

A personal perspective on the UK Occupy Movement

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Mark was one of those who initiated the Occupy protest in Bristol, England. Below he gives his views on the strengths and weaknesses of the movement.

Over the last few months I've been an active member of the largest UK Occupy protest camp outside of London, in Bristol.

Back in late September, my vision, which led me to set up Occupy in my home town, was to establish multiple camps and help in the creation of further camps nationwide. As a result, I've had the opportunity to thoroughly re-evaluate both my social and global political standpoint. In doing so, I've concluded that the only means by which we can secure the global emancipation of the working class is by way of the Fourth International.

Reformism and protest politics are the iron chains which continue to bind us to a life of servitude and as such, serve only to ensure the continuation of capitalist domination.

However, the only way for me to reach such a conclusion was through attempting what I now see as the impossible.

Foolishly from the beginning, I set about trying to create a coalition of lefts, thinking that I could rouse them into some sort of action. During the first six weeks of Occupy I attended numerous meetings throughout my home town. However, every meeting was the same, apart from one, which I'll discuss later. Unimpassioned middle class trade union leaders moaning about government cuts, boldly declaring we have to send a "message" to Westminster. This, sadly, was the most common cry at the majority of meetings I attended.

I always attempted to challenge the trade union position. How many times are the trade unions going to

"send a message" to government? The time for sending messages is over, now is the time to bring the government down to secure our own future.

In mid-November I was invited to speak on the picket line of a local ongoing industrial dispute. During my speech, I told the strikers that it is they who make up the trade union and that they should expel the leadership if it fails to implement their demands for wider coordinated industrial action. I said the only way to secure our future is through the overthrow of the system itself and we should be organising a nationwide general strike. If both public and private sector united with the unemployed, we could bring the entire system down within seven days.

The trade union bureaucrat spoke after me and declared that the dispute was going to be a long hard struggle.

Later that morning I was interviewed by the BBC. I made it clear that if we are to secure a better future for ourselves, we should be organising public and private sector workers, for nationwide general wildcat strikes.

Today I firmly believe we should be organising wildcat strikes on an international basis, bypassing the trade union movement altogether. Although I may be unemployed and hold no formal qualifications, I'm educated enough to know that the trade union movement is the enemy of the working class.

In meetings at the Occupation site I found stiff opposition. From the very beginning the anarchist principle of non-hierarchy was adopted, meaning we couldn't set up effective committees. Likewise, all meetings were open to the general public to participate in general consensus decision making. Strangely enough this was never passed by consensus, but rather it was imposed by assumption.

Early on it was obvious that I had become the

minority. Repeatedly I would ask for a motion to be passed enabling us to set up more camps and to reach out to the working class, only to be ignored. I asked several times for a motion to be passed to indicate if we were a revolutionary or reformist movement. On more than one occasion I was told, "This isn't about class, it is a democratic installation". Although I challenged many things, it fell on deaf ears.

It was decided that we would have open days with activities in order to generate public support. The activities on offer were Ti Chi, meditation, and knitting, along with circus-themed events. Although it did attract the middle class reformists, I felt completely alienated and ashamed by the direction of the movement. At no point have I ever longed to learn Ti Chi, knitting or circus juggling. Likewise, a Robin Hood Tax on financial transactions has never been on my list of priorities. I have always longed for the emancipation of the working class by way of revolution. Now I accept this can only come about through the revolutionary lineage of the Fourth International. Only the latter contains the power and global vision to reignite the flames of working class consciousness.

I came into contact with my local branch of the Socialist Equality Party and a seed penetrated my mind. Sadly from the very beginning, the UK Occupy movement has pushed the agenda of reformism, while at the same time enforcing anarchism's theoretically backward ideology upon every unwitting individual who enters the camps.

The resulting ineffectiveness of this move is precisely the reason why the masses have failed to seize upon Occupy throughout the UK. Quite simply Occupy UK has no vision to offer the working class and runs the risk of becoming nothing more than an insignificant irritant. The reformist vision of the Occupy movement has become nothing more than an infantile fantasy and obstacle to the class struggle.

The Occupy movement must decide if it is to become a movement of revolution, or one of reform. Sadly it is my fear that it will become nothing more than a memory of what could have been if it continues to peruse the path of reformist politics.

This whole experience has been invaluable in

teaching me many great lessons, which I would have never otherwise gained. As such I would like to thank my local SEP branch for not pushing me, for allowing me to come to my own conclusions. Thankfully within the SEP, I have found an authentic global revolutionary movement of the working class. There is no other radical alternative to capitalism. A lot of people in the camp said Marx and Trotsky have no relevance today, but I think they have more relevance today than they ever did.



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