

TOTALLY *Independent*

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Those that Buy and Sell Land, and are landlords, have got it either by Oppression, or Murder, or Theft." Gerrard Winstanley, 1649

OUR NEIGHBOURHOODS: SAFER IN POLICE HANDS?

THE METROPOLITAN Police are rolling out what they call Safer Neighbourhood Teams (SNT), made up of one sergeant, two constables and three Community Support Officers. SNTs are meant to "listen to local people and identify and tackle issues of concern in our neighbourhoods". It all sounds very nice doesn't it?

Is this the latest attempt by a failing police force to grab the headlines? We've had Community Support Officers, ASBOs, curfews, tagging, curbs on street drinkers and cops carrying guns, while seeing a huge rise in the prison population as we lock up more people for less and less serious crimes. But none of these deal with the reasons people commit most crime, such as poverty, boredom, aggressive advertising, and a sense of powerlessness and disconnection from their communities.

My local SNT had a public meeting to introduce the scheme. Anybody could attend the meeting, but the cops specifically invited who they saw as 'community leaders' to give the scheme respect. At the meeting, the cops chose who went on the 'steering group'. As far as I

can tell they have not brought into this process people who are already the focus of unwanted police attention, such as teenagers. Local people can bring up issues of concern, but future meetings have no decision making powers. So, is it just a publicity stunt to improve the police's credibility?

Having community leaders on the steering groups means the police can claim they are carrying out the wishes of the local community. But who do these so-called leaders represent? The police like to divide us into 'good citizens' and 'bad citizens'. Don't fall for it. They will use local people to spy on their neighbours. Things like friendly chats and cups of tea with local people will be used to build up information on us and to find out who the 'dodgy' people are. Are we going to grass up our neighbours over minor issues?

We should be building strong neighbourhoods where neighbours trust and support each other, not ones where we are spying on each other. I know it's a long way off, but this is how secret police forces start and communities get broken up. Is this a road we want to start down?



By relying on the police to do all our dirty work for us we are doing two things: we give them increased powers over us, while disempowering ourselves. Ok, we sometimes feel scared of that gang of kids at the end of the street, but if you knew them and their parents as friends you wouldn't be worried about chatting to them if there was a problem.

Sometimes this may not work and then we'll need to look for different answers, but this should be done as a community. Maybe at the end of the day we do have to call the cops but let's make it a last resort not the first.

As an example, in the roads where I live, cars used them as rat runs and speeding was a problem. Instead of grassing

up and criminalising people, we took another approach: we got speed humps and other traffic calming measures introduced. Nobody was arrested or sent to jail, but the problem improved. We go on about kids being yobs or anti-social. Instead of giving them ASBOs or arresting them let's look at other options such as youth clubs, adventure parks and free night-time activities.

The police have their own agenda to increase their power and funding. Higher crime figures and our reliance on the police increase both. We should not be taken in by their new schemes. The answers aren't quick or easy. If you want to work with the cops, ok, but on our terms – not theirs!

HEALTH AND SAFETY IN THE BIN

IN AUGUST, Haringey's bin workers went on a solid strike for two weeks over health and safety issues and against proposed cuts in the service.

The privatised waste collection company Accord, pressurised by the council to make 'efficiency savings', had planned earlier in the year to cut two trucks from the refuse collection fleet, but in May the council paid them an extra £32,000 presumably to avoid any bad publicity during the local elections. Accord apparently didn't consider cutting the ever-growing number of management posts or their profits (£53m gross in 2005). The council also began to hire strikebreakers to clear some of the backlog.

But Accord – after seeing the long and solid strike, the determination of the strikers, the effective daily picketing at the depot and the general public support for the workers – offered a 'compromise' deal in which one trade waste collection truck would be cut instead. On Monday 14 August the workers, all members of the Transport and General Workers Union, voted 26-18 to accept this partial climb down by Accord. After they went back, a striker told supporters: "We will continue to monitor the situation through our own strike committee."

Public support

A support campaign was launched during the strike at a public meeting. Two days later, 25 residents and trades unionists rallied at the Civic Centre to oppose the cuts and to support the workforce. Many brought bags of uncollected rubbish and dumped them on the steps of the building. Placards read, 'Accord Is Rubbish', and, 'Accord Shareholders Rake In The Profits – Health & Safety In The Bin'.

Strikers were being invited to local residents'

meetings to put their case, and supporters were attending the daily pickets. "We were very pleased about the public support we received – this definitely strengthened our hand," a striker said.



Lively demo outside Civic Centre

KFC SCHOOL BATTLE

IN SPRING 2006, Fortismere School's governors announced they intended to change the status of the school. Currently, under 'community' status, the school is managed jointly by the Local Education Authority (LEA) and the governors. The proposed move to 'foundation' status would mean opting out of LEA control and the formation of a new governing body. This body would control pupil admissions, have ownership of the school site and employ the staff.



The governors' announcement was met with surprise, shock and then anger by many parents. At around the same time there were two vacancies for parent governors. Two parents submitted their nominations on a pro-comprehensive/anti-foundation ticket.

Keep Fortismere Comprehensive (KFC), a joint parent and staff organisation, was formed to oppose the governors' proposal. Parent and staff branches were formed to run autonomously, but virtually all of the activity of KFC is driven by the two working together.

KFC set itself goals of advancing the case for comprehensive education, defeating the governors' moves to foundation status and getting the anti-

foundation parents onto the governing body.

KFC organised a public meeting in July attended by teachers, governors and parents from Fortismere and other schools in Haringey. They have regularly leafleted the local area, attended community festivals, lobbied parents, set up a website and are continuing to build support.

Two major results for the campaign show that building a movement from below that unites parents and staff, and appealing to principled inclusive social education can win success. Firstly the two pro-comprehensive parent governors gained their places on the governing body, winning twice as many votes as the other four candidates put together. Not all the other candidates were necessarily pro-foundation, but arguably their failure to come out one way or the other on the issue, in a politicised and polarised vote, didn't help their campaigns. The second success was that the governors completely revised their timescale and process for moving to foundation status.

KFC has not yet won the campaign, but they have won two key battles and are preparing to bring their positive arguments to the governing body, staff, parents and community in order to Keep Fortismere Comprehensive!

www.keepfortismerecomprehensive.co.uk
Pete Woodward (Parent Governor, KFC)

especially as similar issues apply across the whole waste collection service. In September, street sweepers were also voting on whether to take industrial action.

What are really needed are improvements to the borough's waste collection service. Public services across the country are being starved of the resources and funding needed by residents and the workforce alike. Hence we should all support any such disputes in the future, and campaign for better services all round.

It is clear that those running vital public services do not have our best interests at heart. The only long-term solution is residents' control of all local decision-making and resources, and workers' control of all workplaces.

LEARNING CENTRE UNDER THREAT

IN 1999 HARINGEY Council received £millions from central government to improve the West Green area of Haringey and build the West Green Learning Centre (WGLC) on West Green Road. The centre was to provide a resource to the residents of West Green and neighbouring wards. Initial plans included a community café and library. But these were axed early on.

It was agreed the local school could use WGLC on a temporary basis until school building works were completed. Unfortunately the school never moved out and the centre has become an unofficial school extension. Adult education and other classes continue there, but most of the 'community activities' have failed to materialise, partly due to the demands of the school. This has been a major failing of the WGLC.

The story gets worse

The local authority knew government funding would stop in March 2006. Planning for the centre's long-term future should have started well before this date. Not Haringey Council. They didn't start discussing the centre's future until the beginning of 2006 and wouldn't even have consulted residents over the centre's future if Woodlands Park Residents Association hadn't called a meeting about it.

The future of the centre remains very uncertain. The school wants more control over it, meaning less community involvement. Funding problems have already affected two community initiatives – a local film night and a

residents' group that meets there – as the centre now closes on the nights they use the building. The building is now only open for community use from 5–9pm three nights a week and Saturday mornings. Staff are now on three-month contracts – hardly an incentive to get workers to care about creating a vibrant resource.

What needs to be done

Haringey Council must fund the centre properly. They campaigned for it to be built and secured funding. They knew they would take over from April 2006. But without proper long-term funding, it will die a slow and pointless death.

Secondly, WGLC and the school need to become separate organisations. The school can hire some of the building for their needs, but shouldn't see it as just an extension to their own building.

Thirdly, the centre must be opened up much more to the local community. Providing space for community use is necessary, but charges for community groups must come down to affordable levels. The building should open every weekday until at least 10pm. On Saturdays and Sundays it should open to at least 6pm. Their computers could easily be utilized for an internet café.

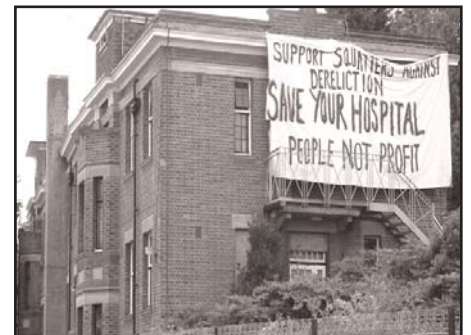
If these changes happen the centre could become a real hub of the local community, as was initially planned, and build real community spirit in the area. You can email one of the people with responsibility for the future of the centre – Ian.Bailey@haringey.gov.uk – to let him know your feelings on the matter.

SAVE IT – DON'T SELL IT

SQUATTERS LIVING next to derelict Hornsey Hospital are facing eviction. They moved into the Old Nurses Home – empty for five years – in early 2005 and left by agreement with the council in January. Three months later they returned to find the building trashed and covered in rubbish, faeces and needles. Moving back in, they cleaned and renovated the place, and planned to turn the gardens into a community space.

Now the owners, Camden and Islington Mental and Social Health Care Trust, want them out to sell off the land, probably for luxury flats. But the squatters are determined to stay until the building is put back into community use: "This building is meant to be for the people of Hornsey and Haringey. We are looking after the building and stopping kids vandalising it. We are using, maintaining and protecting derelict council property. Our ideal situation would be to be left here until they do something positive with the building." The squatters have widespread local support and a 500-strong petition, but still face eviction.

Edited version of article from *Schnews* www.schnews.org.uk/



page report saying the council should throw out the application because it was inaccurate and against council policy.

People would email me and I would collate what they wrote and pass it round. No action took place unless a majority of people wanted it to happen. We set an example by getting off our backs. If people are thinking of doing something similar, they can get free legal advice from these websites: www.elflaw.org or www.lawworks.org.uk.

And now you are widening your focus?

Through the campaign there was a local group, with a wide range of people, over 500 members. When the council announced plans for a Controlled Parking Zone, people emailed wanting to know what's happening and wanting a meeting. I hope that out of this group will grow a residents' association.



SPOTLIGHT ON GREEN N8

WE SPOKE TO OFER of *GreenN8*, who were involved in a two-year long battle against plans by London Concrete for a concrete factory in Hornsey.

The factory plans were rejected by the council, but what's the latest news on the factory?

The application was approved at appeal stage, but with 43 conditions – 13 must be met before even a brick can be laid. London Concrete must submit more plans and do more testing, which the council must approve. The Planning Inspector wasn't happy with the assessment of noise and dust pollution, especially baseline measurements, which will be used to assess pollution level increases after they start operating. We are now waiting for their responses which we will scrutinise closely.

The group enjoyed huge support. How did it start?

It was just three neighbours talking about the problem and the need to do something. We found the plans in the library, but there were over 200 pages! We had no planning expertise; we just knew we didn't want the factory. So I created a website and scanned in the application, and we distributed a small leaflet with the web address. People are interested but have very limited time. We gave people the opportunity to assess for themselves the original information.

Then people began coming forward. One said, "I'm an air quality expert, try tackling it this way." A local accountant analysed the statistics. We scrutinised the documentation and wrote our own 50-

RELIGIOUS BIGOTS LOOSE IN HARINGEY!

IT WAS RECENTLY reported that fundamentalist Christian pastors would be patrolling the streets of Haringey to help 'troubled teens'. This is not so surprising. In Hackney, the police, and in particular self-professed evangelical Christian, Superintendent Leroy Logan, have been building an alliance with TRUCE' a homophobic American Christian organisation. It is being funded by Hackney Council and The Learning Trust to send over a small army from America and let them loose on the borough's estates and schools.

TRUCE is run by 'ex' gangster Nicky Cruz who receives £160k a year and considers that "being a homosexual is just as much a handicap as being hooked on junk", advising people to "abstain from these evil practices". He is also vehemently anti-abortion.

In Haringey, the United Church of the Kingdom of God (UCKG) has several churches and members can frequently be seen in high streets shaking buckets for donations. The UCKG are increasingly pushing their crackpot beliefs on the most vulnerable members of society, leaving leaflets at surgeries and job centres asking the sick and unemployed to trust in god!

Every Saturday the Islamist organisation Al-Ghuraba is outside Wood Green library where they push ideas not far removed from fascism – including holocaust denial, homophobia, execution by

stoning of adulterers and the forced conversion of the population to their particular brand of Islam.

So why do extremist religious groups seem to be gaining influence in what is still one of the most secular countries in the world?

I think there are several reasons; first is the massive increase in poverty and social exclusion in the last twenty years. It's natural for people to look for explanations for their circumstances and for a way out. Religious organisations tell us that by appealing to god they can solve our problems, just like those leaflets that come through the door from self-styled 'medicine men' offering to curse that enemy or ensnare that unrequited love – for a modest sum. The second major cause is the government, which is enthusiastically dismantling the welfare state to reduce the tax burden on the rich and middle classes. It is only too happy to see the established churches and other groups taking over some of the functions of welfare provider. This leads to Christian groups being able to take control of schools and all the issues that come with that, including the rise of creationism in the curriculum of these so-called 'independent' schools.

Secular society needs to be defended from the onslaught of religious superstition and hierarchy. Only people working together as equals to take control of our own lives and the fruits of our labour can create a truly free society.

GOOD HEALTHCARE SERVICES ARE EVERYONE'S RIGHT

ACROSS ENGLAND the NHS is scandalously being forced by the government to make cuts which affect vital patient services – including £11m cuts in Haringey this year. These will hit the most vulnerable the hardest.

In response there's been a series of protests by residents and health workers in the borough – lobbies, rallies, petitions, tens of thousands of leaflets distributed and a march to St Ann's Hospital. As a result the threat to close St Ann's x-ray department has been temporarily withdrawn, while some other cuts have been postponed. But more cuts are in the pipeline, affecting a range of services (see box):

has been occupied to prevent demolition (see *Save It – Dont Sell It* on page 3).

The recently formed Stop Haringey Health Cuts Coalition (SHHCC) is an alliance of local organisations and healthcare workers determined to stop the destruction. There are similar campaigns all over the country. We know the government has adequate resources available – including £25bn currently being wasted on obscene wars and weapons of mass destruction. Let's fight for the public services our communities need.

- Hospital beds for elderly people at St Ann's
- Family planning clinics
- Community dentistry
- Audiology for people with hearing difficulties
- Mental health services budgets
- Blood tests department at St Ann's
- An operating theatre at the North Middx Hospital
- District Nursing
- Many temporary staff

We don't have to take it lying down! In every neighbourhood we need to be organised and ready to fight for our local health services. If we don't stop the cuts, St. Ann's could be run down and some of the land sold off. Campaigners are also demanding Hornsey Central Hospital be re-opened – in fact part of the hospital

For further info: SHHCC, Union Office, St Ann's Hospital, N15. email: keith.flett@btinternet.com

who we are >> HARINGEY SOLIDARITY GROUP is a collective of local people who want to get rid of the current system which places profit and power before people's real needs. The only effective way to do this is for people to get organised, fight back and take over the decision-making in communities and workplaces. To that end we support and participate in local campaigns, spread ideas and help create effective opposition to the powers that be.

MORE INFO: phone 0845 223 5270 or email info@haringey.org.uk

how to contact us >>

I would like to find out more about HSG

I enclose a donation of (made payable to 'HSG') £ _____

Name

Address

Email

Phone Number

RETURN THIS SLIP TO >>

 HSG, PO Box 2474, London N8