The Free Hetherington Evicted...

There have been interesting developments with the Free Hetherington occupation at Glasgow University since we last reported on it (see Resistance #130). On the morning of Tuesday 22nd March, police began the forced eviction of the Free Hetherington. They arrived with no warning and no eviction order was given. After word spread about what was happening, supporters gathered for a sit-down protest on the front steps of the building and police amassed their forces. In the end, approximately 80 police officers, a canine unit and a police helicopter were deployed to forcibly evict fewer than fifteen people from both the Hetherington and the adjoining building. When they refused to leave, the occupants were violently dragged from the buildings. This extremely
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heavy-handed police response resulted in several people being injured, including one student who sustained a concussion after being thrown head-first into a wall by university security.

By this point, hundreds of people had gathered outside to see what was going on. After the last occupier had been dragged out, the mass of people sprung into action. With most of the police gone, the crowd, numbering around 100 people, marched from the Hetherington towards the main administrative building of the university, hoping to occupy the Principal’s office. Unable to find it, protesters decided that the University Senate rooms would be adequate. These rooms are the incredibly plush suite where the senior university management is based and where they host their meetings and events. In the words of some of the occupiers - it wasn’t an eviction, it was an upgrade!

After refusing to have a mass meeting with students for several weeks, the Senior Management Group finally relented and held an open public meeting with students in the newly-occupied Senate rooms. Later that evening, folk singer David Rovics held a concert on the balcony of the Senate, overlooking the city of Glasgow. At approximately 10pm, the university management caved in and told the new occupiers that they could have the old Hetherington building back on the condition that they left the Senate rooms. So within 12 hours of being evicted from the Hetherington building, the students were rather cordially invited back in. Since re-entering the Hetherington building, the occupation has gone from strength to strength. Normal activities have resumed, from anti-cuts meetings to kids’ film showings. Those involved have a renewed vigour, inspired by the re-affirmation of the old adage: direct action gets the goods!

Bristol AF on the 26th of March

The TUC predictably have turned their backs on the Anarchist groups, students and anyone else in attendance who chose to use more direct tactics than marching from A to B. Brendan Barber TUC general secretary said he “bitingly regretted” the violence, the deputy defence secretary described those involved as “tiny minority of violent, parasitic and representative hooligans”, while London’s Deputy Mayor Kit Malthouse said they were “fascist agitators.” Worryingly, shadow home secretary Yvette Cooper urged home secretary Theresa May to “consider co-ordinated action against so-called anarchist groups.”

In response, we would like to state we support all those who took part in any of the marches on the day no matter which tactics they used to make their point or their specific reason for being on the march. We recognise those within the TUC who genuinely worked hard to make the protest inclusive and successful. We even support the woman who said “Anarchists should be banned from demonstrations”, and the man from the fire brigade union who accosted one of our comrades and chastised him for wearing a fake mask. We do however condemn the actions of those scum we saw attempting to smash the window of a coffee shop while an elderly couple sat on the other side of it, and those idiots who threw paint bombs, sticks and even metal fencing from the back hitting and injuring fellow protesters. Let’s get this straight: only wankers throw from the back and endanger the safety of comrades and innocent passers-by! We really hope they were the Fascist agitators the Deputy mayor described as they have no right to call themselves Anarchists.

The TUC dubbed the march “The March for the Alternative”; many people and also the media are left asking what this alternative is. Well, we have the alternative: class struggle ending in the complete destruction of capitalism and the hierarchical state system, to allow us to finally live as equals, with genuine freedom, working together to benefit our communities rather than our ‘leaders’.

Social Centre occupied in Deptford

Local people occupied the disused Job Centre Plus in Deptford in March as a response to government cuts to public services. They aimed to create a space from which the anti-cuts movement can organise resistance to the cuts imposed by the government and carried out by Lewisham Council under the control of the Mayor of Lewisham, Steve Bullock, and other Labour councillors. They also aimed to create a public social space for other members of the local community in Deptford and the rest of Lewisham. Steve Bullock had announced the closure of five libraries, children’s centres and other public centres. The local people who have opened this social centre in Deptford do not believe that vital services like healthcare and education are unfordable, and billions of pounds have been used to bail out the financial system. The social centre is a self-organised space, run by people from a variety of backgrounds. They want Social Centre Plus, as it has been named, to be a catalyst for social and political change based on the principles of direct action, solidarity and self-organisation.

Job Centre occupied in Deptford

It was 2am on International Human Rights Day, 10th December 2009, when Israeli soldiers kicked in Abdullah Abu Rahmah’s door seized him from his bed. He was dragged away in front of his wife and three children, blindfolded, to custody. Abu Rahmah’s ‘crime’ was that he was the co-ordinator of the non-violent Bil’in Popular Committee Against the Wall and Settlements. He didn’t so much as throw a tantrum, never mind crimes, and yet he found himself in front of an Israeli Military Court and was sentenced to one year in prison, for organising demonstrations against the Wall in Bil’in.

Not content with this, the military prosecutors appealed against the undue leniency shown to Abu Rahmah and, duly, his sentence was increased by 4 months, to 16 months. Finally released after 16 months and one day in Ofer Military Prison (you weren’t really expecting the Israeli state to let him out on his release date were you?) Abdullah Abu Rahmah was given a rapturous welcome by family, friends and supporters in their hundreds at the prison gate. He said, “On my release, I have no intention to go back home and sit there idly. In fact, by imprisoning me they have silenced me long enough. Our cause is just, it is one striving for freedom and equality and I intend to continue fighting for it just as I have before.”

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Swindon Anti-cuts action

Around 100 people gathered in Swindon town centre on Saturday March 5th for a local demo against the cuts. After listening to a range of speakers from various unions, community groups (and even one from the Anarchist Federation), people planned to move around the corner for a mass leafleting session. A 20 to 30-strong contingent of radicals, predominantly anarchists, moved off as a group, defying police stipulation that the demo would remain static. It was hoped that more people would join the spontaneous march, but an early, heavy handed police reaction deterred many. As soon as the group began chanting and marching, the police began pushing at the front banner, trying to confuse and label the march ‘illegal’. After a short, slightly comical scuffle (the highpoint being an angry cop getting wrapped up in an ‘anarchists against the cuts’ banner), and lots of chanting the breakaway group split into two, congregating ten minutes later to hand out leaflets and do tax dodger actions at Vodafone and Topshop, leading to the partial shutdown of Topshop, and Vodafone locking its doors.

Overall, the day was a success for the local movement against the cuts, with a large, well-attended rally, thousands of leaflets given out, and a large, noisy and determined breakaway group showing that when they say ‘cut back’, we really do mean ‘fight back’!

The day ended with the movement gaining much vocal support from a diverse cross section of the community, a few tax-dodgers losing a bit of revenue, anarchism and direct action being put back on the agenda in Swindon and the cops (who have tried their hardest to intimidate and stifle the campaign from the outset) bleating about a ‘breakdown in trust’! All in all a good day, and a launch pad for more actions in the future. A Swindon and Wiltshire Afed group is planned for the near future.

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The word sabotage derives from French slang meaning ‘to work clumsily’. Literally: to clatter in sabots (wooden shoes). The term sabotage has also come to mean the destruction of machinery. Both individuals and groups of workers such as the Luddites and Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) have used sabotage as a form of direct action against bad pay and working conditions. Anarchists see sabotage as an effective weapon against the bosses and their profits that is not controlled or directed. Some anarchists believe that the term sabotage is a valid weapon against the capitalist system. I am not a anarchist but I do believe that we can learn from the tactics of those who have used sabotage in the past. The key is to use it selectively and strategically. Sabotage is different than theft or vandalism. It is a form of direct action that can be used by anyone to challenge the power of the state and the capitalist system. I believe that we should use it to challenge the power of the state and to create a more just and equitable society. I am not an anarchist but I do believe that we can learn from the tactics of those who have used sabotage in the past. The key is to use it selectively and strategically.
**NHS workers pay the price of government cuts**

Despite an increase in inflation to 4.4%, more than a million NHS workers are to have their pay frozen this year, which is in effect a pay cut. While workers earning £21,000 or less will get a paltry £250 extra, all other staff including nurses, physiotherapists and midwives will get zero. Health workers are already seeing their workload increase as the full effects of the government’s NHS cuts come into play. While the pay freeze has been condemned by all the health service unions, with the Royal College of Midwives’ saying for instance: “Midwives are in effect being asked to take a pay cut in an attempt to remedy an economic situation in which they are victims, not the cause.”

None of the unions are planning to do anything about the government’s move. As a health worker rightly said: “We can’t pay hard-working nurses a decent wage but we can afford yet another war all of a sudden and the bankers get millions in bonuses, great, eh?” Another said: “So where do we go from here? What are the unions going to propose we do?” Health unions like Unite and Unison need to stop moaning and start organising action.

**Tax rise for workers, but not their bosses**

You’ll probably notice that your pay packet in April is different. That’s when a National Insurance rise of 1% comes into effect. But of course, since “we’re all in this together,” your employer isn’t going to pay it. They were let off the tax rise by the new government, which claimed it was a “tax on jobs.”

No outcry about a “tax on jobs.” None of the unions are going to propose we do?”

**On the frontline**

**Lecturers strike over pensions**

After talks broke down between the college lecturers’ union UC structure and the Employers Pension Forum (EPF), a wave of anger swept through colleges around the country. Changes proposed for the Universities Superannuation Scheme (USS) pension fund were, according to the EPF, out of all proportion. But, when the USS is in very good shape there were the proposals by the EPF to reduce benefits and increase costs. Lecturers at 63 colleges involved in the USS voted for strike action and action short of a strike. As a result lecturers in Scotland went out on strike on March 17th at Aberdeen, Dundee, Edinburgh, Glasgow, Heriot-Watt, Strathclyde, St Andrews and the Open Universities. In addition lecturers struck at Warwick University on the day. As we go to press, further strike actions were planned in Wales on the 21st and England on the 22nd, to be followed by a second day of strike action for colleges and universities throughout Britain on 24th March, which could involve as many as 120,000 workers.

**Council workers and teachers in East London**

Council workers and teachers in Tower Hamlets, east London, planned to strike against cuts in the borough on 30th March, while in Sheffield, people were supposed to go on strike on the same day. Earlier the HQ of Barclays Bank in Canary Wharf was occupied by 20 teachers as the company announced huge bonuses for the bankers employed there. Tower Hamlets has the highest child poverty rate in Britain. Council cuts will affect nurseries, disability services for children and youth workers.

**Speech therapists**

Southwark speech and language therapists went on strike on February 3rd after they were informed that eleven of their jobs were to be axed in March. This would mean that a third of staff would be made redundant. Twenty therapists were on the picket line, in a service where there is no history of militancy. Some jobs were saved as the local Health Authority rapidly made some concessions. The strike immediately increased the confidence of therapists and dispelled the sense of hopelessness and despair that is afflicting NHS workers. If strike action from a small number of workers who have never taken action ever before can win some limited concessions, think what could happen if more workers and in other sectors, both inside and outside the NHS, were to go into action.

**Protest at Lib-Dem Conference in Sheffield**

The Lib Dems were in town! And Clegg and his bandits wanted protection from the angry throngs whose jobs and services they have been systematically cutting since they gained power. South Yorkshire police obliged with a thousand-strong police force in the city centre, mobile barricades, surveillance and a steel ring around City Hall. The media had been bandying about figures of a ten-thousand strong demonstration over the weekenda a figure not on the ground agreed with and was clearly a pretext to justify the reported £2m cost of the entire operation. This expense clearly flies in the face of local people who have been in the past months of the need to tighten their belts and accept hardship and “unavoidable” cuts to public services. There is a general suspicion that this was a bit of a trial run for March 26th and the type of tactics deployed on the day seem to confirm this.

In the end around 5,000 people turned out for the main demonstration on the Saturday. A good turn-out in spite of the predicted figures and generally a good atmosphere with groups from all areas of life that are currently being affected by the Con-Dem agenda. The speeches were, predictably, a staid affair, dominated by trade union bureaucrats and self-appointed leaders of the movement. Thankfully the vibrancy of those marching injected a bit of life into the event in spite of this. The anarchists formed their own bloc with individual activists from Sheffield Student Occupation and members of People and Planet who had also brought a bicycle-powered sound system to provide a soundtrack to the rally. The “friendly face” of S. Yorkshire police was on show as well with liaison officers deployed throughout the crowd. The “freindly face” of S. Yorkshire police was on show as well with liaison officers deployed throughout the crowd. There is a general suspicion that this was a bit of a trial run for March 26th and the type of tactics deployed on the day seem to confirm this.

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