

# THE FARGATE SPEAKER

THE REAL ISSUES, THE WHOLE STORY



SUMMER 2007

Issue 2

## SOCIAL HOUSING CRISIS



Empty and decaying - housing on Sheffield estate

of thousands of former tenants moved due to the demolition (or sale) of their properties. The city lost 30,000 homes under "Right to Buy" and a further 8,000 due to demolition. The council is unable to provide homes for its current tenants let alone those entering the system.

Sheffield, like many industrial city's, also has large areas of land and industrial space that are now falling into disrepair - most of which could be adapted to provide affordable housing. However, the vast majority have been sold for future "development" to private firms making them way beyond the reach of local people. This results in vast areas of the city wasting away while owners wait for their investment to become "profitable". Attempts to force constructive use of abandoned space have also been strongly opposed by local authorities.

The truth is that the state is the wrong person for this job. It has been tenants groups, not councillors or political parties, that have been leading the charge against any further offload of social housing. The government admits itself that its plans to expand council housing over the next few years fall far short of the projected increase in the demand for new households. As the Woodside case demonstrates, affordability will never be a priority when the bottom line for the state is profit, not human need.

Free working class organisations must be the bedrock of any future system for the management of social housing and the basis of community cohesion. These groups have proven highly successful in the past at accessing the needs of the community and forming constructive solutions to local issues. There are many examples of this in practice; Haringey Solidarity Group, founded in 1990 represents a network of local resident's associations seeking to promote working class solidarity, tackle anti-social behaviour and support worker unionisation. When developers tried to close a café in Broadway Market in East London, local people joined together to occupy the building. When the developers evicted and smashed the place up, locals re-occupied and repaired the damage. In Cologne, in opposition to the destruction of the "Barmer Block" estate residents during the Spring of last year occupied the building and ran it along democratic lines. All of these represent prime examples of the strength organisation can bring to our communities and the true power we have to bring a halt to this crisis.

### JARGON BUSTER!!!

**"Priority Need"** - a sensible idea to give housing to those in difficult circumstances, e.g. women escaping violence, people with poor health problems.

**"Right to Buy"** - A Thatcherite policy designed to fleece money. £39 billion has been raised in selling houses, 75% of this has been taken by the government.

**"Regeneration"** - demolishing council homes and handing over the sites to developers, pricing us out of our homes.

## LOCAL HISTORY UNDER THREAT



The Bulgarian cultural attaché and George's widow plant a tree on Caborn's Corner. May 1983

Plans for a massive TESCO superstore (the sales floor is set to be 80,000 square feet) on Spital Hill, as well as drawing opposition from local residents, falls over an important part of Sheffield history. Caborn's Corner, a small triangle of land located at the junction of Spital Hill and Carlisle Street, comes within the area marked by TESCO for "redevelopment". Caborn's Corner represents an important part of Sheffield history. Dedicated to famous trade unionist and founder of Sheffield Campaign Against Racism George Caborn, Caborn's Corner has long been a traditional assembly point for local political marches and rallies. George worked hard in the area both as a militant trade unionist and community activist and is still thought of fondly amongst local people. When he died in 1982, the city council decided to turn the site into a garden to honor his dedication to equality and justice. In 1983 the Bulgarian Cultural Attaché visited the site as a show of respect for his political service and a plaque still remains on the site to commemorate this moment. The area has fallen into neglect over recent years and does demand restoration. TESCO, however, has so far made no concrete commitment for the preservation of the site's historical integrity. In a letter to the *Burngreave Messenger* (15<sup>th</sup> March 2007) Max Curtis, a spokesman for TESCO, has stated that only on the provision of enough "public interest" could keeping the plaque dedicated to the history of the site be "included in our list of considerations". That TESCO, a company with such an appalling record of union-busting and poor worker's rights, should even be entrusted with the future of this site only adds insult to injury (and George's legacy).

To find out more information on TESCO's impact on both a local and international level: <http://www.tescopoly.org>

If you want to see the plans for the new TESCO, you can pick up a leaflet about it in Burngreave Library or New Roots café.

COMMUNITY ACTION, COMMUNITY RESISTANCE

## IT'S ALL IN THE NAME

Believe it or not, **The Fargate Speaker** is not the first news sheet to be produced by local anarchists. *The Sheffield Anarchist*, first published in June 1891, was the product of an anarchist split from the Sheffield Socialist Society (formed in 1886). The publication didn't last long attracting prosecutions from its very first issue. Only eight issues were produced in the end, the last of which was published in October of the same year. Set-backs aside, the Fargate monolith – which also no longer exists – also used to be the regular speaking pitch for Sheffield anarchists. The group even unfurled its “No Gods, No Masters” banner for the first time at the monolith on 1<sup>st</sup> May 1891. Every Sunday, members of the group would go to the monolith to agitate local people over the evils of government and the tyranny of the church (much to the displeasure of the rowdy mob of church goers in attendance). We at the Fargate Speaker are indebted to these pioneers and like them hope very much to stay true to this city's long tradition of radical, working class politics.

“Wanted: Christians pious and pugnacious to interrupt Anarchist meetings on the Sabbath, after nap in Church. No scruples allowed. End sanctifies means. ‘Arise, Oh Lord and let Thine enemies be scattered.’”

Sour Grapes? – a satirical ad placed in *The Sheffield Anarchist*

## PERVERT COPPERS

A policeman whose job involved the monitoring of sex offenders was jailed this month for grooming a 13-year-old girl by bombarding her with x-rated texts and internet messages.

PC Burton, who was working at Ecclesfield Police Station at the time of the offence in May 2006, was sentenced to two years in prison after pleading guilty to the charge.

This is not the first time Sheffield bobby's have been caught out over acts of “sexual misconduct”. In 2003, PC Richard Sweet was spared jail time after prosecution for the distribution of internet child porn. Sweet used a fake chat room identity to build up a host of images of youngsters engaged in sexual acts.

The Fargate Speaker is not produced, written, funded or supported by any politician, business, political party, religion or state-funded organisation ... WE DO NOT WANT YOUR MONEY! WE DO NOT WANT YOU TO SIGN UP TO A POLITICAL PARTY! ... The Fargate Speaker is a community based anti-capitalist, anti-fascist, libertarian publication designed to engage with the real issues that concern local people ... We welcome letters and contributions from readers -

Please contact - [fargatespeaker@googlemail.com](mailto:fargatespeaker@googlemail.com)

## CAN YOU TRUST THE TRUST? HOTEL CASH SCANDAL



Aston Hall Hotel: Conference venue where rooms can cost £149 a night

NHS bosses are under fire after hiring out a luxury hotel for a senior staff conference while local hospitals are starved for funding. Sheffield Primary Care Trust, allowed 11 senior staff to stay over during a two-day event at Aston Hall Hotel, even though it is within driving distance of their homes. The Trust justified the expense by claiming management had to stay overnight because of a “very late” finish on Wednesday and 8:30am start the next morning. This is while health workers have been desperately campaigning for improved pay, conditions and better quality of patient care. Health care in Sheffield has been particularly pushed with the Trust attempting to axe £3m of the city's budget over the course of this year. Every year Primary Care Trusts in Britain receive around 75% of total NHS funding in order to ensure “health services are working effectively and efficiently”.

## DON'T VOTE (IT ONLY ENCOURAGES THEM)

**Lies, corruption, failures ...** It seems that Sheffield city council has provided us with yet another reason for refusing to waste our time by voting on election day - it probably wont be counted anyway!!

Telephone and internet voting systems tested by Sheffield city council have been dubbed a failure by The Open Rights Group (an organisation which aims to protect privacy and identity). The report stated that it had “no confidence” in the system and that votes were open to “error and fraud”. Sheffield council has defended the way the June elections took place.

## G8 COVERAGE THE REAL BLACK BLOCK?

*The Daily Mail* reported no less than fifteen factual errors in its 6th June article on anti-G8 protests in Germany. These ranged from misinformation over the composition and motives of the marches to more serious errors on the size of the security operation, the scale of violence and number of police casualties. For example, the article reports that 427 police officers had been injured in clashes with rioters when the German authorities have stated that only two had been slightly hurt. It also claimed protestors had “squirted acid” into the faces of police. This was totally false and actually an injury sustained by two officers from accidentally spraying each other with their own pepper spray!

The liberal press proved no better. Their reports were more concerned with attention-grabbing “black blocks” and “clown armies” than the real reasons why people blockaded the summit. They choose to show protestors as either ridiculously violent or just plain ridiculous. In our local press there has been some coverage of the widespread anger people feel at the G8's failure to deliver on its' agreements, particularly environmental problems and commitments to tackle global poverty (e.g. The Sheffield Star's 14th June article “G8 Summit is not fulfilling promises”). Yet, there is no mention of the mass movement that has (and continues) to oppose the summit for these very failures.

A key reason why the mainstream media has begun to see the G8 as responsible for these social problems is thanks to the determined efforts of environmentalists, anarchists, and campaigners of all kinds who oppose the G8. By continuing to protest and disrupt summits their message has started to get onto the agenda. So why does the media continue to deny the same level and quality of coverage for these people?



Germany and the G8 summit may seem a long way away from Sheffield. Yet in many ways this is in itself part of the problem. The G8 summits represent a way for national leaders, like Bush and Blair, to manufacture an international political consensus without having to answer to their domestic critics inside and outside of parliament. The G8 doesn't meet to save the world, it gets together to streamline human and ecological destruction in the name of ‘business as usual’. As citizens, we are shut out from this process; our voices are silenced behind mile-upon-mile of steel-ringed fence and hundreds of security personnel. Yet even the simple message - that decisions which affect our lives should not be made behind closed doors - seems lost amongst the widespread hysteria of the mainstream press.