

VIEW FROM THE STREET

by Janet Shapiro of the Hornsey Pensioners Action Group



How to stop NHS being dismantled

Our afternoon meeting on October 21, 'How can we stop the NHS being dismantled?' was well-attended, indicating the high level of concern amongst local pensioners that we should conserve and protect our NHS.

The speaker was Gay Lee, a practising nurse and campaigner for Keep Our NHS Public (KONP). Gay reminded us that that Scotland and Wales had retained the old style NHS; but in England the Health and Social Care Bill had made changes to how the NHS was run.

She asked us what we thought were the problems currently facing the NHS. We came up with many – the shortage of staff, increased burdens of bureaucratic paperwork for staff, and delays on discharge from hospital caused by local authorities' shortage of facilities and funding. Others indicated changes in organisational practice as systemic causes for the problems, one being the system of costing and tariffs, the internal market – that alone absorbs a large proportion of overall funding.

Another was the Private Finance Initiatives (PFIs) used to fund many hospital builds, an alternative to public borrowing that would have been cheaper.

It is now acknowledged that PFI contracts were a bad deal and many hospitals are suffering crippling debts, causing a massive shortage of beds all across London.

The introduction of the 'purchaser/provider split', introduced in 1990, was mentioned. This separated the responsibilities for management and healthcare provision and introduced a form of sub-contracting that many consider has since led to fragmentation and creeping privatisation.

The NHS is good because of its skilled staff, yet paramedics, once trained, cannot afford to live in London, leading to a critical shortage. The real value of pay in the NHS has been falling for five years and this year 60 per cent of NHS staff will not get any pay rise at all, leading to staff leaving, a heavier work load on those that remain and a higher dependence on agency nurses. No wonder these loyal workers threaten strike action.

Gay mentioned a new threat. Junior doctors used to receive unsocial hours payment. They and nurses depend upon this extra earnings to survive. Yet the government proposes to abolish this payment.

Gay's message was to make people aware of the government's agenda. She quoted Noam Chomsky, who said: "That's the standard technique of privatisation: defund, make sure things don't work, let people get angry, and hand it over to private capital."

One of our members not present, had sent a glowing report of the treatment received when referred by her doctor to the new Ambulatory Care Centre (Adults) Whittington Health. Her care was prompt, attentive and efficient and she was also given a complimentary lunch box.

Let us keep it that way! Urge MPs to support the Reinstatement of the NHS Bill due for a second reading in March 2016, and speak up against any commissioning of services to private companies.

This is a brief digest of our meeting; for a full report consult www.hornseypensionersactiongroup.or.uk



Private Finance Initiatives were a bad deal and many hospitals are suffering crippling debts, causing a massive shortage of beds all across London. Public borrowing would have been cheaper.

! What do you think? Have your say at streetlife.com

Serious case review

Was saving cash more important than a life?

Cllr Liz Morris, Haringey's Lib Dem Children's Spokesperson writes:

Last week your newspaper carried the tragic case of a young lady from Haringey who sadly committed suicide.

There was a serious case review into what happened. The young lady, referred to as Child O in the report, was suffering from a serious mental illness; she regularly and severely harmed herself, making several violent attempts on her life. Despite this, Haringey Council's child protection services did not carry out a risk assessment which would have ensured she got the most appropriate treatment and that any threats to her wellbeing were dealt with.

Worryingly, funding concerns may have been prioritised by the Labour council over the immediate needs of this



■ Mary Stroman... 'Child O'

extremely vulnerable child. There were a number of delays in giving her a private residential placement which she clearly needed and the report suggests

concerns about the cost of the placement may have led to those delays.

Haringey can only win back public confidence in its children's services if it implements the recommendations from the review and actually improves the services it provides to vulnerable children and families.

There are also lessons for the police to learn. I am very concerned that the police were given a letter about a sexual attack on the young lady and this did not trigger a formal child protection response. The police should have acted immediately - instead they made no formal record and the letter was lost.

The officer involved did not engage in the review process, which I believe every agency should do. I urge the police to ensure that officers involved in cases like this always contribute to future reviews.

Jewish Film Festival

Ridiculous and hysterical allegations against Israel

Harry Goldstein of Summit Way, Southgate, N14 writes:

John McPartlin seeks the banning from the borough of the 'Jewish Film Festival' on the basis of a series of ridiculous and hysterical allegations against Israel.

The Jewish Film Festival has added to the richness of London's cultural life for years, with films of Jewish interest from around the world, including Israel.

Last year the Tricycle Theatre management sought to impose censorship on the JFF, and when that was rightly rejected cancelled the event. It was actually public opinion in favour of artistic freedom that forced them to back down. Mr McPartlin now seeks to impose the same bigoted censorship on this year's event.

Only last week, more than 150 major figures from culture, literature and entertainment, including JK Rowling, Melvyn Bragg, Wendy Cope, Hilary Mantel and Simon Schama, signed a major statement in *The Guardian* condemning precisely the censorship Mr McPartlin is seeking to impose on London.

Boycotts of Israeli and Jewish artists are not just an attack on their freedom. They are also an act of censorship against all of us, by those who seek to dictate what we are allowed to see and hear.

Israel is a tiny country, under continuous threat from terrorism,

which still remains a democracy and manages to produce cinema and other arts of the highest order. We should not countenance attempts to deprive Londoners of access to these treasures in order to promote a vicious and hate-filled political agenda.

L Pein of North London Friends of Israel writes:

Re the letter, from John McPartlin suggesting that the Jewish Film Festival be banned (*Event shouldn't take place in the borough, October 22*).

He made outrageous allegations and smears about Israel, the only place, in the entire Middle East where a Muslim woman can demonstrate freely on the street, without fear of being molested or sexually assaulted (Egypt), or shot dead in cold blood (Syria, Gaza).

And, let's not forget the appalling stonings, public whippings, and beheadings (Saudi Arabia) and the hangings of gays from cranes in Iran.

Ignoring hundreds of thousands of Muslims tortured and murdered by their own governments, and criticising Israeli responses to terrorism, obsessively and almost exclusively, is a strange sort of racist mental illness that sadly infects many left-wing and right-wing campaigners.

May I suggest that he follows Maajid Nawaz on Facebook, a

de-radicalised Muslim, who set up the Quilliam Foundation – a think tank focusing on integration, religious freedom, and counter-extremism?

Sharon Lukom writes by email:

Israel is a tiny democracy under constant attack from terrorism - from suicide bombings, rockets, and currently from the dreadful knife attacks yet still manages to produce wonderful films and other cultural treasures. The bigoted author of the letter published wants to silence these voices and prevent British audiences from hearing them.

Leonard Klahr of Chessington Court N3 writes:

The problem for most people like John McPartlin is that in all likelihood they have never been anywhere near Israel, otherwise they would appreciate the nonsense they write about.

There are Arabs in senior positions in all walks of life and Jews and Arabs live mainly in harmony. People like John McPartlin need to preach less incitement and more tolerance and peaceful co-existence. Cultural exchanges rather than boycotts promote this process.

More letters on this subject on page 22

Jewish Film Festival

Critic plays hard and loose with the facts

Jon Benjamin writes by email:

John McPartlin plays so fast and loose with the facts in his objection to the staging of parts of a Jewish Film Festival at the Phoenix cinema in East Finchley that it is difficult to know where to start (*Event shouldn't take place in our borough, October 22*).

Perhaps most telling is his casual assertion that the two week-long event is an Israeli film festival when it is a festival of Jewish-themed films from more than a dozen different countries.

Mr McPartlin's call for a boycott of a Jewish cultural event because of what he claims are the actions of a foreign government therefore takes on a rather sinister tone.

He asserts that public opinion brought about a similar boycott by the Tricycle Theatre last year. This bold claim is again at odds with the truth. In fact certain individuals within the management of the Tricycle Theatre initially declined to host the festival as they did not want to seem to be taking sides during the Gaza conflict then going on.

That decision was subsequently unconditionally reversed in response to both public opinion and that of many of the Theatre's trustees and supporters. They realised what Mr McPartlin has failed to grasp; that conflating the right of audiences to enjoy a Jewish culture event with the complexities of a tragic overseas conflict invested with far more nuance than Mr McPartlin is prepared to concede, sets a dangerous precedent.

Gideon Falter, Chairman, Campaign Against Antisemitism writes:

I was astonished by your decision to publish John McPartlin's letter last week, in which he demanded that the UK Jewish Film Festival be banned from the borough (although he tellingly called it the Israeli Film Festival).

Seeking to ban Jewish culture is not a new idea, but many of your readers will have been surprised that you chose to give Mr McPartlin a platform.

Brian Felston writes by email:

The article where your writer suggests banning the Jewish film festival rather than the Israeli film festival shows what the real reason is for this article.

With all the terror in the area in Syria and Iraq, it is strange that the only safe place in the area is attacked by him.

I did active service in the British army and understand the need to stop terrorists. I would like this man to be made to



■ The Phoenix cinema

stand in the south of Israel and watch rockets being fired from the people he admires or stands in Jerusalem with other hateful people trying to stab anyone.

How do you have peace with people who only know death? If Israel's neighbours could behave like the rest of the world then Israel would not need to defend itself. People who hate for the sake of it, like your writer are the problem in this troubled world.

Bea Miller of Prestwich, Manchester writes:

Allow me to point out this is a Jewish Film Festival not an Israeli one. There is a subtle difference and perhaps Mr McPartlin would like to give evidence as to why a Jewish Film Festival should not take place. Could the reason be anti-Semitism, I wonder? Might I also suggest that in view of the ignorant opinions expressed in his letter, he should not benefit by using any of the considerable amount of Israeli technology, inventions and medications currently in daily use in this country, including computer and mobile phone technology.

Ros Morris writes by email:

I am worried that you think it necessary to even consider printing a letter from someone who feels that the borough should not host this artistic event. Would you permit such a letter to be printed from someone who is against, for example, a Muslim/ Arab film festival? I think not.

Mandy Blumenthal of N6 writes:

The truth is not what Mr McPartlane would want you to believe. Israel is not an Apartheid country, it is a democracy surrounded by totalitarian regimes, that carry out repression, homophobia, beheadings and misogyny

It is not a child murdering

state. Rather it fought a war against a brutal enemy that sought to sacrifice its children to protect its weapons whilst its billionaire leaders enjoyed the sanctuary offered by its servile protectors in the barbaric regime of Qatar.

Condemning films from Israel but not demonstrating against the treachery of British nationals going to decapitate people in Syria, or closer to home in the streets of London, says all. Some people feel more upset about films than bombs killing people on tubes and a bus.

PA Spencer of Hendon Lane N3 writes:

Please will Mr. McPartlin note that the film festival is the Jewish Film Festival (films made all over the world) and not the Israeli Film Festival.

Laurie Cohen writes by email

John McPartlin completely ignores all the facts of Israelis living under constant rocket attacks which necessitate women and children living in perpetual fear for their lives and spending hour upon hour in shelters.

Added to this there is now the added threat of random stabbings and shootings on the streets to further blight the lives of innocent people.

The Israeli government has no choice but to do all it can to terminate these threats and protect its citizens.

Just transpose these attacks to the streets of London or Manchester and imagine what the response of the UK government would have to be.

Incidentally, "public opinion" did not induce the Tricycle Theatre to "pull" the festival last year. Indeed, public opinion was responsible for it be reinstated.

Surely some even-handedness and an appreciation of the facts would serve better than this sort of bitterness.

Ruth Barnett, Holocaust survivor of Fortune Green Road, NW6 writes:

John McPartlin is entitled to an opinion regarding Israel but he needs to develop a much better informed opinion based on better evidence than he quotes. However, by taking sides (and it makes no difference which side), he becomes part of the problem of stirring up hostility and hatred that keeps the conflict going. He needs to support and promote the many initiatives and projects that already exist bringing both sides together to talk and work together: then he will become part of the solution.

VIEW FROM THE STREET

by Dave Winskill, former Haringey councillor, now community campaigner



Appreciating full potential of our historic town hall



The society has started work on its own transparent proposals for turning the potential of Hornsey Town Hall into a workable, costed and secure future for the building... we are assembling a team of talented local people

A few weeks ago the Hornsey Town Hall Appreciation Society wrote to Haringey leader Claire Kober in a last ditch attempt to get Haringey to reconsider the way it is selling off Hornsey Town Hall. We asked that the land be sold separately and the capital receipt be used to fund the restoration of the building which should be transferred into community ownership.

This would have the potential of offering a long term sustainable future for the town hall and creating a major social, arts and regeneration hub for this part of north London. So far we have not had an acknowledgement from Cllr Kober.

In a few days time a notice will appear in the Official Journal of the European Union and the "OJEU" process will have started. There have already been a fair number of enquiries and Haringey is confident that several serious bidders will emerge. They will have plans to develop the car park (expect a new, more ambitious planning application) restore the Town Hall and come up with a scheme for the square at the front.

As the HTH Creative Trust's website notes, bidders "will be asked to confirm that they will meet at the very least LBH's minimum requirements for community access and use as well as proposals for enhanced community use". These proposals will count as up to 30 per cent of the total mark when bids are assessed. The HTH Creative Trust will provide the marking for access assessment but neither they nor Haringey are prepared to tell us what their understanding of community use is.

Meanwhile the Appreciation Society has started work on its own, transparent proposals for turning the potential of HTH into a workable, costed, secure future for the building. We are assembling a team of talented local people with the skills to prepare documents to take to bidders.

Soon we will be asking local arts and community groups to talk to us with their ideas. Our pitch to developers is that there is overwhelming community support for an arts, community and regeneration hub and as much of the building as possible should be given over to these uses. We will make the figures stand up and identify the investment required.

But, because Haringey has chosen a commercial disposal, future ownership could change, making it difficult to get investment and plan for the long term. We will be asking the new owner for a community asset transfer into a local Community interest company.

We still need people with the right skills to join us - please visit www.hthas.wordpress.com where there is a lot more back ground. While you are there, visit the archives page to read about what happened to Fulham Town hall - it too was Grade II* listed. And it's probably a good idea to sign the petition too!