Direct action gets the goods after letting agents try to rip off tenants!

Staines Anarchists recently helped 3 young women recover their money from a crooked letting agency after a botched deal.

The women had taken up a rented property through Victorstone Property Consultants, who are based in Shoreditch, paying £3,451 as rent and deposit. After they had only just moved into the house, Victorstone fell out with the landlords over the fees they would take. The landlords decided they wanted to get out of the letting, and changed the locks, leaving the women without a roof or their possessions.

The women managed to get some money back from the landlady, but the landlady had never been transferred the full amount, because Victorstone had subtracted their fee. Victorstone initially tried to mislead the women, implying that all the money had been transferred to the landlady. In fact they intended to keep £1,200 of the women’s money for the completely failed deal.

Vctorstone were sent an ultimatum by supporters of the women, led by Staines Anarchists. When the letting agent’s deadline expired scores of people called in to Victorstone to complain. Although Victorstone tried to knock complaints back with a mixture of bogus ‘legal jargon’ and plain rudeness, they soon found the sheer number of calls overwhelming and within two hours they had contacted the tenants to offer to repay the money.

As tenants ourselves, or other working class people seeking acceptable housing, we see the struggle against exploitative letting agents as being a collective one. We are ready for more struggles like this one. We encourage people who are treated like this to treat the experience as political and we want to hear from anyone who wants to talk about how to take a stand.
CONFERENCE SEASON SIGNALS MORE OF THE SAME FROM POLITICIANS

For the political parties, conference season has just ended. This is the time of year where party leaders turn to their members to reassure them their party membership subscriptions are not in vain because the celebrated leaders have all the answers.

Ed Miliband at the Labour party conference tried to convince us that he’s just like us, because, like us, he was born in an NHS hospital and educated in a state school. This tenuous link formed the basis for Mr Miliband’s assertion that we need to come together as ‘One Nation’. Charming as the sentiment may be, it’s a little hard to be wooed by Mr Miliband’s ‘One Nation’ pipedream at a time when ordinary people are scrimping and scraping their money to buy basics, and rich bosses are reaping in bonuses and tax-cuts.

Likewise, David Cameron at the Conservative party conference tried to reassure us that if we do the whole ‘Keep Calm and Carry On’ thing while he tears apart the NHS, school systems and numerous other vital public services, we can expect that “Britain will rise again!”. Mr Cameron failed to mention the record levels of youth unemployment, and that we can’t expect to ‘grow’ our way out of recession at all because we don’t make anything in the UK thanks to his party’s dedication to selling off industry in the 1980s.

Is it worth mentioning the Liberal Democrats? No, not really.

The desperate fact remains that while these parties enjoy swanning around at their conferences with free champagne and canapés, ordinary people are left without direction and without hope. If we really want change for the better we must stop pinning our hopes on politicians of all stripes, because they only exist to better their own careers. Rather, we need to start finding ways to come together in our communities be they at work or in our localities, so we can work together in order to better our conditions and lives.

Train fare rises add to money worries

This summer, the government announced another exorbitant train fare hike for the beginning of 2013, even though fares had already been increased for 2012.

Overall, train fares are set to rise faster than the average wage. Communities such as ours, which rely on the rail network, will be affected especially badly.

Commuters who use public transport already pay an average of 15% of their wages on fares to and from work. Part-time workers, those on lower incomes and families whose children take the trains to school lose an even greater proportion of their wages to travel costs. At a time when most wages are frozen and living costs are skyrocketing, the government’s decision to allow such massive fare rises just adds to the pressure on working class people trying to make ends meet.

Perversely, even as the government tells working people to ‘get on the bus’ to find work, they allow fare increases that makes work less and less affordable. The result is likely to mean people forced to give up their jobs, students unable to attend college and children unable to attend the schools best suited to them, while our train network becomes as local government minister Philip Hammond once suggested, “a rich man’s toy”.

Produced by:

STAINES ANARCHISTS

“Anarchists?! Aren’t you those people who love chaos and disorder?”

The short answer is, no. Contrary to popular belief we believe in a highly organised society in which workplaces and communities are self-managed by the people.

At the moment a small group of politicians and business owners make the crucial decisions on issues that affect our lives. The choices made are in the interests of profit and the social elite, not ordinary people. Instead we would like to see people making the choices that affect their community and workplaces, and taking control of their own lives.

Anarchism is a way of thinking about how society should be organised and challenging a system where ordinary people are being screwed over.

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