

Bristol, UK: “We are sick to the teeth of being robbed”

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Inspired by Occupy Wall Street and the international movement against social inequality, an Occupy Bristol camp in the UK was set up on Saturday, October 15. The occupation is based on College Green, directly outside The Council House, the seat of local government in Bristol.

The camp is composed of approximately 30 tents and 70 protesters, with various homemade banners.

Tony, who hosts a show on a local radio station and makes videos campaigning for human rights, explained why he is there:

“What we are trying to achieve here is what many, many thousands of other people around the world are trying to achieve. We are the 99 percent of the people that are being enslaved by the one percent. We are sick to the teeth of being robbed, sick of being lied to by governments and bankers and sick of bailing banks, only to see them spend hundreds of millions of pounds on bonuses. 99 percent of the population of this globe is absolutely sick of it.”



“We can’t trust politicians and bankers to continue dealing and handling with our futures,” Tony added. “We have to take it on ourselves. It’s only by standing together as one body that we are going to succeed. We have got a whole international community working with us. This affects everybody, and we are not going to go away.”

“People’s consciousness has awoken all over the world. The mainstream media is very reluctant to report what we do. They’re going to have to soon. It’s going to be too big for them not to notice. ... We are going to win this battle.”

Another of the demonstrators from the St. Paul’s area of the city, said, “I want to see people being put before profits. I’d like to see us come out of Afghanistan and Iraq, use the money we are using on killing over there on the National Health Service and education and on the people that really need it.

“At the moment a lot of people are just struggling to survive, and that’s why we are out here really. We are here for everyone, the 99 percent. We are doing this in solidarity with all the occupying movements in the world.

“The problem with capitalism is it relies on some form of exploitation of someone, whether it’s people in this country or half-way across the world. It doesn’t matter. They are our brothers and sisters. We are one human race and we shouldn’t be plundering resources from other countries or plundering their workforce and exploiting the people. Social injustice is too much of a big problem for us not to stand up.”

On Wednesday evening the Socialist Equality Party held a public meeting in Bristol, which was attended by several members of Occupy Bristol, local residents and students.

Paul Mitchell, national committee member for the SEP, addressed the economic crisis and the global eruption of the Occupy protests. Mitchell outlined how the year had started with the working class of Egypt and Tunisia overthrowing the US-backed dictatorships of Ben Ali and Mubarak. Within days of the overthrow of Mubarak, workers in Wisconsin took to the streets against the destruction of jobs, wages and union rights.

“Through the summer,” he continued, “Europe has been rocked by strikes of Greek workers, occupation of public squares by the Spanish *indignados*, rioting in the most deprived areas of Britain, and other manifestations of opposition to austerity policies and the destruction of jobs.”

Mitchell described how the Occupy movement had struck “a powerful chord among millions of people internationally” and demonstrated a growth in political consciousness among wide layers of workers and youth.

“But the critical question is how to take this movement forward. We say the question of politics is central to this—making conscious the impulses that have given rise to the Occupy movement. The fight that faces the working class and oppressed will require a worked-out political perspective of revolutionary social change on an international scale. It is essential that a thorough discussion take place on the question of political program, strategy and tactics.”

The demand for “no politics” by sections of the Occupy movement and the claim that the protest movement can continue only by excluding any discussion of politics, parties and programmes is a dead end, he continued. “It is obvious to any serious person that a struggle against the capitalist ‘one percent’ poses critical political issues. Every social movement in history has been compelled to adopt a standpoint on the basic question of politics—which class should rule.”

Mitchell summarized the proposal of the SEP for the adoption of the concept that there exist inalienable and non-negotiable social rights that are essential to life in a complex modern society, including the right to a job, free high quality public education and health care, the right to housing and utilities and the right to a secure

retirement.

“We call for the expropriation of the banks and major corporations,” Mitchell declared. “Capitalism has failed the working class of the entire world. The time has come to fight for a different approach to the economic organisation of society. The only viable alternative to capitalism is socialism: the recognition of economic life under the democratic control of the working class to serve social needs, not private profit.”

The meeting concluded with a lively debate around the questions of internationalism, nationalism and localism.



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