

Shout!

Merseyside Anarchist Bulletin



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Liverpool: Capital of Vultures

When Liverpool was made the European Capital of Culture 2008 there were parties in the streets. Liverpoolians were told to have new hope and the publicity machine pumped out images of smiling and excited scousers. An estimated 2 million more visitors are expected to come to the city, bringing money and investment that is expected to improve Liverpool's economic state. And yet, as the years have passed and with 2008 on our doorstep, the city still looks like a bomb has hit it. Derelict homes in the suburbs and massive building sites in the city centre, new shops for wealthy visitors and smaller hospitals for the people that live here. There is an increasing feeling of unrest in the city and residents are starting to feel cheated. So what is really going on?

Whose Culture?

The capital of culture is not for the people of Liverpool, whatever councillors might say about 'regeneration'. Instead it's an invitation for big business to come into the city like a flock of vultures and pick up all the tastiest scraps, leaving the rest of us nothing. Huge grants of European and government money, sweetheart deals and a captive audience. All in return for a handful of temporary, dead-end jobs with no skills or long term prospects and a 'regeneration' scheme more concerned with getting visitors, and their money, in and out than creating a decent city for people to



live in. The ones who benefit will be the owners of multinational corporations who don't even live in the city. It is just another move towards making every city in the world have exactly the same shops where everyone can buy exactly the same clothes with their ever smaller wage packets.

Where's the Money?

Liverpool council were given a HUGE cash injection by the government. The promise then was that the people of Liverpool would not have to pay any more tax to fund the event. So what the hell happened this year? Suddenly the council are £29 million short of funding and it needs £7 million of this just to maintain council services. Well the council can't borrow money off the government because they are now forwarding their money to the Olympic games (another bonanza for the already rich). So they have decided to

go against what they said a few years ago and tax the people of Liverpool, re-mortgage buildings like Millennium House and take out a huge £20m loan that people like us will have to pay for later. The council tax increase is expected to be 3.7%.

Shops not Homes

And what about housing? Well according to a BBC report, house prices are going up since the award came to the city. Many people in working class areas are struggling to keep up with their rents, and some in

Toxteth and Edge Lane are even fighting compulsory purchase orders, which threaten to steal their homes for a fraction of their worth, so yet more developers can come in!

All the investment appears to be going to the centre of Liverpool. The further into the suburbs you go the worse it gets. There are areas of Liverpool that are becoming no-go areas with gang culture on the rise and derelict buildings everywhere. Will the effects of capital of culture really benefit these people? Will it reach out into the lives of those that need the help the most? That's for you to decide.

Not surprisingly, with all the extra money sloshing around, Liverpool's politicians and bureaucrats have their noses firmly in the trough. Read up on all the dirt at liverpoolsubculture.blogspot.com

Education, Education, Privatisation!

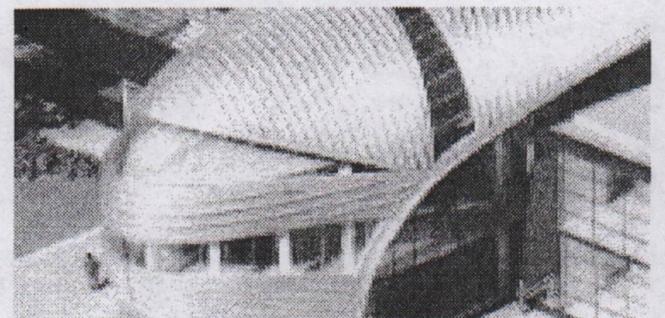
So the capital of culture award has turned the city of Liverpool into the centre of a feeding frenzy for multinational companies. Gentrification is pushing the working class out into the run-down suburbs. Opportunities for getting a decent job or trade under your belt are getting fewer and fewer. Is there any other way that capitalism is destroying our lives? Well rest assured that now you can send your children to a brand new academy school.

The North Liverpool Academy is the

amalgamation of students from Anfield and Breckfield schools. In 2006 the government decided to blend together the most 'failing' schools in Liverpool, throw in a dash of money from a sponsor in the private sector (Stanley Fink from stockbrokers Man Group Plc) and season it with a specialisation in Business and Enterprise. What a great idea! It is too early to tell what the outcome will be. However, merging failing schools in the past has not brought great improvements. Ofsted inspectors branded the Bexley Business Academy in Kent as 'inadequate',

highlighting poor teaching and lower than expected exam results.

So much of this country has been privatised. Has capitalism finally infiltrated our schools as well?



Nice building. Shame about the education

Mersey Posties Show the Way

This summer and autumn, Merseyside postal workers were on the front line of action against Royal Mail's proposed new contracts, which threaten jobs, pensions and working conditions, whilst opening the door to a sell-off of the postal service.

Posties in Liverpool and Birkenhead were among the most militant in the country, taking illegal 'wildcat' action for over a week, after they got back from an official strike to find Royal Mail had changed their working hours without consultation. Eventually the strike was defeated and Royal Mail got what they wanted, but only because workers were stabbed in the back by their 'leaders', and were unable to create strong enough links with other workers facing cuts.

Unions Cave In

When Royal Mail and the Communication Workers Union (CWU) finally reached an agreement, it quickly became clear that union bureaucrats had gladly caved in to pressure from post bosses on one side, and the government on the other. The new deal contained almost exactly the same terms that CWU general secretary Billy Hayes had denounced as a 'carve up' between Royal Mail bosses and their 'rich mates' just three months earlier,

so posties have been expressing dismay and anger.

The union tops started undermining the efforts of rank-and-file posties from the beginning, staggering strikes so as not to cause Royal Mail too much pain, then calling the legal strikes off entirely for two months of talks! Their greatest fear is working class people organising themselves and finding they have no use for their so-called 'representatives'. Many of them have strong links to New Labour, so while they may occasionally talk 'left', they are in reality lined up behind Brown's campaign for the slashing and burning of wages and working conditions.

Winning for Ourselves

But it isn't about the individual politics of the individual reps, it's about a structure that has been used time and time again to keep working people down. By refusing to bow before the law, and organising without bosses (like anarchists), the Merseyside posties have set a great example to workers in other areas and other industries. We don't need to go cap in hand to big business or to government. We can and must organise our own workplaces, our own neighbourhoods, and our own lives.

Renewing the Royal? Ripping Off Patients!

The Liverpool Primary Care Trust's (PCT's) plan to rebuild the Royal Liverpool hospital using a costly PFI scheme rumbles on, and as more details emerge the deal gets worse and worse. At a cost of £225 million (sure to increase if PFI schemes elsewhere in the country are anything to go by) the hospital will be completely rebuilt on a smaller new site with the loss of 200 beds and all kinds of knock on effects on the quality of care. Worse than this, the Trust will not own the new building but will instead rent it back from the private company that builds it, despite having paid for everything in the first place! Only in the upside down world of business and government could this ever be called 'improving care for patients' and 'value for money'.

The real reason for all this, as always, is profits for the usual suspects. Refurbishment of the existing buildings, which are just over thirty years old, was not even seriously considered, despite a sham 'consultation'. As the 'Renewing the Royal' website tells us,

'refurbishment would be an unviable risk for the health treasury and private sector'. In other words, the money's only there if it can go into private pockets. The needs of business to make a killing come first; the needs of patients to go on living are a very poor second.

PFI schemes all over the country have left trusts with unsustainable debts, leading to cuts in services and job losses. A 2007 report from the independent Centre for International Public Health Policy in Edinburgh concluded that PFI schemes are responsible for a wave of cuts over the last few years, cuts that will only increase over the life of the contracts. Any new scheme adds to this pressure. Keep Our NHS Public are campaigning hard on Merseyside and are one of the few forces taking on the trust over this. They meet on the third Wednesday of every month in the Peoples Centre, Hardman Street, and have an email list at uk.groups.yahoo.com/group/KeepOurNHSPublicMerseyside.

Councillor Turner – You're a Joke!

Liverpool was recently voted the least sustainable city in a survey with nineteen others. While other places are tapping landfill for methane, cutting car use, building low-carbon houses and creating zero-carbon neighbourhoods, we're stuck in the ha'penny place. What was the Council environment spokesperson's response? Cllr Bernie Turner could only bleat about salmon in the Mersey and parks built 150 years ago. She'll brag about how much recycling we're doing. But she won't tell you huge amounts of what the Council collects is still going to landfill. Liverpool's bosses want reckless economic expansion, building more roads to carry more cars, choking the city. Yes, we can spend an hour or so in a polluted park and the rest of our lives in an urban hellhole where hundreds die each year from cold, from lung and heart disease or a dozen other diseases caused by pollution or stress. And they call this 'success', 'progress'. Councillor Turner, you're a dangerous idiot. And that's no joke.

Stand Up for Asylum Seekers

Liverpool based group Asylum Voice is organising a demonstration in solidarity with all asylum seekers in this country and especially with those in Liverpool. We demand the right to work, the right to healthcare, the end of Section 4 and forced deportations and the end of all border controls. If there are no borders for the flows of capital in the world, then there should not be any borders for human beings either. The demonstration takes place on Wednesday 19th December 2007 at Reliance House, Water Street in Liverpool, from 12.30 till 1.30 pm.

This protest is also a reaction to the inhuman treatment of Alphonsus from Nigeria. The National Asylum Support Service wants to remove him from Liverpool to Salford, despite the fact that he has secure accommodation here. In Salford he would find himself isolated, without the support network necessary to campaign for his right to stay.

Asylum Voice desperately needs to raise funds to launch campaigns against deportations of people. Therefore any support is very welcome and needed! Asylum Voice can be contacted at the email address: asylumvoice@yahoo.co.uk. Meet members of Asylum Voice at their regular meetings every second Thursday 6.30pm in Next To Nowhere, 96 Bold Street (www.liverpoolsocialcentre.org).

Find out what anarchists on Merseyside are up to, or come and help out. All in Next to Nowhere social centre in the basement, 96 Bold Street (www.liverpoolsocialcentre.org):

- Anarchist educationals third Thursday of the month (Dec 20th, Jan 17th)
- Liverpool Social Forum second Tuesday of the month (Jan 8th)