

Hereford Heckler



The bulletin of Hereford Solidarity League

FREEDOM, EQUALITY, COMMUNITY • #20 • JUNE/JULY 2011



This is thugery. When posh people do it it's called 'boisterous merrymaking'



OIKS AT THE RACES? WE CAN'T HAVE THAT

Fighting broke out during this year's Ladies Day at Ascot as racegoers looked on.

Yet all accounts suggest that these men—and many others on the day—were not the usual 'well-to-do' racegoers that Royal Ascot attracts but ordinary blokes enjoying an otherwise good day out; it seems the posh don't like it one bit.

The *Daily Mail* comments: "A quick glance across the terraces reveals a sea of flesh and unsightly tattoos—of women in cheap, tawdry dresses and men who have shunned the expected top hat." Put another way, they don't like ordinary men and women mixing with the upper classes. Well stuff 'em! If we want to go to the races, we'll go to the races! No class discrimination will stop us.



Jesse



Knob

JESSE RUBS OUR NOSES IN IT

Fresh from the latest round of cuts with his chums down in London, Jesse Norman has been helping out at the Wise Buys charity shop at The Oval.

The deadringer for a door-knob obviously fails to see the irony in the growing need for cheap second-hand goods by victims of recent benefit cuts – caused by his government!

So as we find ourselves with less and less money and an ever-present threat of redundancy, Jesse 'toff' Norman comes down to take pity on us and rub our noses in it.

Jesse made his millions working as a banker for Barclays in London. Obviously realising he had a talent for screwing over working class people, he became a politician.

So what makes this slime bag think he's wanted round The Oval, coming round pretending to care about the people he's screwed over?

Jog on, Jesse!

County workers

JOIN THE PICKET LINES

Strikes hit the county at the end of June as workers took action to defend their pay and pensions.

Schools were closed from Leominster to Lea and colleges, courts and Hereford Jobcentre were also affected.

Members of four unions—National Union of Teachers, Association of Teachers and Lecturers, University and Colleges Union and the Public and Commercial Services union—coordinated the action on 30th June in protest at government plans that would see workers retire later and pay more into their pensions, reducing their monthly wage.

It was the first industrial action taken nationally against the ConDem programme of cuts.

The strikes hit as Herefordshire Council put into action plans to make redundant all music teachers throughout schools in the county in a further 'cost-cutting' exercise. The decision was taken behind closed doors without consultation or a vote.

A business model was recommended that will see teachers laid off and rehired on a self-employed basis, dependent on the whim of schools that want to work with them.

Chris Levandowski, from the NASWUT union, spoke up for members and vowed to fight tooth and nail to save their jobs: "Most of the staff I have spoken to are most unhappy about that situation, but they have no choice." Err, or should that be can't really be bothered to fight for anything.

Childminders in Herefordshire have also been fighting cuts to their budgets by organising a petition, wholly signed by over 60 childminders.

The petition was presented to new council leader John Jarvis, destined we imagine, straight for the bin judging by the council's long tradition of not giving a monkey's

The news that the Trades Union Congress has met with anti-cuts groups, including anarchists and radical groups

like UK Uncut, to coordinate and plan future protests and strike action should be welcomed. Our ultimate goals may be different but right now fighting separately would be idiotic.

But if we are fighting to win we must up the ante and go beyond the one-day strike, the polite petition, the giving up before we've even tried. We must stop merely going, painfully, through the motions and start getting serious.

Right now the Greek anti-cuts movement is showing us that it is possible to fight back against austerity and pose a serious threat to the state; we didn't create this mess so why should we pay for it. But what Greece is also showing us is the level of struggle we have to aspire to have any effect.

Unions, workers, community groups and individuals fighting government cuts across Herefordshire urgently need to unite. Isolated petitions just won't cut it anymore.

Stonewall — LOUD, PROUD & QUEER

This June saw the 42nd anniversary of the Stonewall riots, a significant turning point for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) politics and liberation. The date continues to be remembered and this time of the year is synonymous with 'Pride' events across the world. Here in Hereford the fourth 'Out in The Sticks' festival was recently held, with film showings at The Courtyard, theatrical events and a conference to address the invisibility of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender people in society.

The Stonewall Inn was a gay bar in Greenwich Village, New York. It became a place for the young, poor, dispossessed and newly confident gay and transgender people to socialise and hang out. This was a welcome respite in the face of a widely homophobic society and establishment.

In the early hours of Saturday 28th June the police raided the bar and demanded that the 200-strong crowd inside line up and show their identification, whilst 'gender verification' took place and those men dressed as women were arrested. This was a common occurrence at the time, with state persecution of sexual minorities being the norm.

However, the raid did not go to plan. Many of the revellers left but continued to hang around outside where a crowd began to gather. As the crowd grew and more police officers arrived hostilities intensified. Pushing and shoving ensued as the police attempted to make arrests. The crowd fought



back strongly, surprising the police and showing that the gay community were more than willing and able to defend themselves from attack. Police vehicles were overturned and a volley of missiles rained down on them. Rioting continued and was repeated over the following nights.

These events sent shock waves throughout the establishment, and are frequently cited as the first instance in American history when people in the homosexual community fought back against a government-sponsored system that persecuted sexual minorities. Activist groups were subsequently set up to push for equality, linking in with other civil rights struggles of the time. A year after the riots the first Gay Pride march was held, and has since become a regular annual feature in many towns and cities across the world.

The struggle for equality for the LGBT community has come a long way since Stonewall, but persecution and discrimination unfortunately still exists. Homophobic bullying is all too common on the playground and in the workplace, and the government continues to deport LGBT people to countries where they face repression such as imprisonment and even death. This is clearly unacceptable and if society is to truly treat people as equal regardless of gender or sexual orientation, then we need to oppose discrimination whenever and wherever it occurs.

You can find out more about Hereford's Out In The Sticks project here - www.outinthesticks.org.uk



'Tie yourself to a star and sail with it...'

"Every person must have a star, an ideal, to which he clings. The ideal may not be realised today or tomorrow but you must have an ideal, which will carry you forward in life, will inspire you to do deeds and acts.

"We are living in a society where there are slaves, poverty, misunderstanding, social injustice, all the wrongs of society. And there are people foolish like myself and many others who call ourselves anarchists, who feel that this injustice can be done away with, that people can be educated. We must in our soul believe that justice must prevail. We must have that concept that we are going to carry on, little by little.

"The concept of justice—moral certainty, that right is right—is a doctrine that, no matter whether you call it anarchist-syndicalist, anarchist-individualist, anarchist-communist, whatever label you put on it ... what is the ultimate goal of all these scattered ideas, whether it's the ideas of Proudhon, whether it's Kropotkin, whether it's Malatesta or anyone else—each one had a little variation. But the ultimate ideal, the ultimate concept of all of these people was ultimate human justice for everybody. And that is the ideal that anarchism stands for."

Irving Abrams

VILLAGERS TO RUN THEIR OWN SCHOOL

Long before posh toff David Cameron was going on about his 'big society', anarchists were making the argument that you don't need the government and state to run society, ordinary people can do it for themselves.

And so it is that, after a long battle with Herefordshire Council, Dilwyn residents have decided to run their village school themselves.

Last year council bosses decided that Dilwyn Primary School was 'unsustainable' and would have to close despite various rescue plans including linking with St Mary's High School in Lugwardine. The local community are now working on plans for a free school run by volunteers.

As we've said previously, schools are an important hub of village life and even more so for a small village like Dilwyn.

At a time when rural communities are being decimated by the dwindling agricultural industry and multinational companies sucking trade in to the towns and cities, it is vital that we do whatever it takes to preserve these communities.

Herefordshire Council, whilst paying its top boss more than the prime minister, look only at the balance sheet and see a school as unprofitable, taking in no account of its social value.

We support the efforts of Dilwyn's people in keeping their school open, but it is also vital that we continue to resist every closure.

Herefordshire Council are currently reviewing the future of other schools and will no doubt be attempting to shut down whatever they can. A strong and united anti-closure movement is a must.

A QUESTION OF DEMOCRACY

Lessons from *It's Our City*

Anarchists are often ridiculed and criticised for our attitude towards voting and representative democracy as a whole. We view the system of having individuals representing us in council or government as giving up our freedom. We all know that these people do whatever they want once elected and rarely keep the promises they made at election time.

Anarchism comes from the Greek an-archos, meaning without leaders. Democracy to us is everyone having an equal voice. If we organised in our communities and workplaces into groups we could do without those people who claim to represent us.

An example of what we mean can be seen from the *It's Our City* anti-ESG campaign. This group was set up by people (including some councillors) in order to stop the destruction of the city centre. Around 16,000 people agreed with them and signed a petition to show their support. At this point, we believe, the democratic thing to do would have been to have open public meetings to decide on the direction of the campaign. We would have pushed for the picketing of council meetings, city centre rallies and other forms of protest. Not everyone would have agreed with us, but at least in open meetings people could have shared their ideas.

Unfortunately the self appointed leadership of *It's Our City* decided that 16,000 signatures meant 16,000 votes. Behind closed doors they turned a vibrant community-wide campaign into a political party. This was anything but a democratic decision. Cynics would say they let their egos and hunger for power get the

better of them. In the end, as *It's Our County*, they failed to gain any significant power in the local elections. But it would make no difference if they had won control of the council—people who claim to be the solution always end up as the problem.

When *It's Our City* was being wound up, we tried to push for an open and democratic continuation of the campaign, but organisers refused, thinking that we wanted to take over. We thought that there would be support for direct action, as numerous community-based campaigns have successfully used this in the past. This would have allowed supporters to use their own voice, rather than rely on councillors to talk for them. As we now know only a lack of money stands between the council and their ESG plans. We hope that future campaigns learn from the mistakes of *It's Our City* and don't allow politicians to get in the way of democracy.



It's Our City at 10 Downing Street to deliver their petition to the prime minister

TURNING THE TIDE ON TESCO

Wherever Tesco go there seems to be controversy and numerous high-profile campaigns against its seemingly never-ending expansion. From Tenbury Wells to Stokes Croft in Bristol, local organisations have been lining up against the company and Ledbury looks set to be the next battleground.



Tesco are planning to move their store in the town from its current site on Orchard Lane to the site of Ledbury Welding on Leaddon Way. Locals have raised concerns about the negative effect this may have on trade in the town. Rumour has it that the two-day consultation offered was merely used to pay lip service, with the company already committed to the plans.

An action group has already been formed: Ledbury Opposes Tesco Superstore held its first meeting on Friday 3rd June, with around 150 locals

in attendance. They have said they are ready to fight a lengthy battle, with leafleting already underway and a Facebook page set up.

People oppose Tesco for many different reasons—the power this huge corporation yields, its negative effect on small and local businesses, its ability to steamroller plans over any and all opposition, its environmental impact, the sale of unethical products and so on. But one thing that almost all hold in common is the contempt shown to them by Tesco.

We await further information on the Ledbury plans, but in the meantime we encourage as many people as possible to get involved in the campaign against it. The only way us small people can take on such a large company is through standing together and organising from the grassroots. By using a diverse range of tactics—from petitions to boycotts to pickets and more—we can pack a powerful punch, and that is how such a campaign will be successful.

SHUTS
Every little shop

PRIVATE VS PUBLIC SECTOR

Efforts by the ruling class to divide workers into 'private sector' and 'public sector' are currently going into overdrive. They're pitting shop staff against nurses, factory workers against council workers, truckers against teachers.

They've got us fighting each other for the crumbs that fall off the rich man's table—**BUT THE BOSSES HAVE GOT THE WHOLE DAMN CAKE!**

THE INTERNATIONAL BANKING SYSTEM—A NEW MOTTO

Great Britain has '*God and my right*', the United States have '*In God we trust*' but we can't find a motto for the international banking system. May we suggest '*Profits we keep, but debt we share*'?

COUNCIL MARKS ITS OWN QUIZ

After pledging to make the council more open and inclusive, new leader Cllr John Jarvis has axed five scrutiny bodies in favour of just one committee headed by a member of the ruling Conservative Party. A fine achievement for 'democracy'—one opposition councillor compared it to "doing a pub quiz and marking it yourself".

We can see that right from the outset this council plans to carry on where the old one left off: doing whatever they please.

The Chinese government is said to be taking lessons from Herefordshire Council in how it gets away with such blatant abuses of power.

FOOTBALL'S GREEN REVOLUTION

Finally all closet football-loving greenies can come out and admit their mainstream passion. A football club not far from the Shire is set to become the most environmentally-minded in the land.

Nailsworth, south of Gloucester, is home to Forest Green Rovers FC. Many Hereford fans have fond memories of the away games at their New Lawn stadium when we were down in the Conference. Who could resist the charm of this community-minded club, with the previous chairman serving drinks in the bar, and fans so friendly that even die-hard Meadow End nutters felt like giving them a hug!

In August 2010 Forest Green were taken over by Dale Vince. This is the bloke who owns green electricity company Ecotricity, and also happens to be vegan. He began his green revolution in February this year when red meat was taken off the menu at the club. Initially it was the players who had red meat removed from their diet, but this was extended to all staff and fans. Fish and poultry from sustainable sources and a selection of vegetarian food are now sold instead. Plans are also in place to embed renewable and low impact technologies throughout the stadium.

In May this year Vince teamed up with Gary Neville to launch the 'Sustainability in Sport' initiative. According to their website "this new partnership has the aim of taking the eco message into the world of sport. Environmental projects will be delivered by Sustainability in Sport, the first of which will be a community solar scheme in Manchester."

While all this sounds quite laudable, let's hope Mr Vince treats Forest Green and its history with respect. We hope he is able to make the positive changes he has planned, and works the supporters of Forest Green to achieve them. They will still be there long after he has gone.

BAHRAIN GRAND PRIX CANCELLED

But where do we draw the line?

After months of speculation the FIA has announced that 2011 Bahrain Grand Prix has been cancelled, but the repercussions will linger on for much longer. The race was initially suspended due to the violent crack down on unarmed protesters in the Bahraini capital Manama. Unfortunately F1 supremo Bernie Ecclestone and his money hungry cronies couldn't bear to put people before the loss of £50 million and restored the race to the F1 calendar. This decision angered human rights groups, fans, F1 teams, and some drivers.

Former motor racing chief Max Mosley told the media that "the race should not go ahead as the grand prix is being used as part of the machinery of suppression in Bahrain".

But this is nothing new; sport has always been used by governments for ulterior motives. The summer Olympics in 1936 was used by Hitler to build nationalist and racist fervour. Apartheid South Africa used cricket and rugby to promote their racist ideology. Last year poverty stricken South Africa spent billions on the FIFA World Cup, and in the process crushed workers rights and evicted people from their homes. British governments are no different. While massive cuts are made to public spending, the previous and current governments have poured money into the 2012 Olympics.

So what of the Bahrain GP? Clearly the race should not happen. But where do we draw the line? What about the Chinese GP with their human rights record? What about the Turkish GP with their treatment of the Kurds? What about the British GP with the high rates of death in police custody?

If sport is going to start getting moralistic then someone is going to have to decide where the boundaries lay, no easy task in a money driven industry.



Helen Heckler

■ New council leader John 'face like a slapped arse' Jarvis reckons the whole county owes a debt of gratitude to the outgoing leader Roger Phillips. Too right! Phillips was a courageous and visionary leader—he closed the LEA swimming pool, he tried closing care homes in Kington, as well as 40 schools across the county. If the council owned it, he wanted it closed. Oh yeah, definite debt of gratitude, John. How can we ever repay him?!

■ Taking a break from screwing people over, Herefordshire banker Darren Farnell recently went on a day-long jolly to Foley Auto Services to find out first-hand what his clients need. Uh, I think small businesses want more money, Darren? Any idiot could tell you that. The government keeps telling you that! One of the mechanics told me: "I'm used to working with some big tools, but this guy really takes the biscuit."

CAPTION COMPETITION

Answers to kay.bulstreet@hotmail.co.uk or 07933 655 985 by 30th July 2011.



■ **Hereford Solidarity League** works to build a society based on the ideas of **freedom, equality and community** ■ **Anti-fascism is an important part of our politics**, but we believe that all politicians maintain a system of inequality, privilege and control that divides communities ■ Real change does not happen at the ballot box and can only come about by **independent working class action**; that is, people looking out for each other and organising themselves to deal with the problems that they experience on a day to day basis ■ Our aim is to increase the fighting spirit and self-confidence of working class people to change things for themselves.
FIND US ON THE INTERNET—Join our **Facebook group 'Hereford Heckler'**; visit www.herefordheckler.wordpress.com; or email kay.bulstreet@hotmail.co.uk