Occupy Bristol News Digest - 8th November 2011 -

UK News

Rounds of plastic bullets are being made available to police chiefs in preparation for tomorrow's student demonstration in London. 10,000 protestors are expected to march through London to voice their anger over tuition fees and cuts and around 4,000 officers will be on duty to police the event. There are reported fears that anarchists may hijack the march. Critic Jenny Jones, a Green party member of the London Assembly, said "the prospect of the police shooting at unarmed demonstrators with any kind of bullet is frankly appalling, un-British and reminiscent of scenes currently being used by murderous dictatorships in the Middle East.[1]

Chancellor George Osborne has confirmed the government's opposition to a financial transactions tax that could raise billions of pounds a year. Osborne has argued that the EU's 'output' would decrease by 1.76% if the tax were implemented. £20bn a year would be raised by the tax in the UK. The government's 'essential' cuts to welfare services which have so far cost 105,000 public sector jobs,[2] amount to £7bn.[3] Over 1000 economists and some EU country leaders support the financial transaction tax.[4] Sign the petition at www.robinhoodtax.org.

The government's welfare reforms will cause widespread poverty in some of Britain's most disadvantaged communities. A study released today found that 600,000 would disappear from the benefits system after the government's proposed rule changes. The authors of the study stressed that they did not find evidence of 'widespread fraud' in the benefits system, nor that the health problems and disabilities of those claiming incapacity benefit were 'anything less than real'.[5]

Lloyds Banking Group has reported a £3.8bn loss for the first nine months of this year. Poor figures for the bank are largely due to a £3bn charge paid earlier this year to compensate customers for the market-wide mis-selling of personal protection insurance policies.[6] Lloyds, of which the government owns 43%, has been reducing its balance sheet by selling assets backed by tangible property, such as mortgages, as part of the EU rules for companies receiving state aid. The EU and UK government have argued that this means Lloyds is selling its 'riskiest' assets, even though its mortgage arrears rate is 'broadly consistent' with previous years.[7] The mortgages are being sold at very cheap prices to reflect this 'risk'. Another stipulation of the EU and UK government agreement is that the part publicly-owned bank must also divest of 632 branches, holding £35bn in deposits. It is rumoured that the mutually-owned co-op bank is interested.[8]

The UK has begun its chairmanship of the Council of Europe at the same time as it takes presidency of the European Court of Human Rights. The Council of Europe is responsible, among other things, for supervising the Court. UK chairmanship of the first and presidency of the latter could therefore represent an opportunity to improve and strengthen the European Convention on Human Rights. EU Human Rights law, however, has been the subject of attack from top Conservatives who are calling for the UK legislation that enshrines the Convention into UK law to be 'scrapped'. Theresa May argued that the Human Rights Act caused 'problems' for the Home Office whilst David Cameron suggested it had a "chilling effect [because] of people thinking 'I will be found guilty under it'". Shami Chakrabarti, head of Liberty, said, "only a pretty nasty party would promote human rights in the Middle East whilst scrapping them at home".[9]

According to a report commissioned by St Pauls, professionals working in the financial services industry are less likely to believe in God than the rest of the population. The report, titled *Value and Values: Perceptions of Ethics in the City,* is the first of

---

1 Cherry Wilson, 'Plastic Bullets Available to Police for Wednesday's Student Protests', *The Guardian,* 7th November 2011.

2 Chris Giles, 'Ministers Fear Steep Rises in Job Losses', *Financial Times,* 31st October 2011.

3 BBC News, 'Spending Review 2010: George Osborne Wield the Axe', 20 October 2010'. Available at *www.bbc.co.uk*. Accessed 08/11/11.

4 The Robin Hood Tax, 'Who's Behind It?', *www.robinhoodtax.org*. Accessed 08/11/11.

5 Larry Elliot, 'Welfare Reforms Could Force 600,000 Off Incapacity Benefit', *The Guardian,* 8th November 2011.

6 Patrick Jenkins, 'Lloyds Admits Targets May Be Delayed', *Financial Times,* 8th November 2011.

7 Jill Treanor, 'Lloyds House Repossessions Rise', *The Guardian,* 25th February 2011.

8 Sharlene Goff, 'Good News for Lloyds as Co-op Bids for Branches', *Financial Times,* 4th November 2011.

9 BBC, 'Home Secretary Theresa May Wants Human Rights Act Axed', 2nd October 2011. Available at *www.bbc.co.uk*. Accessed 08/11/11.

its kind and found, perhaps unsurprisingly, that money was the 'number one motivation' for working in the field. Giles Fraser, who recently resigned as Canon of St Pauls, writes in the introduction, "ethics is a state of solidarity with other human beings".[10]

Private investigators were hired by the News of the World in order to track two of the lawyers representing phone-hacking victim to try and pressure them to stop their work. Evidence suggests that an investigator physically followed the lawyers and their relatives, and made secret videos of their movements. It is not yet clear how NOTW would have used the information, but some have suggested it may have been intended to 'blackmail' the lawyers.[11]

World News

Italian PM, Silvio Burlosconi, is clinging to power as the amount of interest Italy must pay on its international borrowings hits record highs. The interest rate a country must pay to borrow is largely an indication of how stable the market considers a country's domestic politics to be.[12]

Spain's socialist government are predicted to be defeated by the country's centre-right Popular party. Current figures predict that PP will win 46% of the vote with the Socialists winning 30%. The PP plans to continue with existing budgetary austerity plans and reform the 'labour market'.[13]

Whilst the pay of the FTSE 100 chief executives rose by an average of 49%, these are leaner times for many firms on Wall Street. According to a closely watched compensation survey, executive pay is expected to decrease between 20% and 30%. Bankers are unlikely to go hungry, however. In the first nine months of the year, Goldman Sachs, Morgan Stanley, JPMorgan Chase, Bank of America and Citigroup set aside almost $93bn to pay employees - $2bn more than last year.[14]

Six people have been killed in riots in Papua New Guinea. Riotes burned down the homes of thousands of people in what is thought to be an ethnic clash, sparked by the rape of a young woman.[15]

Australia has passed a new law allowing the government to tax carbon emissions. The law was controversial in part because of Australia's large reliance on coal for energy, meaning that household electric bills will increase. The government has promised to cut other taxes and increase pension and household payments to offset the increased cost. This expenditure will be funded by revenue collected from the new tax.[16]

A man who is yet to have a trial determining his innocence or guilt, has now been in a UK jail for seven years. Babar Ahmad, the subject of a US extradition warrant is accued by the US of running a website to raise funds for Islamic terrorists and providing material support to the Taliban and other groups. The first time Ahmed was arrested, in a separate case, he was released by the UK without charge after being punched, kicked and strangled, and arriving at Paddington police station with 73 injuries to his body. He was then rearrested nine months later by Scotland Yard acting on the US' request. Many are fighting for his trial to be held in the UK, and the case raises pertinent questions about the UK and US's relationship and methods in the 'war on terror'. Critics have suggested that one possible reason Ahmed has not yet been tried in the UK is that there may not be enough evidence. One of the pieces of 'evidence' cited in the US' extradition request, for example, was 'a faded four-page tourist brochure of the Empire State Building' found in his home. When the 'evidence' was found, US federal officials briefed the New York Daily News that "Al-Qaida thugs…may have considered taking down the Empire State Building".[17]

Khetiwe Mashavave, the Bristol-based human rights activist detained by the Home Office, has been released. The Home Office had attempted to deport Khetiwe to Zimbabwe last year but was stopped by a group of Bristol residents and councillors who petitioned for her to stay. She was still, however, still being held in a detention centre. Khetiwe claimed political asylum in the UK in 2000 because of human rights work in her home country. Welcome back Khetiwe.

News from College Green

Democracy in classical Athens. A talk by Daniel Bennett of Bristol Radical History Group. 12pm – 1pm Thursday 10th Nov.

Revolutions throughout history.
1 pm – 2pm Saturday 12th.

---

10 Ruth Gledhill, 'Paid Too Much, Motivated by Money and Godless: City Workers Confess to St Pauls', *The Times,* 8th November 2011.

11 Nick Davies, 'News of the World Hired Investigators to Spy on Hacking Victim's Lawyers', *The Guardian,* 8th November 2011.

12 Matthew Sparkes, 'Debt Crisis: Live', *The Telegraph,* 8th November 2011.

13 Victor Mallet, 'Poll Predicts Defeat for Spain's Socialists', *Financial Times,* 4th November 2011.

14 Susanne Craig, 'Wall S. Pay Is Expected to Fall 20% to 30%', *New York Times,* 7th November 2011.

15 Associated Press, 'Six Killed in Papua New Guinea Riots', *The Guardian,* 8th November 2011.

16 Sarah Mishkin, 'Australia Passes Carbon Tax Laws', *Financial Times,* 8th November 2011.

17 Mehdi Hasan, 'Is It Justice to Lock Up Babar Ahmad So Long Without Trial?', *The Guardian,* 6th November 2011.

General Assembly: 1pm Saturday and 7pm Wednesday.

THANK YOU BRISTOL! Thanks to everyone who has shown their kind support and offered encouragement over the last three weeks. Our peaceful protest would be impossible without you all. Thank you.