

# Hackney Independent



The newsletter of Hackney Independent Working Class Association • Summer 2003

## LABOUR CLOSED LABURNUM SCHOOL

Laburnum school closed at the end of this term despite the long campaign to keep it open fought by parents, children, the board of governors, the staff and the IWCA.

In the face of overwhelming objections from the local community, the Learning Trust (a private company set up by Labour to run Hackney's schools), which has Labour councillors on the board, voted for closure.

**FACT:** Labour knew about the plans to close Laburnum before the local elections last year.

**FACT:** Local Labour councillors kept quiet about it during the election campaign and, despite assurances from at least one of them, did nothing to help the campaign to keep the school open.

**FACT:** Had the Labour councillor on the Learning Trust board voted against closure it would have had to be referred to the Government for a final decision.

Contrast the do-nothing activity of our local Labour councillors with that of the IWCA. The postcard campaign, the campaign video, the press coverage, the open day at Haggerston Community Centre, the Laburnum School reunion and the letters of objection were all financed by the IWCA and organised by us together with Laburnum parents and concerned local people. As Shaun Abrahams of the teachers' union at the school put it, "The bulk of our support came from the IWCA. Labour said they would help but it didn't materialise". He went on to add, "The kids are still upset and the parents were unanimous against closure. Where's the democracy there?"



Laburnum kids making their point

Hackney Labour councillors may not care about what is happening to community facilities in Shoreditch but we know that local people do. The IWCA will continue to stick up for working class people in this area. We can't always win, but by working together we can make it a lot harder for them to get away with things like this again.

IWCA spokesperson Carl Taylor said, "Those to blame cannot hide behind the Learning Trust. We all know that Labour closed Laburnum School and we won't let them forget it."

This view of who is really to blame for the closure has also been echoed by the Learning Trust themselves. A spokesman was recently quoted in a national newspaper as saying "...they (Hackney Council) retain ultimate authority for education in the borough".

During the last half term holiday, Hackney IWCA put on two kids cinema shows in Haggerston and Hoxton with the support of Whiston & Goldsmith's and Geffrye Estate tenants associations. The events were a great success, pulling in over 60 children in total on what turned out to be one of the hottest days of the year.

For their 50p entry charge, all those present received a bag of crisps and a drink and a showing of Harry Potter, The Philosopher's Stone. Thanks to the success of the events and the feedback from kids, parents and TA members who came along and got involved, we've decided to run future events in the summer holiday, expanding the kids cinema to reach other estates.

You have a choice -  
privatisation or privatisation!



Tenants and residents on St Mary's Estate are saying loud and clear to the council : we want a vote and we want a choice!

The council's cabinet decided in June that housing management on St Mary's and Kingsland Estates will be privatised. If our Labour councillors get their way, a private company Pinnacle will take over the management of the estates in November. The council claims to have consulted with tenants but the IWCA has found many on St Mary's who didn't know about the proposal and the majority of those who did are demanding that they be given a vote on the issue. They are also asking to be given a real choice, including an option to remain with the council, and an informed choice at that (will Pinnacle be more expensive, for example?). What choice was Hackney Council offering? Privatisation this year... or privatisation next year!

The IWCA has organised a petition and has been knocking on doors on St Mary's. This is real consultation, not the sham democracy of the council.

### CONSULTATION

Consultation is a favourite buzzword of the Labour politicians who run the Government and Hackney Council. When the authorities want to do something that's going to affect your life they often have a "statutory obligation" to consult. This sounds democratic enough. Be clear though, you are not being asked to vote, only to give an opinion. If it's the same as theirs - all well and good. If not - they just ignore it

Consultation over Laburnum School showed clearly that everyone in this community wanted the school kept open. Having "listened" to this point of view a handful of middle-class professionals and Labour councillors decided to close it anyway.

The same process is at work with the privatisation of estate management on St Mary's and Kingsland. At a consultation meeting at Fellows Court, 30 of the 35 people who attended wanted to be given the choice to stay with the council. Two weeks later, their obligation to consult over and done with, a small number of Labour councillors in the Town Hall decided to give the contract to Pinnacle anyway.

Let's be clear, consultation is not real democracy. It does not "empower" local people. It is, in fact, the exact opposite. So, the next time you're being consulted, demand some real power; demand a vote!

### How Labour consults

- 1.Labour councillors decide to close, privatise or cut something important.
- 2."Consultation" clearly tells them that the people don't agree with them.
- 3.Labour goes ahead and does it anyway.
- 4.Repeat this process as many times as required.

### Kids Independent Cinema



# More Light More Power

In March we started a campaign to force the Council to repair street lamps in the area from Laburnum Street to Stonebridge and Haggerston estates. They have now finally fixed most of those we reported including the light on the canal bridge. We will be carrying out further night inspections in the autumn to find other unsafe areas which might be improved by having some light thrown on them, starting with Pearson Street.

We started the campaign because muggers are attracted to poorly lit areas and we know many people in this community who feel unsafe or have been mugged. And we knew the council wouldn't do anything about it without a push. This was something we could do to make a difference - however small.

Labour Mayor Jules Pipe has made much of the £200,000 for repairing street lighting in Shoreditch. The fact that he has made this a core plank of his anti-crime strategy shows how Labour is really only paying lip service to the wider issues of addressing crime. They are much more concerned with their real priorities of making life easier for yuppies and developers. And as they do this, they fail to serve the working class majority of Hackney.

## Changing light bulbs won't change the world!

Getting street lights fixed is just a drop in the ocean compared to the real work of reducing crime and anti-social behaviour. There are many causes of crime. If you close the swimming pool and the youth clubs then our young people have got nothing to do and are more likely to get into vandalism, graffiti and other anti-social behaviour. If you add to that that they have no future to look forward to - like getting a decent job or their own council flat, then there is far more chance that they will get sucked into the world of drugs and muggings as well.

Of course there will always be some people who will rob others just because they can. Small improvements, like getting street lights fixed, can help cut down on this, but we also have to be more ambitious or we will only attack the symptoms of crime and not the cause.

To make a real difference the IWCA believes there has to be more investment in community resources, as well as imaginative ways of stamping out anti-social behaviour, like our proposals for community restorative justice or new apprenticeship schemes that give young people real and worthwhile work. For more information on the IWCA's anti-crime initiatives in other areas see the national IWCA website [www.iwca.info](http://www.iwca.info)

If there is a light not working you can report it direct to the Council on 020 8356 8145 (make sure you mention the street or nearest property number). If you think there's not enough light in an area, then get in touch and we will work with you to put pressure on the Council to act.

# "O Rose, Thou Art Sick!"

*Labour newsletter "a sick joke"*

When Haggerston Labour councillors finally put out their *Haggerston Rose* newsletter I'm sure we were all itching to read it and find out what they were up to. It turns out that their biggest achievement has been to get funds to resurface Pearson Street. While this is welcome, it is not the worst street in the Ward by any stretch - but more importantly everyone else knows that what Pearson Street needs is better lighting. These Labour councillors really have not got a clue.

What was worse was their boast about how Labour have brought in millions of pounds of money to improve our schools in Hackney! This from a council that is closing three schools in Hackney this month! IWCA Schools campaigner Peter Sutton said. "This newsletter is a sick joke at the expense of the parents, kids and staff of Laburnum School."



The news that London will bid for the 2012 Olympic Games has been met with excitement by some and scepticism from others. The bid is being spearheaded by Mayor Ken Livingstone, the Greater London Assembly (GLA) and supported by all the major political parties. While the Olympics could be a great money spinner for east London, we wonder who will really benefit - local people or the highly paid consultants and the multi-national construction companies.

There's no doubt that sport can be a great pleasure for many and a chance for working class youngsters to make a mark. But how can the council, on one hand, justify closing down sports and leisure facilities in this part of the borough and the GLA, on the other hand, build a new multi-million pound sports stadium somewhere else in the borough? Does this make sense to you?

For the bid to be successful it will rely heavily on the East London Line extension and Crossrail being completed on time. We have similar concerns about these developments as well. As with all "regeneration" projects, the question that needs to be continually asked is "who really benefits?".

# The Midas Touch

Hackney's Labour councillors have their own kind of Midas Touch. The story goes that when the King Midas touched anything it turned to gold. But when our Labour councillors touch anything it turns into private flats!

Councils have powers to say yes or no to planning applications. So when a developer wants to turn a library into luxury flats, the Council can say "no the site should be used for the community." Or when a developer wants to build private flats on a site, the Council can say "you have to build a mix of private flats and flats at low rents." The problem is that our Labour councillors don't say "no" they say "yes, how many private flats would you like to build and would you be interested in developing on the site of any other vital community facility we have closed down?"



Was: main library  
Will be: part private flats



Was: local library and a nursery  
Will be: luxury flats



The Stables: latest upmarket development on Kingsland Road.  
How will the community benefit from this?

# Do you want to get involved and make a difference to our community?

The IWCA is a community-based organisation that campaigns for working class rule in working class areas. We believe that Hackney's working class majority is not represented by the main political parties so we should work together to change this. Much of the work we do depends on the support we get from local people who want to make a difference to their block, their estate or the whole area - and that means we need your help.

There are several ways to help: deliver the IWCA newsletter to your block or estate; be a local contact; come to our meetings; help us produce the newsletter. If you want to help, but are not sure what this involves, please give us a ring.



Write to Hackney IWCA, Box 48, 136 Kingsland High Street, London E8 2NS or leave a message on 020 7684 1743. You can also find the latest news on our website [www.hackneyiwca.fsnet.co.uk](http://www.hackneyiwca.fsnet.co.uk) or email us at [hiwca@iwca.fsnet.co.uk](mailto:hiwca@iwca.fsnet.co.uk)