

# **The Real Big Issue**

Dear Big Issue Seller,

If you have ever wondered why you are sleeping rough or in some flea-bitten hostel, the pamphlet you have just been handed, "Poison The Rates", will explain why. I published the first edition of this pamphlet last year after visiting the Centerprise Bookshop in Hackney. I had hoped that by now something would have been done about this place. Some hope. As you will see from page 3 of this pamphlet, in the last financial year the London Borough of Hackney and the Arts Council squandered over two hundred thousand pounds of taxpayers' and ratepayers' money promoting queer porn and distributing anti-police and anti-judiciary hate literature. That's just in one borough. How many homeless people could have been rehoused for two hundred grand?

I have a personal interest in this; in 1985 I was homeless; I'd just finished a gaol sentence and had nowhere to go. Fortunately I was given a place at a hostel run by a Christian charity. Many people in a similar position, including many young people, aren't so lucky, and they end up sleeping on the street, drifting into substance abuse, prostitution, petty crime, or even serious crime. Some of them end up doing a life sentence on "the instalment plan". There but for the grace of God went I.

In spite of suffering terrible adversity, most homeless people manage to avoid coming into contact with the wrong end of the law, for all the good it does them. They suffer constant ill-health, discomfort, misery, mental illness, and premature death. And all of this is unnecessary.

During the Gulf War the government spent countless millions of pounds bombing the people of Iraq into submission creating even more homelessness, poverty and desperation. Before that there was the Falklands War. In this day and age when the world has never been richer, we are constantly being told that money is in short supply, that we will have to tighten our belts, or even get "on our bikes" to look for work. Yet the government can always find money for war. Or for queer porn.

The publication of this pamphlet won't stop the next war in the Middle East or wherever, but it might help stop the subsidising of queer porn and hate literature by the London Borough of Hackney, if enough of you complain about it. And this money could be redirected where it is most needed, to help those in need.

Please contact Robert Bevan at "The Big Issue" or Patricia Wynn Davies of the "Independent". Both these journalists have recently expressed an interest in the Centerprise project, and if they bring this scandal to the attention of a wider public, who knows? Maybe something will eventually be done about this insult to the homeless.

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