

Britain: Occupy London and Edinburgh protesters speak

Our reporters
18 October 2011

The *World Socialist Web Site* spoke to a number of those protesting in London's financial district on the October 15 international Occupy movement day of protest.

Jack, a student originally from the United States, said, "I just read about a report recently that the number of children living in absolute poverty in Britain in 2009 was 17.3 percent. They expect for this year it will rise to 20 percent and to almost a quarter in 2013.

"This is at the time of an astronomical rise in pay in the financial sector and austerity measures for everyone else. Inequality of incomes in almost every OECD country have massively increased since the 1970s and accelerated over the last decade. The pay of the middle class and working class has gone down, relatively to the 1 percent of the population who have massive amounts of money.

"I read a report yesterday by the London School of Economics which said we have seen the rise of extreme income inequality in this country and 60 percent of that is accounted for by the financial sector. It's disgusting and I can't believe it's allowed to go on.

"In politics it's the same. There was a report at the end of the 1990s that for each congressman in the United States, there were five lobbyists. It's not democracy when you have that. It's not really a two-party system in the US, but a one party system."

Eline from Norway is a practitioner in fine art. She said, "I have been following the different protests around the world and I thought it was time to do something. We have what they call democracies that don't work and inequality being more and more present.

"There is too much money accumulated by the rich and there should be wealth distribution and a more equal society. I think it is corrupt and unfair and not the way it should be."

Martina said, "The protest is happening all over the world, in many countries. Everyone is taking to the streets and its showing that 99 percent of the population will not sit back and be passive. It's time to take back that which has evidently been

stolen from us.

"You are socialists and Marx himself predicted this that this would happen and that it would keep getting worse. Capitalism in this form has gone on long enough and they tried to make it look as if everyone was going to prosper, but it's just going to decline.

"In my opinion everything you've seen in the Middle East, in Greece, this right now, it's all about one thing—those who have been oppressed for so long fighting back on the basis of just being the sheer masses. It's about the 99 percent realising that they are the 99 percent and against those who are just extracting everything.

"I think change will still take a little while and people still need to realise that nothing will change within this system. There is nothing to gain from going to elections and voting for different leaders. It's like choosing between Coke and Pepsi. Through elections nothing really changes.

"We live under an oligarchy. You saw what the Liberal Democrats did here in Britain after the election. We thought they were an alternative and would change everything in Britain. It was just really betrayal. So we have to go beyond that party system and organise ourselves."

Kevin, a carer from Surrey, said, "I'm here because we can't allow the greedy wealthy destroy our society. We can't tolerate exploitation and creating wealth for its own sake.

"We need to create a better society and I believe these protests are the nucleus of that. We are capable of so much more as human beings.

"People don't know if they are going to get a health service and benefits. And they are being scapegoated and blamed for this situation by the very minority who have stolen vast quantities of money. We don't need the rich. They are parasites living off us and are completely unproductive. They are a decadent, arrogant minority who have no understanding of the real world.

"The fact that this is international is the most impressive thing of all. I don't believe in countries or national boundaries.

We have to get together and look after each other. This is global oppression we are suffering and we need a global and united solution to it.

“The rich are causing tremendous suffering all around the world. I am united with the oppressed all around the world fighting for genuine liberation. We need to unite on the basis that the bankers have done us a great evil, because it wasn’t a natural occurrence. This was all manipulated by the rich and billionaires.”

Cheryl, who works at a school in Hackney, said, “I work full-time and am raising three daughters on my own and I’m struggling to make ends meet as it is. The cost of living has gone through the roof. I can’t afford things and am losing a percentage of my salary through Single Status [legislation governing equal pay for men and women]. I am losing £3,000 a year and can ill-afford to raise my children. Hundreds and hundreds of single parents are struggling like this.

“In Hackney there have been huge cuts. The National Health Service and libraries are being hit with closures. Breakfast clubs and things like Sure Start are being cut. I have to pay for the breakfast club for my kids in order to go to work.

“On my shopping bill alone you can see the change. It has gone up by about £20 or £25 a week for basic things.

“I am in full agreement with the people here. It says we are the 99 percent on my banner here. I’ve tried to explain this to my children, including my teenager. The rich do monopolise the world’s wealth, yet it’s our taxes that are going up.

“I think it is about time we had a global day of protest. I am glad to be here with my children and tell them that they need to stand up for themselves as part of the 99 percent, against that 1 percent, the fat cats.”

Sam, a student in Portsmouth, said, “These occupy movements have an atmosphere that I have never seen before. I am cautiously optimistic where it’s all going to go. It’s a big global thing today, but there is a gap between this and actual political change. I don’t know how we cross that.”

Aaron Sams, a student from the University of Greenwich in London, said, “I am here today as a protest against the banking industry who are so tightly connected to the political institutions. The people are opposed to this, but they still do it anyway. After the Blair years, if you look at that time you see the Labour Party moved more to the centre, even to the right on some things. What we need is a healthy alternative to centre-right politics. Nobody really cares who they vote for anymore.”

Henry Lampitt said, “I am angry about a lot of things, but the main thing is the so-called left in this country, the Labour Party, is run by big business. They are scared to speak out against these bankers and big businesses, because they get so much money from them each year. If they did speak out their lifeline, their money would be cut. I support the Labour Party because it’s supposed to be the main left party in this country, but

frankly it’s just a mess. I don’t even think of it as socialist anymore. It’s just capitalist.”

Edinburgh

Around 400 gathered in central Edinburgh Saturday as part of the international Occupy demonstrations.

Hazel expressed the sentiment of many stating, “We heard about Occupy Wall Street and we agreed with that because we were angry about the bank bailouts. We keep bailing them out and it has to stop. We need to draw a line under it and say you have to take responsibility for your actions.”

Spanish student Jamie said, “The world right now belongs to the banks and they actually do what they want with the rest of the world’s population. At the end of the day it’s their decision ... but it shouldn’t be like that.”

His friend Albert added, “I think it’s important to show, to let people know that we’re not happy with the way things are going. This can be an alternative against the political parties.”

A young mother, who came with her husband and daughter, said, “I have a family, a five-year-old daughter, and we’re thinking of her future. The current system is clearly not working. My daughter started school this year and I feel she’s learning different values than we want to teach her.”

At the general assembly, a WSWs correspondent was able to address the crowd. Pointing to the need for a conscious political struggle directed against the capitalist system, he drew attention to the growing levels of social inequality developing across the globe. Noting that the protests required an internationalist and socialist programme to fight for the social rights of the working class, he pointed out the role of the trade unions and ex-left organisations in preventing such a development. These remarks were welcomed by a significant number of those present, and in discussion with several demonstrators afterwards they expressed their support.



To contact the WSWs and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact