

Tenants, trade unions, councillors and MPs demand

'FOURTH OPTION' for COUNCIL HOUSING

LOBBY of PARLIAMENT

Mass Rally at Central Hall,
Westminster, 12noon

National speakers and workshops

**WEDNESDAY
8th FEBRUARY**



STOP PRIVATISATION

INVEST COUNCIL HOUSING

AROUND THE COUNTRY tenants, trade unionists, councillors and MPs are opposing stock transfer, PFI and ALMOs. Along with councils pledged to keep their homes, we are coming to Parliament on February 8th to lobby our MPs and win the 'fourth option' for council housing – direct investment.

Together we are a powerful force. Join us.

Privatisation means higher rents and service charges, less security and unaccountable landlords. Council workers lose out and local democracy is undermined.

The banks make big profits from stock transfer and PFI. Senior managers get big pay rises and an industry of consultants make a killing too. The Public Accounts Select Committee of MPs said privatisation costs £1,300 more per home to carry out improvements. It's bad value for money.

ALMOs (Arms Length Management Organisations) are designed as a two-stage strategy to privatise council housing. If government has extra money for ALMOs why can't they give it to the council direct – unless privatisation is their real agenda? Now the proposal is that local authorities should give up their majority shareholding in the ALMO private companies. Instead, ALMOs should revert back to the local authority once they have met the Decent Homes standard.

The Audit Commission has criticised councils for 'mis-selling' the role of tenant directors in the new companies. Real power is concentrated in the hands of unaccountable senior managers and the banks.

Tenants are sick of being blackmailed. We are not prepared to trade our 'secure' tenancies and lower rents for new kitchens and bathrooms. We want both!

The trade union movement is backing the campaign on behalf of members who work in housing and the millions who are council tenants or have children who will need council housing.

Councillors from all parties also support the campaign. 92 local authorities have decided, after consulting tenants, to keep their homes. Many support the demand for the 'fourth option' and are setting up Authorities Retaining Council Housing (ARCH) to help lobby government. In Parliament there is growing support from MPs of all parties.

The House of Commons Council Housing group report: "Support for the 'fourth option' for council housing" shows the 'fourth option' is affordable. Government siphons £1.5 billion from tenants' rents each year (2003/4 figures) and makes £0.55 billion profits from 'right to buy' sales. Add to this the high set-up costs of privatisation, debt write-off, and the estimated £249 million a year higher housing benefit costs and there is more than enough money to fund the improvements we need. The Audit Commission says existing council house funding is 'perverse' and has called for a 'review'.

The 'Fourth Option' would utilise all the money that belongs to council housing to fund direct investment. Councils could

finance repairs and improvements without privatisation, and tenants would have real choice.

Whilst England, Scotland and Wales each have their own specific housing finance arrangements and 'stock options' the 'Fourth Option' would give tenants across the UK the improvements we need without privatisation.

Shelter's latest research shows that 'ownership' came third in the priorities of 72% interviewed – after 'affordability' and a safe neighbourhood. Yet government is taking money away from council tenants to subsidise home owners!

The 3 million councils tenants and our families, the millions more in temporary accommodation or chronically overcrowded, and all those priced out of the private sector, would benefit from increased investment to improve existing and build new council housing.

Council housing is cheaper to build, manage and maintain than the alternatives.

Together, we are demanding decent, affordable, secure and accountable council housing for all who need it.

WHAT YOU CAN DO

- Contact tenants and trade union organisations in your area to support the lobby (leaflets and posters available)
- Ask your council to put on transport. National speakers and workshops will be a unique opportunity to hear all the argument and ensure tenants are fully-informed
- Write to your MP. Make an appointment for Feb 8 and ask them to sign Early Day Motion 48 and join the Council Housing group of MPs
- Make a donation towards the cost of organising the lobby
- Order DCH material to put the case against transfer, PFI and ALMOs and copies of the House of Commons Council Housing group's report: "Support for the 'fourth option' for council housing"

Further information from: Defend Council Housing
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