

RESISTANCE

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THE SPARK

STUDENT MOVEMENT TAKES OFF



“This is only the beginning”.

This has been the almost universal message from students who have been engaging in and pushing for more direct action in the first signs, in what we hope, will be a growing movement against austerity cuts. The signs so far have been encouraging. Actions like that taken at Millbank Tower indicate a certain escalation of resistance when it comes to general opinion of the plans of the Con-Dem government. On the ground there has also been much to praise.

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London, 09/12/2010

Inside: The student and anti-cuts movement, bastard of the year awards & more!

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Students are very much taking the struggle against fees and cuts into their own hands. The movement has not been fazed by the repeated condemnations of union leaders like Aaron Porter. There is also a real sense that this is a movement in it for the long-term, real constructive work is happening at the grassroots level at many places to attempt to broaden out the movement to those outside education. The efforts towards solidarity and support for those already victimised are admirable. The widespread re-hosting of the FITwatch advice to Millbank rioters after the Met asked the hosting company to shut it down is just one example of what we can achieve when we stick together. New technologies also seem to be playing a part in developing the autonomous and self-directed qualities of the movement. While Sky News, and later the Daily Telegraph, was to place great emphasis on the Anarchist Federation and London Solidarity Federation call for a “direct action bloc” on the 10th November, and later attempting to identify “key organisers” the truth is that actions have been far more spontaneous and decentralised than this. Social Networking sites like Facebook have seen a proliferation of calls for action and organising groups coming from across the movement. Of course, these technologies also present problems as well, for example, protecting anonymity.

The great claim of the Con-Dem government has been that we are “All in this together” when it comes to the financial crisis. Of course, such an argument disguises the real interests (and wealth) politicians are serving when it comes to the cuts. However, there is a sentiment in this phrase that we should take on board. The recent media coverage has been keen not to highlight this fact, but the current struggle in which we are engaged is not only one that effects various sections of the British working class but it is an international struggle also. Too often cuts campaigns have slipped into nationalistic language over

the need to protect the British welfare system or how valuable graduates are to the British economy. These arguments need to be challenged. Students in Britain found themselves as inspired by the actions of the Irish students as much as the Italian students were undoubtedly inspired by us in their recent protests. The cuts cannot be seen as measures taken by this or that government, they are linked to an international system (and with that an international class) who benefit globally from its implementation. At a time when governments are increasingly attempting to shore up their own economic security, often at the expense or in competition with other economies, it becomes imperative that we re-state our position within an international movement.

The recent wave of direct action bares resemblance to Greece in December 2008 (and France before that) not only in terms of the tactics used, but in terms of the actors involved. Once more it is young students and precarious workers at the head of the struggle. There are obvious reasons for this. As Mike Davis recently commented, “My “baby-boom” cohort bequeaths to its children a broken world economy, stupefying extremes of social inequality, brutal wars on the imperial frontiers, and an out of control planetary climate.”

This is a generational conflict as much as it is a social and economic one. This also points to, as was also the case in Greece, to further limitations that need to be tackled. Direct action has largely been confined to the street and not, except in the case of the student walk-outs, to the workplace. Action needs to be pushed in this direction if the movement is to deepen and broaden. This not only means bringing in other workers, but seriously putting forward the prospect of workplace action in our campaigns. Of course this is not going to be easy. Many of the emerging cut campaigns are dominated by trade union bureaucrats who clearly have an interest in keeping a strangle-

hold on prospects for industrial action. Where workers are involved already they are often precarious and there is little in terms of existing workplace organisation to rely upon. This means we perhaps need to be a bit more creative about how we spread our message. Recent calls for anti-cuts actions, coming from the students, that aim to in-

volve all workers and claimants are a positive step forward. We all have an interest in sticking together when it comes to fighting the austerity programme. Only then can we start to put forward serious alternatives to the kind of society we have now where public goods are tailored to the interests of the wealthy few.



Manchester town hall 24/11/2010



Bury 24/11/2010

THE RESISTANCE BEGINS

30th October: Across the UK protesters blockade and occupy Vodafone stores in response to news that the company has been let off an unpaid tax bill of £6bn. Four shops in Central London are forced to close along with shops in Bristol, Edinburgh, Glasgow, Hastings, Liverpool, Manchester, Oxford and York.

3rd November: 40,000 Irish students take to the streets of Dublin fighting the government over fees and cuts. Protesters occupy the Department of Finance building while the gardai are heavily criticised for their violent reaction to the protests (beating one student unconscious).

10th November: over 50,000 students and education workers protest in London over cuts in further education and the rise in tuition fees. A significant section of the march occupies the Conservative campaign headquarters at Millbank Tower. There is widespread destruction of property as well as scuffles with the police.

11th November: Students at the University of Manchester occupy the university's Finance Office.

17th November: Greece sees its largest Polytechnic uprising commemorative demonstration in more than a decade (30,000 according to the police, around double in real numbers) with protesters clashing with the police.

20th November: SOAS students stage a sit-in occupation of the SOAS building refusing to leave until their demands regarding the reduction of tuition fees are met.

24th November: Second day of action against cuts to further education in the UK. Across the country many school students walk out and join protests and occupations. There are large, militant protests in Leeds, Sheffield, Manchester and Liverpool (amongst other places). In London the Metropolitan police "kettle" a demonstration in Whitehall for five hours allowing people no access to food or water and

using mounted police to charge the crowds. School students as young as 12 are trapped behind police lines. Across the country students stage occupations in lecture theatres, libraries and administrative buildings. Actions are reported in Sussex, Birmingham, Warwick, Glasgow, Strathclyde, Newcastle, Cardiff, Brighton, Leeds and Sheffield (as well as others).

25th November: Italian students storm Pisa Tower and the Roman Colosseum, block roads and railways and occupy the Senate building in Rome in protest against university reform planned by Silvio Berlusconi's government.

27th November: One of the largest demonstrations in the Irish Republic's history brings more than 100,000 people on to the streets of Dublin to protest over the austerity conditions set for an international bailout. During the protest fireworks are thrown at gardai outside the gates of the Dail as protesters shout: "Burn it down, burn it down."

30th November: Demonstrations are held across the UK, with college and university students being joined by school pupils. Occupations take place in at least 20 universities across the country.

9th December: Mass demonstration outside parliament on the day of the vote on the tuition fee rise.

The day sees police kettle the demonstration, with attempts to break out leading to confrontations with the police.

Violence against demonstrators sees Jody McIntyre, who has cerebral palsy, attacked and pulled from his wheelchair, student Alfie Meadows rushed to hospital for brain surgery after being beaten, and mounted charges against kettled students and schoolkids.

Demonstrators were able to break through police lines, using huge model books.

While the vote may have passed, the student movement has been unanimous in making it clear the battle is not over and the fight will continue.

Angry crowd halts Lewisham council meeting

An angry crowd brought proceedings to a standstill at Lewisham Town Hall on November 22nd as Mayor Steve Bullock presented the first round of cuts to public services to be made in the borough. Around 100 people of all ages and backgrounds gathered outside the Town Hall. Impassioned speeches were heard as Lewisham residents demanded No Ifs, No Buts, No Lewisham Cuts. The protesters then moved inside where some people were admitted to the meetings but around 40 people were refused access by security. Chants rang out again from both inside and

outside the meeting until eventually the door was opened and the last remaining protesters entered the room to join the noisy crowd inside. Bullock had several tantrums before halting the meeting all together. Police were called, a large security presence entered the room and the meeting was reconvened about fifteen minutes later. This allowed petitions containing the names of around 20,000 people to be presented to the Councillors demanding that Lewisham Libraries stay open. A Lib Dem and Labour councillor were effectively drowned out in the noise as people banged on the walls chanting 'Shame On

You' and 'No Tory Cuts'. When Bullock spoke, chants of Cut Your Wages appeared to leave him visibly shaken. Another

demonstration was planned when councillors were to meet on November 29th to vote on cuts.



Oxford Fighting Back Against Education Cuts

On 28th October, over 1000 students and workers from Oxford marched through the city centre, breaking police lines, to protest Vince Cable's planned visit to Oxford and the massive spending cuts to education which his party are helping impose.

These cuts, proposed by the recent Browne review, will make universities increasingly elitist, with only the rich able to attend; tuition fees are set to triple.

Students – who already find it difficult to find work after university (over 10% are unemployed 6 months after university) – will be even more crippled by debt. The cuts are likely to result in education workers (from academics to cleaners) being sacked, and students being given less time with tutors and lecturers.

But the movement to resist these cuts is developing.

An independent group of students and education workers from Oxford University and Oxford Brookes – the "Oxford Education Campaign" – organised meetings with hundreds of people, to plan action against the cuts.

At very short notice, a demo against Vince Cable's visit was called, and after just a couple of days over 1000 people were expected to attend. Vince Cable, apparently under the advice of

the police, decided to cancel his visit, presumably fearing for his reputation and safety. But the protest went ahead as planned. After a routine march, the prospect of several hours of static chanting and listening to speeches failed to appeal, so a group of more militant students broke through a police line onto the High Street. About 20 minutes later, fed up with speakers telling everybody to sit down and listen, sections of the crowd again decided to break out. This time everybody joined in.

A tense stand-off followed, with the police blocking protesters'

path onto Cornmarket. Eventually the crowd pushed past the police, and the feelings of empowerment were plain to see. People not on the march expressed their support; some even joined in! However, the police formed another line at the end of Cornmarket, and used considerable violence, pushing many people to the floor. This wasn't enough to put off the protesters, though, and they managed to push through this line too, onto the High Street. There was some talk of occupying the Exam Schools, but all entrances had been locked. This more confrontational approach to

demonstrating inspired many and shows that students and education workers are not going to take these cuts lying down.

The campaign has also put on a successful 'Free University' event, which had close to 100 people attending a range of workshops put on by students, including for example one on 'Cable, Millbank and the resistance to come'.

Nick Clegg was due to come and speak in Oxford on the 17th of November. However, shortly after this protest, he pulled out as well – citing a 'scheduling clash'!



Recession: Winners & Losers

Tory toff Lord Young of Graffham last month declared over lunch with the Daily Telegraph at Roux's (three courses for £55 plus wine) that most people had 'never had it so good'. Resistance's expenses don't quite stretch to Roux's unfortunately (main courses include 'John Dory fillet, caramelised chicory, spiced polenta

and orange' and 'violet artichoke barigoule, broad bean tortellini, piquillo pepper and kalamata olive') so over a cup of tea in our local caff' (total cost 60 pence) we thought we'd put Lord Young's claim to the test and see who the winners and losers in this recession actually are.

Losers weren't hard to find. How about the 500,000 public

sector workers who will lose their jobs? Or the 500,000 private sector workers whose jobs will also go as the government's £81 billion of cuts start hitting? Then there are the students who will have to pay up to £9000 a year to go to university (plus living costs). They may be the lucky ones. One in five 16-24 year olds are currently unem-

ployed and the numbers are rising. The old do not do any better. A pensioner with £10,000 savings will have seen the interest they receive fall by as much as 80 per cent since 2007.

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People in work are also losing out. Most are facing pay freezes. Prices though are rising and taxes are going up. Workloads are also increasing to cover for those jobs which are being cut. This means workers are actually experiencing pay cuts.

People who are lucky enough to own a house have seen its price fall by 14 per cent in recent years. Anyone using a public service is going to be a loser. Three-quarters of public libraries in London are threatened with closure – the figure is similar across the country. The NHS has to find over £20 billion of savings – a fifth of its budget. Some areas have already stopped providing services like IVF. Legal aid has been slashed. Spending on social housing is plummeting. The list goes on and on and on.

What about winners then? We searched high and low and we found some. Well, two to be precise. First there are the wonderful people who got us into this mess – the bankers. Unlike the health, education, construction, council and care workers facing the axe this lot did actually screw up, big time. But in their case the state stepped in and bailed them out to the tune of £850,000,000,000. And then there are Lansdowne Partners – a hedge fund who made £100 million from the collapse of Northern Rock. Oh and I guess you could include Lord Young. He got a nice meal and one can safely assume will not be worrying too much about his heating bills this winter, unlike most pensioners.

Lord Young of Graffham: apparently, we've never had it so good. News to us!



Students and Education Workers rally in Clegg's hometown



University students, school students and education workers rallied across Sheffield on Wednesday 24th November in opposition to cuts in higher education. Sheffield Council had briefed all local schools to instruct pupils to not attend the protest, so attendance was initially expected to be limited to FE students and workers (Sheffield University had been one of the largest northern contingents on the London demonstrations with many participating in the Millbank occupation). However, around midday it became clear that the school students had defied their teachers en masse and opted to walk out and join the demonstration. More than 2,000 people marched to the city centre, in a vibrant demonstration and followed by an unsuccessful attempt to occupy the Town Hall. University students also rallied around sixty to a hundred people from this demonstration and occupied lecture halls on the Sheffield University campus. This

was in spite of a heavy police and security presence both in the city centre and on campus.

The occupation formulated demands against not only the cuts in education, but all areas of the social welfare currently under attack, expressed solidarity with the local UCU branch (who look set to ballot for industrial action), those victimised since Millbank and for the university management to address a number of local issues including the casualisation of its young teaching staff. Messages of support and solidarity were received from across the world, in many cases from former Sheffield students, and an impromptu demonstration of trade unionists in support of the occupation occurred following a local anti-cuts meeting. The occupation was abruptly ended within 24-hours when security staff, after trying and failing to prevent an additional twenty people entering the occupied space, pulled the fire alarm. A short sit-in outside the Vice

Chancellor's office followed the evacuation of the building. However despite this students remain optimistic about the prospects for further action.

As this issue goes to print the occupation group has already called a march on Clegg's constituency office, as well as committing to further occupations in the future. The level of co-ordination occurring locally is also very encouraging. Many FE workers and students are branching out to school students and other anti-cuts campaigns (something made all the more pressing by recent news that a school girl from a local Catholic school had been excluded for participating in the demonstrations). This is while still organising in a non-hierarchical fashion and avoiding the dominance of the Labour Party and trade union bureaucrats, who clearly aim to use anti-cuts campaigns to their own ends, which has occurred in many other campaigns.

Solidarity with asylum seekers in Glasgow

On Guy Fawkes night something explosive dropped through the letter boxes of around 600 families in Glasgow. It was a letter from the UK Border Agency explaining that the families would have to move to alternative accommodation in 'the Scotland region'. Having failed to agree on costs, a 10-year contract with Glasgow City Council to provide housing to asylum seekers was terminated. If the family doesn't want to move? Well tough luck, 'continued support' is dependent on the move. So what happens next? A date and time for the move will be provided to the family 'where possible' with 3-5 days notice so that there is 'time to get ready'. Oh, and luggage should be restricted to two pieces per person.

Hundreds of protesters gathered outside the City Chambers in George Square to demonstrate against the forced displacement of the asylum seekers. The mass removal will mean uprooting people from communities where they have lived for years, pulling children out of schools, as well as breaking links with support networks that have developed. Not to mention the effect this will have on application to remain in the country that can be dependent on providing evidence of being 'integrated' in a community.

Over 400 people also staged a symbolic bonfire where Border Agency letters were put in a metal bin and burned outside the Immigration Reporting Centre. MSPs, including First Minister, Alex Salmond, have condemned the move "in the strongest possible terms". But when, Salmond pressed for no child detentions in Dungavel, Scotland, children were instead detained in England. When Nick Clegg branded the detention of children as 'state sponsored cruelty' and announced this closure of Yarl's Wood, the Border Agency continued the detentions.

Solidarity between asylum seekers, from other Glaswegians, and support from groups like the Unity Centre, has shown before with both dawn raids and forced deportations that the Border Agency can be beaten. The Unity Centre offers friendly, practical solidarity and mutual aid to all asylum seekers and refugees. £100 will help us keep the centre open for a week and help stop two families being detained and forcibly removed from the UK. Please consider helping this work to continue by sending a cheque made out to 'The Unity Centre' to 30 Ibrox Street, Glasgow, G51 1AQ.



Bastard of the Year Awards!

Politician bastard of the year

Iain Duncan Smith. For effectively introducing slave labour for jobseekers, forcing them to do 30 hours per week of unpaid work or face having their benefits stopped for up to three years. Bastard of the highest order.

ineffectual lackey of the establishment.



Honourable mentions

The entirety of the Labour party, for pretending they weren't planning to do exactly the same things as the Coalition government.

Police bastard of the year

PC Simon Harwood. For contributing towards Ian Tomlinson's death and getting away with it.



Hero of the year

Nick Clegg. For shattering an entire generation's illusions of parliamentary politics as a means for positive change.

Sychophant of the year

Aaron Porter. For condemning the occupation of Millbank Tower during student protests in London, claiming that the demonstration had been hijacked by 'a very small minority of violent protesters' and for generally being a crap,



Sabotage at Work: Behind enemy lines

The term sabotage derives from French factory workers throwing their wooden shoes ("sabots") into machinery to stop production. Individuals and groups of workers such as the Luddites and Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) have used sabotage as direct action against working conditions. This piece is the first in a series on the history and practice of sabotage in the workplace.

“Sabotage in a Food Factory: an Account of Open

Sabotage” by Patrick

I worked in a food production factory. I stood at the end of a conveyor belt where boxes with a dozen bottles came whizzing down to me, about one per second. I would stack them on pallets and the forklift driver would take them away. Occasionally, when we got a major shipment of boxes with plastic bottles for the front end of the assembly line, the foreman would take me and a few others off the line and send us upstairs to the old storeroom.

One day we were called to unload a major shipment. The boxes were coming at us at an alarming rate. Two co-workers and I were running like fools, arms stretched wide, grasping these boxes. It was sweltering hot up in the attic storeroom

in this old factory. We were sweating and running with these boxes. The conveyor belt was crammed with boxes. The foreman, a despicable Marine sergeant type, sat on a stack of boxes and picked his teeth, chiding us to go faster.

There was no let-up in boxes, and with sweat dripping into our eyes and cardboard dust irritating our skin, the three of us exploded into open revolt. Tim punched a box off the conveyor belt, and in a matter of seconds, we were punching them all off the belt, one after the other in a wild, deliriously happy frenzy. We ran to the stacks of boxes and started pulling them down with a crash onto the floor. The foreman was grabbing at our arms, trying to stop us, hollering as loud as he could over the

din of the boxes and conveyor motor.

Finally we stopped. The foreman told us to go home, to take the day off. The next day we came to work as if nothing had happened. I took my place on the line. The boxes came whizzing down to me, about one per second...

Thanks to libcom.org for the extracts from “Sabotage in the American Workplace” by Martin Sprouse.

Please send your own experiences of sabotage at work to Resistance at: surreyhants@afed.org.uk

Time to Care, Not Cut - Save the NHS!

The Con-Dem government claims in the current round of savage public sector spending cuts the NHS is a ‘winner’. They claim that they are sticking to their election pledges and increasing spending on the NHS. This is a lie. The NHS is under real threat. In a recent article that well known leftie newspaper The Financial Times set out the huge cuts that are being made to health care:

The NHS will get a paltry 0.1% rise in funding. This won’t be enough to pay for the rising cost of medicines let alone other pressures on services. £1 billion a year is being taken out of the health budget and moved into social care. The NHS has to make a massive £20 billion of efficiency savings. That’s a quarter of the health services whole

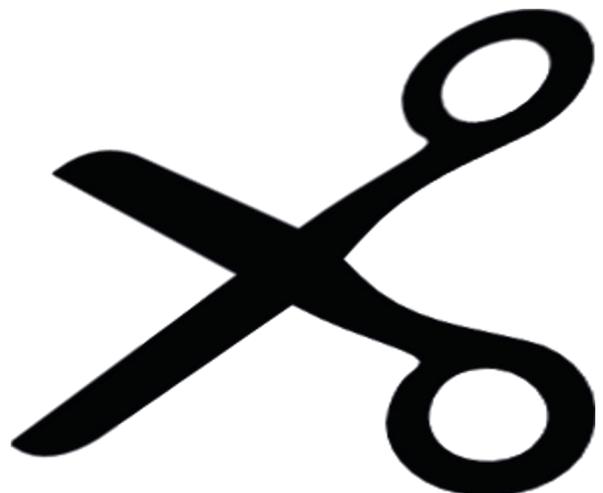
budget. ‘Efficiency savings’ of course in reality means cuts – longer waiting lists, poorer quality care and fewer doctors and nurses. The nurses union, the RCN, has already identified 27,000 jobs that are currently at risk. More redundancies will come. In fact The Financial Times reckons these will cost at least £900 million.

The NHS faces an increase in its tax bill to the tune of £300 million.

Both workers and patients will be the losers. NHS staff have been told that their pay will be frozen and worse is to come. The government wants to try to get local hospitals to set their own pay – something even Margaret Thatcher abandoned! The government has dropped waiting list targets. Before the election

patients with a serious illness had the right to be treated within 18-weeks from seeing their doctor. That has now gone. Worse still the responsibility for commissioning services is going to be given to GPs who will be able to buy in private sector treatment

and decide locally what services are provided. This will lead to a post code lottery with patients in one area being able to access services like IVF but not those in another area. The government believes that competition will improve health care. It won’t.



New AF Pamphlet

Introduction to Anarchist Communism

Anarchist Federation



New from the Anarchist Federation: Introduction to Anarchist Communism

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ANARCHIST FEDERATION

The Anarchist Federation is an organisation of class struggle anarchists (based in Britain and Ireland, but with many contacts overseas) which aims to abolish Capitalism and all oppression to create a free and equal society. This is Anarchist Communism.

We see today's society as being divided into two main opposing classes: the ruling class which controls all the power and wealth, and the working class which the rulers exploit to maintain this. By racism, sexism and other forms of oppression, as well as war and environmental destruction the rulers weaken and divide us. Only the direct action of working class people can defeat these attacks and ultimately overthrow capitalism.

As the capitalist system rules the whole world it's destruction must be complete and world wide. We reject attempts to reform it such as working through parliament and national liberation movements (like the IRA) as they fail to challenge capitalism itself. Unions also work as a part of the capitalist system, so although workers struggle within them, they will be unable to bring about capitalism's destruction unless they go beyond these limits.

Organisation is vital if we're to beat the bosses, so we work for a united anarchist movement and are affiliated to the International of Anarchist Federations.

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