

Millbank Fire

Lessons from Millbank

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November 21, 2010

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“Leaflet to be printed and circulated should you like the taste of it. Breaks down into three parts: Cuts are not an issue... (an article about resisting capitalism and not getting stuck on resisting the cuts) / Keeping It Real (advice for those new to doing stuff) and Some Lessons From Millbank (4 practical lessons to be learned and put into effect everywhere). Please circulate through your networks, should you wish.”

Cuts are not an issue...

Although the impact of the cuts have yet to hit us hard, in recent months loads of local anti-cuts campaigns have sprung up to try and work together to resist the austerity the State wants to impose upon us. But it seemed like the fairly spontaneous attack on the Tory HQ at Millbank on the 10th November Demo-lition seemed to really light a fire under people’s anger about the cuts. Everyone was talking about Millbank. It seemed like this moment had ruptured the political silence that had been accompanying the collapse of the economic bubble in 2007.

But when people talk about fighting ‘the cuts’, it sometimes seems like it’s just a new political ‘issue’. But it isn’t. It’s much more essential than that. Issues are things like opposing nuclear power or being against animal testing. But the cuts are not the same thing. They cannot be resisted in the same way. The reason the cuts are being made all across health, housing, education and so on is to maintain the profits that can no longer be made from a busted economic housing bubble and the bonkers levels of individual debt (credit cards, loans mortgages etc). Now the profits to be made are going to come from squeezing the living standards of a large section of the population. The cuts are not being made because the economic system hasn’t worked, they are being made because that’s exactly how the economic system does work. It never stops trying to screw us for more and more of what we have had to fight to maintain over the centuries. The cuts are about how politics works at a systemic level, about our everyday lives and how we live and not just party politics or campaign issues. The Tories make the cuts with relish but if Labour had been elected to power they would be making just the same level of cuts to maintain the same level of profits for the same rich people.

We’re all pretty fucked...

It’s not just cuts in education and upping the fees that’s the problem. The problem is that the cuts in general mean we’re all pretty fucked. Whether you’re a student in a F.E college or University, whether you’re a working single-mum, whether you’re self-employed, whether you’re unemployed, whether you’re working a precarious temp job, whether you working a good job in the public sector. The depth of the cuts means most people are going to become worse-off.

There are differing trains of thought that link the cuts to ‘The Crisis’ or ‘The Deficit’ or ‘The Tories’ but for many there is a much more simple truth – it’s just called ‘Life as normal’. The rich have been getting successively richer in this country and the poor have been getting poorer. If the cuts are setting out to re-float a busted economy of over-inflated debt and speculation by taking more and more from the poorer section of the population, well, it’s just more of the same for most people. Poverty, crap jobs, insecurity, health problems – well, that’s just how we’ve been living anyway. But do you feel like politicians will sort it out for you? Do you feel like if you keep your head down and work hard, you’ll be okay? Do you feel scared? Had enough of that shit yet?

No Escape, Time to Break it

Mass unemployment is coming and the accompanying disciplining of those unwilling to work for shit wages or for free. The promise of a good job and good life after University is an illusion. The system's guaranteed to be there but the jobs aren't. Most college leavers and graduates will join the 600 Euro generation alongside their counterparts in France, Italy or Greece. It's no wonder that those countries have seen huge levels of militancy and great new tactics of resistance as they have already been suffering the harsh realities of the imposition of austerity. It seemed like a little bit of that European fire was finally burning at Millbank last week when the ante was finally upped. That resistance has to remain at that level – always collective and open, always going beyond the polite and useless limits set up by political parties and unions, always ready to occupy, block, to strike, to walk out, to be adventurous and to be excessive! Anything else is just more of the same shit. Who needs it?

Block The Economy!

Here follows an Excerpt from a statement read out at the General Assembly of students at the University of Rennes, France, 25 October 2010

“Nowadays, audacious experiments of the 2006 movement exist as the basic modes of militant actions in the struggle against the current government. In Rennes, the department stores are targeted in every demonstration. The Marseilles strikers paralyse the harbour and add to their city the beat of the movement. The train drivers are also on the front line, and the lorry drivers have joined the movement. We know that in order to win, we must be able to counteract the government strategies of waiting for the deterioration of the fightback and techniques of intimidation. This can particularly be seen in the increase in the police violence.

What is needed now is the spreading of the tactic – the economic blockade – to intensify the fightback with a means that is accessible to all and to disrupt them in a far more certain manner than the peaceful demonstrations and rallies which have absolutely no effect. Being ready to move quickly, of being able to gather as quickly as possible in one point to constitute a mass that can not be flushed out, as well as spreading to block the city at ten different places at the same time, this will be our tactic. The question of which are the priority targets for the blockade seems already solved: roads, train stations, department stores, distribution centres. Of interest are any blockades which contribute to the spreading of the situation. Let's think about tourism which constitutes one of the main profitable economic sectors of the City fancy hotels and restaurants, big cultural shows, luxury stores – the list is endless.”

Millbank has now helpfully polarised the debates but there is something worth remembering from the day – it was a fairly easy victory! The next few years will not see our victories so easily come by but this should not make us forget the joy, collectivity and solidarity of that day. Those who think they can now step in and try to control our anger via negotiation or undermine us through party politicking – we will push them aside because this movement belongs to us all.

STRIKE> OCCUPY> BLOCK THE ECONOMY> TAKE BACK OUR LIVES!!
No Ifs, No Buts, Capitalism Sucks!!

Keeping it Real

Keep safe. Maintain open communication with people you trust. Know your surroundings and your friends. Act together!

Try to rely on argument and intelligence. Slogans are a staple for all sorts of political factions and usually very boring. They alienate many more people than they win over. Be smart, be funny, be approachable. Have a laugh.

Don't get isolated. You're surrounded by people who are angry and sad about what's going on, but they keep quiet most of the time. So talk to people, find out how they feel about the situation – and what they might like to do. There are a thousand reasons for fighting back (and reasons not to, as well.)

Have confidence in your judgement. Don't be afraid to back out of a situation which you no longer agree with. Things move quickly, can get out of control. Maintaining a critical stance is never a bad thing. A good group is a collection of individuals working together.

Consider the possibility that political activity could be a condition of happiness. Be wary of ways of acting that only feel like a burden – and ways of discussing which feel like placing a burden on others. They don't often go anywhere pleasant. Although, you fight, it's important to enjoy yourselves because real life is what we are fighting for...

Some Lessons From Millbank

MASK UP!

The lessons of Millbank (and the past) should be obvious – if you're gonna go for it then mask up or FACE PRISON! It's that simple!! By masking up, we mean covering your whole face and not just your chin! And stay masked up too because cops and journalists never stop taking photos!! Even if you're not gonna for it, the more who mask up the better for everyone. We have to encourage people via Internet, leaflets and by word of mouth on demos to MASK UP. How many photos of people going nutso without any face covering have you seen? Spreading a culture of masking up means that we are taking our actions seriously – support one and another!!

PHOTOGRAPHERS

A serious lesson is that we have to stop news photographers taking pics or videos of people doing stuff. They are basically putting people's liberty at risk! They must be told to fuck off, be blocked and moved away from the any actions. If, after being told to move, they refuse they should be physically confronted (in whatever way seems fit). The pics they take could put you in jail! But, it's just as bad all the people who take also photos and post them on Facebook, blogs etc. doing the cops jobs for them. The cops trawl these sites to try and identify people. Be conscious of your actions! Don't photograph people doing stuff!

KEEP MOVING!

Don't fixate on a confrontation with the cops if you're outnumbered. Move onto the next thing! Find your own actions, targets, streets to occupy. The cops have to wait for orders to act. They move slow. We should keep it lively and keep it mobile! If the cops block us one way, then let's find another way! In this way, we avoid pointless set-pieces and we avoid getting rounded up in police kettles.

SOUND SYSTEM and MUSIC

12 Volt battery Sound System on bikes or pushcarts are amazing ways to move large blocks of people fast! They also make a demo or riot more like a party! They inspire us to come together around the sounds and to keep moving! We need more sound systems on demos!! And we need more drum bands and freestyle MC's on the megaphones because a riot is like a festival!!

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Retrieved on June 8, 2012 from 325.nostate.net

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