

## Peggy Seeger Council Address

Once upon a time ... eight Oxford city children went to the swimming pool at the Radley School. November 9, 2012. The occasion was a video shoot. The children were popeyed with wonder. They'd never been in a pool like this. You should have seen them on the two diving boards! There is a diving board at their own pool – Temple Cowley – but it was closed 6 years ago due. Lack of maintenance.

Also, in their pool, many of the lockers don't work, tiles are falling off, paintwork is peeling. Lack of maintenance that would seem to be deliberate for their council has given their pool a very very low budget compared to similar Oxford facilities. But soon these children will have no swimming pool at all because their council has voted to close it, along with the gym, the exercise rooms and the adjacent library. It's a fairy tale with no happily-ever-after.

My name is Peggy Seeger. I'm a singer and songwriter, North American by birth. I settled in the UK in 1956. I've become part of this country, working both for and against various issues. I moved to Oxford in 2010. This year I've identified specifically with the Temple Cowley Pools Campaign. It's my pool too and we've made a song for it. Google it – those children sang in the video along with a dozen other Oxfordians of all ages.

I'm not going to spend my time here talking about the campaign issues. You know all about that. It's because of this Council's attitude towards, and its duplicitous relationship with, such issues that I've decided to come here today. I've joined the Labour Party three times even though my political stance is far left of the Party. I've left the Labour Party twice, each time betrayed by its double-dealing, its conservative policies and the behaviour of its leaders. To me the word labour has positive connotations, among them honest work, democratic practices, community action, listening to others. To all others. I've heard enough about this essentially Labour council, your unilateral decision-making, your overweening ambitions, your statistic-falsifying, your disrespect and actual rudeness to constituents in this council chamber. It's disgraceful.

As I said, I've joined the Labour Party three times and left twice. I've just left for the third time and I'm not ever joining again. This council, this issue, has convinced me that the Labour Party is not worth MY trouble. Does that matter to you? Probably not. If I were Adele, an ex-Spice Girl, Jessica Ennis, then it might. I'm well-known in my field but I'm not a household name so no, I reckon I don't matter.

But then, it seems that there is a lot that doesn't matter to you. It is apparently of no concern to you that an enormous number of Oxford citizens not only don't want a number of your election-driven projects but that they haven't even been consulted before BANG! big old trees come down, SMASH! historic buildings and community facilities are demolished for student residences and questionable commercial ventures. SUPRISE! lovely old Oxford, the unique essence of Port Meadow, is gone, essentially (quote) *developed* (unquote) out of existence.

It also probably doesn't matter to you that the public has the perception that some of your leading members seem to have a conflict of interest in the instigation of many of these new projects - but we won't go into that. Right now.

I have come to the conclusion that this Labour-heavy Council is a law unto itself, rather like a priesthood. One must have faith to support it. I have never supported anything by faith alone. We put you where you are and we are angry – very angry.

A chain is as strong as its weakest link and this council is a very weak link in the Labour Party. I do still care what the Party does but this time I'll watch it from a safe distance and work in the Green Party, where I feel visible and useful. It's a time for Green Grass Growing anyway, for roots strengthening and joining from underneath – witness the Occupation movement. You're going to be left behind, swept away – and you know it, or you wouldn't be trying so hard to stay on top – at any cost.