



Edinburgh TUC Anti Cuts Newsletter March 2015

LOBBY OF THE CITY COUNCIL - THURSDAY 12TH FEBRUARY 2015

Over a 100 people from a range of trade union and community organisations gathered outside the City Chambers to protest against the £22 million cuts that were planned by the ruling SNP-Labour coalition.

Nine deputations, all opposed to the cuts, addressed the Council. The deputations included Edinburgh Trade Union Council, City Council Joint Trade Union Committee, UNITE Edinburgh Not For Profit Branch, East Edinburgh Save Our Services, Edinburgh Tenants Federation, Edinburgh Voluntary Organisations Council, Womens International Group of Royston/ Wardieburn Community Centre, Edinburgh Anti Cuts Alliance and the Friends of the Meadows and Bruntsfield Links.

No Need for Cuts

The delegation from Edinburgh TUC asked the Council to put pressure on the Scottish Parliament to give it the necessary powers to raise additional finance. The delegation noted that the Green Party now supports such powers. As yet neither of the two major parties - Labour or the SNP - seem to have any policy on how to resolve the financial problems of Scottish local authorities. All people can expect is more and more austerity, for years to come, more cuts and more devastation of services.

Other sources of income

The Scottish Parliament could decided to amend the **Council Tax** rules to create higher bands (the current bands are well out of date) and could allow increases to be restricted to the higher bands. It is only right that the better off in Edinburgh should pay more in Council Tax as they have not suffered as much as most people in the Age of Austerity.

The Scottish Parliament could allow the Council to levy a **tourist/ visitors tax** along the lines of a similar tax levied in other European cities.

The Scottish Parliament could allow the Council to levy a **supermarket tax** which currently can be levied in Northern Ireland.

The Scottish Parliament could allow the Council to institute a **workplace parking levy**. English local authorities are allowed to have this levy. A Workplace Parking Levy (or WPL) is a charge on employers who provide workplace parking, a type of congestion charging scheme that has been introduced in Nottingham. See:<<http://www.nottinghamcity.gov.uk/wpl>>.

The Green Party has estimated that the combination of all these income generating proposals would have raised over £25 million if the visitors tax was low at the level of £1 or £2 per night. A higher visitors tax (at £5 per night) would raise a lot more and, from European evidence, would have no impact on the numbers of tourists coming to Edinburgh every year.

Did our representations have any impact on the ruling coalition?

According to the Edinburgh Evening News Councillor Burns, the leader of the Council, has pledged to make a strong case to the Scottish Government for more income generating powers. We have also heard from informal sources that SNP Councillors have expressed worries about local authority funding to local MSPs and Party leaders. They have asked for the Council Tax freeze to end and for the other powers to be looked at.

Although all politicians are focused on the impending UK General Election we have to keep up the pressure to preserve Council services



JOIN THE EDINBURGH ANTI CUTS ALLIANCE

Edinburgh Trade Union Council invites you to support the Alliance.

Join our email network to receive newsletters and hear about campaign activities and events. Email: info-etuc@btconnect.com.

The Cost of the Cuts: The Impact On Local Government and Poorer Communities

The Joseph Rowntree Trust has produced a damning report on the effect of austerity on local authorities. The STUC made the following statement on the report:

“Today’s JRF reveals the terrible impact of austerity policies on the vital services provided by local authorities in Scotland and across the UK. The STUC and public sector unions have been arguing for some time that the increased pressure on staff workloads and cuts in employment are not just bad news for our members, but those that they serve.

“This report adds to the volume of evidence that cuts to so-called ‘back office’ functions impact directly on the front-line, and that staff are increasingly pushed into crisis management rather than being able to take a forward looking problem solving approach.

“Increased levels of stress and illness are a natural result of the intensification of work and the pressures of holding together of services which are under unprecedented pressure.

“It is truly horrifying to contemplate that we are only half-way through the UK Government’s proposed cuts agenda and we fully back the Joseph Rowntree call for the cuts to cease. The STUC will continue to lobby Government at all levels to act now to protect the vulnerable and those who provide lifeline services in our communities.”

For the whole report go to: <<http://www.jrf.org.uk/publications/cost-cuts-impact-local-government-and-poorer-communities>>.



The NHS In England is deteriorating

A leading health think tank, the Kings Fund, is saying that the NHS in England is deteriorating in a way not seen since the Thatcher years. Waiting times for A&E, cancer care and routine operations are getting worse, while deficits are growing.

English NHS Trusts are £2 billion in debt and the debt is rising. As Polly Toynbee says in the “Guardian” today (26/3/15) “The NHS needs serious money but our politicians are refusing to face it.”

The Kings Fund is talking about the situation in England and it is not currently relevant to Scotland. However, it might happen here if the Tories get enough votes in May to form another UK Government perhaps in alliance with the Liberals or UKIP. If austerity continues until 2018 and beyond the NHS in Scotland will be in danger.

Use your vote wisely to defend the NHS.

International Workers Memorial Day - 28/4/15

The health and safety day will be marked in Edinburgh on Tuesday 28th April at a ceremony around the Memorial Tree in West Princes Street Gardens. The ceremony will last from 12.30 to 1.30. All welcome - for more details and a leaflet contact us at <info-etuc@btconnect.com>.

Edinburgh TUC’s Support@Work service hit by Council Cuts

For eleven years the City Council has funded the Support@Work service as part of their Employability programme. It is a trade union service that provides advice and support to people entering the world of work, returning to work from caring responsibilities or to disabled people returning to work from long term sick leave. The service is also funded by Lothian NHS. Council officials recommended funding but the Council could not find the money. The service was going to be axed on 31st March but, on appeal, further funding was found until 30th June. This will allow funding possibilities to be explored. Your support will be welcome. Please contact your councillor. The service is needed in dealing with in work poverty and promoting disability rights.