

THE NOTTINGHAM SPARROW



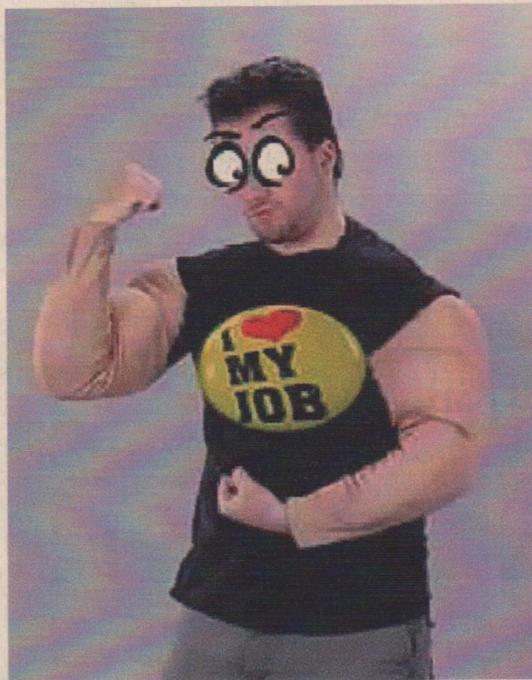
Rebel Nottingham ~ Our Nottingham

March 2008 N°3

Instant Muscle gets wasted

If you ever signed on in Notts, there's a good chance you ran into Instant Muscle. They were contracted by Job Centres to run motivational training and 'help' you off the dole. But at the end of February, Instant Muscle Group went bust, making at least 250 clueless staff across England and Wales redundant overnight, and without pay for the month. Unemployed trainees who turned up in the morning were sent home. Staff from Instant Muscle centres in Nottingham City, Bulwell and Mansfield, and from sister company Protos recruitment agency, are now down the Job Centre themselves, blaming director Tony Garrett for keeping them completely in the dark.

Instant Muscle was one of the first companies to cash in on running the Tories 'Project Work' scheme in the 1990s, where unemployed victims were made to work for a measly £10 on top of dole, or lose benefits. This idea has been enthusiastically continued by Labour as the New Deal. All in all, Notts claimants who had suffered (or were about to endure) weeks of compulsory placement must be delighted by Instant Muscle's demise. Plus, its poor workers should probably rethink the company ethos that having a good attitude to teamwork is the way forward in the job market, now it's become clear that their boss is really not their friend.



HARDSquawk – The Sparrows' regular rant

Is there anything more annoying than those "M&S Food" –style adverts for being self-congratulatory? I'LL be the judge of whether Brand X's chocolate cake is "irresistible and mouthwatering", thank you very much! I'M the one paying for it, after all! Capitalism is bad enough without being big-headed into the bargain.

Well there is something more annoying: big-headed local government! But this time they've shot themselves in the foot and given us all a laugh. Having run out of space at ground level to remind us that we are a PROUD, AMBITIOUS & CLEAN NOTTINGHAM, the Council have taken to the air. As the Nottingham Eye spins, the message on its cars reads "Proud, Ambitious Nottingham City Council", which is kind of closer to the truth!

LEISURE

Save Victoria Baths

The City Council has once again met its match in a grassroots fight to protect services in the inner city. On 19th February and 1st March the Save Victoria Baths campaign held brilliant noisy rallies in the Square, the second of these followed by a meeting at the leisure centre, attended by more than two hundred people.

A council spokesman tried to defend the decision to close down this vital facility, but people in the meeting showed up this hypocrisy. Why is it OK to save money by taking away vital services from some the communities most needing them, in order to fund the East Side development, which so far offers nothing to the ordinary people already living there?

In fact it's clear how little the council plans to invest in local communities. It let slip plans to allow an 'academy school' to be built in the East Side that 'might' have a pool. Will William Booth and the other schools, swimming clubs and public have the same access to this as they do to Victoria then? We doubt it.

If the council go ahead and make a final decision on 18th March as they threaten, community anger will increase.

Campaigners saved this pool as well as Noel St. Baths before and will do again.

<http://www.savevictoriabaths.org.uk>

PEOPLE POWER ON THE WEB

Notts Indymedia

notts.indymedia.org.uk

The Sumac Centre

www.sumac.org.uk

ANTI-FASCISM

Racist fun for all the family

The British National Party, though suffering massive internal ruptures, still intend to go ahead with their annual Red, White and Blue Festival. This year they want to return to the farm of ex-Councillor and BNP member Alan Warner who described the event as “a family festival celebrating British culture”. Clearly any event held by the BNP shouldn't go un-challenged. The BNP are (as they keep telling everyone) a “legitimate” political party but that doesn't detract from the fact that they, as a group, deliberately stir up racial tensions in order to further their hate filled nationalist agenda. It's obvious that they should be opposed by all people who see how damaging their impact is. The festival is due to be held in Denby at the start of August with a broad range of anti-fascist groups already working towards preventing it from happening.

On a lighter note, the BNP are currently facing some major internal problems. The split between the main party and a large contingent of rebels has not only weakened the party's strength numerically and structurally, but has drifted into a mud-slinging match. On the one side the rebels, lead by Sadie Graham (Councillor for Broxtowe) stating “It seems to be that the common denominator where trouble in Nationalist circles are concerned, is Nick Griffin”. And on the other BNP leader Nick Griffin who in his New Year's message accused the rebels of being associated with the “old neo-Nazi Blood & Honour scene”.

Both sides seem to be accusing the other of being crazy Neo-Nazis dressed up as normal people but if that's the case why were they in the same party for so long? The reason is clear, both promote themselves as sensible, reasonable modern groups but both at heart share the same values of hate and intolerance. The split is fundamentally over Nick Griffin's dominance in the party and nothing to do with modernisation. Even so they still plan to go ahead with there big nationalist get together, this demands a response from anyone with an ounce of sense. Fingers crossed however that by the time we get to summer, there'll have been so much factioning that we'll be up against 3 thugs, a farmer and maybe his sheep dog. We can only hope.

REGIONAL

Derby health staff face savage wage cuts

Derbyshire Hospitals NHS Trust is to 're-grade' nurses and health care assistants (HCAs) in its two hospitals in the City. They claim that this is a response to budget funding restrictions by the government.

Re-grading actually means savage pay cuts to an important and indispensable group of workers, with some nurses claiming losses of £3 - 6,000 a year. The Trusts management do not say if they expect health staff to actually do the work prescribed by the re-grade, though I would very much doubt it, especially if you take into account that many nurses and HCAs have undertaken 're-skilling' to do work beyond their particular grades without time-off for courses or additional pay!

And what do management say about it all? 'Re-grading takes place all the time in the private sector' and to a particular department, 'if you don't like it you can leave - we can always replace you'.

We're sure that similar phrases were the vogue during the Thatcher years and spouted by so called 'macho' managers. This is management at its most short-sighted. Morale will be hit, impacting on patient care. Staff will leave for better paid work resulting in shortages, but recruitment for replacements and other essential staff will be almost impossible. Why work in Derby when you can work in Nottingham (of all places) for better money?

Recent mass meetings have seen UNISON calling a ballot recommending industrial action, but the Royal College of Nursing calling for 'further talks'. Even if there was a vote for industrial action, this split between the two unions would undermine the effectiveness of any action.

Unfortunately, until we have a society built on the respect of the individual and the contribution that each of us makes to the well-being of others, these attacks on vulnerable workers will only increase.

Nottingham City Council

proud
to present *Workers in uniform?*
No thanks!

Nottingham Library workers are still opposing attempts by council executive Michael Farter and his management henchmen to force them into polyester hell. Strangely enough, librarians think they're individuals who know how to dress without his help, and that the money would be better spent on books. Plus, council gardeners are already forced to wear lime green t-shirt with a big sim card on the back. “They look ridiculous”, said one, “the jumpers don't fit, the t-shirts shrink in the wash, and the trousers are too thin for outdoor work.”

THE NOTTINGHAM SPARROW IS PRODUCED BY A LOCAL GROUP OF THE ANARCHIST FEDERATION. WE ARE INVOLVED IN A VARIETY OF POLITICAL ACTIVITIES. Do write to us, including letters for the Sparrows' Nest, at BOX AF c/o The Sumac Centre, 245 Gladstone Street, Nottingham, NG7 6HX
Find us on the web: www.nottinghamsparrow.co.uk & www.afed.org.uk/nottingham