The general election is here, and once again the parties are falling over themselves to promise us the earth. They talk blandly about “fairness”, “opportunity”, “security” and “a better future”, doing their best to avoid saying anything meaningful.

But a whopping 83% of the UK general public do not trust politicians, according to a 2009 poll. Just 13% think that they tell the truth. MPs came bottom of the list of least trusted occupations – even lower than journalists and lawyers! This is hardly surprising. If anything, it’s hard to work out what the 13% who do still trust politicians are thinking – have they ever paid attention to an election campaign?

Everyone knows that parties make promises in their manifestos that they have no intention of keeping. For example, when first elected 13 years ago, Labour promised to end child poverty by 2010. Today 4m children in Britain are living in poverty – more than in any other European country. It’s not hard to find other examples of politicians lying through their teeth, from local councillors trying to inflate their own importance, to the massive pack of lies Tony Blair came out with to justify the invasion of Iraq. Events of 2009 further underlined how untrustworthy our rulers are, as many of them were revealed to be fiddling their expenses – despite earning £64,766 a year – and using various other sleazy tricks, such as employing members of their own families. Meanwhile many of the rest of us have to scrape by on a minimum wage of £5.80 an hour.

Despite superficial differences in their rhetoric, in reality life under any of the parties will feature the same things – cuts to public services, attacks on pensions, over-crowded classrooms, job losses, poor housing, under-equipped hospitals, poor public transport, and more war. Before the economic crisis, politicians were coming out with wild claims about what we can actually do to solve our problems ourselves. We believe that real change will come from the people around us – our friends, neighbours and workmates – about what we can actually do to solve our problems.

Not voting or spoiling your ballot paper is a symbol of wanting something better. The millions and millions of us who won’t vote will be doing so because we don’t believe the lies the politicians come out with, because we recognise that they’re a part of our problems, not the answer to them, and because we want a better world.

Instead of voting for some politician’s empty promises to solve our problems, we’ll be talking to the people around us – our friends, families and workmates – about what we can actually do to solve our problems ourselves. We believe that real change comes through direct action, solidarity and campaigning. Won’t you join us?

In This Issue: Save our Sam, the Liberal Dem, continuing look at Sheffield’s radical history and more ...
Save Our Sam

Samuel Musarika and supporters march in the city centre.

A demonstration was held on Wednesday 17th March outside the Town Hall in support of in support of Samuel’s Musarika’s right to stay in Sheffield. The protest started at the Town Hall and then marched on to Vulcan House, the Home Office in Sheffield. Sam is originally from Zimbabwe and has been in the UK for six years but faces imminent deportation. Sam has been unable to live with a normal life for the last 6 years as he waits for the Home Office to process his application. Since Sam faces severe danger if deported back to Zimbabwe, he has a strong case for asylum. Sam emigrated from Zimbabwe because he was forced to join the National Youth Service but refused. Sam had also been beaten in Zimbabwe because his sisters were involved in the Movement for Democratic Change, the opposition party to Mugabe. However the Home Office still do not grant him asylum as his life has been deemed to not be at risk. When Sam first came to the UK he was moved to Leeds into an induction centre which the maximum stay for is 14 days, however he ended up staying 3 and a half months as the Home Office misplaced his file. Since being in Sheffield he has been very active within a number of charity organisations, such as the Conversation Club and ASSIST, and even designed websites for them. Sam wants to progress with his life and get a university education but he is unable to since asylum seekers are not allowed to work or receive loans for higher education. For all these reasons it is crucial for the Home Office to process and approve his application for asylum. Sam’s continued presence, like that of many other asylum seekers, is a positive thing for the Sheffield community.

Anti-racist hero: Mark Collett

Mark Collett may seem a strange choice to honour as an anti-racist hero, since he’s a fascist thug with a long history of saying things like “Hitler will live forever,” and that AIDS is a “friendly disease because blacks, drug users and gays have it.” But he’s done wonders for the cause of anti-racism and anti-fascism in Sheffield recently: he was due to stand as the British National Party’s candidate for Brightside until he was arrested at the start of April for threatening to kill the party’s leader, Nick Griffin. Unsurprisingly, he’s now been suspended from the party and they’re no longer backing him as a candidate. If the BNP gain any kind of power, they’ll use it to divide us by stirring up hatred against immigrants and ethnic minorities, so by making his party look like a complete joke, Collett’s performed a vital service for diversity and tolerance in our city. Here at the Fargate Speaker, we say: well done Mark, and keep up the good work!

FARGATE CALLING!
SHEFFIELD’S RADICAL HISTORY

“When they come to attack our people, we will stand our ground and fight!” (pt. 3)

Closer to the present day, the 1980s saw a different kind of struggle in Sheffield, as young Asians fought back against racist attacks, and faced severe police harassment while doing so. In June 1982, Ahmed Khan was arrested and charged with serious wounding for fighting back against racists, an event that led to the formation of the Sheffield Asian Youth Movement. The Sheffield AYM organised against police harassment and deportations, and to support people being prosecuted for self-defence. It was never simply a communalist group, with Asians, Afro-Caribbeans and white skinheads marching with the AYM banner on demonstrations, and it came into conflict with the existing leadership of the Asian community as much as with the white establishment, with one community leader complaining that “our children were growing up hating our culture. They were angry and withdrawn and we could not reach them.” Leaders of mainstream groups like the Asian Welfare Association refused to speak at the AYM’s events, leading to angry youths producing leaflets with slogans like “Fight for your rights, do away with tribal chauvinism.” The Sheffield AYM folded in 1987, but the Sheffield Defence Campaign continued to do similar work, organising a big demonstration against racism and fascism from Burghrea to Sharrow in 1989. In 1994, the police resorted to race riots in Darnall by arresting a disproportionate number of Asian youths, leading to the formation of a Darnall Defence Campaign, who organised a well-attended packet of Aryan politics, and the names and faces may change, but the struggles - from wages and food prices to racism and police brutality - go on.

Lib Dems Save the World - a regular look at the shenanigans of Sheffield’s “favourite” political party

It’s been a busy few weeks for our dashing hero Nick Clegg and his sidekick Paul Scrivens. After heroically claiming credit for defeating hero Nick Clegg and his sidekick Paul Scrivens, the dynamic duo have claimed leadership of a Tesco planning proposal on Commonside. After heroically claiming credit for defeating hero Nick Clegg and his sidekick Paul Scrivens, its been a busy few weeks for our dashing - a regular look at the shenanigans of Sheffield’s “favourite” political party-

We know where we’ll be keeping our general election manifestos.

While his sidekick sorted out our looming bin crisis Clegg went after the moral angle. He reckons the best way to sort things out here is to let us sack our corrupt MPs if they annoy us, we at the Fargate speaker favour a slightly different solution: Let’s fire them out of a cannon into the sun.

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