

CHANGES BRISTOL NEWSLETTER



12 Steps to Mental Health

"Oh, sweet Garfield, Dave is going to kill me. He's never going to leave me in charge again #Tottenham." - Downing Street Cat via Twitter

15/8/11

GOVERNMENT REPORT ON IB REASSESSMENTS

I'm not really the sort of person to sit down and read an enormous government report on anything, but the latest report about the roll-out of ATOS assisted reassessments for those in receipt of Incapacity Benefit or Employment Support Allowance makes for interesting reading. The reassessments (largely condemned as being unfair, target-driven and in some cases shockingly negligent) are described in great detail with moving personal accounts and a damning assessment of the media's 'inaccurate and irresponsible' coverage of those being found 'fit for work'. If anyone's interested in reading the report, you can find it here:

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201012/cmselect/cmworpen/1015/101502.htm>



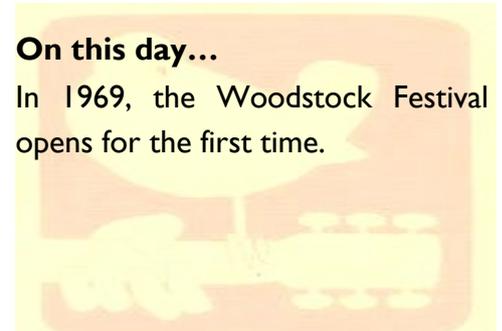
AND FINALLY...

Whatever your opinion of the recent riots, I dare you not to raise a smile at some of these. Loot-a-likes (<http://lootalikes.tumblr.com>) makes it easier to spot a familiar face in the crowd, while Photoshop Looter (<http://photoshoplooter.tumblr.com/>) was... pretty much inevitable, really (see right).



On this day...

In 1969, the Woodstock Festival opens for the first time.



MENTAL HEALTH SURVEY

The Mental Health Research Network are currently conducting a survey about the experiences of people who suffer from bipolar disorder, in relation to the Mental Health Act. It's totally anonymous and not difficult or distressing in any way.

If you are interested in completing the survey, follow the web address below:

<http://www.nottingham.ac.uk/chs/research/projects/parades/index.aspx>

Disclaimer: Changes Bristol holds no responsibility for external links, events, services or organisations provided in our newsletters. Any information given in no way represents endorsement by **Changes Bristol** or any of its affiliates. Any content provided is purely for informative reasons and all activities should be undertaken at your own risk.

We Should Have Listened to the Kaiser Chiefs... by Sarah

The riots seem to be all anybody's talking about at the moment, and yet I'm still struggling to get a picture of what's actually going on. Plenty have voiced their opinions, but no one seems to be in agreement about what's happening. Is it hoodie scum or opportunists in paid work? Disillusioned youth or wanton criminals with no respect for their communities? It may be a bit from column A and a bit from column B but with all the noise online and in the press, I'm starting to fear we won't get any closer to an explanation. What's irritating me the most is how the issues get clouded. It's the poor, then it's the benefit scroungers, then it's rubbish policing, irresponsible parents, the fatcats at the top, the closing youth centres, the lack of jobs, the rain, the traffic and so on and so on and so on.

I have no idea what the answer is myself. I'm disgusted by anyone who used Mark Duggan's death as an excuse to help themselves to a free telly, and anyone who decided to take a baseball bat to someone's small business (and therefore their livelihood) in the name of

'protest', but then I was just as disgusted when I heard about MP Gerald Kaufman helping himself to an £8000 flat screen TV out of taxpayer's money back in 2009. There's not a doubt in my mind that we live in a society that rewards greed, and in that sense the looting wasn't all that surprising. Opportunistic and despicable maybe, but not surprising.

The anger's not surprising either, given the harshness of the recent cuts. People are facing their safety and support being taken away and their hard work ultimately coming to less and less as the years go by. Many of the people arrested during the riots were in work, but, as someone who was unemployed for much of the last year, I can tell you that's no walk in the park either. It took me eight months to find work, and that's with a 1st class degree, work experience, three voluntary

placements, two courses and hundreds of applications. And I'm about to be out of work again after only four months. Have I ever taken a bat to anything because of my circumstances? No. But I've occasionally fantasized about it. It's an enormously frustrating state to be in and I can't even imagine what it must be like for someone who hasn't had the opportunities I've had.

The fact is we may not find a simple answer, but it's not helpful for us all to keep putting forward opinions without listening to anyone else's. I was initially angered by insinuations that those involved in the riots were no-hopers and scum, but I realised quickly that I needed to understand the motivation behind the claims rather than dismiss them as

reactionary nonsense. The people I work with are sneeringly intolerant of what they refer to as 'liberal rubbish' and have dismissed the whole issue as perpetrated by lazy, scrounging morons (admittedly, I do work in marketing and my colleagues have often made it clear what they think of the general

public. During the pension protests in the centre of town, the only response within the office was for the creative director to get up from his desk and bang the window shut, sneering 'God, they always want SOMETHING, don't they').

It might be tempting to say let's agree to disagree and be done with it, but the fact is we all have to live together and the longer we keep pretending that there's one simple answer, the longer we'll have to deal with the devastating actions of the unheard.

Read more of my left-wing rant-a-thons at trichquestions.wordpress.com/



Questions or comments? E-mail us at feedback@changesbristol.org.uk or call 0117 941 1123