

Election madness grips Nottingham

At the time of writing, Nottingham and the rest of the country is in the grip of election madness. The normally dormant and unresponsive political classes are being brought out of their boxes and wound up for the occasion, giving rise to all manner of unlikely promises and public appearances.

On Saturday 27 March, PM Gordon Brown made an amazingly brief and security-shrouded stop at the University of Nottingham, as part of his pre-election tour. Before local political veteran, Lord Biro, could find him he was on his way to Glasgow.

The zeal of the Labour-led City Council's cut backs on community (see below) spending are allowing Tories to set themselves up as unlikely saviours. Their prospective Parliamentary candidate for Nottingham South, is promising to

Cuts begin to bite

Having spent around one trillion pounds bailing out bankers, the British state now claims that it can't find enough money to fund vital services. Alistair Darling has admitted that cuts after the election will be "deeper and tougher" than those under Thatcher. The Tories' only objection is that these are severe enough or quick enough.

While the government has tried to postpone the worst of these cuts until after the General Election, local councils have already started slashing services and cutting jobs.

On March 8th, Labour-led Nottingham City Council met to approve the 2010/11 budget. Included in this budget were £18.8 million of cuts. Services for the elderly and disabled were slashed. The closure of Victoria Leisure Centre was brought forward and closure of libraries at Wilford and Beechdale was proposed, albeit disguised as a "libraries modernisation programme."

Concerned about the impact of these proposals on vulnerable people and likely job cuts, Nottingham City Unison called a lunchtime protest outside the Council House on the day the budget was being debated. Around 100 people turned up to show their opposition. Some demonstrators felt compelled to move beyond official protest and around 30, mostly deaf campaigners took part in a sit-in protest, stopping the trams.

The city council is not alone in implementing cuts. Over the Trent, the new Tory administration at Nottinghamshire County Council have also been slashing services.

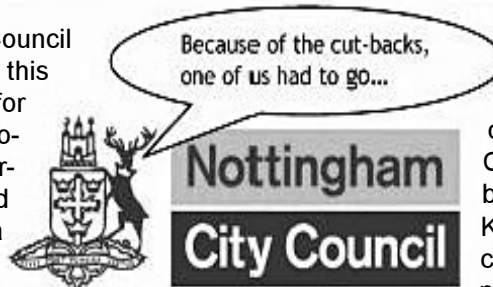
save Radford Unity Complex from closure (see page 2). Not all of the electorate are convinced though – the Broxtowe Tory chairman was savaged by a dog whilst out leafleting in Beeston (see page 3).

Meanwhile the nasties are on the rise. The fascist BNP have put up a record number of candidates across the East Midlands, although they still can't hold a meeting without attracting major protests. When BNP fuhrer Nick Griffin spoke at the Nag's Head in Sutton-in-Ashfield in March. Anti-fascists held a protest outside. Griffin also claimed that the gates to the venue had been chained shut and the toilets blocked.

When the electoral roadshow comes to an end after the election, we can expect politicians to retreat to their tax payer-funded ivory towers for the next four-years. Regardless of who wins real change will only come about if ordinary people make sure it happens. That will require people getting together and organising. This issue of Notts Independent includes reports about some of the campaigns already underway and contacts for some of the others.

Cuts of £33m were announced in November last year. Among the proposals were the end of funding for Dial-a-ride and community transport relied on by many elderly and disabled people. Care homes were to be privatised and the cost of day care services and meals on wheels increased. It was also announced that several recycling centres would close, County Contact points would go and that as many as 1,400 jobs could be lost over three years.

In January, just before the end of the consultation, the council announced a partial climbdown. Community transport was given a stay of execution and some of the steeper increases were reduced, alongside a number of other changes. The council still proposed to cut £28.7m.



The plans were hugely controversial. Thousands responded to the budget consultation, campaigners rallied outside County Hall on the day of the budget and leader of the council Kay Cutts was heckled in the council chamber. There were also protests in Mansfield town centre and at Gedling recycling centre which faces closure. At the time of writing, Unison members at the council are engaged in a work-to-rule in protest at the authority's attempts to impose new terms and conditions on workers without proper consultation.

With the post-election government almost certain to implement even more serious cuts, this fight is far from over. Nottingham City Unison have held a post-budget meeting to begin a campaign against future cuts and Nottingham's Mayday demonstration this year has taken the cuts agenda as one of its central issues.

Save Radford Unity Centre

Nottingham City Council has angered a number of local community groups by proposing to sell-off the Radford Unity Complex (RUC) on the junction of Radford Boulevard and Ilkeston Road.

The council decided to offer the site to a group called "Nottingham Studios" in Autumn 2009 for £150,000, reportedly half of its market value. The authority gave an assurance the groups would be out by March 31. Unfortunately, the council's legal team failed to realise that they had to give these groups 6 months notice and didn't ask them to leave until December 18.

Groups currently using the RUC include some that have been there since 1988. Unsurprisingly, those who have worked hard for so long within the building are angry at the decision. Joginda Singh of the Sikh Community and Youth Service (SCYS) and representatives of other groups put in a bid to buy the building – at the full market value – but the Council weren't interested.

The community groups facing eviction were understandably angry and organised a demonstration from the centre to Market Square on Saturday 20th March. Marchers, accompanied by a tireless group of drummers, carried banners and placards bearing slogans such as "No Consultation. Poor Communication", "Bureaucracy NO, Community YES" and "Unity is divinity".

The demonstrators converged on Speakers' Corner, at the junction of King Street and Queen Street, for speeches. There was a brief speech from a member of one of the affected community groups before Rowena Holland, the Conservative prospective parliamentary candidate for the Nottingham South constituency took the platform. The Tory candidate's championing of this campaign seems rather cynical, in the run up to election. Certainly her fellow Tories across



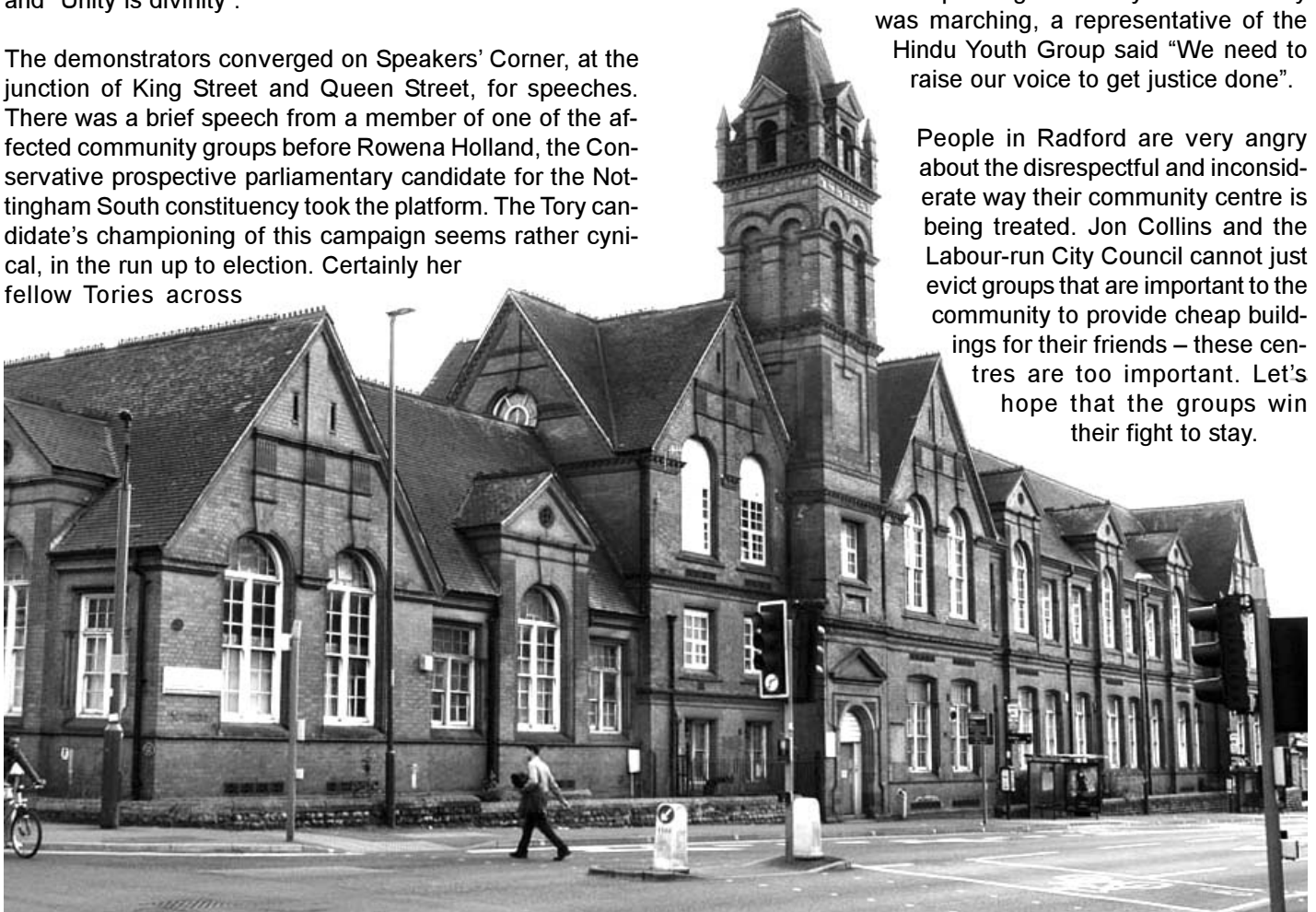
the river at County Hall have been slashing community provision with abandon (see page 1).

Joginder Singh told Indymedia, that the groups based at the centre "have been treated as though we were parasites". When speaking about their imminent eviction he said "We found out purely by accident – they didn't even tell us". "It seems to me", he continued, "that Jon Collins has more power than the Prime Minister".

The groups were offered the now vacant site of the Douglas Road Primary School to relocate to but according to Mr Singh this "is many times worse than what we've already got". He concluded "We've helped thousands and thousands of people for nothing – we're all volunteers. It's not fair."

When speaking about why his community was marching, a representative of the Hindu Youth Group said "We need to raise our voice to get justice done".

People in Radford are very angry about the disrespectful and inconsiderate way their community centre is being treated. Jon Collins and the Labour-run City Council cannot just evict groups that are important to the community to provide cheap buildings for their friends – these centres are too important. Let's hope that the groups win their fight to stay.



It's a dog eat politician world

A local dog has left local Conservatives in little doubt what it thinks of their campaigning, by taking a chunk out of the finger of a Tory canvasser.

Tory dog toy, chairman of Broxtowe Conservatives, Bob Lilley, was out trying to mobilise support in Beeston when he was attacked.

"I bent down to put this through the letter box, it's always the letter boxes on the floor you need to be aware of, and the dog tried to pull me through the letter box. He had the end of my finger. I had to pull myself away from the dog. I just pulled my finger out – it was an instant reaction."

Unfortunately for the people of Beeston, Lilley managed to escape the clutches of the canine and retreated to the rela-

tive safety of a nearby shop, wrapping his finger in a handkerchief.

"It didn't bleed straight away, there was a time gap, we went into a shop and it really started to bleed," he explained to the Evening Post. "I'm still having it dressed now, it's made a mess out of the finger."

Rather than drawing the obvious conclusion and leaving the people of Beeston alone, Lilley has called for letter boxes to be standardised in the UK, with them external to the property as they are in the US.

The dog's opinion of the incident or the quality of Broxtowe Conservatives' electoral paraphernalia is not recorded.

With an election coming up and all the parties, major and minor, likely to be stepping up their campaigning it remains to be seen if this is a one-off incident or if we'll see a spate of dog-led direct action against the electoral farce.

People's Histreh of Nottingham – Part 1

The campaign against the poll tax

On March 5th 1990, Nottingham City Council, then as now Labour-led, met to set the poll tax rate for the city. Protesters burst into the council chamber dressed as Robin Hood. Several councillors were custard pied and the campaigners were removed by the police.

Disruption continued throughout the meeting with the viewing gallery packed with opponents to the tax and adorned with anti-poll tax banners.

Despite expert evidence that custard pies were not dangerous, the Magistrate failed to see the funny side and two of the campaigners involved in the invasion were sent to prison.

This action was part of a wave of protests, disruptions and riots at council meetings across the country which set the scene for the infamous protest and riot in Trafalgar Square at the end of March, the day before the tax was to come into force in England and Wales.

Nottingham was at the forefront of the campaign against the hugely unpopular poll tax and was reportedly fourth in the national league for non-payment. Official figures showed that one third of people weren't paying.

The campaign against the poll tax would ultimately be successful, with PM Margaret Thatcher driven from office and the tax repealed.

To mark the twentieth-anniversary of the anti-poll tax struggle, Notts Radical History Group are recording interviews with people involved in the campaign so that their experiences are not lost. If you would like to get involved, please get in touch. Email: peopleshistreh@riseup.net

Tesco's plans for world domination continue apace

Reports in the local media suggest that Tesco's plans for world domination have now extended to converting old pubs into stores and even deputy leader of the city council and capitalist lickspittle Graham Chapman doesn't like it.

Tesco plan to convert the Jolly Higglers in Radford, where the council had turned down a Tesco on a neighbouring site, and The Oakdale in Bakersfield.

Changes to planning legislation in 2008 mean – bizarrely – that planning permission for a pub can be carried over into a store on the same site without additional planning permission.

Moving into vacant pubs makes a lot of sense for Tesco. With 6 closing every day across the UK as the effects of the recession and the smoking ban bite there certainly isn't a shortage of them.

TESCOPOLY

Every little hurts

Chapman isn't opposed to Tesco on principle: "Some parts of the city are crying out for a small store like that and it would be very beneficial. In other places it is going to wreck the local shopping economy and it is also going to disturb a lot of people."

Crucially, Chapman admits: "At the moment (Tesco) is making the decisions, not the council or residents."

It should be clear that we cannot rely on the council to protect our communities from predatory companies.

Opponents would do well to learn from examples like Bristol where campaigners recently squatted the old Jester's Comedy Club which Tesco plans to convert into a store.

Indy Shorts

Forest Fields Social Club is open every Thursday, Friday, Saturday: 7.30pm to 11pm. Why not join us for a drink? Thursday is kids & family-friendly night. The Social Club is 'members only', but membership is easy and guests are welcome. Sumac Centre, 245 Gladstone St, NG7 6HX.

Enjoy a free meal from Food Not Bombs every Monday from 7.30pm at the Crocus Cafe, 2 Church Square, Lenton, NG7 1SL. See: nottsfoodnotbombs.blogspot.com

Do you know somebody in prison, a friend, or someone in your family – who you'd like us to write to? Join us in writing to our friends to show support and solidarity. Nottingham ABC writes to prisoners all around the world building friendships and developing networks. Every first Monday of the month from 7pm at the Crocus Cafe, 2 Church Square, Lenton, NG7 1SL, with a free meal from Food Not Bombs.

Did you know that many beers, including most 'real' ales are made using isinglass, an additive made from the swim bladders of sturgeons? Wines often use dried blood or egg albumen as finings. Finings are used to speed up the settling of sediment, a process that works perfectly well with the addition instead of a little more time! On Saturday and Sunday 5-6 June, the Sumac Centre is hosting the Great Vegan Beer Festival. See: www.veggies.org.uk/veganbeer

Not many Nottingham residents are aware of it, but the city is home to a major multinational arms company. An anonymous warehouse on an industrial estate in Lenton is the UK headquarters of Heckler & Koch – the world's second-largest small-arms manufacturer. Outraged by the presence of such an unethical company, a group of Nottingham residents established a campaign called Shut Down H&K. The campaign holds monthly demonstrations outside H&K's office at 4pm on 2nd Monday of every month: Unit 3, Easter Park, Lenton Lane, Nottingham, NG7 2PX. See: shutdownhk.org.uk

Notts Online Listings

beestonblog.blogspot.com

Daily photos of Nottingham

leftlion.co.uk

The home of Nottingham culture.

Articles, music, event listings, videos, photo galleries, discussion forum and loads more..

ncclois.blogspot.com

Keeping an eye on Nottingham City Council and its friends.

myspace.com/nottinghamanimalrights

Co-ordinating activities campaigning for animal welfare and animal rights in and around Nottingham.

nobordersnottingham.org.uk

Campaigns against borders and in solidarity with migrants.

nottsarearamblers.co.uk

Local branch of the Ramblers Assoc.

nottinghamcamra.org

Local campaign for for real ale, real pubs and consumer rights.

savevictoriabaths.org.uk

Campaigning to save Victoria Leisure Centre from closure.

shutdownhk.org.uk

Campaign against Nottingham-based arms dealers Heckler & Koch.

stonebridgecityfarm.co.uk

Farm in St Anns.

sumac.org.uk

Nottingham's independent community and social centre.

thesparrowsnest.org.uk

Anarchist library in St Anns.

transitionnottingham.org.uk

A community-led response to the twin challenges of peak oil & climate change and part of an international network of Transition initiatives.

Got a camera-
phone? Try
scanning this
to save keying
in the Notts
IMC web
address



Community Print Resources

c/o Sumac Centre, 245 Gladstone Street, Nottingham NG7 6HX

0845 458 9595 . email: cpr@veggies.org.uk

CPR is a collectively managed print workshop and resource centre for Nottm's campaign community, a real life saver for those on a tight budget or a tight deadline.

The resources are dispersed at various community locations including the Sumac Centre in Forest Fields / New Basford. Access is by prior arrangement.



Facilities include 'risograph' duplicator and A2 poster printing and lamination, with 100% recycled paper stock in a range of colours and sizes.

More info at www.veggies.org.uk/cpr

Notts Independent is produced by the people behind Nottinghamshire Indymedia. We hope to make this a regular newsletter so if you like it and want to receive copies of future editions, please get in touch. | Notts Indymedia is an open-publishing website committed to offering grassroots and local non-corporate news coverage. We aim to generate a fresh perspective on mainstream media-twisted stories and give a voice to individuals and communities in Nottingham and the East Midlands that are marginalised and have no say in the mainstream media. You can contribute your own stories on the website.

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