

WAKE UP!! WAKE UP!! IT'S YER PAGE RAGE...

Weekly SchNEWS

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THE WITHDRAWAL METHOD AS STATE PREPARES TO PULL OUT OF UNIVERSAL LIBRARY PROVISION

As noisy protests continued against tax avoidance by big business and cuts in education and benefits another, altogether quieter, national campaign took off this week at our most unsung of public services: the libraries.

You can't imagine that Waterstones, WH-Smiths, Amazon and others mind too much that libraries were forged from great social ideals. Not only is encouraging universal education and literacy good economically for society (potential talent can rise from anywhere to realise its potential and then productively benefit society) it's availability to serve as community hub, public space, creche and more to those without access to alternatives make it an all round force for social good. Investing equally in all, for the future of all, paid for from the wealth of all. But such aspirations are like, so last millennium. and the shiny new 'Big Society' has no need for such rubbish.

Across the country, councils faced with savage funding cuts are putting libraries top of their list of low hanging fruit and axing swathes of library services. In some places they are offering the meagre crumb of offering to give over premises to volunteers to take over and run what non-funded services they can.

And despite the gargantuan (learnt that word in a book I borrowed from a library) sums of taxpayers money shovelled into the banks to stop them going bust (effectively later ending up as bonuses to smug bankers claiming they're successfully earning their way to 'recovery'), or the billions lost in cosy corporate tax-avoidance, or wasted on mega IT projects etc etc - the government is happy to sit by and force councils to retreat from core social support and non life-essential services.

But the book-reading masses are queuing up to resist. OK, so it ain't smashing up the trea-

sure, but a wave of imaginative actions in libraries have been taking place up and down the UK, instigated for the most part by some unlikely direct action comrades.

Saturday 5th saw a national day of action against the mass closures that are threatening nearly 500 services, including mobile libraries. Huge numbers of people came out in even the smallest of towns, many libraries seeing queues down the street with crowds of hundreds coming to max out their cards and make overdue demonstrations of visible support for these valuable institutions. The turnouts were best attended by those which use the libraries most, families with young children and the elderly, with plenty of those on lower incomes - set to be some of the most affected by benefit cuts - and others who never use 'em but believe in the principle.

Most of the day's actions mirrored the work of borrowers in Stony Stafford, Milton Keynes back in January. There a library that holds more than 16,000 books was cleared of its stock in just a few days after a Facebook campaign called for local people to go in and take their maximum allowance. Aimed to highlight the massive hole that would be left in the community if Milton Keynes council went ahead with its plans to close the popular centre, it hit the national headlines and campaigns started to spring up all over the UK.

On the 5th, many libraries had visits from local

2020: LIBRARY EXHIBIT OPENS



writers and poets, including in Gloucestershire, where a battalion of seven 'Flying Authors' were jetting round the libraries of the county in not the greenest of actions, but certainly the most expensive. Entertaining people who'd turned up to support their local lender with stories, poems and songs, the seven managed to visit all thirteen centres in one day. Others had read-ins with their most famous local scribe or B-list celeb supporter.

Sheffield had a mass Shhh!-in at their city library attended by over 200 people. After a group exclamation of 'Shhh!' and three cheers for their library, people went and took out their allowance of 15 books each, leaving the shelves looking decidedly bare and the floor filled with people sitting down for an impromptu read-in.

Milborne Port library in Somerset was infiltrated by a phantom 'book snatcher' who went around grabbing books from reading people's hands, replacing it with signs saying things like 'illiteracy', 'poor life chances', and 'social isolation'.

People took to the streets in Scotland and Cambridge, with a group protesting outside the Scottish Parliament in Edinburgh and a flash-mob in Cambridge reading aloud from their favourite books.

We hope the public keep on throwing the book at 'em - and wonder how the story will turn out, although we're not holding out for a happy ending.

The fact that sections of the poor, young, disabled, socially marginalised or even middle class end up getting screwed is tough Shhh.

* See <http://publiclibrariesnews.blogspot.com/> for a map of libraries under threat from council cuts and local campaign in your area.

EDL GO TO HELL, WELL, LUTON

The English Defence League held their biggest demo to date in Luton on Saturday 5th. There were estimates of up to three thousand in attendance. However in a marked contrast to earlier outings, there was little drunken violence and the vast majority were on their coaches and away by the time the whistle blew at four p.m. There are reports that two houses were targeted later that night but there was no EDL mass break-out.

Bedfordshire police are estimated to have spent £800,000 on putting over a thousand cops on the street. The EDL were, in what is now becoming common practice, allowed a short march while anti-fascists, under the auspices of Unite Against Fascism were held in a static demonstration in Park Square. The rest of Luton seems to have stayed at home for the day and the streets in the town centre were deserted.

There were scuffles at the train station early in the morning as EDL and UAF mingled on the platforms but no outright kick-offs. Around two hundred anti-fascists occupied the train station entrance until forced to move by the cops. UAF types later broke out of their kettle and running through back streets made it to the Bury Park area.

Previous EDL efforts in Luton, billed by the far-right group as 'where it all began', saw a rampaging mob smashing windows in what is effectively Luton's Muslim quarter in Bury Park. (see SchNEWS 670). This time round in response the Muslim youth were out in their hundreds ready to repel any attack. Shopkeepers defiantly kept their premises open. Although the atmosphere was nervous at first, the united response when one car-driver chose to shout 'EDL' at the mass (and then presumably drove straight to the nearest panel-beaters), made it clear that any incursion would be steadfastly resisted.

Stewards, mostly recruited through local mosques, attempted to control the crowd and conform to the police plan of keeping anti-racists and the Muslim/Asian community apart but the majority of the crowd welcomed those who had come to stand with them.

Hot on the heels of their biggest demo to date, the EDL - in the shape of Tommy Robinson/Steven Yaxley-Lennon -, announced that they're going to become a political party. Ignoring the fact that Britain already has its fair share of ballot-

CONTINUED OVER

Wake up! Wake up! It's yer...

SchNEWS

Anarcho-folk punk benefit gig

with

BLYTH POWER

and

THE ASTRONAUTS

plus

POG

Sun 20th Feb 8pm £5

@ Hectors House
Grand Parade, Brighton

www.schnews.org.uk

EDL GO TO HELL... CONTINUED

box Nazis, the pro-police tanning salon-owner Robinson, increasingly seen to be the EDLs leader, is determined to split the far-right vote. Intoxicated with his Newsnight appearance, he announced that Nick Griffin is washed up and that if he (Tommy) appeared on Question Time, then he'd have 10,000 supporters outside. This news was carried uncritically in a front-page puff-piece in the Daily Star who have, under the auspices of editor and pornographer Richard Desmond, decided to become the EDLs flag-bearers. Quite why the one-time owner of Asian Babes magazine wants to throw his weight behind the EDL is anyone's guess.

Meanwhile not all the rank and file are happy with Tommy's meteoric rise - there are unconfirmed reports that he had to be escorted away by police after being punched by another leaguer. Apparently they weren't too happy at his telling them to 'fucking calm down' on the megaphone.

Meanwhile the EDL have announced their next outing - Birmingham on March 19th. SchNEWS spoke to one anti-fascist who said, "The EDL bandwagon is a dangerous one - at the moment they have laid claim to a single emotive issue - Islamic radicalism. They use this to push a broader racist agenda, one that attacks all racial minorities. They had a big turn-out today but remember that they've been building for this since November - when they were out every few weeks the turn outs were much lower. They can and must be resisted."

EGYPT: TAHIR WE GO AGAIN

As the 17th day of the Egyptian uprising drew to a close Mubarak's position remained ambivalent. With the promise of serious change in the air, protesters gravitated back to Tahrir Square en masse in anticipation of Mubarak's flight. But they were to be disappointed - Mubarak is hoping to cling onto power with a cabinet reshuffle and a vow of not 'giving in to foreign pressure'.

The Egyptian uprising has developed in the past week with a series of strikes and protests by professional groups and workers across the country, broadening the participation in the rebellion. Thousands of black clad lawyers and white robed physicians descended on Tahrir square on Thursday(10th) hours before Mubarak was expected to address the nation and resign. Protests at Al Ahram, the state-controlled newspaper, immobilised one of the most powerful propaganda tools at the government's disposal.

In an effort to stop unsupervised news seeping out pro-Mubarak thugs have been kidnapping and torturing journalists.

The military, which receives almost its entire budget from Uncle Sam, has decided to sit on the fence, declaring its wish to "to maintain the homeland and the achievements and the aspirations of the great people of Egypt." On the other hand General Hassan al-Roueiini, military commander for Cairo told demonstrators, "All your demands will be met today."

* A global day of action has been called for Saturday(12th) at 12pm in Trafalgar Square, London.

* Two Brighton activists have been in the thick of the action in Cairo for the last week - to read an anarchist perspective on the upheaval, go to <http://reportsfromtheegyptianuprising.wordpress.com/>

PARTY & PROTEST

For events listings updated weekly see www.schnews.org.uk/pap

GREECE: HUNGER STRIKES

On Jan 25th, 300 undocumented migrant workers began a hunger strike in Greece, demanding legalization of all migrants in Greece, with political and social rights equal to Greek employees.

Fifty of the 300 are at The Labor Centre in Thessaloniki. The others are in Athens, now based in a privately owned building after a night-time eviction from the out of use Athens University Law School.

Police, backed by the rector, violated the "University Asylum" law, which declares all public university grounds off limits to police. Under this law, only university rectors councils can lift the asylum, and only in life-threatening cases or if an automatically prosecutable crime is committed - clearly not the case.

The Law School was laid siege by hundreds of cops, with traffic banned in surrounding streets. Thousands gathered outside the Law School in solidarity, while gatherings and demonstrations took place around Greece.

The state proposed a new building for the migrants, which they initially refused due to the severe conditions imposed on its use - a ring of cops around the building, no-one but the hunger strikers themselves to be allowed inside, and it would only be available for one week.

After a long hard night of negotiations, at 4:30am demonstrators moved with the hunger strikers to the new building. On arrival, many of the rooms were locked, no heating was available and there was only one toilet. Many of the hunger strikers are sleeping in tents in the courtyard.

This building is only available until this Friday (11th). As yet there is nowhere for the hunger strikers, by now well into their third week, to move to.

Solidarity actions and demonstrations continue around Greece, with messages of support from far and wide. A common day of action has been called for Friday 11th February.

Messages of support can be sent to [yোগrafes.allilegyi.stin.apergia@gmail.com](mailto:yോഗrafes.allilegyi.stin.apergia@gmail.com)

GREECE: TRASH TALK

Five protesters were detained on criminal charges on Wednesday (9th), falling foul of riot police as they demonstrated about a load of rubbish in Keratea, Greece.

Almost daily protests and clashes with cops have been going on since December 12th 2010, over the construction of a new landfill site in the area. Events escalated on Tuesday (8th) as riot police blasted into town, breaking into homes without warrants and arresting a man who was uninvolved in the clashes.

More than 1,000 inflamed locals then retaliated, assailing the town's police station, throwing sticks, stones, petrol bombs and molotovs at the police, who responded with tear gas. One town resident described the scene as "reminiscent of the civil war".

Residents have appealed a court decision to allow the landfill which will be walking distance from the community, spoil an archaeological site and pollute local water. What a waste.

HARPER SCARPER

Rowdy defenders of the Forest of Dean let Tory MP Mark Harper know exactly what they thought of his plans to sell off the forest (see Schnews 757). A sorry excuse for a 'consultation' meeting last Friday (4th), with inadequate space and only 24 hours warning, saw him noisily barracked throughout by public attendees, from children to OAPs. His attempts to then flee the scene unmoled failed as a 300-strong crowd outside the venue, pelted his van with eggs and blocked the road as he tried to make his police-escorted getaway. * See www.handsoffourforest.org

SHOPPED COPS DROPPED

Two cops who tried to fit up a squatter by planting dope on him, have been sacked from the Met. Their crimes would never have come to light if it hadn't been for the victim's ingenious use of a digital voice recorder concealed in his pocket.

Sgt Marcus Garvey and Pc Wayne Campbell faced a IPCC misconduct hearing during which they were found to have used unlawful force in Thacker's arrest and given inaccurate accounts, although they were acquitted by jury of perverting the course of justice last May.

The case began three years ago when the police broke into a squat in Kidbrooke, London with a sledgehammer, forcefully pulled Thacker out of the building, and then arrested him for possession of cannabis - which they'd found in another room of the house.

The officers later claimed they had made the arrest outside the property and then broke into the property to check no-one else was inside.

Luckily, Thacker thought to turn on a voice recorder in his pocket - and the recording proved the cops had been lying. He presented the evidence whilst representing himself in court on the drugs charge, prompting the dropping of the case against him and the start of the case against the officers and the subsequent IPCC hearing.

Thacker is pretty meditative about the whole ordeal: "I've thought about it a lot, yeah it's crap for them that they've lost their jobs but who wants cops like that around? We don't need bullies around, especially with those that can abuse their powers. This is something I've never really driven, it's always been the IPCC and the detective sergeants...I've just given evidence, that's all. So yeah, live and learn, aye."

THE WAR YOU DON'T SEE

SCHMOVIES is screening the new John Pilger film

Wed 16th Feb - 8PM

The Cowley Club London Rd, Brighton

Free / Dontation.

www.schnews.org.uk/schmovies

...and finally...

Perhaps the slobbering councillors at Hammersmith and Fulham don't think refugees don't have right pedigree to get any help from them.

As they push ahead with their plans to evict and sell off the premises of the Afghan Council UK - a body offering support to Afghan refugees, the council stated in an official report on the development that the refugees could instead, er, always find help from the Southern Afghan Club

- a dog appreciation society.

After being hounded for their ignorant howler, they simply said: "We are sorry."

Delving deeper, the eviction of the Afghan Council and 30 other community groups that use the Palingswick House site says even more about the government's current priorities. The building is being sold to become the controversial West London Free School.

The council see the wishes of the upper-middle class parents and their desire to make new schools good enough for their darlings as far more important than the needs of the multicultural community and charity work that's been going on at the centre for, in some cases, over 20 years. Another shining example of the BS that is the 'Big Society' - and probably applauded inside Tory ranks as good 'muscular liberalism' in action.

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