

South London opinion

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THE SPIRIT OF SOUTH LONDON

OUR COMMENT

Never alone in the community

All's well that ends well may come to mind when hearing the decision to overturn the eviction of The Lone Fisherman stall from Tooting Market this week, but not for its owner, Chris Smith.

Mr Smith was targeted by a Met drugs raid on the market, and despite nothing illegal found there, and no charges brought by the police, the market owner – Baron Deschauer – decided to evict him.

Now that we know that decision has been overturned, and Mr Deschauer has apologised, it would seem that the matter is over.

But the damage has already been done.

The Lone Fisherman has now been embroiled in an unsavoury news story, online and in social media, and there will be many who only see the surface level details – that a black man was evicted from a market because the police raided his stall under suspicion of possessing drugs.

It seems Mr Deschauer only overturned the eviction after pressure from a 50-person strong protest and admonishing words from the local MP, Dr Rosena Allin-Khan.

Had there been no intervention from the local community, would Mr Smith still have his stall?

At the time of the incident, Mr Smith said: “The only thing that has connected me to this raid is because I’m Jamaican and I have dreadlocks on my head.”

The snap judgement to evict Mr Smith reflects poorly on Mr Deschauer, but it also raises an important theme about rushing to judgement.

The repercussions for Mr Smith are far more wide reaching than an eviction from a market – this is someone’s livelihood at stake.

Even though The Lone Fisherman will remain in Tooting Market, its name is now associated with something it shouldn’t be and it will take time to mend that.

Breaking law will lead to no-deal economic disaster

I am deeply concerned by the Government’s plan to break promises made in the Withdrawal Agreement; an international treaty signed less than a year ago.

The Northern Ireland Secretary admitted this would break international law.

The Internal Markets Bill would renege on commitments to avoid a hard border on the island of Ireland and would set negotiations with Europe back to square one.

The Conservatives pride themselves on being the party of law and order, of economic stability and of the Union.

Now the Government is openly breaking international law and paving the way to a no-deal economic disaster. How can the Conservative and Unionist party jeopardise the hard-won peace in Northern Ireland?

The Prime Minister does not speak for ordinary Conservatives. He was elected to deliver a comprehensive, ‘oven-ready’ deal with Europe, which would help communities and businesses.

Yet his actions threaten not only the reputation of the Conservative Party, but the global reputation of the UK as a trustworthy nation.

**Heidi Tasker, Gilkes Crescent, SE21
Barbara Callender, Chairwoman, European Movement in Wandsworth & Merton**

Refund motorists caught out on left hand turn ban

I have discovered that Wandsworth council has issued more than 2,000 penalty charge notices from a single newly banned left turn in little more than a month.

For many years the junction between Kimber Road and Twilley Street, in Earlsfield, has been used as an alternative to turning left at the traffic lights in Garratt Lane.

However, as part of the road changes this turning was banned. Although there is a sign it is clearly not prominent enough to alert people not to use the 150-metre long road.

All 2,190 penalty charges were issued at this junction from the introduction of the ban in late July up to September 1.

Even if all the motorists paid the reduced fee of £65, this is more than £140,000 taken from residents at a time when many people are struggling.

Many people will welcome some of the road changes but this is simply a rip-off.

These motorists do not all deliberately ignore instructions like this – the signage is simply inadequate.

Wandsworth claims the changes are not designed simply to raise money but this makes you wonder.”

The issue came to my attention when eight residents from my West Hill ward, which covers Southfields and Wimbledon Park Side, complained about being fined.

If it was affecting people from my area, well over a mile away, it was obviously going to be a widespread issue but I was staggered at the thousands of people who have been caught out.

I am calling on the council to refund these charges and look again at this junction.

It is not a rat run but a perfectly normal route to take when heading from Southfields to Wandsworth Town.”

**Councillor Malcolm Grimston
by email**

Psychiatry is an entirely unscientific profession

When it suits psychiatrists and their puppet masters, it appears as though action can be taken that contradicts the regular and often controversial operating basis of the psychiatric industry.

The action taken relates to thousands of people who have recently been discharged from mental health hospitals, including those who were detained under the Mental Health Act.

Thousands were discharged or released into the community as a result of recent unprecedented circumstances and the need to clear space for Covid-19 patients.

At the Citizens Commission on Human Rights (CCHR), we regularly hear from people who are experiencing the distress and very often the anger associated with being involuntarily detained. Whether a person is experiencing mental troubles or not, being forcibly detained is not something most people embrace with open arms, but psychiatrists erroneously interpret distress and anger as part of the problem. Add in the factor of being forcibly drugged and the entire distressing experience becomes highly contentious.

So, when decisions are made by psychiatrists and the detaining authorities to release or discharge thousands, it raises all sorts of questions.

One of those questions relates to people who were locked up. Considering the reasons for their involuntary incarceration and considering the rapidity of their release, why were they detained in the first place and forcibly

treated?

In the knowledge that psychiatry is an entirely unscientific profession, there’s a reliance on subjective opinions about distressed people that are coupled with manufactured pseudoscientific labels.

These are used to redefine his or her behaviour and to justify detention.

While it cannot be denied some people who experience mental difficulties do need a helping hand, the type of help they receive when locked up is not representative of the care and compassion that will give confidence to a vulnerable person.

When it comes to psychiatry specifically, it appears as though there’s a caveat of convenience. When it suits psychiatrists, they even have the ability to overrule a person and suggest torturous ‘treatment’ like electroshock. It’s no wonder their profession has such a poor reputation.

While ridiculed under regular conditions, this episode has made an even bigger mockery of psychiatry. The most disturbing aspect of it all is that it’s at the expense of liberty and humanity.

**Brian Daniels
Citizens Commission on Human Rights (UK)**

Virtual coffee morning will raise vital charity cash

This year’s Macmillan Coffee Morning will be on Friday, September 25, but we are encouraging people to get involved whenever and wherever they can by hosting a virtual or socially-distanced event. Nothing stops a Macmillan Coffee Morning!

Before Covid-19, many patients told Macmillan being diagnosed with cancer and going through treatment was the scariest thing that they could imagine.

These anxieties and concerns have not gone away during the pandemic – they’ve been made worse – meaning Macmillan needs support from people in London more than ever to provide the vital support people living with cancer rely on.

Macmillan is doing everything we can to offer medical, emotional and financial support to people living with cancer and our work is almost entirely funded by donations.

Every penny raised by Coffee Morning helps Macmillan to provide this support, which is needed now more than ever before.

Sign up at macmillan.org.uk/coffee, call Macmillan free on 0808 808 0000 or visit macmillan.org.uk.

Emma Tingley, Macmillan’s Strategic Partnerships Manager for London



in my view

**Marsha de Cordova,
MP for Battersea**

Lockdown has been a difficult time for children and young people, many of whom have not been in a classroom for near six months.

Therefore, a safe return to schools in Battersea is a must for children, teachers and support staff.

Not least to ensure that formal teaching can

commence. Research from Education Policy Institute has found disadvantaged pupils in Battersea are 7.9 months of learning behind their peers by the end of secondary school and 4.3 months behind by the end of primary school.

While it could be easy to contribute this to the current pandemic, according to research the main problem seems to be the root cause – inequality and persistent poverty – disproportionately affecting children from low income families and black, Asian and minority ethnic communities.

The Government has constantly ignored the warning signs and now we are seeing the gap increase in primary education for the first time since 2007.

With this Government’s poor track record, it is no surprise that almost 20,000 special educational needs and disability children who are unlikely to be resuming classes because of safety concerns have been ‘forgotten’.

Headteachers have expressed their dismay at the lack of clarity in the Government’s guidance on the reopening of special schools while parents are being forced to choose between

their child’s safety and their education and long-term development.

Children in mainstream schools with Education Health and Care plans will be further disadvantaged by the relaxed legal duties granted to local authorities by the Government’s coronavirus legislation in May.

These are the children that will have found lockdown exceptionally difficult, socially and emotionally.

The Government must clarify how they plan to rectify the impact this will have had and address the backlog when regular timescales are reintroduced on September 25.

What is equally worrying is the Government’s promise of a “massive catch up” operation back in June, which has been met with more dither, delay and incompetence.

There is still no clear guidance on how this will be targeted and delivered and the £350million national tutoring programme will not be fully up and running until spring 2021.

The Government needs to act now to ensure no more children are robbed of their future.