

Message from Democracy Village

A message from the protesters camped in Parliament Square.

Democracy Village has been an experiment in peaceful protest. We've achieved a huge amount. We've also made mistakes. The media has portrayed us as drunks, drug addicts, fighters and layabouts.

Here's the truth.

We all are.

Whether you like a drink on a Friday night, smoke cigarettes, drink coffee, get angry, or can't be bothered to tidy up, none of us are perfect. Let him who is without sin cast the first stone.

What we've done is put a microcosm of our society under the microscope, and many of you (and some of us) don't like what we see.

Too many of us look the other way when we see something we don't like; complacency is not an option anymore, we need to unite and face our problems together.

Here's the situation that lead us to set up the camp in the first place:

Our taxes are currently financing war in Afghanistan, a country which has never attacked us, to the tune of £11bn. In so doing we're reinforcing extremism and perpetuating the cycle of violence in an already unstable the world.

On top of that, our troops, young men and women who are working to protect us, are coming home in ruins – those that survive their injuries are hidden from view, can't find work and are generally forgotten; chewed up and spat out by the very country they are fighting for.

An anecdote: At the end of one of our recent Talking Circles, where all our camp members have their chance to speak up about what's on their mind, a young man from Rotherham took the floor and told us about his brother who was in the Army. He'd been serving in Afghanistan and had returned to the UK last December at the end of his tour of duty, only to be told he had to return to the front line due to lack of reserve troops. A week later, this guys brother got a phone

call saying his brother's jeep had been blown up by an IED - the guy almost cried as he explained how he'd had to identify his brother from a tattoo on his back as that was all that was left of him. He came up to me at the end of the meeting and said, 'This is the only place where I feel anyone cares about how my brother died.'

Whilst we sit in our living rooms watching this distant conflict rage on, we're also facing massive cuts in public services whilst big business and government rewards themselves with our money.

We're losing our civil rights day by day, and have sleep-walked ourselves into the world's most surveilled society, where anyone can be locked up with no charge for 30 days in the name of national security and peaceful demonstrators are arrested for sitting outside Downing Street.

Our parliamentarians, whether they start out with good intentions or not, are standing by or actively supporting terrible injustices at home and abroad, which have been pre-planned by undemocratic think tanks and unelected Whitehall mandarins.

Tony Benn recently said, 'the politics of the present is in Parliament, the politics of the future is in Democracy Village and on the streets.'

Instead of sitting around complaining when things go wrong, let's actually make a change. We believe it's our duty to resist injustice, and permanently protesting outside parliament is the way we choose to do that.

We want to learn how to become more passionate and compassionate, heal the rifts that seem to be widening between our communities, and ultimately be proud of our country again.

We can do it. We must do it. We will do it.