

THE OCCUPIED TIMES OF LONDON

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Editorial

“In a society like ours in which people tend to be very isolated and neighbourhoods are broken down, community structures have broken down, people are kind of alone,” writes Noam Chomsky. Speaking in the run-up to International Workers Day, the renowned academic outlined the root of this isolation as observed by industrial workers of the mid-19th century, who protested against the ‘spirit of the age’ of rigid hierarchical structures, where one could “gain wealth forgetting all but self”. Today, in a culture of neoliberalism largely defined during the 1970s and 1980s, an echo of that grievance can still be heard in Thatcher’s famous dictum concerning community: “There is no such thing as society.”

This spectre of isolation now threatens Europe from within. The beneficiaries of the Eurozone crisis are the bond markets and multinational corporations inflating their profits by risk-free gambling on the continued misery of the European people. The continent once seen as history’s most prominent experiment in cross-border social and economic cohesion – albeit under the shadow of bureaucracy and the false promise of ‘liberal democracy’ – is facing dissension on multiple fronts. The departure of several states from the Eurozone is now a growing possibility, as many are unwilling, or unable, to abide by the ever-tightening squeeze of austerity measures. The much-lauded ‘European community’ is being overrun by the dog-eat-dog mentality of market capitalism, and by creeping xenophobia in the wake of the crisis. While the bloodless market forces continue to run the algorithm, ‘community’ is showing symptoms of that historically European disease of nationalism.

The promise of the ‘Global Village’, where we would be able to hear, see, communicate, interact and empathise with communities around the globe, has largely failed to emerge. The common ground is not a sense of shared humanity, but a shared dependence on the forces of capital. While our personal lives are increasingly supervised, analysed, and broken down into trails of wired data, the nebulous forces of capital have largely managed to escape scrutiny. As OT editor Mike Sabbagh notes in this issue’s update on media attacks on the Occupy movement, surveillance is quick to focus on small groups engaged in resistance, but remains remarkably vague when it comes to capital flows, tax injustice, unethical corporate behaviour and political deal-making.

It is with currents in this cloudy ocean of capital that corporate interests continue to shape the communal coastline of the ‘Global Pillage’. Within these pages, research by Occupy London’s Corporations Working Group puts the spotlight on the business of global mining giants Glencore and Xstrata in the developing world, and finds them responsible for human rights abuses, environmental destruction, child labour and political and economic corruption. Multi-billion-pound developments compromise the well-being of indigenous groups and ecosystems,

their prospects siphoned off along with the resources. The legal requirement to maximise shareholder profits has supported corporate interests abroad to the detriment of people and planet. Meanwhile, complicit governments at home have made corporate activities less than taxing in order to reap what they can from the unseen-and-unheard suffering of distant communities.

In the industrialised world, indices of socio-psychological health, such as suicides and depression, are on the rise as livelihoods fall victim to the same trickle-up economics of minority rule. Interviewed in this issue, social theorist Dan Hind reiterates the correlation between economic inequality and distress, echoing calls by Capitalist Realism author Mark Fisher for these concerns to serve as the ammunition in the fight against the neoliberal agenda. The argument from this agenda maintains that a wealthy, ruling minority will in turn carry and tend to ‘the 99%’, but the concerns of our wellbeing reveal that instead of the cared-for dependents of a faux paternalism, citizens are more akin to victims of a traumatic kidnapping.

This situation is obscured by the wide-reaching smokescreen of a corporatist media, while the voice of opposition is consigned to the marginalised complaints of dissenting voices. With even communication coerced by the currents of the market, it is little wonder why our shared grievances lack the articulation and audacity to match the ‘spirit of the age’ of escalating economic injustice and corporate rule.

Reclaiming a common ground beneath the bottom line of capital is now a task for all affected communities. Moving forwards against the grain of austerity and the imposition of isolation, activist groups such as Occupy must work within – rather than beyond – communities to join the dots between the economic injustices around the globe. Activists, unions and citizens must participate with all those whose grievances may yet come to the fore of public consciousness – to reclaim the commons and to collectively redefine our desires for ‘prosperity’.

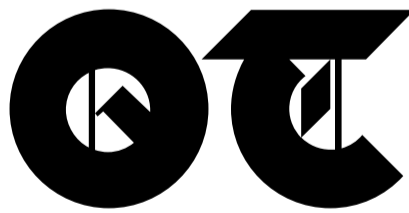
Regardless of corporate greed, political myopia or macroeconomic trends, isolated individuals and communities can be seen to have a natural desire to associate; society grows organically out of humanity. Among its successes, the Occupy movement has shown how a small group of individuals can assemble and participate in a dialogue that can’t be ignored. While the Euro may not hold the continent together, an alternative common currency may be found among communities and citizens unified by isolation. Groups of individuals, bound together through trust and respect, pushing together against the same flimsy tower built upon debt and greed, can change the culture they live in if a shared articulation of a renewed sense of common ground can emerge – from a society lost, but not forgotten.

DONATE TO KEEP US GOING

Since October of last year, The Occupied Times has sought to offer a high-quality alternative to corporate-sponsored mainstream media. Our publication features articles by activists, citizens, thinkers and academic experts from the UK and around the world. The OT has published over 250 pages of critical analysis, opinion, features, news and poetry, without printing a single advert. The paper is totally non-profit and is sustained solely by the voluntary efforts and enthusiasm of its writers and editors.

We need your help to continue with our monthly publication. A donation of £5 funds the printing of 15 copies, and every penny goes into our current print-run of 2,000.

If you would like to help keep us printing the news and views that we feel need to be heard, please make a donation by paypal to occupiedtimes@gmail.com or visit our website at: www.theoccupiedtimes.co.uk.



OCCUPIED TENTS, VACANT MEDIA

MIKE
SABBAGH

The Press Complaints Commission has revealed “misleading information” regarding the source and veracity of thermal imaging photos of tents at the camp at St Paul’s. The findings follow a complaint by Andrea Bakacs on behalf of Occupy London against The Times, The Sun, The Daily Telegraph and The Daily Mail, all of whom were found to be in breach of the Editor’s Code for accuracy in this incident. These publications alleged that the tents at St Paul’s were 90% empty at night, prompting criticism of the movement.

The heart of the PCC complaint focused on the source of the information: the organisations named had never actually seen the police footage or images, nor received official on-the-record confirmation that such footage

or images existed. Instead, they relied on statements made by City of London Corporation councillor Matthew Richardson and an unverified police source.

The complaint took Ms. Bakacs nearly five months to complete. In that time, she exchanged numerous emails with the PCC to achieve this small victory for press accuracy. Speaking about the ruling, Ms. Bakacs said, “it was a long painstaking process between me, and the legal departments of four newspapers [...] after 5 months of back and forth, the commission decided to make a ruling as neither side was letting up [...] I think the truth is what prevailed and awarded us our ruling.”

The publications named in this case have since printed corrections to articles referencing the thermal imaging of tents at St Paul’s.

A TALE OF TWO CAMPS

The City of London Police force has revealed that permission was given by St Paul’s to forcibly remove Occupy protesters from the cathedral steps during the eviction earlier this year. The news from Police Commissioner Adrian Leppard contradicts claims made by the cathedral, where authorities have maintained that police were not permitted to remove those who made their way to the steps when the protest camp faced eviction.

In a letter to London Assembly member Jenny Jones, Leppard confirmed that when permission was granted to clear the steps – during an eviction order that applied to land belonging to the City of London Corporation – protesters on the steps were treated as trespassers.

St Paul’s canon pastor Michael Colclough, whose earlier claims contradict this new information, has refused to meet with five people who were removed from the cathedral steps during the eviction.

The latest details of the eviction emerged ahead of a court hearing regarding the continuing occupation of the camp at nearby Finsbury Square, where Islington Council served occupiers with an eviction notice last month. A council spokesperson raised concerns as to whether the character of the protest at the Finsbury Square camp had changed since it was established last October. The spokesperson noted the concerns of residents and businesses in the area, citing various complaints.



WE DON'T NEED NO EDUCATION

MARK KAURI

Campaigners were left astonished last week after Brent Council took action to remove books, murals and other items from Kensal Rise Library in a dawn raid. Library employees were assisted by police officers to remove items including furniture, murals and plaques commemorating the opening of the site by Mark Twain in 1900.

The action contradicted assurances made by councillor Muhammad Butt that murals and furniture would not be

removed in the stripping of the property, which comes as a result of austerity measures. Council bosses were accused of “cowardice and deceit” after the action took place in the early hours of 29th May.

Speaking after the action, campaigners issued a resounding declaration to continue fighting for the re-opening of the library. Supporters of the cause include residents, campaigners and authors; among them Alan Bennett, Philip Pullman, and Zadie Smith.

A PILGRIMAGE FOR JUSTICE

EMMA
FORDHAM

On June 7th, people of various faiths, together with those of no religious persuasion, will be embarking on a trek from St Paul’s Cathedral to Canterbury to raise awareness about the pressing need for social and economic justice, environmental sustainability and true democracy. The pilgrimage has been arranged by Occupy Faith UK, an autonomous group inspired by the juxtaposition of church, city and Occupy camp at St Paul’s.

Publicity surrounding the camp roused many people of faith from a spiritually-aware but politically slumberous state. ‘What would Jesus do?’ became a rallying call as Christians began asking one another: ‘Whose side are we on?’. Faith groups including Quakers and the United Reformed Church of Wales gave their endorsement to the Occupy movement. The St Paul’s Institute, set up to encourage ethical responses to economic and social issues, attempted to engage with those in the camp. Meetings between bishops and rough-sleepers made good publicity, but came to nought and upset some who were worried about the danger of being co-opted.

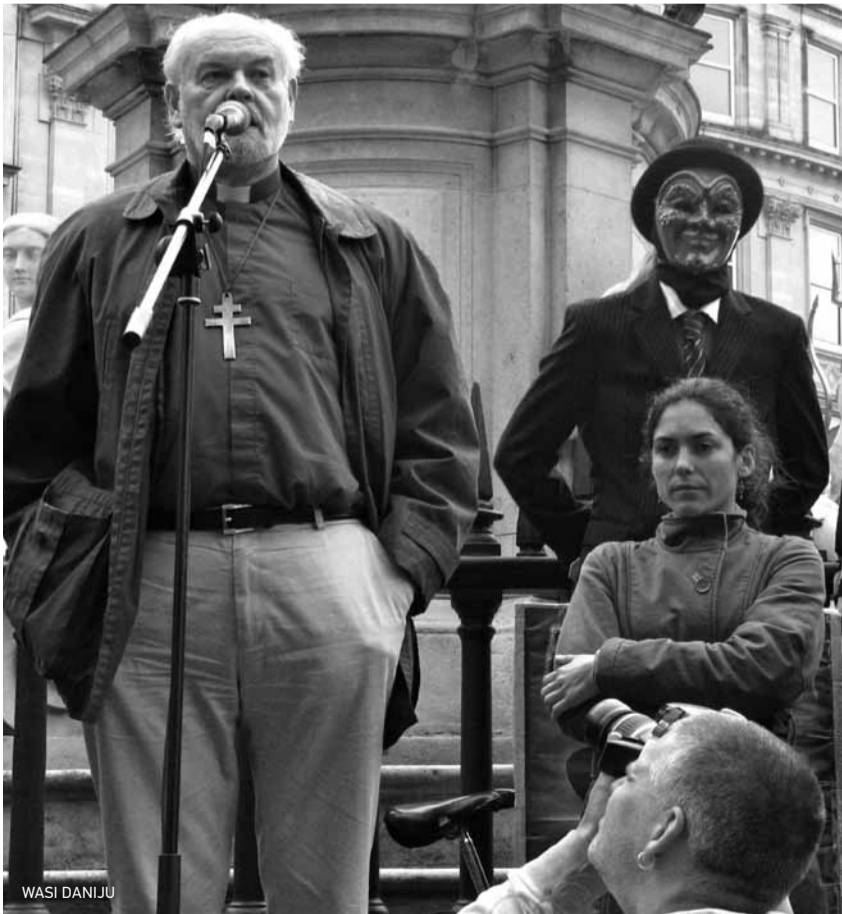
The Pilgrimage for Justice is hoping to tackle some of those fears. Tanya Paton, one of the organisers, explains: “The march is intended to reach out to middle England and all of the 99 percent. Almost half of the British population consider themselves to have a faith,

even if they practise it rarely and have little to do with organised religion.” Tanya emphasises that the Occupy Faith group has no interest in proselytising; they simply wish to engage those of faith, encourage activism and pursue a better future for all.

Not all activists are convinced that the Occupy Faith group is on the right track. Some would prefer not to mix religion with politics, arguing that most faiths have little in common with the Occupy movement’s egalitarian ethos, since, as an Occupied Times editor once exclaimed: “You can’t get much more hierarchical than gods!” However, Tanya Paton argues that encouraging all groups to be part of the conversation does not equate to endorsing any particular belief or practice. To date, Christians, Jews, Muslims, Buddhists, Sikhs, Quakers and Hare Krishnas have joined the conversation.

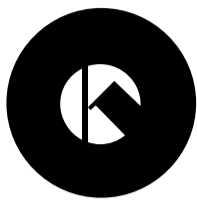
The walk will take two weeks. Poets and musicians will be amongst the pilgrims to entertain and enlighten audiences along the way. Participants will camp en route and have been invited to join local faith groups, including a Sikh community at the gurdwara in Gravesend, for meals and discussions. The trek will culminate in a conference at Kent University in Canterbury, 20–22 June. All are welcome to join the walk, a passion for justice being the only requirement.

Those wishing to take part in the Pilgrimage for Justice are asked to register at occupyfaith.org.uk



RE-OCCUPY TORONTO

SAKURA SAUNDERS



On May 1st, Toronto saw thousands gather in the streets for May Day, an international day of anti-capitalist protest. In recent years May Day demonstrations have focused on migrant justice in much of North America. This year, a massive daytime march was organised, in response to a global call for mobilisations, by a coalition including No One Is Illegal, Occupy Toronto and the May First Movement. Occupy Toronto, like many such groups around the world, had plans to re-Occupy.

The May Day march ended in a park, with an early evening cultural event. The next phase, dubbed 'Occupy the Beast', was to begin at 9pm with a night march leading to an undisclosed but strategic location in Toronto's financial district. The occupation was to be held for 24 hours, as part of a new strategy to target specific sites and events with temporary sit-ins.

Bands played at the cultural event in the park but the atmosphere was not promising. Over a hundred police officers criss-crossed through the crowd, making people feel uncomfortable. The crowd thinned as the bands played – fewer than 500 people remained by 9pm. Local hip-hop crew Test Their Logik were the last band to perform. As they played their final song, they rallied everyone for the night march. "Time to Take the Streets! Let's Occupy the Beast!" we chanted as we set off towards downtown Toronto.

The mood was tense but energetic. Approximately 400 activists were accompanied by a mass of police. Reminded of Montreal's night protests, we yelled our solidarity with the students there – "Everybody Join the Fight! We Support the Student Strike!"

As we approached our target location, many expected to see a line of police. The re-occupation site had been chosen and kept secret by a small working group, but keeping anything completely secure is a challenge. We had contingency plans if necessary but were pleased to find that the coast was clear and began to set up a mobile library and information booth. 'Occupods' – covered wagon-like bike trailers, invented to circumvent anti-tent bylaws – were wheeled into place, a prayer space was designated and a cinema screen was unfurled.

Police soon attempted to put a stop to our activities, making it clear that they would not tolerate the erection of any structure, not even a screen for our planned film night. They said that anyone present in the park after midnight, with tent or without, would be arrested under bylaws. New signs regarding park curfews had been put in place in every downtown park in anticipation of Occupy's action.

In response, we called an impromptu General Assembly and the reason for choosing this location was explained. On the morning of May 2, the world's largest gold mining company, Barrick Gold, would be holding its AGM just across the street. This company boasts the highest paid CEO in Canada and is responsible for numerous human rights' abuses, theft of native land, destruction of environments and militarisation of communities around the world. Barrick is emblematic of corporate greed and the hegemony of the one per cent, and we were there to bring attention to these abuses while transforming the space into one of learning and dialogue. However, the police were uninterested in anything educational or transformative; they were not going to tolerate us holding that space. So the question was: should we stay or should we go?

What followed was an amazing Occupy moment: what felt like the entirety of the general assembly roared – in unison – "STAY!" We numbered over hundred people at this point and the police seemed to have little appetite for arresting so many. Within ten minutes of our reaching consensus to stay, the authorities reversed their decision and granted us permission to remain, although not to erect structures. Our numbers swelled as word went out that the threat of arrest had been removed. We were joined by friends and supporters throughout the night and spent the next few hours in discussion groups, debating everything from food security to corporate greed and psychiatry.

The Occupy Chaplains were the first to challenge the no-tent rule. Their group had set up a table with candles and wanted a structure to shelter them from the wind. Surrounded by police – who were surrounded by occupiers – the chaplains explained that the tent was actually a place of worship and that they must be allowed to set it up. Despite repeated warnings, three of the chaplains erected a tent, only to be arrested and taken to a police van. Later released without trespass charges, the chaplains were not allowed back into the park.

The rest of the night was characterised by joyful solidarity interspersed with police harassment in the form of a no-sleeping policy. Anyone who shut their eyes whilst lying down would be woken with by the strong beam of a flashlight at close quarters. Soon occupiers abandoned the notion of sleeping and instead entertained one another with political folk music and good conversation. Many people left at around 5am, when fog rolled in and the temperature dropped. As dawn broke a couple of shivering but high-spirited activists held candles and sang Good Day Sunshine while others drank donated coffee and scavenged bagels. About sixty people made it through the night and in the morning supporters joined occupiers for a day of highlighting corporate abuses.

Leaders of communities directly affected by the activities of Barrick Gold had been invited to Toronto, so that they could speak their minds to the board of directors directly. Amani Mhinda from Tanzania attended, while representatives from Chile and Papua New Guinea sent written statements. Despite holding legal proxy shares, Mhinda was denied entry to Barrick's AGM. His personal experience of human rights' abuses, poisoning and the militarisation of Barrick's Tanzanian mines was not to be heard by shareholders. Ironically, Peter Munk, Barrick Gold's chairman and founder, was later quoted in a local newspaper saying that he "...would love to go outside where they are demonstrating... I'd love to go to Occupy Wall Street or Occupy Bay Street and I'd like to show them."

People from Argentina, Balochistan and Tanzania spoke – not to shareholders but to occupiers, students and supporters – about their communities' struggles against Barrick Gold. The crowds outside the Barrick AGM attracted reporters who brought Mhinda's message to a wider audience than would have been possible if he had been allowed inside the building. Occupy had successfully lent its platform to a struggle previously marginalised by the media and excluded from decision-making forums. Even Peter Munk could not ignore the fact that his company had become the target of the local manifestation of a global mass movement. Our strong stand in the park had resulted in real consequences for a just cause; and we packed our bags on our own terms to Occupy another day.



LOCKED, BLOCKED & 2 SMOKING BANKS

JOHN
SINHA

Blockupy Frankfurt's well-timed intervention follows an arc of protest that spans the globe this spring, resisting the stranglehold that big finance and big business have on democracy. More than 25,000 people demonstrated against austerity for four days in mid-May, undeterred by the deployment of over 5000 police and over 400 hundred arrests.

Frankfurt is the headquarters of the European Central Bank (ECB). It was part of the troika, including the EU and the IMF, which implemented the so-called bailout of the Greek economy, with catastrophic consequences to Greek society and fiscal austerity. It was executed by the likes of the German Chancellor Angela Merkel, Mario Draghi of the ECB and Olli Renn of the EU Commission.

Blockupy comes as the electorate in both Greece and France have decisively rejected the politics of austerity at the ballot box, the same issue that led the Dutch government to collapse. Rather than take stock of the democratic decision made by voters in these countries, Angela Merkel first responded to Francois Hollande's victory by stating that the Fiscal Stability Pact, an attempt by Europe's elites to hardwire neoliberal austerity, was not negotiable.

When I arrived at Frankfurt's central station on a drizzly evening, the crackdown was manifest across the city. On every corner I saw squads of bored and tooled up riot police stopping anybody and everybody that "looked" like a protestor. The joke amongst activists was that the authorities' exaggerated response did much of the work to build-up and publicise the week of protests. The authorities actually imposed their very own Blockupy with a police cordon preventing anyone suspected of being a protestor from entering, effectively shutting down the financial district. Since October 15th, the authorities physically evicted the Occupy camp outside the ECB, and they also turned away coaches of protesters at the German borders.

The University was shut down for four days – to prevent activists mixing with the local student population. Danielle, an officer from the student council that accommodated protestors from all over Europe in the student union, described how the riot police planned a Genoa style raid on the on the student union building, and placed banning orders on all those present from entering the city. According to her, it was only the presence of the media and MPs from the Left Party that deterred them from carrying this out.

The city government applied for and rapidly imposed a citywide ban on demonstrations at short notice, in spite of the fact that the protest organisers had appealed against this to the Federal constitutional court in a time-consuming process. This citywide ban violates the post-war constitution of the Federal Republic concerning the right to peaceful assembly. This cynical tactic was used by

a "black green" coalition administration to implement an interim ban, and upheld by the lower courts pending the appeal. This is evidence, if any was needed, that we cannot rely on the courts to defend our democratic rights anywhere on this continent.

The authorities also banned a public meeting that David Graeber was to give in a theatre. It was instead rescheduled at the last minute to the student union building at the Frankfurt University campus – the only building not controlled by the authorities. Whatever they were trying to achieve, the clampdown is a political defeat for the government. Even the conservative press was criticising the response as over the top.

Blockupy is an umbrella organisation of groups comprising a politically diverse array of organisations. It includes anti-fascist and anti-racist groups such as the Antifa and the No Borders network, and Interventionist Left – a well-known and non-party organization responsible for organising large-scale and effective direct actions with thousands of people, such as the yearly anti-nuclear transport blockades in Lower Saxony. With the exception of the anti-nuclear movement, this unity is rare in Germany – but it is the kind of unity that can bring over 25,000 people onto the street of Frankfurt. There was also a large scale mobilisation from Spain and Italy, putting this protest on the international map.

Speaking to activists who had been at the receiving end of all this, the mood was not one of dejection nor despair. They can see fear in the eyes of the authorities that this movement could spread to wider sections of society. But for that to happen the movement still has a lot more growing to do.

The lack of trade union banners may reflect a weak trade union presence. This is probably because the German trade union bureaucracy is not feeling the heat from below they way they do in the UK. According to Alexis Passadakis from ATTAC, the DGB (the German equivalent of the TUC) received over €400 million in contributions from its affiliate union this year, making it one of the richest unions in the world.

In Frankfurt, we witnessed the pattern repeated all over the northern hemisphere; in order to impose neoliberal austerity, the authorities further limit our democratic right to protest. This strategy, and those employed by unelected 'technical' governments imposing austerity, reveal a fundamental incompatibility between neoliberalism and the democracy we have been lead to believe in in the West.

At the end of the weekend, my impression is that the tactics of the authorities in Frankfurt and elsewhere are not sustainable in the long-term. Every time the authorities assault our democratic rights, they de-legitimise themselves a little bit more, giving our movement more legitimacy. We don't need to respond with the same kind of violence they use against us, but we do need to expose it, and in so doing build a movement that will bring an end to the system they defend.



AN INTERNATIONAL MOVEMENT FOR A PARTICIPATORY SOCIETY?

CARRAGH, GIULIO,
JOE AND CONOR

How does one approach the creation of a new world in the face of such confusion, cynicism, ignorance and alienation? The left has failed to offer an effective, unified resistance to rampant neoliberal capitalism. Weakened by assaults from the establishment and the constant propaganda of the corporate media, progressive/radical movements and organisations plod along, fatigued by incessant external and internal conflict. The divided strands of radical groups don't stand a chance against the clinical structure of the elite with all the apparatus of the state at its disposal.

The Occupy movement has gone some way to refresh the left and offer new hope... the Thatcherite mantra There is No Alternative has never sounded so hollow in the face of people coming together with a common purpose to show how a different, more

sane way of living can emerge from the most difficult of circumstances. In this respect, the Occupy movement has much in common with (and yet can learn a lot from) the destitute communities of the world, whose constant struggle is their only means of survival. In our materialistic Western society, we often forget or underestimate the value of mutual aid, respect and spiritual health. Our egos are trained to take over our minds and put the selfish, superficial needs of the individual above all else. Even those of us who keep our egos in check and battle the predatory values of capitalism - the conscientious political activist, the caring social worker or the wise old neighbour next door - will occasionally fall victim to self-indulgence.

How then do we overcome our own conditioning and move from an

oppositional force on the margins of public discourse to a wider movement with majority support and participation?

At the beginning of 2012, leading activists from all over the world (including Noam Chomsky, John Pilger, David Graeber and others) came together in an attempt to answer this question and formed the interim committee of the International Organisation for a Participatory Society (IOPS). The core values of this ambitious organisation were agreed to be: Self-Management, Equity/Justice, Solidarity, Diversity, Ecological Stewardship and Internationalism. These values would determine the vision of an organisation that would treat the Political, Economical, Kinship and Community/Culture spheres as being of equal importance to one another within a philosophy of complementary holism. Thus all aspects of life would be considered in offering a vision for participatory societies, and a network spanning the local, national and international would be formed. Self-determination for all peoples, whether in Shrewsbury or Shanghai, Lagos or Los Angeles, would complement co-operation between the local and the global. A bottom-up structure would facilitate this network of individuals and communities, groups and projects, to form a truly participatory world where every person could reach their full potential.

Such an idea seems utopian to many, but this is what it means to think of a better world. We set the parameters; we decide our future, unhindered by what is promoted as realistic or acceptable by elites and their cronies. In April, the interim website of IOPS was launched to help

fulfill this vision. Partially inspired by Occupy and the decision-making processes of its assemblies, IOPS aims to encourage people to deliberate online and face-to-face. Local, Regional and National Chapters in a framework of nested councils can link whole countries and continents, allowing them to function horizontally, with real power being held by the people in a truly democratic way. We hope that in this initial stage, IOPS can help provide a platform for the Occupy movement, improving organisation and facilitating worldwide expansion of the activities and values at its heart.

In time, those involved in IOPS hope that not just Occupy but a diversity of existing groups will use our platform to broaden and sustain their activism beyond local, one-off and single-issue campaigns. There are many challenges to such a radical international organisation. Most members of the interim committee of IOPS are from the United States or Europe; the organisation has a long way to go to be truly international in the sense of attracting participation from individuals or groups in Asia, Africa and Latin America. The website has been translated from English into nine languages so far and IOPS is continuing to look for volunteers to translate it into more. The name and logo on the site are interim only... all aspects of the organisation are open for democratic discussion and will be decided by popular vote once there is sufficient participation internationally. Interim members are aware of the issue of excluding the illiterate and those without regular access to the internet, but see this problem as one that can be overcome at a later date if the organisation grows internationally



and reaches critical mass, thus ensuring that its core values are effectively promoted to all.

Once we effectively organise, the main obstacles are the governments, corporations and financial institutions. Their power is illegitimate - more and more people are becoming conscious of this and are crying out for something that realises their hopes. As this becomes global, the old order will crumble beneath the weight of popular resistance and solidarity. Our main challenge is convincing ourselves that we are capable of winning a better world. If we do that and organise relentlessly to achieve our goals, all this may eventually become more than an impossible dream.

In this spirit, we are inviting everyone to become part of this movement and to help shape it. Visit www.iopsociety.org for more information, to become a member of your chapter, and to keep informed about upcoming events and meetings.

By Carragh, Giulio, Joe and Conor, from the Greater London Chapter of the International Organisation for a Participatory Society



CRIMES AGAINST LEGALITY

MARTIN
EIERMANN

After more than 100 days of continuous protest, over 200,000 students in Quebec province remain on strike in protest against tuition fee hikes of up to 83 percent. More than twenty universities and vocational colleges have been effectively shut down, and students and supporters have gathered for regular protest marches in Montreal and other cities since mid-February. The students are supported by a coalition of 140 different organisations, among them community groups, unions and the Anonymous hacker collective.

British media has been virtually silent on the protests, so you have probably not read about the 300,000 students who took to the streets of Quebec province during the biggest demonstrations, nor about the resignation of the Education Minister who proposed the tuition hikes. You may not have heard of the more than 2000 arrests of student protesters, the pepper-spraying of students and journalists by the police or the prohibition of face-masks in the city of Montreal. And you probably have not heard about Bill 78, a new law that has recently been passed by the provincial government to quell the protests. One Canadian law professor called it "the second worst law on record" after the War Measures Act, which was used during the Second World War to justify the internment of Japanese citizens and the widespread suspension of basic rights. In authoritative legalese, the text of the law outlines some of the most far-reaching restrictions on the right to public assembly ever considered in Canada during peacetime.

SECTION 10 prohibits any university employee from striking in solidarity with students.

SECTION 13 prohibits students from occupying universities.

SECTION 16 requires that any demonstration with more than 50 people is registered with the police at least eight hours in advance and is restricted to a pre-determined route, duration, and means of transportation.

SECTION 17 allows the police to hold individual

student leaders or student organisations responsible for compliance with all aspects of the law of all participants at a demonstration.

SECTION 25 imposes fines from 1,000 up to 250,000 Canadian dollars on individuals and student organisations who violate the law.

If you think these provisions sound pathetically outrageous and blatantly undemocratic, fear not: the law has been roundly criticised from all sides. The Bar of Quebec questioned whether the law was constitutional. The Canadian Association of University Teachers condemned the law as "violating fundamental freedoms of association, assembly and expression" and denounced it as "a terrible act of mass repression." A local teachers' union commented that "this law is worthy of a banana republic." Students have vowed to defend their civil rights and defy the law, while statements of solidarity continue to flood websites like www.arretezmoiquelquun.com - a site which, not surprisingly, mirrors the "We are the 99 per cent" blog that gave an early voice to the Occupy Wall Street movement. For now, however, the law remains in force (it is set to expire in 2013).

In order to "protect the rights of non-striking students and local businesses, and return calm to Quebec society", the government has erred on the side of idiocy. Gone is the idea that the law protects (instead of merely punishing), or that justice and law are built upon the same foundations. Might, it appears, makes right.

This in turn might not surprise students and activists in Britain, who have been heckled, kettled, harassed, attacked and arrested by police during recent demonstrations. In times of crisis and discontent, few governments rely on the powers of persuasion to make their case as a law designed to punish disobedient protesters becomes an offense in itself. In turn, they have turned into the biggest boosters of protest: With every draconian bill and every needless arrest, the delusion that we are protected, rather than threatened, by the law becomes a little less believable.

OWS – TAKING IT TO THE STREETS

Two direct actions in three nights. Both started out from Washington Square Park in Lower Manhattan, and both were ostensibly in solidarity with the huge mobilisation of protesters in Québec against raised tuition fees and the commodification of education. The two protests were quite different in nature but both revealed much, not only about the current state of play in the US Occupy movement but also about the position we all find ourselves in more generally, as those who actively seek to find an alternative to the rigor mortis that is post-crash neoliberalism.

The first action began with impromptu teach outs about the situation in Québec and state repression. The crowd steadily mushroomed to around 400, and consensus that a march was in order was unanimous. The crowd snaked out of the park into 8th Street, claiming the streets of New York as their own and belting out novel chants like: “Shit’s, Fucked Up, Shit’s Fucked Up and Bullshit” and “1,2,3,4 I Declare a Class War. 5,6,7,8 Eat the Rich, Smash the State.” Oncoming traffic was halted while good natured occupiers posted info sheets about events in Québec through the windows of yellow cabs. The sound of beeping horns filled the air, some in solidarity, others in frustration. What was missing?

The NYPD. YouTube videos left me in no doubt that cops were perfectly capable of mass arrests on the Brooklyn Bridge, or smashing a medic’s face into a window, but they appeared to have been caught on the hop. OWS activists told me that it was very rare to occupy the streets for so many blocks without significant police intervention. The softly, softly approach didn’t last much longer, however, as the cops suddenly decided that the street was off limits. This approach soon broke down into farce when a newly arrived, white-shirted commander entered the scene and announced that the real menace was the pavement. “The sidewalk is temporarily closed,” he announced

sternly in a thick Big Apple twang, unaware that his order was either an invitation to return to the street or a demand for people to spontaneously combust. Protesters chose the former, and the march continued with vibrant energy and swarming unpredictability, as the now iconic projector team flashed “bat signals” onto Gotham’s buildings, claiming the city as occupied for the “99%.”

The march involved a few more scuffles with New York’s finest, which were always met with the same response: “March, March,” they urged, keeping the movement moving. A highlight was when one occupier covered three cops with a bucket of red paint and managed to escape to tell the tale. The march, which was unorganised but not disorganised, anarchic but not chaotic, culminated in a valedictory debriefing in Union Square.

Two nights later (and for the third night running) another solidarity march set off from Washington Square Park, this time with only 30-40 people. Groups of threes and fours skulked off to a different meeting point, in order to throw off the ubiquitous police detail. Numbers shrank further between points A and B, and the atmosphere was markedly different from the previous march. This was more sombre– there was no strength in numbers. Arrest would be that much more likely, and yet the determination was even more palpable. This was the hard core of mostly young people, many of whom were living on the streets and outside the system, but most were college-educated. A rag-tag bunch, one who went only by the Dickensian nickname “Pockets”, and another who wore neither shoes nor socks (ever, I was informed, which is a truly revolutionary – or foolhardy – act on the streets of New York). Some were from the city, but many had come cross country on a pilgrimage to the Mecca of Occupy Wall Street. Currently, thousands are criss-crossing the States like the

protagonists of Jack Kerouac’s *On The Road*, but with strong political and economic grievances, not just in search cultural self-exploration. Some had just arrived back from Chicago, where huge anti-NATO protests attracted a militaristic response from Chicago PD. Many witnesses said it was the most violent they’d seen.

The instinct of occupiers to take the streets, no matter how small a group has gathered, would appear to be a shared characteristic. It’s as if it was the work of parallel evolution upon the growing numbers of people across the globe who have decided that enough is enough. Again the group marched up the road into oncoming traffic, walking in circles at large junctions to block traffic and chanting “Sol, Sol, Sol, Solidarité.” There was pride and determination, but also a kind of frantic desperation reminiscent of some smaller actions in London. There was no plan, and so the group became disjointed. The responsibility for the narrative of the action was then unceremoniously ripped from the hands of occupiers as the ridiculous NYPD wrote their own story.

On the corner of East 12th and 2nd Av, a young couple bringing up the rear in an adorable contraption (he on a bicycle, pulling her along in a tiny carriage,) were suddenly and aggressively set upon by uniformed police. Both were manhandled and informed that they had broken the law, by “riding the wrong way up a bike lane.” As one officer apprehended the cyclist, a small crowd formed around them, which set the scene for the most outrageous act of the night. An overweight, grey-haired cop with dead eyes casually walked up to two other on-looking occupiers and aimed pepper spray directly into their eyes. The initial couple offered no resistance but were violently arrested, the girl being thrown onto the hood of a cop car and handcuffed. Most of the police officers appeared to exhibit genuinely sociopathic behaviour, with a deep-seated disdain for the act of protest.



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The couple were arrested arbitrarily, and the NYPD left the scene in double-quick time, leaving a shaken and outraged group behind. Another post-march debrief took place in Union Square, with discussions about what went well and what could have been done better – no-one got the number of the pepper-spraying cop, for example, whose violence was every bit as sadistic as the now famous Lt. Pike at UC Davis. Finally, after OWS medics checked for wounds, everyone dispersed until the following day, the fourth straight day of action in solidarity with the people of Québec who give strength and inspiration to us all.

I only saw a tiny slice of Occupy Wall Street, and did so during an understandable lull following the mobilisations earlier in the month. It was also when the focus of the national movement was rightly on Chicago, and yet it was still encouraging in terms of energy, intelligence and radicalism. Relationships and organisational processes appear to be strong, and they are already investing significant resources and thought towards planning for their first anniversary on September 17th, “Black Monday”, which will hopefully make the Chicago anti-NATO bash look like a mere skirmish. People from all over the world are encouraged to descend upon New York’s financial district, to mobilise a critical mass of people.

For now, strategy is less clear. As in London, with the loss of camps and the pros and cons they brought, there is no longer a physical and political space to coalesce and organise from. Perhaps as importantly, in the eyes of most US citizens who get their news from mainstream sources, Occupy ended when the camps were evicted. And so for now, the strategy would appear to be about showing a consistent willingness to take it to the streets, and be arrested if necessary. Increasing numbers have lost their fear about the harms a criminal record can bring to an individual’s prospects. The ongoing struggle against zombie neoliberalism is now taking the form of sporadic but tacitly agreed upon antagonism between a brutal police force and unarmed crowds. This is the frontline, because it’s the only line we can currently reach, until we have

more numbers and better formed ideas emerge about how to lay a glove on those with real power, not just the petty (but no less painful) power of the police nightstick.

In many ways, we are all in the same boat. OWS is undoubtedly larger and more radical, infused with a confident and re-energised anarchism, but ‘the global Left’ of all persuasions still finds itself at a crossroad. We know what we hate, and we know in detail how damaging, how unsustainable and how exploitative it is. We also recognise widespread desire for radical change, and understand that neoliberal ideology has failed. The challenge now is to find a way to replace the hefty, rotting corpse of the old with an articulated, vital and dynamic new, that catapults humanity into a desperately needed new paradigm. Revolutionary zeal is already palpable; many just need to be shown where it can best be channelled. As the crisis deepens (and the self-immolating policy response from governments ensures that it will), what might now be considered a radical political and economic leap will become just a graceful hop from a steadily sinking vessel. Whether it is Occupy, with its global network (the warmth of which I’ve enjoyed first hand on this trip) or a combination of various other progressive movements, the Left has to move beyond diagnosis to cure, and perhaps vaccination for future ills. Unity and radicalism are essential. OWS is suffused with both, and is the leading light in this leaderless movement in the West, in its own beautifully shambolic and anarchic way.



JESSICA LEHRMAN



MARY ALTAFER

TRANSCENDING LIBERALISM

STEVEN MACLEAN

While the occupation at St Paul's outlived most in the US, the movement here remains in the shadow of Occupy Wall Street. For OWS, the eviction of the camps turned out to be a blessing. Instead of focusing on site management and internal politics, occupiers were given an opportunity to shift tactics and look outwards, focusing on new directions for the movement. Meanwhile, the occupations in London rumbled on defiantly, but vital energy was expended on their upkeep. The occupation of physical space increasingly divided 'occupiers' from sympathetic members of the public, resulting in an exclusive lifestyle. We had created a 'social' without the 'movement', while in the US, Occupy remained an accessible wave of public outrage.

Had the eviction of St Paul's come earlier, things may have been different.

Post-eviction, the allocation of funds became more of an obstacle than an enabling force. Camping enthusiasts at Finsbury Square thought funds should go exclusively towards maintaining occupations, while others wanted to adopt different tactics, spending on outreach and direct actions.

In the run-up to May, the majority of General Assemblies were attended by only a dedicated group of 'core' occupiers, determined to keep momentum in the hope that the energy of last October would return. M12 saw a good turnout, with around 500 people taking part in the action, but compared to Indignados in Spain, OWS and the student movement in Canada, it felt like more of a final whimper than a resurgent roar.

SAME NAME, DIFFERENT MOVEMENT?

The relatively modest stature of Occupy here compared to the US isn't all of our own making. Until the Tory government shreds it completely, Britain still has the remains of a welfare state, which takes some of the sting out of revolutionary sentiment. It breaks the fall into extreme poverty, while in the US there is no safety net. Despite the US government doing more to stave off mass unemployment in the wake of the global financial crash than our governments have here, the foreclosure crisis and continued absence of free healthcare means that Americans are literally on their own. Stateside, Occupy provided both community spirit and, at times, genuine resistance to the consequences of neoliberal ideology, when occupiers defended homes from foreclosure.

While OWS moved on from occupying to the more radical actions of blocking ports and taking back community centres, Occupy in London repeated the same symbolic protests, rhetoric and tactics. Like a river carving its way deeper into the landscape, it reinforced a well-defined identity instead of bursting its banks and flooding the plains of wider society. There has been too much self-affirming, inward-looking debate and, most of all, forging of a safe image. 'Safe' doesn't inspire in a time of record youth unemployment, increasing poverty and ransacking of the NHS.

Despite a more radical outlook and greater numbers, they have encountered many of the same problems on Wall Street as we have. Numbers dwindled, attempts to inspire a mass May Day strike failed, and a lack of political space was a problem we didn't have here, but as winter passed and

key issues were addressed, energy was rekindled.

Writing in the Guardian recently, David Graeber described how OWS benefited by ridding itself of parasitic liberalism and financial burdens. "When OWS re-emerged in the spring, the abandonment of the liberals, the drying-up of the money, have become an almost miraculous blessing." Here in London, we have yet to abandon the (mis)guiding light of liberalism.

THE LIBERAL BRANDING OF 'OCCUPY LONDON'

At some point after the eviction of St Paul's, OccupyLSX and OccupyFS were discarded in favour of 'Occupy London' as part of an undemocratic "rebranding push". This shift was subtle but stiflingly significantly. Now, all 'Occupy London' activities fell under a central PR managerial umbrella, and while anybody could do anything in the name of Occupy in the US, actions in the UK must be prescribed.

As a brand, 'Occupy London' has appeared corporate, measured and polished. Lacking the permeable messiness and dynamism of the wider global movement, it instead looks exclusive and apart. From the outside, 'Occupy London' feels like a members-only club, failing to live up to the promise of the Statement of Autonomy to make "caretakers" of those who wish to participate.

The liberal mindset shaping the press image of Occupy in London is determined not to scare people away by appearing 'too radical'. The 'Capitalism is Crisis' banner in front of St Paul's was removed early on as part of an effort to stop the mainstream media using the 'anti-capitalist' label to describe occupiers, and a recent 'Global



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Occupy Manifesto' (which was put together by a self-appointed group not representative of the movement in any meaningful way) didn't mention the word 'capitalism' at all, after reformists 'blocked' the term.

No similar efforts were made to remove signs from St Paul's expressing liberal sentiments, or links to the questionable Zeitgeist movement, and 'fluffy' actions like handing out flowers escape scrutiny because they are harmless. That people might be alienated by pointless actions lacking a political message isn't deemed worthy of consideration. Any movement needs to attract people, but the aim of Occupy should be to draw people to the radical and new, rather than to fall in line with what is already populist, offering no agitation to the status quo.

Filtering anything too far from the normative liberal consensus has marginalised revolutionary energy in favour of liberal symbolism and indecisiveness. As Slavoj Žižek wrote recently in the Guardian: "The protesters should beware not only of enemies, but also of false friends who pretend to support them, but are already working hard to dilute the protest. In the same way we get coffee without caffeine, beer

without alcohol, ice-cream without fat, they will try to make the protests into a harmless moralistic gesture."

We must be wary of people aiming to perpetuate Occupy indefinitely, forging themselves indispensable roles at the expense of radical, systemic change. While we ought to resist the pressure to make concrete demands or decide on a single, precise focus that would edge us towards becoming a lobby group, a never-ending movement would represent failure.

MOVING FORWARD

Graber finished his Guardian piece with: "The words might be diplomatically chosen, but there's no mistaking what tradition is being invoked here. In endorsing a vision of universal equality, of the dissolution of national borders, and democratic self-governing communities, nurses, bus drivers, and construction workers at the heart of America's greatest capitalist metropolis are signing on to the vision, if not the tactics, of revolutionary anarchism."

For Occupy in London to reignite, we need to reassert our inherently anarchistic values of horizontalism and non-hierarchy. Decentralisation is key to avoiding exploitable power-points, and allowing working groups total autonomy. We must also stop turning a blind-eye to self-appointed managers, regardless of their best intentions, whose closed meetings and branding strategies are more in keeping with the corporate world than a movement seeking radical change.

Occupy has protested against monopolistic corporate media almost as much as financial inequality, but in the mainstream media, our representation is less democratic than the Tories', who at least rotate who appears on Question Time. The same names and faces consistently represent Occupy London on panel discussions and in the press, seemingly at odds with the ethics of a horizontal movement. We do not need to be legitimised by the corporate press, who will amplify our message as long as it remains harmless, and gag us whenever it is right for their product. With citizen journalists, livestreams and self-made media, we can tell our own story in our own words. During the first weeks of OWS the US media simply pretended it wasn't happening. By the time we arrived at St Paul's, we already had the world's media telling our story for us. Much has changed for Occupy on both sides of the Atlantic since then.

Social movements can take years or even decades before realising their true potential. While global economics remain volatile and social unrest is rife around the world, it would be wrong to assume that there are no embers amongst the ashes of OccupyLSX.

As Graeber put it, "Occupy is shedding its liberal accretions and rapidly turning into something with much deeper roots, creating alliances that promise to transform the very notion of revolutionary politics in America." Maybe it's time we followed suit.



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RENDER UNTO CAESAR

THE IRREVERENT
REVEREND NEMU

"Let them march all they want as long as they continue to pay their taxes" – Alexander Haig, US Secretary of State, commenting on anti-nuclear protests.

While I strive to be clean of thought and word, as well as a good neighbour to my brethren and servant to my Lord, my mouth fills with the most indelicate blasphemy when my pay slip arrives and my sacrifice is made known to me. I don't object to paying for libraries, and I understand there are unfortunate people in this world who need things like the NHS, Scotland Yard, and the Olympic games to get them through the day. But what else do I fund?

Back in 2008, when Satan hiccupped and the stock market crashed, tokens of our labour equivalent to 50,000,000,000,000 cola-bottles were offered up to "placate the market". Why not go the whole hog, I wonder, and offer up the blood of unbaptised children?

But of course, we already do. In 2006, a daytime drone attack on a school in Pakistan killed an estimated 69 Muslim children amongst 82 confirmed casualties, along with the target, the suspected militant teacher. Diplomacy by the drone kills ten 'civilians' for every 'militant', whatever those terms mean in such dirty wars, where statistics clearly show that drone attacks increase rather than decrease the frequency of suicide bombings. These flying death robots are called 'Reapers' (tee-hee!), and cost £6 million a piece. The racket they are part of is called 'defense' (guffaw!), and costs taxpayers £43 bn a year, because no private company would touch such risky R & D with a uranium-proof barge-pole. Private interests prefer to focus on the profits of this research, the profits of war, which are many and well-documented. As long as war is waged, there is money to me made.

Should a God-fearing man of the cloth pay tax? A layman once explained how my tax maintains the government, which serves me by maintaining the roads. Money moves in a mysterious manner, but would it not be simpler just to give it to a gang of muscular Irishmen in hard hats?

There is no state tax in Biblical law, just a flat rate for upkeep of the tabernacle (Exd. 30). Tax is what tyrants do to their subjects. It was first introduced during a famine in Egypt, when the famished had nothing left to sell to Pharaoh but themselves (Gen. 47). The tax collector was, before as now, a figure of hate. He is the archetypal sinner (Mat 18:17), though we are reminded that even someone as depraved as a tax collector can be saved, if genuinely repentant of his wickedness. Matthew was a taxman, and his first act after becoming a disciple was to give up this hateful profession. When Jesus eats at Zacchaeus the taxman's house, the people murmur in disapproval (Luk. 19), but the host decides to return half of his takings to the poor.

Jesus says, quite unambiguously, that citizens are exempt from taxation, but that, so as not to offend the taxman, Peter should go fishing, where he would find a coin in the mouth of a fish (Mat. 17). The symbology is clear. The token of debt is a lifeless metal disk, enfolded incongruously within a fish fit for the Messiah's table, a mouthful of indigestion for the Saviour.

Generations of crooked and corpulent priests in the pay of the state preached "render unto Caesar", but of course a butcher is going to tell you that God recommends sausages for breakfast. A closer reading reveals that the nimble Nazarene, when asked a question about tax designed to entrap him, gives a profound teaching as he dodges. He asks the priest to name the image on the coin.



Graven images and likenesses were a serious business in the Jewish world. The accusation of idolatry would not have been lost on the listeners, nor would the suggestion that they should give it up: *"Give back the things of Caesar to Caesar, and the things of God to God"*.

In Psalm 115, the things of God are the heavens, and the earth is for the children of men (not the property of one man). The same psalm could be describing Caesar's coins:

"Their idols are silver and gold, the work of men's hands. They have mouths but they speak not; eyes they have, but they see not. They that make them are like unto them. So is everyone that trusteth in them."

Income tax was first introduced in England in 1798 to pay for soldiers and weapons. In the US, telephone taxes came in during the Spanish War with the War Revenue Act, and increased with military spending. King John demanded tax for a campaign against France; the revolt this provoked only ended with the Magna Carta. The Peasants' Revolt also began with tax resistance, as did the American and French Revolutions. But the most experienced tax-dodgers this side of the channel islands are the Quakers, who refused an early request for £4000 for an expedition to Canada in 1704. Their reply noted that it was contrary to their religious principles to hire men to kill one another.

Our lord, at his arrest, was charged with impersonating the Messiah and perverting the nation by preaching the non-payment of tax. He answers the first charge with a lippy "that's what you say!", but he has no answer for the other charge. Pilate, for whom the Messianic delusions of peculiar Jews were of little consequence, finds him guilty of something worthy of chastisement, but not the death penalty. He has no intention of crucifying him.

Now, as then, tax resistance is far from a capital crime. The worst that can happen is a short spell in jail, and this is extremely rare. The baker Nigel Wild served three weeks in 1990 for trying to pay his taxes in bread, to

ensure that his money would not fund killing. Many more have gone unpunished, and a resister can always cough up when they feel that they have taken the matter far enough. 1040 movement members, named after the 1040 US tax form, deduct \$10.40 from their tax returns and send them off along with a letter explaining the protest. In the US, only one person has been prosecuted in the last forty years.

Tax resistance is a noble and dignified form of direct action you can engage in from the comfort of your home. We usually give the fruit of our toil voluntarily, without even registering a protest, but we are only impotent when we choose not to exercise our power. As Henry David Thoreau put it:

"A minority is powerless while it conforms to the majority; it is not even a minority then; but it is irresistible when it clogs by its whole weight. If the alternative is to keep all just men in prison, or give up war and slavery, the State will not hesitate which to choose."

One act of tax resistance makes for a good news story. A hundred refusals becomes troublesome and embarrassing for the state. A thousand people refusing to ignore their consciences, and it is starting to look like a revolt.

Elsewhere, Thoreau describes how: *"I do not care to trace the course of my dollar, if I could, till it buys a man, or a musket to shoot one with,—the dollar is innocent,—but I am concerned to trace the effects of my allegiance. In fact, I quietly declare war with the State, after my fashion, though I will still make what use and get what advantage of her I can, as is usual in such cases."*

If Caesar is concerned with war, then let us render unto Caesar what is Caesar's, and quietly declare war.

A free audiobook of Thoreau's short and uncommonly beautiful Civil Disobedience may be downloaded from www.voicesinthedark.com.

More subversive rustling from The Irreverent Reverend Nemu at www.nemusend.co.uk

TERROR IN NORWAY: THE HIDDEN DANGERS OF THE FAR RIGHT

RAGNHILD
FRENG DALE

The far right never really left politics. Though we are far removed from the mass fascist and Nazi movements of the 1930s, recent events in Europe and beyond show that their underlying potential was never quite expelled from the world. What we see today is a resurfacing and restructuring of these underlying currents. EDL marches are more frequent and aggressive, and the openly neo-Nazi Golden Dawn party received nearly 7 percent during the recent Greek elections. Together with the recent terror attacks in Norway, it is clear that right-wing extremism will not go away of its own accord, and neither will it be ignored to death. It is on the march, and we need to talk about it.

When the Norwegian terror attacks were first reported in the afternoon of 22 July 2011, sleepy citizens on holiday could hardly believe their ears. In the time between the bomb-blast and the disclosure of Breivik's distinctly Norwegian appearance and heritage, Muslims and immigrants on public transport in Oslo received dirty looks and verbal abuse. Though the perpetrator's ethnicity was quickly confirmed as Norwegian, these reactions show a clear scapegoating tendency, as confused citizens attempt to identify the source of the danger. This often leads to blaming those who act or look a little different, or who hold what are considered to be 'dangerous beliefs'.

These beliefs are precisely what is at stake. Breivik's manifesto includes speculations of an emerging Eurabia: the infiltration of the West by fundamentalist Muslims, allowed to flourish by left-wing multiculturalism. His attack on future Labour party leaders was therefore perfectly rational within his universe. Seeing himself as a crusader, he attacked a world that wanted to take over our society.

What is scary is not just that he can hold these views and act upon them, but what lies beneath the surface. As Zizek wrote in *Organs without Bodies*, an ideology is never just an ideology, but rooted at a micro-level of how we act in daily life. Breivik's actions were ideologies put into practice. Underlying his discourse is the fear of the 'other', not as a real entity (we have yet to see a Muslim terrorist attack in Norway), but as the potential of terror that has to be stopped. On a discursive level, his ideas are not so far from right-wing thinking that is latent throughout Europe. Nationalist parties continuously emphasize that a hidden enemy is creeping into our countries, taking our jobs, our benefits, our social

services. This 'other', markedly the 'Muslim', enters society to water down all values, and will rise to replace it with misogynist, fundamentalist ideas.

Yet, where is this all-encompassing 'other', save as an abstract construction? Certainly, there are fundamentalists in Islamic communities. And yes, they do preach moral lessons that directly oppose Western democracy as we think we know it. But there are also fundamentalist Christians who do the same. The difference is that they look like us, eat like us, and have the same family names as everyone else when they apply for jobs. The fear is therefore not only a fear of forces threatening 'our' values. It is a scapegoating of those who can be singled out and talked about, and blamed because they are visible.

Breivik shows where the real danger lies. He shows why the grey areas of freedom of speech are so dangerous. The EDL marches are not just 'expressions' but practices. An EDL member beating up a young protestor in Manchester, or a black man on a street corner in London, is not just an expression of an ideology. It is both ideology and its practice at the same time, inseparable at the level of the behaviour of a particular person at a particular time.

Zizek, again, says that making something a matter of debate is more dangerous than rejecting it outright. By making his obscure ideologies possible, the actions that follow are also made possible. Constantly scapegoating groups in the media makes people vulnerable to verbal and physical abuse. And we need to talk about that.

If the court case against Breivik does any good, it will be to examine and expose the fallacies and delusions of his ideology. It will examine the grounds on which this creeping fear of the 'other' is constructed, and use public debate and writing to explicitly challenge his actions and his ideas. As Norway's prime minister said following the attack, it would be to work towards 'more openness, more democracy, more freedom'. This is only done by denying the legitimacy not just his actions, but also the grounds on which they are justified, exposing how ideas and consequences are connected. This would work to prevent a future resurgence of those ideas, not by implementing new security measures, but through radical openness and willingness to scrutinize all extremist views until their logic falls apart in thought and in practice, together with the shaky and hostile convictions they are built upon.



THE GREAT DEBATE

CAN CAPITALISM BE ETHICAL?

IN THIS MONTH'S GREAT DEBATE WE ASK IF AN ETHICALLY RESPONSIBLE FORM OF CAPITALISM IS POSSIBLE. CAN A SYSTEM BUILT ON PROFIT AND COMPETITION BE UTILISED FOR THE GOOD OF PEOPLE WITHOUT DAMAGING THE ENVIRONMENT, OR IS RECKLESS CONSUMPTION, ENVIRONMENTAL DESTRUCTION AND INEQUALITY INTRINSIC TO ITS NATURE?

PRO / Dan Stewart

Consumers increasingly demand products their moral awareness impels them to. Likewise, politicians are under pressure to implement policies that mitigate the stresses of globalisation. These forces can come together to produce recycled, carbon neutral, free range or fair trade products, and policies that combat climate change, poverty, and global disease.

Human civilisation has all the moral tools it needs. Ethical principles that emphasise reciprocal rights and responsibilities have long characterised human societies. The Golden Rule features in more than a hundred world religious and cultural canons - "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you." The ancient Egyptian and Greek moral code recommended not doing to your neighbor "what you would take ill from him." Both the Old and New Testaments include the Great Commandment to "love thy neighbor as thyself", and Muhammad's last sermon taught the faithful to "hurt no one so that no one may hurt you."

For many Eastern faiths where variations of the principle are found, such as Buddhism, Hinduism, Taoism, and Jainism, the Golden Rule goes beyond mankind to encompass all creatures, because sentience exists in a spectrum. According to the Hebrew Scriptures

at the fount of Western religion, humankind's role in nature was that of stewardship.

If the Golden Rule acts to guide one's rights and responsibilities toward others, the principle of the Golden Mean helps balance to be achieved. A key concept in Chinese, Greek, and Indian philosophy, the Golden Mean emphasises tolerance, moderation, and pluralism. Aristotle's maxim "nothing in excess" and Confucius's doctrine of equilibrium speak to modern concepts of sustainable living.

In the 1980s, the Brundtland Commission defined sustainability as an integration of economic, social, and environmental spheres, to meet the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. This is simply a special case of the Golden Rule: do unto future generations as you would have them do unto you. It is a definition which extends sustainability beyond traditional areas such as energy, natural resources and emissions, to community relations and working conditions. These basic ethical principles require individuals to consider the consequences of their actions upon both their peers and their environments.



AGAINST / Ragnhild Freng Dale

What does ethical practice mean in a capitalist context? According to the Oxford English Dictionary, ethics relate to moral principles, avoiding practices and organisations that do harm to the environment. Capitalism, as an economic and political system where trade and industry are controlled not by the state but by private owners for profit, seems to render 'ethical capitalism' a contradiction in terms.

Marx takes capitalism to emerge from a separation of the forces of production from surplus value, which comes to be owned by a small upper class. It can also be seen as an extension of Weber's 'protestant work ethic': separating faith from everyday practice. At a public ResPublica debate last year, Sir Giles Fraser said that we have seen a "thinning" of society along with this separation - and that the idea of a common good disappears with it. The consequences of our economic transactions are no longer seen as their cause, in a never-ending production process that always must end in surplus. When there are no more resources to exploit, this system divides up and distributes small packages of social services, mortgages, tar sands and human dignity. We are left with an economy where no one is responsible or accountable, but which is 'too big to fail' because we can no longer imagine an alternative.

Neoliberal capitalism has further engulfed all other forms of economy: hunter-gatherer societies, nomads, and small-scale farming communities are encompassed within a mode of production that is no longer for sustenance, but creates surplus value for export - what economists like to call "growth". In the countryside, this means a stream of resources (food production, oil, metals) and people away from the land and into the cities. In the cities, it means a constant flow of capital, labour, contracts and resources, beyond any particular individual or institution's control, leaving human lives in as much flux as the derivatives on the stock exchange.

In 1987, the Brundtland commission proclaimed economy, society and nature as equally important pillars in a sustainable

future for present and future generations. This conclusion wrongly assumes capitalism is able to care for people's "needs", when its pursuit of profit considers the largest circle to be the economy, enclosing a society that only has a peripheral relationship to nature. Nature becomes a servant and a provider of services, and everything, even fresh drinking water, comes at a price. An ethical approach would be much more radical: the places in the world with the lowest carbon footprints, whether small-scale farmers in Bangladesh or nomadic campers in Haggerston park, are communities that tend to imagine nature as all-

encompassing, and including both society and economy.

The logic of capitalism leads to overexploitation of resources, both human and natural: disguising the fox as a cuddly animal of organic fair trade will not remove this underlying trait. Until we shift our economy away from growth towards sustenance, we will keep robbing resource bases from groups that practiced different forms of economy long before we extracted 'value' from their lands. A turn to a sustainable economy will require a turn to an economics where ethics emanate from a care for the environment - including people - as its first priority.



VENEZUELA'S HIP-HOP REBELS

JODY MCINTYRE
& PABLO NAVARRETE

There's music, there's politics, and there's the hope of revolution in Venezuela. Founded in 2003, the Hip-Hop Revolución (HHR) movement brings together like-minded young people from across the country to organize festivals and help to educate each other. HHR has created 31 hip-hop schools across the country, which teenagers can attend in conjunction with their normal day-to-day schooling. Normally, those who attend the hip-hop schools learn hip-hop skills for four days per week and have one day per week of political discussion. However, in some schools, the students had decided they preferred the ratio the other way around, and politics has taken center stage.

HHR embraces a culture of teaching and giving. Once participants have 'graduated' from the course, they are encouraged to become tutors to the next batch of attendees. Most graduates come from low-income backgrounds, and many go on to establish schools in their local areas. To many of the participants, the hip-hop schools are another element of a new spirit of unity and solidarity in their local communities. In their eyes, hip-hop and the political struggle are inextricably linked, and this is their chance to play a tangible part

in building the better future they want to grow up in.

At a hip-hop school we visited near Charallave while filming for a documentary about HHR, about an hour south of Venezuela's capital Caracas, one student told us how he had done just that. First, he approached the political leaders in the area, who saw the project as a good idea. Then, he approached the gang leaders in the neighbourhood, and they agreed to make sure the kids got to and from their classes without being hassled.

HHR took us from the school to a nearby neighbourhood, where music equipment had been set up for a show local HHR members were putting on for the community. These hip-hop workshops are a monthly occurrence, so the young people in the area know when to come. As the music started, kids came out from their houses, many of them still dressed in their school uniforms. Entire families came out to their balconies to watch what was going on below. Despite the heavy rain that afternoon, a crowd quickly grew. Many of the kids were very young, and without shoes or a care in the world, they washed their feet in the huge puddles of rainwater.

Our trip to Venezuela also coincided with the inauguration and



first ever conference of CELAC, the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States. Thirty-three presidents from all of the countries of the Americas (except the US and Canada) were in Caracas for the event. Photo exhibitions displayed on central avenues in the days preceding the conference expressed solidarity with the people of Cuba, Libya and Iraq, the workers'

movement in Argentina, the Palestinian people, or the Occupy Wall Street movement. "CELAC is the most important development in the last 200 years," Jamil, a member of HHR, told us. "I'm a revolutionary from my heart. If [President] Chavez fucks around and flips on us, we're gonna flip on him. And that's what I think he expects from us. You know what I mean? That's why he is so

serious with his proposals and with what he does. He has the confidence that he won't flip on the people. And he understands that capitalism is crumbling. And this is our time, this is our moment, for Latin America, for Venezuela and for us."

For more information on 'Hip Hop Revolución' including how to support the film's production visit: <http://www.alborada.net/hhr-donate>

THE GULLAH/GEECHEE FIGHT FOR SELF-DETERMINATION

QUEEN
QUET

Not many people have heard of Gullah/Geechee culture, the Sea Islands, or this respective nation, but many more have heard of the 'Heritage Golf Classic' or 'Hilton Head Island'. Little do most know that beneath the perfect lawns and clubhouses of the golf courses are the blood, sweat, tears, and literal bones of the Gullah/Geechees.

We, the Gullah/Geechee Nation, exist on the Sea Islands off the southeastern coast of the United States. Our culture evolved during the transatlantic slave trade. Since that time the Gullah/Geechees - also called 'Black Seminoles', 'Afro-Seminoles' and 'Muscogoes' - have had to fight consistent exploitation, displacement, and even attempts at ethnocide waged against them by the US government and state leaders. We have preserved our language and traditions despite a public education system that degrades us for speaking our native tongue.



Government-funded institutions would issue corporal punishment to students for speaking in the Gullah language.

In 1999, I, Marquetta L. Goodwine - now Queen Quet, Chiefess and Head-of-State for the Gullah/Geechee Nation - became the first Gullah/Geechee to speak before the United Nations. I brought the issues of displacement and the continued human rights abuses of Gullah/Geechees before the global forum at the meeting of the Commission on Human Rights. When we became more aware of our rights at the international law level, we held a year-long election which culminated at Sullivan's Island on July 2, 2000, with United Nations observers, US federal government representatives and media looking on. A year later, the Wisdom Circle Council of Elders returned to the island to present their national flag and constitution to the world.

Since that election, there have been attempts by some US government affiliates to discourage the media from covering stories regarding myself and the Gullah/Geechee campaign for self-determination. They apparently do not want the world to become aware of the numerous land rights battles that we have been fighting to remain on our land and to protect our sacred burial areas from being built on by the corporate interests that fund tourism and the development of resorts, gated and retirement areas, and major golf tournaments. The Gullah/Geechee are not unfamiliar with this strategy. Some suffer continued psychological trauma due to the brutality that took place in Wilmington, NC during the 'Wilmington Massacre' when a Gullah/Geechee-owned newspaper refused to be shut down because it served as a political

vehicle and voice for the community. Anglo militias came into the town and committed hostile attacks and murders on the Gullah/Geechees while also burning down 'Black-owned' businesses and institutions.

We, the leaders of the Gullah/Geechee Nation, continue to stand strong in the face of what has been called an 'economic embargo'. Chambers of commerce, tourism bureaus and park systems promote tourism in a hypocritical fashion, exploiting the images and art of Gullah/Geechees to sell brochures, while directing visitors away from Gullah/Geechee-owned and operated facilities, and towards non-Gullah/Geechee-owned locations. State governments have also continued a practice of compulsory purchase to obtain Gullah/Geechee lands. They have caused displacement and have led to extreme taxation, which in turn has also contributed to a loss of properties.

We are a national, linguistic and ethnic minority, as defined by international human rights law. Our culture is indigenous to the region that is the Gullah/Geechee Nation. However, due to the displacement caused by gated areas, golf courses, mass tourism and exploitation, we have had to continuously fight for our rights and self-determination in local, state, and international arenas. During my tenure as Queen Quet, the Gullah/Geechee became recognised by the United States Congress via the Gullah/Geechee Cultural Heritage Act, which was signed into law by President Bush in 2006. Unfortunately, this law is unable to ensure the protection of Gullah/Geechee land rights. Gullah/Geechee culture is inextricably tied to the land and



waterways on which we live. Without the land, the culture is endangered.

Gullah/Geechee freedom of movement has been attacked by gated areas preventing access to sacred areas, waterways and gathering spaces. In an attempt to combat this, we began our own human rights movement, and successfully elevated our culture to international awareness. The Gullah/Geechee Sea Island Coalition - the premier organisation advocating the rights of Gullah/Geechees - has successfully worked with numerous partners and members around the world to insure that Gullah/Geechee culture will exist well into the future. Personally, I am not only the Chiefess and Head-of-State for the Gullah/Geechee Nation, but also a directorate member for the International Human Rights Association for American Minorities (IHRAAM), which is an NGO with consultative status with the United Nations. In this capacity, I

continue to participate in United Nations forums on human rights, including the Forum on Minority Rights and the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues.

2012 marks the twentieth anniversary of the 'Declaration of Persons Belonging to National, Linguistic, Ethnic, and Religious Minorities'. I believe that it is divine order that this is also the year in which Gullah/Geechee are seeking to bring together our diaspora at the Gullah/Geechee Nation International Music and Movement Festival to be held in Charleston, SC in August. The theme is Gullah/Geechee Jubilee, and we see this as an opportunity to continue our movement and celebration of self-determination.

Fa lun mo bout who webe, gwine to disya (To learn more about who we are, go to the following..) www.officialgullahgeechee.info www.gullahgeechee.net

ASSEMBLING AN ASSEMBLY

DAPHNE
PLESSNER

WHAT OCCUPY CAN LEARN FROM MEDIEVAL ICELAND'S ALTHING

It is not obvious that one needs a sovereign for a society to organise itself or to address its concerns. The Occupation movement has drawn attention to the possibility for people to assemble, discuss, vote on and implement actions that have local and national significance when no leaders are present. The lesson learned is also that political participation and determination does not rely upon, nor is it exclusively embodied in, a Nation State. Occupy presents, at least in theory, an incipient form of alternative government.

To see how those ideas have manifested themselves in practice for hundreds of years, we can turn to the example of the Icelandic Althing, an annual public gathering conducted in the open air at Þingvellir (meaning 'assembly fields'), 45 miles east of Reykjavik. In its early phase, in the years 930 to 1260, the assembly was the formal manifestation of government in a decentralised free state. The Althing was proto-democratic and egalitarian in nature, with republican tendencies, and consisted only of a legislature and a judiciary. There was no sovereign, no state bureaucracy, no police, no army. Instead, the Althing was in practice an event for discussing matters of concern, settling disputes, formulating laws and implementing standing courts. It resembled a kind of festival where people met their future spouses, bought and sold their wares, and where social life took place.

The Althing was also representational. Although great efforts are (rightly) made to refute contemporary representative government, the form of direct democracy practiced within the Occupy movement does not elide the fact that something like one per cent of activists represent 99 per cent of the people. The strategy of representation itself is not 'evil', and is implicit to politics in many ways: individuals represent their interests publicly, members of a collective represent the group's interests, and so on. Currently, liberal

democracies practice a representational system that is dysfunctional in part due to the imbalance between elected members and the population they are supposed to represent.

However, the concept of representation need not be seen as an obstacle to developing a legislature and judiciary within grassroots activist assemblies. The example of the Althing highlights a few parallels which may illustrate the leverage activists can have over governments. Activist movements often lack the formalisation of a legislative and judicial process that can replace the state whilst retaining the autonomy and plurality of its members' voices, support the dynamic of mutable organisational networks and focus on the issues that drive the politic. Activist networks need to gain real purchase over the state and the machinery of corporate capital to counter the void that has resulted from the state's systematic deregulation of the financial markets and its reneging on its democratic commitments. This requires establishing alternative avenues for justice.

Though medieval Iceland was far from an ideal state, their Althing allowed individuals to retain their autonomy while at the same time providing a voice for, and a political system responsive to, the needs of individuals within society. Assemblies were events held at the local level (called Varthing) as well as the national level (Althing). Both consisted of representatives (Gothar) who were equal in status and, unlike their counterparts in Europe, were neither war lords nor petty kings. The Gothar differed from their European contemporaries in that they acted as representatives of small groups of farmers rather than as overlords, and so communicated the farmers' concerns at the annual meeting of the Althing in Þingvellir. Selection of the Gothar was not via elections but was based primarily on kinship; however, it was not tribal – in theory, anyone could change their

allegiance to a different Gothar. More significantly, the selection (or deselection) of a Gothar depended upon interdependent allegiances between 'citizen' and Gothar; allegiances which could also be broken. The system of assemblies drew together, educated and informed society, and legislation emanated from this widespread practice of assembling. Similarly, in activist circles: Online and offline assemblies discuss problems and issues, share information and collaborate on organising events – all key characteristics of Occupy.

The structure of the annual Althing combined two elements. Firstly, it was a forum for discussion that brought together local representatives who communicated the issues and problems of their network and formulated laws that emerged from those discussions. Secondly, it was an event that facilitated the settling of disputes through standing courts. The law that developed was a set of guidelines that were valid in virtue of their having emerged from discussion within the community as a whole, and by incorporating the lessons learned from deliberating, analysing and judging cases. However, with regard to carrying out a judgement, the Althing had no power to execute and police its will: the law was not enforced. It was up to the individuals involved in a dispute to manage the resolution of their affairs following the deliberation of a court. This is deeply significant for activist organisations not only because it allows for the epistemic dimension of justice to come to the fore (all involved come to understand and witness the law and its operations), but it also places the power of the law and its responsibilities in the hands of individuals, actualises equality between members and prevents the establishment of an 'authority'.

At the Althing, the law council (Logretta) reviewed and made laws annually. Local Gothar gathered to discuss emendations with other representatives and their advisers (who were called



Thingmen). The proceedings of the Althing were conducted by a Law-Speaker, a chairman, who was elected for a three year period. The Law-Speaker's job was to proclaim the laws at the opening of the Althing, to manage the proceedings of the Assembly, to furnish information about any part of the law that was needed in deciding new legislation or settling disputes, or when difficult points arose, to consult five or more legal experts (Logmen).

Courts were conducted in the open air and in public. There were two levels of courts: local courts called the Varthing and four regional courts called Quarter Courts. If a dispute was too serious or not resolvable at local level, then the case would be heard at the Quarter Court. To ensure impartiality, a case would be heard in the Quarter Court of the defendant's domicile. Panels of judges would be selected annually and were assigned by lots drawn from all parts of the country. They had the power to operate as a kind of jury, as knowledgeable witnesses, as investigators weighing evidence, and to deliver a verdict. Proposed judges could be disqualified where their impartiality was in question. By holding courts at the Althing, farmers were exposed to cases from across the country which in turn standardised the law and shaped Iceland as one legal community.

The Althing example offers a model of a legislative and judicial system that is at least potentially a natural development of what activist organisations already have in place. It is entirely plausible for activists to establish a judicial system independent

of the nation-state – to form a state within a state and to challenge the powers of the multinationals through a system akin to the Althing where those who benefit from the inequities of capitalist production are directly called to account by those who are disenfranchised by it.

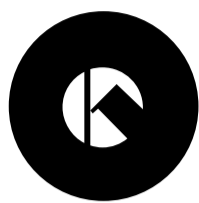
Activist movements have already vividly demonstrated that the act of assembling is a puissant tool in critiquing defunct state assemblies, and that protests and encampments are effective symbols of the problems and issues that people face in their daily lives. There is a real opportunity for a legal and judicial system to be developed within activist assemblies and from the ground up within the encampments and social networks. One notable quality of the Occupy movement is that it stakes a claim in the public space but not a claim on property per se. This opens up the possibility for a judicial system to be realised as an event (rather than as an 'institution') in the public space akin to that within the 'free state' of Medieval Iceland.

The current plurality of activist voices is an ideal precondition and foundation for a new form of judiciary to evolve and to meet the genuine need for answers to social problems and issues such as wage slavery, discrimination, the exploitation of migrants, the corporatisation of education, the stripping away of pensions and welfare, state securitisation, the loss of homes to the banks and so on. If justice is to be "of the people and by the people" then let it be just that – independent of a degenerate Nation State and free to formally judge neoliberal policies and rampant capitalism.



APOCALYPSE NOW BUT FAR AWAY

JAMIE KELSEY-FRY



In November 30 last year, 21 Occupy activists were arrested for occupying a building where the director of Xstrata mining corporation was based. They made a banner drop from the top of the building in London's Haymarket, stating 'All power to the 99%'. No members of the public were hurt or threatened or remotely put out by the action. None that is, but for Mick Davis, the director in question. Occupy made it clear that he had been targeted because he was the highest paid director of any FTSE 100 company in 2011, receiving £18.4 million. His PR company scrambled into action but all they could muster in response was the laughable correction that Occupy were wrong and in fact, Davis had 'only' earned £17.7 million. In 2009, the worst year of the recession, the company's annual report shows that Davis took home a staggering £27m, including basic pay, bonus and share options. Occupy had come to challenge the one per cent and Davis was a perfect example.

To support the 21 activists arrested and in anticipation of their court case on June 27, Occupy London's Corporations Working Group became interested in researching what they could about Davis and Xstrata. The group were a mixed bunch of around a dozen people, meeting in a tent outside a big church once a week - certainly not professional investigative journalists nor experienced NGOs. They included an ex-teacher, a care worker, a few students and an ex-fireman, all from a range of backgrounds and varying in age from 19 to 60.

We began contacting groups that we thought might be interested in helping, saying we were Occupy and wanted to raise awareness about Xstrata. A surprising number of organisations and individuals around the world were keen to support; Xstrata had made a lot of enemies. We wanted to reveal how the mining corporation was responsible for gross abuses of human rights and labour rights, environmental destruction, economic and political corruption and even murder. All crimes that would far outweigh the 'crime' of a bunch of people running into a building and

dropping a banner from its roof. It was humbling to be in touch with all these people around the world who were on the sharp end of Xstrata's machinations. They ranged from tiny indigenous activist groups in Peru and the Philippines to large 'coalitions' of activist groups like the London Mining Network who have remained tremendously supportive to the small Occupy group throughout. We were soon meeting people who personally knew indigenous activists and priests who had been murdered or disappeared for standing up to the mining corporation. We were in touch with documentary makers who had covered the inequities of Xstrata, such as Stephanie Boyd who made the award winning 'Devil's Operation' and Mike Watts who, when we were in touch with him first, was about to go off into the jungle to secretly film a mining operation where film-makers and journalists were endangering their lives to even come close to the plant.

In February 2012, the news came out that Glencore, who already owned 33 per cent of Xstrata and whose CEO was close buddies with Mick Davis, were planning a merger with Xstrata. If Glencore, being the biggest commodities corporation in the world, couples with Xstrata, we will see the creation of another corporate 'superpower' which would join the pantheon at the top of the corporatocracy that currently has inordinate control over the fate and fortune of the world. Suddenly, this hardly heard of corporation, Xstrata, was on the main news. In fact both of these companies have been in the news on a regular basis since then and some of the reports have been highly critical. The mainstream media seem to be doing some of our work for us. In April, Panorama broadcast a scathing blast at Glencore on prime time television, showing them being linked to an 'acid fountain' in Africa; to an imprisoned ex-paramilitary officer in Colombia, who claimed Glencore had paid him and his men to terrorise and murder people on land that Glencore wanted; and to child labour in mines in DR Congo. Panorama managed to present their evidence to Ivan Glasenberg, the CEO of Glencore. For anyone watching, it was easy to start believing the bodies of research which suggest that to get along well in the corporate world, being a psychopath helps.

Soon, the Corporations Working Group were widening their research further, as it became clear that the methods by which Glencore and Xstrata work are par for the course for a whole host of mining and extraction corporations including Shell, BP, Rio Tinto, Vedanta Resources, Anglo American and BHP Billiton.

Similarities we found in these operations include: the murder or disappearing of indigenous activists who oppose them; the use of rape and torture to control or deter activists; the illegal grabbing of lands; corruption of local and national political figures; turning peoples against each other; the flagrant ignoring of environmental controls; swallowing up or poisoning local water supplies; a fondness for operating in conflict zones where laws can be broken even more easily; the funding of conflicts for the same reason; empty promises of employment and better living conditions; the ability to evade and avoid paying taxes; use of sophisticated law firms to help get them out of trouble whenever they have been caught; the funding of local media outlets to create pro-mining propaganda; and employment of the world's leading PR firms to keep greenwashing and whitewashing over all of the above.

The London Mining Network recently held an event at Portcullis House, to launch their latest body of research 'UK listed mining companies and the case for stricter oversight'.

One of their spokespeople, Richard Solly, gave an introductory speech, which he started off by saying "It should no longer be the job of small NGOs or investigative journalists to reveal the crimes of these companies." This fact hit hard, the realisation that all this information is out there, all these abuses and violations are being caught and gathered but really, very little is being done. Most of the time, the crimes are ignored by well paid state officials; or even more highly paid corporate law firms step in and draw out legal proceedings for years, ultimately watering down any real punishment or due responsibility.

An example: see how well Shell fared after a fourteen-year legal case regarding their connection to the execution of Nigerian activist Ken Saro-Wiwa and eight of his comrades, which ended in the families being paid \$15.5 million out of court and Shell stating that the payment did not imply any admitting of liability but was a form of 'reconciliation'. And of course, much of what happens, particularly with financial abuse, is considered to be 'above board and legal'. This was the case with the recent accusations brought by Global Witness, who chose the day before Glencore's first public AGM to release a report claiming that "Glencore played a role in secret and possibly corrupt sales of stakes in the Kansuki and Mutanda mines in Congo's southern Katanga province". In defense, Glencore's CEO Simon Murray simply stated, "We are confident

that these transactions were entirely proper". Time and again, much of what can be considered to be psychopathic behaviour is 'above board' or by some stretch of the legalistic imagination, 'legal'... and if it is not, it can almost always be paid to go away.

It became a daily experience for Occupy London's Corporations Group to come across new stories of murder, rape, environmental destruction and legal, political and economic violations. On one day, we were meeting with a group of Congolese describing in detail how their families had been destroyed by rape and murder; on the next





day, we were talking with delegates from the Cree first nation people in Alberta whose entire culture has been destroyed by the infamous Tar Sands projects. Other groups heard about us and started sending us lesser known stories about the crimes of these kinds of corporations. Sometimes we heard news of activists who had been arrested and locked up, one priest for 40 years due to the 'crime' of standing in front of a truck to block it from going to a mine.

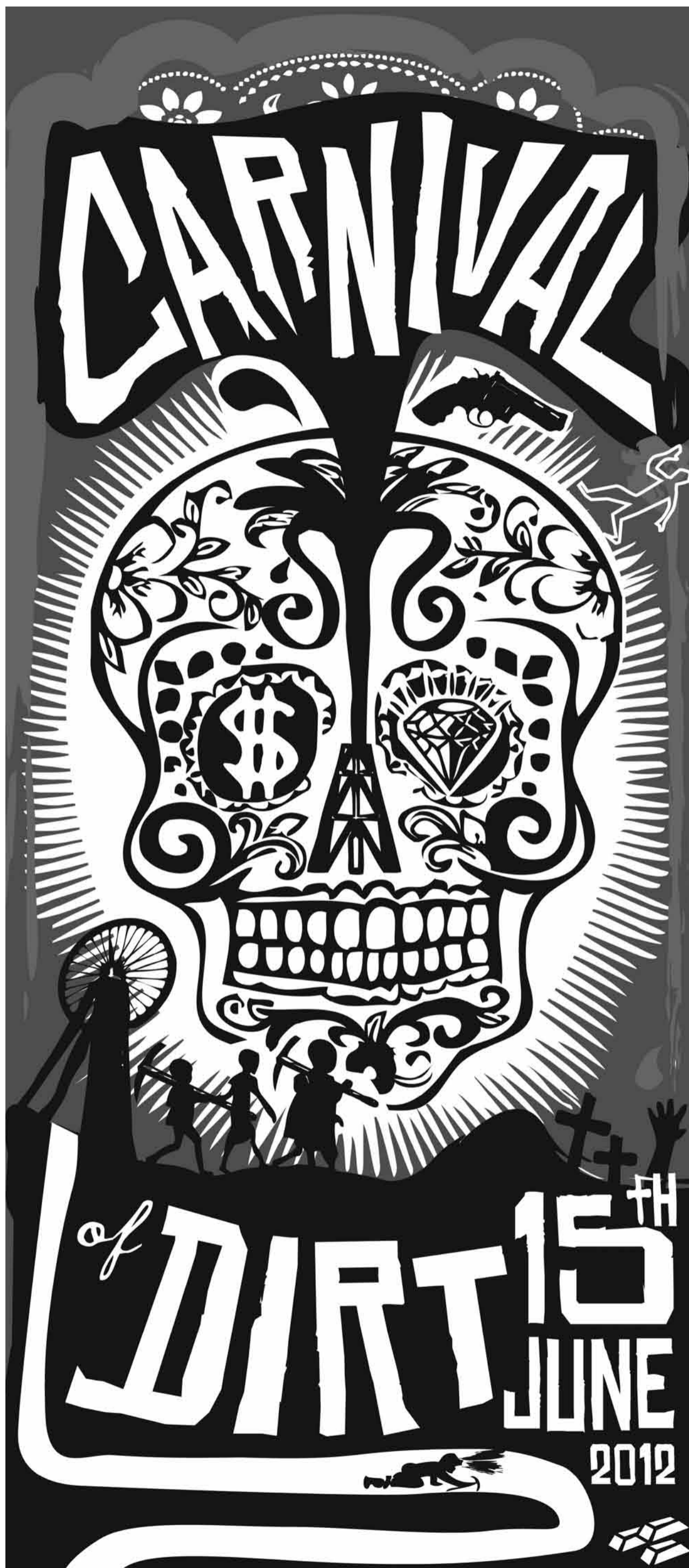
At the Greenwash Gold launch, organised by UK Tar Sands Network, London Mining Network and the



Bhopal Medical Appeal, we heard from people who are suffering due to projects run by the huge corporations that are currently trying to clean their images by being major sponsors of the Olympics. We listened to fishermen from the Mexican Gulf attesting to the fact that BP have done next to nothing towards cleaning up their mess from Deepwater Horizon. Cree spokespeople described the illnesses striking down their people due to Shell's Tar Sands project. A survivor from Bhopal gave an account of the immediate as well as the long-lasting suffering caused by the industrial disaster at the Union Carbide chemical plant, which is now the famously ignored legacy of Dow chemicals. All of these were powerful first hand accounts but one stuck out more poignantly, purely due to the fact that it is a concern that few people are aware of and because the speaker was a profoundly humble and haunted man. Benny Wenda, from the Free West Papua movement, spoke about how the Indonesian Army are being used to bring genocide to the West Papuans so that corporations like Rio Tinto are able to plunder the resources available, including the gold that goes into the Olympic medals. His love of the land that was being destroyed clearly hurt him as much as the destruction of his people; this was not a callous view, rather it reflected how the people and the land were bound together as one, and both were being slaughtered for the profits of foreigners using the Indonesian army as hired hands to steal what they wanted. Journalists are not allowed to enter West Papua freely to cover what is taking place there but several documentaries have been made that reveal what is happening.

And that is what we have found. The horror. Understanding of the inspiration behind Colonel Kurtz/ Marlon Brando's last words in *Apocalypse Now*... "The horror, the horror." The film was based on Joseph Conrad's 'The Heart Of Darkness', a book which sought to reveal the hell-like abuse of the Congolese at the hands of the Belgian colonisers who squeezed all they could from the rich land they had taken by force and subjugated, with now infamous sadism and violence.

The Carnival of Dirt has been inspired by the process that started on the roof of a nondescript office block in the Haymarket. It is the result of a coming together of several activist groups from the past and the present, from the UK and from the majority world, all wanting to challenge the stupidity and destruction of a broken and unsustainable system that rewards the few at the cost of decimating our last resources and bringing suffering and degradation to entire countries. It is a response to the often hidden horrors of the mining and extraction corporations, an opportunity to mourn those who have died or been tortured or raped for coming up against them, a celebration of all those who are fighting back against one of the most hideous faces of the corporatocracy, and a chance for people to come together and challenge this unsustainable, undemocratic, unjust and utterly filthy system. www.carnivalofdirt.org



XSTRATA'S KILLING FIELDS

STEPHANIE
BOYD

ITS PR IS THE SLICKEST BUT THE SWISS MINING GIANT XSTRATA HAS A GRISLY TRACK RECORD IN PERU. ON THE CHARGE SHEET ARE POISONING, CHEATING AND POLITICAL SKULDUGGERY. STEPHANIE BOYD INVESTIGATES, AS THE COMPANY PREPARES FOR A MEGA-MERGER WITH GLENCORE TO INCREASE ITS CLOUT.

A DEFORMED SHEEP, BORN WITHOUT A FACE.

Fast-forward to another dead sheep with a head so shrivelled the poor animal looks like its neck sprouted ears. Skip to another day's footage and a miscarried llama fetus appears on the screen with a single large eye in the middle of its shrunken face.

Then on to testimonies from farmers who have lost loved ones to cancer, displaced people living like refugees, angry protesters...

This is the work of Vidal Merma, a young filmmaker who documents the effects of the Tintaya copper mine on his native province of Espinar, in Peru's southern Andes. Vidal is a one-man show. He films, edits and directs the daily news programme for Espinar's public television station, armed with a handy-cam and a Frankenstein computer, cobbled together from makeshift parts.

Vidal's nemesis is the publicity machine of Swiss-based Xstrata, one of the world's largest mining companies and owners of Tintaya.

His bête noire is about to grow even larger. In February Xstrata announced a merger with the London-listed commodities giant, Glencore. The marriage, if successfully consummated, will create the world's fourth largest natural resources company.

Xstrata's slick web page states that the Tintaya mine complies with Peruvian standards and has international ISO certification for environmental management. But an independent study conducted by a German environmental engineer last year found heavy metal contamination in water and soil samples from farming communities near the mine. Of the 50 water sources tested, 29 had levels of heavy metals above even Peru's lax limits for human consumption, and 15 were deemed unacceptable for animals and crops. All 27 soil test locations were contaminated by heavy metals according to Canadian standards (Peru does not have soil quality standards).

The findings are a blow to Tintaya's image as the gold star of corporate responsibility. Until recently, when people asked for positive examples of mining in Peru, the NGOs waved their magic wand and pulled Tintaya out of a hat. Now they're shaking their heads and wondering what went wrong.

PULLING A FAST ONE

Over a decade ago, Oxfam set up a round table between Tintaya's then-owners BHP-Billiton, civil-society groups, provincial and local governments and NGO advisers. The process led to the signing of a treaty between the mine and local authorities in 2003. This legal contract includes compensation for farmers whose land was expropriated 30 years ago to build the mine, as well as provisions for human rights and the environment and a community development fund.

Three years after the grand signing, Tintaya was sold to Xstrata. The new owners promised to honour the treaty, but Espinar's leaders say the company hasn't lived up to its obligations.

Tintaya pays three per cent of its pre-tax profits into a community development fund as stipulated by the treaty. In 2010 this amounted to \$9.6 million – no small change. But Espinar's leaders say the mine has pulled a fast one: the fund is controlled by the Tintaya Foundation, a non-profit organisation founded and run by – guess who? – the mining company.

The development fund and other economic benefits from mining have made no significant dent in Espinar's poverty rate, which at 64 per cent remains one of the highest in Peru. Provincial governor Oscar Mollohuanca accuses the company of using the fund to wield power and buy supporters, creating 'a network of clientage'.

He says the company is also skirting the treaty's environmental provisions. "The company is cheating on us when it comes to the environment," Mollohuanca says. "There's no serious monitoring."

The provincial government wants independent environmental monitoring, use of greener technology and precautions so that the mine's new expansion project doesn't contaminate the area's watershed. It wants a coalition of civil-society and local governments to administer the development fund and an increase in the mine's contribution to 30

per cent of profits. Espinar's leaders say the company is using stalling tactics to avoid negotiating, in the hope that the governor will not be re-elected in 2014.

I would like to give Tintaya officials a chance to rebuff these accusations but the company will not answer my requests for an interview.

So I decide to have a look at the mine myself. Some locals (who cannot be named) accompany me. We drive along the main public road, fifteen minutes outside the provincial capital, and stop in front of a massive construction site on a flat plain, surrounded by mountains. The place is in constant motion: trucks laden with cargo; bulldozers and buses with workers who wave and smile; a giant crane swinging in the background.

From a distance, the site looks like a child's Lego project, but it is not a toy. This will be the processing area for Xstrata's two new expansion projects. In its quest for 'cost-effectiveness' and 'maximum production', the company is turning Peru's southern Andean mountains into a mining corridor.

The original Tintaya copper mine, opened in 1982, is closing and the new mine, named Antapaccay, will open next door. A second project, the Las Bambas mine, located in

a neighbouring state, will pump copper concentrates through a

215-kilometre pipeline to the processing area. The final product will be sent by rail to a port on the Pacific Ocean.

Xstrata is investing \$5.7 billion to develop the Antapaccay and Las Bambas projects, proudly crowing that their production will increase five-fold to over 500,000 tonnes of copper per annum from the end of 2014.

The company brochures forget to mention conflicts with farmers who will be affected by the Las Bambas mine. During exploratory drilling a few years ago, Xstrata was fined for leaking harmful substances into a nearby community. The news struck fear in the region's farmers, who largely survive on subsistence agriculture.

Last May, the district of Challhuahuacho, near Las Bambas, declared a strike against the mine, and the company was forced to evacuate personnel and machines. Local leaders complained that only communities close to the mine were receiving benefits and demanded more development projects for the entire region.

An agreement was reached and the strike was lifted, but tensions remain.

A few months ago I visited the small farming community of Asacasi, near Las Bambas, to help villagers make a short film about their water management techniques. It was difficult to stay on topic. All the villagers wanted to talk about was the main threat facing their water: Xstrata's mine.

Their concern is understandable. Asacasi sits on a flat, spacious plain, 4,000 metres above sea level, surrounded by imposing mountains with sharp, jagged rocks. At first glance the surroundings seem barren – there are no trees, just tall spiky mountain grass and short native bushes.

The villagers' diet, however, would put any North American to shame. Everything is produced in their village: potatoes and herbs from the soil; eggs from their chickens; milk and cheese from their cows; meat from their guinea pigs, sheep and alpaca; and fish, shrimp and frogs from the river.

While filming one day, the villagers pulled trout out of the river with their bare hands and prepared it for lunch.



ILIAS BARTOLINI

"What would we do if our fish disappeared?" asked Gregorio Tarapaqui, secretary of Asacasi's water committee. "Now, there's enough fish to feed the whole village. We don't have to ration or control it."

POLITICAL INTERFERENCE

Xstrata's troubles in Peru are not the company's only worry. Their mines in Colombia and Argentina are also plagued by social conflict. Citizens from the province of Catamarca in Argentina blocked Xstrata's Alumbrera mine earlier this year for three weeks in an attempt to shut it down. Police used violence to break up the blockades, injuring at least 24 people and spurring protests against Alumbrera and other mega-mining projects throughout the country.

Why does this company provoke such ire? A US embassy cable published by Wikileaks last year provides some insight into Xstrata's corporate philosophy. The cable describes a meeting in 2005 between the Swiss Charge and Canadian and US ambassadors in Peru, with executives from several mining companies, including Antamina, which is controlled jointly by Xstrata and BHP-Billiton.

The Antamina executive asked the ambassadors to 'encourage' Peru's education ministry and Catholic Church to move 'troublemaking' priests and teachers out of mining conflict zones. At the end of the cable, the ambassadors agreed to 'consider' this option, and requested more information from the mining executives.

Sneaking around foreign embassies trying to foment conspiracies against local leaders hardly seems like a good way to make friends. The mine's cosy relationship with Peru's national police force doesn't help either. During my visit to the Tintaya mine I was given a personal taste of this closeness.

FINGERS AND TOES

It began with an innocent mistake. Our plan was to observe the mine from the main highway, when suddenly we came upon a large 'Welcome to Tintaya' sign. No 'KEEP OUT' or even 'Beware of Dog'. No security guard or metal gate – nothing to bar our entrance. Just a proud statement proclaiming that the company has managed to safeguard some 60,000 fingers and toes on its workers' hands and feet. Not a single finger lost, so they say.

Who could resist such a welcoming message? We drive around the mine site, confident that our fingers and toes will come to no harm.

After gawking at the enormous open-pit – an empty space where a mountain once stood – and snapping some photos, a truck approaches, driven by a stern man with dark glasses. A young woman hops

out, an automatic rifle slung over her shoulder, her hair in a tight bun. She peers in our driver's window at our smiling faces and demands to see our identification.

"Excuse me, Miss, are you a police officer or a security guard with the mine?" I ask.

My confusion is understandable. The woman is wearing the uniform of Peru's National Police, but her identity badge is covered by a large, yellow vest emblazoned with the 'Tintaya' logo.

"I'm a police officer," she says. Long pause: "And I work for the mine."

She wants us to go with her to the police station inside the mine. My curiosity is piqued – why does a private corporation have its own police station? What does it look like? But my fellow passengers say "No way!" After a tense back and forth with the officer, it's agreed that we'll go to the police station in Espinar, the provincial capital. Inside the station, the captain examines my official government press card, and makes an impressive display of huffing and puffing. Lawyers from the provincial government arrive for our defence. More huffing ensues from both sides. Finally, we're given a stern warning and told that 'next time' we have to get permission from the company before entering the mine.

We leave the station, my companions muttering that when the mine spills chemicals on the road or contaminates their water, the police are nowhere to be found.

'Laws exist to protect the companies,' is a common refrain in Peru, where the judicial system is easily co-opted by economic interests. In response, a coalition of around 50 organisations, including Amnesty International and Greenpeace, is spearheading a campaign to make Swiss companies respect human and environmental rights when working overseas.

If successful, the new laws would allow victims of abuses by Swiss companies – like the farmers in Vidal's footage – to seek redress in Switzerland. Occupy London is also planning a major campaign to protest the Glencore-Xstrata merger and highlight abuses by both companies.

Such actions might seem idealistic, but when I tell Vidal about the campaigns he is heartened and hands me a DVD with his films to send to activist contacts abroad.

"The mine tricked our parents," he tells me. "But we left Espinar for education and training, and now we've come back and they can't cheat us anymore."

Stephanie Boyd is a writer and independent filmmaker who has been living and working in Peru for the past 15 years. Her films include The Devil Operation. guarango.org/diablo
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XSTRATA

01 / AUSTRALIA

Xstrata’s McArthur River mine is at extreme risk of a “tailings” dam bank failing as well as acid draining into one of the river’s tributaries. The open pit zinc mine nearby covers 83 hectares and the tailing pond sprawls over an additional 210 hectares, held by the dam that has polluted Surprise Creek. It sits on the landscape like a vast open sore. 5.5 kilometres of the river have been shifted off its normal course by the company. Aborigines and other local people are deeply upset by what they see as the destruction to their sacred sites and livelihoods.

There has been failure on the part of Xstrata to listen to the Aboriginal people who live along the McArthur River. One of these groups, the Yanyuwa, were able to legally claim ownership of the land in 1977 under the Aboriginal Land Rights Act. Nevertheless, Mount Isa Mines which had discovered vast underground deposits of lead, silver and zinc in the area began underground mining along the river in 1995.

The CFME Union in Australia made the following claims of breaches of OECD guidelines by Xstrata while operating in their territories: Part IV, 1(a) 2(a) 2(c), Part IV (6), (8), regarding industrial relations, collective bargaining and labour rights. They also claimed breaches of Part IX regarding anti-competitive practices. Xstrata has been very obstructive to talks with the Union and other organisations over this matter. The mining sites affected by this in Australia are: Newlands Mine, Queensland. Ulan Mine (NSW), United Mine (NSW) and Tahmoor Mine (NSW).

02 / ARGENTINA

Minera Alumbrera: there have been numerous protests aimed at shutting down the mine. There were further protests against the lifting of a judicial order prohibiting any mining activity in Agua Rica project area. Last month, the governor of La Rioja Province suspended Osisko Mining Corporation’s gold mine in the Famatina region, after much resistance from activists and local residents.

The battle has now shifted to the neighbouring Catamarca Province. Residents of the town Andalgalá put up roadblocks to Xstrata’s Alumbrera copper/gold mine and its nearby Agua Rica project. Police clashed with activists when clearing the roads and now groups of mining supporters have put their own roadblocks in place.

03 / CHILE

At the Río Cuervo Project, a hydroelectric dam, there have been great concerns about the building of a dam on a geological fault. The fault line is geologically active and has already caused landslides and a tsunami. The project would have resulted in the loss of two lakes and an entire balanced ecosystem of wetlands and grazing land, used for years by local communities. The Supreme Court has just put a halt to the project on environmental grounds although other dams in the area are still being planned.

04 / COLOMBIA

At the Colombian El Cerrejón mine, possibly one of the largest in the world and which supplies some of the coal we use in the UK. Xstrata, BHP Billiton and Anglo American have been in dispute with workers over attempts to cut back on basic workers’ rights such as pay, health, pensions and the rights of sub-contracted workers.

05 / PHILIPPINES

Xstrata’s Tampakan project. The Kalikasan People’s Network for the Environment found that the mine did not have the Free and Informed Consent of the affected B’laan people. The Philippines is one of 143 countries which adopted The UN Declaration on the Rights of indigenous Peoples. Many of the tribespeople within the mining area are not fully aware of its potentially negative impact on the environment and their livelihoods and those who embraced it did so in the belief that it would lead to the provision of basic social services which the government has failed to do and which the company has promised. An environmental assessment of the impacts of this open cast mine by

geologists from the University of the Philippines, found it “would not only pollute rivers but will eventually destroy the sources of ground water in the mountains,” The impact of this will be detrimental to farming and food security for the local people, the majority of whom depend on agricultural activities for their livelihoods. Nevertheless, the company is trying to push ahead with the mine.

GLENCORE

06 / ANGOLA

In late 2009, four men were convicted by a French court of supplying weapons to Angola in the midst of its 27-year civil war, in defiance of a UN embargo. Pierre Falcone, Arcadi Gaydamak, Jean-Christophe Mitterrand and Charles Pasqua were all found guilty. November 1993, ‘Falcone and Gaydamak helped arrange the sale to Angola of \$47 million in small arms. A second deal for \$563 million worth of weapons, including tanks and helicopters, got under way early the following year ... Angolans paid for the weapons with oil, which Falcone and Gaydamak sold through Glencore.’

07 / PERU

September 2007, was a key player in implementing an aggressive anti-union policy at Minera Los Quenuales lead-zinc operation in Peru, a month before a worker had died by being crushed under a heap of ore. The workforce began an ‘indefinite general strike’ to draw attention to their unmet demands, and another person is killed and dozens reportedly injured, when it barricaded access to the mine. February 2007, residents near Prodeco’s La Jagua de Ibirico coal mine in Colombia’s Cesar province set up barricades to protest at environmental damage and respiratory illnesses allegedly inflicted by the

08 / COLOMBIA

Glencore subsidiary, Prodeco, operates on government owned land in El Prado, northern Colombia. Land forcibly taken from its previous residents by paramilitaries in a six month “campaign of terror” during which least 18 people were murdered.

mining operations there. In response, police attacked demonstrators, reportedly killing one man.

09 / CONGO

March 2011 Glencore is accused of human rights abuses, employing child labour, causing pollution and evading taxes in the DR Congo. Accusations centred around Glencore’s operations in the province of Katanga, where it has a \$250 million 77% share in Katanga Mining Limited (KML), a major copper and cobalt producer. Mining is ‘driving the locals away from their traditional farming activities, which has led to less food on the market. There are often no safety measures in KML sites. Miners are not adequately protected from Uranium radiation.’ Houses reportedly damaged by explosive charges and the air polluted by emissions from the mining operations. Glencore contacted ‘to no avail’.

10 / ZAMBIA

From Glencore’s operation at Mopani copper-cobalt complex in Zambia, Ivan Glasenberg CEO received a bundle of letters children at a school exposed on a daily basis to sulphur dioxide pollution from the nearby Mopani Copper Mines (MCM). Children described how toxic clouds made them choke, burnt their throats and poisoned the school’s fruit trees. In 2009, the Environmental Council of Zambia reported sulphur dioxide emissions up to 70x the maximum health limit set by the World Health Organisation. A mineral expert’s report in Glencore’s prospectus confirmed sulphur dioxide emissions from MCM were ‘consistently exceeding’ environmental limits: 3 monitoring stations outside the plant repeatedly recorded breaches of air pollution limits.’ There have been various illegal discharges of hazardous fluids into rivers, an acid leak that had contaminated town’s water supply resulting in “hospitalisation and treatment of a number of people”. The company has done virtually nothing to introduce stringent anti-pollution measures to the area. MCM is co-owned by Glencore and First Quantum Minerals. In April 2011,

5 International NGOs filed complaints against both companies, alleging they had violated OECD Guidelines. The claims were based on results of 2009 audit, performed at the request of the Zambian Government. Among the anomalies were ‘an unexplained increase in the company’s operating costs in 2007 (+\$380 million); stunningly low reported volumes of extracted cobalt when compared to similar mining companies operating in the region, and manipulations of copper selling prices.

11 / AUSTRALIA

Members of the Wutha Native (Aboriginal) Title Claimants Group in Australia were cheated of an agreement made with Glencore in 1996, under which the company guaranteed to employ some of them in return for mining nickel on their land. (The case was only recently settled out of court.)

12 / BOLIVIA

According to The Times, Glencore was guilty of causing river pollution at its operations in Bolivia.

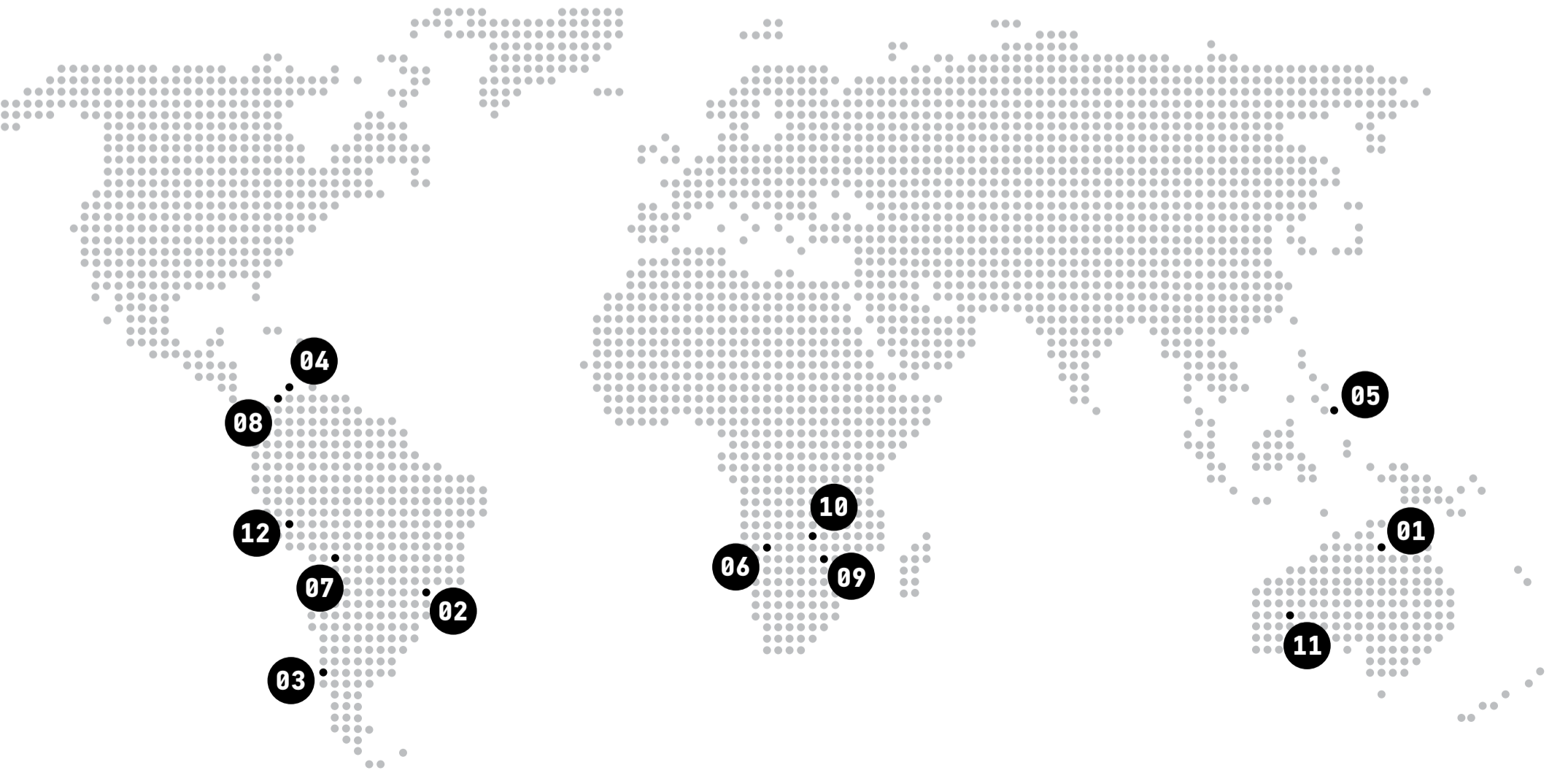
Xtrata Unions

October 2008. Unions from Xstrata operations in Australia, Germany, Canada, Chile, Peru and the Dominican Republic met in Canada with the International Federation of Chemical, Energy, Mine and General Workers’ Unions (ICEM). At the conclusion they announced plans to create an International Solidarity Fund and to move toward the creation of a global council of Xstrata unions. They stated their concern that “... Xstrata’s actions are having a negative impact on workers and communities around the world...” and that they are, contrary to the company’s own claims, failing to act according to the highest labour and environmental standards.’

Glencore Corporate

A Glencore subsidiary procured lucrative market-sensitive information from a European Union “mole”, which, ‘threatens to undermine the EU’s Common agricultural policy’.

MAPPING CORPORATE MAYHEM



PREOCCUPYING: DAN HIND

“IF ASSEMBLIES BECOME BIG ENOUGH, THEY BECOME ABLE TO ALTER ELECTORAL RESULTS”

DAN HIND IS THE AUTHOR OF ‘RETURN OF THE PUBLIC’ AND ‘THE THREAT TO REASON’ AND A MEMBER OF TAX JUSTICE NETWORK. IN HIS LATEST WORK, COMMON SENSE: OCCUPATION, ASSEMBLY AND THE FUTURE OF LIBERTY, DAN POSITS THE END OF AN ERA DOMINATED BY MARKETS AND EXPERTS, SUGGESTING PUBLIC ASSEMBLIES AND OPEN, NON-TELEOLOGICAL DISCUSSIONS AS A POSSIBLE WAY FORWARD. THE OT ASKED DAN ABOUT PUBLIC ASSEMBLIES, ‘VOTER APATHY’ AND RISE OF MENTAL HEALTH PROBLEMS IN TODAY’S SOCIETY.

OCCUPIED TIMES: You open Common Sense with emphasis on the notion that 2012 will be crucial for the future direction of the world. Why is this?

DAN HIND: Late in 2010 I had a strong sense that something had finally started in the UK - that some kind of limit had been reached, in terms of what governments could get away with. Over the following year that ebbed and flowed, but by the end of 2011 it was clear that action by citizens could change things. In the Middle East there were obvious breakthroughs. Here the impact of the occupations was more subtle, and would be denied by mainstream politicians. But nevertheless things had changed. Above all, the numbers of people involved in direct action, and in creating an alternative to austerity, had increased hugely.

If we build on last year, then our impact - on public discussion, at first, but later on the structure of politics and the economy - could be very profound. If we turn out to be as serious and committed as the people who occupied Tahrir Square, then

that would make a difference, for our societies and for the wider world. If, as our critics insist, we are just mucking about, then that too will be important. But not in a good way.

OT: You’re hinting at the difficulties in comparing events in the Middle East with Europe or the US. Late in 2010, the UK saw the first wave of massive student protests, while the Egyptian people, for example, were still under the yoke of a brutal dictator. How much do you realistically think these distinct movements have inspired each other?

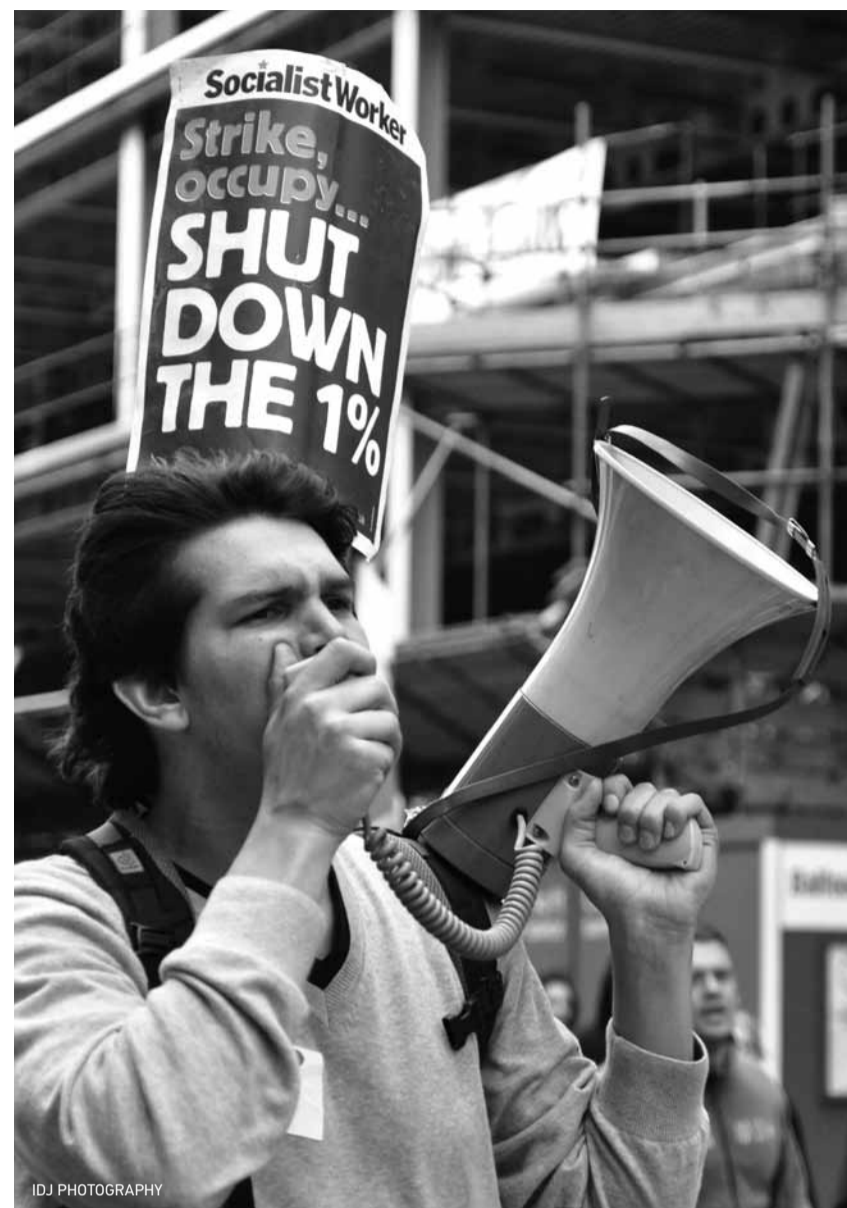
DH: Well, we have to be careful about the ways in which they are distinct. The Middle East is not the same as Europe or North America, of course, and we should avoid facile comparisons. But if we want to understand either situation we have to appreciate the connections, too. The campaign to topple Mubarak has many roots, but an important one was the opposition to the US-led invasion of Iraq. A lot of people involved in Occupy became political at the same time, for the same reason. Similarly, the uprisings in the Middle East are rejections of a particularly

nasty model of globalisation, where a small political elite collaborate with offshore interests to generate, and then appropriate, huge profits. It should be familiar to us, because it is very similar to what we have here. Like I say, there are differences, and the differences are important.

As for inspiration, that’s hard to quantify. But the sense that different societies and countries have been learning from each other is palpable. What’s happening in Quebec at the moment draws from the tactics of popular struggle in Chile. But Canadians are also fighting for similar things. These places are not the same. But people everywhere can take courage from what other people have fought for, and have achieved.

OT: After George Galloway’s by-election win in Bradford you wrote that it represented a change in voter patterns, and suggested it was protest voting. Do you think we saw more of this in the recent local elections?

DH: Well, the Bradford result was an extraordinary rejection of the mainstream options. If you don’t like



IDJ PHOTOGRAPHY

the Conservatives you are supposed to vote Labour, or, if you are feeling particularly daring, the Liberal Democrats. To some extent that has broken down. The established parties are still in a strong position - the electoral system makes it punishingly difficult to break through from outside. But citizens, if they assemble and debate, can put pressure on the professionals in a way that hasn’t been possible for a long time, perhaps since the creation of modern party politics.

The local election turnout - 32% - was partly down to the low status of local government in England and Wales. Starting with Thatcher, the centre has stripped councils of powers and initiative. But still, this was very low by historical standards. The parties can’t convince 68% of voters to participate. This creates a space in electoral politics. What we do about that is an important question.

OT: This is something we’re very interested in. We often hear about “voter apathy” which seems like a loaded term in that it places blame on the voter, rather than politicians. Julian Assange has said “I believe that people are apathetic because they are powerless, not powerless because they are apathetic.” Do you agree that the 68% of non-voters are indeed powerless, or does it say something about the alienating nature of mainstream politics?

DH: If lots of people vote, the political class congratulate themselves: high levels of participation mean that people are happy with the system. If lots of people don’t vote, the political class congratulate themselves: low levels of participation mean that people are happy with the system.

That tells you something about the political class, of course. It also tells you something about voting.

The solution, it seems to me, is that we assemble and debate as citizens, at arm’s length from the political parties. Let them speak, certainly, but on the same terms as everyone else. If people gather to debate, then they gain an independent power. They learn about each other, and about themselves,

through the act of collective assertion: “We live in this place, and we have a right to decide how it is run. And we’ll decide how we relate to electoral politics and on what terms.”

If assemblies become big enough, they become able to alter electoral results - but that’s only one of the things they can do. They first become schools for the exercise of power in the present, and so they become a device for dispelling apathy. Democracy isn’t about getting our team elected. It is about making the institutions of power subordinate to a sovereign public. And in current conditions that means assembly by any and all means possible.

OT: You have been keen to touch on the increase in mental health problems in recent times. Do you believe that a more equal, inclusive and collective society, like the one you envisage in Common Sense, would result in less mental illness?

DH: I think it would, yes. The evidence for this view is very strong. Kate Pickett and Richard Wilkinson’s book, *The Spirit Level*, makes it clear that in wealthy countries economic inequality correlates closely with reported levels of distress. Unequal societies have more mental illness than equal ones.

And we can see why that might be. Inequality makes people anxious - and setbacks and disappointments become far more serious in unequal societies. Not getting a promotion in Britain is much more serious than in Finland, say. And unequal societies become increasingly poisonous, as those with wealth and power use both to justify themselves and to denigrate others.

Here’s the thing: a lot of people felt enormous relief when they met others at occupations, where there was a clear commitment to equality. Now I am not saying that the occupations were a utopia, but there were obvious benefits in being able to talk openly about matters of common concern. That tells us something about the communications system, about the information environment in its broadest sense on which most of us depend.



BEN CAVANNA

We are encouraged to think that our state of mind is our individual responsibility. But we are deeply sensitive to what the culture around tells us. If the culture is telling us that we have no value or voice if we aren't rich, that has an effect. Let's say that depression and anxiety are mental illnesses. But they are communicable diseases.

Political life isn't all we need as humans. But then neither is Vitamin D. **OT:** In what sense would you say the information environment is a factor behind the issue of mental health in our society? How can we hope to change this environment?

DH: The communications sector reproduces the dominant views in society. In a highly unequal society it reproduces the views of a small number of people, but represents its ideas and assumptions as common sense, as what everybody sensible thinks. In such circumstances, most people's opinions and ideas are denigrated - presented back to them as marginal or weird. The majority is urged to see itself as abnormal, defective even.

The public culture, the information environment, tells us that we aren't capable of self-government, that the world is too complicated for us to understand. It tells us that it is up to us as individuals to strive to improve our circumstances. It tells us that political action, in the broad sense of collective deliberation and assertion, is unnecessary or impossible.

How can we change this. Well, we can start to communicate among ourselves, through assembly online and in the world. And we can demand changes to the structure of communications. There are lots of ways we can do that. The most important thing is that we understand that the established media outlets are political institutions; they are constitutionally significant, and as such they must be made answerable to us as a deliberating public. That's the idea I explore in The 'Return of the Public'. Change the mainstream of the media, and you make other changes possible. It isn't something that the governing interests want to talk about, precisely because it is so easy to do and so difficult to argue against.

Media reform isn't the obvious place to start. But it is the right



place to start, if you are interested in democratising the country.

OT: The General Assembly and other organising methods associated with the global Occupy movement (and previous movements) have received positive comment from yourself and others. What do you think has been the success of direct, non-hierarchical organisational process?

DH: Well, they've given people a chance to speak in a context where there is a reasonable expectation that they will be heard. That's a great achievement. They've created a public culture. They motivate people to learn, and to share information and ideas. They have already provided an education in politics, in a culture where political understanding is very tightly

controlled, where the very idea of politics has been radically distorted.

The process meant that people could work out what they thought about an issue, and find out what other people thought too. It made people comprehensible to one another as public beings. It didn't change everything overnight, but why should it? It is a start. Those involved are, I hope, more confident about asserting themselves as citizens. I hope that they have more faith in other people, too.

OT: Is there a danger that assembly movements could end up being dominated by participants with similar motivations to parliamentary politicians, or do you believe they can genuinely shift power into the hands of the people?

DH: Ambition, the desire for praise and status - these are part of what we are. Not everyone craves power, and not to the same extent. But it's part of life. The occupation at St Paul's didn't become a playground for charismatic leaders, for the most part I think because everyone else didn't want that. I don't think domination is an imminent problem, as long as the emphasis is on equality in debate as an organizing ideal.

A group of people becoming a public is what matters. If assemblies can register parliamentary power, without being entranced by it, then so much the better. As for whether we can genuinely shift power into the hands of the people, we have no choice; we have to. There isn't someone far away who understands things and has our best interests at heart. All we have is who we are, we have to make the best of that.

OT: In Common Sense you say, "Nothing can be swept away while most consider it inevitable or natural. Yet nothing can long survive if it is thought absurd." How can groups like Occupy, which have already recognised the absurdity of the present system, help to change the "Common Sense" of the status quo?

DH: I think the main thing is to share the method of assembly, and use it intelligently, so that more people see what can be done with it, how flexible it is - and how it can create a great power.

It takes a degree of skill and experience. I couldn't do it. But there are more people, thanks to Occupy, who can. Generalise the condition of assembly, that was the phrase.

You don't need to give people more and more information, I don't think, or enlighten them in some simple sense. Each of us needs to be in a context where it is possible - safe and socially appropriate - to consider the full significance of what we all know, pretty much, but most of us can't bring ourselves to think about. We can't get rid of something that we can't look at steadily.

Once we've taken stock, we can decide what else we need to know, and what we need to do. To fully appreciate the absurdity of something, you have

to gain a degree of power, I think.

OT: Since the onset of the Occupy movement, these methods of assembly have gone through changes leading to distinctions; for example with Occupy London sticking to the 'consensus model' on all decision-making, but Occupy Wall Street moving to relative majority voting on some issues. If, as you suggest, progress can be made in the sharing of methods of assembly, how can we determine what methods are correct?

DH: There's no one right way, I don't think. We aren't going to be able to achieve perfect consensus about everything. The advantage of seeking consensus in the way the occupations did is that it helps us to understand more clearly where and how we do differ. Though we have much more in common than we would ever guess from the way we are usually described in the media, we are not going to stop disagreeing. For one thing, the beneficiaries of the current system aren't all going to see reason and accept the case for reform or revolution. The 99% are going to have to outvote the 1% on some things.

And the need for experimentation and adaptation goes beyond consensus versus majority voting. For example, I think face to face deliberation is very important. It encourages us in the full sense of the word, when we meet and discover that we aren't a mob, or an apathetic mass, when we find that we are capable of exercising power, regulating ourselves, and so on. There's something at stake when we meet. It feels like something is happening, for a very good reason. Something is happening, something is changing in the world, even if it is only our immediate circumstances. On the other hand, technology can save time, and can be used to circumvent an unreformed media.

There are lots of different approaches to take. People can disagree on what to do in different circumstances. But it is important that we try different things and learn from our mistakes, which will be numerous. Follow Dan Hind on Twitter: @danhind





LOLYMPICS: A CASE FOR RECLAIMING LONDON 2012

KERRY-ANNE MENDOZA

OLYMPIC U-TURN

EMMA
FORDHAM

Eight months ago Harjeet Dhillon was looking forward to the London Olympics as one of the few lucky enough to have a ticket to attend the games. Since then she's been involved in Occupy, given her ticket back, and is now a Counter-Olympics campaigner. She spoke to OT reporter Emma Fordham about why she changed her mind.

EM: Harjeet, you had a ticket for the Olympics but you're not going anymore. How come?

HARJEET: Well, I was one of the lucky few with a ticket, I was given it as a present. It was a good ticket at the stadium for major athletic events and medal ceremony. But I've given the ticket away.

E: Why did you do that?

H: Through my involvement in the Occupy movement I became aware of the Counter-Olympics Network and campaigns such as War on Want, GamesMonitor and Greenwash Gold 2012. I realised that the London Olympics is being sponsored by corrupt and polluting corporations which will gain a huge amount of publicity from their involvement. I didn't want to condone that so I decided to give away the ticket and protest about the Olympics instead.

E: How will you protest against the games?

H: I don't want to disrupt the events or the athletes, so I'm focusing on raising awareness about corporate involvement and profiteering and I'm also involved in highlighting how the Olympics is adversely affecting local communities.

E: Were you politically active before Occupy?

H: I've always been politically left-wing and concerned with social issues, gender politics, human rights, inequality and

injustice; being an Indian girl I experienced and understood about those issues from a young age. I've been involved in anti-war, workers' rights and other demonstrations in the past but my political awareness had become diluted in recent years until I got involved in Occupy.

E: In what ways have you been involved in the Occupy movement?

H: I turned up on the first day, October 15th, unsure of what to expect ... I spent a lot of time in the Information tent in the OccupyLSX camp outside St Paul's, collecting information and sharing it with campers and visitors. I trained as a legal observer and since the eviction at St Paul's I've been going to demonstrations and actions as an observer and have been involved in arrestee support. I've also become a bit involved in the Corporations Working Group because that overlaps with the Counter-Olympics campaigning.

E: What do you find most shocking about the London Olympics?

H: The thing I find most shocking is that Dow Chemical has been accepted as a major sponsor of the London Olympics. This was the prompt for giving up my Olympics' ticket and was the reason for the resignation, live on Newsnight, of Meredith Alexander, the Commissioner for a Sustainable London 2012.

Dow Chemical invented Agent Orange, responsible for killing thousands in the Vietnam war, and later merged with Union Carbide, who were responsible for the world's biggest industrial disaster: a chemical spill in Bhopal, India, in 1984. Amnesty International estimates that up to 25,000 people have been killed by poisonous gases and pollution resulting from this spill. The area has not been decontaminated and thousands continue to suffer.

It's disgraceful that Dow have been accepted as a sponsor for London 2012.

Then there's BP being the 'Sustainability Partner' which would be laughable if it wasn't so shameful, given BP's responsibility for the Deep Water Horizon accident and their involvement in Tar Sands projects in Canada.

E: What about local issues?

H: Occupy supporters have been supporting local campaigns such as Save Leyton Marsh. The marsh, which is Metropolitan Open Land and should not be developed, is being built on to make a three storey Olympic training facility, without proper consultation or an environmental assessment. Although the developers say it is only a temporary structure, they've been digging foundations far deeper than the planning permission allows and locals doubt they'll get their green space back.

E: The Olympics is being sold as a worthwhile investment. What do you think?

H: The budget just keeps going up and up. We're being told that cuts to public services are necessary but a huge percentage of spending on the Olympics is coming from taxpayers' money. Corporations will benefit from all the advertising through their sponsorship but I don't think the average person in the Olympic boroughs is going to benefit, probably the opposite. Green spaces are being taken away and freedoms are being taken away too – getting too close to Olympic sites, photographing them, and particularly protesting against them are met with over-zealous policing, even arrests and ASBOs.

E: What inspires you to keep campaigning, now that the heady days of the St Paul's Occupation are over?

H: The hope that Occupy gives to everyone that one day the world will change for the better, and that we can all help to bring that about, is what gives me the faith and motivation to carry on.



Workfare programme which requires people to work a 35 hour week, often for a multinational corporation, in order to continue receiving 'unemployment' benefit. A day's pay for a day's work? Not in this day and age. And as schools become academies, or limited companies independent of the Local Education Authority, their budgets are diverted to costly repayments of Private Finance Initiative agreements which fund flashy new buildings with ridiculously high operating costs, whilst teachers' pensions and conditions are eroded.

For its use of public funds to generate a corporate feeding

frenzy, its total disregard for the environment and local communities, its focus on big business to the exclusion of anything else and for its assaults on civil liberties – for all these reasons, London 2012 is the epitome of everything that those involved in the Our Olympics campaign want to stand against. The Corporate Games, this ostentatious salute to neoliberalism, requires an equally vibrant, loud, un-ignorable response from those with a commitment to social, economic and environmental justice.

On 28 July 2012, with a Mass Day of Action, Our Olympics intends to make a stand and to highlight the

inequities and injustice embedded in these 'games'. 28 July will not be the first or last day of protest but it is the one we hope a very large number of people will participate in. This is our chance to become a human megaphone for voiceless and marginalised groups in the UK and across the world. This is our chance to make a stand for what we believe in; a world where people are valued as equals, where contribution is enabled and recognised and the planet is respected and nurtured. Join us.

Find OurOlympics online at www.ourolympics.org or on Twitter: @ourolympics

As athletes make their final preparations and construction of the Olympics' venues continues apace, campaign group Our Olympics – alongside a rainbow coalition of activist groups – prepares to make London 2012 the greatest act of civil disobedience of our time.

The cost of the Games in London's successful 2005 bid was £2.37bn. Today, it stands at £11bn in direct taxpayer contributions. According to Jules Boykoff, writing in the Guardian in April 2012, the figure has been reported as high as £24bn if enabling projects are taken into consideration. Given that we are being told our vital welfare and community services should be rationed and removed due to austerity, the extravagance of the London 2012 Olympics seems hypocritical to some and offensive to others.

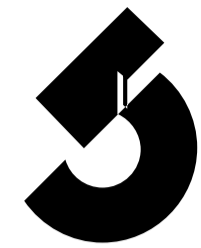
The corporate sponsor list of this Olympics reads like a who's-who of corporate mis-deavour. The Olympics branded 'the greenest ever' is being sponsored by BP, who recently settled a \$7.8bn lawsuit following one of the biggest oil spills in history, and by Dow Chemicals who have refused to clean up the Bhopal disaster inherited from Union Carbide. An Olympics said to promote a healthy, active lifestyle has agreed a food and drinks branding monopoly with McDonald's, Coca Cola and Cadbury. In fact, the world's largest McDonald's is being built in the Olympic Park. Meanwhile, the Paralympic Games is being sponsored by the multi-billion-euro IT and Healthcare conglomerate ATOS. A controversial choice of sponsor, given that this company instigated 'work capability assessments' which forced many ill and disabled people into work that they felt they were not fit for; that they felt might actually set back any recovery by pushing them too hard, too fast.

There is a vast security network set up around the games. Branding police scour the venues for home-made sandwiches and non-sponsor logos. The list of security hardware reads like an Orwellian tick-list for a dystopic state, including a warship in the Thames and missiles on the roofs of homes. National media and human rights' organisations such as Liberty are increasingly reporting security clampdowns including pre-emptive Olympic ASBOs, which ban people deemed a protest threat from going within 100m of Olympic sites. Anti-racist organisation Newham Monitoring Project has reported that teenagers in Stratford are facing curfews, dispersal orders and increased stop and search powers, essentially restricting their rights to be in public places in their own home town. A great concern of campaign groups such as Our Olympics is that these regressive changes in legislation and security architecture will become the real legacy of London 2012.

Finally, there is the context in which the Games operates. Austerity is being used as means of diverting public funds from public services to private interests. This government has accelerated the selling off of national assets, only to lease them back at a higher rate from private corporations. The Health and Social Care Bill seeks to privatise the NHS by stealth, opening the door to private healthcare providers to use up to 49% of NHS beds. Already a private healthcare conglomerate, 'Circle' is running Hinchingsbrooke Hospital in Cambridgeshire. The Welfare Reform Bill introduced myriad cost-cutting reforms hitting the disabled, the unemployed and the mentally ill. Then there is the

GET THE SHELL OUT!

RAGNHILD FRENG DALE



hell is the world's fifth largest company and second largest energy company, producing 3.1m barrels of oil a day. The

company's track record is both dark and dirty: oil leaks and human rights abuses in Nigeria, destruction of first nation lands in Canada and Alaska, and \$55bn to support Assad's regime in Syria in 2011. Now, with plans to open up drilling in the Arctic and a pipeline in Ireland, activists and indigenous groups around the world have united with one message: "Get the [S]hell off our lands!"

On May 18th, UK Tar Sands Network, Indigenous Environmental Network, Rising Tide UK, Platform, FairPensions, Greenpeace and Art Not Oil co-organised a meeting with indigenous activists from the areas most severely affected by Shell's oil and tar sands extraction. The event coincided with the groups' official release of a report on Shell's impact on local environments, and took place a few days before the company's AGM in The Hague, Netherlands – where activists from indigenous groups were heading. The report – published by the Indigenous Environmental Network and Athabasca Chipewyan First Nation – quotes Aamjiwnaang First Nation representative Ron Plain: "Shell's plant is located directly on my father's hunting grounds and today, instead of feeding my family, these lands kill my community. Shell's plans to expand bitumen refining in an area

already devastated by pollution is effectively a death sentence for our culture, lands and people." In the presentation to the meeting, Plain said there is a one-in-three chance of developing cancer during one's lifetime, and that average life expectancy is only 55 years.

Shell's involvement in tar sands has transformed untouched wilderness in Alaska and Canada into landscapes of desolate production sites. Images of the transformation of vast moon landscapes the size of the UK into extraction sites and toxic ponds are not just a bad dream from a futuristic movie: they are real and pose a major threat to the global environment if they release into river systems. Eriel Tchekwie Derange, ACFN Tar Sands Communications Coordinator for Athabasca Chipewyan First Nation, said that they refused to let their communities be ruined, and that young people were rising up to take leadership in their communities to prevent Shell's activity. Also passionately defending their integrity and land was Robert Thompson, Chairman of REDOIL and Inupiat resident of Kaktovik, who explained that their livelihoods were in rapid change, as both the resource base they depended on, and animals they hunted were fast becoming extinct.

From Nigeria, Alice Ukoko from Women of Africa spoke about the 55 years of destruction Shell had been undertaking on her land: oil leaks have poisoned the Niger Delta, poisoned drinking water, and destroyed farm lands of over 85,000 square meters. A recent UN climate report estimates

it will take 25 to 30 years to clean up. Likewise, those communities living downstream from the production sites of tar sands in Alaska and Canada are suffering from this activity.

Activists from Ireland spoke about their work in resisting exploitation of the Corrib gas field offshore, which they fear will be a risk to their health and local environment. Since 2006, the Rossport Solidarity camp has been camping on land Shell wants to use, resisting their transport trucks and building plans in the area. Speakers from activist networks in the UK also made quick announcements about their work.

On May 22nd, the speakers addressed the AGM of Shell in the Hague. In London, the Barbican hosted the video link to this event, where activist shareholders went through disproportionate security measures to directly question Shell and its executives about what they were doing to the environment. Protesters wore death masks with a Shell logo and draped their heads in black. A contingent also stood outside the venue to raise awareness. Shell avoided answering the critical questions posed by shareholders, stating that the company would have to "come back to them" but failing to make any promises about when this would be done.

The more the big companies refuse to answer questions, the more protest is roused. Within the last month, actions against oil extraction have been taken not just at Shell's AGM, but also at those of BP in London and Statoil in Norway. The Big Six Energy Bash exposed the hypocrisy of a "sustainability" conference with only big companies on board, while other campaigns are underway to challenge corporate sponsorship of the arts. With a combination of direct action and work to raise awareness, campaigners speak directly against the corporate power and demand that their democratic rights are observed.



GREENWASH GOLD FOR OLYMPIC SPONSORS

JUDITH SCHOSSBÖCK & RICHARD SOLLY



With a casebook of unethical activity from devastating the Gulf of Mexico to fast-tracking climate catastrophe, the decision to name BP as London's 2012 "Sustainability Partner" has provoked numerous protest actions and campaigns. One campaign which aims to draw attention to the absence of fair play or respect in Olympic sponsorship is Greenwash Gold. The project is targeting controversial sponsors including BP, Dow Chemical and Rio Tinto in light of their poor track records on environmental pollution and human rights abuses. OT editor Judith Schossböck spoke to Greenwash Gold campaigner and London Mining Network representative Richard Solly about the project.

OCCUPIED TIMES: What can users learn on the Greenwash Gold website?

RICHARD SOLLY: The individual user is encouraged to learn more about the companies featured and is directed to sources of further information on the websites of the organisations involved in Greenwash Gold. We hope that by learning more, users will be inspired to become active in the groups sponsoring the campaign, or in some other way.

OT: Is this just a form of clicktivism or feel-good activism or has there already been a concrete output?

RS: We believe that the invitation to take action by voting in the campaign will draw attention to the record of the companies featured. It already has done so: as a result of launching the campaign on 16th April, there was much greater media coverage than ever before of the Rio Tinto AGM on 19th April, and of the issues about which communities are complaining. We hope that by spreading information about the companies and letting people hear the voices of directly affected communities we can inspire people to become involved in the struggle. The internet voting campaign is not an end in itself but a means to an end.

OT: Who deserves the Greenwash Gold medal in 2012?

RS: All of the companies proposed for Greenwash Gold deserve the award – they have all done terrible things! We

hope the voting will draw attention to their records rather than simply make people think that one is worse than the others.

OT: Community devastation is mentioned on the website as a destructive result of supporting these companies. How is this the case?

RS: There are many examples. BP is responsible for grave economic damage to communities relying on fishing or tourism on the Gulf of Mexico. It is also participating in the pollution of air and water in the tar sands project in Alberta and thus to the health impacts on indigenous communities downstream, whose hunting and trapping livelihoods have also been badly affected.

Rio Tinto's operations at Bingham Canyon in Utah contribute to many dozens of premature deaths in the area each year because of its heavy contribution to air pollution. Its Oyu Tolgoi mine in Mongolia is driving away nomadic families and damaging their livelihoods. In other parts of the world, it is profiting from destruction of indigenous sacred sites, the catastrophic pollution of river systems, and militarisation by the Indonesian armed forces in West Papua, with attendant human rights abuses. Pollution from its Panguna mine in Bougainville sparked a war as indigenous communities sought to close the mine and the Papua New Guinea and Australian Governments tried to stop them. In Michigan it is violating an indigenous sacred site at Eagle Rock. At Alma, Quebec, its lockout of workers at its aluminum smelter causes division in the community and strain in families – similar at Boron, California, two years ago. Its association with Muriel Mining in northwestern Colombia in a gold and molybdenum exploration project has caused alarm and displacement among indigenous and African-descent communities as the area has become militarised and local people's legal right to consultation is ignored and manipulated.

In a way, whatever we do that benefits these companies supports these destructive processes. Thus, they should not be given the benefit of positive publicity through association with the Olympics. Don't let them win!

PLAN B IS NOT YOUR SAVIOUR

JOSH HALL

Anyone would have thought 'Ill Manors' was conceived specifically to generate broadsheet think pieces.

With "rich boy"-baiting lyrics and a catchy Amen break chorus, Plan B's latest single is as zeitgeisty as they come. The track has been lauded by Guardian columnists and Labour MPs alike (a surefire sign you're doing something wrong), with some corners of the left-leaning media loudly proclaiming that 'Ill Manors' is the generational anthem for which we've all been waiting.

If Plan B is our spokesperson, we are in significantly worse shape than previously feared.

The left's sudden lionisation of Ben Drew is odd, given that his most recent album is dedicated entirely to perpetuating myths about rape. The Defamation of Strickland Banks is a concept record based around a man convicted of raping a woman during a one night stand. Drew's character, Strickland Banks (apparently not a Bugsy Malone extra, despite the name), protests his innocence, claiming that the woman is in love with him and has falsely accused him after being rejected. In a country in which one in four women is the victim of rape or attempted rape, but in which just six percent of cases result in a conviction (and in which women are going to prison after being forced to retract truthful accusations of rape), there is really no place for art predicated on the notion that women who do come forward are obsessive liars.

But we should also be questioning Drew's sudden urge to position himself in the rioters' camp. The video for 'Ill Manors' shows the rapper ensconced with a group of people hauling away stolen TVs – a strange choice given his disgust at the looters at the time. On the second of those extraordinary days during which the cities burned, the rapper took to the pages of the Sun to deliver a rambling, confused response to events. He seemed to be concerned with a potential terrorist attack while "we already have all our troops overseas, got a lack of police," and a generalised economic crisis caused by riot-related insurance claims. Most offensive of all, he wrote: "I don't think they're doing this as anger towards the government. I don't think they're smart enough to even realise that could be an excuse." The crux of the piece mirrors the argument made by so many commentators at the time and since: that theft is not a reasonable response to poverty, and that the riots weren't political because the people on the street weren't burning government buildings.

This is dangerous, and it is fundamentally incorrect. It assumes that politics is something that just happens in Parliament, between politicians. It assumes that political space is somehow separate from the 'real world', and that actions outside that space can never be political. In fact, politics is everything. The rioters weren't waving placards outside Westminster, but that doesn't mean that the riots weren't influenced by

politics. They were poverty riots, born of inequality and endless police harassment, the constant, systemic violence that is inflicted by capitalism on the working class every day.

Drew is keen (and rightly so) to change the way people think and talk about public housing residents, but most of all he seems personally affronted by the riots. "You've got people like me," he said in the Sun, "who are trying to change the way middle England look at the underclass, have a bit more compassion for them – how can I stand up for that any more?" For Drew, a better life is something that is given to you – not something that you take. In a lecture for TED and The Observer last week he encouraged individuals to ignore the government, and find instead one person that they can help. He talked about a friend who runs a hair salon, training "underprivileged" young people. He pointed to those he had taken out of school to star in his film, as evidence that the solution to poverty is the altruism of the better off. In Drew's mind, the poor need to keep quiet and stop embarrassing him, and wait for a pop star to turn them into film stars. Then society will be fixed.

Drew is the archetypal liberal. He believes that poverty can be solved through charity, and that the poor must respond to structural violence either by ignoring it or by acting within strict parameters of acceptability. For Drew it's bad that there are no jobs, that there are mothers skipping meals in order to feed their kids, that people are being forced



to work for free in order to keep their benefits – but if you throw a brick through a window you're on your own.

Drew has been so effusively welcomed by the faux-left commentariat because he conforms precisely to their prejudices while resolutely failing to challenge their porous theory. He is a working class lad from a 'difficult' area, just rough enough for the Guardian to keep its edge but eloquent enough to safely hold a room at TED. He has 'improved' himself by sticking rigidly to the strictures of the system in which he found himself – a tactic that has seen him financed by one of the world's largest

record companies. It was inevitable that he would become a figurehead for the Guardian and the rest. For them he is totemic proof of the foundation of liberalism: that the 'problem' of the working class can be 'solved' without structural change.

'Ill Manors' is yet another reminder that we must look at the riots through the prism of politics. We must recognise them for what they were, and for what they will be again this summer: a tentative insurrection. It is the destruction of capital that will end poverty. Charity and record deals won't hack it, regardless of how pretty the accompanying video is.

THE FORMATION OF INFLUX PRESS

GARY BUDDEN

A question has been gnawing at me for several months now. Can fiction, poetry, any creative writing, make a genuine difference in a social and political sense? How much of it, really, is just self-aggrandising ego? Can it, at the end of the day, enable positive change? And in the light of such recent political upheaval, what role can it play when compared to the purity of 'action'?

I have spent the last eighteen months working on the creation of an anthology of poetry and prose ('Acquired for Development By...'), and our own independent DIY publishing imprint (Influx Press). It has been a very steep learning curve.

With the book and the press now beginning to show some small flickers of success, what has been most gratifying is that I feel we have proved that, however much hard work it may be, creating something independently and maintaining creative control is possible, as long as the ideas are strong and relevant, and the quality of the work is high.

One of the driving ideas behind this press was for it to become a collaborative and independent publisher pushing interesting work that may have either marginal or limited commercial appeal.

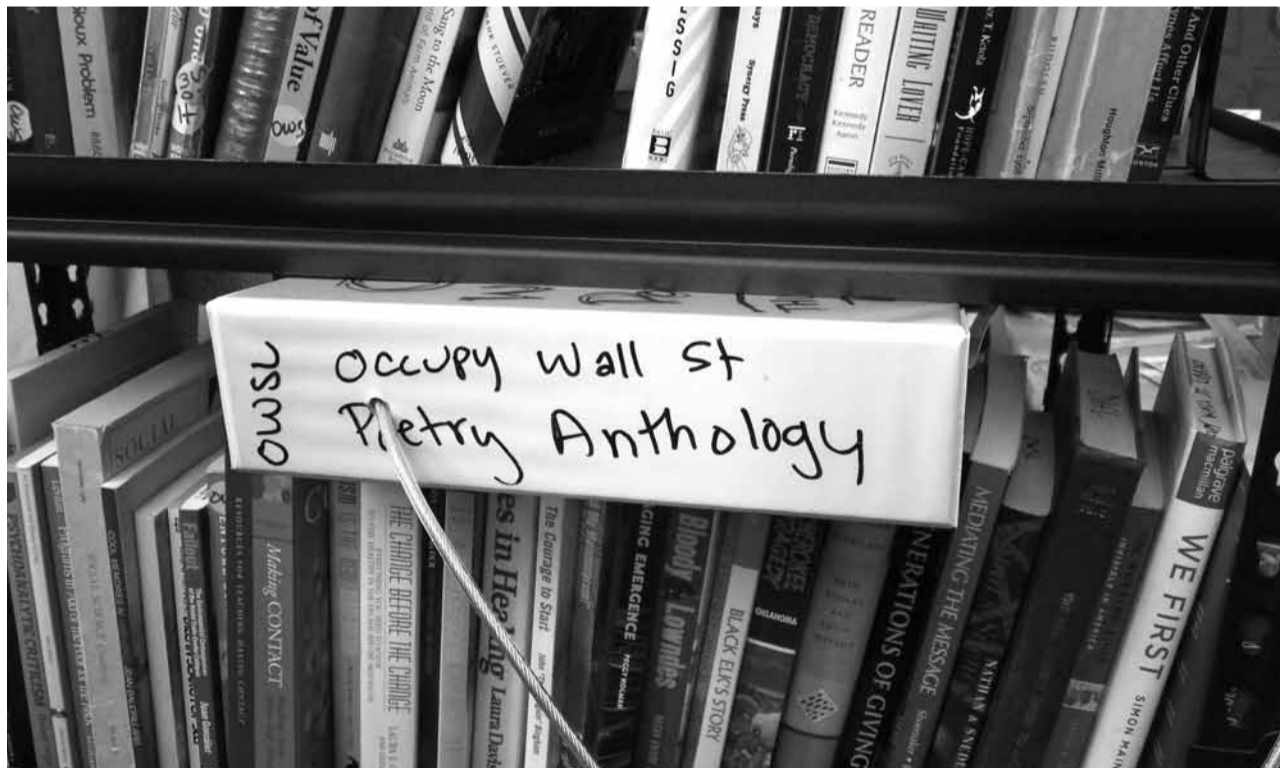
Our first book germinated from an idea that I had – with my co-founder of Influx, Kit Caless – in the place where all good ideas start, the pub. A simple idea that it would be interesting to collect together an anthology of poetry

and prose all centred on a very specific geographical location. As it happened, our specific location was Hackney. The idea swiftly bloomed and expanded from there: Hackney being such a varied and multi-faceted place, a stage where many of the dramas of modern Britain were playing themselves out.

The hot topics of urban gentrification, skyrocketing rents, hipsters, the looming and destructive Olympic games, squatting, the machinations of capitalist giants like Tesco, the constant re-development – all of this, and much more, was happening on our doorstep. We were a part of it, part of the ongoing narrative, perhaps even contributing to the very problems we identified and felt uncomfortable with.

The problem was that what I felt as being my narrative, the story of the things that I and many people like me had done and were doing, was being lost, unrecorded, allowed to be tarmaced over by the official story. As an aspiring writer, with a strong sense of the DIY collaborative spirit taken from my ongoing involvement with the UK punk scene, the answer seemed too obvious: put together a Hackney-specific collection offering stories and poetic responses to these issues.

Why not address these issues through the standard channels of journalism, writing articles, op-ed pieces? Firstly, the issues discussed were already being thrashed out in the traditional fashion. Secondly, there was



a desire to create a lasting record of a moment in time, not merely ephemeral journalism that, although undoubtedly important, could be forgotten due to its very nature.

Why not, then stick to the purely underground world of zines and alternative press fairs, cheaply printed pamphlets and xeroxed political literature? The same problem was apparent. A lot of such literature, utterly invaluable for the historical record and keeping that counter-narrative alive, was either poorly distributed, rarely archived in any useful sense or simply forgotten about. The voices of those it allowed to speak were often lost in the ongoing march of history. I find this distressing in ways I find hard to articulate. People

almost being written out of existence, only those allowed to go through the mainstream channels allowed to have their voices, their lives, remembered.

The stories we tell, read, create, are powerful ways of understanding our world. Fiction, at its most potent and influential, can alter the very language we use, changing our lexicon. Just think George Orwell, JG Ballard, Ursula Le Guin, Alan Moore, Doris Lessing... the list goes on. It almost seems trite to point out the lengths people living under the old Communist or Fascist regimes went to preserve banned texts, distributing their samizdat editions and often facing stiff penalties and incarceration for their efforts.

I often think did that really happen? Were governments, authorities, ever

so afraid of mere fiction? Of poetry? They were, that did happen, people took those risks to disseminate banned and censored texts. It proves that there is power there, not easily definable.

The aim of Influx Press is to create an outlet for site-specific creative writing, tied in with and about contemporary issues. Not art for art sake, but something more, an attempt to engage with our own specific geographic and psychic spaces before the counter-narratives disappear, are forgotten. Before we're handed back the sanitised versions of our own realities and have to ask the question:

Were things ever any different to this? For more information please visit: <http://influxpress.com>

NEWS INTERNATIONAL: BRITAIN'S CAMORRA

MATTHEW
RICHMOND

The 2008 film Gomorrah, loosely based on Roberto Saviano's book of the same name, follows the lives of five people living in Naples. Eschewing the tiresome Hollywood format of intertwining stories in which characters are thrown into each other's paths in improbable ways, the casts of the different chapters never actually meet. This is because the film is not so much about people - as gripping as their personal tales may be - but about a specific time and place. In Naples in the mid-2000s individuals may feel as though they control their own destinies, they may strive for autonomy or success, or simply a peaceful life, but on some level they know (or if they don't, they soon find out) that they are only able to act within boundaries laid down by the real power in the city: the Camorra.

The Camorra is the Neapolitan counterpart to the Sicilian Mafia. Its tentacles reach into and corrupt the work of every major institution, from local government, to the criminal justice system, to local businesses and communities in blighted urban neighbourhoods. Its money is invested in major industries, on which it has an equally corrosive impact. It famously runs Naples' notorious waste disposal service, which has indiscriminately mixed and dumped waste on the cheap with total indifference to the public health implications. According to a report in 2007 it also controls not just drug-trafficking and prostitution but the fish and milk industries, the coffee trade and thousands of bakeries across the Campagna region. The distortional impact of the Camorra's intervention in these markets is symbolised in the film by the bloody retribution meted out to a rival business that undercuts its interests in the garment trade.

The Camorra is not all-powerful. Its members who are caught and cannot be defended go to prison. It does not, could not and would not want to control everything that goes on in Naples, and many inhabitants lead perfectly happy lives there without ever crossing its path. Those who do however, whether unavoidably or through carelessness or bad luck, soon feel a net closing around them. The weapons at the Camorra's disposal are varied and potent, making it a ferocious and resilient force. There is the ability to lean on those in power who have already been compromised, a slick legal machine that can create innocence out of the faintest shadow of doubt, and a

code of silence which allows the whole to survive the loss of individual parts. Most spectacularly there is the implicit threat of unanswerable force. Violence is used sparingly, but once a decision is made it is indiscriminate and brutal.

If a film were made about the same period in Britain, it would be about News International. Rupert Murdoch's hold over British political and cultural life over the best part of three decades has been nothing short of mafia-like. In fact substitute physical violence for the metaphorical violence of character assassination and strategic political attack, replace "Omertà" with the buying of silence, and they become hard to tell apart. This is not to imply moral equivalence between organised crime and the ruthless wielding of enormous media influence, but to highlight the same distortional impact they have on the institutions of a democratic state. For starters, a generation of ambitious politicians have learnt to see the Murdoch empire as an additional pillar of British democracy, and have internalised the requirement to court the favour of this media magnate, or at least to avoid his disapproval. In Murdoch's Britain not just MPs, but police, journalists and representatives of other key institutions, if they are in any way compromised (or even if they are not) are censored or self-censor to avoid career and health-threatening trial-by-tabloid. Of course politics and policing continue as normal in those areas that do not interest News International. But in those that do, clear lines are drawn in the sand and are rarely overstepped by those who matter.

So what does the demise of the News of the World, and the possibility that News International may be further cut down to size, mean for Britain's Camorra? Although there is a long way to go there are positive signs that a single media group may never again be able to exercise such a stranglehold over democratic processes. This is less surprising than it currently feels. Organisations, even old and powerful ones, can suddenly collapse when the arithmetic of power shifts, whether through scandal and intrigue or the creative destruction of the market (in this case the latter may be of equal importance to the former). What changes far more slowly and less perceptibly is the social and cultural context within which organisations operate. On this front the picture is far less clear but looking into the past may give some clues as to what the future holds.

RED TOP CLASS WAR

It may help to see Murdoch's rise as the most recent attempt to unite, politicise and mobilise Britain's diverse working classes. He has come closer to achieving this elusive dream than all the others who have tried, from the Luddites, through Keir Hardie and Oswald Mosely to Arthur Scargill. This is because Murdoch, unlike those other dreamers, did not seek to mobilise the masses in pursuit of an ideological programme - that is, as an end in itself. Rather, the means of becoming an intermediary between the masses and the political elite was his end. On this point, a subtler and arguably more interesting parallel with the Camorra arises.

Although its roots are far older, the Camorra really grew to prominence following the failed continent-wide revolutions of 1848 (incidentally, not long after the News of the World first went to print). The Liberal opposition to the Monarchy, realising the need to mobilise popular support, turned to the Camorristi whom they saw as leaders of the Neapolitan poor, and formalised the agreement through systematic bribery. In effect the extorters of the poor were able to sell their power to the political elite, thus positioning themselves as indispensable power brokers.

Those who see Rupert Murdoch as a right-wing ideologue intent on destroying welfare states, cutting taxes for the rich and launching neo-colonial wars credit him with a "utopian" vision that he has never possessed, and overlook the political flexibility and business acumen which are the true source of his power. Murdoch himself has strong political leanings (many of which are about as far to the right as the inclinations of Genghis Khan) but he would never let these get in the way of the role of power broker that he has carefully positioned himself into. He does not have a vision of a perfect society and can therefore casually mirror the swings of public mood, sometimes leading, sometimes following, but always shaping the debate for optimal impact. The Mail and Telegraph groups, weighed down by cultural and ideological baggage, should be so lucky.

It is a particular set of social and cultural conditions that have permitted his particular organisational model and business strategy to succeed so spectacularly, of which three are paramount.

Firstly, Britain's working classes have split along occupational lines. A shrinking



number of manual workers and a fairly stable (since the 1980s) number of long-term unemployed, have been eclipsed by a large and increasingly diverse service class. This group spans the public and private sectors, has varying income levels and job roles, and experiences different living circumstances (from home-owning to social-housing tenancy). At the same time there has been a decline in regional differences (although not identities) with the onset of national broadcasting and increased mobility. The Sun and News of the World, not to mention Sky Sports, were very much designed to cater to - and mould - the tastes of a national, post-industrial working class.

Secondly, this changing class constellation has been accompanied by a general decline in class deference. This was born of the cultural radicalism of the 1960s and has continued apace, expanding beyond the original vanguard of predominantly middle-class students to all sections of society. Despite a dramatic rise in inequality since the 1980s, political radicalism within the working classes has retreated along with the manual trades. Instead, declining working-class deference has manifested (with the guiding hand of Murdoch and others) in a seething cultural resentment towards a perceived metropolitan elite. The greater social and economic liberalism of the urban middle class and political elites is offset against an often more socially conservative working class, which - at least until now - has also been more vulnerable to the whims of the global free market. It was this tension that Murdoch was able to exploit to his own (and almost no one else's) advantage.

A third key condition is the changing nature of news and our understanding of it. Television offered a more visual and emotional representation of events, which the print media, if it was to maintain its relevance, needed to adapt to. Out of the shrinking margins of newspaper sales - particularly for the tabloids where advertising revenues are notoriously low - a new business model was born. They sought to maximise sales through sensationalist and personality-based coverage of news, eventually more or less abandoning news altogether in favour of idle gossip. Murdoch was simply the most successful and politically canny of several proprietors who took this path.

THE MANY-HEADED HYDRA

These three conditions are in flux and may not settle in a way that is favourable to Murdoch or aspiring Murdochs, dynastic or otherwise. Newspaper margins are sinking beyond the point where scandal and sensation remain profitable. Indeed, the depths to which News International (and in all likelihood other tabloid groups) have sunk is probably a symptom of a slow and undignified demise. A less concentrated and more chaotic online media, somewhat anchored by heavily regulated broadcasters and those newspapers that can become sustainable (or sustained), is likely to emerge. In this more fractured ecosystem individual organisations will probably not be able to manipulate mass opinion in the way that Murdoch has in the past. However,

the human instinct for the witch hunt, which Murdoch expertly harnessed and now finds himself and his friends the proclaimed victims of, will continue. It will arise from more diverse sources, and occur less predictably but with equal ferocity via Facebook and Twitter.

The other question surrounds where the politics will go. There will be no return of deference, nor of old-fashioned working-class radicalism, no matter how much Maurice Glasman (another doomed dreamer) and his Blue Labour movement would like there to be. It also does not seem likely that the cultural resentment that has replaced older forms of class conflict will dissipate any time soon. Britain's class divisions seem to run too deep to address the real causes of this: educational apartheid, polarised housing and labour markets and an individualistic culture, fuelled in part by consumerism and the cult of celebrity, which News International has contributed to but which can survive quite happily without it. The latter's power is to hold individuals responsible for their personal successes and failures without seriously attempting to level the playing field, let alone narrow the outcomes.

The greatest hope in overcoming this seemingly unbridgeable gulf lies in the excesses of the class to which Murdoch actually belongs. The wealthiest and most influential people in Britain, much like the Camorra, are rarely seen in the newspapers. It only happens (as for Murdoch now and for the bankers in late 2008), when they are in crisis. Ironically, despite the money that has been lost to the taxpayer via bank bailouts and the tax avoidance and evasion of the wealthy, both the middle and working classes have largely let the super rich off the hook. As it dawns on them over the coming decade of austerity quite how much of their wealth has been stolen, a basis may emerge for a broad coalition to challenge today's most important political division - that between the carefree financial speculators and their wealthy corporate accomplices, and everyone else. Such a development would require finding a way to move beyond Britain's entrenched class divisions - the inequalities of the past as they have been fossilised in our language, culture and institutions - in order to address the real key inequality of the present.

For a period in the 1970s a powerful Camorra boss was temporarily able to unite the clans under his rule, but before long conflict broke out and the Camorra splintered into several smaller, but equally deadly groups. The Camorra's organisational structure may have changed over the years, but the underlying dynamic of extortionary patronage of the poor has remained intact since 1848. That is Naples' inheritance. Ours is a culturally and politically stifling system of class resentment, mutual suspicion and a lack of basic empathy. Unless we can find a way to liberate ourselves from it, for each of the Hydra's heads we decapitate, ten more will grow.

Matthew Richmond is a PhD student in Geography at King's College London, studying the causes and consequences of spatial poverty traps in Rio de Janeiro.



TALES FROM THE GRIND

DAVE WILKINSON

“SCRATCH-OFF TICKETS AND SCRATCH-OFF TICKET DUST EVERYWHERE. I’M PARTICULARLY FOND OF THE ONES THAT TAKE A WHILE TO FIND OUT YOU’RE A LOSER.”

The alarm sounds at 7:30am and the daily routine begins. To get out of bed, I have to fight my way out of this feeling that’s hard to explain. A friend calls it ‘the ineffable dread’: the crippling anxiety you get where you’d rather be dead than do some task. The task in question is going to work.

I am in my mid-20s, and share a tiny office with two menopausal women. One of them, who we’ll call Patty, is constantly complaining about the temperature in the room. “Oh love, you know how women of a certain age are”, she’ll say. Patty regularly asks me how old my wife is, and I have to keep reminding her that I’m single. She then proceeds to chill the room to arctic levels, even to the point of disturbing the other woman, who we’ll call Sasha.

Patty and Sasha often take on ‘good cop / bad cop’ roles. Patty turns

the office into an ice box, complains about being a “woman of a certain age” to which Sasha responds, “What do you think Dave. Do you think it’s because Patty’s going through her menopause, or just because she’s really fat?” I hang my head in shame; this is not what was promised to me when I left university.

I have my nightly routine down like clockwork now. First is physically getting out of work. My office is on the sixth floor of a massive high-rise downtown that has an attached parking garage. The traffic downtown is absolutely appalling. I live roughly ten miles from the office, but travelling that first mile, until I hit the freeway, takes as long as travelling the other nine. I exit from the freeway, stop at the off-license, buy a six-pack of the cheapest swill they have and five scratch-off lotto tickets. And of course, if it’s Monday I’ll stop over at my dealer’s house and buy an ounce of the shittiest pot he’s got lying around.

My room is covered in losing scratch-off tickets. Scratch-off

tickets and scratch-off ticket dust everywhere. I’m particularly fond of the ones that take a while to find out you’re a loser. I know I’m a loser, I see it in every other aspect of my life. Most of my friends are getting married and starting families, and I’m getting stoned every night and listening to Futurama DVD commentary to feel like I actually have friends.

I’m never sure what to do with all these losing scratch-off tickets. One or two in the garbage is fine, but what do you do with a hundred of them? My sensibilities are conflicted; I can’t just throw all this paper in the trash, but I’m mortified by the idea of putting it in with the recycling. I just imagine the asshole across the street, walking from his perfectly manicured lawn through my tangled jungle, and looking in my recycling bin to see this recyclable glimpse into my filthy life. Empty beer cans, small ziplock bags that clearly held drugs, and thousands of losing scratch-off tickets with accompanying scratch-off dust.



I have a system now for all the embarrassing stuff my life produces. The crew that comes by to empty the recycling bins is different than the one that carries off regular trash, and they come a little later in the day. Let’s say you want to get rid of a pair of panties you found at the launderette and brought home because you’re pathetic and this is the closest you’ve gotten to a woman in God knows how long. Put it in with the recyclables. I called in sick one day to watch the recycling guys when they come on Thursday afternoon: they just dump it in with the rest and move on, taking my shame with them.

You would think that the weekends would provide some kind of respite to this misery, but I’ve never been able to fully enjoy my

weekends since I started working five days a week. Saturdays are usually spent in bed recovering from the trauma of previous five days, and Sundays are spent crippled with anxiety about going back to work – a full 24-hour dose of ineffable dread. My family keeps saying that I should be thankful that I have a job that pays well, even if it makes me miserable. “Better than being one of those unemployed losers that hangs out at the park all day,” says my sister. Little does she know that my life makes those losers look like the most accomplished and vibrant specimens of human existence.

Do you have a tale from your ‘Daily Grind’? Email us at occupiedtimes@gmail.com with your absurd and hilarious stories from the world of working life.

ON THE SOAPBOX

MATT HANLEY WISHES WE’D SACKED BORIS

So, 1,054,811 good citizens of London voted for Boris Johnson in the end. Over a million people, choosing to tug their forelocks to a multi-millionaire Old Etonian Tory aristocrat while ordinary Londoners struggle to stay afloat in one of the most expensive cities in the world, where the hyper-rich 1% are stealing all our money, decimating our city, and are disappearing over the horizon such is the yawning wealth gap between the two.

It should have been an obvious choice in London. During his first term in office, Johnson oversaw a massive increase in both road-traffic congestion and murderous air quality, a disastrous accommodation crisis, campaigned for the abolition of the 50p tax rate, and castigated. London’s young, dispossessed and disaffected as the national Government laid waste to the entire generation.

By removing the western Congestion Charge extension he made poor people pay massively inflated public transport fares so that rich people could drive 4x4s around Chelsea and Kensington, and drastically altered the capital’s road ‘traffic flow’, favouring cars and vehicles at the fatal expense of cyclists and pedestrians

As Dave Hill pointed out in the Guardian just before May 3rd, “Far from being an autonomous defender of Londoners’ interests, the mayoralty is now effectively an instrument of central government policy. Johnson is already compliant with Westminster-imposed damage to employment, housing

and welfare in concert with aggressive, Tory-run boroughs.”

London is naturally a Labour-voting city, so what on earth went wrong? ‘Boris is a legernd LOL’ is what happened. This was a mythology diligently constructed by the media and widely believed. And of course it was designed to have a chilling effect on opposition to him; if you thought you were in a minority, you would be less likely to raise your voice in opposition and you may not even bother to vote. ‘Boris is a legernd, ha ha, look at his crazy hair LOL.’

And there’s the rub. We at Common People decided that that wasn’t quite on. For the 2012 London elections, we thought that Londoners deserved an alternative view to the LOL hype.

We started the Sack Boris campaign in Spring 2011, designed specifically to quietly but succinctly undermine the glossy, impenetrable PR awesomeness of the worst London Mayor since Thomas Bloodworth, and then build the anti-Tory momentum in London in time to get him thrown out of City Hall on May 3rd.

Supported by the TSSA transport union, our message focused on the massive, above-inflation public transport fares increase imposed by Johnson; a simple message emblazoned across 170,000 colourful SACK BORIS Oyster wallets handed out during rush hour at over 250 inner-city stations in the run up to May 2012, each stuffed with information about how much more expensive public



transport is under Johnson.

Coupled to that was a concerted online effort – viral videos, twitter, and a Facebook advertising campaign that reached over 2 million Londoners. Facebook users were key in recruiting volunteers, making our messages go viral, and pushing back against the right-wing online onslaught.

After cracking open Johnson’s PR armour, we then had to get him out of office.

In 2008, inner-city areas voted against the Tories, but the turnout was massively depressed compared to the outer-London Tory stronghold areas.

The Tories, it seemed, could get their vote out in 2008, but even then still only won by 140,000 votes out of over 2 million. It was all to play for.

We produced two comparable voting heat maps, showing simply how increasing the progressive (Labour, Greens, Lib Dem) vote in places like Hackney, Islington, Brixton, Waltham Forest, Lambeth, Lewisham and Newham was going to be crucial if we were to kick Johnson out.

Read our fuller strategy piece on Left Foot Forward from the Chair of Common People, Gary Dunion.

The response was frankly amazing. Hundreds of Oyster wallet orders were taken from work places, charities, NGO’s,

sixth form students, public sector and private sector workers keen to distribute them in their workplaces. They became quite the cult accessory for London’s discerning progressives.

Whereas the Johnson campaign was backed to the hilt by the wealthiest 1 percent, over 1000 individual donations flooded in to our billboard campaign from ordinary Londoners. We erected huge billboards in ten areas where the London riots exploded, paid for by people from the very communities affected by them, and reminding them that when London was going up in flames, the London Mayor instead stayed on holiday.

We also conducted Project(ion) Mischief, projecting enormous images of our crucial Sack Boris messages onto iconic London building; City Hall, the Bank of England, TfL HQ, and County Hall.

And all the time constantly exposing Johnson’s constant lies, and highlighting how sexist and out of touch he is.

And then finally, on the eve of election-day, we produced and handed out at over 70 core stations a bold and colourful guide on how to use the voting system to eject Johnson from office.

Working with the TSSA’s Community Organising Unit (the only one of any

UK Trade Union) was key in mobilising community volunteers and non-aligned activists. At any one Sack Boris actions handing out our Oyster wallets there would be people from the Greens, Labour and Respect, union activists, UK Uncut and student activists, and independents who simply know how destructive Johnson is for London, and want him out.

Sack Boris was a fantastically positive unifying campaign. Progressive people in London should be proud; we fought a City-funded and organised Tory machine, and also daily opposition from the disgraceful Evening Standard newspaper, and even fought opposition from shameful members of the Labour Party. And yet we helped reduced Johnson’s winning margin from 140,000 to just 62,000, and increased Labour representation on the London Assembly at the expense of the Tories, so the Conservatives won’t have London all to themselves anymore.

Although the result didn’t go our way, we showed that the progressive British left can unite under one banner. If we put aside our cosmetic differences and campaign with wit, honesty and integrity, we can inspire ALL people to fight for a better world.

And that means a lot. *Common People is a group of committed citizens working together to strengthen and promote the progressive values shared by the majority of people in the UK. We are a radical, green, left-leaning group that will not hesitate to take on any issue or campaign that needs action. We aim to be at the leading edge of campaigning in Britain, working on the central issues of social change and politics. And, unlike most groups, we will take an active part in influencing elections at all levels. We will act together online, in print, on the streets and in election campaigns to unite and empower the progressive majority that exists in the UK. We will force our leaders to listen to that majority and help create a society of which we can all be proud. Join us and help make a difference.*

THE OT HOROSCOPE

OPPRESSORS



COP
After a brief walk on the wild side, it's back to work, keeping anyone else who dares to step out of line in check. Some might say you're a hypocrite, but you're just doing your job, which is to follow orders and not think for yourself. The mean streets are no place for a conscience, peaceful protest or public assembly. Your fetish for clear highways will pay off nicely this month.



BANKER
Unfortunately for you, the shareholder spring hasn't proved to be an oasis of investors in an otherwise barren economy you helped to create. It's much closer to home. Or should that be homes? Or mansions? With your track record, playing victim won't get you much sympathy, so stop feeling sorry for yourself, and remember: what goes around comes around.



NATIONALIST
Not so long ago it looked like your very own Golden Dawn was about to break, but despite a resurgence on the continent, locally you've faced unanimous rejection. If only you weren't so loyal to the land of hope and glory, you could emigrate to pastures more receptive to your perspective. Don't get caught up in the irony of this predicament - it's all Greek to you anyway.

PROTESTERS



ANONYMOUS
All this talk of 'Do-Not-Track' has gotten your hopes up, especially after Twitter's flirtations. But don't forget to watch for mutiny from within. The Pirate Bay was taken down by a defector, right? These friendships seem solid, but be careful of the company you keep and remember to clear your internet history after your deviant digital escapades; don't leave a crumb-trail of all those cookies!



PACIFIST
For as long as you can remember, the world has been in turmoil, but the mid-month transit of Venus promises a more harmonious passage. Occurring only twice in a lifetime, eight years apart, could this rare celestial event be the catalyst you've been waiting for? With such high hopes, beware of disappointment, and if peace doesn't prevail, find solace bemoaning those who fight back.



ANARCHIST
People often mistake you for an irresponsible hot-head burning with inner rage. Truth be told, you're quite the organiser and have a heart bursting with love. Don't let public misconceptions about the true you dampen your spirits, they're just too caught up in their own status, and don't understand how free you are. Your lucky colour this month (and every month) is black.

POLITICIANS



NEOLIBERAL
You approach this month with a continuing sense of due caution towards the Chancellor's reduction in your tax rates (it's just not good enough, is it?). Cheaper food-and-board abroad and a Frenchman's anti-austerity victory across the channel seem to herald a changing tide against your agenda. Are you certain conditions on these shores remain on your side? Remember: even King Canute couldn't turn back the tide.

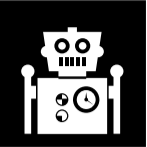


CHAMPAGNE SOCIALIST
Nobody understands the plight of the working-classes quite as well as you. Well, apart from working-class people, that is. But then, they don't have your sophisticated cultural understanding and quality education to help make sense of the world. 'Getting it' can be taxing, and god only knows you contribute enough, so if you feel stressed, head straight for the spa.



LIBERAL
With clowns like Miliband to the left of you (just) and jokers to your right, life's tough when you're stuck in the middle of things. Perhaps a move abroad would do you good? Here, you're often accused of being bland and spineless, but across the pond folks like you are seen as dangerous, mysterious commies! On second thoughts, your cohorts get by just fine in the UK on the "seen and not heard" card.

CITIZENS



WORKER
Not so long ago you were dreaming of promotion, now you live in perpetual fear of the chop. In times like these it's easy to see your colleagues as competitors, yet solidarity with your fellow worker is more important than ever. May Day brought you out of your shell, but now isn't the time to skulk back inside. Put a stop to your daily monotony, and you might just "strike" it lucky.



STUDENT
With exam season over, it's time for you to enjoy a well-earned break - for about 70 years. That's right, the social contract that promised you a career for your hard work was a sham. You've been sold down the river, short changed, Clegged, ripped... well, you get the picture. But don't just sit in the dole queue feeling sorry for yourself, it's time to take action and rip the system down.



PENSIONER
Record low temperatures at the start of last month are on the way out - good news for heating allowance qualms. Now that the weather is nice, you can really stick it to those whining students and put them in their place. You may have had free education, job prospects, a half-decent wage upon graduation, etc... but kids these days are just plain lazy, right?



DEMO DATES

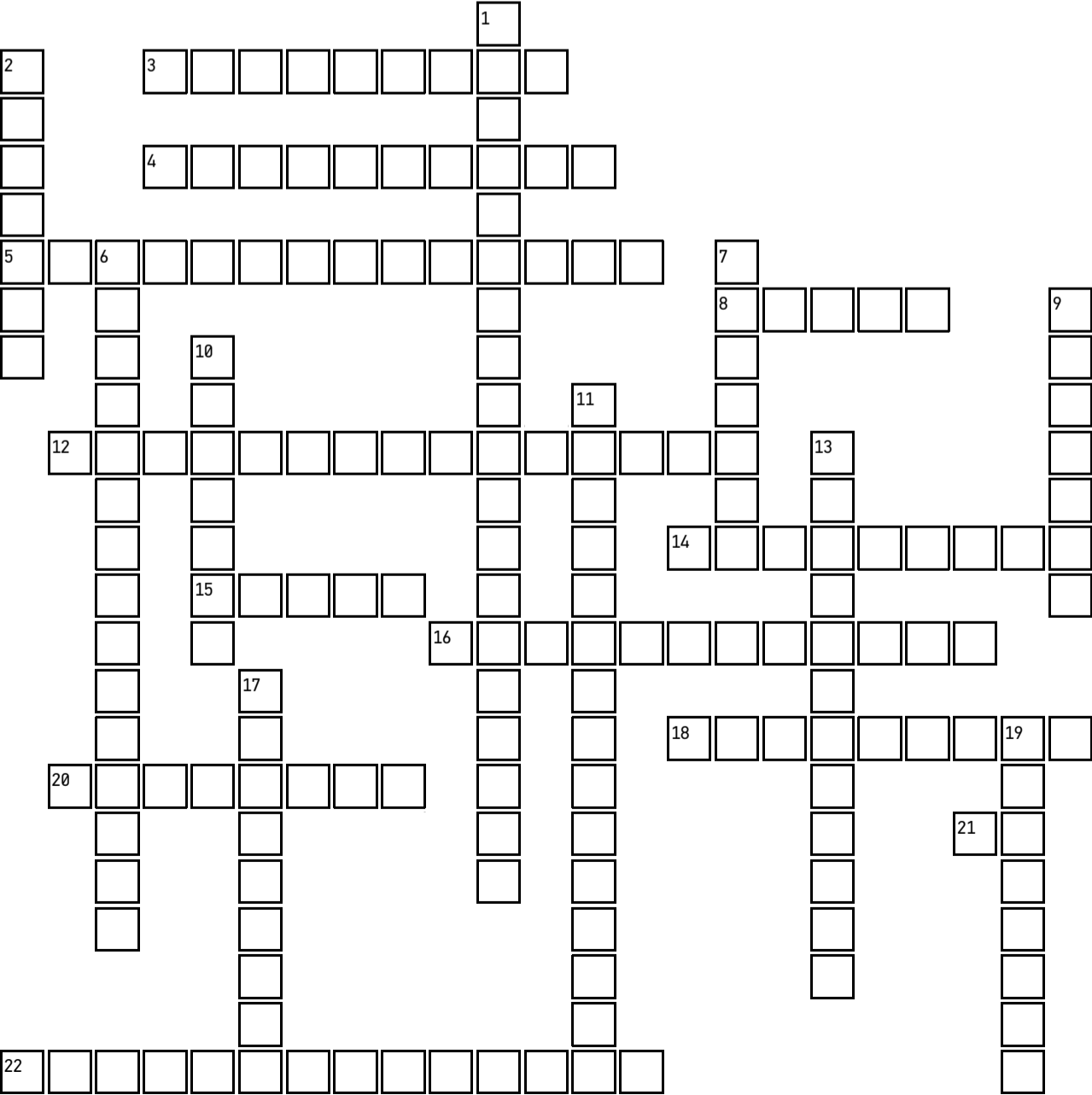
- 3rd: New Cross F**k the Jubilee Street Party** - 2pm.
Goldsmiths Direct Action Group. Secret location, Near Goldsmiths/New Cross
- 7th: Pilgrimage for Justice** - 12pm.
Occupy Faith UK. Starts at Steps of St. Paul's Cathedral
- 9th: Anti-ACTA/Digital Economy Act March** - 12pm.
Part of a nationwide protest for digital rights. Europe House, 32 Smith Square, SW1P 2EU
- 9th: Stop the Olympics Missiles Protest Walk** - 2pm.
Campaign Against the Placing of Surface-to-Air Missiles in East London. Café in Oxleas Woods - SE18 3JA
- 15th: Carnival of Dirt** - 11am.
Corporations Working Group, Occupy London and others. Steps of St Paul's Cathedral
- 29th: Critical Mass** - 6:30pm,
ride starts at 7pm.
Monthly anarchist bike ride, 18 years strong in London. BFI Southbank (on riverwalk)

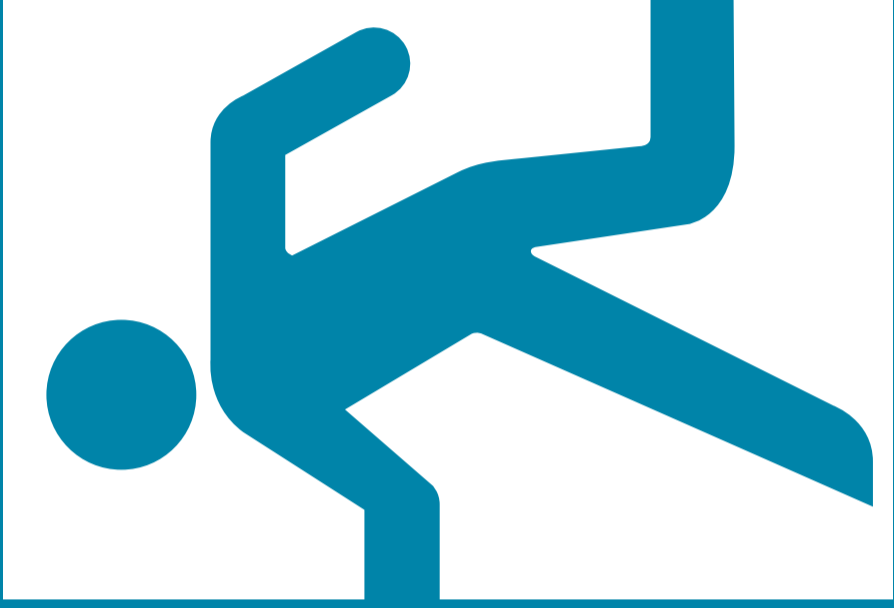
CARNIVOROUS CORPS CROSSWORD

HIGH STREET PSYCHOPATHS

DOWN
1. The mother of all snakes pushing fracking in the UK, with five sites in Lancashire and one in Sussex. (Hint: first word aptly sounds like Godzilla) (9, 9) **2.** Cheap, quality clothing for a cheap price (i.e the exploitation of the developing world). Niel lberal regularly restocks his sock drawer here. (7) **6.** This pharmaceutical giant recently got slated by Auntie's Panorama over allegations relating to the use of tax loopholes. (15) **7.** Carnival of Dirt freak. London-listed Indian mining company who can count the Church of England as a former shareholder. (7) **9.** Monopolistic US food, drug and clothing chain that has violently opposed unionisation of its workers. Asda is a wholly owned subsidiary of this behemoth. (7) **10.** Carnival of Dirt freak. Hosted an impromptu road flare party with Occupy London in November. (7) **11.** National treasure - if you like underpants and erotic food adverts. (Hint: nobody goes here for their shop, they just go for their "bits"). (5, 1, 7) **13.** The heart of Richard Branson's empire. The parent company is part of the slow-gutting of the NHS due to recent privatisation efforts. (6, 5) **17.** Santa Claus may not be 'real' (shh!) but he's certainly known to don the red and white colours of this classic fizzy pop giant. (4, 4) **19.** One of UK Uncut's earliest - and easiest - targets. The most smartly-dressed tax evaders. (3, 4)

ACROSS
3. This global pizzeria's executives' pockets are certainly stuffed with a nice hot dog crust. (5, 3) **4.** This fast-food guru is no stranger to controversy, including claims of child-targeting advertising. We are most certainly not "lovin' it". (9) **5.** Carnival of Dirt freak that sounds like what British men and women born in America would call themselves. (5,8) **8.** The CEO and President of this US energy company called themselves "the smartest guys in the room". Hardly. (5) **12.** Uptight, uber-expensive British tea and coffee vendor that has an unholy vendetta against beach balls. (7, 1, 5) **14.** French 'hypermarket' a la Tesco (though surely their baguette selection is far superior). (9) **15.** Banksy raised the flag on this mammoth UK supermarket giant, accused by Friends of the Earth of unethical trading. Red, white and blue - what does it mean to you? (5) **16.** Michigan (US) based chemical company that is a 2012 Olympics "Sustainability Partner". Joke is spelled J-O-K-E. (3, 8) **18.** Carnival of Dirt freak. This corporate river flowsred with the blood of indigenous communities. (3, 5) **20.** This Carnival of Dirt freak could be mistaken for the post-shoegaze genre your mate Glen has been searching for to define his lame-ass "hardcore" tunes. (8) **21.** Another 2012 Olympics "Sustainability Partner" that really puts the "moron" in oxymoron. (2) **22.** "F*ck M____, S____, M____, S____'s polishing the brass on the Titanic. It's all going down, man." - Tyler Durden; Fight Club. (6, 7)





EXITTO HOMOPQTIA

* DEMOCRACY