Messages of support have poured in from UNISON and other trade union branches across Britain including Falkirk, Bolton and Southampton, with several pledging financial support to the dispute. Despite generating millions in crucial revenue for Camden Council and braving the elements as well as abuse from the motoring public almost every working day, these workers still face the reality of chronically low pay in one of the world's most expensive cities for housing and public transport. We are sceptical about NSL's claim that it cannot afford to pay more, but in addition we're calling on Camden's Labour council to translate rhetorical concern for the low-paid into meaningful action.

George Binette
Branch Secretary

NSL, formerly part of NCP, was split off from the rest of that company in 2008 and is currently controlled by a private equity firm. It is now the largest player in parking enforcement, both in Britain and across London, with 12 local authority contracts in the capital. It reported an operating profit of £9.98m for calendar year 2011.

Basics of claim

- A £2.50 an hour increase for all staff
- Enhancement of time and one third for all those who work between 8.00pm and 6.00am;
- Allowance for moped CEOs;
- Minimum paid annual leave entitlement of 23 days with a further five days after five years of continuous service;
- Incremental pay scale;
- Career structure;
- Time and a half on a Saturday;
- Double time on a Sunday;
- A reduction in the working week from 42.5 to 35 hours.



Camden New Journal

Two fantastic days

A warden who is pregnant with her third child said: 'We earn only £8.09 for a whole hour and we work 42.5-hour weeks. The price of everything is going up – transport, children's uniforms, food – and still after eight years of working here my wages are the same as someone who joined three months ago. There needs to be some sort of pay scale. Is that any way to feel after working full-time and taking the abuse of drivers for nearly a decade? Even the shifts are inflexible. They start before I can drop my children to school and they end sometimes at 10.30pm. My neighbours bring my children up.' Amended from *Camden New Journal* 12 July 2012

Support the Olympic strikers

BBC '5 Live' presenter Gary Richardson urged Tory culture minister Jeremy Hunt to sack PCS union members at the Home Office if they took strike action during the Olympic games. Since then the government has gone to court seeking an injunction to block the PCS strike. The *Evening Standard* denounced the RMT as 'unpatriotic' for daring to call two days of strike action by low-paid Tube cleaners. The red-baiting and union-bashing is a useful distraction from the fiasco surrounding the G4S contract for Olympic security staff. It is clear that Tories are keen to push for further anti-union legislation, imposing still greater curbs on lawful industrial action. Speculation continues about extending total bans on strike action across the public sector or imposing requirements for absolute majorities of members to vote in favour of action. It's a shameful part of New Labour's 13 year legacy that the anti-union law inherited from Thatcher and Major remained intact. The dispute that created the threat of walkouts during the Olympics is a direct result of government policies to slash jobs and privatise current public functions. The strike threat may be successful but if the action goes ahead we should have no hesitation in supporting the strikers.

George Binette
Branch Secretary

Pensions: for and against the deal

The case for voting 'Yes' to pensions deal

The plus points of the pensions deal that Unison and the GMB have negotiated with the government and the employers are:

- There are not going to be pension contribution increases for the 90% of staff who earn less than £43,000 a year;
 - There will be a '50/50' option for staff who want to pay half contributions in exchange for half the benefits;
 - The scheme is still better than most schemes on offer from private employers;
 - Staff who are outsourced to private companies will be able to remain in the pension scheme, although the details of this aspect of the new scheme remain unclear;
 - Staff who do not get promoted over the course of their career may be better off under the average salary based scheme than under a final salary one, especially if salary increases are low;
 - People's overtime payments will count as part of their pensionable pay.
- The deal is the best obtainable through negotiation. Further

strike action may not be able to get further concessions from the government and employers, particularly if there is low participation in the strike and if the employers and the government remain stubborn.

The case for voting 'No' to pensions deal:

The deal has a number of minus points that members should be aware of. They are:

- The normal pension age at which a full local government pension will be payable will go up with the state pension age. This would mean that people aged under 55 will have to work until they are 66 or even older (68 in the case of people under 36) before they could draw a full pension, as the State Pension Age itself is going to increase over the years ahead;
- If people get promoted to a higher grade or if our pay increases exceed inflation (as measured by the Consumer Price Index), as they have in most years before the current pay freeze, then this average salary scheme will result in people getting somewhat lower pensions than they would with a final salary scheme;

- After court rulings the government has gotten away with changing the basis for annual uprating from the Retail Price Index to the less favorable Consumer Price Index. The 'LPGS 2014' deal does nothing to change this;
- While the monthly contributions have remained the same for the lowest-paid 90% of scheme members (85% in Camden) for the foreseeable future, members will be paying them over a longer period of time as the State Pension Age goes up. Members will also need to bear in mind that contributions could go up in several years' time. Crucially, by not fighting for further concessions over pensions, the government and local employers will doubt our resolve to battle for jobs and an end to the pay freeze.

■ **The Branch Committee voted to recommend that branch members reject the proposed pension deal. A 4-page branch leaflet outlining the pensions' deal and saying why it should be rejected is being distributed to all branch members. A copy is on the branch website www.camdenunison.org.uk**

Unions unite to fight government attacks

The two biggest teacher unions, the NUT and NASUWT, have issued a joint declaration seeking to defend teachers and education from government attacks. The unions will campaign to resist the unfair changes to teachers' pensions, which will make teachers pay more and work longer for a smaller pension. The historic move recognises that the concerns of teachers go much wider than this. The declaration, launched on Monday 28 May, commits the unions to working together over pay, pensions, job cuts and the increasing workload demanded by the ConDem programme. In a letter to associations, NUT General Secretary Christine Blower said, 'The attacks on teachers stem from the government's austerity measures and from the ideological steps the Secretary of State is taking to break up the education system and to implement ever more accountability measures.

'Teachers are under attack over pensions, the pay freeze, proposals for performance related pay and localised pay, the removal of statutory protections to limit classroom observations, ever increasing workload with insufficient protections, job cuts arising from funding cuts and curriculum reforms and threats to national terms and conditions arising from the privatisation of schools to name just a few.' Education chiefs have over the past months made countless announcements about the 'failings of teachers' and the education system, all of which serve to undermine our work and professionalism. These attacks have spurred the NUT and NASUWT to launch an unprecedented response. If the government ignore teachers' concerns the unions will initiate a programme of strike and non-strike action beginning in the autumn term. Andrew Baisley Camden NUT Branch Secretary



There was a strong UNISON presence on the World Pride march in London on 7 July, with many showing solidarity with the Palestinians. In the aftermath of the problems that afflicted London's World Pride this year community groups and LGBT trade unionists have confirmed their support for a National Pride to be held in central London, an event that is free and accessible to all, and a celebration as well as a demand for equality. Full report: www.camdenunison.org.uk UNISON LGBT www.unison.org.uk/out/

Last autumn, Camden Council announced its proposal to close several day centres in the borough. Jane Clinton, carer and resolute campaigner to keep Netherwood Day Centre open, speaks her mind

The reality of closures in Adult Day Centres

Shoot-Up Hill for people with learning and physical disabilities, Raglan for people with dementia, Highgate Centre for people with mental health problems, Netherwood Day Centre for people with dementia and Greenwood for people with learning disabilities, were all threatened. Those using the centres earmarked for closure, would, the council insisted, have a place at a new centre to be built at Greenwood Place in Kentish Town.

From the start there was huge opposition from service users, family carers, friends and experts about the one-size-fits-all approach. Petitions opposing the closures attracted more than 1500 names and included signatories such as Sir Terry Pratchett and Sir Jonathan Miller. Many warned the new centre could become the council's "monument to itself". Letters from Age UK Camden and Mencap were sent to Camden Council asking it to

think again about the proposal and the dire consequences such a move would have on the communities that have grown within each of the centres. The protests at the consultation meetings could be heard loud and clear. At one Housing and Adult Social Care scrutiny meeting every single centre had a representative giving at least one deputation on why these places needed to stay. Each deputation was powerful and moving. There was no spin;

there didn't need to be. These were testimonies from real people about how each of these centres are lifelines. Prior to the cabinet meeting in April, where the final decision regarding the fate of the centres was made, more than 90 people from all the groups affected protested in the rain outside the Town Hall. The cabinet pushed through the proposal with two exceptions: Netherwood Day Centre would remain open and Shoot-Up Hill

would be given two years to work on their proposal to become a social enterprise. Meanwhile, a design team for the new Greenwood centre is likely to be in place by September. There has been a lot of spin propagated by the council about a shiny new centre, which, it insists, will improve on the services people have already. The worry for many, however, is whether the centres and the services they depend on will be snuffed out for good.

Walthamstow says no to EDL

The English Defence League (EDL) is planning a national demonstration in Walthamstow on Saturday 18th August. Local and national trade unionists, politicians, faith group and community leaders are signing up to a unity statement, opposing the EDL and supporting the peaceful multicultural 'We are Waltham Forest' event/march in the centre of Walthamstow on Saturday 18th August. Last year, the EDL was prevented from marching through Tower Hamlets due to a fantastic show of unity from the local community. Now they have turned their attention to Waltham Forest and plan to march in Walthamstow. It is essential that the same level of unity is shown. More at www.uaf.org.uk



John Duffy

Have you moved? Do we have your new address?

The national postal ballot on the proposed pensions deal will take place between 31 July and 24 August. Ballot papers will be sent to your home address. If you have moved make sure we have your new address. Update your membership record at: www.unison.org.uk/help/ or visit the branch website: www.camdenunison.org.uk or contact the Camden UNISON branch office on 020 7974 1633

Join UNISON today

● You cannot defend your terms and conditions on your own. You need to join a union. With over 3,500 members Camden UNISON is the largest union in the council. Join online or access PDFs of application forms at: <http://www.unison.org.uk/membership/> If you are already a member why not ask your colleagues to join? **There's strength in numbers.**

● **UPDATE DETAILS**
Have you moved or changed your job/workplace recently? If so please update your membership at: www.unison.org.uk/help/
● Visit the branch website: www.camden-unison.org.uk

● **CONTACT US**
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Camden Eye

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● Want to get involved? We need writers, cartoonists, photographers.

● email peter.ainsley@camden.gov.uk

● Copy date next issue: 14 September

● The views expressed in this newsletter are not necessarily the views of Camden UNISON, but the branch will defend the right of members to express those views.

Time to smash the pay freeze

As members will be aware, the local government employers have imposed a pay freeze on us for the past three years. This pay freeze has meant that people's real wages (after taking into account inflation) have gone down by about 11%.

Unison General Secretary, Dave Prentis, said at Conference that the union will be trying its best to 'smash' the pay freeze. While those at the top of private companies are enjoying pay that has never been higher, and while ordinary work-

ers for many private employers have been getting cost-of-living increases, the public sector – especially local government – has been suffering from a rigid pay freeze. The case previously made for pay restraint has been that it

would mean that jobs could be saved. However, job losses have continued despite the pay freeze and those that remain in post have faced increasing workloads. We need pay rises to compensate for this and for the rise in the cost of living.



Supporters of 'Keep Our NHS Public', blockade Virgin Media store in Walthamstow this April. Protests have been taking place nation wide against privatisation of the NHS. Demonstrations are planned in the autumn with 15 September looking like it will see marches in South London, Brent and elsewhere in North West London. More information at: www.keepournhspublic.com

Keep in the loop!

Keep informed of important news concerning your job on the Camden UNISON website at www.camdenunison.org.uk The website has an electronic archive of this newsletter as well as key updates every few days and

articles about your rights. Why not bookmark it today? For an easy way to keep up-to-date like us on Facebook or follow us on Twitter at [facebook.com/camdenunison](https://www.facebook.com/camdenunison) and twitter.com/camdenunison

We have also started sending particularly important developments to members by e-mail about once a month. For example this month we ran a consultation ballot on the pensions proposals which members could vote on. If you

have not received any of these e-mails, make sure the union has your correct e-mail address. Visit camdenunison.org.uk/update to ensure we have the right contact details for you.