



2017 NEA/NUT Retired Teachers' Convention

The new General Secretary of the National Pensioners' Convention, Jan Short, spoke powerfully against any attempts to divide the generations when she addressed the NUT Retired Teachers' Convention in October. Any attempt to take away Pensioner benefits, such as the Pension Triple lock or the Freedom Pass would be misguided. It would not help the younger generations but would be used to further roll back the welfare state for everyone.

She also made a robust attack on a proposal to privatise 95% of professional services of the NHS - a proposal which was taken off the table following protests by NPC. Constant vigilance will be necessary. She argued for a state pension of £200 a week, reminding everyone that pensioners also contribute to the national good by paying taxes (including VAT) and through volunteering, to an estimated £40 billion pounds per year.

Amanda Brown, Deputy General Secretary of National Education Union, spoke to the Convention about our place in the Union as retired teachers. At the moment, there are two sections in the Union (NUT and ATL) but the merger will be completed in January 2019 when the NEU National Executive will take office.

It seems that the ATL (Association of Teachers and Lecturers) did not have a Retired Teachers Section. The new Union will have to decide what status we have, but it is likely that our local organisation will continue in a similar way to the present, which means it looks likely that we will not have a vote for national officers. Whilst it is obvious that we, Retired Members, should not be entitled to vote for industrial action, it is rather less clear why we should not have a say in the choice of General Secretary and I feel we should certainly have a right to raise issues affecting us at national level. I am still hoping that we will be incorporated into the formal structure of the NEU, with a properly constituted Retired Teachers section and defined role.

Getting the local authority out of education – Part 3



In my two previous newsletter articles, I tried to show how removing further education colleges from local authority control has led to an explosion of spectacular cases of fraud and corruption. So, it would hardly take a genius to predict that adopting essentially the same model for schools through the academy and 'free' school programmes would lead to exactly the same unsavoury outcomes; - ie eye-watering enrichment of those at the top by those at the top and financial mismanagement.

Thus, with the benefit of hindsight, would any logical person not reach the conclusion that caution should be the order of the day before the implementation of any scheme involving the transfer of significant amounts of public money to private or quasi-private providers of school education? Well, the reality is that the opposite has been the case, with the Government moving full steam ahead with its academy/free school programme.

Facts and Figures

Indeed, Whitehall's spending watchdog, the National Audit Office, no subversive left-wing organisation, has itself concluded that ministers have chosen to give billions of pounds to build new free schools while local authority schools are crumbling into a state of disrepair, and that £6.7bn would be needed to bring existing school buildings in England and Wales up to a satisfactory standard. Yet instead of funding that short-fall, the Government plans to spend £9.7bn on free schools, which are state funded but privately run, with such funding being drained from the education budget. By September 2016, 429 privately-run free schools had been opened, with a plan to have 883 up and running by September 2020, all at a time of well-publicised scheduled real terms cuts to state school funding of around £3bn every year up to 2020.

Hidden Agendas

So, the question arises as to why the Government would choose to go down this very expensive path, knowing from previous college experience what the outcome would be. Well, just like Norman Lamont, the Tory Chancellor back in May 1991, thought unemployment to be 'a price worth paying', the present Tory administration appears to see widespread misuse of public funds to be a price worth paying to achieve several of their long-cherished goals. These goals include the privatisation of more and more public services, destruction of local democracy and the power of local government, and a weakening of the education unions (indeed unions in general) through fragmentation, casualisation and the breaking-up of nationally agreed pay-scales and conditions of service.

In my fourth, and definitely final, article on this topic in the next newsletter, I'll provide some examples of how channelling public funds to schools which are outside of local authority control often leads to misuse of those funds.

Henry Tiller

Save Our A&E – the campaign to stop closure



THE campaign to prevent closure of the Accident and Emergency department at King George hospital, Ilford, took a big step forward in October.

Campaigners have managed to unite all four boroughs affected by the closure - Redbridge, Waltham Forest, Havering and Barking and Dagenham - in a call to Secretary of State, Jeremy Hunt, to drop the closure plans.

With support from Trades Councils in Barking and Dagenham and Redbridge and backing from South East Region TUC (SERTUC), "Save King George" group, led by former councillor Andy Walker, set up

a cross-borough march and rally on Saturday 14 October.

In the build up to 14th. October, meetings were held in Redbridge and Havering and campaigners visited trade union, political and community groups across the four boroughs to prepare the ground.

The plan to close A&E at the Ilford hospital was first adopted seven years ago. However, it rapidly became clear that alternative facilities at Queens Hospital, Romford, are not able to take up the load from King George, and it has not yet proved possible to implement the plan. Nevertheless, the decision to close A&E is still on the table for 2019.

Councillors` Voices

Redbridge Council leader, Jas Athwal, was the first to call publicly for the closure decision to be rescinded. He was joined later by Havering's, Roger Ramsey, and Barking and Dagenham's, Darren Rodwell. Finally, Waltham Forest Council also came on board at the last minute.

With significant population growth planned in the area, most of the people approached by campaigners completely agreed the closure plan is wrong and should be explicitly abandoned. The campaigning day on 14 October started with a rally at Central Park, Dagenham addressed by council leader Darren Rodwell as well as a SERTUC representative and other local activists.

Cllr Rodwell (a former postal worker) then led the march off at a cracking pace, past Queens Hospital and then along the high road to Ilford. Strong public support was very evident over the whole route.

The climax of the event was a rally at Redbridge Town Hall, addressed by Ilford MPs, Mike Gapes and Wes Streeting, as well as Councillors Athwal and Rodwell and campaign organiser, Andy Walker. Now Jas Athwal is encouraging the other council leaders to join him in a delegation to Westminster, with the mission to get the closure plan off the table.

Bob Archer

Coffee morning for retired colleagues at the Wanstead Belgique, 29 Cambridge Park, Wanstead London E11 2PU.

Date and time: Thursday 30 November 2017, from 10.45am till the lunch crowd turn up.

Order of the day will be coffee or tea according to taste, a selection of rather nice patisserie, and a chance to chat and socialise with colleagues.

Redbridge Retired Teachers group was set up by Redbridge NUT (now a section of NEU), but all retired teachers of any affiliation or none are very welcome.

Making a NOISE: Speaking up for residents' views about the local area

WHO WE ARE

NOISE is a residents-led group who came together in the Spring of 2016 to oppose the development of 700 flats on the Sainsbury site at Roden Street, Ilford.

We campaign to protect Ilford South from over-development and actively try to improve the area. We also want to develop Neighbourhood Plans in Ilford South.

WHAT WE ARE ABOUT

We are not connected to any political party and believe in the equality of all. We think housing should be appropriate for local needs, affordable and with adequate infrastructure provision.

However, we are not about NIMBYism.

WHAT WE HAVE BEEN INVOLVED IN SO FAR

Since we started in 2016, we have gathered a petition of 1,500 signatories against the Redbridge Local Plan (2015-2030). We took a deputation of 7 people to speak to the Council about this and triggered a debate at the Full Council meeting.

We took some part in the formal inspection process of the Redbridge Local Plan, which started on 6th June 2017. This participation was reduced, due to dissatisfaction with the process. If the proposals are broadly unchanged, we will continue to oppose this Plan.

We objected to the proposal for 70 flats in a 6 storey building at the Ley Street garage site, which was finally refused planning permission on the grounds that the scheme would be harmful to the character and appearance of the area and the living conditions of nearby occupiers.

We also objected to the development of 124 flats in a 25 storey tower at 226-244 High Road. This was refused permission on 26th July 2017, on the grounds of affordable housing. and health & safety.

CONTACT US

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Food for Radical Thought



Members of the Redbridge Retired Teachers Association enjoyed the annual gathering of Redbridge Trades Council at the Star of India in Leytonstone. We heard East End history expert, David Rosenberg, speak about the industrial politics of the area during the late 19th and early 20th century.

His wide-ranging talk included the London Match girls' strike of 1880, the dock strike of 1889, the women's struggle for the vote and the battle of Cable Street against the fascists in the 1930s. He also spoke of Annie Besant, who encouraged the women working at Bryant and May's factory to go on a successful strike against poor working conditions, poor pay, excessive working hours (14 hours a day) and fines. There were also the severe health complications from working with white phosphorus.

Soon after, the London Docks Strike of 1889 resulted in victory for 100,000 strikers and established strong trade unions. David told us about such notable organisers as Ben Tillet, Tom Mann and Will Thorne.

He also described the Jewish garment workers' strike of 1912 and the role of Rudolf Rocker and the anarchist paper *Der Arbeter* (The Workers' Friend). He emphasised how the garment workers took in the starving children of striking dock workers, even though they struggled to feed themselves.

These inspiring stories of the struggles over a hundred years ago demonstrate that with collective action and solidarity between workers, we can protect ourselves - which is why our new union's membership of the TUC will continue to be important.

Bill Harrison