

WAKE UP!! IT'S YER STORED UP AGGRESSION...

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STOKING THE FIRES

AS INNER BRISTOL RIOTS AFTER SQUAT RAID AND ANTI-TESCO PROTESTS

Last Thursday (21st), the Stokes Croft area of Bristol was the scene of violent clashes between police and protesters of the kind not seen in the city since 1980.

The hours of rioting that lasted from 9pm until five or six the following morning were prompted firstly by the eviction of the Telepathic Heights squat, and then tapped into deep anger in the community against the opening of another unwanted Tesco store, which was conveniently trashed and looted in the process.

The Tesco Express, which campaigners say 96% of the local community is opposed to, was built on the site of a former comedy club, Jesters. When the gags had dried up and the club closed, squatters moved in to protest the Council's granting of planning permission for the character- and profit-sucking leech of the multi-national grosser.

Since being evicted last March during a large police operation (see SchNEWS 714), cross-community campaigning has continued the fight to protect the independent businesses of Stokes Croft and its unique character. Tesco opened on April 15th to immediate daily pickets and few customers.

Reaching the Heights

As is the way of the government, as one hand gives power to the corporations, the other tries to take autonomy away from the people. The government's recent clampdown on squatting and attempts to criminalise all dissident behaviour makes the radical hub of Stokes Croft an obvious target. The area has a squatted art gallery, info space, workshops, a social centre and an on/off event space. Telepathic Heights was a long-established squat opposite the Tesco.

The storming of the squat by 160 cops in riot gear on Thursday night was, supposedly, prompted by suspicion that petrol bombs were being made inside. Police claimed, in their usual priority-muddling way, that the squat posed "a real threat to the local community", which the squatters deny. The council had not applied for an eviction order for the residents, most of whom were in the process of leaving voluntarily.

By 9pm, along with the squat defenders, a crowd had gathered from the local Stokes Croft area. There was a mixture of people, drawn from the varied users of the busy street at that time on a Friday. The cops tried to herd people onto the pavement.

SchNEWS spoke to someone who witnessed the events: "At some point there was some kerfuffle at the corner of the road, and the police took the horses there. They were trying to form a blockade but people weren't complying.

This one guy was standing his ground but was pushed up against a police van by one of the horses – it caused a bit of commotion. When the police reinforcements arrived he was grabbed and arrested."

By 9.45 increasing amounts of people were turning up, including a large number of passers-by, and the crowd had swelled to above a hundred. The mood at this point was still good; people were milling around, some chatting to the cops – including the Welsh forces who had already hopped the border at the prospect of some action. A sound system on a trolley arriving from down Ashley Road prompted a cheer from the crowd.

Some protesters then began to make barricades in the road with communal bins and palettes, and a polyprop web. Behind the road block, people danced and there was the occasional shout of a slogan.

When police began blocking off Cheltenham Road, which leads into the city, people began to throw bottles towards the lines.

The police then made their initial charge at the barricades. As the police line pushed down Ashley Road, the truncheons came out and battering began. "Some people witnessed blatantly outrageous stuff: a man whose legs were damaged as he was hit by a police van, a woman who got dragged through broken glass, indiscriminate batoning of bystanders."

It wasn't until around 11pm that the situation could really be called a riot, when hundreds more people had joined the crowds.

"They made a complete screw-up by pushing people down Ashley Road. The fact they pushed the crowd into a notoriously anti-police residential area meant it became a logistical nightmare for them."

Whacky Baccy

Down Ashley Road, people could escape down side streets and the crowds dispersed. The police had exited the area round Telepathic and Tesco, leaving a police van (intentionally?) to be smashed in and the siren and lights to be used as a mobile disco. The shop also had an impromptu late night opening and people helped themselves to 100% discounted tobacco.

Despite the numbers of fresh people arriving later on, there still appeared to be an clear understanding throughout the crowd that the riot was about the squat eviction and/or Tesco. "They are very much joined in peoples minds," says our Bristolian, "The feeling in the air is impossible to put into words. People stood in their front yards beaming, others watched from cafés just looking bemused."

The police finally peed off at about 5 or 6 in



the morning, and the riot calmed down. St Paul's residents started to come out with brooms and sweep up broken glass as a neighbourhood.

And the mood since? "There isn't a sense of anything won as such – we didn't start or sustain it. It was off the back of the community but at least there's reassurance that there's awareness of the Tesco issue and anti-establishment sentiment."

Nine people were arrested for offences ranging from public affray to violent disorder, with at least two being held on remand. At the time of writing, a planned film screening in Mina Park of footage of the riot has been stopped by police, who swarmed in and confiscated the project, bizarrely justifying their action citing anti-rave legislation.

TES-COP-OLY

We are all now pretty familiar with the standard process for supermarket development planning – the company in question attempts to bribe the council into submission with promises to build houses, community centres, sports clubs, install street lighting or mend roads. While espousing bullshit about how local businesses won't lose out from their arrival, they know that they will quickly recoup and exceed any paltry sums paid out in the name of community engagement.

But for a cash-strapped council unable itself to fund anything to toss to the electorate, it's a difficult offer to turn down – just gloss over the fact that for the rest of time the enterprise will be sucking money out of the local economy, and piping it to your new friends at the international HQ of the supermarket – via its network of tax avoid offshore subsidiaries, of course.

And Tesco have been the masters of this technique, championing the complete corporate takeover of their consumers lives – out to sell them their housing, everything they ever need to put in it, providing their recreation facilities, the financial services to afford it all and, of course, stuffing them full of crap food.

And yet they are still upping the ante. To the above list you can now add paying for the means to keep everyone in their place on the Tesco-treadmill: As part of the bribe needed to secure the rights to build the biggest Tesco in the country in West Bromwich, the supermarket is not only building a cinema, restaurants, a hotel, a petrol station, shops and a new ring road but also, for the first time, a police station. The £7m new Tes-copshop is nearing completion and one presumes her maj's grateful constabulary will be only too willing to crack down on anything anti-social going on in the new development in return. Corporate cops on the beat, patrolling the privatised town centres of Britain to make sure everyone behaves like a good consumer should? Well, Every little helps... bring a nightmare corpo-fascist future one step closer...

* For more on Tesco being off the trolleys, checkout www.tescopoly.org

INFORMATION FOR ACTION

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HOVE FOR THE BEST

It was a triple whammy Wednesday (27th) as Met Police violently raided 3 squats in Hove, East Sussex at 7am. They made four arrests for abstraction (nicking 'leccy), two for possession of drugs and one for conspiracy to commit violent disorder. This disorder was alleged to have happened at the March 26th TUC demo (see SchNEWS 765) and the police had arrived with spotter cards of those they wanted.

As the first six were handed over to Sussex police, the one man accused of violent disorder was driven up to London. Once there he was booked into custody and briefly interviewed, only to be released without charge. The squats have now all been illegally evicted; 'evidence' including several laptops has been seized and much of the occupants stuff was either broken or sealed up in their former homes.

SchNEWS spoke exclusively to the arrestee: "There were four vans of Met police in full riot gear at [our house], plainclothes officers pointed me out and I was arrested." After being driven all the way to the Big Smoke two "useless" junior officers asked such inane questions as "what do you do in your squat?" Faced with the standard "no comment" line they then sent him on his (not so) merry way, with no charges and no home.

With the royal wedding (didn't they see the tea-towels?) and May Day just around the corner, police apparently seemed to think that the anarchist high command is currently based in sleepy Hove. Given that the only arrest relating to the warrants resulted in nothing more than an unwanted lift to London it seems police intelligence is even lower than previously imagined. Alternatively this was a fishing expedition intended to seize as much material as possible, while pissing off and making homeless many known "troublemakers".

As SchNEWS went to press on Thursday (28th) morning more squats were being raided in London- including the Grow Heathrow community project and the Rat Star and Offmarket social centres.

Meanwhile, on Tuesday 26th, Met Police charged a further 11 people (including Alfie Meadows who had brain surgery after being hit by a truncheon) for alleged offences committed during the tuition fees protests in on 9th December. All of whom have been bailed away from Westminster for the weekend; wedding fever (and wedding budget) probably the real reason for the recent crackdown. But will all this guarantee a fairytale on Friday? If you read the mainstream press, you'd be forgiven for thinking that anarchist plots to re-enact V for Vendetta are in final preparation - but no-one's sent us our masks and outfits yet...

STICKING TO THE TASK

In the early hours of Tuesday morning (26th), Smash EDO activists glued and locked themselves to the gates of Brighton arms company EDO MBM/ITT. Their actions delayed the opening of the factory, disrupted deliveries and forced EDO manager Paul Hills to, once again, cut a large hole in his own fence.

Having been given 10 minutes to unlock themselves by Paul Hills and friendly local bobby Sean McDonald all three naïvely agreed. They were then arrested anyway for aggravated trespass and criminal damage. Later released on police bail, conditions of which include not going within 100 metres of EDO, preventing them from attending weekly noise demos for at least 6 weeks. To make up for their absence get yourself down to EDO on Home Farm Rd 4-6pm every Wednesday.

* See www.smashedo.org.uk

GEORGIAN FACADE

Trust the fash to screw the sunniest bank holiday weekend in Brighton in years. Around 100 of the March for England's finest shambled their pot-bellied way through town on Sunday. In the event they needed a mass mobilisation of 350 cops from six forces to force their march through town.

For weeks March for England had been claiming to be nothing to do with the EDL, but of course on the day, inside their mobile kettle, out came the flags and up went the chant of "E,E,EDL". Passers-by were subjected to racist and homophobic abuse, but the march was protected throughout by the cops, who held the counter-demo in a kettle.

The not St George's Day march by the not EDL was, for a family event, remarkably short of kids. A hilarious attempt to liberalise their image by carrying a rainbow flag founedered after the mob began chanting "You lot take it up the arse!" The march was interrupted by anti-fascist demonstrations throughout the day and the MFE didn't quite get the stroll in the sunshine they may have been hoping for.

* See www.brightonantifascists.wordpress.com

MORE BENEFIT CUTS

Party-pooing plod tried to put the squeeze on two benefit gigs for political campaigns over the weekend. On Saturday (23rd) coppers quizzed management at Brixton's 'Jamm' over a FITwatch fundraiser they labelled an 'illegal rave'. Then on Sunday (24th), they paid a visit to 'The Grosvenor' in Stockwell to grill management about a scheduled gig for London Student Solidarity Campaign - a group organised by those arrested in last year's student demos. While there they seized promotional materials for the event, presumably not to distribute in a helpful fly-posting campaign.

* See www.fitwatch.org.uk

CLIMATE CAMP: LEWES

South Coast Climate Camp have pitched up in the grounds of a disused school in Lewes, just outside Brighton. At the time of writing, an estimated 100 or so people were at the week-long camp, which has the pleasant air of a family friendly village fete without the beer tent. There's a full schedule of workshops all week on various direct action techniques, guerilla gardening and talks and discussions. In terms of action, there's a few local targets that might want to watch their gates this week: incinerators, an oil-drilling operation and a proposed bio-diesel power station in particular.

* See www.brightonclimateaction.org.uk

AHAVA GOT NEWS FOR YOU

It could have been a landmark ruling - but wasn't. The District Judge presiding over the case of four pro-Palestine activists who blockaded the Covent Garden store of occupation-profitteering cosmetics company Ahava UK last year (see SchNEWS 742) found all four guilty of 'aggravated trespass' on Tuesday 21st. Two of the defendants' argued that the store's products come from illegal settlements in the Palestinian territories, and therefore they weren't preventing 'lawful business' (pretty logical and straightforward.). Unfortunately but not surprisingly, the judge decided not to rock the Israeli boat and left the protesters with 18 months conditional discharge and £250 court costs.

However the consistent and targeted protests have forced to company to put their tail between their legs and leave the flagship location - the protests were cited as one reason they won't be renewing the lease on the shop. If they think merely moving will keep the heat off them they're Ahava'n a laugh.

* See www.bigcampaign.org

MANNING THE BARRICADE

Three Catholic Workers were arrested after slipping past Downing Street security and delivering a fire and brimstone Good Friday sermon outside Number 10, condemning the incarceration of alleged Wikileaker Bradley Manning (see SchNEWS 730).

Ciaron O'Reilly, Frank Cordaro and Steve Jacobs had been participating in London CW's annual 'Good Friday Stations of the Cross'. Together with around 20 other pious protesters they spent the day touring 15 sites of companies and branches of government up to their necks in climate change, the arms trade and other such 'crucifixions'.

After the group concluded the tour back at Downing Street, the holy trinity of activists bypassed security by following in the slipstream of a car passing through the security gates. They dismissed police threats of arrest, triggering a stand-off complete with armed police and riot vans. Eventually police hauled the God-and-Police-botherers away only after 40 minutes of preaching from their unusual pulpit on the immorality of the treatment of Bradley Manning and other topics. They were later questioned and released without charge.

Manning himself remains banged up, although he has now been moved to Fort Leavenworth and hopefully less abusive conditions. His defence team still intend to press on with filing a writ claiming Bradley's right to due process was violated in his treatment at Quantico. His case wasn't helped any by the premature pronouncements of Judge Obama, who declared 'he broke the law' when questioned by a supporter of Manning.

Groups campaigning for Manning have sprung up all over the UK - see <http://wiseupforbradley-manning.wordpress.com/>

* See also www.londoncatholicworker.org

I can't believe it's not Mayday...



Mayday in Brighton will arrive a day early this year as mass celebrations and anti-cuts demonstrations are planned from midday on Saturday 30th. Groups pledging support include Smash EDO, UK Uncut, Climate Camp, No Borders, Squatters Network, Hunt Sabs, Anti-fascists and more... (read about reasons behind groups' participation in the event zine at <http://brightonmayday.files.wordpress.com/2011/04/zine-2.pdf>)

There will be soundsystems, a riot of colour, games, frolics and maybe even the odd bit of paint.

The location for the main event is being kept secret for now to avoid the kind of kettling tactics deployed by Brighton cops as a matter of routine, although a Critical Mass gathering has been announced for 10.30am on the Level.

Stay in touch on the day and obtain the location details: Twitter: #brightonmayday tel: 07950 889281 www.brightonmayday.wordpress.com

*There are Mayday demo's planned all around the country - for more see....

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

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SchNEWS warns Kate Middleton - welcome to Class War's hit list. Honest.

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