

WAKE UP!! IT'S YER MILESTONE ROUND THE NECK...



SchNEWS

www.schnews.org.uk

Friday 3rd December 2010

Free/Donation

Issue 750

FEE FOES' FINE FUN

STUDENT REBELLION CONTINUES WITH DAY OF ACTION AND OCCUPATIONS

Day X2, the second national day of action against education reforms, saw a whirlwind of protest around the country. From teach-ins to storming the town hall, walk-outs to battling police; students, school children and anti-cuts activists ensured the momentum of the student rebellion continues to build.

Crowds of over a thousand marched through London, Manchester, Bristol and Brighton while hundreds more took to the streets everywhere from Oxford to Leeds. In all, over 40 places were hit by protests. Targets were varied - in Sheffield students tried to take their protest to Nick Clegg's suspiciously empty constituency office, in Birmingham demonstrators stormed the council chambers, while across the country symbols of casino capitalism and privateering such as Vodafone bore the brunt of student anger. The message however, was clear. These kids know what sort of country the coalition is trying to build and they aren't going to stand idly by while it happens.

The protests weren't just confined to University students. Thousands of school children walked out of class to join the demonstrations in defiance of school threats to punish them.

Occupy, resist, produce

The last week has also seen the wave of student occupations gather pace, with the count currently standing at 19. Some are already into their second

week, while the latest came yesterday (2nd) as students at the University of East Anglia rushed the university council building. With it too cold to occupy on their arses, students have been busy using their reclaimed spaces for an alternative education programme of workshops, talks, public meetings and planning actions. Many of the occupations retain enough control of the buildings to allow people to come and go, with supporters arriving all the time to boost numbers. A number have also ensured that normal lectures can continue throughout the occupations to ensure minimal disruption to those who still see universities as places to get an education. Even simpering wannabe Prime Minister NUS president Aaron Porter finally threw his weight behind the campaign, not that many cared.

Most attempts at negotiation with the educational powers-that-be have failed after the authorities either refused to meet or met only to dismiss the students as a rowdy minority. These claims that the occupations are a radical fringe without widespread support are becoming ever harder to sustain as support for the occupiers has poured in from all quarters, ranging from letters of support signed by UK academics to international solidarity demos in Greece.

With the frantic university establishment watching its legitimacy seep away, the retaliation has begun. Three of the occupations, Slade School

THINGS WE LEARNT THIS WEEK...



"FIFA are a corrupt bunch of crooks..."



"...Russia is a mafia state..."



"...And the 2018 World Cup goes to...Russia!"

of Art, Nottingham and the University of Central London (UCL) have received eviction notices. At Nottingham and UCL the students have declared they will resist any attempts to turf them out.

Met stick the kettle on

After being caught with their pants down at Milbank, the cops have aggressively policed the protests. With the G20 furore fading in the public's memory the kettle is this winter's must-use police tactic while in protests around the country, riot police have been quick to whip out the batons and charge. Youtube has been flooded with police video nasties showing more punches than a Manny Pacquiao fight and more horse charging than the Light Brigade. The most heavy handed policing was at the London demo, where the futility of negotiating a demo with the police was helpfully highlighted by the Met, who tried to kettle protesters at the starting line of the agreed route from Trafalgar Square to parliament. The students scattered and the next few hours were spent in a game of cats and mice as packs of cops chased the groups of protesters through the city streets. There were several clashes, many of them coming as police lashed out at students attempting to evade kettles. After most of the marchers had returned to Trafalgar Square having found Parliament Square decked out like the Green Zone, police again moved in, kettling the protest and merrily clubbing anyone who tried to break out. There also were reports of snatch squads seizing protesters inside the kettles.

continued overleaf...

SchNEWS 750: STATE OF THE INDIGNATION

"This is a moment to seize. The kaleidoscope has been shaken, the pieces are in flux, soon they will settle again. Before they do, let us reorder this world around us..." stirring stuff from people's champion, Tony Blair

It has been two years since SchNEWS last addressed the nation. In those two years the economic crisis has snowballed, taking down one country down after another and leaving the UK staring down the barrel of the gun of the Lib-Con cuts. Dominating both the news and the SchNEWS is the student rebellion over fees, cuts and the slashing of educational allowance. But it's not because were becoming some liberal rag that would crow with triumph merely because the Coalition were forced into an embarrassing policy climbdown.

The stakes for the 'protest movement' / left / anarcho-radicalist free-thinking massive are way higher than whether students are forced to go into debt for £3000 or £9000 fees per year. This can all be but small potatoes when facing such monster spuds as severe civilisation threatening climate change and the ongoing sham of western free-market 'democracy' as a practice (wikileaks anyone?), with its loaded dice, corporate corruption, war-mongering and exploitation. And of course you don't have to limit yourself to Western democracies in order to find

elites oppressing, looting and lording it up left right and centre, while their 'subjects' live in poverty and fear.

So it has been, more or less since the cosy post-WWII carve up of the world. But perhaps, although in ways different to those referred to by St Tony above, pieces are indeed in flux.

The aftershocks from the economic earthquake in 2008 have barely begun. The collapse of the global debt ponzi scheme has forced politicians to both slash public spending and curtail social support, whilst mortgaging the wealth of the young (and unborn) in order to prop up the system (well you can't expect the super-rich to cough up can you; they'd just upsticks and move somewhere else...presumably to one of Jupiter's moons once this planet is totally screwed).

The economic tectonic plates are shifting. Europe is a busted flush - past and current bailouts mere sticking plasters failing to address fundamental structural flaws and imbalances likely to soon lead to a break up or major restructuring of the Euro. The US are now so in hoc to the Chinese they'll have to end up selling the rest of their assets to them to meet the vig. The West's elites will have to wake up to the fact that a new world order is forming - and they've been demoted in the pecking (Peking?) order.

Domestically this is also a new era. Financially

constrained and no longer able to bribe the electorate - with mostly borrowed cash - into worrying only about iphones and the x-factor, the politicians must be terrified of the masses discovering politics again, as they are exposed to much harsher economic realities than for 30 odd years.

And this is where the student revolt takes centre stage. They are the first real mass wave of discontent to surface here - showing both others, and the authorities, how powerful direct actions can be when done en masse. How this plays out may set the scene for much larger mobilisations of people in the coming months and years, should the rest of the populace finally come blinking out into the sunlight.

And this newly politicised generation, having realising their future under this system is a bleak one, and already willing to go much further than the usual grumbling and banner waving, are of course not going anywhere - they'll be here as the future unfolds, just older and poorer (and, perhaps, wiser).

But to turn discontent into real change needs well articulated and well thought out plans for what real change would look actually look like and how it would work. It's easy to be an 'anti' and form loose coalitions to protest - but harder to convince others what they should be 'pro' and how to enact it.

Time to get back to school...

INFORMATION FOR ACTION

Copyright
Published in Brighton since 1994

FEE FOES' FINE FUN CONTINUED...

Determined to get a grip on the situation the police have also stepped up their intelligence gathering campaign, employing new and ever more repressive techniques. As the students in Trafalgar Square were released from the kettle, they were interviewed on camera by FIT officers who told them they were under arrest for breach of the peace and had to give their details. After doing so, some were bundled into vans while others were released. Over 150 arrests were made.

Despite the police aggression, crowds have generally refused to be passive and controlled and have frequently stood up to the police assault. In Bristol a crowd of around 1000 lit flares and hurled mustard at police while in Brighton, attempts to kettle the main march close to its target - Hove Town Hall - were short lived as the crowd hurled missiles and pushed back against the lines. Police vans and cars were also attacked during the protest.

The movement shows no sign of abating and the next nationwide day of all out action is scheduled for Thursday the 8th of December - the day before the parliamentary vote on fees. A rally is also scheduled for the day of the vote itself. A weekend of action aiming to unite the student rebellion with the wider anti-cuts movement has been called for this weekend (4th and 5th). Protests against cuts, tax dodgers and the decimation of education have been planned across the country. See <http://indymedia.org.uk/en/2010/11/469072.html> for details.

*For a list of occupations and links to their websites, see: <http://edinunianticuts.wordpress.com/other-occupations/who-tried-to-break-out>.

IT'S A ZAD DAY WHEN...

The struggle between campaigners and developers in ZAD (le Zone d'Aménagement Différé) protest site near Nantes, France, is heating up this month.

The site sprung up last August after the first French Camp Action Climate, but there has been a 40 year campaign to prevent an airport being built in the countryside area. The plans for the space now, are for a so-called "high quality environmental project" will also include a high speed TGV railway, four-lane highway and a tram train.

The 1860 hectare site houses a total of 17 squats including fields, houses, forests, a farm and a guesthouse. The group is in the process of occupying a further two forest areas. The occupiers have been busy, organising two libraries, two free shops, a bike workshop, a welding workshop, a herb pharmacy and many collective gardens.

But in the last month surveyors have been clearing areas of land for the highway and drilling for water samples. Aided, of course, by heavy police protection, in this case 150 military police.

The sabotage of a machine "in defiance of the private security guards" who patrol the site to protect the interests of the developers has led to an escalation of police presence and of direct action from the camp.

To stop the work going ahead, groups have engaged in tree-sits, blockades and the first public demo outside a public meeting in the town hall of nearby Notre Dame des Landes. On one occasion, local organisation surrounded the police and made them retreat in a solidarity action.

The police, however, have also upped the ante. The morning after the town hall demonstration, the protesters awoke to find four police riot vans and several buses of military and local police. The police pepper sprayed activists as they "chanted and milled about" with older people and children present.

Campers at ZAD are eager for more support and this critical time, and welcome visitors to stay at the camp. Info and directions available from zad@riseup.net.

THE ITALIAN JOBLESS

Italy was inundated by student protesters rallying against educational reforms on Tuesday (30th), aka 'Block Everything Day'.

Roads were blocked, railways shut and fights broke out as the students hit the streets. The previous week students had occupied The Colosseum and the Leaning Tower of Pisa. The call to the streets this week was to coincide with the voting on the contested reform bill by the lower parliament. It is still to be approved by the Senate.

Thousands of protesters marched through Rome on route to Parliament bearing banners and shouting with gusto. At the sight of Parliament they started throwing eggs, vegetables, bottles, smoke bombs, fireworks and anything with projectile qualities they could get their hands on. Riot police used tear gas and police vans to stop protesters reaching their goal. At one point the rioters tried to overturn a police van.

In Naples the recent rubbish debacle was put to good use as protesters adorned the streets with trash and bin bags especially outside government buildings. PM Silvio Berlusconi, under fire for his party hard lifestyle and sucking up to Vladimir 'Batman' Putin, easily brushed it all off, stating that serious students weren't involved as they were all at home studying. Mamma mia!

RATCLIFFE 20 TRIAL BEGINS

The trial of 20 climate change campaigners planning to shut down Ratcliffe power station began last week (see SchNEWS 672). It has been over a year and a half since police raided a school in Nottingham where activists were staying before the planned action and pre-emptively arrested 114 people. The 20 to face prosecution stand accused of Conspiracy to Commit Aggravated Trespass. They will argue they acted to prevent death and serious injury as a result of the hundreds of thousands of tonnes of CO2 the coal-fired power station emits every week.

The prosecution opened with a bizarre slanderous assault on the defendants, questioning their motives by saying, "Was it more fun to plan this action or to vote for Zac Goldsmith? Did the defendants do all this, because they didn't have a Glastonbury ticket?" The verbal volley provoked a baffled response from the jury, who passed the judge a note asking about the relevance of her ramblings.

After exposing her ignorance of both the electoral appeal of non-dom fops and of festivals of choice for discerning activists, prosecutor Miss Gerry proceeded to lay out the detailed plans to shut down the CO2 spewing plant and present the jury with neverending lists of seized objects spanning from lock-on tubes to portions of cheese.

After this two pronged attack, claiming the defendants were in it for a giggle on one hand while banging on about the fiendish complexity of their alleged conspiracy on the other, Miss Gerry went on to suggested they should have sought celebrity endorsements, saying the money spent on the action would have been more wisely used to hire Cheryl Cole to model second-hand clothes.

On Tuesday (30th) it was the defence's turn. Their star witness was James Hansen, Head of National Aeronautics and Space Administration NASA's Goddard Institute and respected climate change expert. Dr Hansen outlined the catastrophic effects of climate change for the court and declared his sympathy with the actions of the defendants. Two of the defendants have also taken the stand to explain their actions. Up soon will be Green Party Leader, Caroline Lucas, who will describe the failure of domestic and European politicians to act on climate change.

TOWN HALL MEETING

Angry anti-cuts protesters stormed Lewisham town hall before being beaten back by fully toolled up riot police with horses and dogs.

Around 400 people descended on the town hall after attending a rally called by Lewisham Anti-Cuts Alliance on Monday (29th). As the up-fer-it throng bellowed "LET US IN", police struggled to hold the line outside the front entrance and eventually about 100 protesters broke through, provoking the brutal police response.

PHIL YER BOOTS

Many a tax-dodging corporate bigwig must have been relieved when protests hit Vodafone stores nationwide recently (see SchNEWS 746)- because it wasn't their company with angry members of the public sitting across their doorways. Well, it's not over yet!

UK Uncut have announced a new target: Sir Philip Green, billionaire boss of Arcadia, who own Topshop, Dorothy Perkins and Miss Selfridge among others. Arcadia is owned by Taveta Investments Limited, which is registered to an office on the tax-haven island of Jersey. Taveta Investments is owned by Green's family members living in Monaco, where income tax is 0%. It's estimated Green avoided paying £285million in tax in 2005 alone.

*Protests are due to begin this Saturday (4th). See www.ukuncut.org.uk

EDL DOUBLE BILL

It was an EDL double bill last weekend as the racist rabble hit Preston and Nuneaton on Saturday (27th).

Over 100 EDLers took to the streets of Preston and, according to one anti-fascist, promptly began fighting amongst themselves as the EDL stewards tried to prevent more rowdy members brawling their way through police lines. Around 200 people joined a UAF Preston Trades Council counter-protest 30 metres down the road. There were 14 arrests, mostly for being drunk or disorderly.

In Nuneaton, around 800 Islamaphobes, the majority bussed in from outside the area, rallied in the town centre. Missiles were hurled at the crowd of assembled anti-fascists and Asian youth. Other anti-fascists assembled to protect the area's mosque. Five were arrested on charges including affray and public order offences.

...and finally...

One woman from Spain's Galicia region is not waiting for rich countries' hand-outs to 'save' crisis hit Spain. Angeles Duran has registered herself as owner of the Sun. Yes, the ball of burning gas that powers life on Earth, not the reactionary pisspoo Murdoch mouthpiece.

As nobody has previously done this, and an international agreement only says that no country may claim ownership of stars and planets, mentioning nothing about individuals - the local notary public felt obliged to issue an official document declaring Duran to be the "owner of the Sun, a star of spectral type G2, located in the centre of the solar system, located at an average distance from Earth of about 149,600,000 kilometres".

Angeles says she now wishes to charge a fee from everyone who uses the sun and ... give half of the proceeds to the Spanish government and 20% to the nation's pension fund*. And we thought the sun wasn't due to collapse into a black hole for millions of years yet...

*For the record, the remainder was to be split 10% to 'research', 10% for fighting poverty and she keeps the rest...

Disclaimer

SchNEWS warns all readers, if Putin is Batman and Medvdev is Robin, watch out for the Joker. Honest.

Subscribe!

Get SchNEWS free every week by email in pdf or text file - visit our site, or send us stamps and we'll post it to you. Copy and distribute! Keep SchNEWS free with donations (via website or cheques payable to Justice?). Posted free to all prisoners. SchNEWS, c/o Community Base, 113 Queens Rd, Brighton, BN1 3XG. Tel +44 (0)1273 685913 Email mail@schnews.org.uk Web www.schnews.org.uk