

RED RAG

22 JANUARY - 5 FEBRUARY FORTNIGHTLY

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free



council sets police on kids

On Thursday January 19th Bracknell Town Council held a full Council Meeting for which they seemed to think it necessary to both employ private security guards and to draft in large numbers of police. The reason for this was the presentation of a petition, deploring and condemning the Council's decision to cease to fund Easthampstead Adventure Playground and East Lodge Play Centre, and demanding the reversal of the decision, by the children who use them, the parents who wish to see their children in safe and supervised play areas and the staff who have worked hard to build up the facilities over the past eight years.

The proposals for the closures, despite the effect they will have on the community have been shrouded in secrecy. The elected councillors of the relevant areas did not consult the local communities prior to making these recommendations, the meetings between the town clerk and the district youth and community officer were in secret and there was no opportunity for public discussion.

The first that the staff knew of the proposals, despite the fact that they involve the loss of eight jobs, was earlier in the week, when they were told that they would be a meeting of the recreation of the recreation committee to discuss staffing matters followed immediately by a full council meeting to decide about the closures.

On Monday the two centres had their phones cut off, which meant that members of the community trying to find out what was happening could not get through, and when they tried to find out why they were told it was a temporary measure at the customers' request. The councillors gave several reasons for this including one who said it was because the bills were too high, and another who said it was because they were afraid of a seige.

As the staff were finding it hard to communicate with the councillors on the issue they asked for assurances that all their letters were being passed on. The town clerk, Mrs B Rutherford, refused to see them until the next day about this and when they arrived for the arranged meeting they were given a note on headed council paper which simply said:

I find your question objectionable and unworthy of answer.

With compliments
Mrs B Rutherford

The children and parents feel very strongly about the closures because they believe Bracknell needs its supervised play areas and they were determined to do something.

Nearly 3 000 people signed the petition between Tuesday morning and the council meeting on Thursday and two busloads of children, one from each centre, went to present it.. The specially hired security guards tried to stop the 200 demonstrators, most of them between 8 and 18 years old from entering the council meeting because they had not given the statutory seven days notice (they didn't then know about the proposals) but they forced their way in. continued over

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unemployment exchange 9: Peace, Cruise
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Almost immediately the council decided to carry out the proposals and there was uproar. The protestors wanted to know why their centres were being closed, how the council could measure cost effectiveness of children's play and why the proposals had been so secret. However they were shocked to find the council chamber suddenly swarming with police who had been waiting. Children were dragged and carried out unable to express their opinions, one councillor ended up in tears at the ugly scenes and a playleader was arrested for assault when he protested at the rough handling of the children. Many of the protestors were upset and frightened especially when they left the building to find the back was full of police with dogs. There was a great deal of anger because they felt they had the right to express their opinions and to try to stop the erosion of their communities' facilities. The involvement of the police in such numbers at the presentation of a petition concerning such an issue was quite shocking, and can in no way be justified especially as a majority of the protestors were under 15.

The children and staff are now occupying both premises and on Friday morning organised a rooftop demonstration. They hope to get an injunction to stop the council pulling down the fence and need as much support for the occupation as possible. The community feels particularly strongly about the issue after the way they have been stopped from expressing their opinions. Is this democracy in action?

Anna Kist

citizen cain

BUTT.BUTT

The Butts Centre, now put up for sale by the English Property Corporation, was one of a plague of shopping developments that infested the country in the 1960s and early 1970s as a result of an unholy alliance between developers wanting to do something other than offices and local authorities impressed by the idea of modernity and memorials. The Elephant and Castle development in London and the Bull Ring in Birmingham are two of the most notorious. In both, as in Reading, there were grave doubts about whether the local authority was getting an adequate rent for its land. In both, as in Reading, getting the shoppers to come has been a problem: the few really successful developments have been those that have inserted themselves into natural pedestrian thoroughfares, whereas if you walk through the Butts all you get is a nice view of the IDR. And the successful developments, again, have been those that have attracted the major multiples, Woolworths & Marks & Spencer, that are a real magnet for shoppers: in Reading both have remained obstinately in Broad Street, not sharing Harry Tee's dream of moving the centre of Reading bodily to the west. EPC are still making a bomb out of the Butts, but obviously feel, not surprisingly, they could make two bombs elsewhere. It'll be interesting to see who takes up the old vision and whether they're any more successful at making it reality.

HEXING THE PUGH

The Hexagon was of course part of that vision, but designed too modestly and supported too half-heartedly to be a popular magnet in its own right. It looks like having even less chance of success under the present administration of the Borough Council, for members at the last meeting were unsuccessful in getting to the bottom of reports that Hexagon Advisory Board Chairman Fred Pugh (Conservative) was in the frequent habit of demanding complementary tickets for himself and his family and friends. A question of priorities?

MR NORRIS KEEPS IT UP

I mentioned last time the involvement of Tory M.P., Berkshire County Councillor and West Berks Health Authority Vice-Chairman Steve Norris with Berkshire's privatisation of refuse disposal and the Grundons contract that has given us the most expensive refuse disposal service in the country. True to form, I understand that at the January meeting of the Health Authority Mr Norris was the first to volunteer for a panel to consider tenders for privatisation of domestic services at Wokingham Hospital. And that despite his record in Berkshire and despite the fact that his party's election campaign was partly financed by several of the likely candidates (Brengreen Group £5,000 and Pritchard Services £10,000 to name but two). But I'm sure he is an honourable man.

GAMEKEEPERS TURN POACHERS

The news that Reading's long-serving Chief Environmental Health Officer, Geoff Holmes, tried last month to get selected as Conservative candidate for Thames Ward is of course totally unconnected with his slightly earlier attempt to rubbish Labour Councillor John Silverthorne's anxiety about discharges into the Thames and Kennet from Aldermaston and Burghfield. But that he sought selection while still a serving Chief Officer responsible for advising the Council on their policies and duties does put a big big question mark over his understanding of the democratic process. If he does get nominated somewhere the electors have been warned.

There is of course already one former Chief Officer on the Tory benches, former Building Manager David Kirk who "represents" Southcote. While still employed by the Council he was felt by workers in his department to be more sympathetic towards Labour, if only on the grounds they'd do more building and more maintenance. When he left he formed a company with his son, who had spent several weeks "visiting" the Building Department and getting to know how they worked and how they put estimates and tenders together, one of the declared aims of which was to get local authority contracts. I don't believe he's had any Reading contracts yet, but then neither has he opened his mouth on Reading Council except to vote like his Whip had told him.

POACHERS TURN PHEASANTS

The revelation that one of those taking part in the squat in the Borough Arms is the son of Tory Housing Chairman (and mayoral candidate) Ron Jewitt is worth a giggle in anybody's terms. It may even give some of his colleagues furiously to think about whether his son would have gone so far off the true blue rails if daddy had been home a bit more often to give him the sort of straight talking to (or whatever it is) that as Tory Whip he obviously gives them (see above). And they may also be thinking about whether a man who drags the British Legion into politics in defence of the Tories' decision to take a political majority on the Street Collections Sub-Committee (and having a pre-meeting to agree their Party line on which charity should have which flag-day) really has the temperament to chair a Council meeting. Decorum is not exactly Ron's strongpoint.

DEMOLAW

The Borough Council Planning Department has turned down a request from the Labour Party that one of the open spaces in the town centre should be formally designated for public demonstrations. "...insofar as the law impinges on public demonstrations" the letter says, "it does so in a negative way, limited to preventing demonstrations in certain places, at certain times, and in certain circumstances, rather than making provision for public demonstrations in a positive way". Too true, and perhaps an ominous start to 1984. At the last Council meeting Tory Councillors attacked the CND vigil in Palmer Park; at the one before that they attacked the Labour Party's use of the national campaign ambulance as part of the NHS campaign: in both cases after refusing permission for the event. The streets and parks are still the people's, but it looks like in 1984 the people will have to be prepared to defend them.

MORE, MORE

Citizen Cain promises to include in this column any news that's fit to print but that the non-newspapers won't touch. Contributions, rumours and scandals please to Citizen Cain, Red Rag c/o Acorn. Knowledge is power. More knowledge is more power.

GOING-OUT GUIDE

SUNDAY 22

- **JIVE DIVE** · Treats · King's Road
- **ODEON** Cheapside: 1 JUNGLE BOOK 2 THE HONORARY CONSUL [until 26th] check local 'press' for details
- **ABC Friar St**: 1 TRADING PLACES 2 JAWS 3-D 3 NEVER SAY NEVER AGAIN [until 26th] see local 'press'
- **SHP Bracknell** OPERA · AMAHL & THE NIGHT VISITORS [Menotti, 1951] PARK OPERA GROUP 8pm £2/2.25 [til 24th]

MONDAY 23

- **SHP** FILMS · NEW YORK WOMEN FILM MAKERS 7.30 FREE
- **SILKS** Thatcham LARRY MILLER BAND 8-1 tickets £1.50 from Listen Records
- **SHP** OPERA · as 22nd

TUESDAY 24

- **HORSE & BARGE** Duke St ECOLOGY PARTY BENEFIT various local artistes 8pm £1
- **SHP** FILM · FRIENDS AND HUSBANDS 7.30 £2
- **TUDOR ARMS** · GAY DISCO · FREE
- **SHP** OPERA · as 22nd

WEDNESDAY 25

- **HEXAGON** · DAVID ESSEX · 8.30
- **RFT** · PASSION [Godard, 1982] 8pm £1/1.60
- **SHP** FILM · as 24th

THURSDAY 26

- **HEXAGON** · LUNCHTIME CONCERT: THE SIGER SMALL BAND · 12.45
- **JANET SMITH DANCERS** 7.30 [until 28th]
- **SHP** FILM · MAIDENS IN UNIFORM 7.30 £2
- **MUSIC** · ESSENTIAL GROOVE (local band)
- **RFT** · ASCENDANCY [Bennett, 1982] 8pm £1/1.60
- **BRADFELD COLLEGE** · PIANO + OBÖE RECITAL phone 744407/744868 for details
- **SPORTSMAN** · Shinfield Rd LIVE MUSIC [every Thursday]

FRIDAY 27

- **SHP** · FILM · DIRTY HARRY 11pm £2 [also on 29th]
- **FILM** · ONE FROM THE HEART 7.30 £2 [until 29th]
- **ENTERTAINMENT** · THE BOUNCING CZECKS Underground 9pm £2.75/3.00 in advance, £3.00/3.25 on day
- **MUSIC** · PARIKIAN FLEMING ROBERTS TRIO part 1 of complete Beethoven piano sonatas 8pm £2.95/3.20
- **TUDOR ARMS** · GAY DISCO · FREE
- **ST NICHOLAS CHURCH** Hurst · ORGAN RECITAL · FREE
- **[OUTSIDE READING]** <RIGHT TO READ BENEFIT> at LONDON SCHOOL OF ECONOMICS Old Theatre, Houghton St WC2 (Holborn or Temple tubes) WITH: BENJAMIN ZEPHANIAH, JOHN DOWIE, TONY ALLEN, SHARON LANDAU, JOHN HEGLEY details 01-405 8594 £3/£2 students + unwaged

SATURDAY 28

- **HEXAGON** · FREE LUNCHTIME MUSIC · GAVIN JAMES · 12.15
- **SHP** · COME ALL YE (folk) 8pm £1.20/1.50
- **BRACKNELL COLLEGE** · WEEKEND DANCE COURSE · 10-5 about £12
- **UNIVERSITY** Great Hall, London Road RU CHAMBER CHOIR + ORCHESTRA Bach's Mass in B minor 7.30 [tickets Hickies]
- **306 OLD KENT ROAD** [Ambulance station collective squat] PIRATE RADIO BENEFIT 616

SUNDAY 29

- **HEXAGON** · PHILIP JONES BRASS ENSEMBLE 7.30
- **SHP** · KID'S FILMS MATINEE: A GHOST OF A CHANCE + SHORTS + SERIAL 12.15 80p [plus evening films as 27th]
- **JIVE DIVE** · Treats · King's Road

MONDAY 30

- **SHP** · WOMEN'S FILMS: HER IMAGE FADES AS HER VOICE RISES · FREE

TUESDAY 31

- **SHP** · FILM IDENTIFICATION OF A WOMAN 7.30 £2 [also Wednesday]
- **MUSIC** · JIMMY WITHERSPOON + THE LENNIE BEST QUARTET 8pm £2.50/2.75
- **UNIVERSITY** Palmer Building, Whiteknights CAMPUS CONCERT Trombone + soprano 1.10 pm 20p
- **TUDOR ARMS** · GAY DISCO · FREE
- **HEXAGON** · 'WRESTLING SPECTACULAR' [?] 7.30

WEDNESDAY 1 FEBRUARY

- **UNIVERSITY** · READING UNIVERSITY DRAMA SOCIETY Three one-act plays, various authors 6pm and 8.30 £2
- **RFT** · THE YEAR OF LIVING DANGEROUSLY [Weir, 1982] 8pm £1/1.60
- **SHP** · FILM · as 31st

THURSDAY 2

- **SHP** · FILM · THE GERMAN SISTERS 7.30 £2
- **MUSIC** · MIND GAMES [local band]
- **HEXAGON** · SHOCK TREATMENT + SUPPORT [local band] 7.30 £3/3.50
- **SPORTSMAN** · Shinfield Road · LIVE MUSIC
- **RFT** · FILM as 1st

FRIDAY 3

- **CARIBBEAN CLUB** · BANKROBBERS + SUPPORT [Irish punk] 9-2 £2
- **RFT** · PAULINE A LA PLAGUE [Rohmer, 1982] 8pm £1/1.60
- **SHP** · FILMS: FANNY AND ALEXANDER 7.30 £2 (until 5th) CUJO 11pm £2 (also on 4th)
- **MUSIC** · JUICE ON THE LOOSE Underground 9pm £2/2.25 in advance; £2.25/2.50 on day
- **MUSIC** · EISLER ENSEMBLE recital £2.95/3.20
- **HEXAGON** · FRIDAY NIGHT IS MUSIC NIGHT · BBC Concert Orchestra 7.30 £3-£5
- **TUDOR ARMS** · GAY DISCO · FREE

SATURDAY 4

- **SHIP HOTEL** Duke St READING PEACE PLEDGE UNION BENEFIT: ANONYMOUS MICE + SUBURBAN KIDS 8pm tickets: in advance at Acorn £1; on door £1/1.50
- **HEXAGON** · FREE LUNCHTIME MUSIC: BOYS FROM BRAZIL
- **SHP** GRAND MUSICAL JUMBLE SALE 3pm
- **PERFORMANCE EVENT** · NICK GORDON-SMITH 7pm FREE
- **MUSIC** · ROGER WATSON Melodeon + soloist 8pm £1.20/1.50
- **FILMS** · as 3rd
- **JIVE DIVE** · Treats, King's Road · SATURDAY SPECTACULAR

events

regular events

jan

monday 23

WEA peace and disarmament course continues, 7.30-9.30pm. Embrook School, Embrook Rd, Wokingham. 'East/West tension - background and the possibilities for detente' Gordon Schaffer, journalist. Cost £9.40 (10 lecture course), £2.35 (unwaged). Tel Anne Harris 791335 for details.

Anarchists regular meeting : for venue, contact Box 19, Acorn Bookshop

tuesday 24

Veggie Dining cooks' meeting, 50 Carnarvon Road, 8.00pm.

Berkshire Organic Gardeners talk: 'Compost from slurry and using agricultural manures'. 7.30. Coffee, St Mary's Centre.

Lecture: Doug Scott (famous mountaineer) at the Hexagon, 7.30pm.

Ecology Party do at the Horse and Barge. See Going Out.

wednesday 25

Studio evening: photographic session, organised by the Tilehurst Photographic Club. Methodist Church Hall, School Road, Tilehurst, 8pm. Non-members 40p.

thursday 26

Women as Workers course continues: 'Interviewing from a feminist perspective'. Womens Centre, 7.30pm. Free unwaged/75p. For details phone Linda, 61831 or Anne, 596639. Creche and help with lifts.

W.I. mini-market: handicrafts, fruit, veg, etc. St Marys Centre. Morning.

Young Vegetarians regular meeting, The Sun, Crown Street, 8pm.

friday 27

Veggie dining. 7.30 for 8.00pm. Fairview Community Centre, bottom of George St. Tickets in advance from Acorn Bookshop, or on the door.

Berkshire Family History Society talk: 'News Newspapers and Family History' by John Gurnett. Friends Meeting House, 7.30pm. Tel 873888 for details.

saturday 28

Reclaim the Night walk. 6.30pm. Meet Abbey Gateway. Disco starts at 9pm at Women's Centre. Bring a bottle. In aid of Conference funds.

Meeting at St Edmunds House, Bedwin St, Salisbury to discuss action at Boscombe Down (probably at Whitsun). Ideas, enthusiasm, etc needed at workshop. 9.30am.

Photographic Exhibition until February sometime. By Berkshire College of Art and Design, at Reading Museum and Art Gallery, Blagrove St. Free.

Mon-Fri, 10.00-5.30; Sat 10.00-5pm.

Meeting to discuss the setting up of a 'telephone tree' between Greenham Common and Sussex. So that if a cruise missile convoy DID leave Greenham, fast, efficient action could be organised along its route. Offers of transport at short notice and telephone contact numbers needed. If you want to be part of it, please come along between 10 and 4. At the Centre for the Unemployed.

monday 30

South Reading Neighbourhood Group Meeting. South Reading Community Centre, Northumberland Ave. 8pm. All welcome. Alex Pravda will be leading the discussion on Russia.

Anarchists regular meeting. Venue: contact box 19, Acorn Bookshop.

tuesday 31

University public Lecture: 'The Evolution Controversies', 8pm. G10, Palmer Building, Whiteknights.

feb

wednesday 1

Womens Centre: first of the month meeting. Bottom of Old Shire Hall, Abbey St

PPU Meeting, 2 Salmond Rd, Whitley Wood. 7.30ish

East Reading Neighbourhood Group meeting, 71 Hamilton Road, 8pm.

thursday 2

W.I. Mini-market (see last Thursday), 9-1.

Red Rag copy deadline. Editorial meeting: phone 666681 for time and venue.

Greenham support group, 8pm, all women welcome. Tel 662873 for details.

saturday 4

S.W.A.G. paper collection at Superkey, Northumberland Ave; Palmer Park; St Martins Precinct; Recreation Road; Great Knollys St (skips). 8.30-12.30pm.

Red Rag

Red Rag pasting-up. Offers of help tel666681.

Oral history: one day school to be held at Bulmershe College. Cost £6.00, unwaged £4.40. 10am. For more details tel 61621.

sunday 5

Vegan Society 'Annual Auction'. bring along those unwanted presents and pick up a bargain to take back. 2.45pm at 1 Orrin Close, Tilehurst. Refreshments available.

Red Rag folding and distribution. Help always needed. Phone 666681 with offers of help.

Monday 6

Anarchists regular meeting. Box 19, Acorn Bookshop for venue.

monday 7

University Public Lecture. Mr R R Spinney on 'The role of the client in the development process' (Estate Management). 8pm. G10, Palmer Building, Whiteknights.

REGULAR EVENTS

Photography - 2 sessions every Tuesday (10-12, 1-3) at Reading Centre for the Jobfree.

Housing and Welfare Rights - sessions on Thursday evenings at Community House, 117 Cumberland Road, Share your problems and knowledge.

Women's Centre - opening times
Tues 10.30-2.00
Weds 10.30-2.00
Sat 11.00-3.00

Also free pregnancy testing Tues 7-9pm. Bring urine sample from first pee of the day.

Reading Gay Switchboard ring 597269 between 8-10 Tuesday and Friday evenings.

Silkscreen workshops at Newtown Community House, 117 Cumberland Road. Fridays, 10-1

Libertarian Group Bookstall - Anarchist/ Nihilist/ Nihilist / Ecological material. Every Tuesday downstairs in the Students Union, Whiteknights. Lunchtime (possibly termtime only).

Your rights - East Reading Rights Group stall outside the church at Cemetery Junction. Every Sat 11am-1pm

SWAG (charity paper collection) skips at Superkey Palmer Park, Northumberland Avenue, St Martins Precinct, Great Knollys St Recreation Ground, 8-30 to 12-30 every 1st Sat of month.

Minimarket stalls of handicrafts, fruit, veg, plants, cakes, marmalade, flowers etc organised by Women's Institute, St Mary's House by the church at the Butts Thurs am 9-1.

Groups Peace Pledge Union Fortnightly small friendly group meets to discuss issues and plan actions Pacifistic. Contact Box 10 Acorn Bookshop or tel 588459.

- Ecology Party meets 1st and 3rd Monday c the month at 25 De Beauvoir Road and 38 Long Barn Lane respectively.
- Socialist Workers Party Meets every Weds at the Red Lion, Southampton St 8pm.
- Reading Anarchists meet every Monday; for venue contact Box 19 at Acorn Bookshop.
- History of Reading Society 3rd Tues of month Abbey Gateway.
- Women's Peace Group 1st Monday of month, Women's Centre.
- Amnesty International 2nd Tuesday of month St Mary's Centre.
- Reading Autonomists contact via Reading Anarchist Group.

Forthcoming Event

Weds. 29th. February

The first of six weekly sessions on "Women as Artists" from 7.30pm. to 9.30pm. at Alfred Sutton Boys School, Crescent Road. There will be lectures, discussions and practical workshops on :-

Women and Fine Art

Women and Media

Women and Education

Practising woman artist discusses her work

Women making Functional Art

Practising craftswoman discusses her work

Fees are £1.20 per session (waged) or 50p per session (unwaged).

More details from Margaret Keyes 872464 29, Denmark Rd., Reading.

fairview

Fairview Community Centre

Fairview Youth and Community Centre was set up under a Department of the Environment Grant two years ago. It is situated at the bottom of George St, Reading, on the old fairground. It is a terrapin type building with a kitchen and is suitable for meetings, jumbles, parties, receptions and of course Veggy Dining.

The centre is available for hire at £2 per hour for fund-raising events etc. and is free of charge as a community facility. At present there is great flexibility of booking arrangements and the hall is available seven days a week from 10am to 10pm.

For further details phone Gill Phillips on Reading 56598.

Monday evenings: films by women film makers at South Hill Park, Bracknell. They're free and are introduced usually by the maker of one of the films shown. Please turn up if at all interested, or they'll never show anything like it again! See Mondays for details.

ron blew it

On Friday 13th January, the Evening Post presented a story for the masses on squatting. For those who had moved into the Borough Arms in the Kings Road it was one of their first bits of media coverage; for Ron Jewitt it was almost a public and personal embarrassment (though unfortunately the Post's Monday issue lost the main points raised and went for the 'red herring' based on its own conservative family values): Ron's son helped set up the squat. For those who don't know, Ron Jewitt is Reading Borough Council's Housing Committee Chairperson.

In effect what Ron said on Friday was a cover for incompetent local government. He wanted us to think that it's no big deal to get rented accommodation if you're single and living in Reading, in fact even easier with the new Unified Housing Benefit paid by the Council.

Anyone who has ever claimed Housing Benefit in Reading knows that these ideas are crap, but why are we being fed them?

Before April 1983 the DHSS paid rent and all the Council concerned itself with was the old rebate system. The Social Security and Housing Benefit Act 1982 changed all that and by April 1983 the Council found themselves in an administrative disaster, sold down the river by central government.

Under the new scheme the Council claimed the rent direct from the DHSS instead of trying to collect it from their own tenants. For tenants in the private sector the Council paid the money to the tenants to pass on to their landlords and then claimed this cash back from the DHSS.

The initial setting-up costs for 1982/83 were to be fully reimbursed and when the Borough Council took on new administrative staff they could have claimed for preparing and modifying computer programmes, extending office accommodation and training new staff but they fucked it. There was a miscalculation of requirements and with too few staff, a bad system of crossed cheque payment (adapted from the old Treasury Department's method of paying rebates) and a filing system of cardboard boxes and rubber bands they began to administer the 'new Unified Housing Benefit Scheme'.

It's not that they don't know what's wrong with the system now either, they just won't take on more staff or change their method of payment. This is because the year in which the DHSS was prepared to meet development costs has gone. For 1983/84 there is no guarantee of getting the cash back and thus very little chance of making good the damage already done.

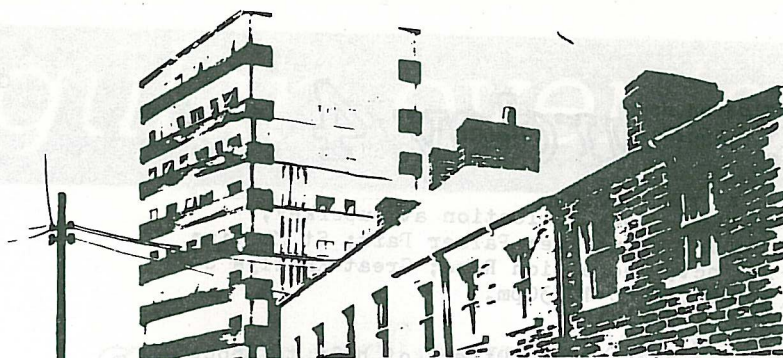
All of this is no consolation to those thrown out of their homes as a result of the scheme. Perhaps the reasons why this has happened should be explained.

The first cause of illegal eviction is easy to understand (even Jewitt could grasp this one); it results from an initial delay in the Council coughing up the cash. No rent → illegal eviction → homeless or B&B and no longer the Council's responsibility.

The second cause comes from the method of payment. If we're realistic, lots of landlords are on the fiddle, not declaring income for tax purposes or defrauding the Council for their own financial gain. If you present them with a cheque for housing benefit they think either the Tax or the Council will be on to them pretty soon, so out you go.

What about finding a new place if you're claiming Housing Benefit? Well did you hear the one about Ron Jewitt who thought that landlords wanted to tell the Council about their income, or love to receive their rent in arrears after long delays.

So what are the chances of changing this system? You could go to the Tories, but they want to spend the run-up to the May Council elections giving false impressions of how wonderful everything is.



It doesn't look too good if the manure hits the air extractor before the election, especially for a Tory Housing Chief with ambitions for higher office. If you go to the constitutional socialists (the party that offers you everything if you're planning to live for ever) it's sympathetic noises and commiserations but who is going to try and improve the system for another party before an election.

It's not that they don't care but fooling some of the people all of the time is the one local government procedure that seems to take up more time than any other with councillors round here.

It seems the only victims of the general hype of local politics are us, those with the day to day experiences who are forced to use those with dogma and power politics to represent us.

Finally to those who live at the Borough Arms, who are enacting one of the best housing policies in years, bloody well done! Perhaps the sympathetic groups on the Council could express their support in some material form as well (if they're not up for election, that is).

Autonomous Whistling Bert

red rag



Red Rag, Reading's only newspaper, hasn't sold a copy in four years. It is produced by a variable collective. Copy should reach the box in Acorn Bookshop or where the Rag is being produced by Thursday 2nd February (at the latest). Each edition of Red Rag will in the future have a co-ordinator whose responsibility will be to get the copy and the people in the right place at the right time. A typical timetable for your favourite fortnightly is the following:-

Thurs: Going Out and Events guides prepared. Completed articles and other copy collected from Acorn (Red Rag, Box 79, Acorn Bookshop, 17 Chatham St). It all has to be read by anyone who turns up at the 'editorial meeting', where we decide what needs shortening and who should type what.

Fri: We spend all day typing all articles which haven't already been typed to maximum 12cm width. Headings traced too.

Sat: Typed material is photoreduced in town. Rag is then laid out and pasted up ie stuck together. This takes 5 or 6 hours.

Sat eve: Rag is printed. 3-4 hours. Then it has to be collected from printers and driven to collating place.

Sun: Rag is collated, folded and labelled. It's then taken out to the distributors to be subsequently delivered.

NB: This is an idealised account and it seldom goes this smoothly.

Help is needed at all these stages. For the next Rag leave a message for Kevin on 666681.

Red Rag depends on its readers for the articles and the money to print them with. A ten-page Rag costs about £50. We have enough money to print this one but not the next.

Donations to collecting tins in outlets or cheques to 'Red Rag', Box 79, Acorn Bookshop, 17 Chatham St.

We now have a new Treasurer but still need someone to do the fabulous Famous Going Out Guide.

Twentieth Century Stories...

LATER THAT EVENING, ADELE MADE HOT CHOCOLATE AND BROUGHT IT UP TO OUR ROOM SO WE COULD TALK...



DON'T YOU THINK IT'S RATHER A DANGEROUS ACTIVITY TO BE INTO? WHATEVER HAPPENED TO YOUR FEMINIST PRINCIPLES?

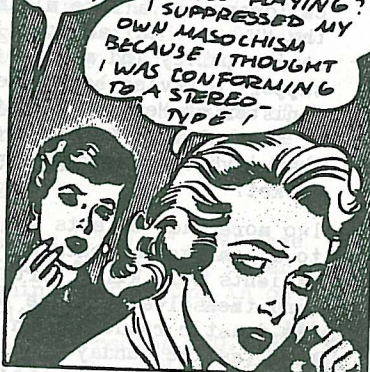


I COULD READ THE SHOCK IN HER EYES--AND I TRIED TO EXPLAIN...

IT'S JUST THAT, THE ONLY WAY I CAN ENJOY SEX IS THROUGH BONDAGE RITUALS! I LOVE HAVING SOMEONE CONTROL ME DURING A SESSION!



BUT OUTSIDE THE RITUAL, I AM IN CONTROL OF MY LIFE, NOBODY ELSE! BUT THE RADICAL FEMINISTS IN TOWN THINK I'M INTO STEREO-TYPES!



BUT MASOCHISM ISN'T MY WHOLE IDENTITY! SIM IS ABOUT TRUST! FOR ME, IT'S NOT MERE FASHION BUT REAL PLAY!



play

Last Monday the store hut at the East Reading Adventure Playground was burnt down destroying a lot of valuable equipment. The insurance will not cover the cost of replacing the stuff and rebuilding the store, and it is unlikely that the Tory council will offer any financial help. Write to the local papers and the RBC - get something done!



letter



Dear Red Rag

With reference to the recent decision by the Borough Council to freeze council house rents, I must congratulate Mr Ron Jewitt for implementing Labour Party Policy by freezing 1984/85 Council rents. After 5 years of increases the battered tenants deserve a rest.

I now look forward to more freezes by the Conservative Council such as:-

- 1/ no more sales of special built council houses which were for the disabled and elderly
- 2/ no more sales of council owned land at knockdown prices
- 3/ no more families in costly bed and breakfast accommodation
- 4/ no more office blocks in the town centre
- 5/ freeze bus fares and bus cut-backs.

Furthermore I look forward to the Tories advising their political masters at Westminster to implement further freezes on the prices of gas, electricity, rail-fares and cutbacks in the NHS.

It seems the price of gas and electricity was frozen before the June General Election but now they are to increase after the Tory electoral win. Perhaps one can draw a parallel with the recent Tory decision just before this May's Borough Elections.

Does this mean a double increase in rents 1985/86?

Yours faithfully

Councillor Maureen Lockey
Church Ward

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racist attack

Apparently Reading's town centre has in recent months been the site of a number of racist attacks on Asian occupied houses which seems to have gone unnoticed by Reading's media - no doubt in the interests of the public the pages of the average local paper being filled with much more important events as may be seen whilst one flicks through looking for the jumble sale ads.

On the other hand the police thankfully are taking the attacks seriously. One midnight two weeks ago about a dozen skinheads shouting racist abuse attacked two neighbouring Asian occupied houses off Castle Hill with bricks the day after one had a new window fitted. The window was smashed about and a door was wrecked. A young white neighbour hearing noises from the street came out and chased the youths whilst shouting 'Come back you cowards!' (probably unwise under the circumstances).

Meanwhile one of the Asian children phoned the police and the response was immediate. Within two minutes a panda and an unmarked car full of plain clothes police arrived (didn't get the number, sorry spotters). The unmarked car was given directions to follow the attackers, whilst a P C and I were left to question witnesses. The P C did not seem to welcome my presence as a rovin Red Rag reporter. He was doubtful about the chances of catching the youths though he said they 'were probably responsible for similar incidents in the area and hopefully they will be caught next time.' One skinhead was brought back by the CID but could not be positively identified and was released. From the tone of the P C it seems similar incidents are expected in the future.

MAKKI.

health

WHAT LIES BEHIND "CARE IN THE COMMUNITY"

The Oxford Regional Health Authority, which includes Reading, unveiled just before Christmas and rubber-stamped on January 7th a new ten-year strategy - a strategy centred on care in the community for the elderly, the mentally ill, the mentally handicapped and even for mothers who are to be released from hospital yet sooner after they've given birth. They presented this strategy as an exciting new vision backed by increased funding from central Government. What are the facts?

The first fact is that the reason for the new strategy is that they now know they won't have the funds from central Government to implement the old one. They are faced with decreasing finance in real terms and with a burgeoning population with increasing numbers of elderly people and are therefore trimming like mad.

They have abandoned the aim of increasing the number of acute beds (for hospital operations) per 1,000 of population, but hope to increase throughput by a 130% hike in the number of day patients - who come in in the morning, get operated on, and go home before night. There have been warnings from many doctors that this target is totally unrealistic, and warnings from the unions that it doesn't actually save money, because you need more intense nursing care and more bed linen and so on. But the ORHA are totally committed to this course.

They have abandoned the aim of increasing the number of beds for the elderly per 1,000 of population aged 65+, and do not plan to increase day care to compensate. They plan to halve the supply of beds for the mentally ill per 1,000 of population, although they say the Oxford Region already has the lowest level of psychiatric in-patient provision in the country. They plan to cut by 20% the number of maternity beds per 1,000 live births by a further drop in hospital stay for "low risk" deliveries, accepting that this will put additional responsibilities for post-natal care onto the family. And they want to rationalise and reduce the number of children's beds, although that will increase the number of children who have to sleep in adult wards.

These reductions in hospital provision are balanced to some extent by an increase in community nurses and other staff; an emphasis on people not buildings. But what they inevitably mean is that many people - particularly

the elderly and the mentally ill - who are now cared for in hospital will have to be cared for somewhere else.

The strategy makes great play of co-operation with local authorities and indeed discussions are now going on between Berkshire County Council social services and the two health districts in the county. The ORHA suggests local authorities should provide more meals on wheels, more home helps, more sheltered accommodation, more homes for the elderly and mentally handicapped, more specially adapted houses for the elderly and disabled, and promises to back all this up with its community staff and with some joint funding. However, while the report denies the ORHA is trying to get local authorities to spend more money this must be the implication and the Government is just forcing legislation through Parliament that will prevent them doing so even if they actually wanted to.

We haven't yet got figures for Berkshire, but a member of Oxford Social Services Committee has estimated they would have to employ 400 more home helps and double the numbers of meals on wheels to meet the targets in this plan, quite apart from the costs of perhaps hundreds of residential places.

So what care in the community is going to mean mainly is more sick and elderly people living at home, being looked after mainly by women who will be chained to the home caring for their parents, in-laws, spouses, or children on a bare minimum of supporting services from the NHS or local authorities. It is an effectively sexist policy and make no mistake about it has top-level support - having been presented to and praised by the Minister of Health, Kenneth Clarke, himself. It is a part of the solution to the problem of unemployment, a solution that involves forcing very many women off the labour market.

Two more side-effects are worth mentioning. The pressure to discharge patients more quickly and for increased day patients will kill, particularly elderly patients who will find themselves at home before they are able to cope. And the drastic reduction in beds for the mentally ill will mean (as the Sunday Times suggested last year) more people sleeping in you-know-who's doss houses or on the streets.

This isn't melodrama. It's happening in this town in this region of the NHS that is only safe with the Conservative Government. To join the fight-back, the defence of the NHS, please support and help Reading Health Watch, which is your local campaign. Next meeting at Reading Centre for the Unemployed at 5.30p.m. on February 21st or contact me c/o VSC, 38 Caversham Road, Reading (Tel: 54123).

Pete Kuhemann

unemployment exchange

Unemployment Exchange

Reading Centre for the Unemployed has recently made contact with an unemployed workers' group in Dusseldorf Reading's twin-town, and is now planning a trip to West Germany to meet them.

The Dusseldorf group, who are known as 'Arbeitslosen Selbsthilfe e.v.', which means a self-help group for the unemployed were, like Reading Centre, set up in the spring of 1982. Their activities are also similar, providing as they do educational workshops, individual counselling and advice on benefits, leisure activities and a politics group. They also publish a monthly news paper which goes to over 3 000 unemployed people. They face similar problems to their Reading counterpart especially over funding and gaining proper recognition from local organisations. The Dusseldorf group is currently supported by a combination of funds from the Church and the Manpower Services Commission.

Following their initial contact and exchange of letters and information both groups are now exploring the possibility of an exchange visit.

It would be especially interesting to see how West Germans cope with growing unemployment and what unemployed people are doing in response. Whilst the average benefits going to an unemployed person in Germany have recently been cut back it still remains far more than that in Britain. A survey in 1980 found that average dole and supplementary benefits, as a percentage of former earnings were 36% in Germany against 27% in Britain. Yet whilst there are fewer unemployed people in West Germany than here those out of work in both countries face the same situation of bitterness, resignation and dwindling hope.

Anyone interested in making the trip should contact the Centre. If enough people express an interest they will then plan details. A major problem for anyone going will obviously be the cost, but the Centre hopes to make this as little as possible by raising its own funds especially for the trip.

peace news

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SATURDAY AFTERNOON STREET THEATRE (14.1.84)

ACT 1: Several people are leaving the Hexagon. There are men and women, and they are chatting and smiling. Suddenly one of them appears to keel over. The others quickly draw a chalk outline around their companion who is lying prone and still on the pavement. One or two of them give leaflets to the curious passers-by. Seconds later the fallen figure jumps up laughing with the group. Some of them write anti-war captions in and around the chalk outline.

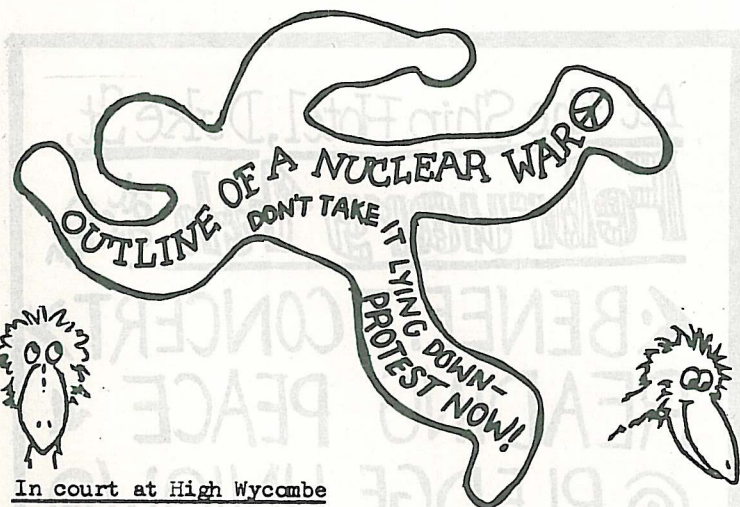
They carry on, past Tesco's, around the Butts and through town - others in the group falling over as the sequence is repeated. They cover the town with chalk silhouettes and anti-war slogans; give out leaflets with suggestions of alternatives to accepting nuclear weapons; chat to all and sundry (including a policeman).

This is one example of Street Theatre. It is one of several different alternatives in campaigning for Peace. If you're happy to accept nuclear and other conventional warfare as the only way, think again! We do not have to accept that a government thinks for us. Nor must we accept that what they say is right.

ACT 2: If you feel frustrated by current methods of voicing your opinion (i.e. writing to M.P.'s and the media) find out more about the alternatives. They don't have to involve boring meetings.

Try the Peace Pledge Union (PPU) or BANC (see Events). You can find more about these groups, other groups and alternative campaigning by dropping in on a meeting (lots in Events) or writing :-
 Peace Pledge Union, BANC/Reading CND,
 Box 10, Acorn Bookshop, P.O. Box 158,
 17, Chatham St., Reading.
 Reading.

For a wider range, have a look at Reading Between the Lines (available at Acorn - 30p.)



In court at High Wycombe

Last Monday, 16th. Jan., 31 people appeared before High Wycombe magistrates court charged with obstruction of the highway on December 19th. Three pleaded guilty and were fined £20 and ordered to pay costs of £25 each. Two refused to make a plea, and the remainder pleaded not guilty. These 28 people are to go to court again on March 26th. and March 27th. If you can get to High Wycombe on Mon. 26th., your support will be appreciated. Hopefully the defendants will get some press coverage and some kind of support action is being arranged. At least another 19 are up in court on Monday 23rd. Jan. and at least 23 on Mon. 30th. Jan. Other dates are 6th. Feb., 10th. Feb., 13th. Feb. and 17th. Feb. Watch this space for news of these hearings.

Reading Peace Pledge Union Members are planning for Stop the City Mark II, on Thursday 29th March. They intend to carry out their own action as an affinity group. About 1500 turned up to Stop the City I last September, and the PPU hope that with better planning and organisation the number will rise to nearer 20 000 this time, with action taken by groups rather than individuals. There will be a carnival at lunchtime and a pirate radio station will operate for the day. The PPU is hoping to hold an affinity group meeting at Fairview Community Centre on Weds 15th February, so watch the Events column in the next Rag.

Local groups throughout the country are considering holding a mini day of action on Thurs 22nd March, one week before the big one, in their own towns doing the same kinds of things.

Events to look forward to include a weekend picket of Boscombe Down, with music, theatre, etc., probably at Whitsun, and a sponsored cycle-ride from Salisbury to Portsmouth on 29th April in aid of CND. The next meeting of Reading PPU is 7-30pm, Weds 1st February in Whitley Wood. Ring Andrew or Debbie 868384 for details.

greenham

Women at Greenham are continuing their night-time watches on all the gates at Greenham to ensure that nothing is taken in or out of the base without their knowledge. However this is hard at the moment because there are a lot of gates to cover, and there are always fewer women during the winter, and following a large action. The police are taking advantage of this to try and intimidate and hassle the women during the night. This can be quite frightening and women on some of the smaller gates feel quite isolated. They would therefore appreciate as much support for night time watches as possible. Typists note : Merle on Ascot 22877 is co-ordinating a rota for Berkshire, so that support covers as much time as possible.

cruise rumours

Reading's suburb of Woodley continues to attract USAF personnel from Greenham Common. I'm sure RED RAG readers will join with the residents of Wallace Close in saying a big 'Howdy' to their new neighbours who've come all the way from Guam.

A RED RAG mole in a local doctors' surgery reports a run on NHS medical cards for USAF personnel and their families. We would never deny anyone the right to free medical care, but, as the Leaderene is always reminding us, these social services have to be paid for. The Oxford area of the NHS is suffering terrible cutbacks - is it, at the same time, to be asked to extend its already stretched services to the staff and dependants of someone else's airforce? What does this cost the NHS when multiplied by the staff and families on all the U.S. bases in Britain? Surely it would have been more in keeping with this government's policy to enrol the entire USAF on a group membership scheme with BUPA.



You may have read in a recent Evening Post of George Robinson (ex-mayor and Councillor) and his idea to sell off up to 30 acres of unused allotments in Reading Borough for housing development, in the hope of raising £2 million or so for the Council's coffers.

As someone who has over the past seven years found suitable housing very hard to get (being youngish, single and often unemployed - Councillor Jewitt please note!) I find his proposal especially galling in view of the number of empty, newly-built offices taking up space where houses could be, and also the number of houses that have been converted for office use. The fact that I'm a keen, if spasmodic, gardener adds insult to injury.

Objections have already been raised because of the lack of open space in Reading it would cause, and the fact that the Council does not look after nor spend any money on allotments.

I have a few more points to make - the reason these plots are not in use may be related to the fact that so few people know allotments exist, let alone how to rent one! The Council certainly doesn't broadcast this information. Some allotment sites are subject to lead pollution (I mean worse than the rest of Reading) which doesn't do much for their popularity - (fancy bringing up your kids in a brand new house with a lead problem?) though future legislation may improve this. Reading is expanding, the population is growing, a proportion of that future population is going to want to rent allotments - where is that provision going to be made if there is no room for expansion because the land has been sold off?

If you are interested in an allotment (the Council are obliged to provide you with one if you apply, I believe) they are quite cheap to rent - from £5 up to about £12 for a year's use. All you have to do is ring, write to or visit the Council Offices at the Civic Centre, Dusseldorf Way (next to the Butts) for the details. Plans of the allotment sites are on view at the offices and the procedure is fairly quick and painless. You could share an allotment with a friend (or more if you don't get much free time) or a group of you could get together, rent several allotments and work them communally (they're generally about half the size of a tennis court) why not try it - it can be fun!

The sites affected by the proposals are Ardler Road, Bulmershe, Caversham B, Caversham C, Coley Park, Goddards Farm, Lower Southcote, Norcot Road, Rodway Road B, School Road, Scours Lane, South View Avenue and Whitley Wood Lane. So if you apply for a plot

on one of these sites, not only do you stand a chance of helping to obstruct these daft plans; if all else fails and you're forced by the Council to move to another site later on you might be entitled to compensation!

A final decision will be made on the matter at a meeting of the Borough Council's Allotments Sub-Committee on February 29th. Dig for victory folks!

Muckraker

acorn

Obscene publications act raid contd.

A date has been set for a court appearance: TUESDAY 20th MARCH at 10.30 am, with a separate court allocated for an all-day trial. The Acorn worker who has been summonsed will then be allowed to attempt to convince Reading magistrates that the 47 titles scheduled for forfeiture should not be destroyed.

See Going Out Guide for details of a London Benefit on Jan 27th for the wholesalers involved in a similar and more serious case.

RED RAG still needs somebody to compile the FAMOUS GOING OUT GUIDE on a regular basis. It involves phoning regular venues & checking programmes, notice boards, etc. Phone 666681 or 666324 if interested.

small ads

Double room to rent in large shared house in Purley - 4 miles from town centre. Pref. vegetarian couple, but singles also considered. Phone 374532 after 6pm. or Pat on 55911 ext. 2069 days. Rent c. £17.50p.w. each.

Wanted: self contained flat or bedsit in Cemetery Junction area, from April. Up to £120 per month. Contact Rupert Thorpe at 55955 ex 353 during work hours.

SALE!

Acorn's having a (kind of) sale starting Friday Jan. 27th. An eclectic(!) mixture of all sorts of things going absurdly cheap.

That is, ACORN BOOKSHOP, 17, CHATHAM ST, READING (under the car park) Tues-Sat 10-6 tel 584425

FOUND at the Red Rag benefit. Light brown leather wallet plus contents. (15 December). Phone 666324 (sorry this missed the last rag).

Wanted - acoustic folk guitar in reasonable condition. Under £50.00. Phone Roger on Pangbourne (37) 2686.

At the Ship Hotel, Duke St,
February 4th at 8.00 pm

◀ BENEFIT CONCERT ▶
READING PEACE
© PLEDGE UNION
SUBURBAN KIX
and The Anonymous Mice

TICKETS £1 IN ADVANCE FROM ACORN