

# Fighting The Cuts:

## A guide to protests, police & the law, for students and activists.



by Bristol Anarchist Federation

## **Preface**

After the Millbank Tower siege of November 10th 2010 well over 50 people were arrested, despite media claims that the siege was planned and led by anarchist groups almost all of those arrested were students. The media and internet was full of footage of young unmasked protesters taking part in illegal activities. Social networking sites linked names to faces and it was just a matter of time before the police caught up with those involved.

This guide was produced for students but is relevant to anyone who may be involved with protest. It intends to provide a comprehensive (but by no means exhaustive) guide to what you can do to stay safe while remaining effective on demonstrations or actions.

Here we initially cover what you and your group should consider before attending an action or demonstration and ways to be effective during it. We then provide a brief oversight on how the police operate including their units tactics and behaviour, as well as what rights you have. Finally we provide a step by step guide of what to do if you or one of your mates gets busted by the cops.

This pamphlet works on the premise that you are just going on a nice fluffy march from A to B but considers that during this time anything could happen including illegal activity.

The authors of this pamphlet in no way encourage illegal or violent behaviour but instead concede that individuals and groups will do what they believe is necessary to fight the cuts, the coalition and the state and provides advice accordingly.

***In Solidarity,***

***Bristol Anarchist Federation***

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## **UNIT A – The Protest**

### ***Introduction***

People choose to take action to further their cause in many different ways and propose many different tactics ranging from marches, occupations, sit down protests and signing petitions through to more clandestine activity including property destruction and other forms of sabotage. This pamphlet does not encourage any particular kind of protest, the choice is yours but we would say three things:

- 1) For your own safety if anyone encourages you to be passive and sit down in front of a line of police horses tell that person to fuck right off unless you want to get trampled.
- 2) If you do anything illegal you must be ready to live with the consequences.
- 3) If you do anything that injures or potentially could have injured a fellow protester (think fire extinguisher) expect to be on the receiving end of a good kicking. Activists (particularly Anarchists) don't do cops, we just do justice.

### ***MODULE ONE – Preparing for an action or demo, get organised!***

First things first, find some friends. Make sure they're friends you trust, preferably some you know reasonably well but most importantly have the same goals and desires regarding the reasoning behind your demonstration and tactics you are willing to use. Create an **affinity group** from this, smaller affinity groups work much better for quick movement and decision making, but it can be bigger if you choose. We recommend a group of 6/8, always even numbers because within these groups you need to **'buddy-up'**. This may be starting to sound a bit like a year 8 school trip, but it can be very important and holding hands isn't essential. Basically, choose one person with in your group and you will be sticking together through the whole thing, making sure each other are OK, working together, and keeping track of if one of you gets nicked.



Now, you've got your affinity group and buddies, you go on the demo and get split up (it happens), do you really want to shout names across a crowd of 1000 + people, where the police can hear and there's probably several other people with the same name? Nah, didn't think so.

Choose a **code word**, possibly an irregular name like Gertrude, or something professional sounding like 'Foxtrot'. 2 syllables works best because it's the most audible from experience. Words not to use include bomb, gun or Allah etc. A **hand signal** in the air helps a lot as well,

because this shows your location above the crowd. This can be anything, but we suggest it's not a middle finger or two fingers because if the cops are feeling like it they could probably attempt an arrest for section 5. We recently taught these tactics to a group of students from U.W.E, some of them put them to use at the demo the next day with great success.

People might be using fake names (recommended) in case of arrest or hospitalisation, so it's worth finding out what names people are using. Not knowing could mean they're in hospital but you can't get to them or check up on them, or find out which police station they are at. Then not only could they find themselves coming out of another police station miles away with no one waiting for them, but the dedicated solidarity demo crew could be sat outside a police station cradling a bottle of whiskey and pack of **hobnobs** for days!

It's worth talking over your **arrestee procedure**, choosing a solicitor (see bust card on back cover), de-arrests, solidarity demos, and anything else you might think of even if you "aren't going to do anything illegal". The more time your group spends together going over things and practising the better you will work as a team.

If you're intending on making a point against certain companies - tax dodgers for example - we suggest you **choose your targets before hand** and scout them out earlier on in the day to see how protected they are. Possibly create a back up list of targets in case the police/security ruin your attempts on one, but a written list on your person may amount to a conspiracy charge (note to self *ed.*).

Let people know if you have **first aid** training, it can be beneficial to have a first aid kit with you either way; you never know when the police are going to decide they're bored and smash you round the head with a big heavy stick!

The basic message is **prepare for everything**, have plans and back up plans and back up plans for your back up plans. Make sure you all know what you're doing and ensure you're never caught off guard. Organise, resist!

## **MODULE TWO – On The Day:**

Wake up well ahead of time and deal with your hangover, even better don't have one. You need to be thinking straight and be on the ball. If you still feel the effects of any drugs (alcohol included) it might be worth staying home because it could effect your judgement and you don't want to be getting yourself or your mates into bad situations!

Eat a good high carb breakfast. **Your mum** always told you breakfast is the most important meal of the day, she was right, so don't go moaning to her when you get stuck in a police kettle and start feeling peckish.

Get dressed, wear **warm clothes and dark colours with no identifying features** like logos or bright colours.

It doesn't matter if your aren't planning on doing anything illegal, nobody plans these things, right? It's a sign of unity and protects the anonymity of all.

Check your pockets, bag and wallet, empty them of **ABSOLUTELY EVERYTHING!** All you need is about one litre of **water**, enough **food** to sustain you (remember you may be running around so burning calories), your house key and enough **money** to get the bus/train home (if you get kettled/carried away/nicked/start the revolution you may miss your planned lift home). Optional extras we recommend are a **baseball cap**, a dark scarf or other **face covering** (an old t-shirt sleeve is ideal), pain killers in their original packaging and prescription drugs where relevant in their original packaging.

**Mobile phones** are useful for communication yes, but remember if they get taken by the cops they will have a list of your friends, access to your text message and call log and you will be down the iPhone you bought with your student loan! Invest in a cheap one to take with you if you need one and pay for it in cash. A change of clothes is good too, you could get wet and need to change, or you could get cold in a kettle and need the extra layers.

As a word of advise, make sure the change of clothes are good for blending into a crowd (blue jeans, t-shirt with a logo, grey hoody, something like that!).

Write the number of a decent, experienced solicitor **on your arm**. "Oh but..." **JUST FUCKING DO IT!!!!** Too many peoples famous last words have been, "Oh but I'm not going to do anything that will get me arrested." So just do it ok!?

Often there are bust cards given out for large demos so use the number on that if appropriate. Bust cards are easy to lose, so writing it on your arm means you can't lose it, and the police can't deny you access to your arm!

Meet your group somewhere public **away from the main demo** make sure everyone is ok and no one has **the shits**, then head over. Stick together for the rest of the day. **NEVER walk off alone**. Tell your group if you need to leave/go somewhere and go together; from personal

experience we know the cops like to pick off stragglers.

**Masking up** – You may choose to “mask up” from the beginning of the demo, this is your choice but from experience this tends to attract undue attention from the **Police** and scuppers any plans you had before you start. So unless there are hundreds of you all masked up then don't bother.

If however things get a bit “Exciting” put your mask on, even if you don't get stuck in yourself it protects you and your fellow protesters when the cameras start flashing. Try your best to **avoid having your photo taken** and whatever you do for Christ's sake **don't tag yourself in facebook you muppet** or load up videos of you on youtube.

Wearing a baseball cap quite low will help to make you less identifiable to cameras (and unidentifiable to CCTV cameras because of their angle) so they're incredibly useful, and don't make you look too suspect.

**Who did that?** – We understand, you went to a student demo against the cuts with your mates, the police have been pushing you around and your are pretty pissed off. Then **some bloody Tory** or corporate fat cat or tool of the state puts a plate glass window right next to you!

We are not going to tell you what to do but what we will say is if something were to happen to that window don't just stand there posing for the media, unless your plan is to go through the window grab your buddy and disappear into the gathered crowd pronto. Consider changing your appearance A.S.A.P too.

### **MODULE THREE – Afterwards:**

**After the demo** get together in a quiet yet public space if you can – parks are good – and have a chat about how you are feeling. Demos can be very **stressful and even upsetting experiences** so take the time to cool down and get your feelings out in the open. It may be worth having a similar gathering a day or two later, from experience the adrenaline can keep you going for hours afterwards, but later that night or the next day you could suddenly feel incredibly overwhelmed by everything that happened. There's no shame in this, everyone gets these feelings and it's best to share them. Even the most seasoned protesters feel their legs shake when confronted with their first police line! (*Too true – Ed.*)

At the risk of sounding cheesy and cliché, group hug everyone!...No, seriously, there's nothing that means more in life than good friends who are able to support you and this is definitely a time you'll need them.

**Now if you are like us head straight down the pub but NEVER talk about anything that you did** or that anyone else did from now on. Use the mantra of **“What happened on the demo stays on the demo”** it could be the difference between pub and prison.

If people are arrested, get to the police station for a **solidarity demo**. This has been proven to pressure police into faster processing, but more importantly it's a lot nicer to have a warm welcome of comrades with food and drink waiting for you than a cold car park and a long walk home.

The most important part however, is a **debrief**. Get together somewhere secure and discuss what happened, what went well, what went badly and what you can change for next time. Remember **never** talk about illegal activities that may have occurred on the demo, even if you think you're safe, you may end up regretting the announcement of “yeah, I set a cop on fire with a petrol bomb”.

## **UNIT B – THE COPS**

### ***Introduction:***

Let's set a few things straight. There is a good chance you have been brought up to believe that the police are good people, they are here to uphold the law and stop all the bad guys like burglars and gangsters and drug dealers and rapists. Though it is true they do these things, if you are planning to protest then you are now potentially one of these bad people. When people protest at a basic level they are complaining about how the state does things. The police are a tool of the state and they will attempt to stifle your dissent. As a result it is sometimes necessary to up the ante in order to get our message heard. Alternatively it is the police who often escalate a situation. Either way it is important to realise that we do not have to obey the police although they will attempt to make you do.

If you want to make your voice heard through protest or direct action, it is just a matter of time until you are confronted by the police. This can be a very stressful and intimidating experience particularly when threats of arrest, riot gear, dogs, horses and batons are involved.

Knowing your rights and police tactics, having confidence in yourself and those around you and how you behave in these situations can be the difference between a successful action and a night in the cells.

### ***MODULE FOUR – Units & Ranks:***

If police officers have green tags on their shoulder, this means they're a **police medic**. This means very little, they're just as likely to batter you, and I wouldn't trust them to treat me anymore than a rabbit squirrel with a box of tesco's own brand plasters!



Orange tags on their shoulder means they're "evidence" gatherers. Their job is to film everyone on demos to try and create intelligence files of when you've been on demos, how vocal/active you were on those demos. They'll use information like what the demo was about and where it was to predict future demos you may go on. They work in pairs, one with a video camera and another who's job it is to look tough and protect the cop with the camera. It's best to avoid being identifiable when the cameras are pointed at you, but masking up when no one else around is could lead to you and the camera building up a special relationship.



These guys are FIT, no really, it stands for Forward Intelligence Team. These are cops who's job it is to build up a profile of what the Daily Mail would call "professional protesters", and what we would call "people". They take your picture, and stick it on a database then use software to match your face to other protests. **Keep clear!**

In public order situations you will see cops with Red epaulettes (two diamonds), these are inspectors and on the whole will be the highest rank you are going to see on the street unless all hell has broken loose. These are the ones giving the orders and the only ones who will know when you may be getting out of that kettle, not that they will tell you. They receive their their orders from chief inspectors and superintendents. They will be hidden in a van or station somewhere moving their units around command and conquer style.

White epaulettes/tabards (three stripes) are sergeants. These ones are attached to a group of PCs (known as a serial) and tell the PCs to do basic functions like walk, arrest, and swing their battons. Listen out for them telling their serial to "turn left" or "step forward" it's pretty funny.

The tactic you're mostly likely to encounter is the "kettle", or "cordon" as the police call it when they're pretending it hasn't been repeatedly condemned for it denying people their human rights. This is when police form lines all around a group of people stopping them from leaving an area. The purpose of this is to demoralize protesters by denying them access to food, water, toilets, and warmth. The easiest way to avoid these is to recognize them forming early. Keep an eye out round the edge of gatherings of police forming tight lines. They can form far away if they think they're likely to get spotted or close in if they think they can get away with it. The obvious aspect of avoiding this is to keep moving, it's very hard to trap a group of people who are constantly moving. Everyone ends up caught in a kettle at some point, unfortunately. I'm not going to lie, they're shit. They're boring and demoralizing. But if we let them demoralize us the police win, so lets not!

Lets say you weren't moving much or paying much attention and the police have formed tight lines all around (bollocks!) so you need to escape. This isn't easy, but here are some hints. Go for the **ends of lines**, these are weaker and so you're more likely to break them. Try to make it directional where you push, rather than pushing the whole line. If you can put a lot of pressure on a small area it's more likely to break, and once it's broken the hole can be forced wider a lot easier. If you fail to break the kettle, it's not going to be fun. They sometimes just let you join into

the larger protest, or keep you surrounded until the official end time of the demo and then leave. It's very inconsistent. There have been cases of them arresting everyone in the kettle for Section 14 (protesting outside a designated protest area) but the most common end would be them letting people out one by one, searching them and filming them whilst they give their details (usually under section 60).

Unless they accuse you of breaching **section 50** of the anti-social behaviour laws, do not have to give your details. When they're filming you, you can put your hands over your face (they may forcefully remove your hands in this situation) or lower your head to hide your face.

When in a kettle be careful what you say, it may seem the police aren't paying attention, that you may be getting off lightly and such but there's a good chance they're listening to everything you're saying and you're only going to make things worse for yourself. Never co-operate with them but don't give them fuel against you! It's easy to let your guard down, but a seemingly casual conversation with a cop could end with them knowing your name, how far you travelled to get there, the fact there's the makings of a paint bomb in your bag. **BOLLOCKS, YOU JUST GOT YOURSELF NICKED.**

Snatch squads are less common, but you've got to keep an eye out! They usually work in groups of 6/8 (see, our affinity group recommendations are so good they're supported by the police!) and will come into a kettle or demo to try and remove people they intend to arrest, possibly someone they see as a trouble maker or recognise someone from enough intelligence gatherers information to consider you as a potential trouble maker, they've been known to use snatch squads on the most vocal in crowds as well. We wouldn't want you to obstruct a police officer, that would be illegal after all, but we have heard that it's possible to use the advantage of numbers to hold people and prevent them from getting dragged away.

## **MODULE FIVE – Know your rights:**

If police are performing a **stop and search** they are required to give the reasons for the stop first. This can be as much as suspicion of committing a crime or suspicious behaviour, so it isn't worth trying to argue your way out of this. They can't however, ask you to remove a mask/facial covering unless a **section 60aa** has been put in place by an officer of inspector rank or above.

When they ask for your details you are not required to give them, unless you're suspected of a section 50 offence, also known as an anti-social behaviour offence. If you are suspected of a section 50 offence, you are only required to give your name and address. Any questions beyond that should be answered with "no comment". Refusal to give your details under **section 50** is a non-arrestable offence, but if you refuse they will ask your details for the non-arrestable offence. Refusal to give your details the second time around is an arrestable offence under P.A.C.E, get it? No? It's a legal loophole, and not a good one. (If they only ask your details once and then arrest you, it is false arrest and worth perusing legal action.)

Before the search, the searching police officer is required to give you their surname, I.D number & station they are attached to. They probably won't do this unless you ask first. It is worth taking note of their I.D number in case you want to lodge a complaint about their conduct afterwards.

If there's to be a thorough search you are allowed to request that you're taken out of public eye, but we would recommend you NEVER do that. You're putting yourself at risk letting police take you out of public view. Despite how the police, media and state like us to picture the police, they are violent.

After the search you should always ask for a **receipt** of search. On large protests where they're searching a lot of people they may say it is inconvenient but they should be filming it themselves and make this film available to you if you apply through the police station they specify. The receipt is not only a pain for them (remember, they've caused you a lot of inconvenience to you, so it's only fair to repay the favour) but also it is evidence of the search, so it helps in case of complaints about their conduct.

## **MODULE SIX: If you get arrested – a step by step guide**

1) Shout for your affinity group

2) Remember everything the cops say to you word for word and repeat them to your solicitor,

**technicalities are wonderful things!**

3) Try and get **badge numbers**, although it can be hard and a lot to remember so your buddy should do that for you.

4) As they are carrying you away you have a few options:

- a) **Go willingly** – this requires little effort, but these bastards are silencing your voice, so you don't want to make their job easy!
- b) **Struggle** – this is fairly futile unless you have others helping by pulling you/pushing the cops, but it can be a reaction a lot of the time. And it counts as resisting arrest.
- c) **Go limp** – *This is recommended, it makes it very hard for police to carry you because you become dead weight. It can often taken four or more cops to carry you this way. They may count it as resisting arrest but it's not that likely.*

5) **Remain silent.** Beyond shouting for your affinity group and alerting people to your arrest you don't want to kick off. These situations trigger a lot of anger and you don't want a section 5 for calling a copper a 'spunk guzzling horse fucker'.

6) Interview: Answer **"No Comment"** to all questions. Your solicitor may advise you otherwise, this regularly backfires so we still recommend saying no comment. They are attempting to get evidence from you to charge you or others, if they have enough evidence to charge you they would just do it. They will try everything to get you to talk, lying about other people grassing you up, pretending to be your friend, convincing you it's in your best interests to talk. It's all bollocks! No comment, no comment, no comment! If you talk you're not just putting yourself and your comrades at risk. You have no legal obligation to speak.

## **MODULE SEVEN: – If your mate gets arrested**

- 1) Attempt a **de-arrest** if you choose too (see module one) but remember there are risks involved, namely you also getting arrested.
- 2) If there is a legal support line for the demo you are on (check your bust card) call them.
- 3) Ask the cops where they are taking them (don't expect an answer) & **record the numbers** of the arresting officers.
- 4) Sorry, but your demo is over, your comrade's welfare takes precedent over the protest. Get together with the rest of your group and head down the police station to show your solidarity, having someone meet you when you come out of the cop shop is very important for morale and the more people outside the better. Call up others to get down there.
- 5) In truth even the quickest turn over time is two hours but realistically it could be much longer. Use this time to buy some extra food and drink ready for the wait and for the arrestee when they come out. A whip round works well if there is a good sized crowd.
- 6) Hunker down for a long wait – you can do shifts, some wait while some go home for a rest or go somewhere else warm. In the past we have had sing alongs, played board games brought from home and played tag. It keeps spirits up so we highly recommend you do whatever you can to have fun.
- 7) When your comrade gets out give them a hug and the food you brought and get somewhere calm and comfy. If they want to talk about it find out what happened to them inside and what questions they were asked as this can be valuable information for the future but to not press the point if they don't want to talk just yet.

### ***In Conclusion***

- 1) Work with people you know and trust.
- 2) Decide in advance what your goal is.
- 3) Prepare for any eventuality.
- 4) Don't lose site of your real target by tussling with the cops unnecessarily.
- 5) Stay together.
- 6) Be anonymous.
- 7) Keep moving.
- 8) Know your rights and the law.
- 9) Don't talk to the police.
- 10) Show solidarity with your comrades.

We hope you have found this pamphlet useful, if you have please copy it and pass it on to your friends. If you think it could be improved or you have any further questions contact [bristol@afed.org.uk](mailto:bristol@afed.org.uk)

***Take Care, Keep Fighting, Have Fun***

***In Solidarity,***

**Bristol Anarchist Federation**

### ***Further Reading:***

There is loads of useful information, to fill in all the gaps we left we recommend these pages:

Schnews' guide to public order situations -

[www.schnews.org.uk/diyguide/guidetopublicordersituations.htm](http://www.schnews.org.uk/diyguide/guidetopublicordersituations.htm)

FIT WATCH - [www.fitwatch.org.uk/](http://www.fitwatch.org.uk/)

Guide to blockading - [www.schnews.org.uk/diyguide/blockadingforbeginners.pdf](http://www.schnews.org.uk/diyguide/blockadingforbeginners.pdf)

Activist Legal Project - [www.activistslegalproject.org.uk](http://www.activistslegalproject.org.uk)

UK Indymedia news resource – [www.indymedia.org.uk](http://www.indymedia.org.uk)

Libcom's Guide to arrest - <http://libcom.org/organise/no-comment-the-defendants-guide-to-arrest>