

THE OCCUPIED TIMES OF LONDON

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Editorial

If any doubt remained, the LIBOR scandal has shown that we're living through a crisis of capitalism itself. There are many out there who cling to the belief that late capitalism still operates under a set of basic rules. When it is revealed, however, that an interest rate central to the global economic system has been systematically rigged for years by the world's leading banks, such a Panglossian worldview becomes difficult to maintain. This is, after all, a system that has always been rigged to favour the few over the many. A system where trillions of dollars of transactions are manipulated - leaving millions out of pocket and the culprits unpunished - while those with the misfortune to have been born with health problems are left to fend for themselves.

In order to encourage growth and unify the many new financial products and services that appeared on the market in the 1980s, the British Bankers' Association (BBA) implemented a benchmark for interest rates. A rate that affected how people and companies worldwide borrow money. This is the London Interbank Offered Rate (LIBOR), determined daily by a consortium of big banks. Through the pricing of loans, currencies, pensions, mortgages and derivatives, the LIBOR is intricately tied to investors, including governments and, by extension, public services.

Thirty years of binge-banking and uninhibited growth later, more than \$350 trillion worth of derivatives are estimated to be underpinned by the LIBOR rate, at a time when gross world product in 2011 was \$70 trillion. Put differently: The total value of (imaginary) assets traded in relation to LIBOR exceeds the total global value of goods and services by a factor of five. This is the economics of fantasists, notions of value that could only seem plausible under a state of capitalist surrealism.

But the price we pay for speculation isn't only unsustainable excess but also a system driven by endemic corruption. Criticism can be levelled at the practices used by the world's leading financial institutions, and it was only a matter of time before more stories seeped into the public domain and revealed the widespread collusion between members of the private banking cartel. Is it right that someone at bank A can pick up the phone to someone at bank B, and make decisions which reverberate throughout society, without being subject to any checks and balances? When seen as part of a broader tapestry of complex derivative markets, where the 'value' that is traded and manipulated remains purely abstract, the recent Barclays Bank-LIBOR fraud is further evidence that capitalism forgot to even pretend to follow its own flawed "rules" wlog ago.

Barclays has been fined £289 million - £59 million by the Financial Services Authority (FSA) and £230 million by the US Department of Justice and Commodities Futures Trading Commission. This is a drop in the ocean compared to the money which has been used to bail the banks out when they collapsed under the weight of their own risky strategies. What's more, financial institutions (including Barclays itself) are likely to pay a lower levy to the FSA next year because of the fine. The Serious Fraud Office has yet to bring any criminal



charges for the rampant dishonesty, even though three senior figures have so far felt the need to resign. You can rest assured that they will receive huge pensions and bonuses rather than face financial ruin or jail. Meanwhile, those affected by the crooked finance game will remain without justice.

By contrast, the majority of people do not have the safety net of personal networks or family affluence to fall back on once we fail, and cannot be safe in the knowledge that even abysmal mismanagement will earn hefty rewards. For most of us, failing means falling hard. Swingeing welfare cuts are now sweeping away the thin cushion that remained. Often, those cuts are nothing more than an anecdotal story to those who preside over them or justify them on the grounds of "fiscal responsibility".

Governments have consistently scapegoated the most vulnerable in society for the elite's mismanagement in recent decades. This coalition is no different. With the continued help of the right-wing press, consecutive incumbents at the Department for Work and Pensions have constructed a grand fallacy, according to which huge numbers of those claiming disability benefit are lying about their condition. These "scroungers", we are told, are the cause of the country's economic woes. The latest Work and Pensions secretary has gone as far as supporting The Sun's "Beat The Cheat" campaign, encouraging readers to denounce suspected benefit cheats.

This policing of neighbours is reminiscent of Soviet Russia or

Orwell's 1984. The Sun's former editor, Rebekah Brooks, recently described her own arrest for alleged involvement in phone-hacking as a "witch hunt". Yet it appears that the real modern-day witch hunts receive explicit backing from national government. The centre spreads of OT16, written by people involved in the disability and serious illness struggle, highlight the shameful neglect we exhibit towards the most vulnerable, and illustrate the myriad ways in which governments and corporations attempt to benefit from the institutionalisation of austerity and its force-feeding to the poor and disabled.

It was that great communist Henry Ford who once said: "It is well enough that people of the nation do not understand our banking and money system, for if they did, I believe there would be a revolution before tomorrow morning." Well, people are beginning to understand - not only the inner workings of the banking system but also the harsh and unjust realities of welfare cuts. After years of crisis, increasing numbers are reacting to the constant trickle of bad news not with apathetic indifference but with indignation. In countries like Spain and Greece, people power is already growing. Now is the time to keep the pressure on governments and corporate elites, to continue to raise awareness of the effects of austerity policies, and to make our presence felt in public places. The future of European politics cannot be found in the Houses of Parliament in London, Berlin, Paris, Athens or Brussels. Democracy is in the streets.

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Since October of last year, The Occupied Times has offered a high-quality alternative to corporate media. Our publication features articles by activists, citizens, thinkers and academic experts from the UK and around the world, and we have published 30,000 papers full of critical analysis, opinion, features and news, without printing a single advert.

The paper is totally non-profit, printed on recycled paper with vegetable inks at favourable rates by a sound and community-minded printer. It is sustained by the voluntary efforts and enthusiasm of its writers and editors, and the donations of its readers. Please help us continue. A donation of £5 funds the printing of 15 copies, and every penny goes into our current monthly print-run of 2,000.

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You can also contribute writing and photography to the OT by visiting us online.



OCCUPY RESEARCH

SAM HALVORSEN & EMMA FORDHAM

The first Occupy Research Collective (ORC) Convergence recently took place in London. Around 50 people participated, and dozens more watched online. The theme of the day was "ethics and activist research". In the spirit of Occupy, however, the final agenda was decided collectively on the day of the event.

Discussion topics included the commodification of universities, radical education, the ethics of researching social movements, how to learn from the history of radical movements, and questioning the notion of research itself.

ORC aims to foster the building of a network of radical researchers. This includes activists, students, academics and anyone interested in doing research associated with activism, social change, education or community. Participants want to experiment with alternative, collective ways of doing, disseminating and collaborating on research and publishing, and

to counteract neoliberal trends in education and the research environment. Occupy Research is more than a network of researchers: it is Occupy activism in practice with intent to open up the process of research to social movements, and to enable those movements to hold researchers to account.

Perhaps the most refreshing element of the Convergence was the acknowledgment that we don't have all the answers and do not seek to answer every question. Occupy Research, not unlike the broader Occupy movement, is an open and collective process which favours asking over preaching. Researchers care about which questions to ask, and who is asking them. Attendees expressed hope that the Convergence will inspire further consideration of the ethics of research within and alongside the radical politics of asking.

ORC blog and discussion forum: occupyresearchcollective.wordpress.com



WASI DANIHU

RESIDENTS LOCKED OUT OVER BBC OLYMPIC COVERAGE

JACK DEAN

On July 21st 2012, residents of the Carpenters Estate in Stratford, East London, were denied access to their home by BBC security personnel and police, who refused to explain their actions. After an hour of obfuscation, the police admitted that they had no legal powers to prevent families entering their own homes and stood aside.

One of those affected by the lock-out had invited members of Carpenters Estate Against Regeneration Plan (CARP), who had been taking a tour of the estate, to inspect the high quality of his accommodation. CARP were also denied access.

The top floors of one of the Carpenters Estate tower blocks were recently hired out by the BBC as a hub for

their Olympics and Paralympics coverage, partly due to excellent views of the Olympic Park.

Residents of the estate have voiced complaints regarding the BBC's presence on the estate, accusing them of breaches of planning agreements and a disregard for health and safety. The residents' lift was used during renovation of the BBC site to remove waste materials, including asbestos, and a large emergency generator has been sited in a grassy play area without planning permission. A complaint to the BBC about noise and fumes emitted by the generator has received no response.

One resident suggested that the lock-out may have been an attempt to hide regulatory breaches from journalists and members of the public.



ECO-VILLAGE RESISTS EVICTION

EMMA FORDHAM

According to bailiffs, private property developers at Runnymede campus are attempting to take out a new injunction against the 'Diggers 2012', a collective of would-be eco-villagers who have been camping on the site for more than a month. The injunction sought would criminalise trespass, combining an eviction order with powers of arrest.

Despite the threat of eviction, the Diggers have continued hosting picnics and discussions at the Magna Carta memorial in Runnymede Park every Saturday afternoon. Local residents, Occupy supporters and environmentalists including journalist George Monbiot have visited the camp and attended workshops in traditional crafts such as charcoal making, pottery, green wood carving, wild food foraging and timber frame building.

One of the Diggers, Simon Moore, said: "There's an abundance of disused privately owned land that's perfectly suitable for eco villages." In what could be construed as a call to the land, Simon suggests that "As the false economy implodes it's possible we'll be seeing lots more Diggers-style villages springing up across the country, challenging the hegemony of the big landowners and the law."

Inhabitants of the Diggers' camp have been evicted three times recently, each time resisting peacefully. Some eco-villagers climbed into the rafters of their wooden 'longhouse' to evade bailiffs, while others played for time by laboriously doing "emergency eviction washing up". Bailiffs, supported by



BEN CAVANNA

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POLICE CUSTODY

MARTIN EIERMANN

Over 1,400 people in England and Wales have died in police custody or following contact with the police since 1990. Some of the better known include: Jean Dorothy, 'Cherry' Groce, Cynthia Jarrett, Blair Peach, Jean Charles de Menezes, Andrew Kernan, Harry Stanley, Mark Duggan, and Ian Tomlinson. Not one officer has been convicted of manslaughter in 22 years.

But let's go by the numbers: A study by the Independent Police Complaints Commission (IPCC) examined a total of 333 deaths in custody between 1998/1999 and 2008/2009. Most were a result of self-inflicted wounds, overdose, suicide or so-called "natural causes". In at least eleven cases, however, physical restraint and violence were determined to be the primary cause of death, according to the Independent Advisory Panel on Deaths in Custody. In addition, there have been reports that police and medical officials have classified deaths which might have resulted from violence during the arrest or in custody as "unknown" or "by natural causes". When Ian Tomlinson was beaten by a police officer during the G20 protests in London in 2009 (later dying from his wounds), the cause of death was classified as "unknown". The Crown Prosecution Service, the government agency tasked with opening criminal proceedings, declined to investigate the case. Another study, which examined deaths in custody between 1990 and 1996, found that up to 8% of deaths were due to physical violence, often from police officers at the scene of arrest or place of custody.

Race, too, is an important factor. Tensions between police and minority communities are well documented, manifesting on a daily basis in stop-and-searches and racial profiling. Black people and other minorities are more likely to be arrested, more likely to be physically abused, and more likely to face prison sentences than caucasians. It is no surprise, then, that black prisoners are almost eight times as likely to die as a result of police actions than white detainees. As the Police Complaints Authority acknowledges, "a disproportionate number of people who die in custody or specifically following restraint are from minority ethnic groups."

Police are clearly aware of their misconduct. The IPCC report found that standard police procedure was breached in 91 cases, by failing to administer first aid, for example, by excessive restraint or violence, or by failing to tend to prisoners considered 'at risk' because of alcohol, drugs, or mental health concerns. As

the report concludes, "the acquittal rate of police officers and staff members is therefore very high despite, in some cases, there appearing to be relatively strong evidence of misconduct or neglect." The Tomlinson case is a good example of breaching police protocol, both in relation to the treatment of prisoners and in the maintenance of internal checks and balances. Simon Harwood, the officer accused of killing Tomlinson, has a long disciplinary record bordering on psychopathy (including several cases of unjustified violence against arrestees). He had even resigned from the Metropolitan Police prior to facing disciplinary action in 2001, but due to a lack of oversight described by the IPCC as "simply staggering", he was allowed to rejoin the police and deployed in a riot squad.

Little has been done to address past injustices or change the culture of impunity in the police force. Of the 333 reported deaths in police custody between 1998 / 1999 and 2008 / 2009, only 67 cases were referred to the Crown Prosecution Service. Seven of those 67 led to prosecutions, and one led to a conviction. The officer, who had watched cartoons with colleagues while a prisoner known to be at risk of suicide hanged himself in his cell, received a verdict of no: "misconduct in public office".

Criminal prosecution, however, is not the only way to address police misconduct. Police authorities can also initiate disciplinary action or misconduct hearings, in an internal process that largely evades public scrutiny. To date, little is known about this (in fact, police have not released information of whether disciplinary action was taken in around half of the 333 cases). This is what we do know: Between 2004 / 2005 and 2008 / 2009, 44 cases resulted in disciplinary proceedings against 114 police officers. Only three received reprimands, further illustrating the lack of accountability within the police force.

Usually, a public prosecutor confronted with 11 proven violent deaths, or with 333 cases that might involve criminal liability, who failed to secure a single conviction, would be exposed to severe criticism and public scrutiny. An employer who failed to take allegations of misconduct or sexual abuse seriously, and failed to initiate disciplinary proceedings, would see their reputation tarnished and their company sued for criminal neglect. Evidently, different standards apply when the perpetrators wear a badge and a uniform. Those who enforce the law continue to operate outside it, and hide behind the institutional culture of impunity.



ANDREA BAIACS



TWO BOOTS AND A BINDLE

ARE WE ANY CLOSER TO PREVENTING FUTURE CIVIL UNREST?

OJEAJU NWABUZO

In the absence of a full government inquiry into the riots, the Runnymede Trust was concerned that ethnic inequality and racial injustice, as potential factors in the civil unrest, were too quickly dismissed and marginalised from public discussions. In October 2011, I was part of a research team that went to communities across England to speak to people about why these disturbances occurred and how we could prevent them from happening again. In particular, we wanted to understand the role that race played in the riots, if any at all.

Returning to a special double issue of the journal "Race and Class", published just after the Brixton riots of 1981, I was struck by the similarity of the circumstances present in the build up to both disturbances. Today as then, there was rising unemployment, unequal access to quality housing and education, and a widening gap between rich and poor. The social contract between individuals and the state is failing, and in particular it is failing many black and minority ethnic (BME) people. In 2011, when peaceful demonstration and opposition to government cutbacks resulted in little or no change, the riots provided an opportunity for people to vent their frustrations. Our research found

that rising unemployment levels, criminal injustices, growing levels of inequality and a general sense of hopelessness were among the reasons for people taking their anger into the streets.

Unemployment is at an all time high. If we look at black men specifically, their unemployment figures have increased disproportionately since 2008. Currently, 55.5% of economically active black men between the ages of 16 and 24 are unemployed. For that community, these numbers imply a severe crisis. While many commentators have pointed to public sector spending cuts as a potential cause of the riots, it is little known that public sector job cuts have a disproportionate impact on ethnic minorities. Since we published our riots report, we have argued that while racial inequalities were not the sole reason for the civil disturbances last year, many of the causes for the riots will not be adequately addressed unless we tackle racial discrimination alongside broader issues of social injustice such as class prejudice.

It's clear that there are some very unequal power relations at play, and the Runnymede Trust's findings highlight a divide between those bearing the brunt of the public spending cuts and those in positions of power who appear to be unaffected, but are willing to point the finger at those devoid of any real command. When we spoke to communities across England, we did not see a 'broken society' - as David Cameron has called it - but a society that is breaking down as a consequence of a pervasive neoliberal agenda. Since the government established the Independent Riots Communities and Victims Panel, few new initiatives have been introduced to tackle the structural inequalities that were raised in the panel's report. Instead, the government's lacklustre response has been to roll out a number of initiatives that were in the pipeline before the riots.

The 2011 riots were a reaction to people's oppressed and marginalised status, and a complete breakdown in relations between the police and the BME community. In the months

before the riots, unprecedented numbers of stop and searches were reported in Tottenham, and recently published data from the Equality and Human Rights Commission shows that black people are up to thirty times more likely to be stopped than white people. None of these tensions are new. Similar reports surfaced after the 1981 riots, but for a younger generation, stop and search appears to have eroded any level of trust or respect for the police. We need enlightened public policies to transform this relationship. Instead we have seen a greater commitment to punitive measures and harsh sentences from the courts.

Let's not forget that these riots erupted in response to the fatal shooting of a mixed raced man, a case of pure and simple police brutality. For the past eleven months, the Independent Police Complaints Commission has been conducting an investigation into Mark Duggan's death - an investigation which has been marred by controversies and still hasn't been concluded. Whilst the causes of civil unrest in 2011 have been discussed and analysed at length, Mark Duggan's death remains unexplained.

It is apparent from the 1981 Race and Class journal and from our research that much remains to be done to tackle racial injustices and racial inequalities. If we are committed to eliminating the causes of civil unrest, creating more meaningful ways for political participation would be a good place to start. Most of us want to live in an equal society with access to good education, employment and housing. People also want to be in positions where their voices make a difference. Once marginalised communities are allowed to move towards the centre of policy-making spaces, and when they have greater influence over the cards they are dealt, the potential for change increases dramatically.

We need initiatives to improve the political literacy and political engagement of young people from impoverished communities. This would offer alternatives to civil unrest as a means of expressing dissatisfaction with the government.



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THE IDEOLOGY OF THE MADDING CROWD: LEARNING LESSONS FROM OUR HISTORY

DRS. STOTT & DRURY

Given their scale and intensity, perhaps the most surprising thing about the 2011 summer 'riots' is how quickly they have slipped into the past and how little has been learned from them. Perhaps this vacuity of understanding flows from the almost immediate political consensus about underlying cause: that the confrontations were not driven by grievances - legitimate or otherwise - but were just a pathological intrusion into the normal social order.

If the political discourse was anything to go by, 'the riots' represented a society under attack, either from a distinct cultural 'underclass' bent on 'mindless criminality' or from others drawn into the apparently random destruction and looting because of 'mob psychology'. In one way or the other, the dominant idea was that 'the riots' were a unitary phenomenon driven by a simple cause.

Discourses of social pathology and criminality always surround major riots. And they are profoundly ideological, for if 'rioters' are unrepresentative of the wider community and their actions meaningless, then there is nothing wrong with 'us' but something profoundly wrong with 'them'. In turn, such analysis presents a powerful legitimisation of reactionary social control through the courts, prisons, curfews, water cannons and 'rubber bullets'. No surprise then that, following 'the riots', one of the only formal consultations undertaken by the UK Home Office has been on creating curfew powers. The same organisation has also recently spent £427,000 on procuring 'rubber bullets'.

The claim by politicians and media commentators that the riots were simply criminal or simply meaningless was based in part on official statistics. However, closer scrutiny sheds doubt on these statistics. On the one hand, there was the use of arrest figures to support the claim that most rioters were already 'criminals'. This ignores the biasing of those figures due to the fact that the vast bulk of detainees were arrested following the disturbances on the basis of CCTV images. Therefore, there was a strong prejudice toward

the arrest of those already well known to the police. On the other hand, there was the assertion that rioters 'turned on their own communities'. However, the data on property damage shows clear selectivity of targets rather than indiscriminate and 'mindless' destruction.

So if the riots were not 'mindless criminality', how do we explain their development and what it was that people did?

In recent years, we have had some success in explaining patterns of behaviour in crowd conflict events - ranging from the St Paul's riot in the 1980s to the No M11 anti-roads direct action in the 1990s - using the concept of social identity. This social identity approach recognises that people act collectively in crowd events on the basis of shared understanding of who they are and how they relate to others. This psychology of shared social identities among crowd participants both enables collective action and defines its limits. From this perspective 'rioting' is always a meaningful reflection of participants' perceptions of themselves and the surrounding social context.

Crowd events like riots almost always involve interacting groups (for example, rioters and police). The definitions of appropriate conduct that people in crowds adopt are therefore not fixed, but relate directly to the perceptions of legitimacy and power that flow from crowd members' common - but potentially dynamic - relationships with those other groups. Consequently, crowds are a place in which normally subordinated identities can change through empowerment to allow for the expression of underlying antagonisms in ways that other more mundane circumstances do not allow.

The authors of this article have undertaken an extensive study into the 2011 riots using video and interview footage. Our findings stand at odds with the dominant simplistic analysis and are more in line with the social identity approach. First, as with other riots, we found that patterns of collective action reflected underlying grievances and collective self-definitions. For example, the riots in Tottenham and Hackney can



ERIK HARTBERG

be characterised as 'anti-police riots', since here the aim appeared to be to get control of the streets through direct collective confrontations with the police. In contrast, the riots in Croydon and Ealing reflected class-based antagonisms, since the targets were posh shops and locations of wealth, and the police were generally avoided rather than confronted.

Thus far from meaningless explosions of random criminality, the 2011 riots seem to reflect grievances that grew from social relationships within the background context. It is highly significant that these riots developed after the shooting of Mark Duggan. This incident represented for many within the community their

ongoing antagonistic relationship with the police. This antagonism fed into the events on Saturday 6th August, but only after Mark's family was left officially uninformed of his death for two days and a peaceful demonstration about this fact was essentially ignored. The rioting on the High Road intensified following police responses to the initial outbreaks of conflict. The events then escalated elsewhere and over the coming days, due to a growing sense of empowerment among those who identified with the rioters. Shared and antagonistic relationships to powerful groups in society, such as the police and the 'rich', were fundamental.

In summary, if one lesson should be learnt it is that riots cannot be

adequately understood by abstracting them from their social context; a context that invariably involves intergroup relationships, including forms of policing. Therefore, the 'solutions' to these conflicts do not reside in trying to address the 'inherent pathology' of the rioters but to start asking questions about the forms of social relationships that lead to and then amplify their antagonisms.

By Dr. Clifford Stott, Aarhus University, Denmark & Dr. John Drury, University of Sussex, U.K.

For further reading see: Reicher, S & Stott, C (2011) Mad Mobs and Englishmen: Myths and Realities of the 2011 'riots'. www.madmobsandenglishmen.com



TWO BOOTS AND A BINDLE

STATE OF DEBT

NICK MIRZOEFF

After the May Day action, which brought 50,000 people to the streets of Manhattan, OWS activists met to consider their next steps. As powerful as May Day had been, it did not shape a narrative for the future. So "Occupy Theory", the working group that publishes Tidal (<http://occupytheory.org>), convened a series of assemblies in Washington Square Park. Unlike the General Assembly, which no longer meets, these assemblies were open and horizontal discussions about the choices confronting a smaller but more focused movement.

After three weeks, the decision was reached to concentrate on questions of debt. Student debt in the US has reached insane dimensions: Tuition levels are rising annually, scholarships are increasingly scarce, and general economic hardship is growing, which means the majority of students are unable to source support from relatives. According to the Wall Street Journal, the total student debt in the United States just passed \$1 trillion. This includes over one million people who owe \$100,000[a]; 27% of these student loans are now in default. Put all these graduates together in one place and you would have the tenth largest city in the country. An actress who spoke at the assembly described how she can no longer take acting work because if she does, all her income goes to finance her student debt. She has to work in the black economy after having graduated from one of the top drama schools. Whereas a director decided to emigrate to Eastern Europe to escape his debt and start anew.

The working group moved on to discuss other ways debt has had a destructive affect on people's lives. Five million homes have been foreclosed in the US, and five million

more are in the process of foreclosure. Outstanding credit card debt has reached \$800 billion, but the lenders have had to write off an additional 10% because people are unable to pay. Debt is the price the 99% have paid for the excesses of the 1%. Or, more precisely, debt is what ties the 99% together. It ruins and constrains lives. Thus was born a new campaign out of OWS: "Strike Debt". Strike Debt will call for an end to debt culture and empower an invisible army of people who are already refusing to repay their debts. In effect, we should consider this a debt strike. This campaign is gathering pace and will officially begin in the week of September 17, on the anniversary of Occupy Wall Street.

Since OWS began, there have been concerted efforts to create a narrative to tie together the themes of biosphere extinction, debt catastrophe and the failure of counterinsurgency. It may be as simple as this: The oil empire built by the US has been challenged by the unanticipated consequences of debt and climate change. There never was a grand strategy, just an application of overwhelming force from a world power that no longer holds sway. No one knows what comes next.

What we do know is that the debt machine at the heart of western hegemony has been exposed as a fake. In London: the LIBOR (London Interbank Offered Rate) debt scandal should be the top political issue of our time. LIBOR is the means of setting global interest rates after the polling of 16 leading banks. This process sets the rate for mortgages, credit cards and student loans - internationally. And it has been systematically fixed for years. The manipulations were of the order of five or ten basis points (1% equals 100 basis points), which sounds negligible. But \$550 trillion of credit is affected by this rate, and some estimates are as high as \$800 trillion. Even tiny changes save or cost the banks billions. Interest rates were never an expression of the

"free market" - they were rigged.

Even the banks know there's a price to be paid. The Financial Times now estimates that fines will reach \$22 billion. And for us? For our over-priced credit cards, the interest is on average 16.24%, on money borrowed at 3.25%. For the student loans, interest rates are running up to 15%. Adjustable mortgages keep getting more expensive even as deposit rates dwindle to zero. We expect what we will get: nothing. But we will strike debt.

It's not just about Barclays, which has paid a minimal fine of \$450 million as part of their admission of guilt. LIBOR rates automatically exclude the highest two rates and the lowest two. So to actually change LIBOR, at least six, probably eight, maybe all 16 banks had to be involved. If the mafia had done this, we'd have hundreds of years of prison sentences being handed down under the Racketeer Influenced and Corrupt Organisations Act. Don't hold your breath to see a 'bankster' do time.

Of course the US government were aware of this. As early as 2008, the Federal Reserve Bank of New York was aware of the fix and refused to intervene. In a functioning political system, heads would roll. If they don't, we'll know that this empire has no functioning democracy - it has been outsourced to the financial sector.

Why do nations keep supporting the US market? One answer is that other nations buy US treasury bonds because of the prominence of America's global empire, as David Graeber has argued. Thus, it makes a difference whether that empire can keep order or not. It's been obvious for some time that global counterinsurgency has morphed into a drone-enabled assassination program, a kind of automatic merger of COINTELPRO (the FBI's covert Counter Intelligence Programme from 1956 to 1971) and Murder Inc. It is now obvious that it doesn't work very well.

The US Defence Department



SUNSET PARKER PIX

budget is so enormous that the \$70 billion it would cost to make all public higher education free is equivalent to the amount of money that was lost to management errors in defense spending. They 'lost' \$70 billion in just two years. But since 9/11, the Defence budget has been almost sacred. If we were willing to shrink it, we could easily strike debt, generate a massive stimulus to the economy, and revive millions of lives.

The global economic hegemony of the US has benefited from the Eurozone disaster. Rumours circulated in 2007 about the disappearance of oil that was priced in euros. Global liquidity has nowhere to go but straight to the dollar. One group of mainstream economists have described the US dollar as being the "oil standard." According to this view, the empire kept the peace in oil-producing regions and was rewarded with cheap oil that was priced in dollars. Since the invasion of Iraq, however, the connection between a strong dollar and high oil prices has been broken.

It still makes sense to think of the dollar as a petro-currency and of its empire as being boosted by oil. In 2007, it was predicted that the US would produce about 30% of its oil needs in 2010. In fact, it currently produces about 45% of its needs, due to massive exploitation of all available resources and greater fuel efficiency. In 2005, the US wasn't among the top ten oil producers in the world. Today, it is number three.

As a result, Big Oil is alive and well in the US. The five largest oil companies made \$136 billion in net profits in 2011, with no sign of decreases this year. US representatives receive significant campaign contributions from Big Oil, \$150,000 on average. Ironically, the supposed oil man Geroge W. Bush has been replaced by a far more oil friendly regime that consists of the purportedly green-friendly Obamacans. They are supposed to be Democrats, but appear more like Republicans.

There are just two tiny problems. The oil is running out, and the biosphere is dramatically transforming. Which is why (here's problem three) things aren't going so well. The International Energy Authority, a totally pro-fossil fuel organisation, has been sounding the alarm for some

time. According to its chief economist Fatih Birol, "we think that the crude oil production has already peaked in 2006, but we expect oil to come from the natural gas liquids, the type of liquid we have through the production of gas, and also a bit from the oil sands. But in any case it will be very challenging to see an increase in the production to meet the growth in the demand, and as a result of that... the age of cheap oil is over." Notably, the big five oil companies are indeed making less oil than they used to do. And then there's the heat. 3300 temperature records were set or tied in June 2012 in the US. 172 new all-time temperature records were reached. Climate scientists are now able to tie these weather events directly to carbon emissions, while also being able to say that events like the cold winter in the UK in 2011-12 were not caused by global warming. The miserable UK summer is likely to be the result of more moisture in the atmosphere, caused by climate change. Arctic ice is melting faster than ever this summer, and was at its thinnest winter level earlier this year. The eleven warmest years on record all happened within the last thirteen years. Time's up for pretending that everything will be OK, or that some invention will come along to sort it all out.

The consequence, as the International Energy Authority has shown, is that we have exhausted our carbon account. If we want to limit temperature rises to between 2 and 4.5 degrees over the course of the century, we have already used, or are in the process of using, all the carbon we can.

Climate justice movements speak of a carbon debt that the developed world owes the underdeveloped world. There are 393 parts per million of CO2 in the atmosphere now. Before the industrial age, that number hovered around 275. The highest level scientists regard as being able to sustain normal conditions is 350. In order to allow for global development, we have to radically cut back, starting yesterday. Empires fall, as any historian can tell you. What happens next? That's up to us.

Nick Mirzoeff is Professor of Media, Culture and Communication at New York University. He has been involved in Occupy Wall Street since its beginning and blogs about it at <http://www.nicholasmirzoeff.com/02012/>



CRISTINA E LOZANO

IMAGINING THE END OF STUDENT DEBT

ANN LARSON

It's a shameful thing to be in debt. Once you're in debt, you're not supposed to talk about it. It's your fault. You borrowed too much. You must accept the consequences of your immoral actions, after all, no one forced you to take out that loan. Lenders, on the other hand, can claim the moral high ground. We lent this student \$50,000 to attend college, it's not our fault she can't find a job.

Thanks, in part, to Occupy, this idea - which places responsibility for a failed economy on individuals - is starting to unravel. As activists, citizens, workers and debtors, we are starting to ask if all debts must ultimately be paid off. As a student debtor recently posted on Twitter, "Are you obligated to repay a loan to the mafia?"

Student debt is a particularly striking example of illegitimate debt.

In the US, two-thirds of college graduates leave school with student loan debt, an average of \$25,000 each. Debt rates have increased 500 percent since 1999. Student debt, which has passed \$1 trillion, will burden students and families for years to come. Many graduates struggling to find well-paid jobs will never be able to pay what they owe. Those who cannot afford to complete degrees, an increasingly likely prospect, will have no choice but to make debt payments for a diploma they never earned.

WHY DOES COLLEGE COST SO MUCH?

The increasing cost of college in the US is partly the result of the wide availability of loans, combined with drastically reduced government funding for higher education. But that is not the whole story. College costs have skyrocketed because higher education is debt financed, which allows administrators, the government, and Wall Street to profit from student debt. Many executives who manage universities want to raise tuition.

Bob Meister, of the University of California, has explained that US colleges are run like corporations. Administrators use tuition dollars as collateral to improve their institution's bond rating in capital markets, allowing them to fund lucrative construction projects. Tuition revenue (increasingly funded by debt) is a giant money spigot that college executives use to enrich themselves. This is why it makes little sense to debate the interest rate of a small subset of undergraduate loans in the US Congress, or to lecture students on how best to manage their loan payments after college. These distractions allow powerful people to evade the fundamental issue; the mass impoverishment of students is extremely profitable for the one percent.

HOW DOES WALL STREET PROFIT FROM STUDENT DEBT?

Wall Street has its own method for profiting from student debt. The SLM Corporation is a good example. Sallie Mae, which is now a private company, sells student loan payments to Wall Street. Wall Street packages this debt, which is backed by the federal government, into a financial instrument called SLABS - Student Loan Asset Backed Securities - which are similar to the collateralized securities that crashed the US housing market. Finally, Wall Street sells these debt bundles on the global market for a spectacular profit. Malcolm Harris noted that "in 1990, there were \$75.6m of these securities in circulation; at their apex, the total stood at \$2.67tn." From reduced state funding and exploding tuition costs to student loans sold as securities, debt financing of US higher education is inseparable from strategies of capitalist accumulation and exploitation.

In the early days of the Occupy movement, a group of us met near Zuccotti Park and began brainstorming ways to challenge the student debt system through direct action. We created the Occupy Student Debt Campaign, which includes a pledge of student debt refusal. Pledgers agree to stop paying their loans once one million others agree to do the same. The pledge is based on the idea that the time for petitioning the government is over. Our elected officials have been bought, paid for by the financial firms that profit from student misery. What incentive could they possibly have for ending the debt financing of higher education that has been so profitable for them?

The pledge is also based on a list of four principles. For example, we believe education should be free (ie publicly funded) as a public good so that future generations do not have to bear the burden of debt.

The student debt pledge continues while the Occupy movement is evolving and expanding. This summer, a series of debtors' assemblies is taking place in NYC. Most of us are in debt, whether student debt, credit card debt, or medical debt. These assemblies quickly took on the moniker #strikeback and became a coalition. We are working together on a model that will allow people to challenge the illegitimate debt system in multiple ways, including online pledges, direct action and mutual aid projects. We're all in this together, and by helping each other, we can begin to live in the kind of world we want to see. That is how we Occupy Wall Street.

Ann Larson is from the Occupy Student Debt Campaign

CITIZEN DEBT AUDITS: HOW & WHY?

ERIC TOUSSAINT & DAMIEN MILLET

The question of the repayment of public debt is undeniably a taboo subject. Heads of state and governments, the European Central Bank (ECB), the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the European Commission and the mainstream media present it as inevitable, indisputable and obligatory. The people have no other choice than to knuckle down and pay. The only possible discussion pertains to how the burden of sacrifice will be spread around so as to find sufficient funds to meet the nation's obligations. The borrowing governments were democratically elected, thus the debts are legitimate; they must be paid.

A citizens' debt audit is a means of breaking this taboo. It enables an increasing proportion of the population to grasp the "ins and outs" of a country's national debt process. It involves an analysis of the borrowing policy followed by any given country's authorities.

How can we answer the questions that arise? A great number of documents jealously guarded by governing bodies and banks should be released to the public; and they would be extremely useful in performing the analysis. We must demand access to the documentation required for a full audit. However, it is perfectly possible to proceed with a rigorous examination of public debt using documents that are already open to public scrutiny. Important data are already available through many institutions and organisations: the press, government reports, official websites of parliamentary institutions, banks and finance agencies of all sorts, the OECD, Bank for International Settlements (BIS), the ECB, private banks, organisations or groups that have already undertaken a critical analysis of public debt, local government archives, credit rating agencies or PhD memoranda. There is no need to delay lobbying MPs to ask questions in parliament, or demanding that local councillors raise these issues in their councils.

Auditing is not a task for experts alone. They may contribute much to the effort, but citizens can begin without them. The groups' research and actions to spark public discussion will strengthen and broaden their expertise and can get various specialists inside. Each of us may take part in analysing the public debt process and bringing it into the open. A national collective for a citizens' audit of public debt was created in France in 2011 (audit-citoyen.org) and has brought together many organisations and political parties. Tens of thousands of people have rallied behind it.

Many local citizens' audit committees have been organised throughout France, Belgium, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Spain and Portugal within this framework. They might start with the "structured loans" that several banks - particularly Dexia in the French case - have sought to impose on local governments. A certain amount of work has already been done on this matter by the French association "Public Actors Against Toxic Loans", which includes a dozen or so local authorities (empruntstoxiques.fr). We may also start by examining the funding difficulties of local health services, such as hospitals.

Other aspects in the field of private debt may also be considered. In countries such as Ireland and Spain, where hundreds of thousands of families have become victims of a real estate bubble, it is relevant to examine household mortgage debts. Victims of mortgage lenders could provide testimony about their situation and help us understand the illegitimate debt process which affects them. The scope of action for public debt audits is infinitely promising and in no way resembles a routine accountancy operation, which superficially checks a couple of figures.

Beyond keeping tabs on finances, audits play an eminently political role linked to two basic social needs: transparency and democratic control of the state and its representatives by the citizenry. These are needs that refer to basic democratic rights recognised in international law, domestic law and constitutions: Citizens have a right to oversee the acts of those who govern them, and to be informed on matters pertaining to administration and to representatives' objectives and motivations. These rights are an intrinsic part of democracy itself.

The fact that governments continually blitz the media with rhetoric about transparency but oppose citizens' audits is an indication of the sorry state of our democracies. Real transparency is the ruling classes' worst nightmare.

Carrying out a citizens' audit of public debt combined with a strong popular movement for suspension of repayments should culminate in the abolition or repudiation of the illegitimate part of the public debt and in a drastic reduction of the remaining debt. Debt relief must not be decided by the lenders, and cancellation of the debt by an indebted country becomes a unilateral sovereign act of great significance.

Why should a state radically reduce its national debt by cancelling illegitimate debts? First and foremost it serves the purpose of social justice, but there are economic reasons as well. Boosting the economy by relying on public and household demand is not enough to overcome this crisis. Such a policy, even when combined with a redistributive tax reform, would still leave extra tax revenue being funnelled into public debt repayments. And since major private companies tend to hold a lot of government bonds (and would use income from these bonds to pay greater taxes), they don't even want to entertain the idea of debt cancellation. So it is necessary to simply write off a very large share of the national debt. The size of the write-off will bear a direct relation to the level of public outrage among victims of the debt system, the course of the political and economic crisis, and above all the balance of power that can be built in the streets and in workplaces.

QUESTIONS TO ASK

- What has caused the state to take on continually increasing levels of debt?
- Who has profited from this? Who are the lenders, and who holds the debt?
- Was it possible or necessary to make different choices?
- What interest has been paid, at what rate and how much of the principal has already been reimbursed?
- What is the portion of the state's budget used to service the debt?
- How have private debts become public debts?
- What were the conditions of each bank bailout?
- How much did they cost? Who made the decision to bail them out?
- How does the state finance debt repayments?

A radical reduction of national debt is a necessary, but by itself insufficient, means of getting European Union countries out of the debt crisis. Other complementary measures are also necessary: tax reform to redistribute wealth, collectivisation of the financial sector and re-nationalising other key economic sectors, shorter working hours without income cuts and with compensatory hiring, etc. Taken together, these measures would result in radical change from the current state of affairs, which has driven the world into a volatile dead end.

By Eric Toussaint (Senior Lecturer at University of Liège and President of the Committee for the Abolition of Third World Debt) and Damien Millet (Professor of Mathematics at Orleans & co-author of several publications with Eric Toussaint)



SUNSET PARKER PIX

THE GREAT DEBATE

A GLOBAL MANIFESTO

THIS MONTH'S GREAT DEBATE CONCERNS THE PROMOTION OF A 'MANIFESTO FOR A GLOBAL DEMOCRACY' BY SOME HIGH-PROFILE ACADEMICS. THE GLOBAL SUFFRAGETTES, A STUDENT SOCIETY THAT LAUNCHED THE MANIFESTO MAKE THE CASE FOR IT, WHILE THE OT EDITORIAL TEAM ARGUE THAT GLOBAL MANIFESTOS ARE NOT THE WAY FORWARD.

FOR / THE GLOBAL SUFFRAGETTES

Written by former Argentine MP Fernando Iglesias of Democracia Global, a Latin American activist organisation focused on global democratic institutions, the Manifesto for a Global Democracy is vocally supported by many prominent academics including Noam Chomsky, Richard Falk and Saskia Sassen. This academic pantheon lends credibility to the manifesto's aspirations in the lead up to it being offered to NGOs, political parties, activists and other actors for endorsement.

This manifesto is a concise articulation of a set of global democracy objectives, a 'pluralist text... able to combine the visions and wishes of all those - radicals but also social democrats, liberals, conservatives and all kind of democratic citizens of the world - who aspire to elevate democratic representation to the global level in which the main decisions that affect humanity are already being made'. At its launch on June 27 at the London School of Economics (LSE), Saskia Sassen argued that the manifesto offers a new lens through which we can look at global inequalities. It is precisely this that represents the defining feature of Occupy: forcing and exercising space for dialogue.

Some argue that the manifesto offers merely a jazzed-up rehashing of calls heard in the streets worldwide ('globalising democracy is the only way to democratise globalisation') without providing concrete solutions or suggesting any protocol for prioritising action. It does not contain a clear-cut set of demands or proposals for effective global democratic governance, and it fails to engage issues of sexual, religious, ethnic or other identity discrimination. Has the voice of global democracy really been relocated to the globally excluded? Was the process behind the Manifesto itself participatory

enough to be called democratic?

This disconnect speaks more broadly to the turf war of sorts being fought within Occupy over the expression of Occupy's purpose and identity. Attempts seeking to clarify Occupy's demands have sparked fierce debate as to who speaks in Occupy's name. While 'the soundbite articulation of a concrete agenda' (OT, June 20) remains suspicious for many within Occupy, summaries such as this manifesto re-invigorate dialogue between street-level protest movements and universities.

The Global Suffragettes, an open society run by students, organised the launch of the Manifesto exactly in this spirit. The society was founded as a response to this gap between political space and political action that has frustrated the Occupy movement.

We are aware of the criticism regarding the absence of objective set of demands, and we're using the 'laboratory' of the LSE to try and counter this. We aim to strengthen dialogue to explore concrete solutions for both existing and future institutions.

The LSE itself has become synonymous with the transnational elite. Yet, it still boasts an impressively diverse student body from all classes and countries winding up in a wide range of positions, from grassroots organisations to the highest echelons of government. We are eager to use our backgrounds, opportunity and the wealth of resources available to us to explore new ideas of democratic participation and decision-making resounding in Occupy, the Arab Spring and countless academic works.

It is our hope that this trickle-out effect will ultimately express the fundamental promises of these movements and ideas: that dialogue is responsible for, and essential to, individual and global change.

<http://globalsuffragettes.wordpress.com/>



AGAINST / THE OT COLLECTIVE

At least two versions of a 'global manifesto' have been released in recent months. In addition to the Manifesto for a Global Democracy authored by the Global Suffragettes of the London School of Economics, there is the Global May Manifesto, drafted by an international Occupy assembly and published in The Guardian to correspond with the global May 12 actions.

The authors of the Global May version aimed to offer a critique of the in-built injustices within economic and political systems globally. Yet they wrote the document without once mentioning either capitalism or neoliberalism - quite a feat, and one mirrored in the Manifesto for a Global Democracy, which focuses on how democracy has lagged behind globalisation.

The Global May document was published after only minimal consultation with the rest of the Occupy movement while the Manifesto for a Global Democracy was launched once a privileged few had voiced support.

Those in favour of a manifesto argue that we need to answer the critics who say we have no objectives, no strategy. However, writing a statement which seeks to impose an overarching narrative on the global Occupy movement seems like a betrayal of its core values. Occupy does not simply criticise policies - it articulates a different way of doing politics. The movement is based on the concepts of autonomy and horizontalism and consciously defies the idea of top-down leadership.

Occupy speaks with many voices but resents being spoken for. A manifesto which articulates specific end goals and presupposes a certain strategic outlook of the Occupy movement fails to take those ideals seriously.

The plurality of voices within Occupy captures precisely the beauty and power as well as, perhaps, the curse of this struggle. In its current form, Occupy is an empty container, a concept which facilitates the creation of networks of like-minded individuals. We know what we don't want and are able to come together and fight, infuriating the state, the media and the holders of the status quo by choosing not to declare a common identity. By attempting to impose a common identity in an undemocratic, top down fashion, a manifesto shifts the discourse from one of 'active becoming' to 'passive being'.

The Global May manifesto contains numerous 'demands', despite objections from many in the movement that these demands legitimise the status quo and weaken Occupy's position vis-à-vis

the one percent. By demanding the extension of rights, concessions from the powerful and regulations of that which cannot be regulated, we fall into the classic Capitalist Realism trap and ask to be oppressed and dominated in the future. We no longer speak for ourselves, but demand that someone else in power must speak for us. Following this course Occupy would simply become another pressure group operating within the liberal framework, not struggling for change but demanding a set of additional privileges.

Perhaps the most fatal flaw in both of these manifestos is that, in their attempts to outline alternatives to the current system which could be implemented globally, they lock us firmly into the capitalist paradigm and close down possible revolutionary alternatives. In the rhetoric of a manifesto, 'democracy' becomes a term devoid of substance, stripped of its energy and revolutionary potential. It becomes identical to any other catchword used by politicians and media pundits seeking a vague, disingenuous consensus from a notional, abstract 'public'. Seeking to unify divergences may result merely in stifling energies and turning occupiers into quantifiable, representable passive voters ready to

be captured and colonised by the state apparatus.

In an effort to produce something which every contributor to the Occupy and similar movements can concur with, how could the architects of these manifestos avoid sinking to the lowest common denominator and an inevitable, unchallenging rehash of everything that has already been said by media pundits and commentators?

Furthermore, how can any document claim to be "global" when thousands of people around the world have been instrumental in Occupy and similar movements, but have not had the chance to be involved in creating these manifestos (or would not care to be involved)? Few within Occupy and allied movements would disagree that we want to work towards a world based on environmental sustainability, community co-operation, food security, equitable distribution of resources, participatory and inclusive democracy, freedom of expression, and an end to corruption, warmongering and to the power wielded by corporations and high finance. However, no consensus was ever reached that a manifesto was the best way of articulating these general aims.

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JESUS SAVES (BUDDHA RECYCLES)

THE IRREVERENT REVEREND NEMU

From Martin Luther to Martin Luther King, Archbishop Tutu and the liberation theologians, the Holy Spirit flows fast in activist veins.

The protest of the Protestants began as a leafletting campaign attacking the Vatican think-tank at the centre of a transnational extortion racket, dictating how rulers and ruled should conduct their affairs. Today we have the IMF and the Fiscal Gospel, and a new Inquisition to guard our souls from economic heresy, but the missionary may not rest. My mission lead me to Buddhafield Festival, with faith in my wellies to keep out the mud, and in the Holy Name of Yaweh to keep me from heresy. Thus I came unto the Buddhists, and the mud was deep indeed.

I was challenged as I distributed the OT, which is always encouraging. "Would thou wert cold or hot," laments the Revelator of Patmos. Someone arguing for an unfettered free market is already engaged, and will consider a question: Is the "invisible hand" really at work? Or is it the incorporated claw of another entity which bails out and fiddles rates, to drag us into debt and damnation?

Some "wert hot" about Occupy, either involved or sympathetic (and sometimes both). Buddhafield began 17 years ago as a meeting of Buddhism and activism, there were off-grid solutions, urban foragers and co-operatives activists, but also face-painters and skillful flirting sessions, ecstatic dance workshops, masseurs and healers, sun-saluting yoginis, singers of bajhans, readers of omens and bones. It could feel like young Prince Gautama's palace, where the wilting flowers of the gardens were cut at night to spare him the sight of decay in the morning. Beautiful Amazonian beadwork was on sale, but without information about the new Brazilian forestry code or the catastrophic Belo Monte dam. There were plenty of solar panels and a hardcore baby shit-scraping recycling team, but no rabble rising about fracking or land grabs, green-washing, GM crops and oil spills. I was cut off from my daily fare of doom, the music of the hooves of the horsemen of the Apocalypse.

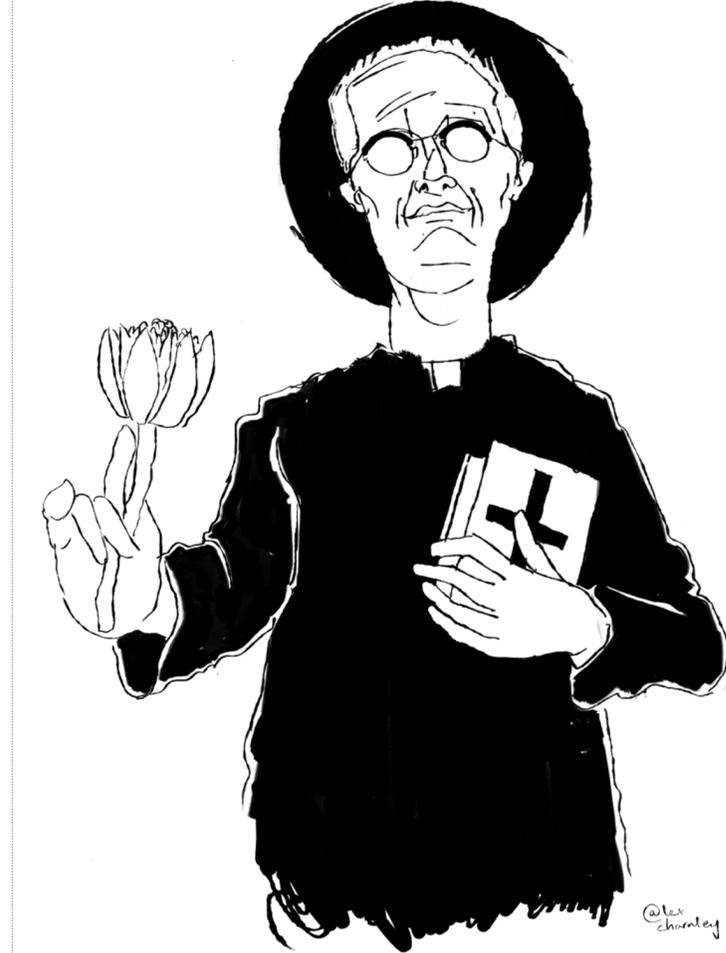
The End is Nigh! and the Kingdom of Heaven is at Hand! are sentiments that cry out for

exclamation marks, but where might a missionary find a corresponding sense of urgency in Buddhist scripture? Graven images of the Buddha sit calmly, cultivating non-attachment, and Buddhists make a virtue of silence. What other festival stops the music at 11pm, and does not serve vodka? Occupy camps would clearly have benefited from such mindfulness, but is there a middle way? Or is the First Noble Truth, that everything is suffering, more conducive to non-action than direct action?

"So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot," continues the mystic seer, "I WILL SPEW THEE OUT OF MY MOUTH". Of course, this was not really a spewing type of gathering, and disinterest is far more serious outside the Buddhist community, but how do we get people fired up without spewing? Buddhism cautions against extreme positions, but Occupy asks you to chose your side.

The Second Noble Truth, that the origin of suffering is craving, is a point of contact as it is also the first ignoble truth of advertising. It is the engine that turns the wheel of capitalism as well as samsara. The Third Noble Truth is of liberation from suffering, and perhaps some were seeking just that in a muddy field in Somerset. Many looked suspiciously at my newspaper, or froze at the mention of an idea - occupying, protesting, financial crime. One literally shuddered at the word "London." But the Buddha's journey to liberation began when he left his sheltered rose garden, to see the truths of poverty, old age, sickness and death outside the palace gates.

The Japanese are famously stoic even amongst Buddhists, but a new generation is taking to the streets en masse against nuclear power, as the country's reactors, which were all switched off when the Fukushima disaster began, return to service. Buddhists do demonstrate, and spectacularly, as in 1963, when a petrol drenched Vietnamese Buddhist burned silently in lotus for ten minutes before rolling backwards dead. The president he opposed was deposed, and as dead as the monk four months later. The Arab Spring also began with self-immolation. "Would thou wert cold



or hot?" These roasting Muslims and Buddhists respond in Fahrenheit.

The Fourth Noble Truth is the eightfold path to liberation, to understand and cut through the web which generates suffering. It includes the cultivation of ethical livelihood, discernment and consistent effort, all relevant to activists.

The virtue of right speech is also of paramount importance, particularly as we engage with outreach as well as outrage. A Buddhist teacher explained its four facets when we occupied the Dharma Parlour to consider what Buddhism could offer to activists.

Firstly, one must speak the truth, which is why we gathered at St. Paul's in the first place. To do so in compliance with the second principle, however, to abstain from slander becomes more difficult. 99% versus 1% rhetoric can become a blame game. If Occupy is to survive and grow, we can't afford to be bellicose or fractious, as the left so often is, under the strain of competing ideologies and personalities. The truth must be delivered in a manner that can be digested.

The third principle, kindly speech, applies as we take autonomy and consensus into our lives and workplaces. We need

a refined vocabulary to engage others in festival outreach, indy journalism, nomadic occupations and school visits. Theatrical protests and funny billboard subversions communicate better than angry slogans, and in marches and actions, words with police and staff can be harmonious.

Finally, one should abstain from idle chatter that lacks purpose or depth. Amongst ourselves at General Assembly or on an e.list, in a public tweet or a speaking engagement, the issues are important, and no one wants to hear babbling, self-indulgent nonsense or divisive gossiping.

Among the many teachings Buddhism can offer occupy is the vision of one of the six realms of existence, the Asura realm, driven by competition and paranoia, where boastful and territorial gods seethe with jealousy. A sixth century description of the realm could equally be leveled at the archetypical bankster, cynical politician or corporate psychopath:

"Always desiring to be superior to others, having no patience for inferiors and belittling strangers; like a hawk, flying high above and looking down on others, and yet outwardly displaying justice, worship, wisdom, and faith."

Buddhafield was a mudfest. Occupy London turned into something of a mudfest, and the economy looks like quicksand. It can be difficult to get people motivated in these conditions, but mud nourishes the roots of the lotus, which rises in dignity above it, as wisdom and compassion emerge from the defilement and suffering of samsara.



PREOCCUPYING: MCKENZIE WARK

“TIME’S UP. WE’VE RUN OUT OF PLANET.”

MCKENZIE WARK IS A WRITER AND TEACHER INTERESTED IN MEDIA THEORY AND NEW MEDIA, WHOSE WORKS INCLUDE ‘A HACKER MANIFESTO’ AND ‘THE BEACH BENEATH THE STREET’. HAVING VISITED OCCUPY SITES IN THE US AND AUSTRALIA HE DESCRIBES THE MOVEMENT AS A ‘WEIRD GLOBAL MEDIA EVENT’. HIS WRITING ON OCCUPY FEATURES IN HIS NEW BOOK, TELESTHESIA.

OCCUPIED TIMES: Writing soon after the the occupation of Wall Street, you suggested that one of the most interesting aspects of the phenomenon was its demonstration that politics itself is lacking in the world of Wall Street. What do you mean by that?

MCKENZIE WARK: Only intellectuals and leftists seem to actually believe politics exists. Nobody else seems to. Well, what if everyone else is right? God is dead, as Nietzsche says; politics is dead too. It's a kind of fantasy that took the place of a benevolent father in the sky. The fantasy of the fraternity or brotherhood of property-owning men here on earth who could rule just as wisely as He could. Well, that is in essence still what politics is. That women can vote and even occasionally govern does not change things as much as one might expect. Politics is a fantasy.

Now, while politics does not exist, certain other things are very real. Capitalism exists. Exploitation exists. Oppression exists. Inequality exists. The climate crisis is very, very real. So how can we work on all those things without invoking either God or the magic of politics? Perhaps we just need to invent new practices, drawing on past experiences, which might help, but without invoking the protective fantasy of politics, which is no more real than God.

OT: Even if we were to accept that politics in this sense is 'dead', the

obituary certainly hasn't been published, and centralised governments remain prevalent. How can new processes hope to challenge these failing establishments so long as their fanfare continues?

MW: One should add that the state is real, but has nothing to do with politics. I had a law professor who kept insisting to us: "there is no justice, only law." I think in a similar way one could say: "there is no politics, only state." Although that would be to think from the point of view of the state, which sees everything in its own terms.

I think that rather than confront the state one should do one's best to ignore it, to make forms of life in its shadow, as it were. But it depends on local contexts, on how much the state is 'ours' in any sense and how much it is 'theirs'. Marx used to take visitors around London and say to them: "this is their parliament, this is their foreign office", and so on. But in the twentieth century the state had to respond to the tactics of the labour movement and others by ceding some of its functions to the interests of the movement, thereby of course incorporating it into the state. So there is always a local strategic assessment of how much of it can be salvaged, and how much is just 'their state'.

OT: When it comes to new practices, do you believe the occupation of physical space is a tactic that should be revisited, or are there alternative tactics that may prove more effective in challenging

economic, social and environmental injustices? What advice do you have for those looking to develop new tactics?

MW: Sometimes it works; sometimes it doesn't. It worked brilliantly with Occupy. One should never get emotionally attached to a tactic or a base. There's a certain symbolic power to particular places. There's power in the image of people together. And of course people who do these things learn a lot and some will become comrades for life. (Some of course, will never speak to each other again!)

But the problem is: how do you occupy an abstraction? Power has become vectoral. It can move money and resources anywhere on the planet with unprecedented speed. You can block a particular site, but vectoral power routes around such sites. The Thai 'yellow shirt' movement, while one might not agree with their views, they got this. They occupied Bangkok airport. Now, I'm not suggesting anybody should do that, but it highlights the lengths to which one would have to go to make interrupting physical space actually count, outside of its symbolic effects.

It would be irresponsible for me to recommend tactics to anyone from the comfort of my armchair. So all I suggest is that people interested in tactics should study tactics. Study what others have done. Or as Guy Debord did -- read Clausewitz. His account



JULIA CREINHART

of Waterloo is still an astonishing document. Now, we mean tactics in a different sense here, non-violent movement tactics, not tactics of war. But there's still something to be learned by studying actions taken under the pressure of time, of incomplete information, of the 'friction' caused by the situation itself.

OT: One criticism of Clausewitz is the claim that his theories on war and warfare cannot adapt to 'swarm' type warfare, where the boundaries between warring parties are unclear, as with the semi-autonomous cells of organisations such as al-Qaeda. Do you think the established models of capitalism and mainstream politics face a similar problem against the unpredictable tactics used by movements such as Occupy?

MW: There's not all that much that's really new about Occupy, so the extent to which it invalidates past accounts may be rather overstated. And to go to a completely different and unrelated example, there's not much all that new about Al Qaeda either. New comms technology changes the envelope of possibilities for the unfolding of events in time and space. But this is what a reading of Clausewitz is for: to equip one to understand how events unfold in time and space and how one acts within them with limited knowledge and under constraints of time as well as material and emotional inertias. Or in short: how not to think and act like an intellectual!

OT: You have described Occupy Wall Street as a 'weird global media event'. What is meant by this, and what would you say are the unique or interesting features of Occupy in this sense?

MW: My first book, *Virtual Geography* (1994) was about weird global media events, like the fall of the Berlin Wall and the occupation of Tiananmen square in the late 80s. Occupy is an event of that kind. It is an event in appearing to be unexpected, at least to the media. It is a media event in that its novel nature meant that it was picked up and amplified (and of course distorted) by media coverage, which would then feedback into the event itself. It was global not in that it embraced the whole planet but that it invoked a world, and showed through its moment of exception how at least

part of the world functions. It was weird in that nobody really knew what they were doing. Decisions had to be made with so little context to go on. Weird global media events are moments when the abstract world, the world of vectoral power, reveals itself, and its functioning, in a moment of exception, where the norms and codes seem not to apply.

OT: The media obviously plays a huge symbiotic role in maintaining the status quo, but is it possible that the emergence of citizen journalism could help redefine traditional news values, and lead to media more likely to promote change than stifle it?

MW: One has to make media of any form respond to popular moods as expressed in acts. Part of it is by trying to develop autonomous channels, but part of it is by working the polyvalent quality of any popular form. Media is only popular if it can respond to a range of desires, including radical ones, simultaneously - by commodifying them.

OT: You have spoken in favour of a 'low theory' of revolutionary practices rooted in everyday life. Could you tell us what is meant by this, and how this method differs from other approaches to revolution?

MW: High Theory is the grand tradition of philosophy, claiming to legislate for other domains of thought and practice, whereas low theory is the organic concept-forming practices of everyday life, which might borrow from High Theory but really doesn't care about its desires. High Theory desires academic respectability and honours, at the end of the day. Low theory might be written by people as driven by vanity and self-regard as anyone else, but it doesn't take the existing forms of the game to be all that interesting. It is about inventing new practices of knowledge, hopefully more interesting ones. After all, if philosophy was going to save us, it would have done so by now. It's been 2000 years. That's long enough to declare an experiment a failure.

OT: The processes and habits of the Occupy movement have, at times, appeared to mimic the practices of open source software development; the development of which has been one of the more successful implementations of resistance to capitalism in recent times,



BRIAN LELI

with large areas of the "market" and production held in common. What other tools could be adapted from networked media and communication to further movements such as Occupy?

MW: I think there's a continuum of practices, some more technical, some more social, through which forms of non-commodity relation are continually being created and re-created. A lot of everyday life is outside the commodity form. How groups of parents raise their kids together. How communities work. Churches, temples and mosques. I think it may be about seeking alliances more broadly and coming up with ways of sharing skills and conducting inter-generational education on how to live. The attacks on education, obviously, are about preventing this, which makes me think the education sphere is a key one right now.

OT: Today's creators of intellectual property have been described as belonging to the 'Hacker class'. Does this reflect a change in dynamic between private property, production and the commodity form in today's world?

MW: Well, the hacker class, as I defined it in *A Hacker Manifesto* (2004), were always the creators, in whatever field, of what becomes 'intellectual property'. But not owning the means of production, they - we - don't get to profit so much from what we create. And in any case, as any creator who is honest with him / her self knows, creation is always re-creation, always built from borrowed parts. There is no



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private language, as Wittgenstein says, and neither are their 'original' works in science or art.

But you notice how now someone like Steve Jobs gets all the credit. As if the entrepreneur was the 'innovator' and did it all by himself! When Jobs died, there was even a little shrine outside the Apple Store on 5th Avenue in Manhattan. Imagine! People offering little apples to their dead little god! It's part of what makes this a rentier culture rather than the dynamic, creative one that capitalism was - for all its faults - in its better moments. It's just about collecting the rent now. It's not really about invention. Nothing Apple invented holds a candle to the breakthrough research in computing on which it is based, which was all done with public money at public and non-profit private universities.

OT: In your recent work, you highlight a hypothetical parallel between the anti-nuclear weapons movement of the twentieth century and the environmental movement today, raising concerns that these forms of critical energy could in fact work in the favour of existing political forces. Could you explain this dynamic and the possible implications for those looking to challenge environmental injustice?

MW: One liberation movement has succeeded without limit, only it did not liberate a class or a people or a gender. It liberated an element: carbon. Climate change is very real. It's a molecular problem: molecules of carbon (and methane, etc) being not where they should be.

So no, 'environment' is not a distraction. It's the other way around, we distract ourselves with lots of things that don't address the main event.

There are however distracting uses of 'environment'. As if recycling a few pizza boxes would save the planet. Or as if just moving toxicity and danger from rich to poor parts of the world will do it. So in that sense, environment is marketing or buck-passing rather than genuine re-engineering of the whole infrastructure. That's a distraction. **OT:** Writing in *'The Beach Beneath The Street'*, you suggest that leaving the twenty-first century "might not be a bad ambition". What do you identify as the

chief problems with our time that may give rise to this ambition, and in what sense should one interpret the notion of a 'departure' from the twenty-first century? **MW:** The Situationist International - whose tactics are among those worth studying - talked about leaving the twentieth century. Well, we didn't, other than in a chronological sense. But it is getting urgent that we figure out how to leave the twenty-first century. Times' up. We've run out of planet. There isn't any more of it. The method of quantitative accumulation, the method of capital, won't work, at least not as a dominant form of resource discovery

and allocation. That's if this is even still capitalism. I'm not so sure. What we see now is not capitalism, it's worse. It's a rent-seeking, parasitic form of commodity economy. Time to figure out how to leave it.

OT: Despite these concerns, the 'party line' of the economic status quo holds that 'There is No Alternative', and any attempts to challenge or depart from this course are marginalised or downplayed. How might we hope to bring the marginalised calls for a departure from our predicament to the forefront of public attention?

MW: There's layers to it. There

is actually an alternative within mainstream economic debate at the moment, and that is interesting. What you might call the 'Austrian school of austerity above all' is really not working very well even for the ruling class. If you put money on its predictions -- for example that looser monetary policy and the modest Obama stimulus would cause interest rates to rise even in a recession - you would have lost money. Australia and Iceland - the two 'Keynesian' line responses to the crisis - seem to be fairing better than the Austrian austerity-based approaches. Even the Cameron government realises this, even if its response is to try to funnel public money into private companies to do public works' projects that the public sector would do a better job at through bond issues. So actually, there is an alternative, and it is actual economics, as opposed to the ideologies that took over and are popular with the ruling class.

But that only gets us as far as ending this very, very long recession by getting back to business as usual. After that, the next alternative is to try to use public investment to shift the economy away from carbon and on to a less hazardous path. Obama at least tried this but the energy sector shut down pretty much all hope. But I think one has to keep at this: connecting science, technology, design, the mobilising power of the state, and economic and social justice.

Then there's the alternative to those alternatives. Which is that we really just have to start organising the whole of social life ourselves all over again. What if that civilization really had ended but nobody realised it? What if we were already in the ruins and starting again? Using leftover bits of the old one and doing a vast détournement or patch-together job, and hoping that all our micro-scale initiatives will accrete together as we learn how to scale things up from the bottom?

Or in short: there's plenty of alternatives. I think the ideology of our times is so shrill because everybody knows a phase-change has to happen, and the alternatives are all around us.

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JULIA CREINHART



BRIAN LELI

AN ORDINARY HERO

KALIYA FRANKLIN

Karen Sherlock was just an ordinary woman. She didn't have a great deal of money, her health meant she didn't get many opportunities to go out, particularly not anywhere you might have seen her, and even if you did you wouldn't have given her another thought.

Just another woman in middle age, as invisible as all women past a certain age become.

But Karen had another life, one in which she was recognised for her courage and determination to stand up for the rights of all sick and disabled people subject to the Work Capability Assessment (WCA). This utterly remarkable woman's experiences typify the disconnect between the reality of sick and disabled people's lives and the blunt instrument employed by the state to decide if we are 'fit for work'.

Karen was diagnosed with type 1 diabetes when she was three. By the time she reached working age she was already developing complications, but that didn't stop her from working and living a full life. Time passed, she married her beloved Nigel and worked in the NHS. Her health worsened, and after losing most of her eyesight it became impossible for her to continue working. In February 2008 Karen was dismissed from her job due to ill health, after an assessment carried out by the Occupational Health arm of Atos, on behalf of and decided by the Pensions Agency.

This is when Karen's nightmare truly began. She applied for Employment Support Allowance (ESA), formerly called Incapacity Benefit, which is for people who are temporarily or permanently unable to work due to disability or ill health. She was called to a Work Capability Assessment 'medical'. Again it was run by Atos, but an Atos held to entirely different standards by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) than the Atos which assessed her for the pension agency as unfit to work in the NHS. The criteria by which she was retired considered only whether she was well enough to do that specific job. The WCA, however, was designed to assess her capacity for any form of work. Ministers such as Chris Grayling have made it very clear that this is the intention of the test, by repeatedly stating their 'absolute and implacable opposition to a real world test'. In normal-person-speak, that means they refuse to consider an assessment process that takes into account the job the person was trained to do. Instead they focus narrowly on the ability to perform imaginary work-related tasks, such as sitting at a workstation for half an hour.

Karen described her first WCA in Spring 2008 as a 'farce'. She never heard the results, and was called for another assessment that August, after which she was placed in the Work Related Activity Group (WRAG). Karen's diabetic autonomic neuropathy, gastroparesis and diabetic retinopathy left her partially sighted, with a heart condition, asthma, chronic kidney disease, B12 deficiency, anaemia, high blood pressure, and she was frequently doubly incontinent. For all these reasons she was correctly found unfit to perform her role in the NHS, but the WCA judged her fit to return to a workplace.

A blunt tool, the WCA separates people into three categories. Those unfit for any kind of work are placed in the Support Group with no conditions attached to their benefits. Those considered entirely fit for work are transferred to jobseeker's allowance. Those placed in the WRAG are expected to participate in activities aimed at returning them to the workplace, including mandatory work programmes in some circumstances. For those in receipt of contributions-based ESA (the benefit paid in return for National Insurance contributions) a one year time limit now applies, though this benefit used to be paid to those with sufficient NI contributions for as long as they were sick or disabled. This means that people such as Karen, who have worked all their lives, lose their eligibility. Karen's husband worked, but even before tax didn't earn anything approaching the £26,000 pa means-testing limit being introduced for other benefits. However, the means-testing limit for ESA is a partner earning a mere £7,500 pa.

Karen endured the stress and anxiety of four WCA's and subsequent appeal processes between 2008 and April of 2012, at which point her ESA stopped completely, leaving her and Nigel £380 per month worse off. Karen was terrified; her fear was palpable, even in online communications. She worried about how they'd pay their mortgage and bills, how Nigel would cope.

Along with the financial anxiety, Karen's health was deteriorating. She was awaiting an operation to enable her to start dialysis, being considered for the transplant list and, her cardiac problems were worsening. Despite all that, Karen remained in the WRAG.

On May 30th 2012, the day before Karen was finally moved from the WRAG to the Support Group (and a mere ten days before her death), Chris Grayling announced that those in the WRAG - people just like Karen who could soon expect to be moved into the Work Programme - "have proved sicker and further from the workplace than expected". That is one way of describing it to the 32 families each week grieving the death of loved ones who had been found 'fit for future return to work'; loved ones who were a far cry from the 'lazy scroungers' the public has been led to believe this policy applies to.

Although frequently terrified by her treatment, Karen was also amongst the first to stand up to be counted. She understood that telling her story would help others, and acted in her characteristic manner, doing what she believed to be right. In her last email to me, from early April 2012, she told me she had used the benefits calculator I'd suggested to see if there was any other support she and Nigel could claim. There wasn't. I couldn't offer Karen any hope. All I could do was apologise, and explain that this was exactly the intended effect of the benefit 'reforms' we had all fought so hard to prevent.

Karen played an active role wherever she could, supporting others in distress. When she was frightened, which was most days, she would literally beg other campaigners to reassure her that everything would be ok. Every time it broke a piece of my heart to be unable to offer her the security she needed, the answer she was so desperate to hear, that it would be ok, that it was all some big mistake. She died just days after learning that she had finally been placed in the Support Group, her last years of life utterly blighted by 'despair, helplessness and frustration' directly caused by a government which had pledged to alleviate precisely such bureaucratic ordeals.

One memory typifies both Karen Sherlock and the labyrinthine, bureaucratic cruelty she experienced. The Atos nurse who performed the initial WCA kindly tried to reassure her that she should be in the support group. This stuck with Karen. She couldn't understand how what had been so obvious to the first person to assess her was overturned, nor why everyone else she appealed to seemed wilfully blind to the severity of her condition. Although she'd been assessed by an Atos employee, it was a medically-untrained Department for Work and Pensions bureaucrat who had the final say over her allocation. People carrying out the 'medical' weren't supposed to comment on which group people were to be placed in. Despite her anxiety and the disgraceful way the system had treated her, Karen worried that if she spoke out about the nurse's kind words, she might be disciplined for her compassion.

I met Karen in October 2010, during the founding of The Broken of Britain, a social media based disability rights campaign. We were asking sick and disabled people to speak out, to tell their stories about how they had become reliant upon benefits, and people were initially reluctant. Pride and anxiety combine to prevent us discussing the intimate details of our lives in public. But a small handful of people came forward, pushing aside the fear that speaking out would be used against them by the DWP, and told their stories. Karen was one of those people.

<http://benefitscroungingscum.blogspot.co.uk>



DIMITRIS ALEXAKIS



WHO'S REALLY GETTING RICH FROM THE BENEFITS SYSTEM?

JOHNNY VOID



Despite claims that welfare spending is 'out of control', the Government is handing out billions of pounds to a private sector actively involved in demolishing the welfare state.

One example: Atos, the global IT company, currently receives around £100m a year to carry out the Work Capability Assessment (WCA) on behalf of the Department for Work and Pensions. This crude computer-based assessment is used to determine eligibility for sickness benefits. The system has proved to be a brutal and expensive farce, with hundreds of thousands of sick and disabled people being denied benefits and forced into the Job Seeker's Allowance regime, to face workfare and benefit sanctions.

People with life-threatening and even

terminal conditions have been found 'fit for work' by the company based on a test which ignores the opinions of general practitioners in favour of a crude 'tick box' approach. Only a tiny proportion are deemed genuinely unfit for work and placed in the 'support group' that entitles them to sickness benefits. Most people who face the process either have their sickness benefits cut completely, or are placed in the Work Related Activity Group, which means that their sickness benefits are restricted to one per year.

An increasing number of suicides have been directly linked to the gruelling and relentless claims process. Even those found unable to work are often recalled for further assessments, and the British Medical Association recently voted to demand

an immediate end to the WCA. The entire process is further discredited by the fact that 40 percent of appeals against WCA decisions are successful.

Despite the shambles, the government is planning to extend the same flawed model of assessment to everybody on Disability Living Allowance, which is to be replaced by the so-called Personal Independence Payment. The goal is to reduce disability benefits by 20 percent after the introduction of the new system. Atos have already been announced as a preferred bidder to carry out the assessments.

It's not just Atos raking in staggering sums under the cover of welfare reform. The Government's flagship Work Programme, aimed at cutting long-term unemployment, is set to cost a whopping £5 billion. The Work Programme is run by a host of Welfare to Work companies, including the fraud-ridden A4e ('Action for Employment') and the national joke that is G4S, which just made headlines with a massive Olympics security blunder. These companies are paid a flat fee whenever anyone signs up to the programme and then receive another payment, which could be as high as £16,000, if someone takes a job.

Unemployed, sick or disabled claimants all face having benefits sanctioned or stopped if they fail to carry out 'mandated activity' as part of the Work Programme. Unemployed claimants have been sent to work in global companies such as Holiday Inn and Pizza Hut without pay. Other workfare schemes have seen thousands sent to work without pay at charities like the British Heart Foundation, or companies like Tesco and McDonald's.

Recent figures suggest that the scheme is under-performing miserably. Only 25 percent of claimants on the programme are coming off benefits (but not necessarily into work) for a period of thirteen weeks. This may well be less than the percentage expected if people were expected to find jobs under their own steam.

By contrast, the private sector clearly benefits from the programme. The government has shelled out over £500 million to Work Programme providers so far, while those who are forced into the programme often remain without pay and benefits. The Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, Iain Duncan Smith, is also handing £2 billion to IT companies to develop Universal Credit, the new all-encompassing benefit regime. It is already behind schedule and over-budget, and it probably won't work.

Welfare reform appears to be good business for everybody except welfare recipients. But ultimately, we will all suffer. The welfare state is good value for the vast majority of the population who would otherwise be forced to spend small fortunes on income protection and disability insurance schemes. Only those rich enough to withstand personal disasters will benefit from a reduction in welfare spending. Welfare reform is not about getting Britain working - there are no jobs to be doled out. The erosion of the welfare state is simply one more mechanism to transfer money from the poor to the rich.

<http://johnnyvoid.wordpress.com/@johnnyvoid>



ANDREA BAKACS

DISABILITY ACTIVISM 101

DISABLED PEOPLE AGAINST CUTS

The millionaire wreckers now in government are determined to continue with the wholesale destruction of our National Health Service and welfare state, both of which most disabled people rely on.

The NHS and the welfare state were fought for through generations of poverty and misery by working class people. Likewise, disability rights were fought for and won due to the strength of those disabled people who would not accept less than their human rights. Everything worked for is being destroyed in the biggest onslaught on social justice in our lifetimes.

As with most things disabled people do in life, disability activism requires detailed thought and planning. To be as fully inclusive as possible we have to take into account the diverse requirements a range of impairments requires.

Sometimes these can compete. For example, while we might want to make a lot of noise to help draw attention to our presence, for many people with neuro-diverse conditions (autism, Asperger's syndrome), loud noise would mean they couldn't take part in the action.

Providing BSL (British Sign Language) interpreters is expensive and often difficult as they don't want to be involved in direct actions, yet without this it is difficult to be fully inclusive to deaf activists.

We also have to provide supporters to guide and help anyone with a visual impairment, so that they can take part safely and know what is going on around them. Using social media to organise things which we don't mind the police knowing about is really helpful but most of those with visual impairments cannot access Facebook and Twitter, so we need alternative means to communicate with them.

Anyone who needs a PA (personal assistant) to come with them needs four weeks notice to ensure they have enough time to arrange this plus travel. Taking your PA on a direct action is also technically illegal, as you are only supposed to use your Individual Budget (money from social services to pay for care and support) for legal activities. Fortunately we've never had any problems with this.

So having taken into account how you can meet everyone's needs, you then have to start to plan where you can hold your direct action, and choose somewhere that is not only accessible but can be easily reached by public transport. It's also important to know where things like accessible toilets are and so on.

Ideally we hope that our actions will be fun and enjoyable, even though we seem to do most things in the pouring rain! Actions are

certainly somewhere people can meet up with friends from different parts of the country whom they may not otherwise see. This is important to help us build solidarity as a group of people facing similar attacks against our rights.

For people who might otherwise have little control over their lives, direct actions are enormously empowering. They are a crucial part of giving people the confidence to fight back and to win.

Occupying buildings or blocking major roads and causing chaos in central London is, of course, designed to raise awareness of the way we are being treated as disabled people, and to make sure the

public, politicians and everyone else know we won't sit back and accept the attacks we face. Direct action demonstrates the power disabled people have when they mobilise and take action together. We have never backed down as a movement - and we don't intend to start now. We said at the Regent Street action that we would continue to create spaces for disabled people to come and have their voices heard, and we will.

We welcome our many non-disabled allies, whose support is often crucial in helping disabled activists, and we hope to take part in many more actions together until we achieve the changes to society that we seek. www.dpac.uk.net/ @Dis_PPL_Protest

RIGHTS NOT CHARITY

LISA EGAN

THE MYTH OF "TAXPAYERS' MONEY"

I didn't get my first job until I was part-way through my degree. My impaired mobility meant I couldn't do the kinds of work young people traditionally do, like bar work or stacking supermarket shelves. So I claimed benefits until I was educated enough for people to be willing to give me a job within my physical limits. I started paying my own National Insurance contributions halfway through my final year at university, and continued to do so for several years.

I was in my mid-20s when my health started to deteriorate. Over the next few years, bit by bit, I reduced the amount of work I was doing until, when I was 28, I reached a point where working was something I'd become completely incapable of. I've now reached a point where I've claimed back from the National Insurance pot more than I ever paid in - but that's how the insurance business works.

Some people buy annual multi-trip travel insurance every year and never make a claim. Other people take out a fortnight's insurance for their first overseas holiday, and have to make a claim immediately for a suitcase that was lost on the outbound flight. Sometimes that's just how the cookie crumbles.

When an article appeared in the Huffington Post about me, a group of commenters reacted in one of two ways: Some said, "it's sad that people have these conditions, but why should they get taxpayers' money?", while others argued that "she says she can't work but she also says she can do her own shopping. If she can leave the house to shop, she can get a job and doesn't need taxpayers' money." The recurring point here is about taxpayer money. We seem to have developed a cultural notion that people who claim benefits are not taxpayers, and never have been. This isn't true.

I am not scrounging taxes from others; I paid my taxes and my National Insurance contributions when I could. Now I can't do that anymore, and I'm living under the protection that the insurance scheme offered.

Sometimes I debate these questions on the radio. During one debate, I was up against a guy who felt that it was absurd that a third of taxpayer money went to the welfare state. His suggestion? Rich people take out private income-protection insurance instead, and only us filthy poor people claim from the state.

Private insurance premiums would cost more than National Insurance

contributions. Private insurance companies also try extremely hard not to pay out. If there's an element of self-infliction to your condition - for example if you drunkenly dived into the shallow end of a pool and broke your neck - your insurer will probably not pay out. The welfare state traditionally has paid out to all who needed support, regardless of how the need for support arose. The person I was debating with would rather see people pay more for poorer quality cover, just for the satisfaction of saying "yeah, well, at least we're not spending a third of our taxes on welfare!"

But this would further undermine what little will exists among the rich to keep the welfare state going. A rich person has a motivation to pay their National Insurance contributions if they know that they, too, get their £90-odd a week if they develop cancer; even though they've got the means to not need it. Combined with the introduction of strict means-testing for people claiming Employment and Support Allowance, this gives the rich further grounds to be hostile towards the poor for claiming what they see as "their taxes".



SUNSET PARKER PIX

Some disabled people have never been and will never be able to work. Some might argue that someone like me who only worked for a few years and has claimed back more than they paid in should at least be eligible because that's the nature of insurance. But what about those who've never paid and will never pay even one week's worth of National Insurance?

The answer to this question was brought up by a person I debated on the radio, and also several times by commenters on the Huff Post article, who told me that I don't deserve state benefits: It's a family's responsibility to look after a disabled child.

Of course, what they mean is that a parent should pay to meet the disabled child's needs for life, and the state shouldn't be forced to pay for a quirk of genetics, a traumatic birth, or an accident. But I see it differently. If I had never been able to work at all, the National Insurance premiums my parents paid would cover me. Radio rightwinger said that she'd made private insurance arrangements to protect her family. Both my parents worked in factories and paid their National Insurance, and the only

difference between her insurance protection and mine is that hers was private, and mine public.

With people of means no longer able to claim Contributory Employment and Support Allowance for more than a year if they're deemed capable of possibly being able to work at some point in the future, it not only undermines support for National Insurance but also constitutes a remarkable bait and switch. A comparable situation can be found in the case of public sector pensions. Public sector workers were sold a pension scheme, and now the government is trying to change the rules. You have to have paid a minimum amount of National Insurance contributions to get Contributory ESA - the clue is in the name - but we have not seen the same outrage over these changes to the rules. Two million people went on strike over pension changes, but because disabled people are seen to be "scrounging taxpayers money" rather than "people who paid into an insurance scheme", I doubt we'll ever see the same amount of support in fighting the changes.

Lisa Egan is a writer and disability activist. She Tweets as @lisybabe.

JOHNNY NEEDS MORE THAN CHALK

SUE MARSH

To do his schoolwork, the bare minimum Johnny needs is: paper, a pen, a teacher, a school, a chair to sit on, a

desk to sit at, and a packed lunch. If you take away just Johnny's lunch, he will go hungry. It would be almost impossible for him to concentrate and do well in school. However, in theory, he could still do schoolwork.

If you just took away his desk, it would make it tricky to write, but Johnny could still do his schoolwork. It would just take longer and be less neat.

If you just took away his teacher, he could, in theory, go to libraries and museums to learn. In theory. Hypothetically, it's still possible that he could teach himself something, so he could still do his schoolwork.

If you take away his paper and pen and school all at once, he can still sit on the floor and use chalk to write on the ground.

But if you take away Johnny's paper, pen, teacher, school, chair, desk and lunch, all at once, Johnny is sitting on some ground with nothing, hungry, without a roof over his head. It's hard to learn anything at all sitting alone, on the ground, with nothing but a piece of chalk.

Now imagine you have a disability or a long-term chronic illness. To manage it with a degree of dignity, you need a carer, a roof over your head, a bed, heating, food and transport. You rely on the carer, who comes in twice a day from social services, because she helps you to get up and get dressed and washed. Without her, you would have to spend all day, every day in bed. But at least you still have a bed.

Or maybe you rely on housing benefit to keep a roof over your head. You are forced to move to a smaller property on the 5th floor of a tower block when your housing benefit is cut. The lift doesn't work. It means you have to move away from family and friends who help you out whenever they can. They cook meals perhaps, or help with all those jobs around the house you just can't do.

But at least you still have somewhere to live. Or maybe you rely on Disability Living Allowance (DLA) for transport. It means you can get a taxi to the hairdresser or social club. Without it, you would become isolated. It would be impossible to get to your GP or meet hospital appointments.

But, in theory at least, you don't actually need to go anywhere.

If, however, you cut Disability

Living Allowance, housing benefits, social care, hospital budgets, the Independent Living Fund, Employment and Support Allowance (ESA), income support and the Social Fund, then you are just lying in a bed, hungry and isolated, a prisoner in someone else's home.

Governments must perform what is called an "impact assessment" on any new policy or law. This government has done the bare minimum to fulfil this commitment. Would it surprise you to know, for instance, that when considering the greatest cuts to disability support in living memory, they claim that they will have no impact on health, no impact on well-being, no impact on human rights, and no impact on the justice system?

The crucial flaw is that they have independently assessed each cut to the services disabled people rely on, as if it existed in a vacuum.

The government has refused to do an overall impact assessment. They have repeatedly refused to assess what the combined impact of their cuts will be. First they said it would be too expensive, then they said it would be too difficult!

Why might it be too difficult? Because they know, as we know, that, metaphorically speaking, the



CRISTINA E LOZANO

result will be little Johnny sitting on the floor with nothing but a piece of chalk, hungry, without a roof over his head.

The combined impact of removing someone's DLA so they can no longer afford care or transport, heating or food, cutting their ESA so that they must look for work with cancer or multiple sclerosis, cutting their local care support so that they cannot clean themselves or feed themselves, cutting their housing support so that they risk homelessness and, to cap it all, scrapping the Social Fund so

that there is no safety net when all else fails, is a strategy so risky that it ought to be criminalised.

We call upon the government to immediately carry out an overall impact assessment of all the cuts to the support that sick and disabled people rely on to live. I'll say it again - to live. And they must do it now, before it's too late. Because it's hard to survive, sitting in the dirt with nothing but a piece of chalk. Sue Marsh is an activist. She blogs at <http://diaryofabenefitscrounger.blogspot.co.uk/> and tweets as @suey2y.

A NEW SOCIAL NARRATIVE

EUGENE GRANT

Amid a mass of measures by which a government's performance can be evaluated - whether it be unemployment statistics, credit ratings, borrowing figures - one test in particular stands out. English philosopher T.H. Green proposed that for each government action, one should ask, "Does it liberate individuals by increasing their self-reliance or their ability to add to human progress?"

The coalition government is fixated on self-reliance and individual personal responsibility is supposed to be the lifeblood of conservatism. References to that familiar, and yet vague group, people "who do the right thing" pepper the prime minister's speeches. The best example of putting this principle into practice is undoubtedly the benefits system, specifically disability benefits. Within months of coming to power, the coalition set out £18bn worth of welfare cuts. At the time of writing, calls to cut another £10bn are growing louder. Witnessing the government undertake its welfare reform agenda has felt akin to seeing youths rob and strip an elderly man, who was once respected by his contemporaries but is now chastised and marginalised by his community. We watch from a distance, feeling powerless to stop it.

Few would argue that the coalition's rapid unravelling of the welfare safety net will not increase self-reliance. But it is the second part of Green's test, whether government action increases a person's ability to add to human progress, that is most important. And it is in this respect that, for disabled people across the country, the government is set to fail spectacularly.

It's only when we begin to look more closely at the government's

welfare reform agenda that its callousness is fully revealed. The coalition is set to cut benefits for disabled children meaning that more than 100,000 of them will lose up to £27 a week. It distracted attention from other reforms by proposing to cut a benefit that helps care home residents get out in their community. Certainly a tactical device, this plan was later dropped but its very suggestion is indicative. Next year, support provided to disabled people with complex needs and no adult to care for them will no longer exist. Emergency payments for families in dire crisis, including disabled people and women fleeing domestic violence, could be replaced with supermarket store cards - vouchers for the destitute. Plans to increase self-reliance look very different when the person is a mother with children in tow, escaping a violent partner.

A recent report by Scope, a disability charity, and the thinktank Demos, reveals the profound impact that the cuts are having on disabled people. For the last two years they have followed the plight of six disabled families as the cuts have come into effect and they have documented the families' declining mental health, increased fear and anxiety, financial instability and a desperate struggle to make ends meet. One elderly couple was left without money to fix their broken windows for almost a year, using towels to keep out the cold and rain. It is stories like these that show with startling clarity the true human cost of austerity.

The argument put forth by ministers that it is better to work than to languish on benefits, is solid. Nobody wants to squander his or her

potential. But the narrative directed by politicians and the press frequently fails to show the whole picture.

First, it is often assumed that benefit recipients make the choice not to work. "For choice to be real," authors Richard Reeves and Phil Collins state, "there has to be a range of options." It would be naive to deny the existence of some who do genuinely choose not to work, but there are many disabled people who desperately want a job but are unable to secure and maintain employment.

The second assumption is that for those who are less able to work, this must be due to the limitations imposed upon their body and mind. To the public this may seem entirely reasonable, but it overlooks the crucial interaction between impairment and society. The 'social model' of disability sets out how practical and environmental barriers render people with impairments 'disabled'. Many disabled people find ways to manage their condition, but still face real social barriers - inaccessible transport, unsuitable housing, social isolation, discrimination - that prevent them from working and leading lives they value.

Finally, these problems are compounded by the lack of jobs in the midst of a double-dip recession. There are over 2.5 million people unemployed. It is against this hostile, competitive backdrop that the Government recently confirmed the closure of 27 Remploy factories that employ disabled workers. There are good arguments for ending sheltered working, but it is not conducive to the 'mainstreaming' of disability that our society badly needs. The choice of timing is poor, and charities have expressed real concerns about the level of support



KARNEY HATCH

that former workers will receive. The government's woeful lack of tact here was illustrated by the contemptuous comments of the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, Iain Duncan Smith, who remarked that Remploy staff, who provide equipment to the police and the armed forces, were "not doing any work...just making cups of coffee." Above all this, however, is an issue vastly more important than any benefit or work programme: our social narrative is becoming increasingly venomous. Much of the tone is set by our media, sections of which were lambasted by a cross-party Select Committee for the "irresponsible" use of "pejorative language" like 'work-shy' and 'scrounger'. Major disability charities warn that the government's focus on alleged fraud to justify welfare cuts has caused an increase in abuse directed at disabled people, when the actual fraud rate for Disability Living Allowance is 0.5%. Many disabled people have said they are taunted in the street about 'faking it', and are concerned this

Salem-like climate of suspicion might result in violence. A recent academic study of disabled children found a fifth of them had been attacked physically, sexually, abused emotionally or neglected. Experts have warned that disability hate crime remains under-reported and often ignored by police. This is not the atmosphere in which we can prevent another tragic story like Fiona Pilkington, who, after years of abuse from local youths, killed herself and her disabled daughter.

There is a desperate need for a new narrative in our society and a serious and in-depth discussion about the role of the state in supporting disabled people to become self-reliant and to exercise their capabilities to lead lives that they value and add to human progress. Politicians of all stripes have failed to stem the toxic tide that now floods our social landscape. Further retrenchment of the state will only raise these water levels higher. Distinguished disability campaigner Jenny Morris was right when she said that we need a values system which embraces diversity, in which disabled people are treated as belonging and contributing to their communities. Whether any politicians and parties will be brave enough to stand up and say this remains to be seen. Even with further cuts still to come, we must remain hopeful. As the deafblind radical Helen Keller once said, "Optimism is the faith that leads to achievement. Nothing can be done without hope or confidence."

Eugene Grant works in the third sector as a public policy advisor on poverty and welfare, and comments regularly on disability and issues of social policy. He blogs at [Dead Letter Drop](http://DeadLetterDrop.com/) (<http://eugenegrant.wordpress.com/>)



SUNSET PARKER PIX

HOW DO YOU BUILD A MOVEMENT?

FOR DECADES THE LEFT HAS STRUGGLED TO UNITE AGAINST THE NEOLIBERAL AGENDA. IN RECENT YEARS WE'VE SEEN ANTI-GLOBALISATION & OCCUPY MOVEMENTS MAKE PROGRESS, BUT WE'RE STILL SOME WAY FROM A BROAD, SUSTAINED RESISTANCE. OVER THE COMING MONTHS, THE OT WILL BE ASKING CAMPAIGN GROUPS, ACTIVISTS & GRASSROOTS ORGANISERS TO COME TOGETHER IN DISCUSSING HOW TO BUILD A STRONG MOVEMENT, STARTING THIS MONTH WITH ADAM RAMSAY, MARK BERGFELD, DANIEL GARVIN & ALARM.

MARK BERGFELD

STUDENT ACTIVIST & SWP

Nearly one year after OLSX set up camp outside St Paul's, we are preparing for a hot autumn, with strikes, a Trade Union Congress and student demonstrations. Inasmuch as the situation is pregnant with new opportunities, we must not forget where we came from.

We have come a long way from the anti-capitalist movement of the early 2000s and its bitter debates, which led to inaction and navel-gazing. Since then, we have had mass anti-war movements, successful movements against neoliberalism in Latin America, the return of youth revolts and mass strikes in Greece, Spain, Portugal, France and Britain, and, most importantly, the Arab revolutions which continue today.

However, the ruling classes remain as determined and united as ever to crush the rights of workers and other oppressed groups. That's why it is necessary to build the broadest possible unity on our side. Unity doesn't mean we should shy away from arguments amongst ourselves. In every movement, there will be a thousand and one opinions on what the way forward is. While this can be a strength, it is also our weakness and can create the kind of inaction that we saw in the latter years of the anti-capitalist movement.

In allusion to the old trade union slogan 'Unity is strength', we need to raise the banner 'Unity in action'. We cannot, for example, let the students fight by themselves like they did in 2010. Similarly, we cannot let public sector workers of the PCS strike by themselves like they have been doing over the last year.

'Unity in action' means we stand united on the picket lines and support each other's demonstrations and occupations. It doesn't mean we brush our differences aside, but requires us to engage in a political dialogue about what kind of strategy and tactics our movements need in order to succeed.

In the course of Occupy London we entered a crucial process of learning from each other and developed common strategies which could unite different political actors. Now we have to lay the organisational foundations for escalation. In Spain, the Indignados have successfully taken their protest from the squares into the universities and built support with Asturian miners.



ANDREA BAKAËS

Our tactics must be based on the objective circumstances we find ourselves in, and in considerations whether tactics such as occupation bring the movement closer to the goal of defeating the neoliberal project. While the students' movement and Occupy elevated the tactic of occupation above its strategy, the anti-war movement in 2003 did the same with its bi-yearly marches. Our movements need to aim to change the balance of forces inside of society and create the kind of networks that can make us stronger for the next round of struggles. As we have seen with UK Uncut, Occupy or the students' movement, even a minority can detonate wider social and workers' struggles. But we don't want to remain a minority movement. We want to see the 99% joining us in action.

We need to combine two things: develop tactics which can draw people into action against neoliberalism, and develop demands which can offer an alternative to the neoliberal project.

We can start to contest neoliberalism when the 99% aim to shut down the 1%, as we have seen in Occupy Oakland. Additionally, we need demands which present an alternative to the current system: tax the rich, stop tax avoidance, provide free education. Such demands need to be radical enough so that a militant minority fights for them, and broad enough for the wider masses to connect with. The slogan "Occupy Everything - Demand nothing" cannot provide a framework for developing tactics and strategies for the 99%.

As we move into the autumn, we will need to learn from some of the best experiences of the global Occupy movement. Occupy Oakland turned the slogan 'Unity is strength' into action by uniting occupiers, students, the black community and the longshoremen of America's fifth largest port. Having gained support from Oakland's organised working class, Occupy set out to shut down the port and called for the first American general strike since 1946. What Oakland activists understood was that the self-activity of workers was key to building a movement against neoliberalism.

In the UK, the electricians who linked up with Occupy to shut down building sites succeeded in challenging the multinational corporation Balfour Beatty. This is the kind of strategy we need.



ADAM RAMSAY

GREEN PARTY ACTIVIST

Our movement is, they say, an ecosystem. There is no central committee. There is no vanguard. There is no Politburo. There are thousands of people involved in hundreds of mutually beneficial projects, running in roughly the same direction.

At the recent Netroots gathering, former communist organiser and current Newsnight Economics Editor, Paul Mason, used another metaphor: "We used to see ourselves as a lever, trying to get the vast boulder of the trade union movement to shift... If I were involved today, I'd just become a small rock and start to roll."

Perhaps we take this approach because so many of us belong to a generation who have known only neoliberalism: we demand choice, we expect to be atomised. Perhaps it is because we are so aware of the failures of Soviet centralisation. Maybe it's because we have learnt so much from the movements in Latin America, Spain and Italy, whose ideology stems as much from battling dictators as it does from fighting the corporate power these oppressors served. For whatever reason, though, it seems that we do not do mass parties with orders from above. We do our own things, and hope we are collectively pulling the same way.

This model has distinct advantages. As global capitalism flails, it is hard to know where it will strike next, or where we should strike it. Hundreds of small, self-organised nodes can respond more quickly than a large bureaucracy. We can achieve more because everyone does that for which they have energy. But it also has disadvantages. All too often, it generates cliques and lacks entry points for new people. It encourages us to think of ourselves as activists on the front line, not organisers building our power base: too often, the action we take fails to recruit others - to re-fertilise the soil on which our ecosystem depends.

Likewise, there is little space to build a shared vision and analysis (or to discuss and learn to respect our differences). Different parts of the movement rarely cross-pollinate. Occupy perhaps helped with some of those problems, but a movement is the pursuit of a lifetime. A temporary camp, no matter how glorious, is always temporary.

Ideology is forged in struggle. Atomised activism means that people too often end up believing that their campaign demand is not one of many

good ideas, but rather that it is the solution. As I meet more and more people who fetishise one technocratic fix, or who idolise one particular tactic - whether direct action or standing in elections, workplace organising, media stunts or publishing research - I worry that we don't have enough space to come together as a broad movement. With that space we could hope to gain mutual respect, to realise that these are all tools in a box, and that we must, between us, master them all.

Likewise, we are lacking true international ties. If cross-pollination is important within the UK, how much do we have to learn from movements around the world? Why aren't there regular, open, widely publicised Skype conference calls enabling those in Britain who work against neoliberalism to join up with those in other countries who do the same?

Our emerging tradition seems to be about coming together with others who already agree with us. In a world built to tell us that we are alone, this is crucial. But the next step must surely be reaching out - learning to educate and organise those around us. How many self-defining activists have ever knocked on a stranger's door, or organised a union meeting with their colleagues? How many have been trained in how to do so?

We seem to be afraid of engaging formal organised power. Whilst we are right to be wary of political parties and trade unions, we mustn't be afraid of them. I can't think of a successful movement which has achieved real change without working through these formal structures. And, with The Green Party on the rise and trade unions leading mass mobilisations, how can we not engage with them - if even with a cheeky scepticism?

The UK has hundreds of local groups working in their own ways for economic justice. If our movement is an ecosystem, we cannot pretend that we will all tackle the same targets or organise in the same ways. But successful ecosystems must cross-pollinate and must ensure their leaves continue to fertilise their roots. Get these things right, then, as the glaring iniquity of neoliberal exploitation becomes brighter, we will flourish.

Adam Ramsay ran as a Green Party candidate in the recent local elections. He has also been closely involved with UK Uncut. Adam writes at <http://brightgreenscotland.org/>

Ideology is forged in struggle. Atomised activism means that people too often end up believing that their campaign demand is not one of many

DANIEL GARVIN

PAYUP

Occupy, like many preceding social movements, features the battle of the 'radical' versus the 'liberal'. The debate tends to go in one direction with 'radicals' proclaiming in blogs and independent media that 'liberals' gut the movement of radical thought, inspiration, and the militancy that will eventually smash capitalism and the state.

The 'radicals' point to images beamed at us from Occupy Oakland, Greece, Spain and Quebec, seemingly ignoring the fact that we don't live in Oakland, Greece, Spain or Quebec. We live in the UK, with different conditions, a different culture of politics and a different history of social movements. Sure, we can take inspiration and tips and advice from across the waters, but in the end we have to think about what we are working with. Some may point to last year's riots and disagree, but I don't think the insurrection is coming any time soon.

I am not a liberal. But, nor am I interested in playing a minority sport of radicalism. How do we achieve change? I don't really know, but these thoughts reflect six years of being an activist seeking alternatives. I believe we live under the most powerful economic and political system in human history. Changing it is going to need a genuine mass movement. We currently do not have anything that remotely resembles a mass movement. Movement building, therefore, should be a primary concern.

While we should not drop radical politics, movement building won't happen, in my opinion, if we are dogmatic and insular, which is why I think the consistent grumbling from certain 'more rad and intellectual than thou' cliques is unhelpful, and perhaps even counter-productive.

People are radicalised and empowered by joining social movements and engaging in collective actions. It's a process, not an event. It took me years of gradually moving more and more to the left before I became involved in 'the movement'.

For a long time I was turned off by what I regarded as over-zealous activists who disagreed with everything, who seemed too negative to be constructive, and who made me feel inadequate because, for example, I lacked fluency in the theories of Theodore Adorno.

I think our immediate target audience for building the movement is the 500,000 people who come out on TUC marches. Labour-voting members of trade unions or other community

organisations may not be overly political or active, but they hold a conviction that the world can be a much better place. To get these people involved, I think we need to ground the movement not in strict ideals but in more pragmatic, strategic, savvy thinking. We need to be relevant to people's lives. We need to be worth the sacrifice of a few hours out of a busy week working and looking after the kids. A key element of this is to be seen to be actually making a difference, no matter how small.

We need to build with the vision that we can shift our positions over time. Remember, people get radicalised within movements. The identity of a social movement can be crudely divided into two parts; demands and tactics. To build a mass movement, to become more relevant and appealing, our demands should be positioned to the left of the mainstream, but not so far left that we are marginal and unable to relate to anyone less radical than us. Our tactics need to embrace genuine diversity. Phoney claims about 'diversity of tactics' are not enough if we're giving out the message that we really think only black bloc tactics are worthwhile.

Modern forms of anarchist-inspired social movements have existed in the UK for a long time. We're good at creating a small countercultural scene around squatted social centres, free parties, endlessly long meetings, zines, independent media outlets, blogs, and fetishised images of riots and tear gas. The 'radicals' in the movement argue that if only we just did more of all these 'radical' things, ignoring the mainstream media and 'liberal' consensus about what is acceptable to think and do, then we could get down to the business of pure revolutionary activity.

But people have been doing these things for decades, and we are still a tiny clique.

Reflections on the Pay Up campaign "We should be as radical as possible" says someone, critically, in response to my idea for a UK Uncut-style living wage campaign called Pay Up. "Surely we want to abolish wage labour, not just give people a pound extra" they continue. "Yeah, the living wage, who defines that? It's really problematic, we should price our own labour - you sound like London Citizens" says another.

London Citizens, while obviously not 'radical', have achieved something that we currently can only dream of - a network



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ALARM & FENCELLS

of thousands of people a million times more diverse in education, class, faith and culture than any radical movement to date; a network that has managed to organise locally and win the living wage for 10,000 workers in the capital.

Once the Pay Up campaign was launched, the usual small band of highly educated rad twitter users were quick to dismiss it. "Be more anti-capitalist!" "What's the use of a living wage?" "Why not demand full worker control?" "Only militant workplace organising". Anyone who thinks that demanding a living wage is a waste of time is so far removed from the reality of what it means to live on the minimum wage, that they'd be better placed in the elitist ranks of the Tory party. Writing "full worker control" on a leaflet, or on a blog that no-one but your Facebook friends read, doesn't mean you are any more likely to get where you want to go than those working towards lesser goals.

I want to engage people in the relationship between capital and labour; to build a degree of class consciousness. At the moment many people are critical of financial capitalism, but not the nuts and bolts framework of bosses and workers. Just because Pay Up isn't overtly saying "smash capitalism and sack the bosses", it doesn't mean it's not moving towards a fundamental critique.

Another blog criticised us, saying that "only militant working class action will achieve anything". While I agree that "militant working class action" would be great, this calls to mind a radically different supermarket working culture to the one I know. People do not stand around at work chatting about radical theory like PhD activists. It's hard enough to engage people in even the concept of a trade union.

There's plenty to say on achieving social change, but here's a final note. In 2006, 600 people camped outside Drax power station for the first climate camp. By 2008, 2,500 people were camping and engaging on some level with direct action on climate change. New people had joined. At this point, many of the old purists kicked off that the new people we're not yet militantly anarcho enough. They wrote bitching indymedia posts scorning at the creeping 'liberalism'. Many left, taking all their well-worn skills and experience. Others stayed, trying to get the camp to adopt hard line political statements that would finally stop the 'liberal' rot. Barely a national meeting went by without some reference to the battle between the 'radicals' and the 'liberals'. A few years later climate camp died, for many reasons, but a considerable factor was the vocal band of purists who were more comfortable preaching to the converted than engaging in the messy job of building a genuine mass movement.

This is the perspective of one Alarm member. Just some pointers to consider when organising.

1. As anarchists we believe a self-organised collective process is the key to organising, one that does away with hierarchical structures and egos. Meetings should always either have a concise action plan or take the form of a discussion group / consciousness raising group.
2. Think big! Think global! A network alliance / federation of sorts, made up of local grassroots groups, should be in our sights and be the long-term goal, whilst always maintaining autonomy.
3. Be prepared for direct action. Sooner or later the State, or those seeking to protect their privilege, will try and quash what we have created if they feel threatened in any way. Just look at the Paris Commune in 1871, as one example among many.
4. Never lose the radical, but also don't be afraid to be creative and imaginative with getting messages across.
5. Remember to always include women in decision-making or we've failed before we've begun. Make a firm commitment to fighting patriarchy as much as racism, capitalism and the State.
6. Always challenge and stop behaviour that is clearly offensive or abusive. We don't want to replicate what we have to go through under capitalism. We want to create a better society.
7. A fluid and transparent people's assembly is a good model to follow. Everyone's needs must be addressed, and representation for those needs is as far as we should go when it comes to positions of power.
8. Everyone should be made accountable. We do not live in a

- democracy at present and those in power are not made accountable.
9. Our enemy is NOT our friend. Why settle for that? It's important to realise that if we are on the right track, our message will be successful in winning over public opinion.
 10. Never settle for anything less than a substantial restructuring of power based on organised resistance. We are not liberals.
 11. Numbers are not initially important. Just as long as networks are growing steadily in numbers and interest is being generated. Remember quality over quantity.
 12. Don't be afraid to be critical and be prepared to change with the times. Reflect on what the current real issues/needs are.
 13. How we communicate with others is possibly the most important thing. Make the effort to welcome newcomers so they don't feel isolated. Make sure to follow up by taking contact details.
 14. Analysis of class, race and gender should be at the heart of things. Promoting environmental issues is also very important. To prepare for the revolution we have to be as sustainable and self-sufficient as possible. Control of food production would mean ultimately the end of criminal injustices against the earth and all those living on it.
 15. Go propaganda crazy! Make stickers, badges, posters, zines etc and take over the streets with your message.
 16. And lastly: each one, teach one. Hold skill-shares on a regular basis. Knowledge is for sharing. [http://www.soundthealarm.org.uk/ alarm@hushmail.com](http://www.soundthealarm.org.uk/alarm@hushmail.com)





OCCUPY LATITUDE AND THE COMMODIFICATION OF PROTEST

JACK DEAN & SARA CAMERON

What was born in a tent, died in a tent. Worn like the skin of one of Buffalo Bill's victims in exactly the kind of enclosed corporate space it was built to dismantle, Occupy London's Tent City University (TCU) was recently taken to a branded woodland glade in Suffolk where it was stripped of political meaning.

A true occupation of the Latitude festival would have highlighted the vastly unfair labour practices used by the organiser, Festival Republic. It would have challenged the main sponsor, Vodafone, about their continuing refusal to pay a fair share of taxes and questioned the value of packaging protest culture into a product bought at £100 for the weekend. Whilst Occupy's outreach efforts have always been of paramount importance, especially since the eviction of the camps, outreach in such an insular, paid-for space is not nearly as effective as time spent working in disaffected communities.

Occupy Latitude, in failing to engage with any of these issues, became merely a simulated occupation at the heart of Festival Republic's event, an occupation sadly lacking the inclusive diversity and indignant dialogue that made Tent City University what it was at St Paul's. Occupy Latitude predominantly provided a platform for 'celebrity' voices, for those who use the Occupy movement as a stylish and attractive backdrop to their one-man plays rather than daring to engage in the movement's challenging collaborative processes. Those more intent on padding their CVs than giving a platform to the voiceless put themselves forward to perform, and to be managed by PR agents who had previously muffled the raw cries emanating from St Paul's in favour of corporate-style 'messaging'.

Whether those who believe they 'created' Occupy London always intended to distil it into a reformist lobbying campaign, or months of institutionalisation in positions as key actors warped their intentions,

the result is the same: Occupy has become a sanitised, pseudo-radical space for hire.

As numbers dwindle, opportunists who never truly held any radical perspectives have begun the process of commodifying Occupy. Our process is being bypassed and our principles are being ignored, suggesting that horizontalism and consensus-based decision-making are mere inconveniences.

High-handed and non-collaborative approaches abound. A finance request to fund the use of the TCU tent at Latitude was brought to an Occupy London general assembly without mention of its intended use, while a request to fund Occupy Latitude's publicity material was blocked at the same assembly for the reasons outlined here. Occupy London's communication channels were also co-opted as part of the Occupy presence at Latitude, without prior discussion with those involved in moderating them.

Slavoj Žižek's insights into cultural capitalism describe the idea of 'protest as product'. With the inclusion of an Occupy presence at the Latitude festival, the attendees didn't simply purchase a ticket, they also bought redemption from being a consumer. Today's cultural capitalism embeds commercialisation in the act of charity, in order to make us feel better about the products and services we are using. Peace and love are commodified, packaged and sold. Che Guevara T-shirts are purchased by those who wish to 'demonstrate' their beliefs. The irony is that corporations and the system itself profit from the sale of counter-culture, which is now such a mainstream and commercially neutered idea it has left much revolutionary discourse sounding more like the latest trendy advert.

We find ourselves surrounded by a failing economy, unemployment, and a widening gap between rich and poor. The altruism sold in consumerism merely cements division through misdirection.

OCCUPY LONDON IS DEAD - LONG LIVE OCCUPY

RAGNHILD FRENG DALE

Some languages have a word for the wisdom that comes with looking back at an event. The nearest equivalent in English is 'hindsight', but the meaning in this context should be clear: Occupy London is no longer what it set out to be. A liberal wave has washed out the contents of what bore so much potential, leaving a hollow cave in which future explorers may still find a space of curiosity and radicalism. But first, we have to let it die – so that Occupy may live on.

When Occupy London first began, we all fell in love at the steps of St Pauls. We felt it was something that had never happened before. Something new, buzzing, and real. For the younger generation, it was our 1968, our delayed Spring of Hope that finally addressed the discontent brewing amid global recession and recurrent collapses. Spring was coming. A spring that would address the hike in student fees, the massive unemployment, and the reasons underlying the august riots. A spring that would create a radical alternative. For those slightly older, it seemed a chance to redeem a slumbering generation whose material safety had lulled them into the belief that economic growth, combined with "development of third world countries" was the best way to secure a good future for us in Western Europe, and – hopefully – for those not quite as fortunate as us.

It was global. Or, at the very least, international. We felt the unstoppable tide of the Arab Spring reach the shores of the Thames, after it had travelled across the Atlantic Ocean to make waves in downtown Manhattan. Occupy Wall Street spread to the world, and London jumped on board with curiosity, enthusiasm, and determination. On the very first day, in an attempt to occupy the London Stock Exchange, over 2,000 people came down to join in. Many remained overnight. Hundreds of tents were pitched, in changing configurations over the course of a few weeks. A Tent City was born, complete with a kitchen tent, a university, a library, an information point. It was real, it was alive, and it was enthralling.

We had meetings, we organised, we debated, and we challenged the system. We wanted to address not just bankers' bonuses and executive pay, but the very logic of capitalism itself. To prove alternatives do exist and are feasible. There were those who did not like us, and who scorned us for our lack of "demands". We claimed they "did not understand" us. Mainstream press, drunken City workers on a Thursday night, and liberal right wingers were no longer the only ones with the right to speak. We made a powerful statement on our second day, and we made sure it was heard.

We saw camps pop up across the globe. We had traveller-pilgrims, visitors from other movements. Some of us went on overnight bus rides to visit them. We felt alive, and we felt connected. Change was in the air. Inequality and justice back on the agenda. This, we felt, was our moment.

We were listened to, we were in the press, and much more importantly, we were on people's lips. The possibilities of questioning the system and talking politics with strangers became legitimate, even necessary. People came to visit, they joined, they were radicalised. Enchanted. And we fell in love. With the movement. With the potential for change. With the buzz of voices. And, unfortunately, with ourselves. We had found a space, and



We decided to occupy it, despite legal threats and police repression. After all, everything was civil here in England.

But perhaps the comfort of our legal status steered us onto the wrong track. Over winter, many remained indifferent, or became disenchanted, and the constant bickering over petty issues drained the remaining few of the energy they had mustered. Resuscitating the camp until the end of February left plans for May unclear, and plans beyond in an uncertain state. International bonds receded as other camps seemed to disappear off the grid. People remained active, but they no longer took the name in their mouth. The mainstream media systematically under-reported, or misrepresented, any activity. The police were no less systematic in their power policing. Some actions were in the pipeline, but in the eyes of the public, Finsbury Square clung onto a brown patch of what was once a lawn whilst the rest of the movement had vapourised. May came and went, but neither Mayday flowers nor the May12 rent-a-crowd gave the necessary lift. Occupy London, it seemed, was going into a lull.

At the time of writing, it is July 2012. A winter's cold summer's day in London. The city is buzzing with life, with tourists coming to visit Oxford Street, Covent Garden, Buckingham Palace and St Paul's Cathedral. But there is no longer an Occupy camp at the steps of St Paul's. And though tents pop up every now and then, in various locations, there is no longer an Occupy London. Press statements targeted at the corporate media gain few responses, if any. Actions have become such a common sight that the public have become blind to it. Call-outs for people to "get involved" become fewer and fewer, and the occupiers showing up are ever more sparse and familiar. Whilst small fractions of working groups debate how to connect with people, initiatives spring up that have nothing to do with the name of Occupy.

And maybe that is the way forward, for all those who saw their hopes raised on 15 October, later to be vanquished somewhere over the course of a very harsh winter. Our initial statement says it all: this is where we work towards it. We did. But the space had to transform into a metaphysical space to reach all those places where discussions were held, newspapers read, action taken, and life choices made.

We started to work towards a different society. But we never said that Occupy would be the solution. The solution was not our tents, the general assembly, the free food or working group meetings. It was not to provide a homeless shelter or a spiritual retreat. The solution was never within our reach – it lies beyond, behind, and on the side, bigger than our tents. This does not mean our efforts were futile. Changes take lifetimes, and much is yet to be done. Occupy was not first, nor shall it be last. It sounded an alarm bell, and it gathered more attention on those already highlighting injustice and working for fairer, greener alternatives. But Occupy was only a temporary community, and it must learn, not teach, when it interacts with others.

We may not be able to save the movement, but we can save its legacy. Most people have already abandoned ship, or are floating around an unstable core. The liberals that still cling on to the name of Occupy London should honour the hard work of others and let their own egos go.

Anyone who makes a name for themselves on the back of Occupy London should carefully question their own motives. And we should not be afraid to scrutinise them. Horizontality and accountability were, after all, at the core of the society we agreed, by consensus, to work towards. Rather than plug in a gas burner to temporarily reignite a beacon that is fast running out of wood, let us return to the embers and tend them, until we have added enough logs to the pile to light it anew, this time with a glow that will warm us for decades to come. There may not be any glory or stardom in this work, and those who were in it for their own CVs will find their interest dwindle. Humility and patience is needed for the movement to grow again and develop – not just as "Occupy London", or even necessarily in London, but as a global construction for far-reaching, deep-rooted change.

We had no captain, only a temporary autonomous space of free thought in action. It is time to let go, and leave the space for new groupings and radical alternatives to grow and breathe with oxygen, without being suffocated by what has become of the Occupy London "brand". If we stop mourning the dying phoenix, and instead remember all that was beautiful in it, the new phoenix rising from the ashes may still fly as an idea that promises new beginnings.

OCCUPY NOMADS, THE INSIDE STORY

EMMA FORDHAM

THE NOMADIC OCCUPY GROUP HAS, IN RECENT DAYS, MELTED AWAY AFTER A MONTH CAMPED IN A CORNER OF HAGGERSTON PARK, HACKNEY. WHERE THE GROUP WILL POP UP NEXT IS INFORMATION BEING KEPT FIRMLY UNDER WRAPS. TEMPORARY ENCAMPMENTS IN LIMEHOUSE, MILE END, SHADWELL, A DIFFERENT AREA OF HAGGERSTON, HAMPSTEAD HEATH AND ION SQUARE GARDENS PRECEDE THIS LATEST MOVE. THE GROUP HAS BEEN NOMADIC SINCE MARCH, SHORTLY AFTER THE EVICTION OF OCCUPLYSX AT ST PAUL'S.

Stephane is Corsican. He's fiery and proud. He joined the Nomadic Occupy group in March, at the group's first camp in Limehouse. Before that he was a politically-motivated, community-minded squatter.

I asked Stephane why he joined the Nomads.

"I support Occupy, because if Occupy wins it will be a nice little step in the right direction," he said. It took a while to untangle what he meant, the rapidity of his speech and his strong accent hindering me far more than explaining complex concepts in his second language hindered him.

Stephane wants to take down the capitalist system we live in, but not via revolution. He knows it's not going to happen overnight, that if it did we'd be in a mess because we're not ready to live self-sufficiently and autonomously in the anarchic communities he would like to see emerging from the death throes of neoliberalism. For him, Nomadic Occupy is a training camp, an opportunity to live in the future he wants to see, and a physical, visible reminder to the authorities and the wider world that dissent has not gone away.

Stephane doesn't see camping as the be all and end all of the Occupy movement but he does believe that keeping a tented presence in the public eye is important. He sees the Nomads as forerunners of change, taking back our right to live on the land, to build our own communities and to practice self-sufficiency. The Nomads are, to a small extent, supporting themselves by recycling items destined for landfill and by foraging. Old electrical appliances are expertly taken apart and rebuilt or stripped into useful parts, food is plucked from skips or donated and, as summer unfolds, fruits and herbs can be picked for free in London's parks.

I asked Stephane what Occupy "winning" would mean and why, for him, such a win would be only a "nice little step". He said that as he understands it, the Occupy movement is pressing for redistribution of wealth, which for him wouldn't be enough – we'd still be living in

a system he wants to reject. For Stephane, anarchy is the answer and he explains anarchy thus: "Everyone has individual responsibility, first for themselves and then to their community. You look after yourself, but also you share, you co-operate. That's what we're doing here."

Tim camped at St Paul's before becoming a nomadic occupier. He believes that the OccupyLSX camp, being in the City of London and thus visible mainly to city workers and tourists, failed to connect with ordinary people in the way Nomadic Occupy does. He says "The nomads engage with people at the arse end of society, the people who are massively affected by the big issues – politics, globalisation, corporatisation – but who're least engaged with those issues. We encourage people in local communities who have never been politically active, who've always assumed they can't change anything, to think and talk about these big issues and to start connecting with activist groups and grassroots campaigns."

Nomadic Occupy also provides a valuable social hub which is particularly appreciated by the disenfranchised, according to Tim. Pubs and cafes are too expensive to be viable meeting places for many and squatted social centres are often too hidden, or too intimidating, for people outside the squatting community to take advantage of. A small camp in a public place is far easier to approach. The kettle is always on and "we probably provide the only free all fresco cafe in London".

Encouraging participation in political issues is a big part of the Occupy mission. Tim is passionate about recruiting new people and about "bridging the disconnect between the local and the global". He accepts that the Nomads have made some mistakes and that they're still on a steep learning curve, working out how best to connect with communities and how to avoid antagonising the very people they want to reach out to. On the whole, he says, the dispossessed – those with insecure housing, troubled relationships, unstable mental health or little to lose – welcome

Nomadic Occupy. Those upset by the encampments tend to be clinging to privileges and a 'not in my backyard' attitude. Some of those who are initially, perhaps naturally, suspicious, relax and engage once they understand the remit of Nomadic Occupy and the temporary nature of the camps.

Tim explains how residents around Mile End and Ion Square found that the presence of a Nomad camp reduced crime and antisocial behaviour in the area, making local parks – once no-go zones for pensioners and families – safer and more hospitable. He also reminds me that as eviction loomed at St Paul's we brainstormed about what Occupy should do next. Going "on the road" and engaging with local communities was high up the list of priorities and the Nomads have found a means of doing that. "St Paul's was probably one of the largest activist training camps ever," Tim says. "Since the big camps have been evicted the activists have scattered but they're still spreading the word in their own communities and work places, on the streets and in the parks."

Steve describes himself as "a typical East End person". He stumbled across Nomadic Occupy in Ion Square Gardens and wasn't impressed at first but was invited to sit down for a chat. "I had my eyes opened," he says. "These guys educated me about social issues which I'd always felt powerless to engage with or change. They made me think about the things that matter. Most of us don't think about those things because we're blinded by TV or by our own struggles."

Steve decided to join the Nomads. "I want to help them engage with local people. I want ordinary people to understand that the banks and the press manipulate people and how it's all for the benefit of the one percent." Regarding the camp, Steve argues that land should be for the people, for all people, and that camping out, cooking over a fire and creating a social space for discussion is a better use for it than most.

Nomadic Occupy has given Steve hope



joining the camp at St Paul's out of necessity or a desire for community. As Kay explains "Homeless people have no choice but to Occupy space which is not 'theirs'. The Occupy movement brought this to public attention but the issue is still misunderstood. Charities and other organisations set up to help the homeless often cannot understand why someone they have placed in a hostel or other accommodation will leave and go back to the streets. They don't realise that a home is not just about having a roof over your head. Being socially isolated is worse than being cold or damp. That's why people will return to the homeless community rather than sit alone in a bedsit. That's why camps such as this are such positive developments – we are creating a real community of people who care about each other here."

Kay believes it to be important that Occupy maintains a visible presence on public land, not just for community-building purposes but to remind people that the issues which brought occupiers onto the streets in October 2011 haven't gone away – and in fact, are becoming more and more apparent what with the Barclays interest-rate fixing scandal and the militarisation and corporatisation of the Olympics (and the negative effect that's having on many East-Londoners). "We will Occupy until the one percent start to address us and propose solutions," Kay proclaims.



WARRIORS AT THE EDGE OF TIME

STEWART LEE



uch of the history of protest in my lifetime has concerned the enforced occupation of physical space, from the perimeter fence of Greenham Common Airbase to tunnels beneath the A30 extension in Devon, to the Occupy Movement's own encampments in Wall Street and The City, to a grocer's in Hastings I refused to leave for twenty minutes in 2008 because they wouldn't accept a Scottish fiver despite it being legal tender. The reason public opposition to global capitalism hasn't yet reached a tipping point is precisely because its real crimes don't conclude in physical space itself, but in a virtual world of virtual money and virtual profit. It's hard for many people to feel especially strongly about the effects of something they

can't really see, though this didn't stop the Church of England from tying itself in knots about what God would think of there being a load of tents outside St Paul's Cathedral. (One assumes He'd have been delighted. There are exactly 48 mentions of tents in the King James Bible, and if He doesn't like them, why did He keep putting them in the Bible so much, seeing as how He wrote it.)

The Occupy Movement is occupying space and time. Well done. In doing so, it has thus far changed the news agenda, shown how random groups of people can co-operate to noble ends, and made the plastic-headed Tory MP Louise Mensch look like an out-of-touch dilettante. Again.

But Global Capitalism has moved beyond space and time into a theoretical abstract region unfettered by the laws of either physics or common decency, and where there isn't so much as a paving slab to pitch your tent on,

let alone a Starbucks where you can recharge your mobiles and irritate Louise Mensch.

I admire Occupy's commitment no end, and were I not busy satirising capitalism for hard cash in the world of light entertainment, I'd be camped out too. But, in the words of David Essex in Geoff Wayne's 1976 prog rock concept album War Of The Worlds, given that the Occupy Movement's foot soldiers are real physical beings made of meat and water, and Global Capitalism is an invisible Lovecraftian entity from another dimension, maybe it's a case of "bows and arrows against the lightning."

I'm not trying to piss in anyone's chips. But look at the facts. In 1649 at St George's Hill, a ragged band they called The Diggers tore down the enclosures to reclaim ancient Common Land. In 1811, the Luddites attempted to protect the work force by smashing wide-framed automated looms. They had physical targets to attack.



And while it certainly was fun to put supa-glue in a bank door lock in the 1990s, Global Capitalism is now too slippery an entity to be inconvenienced by commercially available solvents.

Let's pin this to a recent news meme. We all know that the comedian Jimmy Carr, for example, and the pop star Gary Barlow have concealed millions of pounds of tax, within tentatively legal loopholes. But where is the cash? Did it ever exist? At no point did a boat containing their joint millions in tightly tied bundles with pound signs on them cross the sea by night to Jersey, with Carr at the prow, squinting towards land, and Barlow tugging lugubriously at the oars, whilst singing Take That B-sides to keep time. Where might a protester have intercepted this transfer? The money never existed. The abstract idea of it was simply suddenly double clicked from one non-existent space to another.

And asking anyone to understand the exact procedures behind Barclays fixing of interest rates is unreasonable. Pictured in its simplest terms, we know Bob Diamond has essentially run off with a big wheelbarrow containing the bare essentials of the poor, and the aspirational hopes and dreams of the squeezed middle. But in reality we know that some guys who call each other 'dude' and go surfing together in Cornwall for bonding weekends somehow manipulated some figures relating to notional ideas of value in a virtual conceptual marketplace, and now no-one in East London can afford breakfast cereal and teachers are sneaking the kids apples.

How can non-theoretical visible protesters strike blows against the manipulation of theoretical invisible money? Whilst Occupying the squares and streets of finance districts has no doubt been hugely effective, to deliver the killer blow, Occupy's agitators need to move beyond the physical realm and do battle with the concept of unfairly distributed wealth on the astral plane of non-corporeal fiscal matter. These rebel forces need a Yoda to train them to meet the evil Empire on a whole other level.

Step forward Dr Giles Fraser, the former Canon Chancellor of St Paul's, who stepped down after a moral dilemma during the Occupy protests. The philosopher priest, able to interrogate language and meaning using Wittgensteinian

techniques, whilst simultaneously having the ear of the liberal media, is found in the liminal zone between Heaven and Earth beloved by Anglican mystics, for whom even God Himself is more conceptual notion than actual entity. Could Fraser, on some level a friend of Occupy, teach the troops how to pray themselves into a virtual state, whereby disconnected versions of their physical selves could somehow take invisible wings and stop the transparent flow of Jimmy Carr and Gary Barlow's tax cash, and of Barclay's falsely manufactured profits, between equally non-existent spatial safe havens.

Once they had become Fraser-formed avatars of their own ideals, could Occupy protesters coagulate into gas clouds of rage, smothering the non-corporeal growth of Global Capitalism? Could we all join hands and levitate Jersey into outer space, where lack of gravity would render it as weightless as the virtual money stored in its virtual vaults? Its money market men threaten independence from the UK. Cut them adrift, literally, and see how they like it. And Bob Diamond himself may not even exist. I suspect he is some kind of skin-bag, full of virtual pound coins, manipulated by the formless energy of notional wealth, a collection of transactions that have somehow coalesced into a malign energy swarm, almost, but not quite, physically real.

Sadly, Giles Fraser, like some part-time Gandalf, remains at his new post in Elephant and Castle, selfishly refusing to use his spiritual powers to shape the Occupy Movement into a trans-dimensional ethical police force, unencumbered by mass or shape; psychedelic warlords, ready to disappear in smoke.

Instead, Occupy protesters remain on duty, solidly and nobly embodying a literal notion of political presence. Meanwhile, the air around us hums with unknowable communiqués as vast sums disappear in clouds of transparent data, assets transfer and liquidise in the reverse land grab of the system's gradual collapse, and you reach for them, like children swiping at wasps, who have licked up the sugar and scurped in the face of the rolled up newspaper of public condemnation. Buzz. Thwack! Bzzz...ugh.

www.stewartlee.co.uk



OT ALTERNATIVE CITIZENSHIP TEST

WITH THE GOVERNMENT ANNOUNCING PLANS TO UPDATE THE CITIZENSHIP TEST TO BE TAKEN BY PEOPLE SEEKING A UK PASSPORT, THE OT, EVER KEEN TO ASSIST, OFFERS THE FOLLOWING ALTERNATIVE TEST. HOW WELL DO YOU KNOW THE REAL BRITAIN?

- St. George is the patron saint of England, but was he:**
 - a racist from Luton
 - the founder of England
 - the great, great, great, great, great grandfather of John Terry
 - a Palestinian soldier
- To be an MP in the UK you will need to:**
 - play an active role in your local community
 - have a degree in PPE from Oxford
 - have a profound desire for equality for all
 - have never committed any kind of fraud
- Theresa May is:**
 - alarmingly, the Home Secretary
 - a distant relation of Erwin Schrödinger
 - a big fan of Human Rights
 - secretly the Cat Bin Lady
- Which of these countries will the UK illegally invade next?**
 - Iran
 - Syria
 - Pakistan
 - Yemen
- The United Kingdom gained most of its wealth through:**
 - trade and commerce
 - charitable donations
 - the Euromillions jackpot
 - the exploitation of people and the theft of resources from other countries
- Which of these countries does the UK NOT supply arms to?**
 - Libya
 - Israel
 - Iran
 - Saudi Arabia
- Who owns the Bank of England?**
 - The Queen
 - The public
 - The government
 - We are not allowed to know
- Who owns the most land in the UK?**
 - The Duke of Buccleuch and Queensbury
 - The Ministry of Defence
 - Tesco
 - The Forestry Commission
- According to the Tax Justice Network, how much tax is avoided each year in the UK?**
 - Zero.
 - We have to pay their taxes, stupid
 - £69.9 billion
 - Just a penny here and there
 - Who cares? It's legal. And everything that's legal is morally acceptable
- Deputy Prime minister Nick Clegg did community service for committing which crime?**
 - Arson
 - Telling big porky pies
 - Being in possession of two faces at the same time
 - Impersonating a decent human being

Failure to score at least 7 correct questions out of 10 will result in you being deported (unless you work in the finance industry). ANSWERS: 1D (ironic we don't even recognise

Palestine as a country) 2B, 3A (but it could well apply to all of them) 4 (Anyone's guess, all correct), 5D, 6 (Trick question, we supply them all), 7B (apparently), 8A, 9B and 10A.

GENERAL ASSEMBLY: "LIBOR MY ASS!"

At ease private...

Last month I shared some top-secret intelligence on the impending invasion of allied territories. The enemy was primed for an advance, employing shock and awe tactics, but thanks to us, we've managed to halt their progress.

I've spent the last month holed up in an undercover operation but I had to keep y'all in the dark for your own safety. Let's just say, the Head of Recruitment at G4S has been a little "tied up" recently. Now we've sent the G4S brigade packing, the neolibs have brought in them there regular marine corps faster than green grass through a goose. These jarheads ain't gonna be too pleased about checking bags and handing out lollipops to tourists, but don't be getting all complacent, soldier. These corporate maggots won't stop until every last inch of public space is under military lockdown.

Who'da think that it would be cycling shorts and synchronised swimming that would finally push us into martial law? Well hell, we can't allow this show of force to keep us from taking action against these corporate junkies! Excuse me while I present my proposal - which I've already granted consensus.

Starting today, we embark on a new operation, code word: Well, actually the codeword has been copyrighted, so we can't use it, but, here's the mission anyway.

As I'm sure y'all heard, these Locog hounds ain't too happy about good citizens using their precious logo

- hell, they would brand a fart if they could catch one. So, our scouts are drilled and ready to set up stalls near OT*mpic venues and sell all that novelty merchandise the organisers don't like to hear about. "Who wants a 'BP is your friend' T-shirt tie-dyed with the authentic blood of an indigenous activist?" "Get your Olymprick™ McLard Burger - the cornerstone of any nutritious breakfast!". We gonna subvert the shit out of these corporate clowns! Talking of clowns, the ace in the pack of our most wanted is a dangerous counter-revolutionary and ideologue - average height, Caucasian, medium build with a red wig, face-paint, and as crazy a buzzard as you've ever seen. Rest assured, we've got tabs on this one. He's been busy converting unsuspecting tourist folk in his Church of the Golden Arches - so get down there and bring him in soldier...

But the OT*mpics sure as tootin' ain't the only target in our sights. I'm sure you've heard, the enemy has been using a sophisticated financial weapon against us to manipulate the battlefield, which until now has outwitted our counter-counter insurgency squad. That's right, I'm talking about LIBOR.

Worse still, they've been accumulating a gigantic hoard of monetary ammunition in secret offshore bases. This, is financial warfare, soldiers, and we have a helluvalotta ground to make up. But can we do it? I SAID, CAN WE DO IT? You can bet your last penny we can. Coz that's all you got!



ON THE SOAPBOX

READERS' LETTERS & COMMENTS

THE PROBLEM WITH MORALISM

PAUL WALKER

In confronting many of today's problems we hear a lot of talk about immorality, corruption and unethical behaviour. Bankers, traders and other capitalists are regularly called out in the media for corrupt and immoral behaviour in the wake of successive financial crises. Individuals and companies are consistently attacked for avoiding taxes and collecting large bonuses, politicians are pulled up for having uncomfortably close relationships with powerful corporations and exploiting their positions for profit, and so on. Intuitively, it seems correct to attack these bankers, politicians and CEOs for their immoral behaviour, to reveal their corruption to the general public, and to criticise their lack of ethics so as to encourage those in a position of power to act in a more socially responsible manner. Yet, in this very approach, the real problem is obfuscated: The moralist critique prevents us from perceiving the true dimensions of the issues we wish to address.

In order to properly confront the issues we face today, we must return to the fundamental insight of Jean Baudrillard apropos Watergate – that is, that the Watergate scandal was not a scandal at all. Baudrillard's point here was not that the actions of Nixon et al were somehow acceptable, but rather that in attacking the perpetrators from a moral standpoint, in creating a public atmosphere of moral indignation, the unspoken assumption was that the unethical and corrupt actions of those embroiled in Watergate were a deviation from the norm.

In other words, the unspoken ideological assumption was that power normally operates in an ethical way, that government and politicians normally operate from a pure moral position, that — at a trivial level — even Nixon's tendency to utter profanities, as revealed in the Watergate transcripts, somehow revealed a disgusting deviation from the normal ethical functioning of government. This is of course ridiculous. The history of governments is littered with corruption, unethical behaviour and immoral politicians. The properly radical position is Baudrillard's: to assert that Watergate was not a scandal but, rather, indicative of the way that power functions.

What can this insight in regards to Watergate offer our contemporary perspective? The answer is that it helps us to perceive the "other side of the coin"

when we encounter moral critiques – that is, the conservative element in the apparently radical. When our media attacks figures like Rupert Murdoch, Bernard Madoff or Bob Diamond through a moral prism, when society attacks these individuals with a shared spirit of moral indignation, do we not replicate the very same problem identified by Baudrillard concerning Watergate? The underlying ideological assumption is that by purging these corrupt, immoral elements from our society, the system can then return to functioning in a just fashion; and so, paradoxically, an apparently anti-establishment moral critique can reinvalidate the very system it denounces. To repeat the point emphasised by the Slovenian philosopher Slavoj Žižek, it is not so much the case that we suffer from a lack of anti-capitalism these days, it's just that, more often than not, it's the wrong kind.

From the moralist's perspective, the problem appears to be the following: how do we stop corrupt and immoral capitalists and politicians from exploiting the liberal democratic capitalist system so that it can function in a properly just manner? But the real problem is that the unethical, immoral and corrupt behaviour of the rich and powerful is intrinsically linked to the way in which the liberal democratic capitalist system functions. The real problem is thus: What do we do with a system which not only rewards but actively encourages immoral, unethical and even corrupt behaviour?

Of course, this does not mean that those who cheat taxes, rig markets, or take home outrageous bonuses should not be criticised or punished appropriately, nor that they are somehow absolved of moral responsibility. The point is simply to perceive the "other side of the coin" in moral critiques, to recognise the unspoken ideological assumption that accompanies moral indignation. As long as we continue to treat the undesirable behaviour of the rich and powerful as disturbances in the operation of what could otherwise be a just and egalitarian social system, we cannot hope to properly address the issues confronting us today. Only by acknowledging that this undesirable behaviour is a symptom of the way liberal democratic capitalism functions can we truly begin to confront the problems our society faces.



DEMAND NOT. BUILD.

MARK WEAVER

Since the Occupy movement arose spontaneously in September 2011, it has reignited political debate across the world. Its hundreds of tent city occupations have revealed an internationally shared sense of discontent on an unprecedented scale. The movement boasted a collection of anarchic features including direct methods of disruptive protest, explicit rejection of leadership structures and an emphasis on total inclusivity. These globally shared themes have earned it the term "radical".

From the beginning and right up to the present, certain questions have dominated the ensuing discourse: "What are your aims?" and "Do you have demands?". Occupations across the world have been hesitant to form demands. In London the Occupy protesters produced a statement through mass consensus. The ten point statement expressed general concerns about democracy, economic justice, austerity and more. However the statement did not offer a coherent political program ready for the powers that be to implement.

Despite the media's persistence, the Occupy movement has still not produced concrete demands. One reason for this is that direct democracy insists that decisions affecting people's lives can only be made when all those concerned have full access to the decision making process. This suggests an incapacity to make demands on behalf of other groups of people. In time, the Occupy movement and other sympathetic groups – of which there are many – may develop ways to include greater numbers of people in decision making. The organisation of the global Occupy movement resembles a network of solidarity and cooperation rather than a centralised form of governance.

More significantly however, the movement suggests that people take independent action to create change, rather than relying on institutions. Far removed from our representative electoral systems, this kind of politics in

action favours personal responsibility, cooperation and long term commitment. One demand, for example, could have been the creation of a democratic system that everyone can participate in directly. Another demand could have been free education for all. Another could have been the universal right to form self-determined communities on common land.

The Occupy movement does not need to demand these things from anyone, instead, it simply builds them from the ground up. It is this radical approach that continues to inspire so many people around the world.

This approach demonstrates a belief that ordinary people can create a better world for themselves. It is the understanding that people have power with one another and do not require power over one another. From this liberated position, one only makes demands of one's self and finds ways to realise one's vision with the willing cooperation of others.



GROW UP & OCCUPY YOUR LIFE

MATT WILSON

Occupy is not so much a new phenomenon as the latest incarnation of a trend in political movements, a trend which sees the politics of protest rejecting hierarchy and centralised control while diverging from leftist rhetoric and its focus on the state. This trend is driven by a genuinely democratic impulse, where democracy is understood as being rooted in the people, not in governments.

Alongside this interpretation of democracy is the notion of prefiguration – the idea that we ought to start building the world we want to see, here and now. Rather than waiting for governments to implement demands or anticipating liberation through revolution, we must build, from the bottom up, a different world. Movements based on prefiguration refuse to leave politics in Westminster (or the Stock Exchange), instead working to create democracy in everyday lives.

Occupy has been quite successful in bringing democratic politics into the sphere of its own occupations but, as with other

movements of its kind, has failed to follow through with anything more widespread. Simply moving the arena of the political from Westminster to the Occupy camps is not enough, even if it is a feel-good beginning. The idea that Occupy is 'new' allows its supporters to feel that now, with these new ideas, they really can change the world – but are we just seeing a rehash of everything that's gone before, wrapped in a freshly painted banner? Believing – or pretending – that something is new allows us to make mistakes, to fail to achieve goals 'immediately', precisely because we're 'just getting started'.

It may be time to look more honestly at the history of prefigurative politics, to accept that the ideas of Occupy have been articulated for many, many years. From the 18th Century Diggers, to the student protests of 1968, from the anti-roads blockades of the early 90s, to the summit mobilisations and climate camps of the recent past – the rhetoric has always been more or less the same: "We're building a new world... This is what democracy

looks like!" For how long can we keep on starting, and starting again? It's time we start asking why we never get very far, to consider that perhaps the current tactics of political protest are failing, and to look for practical solutions.

These may lie less in attention-grabbing stunts than in paying attention to the everyday details of our lives. Democracy could be inserted into every corner and crevice. It could be invited into our communities and workplaces, our habits, our relationships. We could reject the carrots of the capitalist state, as well as fighting its sticks. By consuming less and differently, by sharing and communicating and organising with our neighbours, by refusing to support companies and institutions which we know are anti-democratic, we can begin to do what we say we're doing – building another world, not just one more protest camp.

By Matt Wilson, a member of Radical Routes – a network of radical co-ops whose members are committed to working for positive social change: www.radicalroutes.org.uk/

THE OT HOROSCOPE

OPPRESSORS



COP
What great luck you've had of late! The power to enforce the law is one thing, but to be deemed

above it is a very handy get out of jail free card. You're feeling untouchable, as if you could get away with murder. But don't get too cocky, Chance is fickle and you don't have a Monopoly on good fortune. Privatisation lurks just past Go, so remember to collect your dosh, you never know when you'll be bankrupt.



BANKER
You've been banking on your skeletons staying in the closet, and if it weren't for investigative

journalism and those pesky protesters, you might just have gotten away with it too. Okay, so with the LIBOR rate you'll have to declare an interest but they never used to care about these things during boom-time. You don't get much credit these days, but to be fair, you don't give much either.



NATIONALIST
After the disappointment of Roy's Boys' lacklustre display in the football, the Olympics offer a

chance to reassert national glory, and better still, we don't have to go abroad to do it. The downside, of course, is a massive influx of foreigners. Still, with a bit of luck you'll be hearing the national anthem on a daily basis, and you can get your Jubilee kitsch back out of the attic.

POLITICIANS



NEOLIBERAL
Oh dear. After months of sustained abuse, things have just gotten worse. Can you really claim

wealth trickles down now that everyone knows you've been hoarding trillions offshore? Your banker friends are up to their necks in it and that claptrap about the market being "free" is getting less believable by the day. It can be lonely at the top, but that's what you get for being a total bastard.



CHAMPAGNE SOCIALIST
You're shocked and appalled by the unethical sponsors, overzealous security

measures and censorship of any language relating to the Olympics - but not so much that you're going to give up your tickets to the rhythmic gymnastics. After all, just like the athletes, you worked bloody hard to be able to afford them. Well, your parents did, and sometimes wealth "does" trickle down.



LIBERAL
This coalition with the Tories has been nothing but trouble. Who knew power could be such a

drag? You've started to cast your eyes back across to the Labour benches but this unjust electoral system will always leave you in a weak negotiating position. Was it all worth it? Will you ever live this down? You've forgiven yourself, but redemption can't be self imposed, and forgiveness from a nation is a long time coming. Blue brings bad luck.

PROTESTERS



ANONYMOUS
New month, new memes. This is all getting tiresome to keep up with and you're thinking about the

bigger problems facing the landscape of the Internet. SOPA and PIPA might be dead for now, but the Internet Defence League doesn't feel like the right answer. The world fails to appreciate your online heroics but one day they'll see, anonymity is the future. Invest in Lulz for the win.



PACIFIST
The boys in blue have had military back-up recently, but does one really need a piece to keep the peace?

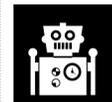
That's certainly not the way you'd go about it, but with missiles on rooftops and soldiers deployed on the streets, London seems far from the gentle utopia you crave. Don't despair! A trip abroad to somewhere looking like less of a warzone would do you good.



ANARCHIST
Direct action is the logical, consistent method of Anarchism, and right now you're

just itching to agitate. The people responsible for the plethora of Olympic mishaps could learn a thing or two from you about organising, so why not put those skills to good use? After all, you're one of the OfficialTM OlympicTM ProtestersTM, and you wouldn't want to let the side down. Your colours this month are red and black.

CITIZENS



WORKER
A ferment is building. Let's see how the bosses like things with their borders unguarded, their

buses undriven and their coffee latte without milk! Never forget, it's you who reproduces the city and it's your labour that makes their profit. Somewhere back along the way the 'rest' and 'play' parts of the bargain went missing. Keep October 20th in mind, plan now and plan big! We are many, they are few.



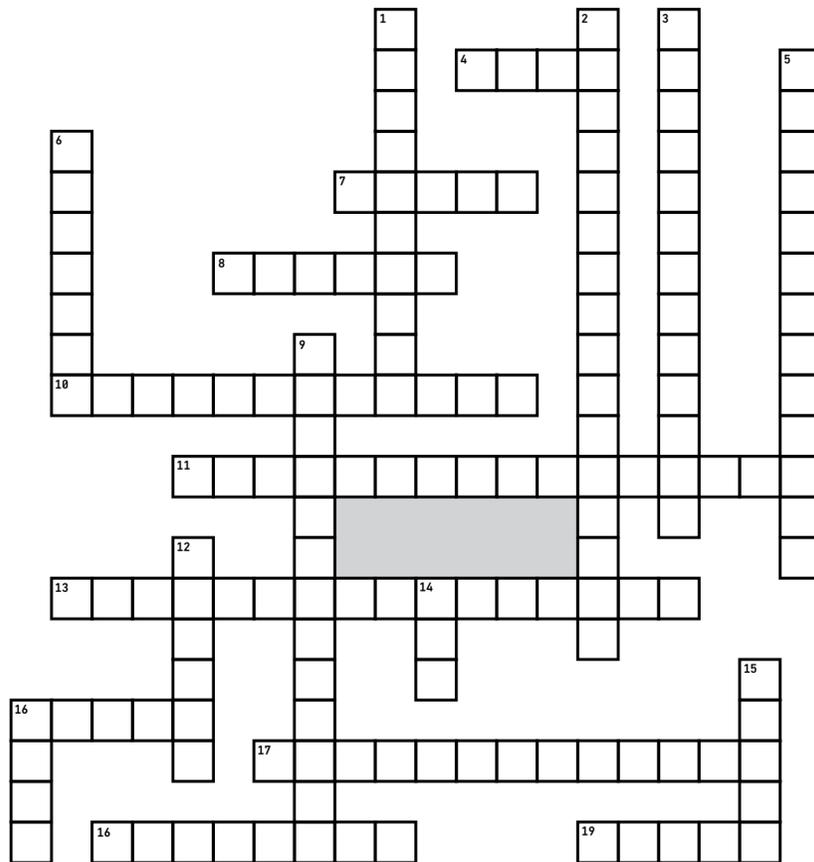
STUDENT
With school out for summer, you may be feeling out of sorts. If you've been stumbling from bar

tent to dance tent in abominable states of consciousness this could be a good taster class for your next instalment of education. Who knows? Tent cities could replace halls of residence in the next round of "efficiencies" the government plans to impose on higher education. Rest up, big battles lie ahead.



PENSIONER
With the London transport network in acute demand this summer, you had better say goodbye

to your priority seats on the bus. Why can they prioritise VIP lanes but not OAP ones? It wasn't like this in 1948 but never mind, the doctor's surgery has gone private and all the post offices are closing down, so there's less call for travelling these days anyway.



SCANDALOUS CROSSWORD

THE OT

SLEAZY DOES IT!

DOWN

- Every parliamentarian's must-have, publicly-funded pond installation in 2009. (4,6)
- Blair's Government instantly showed how craven it would be towards big money by relaxing its stated principle to ban tobacco advertising from sport. This diminutive F1 boss was the chief beneficiary (and a big Labour Party donor). (6,10)
- The template for all modern British political scandals. Macmillan Secretary of State for War is forced to resign after having an affair with the mistress of a Soviet spy and then being found to have lied about it to parliament. (7,6)
- Russian Oligarch whose yacht George Osborne and Peter Mandelson were both caught living it up on. Worst guestlist ever. (4,9)
- The dossier drawn up in September 2002 with the aim of justifying the invasion of Iraq was said to have been what? (5,2)
- Scandal in 1998 involving Derek Draper charging money in return for providing people the opportunity to meet with senior government ministers. (anagram: ass face scorch) (4,3,6)
- To lose one of your top brass is unfortunate. To lose two is careless. To lose several, as this organisation did in the wake of the phone-hacking scandal, is a clear sign of systemic corruption. (3,3)
- Former Tory Defence Minister who took his friend with him on official trips overseas. (3).
- Company that used accounting loopholes to hide billions in debt from failed deals. CEO Ken Lay was found guilty of securities fraud and faced up to 45 years in prison but died before he was sentenced. (5)
- Orwell prize-winning journalist caught plagiarising Hari(4)

ACROSS

- Last name of athlete who made the host nation's notion of their own racial superiority look ridiculous when he stormed to 4 gold medals at the Berlin Games in 1936. (4)
- Interbank lending rate systematically rigged by Barclays and others in order to conceal the true state of their finances.
- When he was invited to give evidence to a Select Committee about his company's phone hacking, Rupert Murdoch said it was the most _____ day of his life. Then he got pied. Irony. (6)
- HRH The Duke of York, Earl of Inverness, Knight Companion of the Most Noble Order of the Garter, close friends with Saif Gaddafi and a convicted sex offender, is more commonly known as... (6,6)
- 1970s scandal at the nadir of a Major government that became forever associated with sleaze. (anagram: soft quoin chasers) (4,3,9)
- Former New Labour ministers caught selling themselves to lobbyists including Stephen Byers, who described himself as a "cab for hire." In such felon farce (anagram.) (4,3,8)
- It was revealed that Rebekah Brooks was given one of these as a gift by the Metropolitan Police and that it was ridden by David Cameron, the Prime Minister. (5)
- Conservative Peer and best-selling Novelist found guilty of perjury after fabricating an alibi (7,6)
- Woman Bill Clinton claimed he "did not have sexual relations" with. Monica _____(8)
- Only US President to resign from office. Was caught bugging his Democratic rivals headquarters in the Watergate building. (5)



LIBOR CARD



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