

Parents occupying Glasgow schools speak out

Our reporters
18 April 2009

Reporters for the *World Socialist Web Site* covered a demonstration April 17 outside Glasgow City Chambers against the city council's planned closure of 11 primary schools and nine nurseries.

The decision, supported by the Labour group by 31 votes to six, has been opposed by thousands of working class parents across the city. Two primary schools, Wyndford Primary and St Gregory's Primary, have been occupied for the last fortnight by parents and their supporters. One primary school and two nurseries have been relieved.

Around 300 parents, children and supporters attended Friday's demonstration.

The WSWs asked the demonstrators what they thought of the Labour group's decision, and how they felt opponents of the school closures should respond.

Nicola Rathmill is a parent occupying Wyndford and St Gregory's. She told us:

"We thought they would go ahead with the closures because they are a bunch of lowlifes who have forgotten who voted them in and who they are supposed to work for. We have been occupying the school for a fortnight now. We have been told that if we are not out of the school by Monday morning, the children will be taken off us at the gates of the school. No adult or parent will be allowed into the school. The children will be put on buses and taken up to Parkview and St Mary's schools without our permission. Is that not illegal?"

"The Labour group are all slimes. They say one thing to your face and stab you in the back. This is the last time they will get in this city. They are only worried about their own pockets.

"People should get into the schools. If you are in the schools then they can't touch them. Every school should be occupied. If they are occupied then what are they going to do? They can't supervise all of us.

"A lot of the lasses are going to lose their jobs because of this. They will have to leave the house an hour earlier to get their kids to school and back. People will move

away from the area. There is nothing in our area but these schools. There are no clubs. If they close the schools, there is nothing else."

Susan, who has children in Wyndford Primary, arrived recently in Glasgow from Switzerland. She attended the demonstration, and commented to the WSWs:

"I don't know the country. I just came some months ago from Switzerland. My husband studies here.

"What I heard was that the reasons given by the council [for the closures] were odd. For me, if you have the money now, you have to spend it now. Because afterwards, if you don't have well-educated kids, then this is a problem. This is a problem all over the world. If you don't have a stable base when they are young then you can forget it.

"All the money and effort to transfer them to other schools, in buses, this all cuts the time you can spend with them.

"Sometimes I think you should protest and strike, but in the end sometimes I think this doesn't bother the politicians, it just bothers my kids. I don't know what to do, I don't understand it. I don't have a vote here, but I won't ever vote for the Labour Party. You can't bother kids like this.

"I had problems with one of my boys in a larger class. He is an example. He needs attention and he started to be aggressive. When he doesn't have the right attention he will go the wrong way. I heard of two kids who went to another school, and they came back after a week. Compared to Wyndford it was horrible. They had no books. They had to provide them themselves."

Kate is from Ruchill primary:

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"We are from Ruchill primary, the autistic unit, and were told the other day that we could stay. But we are here to support the other parents, schools and nurseries. There should be a lot more people here, but lots of them have got to work.

"It's disgusting. It's all down to money. Do they have

plans for the land? We got a building report which was an absolute disgrace. It was a joke. They had the playground down to be repaired. This was going to be £63,000. But it was done last year, so it shouldn't be on the building report. Our alarm system was on the report for £7,500. It was done last year. Same with the chimney. Half of it should not have been on the building report.

“From what we can understand, two men came wearing suits and did this report one afternoon. How can two men do this in one afternoon? There was electrical work, work on the roofs reported. But nobody got up to see the roofs. That would take a team of surveyors. They told Wyndford their swimming pool needed repairs. Wyndford Primary doesn't have a swimming pool!

“They forgot we had an autism unit and forgot we had 24 autistic kids. It took seven years to build up and tens of thousands of pounds, and then they forgot it was there.

“All we are asking for is to leave one school in an area. That's all Maryhill is asking for with Wyndford. Why should we need to take kids on buses? It's not fair for primary school kids, it's bad enough for secondary kids.

“I would do away with this religious divide [between Catholic and Protestant]. There shouldn't be a religious divide. They go to nurseries together, they go to university together. They go to the same clubs outside school, why separate them at primary school?

“We have to stand up for ourselves. They can't keep dictating to us. We are being ignored. We need to get Labour out and stand up and be counted. We had over 700 response sheets from Ruchill primary and the council said ‘Petitions—none.’ So where did they go?”



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