



Newsletter N^o7 ◊◊◊ November 2011

NOTTS SOS

Defending jobs, services, welfare & education against cuts in Nottingham and Nottinghamshire

A YEAR OF FIGHTING THE CUTS

THE ROAD TO SUCCESS

In September 2010 Nottingham SOS was formed, and over a year later we are still here and still active! This is an achievement to be proud of, and this anniversary newsletter is to celebrate our first year. The year has not been without its problems for a new organisation, but they have been relatively minor and negotiating the way through them has strengthened the group and helped it find its role. There have been disagreements over the exact stance that we should take over a few issues, and there have been some arguments – this just proves that we are alive and well!

What is really impressive, and so often people fail to achieve, is the way that in SOS people have overcome their differences and made common cause about the really big issues facing us – the unjust and unfair way that ordinary and vulnerable people are being treated, and the way that the rich are being allowed to get away with their tax avoidance, huge salaries, and the arrogance with which they assume this is their right. The feeling that a new way of running society is needed, and that the current situation cannot be accepted, is growing – and moving into groups and parts of society that are not usually aware of political issues. As the cuts bit deeper and the world economic situation teeters from crisis to crisis, even more people will realise that things need to change radically.

Some of this anniversary newsletter is devoted to looking back at the main events and campaigns which we have run or supported in the first year, most of which are of course, still ongoing. The fight goes on, and its growing!



Our first major event was the big march on October 30th 2010, which attracted 1200 people. The march from the Forest to the Old Market Square gathered more supporters on its way, and the reception given to the speakers when it arrived at Speakers Corner left no-one in any doubt that there were already then many people who recognised the coalition government's policy for what it is – robbing the poor to pay the rich.

This theme was echoed again in one of our most recent activities when SOS members dressed as Robin Hood's Merry Men handed out leaflets in front of the castle gate on the day of the annual pageant on Sat 29th October 2011.

The leaflets which SOS handed out on this occasion were headed "Robbing the Poor to Pay the Rich" and featured a picture of the current Sheriff of Nottingham.

On bonfire night, we handed out leaflets against parliament, displaying a Cameron 'guy' at the entrance of the Forest.

For regular updates, visit the Notts SOS web site www.nottssos.org.uk

AN APPEAL FOR UNITED ACTION IN NOTTS

Workers, service users, welfare and disability claimants, pensioners, students and community groups are all being affected by the cuts

Over the year our role has crystallised into being an umbrella organisation. Our most active members come from many different political parties and no political party; many different unions and no unions; working and retired or unemployed. The difference between being an active member or just a supporter is just how much time you have got and how willing you are to help – we have no official membership, and no officials (the only exception to this is we do have a treasurer). Our meetings remain fortnightly on Mondays at the ICC in Mansfield Road, where we take turns at chairing the meeting (as informally as possible) and at taking minutes – just to make a note of reports we've heard and what we've decided to do.

WE NEED MORE PEOPLE!

Despite the large numbers of people who are sometimes involved in our events and other events which we support, SOS still needs more people. Because most of our activists are busy working people their time is already overbooked. Please come along to a meeting (the website always gives details of which is the next Monday evening meeting), or email the SOS email below and say if you can help. We are frequently short of people to take a turn at standing behind the stall, handing out leaflets, or just holding the banner! You won't be asked to do anything you're not happy with – if you don't feel happy leafleting then just be there and lend moral support with extra numbers.

OUR WEBSITE

Our website is the way in which we are probably most influential. We know from the record of hits that lots of people look at it, particularly before an activity. From it you can get links to other groups fighting for jobs, benefits, work issues and against all the other injustices that late capitalist society is inflicting on the majority – the 99%! In addition, anyone can join our email list and make sure they get information about events without having to remember to look at the website.

A VIEW FROM GREECE

As a result of the crisis in Europe, new austerity measures are continually being announced - wage cuts, redundancies growing and bargaining agreements hacked to pieces. The number of unemployed and poor people is increasing, social rights and civil liberties are being torn up. The Greek state is acting more and more like a Mafia than ever before, and society is being crushed further every day.

As a result there is massive social unrest, as thousands of demonstrators have taken to the streets and squares either as strikers or simply as frustrated people. There are numerous new attempts at social organising such as the local people's open assemblies and new movements (such as the No Pay Movement), while at the same time the whole social movement continues to clash with the forces of repression and their parliamentary assistants.

A 48-hour strike called by the central union confederation GSEE (General Confederation of Greek Workers) and ADEDY (Civil Servants' Confederation) on 19-20 October produced a massive, unprecedented mobilisation across the country. Thousands of workers, unemployed, pensioners, students, schoolchildren, etc. went on strike and took to the streets to show their opposition to the measures being taken by the rotten political system and the wave of new laws that are now destroying our entire society. In Athens, a vast sea of people turned out - one of the largest strikes in recent decades.

As the crisis deepens, the challenge now is overthrow social barbarism, by collectively building a new life on the wreck of the entire old world which is adrift together with its components. Another goal must be to go beyond the limits of mass demonstrations and turn the mobilization into something more real, with more concrete action and not just a regular spot on the TV news.

CAMPAIGNING IN NOTTINGHAM AND NOTTS

THE SAVE THE NHS CAMPAIGN

Along with other groups Notts SOS has campaigned vigorously against Andrew Lansley's reforms of the NHS, and this has been a main theme of our newsletters, leaflets, placards and stalls over the year. We've participated in two very well attended public meetings, both of which have made clear the extent of public and professional concern. Other activities on this score included the picketing of the 'Listening Exercise' held in the city on 18th May and the street theatre trial of Andrew Lansley on 9th July. Future activity, as the bill ploughs ahead despite no public mandate for it and the widespread almost total hostility of unions and medical professionals, is likely to include drawing attention to the clash of interest as GPs commission services from companies in which they themselves have a stake.

NO TO COUNCIL CUTS

Notts SOS have been clear from the start that these cuts are not necessary, there is an alternative, and if councils would only stand up and refuse to implement them the coalition government would have to change its policies. We campaigned last year for a needs based budget, one which meets the essential needs of the people of Nottingham, and we are now once again calling on the council to refuse to continue cutting. The petition we handed in to the council last spring had almost 1000 signatures and we are again preparing a petition for the budget setting process in 2012, aiming to reach out to even more members of the public. We particularly need extra helpers on stalls to spread the word as the cuts bite and even more people come to realise the extent and the effect of them. PLEASE HELP.

SUCCESS - NO FOREST SELL-OFF, DAYCARE SAVED

Over the last year we supported the Save Sherwood Forest Campaign and the campaign to save day care at Hayward House. Both of these have met with success. In the case of the Hayward House campaign this was a complete success with the NHS board responsible apologising and recanting on their intentions – thanks to the fantastic efforts of the patients, volunteers,

friends and relatives who worked so hard to save it. In the case of Sherwood Forest, campaigners remain alert to threats to our local forest despite the government's u-turn on the main policy.

EDUCATION, EDUCATION, EDUCATION

We have supported the Anti-Academies Alliance, the campaign against closure of Gedling School, and a ESOL rally and protest in the Old Market Square part of a national campaign which resulted in some success against the loss of ESOL services for those who most need them. Nottingham Students Against Fees and Cuts have been particularly active and have enthusiastically supported Notts SOS events as well as supporting UCU picket lines at local universities and further education colleges. Campaigns against library closures were well supported in our region.

MAKING BANKERS AND CORPORATE TAX AVOIDERS PAY

The Notts branch of UK Uncut have been very active in the city and have taken their campaign outside to other areas as well, including Lincoln and Derby.

COUNTY AND CITY

The Notts SOS banner, stall and our supporters have been seen in Mansfield as they launched their own anti-cuts campaign; at the TUC organised March for the Alternative in London on 26th March; at the Nottingham May Day festival and march on 30th April; the Green Festival at the arboretum; the County Council Unison march and rally at County Hall; and on the union day of action on 30th June when teaching and public service unions had a one day strike and marched and rallied in the city.

NO TO BENEFIT CUTS

Notts SOS activists have been amongst those protesting on two occasions against the actions of the Healthcare Assessment company ATOS, who are implementing the new work capability assessments which are manifestly so unfair to many genuinely ill and disabled people who would like nothing better than to work.

Tell your workmates, friends and neighbours about our campaign and get involved in saving our services. Come to our meetings on Monday evenings at 7.30pm at the ICC (International Community Centre), YMCA, 61b Mansfield Road, Nottingham NG1 3FN. Please just turn up. Meetings end by 9.00pm. Currently we are meeting fortnightly. Meeting dates are advertised on our website and Facebook.

NOTTS SAVE OUR SERVICES – November 2011

OPINIONS



Why strike? Your bosses will often try to convince you that they are your friend. The reality is that their interests are opposed to yours. They want you to work for as long as possible for as little as possible, while you (presumably) want the exact opposite. This is particularly true in the private sector where profit is king, but is also the case in the public sector with its drive for "efficiency."

In many cases it may be possible to negotiate a middle ground which both of you are prepared to accept, this is not always possible. At that point you can either rollover and accept the bosses' terms or you can fight them. As a worker, the only power you have is to withdraw your labour and refuse to work. It goes without saying that doing this individually is a waste of time. Hence the need to strike; for everybody in the workplace to collectively refuse to work.

Workers normally engage in strike action as part of a union. There is no "right to strike" as such in the UK, but provided you are a member of a recognised trade union which has conducted a legal ballot then you are entitled to a number of legal protections and cannot be disciplined for striking. These protections do not apply for strikes which don't follow this process (often called "wildcat strikes"). However, where workers stick together and refuse to be intimidated, it is very difficult for bosses to discipline them for unofficial strike action. Wildcat strikes can be - and have been - very effective. If you decide to continue working during a strike (to "scab") you are undermining your colleagues, strengthening your bosses hand and shooting yourself in the foot.

The bosses and the mainstream media would like us to believe that striking is ineffective, but over the years strikes have been crucial in winning the 8 hour working day, equal pay for women and many of the other rights we now take for granted. Even today, it can ensure workers are better paid and treated. Witness the relatively good pay and terms and conditions of London Underground workers who have time and again demonstrated their preparedness to strike. They'd also like us to believe that strikes are unpopular, but despite every major newspaper being consistently opposed to strike action, polls invariably show widespread public support for strikes.

As the government and private sector bosses attack workers' pay and conditions under the cover of "austerity", striking is one of the most powerful tools available to us. If we strike together we can win. By building on those victories as part of a wider movement there is a real hope of finally and definitively beating the cuts.

Occupy Nottingham!

You cannot have missed the tents in Nottingham Old Market Square which are camped to highlight the causes of global recession and to spark discussion amongst Nottingham residents and visitors. On November 15th it was one month since it started in Nottingham. Occupy Nottingham is one of close to 1000 such camps across the world. The information tent is a good place to find out what it's all about.

GETTING INVOLVED Demonstrate against the cuts on Wednesday 30 November, supporting public sector strikers. Gathering 10.30 at Forest Recreation Ground and marching to Albert Hall at 11.30am. Bring banners and placards and anything else to make this a noisy demonstration. March will start at 11.30am, proceeding along Mansfield rd, Upper Parliament St, Market Sq, Derby Rd and back through College St to get to the Albert Hall. Rally at Albert Hall to start around 12.30pm – 1pm (tickets from local trade unions). Speakers (locally and nationally via video links), music and contribution from 1pm to 3pm – and beyond! Notts TUC stall in the market Square at 12 noon.

CONTACT US

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Sign the Notts SOS petition against council cuts that we will present in the New Year.