

99 Problems and the Rich Are One

It is nice to see Occupy London explain its general ideological direction at greater length than we've seen in its meetings and previous writings in the June issue of The Occupied Times of London. (The Occupied Times is produced by an 'autonomous working group of Occupy London general assembly.')

The initial statement on 16 October 2011 agreed by a 'gathering of Occupy London' leaves a little to be desired, and though Global Occupy Manifesto (May 2012) did consult international Occupy groups, Occupy London was not consulted to publish. The Occupied Times describes itself as 'self-funded' and states that it "does not operate an open-door policy like most other working groups, instead taking the form of an affinity group".

Issue 14 carries a debate on whether capitalism can be ethical. This is written comprehensibly and well. Capitalism's defender can barely be bothered to defend capitalism at all, calling instead for ethical consumerism. Its critic gives Marx a mention and writes well but sprawlingly and concludes his piece with a call for a sustainable economy or, seemingly, for a zero-growth economy. Though it's easy to read, it's not so easy to understand the detail of the author's alternative proposal.

The issue also carries a correction of media reports on the verifiability of vacant tents, criticism of specific corporations and specific directors, criticism of the Olympics, pieces on the transatlantic slave trade Gullah/Geechee culture, the Medieval Icelandic Althing, and a Venezuelan documentary, Hip Hop Revolution, an irreverent look at tax resistance (more interesting than it sounds), various international reports and a free plug for London Chapter of the International Organisation for Participatory Society (IOPS). There is also a critical report on an autonomous group, Occupy Faith UK, which is rightly suspicious about co-option by faiths promising not to proselytise. An editor comments: "you can't get much more hierarchical than gods".

Transcending Liberalism by Steven MacLean is by far the best article about liberalism in the Occupy movement. He writes:

"while the occupation at St Paul's outlived most in the us, the movement here remains in the shadow of Occupy Wall Street. For OWS, the eviction of the camps turned out to be a blessing. Instead of focusing on site management and internal politics, occupiers were given an opportunity to shift tactics and look outwards, focusing on new directions for the movement. Meanwhile, the occupations in London rumbled on defiantly, but vital energy was expended on their upkeep. The occupation of physical space increasingly divided 'occupiers' from sympathetic members of the public, resulting in an exclusive lifestyle. we had created a 'social' without the 'movement', while in the us, Occupy remained an accessible wave of public outrage."

Although the Occupy Movement is still a work in progress, the Occupied Times of London seems relatively editorially free from attachment to some of the dubious ideas in Occupy. In any case, irrational or inaccurate ideas might tend to be undermined in a relatively open publication. A letters page would probably be redundant in the internet-minded Occupy movement, and Occupied Times of London do call for contributions - so seem committed to participation. If the content and commitment of Occupied Times is anything to go by, and the Occupy Movement can resist co-option by hierarchies and defend horizontalism, it will probably sustain the momentum to continue into another year.

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