

The Oakland Commune

Sundry writings about the successful failures

(Ed.: Et al.)



Content

- Editorial Note - S. 4
- Aaron Bady: The Oakland Commune - S. 6
- The Occupation Movement: On Greed, Unity & Violence - S.12
- Research & Destroy: Plaza – Riot – Commune - S.16

General strike – 2th November

- The Society of Enemies: A Message to the Partisans, in Advance of the General Strike - S.21
- Cracks in the Glass – Belated Reflection on Nov 2nd - S.24
- Society of Enemies: Blockading the Port Is Only The First of Many Last Resorts - S.29
- The ANTI-CAPITALIST MARCH and the BLACK BLOC - S.37
- COMMUNISMKNOWSNOMONSTERS: "We Laugh at the Waves as they Crash on Us! or, some thoughts on the infamous anti-capitalist march" - S. 47
- Statement on the Occupation of the former Traveler's Aid Society at 520 16th Street - S.49

Interlude

- State Repression of the Occupy Movement - S.52
- Anon: A brief account of this last week in Occupy Oakland: - S.54

Port Shutdown

- Steve Stallone: From Camps to Ports – Wall Street of the Waterfront - S.57

Move-In Day

- A Statement from Occupy Oakland's Move-In Assembly - S.61
- Statement from the J28 Tactical Team - S.64
- Asad Haider: Building the Red Army - The Death and Forbidden Rebirth of the Oakland Commune - S.73s

Editorial Note

The booklet at hand, comprising a number of texts about Occupy Oakland, was originally published as a German translation. Although most of the contributions are already available in English on the website of Bay of Rage (www.bayofrage.com) we decided to publish them in English anyway to give them a wider distribution. The following lines are the translation of the editorial note of the German issue.

Between October 2011 and February 2012 a series of remarkable phenomena occurred in Oakland. As an offspring of the Occupy Movement that had started in New York, a number of people permanently occupied a square in Oakland and renamed it Oscar Grant Plaza – the name refers to a young black man whose murder by the police in 2009 initiated a riot. Different from the procedures in other cities in the U.S., in Oakland the police was excluded from the occupied square from the outset. Thereby a vivid activity developed in the camp, including an impromptu kitchen, library, school, medical care, and child care, not to mention the frequent rallies and demonstrations. On October 15 the people of the camp were evicted during a coordinated attack on occupations in 15 cities in the U.S. As a response a huge strike was initiated on November 2, including the occupation of the port and a hooded „anticapitalist march“ that destroyed shops and companies which undermined the strike. Additionally the attempt was made to occupy a building that could have been used by the movement: On December 12 a second blockade of the port turned out to reach fairly large dimensions, pushing the movement (that gave itself the name Commune of Oakland) towards its point of culmination on January 28, when thousands of people made a publicly announced attempt to take a building of an adequate size for the movement.

Most of the texts collected in this booklet were produced by the radical wing of the movement in Oakland, that rejects capitalism in its entirety. After an introductory text, which was written after the violent breakup of the occupation, follows a contribution comprising some reflections about the early days of the movement. The rest offers assessments, descriptions and analyses of the strike, the black bloc, the occupations of buildings and the port shutdowns.

We believe that broad and free discussion about these events is useful. Therefore we have translated and published the texts at hand – without agreeing in our group entirely about the sense or nonsense of the texts or about the practice they reflect. We, that is an informal collective of varying composition, translating from time to time publications that are in a broad sense critical of the existing society. For this booklet we decided not to contact a publishing house because we wanted it to spread without any restrictions. Therefore this publication needs a decentralized circulation based on the initiative of individuals. Apart from the printed edition the articles and a PDF document are also online at: www.magazinredaktion.tk/etal/oakland_en.php. To order the printed version contact www.black-mosquito.org.

Et al., Berlin, May 2012

The Oakland Commune

As a site of resistance, “Wall Street” is a metonym for a system, a transnational apparatus of capital and political oligarchy. We don’t have to get too specific, because we all know what we mean when we say “Wall Street” (even if we don’t agree on what that thing actually is). And so while that particular part of Lower Manhattan might be a focal point of a gigantic process of accumulation and dispossession, “Wall Street” is still just a concrete symbol for that larger and much less tangible process. The fact that so much financial work is actually done elsewhere is not that important; to “Occupy Wall Street” is to attack and de-legitimize the thing it symbolizes, the ordering structure that builds and rebuilds the world around us, that the rest of us have no choice but to inhabit and endure.

This is why it has meant something very different, from the beginning, to “Occupy Oakland.” In a just world – in the world the occupiers are trying to usher into existence – there might be no such thing as “Wall Street” at all, and certainly not in its current form. But Oakland is not a center of finance and power or a locus of political privilege. There is a “here” here. No one really lives in Wall Street, but those who “Occupy Oakland” do so because they already did. As a result, when we “Occupy Oakland,” we are

engaged much less in a symbolic protest against “the banks” or “the 1%” – political actions which are given their shape by the political terrain of protesting abstractions – and much more in a very concrete struggle for a right to the city.

After all, the police who dispersed occupiers with tear gas were only doing the sort of thing they had long been accustomed to doing to the poor, transient, and/or communities of color that make up a great majority of Oakland’s humanity. They used inhuman means of regulating human bodies – the declaration of “unlawful assembly” – because the city is accustomed to having the power to do so, the effective right to assemble and disassemble Oakland as they see fit. It’s that power that’s being contested. When a body calling itself the Oakland Commune renames the front yard of city hall after a police shooting victim, sets out to feed and house anyone who stands in line, and refuses to allow the state’s purveyors of violence to police them, the challenge is quite direct and legible, a peaceful revolution.

This point is worth lingering on, because it has generally been neglected. You will struggle in vain to find the words “Oscar Grant Plaza” or “The Oakland Commune” in most national news reports on Occupy Oakland;

even in local Bay Area reporting, those words tend to appear, at most, in quotes made by occupiers. Instead, “Occupy Oakland” gets made legible by reference, first and foremost, to other occupations, mainly the one in New York. It will be described as more violent, perhaps, or more radical, or the way the police crackdown has been more intense will be noted (and, in some cases, found to be wanting by the guardians of the true spirit of the movement). It is *like* Occupy Wall Street, but *different*.

I’m not saying this is right or wrong, or even making a media critique (though there *is* much to critique). My point is that using a comparative lens – that mode of analysis by which “Occupy” is a category, a series of variations on a theme that first emerged in Zuccotti Park – will almost inevitably lead us to overlook the ways that an *autochthonic* Oakland Commune

rises up and makes sense of itself, in resolutely local terms, by reference to nothing other than itself. There’s a crucial way, in other words, in which Occupying Oakland (or Atlanta, or Philly, or San Jose, or Huntington, WV, etc.) is not the same thing as to be a part of the “Occupy Wall Street” movement: while the former is a reclamation of a very particular shared space, community, and history, the latter not only implies that “Occupy Wall Street” is the original thing – the *important* thing – but it places and understands all the other occupations by reference to that original, like local franchises or copycats who have been inspired by it.

This distinction is especially important, because a certain idealized (and whitewashed) version of #OWS has become a useful narrative for a variety of establishment politicians and critics of both good and false



faith. But we need to beware of people who pay theoretical lip service to an idealized “Occupy Wall Street” brand and then to use the particular shortcomings of its local iteration to condemn it. Oakland mayor Jean Quan, for example, always says that she supports the goals and principles of Occupy Wall Street – a theoretical solidarity, by which she is rhetorically positioning herself in opposition to abstractions like “Wall Street” – but this theoretical solidarity has, of course, never translated into any *actual* support for Occupy Oakland. And this is precisely its purpose: a symbolic protest against a symbolic abstraction like “the banks” is sufficiently meaningless in practice that almost anyone can rhetorically sign on. And once a symbolic protest has been allowed, for the moment, the *nonsymbolic* protest (of breaking a law against open flames or camping in public) suddenly becomes all the more illegal by reference to it.

Take Joan Walsh’s recent argument in *Salon* that doing practical social justice will get in the way of doing social justice:

„In Oakland, as in other cities, the camps have become magnets for the symptoms of the social injustice they’re protesting: homelessness, drugs, mental illness and crime. Dreamers and do-gooders in the groups genuinely believe the movement has to help society’s victims as it tries to change the world. Some think that’s part of creating the alternate society that is going to gradually annex the

rest of us. I admire those people, but I think the shameful problems of our larger society will capsize this movement if it attempts to solve them on its own, rather than channeling energy into changing a political structure that creates and ignores these human tragedies. Meanwhile, the more the camps attract troubled and violent people, the more they alienate the vast majority of the 99 percent the Occupy movement is trying to speak for, and leave those comfortable with violence and disorder in control.“

The logic of capitalist realism is overwhelming here – in which the desire to include homeless people is “admirable” but unrealistic – but what interests me in such rhetoric (and Walsh is pretty representative) is the explicit privileging of “the movement” over the claims of those it seeks to speak for. Not only have the homeless and chronically unemployed suddenly ceased to be a part of “the vast majority of the 99 percent,” but she’s telling a revisionary history. Homeless people were sleeping in Frank Ogawa Plaza long before Occupy Oakland showed up and renamed it; to push them out because they’re not wanted – because to include them would be too difficult – would be to replicate the logic of the city managers themselves. It is to Occupy Oakland’s credit that they never did; all were welcome to be present and to be part of the camp. And those who were there, before the city tore it down, know that the pulsing heart of the camp was never primarily the General Assembly. It was the kitchen.

And this was what I found inspiring from the beginning: in a community as utterly divided by class, race, politics, language, and gender as Oakland, people reflecting so much of that variety of difference were getting together to hammer together some kind of common and communal purpose, to declare that everyone who inhabited the same space was, in an important sense, *there* together. We ate together, we listened together, we spoke together, and we were tear gassed together; in the days when Frank Ogawa Plaza became Oscar Grant Plaza, that tiny stretch of Oakland was perhaps the least segregated neighborhood in the city, and the *only* place in the city where I would ever have the conversations I had with the people I did.

In a way, I’m idealizing it, both because it sometimes lived up to that ideal, and because having it as an ideal reminds us that more is possible than we find to be imaginable. Problems are solvable, and we are capable of confronting them. *You* are capable of being the person who steps up when some crisis arises organically out of the dysfunctions we’ve inherited from the societies we have no choice but to occupy. This is not the easy triumphalism of Yes We Can, but the hard responsibility of Yes, We Must that we are forced to look in the face when the problems we’d like to avoid don’t go away. And this is clearly the job ahead of us.

This is why putting up tents in Oakland was not a symbolic protest, not a part of the movement that can be al-

lowed to die. To put up a tent and sleep in it, in violation of city ordinances, is a tiny way to claim the right *to make the city ourselves*. And since we are, as people, a function of the cities we build to remake ourselves as a people, as David Harvey puts it quite nicely, putting up a tent in this way is the very definition of the right to the city:

„The right to the city is far more than the individual liberty to access urban resources: it is a right to change ourselves by changing the city. It is, moreover, a common rather than an individual right since this transformation inevitably depends upon the exercise of a collective power to reshape the processes of urbanization. The freedom to make and remake our cities and ourselves is, I want to argue, one of the most precious yet most neglected of our human rights.“

The construction of a thing called “The Oakland Commune” at a plaza that was re-named after Oscar Grant was, in this sense, not a franchise of Occupy Wall Street but a revolutionary defense of that particular space, the demand that *we who occupy it* have the right to decide what will be made of it.

At this point, then, we have to talk about Oakland itself, about what “Oscar Grant” means to the people who made that name the center of their protest (or what it would mean if Occupy Oakland renamed itself “Decolonize and Liberate Oakland.”) The broad and racialized social restructuring

that Oakland has undergone in the last half century – an “urban renewal,” after the end of segregation that has melded seamlessly into suburbanization and gentrification – is a process that has analogs in cities across the United States. But the Bay Area is also unique, and the fact that Oscar Grant was a young African American man traveling on the Bay Area Rapid Transit (BART) system – and was shot and killed by a police officer charged with policing BART – is a perfect symbol of the forms of differential inclusion through which Oakland has been formed and reformed (as this blogger describes too precisely for me to need to replicate).

After all, is Oakland really a city? It might once have been clearly distinct from San Francisco, Berkeley, San Leandro, Castro Valley, Emeryville,

Piedmont, and Alameda (to name only the Bay Area municipalities on its borders), but it clearly is no longer. To put it more firmly, to pretend that Oakland is anything but a thoroughly well-integrated unit within the vast urban system that wraps itself around the San Francisco Bay is to allow ourselves to be mystified by the very structures of economic and political segregation that we oppose. Woven together by the BART system and by a series of freeways that allow commuters from the hills and bedroom communities in Contra Costa and Alameda counties to pass over or under Oakland’s once vibrant flatland communities – that have been left economically stagnant as a result – on their way to San Francisco, whatever is “there” in Oakland is there because of how the Greater Bay Area has been designed around it, how it



was reshaped by its differential inclusion.

When BART and the freeways were built in the 1950s and 60s, this differentiating inclusion was made painfully clear by the massive displacement and demolition of primarily African-American communities in West Oakland that their construction required: once the heart of Oakland’s African-American community, West Oakland’s most thriving commercial and residential districts were torn down to make room for the transportation corridors that linked the expanding suburban fringe to San Francisco’s thriving downtown and financial district.

In fact, it would not be much of an exaggeration to argue that “Oakland” is what’s left behind when you carve away the most capital-rich parts of the Bay Area, a single, relatively poor and non-white gerrymandered remainder. As the industries that once employed Oakland’s middle class have foundered and gone elsewhere in the last fifty years, Oakland’s most affluent residents fled to Alameda, San Leandro, Hayward, Orinda, Lafayette, Concord, or suburban enclaves where their taxes would do nothing for the (increasingly non-white) Oakland they left behind. And even as new sites of industry and development have emerged just outside its borders – in Emeryville, for example, home of Pixar, or in Alameda, adjacent to but external to Oakland itself – the astoundingly affluent island city of Piedmont remains officially external to the impoverished city of Oakland all around it, a kind

of reverse Bantustan of millionaires. Named one of the “25 Top-Earning Towns” by *CNN Money* in 2007, its tax rolls need contribute nothing to the schools and communities around it, and do not.

To tell the story of post-war Oakland – as the Bay Area has exploded around it – is to tell a story of political and economic exclusion. But while that story might have begun at the end of official Jim Crow segregation (when the Oakland Police Department notoriously recruited white police officers from the deep South to police its fast growing black population), Oakland’s constitution through exclusion certainly didn’t end there. As part of the gentrifying flood of white Oakland residents that have progressively lightened Oakland’s demographic makeup in the last ten years, I can testify that the lines separating where it is “safe” and desirable to live – and where it is not – are as well understood as the red line that separated black and white Oakland in the 1960s.

All of this is necessary background for understanding why, from the beginning, Occupy Oakland has been the kind of radically inclusive space that it’s been, why the beating revolutionary heart of the camp has not been its library or information tent – or even the General Assembly – but the kitchen that fed thousands of hungry Oaklanders every day, or the grassy space of Frank Ogawa Plaza where Downtown Oakland’s substantial homeless population could find a home. Local

history is necessary for understanding why the occupants of the “Oakland Commune” have focused less on national economic issues than on the right to the city of Oakland which has, for so long, been denied them. Occupy Oakland has set its sights resolutely local from the very beginning; while anti-bank rhetoric and actions have not been absent, of course, activists at Occupy Oakland have targeted the five elementary schools that Alameda County recently voted to close, for example, and are moving in recent weeks towards defending neighborhood homes from foreclosure.

In other words, a close focus on local Oakland history is necessary background for understanding why this local orientation is so *important*, why the many calls to stop focusing on the camp and re-focus on the economic issues – Wall Street! The Banks! Political Corruption! – are missing something utterly crucial about what is happening around us.

Aaron Bady
December 5, 2011

Source: <http://www.possible-futures.org/2011/12/05/oakland-commune/>

The Occupation Movement: On Greed, Unity & Violence

Corporate Greed is the Wrong Target

Being “greedy” is what good corporations and businesses are *supposed* to do in capitalism. In this system, individuals can only get *ahead* by acting greedy, in their own self-interest. So while many recent city occupations in the USA have built themselves against “corporate greed”, “big business,” and “financiers on Wall Street”, we cannot forget that the most *greedy* corporations also donate the most to charity, that small business is just as much part of the system as big business, that productive industry *cannot exist* with-

out finance. We must challenge the entire system. If we are really against “corporate greed” then we are against capitalism itself.

The 99%?

Yes, the 1% have been screwing us, for a long ass time. The 99% are reduced to working, serving and maintaining a system that makes us miserable and prevents us from realizing our potential. A growing number of us have been completely expelled from ‘society’ altogether – through homelessness, joblessness, an inability to get adequate healthcare, lack of ac-

cess to education and other miserable conditions.

But the idea that there is something called *society* that we should all work together to defend is an illusion. *Society* is rife with divisions, conflicts and wars. Some of these wars are manufactured and waged by the 1%. Other wars, such as the wars conducted by indigenous peoples and people of color against racist colonization and the war conducted by women and trans people against patriarchal gender violence, are hidden and suppressed in the false name of *society*. Every year for these last decades, the casualties of society have piled up as the revolutionaries have been killed or jailed.

In recent years, many of the 99% have appeared to follow the rules. Many of us have been caught in the cycle of working and borrowing in order to continue working and borrowing, we have been terrified of speaking out against daily injustices and humiliations for fear of losing the tiny foothold we hope to protect, or for fear of getting jailed or beaten by the cops, or getting ostracized and criminalized by the obeyers (even though they know the rules are unjust). Many people who have recently lost their social standing are figuring out that the promises capitalism holds out to them are hollow. What the 99% faces, at best, is a life of debt, chained to shitty jobs and to shitty commodities.

The Occupy Movement is awakening to the fact that if we continue to follow their rules, *they*, the 1%,

will win. The Occupy movement is a wake-up call to disobey their rules and to create new ways of living together.

But the call for *unity* of the 99% is empty. There is no unity between those who seek to uphold the system of domination and those of us who seek to destroy it as we create a new world. What section of the 99% will join us, and what part will seek to defend the powers that exist, playing on fear of chaos or disruption? What part of that 99% will work with us to expropriate, destroy and transform what the 1% controls? Most immediately: the cops may well be part of that 99%, but they are directly in opposition to us as long as they continue to do their job as cops. (The Tea Party minions, the rapists, racists, gay bashers and sexual abusers are all part of the 99%, but they are definitely not with us).

Violence is not something we can choose or not choose

The Occupy Movement quickly comes up against the pepper spray and baton blows of the cops. What is violence? Ask the friends and family of all those who have been killed or sexually assaulted by cops or shot in the back for not paying a transit fare. Ask the prisoners who are on hunger strike across California, the homeless who try to find a place to sleep or a place to pee, the thousands who have gotten beaten up for protesting injustices, the young people of color who are constantly harassed and attacked by anti-gang task

forces, the sex workers abused and exploited by the cops.

Destroying and expropriating the property of the 1% is not violence. Violence is the shooting of Oscar Grant, of Charles Hill, of Kenneth Harding, and countless others. Violence is more than 1/3 of women who suffer sexual assault. In fact, violence is a *normal*, constant condition of capitalism. For the occupation movement, the first clear violence will come from the cops and resistance to these agents of repression is absolutely necessary. As someone said in Tahrir Square, “when the cops come to take your shit, you have to try to stop them.”

The square occupations in North Africa unleashed revolutions that toppled dictators and those in Europe brought global stock markets to the

brink of collapse. The difference here is obviously in the numbers; 50,000+ in Tahrir Square, 20,000 in Syntagma. Yet there was also something more. The strength of these occupations lied in their refusal to be removed, their commitment to physically resist any attempts to evict them from their liberated spaces. Remember the barricades around Tahrir? Non-violence made no sense during those long nights of fighting to protect the revolution. Here in the usa, we will also need to resist, in our own ways. By limiting the scope of that resistance right from the start, we undermine our potential strength and we let the state decide when we will be removed, when this explosion of resistance has gone too far and needs to be extinguished.

We need tens of thousands to take to the streets and build this move-

ment into something greater. But if the past weeks have taught us anything it is that clashes with the state do not scare people away. In fact it is the opposite. The numbers on Wall Street have clearly grown after each round of escalation and scuffles with police.

The potential of this movement. What do we really want?

We don't want shitty jobs. We don't want to vote for politicians who promise to change things. We don't want to waste our energies trying to change the constitution. We don't want a few new rules for Wall Street. We don't believe we can “affect the system” by just “being together.”

The 1% controls the wealth of the society. We need to take it back, and remake it in the process. But what comes after occupying the city squares? City Hall? Foreclosed homes? Supermarkets? And then – Liberating public transit? Free health clinics? Free education? Collective food production?

Everything is possible.

Postscript: Occupy Oakland

As we write this, we have no way of knowing whether the city-controlled Frank Ogawa Plaza will become occupied Oscar Grant Plaza, with all of the possibilities that entails. But we do know that if this occupation is to last and continue to grow beyond the first night, and if this movement is to

bring any fundamental change in the quality of our lives, it must be drastically different than any of the other Occupations around the country.

Oakland is currently under occupation by the police. The form of this occupation varies; the situation is much different in Temescal than in deep East Oakland. We live in a militarized space. Whether it's police executions of Black youth, police harassment of sex workers along International Boulevard, or the city council's racist legislation in the form of anti-loitering laws, gang injunctions or the suggested youth curfew, this *paramilitary occupation* is a project of local government to pacify and contain the city so capitalism can go about it's business uninterrupted.

But Oakland doesn't just have a violent, repressive contemporary situation; we have a vibrant history of struggle and resistance. From the 1946 General Strike to the formation of the Black Panther party in 1966 to the anti-police rebellion following the execution of Oscar Grant in 2009, Oakland has long been a city full of people that refuse to sit down and shut up. Despite every attempt by the state to kill that spirit, it lives on and will be out in full force over the coming days.

October 10, 2011

Source: <http://www.bayofrage.com/featured-articles/greedunityviolenc>



Plaza – Riot – Commune

We are the generation of the abandoned, the betrayed. Tossed up on the shores of the present by 150 years of failed insurrection, by the shipwreck of the workers' movement, the failure of a hundred political projects. But it is not only our once-upon-a-time friends who have departed. Today, even our enemies flee from us, even capital abandons us: no more its minimum promises, the right to be exploited, the right to sell one's labor power. Abandoned, we greet the world with utter abandon. There is no longer any possible adequacy of means and ends, no way of subordinating our actions to the rational or the practical. The present age of austerity means that even the most meager of demands require the social democrats to pick up bricks. Betrayed by democracy, betrayed by the technocrats of socialism, betrayed by the dumb idealism of anarchy, betrayed by the stolid fatalism of the communist ultraleft. We are not the 99%. We are not a fucking percentage at all. We do not count. If we have any power, it is because we are the enemies of all majority, enemies of "the people." As the old song goes, *we are nothing and must become everything*.

Though it is a key characteristic of capitalism that each generation of its victims has, in its way, considered its persistence beyond a few decades

unlikely if not preposterous, the difference between us and them is that in our case it just happens to be true. Now, not even capital's footservants can paint a convincing portrait of a future based upon markets and wages – all the sci-fi dystopias of flying cars and robot servants seem truly ridiculous. No, the future only presents as ruin, apocalypse, burning metal in the desert. It is easier to imagine the end of life on earth than our own old age.

This is why anxieties over the implicit statism of anti-austerity struggles are baseless. With the exception of a few benighted activists and media ideologues, everyone understands quite well that the Keynesian card was played long ago, blown on wars and bailouts, the victim of its own monstrous success. There will be no rebirth of the welfare state, no "reindustrialization" of society. This much is obvious: if there is an expansion of the state, it will be a proto-fascist austerity state. Nor is there any longer a "Left" in any meaningful sense, as a force that desires to manage the existing world on different terms, in the name of the workers or the people. Those radicals who, tired of the weakness of the loyal opposition, imagine themselves called upon to "destroy the left" find that their very existence is predicated upon this old, vanished enemy.

There is no Left left: only the great dispirited mass of the center, some wild and misdirected antagonism at the fringes.

The hopelessness of deflecting the state from its current course; the realization that even a slight reform of the system would require collective violence of a near revolutionary intensity; the attendant awareness that we would be idiots to go that distance and yet stop short of revolution – all of this gives many anti-austerity struggles a strange desperation and intensity. Our hope is to be found in this very hopelessness, in the fact that, in the current cycle of struggles, means have entirely dissociated from ends. Tactics no longer match with their stated objectives. In France, in response to a proposed change in the *retirement age*, high school students barricade their schools; roving blockades confuse the police; rioting fills city center after city center. In Britain and Italy, university struggles recruit tens of thousands of youth who have no hope of attending the university, nor any interest in doing so for that matter. There is no longer any possibility of a political calculus that matches ideas with tactics, thinking with doing. Do we suppose that French children are really concerned about what will happen to them once they are ready to retire? Does any young person expect the current social order to last that long? No, they are here to hasten things forward, hasten things toward collapse. Because it is easier to imagine the end

of the world than retirement. Because anything is better than this.

For the neo-Leninist *philosophes* who build their cults in the shells of the dying universities, such an impossibility of lining up means with ends is nothing but a barrier or block. Where is the revolutionary program in the Egyptian revolution, they ask, where is the program in the streets of Britain or Greece? Who will discipline these bodies for their final assault on the palaces and citadels? For such thinkers, only an idea can guarantee the efficacy of these bodies. Only an idea – the idea of communism, as some say – can make of these bodies a proper linkage between means and ends. But communism is not an idea nor an idealism – it means freeing bodies from their subordination to abstractions. Thankfully, we are skittish, faithless and flighty people. We have trouble listening. For us, communism will be material or it will be nothing. It will be a set of immediate practices, immediate satisfactions, or nothing. If we find discipline and organization, it will come from what we do, not what we think.

By "idea" the *philosophes* mean something like "the Party." They intend to make themselves and their ideas mean, as structure and social form. They intend to cement the old pact between the intelligentsia and the workers' movement. But there is no intelligentsia anymore and there certainly is no workers' movement to

speak of. The entire structure of duty and obligation – Christian in origin – upon which the classical programmatic parties were built no longer exists, because capital no longer needs morality for helpmeet. There is acting *for ourselves*; there is acting *with others*; but there is no sustained acting *for another*, out of obligation.

Our indiscipline means that among political ideas only the one idea which is, by its very nature, determined to remain an idea, an ideal, can gain any purchase here: *democracy*. From Tunisia to Egypt, from Spain to Greece, from Madison to Wall Street, again and again, the “movement of the squares” buckles under the dead weight of this shibboleth. *Democracy*, the name for the enchantment of the people by its own image, by its potential for endless deferral. *Democracy*, a decision-making process become political ontology, such that the form itself, the form of the decision, becomes its own content. *We democratically decide to be democratic! The people chooses itself!*

In the present era – the era of the austerity state and the unemployment economy – radical democracy finds its ideal locus in the metropolitan plaza or square. The plaza is the material embodiment of its ideals – an blank place for a blank form. Through the plaza, radical democracy hearkens back to its origin myth, the *agora*, the assembly-places of ancient Greece which also served as marketplaces (such that the phrase “I shop” and “I speak in public”

were nearly identical). These plazas are not, however, the buzzing markets filled with economic and social transaction, but clean-swept spaces, vast pours of concrete and nothingness, perhaps with a few fountains here or there. These are spaces set aside by the separation of the “political” from the economy, the market. Nowhere is this more clear than in the most recent episode of the “movement of squares” – Occupy Wall Street – which attempted, meekly and rather insincerely, to occupy the real agora, the real space of exchange, but ended up pushed into a small, decorative park on the outskirts of Wall Street, penned by police. This is what building the new world in the shell of the old means today – an assembly ringed by cops.

If there is hope in these manifestations, it lies in the forms of mutual aid that exist there, the experimentation people undertake in providing for their own needs. Already, we see how the occupations are forced against their self-imposed limits, brought into conflict with the police, despite the avowed pacificism of the participants. The plaza occupations – with all their contradictions – are one face of the present dissociation of means from ends. Or rather, they present a situation in which means are not so much expelled as sublimated, present as the object of a vague symbolization, such that the gatherings come to pre-enact or symbolize or prefigure some future moment of insurrection. At their worst, they are vast machines of deferral. At their best, they force their participants

toward actually seizing what they believe they are entitled to merely want.

How far we are from Egypt, the putative start of the sequence. There, the initial assembly was an act of symbolic violence, decidedly so, which everyone knew would open onto an encounter with the state and its force. And yet, even there, the separation from the economy – from the ways in which our needs are satisfied – remained inscribed into the revolution from the start. In other words, the Egyptian insurrection was not *deflected* to the sphere of the political but started there to begin with. And all of the other episodes in the so-called “movement of squares” repeat this primary dislocation, whether they remain hamstrung by pacifism and democratism, as in Spain, or press their demands in material form, as in Greece.

This brings the plaza occupations into relation not only with the entire development of orthodox Marxism, from Lenin through Mao, which places the conquest of state power front and center, but also its apparent opposite in this historical moment: the riots of Athens and London and Oakland, which, bearing the names of Oscar Grant, Alexis Grigoropoulos, or Mark Duggan, treat the police and state power as both cause and effect, provocation and object of rage. Though the looting which always accompanies such eruptions points the way to a more thorough expropriation, these riots, even though they seem the most immediate of antagonistic actions, are also bound by a kind of symbolization, the sym-

bolization of the negative, which says what it wants through a long litany, in letters of fire and broken glass, of what it does not want: *not this, not that*. We’ve seen their limits already, in Greece – even burning all of the banks and police stations was not enough. Even then, they came into a clearing, a plaza, swept clean by their own relentless negations, where negation itself was a limit. *What then? What will we do then? How do we continue?*

Between the plaza and the riot, between the most saccharine affirmation and the blackest negation – this is where we find ourselves. Two paths open for us: each one, in its way, a deflection from the burning heart of matter. On the one hand, the endless process of deliberation that must finally, in its narrowing down to a common denominator, arrive at the only single demand possible: a demand for what already is, a demand for the status quo. On the other hand, the desire that has no object, that finds nothing in the world which answers its cry of annihilation.

One fire dies out because it extinguishes its own fuel source. The other because it can find no fuel, no oxygen. In both cases, what is missing is a concrete movement toward the satisfaction of needs outside of wage and market, money and compulsion. The assembly becomes real, loses its merely theatrical character, once its discourse turns to the satisfaction of needs, once it moves to taking over homes and buildings, expropriating goods and equipment. In the same



A Message to the Partisans, in Advance of the General Strike

way, the riot finds that truly destroying the commodity and the state means creating a ground entirely inhospitable to such things, entirely inhospitable to work and domination. We do this by facilitating a situation in which there is, quite simply, *enough of what we need*, in which there is no call for “rationing” or “measure,” no requirement to commensurate what one person takes and what another contributes. This is the only way that an insurrection can survive, and ward off the reimposition of market, capital and state (or some other economic mode based upon class society and domination). The moment we prove ourselves incapable of meeting the needs of everyone – the young and the old, the healthy and infirm, the committed and the uncommitted– we create a situation where it is only a matter of time before people will accept the return of the old dominations. The task is quite simple, and it is monstrously difficult:

in a moment of crisis and breakdown, we must institute ways of meeting our needs and desires that depend neither on wages nor money, neither compulsory labor nor administrative decision, and we must do this while defending ourselves against all who stand in our way.

Research & Destroy, 2011

Source: <http://www.bayofrage.com/featured-articles/plazariotcommune/>

We are the consequence. Thus reads the poetry of the moment, spraypainted on the side of a dumpster-barricade outside of Occupy Oakland in the hours before it was besieged by hundreds of cops and destroyed. A threat, a promise, but more than that the phrase means that what is happening here in Oakland is not just a ephemeral explosion, not just another one of the twice-yearly riots that passes through the city like a comet. No, it is part of a sequence. There are consequences to the things we do. Our days are no longer a collection of mere happenstance and triviality, no longer a random distribution of inconsequential moments. Finally, what happens happens for a reason, even if from the perspective of the dominant order this reason appears as purest irrationality. Finally, what happens is what must happen, even if from the perspective of the dominant order this necessity appears as pure contingency. There are consequences. We are those consequences. We are the pure products of a political and economic system that can no longer guarantee for us even the mere survival upon which its own survival depends, that can’t even provide us with the unbearable jobs and mind-numbing schooling of decades past. Nor can the American state any longer guarantee social peace – not even if it could afford to imprison another

2 million people. The consequences have arrived. After orbiting the world as riots and general strikes, massive urban encampments and near-revolutions, those consequences have finally come home to the decaying US cities from which the crisis first emerged.

But we are more than simple symptoms of capitalism’s collapse. We are also the agents of consequence. We are the hinge between *if* and *then*. We are what makes what must happen happen. If we were driven to occupy Oscar Grant Plaza by the nature of the conditions, then it is also true that we did so intentionally, with clarity about our purposes, and with minimal equivocation. We established a space premised upon free giving and receiving rather than exchange, a space where anyone could find a meal or a tent, attend a workshop or political conversation, and, if they wanted, participate in the maintenance of the occupation in numerous different ways (though participation was never a requirement). We did this with open hostility to the cops and the city government, refusing their entreaties to negotiate on multiple occasion. Such a commune can only result from all kinds of care, attention, willfulness, decision and effort. This space was, in many regards, the opposite of the spontaneous. And yet, without an openness to the spontaneous, without a sensitivity to the or-



der of what happens – in other words, “material conditions” – it could never have come about. The crisis is the necessary but not the sufficient condition of the commune. When we tore down the fence the city erected to keep us from the returning to the plaza, we did so not only because we had to, not only because we wanted to, but because we chose to.

Curiously, nihilism has become the philosophical vogue among radicals at the precise historical moment when, for once, people can do things that actually matter. Of course, if you plays the odds, nihilism is the safest bet. Most of what we do doesn't matter. Chances are that capitalism will be succeeded by something as bad as it or worse or by centuries of total ruin. Furthermore, any sober assessment of the enemy and the state of those who have avowed their total opposition to the status quo can only lead one to conclude that any force ca-

pable of establishing some other way of living must emerge not as a result of willful, voluntary antagonism but in response to new historical developments, new “objective conditions” among people who are not now, in any sense, declared enemies of what exists. But what such a standpoint misses is that we are history, too. We are those objective conditions. This is why the moment of crisis is significant, because it is a moment when the spell of “objectivity” is broken, when the myriad apparatuses and institutions designed to ensure that what we do doesn't matter – from the police to the universities to the media – stop functioning, when they can no longer fulfill their task of neutralizing, displacing, misrepresenting or repressing antagonism. Crisis is the moment where what we do matters because the apparatuses for containing antagonism have failed. Because there are consequences.

Crisis is the condition. It is the conditional term in the proposition, the *if* phrase, but crisis is not itself capable of producing consequences, of turning an *if* into a *then*, a condition into a consequence. So many people – friends and strangers – who did what needed to be done, who recognized the opportunity! None of this just happens. It takes tremendous effort, preparation, intelligence. It is the fruit of years of conversations and friendships and projects. Though none of this will ever be acknowledged openly, and no names will be shared, each of us knows the dedication and ferocity and courage of our friends, as well as the incredible things done by people whose names we will never know. We know what it took: from the most mundane tasks to the most thrilling, all of it necessary.

Two years ago, “occupation” was adventurism or vanguardism, the suicidal plunge of the lunatic fringe that barricaded university buildings or rioted in the consumer corridors of university districts or marched insanely onto freeways. The signs read *we are the crisis* because we were, we were the first expression of a crisis become general, the insane children of an insane world. But now we are no longer merely the crisis. We have grown up; we have graduated (even those of us who never went to college or were already quite grown). *We are the consequence*. We have moved from the futureless universities into the presentless squares of our cities, from the sites of the formation of labor-power toward

the place of its circulation, and finally, with the general strike, the place of exploitation. Small though they were, those flares lit the way: they provided moments of theorization and practical elaboration which have pointed now, finally, to the centers of all our cities. The slogan *Occupy Everything*, once absurd, is now banal. Though occupation has up until now remained bound by semi-public property – university buildings and parks – the general strike now looming promises the possibility of taking occupation to private property itself. We can start taking the things we really want and need: the buildings we will need to survive the winter months, for example. There will be consequences to what we do on the November 2. Let's make them as brutal and beautiful as possible.

The Society of Enemies

November 1, 2011

Source: <http://www.indybay.org/newsitems/2011/11/01/18696540.php>

Cracks in the Glass Belated Reflection on Nov 2nd.

“A part of this bank belongs to me too, so this is a little piece that belongs to me and my family, and my people here. That’s why I want to keep this as a memory of today when the people of Oakland stood up against the banks”

Geraldo Dominguez uttered these words during the November 2nd Oakland General Strike in the foreground of a city in revolt. With his child near him an ABC 7 cameraperson managed to catch Mr. Dominguez collecting shards of broken glass in front of a recently destroyed Wells Fargo. In his hands he held the material memory of a day of intense and direct struggle. A day when thousands of people converged on downtown Oakland, snake marches shut down banks and business all over the city, thousands marched to one of the busiest ports in North America to shut it down, thousands celebrated the short lived occupation of a foreclosed building and downtown was imbued with a spirit of resistance well into the early hours of the next morning. By now the events of November 2nd have been analyzed and reflected upon by many. However, it is important to understand these events in the most honest terms, reflecting on the real content of the activity and the political configurations of Occupy Oakland that produced them. There is no better place to begin formulating

this understanding than with the Occupy Oakland General Assemblies.

From the very beginning the General Assembly of Occupy Oakland has been contentious political and logistical ground. As the main coordinating body of a decentralized and leaderless movement, the General Assembly has often acted to help facilitate logistical questions of the camp that are necessary to reproduce the space its self (i.e. the coordination of various internal committees, security, etc). There has never been one concrete political line for the whole of the Occupation. For this reason there have only been a few actions done in the name of Occupy Oakland but many done in relation to it. This formula has existed to constantly encourage autonomous actions within and outside of the camp that do not require consensus from the General Assembly. This has allowed for both infrastructure within the camp and political activity surrounding the occupation to take a life of its own, be completely decentralized, prevent cooption by small groups and breathe as many voices and actions into the movement as possible. Without the encouragement of autonomous activity and initiative not only would the camp its self not be so vibrant and politically relevant but November 2nd would not have been as successful as it was. The basic outline of November 2nd was

coordinated through the General Assembly as was the call to march on the Port of Oakland in solidarity with the ILWU and their struggle against EGT. However the snake marches through out the day, bank shutdowns, speakers, mini-rallies, the nighttime building occupation and other activity were not. It is both due to the impracticality of coordinating everything in a large General Assembly and also a reflection of a common understanding and sentiment that has been central to Occupy Oakland from the beginning: autonomous activity, actions and initiative are not only welcomed and encouraged but absolutely essential to the proper functioning, expansion and relevance of Occupy Oakland. The centrality of autonomous activity has been reflected in the variety of positions, sentiments and forms of activity that have circulated through the Occupy Oakland encampment since it’s beginning. These various sentiments and forms have influenced the direction of the camp as a whole in different ways. Since the beginning many anti-capitalist, anarchist and other militant ideas have been integral in all areas of the camp. This has separated Occupy Oakland from other occupations around the country. For example, where as in Zucotti Park at Occupy Wall Street the police presence is constant around the periphery, at Oscar Grant Plaza from day one the police were not allowed anywhere near the camp. Multiple times since the camp’s inception police have attempted to come into the camp and solidify a presence to control and moni-

tor the situation. Every single time this happened groups of anywhere from 20 to 100 people virulently and bombastically forced the police to leave. It was quickly understood that the police were not welcome at any time and their presence would produce a response from the camp. During one of the first general assemblies it was officially decided that no politicians or political parties were allowed in the camp nor would they be supported or endorsed by Occupy Oakland. Weeks before the Occupation began Democratic Party front group Moveon.org organized a labor rally and march in the plaza. They had scheduled the mayors of Berkeley and Richmond to speak. Upon learning this information the General Assembly immediately decided that it would not allow these politicians to speak at the rally and forced Moveon .org to relocate their speeches elsewhere. In another situation the City of Oakland attempted to subvert the aims of the camp by criticizing the Occupation on many fronts. Everything from tents to the kitchen became points of criticism and used to justify the immediate termination of the camp. When a letter from the city expressed this it was set aflame on stage during a General Assembly. In another situation a few days after the militaristic police raid on Oscar Grant Plaza Jean Quan herself tried to speak at a General Assembly after the initial time for speakers was over. She was immediately booed off the stage and chased back into City Hall. With all of these actions and others alongside the

brutal actions of the police, Occupy Oakland became the frontrunner of the entire Occupy movement pushing it in ever more radical directions eventually resulting in the call for a General Strike on Nov. 2nd.

During the General Strike an anti-capitalist march was called for to meet at Telegraph and Broadway at 2pm. This march was attended by over two thousand people and was a product of autonomous initiative. While it was not called for by the General Assembly it was attended en masse and was intended to be in solidarity with Occupy Oakland, against the police, and demonstrate a political will antagonistic to capitalism its self and taking inspiration from the political culture brewing in Occupy Oakland. During this march individuals took it upon themselves to directly attack banks and the Oakland Whole Foods. The banks have been on the receiving end of criticism and one of the main targets of discontent for the entire Occupy movement. Whole Foods is a product of gentrification in Oakland, a symbol of pacifying green-capitalist consumer politics and also, it was reported, planned on taking punitive action against any workers who attended the strike. It was during this march that differing tactical positions were explored than had been at snake marches and bank shut downs earlier in the day. These tactics included sabotage and property destruction. Certain tactical choices made on a march autonomously called for outside of the General Assembly were decisions made by participants in a

specific situation. This is no deviation away from the basic formula for how tactical decisions had been made in the past – those present in the situation decided to act how they felt it would be appropriate to act. Those people in the march who attempted to physically restrain others tactical decisions acted as authoritarian as the police themselves. Those who engaged in direct attacks on the banks and Whole Foods were not a “fringe element” or acting in contradiction to the motives and aims of Occupy Oakland. They were as much a part of it as those who sit in front of the police upon their encroachment or those wanting permits for demonstrations. They are not on the periphery of another wise “peaceful movement” – they are an integral component tactically, strategically and politically. During the march it was not uncommon to hear cheers and see jubilant smiles by many at the sound of a bank being destroyed. It was as though those in attendance saw the impossible before their eyes – people actually fighting back. To say that this activity was a deviation forgets the principles and logic upon which tactical and strategic decisions through out Occupy Oakland had been made – autonomously.

Another autonomous act that took place on the 2nd was the occupation of a foreclosed building on 16th street in the evening hours. By the time the march from the Port had returned people had taken it upon themselves to occupy a building that once housed a myriad of social services. While this

act its self was not (and did not have to be) passed by the General Assembly it came in the wake of an initiative passed by the General Assembly a few days prior. This resolution committed to materially and politically supporting any occupations that were to occur in Oakland and beyond. This lends a certain political continuity between the General Assembly and the building occupation – those who acted were acting both autonomously and in direct line with the political content of the Occupation its self. This occupation also expanded Occupy Oakland from being held just within the parameters of a plaza into other locations of social life thus increasing the contentious political and strategic content of the movement its self. The space was intended to house workshops, a library and more occupiers. It also was supposed to undermine the authoritarian social relations of capitalism predicated on private property and the state. The state becomes irrelevant when people in large numbers provide for one another and do not allow any room for the state to promise their own services. By taking over this building people collectively bit the hand that feeds because that with enough initiative at the right moment the state and capital fade into irrelevance. It is with this material acknowledgement that those in the building intended to stage and continue with political attacks. Realizing this the police began to assemble and move in to both quell and stop the situation before it continued. It must be reiterated that this action was

autonomously organized and in line with a resolution passed by the General Assembly and was not a deviation from other escalatory autonomous activity through out November 2nd.

Upon learning that the police were advancing, barricades made of garbage bins, tires, pallets and other debris were quickly erected on both sides of 16th. The intention of the police operation was to prevent the expansion of the Occupation outside of the plaza. The intention of the barricades was to defend the newly acquired space and make police advancement more difficult. As they moved forward scuffles began between those in the streets and the police. As a form of self-defense a barricade at 16th and Telegraph was lit aflame. The police attacked people, injuring and arresting many. The space was lost however the struggle in the street showed that it would not be taken away without a fight.

After the police solidified their lines at each of the barricades and forced people out of the newly acquired social space a large and diverse crowd retaliated in downtown Oakland. Various businesses were looted, covered in spray paint or attacked. This was not random but the product of a direct police advancement and threat. 14th and Broadway became the epicenter of an earthquake, with redecorated walls, and shattered glass all under a banner that read “Death to Capitalism”. These acts were not merely acts of naïve destruction for its own sake. They were expressions of anger and resistance that cannot be contained within the

formula of a march and three word chants. They were an explosive reaction against this society in an attempt to reclaim and recreate everything that has been stolen. Through material destruction and the fire of burning barricades the ashes and debris of this society began to, if even for just a night, reconstruct the world anew.

November 2nd showed the world what is coming. The terrain of unemployment, gang injunctions, school and library closures, a murderous police force and poverty gave birth to the radical essence of Occupy Oakland. Building occupations alongside struggles with the police will not be unique to Oakland for long – they are the beginning of what is to come. It is because this society cannot provide that these measures are not merely coming from a political consciousness but out of direct material necessity. It is this necessity, so apparent here in Oakland, for housing, food and protection from the police that has made Occupy Oakland everything it is. As these conditions continue to spread in ways as of now unseen, so too will resistance to them. Buildings will be occupied. Police will be fought. Banks will be attacked. From broken glass to abandoned buildings everything will be reclaimed.

Geraldo Dominguez held in his hands the broken pieces of a world stolen from all of us, of a broken society constituting the foundation for something else. A society of profits, value and property that we create but cannot hold, that we produce but cannot touch. That is ours

but so far away. This separation is the reason that spaces and buildings are occupied in the first place – it is through occupation and reclamation that we can take back our lives from a system predicated on separation in all areas of life. Mr. Dominguez held pieces of glass that stood as an omnipresent reminder of this separation until they shattered on the ground. It is then that they became a memory of struggle, a piece of history, a broken looking glass capable of staring into a world of possibility. November 2nd was a day he and all of us could see clearly through the cracks in the glass.

December 5,2011

Source: <http://www.bayofrage.com/from-the-bay/cracks-in-the-glass-bellated-reflection-on-nov-2nd/>

Blockading the Port Is Only The First of Many Last Resorts

By any reasonable measure, the November 2 general strike was a grand success. The day was certainly the most significant moment of the season of Occupy, and signaled the possibility of a new direction for the occupations, away from vague, self-reflexive democratism and toward open confrontation with the state and capital. At a local level, as a response to the first raid on the encampment, the strike showed Occupy Oakland capable of expanding while defending itself, organizing its own maintenance while at the same time directly attacking its enemy. This is what it means to refer to the encampment and its participants as the Oakland Commune, even if a true commune is only possible on the other side of insurrection.

Looking over the day's events it is clear that without the shutdown of the port this would not have been a general strike at all but rather a particularly powerful day of action. The tens of thousands of people who marched into the port surpassed all estimates. Neighbors, co-workers, relatives – one saw all kinds of people there who had never expressed any interest in such events, whose political activity had been limited to some angry mumbling at the television set and a yearly or biyearly trip to the voting booth. It was as if the entire population of the Bay Area had been transferred to

some weird industrial purgatory, there to wander and wonder and encounter itself and its powers.

Now we have the chance to blockade the ports once again, on December 12, in conjunction with occupiers up and down the west coast. Already Los Angeles, San Diego, Portland, Tacoma, Seattle, Vancouver and even Anchorage have agreed to blockade their respective ports. These are exciting events, for sure. Now that many of the major encampments in the US have been cleared, we need an event like this to keep the sequence going through the winter months and provide a reference point for future manifestations. For reasons that will be explained shortly, we believe that actions like this – direct actions that focus on the circulation of capital, rather than its production – will play a major role in the inevitable uprisings and insurrections of the coming years, at least in the postindustrial countries. The confluence of this tactic with the ongoing attempts to directly expropriate abandoned buildings could transform the Occupy movement into something truly threatening to the present order. But in our view, many comrades continue thinking about these actions as essentially continuous with the class struggle of the twentieth century and the industrial age, never adequately remarking on how little the postindus-

trial Oakland General Strike of 2011 resembles the Oakland General Strike of 1946.

The placeless place of circulation

The shipping industry (and shipping in general) has long been one of the most important sectors for capital, and one of the privileged sites of class struggle. Capitalism essentially develops and spreads within the matrix of the great mercantile, colonialist and imperial experiments of post-medieval Europe, all of which are predicated upon sailors, ships and trade routes. But by the time that capitalism comes into view as a new social system in the 19th century the most important engine of accumulation is no longer trade itself, but the introduction of labor-saving technology into the production process. Superprofits achieved through mechanized production are funneled back into the development and purchase of new production machinery, not to mention the vast, infernal infrastructural projects this industrial system requires: mines and railways, highways and electricity plants, vast urban pours of wood, stone, concrete and metal as the metropolitan centers spread and absorb people expelled from the countryside. But by the 1970s, just as various futurologists and social forecasters were predicting a completely automated society of superabundance, the technologically-driven accumulation cycle was coming to an end. Labor-saving technology is double-edged

for capital. Even though it temporarily allows for the extraction of enormous profits, the fact that capital treats laboring bodies as the foundation of its own wealth means that over the long term the expulsion of more and more people from the workplace eventually comes to undermine capital's own conditions of survival. Of course, one of the starkest horrors of capitalism is that capital's conditions of survival are also our own, no matter our hatred. Directly or indirectly, each of us is dependent on the wage and the market for our survival.

From the 1970s on, one of capital's responses to the reproduction crisis has been to shift its focus from the sites of production to the (non)sites of circulation. Once the introduction of labor-saving technology into the production of goods no longer generated substantial profits, firms focused on speeding up and more cheaply circulating both commodity capital (in the case of the shipping, wholesaling and retailing industries) and money capital (in the case of banking). Such restructuring is a big part of what is often termed "neoliberalism" or "globalization," modes of accumulation in which the shipping industry and globally-distributed supply chains assume a new primacy. The invention of the shipping container and container ship is analogous, in this way, to the reinvention of derivatives trading in the 1970s – a technical intervention which multiplies the volume of capital in circulation several times over.

This is why the general strike on Nov. 2 appeared as it did, not as the voluntary withdrawal of labor from large factories and the like (where so few of us work), but rather as masses of people who work in unorganized workplaces, who are unemployed or underemployed or precarious in one way or another, converging on the chokepoints of capital flow. Where workers in large workplaces –the ports, for instance– did withdraw their labor, this occurred after the fact of an intervention by an extrinsic proletariat. In such a situation, the flying picket, originally developed as a secondary instrument of solidarity, becomes the primary mechanism of the strike. If postindustrial capital focuses on the seaways and highways, the streets and the mall, focuses on accelerating and volatilizing its networked flows, then its antagonists will also need to be mobile and multiple. In November 2010, during the French general strike, we saw how a couple dozen flying pickets could effectively bring a city of millions to a halt. Such mobile blockades are the technique for an age and place in which production has been offshored, an age in which most of us work, if we work at all, in small and unorganized workplaces devoted to the transport, distribution, administration and sale of goods produced elsewhere.

Like the financial system which is its warped mirror, the present system for circulating commodities is incredibly brittle. Complex, computerized supply-chains based on just-in-time

production models have reduced the need for warehouses and depots. This often means that workplaces and retailers have less than a day's reserves on hand, and rely on the constant arrival of new shipments. A few tactical interventions – at major ports, for instance – could bring an entire economy to its knees. This is obviously a problem for us as much as it is a problem for capital: the brittleness of the economy means that while it is easy for us to blockade the instruments of our own oppression, nowhere do we have access to the things that could replace it. There are few workplaces that we can take over and use to begin producing the things we need. We could take over the port and continue to import the things we need, but it's nearly impossible to imagine doing so without maintaining the violence of the economy at present.

Power to the vagabonds and therefore to no class

This brings us to a very important aspect of the present moment, already touched on above. The subject of the "strike" is no longer the working class as such, though workers are always involved. The strike no longer appears only as the voluntary withdrawal of labor from a workplace by those employed there, but as the blockade, suppression (or even sabotage or destruction) of that workplace by proletarians who are alien to it, and perhaps to wage-labor entirely. We need to jettison our ideas about the "proper"

subjects of the strike or class struggle. Though it is always preferable and sometimes necessary to gain workers' support in order to shut down a particular workplace, it is not absolutely necessary, and we must admit that ideas about who has the right to strike or blockade a particular workplace are simply extensions of the law of property. If the historical general strikes involved the coordinated striking of large workplaces, around which "the masses," including students, women who did unwaged housework, the unemployed and lumpenproletarians of the informal sector eventually gathered to form a generalized offensive against capital, here the causality is precisely reversed. It has gone curiously unremarked that the encampments of the Occupy movement, while claiming themselves the essential manifestations of some vast hypermajority – the 99% – are formed in large part from the ranks of the homeless and the jobless, even if a more demographically diverse group fills them out during rallies and marches. That a group like this – with few ties to organized labor – could call for and successfully organize a General Strike should tell us something about how different the world of 2011 is from that of 1946.

We find it helpful here to distinguish between the working class and the proletariat. Though many of us are both members of the working class and proletarians, these terms do not necessarily mean the same thing. The working class is defined by work,

by the fact that it works. It is defined by the wage, on the one hand, and its capacity to produce value on the other. But the proletariat is defined by propertylessness. In Rome, *proletarius* was the name for someone who owned no property save his own offspring and himself, and frequently sold both into slavery as a result. Proletarians are those who are "without reserves" and therefore dependent upon the wage and capital. They have "nothing to sell except their own skins." The important point to make here is that not all proletarians are working-class, since not all proletarians work for a wage. As the crisis of capitalism intensifies, such "wageless life" becomes more and more the norm. Of course, exploitation requires dispossession. These two terms name inextricable aspects of the conditions of life under the domination of capital, and even the proletarians who don't work depend upon those who do, in direct and indirect ways.

The point, for us, is that certain struggles tend to emphasize one or the other of these aspects. Struggles that emphasize the fact of exploitation – its unfairness, its brutality – and seek to ameliorate the terms and character of labor in capitalism, take the working-class as their subject. On the other hand, struggles that emphasize dispossession and the very fact of class, seeking to abolish the difference between those who are "without reserves" and everyone else, take as their subject the proletariat as such. Because of the restructuring of the



economy and weakness of labor, present-day struggles have no choice but to become proletarian struggles, however much they dress themselves up in the language and weaponry of a defeated working class. This is why the Occupy movement, even as much as it mumbles vaguely about the weakest of redistributionary measures – taxing the banks, for instance – refuses to issue any demands. There are no demands to make. Worker's struggles these days tend to have few objects besides the preservation of jobs or the preservation of union contracts. They struggle to preserve the right to be exploited, the right to a wage, rather than for any expansion of pay and benefits. The power of the Occupy movement so far – despite the weakness of its discourse – is that

it points in the direction of a proletarian struggle in which, instead of vainly petitioning the assorted rulers of the world, people begin to directly take the things they need to survive. Rather than an attempt to readjust the balance between the 99% and the 1%, such a struggle might be about people directly providing for themselves at a time when capital and the state can no longer provide for them.

Twilight of the unions

This brings us finally to the question of the unions, the ILWU in particular, its locals, and the rank-and-file port workers. Port workers in the US have an enormously radical history, participating in or instigating some of the most significant episodes in US

labor history, from the Seattle General strike of 1919, to the battles on the San Francisco waterfront in 1934 and the sympathy strikes that spread up and down the coast. The ferocious actions by port workers in Longview, Washington – attempting to fight off the incursion of non-ILWU grain exporter EGT – recall this history in vivid detail. Wildcatting, blockading trains and emptying them of their cargo, fighting off the cops brought in to restore the orderly loading and unloading of cargo – the port workers in Longview remind us of the best of the labor movement, its unmediated conflict with capital. We expect to see more actions like this in this new era of austerity, unemployment and riot. Still, our excitement at the courage of Longview workers should not blind us to the place of this struggle in the current crisis of capitalism. We do not

think that these actions point to some revitalization of radical unionism, but rather indicate a real crisis in the established forms of class struggle. They point to a moment in which even the most meager demands become impossible to win. These conditions of impossibility will have a radicalizing effect, but not in the way that many expect it to. They will bring us allies in the workers at Longview and elsewhere but not in the way many expect.

Though they employ the tactics of the historical workers' movement at its most radical, the content of the Longview struggle is quite different: they are not fighting for any expansions of pay or benefits, or attempting to unionize new workplaces, but merely to preserve their union's jurisdictional rights. It is a defensive struggle, in the same way that the Madison, Wisconsin



sin capitol occupation was a defensive struggle – a fight undertaken to preserve the dubious legally-enshrined rights to collectively bargain. These are fights for the survival of unions as such, in an era in which unions have no real wind in their sails, at their best seeking to keep a floor below falling wages, at their worst collaborating with the bosses to quietly sell out workers. This is not to malign the actions of the workers themselves or their participation in such struggles – one can no more choose to participate in a fight for one's survival than one can choose to breathe, and sometimes such actions can become explosive trigger points that ignite a generalized antagonism. But we should be honest about the limits of these fights, and seek to push beyond them where possible. Too often, it seems as if we rely on a sentimental workerism, acting as if our alliance with port workers will restore to us some lost authenticity.

Let's remember that, in the present instance, the initiative is coming from outside the port and from outside the workers' movement as such, even though it involves workers and unions. For the most part, the initiative here has come from a motley band of people who work in non-unionized workplaces, or (for good reason) hate their unions, or work part-time or have no jobs at all. Alliances are important. We should be out there talking to truck drivers and crane operators and explaining the blockade, but that does not mean blindly following the recommendations of ILWU Local 10. For

instance, we have been told time and again that, in order to blockade the port, we need to go to each and every berth, spreading out thousands of people into several groups over a distance of a few miles. This is because, under the system that ILWU has worked out with the employers' association, only a picket line at the gates to the port itself will allow the local arbitrator to rule conditions at the port unsafe, and therefore provide the workers with legal protection against unpermitted work action. In such a situation we are not really blockading the port. We are participating in a two-act play, a piece of legal theater, performed for the benefit of the arbitrator.

If this arbitration game is the only way we can avoid violent conflict with the port workers, then perhaps this is the way things have to be for the time being. But we find it more than depressing how little reflection there has been about this strategy, how little criticism of it, and how many people seem to reflexively accept the necessity of going through these motions. There are two reasons why this charade is problematic. For one, we must remember that the insertion of state-sanctioned forms of mediation and arbitration into the class struggle, the domestication of the class struggle by a vast legal apparatus, is the chief mechanism by which unions have been made into the helpmeet of capital, their monopoly over labor power an ideal partner for capital's monopoly over the means of production. Under such a system, trade unions not

only make sure that the system produces a working-class with sufficient purchasing power (something that is less and less possible these days, except by way of credit) but also ensure that class antagonism finds only state-approved outlets, passing through the bureaucratic filter of the union and its legal apparatus, which says when, how, and why workers can act in their own benefit. This is what “arbitration” means.

Secondly, examined from a tactical position, putting us blockaders in small, stationary groups spread out over miles of roads leaves us in a very poor position to resist a police assault. As many have noted, it would be much easier to blockade the port by closing off the two main entrances to the port area— at Third and Adeline and Maritime and West Grand. Thousands of people at each of these intersections could completely shut down all traffic into the port, and these groups could be much more easily reinforced and provided with provisions (it’s easier to get food, water, and reinforcements to these locations.) There is now substantial interest in extending the blockade past one shift, changing it from a temporary nuisance to something that might seriously affect the reproduction of capital in the Bay Area given the abovementioned reliance on just-in-time production. But doing so will likely bring a police attack. Therefore, in order to blockade the port with legal-theatrical means we sacrifice our ability – quite within reach – to blockade it materially. We

allow ourselves to be deflected to a tactically-weak position on the plane of the symbolic.

The coming intensification of struggles both inside and outside the workplace will find no success in attempting to revitalize the moribund unions. Workers will need to participate in the same kinds of direct actions – occupations, blockades, sabotage – that have proven the highlights of the Occupy movement in the Bay Area. When tens of thousands of people marched to the port of Oakland on November 2nd in order to shut it down, by and large they did not do it to defend the jurisdiction of the ILWU, or to take a stand against union-busting (most people were, it appears, ignorant of these contexts). They did it because they hate the present-day economy, because they hate capitalism, and because the ports are one of the most obvious linkages in the web of misery in which we are all caught. Let’s recognize this antagonism for what it is, and not dress it up in the costumes and ideologies of a bygone world.

Society of Enemies

Dezember 2011

Source: <http://www.bayofrage.com/from-the-bay/blockading-the-port-is-only-the-first-of-many-last-resorts/>

The ANTI-CAPITALIST MARCH and the BLACK BLOC

In addition to the marches called for by the General Assembly of the Oakland Commune, several marches were organized outside the formal processes at Oscar Grant Plaza. The organization of this, and other “unofficial” actions throughout the day is a point to be celebrated: the GA has consistently emphasized autonomous action and the strike has to be seen as a success in opening space for such autonomous activity. Most significant of these was the march that departed from the intersection of Broadway and Telegraph at 2 p.m. This march had been anonymously called as an *anti-capitalist march*. Both the poster

promoting the march and the banner at its front boldly proclaimed “if we cannot live, we will not work; general strike!” An accompanying banner declared “this is class war.” This messaging of the march matched its stated intention and its subsequent action: to shut down those businesses and banks that remained open despite the strike (a promise it would make good on).

The small concrete triangle at the intersection of Broadway and Telegraph has great significance in the recent and long-past history of the struggle against class society in Oakland. In 1946, this intersection was the stage for the opening act of what



would be the last General Strike in the United States before Wednesday. More recently, anarchists and anti-state communists in the Bay Area have used the intersection as a staging point for a series of three anti-capitalist processions in downtown Oakland. Named *anticuts*, these marches were a conscious attempt by anti-capitalists to carve out (anti)political space in Oakland from which to begin a non-statist / non-reformist response to the financial crisis, in the absence of any foreseeable social movement in the States. Each one beginning at Broadway and Telegraph, these three marches took to the streets of Oakland and took as their objects certain focal points of hate in downtown: particularly the jail and certain highly visible banking institution, but also the police whenever they came into conflict with demonstrators. To the extent that the intention of this sequence was to claim space for and build the offensive capacity of anti-capitalists in the Bay Area, the anti-capitalist march during the general strike proved this initial sequence to be a success. Noise demonstrations have returned to the jail several times through the course of the occupation, each communicating louder and more fiercely to the prisoners than the march before. However, it was specifically the downtown banks that attracted the ire of this particular march. The anti-capitalist march on November 2nd must then be understood within a continuum through time; it must be seen as the emboldened and enraged continuation

of a communizing thread which aims to collectively claim and determine space within the city of Oakland.

Any reading of recent anti-capitalist street endeavors in the Bay Area also offers another discreet lesson to the students of social struggle: *come materially prepared for the conflict you wish to see*. Following this analysis, one could read this march as highly conflictual based solely on the obvious material preparations that went into it. From the outside, one could see that the march was equipped with two rather large reinforced banners at the lead, scores of black flags on hefty sticks, dozens of motorcycle helmets, and the now familiar book shields. Add to this the anonymity afforded by hundreds wearing masks and matching colors, and there is no question that these demonstrators came to *set it off* that afternoon. The black-clad combatants at the front of this march would retroactively be referred to with much notoriety as the black bloc, though this is perhaps a backwards reading of the events of the day. Rather than a coherent subject group or organization that set out to offer a singular political position, this tactical formation should instead be thought of as a void, a subjective black-hole where those who shared a similar disposition could be drawn to one another for protection and amplification. The so-called black bloc forcefully asserted a desirable situation for those who wanted to accomplish outlaw tasks despite repressive state apparatuses. Many will question the metaphysical

implications or the contemporary efficacy of this particular form of making destroy. Yet regardless, it is important to emphasize that in the context of efforts to openly attack capitalist institutions in the face of intense surveillance, concealing your identity and rolling with friends will continue to be the best tactic. Additionally, this effort further expands the intention of anti-capitalist space in the bay area, offering a way for social rebels to find one another and act in concert.

Toward this end, the anti-capitalist march was quite successful in heightening the conflict in the streets of Oakland during the general strike. To the pleasure of a great majority of the several hundred demonstrators, an active minority within the march set about attacking a series of targets: Chase Bank, Bank of America, Wells Fargo, Whole Foods, the UC Office of the President. Each was beset by a stormcloud of hammers, paint bombs, rocks, black flags and fire-extinguishers loaded with paint. The choice of these targets seems intuitive to anyone attuned to the political climate of Oakland. The banks attacked are responsible for tens of thousands of foreclosures in Oakland alone, as well as the imprisonment of Oaklanders through the funding of private prisons and immigrant detention. Whole Foods, in addition to its daily capitalist machinations, had purportedly threatened its workers with repercussions if they'd chosen to strike. UCOP, besides being the headquarters for the disgusting cabal that rules the UC sys-

tem, was rumored to be the day's base of operations for OPD and its cronies. Despite any number of reasons to destroy these places, the remarkable point of these attacks was that no justification was necessary. As each pane of glass fell to the floor and each ATM was put out of service, cheers would consistently erupt. Foregoing demands of their enemies, demonstrators made demands of one another, shouting *wreck the property of the one percent! and occupy / shut it down / Oakland doesn't fuck around!* In 1999, at the height of neoliberal prosperity, participants in the black bloc at the Seattle WTO summit issued a communique detailing the crimes of their targets. A dozen years and a worldwide crisis later, such an indictment would seem silly. Everyone hates these places.. This isn't to say that there wasn't conflict over these smashings. A small, yet dedicated group of morons set about trying hopelessly to defend the property of their masters. In the name of non-violence, these thuggish pacifists assaulted demonstrators and sought to re-establish peace on the streets. Thankfully, these people were as outnumbered and ill-coordinated as they are irrelevant. Chair fights and brawls ensued, but each skirmish concluded with the hooded ones and their comrades on top. The anti-capitalist march and the formations that comprised it, should also be looked to as a practical means of neutralizing and marginalizing such peace police as well as the plain-clothed officers who fight at their side.

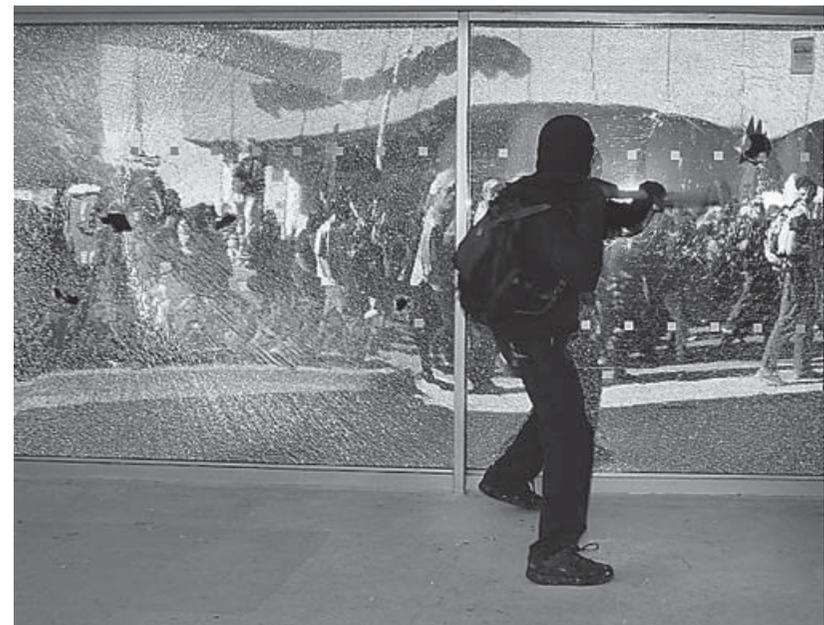
Property destruction is not a new element for the Oakland Commune. In the weeks prior to the anti-capitalist march, the property of various police entities were attacked by communards several times: an anonymous communique claimed an attack on an unmarked police cruiser parked near the plaza; the riot following the eviction of Oscar Grant Plaza took a few more cop cars as its victim; a march against police brutality, days later, smashed the windows at OPD's recruiting station next to City Hall. The destruction of the anti-capitalist march is set apart from these incidents for a handful of noteworthy reasons. Firstly, this demonstration marked the first large and coordinated act of collective destruction by the nascent Occupy movement. For a movement that fetishizes re-written narratives of non-violence in the Arab Spring, this event served as an act of forced memory. Clandestine attacks, however lovely, have a tendency to be overlooked, whereas hundreds of masked individuals comprising a march that makes destroy cannot so easily be ignored. Secondly, this symphony of wreckage marked a turning point in the naughty behavior of the occupations. Rather than reacting to police provocations (and in doing so feeding certain narratives about what justifies destruction) the demonstrators of the anti-capitalist march determined to take the initiative and the offensive in smashing their enemies without waiting to be gassed and beaten first. In doing so, they concretely refused the pacifist

ideology of victimization that characterizes the dominant discourse of policing and violence. Lastly, in specifically targeting the dreaded banks and corporations, so hated by the occupation movement, these attacks served to equip the movement with the teeth it had previously been missing. Not only do these people hate the banks, they'll actually make concrete attacks against the institutions they hate.

For enemies of capital, the shattering of bank windows and the sabotage of ATM machinery is beautiful in and of itself. It is intuitive that wrecking the property of financial institutions and forcing their closure is desirable. Some will argue that plate glass can be replaced and that any business closed by these actions would likely re-open the next day. This line of criticism isn't wrong on the face of it, but it often misses a certain set of implications at the center of chaotic episodes such as this. For those seeking to destroy class society, chaos itself must be seen as a primary strategy at our disposal. Theorists of social control often cite the *broken window theory*: a way to describe the phenomena where the introduction of disorder to an otherwise perfectly ordered environment begets and creates space for further disorder. At the heart of this theory of governance is the understanding that biopolitical government must treat any interruption of order as a threat to order as a totality. Put another way, this violence against the facades of these capitalist institutions is damaging to said institutions in a manner far

more grave than the cost of a few windows or the lost labor time. Rather, this activity sends signals of disorder pulsing through the imperial system. In the way that a broken window indicates the instability of an environment, the concerted efforts to smash the windows of various banks signals a coming wave of violence against the existent social order and its fiscal management. In the same way, attacks on police apparatuses signal the coming of far greater confrontations with the institution of policing. In a system as future-oriented and perception-driven as capitalism, this type of perceived disorder is catastrophic to investor confidence and to the key functions of the market. One need only look to the Eurozone to see the way in which anti-austerity revolt is intrinsically tied to

the collapse of any illusion of security or confidence in the capitalist mode of production. Last year, blackclad haters in London smashed windows and attacked banks during a UK Uncut day of action. Months later, dispossessed people all over the England set about burning police cars, attacking police stations, looting stores and generally expropriating a future they were totally excluded from. Though the professional activists of UK Uncut were quick to distance themselves from the rioting in London, nobody was fooled. The actions of vandals during the UK Uncut events demonstrated that the crisis had arrived; that disorder was about to unfold. The left bewailed the nihilistic elements who had 'infiltrated' 'their protest', either anarchists intent on destruction or hooligans out



to get theirs. When in subsequent months, massive segments of London's underbelly rose up against their daily misery, they confirmed the fears of the bourgeoisie; the war was at their front door. In Greece and now in Italy, the violence of insurrectionaries in the streets corresponds to the chaos tearing through the countries' economies. In each of these events, the reality that there is no future comes tearing into the present. To quote comrades in Mexico, *chaos has returned, for those who thought she had died!*

One can already see this instability rending its way through Oakland. The business leaders of the city are all too aware of the implications of this sort of anti-capitalist activity in the East Bay. In the days following the strike, bureaucrats from Oakland's Chamber of Commerce went to City Hall to wring their hands about the previous day's destruction. According to them, three businesses had already withdrawn from contractual discussions about opening their doors in downtown Oakland. Another downtown business association, comprised primarily of banking institutions and corporate investors, bewailed the existence of the Commune. They asserted that the activities of the occupation and the strike were causing a great deal of damage to Oakland's business community and that many "local businesses" wouldn't survive another month of its existence. Clearly it is wrong to locate a month of anti-capitalist activity as the cause of financial crisis in the town, but there

is a truth buried beneath their denial. These events in Oakland cannot be conceived of outside the context of the crisis as it unfolds. By the same logic, the activities of Oakland communards cannot be separated from the social conflict which propels them and of which they are but a small part. Almost two years ago, social rebels in the Bay Area locked themselves into university buildings and ran blindly onto freeway overpasses declaring *OCCUPY EVERYTHING* and *WE ARE THE CRISIS*. The former slogan has become a self-fulfilling prophesy. Perhaps the latter is coming to fruition as well.

FIRST NOTE: WE ARE NOT PEACEFUL

Predictably, dogmatic pacifists responded to the vandalism and fighting by screaming *PEACEFUL PROTEST* and *NON-VIOLENCE*. The majority of demonstrators responded by taking up the chant, *WE ARE NOT PEACEFUL*. Since the strike, this particular conflict has played out in innumerable discussions. In each case, the meaning and efficacy of 'violence' is drawn out and debated *ad nauseum*. In the skirmishes between occupiers and university police that played out the following week on University of California campuses, this discourse surrounding violence escalated to pure absurdity. After UC police beat protesters on the UC Berkeley campus, police and university officials declared that such beatings were in

fact not violent, while those students who linked arms in the face of police assault had themselves committed a violent act. Within the logic of power, force dealt out by police batons is not violent, while solidarity and care in the face of such force is violent. In the clearest way possible, this tragedy-comedy demonstrates precisely why it serves us to avoid discussions of non-violence. Violence will always be defined by Power. Those who resist will be labeled violent, regardless of their conduct. Likewise, brutality at the hands of those servants of Power will always be invisible.

There is an intelligence in this declaration against peace, but it cannot be reduced to this or that position on violence. Any attempt to define violence will always fall back upon abstraction. Any attempt to deploy such a definition is always already useless. Rather than being for or against violence, it behooves us to instead position ourselves against peace. In defining peace, let's avoid abstraction. We can name every miserable element of the daily function of capital as peace. Peace is our terrible jobs, our lack of a job, our workplace injuries, the time stolen from us and the labor we'll never get back. Peace is being thrown out of our homes and freezing on the streets. Peace is when police officers kill us in cold blood on train platforms and in our neighborhoods. Peace is racism, transphobia, misogyny and anti-queer attacks. Peace is immigrant detention and prison slavery. When the apologists for class society

declare their intentions to be peaceful, we understand as their desire for the perpetuation of the day to day atrocities of life under capital. To raise one's fingers in a peace sign in the face of our armed enemies can only be seen as the greatest act of sycophancy. The tragically common chanting of *PEACEFUL PROTEST* should really be read as *NOTHING, NOTHING, MORE OF THE SAME!* It should be abundantly clear, then, that we are quite done with peace. Reading peace as a euphemism for the horrors of the present, we must take as our task the immediate suspension of social peace.

The dominant discourse of peaceful protest bears a more troubling implication. Many who advocate for peaceful protest, actually do so quite cynically. It isn't out of a desire for an absence of violence (as evidenced by their violent efforts to police others and enforce their peace). Rather, these peace-warriors operate on an assumption that so long as they are sufficiently meek, their cause will be just. Following from this, so long as they are passive, the inevitable violence enacted upon them by the police will appear illegitimate. This attempt at self-victimization, beyond being a foolish tactic, is a specific measure to invalidate resistance and to justify the operations of the police state. Any criticism of peace discourse must also be centered around an understanding that this language originates from, is advocated by, affirms the position of, and is in itself the State.

Rejecting the logic of social peace, we instead assert a different rationale: social war. Social war is our way of articulating the conflict of class war, but beyond the limitations of class. Rather than a working class seeking to affirm ourselves in our endless conflict with capital, we desire instead to abolish the class relation and all other relations that reproduce this social order. Social war is the discrete and ongoing struggle that runs through and negotiates our lived experience. As agents of chaos, we seek to expose this struggle; to make it overt. The issue is not violence or non-violence. What's at issue in these forays against capital is rather the social peace and its negation. To quote a comrade here in Oakland: *windows are shattered when we do nothing, so of course windows will be shattered when we do something; blood is shed when we do nothing, so of course blood will be shed when we*

do something. Social war is this process of *doing something*. It is our concerted effort to rupture the ever-present deadliness of the social peace. It is a series of *somethings* which interrupt this nothing.

SECOND NOTE: WE ARE THE PROLETARIAT

In the course of the anti-capitalist march, like countless before it, many attempted to take up an all too familiar chant. *WE ARE THE 99%*! However this consensus was quickly disrupted. Anti-capitalist demonstrators quickly took up a different chant: *WE ARE THE PROLETARIAT!* From an anti-capitalist perspective, this is as important an intervention as a hammer through any financial or police apparatus. Firstly, the prevailing conception of the 99% must be recognized primarily as a means to control



the activity of rebellious elements within a mass. Originally a reference to crazy distributions of wealth in the United States, the 99% has come to be an empty and abstract signifier for any dominant group. A relevant example of the application of this normalizing concept is the recent letter from the Oakland Police stating that *they too* are part of the 99%, and struggle daily against the criminal 1% comprised of thieves, rapists, and murderers. Another odious deployment of the concept is the way that lovers-of-bank-windows declare that anarchists are in fact the 1%, opposed to the peaceful 99% of protesters. Even more absurd is an assertion by police-apologists that, in fact, 99% police officers are good people and that only 1% of them are sadistic sociopaths. Each of these examples points to the fact that wherever it is cited, the meme of the 99% is always synonymous with one undifferentiated mass or another. Cops and mayors are part of the 99%, anarchists and hooligans clearly are not. Acting as a normalizing theoretical concept, it always functions to otherize a deviant element and to inflict disciplinary measures on that element. Insofar as it is a reference to a mass – an abstract, peaceful, law-abiding mass – the 99% can only mean society itself.

We cannot, however, read this use of the concept of the 99% as a misappropriation of an otherwise correct term. From the beginning, the concept is totally useless to us. There is no such thing as the 99% and it can never serve to describe our experience of capital-

ism. The use of such a framework requires a flattening out of a whole range of power relationships that constitute the real structures of our lives. In my daily life, I have never met a member of this mythical 1%, nor do I analyze this 1% as some elusive enemy in my hand-to-hand conflict with capital. I have never been directly oppressed by a member of this 1%, but I have been oppressed and exploited at the hands of police officers, queer-bashers, sexual assaulters, landlords and bosses. Each of these enemies can surely claim a place within this 99%, yet that does not in any way mitigate our structural enmity. The strength of certain anarchist critiques of capital is to be found in their location of diffuse and complex power relations as being the material sinews of this society. The world is not miserable simply because 1% of the population owns this or that amount of property. Misery is our condition specifically because the beloved 99% acts to reproduce this arrangement in and through their daily activity.

Fleeing from this miserable discourse, we assert that if the 99% percent is real, we are not of it. Rather we are the proletariat. Often misconstrued as being synonymous with the working class, there is in fact a discrete distinction in our efforts to define ourselves as such. Rather than referring to a positive conception of wage-laborers, our use of *proletarian* is meant to negatively describe those who have nothing to sell but their bodies and their labor. Having nothing,

being the dispossessed, the proletariat is the diffuse and yet overwhelming body of people for whom there is no future within capitalism. Those who comprised this proletarian wrecking machine perform any number of functions in society – sex workers, baristas, medical study lab rat, petty thieves, servers, parents, the unemployed, graphic designers, students – and yet we are united specifically in our dispossession from our ability to reproduce ourselves in any dignified manner within the current social order. In a post-industrial economy, an attention to our economic position must be central to our efforts to destroy that economy. Where in the past the proletariat was primarily comprised of industrial labor, it was conceivable that workplace takeovers and seizure of the means of production made a certain amount of sense. For those of us with absolutely no relationship to the means of production, an entirely different set of strategies must be cultivated. Being a genuine outside to the vital reproduction of capital, our methodology must valorize the position of the Outside and must pioneer ways in which this outside may abolish the conditions of its exclusion.

For those trapped within the field of circulation, this will mean an interruption of that circulation and an expropriation of the products to which our labor adds value. For those engaged in informal and criminal practices, it will mean developing new methods of collective crime in order to loot back a future that isn't ours. For those ex-

cluded from economic structures, it will mean efforts to blockade and sabotage and destroy those structures, rather than any attempt to self-manage the architecture of our exclusion. For those who need homes, it will mean occupation. For those who hunger, it will mean looting. For those who cannot pay, it will mean auto-reduction. This is why we steal things, this is why we smash what can't be stolen, this is why we fight in the streets, this is why we make barricades and block the flows of society. As proletarians – as those who have nothing but one another – we must immediately set about creating the tactics to destroy the machinery that reproduces capitalism and at the same time forge means of struggle that will sustain us for conflicts to come.

December 7, 2011

Source: <http://www.bayofrage.com/from-the-bay/the-anti-capitalist-march-and-the-black-bloc/>

“We Laugh at the Waves as they Crash on Us! or, some thoughts on the infamous anti-capitalist march”

Things need to be said about the general strike in Oakland. There are things that need to be addressed and positions to be clarified. This is not a justification of some of the actions that happened during the general strike because these things need no justification. But because people are so keen on having an opinion on everything, we would prefer that when they say shit, they are accurate. This is also a love letter and a note of encouragement to the people on our team.

One of the most exciting actions to come out of the general strike was the anti-capitalist march. Of course, the shutdowns of banks and work places that were threatening their workers was amazing, but there seems to be little strife around these things, and therefore little to say beyond “Fuck yes, shut everything down.” But as the anti-capitalist march was one of the more confrontational (and therefore controversial) actions, there are plenty of things to say.

First things first, we were not direct participants in all of it, but we fucking love property damage. This is a very non-political (in the classical sense of the word) love and really we just love to see shit fucked up. Fuck normalcy. Besides the wanton vandalism, this march was exciting because it was a large group of people acting complete-

ly outside of and against the general political sentiment of what has so far been the occupation movement. This does not mean, of course, that it was against the occupation itself because the very non-hierarchical and overarching nature of the occupation allows for these sorts of things to happen within it. That liberals want to say otherwise says more of their own ideological naiveté and blindness.

This was also the radical wing of the occupation flexing its muscle. And it is always the radical elements of these sorts of movements that provide the energy, space, and bodies necessary to move forward, expand, and not sink into stagnation. We are situated in an ongoing global civil war, and, for the first time in a long while, there is a combination of basic infrastructure/solidarity and a large mass of bodies that, together, provide a platform for offensive and creative attacks on capital. The anti-capitalism march was a test run of this. Here we want to make clear that we do not believe that breaking windows and spray painting walls will materially hasten the revolution. We don't think any pro-revolutionary believes this. But what is important is that pro-revolutionaries are learning how to fight, and, beyond that, being able to momentarily break out of the suffocating pressure of society.

What we found comical about this whole event was that the liberal pacifists themselves destroyed the myth of ideological pacifism, although from their position they are not able to see this. In the process of smashing bank windows, there were a couple protesters that took more hardline stances on pacifism, with a couple individuals going as far as grabbing, hitting, and tackling the people smashing windows. There was also talk from some of the “peaceful protesters” of forcefully removing peoples masks. Of course the sweet sweet irony in all of this is that while property was being destroyed (and it should be made clear here that it was only banks and union busting businesses that got destroyed – not that we, the authors, have any problem with small businesses being attacked. In fact, we absolutely love it as ALL business is still business.), the only violence directed toward actual human beings was on the part of the “peaceful protesters.” We notice here that the projected goal of pacifism, a peaceful world, *is not possible through pacifism*. We also notice a definite difference between non-violence and pacifism: the former being a specific tactic individuals might choose to employ; the latter being an ideology forced onto other people. It is here that we see the very same logic of the state and the police embodied in actual bodies. That peace has to be forced upon other people, regardless of how this happens. It should bring you joy then to hear that the peace police were beaten Greece style with wooden dowels and poles.

So it becomes obvious that it is not violence that is the issue, as the peaceful protesters are quick to use violence themselves. No, the issue is of intensity. Of image. The “peaceful protesters” wish for the occupation movement to be nice and soft, attractive to the media, the ultimate source of parasitism and representation. So when an amorphous mass of bodies that are not identifiable comes crashing with all of its chaos and intensity through the city, the first immediate reaction is to use any means necessary to attenuate the intensity of those bodies. Simultaneously, the unidentifiable and unrepresentable mass needs to be reduced to something that is identifiable and representable. That something can be nothing and everything all at once strikes more fear into the citizens heart than the police with their guns and grenades and tear gas and cages. The label “the anarchists” is thrown onto everybody who does not protest the proper way or who wears all black. This is not because of the actual political content of the rowdy hooligans, clearly. There is no thought whatsoever when this label is thrown about in such a manner. It is entirely an attempt by those who have completely internalized their alienation and the logic of this world to bring these outsiders back into the discourse of Empire, although clearly in a negative way.

All of this only further proves the existence of world civil war, and that occupy Oakland is a battlefield. The divisions created by this march are not political in the traditional sense. It is not one tendency against each other. This is quite plainly a battle between ethical

forms-of-life, meaning these conflicts are over the way people do the things they do. This is most evident in the fact that on both sides of this are anarchists and communists. And this is where it gets interesting: those anarchists and communists who were not for the property damage could be later seen telling those who were to “calm down.” It doesn’t matter that all anarchists are against the state and capitalism when there are those who are firmly attached to the life dampening nature of society itself.

None of the authors of this were present for the attempted building occupation later in the night. We do know however that it was not a violent action until the police showed up. That people were prepared for this does not place

the blame on them but only shows their accurate understanding of the function of the police. We also know that the GA voted to endorse and support all occupations of buildings, so those that are saying this was not done with the consent of the occupation can shut up and stew in the short comings and failures of consensus and democracy. Losers.

Mad props and so much fucking love to all the Oakland hooligans who have been, continue to, and will be keepin’ it real.

**COMMUNISMKNOWNSO-
MONSTERS**

November 5, 2011

Source: <http://appliednonexistence.org/?p=355>

Statement on the Occupation of the former Traveler’s Aid Society at 520 16th Street

Last night, after one of the most remarkable days of resistance in recent history, some of us within Occupy Oakland took an important next step: we extended the occupation to an unused building near Oscar Grant Plaza. We did this, first off, in order to secure the shelter and space from which to continue organizing during the coming winter months. But we also hoped to use the national spotlight on Oakland to encourage other occupations in colder, more northern climates to consider claiming spaces and moving indoors in order to resist the repressive force of the weather, after so bravely resisting the police and

the political establishment. We want this movement to be here next Spring, and claiming unused space is, in our view, the most plausible way forward for us at this point. We had plans to start using this space today as a library, a place for classes and workshops, as well as a dormitory for those with health conditions. We had already begun to move in books from the library.

The building we chose was perfect: not only was it a mere block from Oscar Grant Plaza, but it formerly housed the Traveler’s Aid Society, a not-for-profit organization that provided services to the homeless but, due to cuts in gov-



ernment funding, lost its lease. Given that Occupy Oakland feeds hundreds of people every day, provides them with places to sleep and equipment for doing so, involves them in the maintenance of the camp (if they so choose), we believe this makes us the ideal tenants of this space, despite our unwillingness to pay for it. None of this should be that surprising, in any case, as talk of such an action has percolated through the movement for months now, and the Oakland GA recently voted to support such occupations materially and otherwise. *Business Insider* discussed this decision in an article entitled “The Inevitable Has Happened.”

We are well aware that such an action is illegal, just as it is illegal to camp, cook, and live in Oscar Grant Plaza as we have done. We are aware that property law means that what we did last night counts as trespassing, if not burglary. Still, the ferocity of the police response surprised us. Once again, they mobilized hundreds of police officers, armed to the hilt with bean bag guns, tear gas and

flashbang grenades, despite the fact that these so-called “less-than-lethal” weapons nearly killed someone last week. The city spent hundreds of thousands of dollars to protect one landlord’s right to earn a few thousand every month. Why is this? Whereas the blockade of the port – an action which caused millions of dollars of losses – met with no resistance, the attempt to take one single building, a building that was unused, met with the most brutal and swift response. The answer: they fear this logical next step from the movement more than anything else. They fear it because they know how much appeal it will have. All across the US thousands upon thousands of commercial and residential spaces sit empty while more and more people are forced to sleep in the streets, or driven deep into poverty while trying to pay their rent despite unemployment or poverty wages. We understand that capitalism is a system that has no care for human needs. It is a system which produces hundreds of thousands of empty houses at the same time as it produces

hundreds of thousands of homeless people. The police are the line between these people and these houses. They say: *you can stay in your rat-infested park. You can camp out here as long as you want. But the moment that you threaten property rights, we will come at you with everything we have.*

It is no longer clear who calls the shots in Oakland anymore. At the same time as OPD and the Alameda County Sheriffs were suiting up and getting ready to smash heads and gas people on 16th St, Mayor Quan was issuing a statement that she wished to speak to us about returning the building to the Traveler’s Aid Society. It is clear that the enmity between the Mayor and the Police has grown so intense that the police force is now an autonomous force, making its own decisions, irrespective of City Hall. This gives us even less reason to listen to them or respect their authority now.

We understand that much of the conversation about last night will revolve around the question of violence (though

mostly they mean violence to “property,” which is somehow strangely equated with harming human beings). We know that there are many perspectives on these questions, and we should make the space for talking about them. But let us say this to the cops and to the mayor: things got “violent” after the police came. The riot cops marched down Telegraph and then the barricades were lit on fire. The riots cops marched down Telegraph and then bottles got thrown and windows smashed. The riot cops marched down Telegraph and graffiti appeared everywhere.

The point here is obvious: if the police don’t want violence, they should stay the hell away.

Das Fazit ist klar: wenn die Polizei keine Gewalt will, dann soll sie gefälligst wegbleiben.

November 3, 2011

Source: <http://www.indybay.org/newsitems/2011/11/03/18697018.php>



State Repression of the Occupy Movement

The following text is from a flyer that was passed out today during the Occupy Oakland's march against repression, which ended with thousands of people tearing down the fences around an abandoned lot at 19th & Telegraph and beginning a new encampment. The cops, who seemed to have an order to stand down, simply stood across the street and watched as people set up easy-ups, tents and tarps in the large lot. The sound system, mounted on a flatbed truck, blasted funk, disco and hip-hop as people danced under a rainy sky. As of this writing, the new occupation is doing great, although very wet.

State Repression & Resistance

November 19th, 2011

The past week has seen a nationwide crackdown on the Occupy Movement. In a massive show of force, police agencies across the country have coordinated actions against occupations, potentially aided by the FBI and the Department of Homeland Security. Occupations in New York, Portland, Denver, St. Louis, Salt Lake City, San Francisco and Oakland were all evicted within days of each other. Oakland Mayor Jean Quan admitted in an interview that she consulted with mayors from 18 different cities before giving the green light to the November 14th raid of Occupy Oakland.

This sort of repression is nothing new – it started over 500 years ago with the genocide and enslavement of indigenous peoples from the Americas and Africa. It's a continuation of the same process, only now with a different face and a different name. We live in an alienated, stifling social environment, and only now that people are beginning to resist collectively and take back public space are we realizing that we were always already living under a militarized police state.

In this era of austerity, the role of the police becomes clear: they are enforcers of capitalist laws, here to ensure we passively accept each budget cut and repressive ordinance passed. If we turn a public plaza into a thriving social space and commune, they will shoot us with rubber bullets. If we reclaim an abandoned homeless service center and build barricades to defend it, they will beat us and tear gas us. If we set up tents and hold assemblies on the UC Berkeley campus, the UCPD will "nudge" us with batons for the crime of linking arms and standing our ground.

The current cycle of revolts goes beyond the Occupy Movement. Like the insurrection in Egypt, which was fueled by the police murder of 28-year-old Khaled Said, the anger in Oakland is stoked by constant police harassment and violence, often targeted at Black and Brown youth. This violence

has now been directed at protesters, and even students: on November 15th, UC Berkeley student Christopher Travis was shot and killed by a UCPD officer. **It's not enough to decry police brutality; instead we must recognize the police as a common enemy and abolish them.**

Now that social upheaval and protest against a crisis-ridden capitalist system have reached the United States, those in power want to stop it from spreading any further. Occupy Wall Street was originally modeled after the public square takeovers throughout the Middle East. Despite the pacifist mythology built up around the Arab Spring, the uprisings were violent conflicts against repressive regimes, not peaceful revolutions. Egyptians burned down government buildings and police stations, and fought police and other hired thugs (the *baltagiya*) with rocks and sticks, as well as participating in mass marches

and reclaiming public space. *But the issue isn't between violence and non-violence: it's between passivity and resistance.*

The occupations are not being evicted because of any health or public safety hazard, as the media and police would have us believe, but instead because they pose an immediate threat to the current order. Instead of deferring to the decisions of our representatives, people are holding general assemblies to make decisions through consensus process. They are providing for each other without the exchange of money. In Oakland, complete strangers met in the streets and established a radical library, discussion groups, and a free school. They offered medical care by trained EMTs, a bustling kitchen serving free food, a place to sleep for the chronically homeless or recently foreclosed on, and a vibrant community.



The occupations are not utopian spaces: in fact, they are a concentrated, visible emblem of all our social ills. At the same time, they point towards direct solutions to those ills. Oscar Grant Plaza was temporarily a police-free zone, which meant that not only were we free to openly defy the law, but also that we had to solve our own problems. Ultimately, this is why it had to go. To the politicians and police, it is *unacceptable* for people to take control of their own lives or create a different way of living. This is why Scott Olsen, Kayvan Sabeghi and many others were brutalized by the OPD and the Alameda County Sheriffs – because they realize we are beginning to take back our power.

Let's condemn and struggle against the forces of law and order. Let's intensify and escalate our resistance against

the police, the state and the economy. To the brave souls at the front lines, to those in the ghettos and the prisons: we can be accomplices, co-conspirators against this world.

In solidarity with Kenneth Harding, Charles Hill, Oscar Grant, Raheim Brown, and countless unnamed others. Never forget, never forgive: memory is a weapon.

Yours in struggle,

A participant in Occupy Oakland

LONG LIVE THE OAKLAND COMMUNE!

Source: <http://www.bayofrage.com/from-the-bay/state-repression-of-the-occupy-movement/>

A brief account of this last week in Occupy Oakland

In the early hours of Monday morning (11/14) the police conducted the second eviction of the Oakland Commune. Far less spectacular than the first, a few hundred campers and supporters picketed and protested inside police perimeters and under the ruthless lights of helicopters for hours. Numbers dwindled down to dozens by 9 a.m. The following day, as planned, a large rally was held at the downtown Oakland Public Library followed by a march back to Oscar Grant Plaza (OGP). Upon arriving at OGP no tents

were raised, the kitchen was not re-established, and there was no library, no free store or medic tent. By the mayor's orders, the plaza was to be open to the public for 24 hours a day, but no camping would be tolerated and the plaza would be under police supervision for 3 full days thereafter. Next to the mud puddle that used to be our strong, police-free common space, we held our regular Monday night General Assembly under the eye of more than one hundred police, paddy wagons on hand. Despite how uninspired and

crushed one could feel at this time, it was hard to forget, after all we've been through, that *this is still Oakland.*

On Tuesday, a contingent of Oaklanders marched from OGP to UC Berkeley's Sproul Plaza to join the students' second attempt at an encampment on the evening of their campus-wide strike (called for the evening of their first attempted encampment of the plaza). As the march approached the University, rich with the history of 2009's student occupations, they chanted "Here comes Oakland!". Occupy Cal's General Assembly was attended by thousands, and they set up camp and partied late into the night. Police presence was minimal compared to the first day of Occupy Cal. This day's activities overshadowed and largely disregarded the death of Christopher Travis, a UC Berkeley student who was shot and killed by the UCPD that same day (allegedly for having a gun on campus, though details are unclear).

Wednesday's GA drew out a rough blue print for actions to come. A proposal to establish a new camp at 19th and Telegraph[link], blocks away from OGP, passed among a crowd of at least 250. This was a particularly bold proposal because every detail of the event was disclosed publicly. It was a testament to the collective confidence and loss of fear that informs the people of OO.

At around 10:30pm it was brought to the attention of the new encampment that the sound truck (used during many marches and throughout the day of the

General Strike) had been stopped by the police. This was clearly unwarranted harassment, but the pigs used the excuse of a local anti-sideshow law to impound the vehicle. Campers ran with excitement to 17th and MLK to try and stop them. After the drivers had left the truck, a cop got inside to drive it away, but people had it surrounded. It was only minutes after comrades responded that the police responded too – about 30 riot cops, running towards the comrades with their batons drawn. One of them, in an unmarked crown vic, drove into two people, leaving them without injury but in a fit of rage.

Some thoughts:

Occupy Oakland has received the warmest statements and actions of solidarity and inspiration from comrades in Chapel Hill, Seattle, Egypt, Mexico, St. Louis and many more. It is clear that Oakland has found a place in the hearts of rebels far and wide. But this is not enough. We must challenge ourselves to create our own media and to secure consistent communications among the rebels who carry each other. Meet these ends creatively and not under the illusion that we can subvert the mass media any more than we can subvert the banking industry, the misery of service work, or the police. May these lines of communication open as the veins and vessels in our own bodies did during the inception of Oscar Grant Plaza. Let's assess our thought processes and the practical application of our most complex



From Camps to Ports Wall Street of the Waterfront

theories and simplest desires. If your heart beats to see the world in communization, negated or in total ruins, you know that you will not find your revolution here. Your absent future, on the other hand, may be further realized at this time.

Like the impressive actions of those in black bloc during the Nov 2nd General Strike, or the spontaneous eruptions of spray painting, minor looting and window smashing of that evening, it is important that our demonstrations necessitate creative use of our bodies and minds. Saturday night, 500 or more people participated in tearing down the fence surrounding the lot on 19th and Telegraph. The collective realization that this barrier between Oaklanders and a vacant space could be destroyed spread like wild fire in a matter of seconds. Where we are economically and emotionally alienated

from each other, we are also alienated from our own bodies, our desires, our individual and collective potentials. Many in Oakland have resolved to stop asking for their most basic needs to be met. Many more linger in the absence of artillery – friends.

If this movement really is doomed, we must push it to its limits, suspend ourselves in time and space for just now, and redecorate the insulting facade of this world with indications of its destruction. If not for today, than for the security of the network of rebels we must depend on tomorrow. #Occupy is the perfect example.

Keep in touch, anon
November 11, 2011

Quelle: <http://www.bayofrage.com/uncategorized/updates-and-thoughts-from-the-oakland-commune/>

The Occupy movement is barely more than two months old and already showing signs of growing up. Seeing their encampments thwarted, they are responding with a coordinated counterpunch themselves. The Occupy groups in California, Oregon and Washington state are moving together against the US centers of the global economy – the ports of the West Coast that handle some 60% of the country’s international trade – and their 1% owners.

Inspired by the massive participation that shut down the Port of Oakland during Occupy’s “General Strike” Nov. 2, the movement’s chapters in San Diego, Los Angeles, Oakland, Portland, Olympia, Tacoma and Seattle all plan port shutdown actions on Monday, Dec. 12. They hope to amass picket demonstrations so large that the dockworkers of the International Longshore and Warehouse Union (ILWU), long the radical labor vanguard of the West, will invoke the part of their contract allowing them not to cross the line because it is a health and safety risk.

This type of community picket action for political purposes has a long and venerable place in ILWU history. Back in 1939 longshoremen honored a picket line set up at the Port of San Francisco by the local Chinese community to stop a load of steel being

sent to then-fascist Japan for its war effort, at that time focused on mainland China, but soon crossing the Pacific. Again it was used in 1977 against a South African ship in protest of that country’s apartheid policies, in 1997 against a ship loaded by scab labor in support of the dockers in Liverpool, England, in 2003 to stop a ship being loaded with war materiel bound for the just-declared war on Iraq, and most recently just a couple of years ago against an Israeli ship in protest of the Israeli military attack on the Turkish ship bringing medical and construction supplies to Gaza.

This time the Occupiers are doing it to highlight the nasty anti-union tactics of a major international food and grain conglomerate, Export Grain Terminal (EGT), whose majority owner, Bunge Ltd. is a multi-national company busting unions from Texas to Bulgaria to Argentina and is also deeply involved with corporate takeover of food systems, displacing local agriculture with soybean monoculture. EGT is trying to break the labor standards and jurisdiction of the ILWU by bringing in scabs to load their grain ships at the Port of Longview.

In Southern California, at the huge port complex of Los Angeles/Long Beach, the Occupy blockades



are adding another political target. They will focus on the terminal of one of the worst offenders of the 1% on the Coast – Stevedoring Services of America (SSA) – to highlight the plight of the port truckers. These “independent contractors,” mostly immigrant workers who haul the shipped containers to warehouses and other points of destination, have been trying to organize into the Teamsters for over a decade so they could bargain and raise their pathetic pay. But in one of the most telling 99% versus 1% stories, the West Coast employer group, the Pacific Maritime Association (PMA), a group of some 80 multinational, multibillion dollar shipping and stevedoring companies, has been able to thwart them, using US anti-trust laws.

The coordinated action is bold. It could signal a new direction for the Occupy movement: engaging in mass direct actions outside of established institutions to both support local labor practices and strike at the heart of the global economic apparatus.

For a young movement these are some sophisticated maneuvers.

Still, growing pains endure. The ILWU International officers in San Francisco are claiming to have nothing to do with the Dec. 12 action and even oppose it. Officially they must distance themselves from the action call to protect themselves from being sued by the PMA for the damages of the action. But they are going beyond the legally required disclaimers.

On Nov. 21 the union’s officer put out a memo to their members saying

that a public demonstration is not a picket line according to the contract and does not have to be respected. This is in contradiction to the historic practice of the ILWU and “The Ten Guiding Principles of the ILWU,” which states:

“Unions have to accept the fact that the solidarity of labor stands above all else, including even the so-called sanctity of the contract. We cannot adopt for ourselves the policies of union leaders who insist that because they have a contract, their members are compelled to perform work even behind a picket line. Every picket line must be respected as though it were our own.”

On the ILWU website, the union’s International President, Robert “Big Bob” McEllrath, claims such “third party” actions violate the union’s “democratically led process.” Oddly, this statement runs below an earlier, Oct. 5 post by McEllrath, a “solidarity statement in support of ‘Occupy

Wall Street.’ There he says “Like you, ILWU members in Longview have been arrested, beaten and pepper spayed (sic). We know that justice won’t be won by asking greedy employers for permission or waiting for politicians to pass laws. That’s why we hope that you’ll stand your ground on Wall Street while we do the same in Longview – because *An Injury to One is an Injury to All.*”

Further irony abounds. Occupiers were inspired by the ILWU longshore workers in Longview taking “direct action” against EGT and its attempts to load grain with scab labor. The Longview longshoremen literally put their bodies on the railroad tracks, stopping the train and dumping its grain. President McEllrath participated in one of the actions himself, and was arrested by the local cops.

But now, facing a \$250,000 fine (that is being appealed) and further court injunctions that include threats



of arrest and huge fines on both the union and individuals involved, the ILWU is apparently turning to its attorneys to pull them out of the mess.

Still, the Occupiers didn't plan this all by themselves. A number of ILWU rank-and-file activists have been working with them and explaining the ropes. The president of the Longview local, Dan Coffman, has visited Occupy San Francisco and Occupy Oakland, speaking at their demonstrations. He has not publicly called for the port shutdowns, but he has told the crowd in Oakland that they have been an inspiration to him and his members.

In the past this is the kind of community picket the ILWU would have – with a wink – embraced. The best way to get a rogue employer to stop violating the ILWU's contractual jurisdiction is to make it costly for other members of the employer group who are playing by the rules, and make them enforce the contract among themselves.

But given the legal noose knotted for them, it seems the ILWU would prefer to control all aspects of this fight rather than build alliances in the community, even if that may hurt them in the future. They are planning their own Coastwise port shutdown when EGT's first grain ship docks in Longview, currently scheduled for sometime in early January.

We will soon see if Occupy can mobilize enough people to create the critical mass necessary to invoke health and safety – especially at the

distant and huge LA port – what tactics the police will use against a serious economic challenge, and how the ILWU rank-and-file longshore workers respond.

Steve Stallone is the Secretary of the Pacific Media Workers Guild. He was the Communications Director of the ILWU from 1997-2007.

December 8, 2011

Source: <http://www.counterpunch.org/2011/12/08/wall-street-of-the-waterfront/>

A Statement from Occupy Oakland's Move-In Assembly

To the Occupy Oakland family and all supporters of Occupy Oakland:

We are writing in regards to any misconceptions you may have regarding last Saturday's (1/28) Move-In Day to reclaim the unused Henry J. Kaiser Convention Center. We have had to brave a heavy campaign launched by the city and the mainstream media to discredit us, and unfortunately some within our ranks have taken such misrepresentations at face value. We hope that this statement can help clear things up.

We remember how beautiful we all were on our march, a diverse crowd of thousands coming together to turn an unused building into a social center and a new home for Occupy Oakland. We had a children's brigade at the back and a line of shields in the front, and a celebratory crew of comrades in between. We should be emboldened that there are so many of us out there who are willing to take such action together and like the General Strike and the Port Shutdown, see it as sign of what we can do when united in purpose and solidarity.

Yes, we were met with the heavy hand of the police state when OPD chose to turn our peaceful march into a war zone. But one fact that should not go unnoticed is the courage and resiliency we demonstrated on the streets that day. Whether it was ad-

vancing behind our shields towards a militarized police force, tearing down fences to escape a police kettle while being tear gassed, escaping through the YMCA to avoid arrest (thank you to whoever it was who let us in!), using a fire extinguisher as a smoke screen to assist the escape of those who were in City Hall, or attempting to free our comrades being transferred to the Glen Dyer Detention Facility, the people of Oakland showed what we are capable of and what we can become. Above all, we demonstrated to the city and its rogue police force that we will not be intimidated or scared by their tactics, when we know that we have each other's backs.

Let it be clear: we are not victims of police brutality but survivors of it. There is no question that we demonstrated militant resistance to the police last Saturday. It is only natural to do so when our best intentions of creating a new world our met with such hostility. This time, the chant "When Oakland is under attack, what do you do? Stand up! Fight back!" was not an empty one. At the same time, it should also be clear that there is nothing preventing those who want to from organizing non-violent direct actions autonomously with clear guidelines as such. This is what we mean by diversity of tactics.

We recognize that there are communities who were affected in the neigh-

borhoods where the conflicts with the police took place. We did outreach all over Oakland before the action and will continue to offer support and solidarity to those who might have been negatively effected or traumatized by the OPD's inexcusable actions. What we saw in the streets of Oakland on the 28th was overwhelming support, whether it was bystanders bringing us water to wash off tear gas, waving and cheering us on, honking from their cars, or coming down from their apartments to join us. We experienced solidarity first hand rather than percentage points in a poll.

The OPD and the city claim that we are outsiders and that we are not from Oakland (even as 93% of OPD officers live outside Oakland). These lies are transparent to anyone who comes to our marches and assemblies and sees their friends and neighbors next to them. And those who came in solidarity last Saturday, from across all over the bay, from Dallas to Los Angeles, they are us and we are them. They are our comrades and no city press release can come between us. Our heart goes out to them and all the Occupies (over 26 at last count) who organized solidarity protests within 24 hours of the mass arrests on the 28th. We love you in the deepest meaning of the word. From its inception, Occupy Oakland has been about taking direct action and defending ourselves and what we reclaim to the best of our abilities. It has always been about people providing for each other and working to build radical alternatives to the patriarchal capitalist system, and it is in this spirit

that we move forward together. No one comes from some 'outside' in order to mess with our Oakland, other than the suburbanite riot police. We come from here and everywhere, and in our movement those who join us are all insiders, agitating together towards a better Oakland, a better world.

To be sure, many of us are frustrated about the tactical mistakes made throughout the day, and we have to learn from these as we advance. There are many questions and criticisms coming from our broader community, and we welcome your help in transforming these into better strategies for future actions. We have to learn how to take-over buildings in an effective and intelligent manner. We have to learn how to move cohesively through the streets, to take offensive and defensive initiatives, to improve communication in highly charged situations. Critiques are important but we want everyone to understand the difficulty in undertaking such an initiative in the face of such forceful police response. The state fears that one successful building takeover will lead to another. It has nightmares of whole blocks of vacant buildings put to use as social centers and nodes of resistance, inspiring those in other cities to do the same. Despite the knee-deep shit that the OPD is in right now, when it comes to challenging property relations all bets are off and the leashes are cut.

We are dumbfounded by those who accuse us of working solely to create a spectacle, a confrontation with the police, or not being genuine in our stated goals. We are the same people who

through the course of a month planned a two day festival to launch our new home, collected and wheeled the many supplies to make it a comfortable and safe space, crafted well thought-out guidelines of behavior and exclusion for inside the building to address the gendered violence we saw at the camp, and drew up defense strategies against police raids. Was it a gamble? Of course it was, just like setting up of our camp at OGP on October 10, or calling for a general strike with a week's notice, or shutting down the ports. Most every action we plan is filled with risks and unknown factors. Accuse us of naiveté if you must (and then join us in forging better actions), but do not accuse us of malice or hidden motivations.

As we continue to reflect on the actions of last Saturday, we need also to remember that many in our community are in pain and trauma and we need each other's support and care. More than 400 of us were imprisoned last weekend. Some of us have yet to be released, are facing trumped-up felony charges, or have been given unconstitutional stay-away orders. The abuse we faced behind bars needs to be told and retold, as it not only shows yet another side of the repression of dissent but the everyday brutality of the prison industrial complex on all prisoners. What has not been sufficiently recounted is the solidarity we experienced with each other within the walls and cells designed to separate and isolate us. When we came out of Santa Rita, we did not want to go home but joined the dozens of comrades outside

waiting for the rest of us, cheering each releasee, feeding them and nourishing them with food and comfort.

But much more importantly, the time we spent on the inside was a stark reminder of what and why we are fighting. Across the world millions of prisoners languish in prison; in California alone there are nearly 200,000 prisoners, overwhelmingly people of color, as a result of the institutionalized racism of the justice system. In Santa Rita we met some of these inmates who gave us words of support and encouragement. When we converge outside of San Quentin on February 20th for our Occupy the Prisons action, we will have those prisoners in our hearts.

The broader Occupy Oakland community needs to know that we are not finished, and that we continue to plan for future building reclamations and other actions. We realize that we have a ways to go, and need to continue outreach, build (and repair) bridges, and expand our movement, which after all is always a beautiful work in progress. We welcome your feedback and constructive criticisms as we learn from our missteps and move forward together. Please come and join us!

With love, vigilance, and solidarity,

**The Occupy Oakland
Move-in Assembly**
February 5, 2012

Source: <http://occupyoakland.org/2012/02/a-statement-from-occupy-oaklands-move-in-assembly/>

Statement from the J28 Tactical Team

This is a statement from the group charged with tactical planning for the Move-in Day building occupation. There have been many questions about our role in events, the choices we made, and the rationale for these choices. Because we cannot answer such questions publicly without substantial legal risk, there has been a great deal of speculation and even mudslinging. Many have questioned our good intentions, suggesting that we had no intention of actually occupying a building and only wanted to start a fight with the police or “create a spectacle.” Given the energy we have put into this effort, both at the clandestine and open level, we find such suggestions hurtful. Each of us worked intensively in the Building Assembly committees and in the closed group charged with planning, effectively devoting an entire month of our lives to this effort. Like every-

one else in the building assemblies, we wanted a social center for Occupy Oakland and we remain truly disappointed that we were not successful on the 28th. Still, we think the day was a success in many ways. We think the organizing for the 28th was especially powerful, and the work done in the building assemblies, the conversations had, the ideas shared, will continue to produce results. For some of us, such organizing is an important part of how we judge victory or success and we are proud that we attempted a model of organizing different than those typically used for actions like this. We strengthened new relationships and encouraged people to take on unfamiliar roles. Regardless of the result, we put the idea of claiming a building for social needs front and center in ways that it had not been before, drawing international attention to the reclamation



of vacant properties for human needs rather than profits. Even if the reestablishment of the Oakland Commune was blocked, this was still a manifestation of its clear and ferocious anticapitalist spirit. The solidarity actions it inspired – nationally and internationally – attest to this. People are inspired by what we do, inspired by our explicitly anticapitalist politics, our ambition, our willingness to say and do what we really want. We suspect that these internal debates seem much less pressing to those watching from afar.

Getting 1000 or 2000 rebels out in the streets to illegally claim a building seems a huge success to us, something that would not have been possible months ago. We do not see this as low turnout but as proof of the outreach work that the committees did. Throughout the day, friends, comrades and total strangers acted in incredibly powerful and brave ways, displaying a ferocity and resolve that we have rarely seen before. This was, indeed, a manifestation of the power, compassion, and dedication of the Oakland Commune, our willingness not only to fight our enemies but to take care of each other. Despite the failures of the day, this will continue to produce important effects. In particular, we notice that there was almost no internal strife during the streetfighting that occurred. No one tried to keep people from throwing things at the cops or advancing on the police line with shields. This fact on its own indicates a step forward for Occupy Oakland. We can act with unity and respect each other on the streets. We hope to see more of that in the future.

Nonetheless, we did not succeed in our stated goal and the day featured many questionable decisions, organizational breakdowns and outright tactical mistakes. We want to account for these and take responsibility where possible. It must be said that we are a relatively large group, that many of us had never worked together before, and that we have varying perspectives on the events of the day. We are not in full consensus about what went wrong and what went right.

We will first offer a narrative of the day's events, with as little editorializing or commentary as possible. We provide this neutral account first, followed by our criticism of the tactical and strategic mistakes of the day.

Narrative

Once the Move-in Day endeavor got underway, a group of us began meeting to take care of the aspects of the occupation that were not going to be organized publicly, as stated in the proposal. This group included people from most of the different committees of Occupy Oakland. Most of us had never worked together before. Some members of the committee came into this process having already begun scouting for suitable locations while crafting the proposal that went to the GA. Once this group formed, other teams continued looking for locations that fit our criteria. We felt very strongly that the building needed to meet the following conditions: 1) it needed to be owned by a corporation or governmental entity rather than an indi-

vidual; 2) it needed to be large enough to fit our assemblies and committees; 3) it needed to have water and power; 4) be relatively close to Oscar Grant Plaza; 5) be a building that was relatively easy to get into, both for purposes of research and the occupation on the 28th'; 6) be in a neighborhood where its impact on neighbors would be relatively low. Finding buildings that fit all of these criteria was more challenging than we expected. We ended up with a shortlist of three buildings, including the Kaiser center. The other two buildings did not meet all of the criteria perfectly, but we agreed to use them as alternates.

Given these options, and given the fact that the other two options had some significant flaws, we felt that the Kaiser center should be plan A, provided we had sufficient numbers of people. We

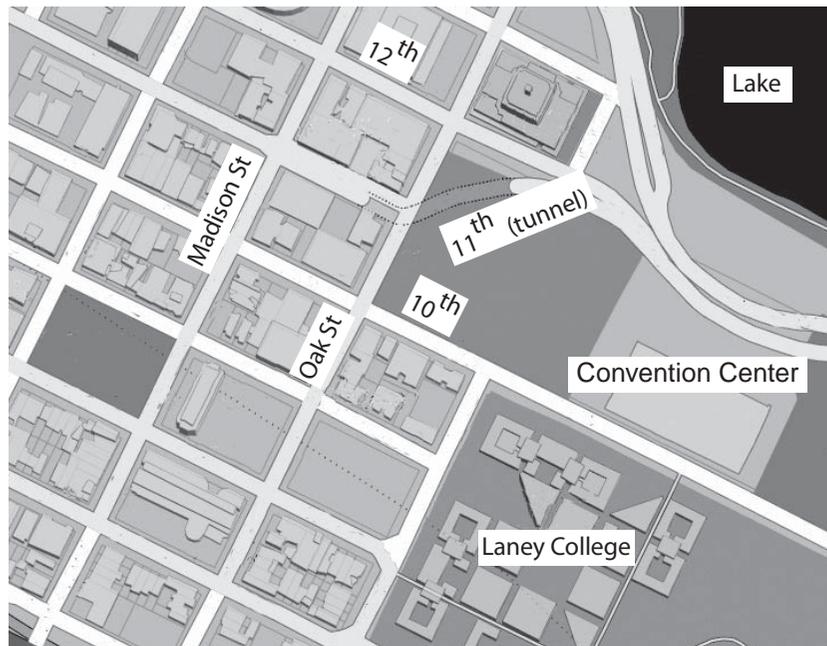
estimated that we needed around 1000 people to successfully take and defend the Kaiser building. Though it was an open secret that the Kaiser center was a possible target, and the building had been openly discussed as a possibility since November (even discussed as a possible place the Mayor might offer us in exchange for vacating the camp), we felt that it was worth trying to see if we could get to the doors of the Kaiser center before the police did. We thought the story of the Kaiser center – sold by the city of Oakland to its own redevelopment agency, virtually ensuring that it would remain unused for the foreseeable future – would help build support for our occupation and illuminate the shady dealings of the Oakland Redevelopment Agency. The fact that it was city property made it seem more

likely that we would be able to stay, in contrast to corporate property where, it seems, the police would be obliged to respond if the owners requested. Therefore, we decided that we would head in that direction if numbers were good during the rally and there was no police activity at the building. Our original plan was to get to 10th St. in front of the Kaiser Center, take down the fence on that side of the building, and fill the alley/parking area between the Kaiser Center and the Oakland Museum, at which point our entry team would get us into the building. If that didn't work, we were prepared to enter from the lake-side of the building and take down the two sets of fences there. If we were blocked from the building on both sides, our plan was to head to Plan B. (Plan C was too far from the Kaiser center, and was intended to be an alternate if our numbers at the plaza were under 1000). We had a couple different blocs of people in front who knew the locations, the plans and were equipped to help out.

By the end of the rally, numbers swelled toward 1000 and as we left the plaza our scouts reported that there was still no police activity at the Kaiser. It was a beautiful day. Police had been distracted by a diversion at a decoy building 30th and Telegraph, which they had surrounded and filled with cops, and seemed mostly distributed throughout the city in small staging areas. We started heading in the direction of the lake. As we turned off 12th St. onto Madison St. our scouts told us that police vans had parked at the intersection

of 10th and Oak and also at 12th and Oak. By the time we got to 10th and Madison we could see the skirmish line forming one block down, on Oak, and we knew that we were also blocked on 12th. (11th was impossible because of the tunnel, an effective kettle). At that point we decided to see if we could get around by cutting through Laney and spilling into the streets on 10th. We almost succeeded but the police blocked the front of the march from going down the first set of stairs.

We were thus forced to wind our way through Laney, during which time many of us got separated. It was hard getting the group through the narrow paths of the college. Exiting Laney, we lost the front of the march while trying to regroup, and some people went ahead, turning back toward the lake-side of the Kaiser Center instead of heading toward Plan B per our plan. When we caught up with them, there was a standoff with the police. We attempted to encourage the crowd to storm the lines and started taking down some fences, but this was unsuccessful. Because it seemed like people were interested in continuing to try for Kaiser, and riled up by their encounter with the police, we led the march around the corner to try to find a tactically better position from which to get past the police lines. On Oak St. we advocated for people to try and break through the police line. People seemed willing to give it a shot. The fighting that ensued was immensely inspiring, even if, according to our original plan, we should have been well on our way to Plan B. People displayed impres-



sive bravery but the encounter was exhausting and Plan B seemed too far at that point, and too difficult to get to, seeing as we would have to get around the police and head into East Oakland. We decided to return to the plaza.

Once back at the plaza we needed to make some decisions about whether to continue on to plan C, call it quits or do something else. Plan C was a bit of a walk, given what we had just gone through. It was also clear to us that the police were capable of guessing our destination, and would probably block us if we tried to make it to C. At the same time, it was clear that people were very inspired by the Battle of Oak St. and wanted to try for a building. We felt some sense of urgency based on that energy level, but were pretty sure that many people would go home if we didn't try something quickly. It occurred to us that we might try the Traveler's Aid building. We sent a scout to look at it. There were people working on the building who had the door padlocked. We suspected that we could cut the lock, the workers would leave and we would have our occupation. Though this did not fit our criteria – it was owned by a wealthy individual rather than a corporation, and was smaller than our needs – we felt that it was our best chance for success, given the aggressive police response. We assembled at the corner of 14th and Broadway and marched over to the Traveler's Aid building. However, when we got there, the group tasked with cutting the

padlock was unable to do so, given the equipment they had. While standing in front of the Traveler's Aid, trying to figure out what do, the march took off around the corner, up San Pablo. At that point our decision making structure effectively collapsed, and we scrambled to try and find a place to take the march. Most of us in the tactical group had different ideas about what we should be doing and no time to figure them out. While trying to discuss our options, we were kettled at 19th and Telegraph, escaped miraculously, and continued up Telegraph toward the building used as a decoy that morning. The police, however, blocked us at 28th and, once on Broadway, the march, which was no longer entirely in our hands, started heading back to the plaza, which seemed wise. Most of us were arrested in the final kettle on Broadway, though some of us escaped and went to the other side of the kettle to support our arrested comrades. At that point, autonomous groups, enraged by the events of the day, responded to the police violence in the manner which they saw fit – entering City Hall and trashing it, for instance, or marching to the jail to try and block the sheriff's buses.

Analysis, Self-Criticism and Recommendations for the Future

We made several tactical mistakes and some questionable decisions during the first march. As stated before, we do not have consensus on what went right and what wrong, and can only offer the following perspectives

The First March:

1) Cutting through Laney is certainly questionable. We do feel that it might have worked, and could have been seen as a brilliant gambit. The only other choices would have been to charge the lines or immediately go to Plan B. Some of us think storming the lines would have been the best option. In hindsight, if we had split the march, with half of the people pressuring the police lines on Oak and the other half going through Laney, we might have effectively surrounded the police.

2) Letting the march escape from us in Laney was a clear failure of control. As a result, the crowd turned back toward the Kaiser center when many of us feel that it would have been much better to go to Plan B immediately, since it was clear that the police had already surrounded the building and put it on lockdown. Others feel that we still had a chance and might have effectively charged the police line on the lake-side of the building and that the crowd therefore made the correct choice. Some people in the decision-making team had reservations about plan B, particularly with regards to its residential location. They were hesitant to bring such an intense fight to that location.

3) As for what happened afterward, it was clear that there was a real will in the crowd to fight the police. Although there was probably only a very small chance of successfully reaching the doors of the building, and we probably should have been well on our way to Plan B, the Battle of Oak St., as it has

been called, was immensely moving for all of us, and we very much value this material testimony to our hatred of the police and our desire for a home for the Oakland Commune. We do not think people would have fought as hard as they did if they were not committed to the project of taking a new home for Occupy Oakland.

The Second March:

1) Our decision making structure effectively broke down, and we were seduced by a sense of urgency into making hasty decisions, rather than following the planning and thinking we had come up with. Our unwillingness to call it a day and risk the feelings of anticlimax and defeat was a real weakness. We need to be willing to make strategic retreats.

2) We made a hasty decision to occupy the Traveler's Aid building, and we did not adequately prepare to make sure it happened correctly. In particular our entry team only had one tool, which did not work for the job. They were supposed to have another tool which would have worked in that situation. Ultimately, we are not in consensus about whether we should have done something else in place of the TA building, whether we should have gone to another building on our long list, tried for plan C, or called it a day.

3) After the failure of Traveler's Aid, things completely broke down. We should have jumped in front of the march and taken it back to the plaza in light of the fact that we didn't have a

really great destination. While we were trying to figure out what to do we got kettled and after the breakout the march headed up Telegraph on its own. It was a runaway train, but we should have found a way to stop it.

4) After we were kettled once, we should acted to prevent a second kettle. We should have taken the march out of situations where we might get caught by the police. Broadway, in particular, is a bad street. We should have put the march back on Telegraph as quickly as possible.

General Self-Criticism and Other Remarks

1) In retrospect, the parameters of the proposal, particularly the parameters around ownership (or our interpretation of them) seem very problematic. There were not as many viable commercial spaces owned by banks and corporations as one might have thought. There were, however, many viable spaces owned by wealthy individuals for investment purposes. This is a place where the anticorporate (rather than anticapitalist) ideology of the Occupy movement has become a limit. We should have initiated a discussion with the assembly about these parameters and tested out people's feelings about them.

2) Many of us feel that we were not good enough at communicating with the march. We failed to stay in front of it at a crucial moment. Though we prompted most of the major decisions the march made, our team was not sufficiently visible as leaders or decision-makers. Many

of us are, of course, uncomfortable with such authority but we recognize that visible, identifiable march leaders are important. Many of us feel that our decision-making team could not effectively consult with each other, receive info from the scouts and lead the march quickly. We have discussed the possibility that we might need more people for march leadership, or a single person who can make decisions autonomously if necessary, consulting with the others where possible. Speed is important.

In general, we feel that a "leaderless" movement like Occupy Oakland – one whose basic principles we support – produces too few people who are willing to stand up and lead a march with a megaphone. [We also want to note, here, that patriarchy plays a big part in who gets noticed or respected as a march leader]. This opens up very complex issues of power and authority in such situations, the need for strategic "leadership" or direction and the contradictions this raises for people who are opposed to leaders and authority in general. Throughout the day we struggled to balance our own responsibility to lead the march toward success, making choices for the group, and yet at the same time preserve the autonomy of individuals and groups, in the spirit of Occupy Oakland. This is a difficult balancing act in such a situation. There are times where autonomous action made it difficult to succeed and times where autonomous action was exactly what was necessary. (For instance, if an autonomous group had flanked the police as they were facing off with the shields at 10th and Oak,



going up Madison and down 10th, we might gotten past the police lines there.) We hope that we can discuss such issues and think about the new organizational forms they demand.

3) We should have gamed out more scenarios beforehand. Though many of us feel it's impossible to play out, in advance, all of the contingencies and possibilities one will encounter, we should have thought about the possibility of splitting the march in half for tactical power. We have indicated two places where the capacity to split the march might have led to success.

4) Many have suggested that we should have gone about the occupation in an entirely different manner – clandestinely occupying a building and attempting to regularize our tenancy there. Though we think the project of occupying buildings in this manner – squatting, in other words – is important, and some among us are squatters, it is not possible to occupy commercial space this way. Or rather, it's not possible to occupy the

kind of space that would meet the needs of the proposal in this manner. You can't quietly occupy these kinds of buildings, and even if you could, the point of the proposal was to create a space for the Oakland Commune, which is anything but quiet. Others have suggested that we should have gone in the night before and then brought people over. Ultimately, we do not see how this would have made a difference. The mass of people coming to support the occupation would have encountered the same resistance, as long as the day was announced as a day of occupation. We think that the main tactical problem is that an occupation needs hundreds if not thousands of people to support it. Getting those people to the building before the police block you or evict those already inside is a difficult problem, especially if one wants to openly inform people about what is happening and what they might expect. We hope there can be more discussion about how this project can be successful at a tactical level.

A Final, Slightly Philosophical Note

We have pointed out the many ways in which we thought the day was a success and the many ways in which we thought it was a failure. But we also want to remark on how relative and ultimately ambiguous these terms are. For some of us, everything short of the total destruction of capitalism is a failure. History is full of strange twists and turns and reversals. None of us know, ultimately, what all of this will have meant one month from now, one year from now, in a decade. We also note that, in many regards, some of Occupy Oakland's greatest "successes" were born from "failures." The effect of failure is not always clear. Some failures lead to successes. Some successes lead to failures. The eviction of the camp on the morning of Oct. 25th was a clear failure. We had no capacity to defend ourselves against the military operation of OPD. The attempt to storm the police lines and retake the plaza on the night of the 25th was unsuccessful. The night was a series of brave and remarkable failures to take down the police line at Broadway and 14th. And even though there were five thousand people in the streets, the police deployed tear gas and drove us back, again and again. Why, then, did it feel like a victory? One of the reasons we were able to retake the plaza the next night is that the police grievously wounded some people – one of them a veteran – and were forced to retreat under public condemnation. The point, therefore, is that we do not know

what will happen. This does not mean that all choices are equal. Questions of strategy and tactics are of the utmost important but they have to be situated in this terrain, where the effects of tactical success or failure are difficult to predict. We are up against an enemy with overwhelming force and, as a result, sometimes we win indirectly, by creating the condition for the next thing to happen, as the eviction of the camp created the conditions for the General Strike. This is why it is worth trying things, even knowing that they might not work. Think, for instance, about how the day might have gone otherwise J28. We do not know what would have happened if we had reached plan B, or chosen to head toward Plan C instead. We do not know, ultimately, whether or not we could have reached these places without being blocked or kettled. The police seemed determined to use whatever force they had at their disposal in order to preserve the sanctity of private property. Under such circumstances, holding a building might be impossible. There are no magic tactics here, no secret weapons. Nonetheless, we still think the project of taking a home for Occupy Oakland is of utmost importance. We hope that our experience, our failed success and our successful failure, will eventually lead us onto the road home. Long live the Oakland Commune!

Source: <http://occupyoaklandmovein-day.org/content/statement-j28-tactical-team>

Building the Red Army: The Death and Forbidden Rebirth of the Oakland Commune

"Don't fuck with the Oakland Commune." Words which will live forever in history, to be remembered and repeated at every glorious defeat inflicted upon the heroes of the future by mayors, police officers, unions, churches, and children. A letter, signed by the Occupy Oakland Move-In Assembly, promised to respond to the *inevitable eviction* of an illegal building occupation by "*blockading the airport indefinitely*." Tactics only dreamed of by al-Qaeda, within the reach of Occupy Oakland after just four months.

Yesterday these words were at the center of a material practice which brought our movement up against its limits. It's not a bad thing to meet your limits. It means confronting the possibility and necessity of radical transformation. And this confrontation should be approached with all the courage and resolve on display when a young militant throws a tear gas canister back at a line of police.

Occupy Oakland Move-In Day was to be a historic event, an occupation of a privately owned building by a mass of people, announced well in advance. The literature indicated that "multiple targets" had been identified, and that the site would be "a vacant building owned either by a bank, a large corporation of the 1% or already public." The goal was familiar: to establish a social center in the building for com-

munity use. And in fact a remarkable schedule of events had been planned, a "festival" which could surely have drawn in attention and support.

Every action in Oakland begins with a deceptive innocence, a rally at Oscar Grant Plaza. The numbers were impressive – the mainstream media reports 1000-2000 throughout the day – and a sign that a remarkable cross-section of the city had been waiting for this. But at the same time police were walking through the crowd with a photo album of prominent organizers, along with warrants for their arrest.

Apparently some of those arrested were returned to the rally, and the march set off in good spirits. From time to time you could look across the street and see lines of police on the next block. You could also look up and see their helicopters.

At a certain crucial intersection it became clear that police, who had a bird's-eye view of our trajectory, were blocking the planned route. In front of us was a quagmire known as Laney College. This was the first moment in which a desperately-needed contingency plan was unavailable. Though the truck with the sound system and furniture was at an impasse, the crowd spontaneously surged onto the unfamiliar campus and had no idea where to go. It wasn't hard for the police to block the most apparent exits.

Inevitably, there was a mic check and an attempt at a general assembly; the suggestion that we occupy a building on campus was met with appropriate derision by the already irritated crowd. We walked over an extremely narrow bridge and climbed up a hill to the street, where once again we met our friends in blue and had no idea where we were supposed to go. Eventually we walked on a large street to approach the Henry J. Kaiser Convention Center, which was surrounded by fences and cops.

The Kaiser Convention Center is a very large building. It is an obvious and excessively ambitious target. Whether it was a good idea to consider this building at all will be the subject of great debate in the future. What's obvious is that doggedly pursuing this questionable plan after significant police interference was inadvisable. The front lines, the people with trashcan shields, took the initiative. They grabbed the fence and pulled it down to face the police, who shot off a smoke bomb. Because smoke bombs look a lot like tear gas, they're a great way to cause a crowd to become even more chaotic. But people were already drifting away by then, trying to find some representative of the leadership to explain plan B.

Every step we made towards plan B brought us towards another line of police. The handheld garage-door barricades and trashcan shields gathered again at the front lines, with a mass in goggles and bandanas behind them. Ominous drumming on parked cars

and buckets. An advance on the police, met with flashbangs and tear gas. The crowd advanced three times.

There was nothing much to do after that. A megaphone told us we were going to take back Oscar Grant Plaza, so we walked back there. After a brief moment of recuperation the organizers announced that we would be taking another building in 45 minutes.

I regret to say the atmosphere was triumphalist. It's understandable that a clash with police has a marked effect on the adrenal glands. But there was nothing resembling a victory in this. The stated goal had not been achieved, and the police are familiar with the aggressiveness of activists in Oakland. They expect it. In fact, the Oakland Police Department is on the verge of federal receivership, an unprecedented move, because the OPD *really likes violence*, and seeks it out as part of a policy of state-sponsored gang warfare. And the insistence on "Fuck the Police" marches in Oakland leading up to yesterday could only shift the emphasis from the occupation itself to the clash.

Now we have to ask ourselves if we should continue to give the police what they want, which we do in ritualized form at every action. After all, it is these rituals that reproduce belief in the cops. The cops tell a lie. The lie is that their violence is autonomous and imposes its power to preserve an abstract order. What they never want us to understand is that cops are an element of the machinery of the capitalist state, and they exist within a wide

network of institutions which allow the capitalist class to exercise social power. In Oakland their repression was used to evict an encampment which threatened to bring public space under proletarian control, and to drive out an attempted building occupation on a day declared to be a "general strike." And if yesterday the OPD was forced to call upon the Alameda County Sheriff's Office and city police including Fremont, Hayward, Berkeley, Pleasanton, Union City, and Newark, their actions were structured around the defense of private property and its social system.

But the reinforcement of private property is not limited to police violence. It happens in schools, the legal system, social welfare institutions, non-profit organizations, trade unions, and countless other spaces. Since these institutions don't use *violence* to defend private property, a struggle whose assault on capitalist power is as broad as that power itself will situate street confrontations within a wide spectrum of activity. In Oakland the class war did not begin with the occupation. It happens every day when the police are used against its citizens, many of whom are sent not just for a night in jail but to prison, if they aren't shot in the back. And it happens every day when people are evicted from their homes, when they are subjected to discipline and humiliation in the workplace, when their schools are converted into training camps for Bill Gates. For many of these people, whose entry into political practice is

required for the continuation of the Occupy movement, escalating the confrontation with police may not be highly desirable. Evasion is better.

And it is the subject of evasion which brings us to the next part of our story. I can't claim, for a specific set of reasons, to have direct knowledge of what happened then. I can certainly assure you that I took no part in any illegal activities. But someone who isn't me was there, and experienced it.

A much smaller crowd – maybe between 200 and 500 – followed a route past the Traveler's Aid building, the site of the November 2nd occupation attempt, again followed by police. At a certain crucial intersection someone creatively knocked open a fire hydrant to produce a water barricade. The crowd swarmed into a park containing the Remember Them statue, with depictions of Martin Luther King and Malcolm X, among others.

The next time Occupy Wall Street sends money to Occupy Oakland, the general assembly may want to consider investing it in a helicopter. With their helicopters the police knew exactly where to line up to kettle the entire group, who were blocked into this park, with little left to do but admire the sculptures, erected by the Oakland Metropolitan Chamber of Commerce, of men and women who committed civil disobedience and faced police in the past.

The police recited their order to disperse. Some people probably wanted to fight again, but the vast majority did not. They approached the lines of

police and informed them that they wished to disperse. This had to be repeated several times; most times it was ignored, sometimes it was met with a response that they were waiting for instructions. When the instructions arrived the police informed people who wanted to disperse that they should move to another corner of the park and exit onto the street there. The crowd moved over to that corner, where a cop told them, “stay away from us,” and refused to allow anyone to leave.

Suddenly, at the other end of the park, a smoke bomb. People started running towards a fence, which blocked the only area without police. An advanced element knocked down the fence and the whole crowd ran, coming up against another fence and knocking that one down too.

A few people ran off and successfully dispersed. The others gathered and were kettled again. Part of this group made a remarkable escape through the YMCA, jumping over exercise equipment and exiting elsewhere. Another part of the group was arrested.

The action didn't stop there. Another group, whoever wasn't sitting in front of the YMCA with zipties cutting into their wrists, returned to Oscar Grant Plaza and simply decided to occupy City Hall, where they burned an American flag and fought with police again.

Earlier that day, as we sat in Oscar Grant Plaza waiting for the next round, I heard a number of people talk about the class war. War demands military thinking. Among the basic principles

of military strategy is the one which dictates that you retreat when the enemy advances. This is as fundamental a principle as the one which dictates that you pursue when the enemy retreats. And any evaluation of the day will have to begin with the acknowledgment that up to 500 of our troops were captured.

In the 1895 Introduction to *Class Struggles in France*, Karl Marx's account of the 1848 revolution and its repression, Friedrich Engels reviewed the effect of historical changes in warfare on the class struggle. “Let us have no illusions about it,” he wrote. “A real victory of insurrection over the military in street fighting, a victory as between two armies, is one of the rarest exceptions. And the insurgents counted on it just as rarely... The most that an insurrection can achieve in the way of actual tactical operations is the proficient construction and defence of a single barricade.”

Knowing that the barricade tactic was one of “passive defense,” and that the military always possessed equipment and training unavailable to the insurgents, the revolutionaries of the 19th century pursued other goals. “Even in the classic time of street fighting,” Engels wrote, “the barricade produced more of a moral than a material effect. It was a means of shaking the steadfastness of the military.”

But at a certain point street-fighting lost its “magic,” even for this “moral” effect. After 1848 the police developed their own tactics of street fighting, and a whole range of changes tipped the

balance in favor of the military. Their armies became bigger, and their weapons far more effective. Engels lists the smooth-bore muzzle-loading percussion gun, the small-calibre breech-loading magazine rifle, and the dynamite cartridge. He adds that the urban terrain had been transformed, with “long, straight, broad streets, tailor-made to give full effect to the new cannons and rifles.”

To this list we can now add beanbag bullets, CS gas, and helicopters. We are lucky that, unlike in Egypt, more traditional varieties of bullets are not currently on the table. But we can't ignore the limits of the barricades; since the Paris Commune in 1871, which the Oakland Commune now recalls, the tactic of the barricades has been linked to defeat and the possibility of vicious and bloody repression. We have not suffered such a gruesome defeat. But coming up with a long-term strategy, beyond the short-term tactics, means that we acknowledge and learn from the defeats that we experience.

The alternative to street fighting that was embraced by the 19th century socialist movement, parliamentary contestation, is absolutely useless to us now. But even in the 19th century, when universal suffrage was a new democratic right, its use for revolutionary movements was not to enter into the administration of the capitalist state. Engels wrote that it “provided us with a means, second to none, of getting in touch with the mass of the people where they still stand aloof from us.” The dramatic increases in

numbers – German socialists drew 1.5 million votes while it was illegal to even have a party meeting, and nearly 2 million votes after that – could compensate for the new military disadvantages. Street fighting, Engels argued, could play a role in the future if “undertaken with greater forces,” which could drop “passive barricade tactics” in favor of “open attack.”

A century later, insurrectionary anarchists and reformists like MoveOn vie for hegemony over the movement, each advancing street-fighting and voting not as tactics, but as the ultimate goals. And we have to be clear that it is an alliance between social democrats and ultra-leftists that has driven this movement, in spite of their public scorn for each other.

Their alliance, however, has opened a space for revolutionary responses to the crisis. These responses won't be summed up in spectacular clash. They'll be a process that will be with us through the ebbs and flows, beyond every defeat and within every victory.

The movement is currently in a lull. Everyone looks forward to spring, but there is no need to cling to escalation in period of quiet. No need, because it is precisely the time to expand, to engage in the less dramatic work of growing and incorporating the diffuse energies of the working class.

Reformists urge coalition building, as though the union bureaucracies could somehow lead a radical movement. While some purists refuse coalitions, the revolutionary response is infiltration and invasion. When we ap-



proach the unions we don't seek their guidance; we seek to introduce class antagonism into those institutions, to construct a broad class power, menacing and inescapable for the bosses just as it is irresistible to workers who spend each day on the defensive.

Fences were torn down twice yesterday. The first time, a panicked and impotent attempt to convert a thwarted plan into a confrontation. The second time, as a tactical maneuver which played a precise and necessary role in evading the enemy. The determination and resourcefulness which enables such an escape could play a role in the army that not only defends the working class from capitalist brutality, but also defeats capitalist power. And at every action we are reminded that our historical task is to build the mass organization capable of drafting its strategy and guiding it to victory.

Asad Haider

29/1/2012

Quelle: <http://viewpointmag.com/2012/01/29/building-the-red-army-the-death-and-forbidden-rebirth-of-the-oakland-commune/>