

Nether Edge G8 Welcoming Committee invite you to speak to the G8:

From the 15th - 17th June the Justice and Interior Ministers from the eight most powerful countries in the world - the G8 - will meet in Sheffield. They will be meeting, they say, to promote "structural reforms" to "foster growth." What this means in practice is that they'll be meeting behind closed doors and no doubt lines of police, with luxury meals and accommodation, to discuss their agenda. Britain, who is hosting the G8 summit this year, doesn't actually want the ministers to see, consult or hear the people of Sheffield raising their voices in dissent, and will of course be using your tax money to fund this expensive (£4m plus) meeting.

These officials will be travelling right through Nether Edge to get to this meeting, perhaps right past your front door. So you have an ideal opportunity to let them know what you think! Why not make a banner, to let them know they're not welcome - "stuff the G8", "G8 unwelcome here", or something creative of your own - and hang it from your windows to send them a loud and clear message. You could simply make a poster to put in your window, or let your imagination and creativity loose; perhaps if you've been thinking of hiring a skip the 15th might be a good day to have a lot of awkward, unwieldy boxes down the street; perhaps a scarecrow or an unseasonal 'guy' of the G8 ministers might look very nice in your front garden; what else you can think of to get your message across...have some fun with it and see what's possible...

So what agenda are they meeting to discuss, then?

And what's so bad about it?

The G8 are at the heart of corporate globalisation. They meet at these summits, in a private and publicly unaccountable way, to protect and promote free trade in all its forms. They intend for all aspects of life, from the provision of essential goods and services, through to health care and education, to be determined solely by the forces of the free market, maximising the profit for a few at a human and environmental cost to the rest of us. Your rights at work from sick pay to a safe working environment, protection of the environment from pollution and the government's provision of free healthcare and education are all just barriers to free trade that cut into their profits.

They'll also be meeting to discuss their 'war on terrorism'. The war in Iraq, carried out despite massive public opposition and without a legitimate reason, also handily gave these dominant countries access to some of the planet's last reserves of oil and developed some profitable defence contracts, all in the aid of the free market. It's only been possible for governments to legitimate their actions by whipping up paranoia and stifling dissent. If people are scared enough, they'll give up their liberties and agree to anything for protection. So we get a constant bombardment of images and sound bites from the media, politicians and others who "know best," stirring up a disproportionate fear of crime, fear of foreigners, fear of migrant workers and asylum seekers, maybe even fear of our own neighbours.

Where does this spectacle of fear get us? What will life be like when we've traded in our civil liberties to protect ourselves from these exaggerated demons? No right to be angry with our government? No right to protest and demand change? Unlimited detention? Trial without jury? Not knowing what we are on trial for? House arrest? No right to asylum from persecution and wars carried out by these governments? No right to work here and contribute to the economic and social wellbeing of our communities? How do you feel about having to carry an ID card to get into your own home? How will you feel when the government implements planned national ID card schemes, leaving less space for your personal freedom and anonymity and allowing minorities to be targeted more easily? How long will it be before we have no rights at all and all that was hard won for us by past generations is lost?

Maybe it's time to speak up now, and take this opportunity that the people of Nether Edge have to tell the G8 just where to stick it.

Love,

The Nether Edge G8 Welcoming Committee.