

WAKE UP!! WAKE UP!! IT'S YER STRIKE A LIGHT...

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ONE STRIKE AND YOU'RE OUT AS PUBLIC SECTOR FIGHTBACK STARTS WITH BIGGEST STRIKE IN 30 YEARS

Wednesday's N30 strikes saw 2 million public sector workers striking and hundreds of thousands marching in Britain's streets all over the country, marking the biggest strike in a generation.

Demonstrations and pickets were held in nearly every major town across the UK, with the largest gatherings seeing 30,000 in London, 20,000 in Manchester, 15,000 in Birmingham and 10,000 in Edinburgh and Glasgow. More than 6 out of 10 schools were closed for the day and some activists from Occupy London stormed the offices of the UK's highest paid CEO, Mick Davis, head of Xstrata mining corporation. Reports are of 75 arrests in total, most of them around the occupation of the Xstrata office and in Hackney, after some demonstrators were kettled for four hours, then

taken into custody on 'suspicion of breach of the peace'.

The action by Occupy London saw 300 protesters, and a samba band, split off from the main march and approach Panton House, where Xstrata's offices are based. About 60 people managed to gain access to the building in Haymarket and unfurled a banner saying "All power to the 99%" from the roof. Once the police caught up with them some left by their own accord, leaving twenty inside to try and hold the space. They were violently arrested by police and taken outside to the sight of hundreds from the march who had joined to show solidarity and been kettled. Mick Davies was the highest 'compensated' executive in the FTSE 100 in 2011, receiving nearly £18.5million for his efforts as his company lost money and the economy collapsed.

David Cameron did his best to stop his lip from wobbling as he branded the nation's actions as a 'damp squib', declaring that the industrial action would have no effect whatsoever on austerity measures, stating "*Britain must live within its means*". If the highest

BACK ON THE FRACK

For the second time in a month, anti-fracking campaigners have targeted the proposed fracking site in Hesketh Bank, Lancashire. Rising Tide activists from Bristol made the long journey up north with their bikes and have stormed the rig, climbing on to drilling equipment and halting works. As SchNEWS goes to press the three plucky protesters are settling down in hammocks and warm clothes for a night atop the rig in 4 degree temperatures. A man and a woman were arrested on site, on suspicion of aggravated trespass and are now in custody. A banner drop was made from the drill, only to ripped down by a Cuadrilla cherry picker - but those on the rig have vowed to stay for as long as possible to disrupt operations.

See www.frack-off.org, www.risingtide.org.uk/bristol, and <https://twitter.com/#!/BrisRisingTide> for more info.

FRACK IN THE USA

In America, the fracking issue remains top of the climate agenda, and has become a symbol of people vs. corporations in many ways. Over 100 cities and numerous states have banned any fracking operations until more research into the damaging effects of the process have been done.

CHINESE FRACK MARKET

China is another not to be left out of the latest energy extraction fad - no matter how polluting. In a recent government announcement, the country has pledged to employ the technique as part of an effort to reach an output of 450 million tons of oil and natural gas by 2030, a 62% increase on 2010.



ranking politicians, bankers and businessmen in this country had managed to learn how to do that, it's possible the crippling cuts to essential public services might not be quite so "necessary".

Despite the devil-may-care attitude, the government has since become a little more uncertain on reaching a definitive plan for the cuts by the end of the year. Ministers leading the pensions talks between government and the unions had, up until the strikes, been hardline in their commitment to reaching an agreement before January 2012. The word now coming out of Downing Street is that no deadline has been set, and they are hoping for a resolution by the end of the year if "*unions and government negotiators engaged in a very positive manner*".

U-BOAT IF YOU WANT TO

One of the few things the lily livered Lib Dems had not caved in on so far in their desperate attempt to cling on to a scintilla of power was their support for a review into the replacement of Trident nuclear submarines. While it's hardly a radical step towards unilateral disarmament (though many in the party's grass-roots would be in favour of this) it would at least help to hold the government and arms industry to account for spending billions on a completely irrelevant bit of mass murder technology.

In May the (now disgraced ex-)Minister for War, Liam Fox announced the Trident Alternatives Review, with much fanfare from the beard and sandal brigade. Unfortunately six months down the line and Liam Fox's replacement Philip Hammond has now stated that the review will not be made public because of the "*highly classified technical, intelligence and policy information covering extremely sensitive national security issues*". Essentially the Tories are sweeping one of their few concessions to their Lib Dem 'partners' under the carpet in an attempt to stifle debate.

The government has bought into an ex-

pensive, unnecessary, like-for-like replacement for Trident (so much so they've already spent £6 billion on it) so any semblance of democracy at this stage would just be an irritant to proceedings. At best a nuclear deterrent is a costly white elephant, at worst it is a (almost literally) ticking time-bomb. Even if it were fully independent (which neither Trident nor its likely replacement is) there are no realistic scenarios where the UK would actually deploy them. So - why spend the money?

The reasons for unquestioningly replacing Trident are much the same as those for hugely subsidising the arms trade in general - having a large metaphorical wang to wave about on the world stage. The UK no longer has enough economic or military power to force other nations to their knees, so the only way to get their attention is to be the one selling them their weapons and having 'the bomb' up your sleeve - even if you don't actually need it.

Unfortunately when it comes to a choice between investing in hospitals, schools and support services on one hand and a massive silver phallus in the other it's obvious which a bunch of old Etonians are gonna choose.

GREENPEACE OF THE ACTION

The Department for Transport was blocked by fifty Greenpeace activists and two immobilised cars on Monday (28th) to protest the UK government's determination to stick a spanner in the upcoming EU vote on tar sands. 16 of the boilersuit-clad blockaders were arrested on the day.

The fact that it's less than a week now until the all-important vote is not the only reason the protest was well-timed. It's recently transpired that the UK government has been giving secret high-level support to the Canadian's campaign to stop the legislation.

Not only would the EU penalty on tar sand oil imports clean up European energy, it would also dissuade the greedy oil barons from expanding their environmentally devastating operations. Which any sane person would consider a good thing – but not the government. They've also installed a consulate in the middle of tar territory to protect the interests of fellow capitalists Shell and BP, or 'British commercial interests'...

CITY BNP RABBIT SEX SHAME

While hanging around outside schools is probably quite familiar to the rank and file of the BNP – this time they had an excuse. Well kind of... this time it's not those bloody immigrants – it's unwashed commie teachers brainwashing kids into a precocious knowledge of the facts of life.

A delegation from the far-right party picketed Grenoside Community primary school in Sheffield last Tuesday over proposals that would see children aged between four and six being taught about reproduction in mammals.

Frthing at the mouth far right loonies claimed the lessons (about rabbits) were 'bordering on paedophilia'. In fact Nasty Nick Griffin weighed in via Twitter "*Mental paedophiles behind sick plan must drop it or face demos at home too.*"

One of the mental paedophiles behind the sick plan - Colin Fleetwood, headteacher said "*It's about mummy rabbits and daddy rabbits*". Just when you thought the nasty party couldn't burrow any deeper.

THOU SHALT NOTTS SQUAT

The Bigger Society Social Club opened its doors to the public of Lenton, Nottingham on Monday (28th) morning only to have them kicked in and closed a few hours later.

Autonomous Nottingham had squatted the former Conservative Club on Castle St and had big plans for the formally unused space. Having spent the best part of a week preparing the building to host a series of workshops, discussions and film screenings with a focus on supporting Wednesday's strikes the group were illegally evicted after just one event. As the occupiers were meant to be enjoying a 'Self Defence Foundation Course' things got a little too advanced for their liking as the owner appeared at the window. He preceded to kick in the door and give them a few violent lessons of his own.

Fortunately, although the building was lost, no one was seriously hurt and most of the equipment was recovered and relocated to the Sumac Centre across town for the continuation of the week's events. To paraphrase Obi Wan "*If you strike us down, we shall go do it somewhere else*".

CRAP ARREST OF THE WEEK

For being...
Santa.

Obviously getting a little jealous of their counterparts in the US getting all the fun with the pepper spray, cops in Bristol got into the Christmas spirit this week at a Santa Uncut demo in Bristol.

At the peaceful protest that was picketing a number of top anti-cuts targets – Marks And Spencer, Topshop and Lloyds TSB – police officers attacked the festively attired activists, running over one of the elves and pepper-spraying several of Santa's little helpers. If this wasn't enough, they arrested Santa as "he couldn't prove he wasn't someone else". Come on guys, if he took the beard off, it would only ruin the magic...

ROGUES GALLERY

Brighton University's Vice Chancellor must be kicking himself. The university was on lockdown yesterday (Nov30), not out of support for the strike, but to prevent a possible occupation. Unfortunately for him, the students waited 'til the 2nd, when the uni was wide open and vulnerable again. Thirty plus occupiers are now camped out in the very public art gallery space and more are expected as the space gets established. They're protesting in solidarity with the public sector workers, against the increase in fees and the fact that the VC made noises in opposition to the White Paper to please students and staff - and then signed a public letter to the government in support of fee increases. The uni is also targeted for their lack of transparency regarding links to dodgy private companies.

Elsewhere in the country: Aberdeen students have occupied their uni's management offices.... Unlucky UWE students have been threatened with expulsion and police-aided eviction for daring to protest in administration buildings- the occupation continues on another site... Sheffield occupations going strong...

PALESTINIAN HOMES SMASHED

The Israeli bulldozers are still undertaking numerous demolitions in Palestine. In this week alone, four family homes, four Bedouin tents containing 40 people, a mosque, a public meeting house, a restaurant, a shop, a car wash, a bee farm owned by a women's cooperative, a sheep farm, numerous barns, an irrigation pond and a plant nursery have all been smashed to pieces. And those are just the ones where reports are reaching the West.

The owners and workers on these properties often own the land themselves, and have paperwork to prove their right to be there and use the space. It doesn't seem to matter to the Israeli army however, who are turning up with bulldozers without prior warning and giving people no chance to produce paperwork on their arrival. Throughout the Arab world, as struggles continue for autonomy and freedom from dictatorial rule, in Israel and Palestine the fight seems to rage even harder, and unnoticed by the western media.

PARTY & PROTEST

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

FOREST RE-COMMISSIONED

The Forest Café (a volunteer run venue/cafe/arts space in Edinburgh) was forced to close back in August when the building's owners went bankrupt. It has now risen phoenix-like and been re-christened 'The People's Café' as a over 100 people are now occupying the building.

The occupiers are planning to reopen the space to the public and are calling for others to come pitch in. Unlike in England & Wales where squatting is not a criminal offence (yet – see SchNEWS 795) in Scotland it is punishable by up to 21 days in prison. So if your currently squatting south of the border why not head up to Edinburgh for a taste of what life might be like post-criminalisation?

A 'spokesman' for the former Forest Cafe has already distanced themselves from the current occupation. Harry Giles said: "It's not a Forest led occupation. It's not been organised by us and it's an entirely different group of people who have taken this action." The Forest's reputation is not entirely spotless with talk of missing money and paid management lording it over volunteers doing the rounds, hopefully the new collective will be a little more um... collective.

To get involved head to 3 Bristo Place, Edinburgh or call 07799737995.

...and finally...

Never mind all those public sector workers having a pay freeze shoved down their throats whilst more hours are demanded of them and their pensions go down the wazoo; don't worry about all those private sector workers whose pensions have also been devalued and flung to the economic ill winds; ignore those on benefits who are being forced into below minimum wage labour in Tesco or are having to spend half their income on child care because their child allowance has been divvied up between the defence budget and bankers' bonuses; the one who is really suffering in all this is the poor old Lord Mayor of Plymouth.

In a heart rending outburst this week, Tory Mayor Peter Brookshaw has brought a tear to the eyes of many of his citizens as he mourned the fact he's been told he's not allowed to wear his special hat due to council cut backs. And not only that, but he's not even allowed to be escorted by his mace bearer. In a letter to the local paper, the Mayor is particularly upset that he must "*wear ordinary clothes with just a 'collarette'*" rather than the full chain and regalia; drive himself around, and therefore "*can't socialise because ... you can't have a drink*" and suffer the most isolated of existences after being restricted to a mere 30 events per month. This has caused much distress to not only Mayor Brookshaw, but also his wife. "*We don't feel properly attired ... Without the official chain you're a nobody ... It was my dream for 30 years to be Lord Mayor, for me and my wife Brenda to be able to give ourselves to the city. It has been stolen from us.*"

This sorry state of affairs has obviously taken up a lot of the mayor's attention, who took the time to voice his personal sorrow to his local populace, but failed to take similar action when his council laid off 500 staff in order to make £30m of cuts. We feel for you Mayor Brookshaw, we really do.

Disclaimer

SchNEWS advises all readers, you've gotta strike for your right to party. Honest.

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