

WAKE UP!! IT'S YER TREASURY THESE MOMENTS...

Weekly SchNEWS

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FOR WHOM THE FEE TOLLS

THE DEBT GENERATION FIGHTS BACK AS PARLIAMENT VOTES ON FEES

The wave of student protests that sprang forth so vehemently on 11/11/10 faced its day of reckoning this Thursday (9th) as MPs huddled in Parliament to decide on the future of education. Chaos was on the menu as the tuition fees bill passed with a majority of 21 votes.

The crowds started congregating at 12 noon by the University of London Union in Malet Street. The march stalled to hear speeches and bold declarations such as "We will not be detained, constrained and kettled again!" just before heading towards Parliament Square.

At 12.45 the march crossed the starting line, and police tried to nip in early by containing the protesters at the first turn, helped by stewards linking arms to control the crowd - but alas the kids gave them the two finger salute and ran through the whole lot. "Today we won't be kettled because today we are prepared," as one protester put it.

There were scores of police lining each street and batches of riot police waiting round each corner. Cops tried to run in front and form a line but the youth ran faster and by 1.15 they had descended on Trafalgar square in numbers, accompanied by the sounds of a salsa band.

Protesters were stopped there but soon managed to break through. The FIT team was shoved out the way by a rebellious posse. At this point billows of coloured smoke surged through the air as the demonstrators released flares and bangers. The feisty atmosphere became charged as people reached the corner by Westminster Abbey. The harris fencing surrounding the green got ripped apart and waves of the disgruntled started cascading

ing onto the legion of riot police protecting the finishing line, batons at the ready.

Hundreds more police started approaching the square and each road leading off from it was filled with a dozen riot vans. Flares, sticks, snooker balls and paint balls flew across the square, placards were set on fire as students hollered "Fuck the cuts!" The protesters started using barriers to break through police lines. Scuffles erupted, leaving one officer with a bloody nose while another got sent to hospital with a broken leg. By 3.45pm a containment was in place with peaceful demonstrators allowed to leave the space, but for many that was easier said than done.

As the afternoon wore on a large sound system was in place and the party started really bouncing - to a backdrop of hardcore, protesters and riot police having it out on the street. The focus then turned towards the Commons as voting time approached. In the distance an outline of police horses could be seen standing ominously in wait as dusk set in. The police line flowed back and forth as people kept trying to break through their lines.

After the vote, angry protesters rampaged through the government quarter, smashing telephone booths, vandalizing statues and breaking government building windows.

By 6pm reports were coming through of many people getting injured as police tactics took a turn towards the oppressive. Police marched through docile crowds and shoved them violently backwards. The horses were released towards the crowd. Two demonstrators were knocked unconscious, another demonstrator on a wheelchair was

dragged away by police; minutes later the wheelchair was seen lying empty. A medical steward passed on he treated at least 10 serious head injuries from marchers being hit with police batons.

The next generation of possible voters then turned their attention to the Treasury building, home to the Chancellor George Osborne, and let loose. While contained inside the square, students started using concrete blocks and metal poles to smash windows of the building on Great George Street before the riot crew got in and reclaimed the property. Windows of the supreme court were also put in.

Protests spread to the West End with demonstrators breaking shop windows in Oxford Street. Police eventually surrounded a group of around 150-200 people in Trafalgar Square, where fires were lit, graffiti daubed on statues and missiles thrown at riot police. They then moved on towards Marble Arch, attacking two Vodafone stores along the way.

Elsewhere, at around 7.30pm, an angry mob attacked a vehicle they thought contained a mediocre Tory candidate; instead they managed to hit the negative media coverage jackpot by coming face to face with Prince Charles and his bit on the side.

The stately window was cracked and the royal buggy was splashed with paint. Cue the media's defining image.

By 9pm the protest seemed to be dwindling. Police attempted to clear Parliament square by reopening Westminster Bridge to the South Bank. They had apparently been letting protesters out one by one but felt the area (perhaps unsurprisingly) was not clearing quickly enough. The police made 22 arrests in total with scores injured. There were also protests in Leeds, Sheffield, Edinburgh, Liverpool, Belfast, Brighton, Manchester and Bristol, with school pupils joining students.

* See www.anticuts.com

ANTI-TAX DODGERS HIGH STREET BONANZA

The protest movement against the loophole-loving corporate sector that began in October with a small group of protesters venting spleen at Vodafone for massive tax dodging has snowballed into a nationwide campaign (see SchNEWS 746).

The outrage has been so widespread, members of the normally sheepish general public have been indistinguishable from die-hard black bloc with lairy actions taking place all over the country.

This exposing of the unjust underbelly of Britain's corporatocracy has captured the public's discontent - and why not, as crippling cuts targeting the poorest are made while the capitalist enterprises raking in billions are left unscathed.

Targets have grown from Vodafone to include Boots, Miss Selfridge, Wallis, Dorothy Perkins, Evans, Burtons, Lloyds TSB, Barclays, HSBC and Topshop, with Grolsch and Cadbury being the latest added to the list. Unsurprisingly, even politicians have been cashing in on legal loopholes with Channel 4 claiming that Chancellor George Osborne, Transport Secretary Philip Hammond

and International Development Secretary Andrew Mitchell have also got out of paying millions.

Last Saturday, Topshop's flagship London shop was closed by hundreds of protesters emerging out of the consumer throng to beat saucenaps, wave placards and shout slogans, before blockading the entrance for the whole day. Security guards and police manhandled demonstrators and journalists out of the way, but support from the public was unfaltering with one kindly gent even turning up with loads of pizza for the shivering blockaders.

Similar actions targeting Topshop were seen up and down the country, including Liverpool, Leicester, Leeds, Glasgow, Edinburgh, Brighton, York, Loughborough, Southampton, Sheffield, Reading, Portsmouth, Oxford, Nottingham, Newcastle, Manchester and Birmingham. In Brighton, 18 protesters were arrested after eight superglued themselves to the inside of the shop window, and others were kettled for hours in the freezing temperatures. They were threatened with arrest if they refused to give their names and

addresses when finally allowed to leave.

More anti-cuts action on Saturday 4th saw Vodafone targeted in many cities with blockades and pickets, shutting down around 20 stores for the day. Boots were another focus for protests in at least nine locations from York to Brighton while fashion-floggers Miss Selfridge, Wallis, Dorothy Perkins, Evans and Burtons were also hit by sit-in protests. HSBC, Lloyds TSB and Barclays got their fair share of rage in the capital as well as at local branches nationwide.

SAB Miller, the owners of Grolsch, are now gaining attention after it was revealed they have paid no corporation tax at all in the last two years, while Kraft, new owners of Cadbury, have recently announced plans to move much of their business dealings to Switzerland, getting out of paying millions in UK taxes. At this rate the public might soon realise there's no end of corporate targets deserving of good kicking.

* More protests are planned for the coming days and weeks, check out <http://www.ukuncut.org.uk/actions> for a list of demos near you or, better still, organise one of yer own and post it up there...

INFORMATION FOR ACTION

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A HELLAS OF A TIME

Two years since the death of Alexis, Athens is once again in flames. While demonstrations and actions kick off in 17 cities across Greece, solidarity demonstrations take place around Europe.

15-year-old Alexandros Grigoropoulos was shot dead by police in the Exarcheia district of Athens on 6th December 2008, igniting months of riots and a popular uprising. After another uprising last year, a new wave of riots looks likely. (see SchNEWS 659).

On the anniversary of the assassination, clashes with police began even before the main demonstration - which police effectively kick-started by charging and hurling teargas at the amassing crowd. Following an earlier demonstration of around 3,000 students and teachers, several thousand people took to the streets for several hours, many armed with sticks, molotovs and gas masks. Those without relied on scarves or paint masks; scant protection against the clouds of teargas that followed the crowd. Paving slabs were ripped up, broken and thrown at windows of banks and shops as well as police. Rubbish bins, already overflowing after a series of collection strikes, were set alight. Many a cop was seen running around on fire.

At around 10pm, police launched incendiary attacks on the congregation taking place on the spot where Alexis was killed, shoving people away from the shrine. In the end police had to use tear gas and stun grenades to disperse the crowd. Over 96 people were detained in Athens leading to 42 arrests. The next anarchist demonstration in central Athens has been called for December 11th, while the next general strike is on the 15th.

This past week has also seen a huge crack-down by the authorities in all major Greek cities with searches and arrests. Anti-terrorist units have been ruthless on squats and the 'Nadir' in Thessaloniki was raided on Saturday (4th). Eye witnesses report that riot police moved in after the initial terror unit had driven off, forcibly dragging people out and arresting eight. The 150 onlookers outside became a solidarity vigil. At least three houses were raided in Athens during the weekend and another one in the western city of Agrinio. Ten people have been detained and of these at least seven people will be arrested and charged. On Sunday (5th), the night before the demonstration, there was an unconventional 21-hour traffic ban in central Athens and a colossal police presence in Exarcheia (Athens' anti-authoritarian district) where four people were allegedly detained.

And facing time in Greek jail is not pleasant. As of Monday (6th) more than 1,000 prisoners across the country have gone on hunger strike, with more than 9,000 others - three-quarters of the entire prison population - also abstaining from prison meals (relying on privately supplied food in prisons with no food shops: an effective hunger strike). Demands include the de-congestion of prison buildings, overall improvement of detention conditions, true justice and shorter imprisonment times.

Monday, December 13th has been called as a day of action and demonstrations will take place across the country.

* Info fresh from the mean Greek Streets at www.occupiedlondon.org/blog and <http://athens.indymedia.org/?lang=en>

WIKILEAKS: HACKTION STATIONS

A real (but largely virtual) war is being fought over control of information and your right to hear the truth - especially any truth unpalatable as far as the ruling elites are concerned. In their guise of 'The Authorities', the nod for a full on assault on WikiLeaks was given sometime ago; a not-so-covert campaign to shut the website shut down and trace and punish those responsible is well underway.

Despite founder Julian Assange being arrested in the UK this week (and wouldn't you like to be a fly on the wall in that interview room?!), the website itself has proved harder to conquer, and a mass direct 'hacktion' campaign of unprecedented size has booted itself up to help fight back.

Following the release of the 250,000 US diplomatic cables, and the constant drip-feed of awkward news stories flowing since, the diplomatic world has been flapping in panic. The nut-o-sphere of right-wing media and front-of-house politicians continue to froth in helpless rage at the constant parade of behind-the-scenes dirty laundry.

But backroom US government departments, and their proxies, have been stepping up their efforts by leaning heavily on anyone with connections to the web's whistle-blowers.

Last week, Amazon pulled the plug on its hosting of the site, while the Wikileaks domain name was also yanked off-line by Everydns.net (hosting was switched to mirror sites in Europe). Funding was also targeted, with PayPal freezing funds and Mastercard and Visa suspending all payments to Wikileaks. Swiss bankers PostFinance shut down accounts containing defence funds for Wikileaks and founder Julian Assange. The site has also been subject to a continued barrage of Distributed Denial of Service (DDoS) attacks from 'sources unknown'.

The only possible point to all this is presumably petty revenge and as a warning to les autres; the file containing the source data has been posted and torrent-downloaded by many thousands of people all over the planet. There's no keeping this embarrassing cat in the (diplomatic) bag.

With Wikileaks under siege, hacktivist group

'Anonymous' launched 'Operation Payback' - widely distributing software that can launch DDoS's of their own. This week they took aim at an array of targets including PayPal, Amazon, Sarah Palin, Visa and Mastercard (whose website was paralysed, shutting down its ability to process transactions for a time).

'Anonymous' describes itself as "an anonymous, decentralised movement that fights against censorship and copywrong". In the past they have targeted Kiss's Gene Simmons for his attacks on filesharing and sinister culty weirdos the Church of Scientology.

One member said, "If we let WikiLeaks fall without a fight then governments will think they can just take down any sites they disagree with as they wish." Although there has been no let up in the attacks, he said the group would now focus on methods to support Wikileaks such as mirroring the site.

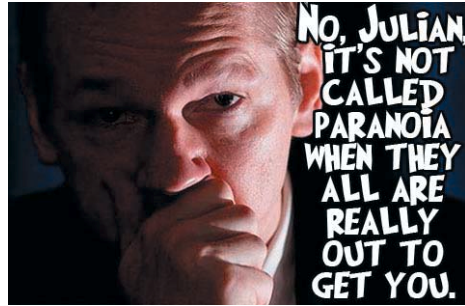
'Payback' has also targeted the Swedish prosecution authority in protest over the strange affair of Julian Assange's sex-offence charges.

The allegations against Assange concern two women he had consensual sex with, one of whom accuses him of deliberately breaking a condom, the other of them having non-consensual sex after consensual sex.

The original charges of rape were thrown out last August when Swedish authorities found they were unfounded. However, as Assange was gaining renown as the public face of Wikileaks, the case was reopened last November. Two days after the release of the first diplomatic cables, the Swedish authorities issued an Interpol alert, leading to his arrest in the UK - and denial of bail. He now faces extradition to Sweden.

Protesters declaring their support for Assange gathered outside Westminster Magistrates Court for Assange's bail hearing on Tuesday (7th). Demos have been called against Assange's extradition for Monday (13th), outside the Swedish Embassy at 16.00, and for Tuesday (14th) outside Westminster Magistrates Court.

*To get a slice of the hacktion see <http://www.indymedia.org.uk/en/2010/12/470215.html>



SchNEWS IN BRIEF

* **Following high turn outs at demos** in Preston and Nuneaton (see SchNEWS 750), the EDL are heading to Peterborough on Saturday. A counter-protest is being organised by the TUC, less organised anti-fascists are also encouraged to attend.

* **The trial of the Disarm Now Ploughshares** activists who broke into a Trident nuclear sub base to symbolically disarm nuclear weapons got underway on Tuesday (7th). The seven campaigners face charges of Conspiracy, Trespass, Destruction of Property for last year's action.

PARTY & PROTEST

For events listings updated weekly see www.schnews.org.uk/pap

...and finally...

There'll be less hippy Christmases in Germany this year thanks to party pooping drug Kops.

A two-metre high cannabis plant decorated with tinsel and fairy lights was seized by fuzz during a drugs raid in Koblenz, scuppering the owner's plans to have a really festive season.

Another raid in Munich ended in arrest for a 21-year-old man who had taken the trouble to make his own advent calendar. Instead of the more usual chocolates or pictures of baby Jesus, behind each door was his day's supply of Mary Jane.

There have been no reported arrests of those still holding out for a white Christmas...

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