

THE FARGATE SPEAKER

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It's time to get angry.

The dust has settled after the election (one that sometimes seemed like it'd never end) and no-one's surprised to see that cuts in public services, jobs and welfare are on the agenda. Central government has already told councils they have to find £1.2bn in savings over the next ten months to help bring down the £156bn deficit. This means cuts in many basic services people have come to depend upon as well as cuts in pay and worse conditions for council workers.

The council, for their part, have been denouncing the cuts left, right and centre. Despite the fact that all of them were elected on the basis of Party manifestos that promised substantial "belt-tightening" and promoted the idea that we need to all make sacrifices to weather the economic storm. The protests of the council are, of course, nothing but hot air to try and give the illusion of meaningful opposition to the worst wave of austerity measures the city has seen since Thatcher's reign in the 80s. After all, why would we need to act in our own interests when we've got such lovely councillors making a fuss on our behalf?

The various factions of the political class are

always happy to attack each other to try and give the impression that they represent our best interests, especially in times of social and economic trouble. But none of the existing parties offer any real alternative for working people in Sheffield. If we want to stop the cuts, it's up to us. We need to stand together and act directly to defend our jobs, conditions and public services.

Voting in elections is a completely ineffective way to make your voice heard, as many people

who voted for the Liberal Democrats in the hope of progressive change, only to find their chosen candidates backing a Tory government, are now discovering. Fortunately, politics doesn't stop at the ballot box. Fighting back collectively in our everyday lives - through strikes, occupations, and many other forms of protest - we can exercise a power that's far more meaningful than just choosing which politician will screw us over next.



Sheffield's first anarchist bookfair a success!



May 2010 saw an anarchist bookfair in Sheffield, the first in living memory for most of those attending, and a real success. It seems that interest in anarchism is having new growth, with social centres, bookfairs and co-operatives springing up around UK and the world. The basic principles like self-organising, equality, non-hierarchy, mutual aid and co-operation make a lot of sense to new generations who don't believe negative media demonization and want to find out for themselves how it works.

someone could have seen that coming - but apart from that the response was very favourable. In fact, in a fine demonstration of mutual aid, many people rushed back home to return with deskclamps to shine a bit of light on the place.

Stalls included, naturally, lots of books, magazines, pamphlets, badges and posters. A series of talks was held in an adjacent room. These ranged from "An activist guide to the web" to "Anarchism 101, every-

The book-fair was a fine example, being organised in a short time, on a tiny budget, with a little help from other bookfairs around the country. It attracted around 200 people, and seemed busy all day. The venue, the Corporation nightclub, was dimly lit - it's a nightclub, perhaps

thing you wanted to know about anarchism". This was really well attended, with around 40 people involved. Corporate Watch came from London to run a workshop on "Tracking Corporate Complicity in the Occupation of Palestine" and there was also a Yorkshire Anarchist Group meeting. Sheffield Indymedia recorded the talks, which can be heard through the website - sheffield.indymedia.org.uk. Thanks also to Sheffield Animal Friends for serving excellent vegan food, and for the helpful staff of the Corporation.

Perhaps the most exciting part of any event is the personal connection and meetings, and the results which flow from this. Personally I was very pleased to meet people who led me to think through ideas about archiving Sheffield political materials I have collected over the last 25 years, and about selling books to spread ideas. Also the talk about opening a libertarian 'social centre' in Sheffield was inspiring - if I hadn't been there I wouldn't have known what is now being discussed. It suddenly felt that a decade of frost was being thawed.

Anarchism is a force for organising social change which empowers people, more than signing petitions and agreeing to programmes, and that's fun. It's worth looking into, and I'll certainly be at the next one. Sheffield Anarchist Bookfair 2011? Watch this space ...

Protests against state murders "Purple power" ?



Protesters assemble in front of the town hall (photo courtesy of Sheffield Indymedia)

As you are probably well aware by now, the state of Israel recently caused a fresh international outcry. In the early morning of 31st May Israeli commandos stormed aid ships which were on their way to the Israeli-besieged state of Gaza to provide essential humanitarian relief to the desperate civilian population who are trapped there. We now know that nine activists were shot dead by the Israeli commandos, including possibly some as they slept.

Protests have been erupting across the world in response to this latest atrocity, including in Sheffield. On the day of the massacre, at 12pm, the Pales-

tine Solidarity Campaign (PSC) in Sheffield called a demonstration outside the town hall. Over 50 people attended at short notice, with members of PSC making speeches through a mega-phone towards the gathered demonstrators. A moment of silence was also held.

On Wednesday 2nd June at 5pm there was a follow-up demonstration which was mostly like the first, but with more people, (perhaps 100 or more), and with more speeches. A couple of moments of silence were also held at this event, as well as some slogan chanting.

On Sunday May 23rd a mainly liberal group held a demonstration in Sheffield as part of the nationwide purple campaign for a "fairer voting system." Members of the Anarchist Federation attended this protest to put forward the argument that Parliament cannot be meaningfully reformed, and needs to be replaced completely. The turnout for the demonstration was fairly weak. There weren't the same numbers as these protests have attracted in other cities, and they didn't attract the same student support that might be expected. In the end the demonstration was just members of the local purple group handing out their literature. Members of the AF had a few discussions with those supporting the purple campaign, explaining the tradition of anti-parliamentarism in the UK and especially in Sheffield.

While the purple movement has managed to tap into some of the anger that a lot of people rightly felt after the general election, the answers they put forward are deeply flawed. If we wish to see real change then we must act for ourselves and seek change through direct action, and build a system of direct democracy where everyone has a say in decisions that affect them, instead of leaving power concentrated in the hands of politicians or bosses.

Organising in Care

Support workers and other frontline staff in care work are badly paid and often work under horrendous conditions. This is obviously bad for care workers but the stress workers face and the high turnover these conditions cause is bad for service users too because they lose continuity of care and have staff that through no fault of their own have limited experience and training. These conditions need to be challenged.

It is difficult to organise and fight when we work in isolated locations and have no contact with the majority of our colleagues in the same company and even in the same teams. This leads many to think that nothing can be done and that we must suffer in silence.

However, despite these difficulties, support workers and service users have fought cuts in pay and conditions elsewhere. In Edinburgh the 'Support Workers Action Network' (SWAN) has successfully fought against cuts to their pay and conditions. (Details: www.swanedinburgh.org.uk)

We know something can be done. All care workers in Sheffield need to organise against attacks on service user's care and staff pay and conditions. An example has been set by Edinburgh SWAN, can we follow it?

If you are interested in talking to other care workers about issues you be facing in your workplace or maybe just looking to share experiences with other workers in the city. email: sheffield@af-north.org

Review: Four Lions

'Four Lions' (Chris Morris, 2010) has been released for some time now. Released is an apt verb, as from pre-production onwards it sounded as if it could do as much damage to the bourgeois psyche as the aforementioned beasts of the title. It was set to become the most controversial film of the year, quite understandably given its sensitive portrayal of radical Islamic terrorists, who also happened to be British. You can picture the Daily Mail headlines now, probably featuring the words 'disgusting' and 'outrage' but then that could describe any Daily Mail headline that is not about white people. However, I found 'Sex and the City 2' more insulting to Western and Islamic cultures than 'Four Lions'. The research Chris Morris underwent was extensive and the film is the result of those three years worth of interviews across the Islamic community. The film is water-tight. At no point is there an impression that these characters are representatives of the wider Islamic community. The subplot featuring Riz Ahmed's brother makes it perfectly clear that the majority of Muslims do not approve of the fundamentalists claiming to be Muslims, whilst everyone else seems to think they are terrorists themselves.

I am not sure what I expected of 'Four Lions' but I was not disappointed. It is hilarious. Some of the laughs are drawn from the aspiring terrorists' ineptitude, which had a distinctly Ealing comedies flavour. Carry On Jihad if you will. This does not detract from the subject matter, which is at times incredibly scary. I have never found a Weetabix so threatening in my life. Its emphasis on the virtue of letting people think for themselves is admirable in a culture saturated with party politics and religion trying to compartmentalise



the opinions of millions. So don't take my word for it. See it and make your own mind up.

Five anarchist stars go to the film in terms of supporting the local culture. The film has nearly made back its budget of £2.5 million, which is miniscule compared to most of the fodder on general release. Much of the action takes place in Meadowhall, Meersbrook, Attercliffe and on various Supertrams. The only part where Chris Morris' research fails is when there are TV screens broadcasting news on the blue route service to Halfway – but nobody is perfect. Please support local film production by seeing this brilliant film. Creative arts are becoming dangerously close to being completely centralised in London. With Sheffield Independent Film declaring bankruptcy, there is no better time to get some grassroots growing.

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