

'This campaign can win' says Tony Benn ...BUT IT NEEDS FUNDING

DCH last year produced regular bulletins for activists and 100,000 copies of our national broadsheet. Local campaigns fought and stopped privatisation up and down the country.

But several councils rushed through transfer or set up ALMOs with little or no real debate, and PFI schemes are being worked on without tenants getting the facts. DCH lacked the resources to bring together an organised 'Vote NO' campaign in these areas.

When we campaign effectively we can stop privatisation. The Birmingham DCH campaign was a model everyone should adopt. Tenants, the main trade unions, councillors and MPs joined forces in a united, broad-based campaign and took the argument out onto the estates.

On the Havelock Estate in west London in an effective multiracial campaign tenants knocked on every door, leafleted several times, and held public meetings and a debate between DCH and the council leader.

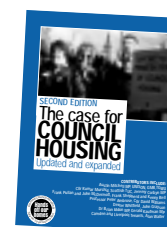
In Camden, 34 tenants association reps have written calling on councillors to join tenants and trade unionists fighting for more investment without strings. Our campaigning offered an alternative and gave confidence to tenants in Birmingham, Southwark and



Merton. But in many other areas tenants opposed to privatisation feel isolated. Even where we weren't able to put our arguments across, a large minority of tenants (Carlisle 48%, Amber Valley 43%, North Herts 40%) still voted NO. One decent campaign leaflet and a meeting could have changed the result.

We need to make sure tenants in every area get to hear the case against privatisation and for direct investment in council housing with no strings. For that we need money from your organisation.

When Prescott announces his 'Communities Plan' we aim to produce a new four-page broadsheet responding to his proposals and spelling out what we need to do next. We need bulk orders in advance to fund a massive print run. Both UNISON and GMB



The Case for Council Housing—new expanded and updated edition out now

ordered 10,000 of the last broadsheet. Get every union to order and distribute the new one.

Get your tenants organisation or trade union branch to affiliate to DCH, make a donation and put in a bulk order for this new broadsheet. Urge every national trade union to distribute copies. Use the order form or ring/e-mail your order and who to invoice (payment in advance much appreciated!)

Defend Council Housing needs your support...

Is your Tenants Association/Federation or trade union affiliated to DCH? Put a resolution to your next meeting and help win this campaign

Annual affiliation fees:

Tenants/Community Organisations

Local £10 Regional £25 National £50

Trade Union Organisations

Local £40 Regional £100 National £250

Annual subscription to Campaign Mailings & Briefings £15

Conference Delegates £5 tenants; £10 trade unions

Defend Council Housing c/o PO Box 33519, London E8 4XW, ☎ 020 7987 9989, email: info@defendcouncilhousing.org.uk, website: www.defendcouncilhousing.org.uk

Publications

National four-page broadsheet £10 per 100 ; £100 per 1000

Case for Council Housing pamphlet (2nd edition) £5 discount for bulk orders

Name

Address

Organisation

Phone/Email

Amount Enclosed (Return to DCH at address below)

DEFEND COUNCIL HOUSING



STOP PRIVATISATION INVEST IN COUNCIL HOUSING -WITH NO STRINGS ATTACHED

Tenants' mass opposition to privatisation has stalled the government's transfer programme for council housing. Birmingham tenants voted 'NO' by an overwhelming 2 to 1—and others are doing the same.

The Lobby for Council Housing on 29 January demonstrates that our united campaign is winning growing support.

The Local Government Bill now

MONEY IS THERE

An extra £600 million a year until 2010 would clear the current £19 billion backlog of council housing repairs and carry out the improvements we need to our homes. The ODPM plans to spend £800 million in 2003/4 subsidising privatisation of up to 200,000 homes through stock transfer.

Why not use this money instead to solve the investment crisis for all 2.7 million council tenants in England and Wales? The problem is not financial but political. The solution is obvious—invest in council housing not in privatisation!

going through parliament introduces a new 'right to borrow' for councils. Direct investment is back on the agenda.

Over 200 MPs have signed one or more of the Early Day Motions in parliament supporting a level playing field for council housing. Growing numbers of former government ministers and senior backbenchers back our campaign.

The government is struggling to find a way out of conceding direct investment in council housing.

They are still pushing stock transfer, PFI and their new two-stage route of ALMOs (see inside). But the tide is turning against privatisation. We are defending our right to stay as council tenants and get investment in our homes.

Across Britain 3.6 million council tenants need to win investment to make it first class housing once again.

This fight is not just for existing tenants but for all those who face homelessness, temporary accommodation, rogue private landlords or

the real risk of not being able to pay their mortgage.

We're defending decent, affordable, secure and accountable council housing in a fight that now unites millions.

Our struggle on estates across Britain is to secure the future for ourselves and for future generations who need a secure home.

Together we can win.

DCH NATIONAL CONFERENCE

Stop privatisation The case for council housing

Saturday 26 April

Friends' Meeting House

Paradise Street, Liverpool

Registration 11am, close 4.30pm

£5 tenants; £10 trade unions

Get your organisation to
send a delegation

Tenants and trade unionists are working together and supporting each other, locally and nationally. Together we can resist plans to privatise and win direct investment in council housing with no strings attached. The Lobby for Council Housing on 29 January is supported by tenants federations including: Camden, Doncaster, Halton, Hull, Liverpool, Newcastle, Reading, Southwark, Stevenage, Stockport, Wakefield, Waveney, Wirral; the national trade unions UNISON, GMB, TGWU, UCATT and RMT and the TUC, the Labour Group of councillors in Southwark and Liverpool and individual councillors from Wirral, Manchester, Bristol, Stroud, Camden and many other areas plus a growing number of MPs

We are fighting for: Decent, affordable accountable co

There is a serious fight going on for the future of council housing. More tenants are saying NO to privatisation. On the estates and in conferences, town halls and parliament the tide is turning against privatisation.

Now the case for council housing needs to be fought and won on every tenant's doorstep, with every trade union, councillor and MP.

Council housing is more secure, affordable and accountable. That's because it is public not private—and we intend to keep it that way.

Britain's 3.8 million council tenants have the most secure tenancies: housing association tenants have less protection with 'assured' tenancies. Council rents are at least 17 percent lower. We can vote out our landlord—no other tenants can.

That's why we are fighting to stay as council tenants—and to win the investment needed to make all our homes first class. Our manifesto for council housing shows what we are fighting for. The Lobby for Council Housing demands spell out what we need to win (see box, centre).

We need to put council housing back at the heart of plans for local areas. With house prices up 25 percent in the last year (and maybe falling 30 percent in the next), even teachers, nurses, firefighters and others in secure jobs can't afford to buy. With record numbers homeless and living in bed and breakfast, with one in four mortgage-payers living in poverty, we need more council housing not less.

The principles of council housing—

GET YOUR MP TO SIGN 'COUNCIL HOUSING' EDM 116

Make sure your MP signs up to the Early Day Motion tabled by Austin Mitchell MP, supporting the lobby demands (above). See link on www.defendcouncilhousing.org.uk



- End all 'Daylight Robbery' tax on tenants' rents.
- Free councils to borrow for investment.
- Return all capital receipts to fund investment in our homes.
- Write off all HRA debt—not just for councils who transfer.
- Fund council borrowing through an investment allowance.
- Use Local Authority Social Housing Grant to build new council homes.

public investment to create and maintain homes for need not profit—have not failed. For over 25 years governments has starved council housing of new investment.

Council housing pays for itself, as the government has admitted. In fact over the last ten years the government has taken more than £13 billion OUT of our rents and spent it elsewhere. We are demanding they put that money back into investment to do the repairs and improvements we need, and to build new council homes.

This is the quickest and 'best value' way of getting the homes we need. To win this battle we have to join in a national campaign to change government policy and win direct investment

for all council housing without strings.

It is time to argue loud and clear the case for council housing as a service for all who want a secure home. That is the way to inspire confidence and overcome attempts to divide us, seeing off the racism that feeds on despair.

Market forces and the private housing sector offer no prospect of a secure home for many millions of people. We must leave ministers in no doubt: privatisation of council housing, in any form or by any method, is not an option.

We have to secure a level playing field that brings the extra investment needed to clear the backlog of repairs and improvements to our homes—without any strings attached.

WE ARE WINNING

Deputy Prime Minister John Prescott's 'blue skies' review of housing finance, announced last August, includes the demands put forward by DCH, tenants and trade unionists.

Ministers have at last been forced to act on Daylight Robbery—by 2005/6 the amount the Treasury siphons out of our repairs budgets is at standstill for the first time in over a decade.

Our united campaign is hitting home. We have proved the cynics wrong!

ble, secure and council housing

We are fed up with the arm-twisting blackmail that says we must accept transfer, PFI or ALMO to get more investment in our homes. If the money is there, why not invest in council housing?

On average council tenants pay around £2,500 a year in rent. Only £1,500 of that is spent on our homes (£1,000 in management and maintenance, £500 in major repairs). The rest—another £2.7 billion in total every year—would pay for the major repairs and improvements we need.

Instead transfer and PFI involve higher borrowing, profits and management costs including record £100,000-plus salaries for chief executives. ALMOs also mean consultants' fees, set-up costs and, all too often, telephone number salaries for senior management.

In 2001-2 £8.2 million, more than half the total housing transfer bill paid by councils went to consultants, surveyors, solicitors and advisers. One firm, HACAS Chapman Hendy, took nearly half of all the lead consultancy work.

The government has ploughed £2 billion of public money into the Glasgow transfer—exactly the amount needed to repair and modernise all of Scotland's publicly rented housing, according to the Scottish TUC. A well overdue report by the National Audit Office is so critical of stock transfer, say reports, that ministers have demanded it is rewritten.

This is housing madness. Make sure every tenant, trade union, councillor and MP gets the facts and arguments against privatisation and for investment in council housing—without strings.

The case against stock transfer

Evictions by RSLs have risen by 36 percent; rents are more than 17

percent higher; transfer RSLs' housing management costs 39 percent more than local authorities'. One third of RSLs will not get tenants' homes up to a decent standard by 2010.

Very few RSLs have effective tenants associations. Some have tenants on the board but they are not legally allowed to act as reps. There is pressure to kick out tenants and have paid boards dominated by professionals.

RSLs work increasingly like businesses, with mergers and takeovers, and lenders rather than government in the driving seat.

As John Belcher, chief executive of one of the largest RSLs puts it, 'We're a business and all our divisions are expected to make a surplus.' They want to make it at our expense.

The case against PFI

PFI in housing is new, but in schools and hospitals the record is appalling. The first school PFI deals cost more for poorer quality than traditional funding, according to the Audit Commission. Developers expect at least 15 percent profit and often a lot more.

Costs escalate between bid and final contract—in Sandwell by over 60 percent according to the local paper.

CAMPAIGN UNITES TENANTS AND WORKERS

Privatisation, whether by transfer, PFI or ALMO, means public sector workers are TUPE transferred to the new private companies so pay, conditions, pensions and union organisation are all under attack. Many council workers are also council tenants, and are under pressure from two sides. Housing and other public sector workers want to provide a service, not spend their days making excuses and saying 'no' endlessly to tenants and the homeless.

Any risks are effectively underwritten by government with yet more public money. The National Audit Office describes 'errors, irrelevant or unrealistic analysis and pseudo-scientific mumbo-jumbo' behind claims that PFI is value for money.

Tenants have no right to a ballot, and often find public land 'gifted' to developers, with homes demolished to increase their profits. PFI gets first call on council budgets—cutting money from housing and other vital services.

Transferred housing staff are hit by 'two-tier' employment practices. Tenants have to live with developers running the show for up to 30 years.

The case against ALMO

Arms Length Management Organisations are the government's latest tactical fall-back, where they can't push through transfer or PFI. Under ALMO we stay as council tenants, hived off from but accountable to the council.

The carrot is an uncertain amount of extra funding for five years. If money is available, why can't it go into council housing directly?

ALMOs waste money on consultants, lawyers and other set-up costs, many moving to new businesslike offices with big new salaries for the top managers. Split into separate ALMOs, tenants are distracted from the united campaign for more investment. It is then much easier to push through full privatisation at a later stage.

The same trick was used to privatise bus services around the country, when councils set up wholly-owned companies and then sold them off: '[An ALMO] is compatible with achieving full stock transfer in the longer term,' as consultants PriceWaterhouseCoopers reported to Haringey council (June 2001).