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UPDATE, 1 November 2011

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Occupy London Stock Exchange, The People's Protest



Jane Bryant, One Click Group Director
21 October 2011

The new Occupy Movement phenomenon exploding all over the globe with its antecedents in Athens, Tunis and Cairo et al, is rapidly becoming the worldwide go-to event, the must see, the must join.



For the many that have switched off from mainstream politics in their droves, the Occupy Movement is striking a universal chord all over the globe. Disengagement from conventional politics

is viscerally reinforced when the police deploy military tactics in their attempt to crush peaceful protestors as they did in New York, Boston and London briefly on Saturday evening as but three examples.

In Britain we have experienced the overt corruption of our political system in the form of MPs expenses, lobby groups and their vested interests that run policy in this country, together with our politicians in bed with the tabloid media, not to mention police corruption in the hacking scandal on a mind-blowing grand scale. White collar crime committed by the bankers, politicians, the media and the police appear to the public to have reached nigh-on epidemic levels with very few arrests.

As David Cameron and his ConDem coalition government (which nobody actually elected to rule) inflict deep cuts and harass the poor and disabled with over a million young people unable to get jobs, never has there been a better time to protest at the way things have been run to the advantage of the privileged 1% elite in Bent Britain, leaving the 99% majority struggling for scraps.

OccupyLSX Launches, Saturday 15 October 2011

As I made my way to St. Paul's Cathedral for the launch of the OccupyLSX in London last Saturday, I had the telephone number of my favourite lawyers, [Saunders Law Ltd](#), inked on my arm, my running boots on and my digital voice recorder in hand. The foaming discontent of the British riots that took place in August have cast a long shadow.

Exiting from St. Paul's Tube station that morning, we were all met by a considerable number of police attached to large dogs with helicopters throbbing above.



Police block OccupyLSX entrances and exits, Saturday afternoon

In contrast to the Tube exit reception provided by the police, entering into the courtyard in front of St. Paul's Cathedral revealed an atmosphere of great goodwill amongst the protesters starting to gather in the crisp Autumn London sunshine. Mixed with workers, tourists and the merely curious, people from all over Britain were assembling. As tents sprung up around the site, local businesses such as Black's Camping realised that they had never had it so good.



Some has been written and broadcast about the police aggression towards peaceful protesters that London Saturday night and how they threw people down the steps of the Cathedral.



Ronan McNern, a speaker for OccupyLSX (photo Tristan de Bourbon)

Ronan McNern from the OccupyLSX media collective said: *“We made sure a lot of statements were going out to the media and live footage of what the police were doing. They were kicking and beating and I captured four incidents or so. We resisted peacefully.”*



Screenshot

Watch the police assault video [here](#)

Ronan continued: *“What happened the next day on Sunday morning was that I woke up, staggered out of my tent, got interviewed by Reuters and then I spotted somebody from the church, Canon Giles Fraser, a lovely man and very supportive. He said that he absolutely respects our right to protest and that he is very happy for us to protest. He addressed the police and asked them to go. So that was great and Giles Fraser said we will take this on a day to day basis. For our part, we will try to set up smooth OccupyLSX coordination. We particularly don’t want to disrupt anybody going to the church.”*



St. Paul's Cathedral

It is ironic for the police and the 1% that the protest they tried so very hard to prevent embedding elsewhere in Paternoster Square has ended up gaining considerable traction by camping outside the iconic St. Paul's Cathedral with the blessing of the church. It is almost as if a modern parable is being created and such images indeed have great power. So far, the St. Paul's response to the OccupyLSX presence in their courtyard is the best PR that the Church of England has enjoyed for many a year if not numerous decades.

It could be argued (and some religionists have) that St. Paul's could go further in the hand that they extend to the peaceful, well mannered and responsible protesters. If St. Paul's is becoming an attraction for a very different type of tourist simply because of its propinquity to camp OccupyLSX, this could surely be turned to the Cathedral's advantage.

The church recently stated that the number of protesters on the St. Paul's site is now having an adverse impact on their revenue and this concern is very understandable. Nonetheless, relations between the church and the OccupyLSX church liaison team remain most cordial. Indeed, the church might be very reluctant to turn away the hearts and minds that have lately been opened up by their gracious attitude. The last thing the Church of England needs at this time is to get the 1% label metaphorically nailed to the sacristy by example.

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Protesters Meet City Workers



I returned to the OccupyLSX encampment on the Monday, particularly interested to see how city workers would respond to their new neighbours.

“The feedback we are getting is phenomenal,” said Ronan McNern. “I’m getting calls from the general public saying keep doing what you are doing, it’s amazing. It really means something when people pick up the phone and say that. It’s not often that happens unless people are complaining. There is a lot of good stuff coming out, it feels like this is the start of a change. People are becoming active citizens in politics. All of the comments that we are getting, some from the bankers, are so, so positive.”

The Broad Church Of Galloping Inequality

The Occupy Movement has been criticised for not providing [specific demands](#), whereas in fact this is one of its greatest strengths, allowing a broad church to assemble and protest under the injustice umbrella, the concentration of wealth into the hands of a few, the 1%, whilst the vast majority 99% are saddled with heavy debt, small businesses fail, fuel prices rise, the poor and disabled are crucified by government cuts, there are no jobs for the young and much else besides.

The mainstream media seem desperate to pigeon hole the people attending OccupyLSX. *“It’s hippies, it’s anti-capitalists, socialists and the far left,”* they trumpet, never allowing the facts to get in the way of a good story. Actually the residents and visitors of OccupyLSX are everybody, ordinary people just like you and me who are fed up with the galloping inequality in Bent Britain.



OccupyLSX tent dwellers Rob and Ben who have been in residence at the camp since Saturday take up the story:

“This place is a goldmine for human interest stories and good conversations,” said Ben. “There is such a great ambience here. I wasn’t around in the sixties when Bob Dylan and Joan Baez were singing their songs and I always felt I missed out on that and I didn’t really have a platform where I could express my ideas about corruption and what goes on and so it’s great to be here in the company of these people who are all good-hearted and taking care of one another.”



Assisting in the Media Tech area and everywhere else is Lucy from OccupyLSX who said: *“I think in some people’s minds, the perception of this area is that this is a walled off camp and that there is a lot of hostility. That’s not the case at all. Right now if you can hear the footsteps, they are people in the area going to work in the buildings nearby. There are lots of tourists. Lots of people putting their heads around taking photos and asking questions and lots of toots of the horn on the traffic that goes past that makes us very happy indeed. There was team of people giving out free hugs as people went to work and one of them collected 253 free hugs which I don’t quite actually believe he can do in a morning! There was a lot of interaction, a lot of people saying welcome. We are the 99%. This is about ordinary people taking action, having their voice heard.”*

There is plenty to do and much going on down at camp OccupyLSX. From a series of daily workshops, meetings, general assembly, free University library, live music, poetry readings, a First Aid area, rubbish recycle, the kitchen tent and a media centre being created as I write, OccupyLSX is full on busy talking politics.



Music, Meetings and Messages



Info Point, OccupyLSX

The **Legal Drop In/Know Your Rights** talk was amongst the best adult education of its kind on what to do and who to call in the event of peaceful protest arrest. OccupyLSX are training more people to become legal observers to protect the rights of participants.



The Kitchen and Recycle Area

How To Help

One of the most common refrains heard down at OccupyLSX is people coming up and asking what they can do to help.

“We are working off generators at this moment in time. We have a team of people dealing with logistics, dealing with liaison and the cathedral as well to make sure that things that we are introducing to this space are working within what they would like to see happen in their grounds,” continued Lucy. The camp needs more tents, wooden pallets, weatherproofing for the site so people don’t get rained out in their tents, sandbags for ballast, sound systems, food and water and items for warmth such as blankets and jumpers. It gets really cold at night down at camp OccupyLSX. *“If anybody is able to make any contributions, we’ll be very grateful and happy if they come here,”* said Lucy.

If you are one of life’s creatives, bring some music, pictures or words. And if you are just you, your ordinary everyday person like me, you will be made more than welcome.

“I just want to encourage people to take that step themselves, come and join in, come and spend the night, or just come and spend an evening with us or your lunch break. You are really welcome. You don’t have to be an expert to be here, you just have to be yourself,” said Lucy.

The ethos that is developing at OccupyLSX is really working in a highly organised, responsible protest.

As I departed the site that evening, the last word must be given to Francis, a lovely gentleman of no fixed abode with few teeth and a huge ready smile that I met sitting on the stone steps of a building in the lee of St. Paul’s Cathedral, keeping a beady eye on the kitchen. So often the silent dispossessed witnesses at many major political events in London, people like Francis have seen it all. *“Good luck to them all, good luck!”* he called out to me as I left, waving happily with one hand whilst drawing his threadbare grey coat around him with the other as the wind whistled down the cold canyons of the City of London.

I second Francis’s sentiments entirely. Good luck to them all. Good luck to all those that are spending their time (and freezing every night in London) to highlight the blatant wrongs inflicted on us by the politicians of today. Hats off to OccupyLSX and all of their ilk. Please make your contribution by helping with supplies.

All are welcome.

Jane Bryant
The One Click Group

Related Links:

* [Statement from OccupyLSX, St Paul's Cathedral closure](#)

Information Release, OccupyLSX

* [Let's name those who may have decided to move #occupylondon on from St Paul's](#)

Information Release, Tax Research UK

* [Statement from the Dean of St Paul's](#)

Graeme Knowles, Dean of St Paul's Cathedral

* [Occupy London](#)
