

# Defend Council Housing

at Labour Conference

## What's the difference between 6 and 7?

THREE YEARS RUNNING Labour Party conference has supported the demands now described by everyone (including government Ministers) as the 'Fourth Option'. We've called on government to listen to council tenants, respect their choice and provide a level playing field of direct investment in council housing.

The last four paragraphs in Composite 6 directly quotes from Composite 10 passed last year. This in turn directly quoted from the motion passed by conference the previous year, which was based on the 2004 motion passed by an eight-to-one vote.

Much of Composite 6 has been accepted into Composite 7. But Composite 7 excludes the crucial paragraph from our motion. This is the eighth paragraph ("Conference re-affirms...") that sets out the specific measures required.



**by Austin Mitchell  
MP, chair, House  
of Commons Council  
Housing group**

There is also a deliberate sleight of hand in Composite 7, making a small but key change. Did you notice? The founding demand of our campaign "investment in decent, affordable, secure and accountable council housing" becomes "investment in decent, affordable, secure social housing" in Composite 7 (paragraph four). These are not the same thing!

Our alliance of tenants, trade unions, councillors and MPs has campaigned for the 'Fourth Option' because council housing has 'secure' (rather than 'assured') tenancies, has lower rents and charges and is run by an elected landlord that it is easier for tenants to hold to account. That's why

so many council tenants across England, Wales and Scotland have stood up to the bullying, turning down the bribes of new kitchens and bathrooms, conditional on accepting one of the government's privatisation options.

It is time that government stopped ignoring council tenants. It is time that Ministers got around the table to settle this dispute and find formulas to enable all local authorities to improve their homes and estates, start building a new generation of first class council housing and ensure that all council homes are maintained as first class housing in years to come.

Support Composite 6, and note the attempt to blur the important differences between council (public) housing and private housing in Composite 7. We haven't fought this long and hard and come this far to be fobbed off now. ●

Tenants, trade unions, councillors and MPs say:

## 'FOURTH OPTION' for COUNCIL HOUSING

1. Enable local authorities to improve all existing council homes and estates;
2. Allow local authorities to start a new council house building programme;
3. Ensure that local authorities have sufficient revenue to maintain all council homes in future years;
4. Detailed proposals and a clearly defined timetable for implementation;
5. An immediate moratorium on any further transfers, PFI or ALMOs, demolition schemes or sale of council land and properties, until the new options have been formulated, to give tenants real choice.