

OWEN, OWEN, GONE!

New Deal representative Owen Hart is dumped from EC1 regeneration project after his bigoted views are exposed.

A bad couple of months for anti-working class bigot Owen Hart just got worse!

After being voted off his tenants association by angry neighbours, he has now been removed from New Deal, with EC1 bosses presumably embarrassed after Harts' views were made public.

The Independent Working Class Association (IWCA) had demanded Hart's removal from the regeneration project after we received a copy of the minutes from a meeting of the London Leaseholders Network.

During the meeting Hart had told those present that Islington would benefit enormously from a program of social cleansing, selling-off all council homes to private landlords.

Tenants were 'workshy and feckless' and ought to be encouraged to live elsewhere, he told them.

Tenants on the Percival Estate (where Hart has lived since buying a flat there) responded with a mixture of disbelief and fury on discovering what their EC1 New Deal representative and the chair of their tenants association, really thought of them.

Outraged neighbours immediately confronted him and at a hastily convened AGM Hart was ousted as chair of the Tenants and Residents Association.

No one supported him and in a show of petulance he stormed off before the vote was taken.

Tara Pearson who was elected as secretary told the *Finsbury & Clerkenwell Independent*: "Hart was

aggressive, abusive and foul mouthed to those who had turned up to our AGM to challenge him about the things he had said, and in front of my two year old.

"He is not fit to represent anyone in EC1; his interest is in himself and his own offensive agenda".

Next the IWCA called on Finsbury-based regeneration body, EC1 New Deal, to rid themselves of Hart and last week it appears they finally bowed to pressure and dumped him.

IWCA representative Gary O'Shea said: "Obviously someone who hates council tenants can't be chairman of a tenants association and his neighbours were of course 100% right to get rid of him.

"And it looks as though we've embarrassed New Deal leader Mathew



Humphreys and his cronies into dumping this bigot from their little gang at EC1.

"I think it is now the turn of leaseholders in the area to ask themselves whether

they want to be associated with this man.

"Recently Hart has set himself up as a self-styled spokesman for Islington leaseholders.

"Obviously associating

themselves with this man will only damage leaseholders' fight to gain fair treatment from the council and Homes For Islington, my advice is to have nothing to do with this person."

Our interests lie in working together

The IWCA's Sarah Nash, a leaseholder on the Finsbury Estate, argues that it is in the interests of both tenants and leaseholders to reject the divisive agenda of Owen Hart and work together to improve our homes and estates.

"Owen Hart is not fit to represent anyone in EC1; his interest is in himself and his own offensive agenda"

Tara Pearson, Secretary, Percival Estate TA



Tara Pearson (left), secretary of the Percival Estate Tenants Association, with treasurer Shirley Colson and the IWCA's Sarah Nash (right).

MANY of us who are council leaseholders work hard in our tenants and residents associations (TRAs) alongside tenants, for the benefit of the community on our estates.

Since most of us were previously council tenants we understand the issues that affect us both, as well as having a clear understanding of the stresses and hardship of having to pay up front costs of capital works.

The massive changes that have occurred on my own estate, over the last ten years, are only as a result of tenants and leaseholders fighting hard together to demand the services which tenants pay for in rents and leaseholders in service charges.

Previously the Finsbury Estate had been one of the worst in Islington with high levels of anti-social behaviour, graffiti from top to bottom of our stairwells and people regularly committing suicide by throwing themselves off Michael Cliffe House.

Additionally we believe our council had us, not on their list for improvements, but to sell off to another landlord.

While many TRAs can and do raise issues on behalf of leaseholders, New Labour's

'decent homes standard' has hit leaseholder pockets severely and raised issues which for the most part can't be challenged by TRAs.

The IWCA believes the appropriate response to this is, as many leaseholder activists in Islington have argued for, the formation of an Islington-wide Leaseholder Association, funded by and accountable to leaseholders.

Collectively, such an organisation would be able to support and provide advice to hard pressed working class leaseholders who are unable to afford the cost of a barrister to represent them at a Leasehold Valuation Tribunal.

Whilst the immediate possibility of this occurring has

been scuppered, we hope in time this will be achievable.

What must be remembered by leaseholders and tenants alike is that New Labour introduced the 'decent homes standard' when its drive to privatise council homes wasn't moving fast enough for them.

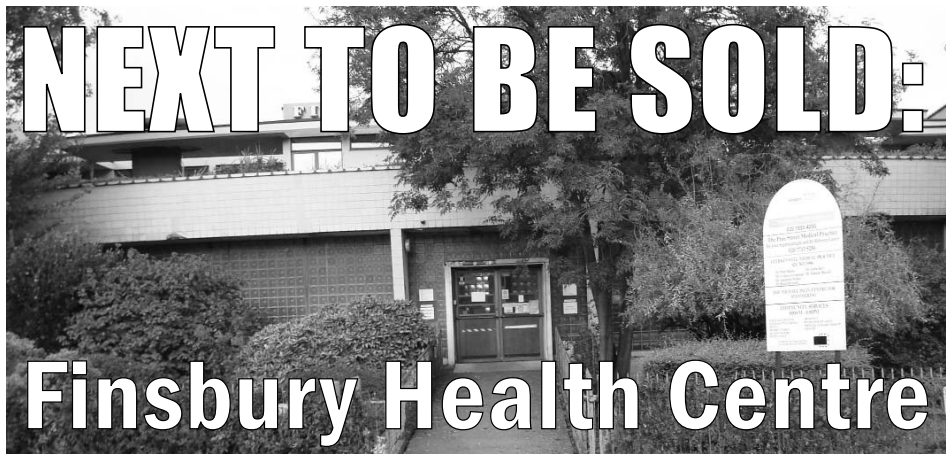
It came up with a standard but no funds to support it - other than three privatisation options.

The cost of all those options - stock transfer, PFI or ALMO, all dependent on borrowed money, has been massively more expensive - to leaseholders in one off bills and tenants in rent over many years to come - than had the council carried out the work itself.



In his own words: Owen Hart's divisive agenda...

"We have nothing in common with tenants and therefore we have no business in attending their meetings. As leaseholders any alliance with tenants is doomed to failure. Our interests are diametrically opposed."



Another day dawns and another community facility, Finsbury Health Centre, is set to be closed, joining a long list over the years. What can be done?

MERLIN Street Baths, Finsbury Town Hall, St Lukes Library, Goswell Road and Amwell Street post offices have all gone, wiped-out in the New Labour/Lib Dem gentrification drive in Clerkenwell and Bunhill.

And as we predicted at the last round of local elections, if any of the 'old gang' parties, Lib-Dem, Labour or Tory, got in the closures and the sell-offs would continue - and so it has proved.

However, that has not stopped either Labour or the Lib Dems trying to distance themselves from the axemen.

Local Labour MP Emily Thornberry had her picture taken with campaigners against the sell-off of the Finsbury Health Centre despite the fact that it is her own Labour colleagues who are ultimately responsible for the closure.

The Lib Dems also have blood on their hands.

The Primary Care Trust (a quango established by and

accountable to the New Labour government) which has taken the decision to close the health centre has a number of prominent Lib Dem figures on board.

These include Steve Hitchins - former Lib Dem leader of Islington council - and Lib Dem Councillor John Gilbert.

Hitchins, Gilbert and their party would have been intimately involved with the decision to sell the health centre long before the Trust publicly announced it in March last year.

Therefore declarations to 'Keep Finsbury Health Centre Open' by the Lib Dems should be regarded as little more than another cynical attempt to hoodwink the public.

When news first broke about the planned sell-off of the health centre the IWCA discussed what could be done. A petition was suggested, to be followed up by a public meeting to rally support against the closure.

Similar campaigns had worked successfully in the recent past most notably around the now infamous plan to gentrify parts

of Bunhill during the run up to the local elections in 2006.

As well as setting up the popular 'Bin It!' campaign, the IWCA was to the fore in collecting 1,500 signatures door to door that gave lie to the claims by the EC1 New Deal Board that the 'St Lukes Framework' had any genuine public support.

Of course, one it became clear how unpopular the Framework had become, the Lib Dem councillors in Bunhill, sensing impending electoral disaster, began to put distance between themselves and the planned redevelopment.

The result was they hung on to their council seats but at the cost of the St Lukes project being ditched.

The difference between the situation then and the controversy over the Finsbury Health Centre is that a) the closure is clearly already a done deal and b) they are not even pretending this time that they have public support for it.

Therefore for the IWCA as a political party to encourage people

to campaign without a reasonable possibility of success would only add to the already high levels of cynicism working class people have for local politics.

Similarly a public invitation by campaigners to throw our weight behind a cross-party initiative was also rejected on principle.

We are not called the 'Independent Working Class Association' for nothing.

While we understand the frustration of campaigners about yet another sell off, the parties they were asking us to stand shoulder to shoulder with are 'old gang' parties, who by controlling the planning committees have facilitated the developers for the best part of two decades.

Ultimately the only sure-fire way to halt the destruction of our community is to ensure the Lib Dems are removed at the next election.

Doing anything other than backing the IWCA candidates in 2010 will simply mean another four years of cuts and closures.

Bank bail-out is just Socialism for the RICH

'Man in the street' pays the price for New Labour economic crisis

AS a result of the worst financial crisis since the First World War, Britain is now entering into a long and painful recession.

In fact, if it wasn't for governments all over the world bailing out the so-called 'free market' system with taxpayer's money, we would be facing an outright repeat of the Great Depression of 1929.

Living standards are set to fall and unemployment is predicted to hit at least three million by the end of the year with none certain when - or even if - this recession will end.

So where did it all go wrong?

Over the past thirty years all significant controls and regulations on finance have been removed, allowing big business to do whatever

Now the party's over and it is all set to end in tears - as it always does when finance is deregulated - it's the taxpayer who has had to clean up the mess.

There's are no complaints from the 'free marketers' about the interference of the 'nanny state' when our money is being used to bail them out.

While those at the bottom are regularly lectured by government about their roles and responsibilities within society, those at the top carry on pocketing the profits knowing that if it all goes 'belly-up' they will be rescued at the public's expense.

The 'free market' is nothing more than a form of socialism for the rich: the profits are privatised, but the risks and losses, like now, are shared.

MP Thornberry in 'secret expenses' row



A mass campaign organised by the Islington-based pressure group Unlock Democracy has forced Gordon Brown to back down on controversial plans to exempt MPs expenses from the Freedom of Information Act - but not before local Labour MP Emily Thornberry had been exposed as being on the side of secrecy.

Last year, Ms Thornberry voted against external audits of MPs' expenses, voted against making

MPs provide receipts for expenses like all other taxpayers, and voted against bringing the transparency of Parliamentary expenses into line with other public bodies.

These proposals were defeated by Labour in Parliament.

Meanwhile Ms Thornberry told the BBC she didn't know "what the fuss was about" over MP expenses, and rejected suggestions that they should be accountable for "every single item on our receipts".



it pleases in the name of making a quick buck.

Margaret Thatcher had started the ball rolling, but as slimeball Peter Mandelson told us shortly after Blair took power in 1997, far from reigning-in the excesses of the big corporations, New Labour would allow them still greater freedoms.

"We are intensely relaxed about people getting filthy rich", he boasted.

Thatcher and Brown: The current crisis is a direct result of Tory and New Labour free market policies.

Your community needs YOU! iwca

For the first time in a hundred years the working class is without a voice, without influence, without political representation. The IWCA is a working class organisation, independent of any existing political party. Our purpose is to give the working class the opportunity to directly influence the political decisions that affect us all. With New Labour intent on continuing the Conservative attack on working class communities, it is clear that we must now organise ourselves in our own interests. If we fail to do this, no one else will do it for us.

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 I can deliver copies of the Finsbury & Clerkenwell Independent
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Contact iwca
 telephone: 07000 752 752
 email: iwca_islington@hotmail.com
 web: www.iwca-islington.org.uk
 post: BM Box IWCA, London, WC1N 3XX