

THE STAINES HOWLER

FREE/DONATION

AUTUMN 2012

STAINES IS NOT FOR SALE

S.t.a.i.n.e.s. - that's it

"Shouldn't this be the 'Staines-upon-Thames Howler' now?"

Well... no. Probably not too surprisingly we're not very keen on the attempt to repaint Staines as somewhere upmarket, and we're not alone, if the masking tape covering 'upon Thames' on one road sign we've spotted is anything to go by.

Rebranding like this is done for a reason: to make the town more sellable. This has been picked up on quite quickly in the circles it was aimed at. If you type the words 'staines-upon-thames' and 'guardian' into google, you'll find an article from their 'Let's move to...' section which reviews the town for the perspective of someone browsing for a new place to buy a house. Their tip? A "Three-bedroom cottage with garden, near the town centre, [for] £227,500" with estate agents Gregory Brown.

So, more people interested in the area. That's got to be a good thing right? Well... not exactly.

If you're lucky enough to own property in Staines(-upon-Thames) then it's possible you might benefit from seeing the theoretical val-



ue of your house rise. One benefit being you could sell up and leave. We'd miss you, we really would.

Alternatively, if you live in Staines but don't own your own home then this upward pressure on house prices, also known as inflation, is bad news. As people are now willing to pay more for your home than you already do, your landlord might cotton on and ask you to pay more.

If richer people move into the area inflation won't just affect house prices. When these yuppies start strolling around Staines town centre they'll be looking for somewhere to buy their clothes and maybe T.K. Maxx or the charity shops aren't really what they're

looking for. Two things might happen here: either the shops which are already here start selling more expensive stock, meaning an ordinary person can't afford it - or if they don't, they won't be able to afford the new rents being charged now that new shops are interested in setting up here, such as Selfridges.

The term used for this process is gentrification, from the word 'gentry', itself another word for the rich. The process is built into the way the system is set up. Because housing and pretty much everything else is distributed through 'markets', if someone richer decides they want what you have they can pretty much take it - they just have to outbid you.

There are anti-gentrification campaigns all over the world. One way to resist is to put off the gentry, to send out a message that this isn't the kind of place they want to live. Ultimately though we want the places we live to be desirable, we just don't want them to be taken from us as soon as someone else decides they like them. This means we need to challenge the system that says everything is for sale if the price is right.

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 £1200 of the women's money for the completely failed deal.

Victorstone 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.

stainesanarchists@riseup.net
www.stainesanarchists.wordpress.com