

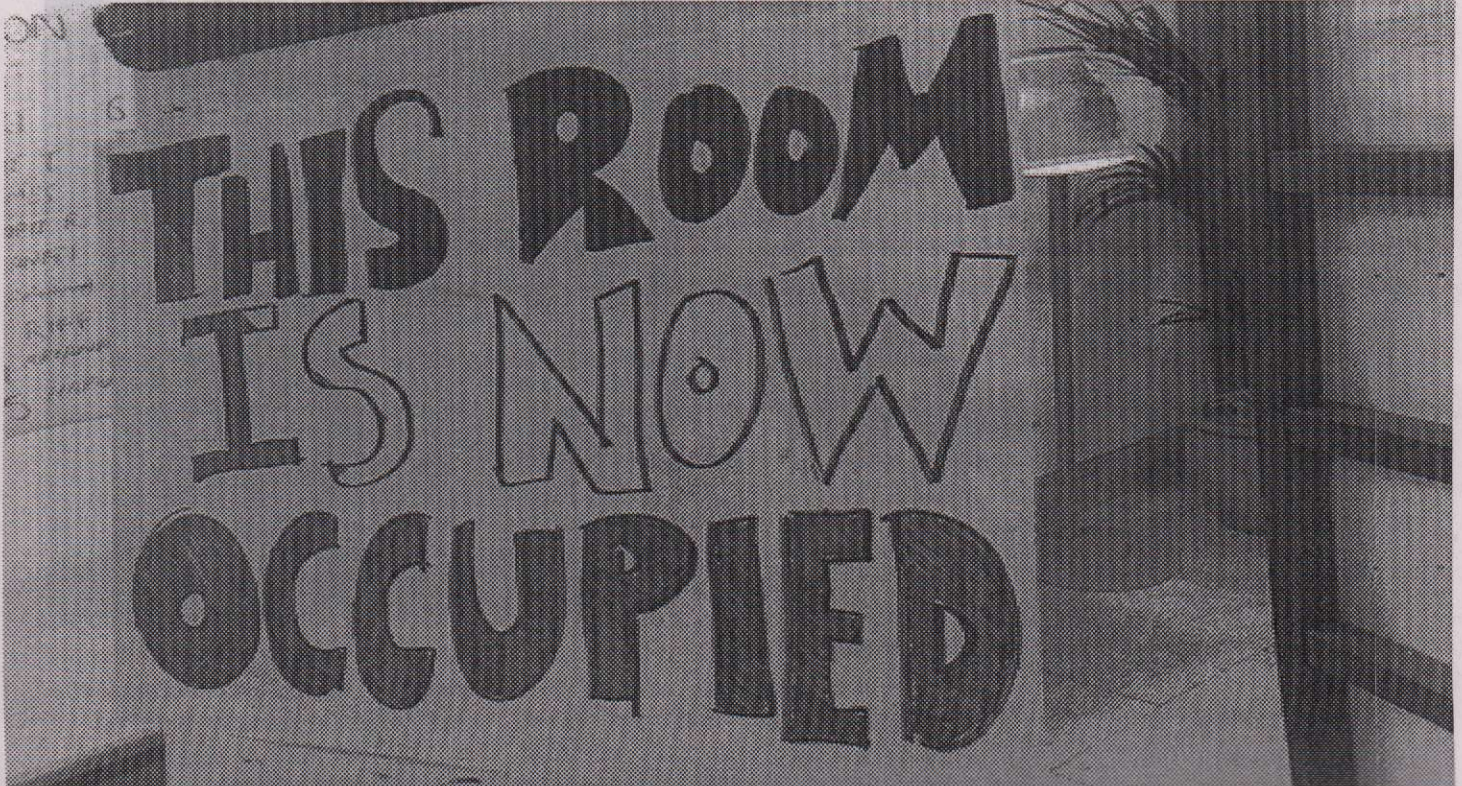
REVOLUTION

socialist youth movement

30P / DONATION

Issue 94

UNI OCCUPATIONS LEAD THE WAY FORWARD



Inside...

• Student revolt at Leeds Uni • Occupations revive student struggle • It's time to plan our economy • Shop workers hit by recession • End the siege of Gaza

a word from the editor

Not many school and college students today remember what they were doing in 2003. It was a year of mass struggle in Britain when Tony Blair took us to war so that we could steal Iraq's oil supplies.

Young people showed their outrage by organising mass walkouts from their schools. "Teach-ins" were organised at universities to educate students on war and imperialism in lecture rooms they took over. Direct action became commonly reported at petrol stations belonging to big oil business and there were even stories of people entering military bases in protest. Roads were blocked by local protests and traffic stopped.

The high point was when two million people demonstrated in London for the biggest march in British history. But tragically, the next step wasn't taken and the leaders of the movement didn't call upon the unions to shut down the country to stop the war.

The Gaza demonstrations may not have been quite on the scale of those in 2003 but they have been huge and with youth taking the lead they have shown an anger and determination unlike any movement that has gone before. Whilst it is school and college students that have given the protests such as the January 10 march their radical enthusiasm, university students are currently showing the way to organise.

Uni students across the country have occupied spaces to use for political discussion, networking, activities and the planning of strategy. Through every form of communication possible they are starting to organise on a national level a movement to stop Britain's continuing weapons sales to Israel, to boycott Israeli goods and isolate the terrorist state. They are showing a way for us all to organise against the attacks which come with recession.

School, college, university students and young workers have an historic opportunity here – let's seize it!

...One solution... REVOLUTION!

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VOICES FROM THE DEMONSTRATIONS

REVOLUTION NEWSWIRE

REVOLUTION has set up a brand new Newswire service so you can find out about what socialist youth are saying as soon as we say it. All you need is an email address and to sign up on our website at <http://www.worldrevolution.org.uk>.

Getting the message out that there is an alternative to the capitalist system of war, poverty and exploitation is one of the most important things socialists do - so make sure you do your part by getting your friends to sign up too.

We are always looking for new writers – the more the better! We want to know what is happening in your area, demonstrations and protests. Has something angered you that you think we should know about? Or is it something you saw on the news that you think we need to cover? What ever it is, get in touch! info@worldrevolution.org.uk



End the siege of Gaza – this is no “ceasefire!”

JOHN FROM SOUTH LONDON

Israel has called a “unilateral ceasefire” in the Gaza strip after weeks of devastating the area with bombing raids.

Israel came up with the entirely unacceptable terms of this “ceasefire” without speaking to or negotiating with Hamas, the elected Palestinian government. The proposed deal was “stop resisting the Israeli Defence Forces in Gaza. In return we will withdraw our forces at a time which suits us. And by the way, we will still control all your borders and Gaza's food, water and energy supplies”.

Israel was playing a clever media game by ordering Hamas to stop fighting and publicising it as a “ceasefire”. The idea was that Hamas would be unable to accept the demands which would amount to an unconditional surrender on their part - and starve Palestinians of vital supplies. When Hamas refused to accept Israeli demands, Israel would be able to

claim that they were the peaceful ones, and that Hamas was intent on continuing violence.

But it's too little too late for Israel to come across looking like the good guys at this point in time. The Zionists have been taken aback by the militancy and size of the mass protests which have taken place not just in the UK but all across the world. Even now occupations in universities all over the UK have demanded an end to the Israeli siege and for boycotts and divestment in Israel.

Thankfully, Hamas did not fall into the trap of either ignoring Israel's false ceasefire and undermining the Palestinians' credibility nor accepting Israel's surrender conditions. They called their own “unilateral ceasefire” and gave Israel a week to remove its forces. Israel has now withdrawn their troops from the inhabited areas, but has continued to starve Gaza

of humanitarian aid - in its self an act of war. We must demand that Israel ends the siege now and pays reparations for all the damage it has caused and to the families it has destroyed. Israeli politicians must be punished like the war criminals they are.

We must demand that Gordon Brown withdraws his promise to send the British Navy to police Gaza's borders, and resigns. The Israeli embassy must be shut down and diplomats expelled. Britain must cease all arms sales to Israel immediately and we must enact a political, commercial, academic and cultural boycott of everything to do with this racist state.

There is still a lot to fight for if the Palestinians are to win. We must continue demonstrations, occupations and all other forms of protest until our demands are met.

University rooms and departments seized by students in solidarity with Gaza

It all started at the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS) in central London.

The Ministry of Defence had put together an exhibition on colonial war which did not look at the slavery and oppression of those colonised by the big European powers.

To rub salt in the wounds the MOD managed to host their exhibition in the Brunei Gallery Suite for free. It would have cost students £1000 to do the same.

This was the last straw for SOAS students who, like the rest of us had been watching Israeli bombs fall on

public buildings massacring civilians for several days.

So perhaps it wasn't surprising when students in university after university all across the country announced that they too had occupied rooms and departments, demanding their universities condemn the attacks on Gaza.

The organisational skills and mean propaganda machine of the SOAS students set the trend for all the other occupations who swiftly set up blogs, email addresses, facebook groups and press releases with firm demands on university

managers.

Occupations have taken place at:

Manchester, Newcastle, Nottingham, Salford, Kingston, Bristol, LSE, Essex, Nottingham Warwick, Salford KCL, SOAS, Manchester Met, Oxford, Sussex, Birmingham, Leeds, Cambridge, Queens, Bradford, Kingston, Sheffield Hallam and more!

Revo in occupation at Leeds Uni!

Revolution members at Leeds University have taken a leading role in the occupation of Botany House. We have organised alongside Students Against War and Palestine Solidarity Group to take action against the war on Gaza and the continued occupation of Palestine through occupying a university building and holding vigils, meetings, films, banner-drops, die-ins and much much more!

The demands that the occupation has placed on the university focus around disinvestment from Israel, aid for Gaza and the uni making a public statement condemning the Israeli attacks. So far, the university has offered some aid and a soft, ambiguous statement about how they hope that violence in the Middle East will end but this is an insult to the people of Palestine who have suffered 40 years of occupation and now over 1,000 new deaths in the recent war. We stand in solidarity with the Palestinians resisting this oppression. So the university occupation continues.

For now we are allowed in and out of the building and we've been using our time to attend the other actions taking place on campus and to poster and leaflet for the daily meetings and film showings taking place in the occupied building.

We have had meetings of around 50 so far and we expect the numbers to swell further now exams are over and we can use the occupation to discuss Palestine, Zionism, the War on Terror, the threat of the BNP and also how we

can strengthen the student movement in the UK. Revolution members have been speaking in the meetings we've held about why we must support the right of Palestinians to resist war and occupation and why this means we want Hamas to trash the IDF, why the only solution is a

one-state solution

and that this can only be achieved through socialist revolution. We're looking forward to discussing how we can fight fascism and also about the prospects for a new, fighting student union now that the NUS has been gutted of all democracy.

On Saturday we sent a delegate to the national meeting of students who are occupying their universities and tonight he is reporting back on how we can build greater unity and



communication between the occupations and also about how this movement, the biggest student occupation movement since the 1970s, could radicalise students across the country and help prepare us for the fight against fees and unemployment in the economic crisis.

We've loads of support, with lots of donations of food and money - including from some Leeds postal workers who agreed that we need to do everything we can to help Gaza. We have approached the lecturers' trade union to ask for their support and are also proposing a motion to union council this evening to ask it to support our demands and the actions we're taking. If you live in Leeds then come along to Botany House and join the occupation!

RETAIL WORKERS OF THE WORLD – UNITE!

BY KIRSTY WIMBLEDON

Some 40,000 workers have already been made redundant following the collapse of big retail chains such as MFI and The Pier, Zavvi, Whittards, Adams, USC, Viyella and of course budget family favourite, Woolworths. This is to name but a few.

In the chain stores still standing, widespread fear is now in full effect with workers receiving little or no information from head offices as to whether their jobs are secure.

Dramatic statements are rife in the media with experts warning that there will be worse to come, spelling "the end of the high street as we know it", conjuring up images of a dystopian big-business dominated consumer environment as independent and mid-ranking chain retailers alike struggle to stay afloat.

The Telegraph reported on the 4th of January that "The Centre for Economics and Business research is forecasting that retailers will be forced to cut between 100,000 and 135,000 jobs in 2009 because of the "severity of the slowdown, as we have seen viscerally over the last month," according to CEBR economist Charles Davis.

According to a statement made yesterday by TUC General

Secretary Brendan Barber, "Unfortunately it seems certain that unemployment will continue to rise for at least the first 6 months of 2009, with a very strong chance it will pass the 2.5 million mark by June."

In this recession some of the biggest announced closures and layoffs are in the service industry comprised of retail and hospitality where more women than men work. As the retail sector is female-dominated, the recession will have



Right now, cuddling up to the bosses is the last thing on the minds of Woolies' staff

a brutal impact on child poverty.

It is imperative that schemes are put in place by the government to ensure that the women who face redundancy are either guaranteed a new job immediately, or decent living benefits if not.

Retail workers must quickly organise if they find themselves in the unfortunate position of losing their jobs. They could certainly do worse than to follow the admirable lead of the 150 staff employed by Woolworths in Jersey who were told only 5 minutes after they closed for the last time that they would not be receiving a redundancy package. They launched a petition as a result, signed by almost 6000 people, staff and customers alike. The shop workers would be "lucky to survive more than a week" after their final wages without financial help according to a local politician.

Petitions are a good start to organising workers in a sector which is notoriously poorly unionised but workers must step up if they want to win serious concessions. American workers have shown the way in doing this so far.

Around 250 workers from Republic Windows and Doors voted "overwhelmingly" to occupy a Chicago factory until they received the severance pay owed to them and won a victory for their efforts.

You can read more about their struggle at:

<http://revousa.org>



capitalism doesn't work

*** ONE WORLD * ONE BATTLE ***

REVOLUTION 5

Bankers get billions and we lose our jobs!

BY JOHN* SOUTH LONDON

On page 5 of this issue of Revolution magazine, Kirsty explained how job cuts in the retail sector are making workers lose out. The disgraceful story of how Woolies laid off loads of staff in Jersey refusing to pay them their redundancy should make many young people and workers glad to see the shop closing for good.

But in a recession, it's not just the case that you are more likely to get thrown out of your job. It becomes infinitely more difficult to find another one to replace it.

Over the last decade or so, employers and the government have made a real push towards making our jobs what they call "flexible". In practice this means that it is easier for employers to cut or increase your hours, hire you and fire you whenever they please. Workers and youth in France who have fought tooth and nail against these arrangements in marches, occupations and strikes call it precarité.

It is now commonplace in Britain for young workers to be on 'zero hours contracts' and very short or non-existent periods of notice so employers can sack us quickly with no repercussions when business isn't going so well. The bosses' argument was always that this system made it easier for young workers to be hired too - but the recession has put a stop to that. So much for the 'hiring and firing' in the business world - now it's 'firing and firing' which is making our lives difficult.

Now young workers are faced with being turned out of their jobs on mass which were the worst paid temp jobs anyway. We are not being offered any new work to help get us back on our feet afterwards. As young people often lack the

same work experience as older people we can be at the bottom of capitalism's food chain when competing for the few jobs there are. This runs the danger of long-term unemployment, which nobody should ever have to go through!

Whilst help for young people in this crisis of capitalism is nowhere to be seen other people are seeing lots of help. The banks are being paid literally hundreds of billions of pounds because they failed to manage their money properly when the economy was going well and gave out huge loans that neither they nor their borrowers could afford.



Gordon Brown may have expressed his anger at the stupidity of the banks, but he just can't stop giving them more and more money. Each billion pound cheque he gives them is wasted on their unimaginably huge debts. Every time he asks them to put money back into the economy, lend to each other and lend to businesses again he is ignored. The bank managers may well be laughing at the really stupid party in this mad situation.

So why is so much money being wasted on these banks and poured down the

drain? Gordon Brown and the rest of the government are capitalists and they only see one way of running our economy. That is to keep all the economic decision making power in the hands of the capitalists - the super rich, the bankers and the owners of British industry. Even though the government has part-nationalised and technically has overall control of some of the major banks, they refuse to direct policy. The government want to keep these institutions to be run for profit, not the benefit of society whatever the cost.

Socialists have a different answer. We are in favour of nationalising all the banks into one single state bank that could allocate financial resources into the places where it would most benefit us. It would be run under the control of ordinary workers and communities, not rich bosses and shareholders. It could be used to build more hospitals, schools and more social housing. It could improve infrastructure through building more railways, trams and improving busses, employing more people in the process. It could be used to build up an economy based upon renewable energy.

In manufacturing as well as finance the capitalists' solution is now to blindly throw money at industries like car production to have these resources squandered by bosses. It's time to open the books of all these businesses and see how skint they really are. We call for the immediate nationalisation of all companies announcing job cuts and for a democratically planned economy. An economy that organises human labour, working hours, factories and infrastructure in a rational way based upon need - not failing profits.

capitalism doesn't work

REVOLUTION 6

*** ONE WORLD * ONE BATTLE ***

NUS bites the dust

but wave of student occupations shows clear alternative

BY JO*UNIVERSITY COLLEGE LONDON

The last few weeks have seen dramatic events in the typically sleepy British student movement. A wave of occupations has swept across the country in a manner that echoes the student movement against apartheid in the 1970s. But, at the same time as this rise in student protest, the final nail has been put into the coffin of the democracy of the National Union of Students (NUS).

The NUS Extraordinary Conference on the 21st of January saw the passing of the Governance Review by a massive majority of the delegates: about 800 – 50. The Governance Review has been the project of Wes Streeting (President, New Labour careerist and all-round smarmy bastard) and his Labour and Tory cronies for some time and after having been defeated at the last conference it has finally passed. The Governance Review alters the constitution of the NUS to make it completely undemocratic.

Firstly it will mean that political debate, which used to take place at conferences where motions on issues like Palestine, racism and women's rights would be voted on will now be discussed at four 'Zone Conferences'. However these conferences will have no formal policy making power and each union will only be funded to send one delegate – who you can bet will be a full time officer. Secondly, the review will introduce a board of trustees who will have responsibility for legal and financial matters and the power to

override the National Executive committee (the current elected leadership). Plus four of these trustees will be either mangers or bureaucrats from outside of the student movement. The argument for this is that students cannot organise such a big organisation and its financial turnover. Not only is this incredibly patronising to student activists who spend their lives running campaigns, it has also been implemented in individual student unions and meant that the trustees can discard democracy and the student voice and run the union in their own interests.

So, it doesn't look good for the NUS. As a state-funded union it has never been a healthy campaigning body for students but the process of destroying its democracy is now irreversible. It looks set to become a sort of a charity or lobbying group rather than any sort of fighting union.

But at the same conference where this was passed, you could also see how a new independent student movement could emerge. During the conference, about 30 delegates stormed the stage to protest against Israel's attacks on Gaza which the NUS has disgracefully failed to condemn. The movement against the attacks on Gaza and for the end of the siege has sprung up quickly in the last few weeks. As I write there have been occupations in seventeen unis up and down the country and I expect there will be more to come. It is from this sort of grass roots, militant action that a new student union

could be set up.

Recent events have shown that the UK student still have the capacity to fight back and how massive events like the massacre in Gaza and the economic crisis can encourage students to become active in campaigns and even take militant action such as occupations. We now have a unique opportunity to build an alternative outside the NUS, as its ruin and the student movement's revival have almost coincided. The Gaza protests have shown how campaigning students' union is possible and why it is necessary to organise and coordinate the emerging movement.

So, what would this new students union look like? Well, we can take our lead from the French students and the massive protests in 2005 against the CPE law which would have limited labour rights for young people. This movement was successful and led to the withdrawing of the law after weeks of strikes by workers and students and occupations of the majority of French unis. During this movement, the students set up mass meetings on campuses which would elect delegates to attend regional and national conferences to decide on strategy. This is how the British student movement needs to start to organise if we are to step away from the ruins of the NUS and towards a union of students that can really fight for our interests – whether that be anti-imperialism, anti-racism or free education.

Voices from the protests

REVOLUTION ASKED FOR SOME OF YOUR VIEWS ON THE GAZA DEMONSTRATIONS, STUDENT OCCUPATIONS AND SITUATION IN GAZA...

Sara H - If we don't stand up to the terrorist actions by Israel how can we call ourselves human?

Yousif B - The situation in Gaza is horrible. We should get the Israeli government

Zaweb - Carry on making these excellent protests (more of them!)

Fatima - I am not sure what children and UN run schools have got to do with Israel's fight on terror

Mariam - Stop the killing

Safiya - Stop the killing and the crime! Free Gaza!

Sarah - More marches down Israeli embassy!

Zee - We are outraged. Muslims don't hate the Jews we hate the Zionists. How can someone justify killing children and women. FREE PALESTINE NOW!

John - We should follow the example of university occupations at schools and colleges!

Tamz - We should support our brothers and sisters in Gaza. We should also tell Israel to stop the crime.

Semin & Jav - Excellent demo! Keep it up! Stop the war!

Riham - Great demo, we should keep doing this til the war stops!!

Rey - The protest has always been great since it started. We should keep it up and never give up! FREE PALESTINE!

Ahmad - Free Gaza! Stop the war

Mariam - More marches!

Fatema - The world needs to open their eyes!! Where's the justice!

Naya - Shocking that this has been allowed to go on for so long and the international community haven't stopped it. The Israeli government is just trying to gain votes and its approaching an apartheid

Rebecca - Victory to the Gazan resistance!

Fikir - I am incredibly shocked by what is going on since it is such a blatant disregard of the human rights of civilians

Nasreen - Nothing can justify this massacre in Gaza

Sajid - Please stop this war - it def aint fair or just

Ruby - People cannot just stand by while people are being massacred - everyone needs to stand up and make their voice heard to make a difference

Andrew - This is a massacre. Innocent children are being killed - we must do everything to stop this!

Ashraf - What is happening in Gaza is a racist slaughter of innocent people

Dan - The Israeli State cannot expect to commit slaughter against a civilian population without legitimate resistance to arise. I stand by all activists and fighters working to free the Palestinians from Israeli oppression.

WHAT WE STAND FOR

The Independent on Sunday got it right in an "expose" of REVOLUTIONs involvement in organising May Day 2001. It said: "REVOLUTION wants to build a revolutionary socialist mass movement and overthrow capitalism." Exactly right. We are opposed to capitalism and the misery, alienation, war and environmental destruction it creates.

We fight all forms of discrimination and oppression, whether on grounds of sex, race, nationality or sexuality.

Capitalism is a global system, so we have to fight it globally. We want to smash the borders and divisions of nations and move forward to a truly global and united humanity, without bigotry, war and class division. We stand shoulder to shoulder with our sisters and brothers in the Third World struggling to break free of the trillion dollar debt, the IMF, WTO and NATO.

We are socialists - we want to abolish capitalism and replace it with a planned economy. But we do not believe that the capitalist elite will allow their wealth and privilege to be voted out of existence. We believe it will take force to take the power and property away from the few and redistribute into the hands of the many - that means a revolution!

REVO wants young people to participate in radical politics and organise themselves. Young people can be very radical and militant, the anti war movement proved that. They should take a lead in the movement that will shape the struggle for the future.

We believe a mass movement must be built based on the support of the majority of the people - the working class. It is the working class that produces all the wealth in this society. The working class has no interest in keeping capitalism going. Only the working class has the power, the size and the traditions of organisation to bring this rotten system crashing down.

JOIN US!



are you sick of sweatshops • discrimination • poverty • sexism • war • politicians • racism • boredom • police • big business • exploitation • oppression • Tony Blair • homophobia • unfair laws • third world debt • unemployment • eco-destruction • rightwing morality • tuition fees • crap jobs • CAPITALISM??

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and get the antidote and find out what your local group is up to.

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