

RANT:

DEMOCRACY SLEEPS IN WHITEHALL

By Chris Holgate

You're walking down the high street in Kingston, wearing a "MAKE LOVE NOT WAR" tee or even just a wristband. Some fuzz pull you over and before you know it you're your way to Kingston's finest station because of something you have never heard of? Not likely in Kingston but if you're within 1 Kilometre of The Houses of Parliament the police have the right to do it. This is because of a small clause of the Serious Organised Crime and Policing Act of 2005.

This law was first created in order to stop a protest by, the now infamous, Brian Haw. He set up camp outside parliament in July 2001, when the UK and US were already bombing Iraq. Brian had been asked to leave, but he battled the decision, claiming that due to the fact that his protest started before the law came into place, and the act had no clause to cover retrospective law, he was exempt. The courts agreed however. this has not been the end as the Government has taken it to every court they can, various restrictions have been applied to Brian, some overturned, some held, and most ongoing. An entire law formed in order to get rid of one man, repeatedly failing.

Groups have been set up in order

to combat the law. A small disorganised group called People in Common regularly have picnics complete without permission with blank or 'THIS IS NOT A PROTEST' signs. Last may day, a man with a blank placard marched up and down in front of Parliament, refusing to talk to police, who had no idea if they could do anything; weather or not this fell into the category of a protest as defined by the Act. Lefty comedian Mark Thomas also holds many demonstrations, trying to overwork the police by getting up to 150 people to send in their own application form, thereby making the amount of work required for the police enormous. One of the first altercations about the law was over a cake one of his friend's had baked for a birthday, which caused controversy as it had the word 'Peace' iced onto it, and the way he sees it 'any law which can get a cake into trouble, is worth messing with.' On top of all this, with a completely un-elected leader ruling our country, democracy is truly sleeping in Britain today.

If you wish to read full any of this fascist legislation please go to <http://www.opsi.gov.uk/ACTS/acts/2005/50015--1.htm#132>.

