



WAKE UP!! IT'S YER PRE-EMPTIVE STRIKE...

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NOV30: WE'RE ALL IN IT TOGETHER AS UK PREPARES FOR BIGGEST STRIKE IN GENERATIONS....

Well, it's been a long time coming... Wednesday 30th November will see the first mass strike in the UK for four decades. 17 unions, including the biggest ones Unite, UCU, Unison, various teaching unions and PCS, have balloted to strike on pension reform which will see an estimated 3 million off work and, hopefully, cause massive disruption. Demonstrations and pickets are planned across the country - see <http://www.n30strike.org> for a complete list. Amongst the strikers are some unlikely suspects: 18,000 Border Agency workers are expected to strike leaving the government having to employ sinister private security firm Serco to take over for a day. Even the National Union of Probation Officers voted to join the strike four-to-one.

The government wants public sector workers to forgo 3% of their salary as pension contributions, which equates to a pay cut. So far workers have had to accept a two year pay freeze during a time of high inflation (in other words a pay cut), if they haven't already been thrown out on their arse during the waves of mass redundancies (a total pay cut). The government's arguments are designed to play on long term disgruntlement among the private sector that they have to deal with, on the whole, a shockingly shit pensions scenario and the public sector have had it a bit better off. Rather than aiming to sort out the private pensions mess which leaves millions in poverty on retirement, the PM wants the country to believe the public sector pensions are 'gold plated', unfair and unsustainable. Actually, most public workers end up with less than £5000 a year pension. They've also been reformed already: through a mix of negotiated and underhand changes, public sector pensions have been reduced to the tune of 25p in each pound over the last few years.

While the 'official' pensions reason is a biggie, the day will be one of anti-austerity action on the whole. It was obvious a year and a half ago that austerity measures were going to cripple the public sector, but it's only over the issue of pensions that unions have been able to come together in co-ordinated action. The government's various cuts bills have been sector specific until now, and Tory anti-strike legislation forbids solidarity action - effectively making mass, cross-sector strikes illegal. This, combined with the timidity of the unions and their own stifling legal processes have delayed action until the shared pension cuts could become the focal point for general civil unrest.

Which is rich, considering unemployment is at a 17-year high thanks to government policy. They're also attempting to rebrand it as a "take your child to work day" in an effort to avoid parents taking the day off to look after children turned away from closed schools. It's not only the government who want to break the strike: One particularly bizarre measure is being taken by an academy school headteacher

in London, who is bringing in ex-Army personnel, police dog handlers and CSI teams to teach classes next Wednesday.

The tactics for the day are to keep demonstrations and marches focused in local communities and for many dispersed actions as opposed to a mass gathering, but if you fancy hitting the road to get in on the action, the most fun place to be looks set to be London. Occupy have issued a call-out to congregate in the capital and 'Shut down the city' - the plans for which are to be confirmed...

In other union news, shining like a beacon of wildcat hope in the darkness, the Sparks electricians union showed how its done again this week by an unannounced occupation of the head office of construction firm Grattes Brothers on Wednesday (23rd). Continuing their protests against industry-wide collusion to cut pay and de-skill work, which has involved direct actions, walk-outs and demonstrations, 150 Sparks have locked themselves in the Kings Cross premises.

CRAP ARREST OF THE WEEK

For handling second-hand clothing...

A cyclist was nicked during a particularly nasty squat eviction on Monday on more spurious than usual grounds of "handling stolen goods". The goods in question - a tatty old Royal Mail fluoro jacket he'd been wearing. The pigs were dead set on nicking someone, and so unfortunately our hero's efforts to, 'be safe, be seen' got him spotted and busted by the boys in blue.

Our man on the ground wasn't able to provide a blow by blow account, as, in his words, "there was a bloke coming through our door at the time with a sledgehammer so didn't get many details!"

So next time you're out at night wear black and mask up - if they can't see you they can't bust you. Honest!

Whether the country comes grinding to a halt or not, we'll have to wait and see, but N30 has the potential to reinvigorate the anti-cuts movement and take it outside the Occupy camps. See ya on streets!

TAHRIR²

Violent clashes continue between Egyptian police and protesters in the latest round of resistance unfolding in the streets of Cairo. Tahrir Square, which since February has become a synonym for mass civil uprising, has again become the focal point for Egypt's ongoing revolution. The generals (aka the SCAF) who claimed power in a palace coup on the backs of tanks and promises, 18 days after the uprising began, have refused to hand over to civilian rule, the constitution they want the country to accept will enshrine the supremacy of the army, allowing only a democratic figleaf.

Thursday (24th) became the 7th day of this most recent turmoil. Police wanted to block protesters from getting near the Interior Ministry Building, whilst protesters wanted to stop police from gaining access to Tahrir Square. Police have not entered the square for the past two days. Protesters have been throwing rocks at police, who have responded in kind. Unfortunately that is not the only offensive tactic Egyptian police forces have used. One protester, Husam Said, related "the police are also shooting metal bullets and some protesters have already lost their eyes from this." There is a first aid point in Tahrir Square trying to deal with the surge of injured people, over 2,000 so far. Volunteers have been overwhelmed with work as they try to make sure all protesters receive treatment and medical supplies. They are using Twitter to organise the delivery of medicine to field hospitals around the square.

Egyptian forces are using very dangerous and potentially fatal tear gases, different to CS gas. The likely suspects are rumoured to be CN gas, a crowd control gas used by the US before CS gained its current popularity and CR gas. There have been reports from protesters seeing cans

with "CR" written on them. Both gases are a lot more dangerous than CS, known to cause unconsciousness and epileptic-like seizures. They smell different to CS gas and cause a burning sensation on the skin and rashes. Recent deaths in Cairo have been caused by gas asphyxiation. A doctor, Dr Ahmad Sa'ad, treating patients said, "We have been attacked with four different kinds of gas bombs, I have never seen these ones before. You can be 100 metres away from the gas bombs and they will still affect you". Gas canisters more than 5 years old become more toxic and some of the canisters being used are over 10 years old. One activist described the effects of the gas, "I was wearing a gas mask. My eyes and mouth were covered as was my skin. I felt weak and dizzy. I started coughing up blood." He was still coughing up blood 15 hours after being exposed to it. What is supposedly a unruly crowd control device is being used as blatant punishment.

More than 40 people have died during the course of the past few days. But fear not, Egypt's military rulers have apologised with the following sentence "The Supreme Council of the Armed Forces expresses deep sorrow and apology for the martyrdom of Egyptians in recent incidents in Tahrir". With such a sincere and heartfelt apology, we obviously don't have to worry about any more deaths - phew. They really sound like they mean it this time.

The parliamentary elections are still scheduled to begin on Monday 28th, although the exercise seems pointless until the military council consent to transfer power to a civil authority. The hope for the future that was to be found in many protesters after overthrowing the 30year old regime of Hosni Mubarak is becoming extinct as the reality of a different regime hits and keeps hitting

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INFORMATION FOR ACTION

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Egypt continued....

them everyday. One of the focal points for the protests is Defence Minister Field Marshal Hussein Tantawi (aka Mubarak Jnr, head of the military council, who briefly (in terms of dinosaur years) took power. The most popular chant in Cairo at the moment is "the people demand that Marshal leaves". The elections are losing their validity in the protesters' eyes; "What are elections worth when the army continues to hold on to power and the police continues to go crazy unchecked?" Indeed.

Events in Egypt this spring had the right attitude, empowering the people, overthrowing a 30 year old regime, demanding justice and fair treatment. Nine months down the line the Mubarak regime reigns on without Mubarak. Egyptians - welcome to real democracy. At least now after their successful coup, ordinary Egyptians are no longer prepared to abide with the behaviour of their despots. The struggle continues, the military regime remains to be overthrown and the fight is far from over.

On Saturday 26th November there is a march to the Egyptian embassy in London. Meet near Edgware Road tube station, 12 noon. This march is not just about solidarity, but to pressure the British government to not sell more weapons to the military regime.

TARSAND AND SHAME

Imports of oil from tar sands - the dirtiest, most expensive and most bat-shit crazy form of oil extraction around - looks like it may face a possible EU ban soon. That is unless unless Lewes MP Norman Baker can scupper it that is. For reasons best known to himself, Neo-LibDem Norman (the self-styled 'environmentalist') has been working as a shill for the Canadian oil industry, inserting clauses into the tar sands bill in an effort to delay and derail it.

Campaigners from Baker's 'hood in Lewes are opposing his idiotic scheming. With the help of nice-smelling and cosmetics selling good guys, Lush, he is being named and shamed as a pollution perpetrator. In Lewes Town this coming Saturday (26th) the UK Tar Sands Network, along with South Coast Climate Camp, the Lewes District Green Party and Friends of the Earth Lewes will be spreading the message on the mean streets of Lewes, alongside their very own oily tar sands monster. That message: tell him to stop caving to Canadian lobbying efforts and make a commitment to effective climate policy. Join them @10am outside the WHSmith on the main high street in Lewes. Invite people people along! Email info@no-tar-sands.org for more info.

SMASH EDOM

It turns out there's another UK-based company linked to the Israeli Occupation whose name starts with EDO...

EDOM-UK are an Israeli Agricultural exporter. EDOM's UK partners, Essex-based Valley Grown Salads and Herts-based Glinwell, were picketed today (Tuesday 22nd November) by Palestine Solidarity activists. Also targeted was Macilvin Moore Reveres, reps for bankrupt Israeli agribusiness Carmel Agrexco's new owners, Bickel.

The global campaign to hold Israel to account for its crimes has stepped up a notch recently, as the worldwide Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS- please, no tittering) Movement gains momentum in the run-up to the BDS Day of Action on the 26th of November. The slogan chosen by the BDS Movement is "Take apartheid off the menu". The Israeli fruit and veg market is much more vulnerable than most industries to a consumer boycott because it sells to supermarkets and other such fickle consumer havens. Companies that sell produce from Israel's settlements face an additional hurdle in that their trade flagrantly violates International Humanitarian Law, which explicitly prohibits an occupying power from fucking with its occupied territory). Companies that have been contacted by BDS activists have gone to strenuous links to deny their links to settlement produce.

Activists targeted the UK-Israeli fruit & veg depots to get across the message to company staff and consumers that boycotting Israel is necessary for the freedom, justice and equality for Palestinians and Israelis alike. The activists tried to deliver letters to company directors, and encourage them to divest away from companies that are complicit in profiteering and ethnic cleansing. Unsurprisingly this message didn't go down too well with the staff, who had their best goes as volunteer private security grunts, trying to manhandle the protesters out of their depots.

The boycott was the most effective tactic for grassroots international activists to embrace in apartheid South Africa, and it is the most effective tactic for activists to embrace against Israel. The group, Brighton-Jordan Valley Solidarity is taking that message to Israel-linked companies around the country.

See www.SchNEWS.org.uk for our flash new website with constantly(ish) updated news and while you're there you can check out an online only story about the EDL's attempt to merge with the British Freedom Party.

...and finally...

The brand of pepper spray famously used by lieutenant Pike has been getting nearly as much attention as the now-on-leave people fumigator himself. That's definitely the case if you go by the number of positive reviews it's received on Amazon.com (US buyers only we're afraid, before anybody rushes to make any to be regretted drunken online card purchases). On closer inspection though the reviews for this pepper should be taken with a grain of salt, including such gems as, "I just love this product! It makes for a kinder, gentler America. Now, when I hear the word "culture", I reach for my pepper spray!!! And, I save \$money on bullets, which In this economy is nothing to, you'll pardon the expression, sneeze at." and "When I wish to engage in chemical warfare against unarmed civilians, Defense Technology 56895 MK-9 is my go-to weapon." Hurry while stocks last...

Disclaimer

SchNEWS advises all readers, that the Tory austerity measures are as necessary and pain free as a coffee enema. Honest.

OCCUPATION NATION

Occupy LSX took a third space in London last week as a group from the camp liberated an abandoned three storey complex of four interlinked office blocks in Hackney. In the one short week since activists brought the building into community use, it has played host to a wealth of educational and social activities.

The building 'belongs' to Sun Street properties, a wholly-owned subsidiary of UBS Bank - an organisation that got a \$60bn bailout from the Swiss government in 2008 after piling up the biggest losses of any European lender from the global credit crisis.

UBS posted some hurriedly scrawled paperwork on the building last Friday (18th) claiming an injunction on the building, and on Saturday (19th) left a possession order which was unsigned, unstamped and had no claim number. The newly christened 'Bank of Ideas' plans to formally challenge any attempt by UBS to regain empty possession.

Wednesday (23rd) saw London's Occupy movement in the High Court, after failing to decamp last Thursday (16th). In a statement that is too farcical to even satirise, the unelected feudal barons at The City of London Corporation highlighted their main concern as the 'significant harm to public interest' if Occupy's population of concerned citizens were to stay.

John Cooper QC, acting for Occupy LSX, asked for a delay in legal proceedings until 9th January, allowing time for the movement to gather their defence with their limited resources. Cooper also added that his workload would prevent him being able to appear in court until that time. However, Mr Justice Wilkie said he could see "no good reason" for a delay, despite admitting the 7th December date proposed by the Corporation was "unduly rigorous". The trial date was set for 19th December, and is expected to last four days. It is unlikely that, if the trial should go in favour of the Corporation, any eviction attempt will be made until after Christmas. This is due to the difficulty of finding a bailiff over the festive season - presumably because they will be concentrating on fostering a sense of peace and goodwill until the new year, when they will be ready to go smash shit up again.

David Forsdick (insert genital related pun of choice here), acting for the corporation, seemed

to reassure protection from court costs if Occupy LSX provided one named defendant for the case, but Mr Justice Wilkie quickly warned the 25 or so activists in the public gallery that they would be liable for costs if they put their name forward. According to Cooper there is no shortage of people willing to put their name where their tent is, answering that there was a list four pages long of people interested in being defendants. There was one camper present in the courthouse though who was not so happy. In an act that will no doubt cause some consternation back at Occupy LSX, one activist stood up at the end of the hearing and openly accused John Cooper QC of working for the Corporation - stating "I think you'll find you've just been fired". After this outburst, we'll wait and see who turns up on the 19th...

Students in occupation at Birmingham University campus had a disturbed night's rest on Wednesday (23rd) thanks to university security. At 11.30pm, a security guard tried to drag a student from the window being used as entrance to the building, then starting punching the other occupiers as they helped their fellow activist back inside. After the scuffle, the hired goons began continually ringing the doorbell, banging on windows, and shouting insults and abuse. Sometime after midnight, security forced a front window in an attempt to gain entry, but failed, resulting in a stand off. It didn't last long as students from the neighbouring halls of residence and houses rushed to their comrades' aid, linking arms around the building, forcing the thugs to turn tail and run.

Elsewhere, 'murricans have been dealing with the backlash of the now infamous actions of police lieutenant John Pike's casual pepper spraying of passive, seated student protesters at UC Davis. The university's chancellor has placed the campus police chief, Pike and one other pepper-spraying officer on administrative leave (paid, of course), and asked prosecutors to drop charges against nine students who were arrested and said the school would reimburse students for medical expenses. The protest camp at UC Davis had been evicted, but was re-occupied on Monday (21st) with as many as 80 tents up by Wednesday (23rd).

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