



Brighton's monthly dirt diggin'...

ROUGH MUSIC

Issue 1

Free/Donation

Jan-Feb 2005

CLASSROOM WAR

The teaching assistants' strike - What's the real story?

The strike stems from the councils latest pay "offer", which increases their pay per hour, but then reduces their number of paid weeks by five in the year. That's a pay cut of over ten per cent! Also gone is the cost of living allowance. This used to be £1,000 a year. Now it will take the form of a one-off payment of just under £500.

Not surprisingly this has pissed off the city's dedicated teaching assistants. So after a ballot they took strike action. Local rag the Argus began its knee-jerk coverage with stories about the disruption to parents, ignoring the fact that plenty of children's education has already been disrupted by the government using classroom assistants as teachers on the cheap. Strikers of any hue get short shrift in the Argus.

It quickly changed its tune when its own poll found that 90% of us support the strikers. The following day's letters page was inundated with letters of support from parents, teachers, and other teaching assistants around the county.

The role of teaching assistant has grown to now where many are used to plug gaps in the education system. The situation was so bad by June that the NUT wrote to all schools asking them to use only fully qualified teaching staff.

It's the same policy across the public services. Community support wardens are being given powers that used to belong to cops, and are getting less money and far less training in how to use them ('cos the police never make mistakes even with all those years of training). In hospitals, auxiliaries do the jobs of nurses, nurses take on the role of doctors, and doctors die young from overwork.

Bliar and Neo-Labour seem to have perfected the Thatcherite art of swingeing. Often the assistants work long hours for much less reward, and in the case of Brighton's teaching assistants, are usually women with children to support and precious little time and money to be fighting the council for a living wage.

As we write the latest strikes have been called off after both sides agree to go to ACAS. However with Ben Kodfish the council leader saying that he does not have the power to write a blank cheque for teachers wages (yeah 'cos they're all asking to be millionaires aren't they Ken), and chief council negotiator Pat "I used to be a teacher" Hawkes refusing to admit that not paying our dedicated TA's for five weeks of the year amounts to a pay cut, it is hard to see what the council is prepared to offer.

Should the council try to weasel out of any agreement, classroom helpers will have our support in further action. If the classroom assistants win it'll be music to our ears!

Brighton Arms Dealers On Trial

Brighton's supposed to be a U.N Peace Messenger city right? Somewhere where a large percentage of the population not only opposed the war on Iraq but took to their feet on the day "Shock and Awe" was unleashed on the Iraqi people and assembling in Churchill Square marched through town. In fact Brighton people pride themselves on their tolerance and sense of justice.

So how come there's a bomb-making factory just up the road on Home Farm Industrial Estate? (just left immediately after the railway bridge on the Lewes Road). EDO/MBM Technology Ltd manufacture essential parts for F-16 fighter/bombers used by the U.S and Israeli militaries. and boast on their website of their contribution to the Paveway IV guided missile system which was the main weapon used in the bombing of Iraq.

Last June campaigners shut the factory down for the day with a combination of a rooftop occupation and a road blockade. This cost EDO an estimated £20,000. Protestors from the SMASH EDO campaign, who climbed on EDO's roof, were in Brighton Magistrate's court last week charged with "aggravated trespass".

Aggravated trespass is defined as "trespass with the intent to disrupt a lawful activity". So campaigners turned the trial around and enquired if what EDO/MBM do is lawful, using evidence about war crimes and the bombing of civilians. Under the International Criminal Court Act anybody who is an "ancillary" to war crimes, wherever they take place, is guilty under British law. Given the legal murkiness surrounding the Iraq war, EDO are in an interesting legal situation. If the "full spectrum" coalition air attacks on Iraq, which may have killed over 100,000 people, were a war crime, then the management of EDO are aiding that crime (and judging by the motors in their car park getting rich doing it.)

David Jones, the managing director of EDO, was quoted in the Argus as saying "We are proud of what we do. We live in a democracy and one of the things we have to do is defend ourselves" Not a word about fat profits then. 'Cos if there's one man who's happy about escalating hostilities in Iraq it's David, who now claims he has no knowledge of where the parts manufactured in Moulsecomb end up, while admitting that Raytheon and Lockheed Martin- big league arms manufacturers- were amongst his biggest customers. He attempted to explain that EDO/MBM don't make weapons they only "provide complete weapon interfacing solutions". Er, yes, this IS actually rocket science but we can't figure out the difference. A bomb, a plane and its pilot are all part of a "weapons system". Without EDOs

"interfacing solutions" the bombs simply couldn't be dropped.

Other EDO executives were equally truth shy, failing to recall information which is publicly available on their website. Simon Davis, General Manager admitted that EDO/MBMs website had been altered saying that pictures of F16 fighter/bombers would allow "protesters to capitalise". Anonymity is EDOs best protection, an anonymity which SMASH EDO campaigners promise to strip away.

The verdict in the case will be given at midday on 28th January. Protestors have called for a presence inside the court and a demonstration outside. For more info www.smashedo.bpec.org

What is Rough Music?

Yes it's an odd title. You're going... what the hell is "rough music"? Who the hell are we and what do we want?

Rough music is a Sussex tradition dating back centuries. It was a form of punishment for those who had offended their communities; people like profiteering landlords, wife-beaters or kiddie-fiddlers. In the past lovely people like these were a lot harder to prosecute using the law. So people took matters into their own hands. Taking what ever they could to make some noise with them, they would stand outside the miscreant's house and make as much noise as possible. If they were successful the offender was often driven out completely. Although such gatherings were illegal they happened throughout Sussex with the last ones recorded as happening as late as the 1950's.

Now we want to bring back this tradition with a vengeance. We want to show how the people of Brighton are making plenty of Rough Music of their own. How people are making Rough Music against City Council and big business profiteering feeding frenzies. How they are making Rough Music for those who treat their employees like dirt. How they are making Rough Music for businesses that think that the environment and the quality of people's lives is a secondary consideration to the important task of making mega-profits.

From EDO/MBM the bomb makers to Brighton and Hove City Council, from the Shoreham Airport stitch-up to the sneaking encroachment of the supermarkets into every corner of the city; we say, bring on the music!

Copyleft - Roughin' it up round Brighton

Welcome To Heathrow-by-Sea

Shoreham Airport has changed its name to Brighton City. From a small scale aerodrome, it now runs scheduled services to the Channel Isles and France.

Just so as Brighton yuppies don't have to travel the extra half hour to Gatwick! And at a time when air pollution is the fastest growing contributor to climate change do we need yet another airport? It's the richest top 10% of the population who travel most by air either on luxury business trips or weekend getaways to second homes. The poorest 10% hardly use aircraft at all. Plans for an extended or new runway at Shoreham are at the consultation stage. Shoreham, Lancing and Adur residents face having a once tranquil area turned into an over-developed, noisy, hell-hole.

Jean Kitchener, a local resident, helps run Communities Against Runway Expansion (CARE). She told Rough Music: "Why have the wishes of 79% of the population of Adur been ignored and the proposals to market the airport for commercial flights gone ahead?" Already, 2.5m tons of gravel has been dumped in a pond at the end of the runway to act as a safety buffer. Nearby residents are concerned that their homes face flooding as a result. And that's to say nothing for the population of herons and other birdlife which have been forced off. In the meantime the Dept of Transport says that we have to keep pace with demand for air travel - that argument is the same that's used with roads and we've seen how that ends up - in tears.

A recent DfT report shows that the proposed runway at Stansted Airport would have a net economic loss of £400m. It is a fact that investment in other industries actually contributes more to regeneration.

The European Environment Agency puts the damaging costs of UK aviation at £6bn each year. 5,000 people a year will be breathing in dangerous levels of nitrogen dioxide above EU levels if national airport expansion, including Shoreham, goes ahead.

The aviation industry doesn't pay fuel tax. If it did £9bn a year would be raised and the 500m passengers predicted by 2030 would fade away as the price of air tickets went up. As it is, the UK is expected to see an explosion in air passengers from 180m now to that unsustainable 500m figure. And air pollution will count for 15% of global warming by 2050 if nothing is done. To get involved: stopshoreham@hotmail.com

Police Look On As Hunt Violence Escalates

Despite the legal challenges launched by the Countryside Alliance, the end of fox and hare hunting is drawing closer. Realising that they've lost the legal and moral arguments hunt supporters in the southeast are relying increasingly on the old tactics of violence and intimidation against hunt protesters.

On New Years Day protestors on the Chiddingfold hunt returned to their vehicles to find them vandalised with dead foxes thrown through broken windscreens. On Saturday 8th January a group of four women protesting against the Crawley and Horsham were attacked with a six-foot staff by a male hunt supporter. Three of the women received hospital treatment. There have been numerous other incidents as the realisation that their sport may soon become history has brought bumpkin blood to the boil. (Not to mention dumping carcasses around Brighton during the Labour Party Conference)

The police reaction has been strangely muted. For years Sussex police gleefully wasted council tax payer's cash careering around the South Downs in 4x4s chasing hunt saboteurs. At one point there were eighty officers a week (and a helicopter) whose job was to prevent hunt sabs from saving foxes and disrupting hunts. However the prospect of red-jacketed toffs becoming criminals instead of black hooded sporting hunt sabs has clearly upset Sussex Constabularies delicate sensibilities. Suddenly the police don't have the resources to deal with hunting. Admittedly this is giving hunt protesters free rein at the minute but Rough Music suspects a darker game afoot. Surely the boys in blue aren't going to turn round and say they can't enforce a hunt ban.

For more info and to get involved in anti-bloodsports activity contact southdownssabs@yahoo.com

Frothing Crappucino

A new study commissioned by Brighton Council has revealed alarming gaps in our city's on-street coffee supply, residents in certain extreme instances facing walks of over 150 metres between retailers. 'It's totally unacceptable' says a spokesperson from Brighton's Department of Trade and Commerce. "We've made massive inroads in driving alcohol-swilling scum off the benches and pavements of the Laines. But the retail community is simply not doing enough to usher in the new order. And what's more, there have been cases where retailers have attempted to provide a 'unique' cafe environment; a place with its own eccentric style and character, like you find in backward foreign holes like Paris or Barcelona. Brighton is a forward-thinking city, and we expect our retailers to reflect this. Shoppers are terrified of uniqueness and difference. Why do you think they all buy 'labelled' clothing, designer footwear and the like at great expense so they can look just like everyone else and fit in?" These sentiments were echoed by the owner of Brighton, Mr Simon Fanshawe. "Individuality is passe," he said "We must aim to provide coffee shops every 50 feet and they must all be exactly the same, or they can f**k off, basically".

Dredging It Up

Brighton, as any good citizen will know (and we're all good citizens, ain't we?) grew out of the fishing village of Brighthelmstone. Until the local economy switched to fake fur, body adornment and overpriced coffee, fishing was the main industry of the South Coast. Off Brighton, in the middle of the Channel, is a crucial spawning ground for fish, and a very important and diverse marine environment. And it's now under serious threat- from housing! Er, come again? Well, one of the main policies of the government in an upcoming election is 'dealing with the housing shortage'. Chances are you'll have heard about the plans to build 200,000 new homes across the South East, currently awaiting the go-ahead from 'Two Jags' Prescott.

And guess what? Those long-sighted carin' folks in the construction industry have decided that the cheapest and largest supply of building materials is gonna be... the sea bed! Yep, a consortium has been formed to push for trashing up to 100 square km of it, mainly to supply thousands of homes the likes of you and me have no hope of ever affording while other areas of the country have whole estates standing empty. And, of course, the government stands to make tens of millions of pounds in royalties and so, in principle, has given consent to sea-bed exploitation. The East Channel Association's members are Britannia Aggregates, South Coast Shipping/RMC, Hanson Aggregates Marine Ltd, Dredging International Ltd, UMA and Volker Dredging Ltd who together plan to strip-mine 200 million tonnes of gravel from the Median Deep, the fish-spawning ground halfway between the South Coast and Northern France. Fishermen on both sides of the channel are up in arms- there's already serious problems from over-fishing without industrialists wrecking the delicate balance of underwater life. This cannot be allowed to happen. We don't need more roads. We don't need more homes. There's more than enough of both in this country already. What we need is a serious change in attitudes and wealth distribution. Concerned people have already threatened companies involved with serious action should these plans get to go ahead.

Recently, plans to open hideous new quarries all over the place had to be shelved because of grief from local people and environmentalists. One reason for using the Channel as a source of raw materials is the idea that pissed off people won't be able to do anything about it. Wrong! Stuff has already happened to 'dissuade' potential companies from getting involved. In November a dredging ship belonging to Hanson was stopped from leaving Newhaven harbour when people locked the swing-bridge shut with bike locks! This followed a protest in October, when Hanson's compound in Shoreham was locked up with heavy-duty chains, preventing lorries leaving. Hitting these companies in the only place that hurts - their pockets - is the only way to stop 'em. People who would happily concrete over the entire Downs if the money was good certainly don't give a monkeys about a muddy sea bed they can't see. www.eco-action.org/sos

Open Season On Burglars

Under legislation proposed by the Conservative party, householders will be able to use violence against intruders according to the householders council tax band. Band H homeowners will be able to shoot maim and incapacitate trespassers on sight. Those renting in Band A will have to settle for a "mild rebuke". Tory Home Affairs spokesman Jim "nick-nick" Davidson said from his home in tax haven Dubai "if you've got the readies then you should get a licence to kill".

Political Football

The second public inquiry into the Albion's destructive bid to build a new stadium on the South Downs is due to begin in February. This follows the first inquiry last year which got the thumbs down from the planning inspector due to environmental damage.

The Albion have been asked to look at alternative sites this time - Waterhall, Shoreham Harbour etc - with two jags Prescott expected to decide after the election - that way they don't lose votes should it go against the football club, innit.

Now we're not against football, and yep the city should have a viable club, but not at the expense of one of the last remaining chalk grasslands in northern Europe. Building at Falmer will attract ribbon development which will eventually trash vast tracts of pristine landscape - home to rare flora and fauna. Up to 50 species alone live in one square metre of land, giant toadflax and the adonis blue butterfly among them.

Falmer Parish Council, Brighton Urban Wildlife Group, The South Downs Campaign, FoE have all come out against the proposals and talk of the more sustainable option of using a brownfield site better served by public transport.

Of six new football stadia surveyed recently all were on brownfield or ex-brownfield sites and the smallest of these was 75 acres allowing space for buses etc. The Falmer site is just eight acres.

You do the maths.

Boss pissed you off? Dodgy dealings at the council? Are you Simon Fanshawe's P.A? Perhaps you've got a story for Rough Music. Drop us a line at roughmusic@hotmail.co.uk - Parcel bombs etc to Rough Music c/o Cowley Club, 12B London Rd, Brighton BN1 4JA