

Hackney Independent

www.hackneyiwca.org

Haggerston & Hoxton Edition

Newsletter of the Independent Working Class Association Summer 2004

The 'Decent Homes' Con

Labour's 'Choice' of Privatisation or No Repairs

For fifty years Labour was the party that built council housing as homes for the working class. Now Labour wants rid of council housing in the next seven years so that it can build more private housing for the middle class.

If you look around you from Wenlock Basin, Gainsborough Studios, along Kingsland Road, at Cremer Street and at Goldsmith's Row you see big smart blocks of flats going up. Never council housing for our overcrowded families or our sons and daughters – always private housing for the middle class.

Now the Government has said all council housing must reach the "decent homes standard" in the next 7 years. They have put forward three "options" to bring in the

money needed - with the enthusiastic backing of our Labour council. But as usual the only choice is "what kind of privatisation do you want?":

STOCK TRANSFER – your estate sold off to a housing association
PRIVATE FINANCE (PFI) – control of your estate handed over to a private company for thirty years
ARMS LENGTH MANAGEMENT (ALMO) – a private company takes over the running of all Hackney estates for 10 years.

Yet again Labour are pushing their privatisation agenda on us and denying us the choice of staying with the council. This decent homes standard is a con. They think that by saying they will finally do the repairs to our estates we will accept their privatisation plans. We say spend the mil-

lions of pounds of rent and service charges we pay on improving the cleaning and state of repairs on our estates. One proposal which has been put forward for discussion involves building private flats on the open spaces on our estates to raise money for repairs. While this is better than any of the three privatisation options, there are two points that need to be made:

- Aren't we over-crowded enough already and don't we need our green space?
- Why not also build new council homes in between the private flats as well? If it is good enough for us to take private neighbours, why should private owners not have council tenants as their immediate neighbours?



Labour's Guy Nicholson lives in this 'decent home'. Guy is paid £700 a week as a leading councillor and owns this million pound Georgian townhouse in Central Hackney.



Hackney Council's Lies about Housing

The Council sent out a DVD giving their side of the story on privatising our estates, starring Radio 1 DJ Trevor Nelson. It was a deliberate attempt to mislead Hackney's tenants and leaseholders into thinking that there were three good options and our views would be taken into account before a decision was made. The truth is that the Council will sell off

any estate where it thinks it can con the tenants into voting for it and that Hackney councillors and top officers are pushing for the creation of an ALMO here – their third so called option. Among all the misleading information and part-truths Hackney Independent can identify four outright LIES on the DVD:



LIE 1

Trevor Nelson says "over the last 10 years the Council has been transforming estates like Kingsmead." The TRUTH is that the Council sold off Kingsmead to Sanctuary Housing Association. When a young boy was killed during the building work the Council made clear they had no responsibility.

LIE 2

Trevor Nelson says housing associations are "not for profit organisations" and that any money they make is invested back into your home. The TRUTH is that the big housing associations pay their top officers over £100,000 a year and many pay out bonuses to top staff. Money they make is normally invested in buying more land to expand their empires.

LIE 3

Trevor Nelson says that "housing association rents would be broadly in line with council rents." The TRUTH is that nationally their rents are 13% higher than council rents – if you pay £60 a week they pay £68.

LIE 4

Trevor Nelson says an Arms Length Management Organisation would be run by an elected management board. The TRUTH is that we would not be able to vote the majority of the Board in or out. In Islington the new ALMO there has only 7 out of 17 elected Board members. The rest are appointed through the Council.

We expect this sort of thing from Hackney Council – but our advice to Trevor Nelson is to stick to spinning records and leave the political spinning to Hackney Council's privatisation PR machine.

INDEPENDENT KIDS CINEMA
 Presents
MONSTERS, INC.

Saturday 28th August
 10.30am
 Goldsmiths Community Centre
 Goldsmiths Row E2

Film + Drink + Crisps 50p

DESTINATION BROADWAY MARKET

WHAT MADE YOU CHOOSE TO STUDY BROADWAY MARKET?

It seemed to be really changing. There were a lot of people moving into the area - middle class professionals, not families, but young single people. On Broadway Market lots of the old shops have closed down like the florist, TV repairs, and second hand furniture shop. There were lots of new shops arriving but they didn't seem representative of the local area. They were selling things like handmade shoes and pottery. I wanted to understand why these shops had located themselves here.

HOW DID YOU CONDUCT YOUR STUDY?

I interviewed 10 businesses that had been here for over 5 years and 10 that had just moved here. I also spoke to local people. One shopkeeper told me about plans for a Broadway Market Farmers Market. It was weird because he'd only been there for 2 months and he knew more about it than I did! So I also spoke to the Markets Manager from Hackney council.

SO WHAT DID THE LOCAL BUSINESSES SAY ABOUT BROADWAY MARKET?

There were very different reactions from the old and new businesses. The old businesses had real issues with the council. Many had found that their premises had been sold off by the council to developers, sometimes without them being aware of it. Many were



An Interview with Yejide Adeoye

Haggerston resident Yejide Adeoye has just finished a university degree during which she made a study of recent changes in Broadway Market.

fighting to remain in the market, because of massively increased rents. One shop's rent had increased by 160%.

The new shops were attracted by what they saw as cheap rents and a good location which they saw as 'close to the city'. A lot of the shop keepers were complaining about the local youth. They seem to have no focus, no direction, nowhere to go and nothing to do so they steal from the local shops.

WHAT DID YOU FIND OUT ABOUT THE NEW FARMERS MARKET?

Hackney council's Markets Manager told me they wanted to make Broadway Market into a brand and give it an identity. They wanted it to be seen as 'the' market in the area. He felt that somewhere like Dalston market was too cheap and the area needed an up market destination. He saw Broadway Market as a blueprint for markets of the future in Hackney.

WHAT DID LOCAL PEOPLE THINK ABOUT THE FARMERS MARKET?

Locals on the estates aren't really

bothered about the Farmers Market. They know it's not really for them. They are more interested in real facilities. Also, look at the prices there. I wanted to go and get an apple pie. Then I saw it was £6.50! The prices are not affordable for most people.

SO WHAT WERE YOUR CONCLUSIONS ABOUT THE FARMERS MARKET?

The market is there for the new 'locals'. The idea is to attract new wealthy people into the area. All the people involved with the market are from outside the area. Nothing is made locally. There was no effort made to tell local people about it. They printed 10,000 flyers for the market but none reached our doorstep and I only live 5 minutes away. If you looked at the Farmers Market flyers they showed people how to get into the area. The idea is to attract people from outside into the area to buy stuff that comes from outside the area. The money comes in and then goes out again. There is no benefit for local people.

The way I see it for the market to have a real identity people in the local area should be involved. It can be a place to sell stuff for us. I might try and get myself a stall selling things made by me and my friends. We are trying to set up their own thing - but there are always obstacles for people like us. My friends are artistically minded but because they don't have money they can't pursue their interests.

WHAT WOULD YOU LIKE TO SEE HAPPEN IN BROADWAY MARKET?

I wanted to set up a community centre here - a place with resources for local people and for the youth to go. Things like that might start to give young people some hope. But to do that you really need your own money. You can't rely on the council!



Bread on Broadway... £2.50 loaves are aimed at wealthy outsiders not locals

We are told that things are getting better by papers like 'Hackney Today' and 'In Shoreditch'.

THEY SAY the council is now improving. **THEY SAY** millions of pounds are being spent on this area. **THEY SAY** the Council empowering the community and you should get involved.

WE SAY nothing has changed for the better. The council is as badly run as ever. They do what they want and never improve our lives. Any new money is just for the short term to replace what the Council used to pay for directly. They only look out for the interests of middle class settlers - getting private flats built and supporting their new bars and restaurants.

The IWCA wants to drive the Labour Party out of Haggerston and Hoxton - they don't represent working class interests. We want to block the development of private flats. We want to defend what we have got from being cut back or sold off. We are trying to build an organisation that can take on and beat Labour in elections, play a part in community campaigns and try to do practical things like advice sessions and run kids' films shows. You can help.

To get in touch phone Carl Taylor on 020 7684 1743, write to us at Hackney IWCA, PO Box 47000, London E8 4WW, or email us at info@hackneyiwca.org.

News Updates

Banking on a Good Education

Although Craven Park Primary School in Stamford Hill, was recently saved from closure by a strong local campaign it's worth remembering what has become of Laburnum Primary School in Haggerston. The 'Bridge Academy' is soon to be built on the site with a £2 million contribution from Swiss banking firm UBS. This is Hackney's second academy, and is part of the government's strategy of encouraging greater private sector involvement in education. Do you think it's right for a bank to be involved in educating our kids?

Laburnum Street Party Success

The Laburnum Street Party on 26 June, organised by the Haggerston Pool Campaign and supported by local tenant associations, was a great success. The party combined stalls run by residents as well as a sound stage exhibiting local talent and lots of activities for kids. The Laburnum Boat Club was also open for those who wanted to mess about on the water. IWCA members assisted with stewarding. The aim of the day was to raise the profile of the Pool Campaign and a few quid towards future campaigning. For the latest on the Pool Campaign check out www.haggerstonpool.com.

Olympics 2012: Empty Promises?

Ex-Tory MP and athlete Sebastian Coe has been appointed as front-man for London's 2012 Olympic bid. He has recently claimed that the most important aspect of a successful bid is the legacy it leaves for local people: sports facilities, transport links and affordable housing. Many locals are far from convinced by this promise. Users of Hackney Marshes face the loss of existing sports facilities to make way for a giant car-park. Ironically community-based sports facilities face further cut-backs in anticipation of a 'possible' Olympic windfall. We also have to be sceptical of the promise of affordable housing for locals - at the Sydney Olympics the Village was given over to a development of luxury flats. Londoners face a 10% Council Tax surcharge for the next eight years if the bid is successful. Will Mr Coe guarantee that property developers are not the only winners at the next Olympics?

IWCA Takes Three Seats On Oxford Council

On the 10th of June, the IWCA in Oxford shook the local Labour party to the core when it took three council seats in working class wards. It was a particular humiliation for cabinet minister Andrew Smith who had personally spearheaded the attempt to unseat the IWCA's existing councillor, Stuart Craft. The turnout in Northfield Brook and Blackbird Leys was three times as high as a result of the IWCA work on the ground. Clearly ordinary people do see us as a genuine alternative. As reported in the Oxford Mail, 'Lord Mayor Patrick Stannard, a Labour stalwart and a councillor for Blackbird Leys for more than 20 years...lost to IWCA candidate Lee Cole. Mr Stannard was spared the humiliation by being away on holiday.'

We believe that this success vindicates our approach in Hackney - local people campaigning on issues which have been raised by local people. The victories in Oxford can happen here too.

IWCA Advice Session
Need help with housing, repairs, benefits?

Thursday 2nd September 6-8pm
Geffrye Estate Community Centre