NALGO
# BRIEFING

# NALGO AND THE GENERAL ELECTION

EVERY NALGO member has an interest in seeing Thatcher defeated at the polls. The main challenges facing the union — privatisation in local government and other services, cutbacks in public spending, attacks on local democracy and restrictions on trade union rights — are a direct result of Tory policies. The injunction brought against the 'Make People Matter' campaign by Tory trade unionists vividly demonstrated what everyone knew — the Tories are hostile to trade unionism, and that includes NALGO.

*NALGO Briefing* believes that it is contradictory to the facts of everyday life to pretend that the union can be 'non-political'. Thatcher has made trade unionism political, by politically attacking it at every turn. But NALGO is hamstrung in its response by having to maintain the facade of being a 'non-political union'.

The 1984 amendments to the Trade Union Act make it extremely difficult to pursue even the fight for basic trade union interests without having a political fund; the NEC must campaign vigorously for a 'yes' vote. Virtually every other union now has a political fund. Without it NALGO will be fighting with one hand tied behind its back.

There is nothing to be gained for NALGO in developing friendly relations with the SDP/Liberal Alliance. The Alliance proposals on trade union law are in some ways worse than the Tory laws — they have been rejected, lock, stock and barrel, by the NEC. We ask Mike Blick and Sheila Smith — why are you supporters of parties which are hostile to trade unionism? If Dr Death were Prime Minister, privatisation would proceed apace and the unions will be thoroughly bashed.

In the event that the Tories or the Alliance are elected, NALGO members face a tough few years ahead. The union will have to strain every muscle to resist new attacks on our members. Publicity campaigns alone will not be enough; it will require more effort to strengthen the organisation of the union at workplace and branch level to wage a fight — including using what for the NEC is unmentionable — industrial action.

The sleep walking routinism of Mabledon Place must come to an end. If Organising Officers don't organise — but merely send out circulars — the whole union will suffer the fate of Ada Maddocks' disaster area in the Health Service, where members are leaving in droves, while the Health Section hierarchy keeps its eyes firmly shut.

The only election result which could offer anything at all to NALGO — and then not much — would be a Labour victory. For NALGO to use its considerable (potential) clout, means recognising who are our friends and who are our enemies. NALGO should vote in a political fund and affiliate to the Labour Party. If Messrs Blick and Smith think it's possible to support the Alliance and be good trade unionists, that's their contradiction. NALGO needs to mix it with the mainstream of the labour movement, and get off the 'apolitical' fence.



**Pritchards — one of many contractors doing very nicely**

## FRINGE MEETINGS TO LOOK OUT FOR

**MONDAY — 12.30 — Baronial Hall, Winter Gardens**
***Ratecapping: Is there life after creative accountancy?***
**Organised by Camden NALGO**

**MONDAY — 7.30 — Tara Hotel**
***What policy for Ireland?***
**Debate organised by National Broad Left**

**TUESDAY — 6.00 — Opera House Circle Lounge**
***MSC — Working for Thatcher***

**WEDNESDAY — 5.30 — Savoy Hotel**
***Stop the Deportations***

**WEDNESDAY — 7.30 — Baronial Hall, Winter Gardens**
***NALGO for Labour rally***

**FRIDAY — 12.30 — Baronial Hall, Winter Gardens**
***After the election, what next for the left in NALGO?***
**Debate organised by Met District Broad Left**

## WHAT IS NALGO BRIEFING?

**THIS BULLETIN has been produced by supporters of *Labour Briefing* — a fortnightly journal of socialists in the Labour Party. *Labour Briefing* is determined that the record of past Labour Governments should not be repeated without opposition. *Labour Briefing* is campaigning against the drift to the right and coalition that Kinnock is imposing on the Labour Party by fighting for socialist policies and against expulsions of leftwingers. In the unions, *Labour Briefing* supports the setting up of Broad Lefts to combat the 'new realism' of Willis and Todd which has meant no opposition to the Tory anti-union laws, and acceptance of an incomes policy from a future Labour Government.**

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# THE LEFT IN NALGO

MOST NALGO activists would probably consider themselves part of the 'Broad Left'. But what exactly is the Broad Left and what role should it play in the future?

In terms of organisation, the NALGO Action Group has come and gone. Originally a coming together of a fair cross-section of the left, it won a number of victories on both the conference floor and at NEC elections. It led the first round of campaigning for shop stewards systems, fought for flat rate pay rises and for higher grades for typists. It backed the successful election campaigns of such worthies as Jean Geldart and Will Fancy in the Met — a district that these days can't muster a single left NEC member out of eight.

Unfortunately internal wrangling and a certain amount of political sectarianism slowly strangled NAG and the final blow occured at the 1982 conference when the SWP pulled out amidst angry scenes at a fringe meeting.

The Broad Left, launched at a fringe meeting at '83 conference, made an auspicious start with an excellent weekend conference on privatisation hosted by the Leeds branch. However, disagreements as to who was in control of the conference agenda and what its aims were, pointed to the political differences which were to erupt later. It must be said that the impact of the Broad Left in NALGO has been tiny and has borne no relation to the high profile campaigns of the NALGO Action Group.

The public self-destruction of the Broad Left happened at last year's conference at a fringe event advertised as a debate between Derek Hatton and Margaret Hodge, neither of whom turned up. Instead a Liverpool councillor, drafted in as a substitute for Derek Hatton, was bitterly criticised by the Liverpool NALGO leadership and black members, and staunchly defended by NALGO Militant supporters. Ian Stephenson bravely tried to keep some control from the chair while assorted individuals scored meaningless political points. For those on the left who have patiently tried to develop a functioning democratic national left in the union it was a disaster.

In the last twelve months since the Bournemouth conference nothing has been seen of the national Broad Left but the North West caucus continues along with a small but gallant band in the Met. Now, on the eve of a General Election, is an appropriate time to make some strategic decisions. On a national level the Broad Left doesn't exist and organisationally and politically it is incapable of achieving the aim of a national democratic left capable of any meaningful campaigning in the union. Yet there are vibrant, healthy campaigns in the union — the Black members groups, lesbian and gay groups, disability groups, Irish workers groups, women's groups, the United Ireland campaign, the YTS/ community programme campaign and others, all organising and campaigning on issues supported by the majority of NALGO activists would would describe themselves as 'broad left'. Thousands of NALGO activists are committed to the development of strong shop stewards systems, holding together branch executives and campaigning at District level sometimes through the maintenance of District Broad Lefts.

There is a growing need for effective action against the apartheid regime in South Africa which reaches out from conference and District Council meetings to involve the entire membership. And the ever growing number of NALGO members trapped in the low pay ghetto desperately need a militant campaign to achieve decent pay levels. To fight back effectively against the anti trade union laws we need a political fund and a campaign for a 'yes' vote in such a ballot is vital.

Such campaigns, stewards committees, branch executives, district broad lefts, form the core of an opposition to those in government and in our own union who would wish to see us shackled by anti trade union legislation and smashed up by rampant privatisation. We need to strengthen these campaigns, launch new initiatives around such issues as apartheid and low pay. We must link these campaigns, stewards and district activists to fight common issues and enemies. The building blocks of a real 'democratic left' capable of challenging for the leadership of this union exist here and now — the rebuilding of the left must start from this conference.

**Bill Hamilton**
**Met District Broad Left**

# SHOULD NALGO EMPLOY FASCISTS?

Paul Kingsley, the branch administration officer for the West Sussex NALGO branch, is a leading light of the fascist movement in Britain today. He has a long history of the fascist movement dating back to 1975 when he stood for council elections on an NF platform. The anti-fascist magazine *Searchlight* has documented his activities up to the present day. In January of his year, Kingsley was one of the prime movers to form a breakaway loyalist Trades Union Congress in Ulster.

It should not be necessary to repeat to NEC members of NALGO what fascism stands for: the destruction of the organised labour movement, forced repatriation of all black people, physical attacks on gays, lesbians, jews, black people and all others they see as being abnormal and not pure British. These attacks on individuals have often been lethal, and in any case are designed to terrorise. Mobilisations in the 70s were able to deny the fascists from having a platform and stopped them from publicly organising. In the 80s, the various fascist currents have adopted a long term strategy of infiltration of the Tory Party, but also of the unions and even of the Labour Party.

It is therefore an intolerable situation that NALGO continues to allow the employment of a fascist, yet the NEC prefers to ignore the situation. Two years ago, NALGO happily sacked Jim Roberts, a Labour Party member, on the suspicion that he leaked union information to employers. This sacking was totally unjustified. Today, we are certain that Paul Kingsley is a fascist and a threat to the union and its members. If Whitehall and Lewisham Council can sack fascists, then there are no reasons why the NEC should have cold feet. Paul Kingsley must be sacked.

**Fred Leplat**
**ILEA NALGO**

## J O H N  W H O ?

John Daly is paid more than the General Secretary of the TUC and the leader of the Labour Party. He is on a scale which goes from £35,000 to £38,000 a year, plus a chauffeur driven car. That works out, when London weighting is added in, at more than £20 per hour or about £150 per day. John WHO?

## J O H N  T H E  P I T T S

Good riddance to John Pitt, National Officer for Water/Transport, who recently departed to be Personnel Officer with British Water. Pitt will now represent the employers at negotiations with NALGO. Pitt distinguished himself by presiding over the collapse of the membership in transport, and by not lifting a finger in the fight against water privatisation — despite getting the credit. Isn't it about time the union started using a commitment to trade unionism as one of the criteria for employing people. John Pitt thinks it's 'good to be controversial' (sic). All those in favour of being controversial for £35,000 p.a. — hands up.

## 4 5 %  V O T E  F O R  A  H O L I D A Y

Last year's ballot for industrial action for the pay claim produced a 45% positive vote. This was a surprisingly high positive vote. Was this helped by the fact that Keith Sonnet, the Local Government Officer, went on holiday for 6 weeks during the Campaign?

# REJECT THE PAY OFFER

THE PAY offer by the employers is not a rotten deal: it keeps pay rising slightly above inflation, there is a flat rate element and miscellaneous grades 1/2 have been deleted. It is understandable that the left on the NLGC voted to accept the offer, especially as the campaign for the pay claim has been a low key affair.

Nevertheless, the offer should be rejected because it is far from meeting the objectives that NALGO had set: eradicating poverty pay. The pay of APT&C staff has fallen in relation to private sector pay since the 1979 comparability study, and low pay is widespread with 45% of APT&C staff earning below £125 per week. The original NALGO claim for 12% or £900 would have started to oust poverty wages in local government. However the employers' offer falls just half way below the claim, and the lowest paid on scale 1 get a relatively low rise as the flat rate does not extend to them.

The left on the NLGC should therefore have voted against the offer, and campaigned for rejection in the union. Last year's near majority for industrial action was a strong basis for relaunching the campaign this year. NALGO could combine its fight against low pay with that of the teachers and civil servants, thus building a stronger campaign.

The case for continuing the fight against low pay is overwhelming and the offer should therefore be rejected. The possibility of losing the ballot for industrial action is not a reason for acceptance and dropping the campaign. In fact it will be even harder to relaunch the campaign next year as those that indicated a willingness to fight in last year's ballot will have been demobilised, especially as the employers are giving a 2.5% rise in February. Accepting the offer will mean throwing away the opportunity NALGO has now to fight low pay — this opportunity will not present itself again in the near future.

LABOUR COUNCILS 88/89:

# NO CUTS IN JOBS & SERVICES

**Meeting for local authority trade-unionists, councillors and Labour Party members: Saturday 27 June, 1-5pm, Camden Town Hall.**

**Eight years of Tory attacks on local government finances have taken their toll, some Labour authorities have made cuts in jobs and services, many have stretched creative accountancy to the limit. More and more have been ratecapped. Whether Labour wins or loses the General Election, Labour authorities and their workforce face a crisis in 1988/89. If Labour win, we will have to force it to come to our aid. If Labour loses, there will be no other options but to cut or to struggle against the new Tory Government. This year, most Labour authorities muddled through hoping for a Labour Government. Some miscalculated and made cuts or rent and rate rises. There was no serious attempt in the Labour Party to co-ordinate a Left response in London or nationally on the basis of no cuts in jobs and services. *Labour Briefing* is appealing for support for the meeting on June 27 to prepare now for next year's budgets.**

# THE PAWP REPORT: A GOOD START

DESPITE BEING one year late, the Positive Action Working Party (PAWP) Report is a very important document and should be welcomed by members of NALGO and other unions. This official Report has the most far-reaching recommendations ever to be proposed by a union in Britain for ensuring representation and an effective voice in the decision-making process by self-organised groups (black members, lesbian and gay members, members with disabilities, etc). It has detailed analysis of the needs of the self-organised groups, and the proposals reflect the requirements that were put forward by these groups in the consultation process. The most important proposal in the document is the setting aside of reserved seats for the self-organised groups that have requested such representation. Reserved seats is nothing new to NALGO: such seats exist to ensure representation of minority services such as Gas, Water, etc.

It is therefore a pity that the NEC chose to put out the Report for consultation to branches and districts without any recommendation. Furthermore, the distribution of the Report has unfortunately been limited to 4 copies per branch.

However, branches and districts should examine very carefully the PAWP Report, as they will find it useful even if they do already have some self-organised groups. But branches and districts should not wait until the Report is adopted by the 1988 Conference before taking up and implementing its proposals. This should be done now!

# LOCAL GOVERNMENT PAY IN 1987

FOR MANY NALGO members in local government pay has not been the major priority issue over the last few years of action and campaigns. The attacks of privatisation, ratecapping, cuts and abolition have seen many local government workers organising to defend services and jobs. Pay has tended to take a back seat in the face of these attacks and members living standards have been eroded as a result.

Last year's Low Pay Unit report showed that there were well over 200,000 white collar workers in local government receiving less in wages than the low pay level. NALGO's claims have, for the last three years, emphasised the factor of low pay amongst our membership. If we want to prioritise low pay and the reduction of differentials within NALGO then every claim should be a flat rate amount not the mixed claims which still give higher increases to the high paid!

This year's claim, although a mixed claim, contained a substantial flat rate element, £900. Many NALGO activists preferred to campaign around this element, rather than the 12% for PO6s and 7s. It is therefore disappointing that although the national employers have, for the first time, conceded a flat rate element in their latest offer, that that offer is not a substantial one.

The 5% now, 2½% in February '88 offer which came from the employers at the NJC on the 14th May has been pitched sufficiently high to make a successful ballot on industrial action unlikely. That is the main reason why many on the left in the National Local Government Committee voted to recommend acceptance. However, the offer itself, although better than many expected, is not a good one. The offer still maintains 150,000 workers below the low pay threshold this year and it discriminates against the lowest paid — the under 18s. Further, by introducing a February increase, it will have a potentially demobilising effect on next year's claim.

There is an urgent need to develop a fighting campaign on pay — based on a substantial flat rate claim and the effective strike action necessary to win it. It must be recognised that we are a long way away from this stage with many NALGO members. We must integrate the pay issue with the fight against cuts and privatisation — to be taken on by all members over the next year. In that way we can stop pay remaining a minor issue in 1988.

**Dave Burn**
**Islington NALGO Branch Secretary**
**N.L.G.C. (personal capacity)**

# RATE-CAPPING – IS THERE LIFE AFTER CREATIVE ACCOUNTING?

THE SURVIVAL of local government rests squarely on the outcome of the General Election.

While a Labour victory will not restore us to instant health, a third Tory term is certain death. If that sounds a bit over the top, consider the legislation which will certainly be passed in the early stages of a Tory administration:

- extension of compulsory tendering throughout local government services;
- abolition of rates in favour of a local 'community charge' and standardisation of the business rate (which would finish off some inner city boroughs like Camden);
- privatisation of water and electricity;
- abolition of Council housing as a form of tenure;
- continued asset stripping of the NHS;
- selective education by concentrating education policy away from local authorities.

A Labour victory will guarantee our futures, as the Party has not committed itself to repaying the lost Rates Support Grant or bailing out those authorities which are now facing a crisis because they used accounting measures to avoid cutting jobs and services.

After all, many Labour controlled authorities Councillors *are* planning for cuts and handing increased power to Chief Officers as part of their budget control exercises. Even those who strongly resisted the Rates Act in 1985 are now thinking the unthinkable; vacancy freezes, stops on all reviews, reorganisations, attempts to cut various service conditions and working standards are already clearly detailed and will be introduced in the next few weeks if there is a Tory victory.

If we do face that reality on Friday then we must be prepared to organise to defend the policy of 'no cuts in jobs and services' which has been maintained in many local authorities against increasing odds since 1985. The Councillors may be prepared to abandon their commitments in order to balance the books; NALGO branches must not collude in these 'soft cuts' policies. That would be precisely what the Tories wanted when they first introduced the Rates Act; get the Labour authorities to make the cuts and, even better, the unions to accept them. We can't let that happen.

**Jo Fawkes**
**Camden NALGO and National Rate Capping Liaison Group**

# VOTE NO TO CHEAP LABOUR SCHEMES: WITHDRAW FROM THE MSC

At this year's conference there will be a major debate on the role of the Manpower Services Commission (MSC) and the proliferation of so called job creation schemes including the Youth Training Scheme, the Community Programme and the new Job Training Scheme.

Under the Tories the MSC's role has expanded massively, but schemes to promote 'training' and 'work experience' have very little to do with tackling unemployment and a great deal to do with conditioning workers to expect low-paid, part-time, temporary work. YTS, the CP and JTS are nothing more than cheap labour schemes, which undermine trade union rights and substitute for permanent staff.

Local government and Health Authority workers in particular have been affected for instance in Rochdale where the majority of council workers are employed on MSC schemes! The new JTS (benefit plus travel expenses) will reinforce this as 20% of the planned 110,000 places will be in local government. The JTS is the clearest example of a 'work for benefit' scheme, as only a maximum of four hours per week are allocated for training. So a NALGO boycott of the JTS could have a major impact.

In the face of this massive attack on workers' rights, terms and conditions the TUC response has been pathetic, giving credibility to the MSC by sitting on Area Boards, often rubber-stamping schemes. The opposition to the new JTS voiced by the Scottish and Welsh TUCs has been ignored by the TUC General Council who's May meeting voted *not* to boycott the scheme. This was after a great deal of pressure had been put on the TGWU, from the Labour Party leadership, not to boycott and "rock the boat" during the election. The NALGO leadership then fell into line.

On the Community Programme NALGO Executive will be proposing a moratorium on all new schemes. This is not enough. The first step in fighting back against Tory attacks on workers is to unconditionally withdraw from the MSC and immediately boycott existing CP, YTS and JTS schemes, replacing these with training under trade union control and real jobs under trade union terms and conditions. Organised trade unionists have a responsibility to fight against unemployment — the only negotiations the MSC will understand is to withdraw and boycott their cheap labour schemes.

**Jane Connor**
**Haringey NALGO (vol sec)**

# NALGO AND IRELAND

THIS YEAR, there will be a major discussion on Ireland at NALGO Conference. The fact that this will take place in the midst of an election campaign in which no major party makes even a passing reference to the past 18 years of conflict in the Six Counties, makes NALGO's role even more crucial. As the fourth largest union in Britain, and which has a history of support for international struggles, NALGO is well placed to take up the policies agreed and to campaign for them within the TUC.

Last year's conference discussed the role of apartheid in South Africa. For some, it is easy to see colonialism and imperialism in South Africa with a population divided according to their skin colour. Britain has used the same strategy, but this time using religion, to dominate Ireland over the last 800 years. Land and employment was offered to the protestant community while catholic small holders were driven into emigration. This trend continued even after the creation of Ulster which had an inbuilt protestant majority. Figures from the Government's own Fair Employment Agency show unemployment for protestant males at 13.1% and catholic males at 31.4%. Yet the Government continues to give contracts to Harland and Wolf, Shorts, etc. ... where a mere 5% of the workforce are catholic in a city which returns a nationalist MP. Unemployment bars catholics not only from a job but also from having a voice in the unions.

Any campaign for employment or civil rights cannot fail to draw attention to the roots of the present conflict: the continuing British presence in Ireland and the repressive means used to contain any protest. Nearly 20 years after the original civil rights marches in Derry, the catholic community not only continues to face discrimination in housing and employment, but they also have to face plastic bullets, strip searches, troops in the streets, and trials without jury based on the evidence of paid informers. And yet, the Anglo-Irish Agreement has changed absolutely nothing to this situation. In fact more troops have been sent in, and more UDR officers have been signed up.

It is now more urgent than ever for British trade-unionists to raise discrimination, civil rights, British interference in Ireland, and freedom for those wrongly imprisoned such as the Guildford 4 and the Birmingham 6. If not Ireland will continue to be dragged into the US/British backyard.

**Nadine Finch**
**NALGO Campaign for a United Ireland**