

**Q** If the government has extra money for ALMOs why can't they give it to the council direct?

**A** Their agenda is privatisation. Don't take the first step—VOTE NO to ALMO

# Resist the blackmail

## CAMDEN TRIED THE SAME BLACKMAIL IN 1997

Five years ago Camden threatened tenants that if we didn't accept stock transfer there would be no major repairs and improvements to our homes.

Their "New Opportunities" document argued at the time that all they could do was just "strive to keep homes safe, warm and dry, but little more."

"Major repairs and renovation projects... would be unaffordable... Overall, the condition of our housing stock would gradually get worse. Most people would continue to be forced to wait a long time for even modest improvements."

Well since 1997 Camden has had a big investment programme benefiting many tenants. The council's predictions were wrong.

They deliberately painted a bleak picture in 1997 to blackmail tenants to accept selling off our homes. Today they are using exactly the same argument to try and get us to accept ALMOs.



Protest at town hall after Shadow Board election fiasco

**THEY PROMISED RAIL AND TUBE PRIVATISATION WOULDN'T AFFECT SAFETY. HANDS OFF OUR HOMES!**

A strong, independent tenants' movement with tenants' associations on every estate and street is a much more effective defence of tenants' interests than a handful of board members.

## What you can do

It is wrong that the council is using our rents to pay for its pro-ALMO campaign (glossy brochures, mailshots to all tenants, information vans, colour press adverts, show flats, staff time, etc).

We have to rely on donations from tenants' associations, Unison (the trade union representing council workers), individual contributions and fundraising to put the case against.

family, friends and neighbours and get them to

### VOTE NO

Some material is available in Sylheti, Somali, Greek, Chinese and French—help translate more.

For posters, postcards, more copies of this broadsheet or other information ring us on 7419 4923 or 7209 0197.

### Council propoganda dishonest

Camden council are pumping out publications every week dishonestly suggesting that new kitchens and bathrooms are dependent on going ALMO.

Even their revised Business Plan calculations—now £338 million (see inside page for why they keep changing their figures) makes it clear that the council will have a substantial capital programme without the ALMO.

Many tenants will get a new kitchen and bathroom even if we vote no (we might not get the tacky plastic bowls and towels in their photographs). Replacement will just take longer.

If the council isn't prepared to be open and honest on this issue what else can we trust them on?



"Now I want to call upon all tenants in Camden to unite under one banner. Regardless of your political views, we must stand together to defeat this idea. I make a last appeal to the chair of housing and the leader of the council to drop this idea before you all build a heap of trouble."

**Eddie O'Dwyer, Chair, Hardington & Belmont TA**

### How cheaply can you be bought?

Camden Citizen says, "The prospect of being able to cook in a stylish, fitted kitchen, or take a shower in a modern bathroom would be a dream."

Aren't they just exaggerating a tiny wee bit the impact new kitchen cupboards will have on our lives?

## FOUNDATION HOSPITALS:

Arms-Length Management for the NHS

Local MPs Frank Dobson and Glenda Jackson are opposed to Foundation Hospitals—part of the government's drive to privatise our public services.

They have argued that the government case for Foundation Hospitals is nonsense and dangerous and will undermine the NHS.

Foundation Hospitals are being promoted along the same lines as ALMOs. Ministers argue freedom from Whitehall control will improve services—they will act as 'public benefit corporations' run by boards of 'local stakeholders' and will be 'not-for-profit'. Does that sound familiar?

Councillors and MPs should recognise that ALMOs are the housing equivalent of Foundation Hospitals. They both seek to use a new company to break public control and accountability and pave the way for the private sector to take over.

We need to defend the principle of decent, affordable, secure and accountable council housing alongside a secure National Health Service.

## YOUR VOTE COUNTS

The council knows that: **MOST TENANTS** understand that this government wants to privatise our public services—and are against privatisation.

**MOST TENANTS** don't vote in local or national elections because they think it will make no difference.

## IN THIS BALLOT EVERY VOTE COUNTS.

If the majority of tenants **VOTE NO** we can stop the **ALMO** and send a clear message to government:

**CAMDEN TENANTS WANT 'DIRECT INVESTMENT IN COUNCIL HOUSING—WITH NO STRINGS ATTACHED'**

## Council workers oppose the ALMO too

Unison members who work in the council can see the dangers of an ALMO. We are fearful that it will lead to a new "company culture" and become more and more distant from the council ideal of providing a comprehensive local service.

Arms length companies that have taken over running Leisure and Social Services, in other parts of the country, have led to privatisation. An ALMO will create a new layer of highly paid senior managers—usually paid for by cutting frontline staff.

Council promises that workers won't lose out are nonsense. Just ask anyone who has been TUPE transferred from the council, NHS, rail or other public services.

This will lead to more staff demoralisation and higher turnover, which affects the services tenants receive.

Most of us have chosen to work for the council because we want to provide an important public service. Many of us are council tenants ourselves. Everyone living in London knows how important council housing is, for this and future generations.

An ALMO won't just affect housing staff. Workers in other council departments such as Legal and Information Technology will suffer if central services are outsourced to private contractors.

That's why Camden Unison members are 100 percent with tenants in opposing the ALMO. We are determined to fight this together. **Camden Unison**

# CAMDEN DEFEND COUNCIL HOUSING

# VOTE NO TO ALMO



October 2003

Camden Council claims that it is against privatisation of council housing but only five years ago they wanted to sell off our homes and called it "New Opportunities"!

Both times they have denied it has got anything to do with privatisation. If we'd accepted their advice in 1997 we wouldn't be council tenants today.

The government and council are now pushing ALMOs because they know that tenants in areas like Camden won't accept stock transfer. ALMOs have been developed as a two-stage strategy to privatisation (see inside).

They hope that if they can separate housing management from the council, get a new private company in place and put distance between the new company and the council then it will be easier to sell our homes later.

We're expected to believe their assurances that they would never do this. But their past record—and their refusal to campaign against government policy today—makes this hard to rely on.

Who is confident that the same councillors who tell us there is "no alternative"

would stand up to further government pressure tomorrow?

Council housing is worth defending. The council is far from brilliant but it's a better landlord than most. We pay our rent and we have a right to expect a decent service—not blackmail to accept a new company managing our homes.

For years governments have told us there is no money for improvements. Suddenly there is plenty of money—but only if we accept ALMOs. This "new" money comes from tenants' rents. Ask yourself: why can't the government give the extra money to the council direct—as tenants are demanding—unless they have a privatisation agenda?

Camden has sufficient resources to do all the most urgent work to our estates and provide many new kitchens and bathrooms. Most tenants would rather it took a bit longer than face the risks attached to ALMOs.

Our campaigning has already forced concessions from the government. Now Ministers are under increasing pressure to show they are listening to ordinary people.

We can win much more. We can win direct investment in council housing with no strings attached. Vote No.

## COUNCIL BRIBERY—IT'S NOT WORTH THE RISK

They call it "choice" but Camden's 'information' to tenants is just a one-sided, hard-sell marketing campaign.

They are dishonestly exaggerating the benefits of ALMOs by suggesting that every tenant will get a new kitchen and bathroom. They won't.

The council's Housing News (August 2003) only promises "almost 15,000 homes will have a new kitchen and/or bathroom". Once again they are delib-

erately misleading tenants and not telling us the truth.

If their programme goes over budget (as many do) or the government cuts spend-

ing on ALMOs, even fewer tenants would actually get what they expected. We'd still be stuck with the ALMO!

The council hides the fact that Camden's existing resources—without an ALMO—will cover much of the promised work.

They are desperate to get another award and don't want to embarrass the government.

Tell councillors: Defending council housing is the main priority for Camden council tenants!

## 8 REASONS TO REJECT ALMOs

- 1 This government wants to privatise council housing—ALMOs are a key part of their strategy
- 2 Camden can afford to do all the urgent repairs and improvements without going ALMO. There is no need to take the risk!
- 3 Elected councillors will no longer be accountable for what happens to our homes. It's a recipe for excuses
- 4 A separate private company means less coordination between housing and other services—when we need more!
- 5 Tenants on the board will not be allowed to represent our interests—their hands will be tied by company law
- 6 Massive amounts will be spent on consultants, re-organisation and higher senior managers' pay
- 7 Housing workers will lose out by being TUPE transferred. Staff turnover and demoralisation will affect the service
- 8 Winning direct investment without strings is worth fighting for. We've already won concessions. We can win much more!

This publication has been certified **FREE FROM ADDED PROFIT** No highly paid consultants, senior managers or ambitious politicians have been involved in this broadsheet

This broadsheet was entirely written by council tenants with the financial help of the Camden UNISON union.

Camden, on top of spending our rent on council publications promoting the ALMO, have also employed consultants to promote their plans.

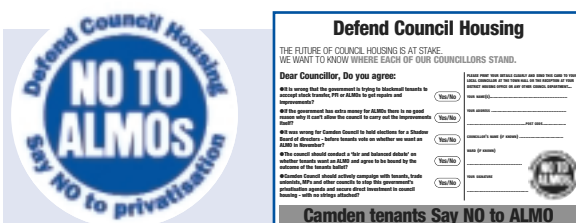
Aldbourne Associates call themselves an "Independent Tenants' Friend". But paid by the council they are neither "independent", "tenants" or our "friends".

This isn't a fair and balanced debate! Ask yourself—Why not?

## THANKS FOR YOUR HELP

Thanks to the tenants on all these estates who have helped by delivering broadsheets and putting up posters. Please make sure that every tenant gets to read this new broadsheet. If you want help to do your area get in touch.

Agar Grove	Clarence Way	Langdon House	Russell Nurseries
Amphill Square	CRAB	Lissenden Gardens	Sidney Boyd Court
Artisan Dwellings	Denton	Ludham & Waxham	South Hampstead Housing
Bacton	Dudley House	Maiden Lane	St Pancras Way Co-Op
Barnfield/Woodfield	Durdans House	Maitland Park	Templar House
Bayham Place	Gamages	Millman Ct	TBH
Bourne Estate	Godwin & Crowndale	Monmouth Hse & Alpha Ct	Torriano Estate
Broadfield & Fairhurst	Gospel Oak 7&8	8 Newton Street	Tybalds Close
Brunswick Estate	Hardington & Belmont	Peckwater Estate	Wendling Estate
Bury Place	Highgate Newtown	Primrose Hill Court	Wells House
Camden Square Area	Hilgrove	Red Lion	Westcroft Estate
Cayford House	Holly Lodge	Regents Square	Widford/Heybridge/Roxwell
Chalcots Estate	Ingestre Rd	Rowstock	Willingham/Kenistoun



## SEND A POSTCARD!

It's time that politicians represent the interests of the people who elect them—not just tell us what the government wants us to accept.

Get copies of the campaign postcard for yourself, friends and neighbours. Send them to your MP and local councillors to tell them what you think and urge them to support our campaign.

If you agree there should be a fair debate:

- Distribute this broadsheet to every council home
- Put up posters on your estate and in your area
- Organise a meeting and invite a DCH speaker to debate with the council so all tenants can hear both sides of the argument
- Raise money to pay for the campaign
- Most important... talk to your

