

Monarchy and Militarism – Why we should speak out against the Coronation.

Little did Symon Hill know when he came to speak to Faringdon Peace Group (FPG) just before the coronation, that the anti-monarchy campaigning group 'Republic' of which he is a member, would become headline news! Using new Public Order laws which had been rushed through earlier in the week, police arrested 8 members of Republic and confiscated placards, despite the group having been in discussions with police about a peaceful protest for 4 months. Ironically, a policy of 'extremely low tolerance' designed to deter protesters in fact brought more onto the streets when it became a civil liberties issue!

Symon himself was assaulted and arrested last year while passing by a Proclamation ceremony in Oxford. He called out, 'Who elected him?', which was eventually deemed a 'spontaneous indistinct heckle' and all charges were dropped.

Symon, who teaches history and works for the Peace Pledge Union, described the close links between the monarchy and the military. Both are considered non-political and therefore no balance is required in media reporting. They are tied up with notions of patriotism and Britishness, so dissent is not tolerated and criticism is met with abuse. Symon believes there is much to be proud of in British history, which should not be narrowed down to a list of Kings and Queens. We should not allow the establishment to define what 'British' is.

There are historical links which carry on to this day – a monarch cannot maintain a standing army without permission of parliament. An Act which into the 20th century had to be passed every year is still required every 5 years. The armed forces still swear allegiance to the King.

Symon objected to the power and influence of the royal family, which, although less than it was, is not always used to defend democracy. He suggested that both the monarchy and the military reinforce subservience, the class system and hierarchies based on inherited wealth and privilege. This sets the tone for a society which demands blind obedience to superiors, denying rights and respect for each other as equals.