



Hackney Solidarity

14
March
2004

Hackney Council betrays residents (again)

Hackney Council has once again betrayed the residents of Marcon Court.

First, it leaves the estate to rot for twenty years. Then it promises Major Repairs, only to confess that this was a lie. Now, it says that nothing will be done for three years.

One thing you can be sure of. The Council's political leaders and senior managers would not allow their homes to be treated like this. But then, senior Council managers don't live on Hackney Council estates.

Why is this happening? Basically, because the Council does not care about working-class communities. The Council lurches from crisis to crisis, caused by Government underfunding and the Council's policy of privatising services or giving them to 'arms-length' administrators.

Even though local working-class people have not caused the crisis, the Council makes us pay for it – through cuts in services, ever-higher Council Tax, and letting our estates degenerate. The private companies still make their profits, and Max Caller still gets his £150,000 salary, but we get ... treated with contempt.

What should we do about it? The community needs to fight back. The Tenants & Residents' Association is putting up a good fight for the future of the estate, and the local Workers' Liberty branch is doing our bit to help the TRA with its campaign. The more residents get involved, the stronger this fight will be..

We also need a political response. The Labour Party was set up to represent the interests of working-class people. But these days, most Labour Councillors are more interested in sucking up to business and claiming ample expenses.

Genuine socialists support communities fighting for a better deal. We try to work out why this situation exists and what the political solution is. That's what Workers' Liberty does. If you are interested in finding out more, then contact us. We'd love to hear from you.

workers' liberty discussions:
all welcome

The local branch of Workers' Liberty holds regular meetings discussing interesting political issues.

All discussions take place on Wednesday evenings at 7.30pm at the Red Rose Club, 129 Seven Sisters Road, Finsbury Park. Please contact us for dates and details.

Clissold closes: Hackney's swimming scandal

Clissold Leisure Centre has closed,

and may not reopen for two years ... or ever. Is this some decaying Victorian facility that has provided decades of service but is finally past its natural life? No, it is a brand new, state-of-the art, showpiece leisure centre which Hackney Council showed off around the world.

Design flaws have left it unusable and dangerous. Amongst other things, the roof can not cope with rain! It would be comical if it were not so serious.

Clissold Leisure Centre was built at a cost which grew (eventually to £31m), and at the expense of other, long-standing facilities. Haggerston Pool and London Fields Lido remain closed, and Britannia and King's Hall regularly close temporarily due to disrepair.

Urban regeneration 'strategy' often, in practice, means paying over the odds for one showpiece facility, whilst other centres in local communities are left to rot. The Clissold's closure is an unusually dramatic failure, but its impact is even worse because the rest of Hackney's sports facilities had been neglected in its favour.

There is a danger that in a Borough notorious for its municipal incompetence, this outrage will prompt only shrugs and tutting. We can not allow this to happen: the situation is a scandal, and an affront to public health and recreation in a working-class borough.

Hackney Council is a little embarrassed, but is quite breathtaking in its attempts to pass the buck. Mayor Jules Pipe assures us that the Council will be taking action against "whoever is responsible for this". That would be Hackney Council, wouldn't it?! Our New Labour Council seems to believe that if it contracts out a service, then it also contracts out the responsibility.

Oh no. Local councils have to provide services, leisure facilities being one. From education to housing, local services are handed over to private companies or 'arms-length' bodies precisely so the local authority can avoid taking responsibility. The danger for Mayor Pipe and his colleagues is that people will start to ask why, in that case, we have a Council at all. Which could open the door to those in Whitehall who would strip local government of its few remaining powers.

We urge Hackney residents to draw the opposite conclusion: that they should get rid of the charlatans who currently infest the Town Hall, and elect in their place genuine socialist representatives of our working-class communities.

east london line: stop the sell-off

London Underground plans to hand over the East London Line to a private Train Operating Company. Even though railway privatisation is one of the least popular policies ever, it is to be

inflicted on us again - unless we fight to stop it.

LUL plans to close the line in 2006 and re-open it - extended - in 2008, as the East London Line Train Operating Company.

The excuse is that the Strategic Rail Authority apparently has 'no money', and so can not build the extensions without privatising the whole line. Of course, the SRA would have enough money if the government would give it, and the government could give it if it would only tax the mega-rich and big business.

LUL's privatisation plan is nothing short of a betrayal of the communities who use the line and who are crying out for the extensions. Hackney, for example, is the only London Borough north of the river without a Tube station. Local people are desperate to see the Tube come to Hackney.

The Tube, that is, not another mainline rail line. We already have several of them. Mainline services generally start later and finish earlier than Tube services. They are less frequent, and - as long-suffering Silverlink passengers will testify - less reliable. Even though the Tube's safety regime is fast deteriorating under PPP, people have even less confidence in safety on the private, overground rail system.

Privatisation will be a nightmare for the staff, too. Those who currently work on the line will be given the 'choice' of transferring to somewhere else on the Underground, or transferring to a new employer. The new jobs that the extensions will create will be low-paid ticket clerks and security guards rather than better-paid, more secure jobs with London Underground.

But if we fight this, we can beat it. The crucial thing is for the Tube unions, the wider labour movement and the working-class communities along the line to unite in a concerted campaign to stop the sell-off.

news from ...



The UK campaign against sweatshops

Around the world - and here in Hackney - people slave in 'sweatshops', producing clothes and toys for multi-national companies. They work in appalling conditions for poverty wages whilst the companies rake in the profits.

No Sweat campaigns against sweatshop working conditions. It will be organising campaigning activity in this area soon. Please support it - *and get involved!*

**To help this campaign, contact No Sweat,
PO Box 36707, London SW9 8YA.
elondon@nosweat.org.uk Ring Jean on
07779-915479**

workers' liberty london forum

Wednesday 24 March, 7.30pm, ULU, Malet St, WC1
- all welcome

'War in Iraq: a balance sheet'

A debate between:

- Observer columnist Nick Cohen; and
- Workers' Liberty speaker

What's on our web page:

[www.workersliberty.org/
haringeyhackney](http://www.workersliberty.org/haringeyhackney)

On our web page, you can see details of local campaigning events, and also articles on:

- the Hackney **refuse workers' dispute**;
- our recent discussion on the history of **Islamism in Egypt**;
- the **Clissold leisure centre**

scandal and the campaigns to re-open local swimming pools; - the threatened closure of **Hackney post offices**.

You can post comments on any of the articles, and post news, reports and articles yourself.

You can link to the rest of the Workers' Liberty web site, with hundreds of articles about political issues and Marxist ideas.

hackney solidarity



... is produced by the local branch of the **Alliance for Workers' Liberty**, a Marxist group campaigning as part of the trade unions, community groups, Labour Party and Socialist Alliance.

Politics is dominated by the interests of big business: we want a political voice for working-class people.

We want to replace capitalism with socialism - a society where the collective ownership of the productive wealth allows democracy, social provision for

need, sustainable development, individual freedom, and equality.

Please get in touch to find out more about the issues we have covered in this newsletter, if you would like to receive this newsletter regularly, or if you would like to come to any of our meetings and events.

You can contact us:

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