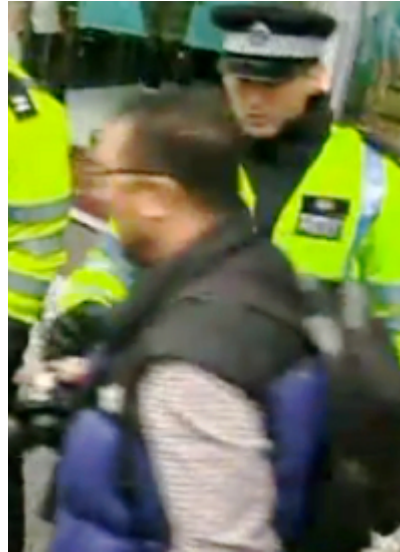




Written by [Alex Newman](#) on March 28, 2011

London Anti-cuts Union Protest Turns Violent

Hundreds of thousands of protesters took to the streets in London over the weekend to oppose proposed budget cuts being pursued by the new government. And while most of the union-led demonstrators reportedly remained peaceful, violence and vandalism were frequent occurrences. (See videos at bottom of page.)



Some of the protesters smashed windows — particularly targeting banks, though hotels and retailers did not escape the rampage — while others used “paint bombs,” bricks, and flares to get their point across. Vandals spray-painted vulgar messages on shops, including [grocer Fortnum and Mason](#), which is largely owned by a charity. Other businesses including McDonald’s were also targeted.

Various fires were set throughout the city, too. And a breakaway mob of about 300 angry youths — which the larger group of protesters condemned — [reportedly](#) hurled “missiles” at police.

There were more than 200 arrests at the demonstration, with [more to come](#) according to authorities. And hundreds of people, including dozens of police officers, were [injured](#) during the chaos. Many were hospitalized.

But police action was attacked from all sides. Protest groups complained that officers were too violent in responding to the disorder. Meanwhile, other critics blasted the police’s delays in quashing the violent hooliganism of some demonstrators.

“Anarchists participated in violence alongside more than 250,000 peaceful demonstrators[;] many were not masked and don’t seem to care about being identified,” police commander Bob Broadhurst [told](#) the *Financial Times*. “We’ll catch up with quite a lot of them.”

Between 250,000 and 400,000 people participated in the “March for the Alternative” demonstrations led by the Trades Union Congress, according to estimates cited in news reports. Protesters carried signs reading “No Cuts” and “Defend our public services,” while other displayed banners featuring pictures of communist mass murderer Ernesto “Che” Guevara.

Almost 5,000 police were there to prevent “widespread damage and mayhem,” commander Broadhurst [told](#) the BBC. He admitted, however, that “we just cannot protect every building.”

Hundreds of thousands of government jobs — possibly up to 500,000 — could be on the chopping block if the proposed cuts go through, according to news reports. And ironically, “anarchist” groups such as the “Black Bloc” were reportedly the most vicious in opposing the proposed government downsizing.

But labor unions, which led the protests, were also among the groups opposing the cuts. “We are here to send a message to the government that we are strong and united,” [declared](#) Trades Union Congress



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general secretary Brendan Barber during the march. “We will fight the savage cuts and we will not let them destroy peoples’ services, jobs and lives.”

Smaller union bosses spoke out, too. “We are faced with losses to jobs and services, a pay freeze while the cost of the living is increasing and now attacks on our pensions,” [complained](#) representative Clare Williams of the government-employee union Unison in an interview with the U.K. *Chronicle*. “Some people like to dismiss trade unions as self-interest groups, but Saturday’s march was about protecting vital services which help the poorest and most vulnerable in our society,” she insisted.

Leftist-newspaper columnists backed the demonstrations as well, downplaying the violence and vandalism. “This common interest is powerful, and produces strong emotions,” [wrote](#) the U.K. *Guardian*’s Jackie Ashley. “Whether there were half a million people or a quarter of a million, the turnout was a valuable reminder to the political class that the anti-state, low-tax views of rightwing bloggers are not the only voices in the land.”

But the U.K. government, facing massive budget shortfalls, said it would not change its strategy in response to the protests. The Prime Minister and his party announced that they would be seeking spending cuts of about \$130 billion over five years, in addition to an increase in the sales tax. And polls [show](#) most voters blame the previous regime of big-government supporter Prime Minister Gordon Brown for the cuts.

“Doing nothing is not an option,” [said](#) the ruling Conservative Party’s deputy chairman Michael Fallon, criticizing the opposition for not offering an alternative. “We have set out a credible plan backed by the [International Monetary Fund], [the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development] and every major business body in Britain to put the public finances back on track.”

Analysts have [likened](#) the protests in London over the weekend to the massive demonstrations that recently [wreaked havoc](#) in Madison, Wisconsin. And predictions of more unrest worldwide are everywhere as bankrupt governments seek to rein in unsustainable spending.



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