

LAMBETH PENSIONERS ACTION GROUP

AGM 21 MARCH 2011

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

We will be going through difficult times as the impact of the Con Dem government austerity measures and local authority cuts take effect. We will be witnessing the erosion of the Welfare State and public services, widespread job losses, heightened dissatisfaction about working conditions and pension reforms and further student unrest at the loss of the EMA and increases in University fees. All this will be happening against the background of increases in VAT, fuel and cost of living

Here in Lambeth the council introduced cuts to public services on which we most depend. These cuts will hit the most vulnerable and amongst them women the hardest, .T he government says that “we are all in it together” and that they had no choice but to slash funding of essential services. As an action group we do have a choice .We can choose to accept rhe status quo or we can choose to join the campaigns and resistance against cuts which will inevitably damage the long term quality of our lives. I think our choice is clear We need to strengthen our resolve to challenge any moves that threaten our wellbeing and continue to campaign for real and long lasting change. We in LAMPAG have been at the forefront of the campaign to have have our demands as set out in the Pensioners Charter met and we have done this through our commitment to the aims of the group. We have to sustain this.

I would like to thank say a big thank to the outgoing committee for their hard hard work in taking the aims of the group forward, for their team spirit and for their support. Katie Anthony the members' secretary has informed us that she will be standing down from office due to other pressing commitments. She has been the members' secretary for two years. I would like to thank Katie on behalf of the group for carrying out her role so effectively. I would also like to pay tribute and salute members past and present who through their sterling efforts and resolve have ensured the continued existence of LAMPAG. I owe all a debt of gratitude.

I would now like to draw aside the dark clouds of the future that I have painted, by celebrating our achievements over the past year. Firstly I would like to announce that our finances are in a much healthier state now than it was last year, This is due the two grants which we successfully applied for and won from Grassroots Community Grants and from The Deutshe Bank. Most recently this month if fact, we managed to put in a proposal for a further £675 for a project which we got. This money will go towards setting up a website for LAMPAG.

LAMPAG has stood firm in upholding its tradition as an action group of campaigning and lobbying at both national and local levels. We joined the 10.0000 strong TUC March and Rally in April in defence of the Welfare State and Public Services and showed our solidarity with workers' organisations nationally and globally for improved workers rights and conditions on May Day. We have campaigned against the decisions to phase out the issue of giro cheques and the plans to force us to open a bank account and the privatisation of Royal Mail.

Post election May meet, LAMPAG was vociferous in its condemnation of George Osborne's Emergency budget and pledged ourselves to reject the cuts. LAMPAG joined the Lambeth SOS campaign Group made up of workers' and community groups to plan and to execute the resistance activities against the cuts in the borough.

We came out strongly against the proposed cuts announced by the Con- Dem Government which promises decades of pain for millions and billions for bankers. We joined community groups in June to make our voices heard about the proposed local authority cuts in a rally outside the Town Hall. Our campaign activities did not stop there.

The month of October saw pensioners at the NPC Rally and Lobby of Parliament, Lambeth against the cuts Demo and the Women against the cuts outside the Treasury on a freezing cold evening. LAMPAG joined the panel of speakers at the SOS Lambeth against the cuts campaign Public Meeting where we highlighted the effects of the cuts on older people. and the most vulnerable.

The New Year has become the year of fight back and resistance. So LAMPAG will be joining public services workers on the TUC Day of Action on 26 March to send a strong message to the government that we oppose the cuts and call for job creation, the end to the privatisation of our services and for economic growth.

Last month we were refused the opportunity to have a say on how the Lambeth cuts will impact on our lives when the Council denied us the state basic right of representation to the cabinet meeting on the cuts by holding the meeting and passing the cuts in private.

Throughout the year, LAMPAG has ensured that it is the voice of the voiceless and the public face of pensioners. We have been involved in groups where we can have an influence on policy and decision making. Hence we have representation on the LINKs Committee and attend and addressed key meetings and the Older People's Partnership Action Board. LAMPAG has participated in consultation meetings on the Co-Operative Council and has spoken at Scrutiny Meetings against the cuts to adult services. We have had input into Defend Council Housing discussions on Housing in Lambeth. We have joined parents and children against library closures.

LAMPAG works closely with AgeUK Lambeth and as affiliate of the NPC has worked with and supported the NPC in achieving dignity, respect and security in old age.

We hear about people being made redundant, hospital closures, people being told that they will have to work longer, the young unable to find work and poverty levels increasing. These cuts are ideologically driven and an attack on working people. We cannot remain complacent and sit back and see this kind of pain inflicted on our communities. We need to form a broad alliance with others to oppose the spending cuts and the changes to our health, social care, education, pensions, housing and public services. We owe this to ourselves and to the generations to come.

Ellen Lebethe. Chair)

