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Camberwell Squatted Centre supports the Ritzy Strikersâ. 1

Camberwell Squatted Centre supports the Ritzy Strikers!

ByCamberwell Squatted Social Centre

Camberwell Squatted Centre supports the Ritzy Strikers....

We're holding a Benefit Night, featuring the No Frills Band, Brixton's finest acoustic maestros...

Plus bar, food, and more

On: Friday 15th June, 7.30pm

Camberwell Squatted Centre, 190 Warham Street, London, SE5

Despite its trendy reputation as a favourite haunt for Brixton's liberals, the Ritzy Cinema is being far from kind to its staff. If you go to the Ritzy during the Human Rights Film Festival you will get see many worthy productions that rail against the exploitation of workers across the globe. Meanwhile the cinema is paying its staff the minimum wage of £5.35 an hour in the most expensive city to live in the country... Picture House (City Screen) cinemas, notorious low-payers, took over the Ritzy in 2003 and refused to recognize the BECTU Trade Union which the staff were members of. Instead the management set up an alternative to the union called 'The Forum'. This is a well known tactic of bosses who prefer to deal with a toothless organization representing workers rather than a union. After a court case (which the management lost), the union was finally recognized in 2003 and real negotiations began in 2004. All the staff are part time except for the chief projectionist and the assistant and general managers. The staff in the café do not leave work at weekends until after 1 am with most ushers finishing after 12. Despite these unsociable hours the management are still refusing to budge from their slave wage offer.

In a final attempt to resolve the issue, Ritzy staff proposed a 3-5 year pay settlement to bring them closer to the living wage. The living wage is currently set at £7.28 per hour, the amount needed to comfortably live in London. City Screen stated they would never pay the London poverty wage of £6.25 per hour (as set by The Greater London Authority). The poverty line is the minimum amount needed in order to survive living in London and takes into account increased living costs such as utilities and transport.

The latest deal on the table is an insulting rise from £5.35 to £5.42! Alternatively the staff have been offered £5.50 without their sales bonus. Unsurprisingly the staff have voted unanimously to hold strike action and today was the first day. The action was timed to coincide with first night of 'Pirates of the Caribbean' so some of the protesters dressed accordingly. There was also a drumming band to liven things up: the picket line was loud and well attended. The management have brought in scab

labour from their head office to fill the gaps. How they will cope remains to be seen. They have also started trying to intimidate the staff over the strike.

Please show your support by emailing ritzzy@picturehouses.co.uk to say that you will be boycotting this cinema until they start paying their staff properly.

Send emails of support to the strikers: ritzystaff@yahoo.co.uk

And finally...

Guess which letterbox-mouthed barrister represented the management in their bid to defy the human rights act by not recognizing the union?

Please send your answers on a postcard to 'Cherie Booth Competition', 10 Downing Street, London, W1