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## Language

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In Britain the campaigning group UK Uncut was launched in October 2010 to use direct action against tax avoidance by large corporations and to oppose austerity cuts to public services. It dramatized its demands with a number of sit-ins in stores and a sit-down at Westminster Bridge, London to oppose the Health and Social Care Bill going through parliament. It inspired US Uncut and Portugal Uncut.

In early 2011 the TUC initiated a series of protests against austerity – notably the ‘March for the Alternative’ mobilizing about 500,000 in London on 26 March 2011. UK Uncut protesters took part, occupying Fortnum and Mason and blockading Boots. Many were arrested – they were easier targets for the police than the Black Bloc anarchists who were smashing up shops. Subsequently there was strong pressure from MPs and other public figures for charges against the nonviolent Uncut activists to be dropped.

The Occupy movement was launched in London in October 2011: protesters tried to occupy the financial centre of the City, but finally established their camp the precinct of St Paul’s cathedral, where it highlighted the moral ambiguity of the Church of England participating in an unjust financial system. Three more camps were set up in London: in Finsbury Square just north of the City, in disused offices owned by UBS and in the (disused) Old Street Magistrates Court. The high profile St Paul’s camp was not dismantled by police until the end of February 2012 (*Guardian*, 29 Feb. 2012, pp. 1-2, 30 and 32). Occupy London then turned to other forms of campaigning.

Although protests did not alter the Conservative-Liberal Coalition austerity policies, the government was more responsive on the issue of tax – the Treasury announced changes to UK rules on legal tax avoidance on 6 December 2010, and the Parliamentary Public Accounts Committee has pursued this and related issues vigorously. There has been a real shift in public debate, with much greater awareness of the need to justify bankers’ rewards – shareholders at Barclays annual meeting in 2011 criticised ‘obscene bonuses’, criticism of tax avoidance by large companies and protests (including by churches) against exploitation of the poor by loan companies and the misery created by some welfare reforms. Local credit unions and food banks have been constructive responses. Exploitation of workers by offering ‘zero hours contracts’ (i.e. no guarantee of a minimum number of paid hours’ work a week) became an issue in 2013 – McDonald’s was identified as the biggest such employer, admitting that 90% of its workforce was on these contracts.

Hancox, Dan, [Fight Back! A Reader on the Winter of Protest](#) [1], OpenDemocracy, 2011, pp. 340

Covers both student protests in late 2010 (e.g. against high tuition fees) and wider demonstrations against cuts. Edited by young protesters, but includes essay by Anthony Barnett, founder of openDemocracy reflecting on potential significance of new activism.

See also:

Paul Mason, [Why Its Kicking Off Everywhere: The New Global Revolutions](#) [2], ([A.8.a. General Titles](#) [3]), pp.57-63 on UK Uncut.

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## Links

[1] <https://civilresistance.info/biblio-item/2011/fight-back-reader-winter-protest> [2] <https://civilresistance.info/biblio-item/2012/why-its-kicking-everywhere-new-global-revolutions> [3] <https://civilresistance.info/taxonomy/term/206>