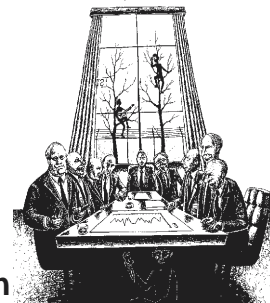




WAKE UP! WAKE UP! IT'S YER ROTTEN BOROUGHS

# SchNEWS

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## TOWN WHORES

**“The New Local Government Network’s debate on the Government’s reform programme and its implementation are vital to the cultural change we seek. I know that the Network is committed to a brighter, more dynamic future for local government.”**

**Hilary Armstrong MP, Minister for Local Government.**

Local government is the latest institution to be the subject of the New Labour “modernisation” agenda. And modern it certainly is, paving the way for a small group of people to meet in secret to decide the day to day running of a democratically elected organisation.

The Local Government Act, which became law last month, abolishes council committees, and in its place we get the choice between either elected mayors or council cabinets. Either way, they will be free to meet in secret, with numerous loopholes to stop voters and journalists finding out what they are up to. Mind you, the government has said that councils should meet in the open when they make ‘key decisions’ But who chooses what is a ‘key decision’? Well, the Councils of course.

As journalist Nick Cohen points out “What we are seeing in short is a return to the rule of closed local elites”

### CAUGHT IN THE NETWORK

Pushing for the new law has been an alliance of New Labour politicians, lobbyists and corporations, coming together under catchy title - the New Local Government Network.

Now here’s a co-incidence. One of the main movers behind the Network is Professor Paul Corrigan, who just happens to be romantically involved with Hilary Armstrong, the Local Government Minister who pushed the legislation through the Commons in the first place!

Still, why would corporations want to hand over cash to help pay for the *Networks*’ plush conferences and glossy brochures? Well, in return for their cash these ‘corporate partners’ are promised articles in the Network publications ‘circulated to over 15,000 leading local government politicians and top managers’, platform seats at its conferences, and ‘informal discussions’ at ‘private briefings’ featuring ‘high profile speakers and participants’.

Councillor Gerry Harrison from the Labour Campaign for Open Local Government describes the Network as a ‘front organi-

sation’ pushing ‘anti democratic measures on behalf of private interests.’ While Green Party Councillor Pete West describes how this new style of government has already been working in Brighton: “Whereas before there were public committees, we now have Executive Councillors making a lot of the day to day decisions in private meetings with council officers. Access for the vast majority of councillors is restricted and the press and public aren’t allowed in. This means that there is a real lack of opportunity for people to influence and scrutinise decisions. If we aren’t involved in the everyday running of the council, it’s very difficult to follow the plot. I get the feeling that removing the majority of councillors from the decision making process is the first step in putting us out to pasture, as now the intention is to cut the number of Councillors by a quarter.”

The Local Government Act talks about councils promoting “the social, economic and environmental well-being of their communities”. More like the well being of the corporations that have been behind the scenes pushing for this legislation.

The Act will mean handing over great swathes of public services to corporations. And the company executives will no doubt prefer cabinets and mayors to the slow and often painfully revealing process of explaining themselves before councillors, voters and journalists.

Brilliant! Instead of life before the Act, when small dodgy cliques of councillors lined their back pockets and those of their mates, why not instead line the pockets of big business.

So that’s what New Labour calls modern.

**New Local Government Network**, 2nd Floor, 42 Southwark Street, London, SE1 1UN Tel. 020 7357 0051 [www.nlgn.org.uk](http://www.nlgn.org.uk)

The **Exodus Free the Spirit Festival** has been moved from the end of August to 8<sup>th</sup> - 10<sup>th</sup> Sept, so that the event can be licensed (but it’ll still go ahead even the license isn’t granted). 01582 508936

But if you can’t wait that long, then get to the Enigma in Ship Street, Brighton next Tuesday (15<sup>th</sup>) to see Exodus DJs spinning their tunes at the SchQUALL book launch.

Copies of the SchQUALL book – issues 201-250 of SchNews, plus more in depth articles from SQUALL, photos, cartoons and a contacts database of over 700 grassroots organisations – will be available for £7.00 (or from SchNews for £8.50 inc. postage)

### CRAP ARREST OF THE WEEK

**For playing football.** A 14 year old boy was arrested for riotous behaviour and resisting arrest after going to play football with his friends on his local green. The green in northern Belfast borders both loyalist and nationalist housing estates. Since the beginning of the Orange marching season local nationalist children have been too afraid to play on the green and have been forced to play in the street behind a high iron railed fence. At a loyalist ‘funday’ on the green, nationalist residents were warned that if they set foot in the field they would be arrested. But finding the field empty in the evening a handful of teenagers decided to have a game of football, within minutes they were confronted by an angry violent crowd. The mother of the 14 year old boy arrived later to find him being beaten up by six RUC officers.

### SOME CORPORATIONS BEHIND THE NETWORK

**Capita** ‘the outsourcing’\* specialists who’ve been taking over housing benefit services up and down the country. They told a parliamentary committee on local government that it would be easier to negotiate contracts “without the hindrance of party politics on a day to day basis.” They have also suggested ‘business and professional interests’ should be co-opted onto cabinets and committees.

**Nord Anglia** who are busy behind the scenes pushing for more school services to be privatised. (see SchNews 257)

**BT and Cable & Wireless** Listening in on the possibility that councils will start using call centres to deal with enquires.

Construction firm **AMEC** who are no doubt waiting in the wings hoping to pick up the odd building contract under the Private Finance Initiative.\*\*

**Serviceteam** and **Onyx** sniffing around for more council rubbish collections.

**KPMG and Deloitte & Touche** Accountancy firms wanting to cook the books for their corporate mates.

### SchNEWS VOCAB WATCH

\* Outsourcing = privatisation

\*\* Private Finance Initiative = privatisation

SchNEWS presents **Exodus** Techno/Drum&Bass

Book Launch Party

**The Enigma**  
Ship Street  
Brighton



OUT NOW!

Tues 15th Aug 10-2AM £2.00  
Small venue - be early!

## Inside SchNEWS

On 4th August 1999, **Sarah Thomas**, a young black student was arrested for 'acting suspiciously'. She was taken to Stoke Newington Police Station, where she collapsed and stopped breathing. Sarah was taken to hospital, but never recovered consciousness and died two days later. Call us cynical, but the fact that no reasonable explanation for her death has been put forward, combined with the fact that Stoke Newington Police Station has the highest rate of death in custody, unlawful arrest and violence against those arrested - especially involving black and ethnic minority people - and you begin to wonder just who was actually 'acting suspiciously'. Surely not the boys in blue? The two plain clothes dicks involved in Sarah's arrest have not been suspended, the Police Complaints Authority (PCA) are still conducting an investigation. Friends of Sarah want an independent investigation, not just another cover-up of a death in custody. Justice for Sarah Thomas Campaign, c/o 14 Chardmore Road, London N16 6JD. Tel 020 8806 0742.

\* The family of **Roger Sylvester**, who also died in police custody in equally suspicious circumstances last January (SchNEWS 199), are holding a rally next Thurs (17th) on the anniversary of Roger's birthday. Meet outside the Home Office, 50 Queen Ann's Gate SW1, 2-4 pm, and dress in black. Roger Sylvester Justice Campaign 07931 970442 www.rsjc.org.uk

## S.O.S Mayday

Recently two people, **Ashley Warder** and **Paul Revell** were sent down for the Mayday demos (see SchNEWS 258). Ashley was sentenced to a year and Paul got 18 months, both for violent disorder. Ashley's "brush" with the law started on April 31<sup>st</sup> after he had been visiting friends on a traveller site in Streatham, London, which had been under surveillance for the week leading up to Mayday. Driving away in his mobile home he was pulled by no less than three cop cars. They first reckoned he had been speeding, then after smashing his back light with a truncheon said his light was out! Finally after all this failed they proceeded to "search" Ashley's truck/home for drugs. This consisted of basically destroying his gaff, smashing his TV, tipping over a kitchen unit and kicking in a chest of drawers. After this "meticulous and scientific" search in which nothing was found the pigs let him go saying ominously "We'll see you tomorrow".

The next day Ashley, dressed in a monk's robe, ended up stuck in Trafalgar Square with lots of other people, surrounded by irate riot cops. After trying to leave and then being stopped he threw a plastic bottle in frustration. He was then jumped on, beaten around the head by the thugs in blue and then arrested. The charge was violent disorder, rather than the lesser charge of threatening behaviour or affray, because Ashley was with more than two people and according to the boys in blue caused members of the public to fear for their safety. There were several hundred people in Trafalgar Square that afternoon and they were all in fear of their safety- from the advancing lines of riot cops. Letters and cards to Ashley Ward FR5464 and Paul Revell, FR 5599 who are both @ HMP Wandsworth, PO Box 757, Heathfield Road, Wandsworth, London, SW18 3HS.

## Subscribe!

Keep SchNEWS FREE! Send 1st Class stamps (e.g. 20 for next 20 issues) or donations (payable to Justice?) Ask for "Originals" if you can make copies. Post free to all prisoners. SchNEWS, c/o on-the-fiddle, P.O. Box 2600, Brighton, East Sussex, BN2 2DX.

Tel/Autofax : +44 (0)1273 685913 GET IT EVERY WEEK BY E-MAIL: schnews@brighton.co.uk

## SchNEWS in brief

American cops had a busy time arresting and beating up people at last week's **Republican Convention** in Philadelphia. Nearly 430 were nicked and reports from people who spent time in jail talk of everything from having ankles tied to wrists behind their backs for 14 hours, beatings with truncheons, gloves soaked in pepper spray being rubbed into faces - and much worse. One man John Sellers an active member of the Ruckus Society had his bail originally set at \$1,000,000! www.indymedia.org \*\* This Saturday (12th) protest by the only genetic test site in Wales. Meet outside Sealand Farm, Flintshire, North Wales 2pm. \*\* The following Saturday (19) **Doncaster Committee against GM** are holding a demo against a genetic test field site in Armthorpe, Doncaster. Meet 11am Armthorpe Community Centre. 01302 531762. \*\* On 16 August 1819, 11 people were killed outside St Peter's Fields, Manchester at a protest demanding radical reform of the government. In remembrance of those killed, and as a protest against the new Terrorism Act there is a **Mad Hatter's Teaparty**, on Thurs 17th August, 4.30pm, St. Peter's Square (outside Central Library). Bring some banners, instruments, appropriate dress. Info 0161 226 6814 teaparty@nematode.freeseerve.co.uk \*\* For all you seriously organised people, the **2001 Housmans Peace Diary** is out now. Cheques payable to Housmans for £6.95 (inc p&p) from 5 Caledonian Road, London N1 9DX \*\* Don't forget 10-13 August is the **Bristol International Balloon Fiesta** a great day out if you want to see flying replica Coca-Cola bottles or other blatant flying commercials www.bristolfiesta.co.uk

For an up to date list of party and protest dates go to the SchNEWS website

## Pushed About

Mums in Camden fed up with being forced to collapse their pushchairs on buses, held an impromptu protest, when a bus driver of a low floor bus refused to move the bus until a mum either folded her pushchair or got off. Mums on the bus rose up in solidarity and staged a sit in on the bus until the local copper arrived. London Buses has a policy that pushchairs must be folded before boarding. I wonder how many of them has had to fold up pushchairs with toddlers in tow and their weekly shopping between their teeth. Keep up the resistance.

## IRAQ DIE-IN

On Monday (7th), 300 protesters gathered in Whitehall to protest 10 years of sanctions against Iraq, which have resulted in the deaths of over half a million Iraqi children due to starvation and disease (SchNEWS 235). 90 people "died" on the doorstep of the Foreign Office, bringing traffic to a standstill. Four people were arrested for highway obstruction. After occupying Whitehall for 90 minutes the group held a minute's silence and laid a wreath at the Cenotaph.

\* Meanwhile in Washington, 114 of 500 protesters were arrested for trespassing on the steps of the White House.

\* Two former UN Humanitarian Coordinators, Denis Halliday and Hans Van Sponeck, have resigned in protest at the effect sanctions are having on ordinary people. As Halliday said, "We are in the process of destroying an entire society. It is as simple and terrifying as that. It is illegal and immoral."

\* Voices in the Wilderness break the sanctions by taking medical supplies to Iraqi children. 01865 243232 www.nonviolence.org/vitw

## Positive SchNEWS

We know it's still summer and too soon to think about the gloomy months of winter and the new school term, yet how about getting things off to a good start by setting up a walking school bus?

Parents at schools in Maidenhead and St Albans, fed up with the constant congested traffic and pollution at school times, took matters into their own hands and set up the walking bus. It allows groups of children to walk to school together in safety under the supervision of adults who act as drivers and conductors. Like a normal bus, the walking bus stops at certain places on the route to school.

Why not set up a similar scheme and help the environment, children's health and also save money!

Friends of the Earth, Maidenhead: 01628 782651

## ROAD WAGE

For those of you who naively thought that once a road was finished, it stopped costing money, think again. That old fave the M11-link road in East London was budgeted at £150m when it was first started 7 years ago. By September 1999 that had risen to £340m, and the 'latest forecast' this June was at £430m, even though it was completed 2 years before! Yes, W.S. Atkins' consultancy fees are still rising because they are delaying negotiations. Send your estimate of the final cost to be entered in the SchNEWS sweepstake.

Meanwhile Walmart are getting in on the act of developing what's left of greenspace in the area, with plans to build a superstore on land by Leyton tube station. Walmart have bribed the council with a million quid, who will use the cash to complete the Leyton 'Relief' Road. Then the whole of the area's traffic problems will be solved....(er, maybe not)

Work is due to start soon with and plans are afoot to squat two empty properties properties on route. Please contact STORMM at Hornbeam Environmental Centre, 458 Hoe Street, Leyton Green, London E17 9AH 0208 558 5527

\* Celebrate Lughnasadh (Old Lammas Day) with the New Lammass Lands Defence Committee on Leyton Marsh, Sunday 13th August 3-6pm. Meet by Parish Boundary (black poplar trees) behind Lea Valley Ice Rink near Sandy Lane (path alongside river).

## ...and finally...

If you're miserable, have no friends and can't sleep the good news is that you are more likely to be rich and successful, according to a recent report by the American Psychological Association. The findings from a study of US stock-brokers found that those who suffered the greatest levels of anxiety and depression and got the least sleep were the most successful. An alternative conclusion could be that that money don't make you happy- surely not! The report goes on to look at the personalities of politicians and concludes what we'd all guessed, to get to the top politicians need to be egotistical, stubborn and disagreeable, and economical with the truth (i.e. a liar). Many of history's most favourite politicians were also highly disorganised which proves that SchNEWS could yet go down in history.

### disclaimer

SchNEWS warns all citizenry not to be subject to the slavery of big biz and puppet politicians, but to vote with their feet (literally). Honest