

# Working Class Movement Library faces harsh cuts

**The Working Class Movement Library on Salford's Crescent is facing a tough financial battle to survive. Thirty per cent cuts to its funding from Salford City Council, lost rental income and increased staff costs mean it needs to raise £80,000 a year to continue its cataloguing work and keep open its collection, displays and exhibitions to the public.**

The Arts and Crafts-style library is home to the vast social and political archive collected by activists Eddie and Ruth Frow, now deceased. Dedicated campaigners for social progress from the 1930s, the couple started gathering literature, photographs and artefacts relating to working people's movements in the 1950s, when few others were interested in the subject. By the time Salford City Council offered them accommodation in 1987 they had amassed tens of thousands of items in their Stretford home, including some of the first trade union records from the 1820s.

## Lost rent

The library is now run as an independent charity with only one permanent staff member and two temporary employees, including a librarian until recently funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund. Members of the



The collection dates back to 1820



The Salford library under threat

public can access its collection by appointment, and visit displays and exhibitions on the history of working class politics on Wednesday, Thursday and Friday afternoons.

"Thanks to a successful HLF project to make the library more accessible, our visitor numbers have increased more than five-fold in the last three years," said trustee Michael Herbert.

"Unfortunately though we're not immune to the government's slashing of public sector expenditure, and by 2014 our financial support from Salford Council will have been reduced to £22,000 a year."

In 2009 the library also lost rent payments from the council when Labour MP for Salford Hazel Blears' offices, which were housed in the building, moved to new premises.

"To maintain the library in its present form, with current staff levels, we need to find approximately £80,000 a year – and rising," Herbert said. "We're bridging this gap with the donations we receive from individuals and trade unions and, currently, by drawing on our reserves, but this is not a sustainable position."

Paula Boshell, Salford Council's lead member for neighbourhoods, culture and leisure, said: "To reach the

tough savings targets we've been set the council has been forced to make budget cuts across most services, including funding to the Working Class Movement Library. To reduce the impact we have been in discussions with the library for some time and at the beginning of the year agreed to reduce funding gradually, by £10,000 over the next three years."

## Strong support

In the meantime the Working Class Movement Library has launched a campaign to attract new financial supporters and raise awareness of its work, which includes book and pamphlet publishing, educational activities and a year-round events programme to promote knowledge of working people's movements. Its 50-strong army of volunteers, who catalogue material, greet visitors and research exhibitions, suggests hands-on support is strong, but Herbert is now also keen to attract marketing expertise to help the library's fundraising efforts.

"When Ruth and Eddie Frow began the library they were driven by the belief that working people should remember and value their own history, and they rescued countless items which would otherwise have been lost," he said. "In these turbulent times that history has never been more relevant, but its survival now depends on the generosity of members of the public."

*Anyone interested in volunteering at the Working Class Movement Library should contact its manager Lynette Cawthra via the website ([www.wcml.org.uk](http://www.wcml.org.uk)), which also accepts donations*

JO NIGHTINGALE



## NEWS IN BRIEF

### MANCHESTER CRIME

Crime in Greater Manchester is at its lowest in 11 years. Statistics show a seven per cent reduction in the last year with vehicle crime enjoying the biggest fall at 21 per cent and burglary, violent and sexual offences closely following. Despite the encouraging figures drug offences and theft are up and Mancunians are still more likely to become victims of crime than anywhere else outside London.

### FOOD PRICES

Plans announced for EU financial reform are insufficient to tackle soaring global food prices, according to campaigners. A World Development Movement spokesperson said the EU is condemning millions of people to hunger and poverty after loopholes in the proposal for an overhaul of the EU's financial architecture were revealed. WDM said the loopholes would make the new rules ineffective in preventing financial speculation from driving up food prices.

### CITY SAFE

A scheme to help members of the public leave the city centre safely after a night out has seen success in Liverpool. Since January, trained uniformed marshals have maintained orderly queues at taxi ranks and a survey found that 88 per cent of the users feel safer. Marshals have dealt with 187 queue jumpers, four arrests, seven reported taxi drivers and nine people without money to pay.

### BUS TIMETABLE

Ripon MP Julian Smith has called on ministers to meet with North Yorkshire County Council about the need for continued funding for bus services in the rural area. Speaking in Parliament, Smith said: "I was disappointed with the shortfall given to the council last year and hope to be able to bring ministers and the council together to make sure there is a fairer deal in the future."

GOT A STORY? CONTACT 0161 831 5563 OR EMAIL [NEWS@BIGISSUENORTH.CO.UK](mailto:NEWS@BIGISSUENORTH.CO.UK)