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HAVERING FABIAN NEWSLETTER

December 2013 January 2014

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Havering Fabian Society
Newsletter Volume 2 Edition 15



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VOLUME 2 EDITION 15 January 2013 December 2014

Introduction

Welcome to the new edition of the Havering Fabian Newsletter. This issue will give a summary of the October meeting, an introduction to the crowded programme for 2014 and some opinions on current political issues.

With the 2014 Council elections on the horizon, the local Labour Parties are selecting candidates – keep up to date at our twitter site **@haveringfabians** for the latest news. We are affiliated to the four local Labour Parties, and will do all we can to support their campaigns.

Local society member Councillor Sanchia Alasia continues with her campaign to win a seat in the European Parliament and we wish her well. We include an article she did earlier in the year on the local health service.

Welcome to Sam Gould as the new Labour prospective parliamentary candidate for Romford and Paul McGeary as the PPC for Hornchurch and Upminster. We will invite Sam and Paul to speak to the Society later in 2014, and look forward to working with them in the run up to the General Election.

As opinions are the lifeblood of politics, we welcome a reply to any of the articles. The Fabian Society exists to promote political debate, both within and outside the Labour Party. Progressive politics extends beyond the Labour Party and contributions from the Labour Movement as a whole are welcome.

Attendances at recent meetings have remained excellent and the quality of speakers remains exceptional. We are glad to see a number of new people attending the meetings, and have an ever increasing number of followers on Face book and Twitter.



Our Face book site is a closed group, please contact David Marshall to be added to the site or e-mail Haveringfabians@outlook.com and we will add you to the growing list of followers. We are developing a public site and this will be up and running soon.

September meeting Patrick O’Sullivan

Patrick is Education & Outreach Manager at Queen's. He manages the theatre's participatory programmers where he works with over 9,000 people each year.

The Queens Theatre is the centre of Havering cultural activity. It has a unique history. Queen's Theatre has been producing theatre in Hornchurch for over 60 years. Originally situated in Station Lane and moving to Billet Lane in 1975. Patrick is involved in touring productions for young people's audiences, as well as directing the community musicals.

The theatre is unique having a group of actor \ musicians employed by the local Council. As with all regional theatres, funding is limited. This means the theatre has to be broadly self financing each year and needs to average around 75% attendance at each performance to achieve this. The annual pantomime is key, as audiences are much larger; a key part of the marketing campaign is to encourage those who attend once a year to come again. The “jump the queue” imitative has a similar objective, that is ensuring consistent attendance.

The Director’s have made use of their acting/musician troop to favour musicals, and these are well received by the local audience.



Patrick is a lively and enthusiastic speaker, and well worth listening to if he is speaking at an event near you. The Queens Theatre remains an important part of the Borough's heritage and well worthy of support.

Care quality commission listening event – Sanchia Alasia writes...

On Tuesday 15th October, 2013, I attended a listening event hosted by the Care Quality Commission (CQC). The CQC are running listening events for each of the first 18 NHS trusts that they are inspecting under our new model. Barking, Havering and Redbridge University Trust (BHRUT) is currently being inspected under this model.

The purpose of the event was to listen to users and key stakeholders about their personal experiences of using the trust's services, share feedback on how improvements need to be made and find out how the new inspections will be carried out. The views and experiences shared will shape how the CQC inspectors determine which areas to look at during the inspections.

As chair of the health scrutiny committee on Barking and Dagenham council, I raised a number of issues in relation to BHRUT. There is already a wealth of data that describes the problems at the trusts hospitals, including accident and emergency performance statistics, friends and family tests, mortality rates and the hospitals financial position, as it is currently in £240m deficit. I expressed my hope for the future, in that I would like to see all patients at Queen's hospital having a positive experience. To that end improvements are needed in consistency of care, so that this can be achieved, as the Trust has bottom ranking scores in patient surveys. This is particularly relevant to the Queen's hospital accident and emergency department, which is still struggling to get to grips with demand, staffing issues and waiting times. The trust recently issued proposals to close the accident and emergency services at King George hospital, only to have the clinical commissioning groups (CCG) challenge the proposal which was eventually removed. This reflects perhaps a lack of joined up working between the CCG's and the trust.

I pointed out that communication between the Trust and Barking and Dagenham council has improved over the years. They have a seat on our health and wellbeing board and send me regular strategic bulletins.

CQC themselves have raised in previous inspection reports, that the structure and design of Queen's hospital is not particularly helpful to people using it. Some of these issues will be very difficult to address as they will require considerable investment and capital works, acknowledging that new signage has been out in place.

I did want to acknowledge that there have been real improvements in maternity services at Queen's hospital, which must have taken a lot of effort and hard work. However I highlighted the need for these improvements to be sustained in the long term, especially with all the pressures the hospital is facing with its accident and emergency department and the increasing birth rate in the borough's the hospital serves.

So concerns about BHRUT remain and I'm sure all of the relevant health and wellbeing boards and health scrutiny committees in Barking and Dagenham, Havering and Redbridge will continue to keep a close eye on the issues, as well as invite CQC representatives to their respective meetings, to talk about how the new inspection regime is progressing.

Sanchia is a Labour Barking and Dagenham Councillor and standing for Labour in the 2014 European Elections



Common issues Common Solutions?

The recent Council by elections in Havering and Thurrock should have seen Labour do well – good candidates, lots of support from outside to ensure a well resourced campaign and the national opinion polls ought to have delivered comfortable victories in both.

The results in both were disappointing – in Havering the Labour Party came second to UKIP in a once safe seat, and in Thurrock there was a rise in both the Tory and UKIP votes while the Labour vote declined. What should have been an easy win was far from it – an 8% swing away from Labour, and a majority of 76. Comfort in the win, but lots to consider.

While it is possible to explain the later as control of the Council rested on the result and all three parties had external assistance (the Lib Dems were nowhere in either contest) there are clearly bigger issues here.

UKIP are clearly resonating with parts of the electorate and taking votes from both main parties. With the European elections on the horizon, they can expect a higher profile which has a potentially significant impact on the Council elections in 2014 which are now on the same day.

It is important to address the issues at a political rather than an electioneering level. When the BNP first gained a seat in Barking, it was possible to win back the seat at a by election and defeat them elsewhere in subsequent by-elections by being able to bring more resources to bear and out organising them. Low turnouts in by-elections can mean a concentration of resources can paper over bigger issues.

However, when the 2006 Council elections came along and resources were deployed across the area, the political issues the BNP campaigned on remained – while racist and unpleasant, they struck a chord with some voters and hence the election of 12 councillors. A campaign with overt racist overtones also hit a chord over the lack of social housing, and the damage was done.

It was only when the political issues were addressed –proposals to deal with the lack of available housing, the impact of a rapid population changes, the racist nature of the BNP – that the BNP were defeated at the polls. However good it felt to see all 51 Council seats return Labour Councillors, it should be remembered that the BNP vote was still

significant. While the BNP as an organisation has imploded, a significant number of their voters or former voters remain dissatisfied with what the political system offers them.

They have a lot in common with UKIP voters. Some are borderline racists (and a few not borderline) some have a genuine belief that Europe is the root of all evil, and others are of the “anti politics” wing with no great belief in any of the mainstream political parties.

Labour should not pander to the first group – immigration policy needs to reflect the Country’s needs not the views of the Daily Mail. On Europe, there is need to spell out and campaign on the benefits it brings. This does not mean being uncritical - no organisation of the size of the EU can be perfect or anything like it. Being critical to drive improvement is no bad thing and is hardly a vote loser.

We need to work to ensure we give the message that working class people deserve an equal standard of living regardless of where they come from and that high standards in living accommodation (with no overcrowding) , minimum wages and safe working places should be the norm for all people regardless of where they have come from.

It is the third group where Labour needs to work hardest. This is also the group most prevalent in Havering and the South Essex corridor of UKIP support.

Havering returned the highest vote for UKIP in London in the last European elections. There are several reasons for this

1. There has traditionally never been a significant Liberal presence in Havering and their organisation is minimal
2. Havering Resident association has maintained a strong presence on the Council since its inception in 1965, and had support on Hornchurch UDC before that. For many residents this has provided a natural home for the anti politics vote. UKIP are unlikely to take many votes from them at the Council elections, but will surely target their votes for the European poll.
3. Havering voters generally reflect the national trend – hence the Labour vote rises as Labour moves into Government (giving three seats in 1997) and wanes when Labour is nationally in decline.

4. When the voters in Havering change, they tend to change as a group, so larger than national swings are quite common.
5. With Labour unpopular and the Tories not trusted, the swing voters in Havering will vote UKIP (or in Council elections Resident)
6. The demographics of Havering are changing – many residents have an East London heritage, and the locals, while reducing in number, have always viewed Havering as part of Essex not London. While likely to have voted Labour in Tower Hamlets, Newham or Dagenham, they are less likely to do so once relocated – but have in the past, so some will vote Labour.

There are parallels with Thurrock, which is generally a Labour area but has twice in recent elections returned a Tory MP. A recent Open Thread article in the Guardian asked readers ‘What would it take to win you back?’ in some of the comments posted below there were some interesting points for Labour to consider one of which resonated as it related specifically to the areas of Havering and Thurrock.

Commentators have stated that the Labour Party need to think about whether it is going to provide low cost affordable housing for young people and win these people back or whether it was still going to pander to the NIMBY residents of the baby boom years. This is something which is of real issue for Thurrock and needs a real balancing act to ensure that whilst we don’t lose the core labour vote, we do not lose disenfranchised young people who don’t see secure and stable future and therefore blame people from different ethnic backgrounds for this.

So both areas are potentially fertile for UKIP. Demographic changes are altering the class and ethnicity of both areas, and rapidly. This has enabled some cheap politics by those seeking to exploit the position, which has scope to resonate with an unsettled electorate. There is an undercurrent of racism in this – blatant with the BNP and fellow travellers, more subtle from some others; with an apparent antipathy anyway from some former east enders who have moved to Essex to newcomers of any ethnic origin, the ground is fertile to play to base instincts.

This may bring short term electoral benefit, but even on its own terms does nothing to address the underlying issues. An added emphasis to the numbers moving to the area could well follow as a result of Local

authorities in London seeking cheaper accommodation in the area than is available in central London.

This is likely to have several effects;

- a) Increased pressure on already limited accommodation in the areas involved – increasing the cost and reducing the supply of homes – potentially squeezing out locals
- b) An change in the working\ non working populations
- c) Increases demand for public services – Health, Schools etc – without the resources to match.

This presents a major problem for Labour in the area, as there a few if any short term solutions available. If longer term solutions are the answer, then progress needs to be made soon.

There are no easy answers. The BNP were defeated in Barking and Dagenham by exposing their inherent racism, while taking seriously the housing issues that enabled their premise about Locals being squeezed out to strike a chord. The Council began a house building programme which is beginning to show that Social Housing has a future. There is a need for more properties than are currently being built, and unusually, there is the land in Barking (Thames Reach?) to enable a major building programme – in this regard the failure of the Mayor of London to sanction the DLR extension in to the area is short sighted.

Space in other areas is more limited – Havering has a lot of green belt and most of the available land lies close to the marshes in the south of the Borough. Building elsewhere on any scale would risk bringing a backlash from the “Not in my back yard” elements. Pressure to maintain a space standard is essential – people do not deserve to live in little more than concrete boxes, and this principle goes right back to the Bevan post war housing a time remember when the Tories were willing to attack Labour for not matching their council house building numbers. That’s not going to happen now.

The Right to buy legislation has seen a decline in the number of Council properties throughout the area. While it is not practical to return to the numbers of the 1970’s in the short term, housing waiting lists will remain excessive until the numbers increase. So for this reason it is essential

planning authorities maintain a requirement that every major development should have a social housing element

Labour cannot do this from opposition nationally. This brings another problem. In thirteen years in power the Party did not do enough to address the problem and lacks credibility as a result. To address this Leadership will need to make provision of Housing a major plank of the 2015 Election campaign and then deliver on it.

It is clear that whilst recent campaigns on Freeze the Bill and free childcare from 8-6 have really galvanised support for the party we are missing one big outgoing that all people feel especially in the south and that is housing. With rental properties in the satellite areas increasing as the demand goes up we will begin to see a more disenfranchised local voice that turn to other groups.

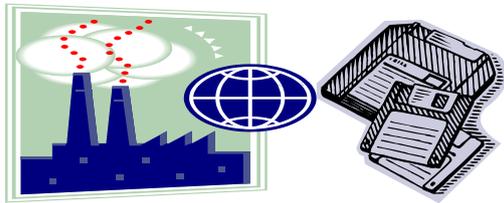
Employment rights are also significant – zero hours contracts and violations of minimum wage legislation enable employers to exploit the low paid and play off one section of the workforce against another. This is a toxic mix when (say) east European labour is used to under price or replaces the existing work force. These workers also have rights and need protection it would be interesting if labour could look at the level of these contracts and see where they are highest and look at voting patterns in these areas as it is likely that unsecure residents will look to alternatives if their issues are not addressed by the big three.

There is a need to look beyond any referendum that may follow the election. In the likely event that the euro sceptics are defeated, UKIP won't go away. They may change their tactics but the underlying message will still be prevalent. Unless given an option of policies that make a difference to their lives, their voters will feel more alienated than now and will either not vote or look for other avenues on the right to express their dissatisfaction.

A vote to take Britain out of the European Union will give UKIP a significant boost and greater influence. This would take Britain to the edge of a very unpredictable future, isolated on the edge of events and without influence on decisions that will affect large sections of the community.

Labour need to address the issues that cause this dissatisfaction. This is a slow process and has many strands. As above, there is a need to address housing provision.

Finally and most importantly there is a need to build integrated communities – which has begun in Dagenham with a growth in community volunteering involving groups across the area. This can take years to achieve and is not guaranteed to ensure any particular outcome. So as Jon Cruddas suggests in a recent paper, this means letting go of decision making – something governments and councils are notoriously poor at doing.



Future Meetings

John Cryer MP and Labour European election Candidate **Sanchia Alasia** will debate the call for a European Referendum On Monday 13th January 2014. The venue is Billet Studio, 51 Billet Lane Hornchurch Essex RM11 1AX.

We have secured **Jon Cruddas MP** for Friday 31st January 2014- the topic will be “Labour between now and the election.” – Venue the Royal Rainham. The meeting will start at 7.30pm

The Society AGM will be on Friday 7th February 2014. The venue will be Fairkytes in Hornchurch. The speaker will be well known journalist **Christian Wolmer** on”A future for London.” The AGM will start at 7.30 with Christian speaking as soon as the formal business is concluded.

On Monday 17th March, the speaker will be Brentwood Councillor Mike **Le Surf** addressing "Learning Disability " 7.30 , and the venue My Place, 343 Dagnam Park Drive, Harold Hill. Mike is also PPC for South Brentwood and East Thurrock, one of the least imaginative names for a constituency possible.

On Tuesday 8th April the speaker will be **Jennette Arnold** OBE, Greater London Assembly Member. The venue and start time will be finalised nearer the time.

There will be no meetings in May as there are Council and European elections to win.

We hope to recommence meetings in June with a joint meeting with Hornchurch and Upminster Labour Party with the speaker **David Lammy** MP for Tottenham. Details to be confirmed nearer the time.

On Friday July 4th we welcome back **Carole Tongue**, former MEP talking about election results and the book " *Our Europe not Theirs* ". Venue and start time to be finalised.

Meetings for the second part of the year will be in the next newsletter due in March\ April 2014.



The Society is looking to organise another fundraising dinner, after the success of the previous event at the Bekash in Romford. Please contact David Marshall if interested.

If you go to the Bekash mention you are a Havering Fabian and get 10% discount off your food bill.



We value your input!

The Society invites speakers on a range of subjects; if you would like us to invite speakers on a particular subject let us know and we will try to oblige.

The Society has a policy of rotating meetings around the Borough; if you need a lift or if you know of any suitable venues we could use, contact David Marshall.

Articles for the newsletter are always welcome.

Local Fabian Society Contacts

Chair Councillor Keith Darvill	Secretary David Marshall	Contact David Marshall
Membership Secretary		31 Vicarage Road Hornchurch RM12 4AS 01708 441189 david.c.marshall@talk21.com
Vice Chair Mike Flynn	Treasurer Dave Baldock	
Committee Members		
Cecile Duerinckx	Ed Glasson	Sanchia Alesha
Wilf Mills	Ian Carnochan	

Future Editions

The next edition will be published in the spring and focus on the Borough and European elections.

Contributions to the newsletter are always welcome. The Fabian Society exists to promote progressive ideas from within and outside of the Labour movement.

As such we are happy to publish articles in keeping with this broad ethos, but reserve the right not to include all of part of any material which falls outside of this parameter.

Links

The following links should be useful in keeping up with the debate in the Labour movement

National Fabian Society www.fabian-society.org.uk

The Labour Party www.labour.org.uk

Jon Cruddas MP for Dagenham www.joncruddas.org.uk

Barking Labour Party www.barkinglabour.org.uk/

Romford Labour Party www.romford-labour-party.org.uk/

Twitter @romforlabour

Hornchurch and Upminster Labour Party

Website <http://hornchurchandupminsterlabour.org.uk/>

Facebook Hornchurch-Upminster-Constituency-Labour-Party

Twitter @HULabour

Tribune www.tribunemagazine.org

Barking and Dagenham Council Labour group www.bardaglabour.org.uk

Hope not Hate www.hopenothate.org.uk

Thames Chase Community Forest

<http://www.forestry.gov.uk/website/recreation.nsf/LUWebDocsByKey/EnglandEssexNoForestThamesChaseCommunityForestTheThamesChaseForestCentre>

Contacts

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biggsnews@london.gov.uk

His website is www.johnbiggs.org.uk

Havering Fabian Society is affiliated to

- National Fabian Society
- Dagenham and Rainham Labour Party
- Romford Labour Party
- Upminster and Hornchurch Labour Party
- Barking Labour Party



Havering Fabian Membership

To join Havering Fabian Society, please complete the following and send to David Marshall. You can also join the Society nationally, David has more details. You do not have to be a member of the Labour Party to join Havering Fabians, but you will need to be a Labour Party member to take part in Labour Party selections and elections.



This is the 15th edition of the newsletter. Previous editions are available, please get on touch if you want a copy; all are available via e-mail.

Havering Fabian Society

Founded in 1974, the Society promotes progressive political thought in Havering and beyond. Membership of the Society is not necessary to attend meetings, and neither is membership of the Labour Party.

However, to participate in nominations to the Local Labour Parties or in selection conferences, membership of both is required. The Society meets regularly throughout the year, apart from the summer and during election campaigns. Local Membership is currently £10 waged, £5 unwaged.

I\ we wish to join Havering Fabians

Name

Address

.....

.....

.....**postcode**.....

E-mail.....

Phone number

Waged (£10) unwaged £5