

# The crisis of the British regime: democracy, protest and the unions

[counterfire.org/theory/37-theory/14906-the-crisis-of-the-british-regime-democracy-protest-and-the-unions](http://counterfire.org/theory/37-theory/14906-the-crisis-of-the-british-regime-democracy-protest-and-the-unions)

- November 27, 2011
- Written by Adrian Cousins

**The British political regime faces a crisis of confidence. This report presents empirical evidence for the democratic deficit, growing protest, the state of the trade unions and the strategic implications for the left**

## Main findings

1. There has been an unprecedented fall in public trust in government, the media, corporations and other central institutions in British society – with less than a quarter of Britons trusting national government, less than a fifth trusting parliament and fewer than 15% having any confidence in the press.
2. There has been a marked and significant rise in protest movements – twice as many of us are taking part in demonstrations compared to the 1970s and the proportion of the population describing themselves as ‘left wing’ has grown by over 2 million since the 1980s.
3. Trade unions retain greater public trust than other institutions but are facing a crisis of membership and confidence: 77% of private sector workplaces have no union members at all.
4. That a viable strategy for the left involves focussing on the politics of protest and utilising this energy to rebuild the unions along ‘[social unionism](#)’ lines.

## The democratic deficit and a crisis of institutional confidence

The central institutions of British society are facing a crisis of confidence. Survey evidence for the last quarter of a century points to a substantial decline in confidence in parliament, national government, politicians, political parties, the banks, the press and to a lesser extent the police.<sup>[ii]</sup>

It is commonly assumed that the unrest of the late 1960s and early 1970s represented the high point for movements of protest. However survey evidence from the early seventies to the present shows large increases in the numbers taking part in legal demonstrations, signing petitions and engaging in consumer boycotts. In the five years to 2005 over three million people took part in protests against the government. The survey evidence also shows that the number of people who consider themselves to be on the left has grown from under five million in 1981 to over seven million in 2006. Over the same period there has been a sustained decline in trade union density, disputes and strike action, with the year to March 2011 registering the joint lowest number of strike days since the Office for National Statistics’ records began in 1931.

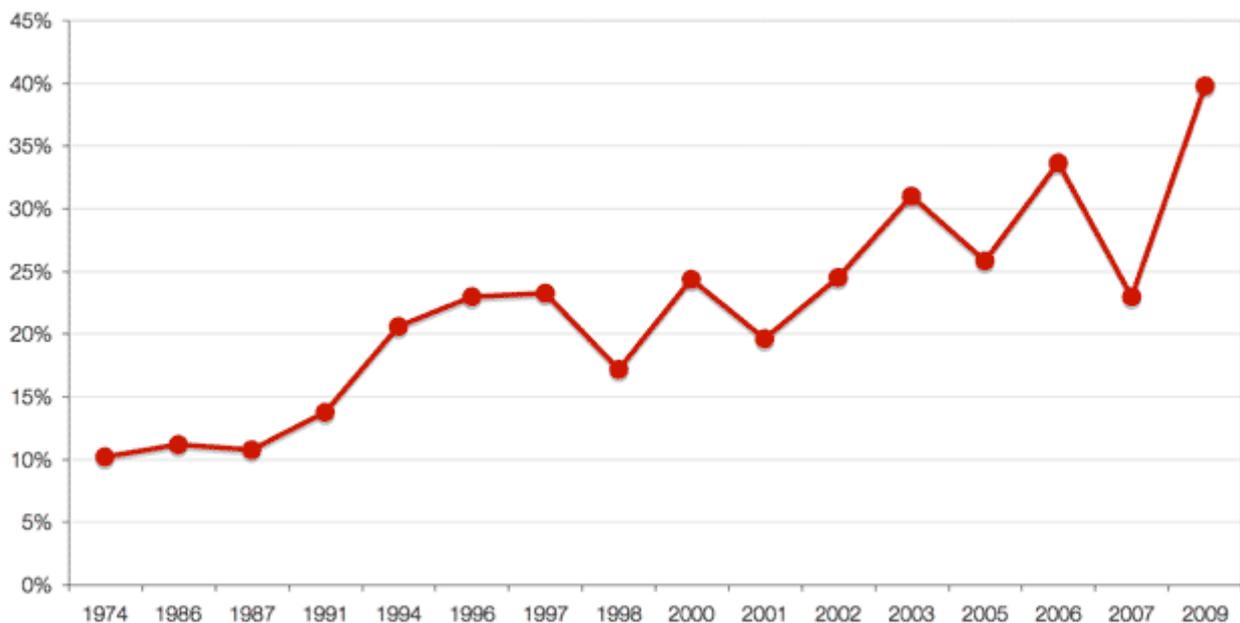
This report presents the evidence for these shifts and looks at the strategic implications for the left. It argues that the increasing lack of trust in the British regime, the growth of protest politics and the state of the trade unions requires a strategic response that places the central emphasis on building a mass

political protest movement against austerity and war in communities, streets, workplaces and unions. Such a broad based approach is crucial to rebuilding the strength of the trade unions themselves.

## The crisis of confidence in the political institutions

The 2009 British Social Attitudes survey indicates that 40% of the public 'almost never' trust National Government, compared to around 10% in 1974 (Graph 1).

**Graph 1 : Percentage who 'almost never' trust the British governments of any party to place the needs of the nation above the interests of their own political party**



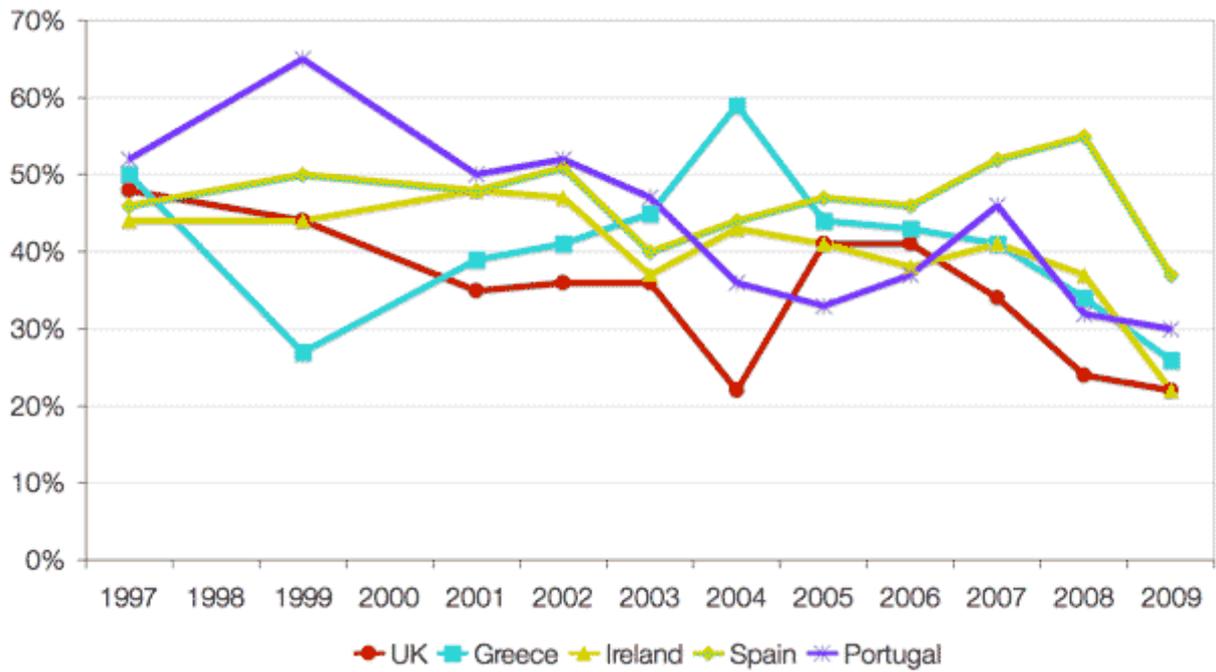
Sources: Political Action Study (1974), British Social Attitudes Survey

According to research conducted by Michelle Beyeler and Dieter Rucht (based on the period from 1972 to 1996), Britain stands out as the most 'closed' political system in Europe:

*'Britain stands out as the most closed political system or, using another terminology, the country where power is centralized the most. Only two major parties, each with a high degree of party discipline, are able to win national elections. Together with the few channels of access to the decision-making system, this creates a high degree of independence from the general public and special interest groups on the part of the officeholders'.<sup>[iii]</sup>*

This 'closed system' is now under strain. Surveys show significant declines in trust in national government for a number of European nations. The UK is the least trusted in Europe with a 26% drop in those who say they 'tend to trust' it compared to 1997 levels (Graph 2).

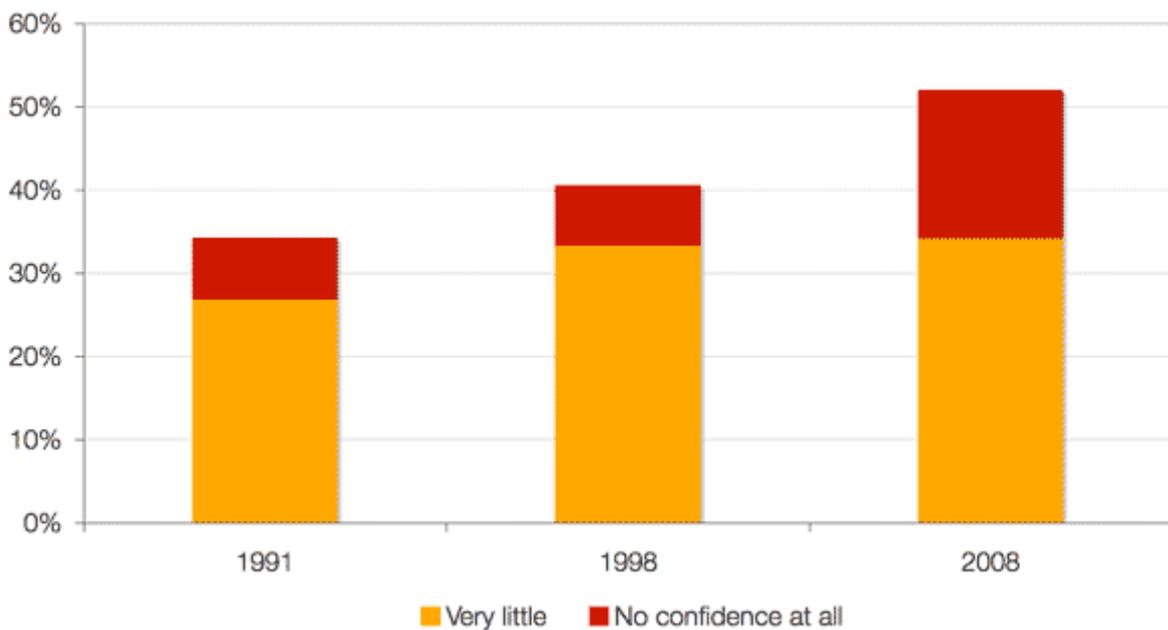
**Graph 2: Percent responding 'tend to trust' national government**



Source: Eurobarometer survey quoted in Norris (2011).<sup>[iv]</sup>

Figures from the British Social Attitudes survey chart the increase in those expressing little or no confidence in parliament (Graph 3):

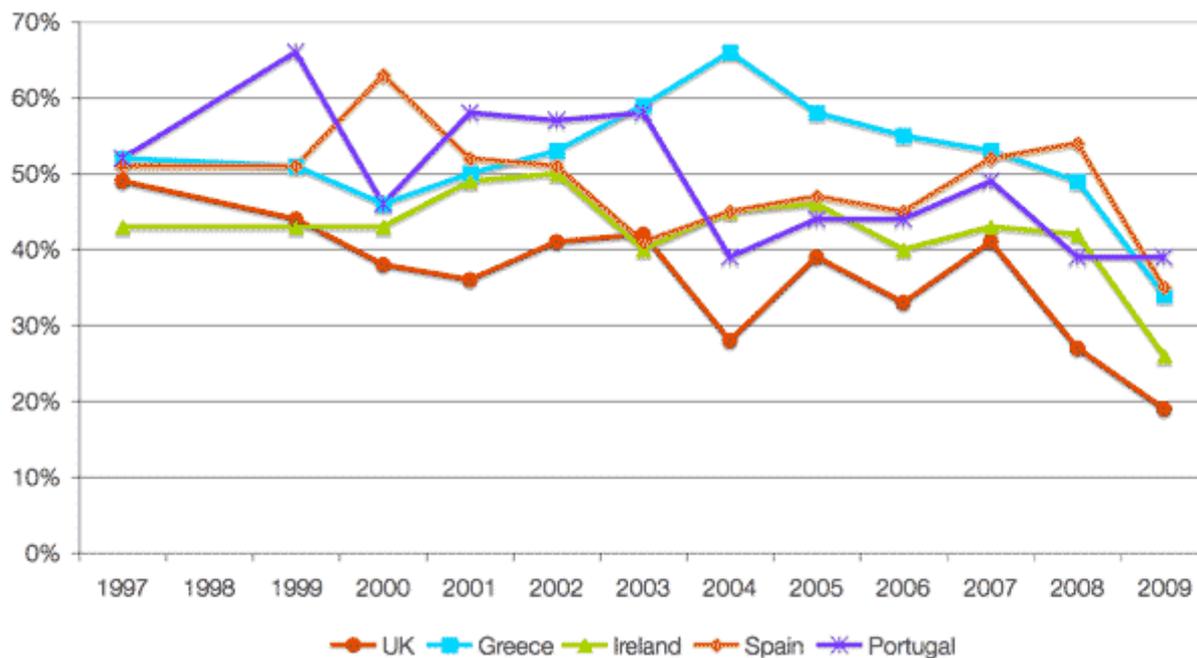
**Graph 3: Percentage with 'very little' or 'no confidence at all' in parliament**



Source: British Social Attitudes Survey

The UK Parliament tops the European league table for the decline in trust – showing a 30% fall in the percentage of people saying they 'tend to trust' parliament since 1997 – so that now only 19% say they do (Graph 4):

**Graph 4: Percentage responding 'tend to trust' parliament**

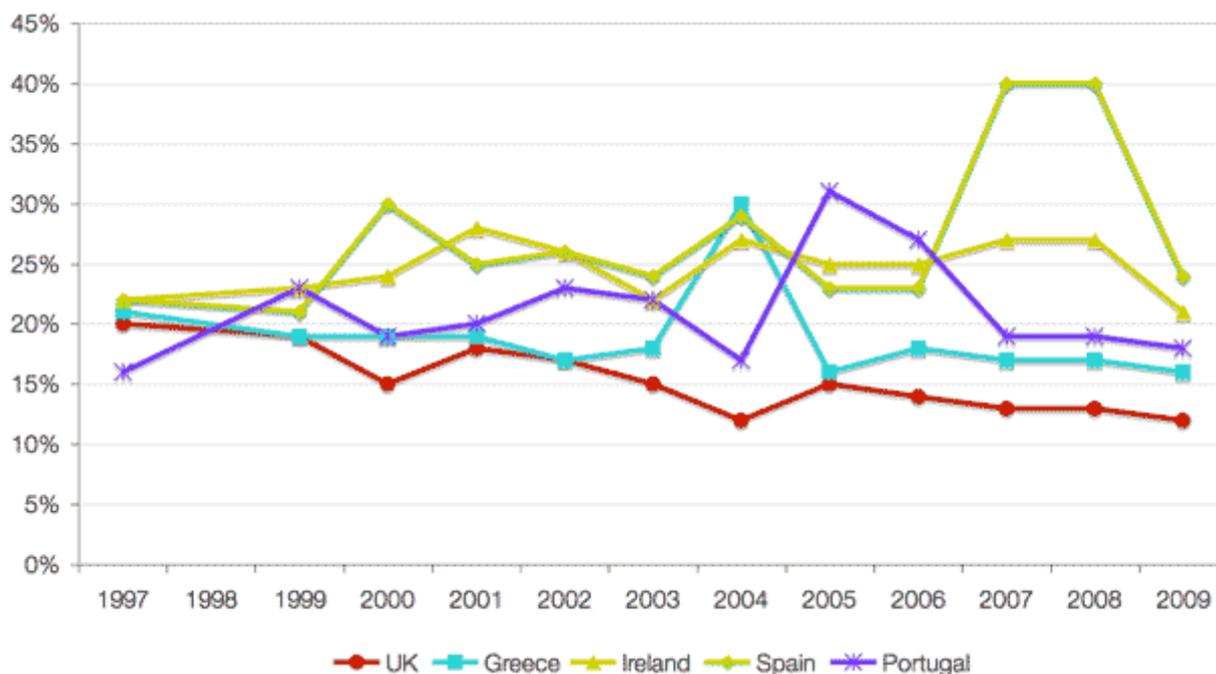


Source: Eurobarometer survey quoted in Norris (2011).[v]

## Political Parties

Political parties have traditionally been one of the main conduits of political participation in western democracies. The growing distrust in national government and parliament also applies to political parties, with UK political parties appearing as the least trusted in Europe (Graph 5):

**Graph 5: Percentage responding 'tend to trust' political parties**

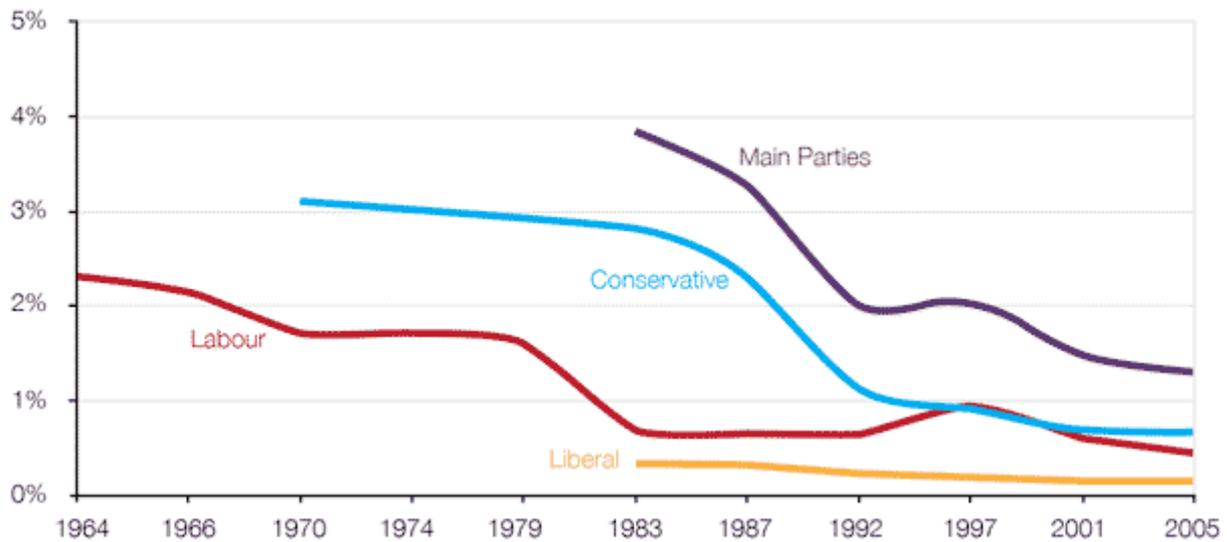


Source: Eurobarometer survey quoted in Norris (2011).[vi]

As the graph below shows, there has been a large decline in the membership of the main political

parties in the UK (Graph 6).

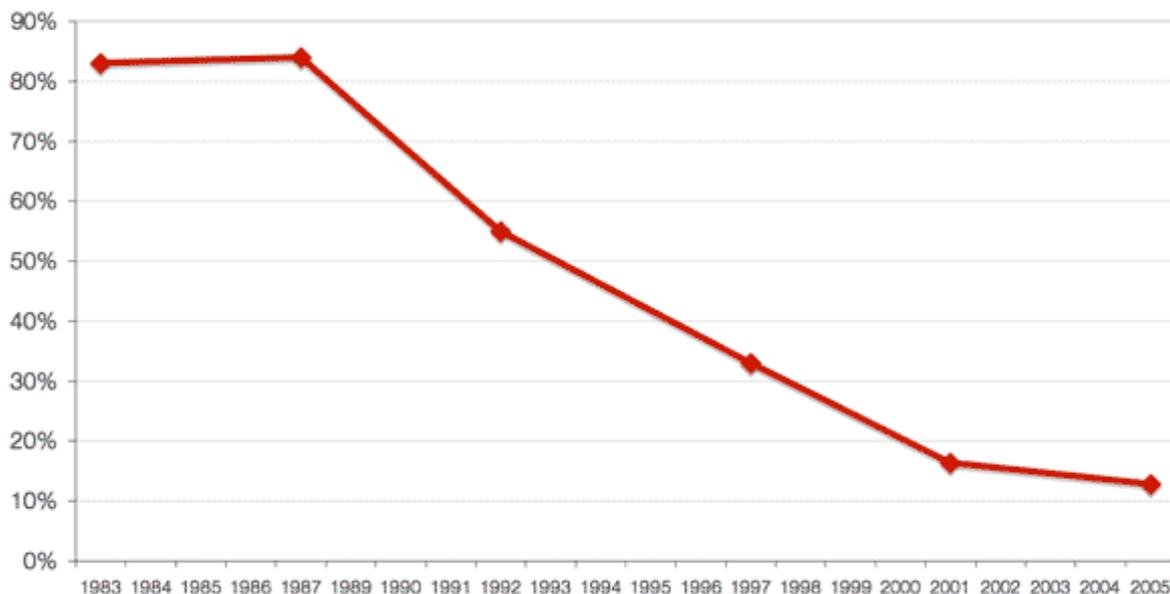
**Graph 6: Party membership as a proportion of the electorate 1945-2006**



Graph reproduced from *Membership of UK political parties*. [vii]

The trends in the UK are replicated in many other long-established European democracies with the absolute number of members falling consistently and sometimes substantially. [viii] The decline in trust and membership of the UK's main parties has accompanied their increasing political convergence. In the 1980s over 80% of respondents in British election surveys believed that there was a 'good deal of difference' between the political parties, by 2005 this had fallen to 12% (Graph 7).

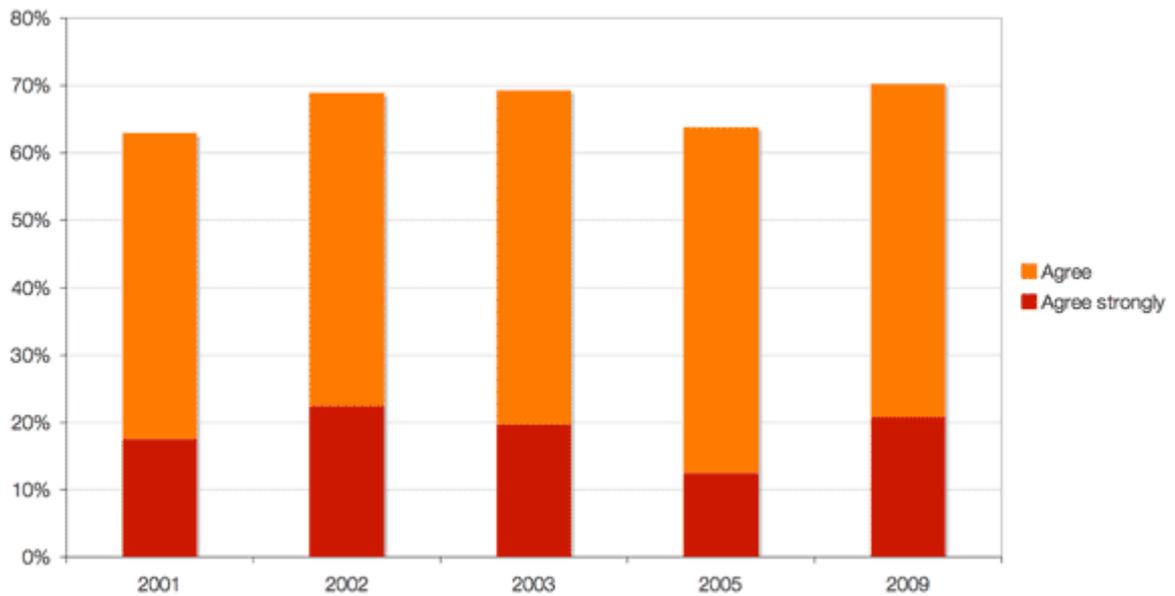
**Graph 7: Percentage of respondents who believe there's a 'good deal of difference' between political parties**



Sources: BES 1983-1997, BSA 2001-2005

Seventy percent agree, or agree strongly, that 'it doesn't really matter which party is in power, in the end things go on much the same' (Graph 8).

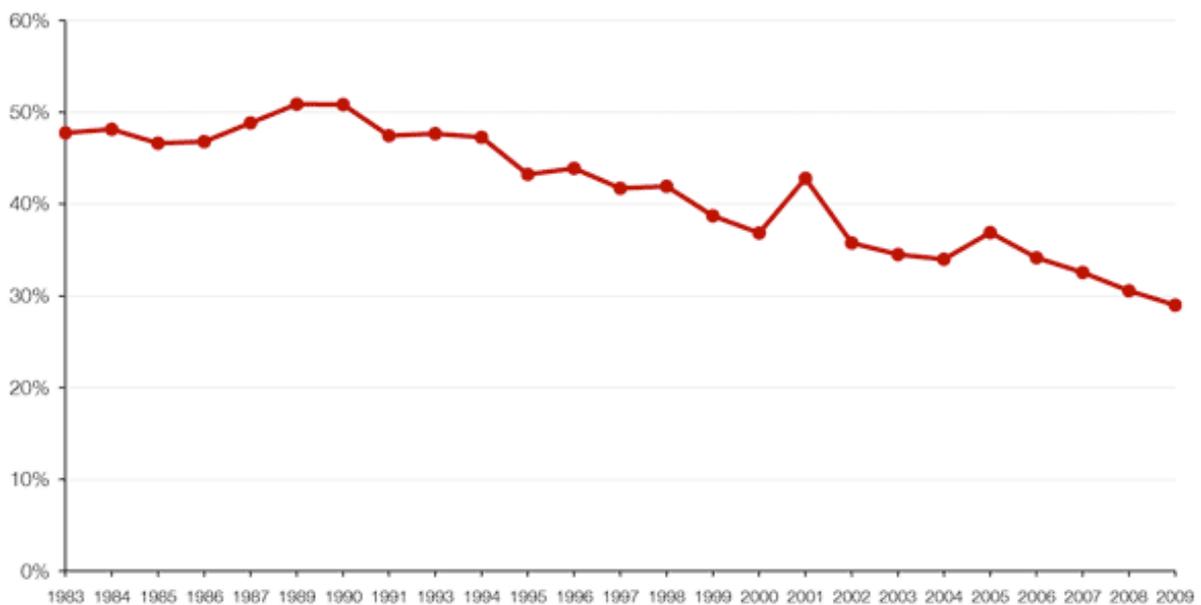
**Graph 8: Percentage agree or agree strongly 'that it doesn't really matter which party is in power, in the end things go on pretty much the same'**



Source: British Social Attitudes survey

There has also been a substantial decline in party identification (Graph 9):

**Graph 9: Percentage answering 'yes' to the question 'Do you think of yourself as a supporter of any one political party?'**



Source: British Social Attitudes survey

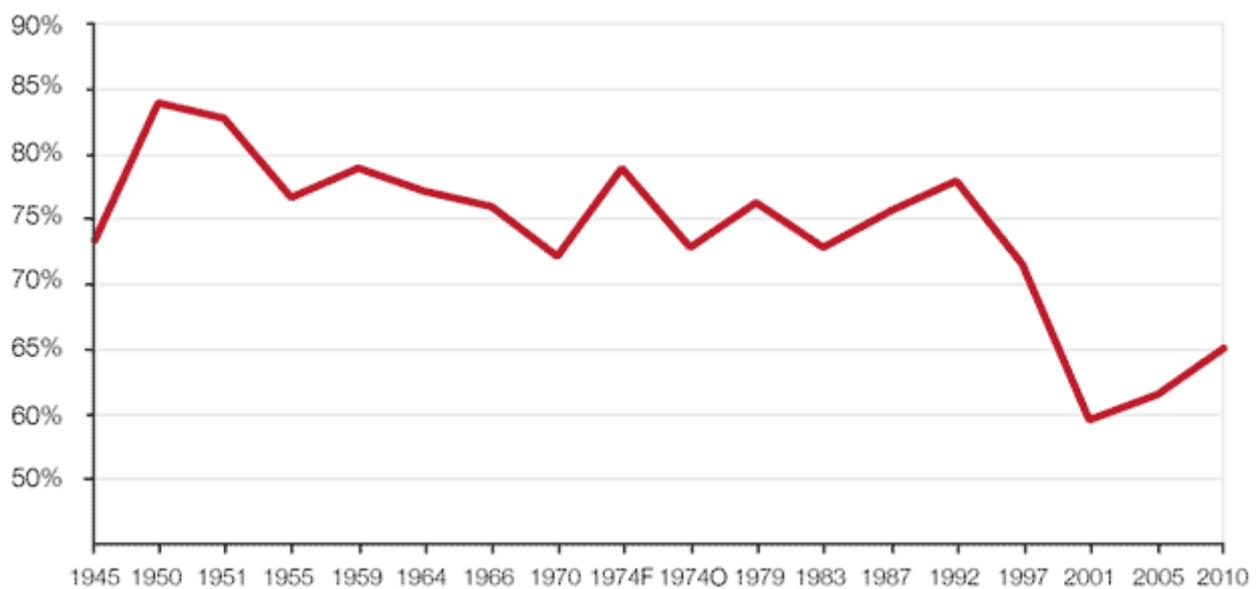
As with trust, the decline in party identification is an international phenomenon, according to Pippa Norris:

*'Throughout established democracies there is now overwhelming evidence of a glacial erosion of partisan identification in the electorate ... which has reduced the proportion of habitual loyalists in the electorate who support their party come rain or shine.'* [ix]

## Voting

The decline in trust in and membership of political parties and their increasing lack of political differentiation is implicated in a change in attitudes to voting. There was a sharp fall in electoral turnout in the nineties, recovering slightly recently but still at a lower level than the post-war average (Graph 10):

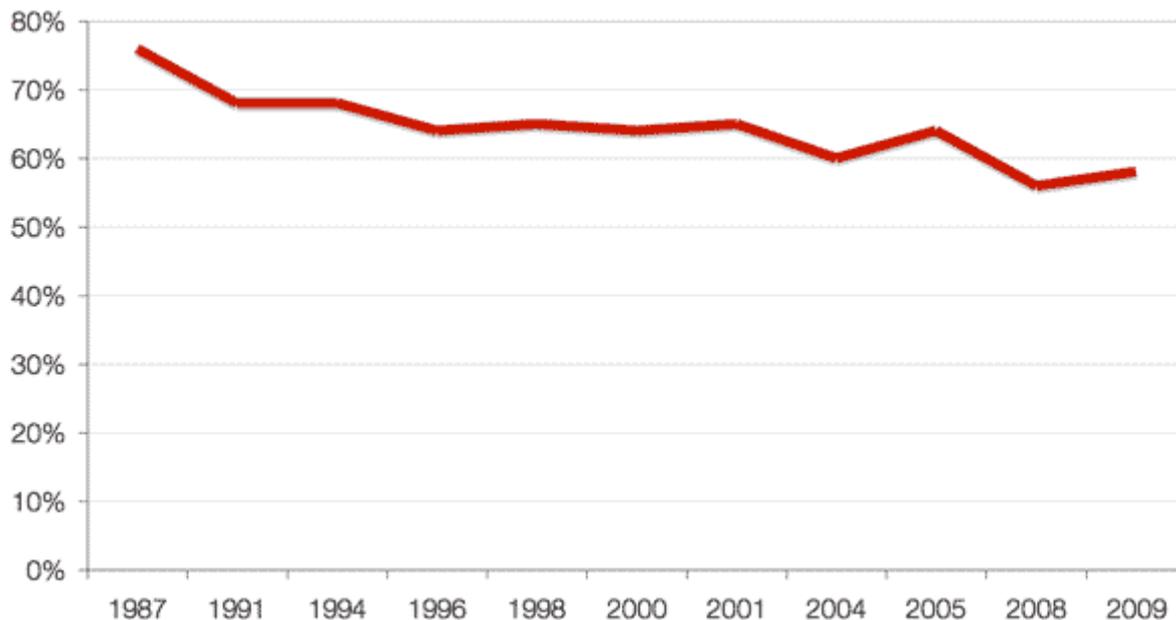
**Graph 10: General election turnout 1945-2010**



Source: UK Political info - <http://www.ukpolitical.info/Turnout45.htm>

The number of people who believe that they have a duty to vote has fallen too, down from 76% who believed it was everyone's duty to vote in 1987 to 58% in 2009 (Graph 11).

**Graph 11: Percentage agree its 'everyone's duty to vote'**



Source: British Social Attitudes survey

A 2004 study by the Centre for Research into Elections and Social Trends (CREST) explains the fall in turnout in terms of narrowing political differentiation:

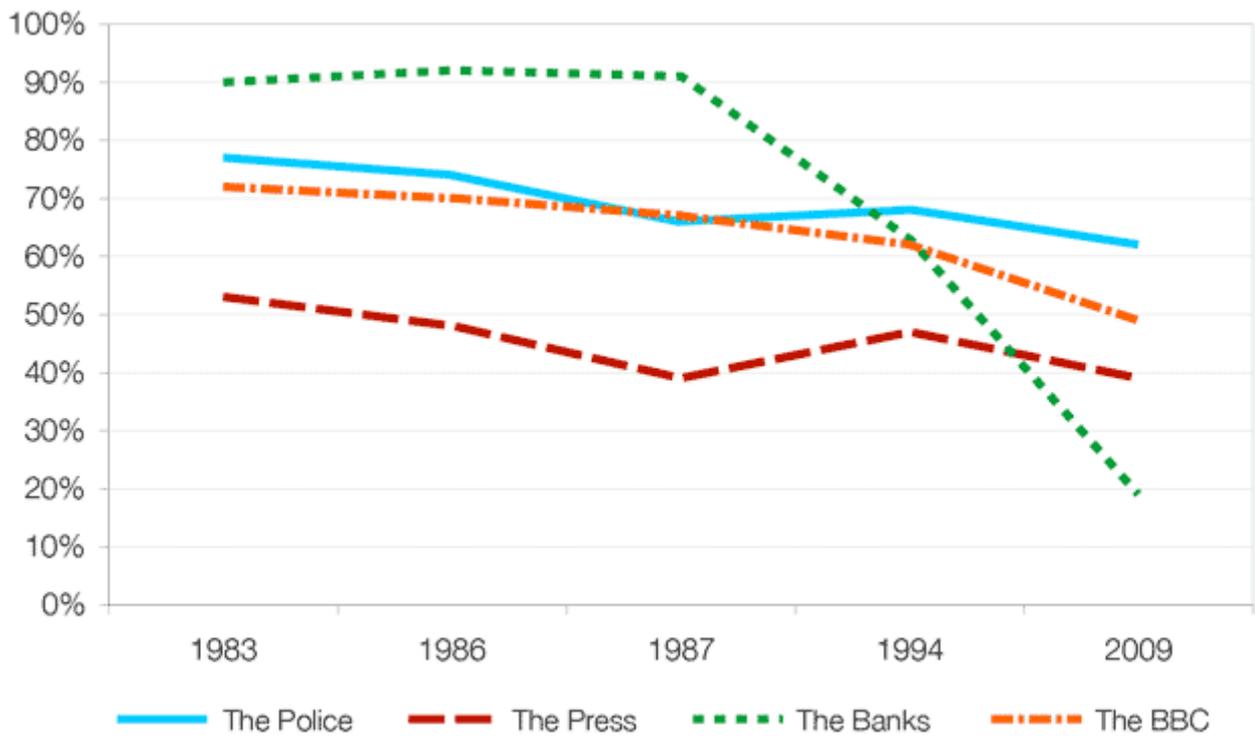
*'Across the electorate as a whole, no less than 43% felt there was not much difference between the Conservative and Labour parties, well up on the 22% who took that view in 1997, let alone the 5% who did so as recently as 1987. As those who did not feel there was much difference between the parties were 17 points less likely to vote, this growth clearly helped to depress turnout... the perception that there was not much difference between the parties grew most amongst those who are relatively politically disengaged, such as those who do not identify strongly with a party.'* [x]

Declining trade union density is also implicated in the fall in voter turnout. A study of nineteen industrial democracies by Radcliff and Davies confirmed that the greater the share of workers represented by unions, the higher the turnout. [xi] Another large study by Gray and Caul concluded that 'the declining levels of union density and the diminishing success and effectiveness of traditional labour-affiliated parties in industrial democracies have left many voters uninterested, uninformed, and politically inactive.' [xii]

## A decline in confidence in other key institutions.

The press, the police, the banks, the justice system, the BBC, major companies and even the armed forces have all suffered a decline in confidence since the early 1980s. The British Social Attitudes survey shows a fall in the numbers saying key institutions are well run (Graph 12):

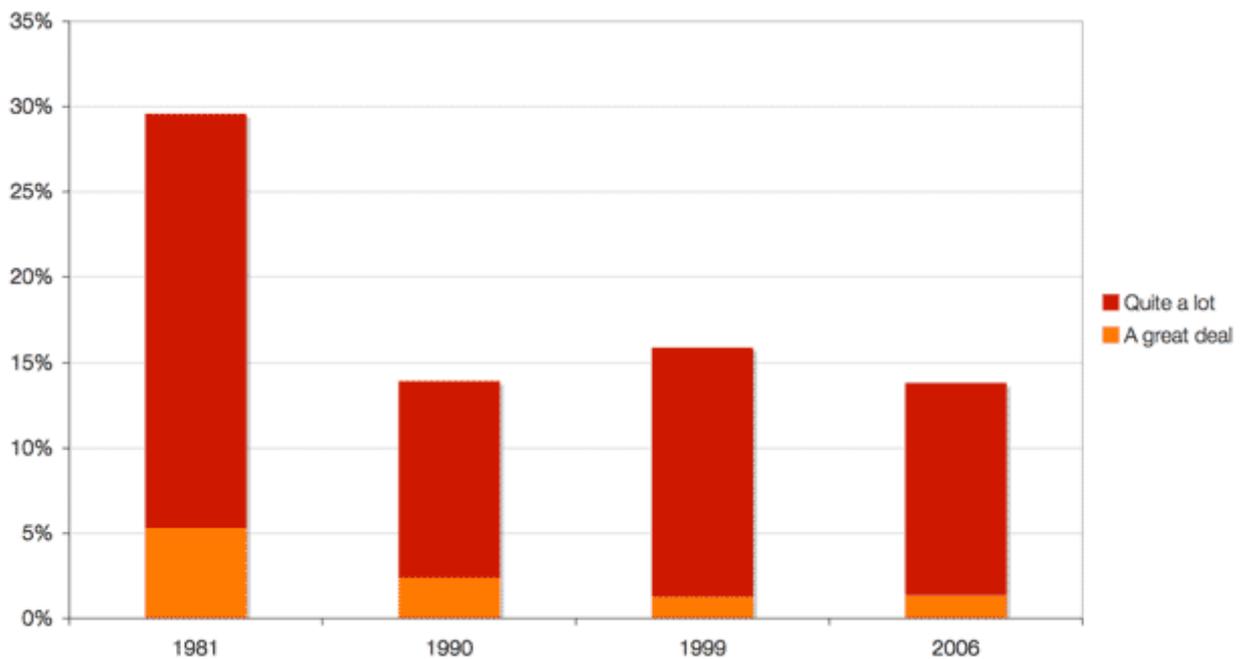
### Graph 12: Institutional trust: percentage saying institution is well run



Source: British Social Attitudes survey

The World Values Survey data for Britain show that the number of people who say they have 'a great deal' or 'quite a lot' of confidence in the press has fallen dramatically, halving since 1981 (Graph 13):

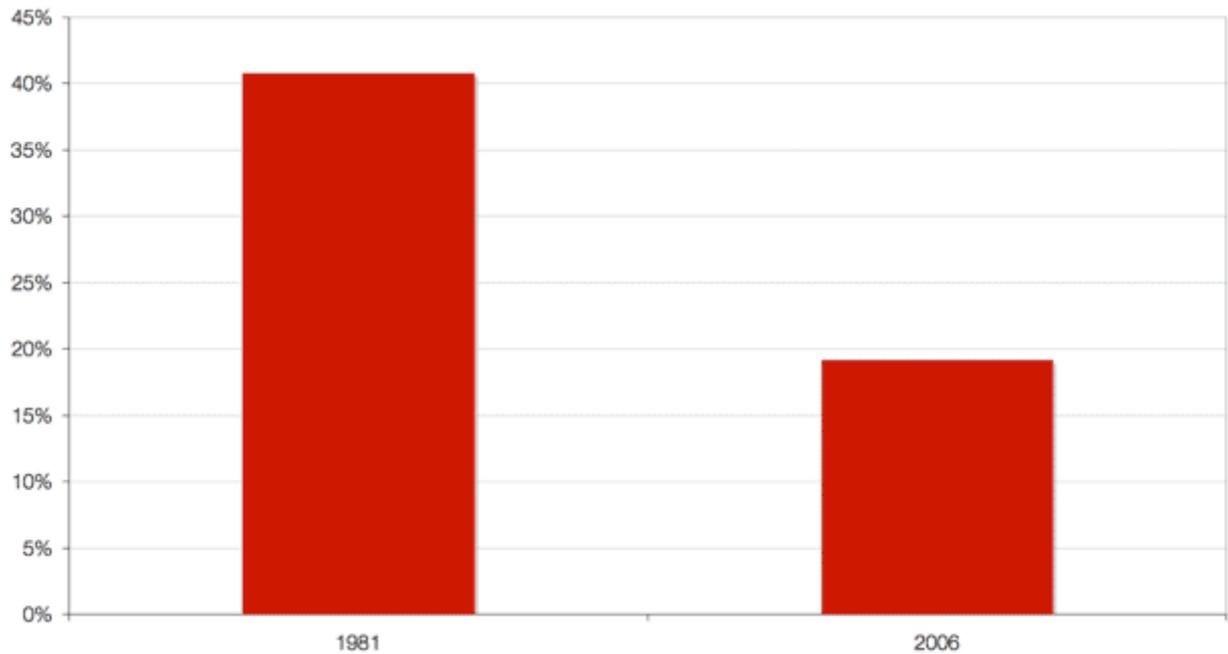
**Graph 13: percentage with 'quite a lot' or 'a great deal' of confidence in the press**



Source: World Values Survey

The percentage expressing a 'great deal' of confidence in the police halved between 1981 and 2006 (Graph 14):

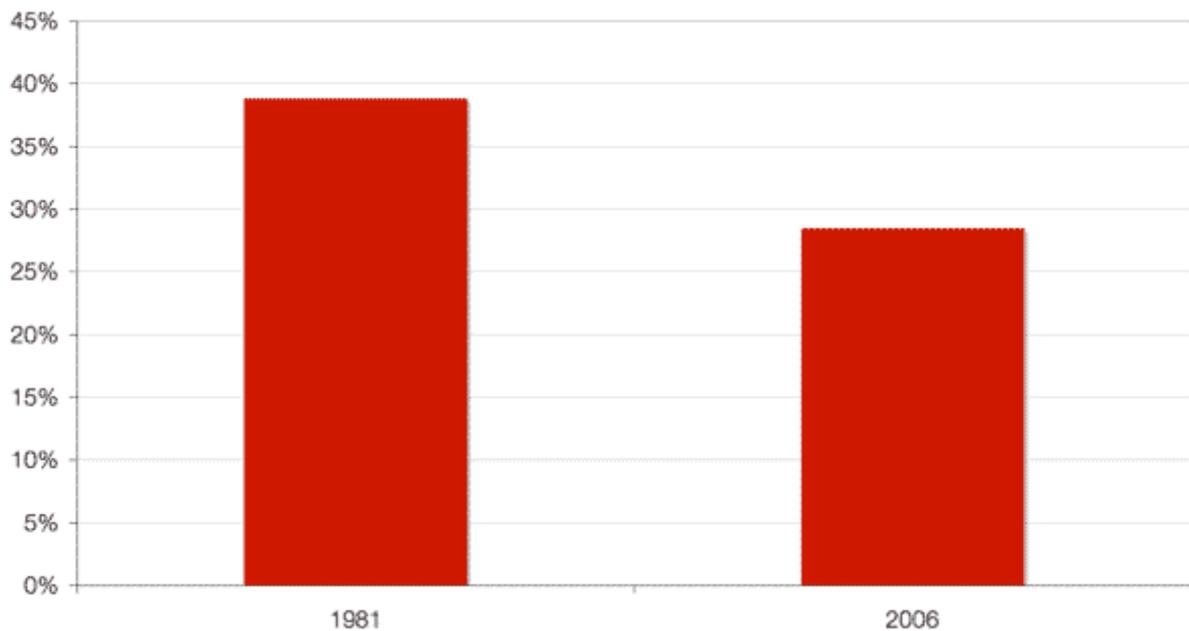
**Graph 14: Percentage expressing a 'great deal' of confidence in the police**



Source: World Values Survey

There has been a fall in the percentage expressing a 'great deal' of confidence in the armed forces (Graph 15):

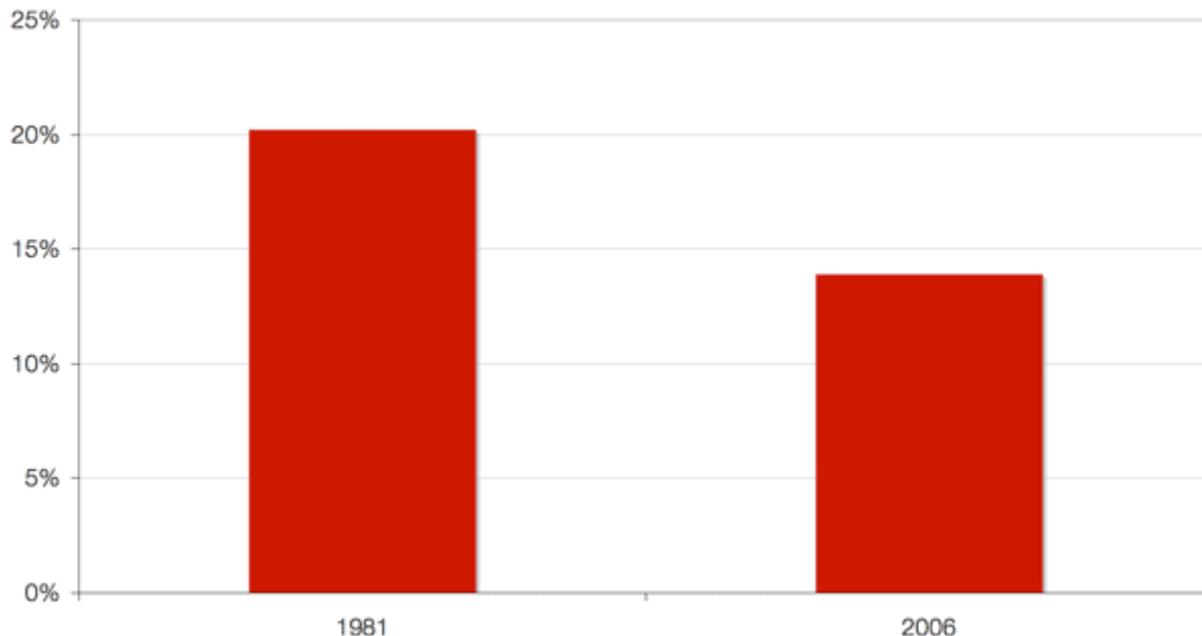
**Graph 15: Percentage expressing a 'great deal' of confidence in the armed forces**



Source: World Values Survey

A decline in confidence in the justice system (Graph 16):

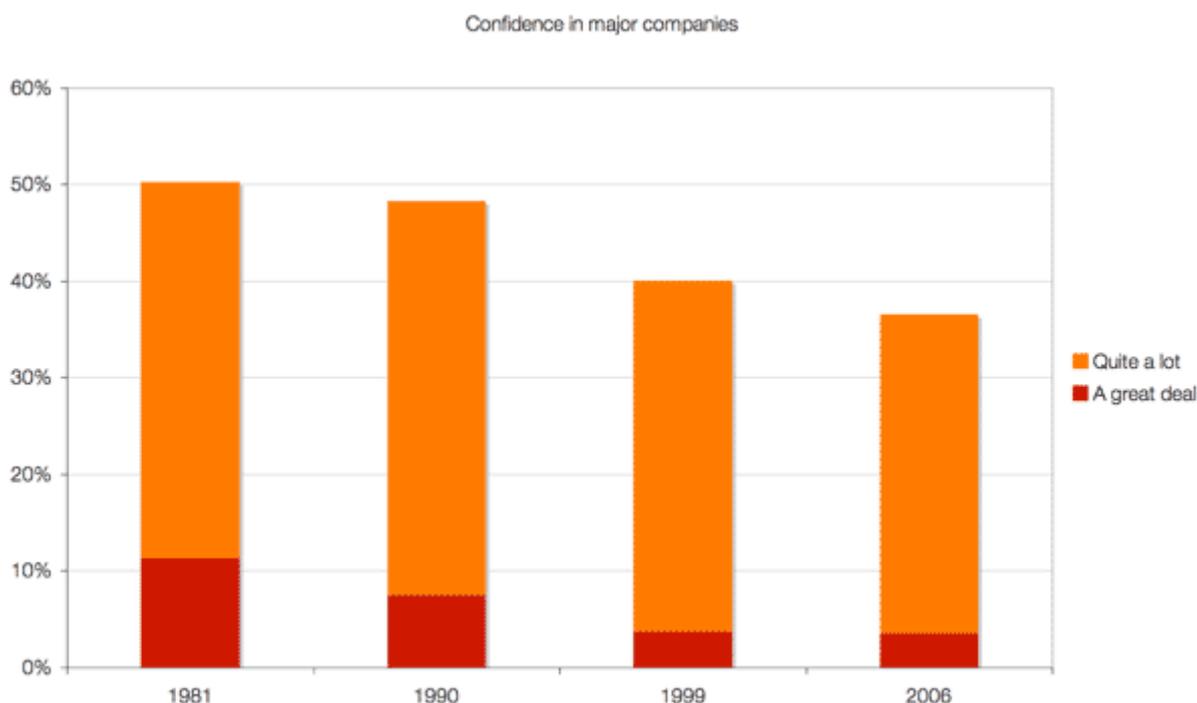
**Graph 16: Percentage expressing a 'great deal' of confidence in the justice system**



Source: World Values Survey

Major companies have also suffered a decline in trust, with the number of people saying they have 'a great deal' or 'quite a lot' of confidence in them falling since 1981 (Graph 17):

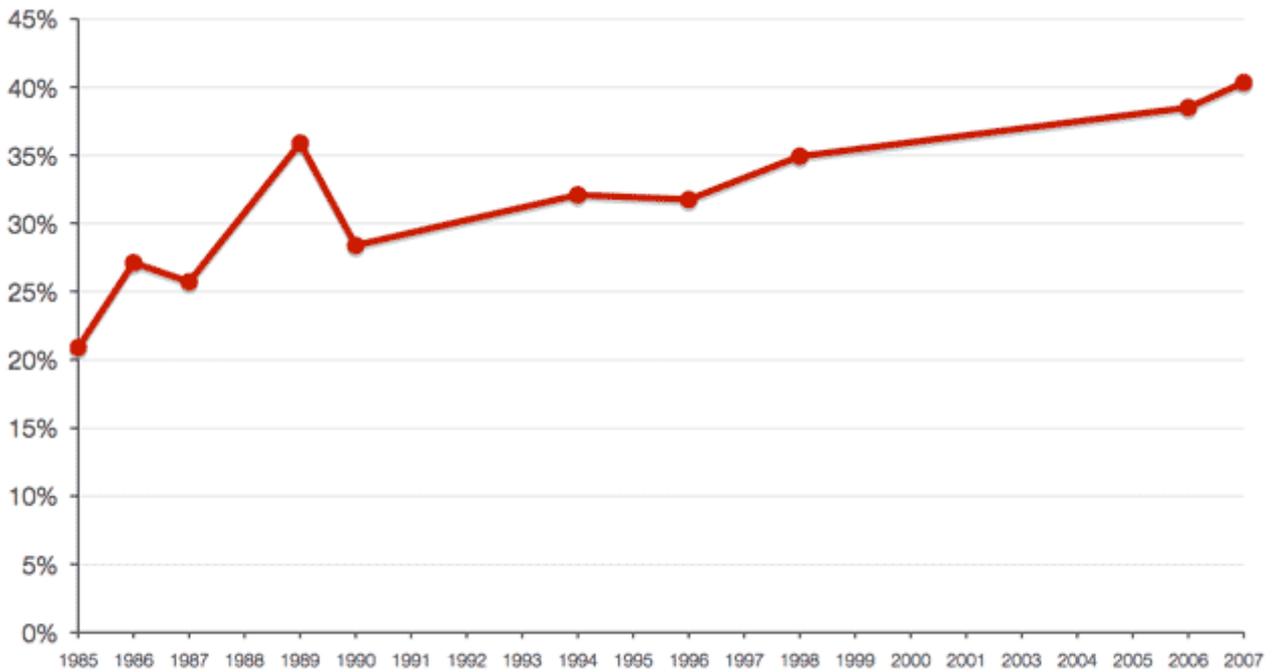
**Graph 17: Confidence in major companies**



Source: British Social Attitudes survey

Increasing numbers agree that business and industry have 'too much' or 'far too much power' (Graph 18):

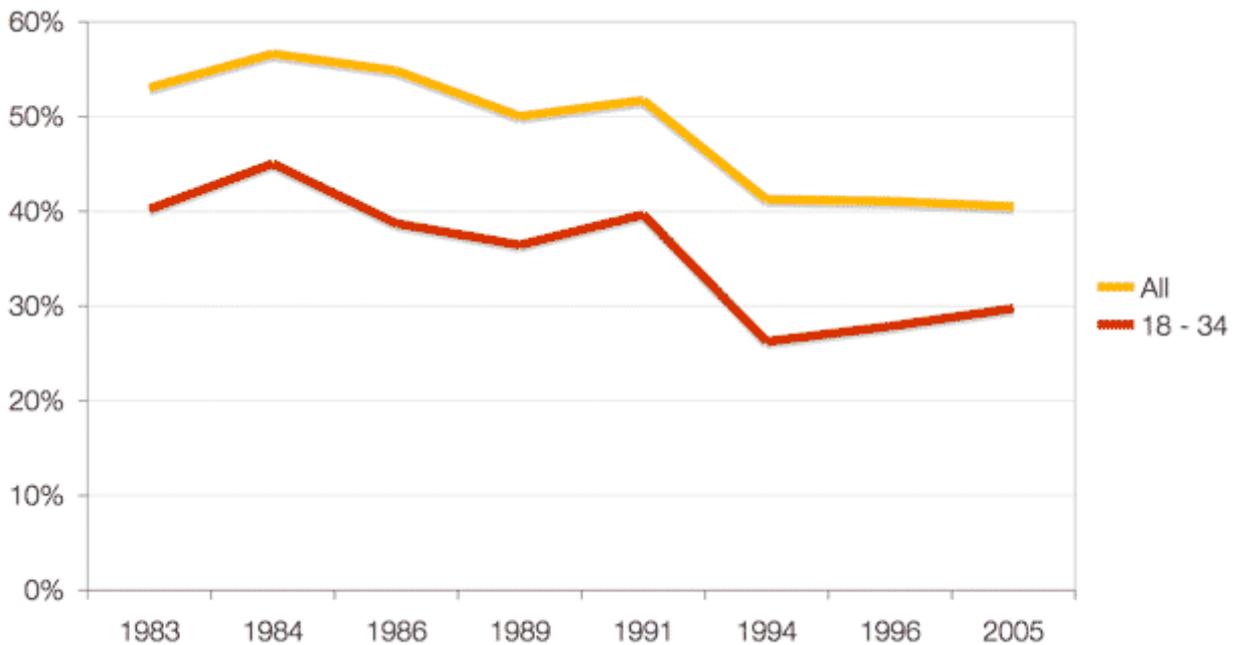
**Graph 18: Percentage agree business and industry have 'too much' or 'far too much' power**



Source: British Social Attitudes Survey

Alongside the decline in support for key institutions there has been a shift in attitudes towards obeying the law, with only around 40% of the public agreeing that they should always obey the law rather than act according to conscience. The decline in support for always obeying the law is even more marked for respondents in the 18-34 age group, with less than 30% saying they would always obey the law (Graph 19):

**Graph 19: Percent agreeing that they should always obey the law rather than act according to conscience.**



Source: British Social Attitudes Survey

## Why the Decline?

The decline in trust in national governments, parliament and MPs can be linked to public perceptions of 'sleaze'. As a 2004 paper by the Centre for Research into Elections and Social Trends (CREST) argued:

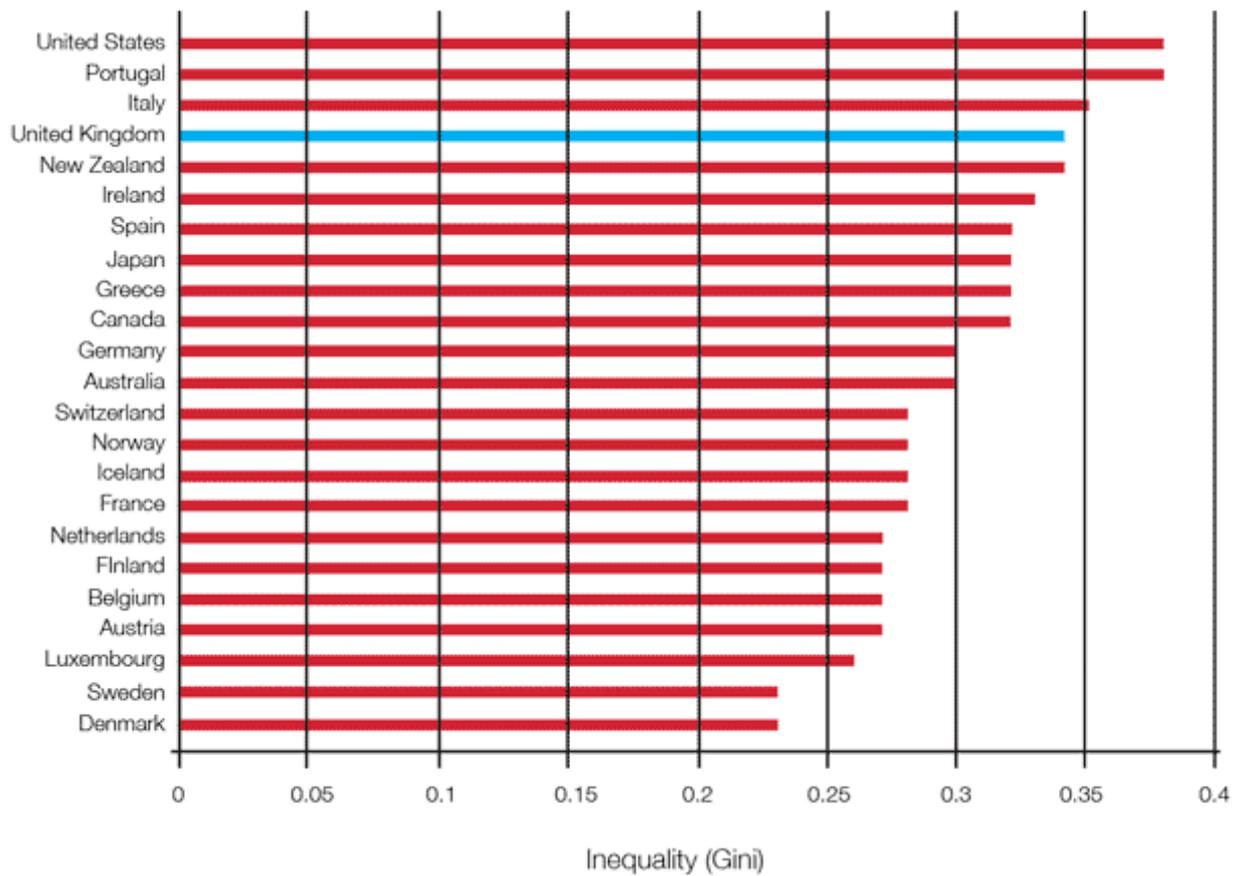
*'the fall in trust and confidence mostly occurred in the early 1990s; that is, at just the moment when the word 'sleaze' entered the regular political vocabulary in Britain. Meanwhile, our own survey work indicates that those who perceive sleaze are certainly less likely to express trust and confidence in government. For example, amongst those who think that the Labour Party 'very often' does favours for those who give the party money, only 13% trust governments to put the nation's interests first 'just about always' or 'most of the time', whereas amongst those who think Labour does such favours 'not very often' or 'never', no less than 36% trust governments'.<sup>[xiii]</sup>*

The recent MP's expenses scandal has undoubtedly contributed to the recent further fall in confidence and trust in the political establishment.

However, the decline is not restricted to the UK. As the graphs earlier in this article show, similar declines in public trust in political institutions have occurred in other European countries - Greece, Spain, Ireland, Portugal, Italy and France. And, as we have seen the decline in trust affects not just government but a range of institutions. Thirty years of neoliberalism in Britain means that the unashamed pursuit of corporate profit and personal enrichment increasingly dominates the mindset of all those in positions of power. The 'sleaze' scandal, the MPs expenses scandal, the serious corruption involving public servants exposed in 'hackgate' are the result of the idea that the 'hidden hand' of the market is the best device for mobilising even the basest human traits for the benefit of all.

Since the late 1970s there has been a sustained attack on the welfare state consensus of the post war years and the associated idea of 'public service'. All the main political parties now see the role of government as consisting mainly of creating the ideal conditions for business. The main political parties – including Labour - are all proponents of neoliberal orthodoxy, 'pro-market' and 'business friendly'. The result has been that Britain has become one of the most unequal societies on the planet. Inequalities of income in today's Britain are larger than most other developed countries, and much bigger than they were thirty-five years ago. The graph below (Graph 20) uses data from the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) on an index of inequality known as the Gini coefficient (a higher Gini coefficient corresponds to greater inequality).

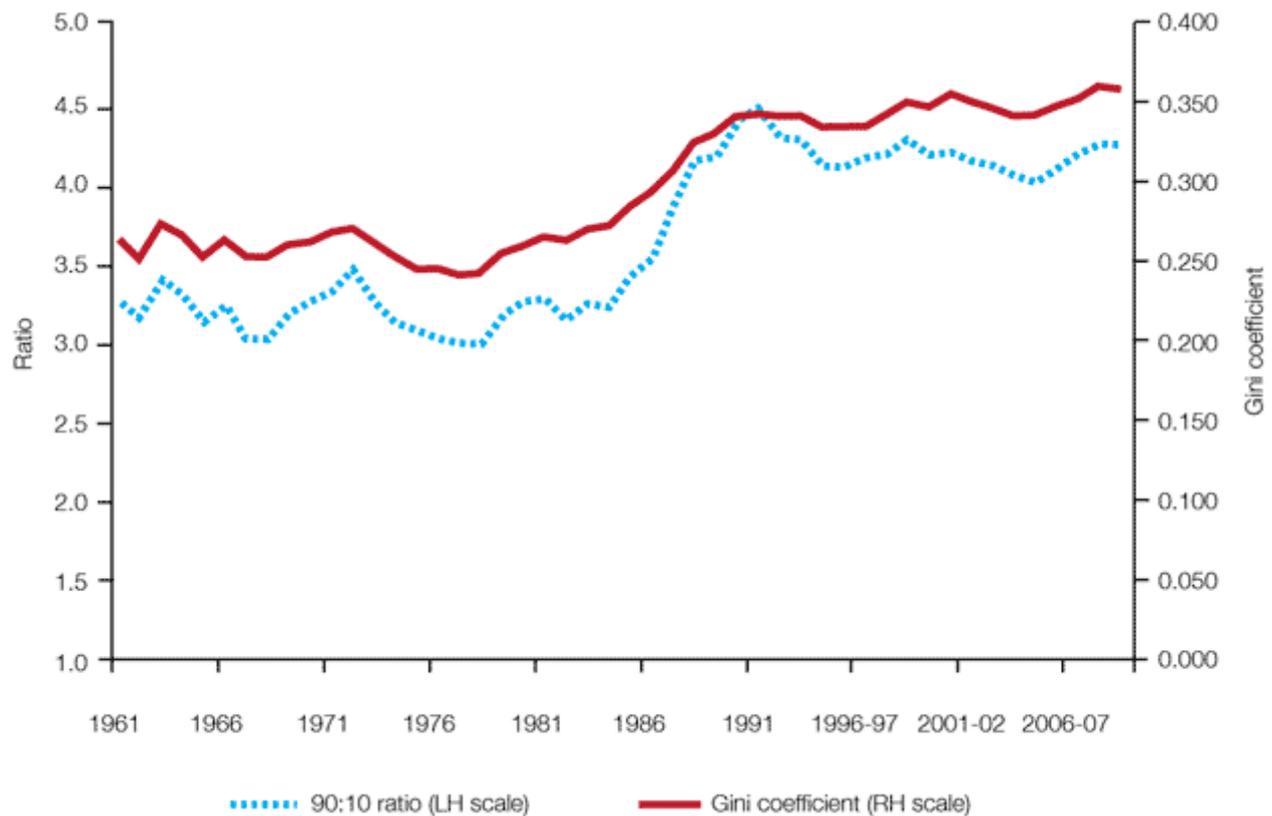
### **Graph 20: Inequality in OECD developed countries, mid-2000s**



Graph reproduced from Howard Reed, *Fairness and Prosperity*, TUC, 2011. [\[xiv\]](#)

The graph below shows trends in the Gini coefficient and the 90:10 ratio (the ratio of the income of the household at the 90th percentile of the income distribution to the income of the household at the 10th percentile). The neoliberal decades have seen growing inequality (Graph 21):

### Graph 21: UK inequality in summary measures, 1961-2008/09



Source: Institute for Fiscal Studies | Graph reproduced from Reed, *Fairness and Prosperity*, TUC, 2011 [xv]

Imbalances of wealth translate into imbalances of power; those with more time and money to engage in political activity exercise greater influence, and those with vast amounts of wealth and power have the greatest influence on the policies of those in office. Growing inequality weakens further the capacity of those without wealth to influence the course of politics – increasing the distance between the institutions and the vast majority of the population. As a 2008 report into lobbying by the Commons Public Administration Select Committee (PASC) argued:

*'there is a genuine issue of concern, widely shared and reflected in measures of public trust, that there is an inside track, largely drawn from the corporate world, who wield privileged access and disproportionate influence...[and that] commercial corporations and organisations have an advantage over not-for-profit bodies which is related to the amount of money they are able to bring to bear on the political process.'* [xvi]

The neoliberal consensus now dominant amongst political and economic elites across Europe is not shared by large numbers of the population, therefore the policies and practices pursued more and more by politicians of all hues increasingly depend on negating democratic consensus.

The gap between parliamentary representatives and those that elect them is a growing feature of politics in Britain. Large swathes of opinion find no expression in the main political parties and are effectively disenfranchised. The armed neoliberal interventions of the first decade of the new millennium have all been conducted against the background of significant public opposition. No less than 40% of the public believed that the Iraq war was wrong before it started, rising to over 60% as it became clear we had been systematically misled over weapons of mass destruction.[xvii] Polls show majorities opposed to the war in Afghanistan,[xviii] and intervention in Libya.[xix] Despite a majority of the British public sympathising with the Palestinians and regarding Israel as an aggressor,[xx] the main political parties and institutions such as the BBC continue to exhibit a pro-Israel bias.

Data from the British Social Attitudes survey shows that the percentage who believe that the NHS is 'well run' has increased by 20% since 1994, yet it is being targeted for 'reform', with the very basis of the NHS under threat despite a majority of the public opposing the Tory plans.<sup>[xxi]</sup> Lib Dem MPs who won their seats after pledging to scrap tuition fees reneged on the promise they made to those who voted for them and continue to abandon election promises. All three major parties planned large cuts to public services but did not place these plans before the electorate, prompting the *Financial Times*

to carry the following warning before the election:

*'The UK 2010 general election campaign has been bowdlerised. The country's politicians decided not to explain their fiscal plans, fearing that the details would be too gory for the delicate nerves of the British voter. Whichever party wins this election will need to sack public sector staff, cut their wages, slash benefits, reduce pensions and axe services. None, however, has deigned to explain that.'*

*'Whoever wins this election will not be able to claim that they have a mandate to cut the state. That will, in part, be their own fault for choosing silence and short-term electoral advantage over outspoken courage.'*<sup>[xxii]</sup>

Government ministers go out of their way to emphasise their remoteness from any attempt to influence them through the medium of democratic protest. Immediately after the March 26th protest Vince Cable was on BBC television to reaffirm that despite the march: 'No government - coalition, Labour or any other - would change its fundamental economic policy simply in response to a demonstration of that kind.'<sup>[xxiii]</sup>

Neoliberalism has also rendered elected bodies more distant from those that elect them by shifting decision making away from democratic institutions. As Pippa Norris puts it:

*'[T]he "shrinkage of the state" through initiatives such as privatization, marketization, and deregulation means that decision making has flowed away from public bodies and official government agencies that were directly accountable to elected representatives, devolving to a complex variety of non-profit and private agencies operating at local, national, and international levels. Because of these developments, it has become more difficult for citizens to use conventional state-orientated channels of participation, exemplified by national elections as a way of challenging those in power, reinforcing the need for alternative avenues and targets of political expression and mobilization'*<sup>[xxiv]</sup>

## The growth of political protest

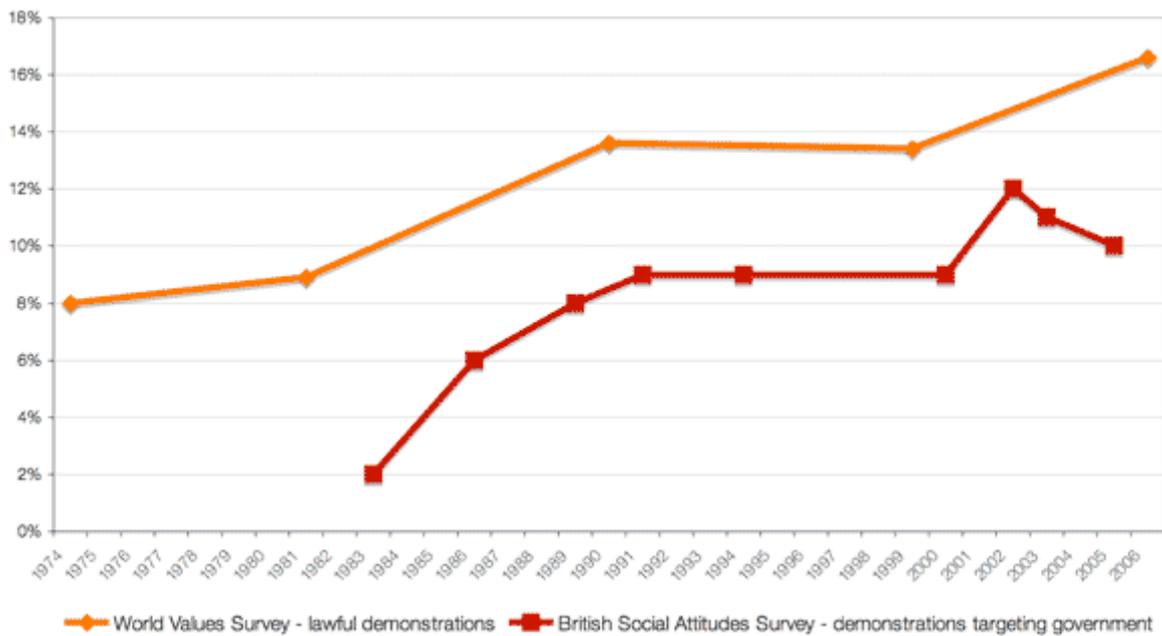
The 'hollowing out' of democracy lies behind the decline in trust in institutions and is also implicated in another striking process revealed by the survey data, the growth of 'alternative avenues and targets of political expression and mobilization.' Since the early 1970s, a growing percentage of the UK population have been reporting that they have taken part in a demonstration, signed a petition or joined a consumer boycott of certain products for political or ethical reasons.

The targets of protest are not restricted to national government: corporations and global economic and political institutions are also included. However the data suggests that the majority of protests are

directed at governments. The Political Action Survey (1974)[xxv] and successive waves of the World Values Survey ask whether people have taken part in a lawful demonstration, the British Social Attitudes survey asks respondents whether they have gone on a protest or demonstration about a *government*

action which they thought was unjust and harmful. The graph below shows that the numbers attending lawful demonstrations have increased and that the majority of these protests target government (Graph 22):

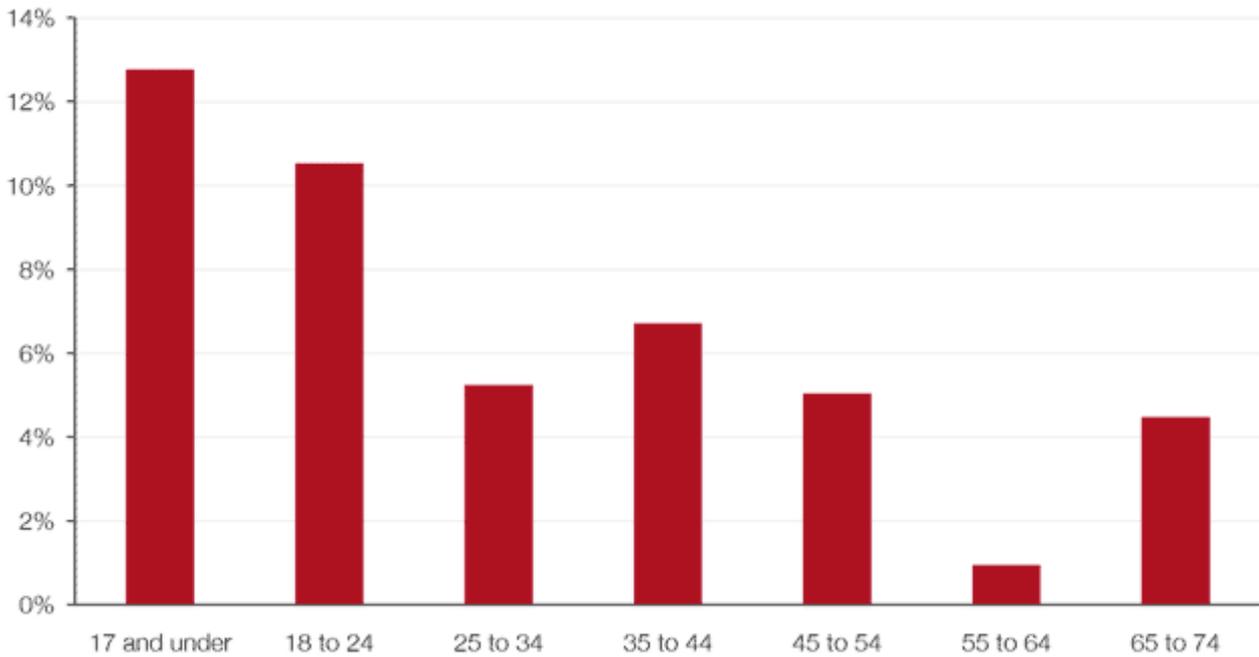
**Graph 22: Percentage who have joined a lawful demonstration**



Sources: Political Action Survey (1974), World Values Survey, British Social Attitudes Survey

The 2005 British Social Attitudes Survey asked respondents if they had taken part in a protest against the government in the previous five years, with 6.4% confirming that they had. The results, when broken down by age show that a large proportion of young people had taken part in protests aimed at the government (Graph 23).

**Graph 23: 2005: Percentage who have taken part in a protest in the last 5 years**

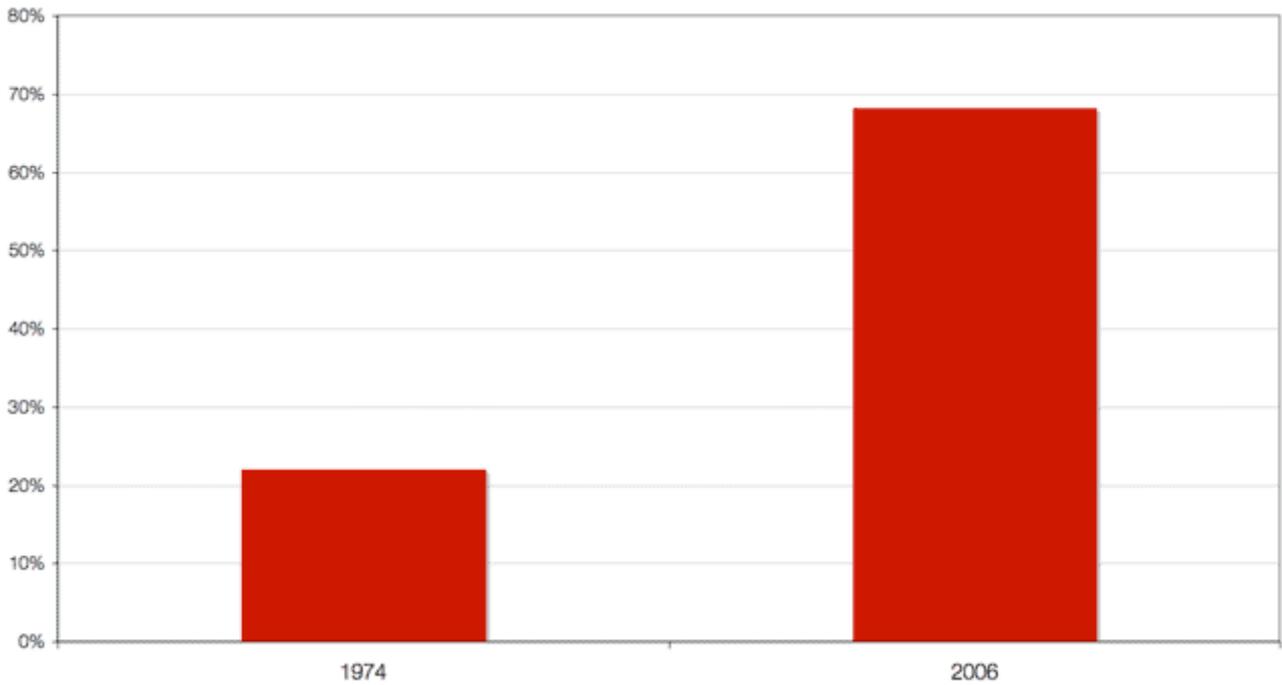


Source: British Social Attitudes survey

This means that in the first five years of the new millennium almost three million people in Britain took part in lawful demonstrations against the government. Over a third of these protestors - 1.2 million - were between 12 and 25, yet this group formed only 17% of the UK population in 2005.<sup>[xxvii]</sup> A number of large protest movements were active at this time: the anti-capitalist mobilisations and the anti-war movement, and to a lesser extent the rural protest movement represented by the Countryside Alliance and the protests over fuel prices. Only 3% of the membership of the Countryside Alliance were aged 26 and under.<sup>[xxviii]</sup> Therefore what this BSA survey evidence captures is the huge numbers of young people – including school students – who took part in protests against the invasion of Iraq.

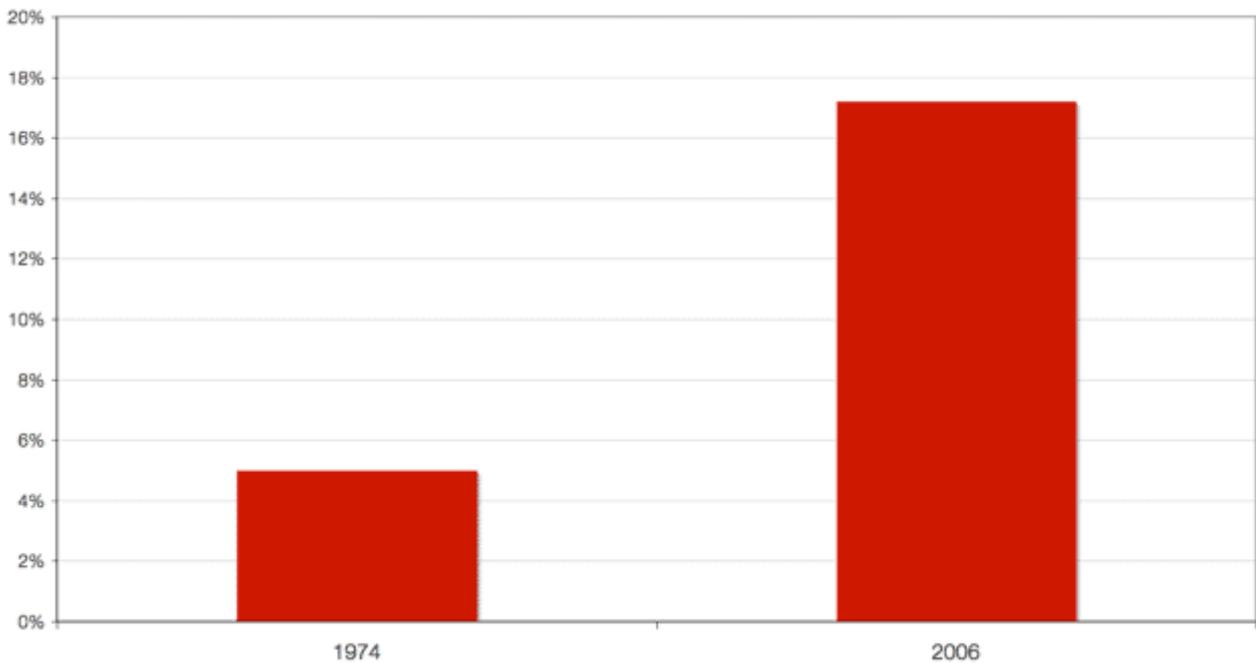
Compared to the early seventies three times more people are signing petitions (Graph 24) and joining consumer boycotts (Graph 25):

### Graph 24: Percentage who have signed a petition



Sources: Political Action Survey (1974), World Values Survey

### Graph 25: Percentage who have taken part in a boycott



Sources: Political Action Survey (1974), World Values Survey

The increase in protest activism in Britain is repeated in other western democracies. Pippa Norris looked at survey evidence for protest activism in eight nations from the mid-1970s to the mid-1990s.[\[xxviii\]](#)

*[The results] confirm that experience of protest politics has risen steadily over the years. The proportion of citizens who had signed a petition in these countries doubled from 32 percent to 60 percent; the proportion who had attended a demonstration escalated from 7 percent to 19 percent; and the proportion participating in a consumer*

boycott tripled from 5 percent to 15 percent. . . .

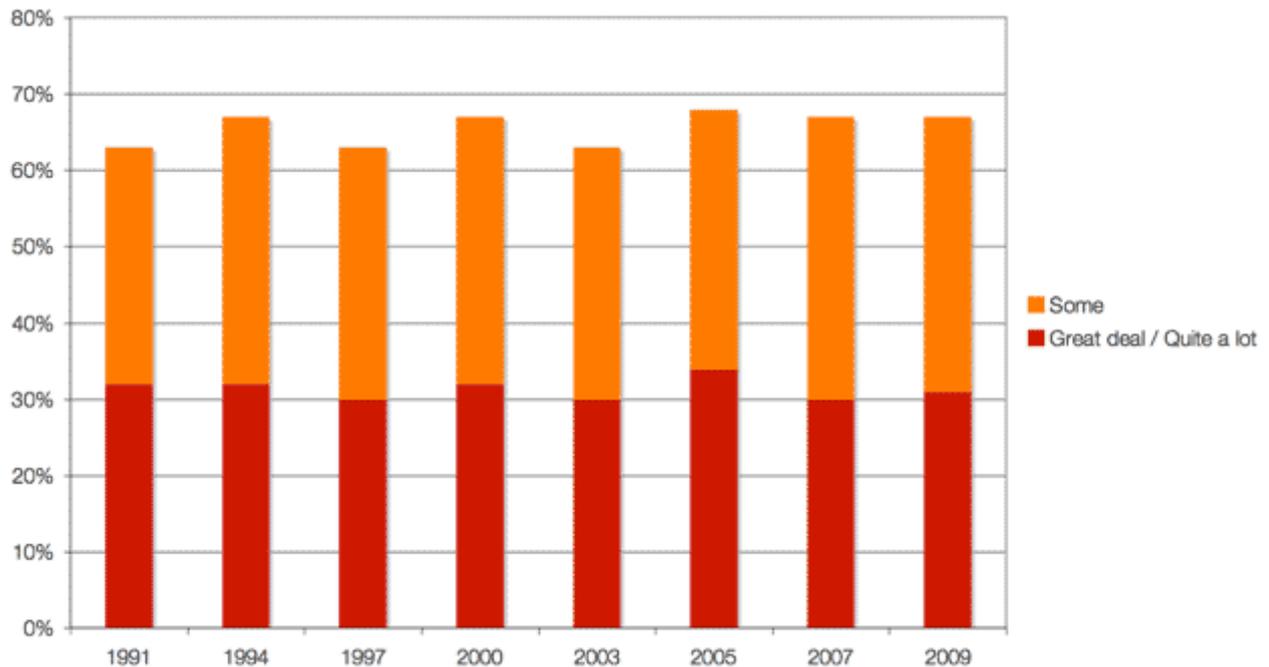
*'Protest politics is not simply a passing fad of the "hot" politics of the 1960s and early 1970s that faded with the end of the civil rights struggle, the Vietnam War, and the Watergate generation. Instead the proportion of citizens engaged in protest politics has risen, and risen dramatically, during the late twentieth century'.<sup>[xxix]</sup>*

Political protest has become more 'mainstream' with a broad range of groups utilising it as a means of influencing those in power, but there is no evidence that people who protest have abandoned the ballot box in favour of street protests:

*'Those who take part in non-electoral political activities are actually more likely to vote in elections than those who do not participate in protest actions. For example, the 2002 British Social Attitudes survey found that 80% of those who had undertaken three or more protest actions said they had voted in the previous year's general election, compared with just 65% of those who had not engaged in any actions. Non-electoral participation is an addition to, rather than a substitute for, taking part in the electoral process.'<sup>[xxx]</sup>*

Despite the falling confidence in the British regime, it is not the case that the public have become less interested in politics (Graph 26):

### Graph 26: How much interest in politics?



Source: British Social Attitudes survey

This is true of younger sections of the population. Young people are often portrayed as apolitical and apathetic, but the evidence indicates something more complex at work. A 2005 study reported:

*'young people's characterisation of politics was broadly negative in orientation; by defining politics as something that occurs elsewhere, by others, involving discussion and debate, the young people who responded meant that they considered politics to be an activity carried out by unrepresentative and self-serving politicians, who operated at a distance from the lives of the general public, engaging in argument that had little relevance for the public at large. . . .*

*Despite their aversion to the world of Westminster (for this is how they themselves define the arena of 'politics'), young people claim (paradoxically) to be interested in 'politics' in general. When asked about politics in general, 56 percent of respondents replied that they had some or more interest in the topic (which compares with 13 percent who had none at all). . . .*

*...at the heart of young people's declining turnout and their apparent disenchantment with Westminster politics is a strong sense of political alienation rather than political apathy – the political system in Britain is failing to provide the stimuli necessary to encourage young people to take a greater role in political life, and as such, faces a crisis of democratic legitimacy.'[xxxj]*

This captures well the dual nature of today's political environment. There are two understandings of politics. One is politics in terms of 'the world of Westminster', the other is about 'politics in general', the living politics of debate and argument on the streets, in school, in university, the office, about the big issues that shape our lives and the future of the planet. Looking at evidence from across Europe Norris concludes that:

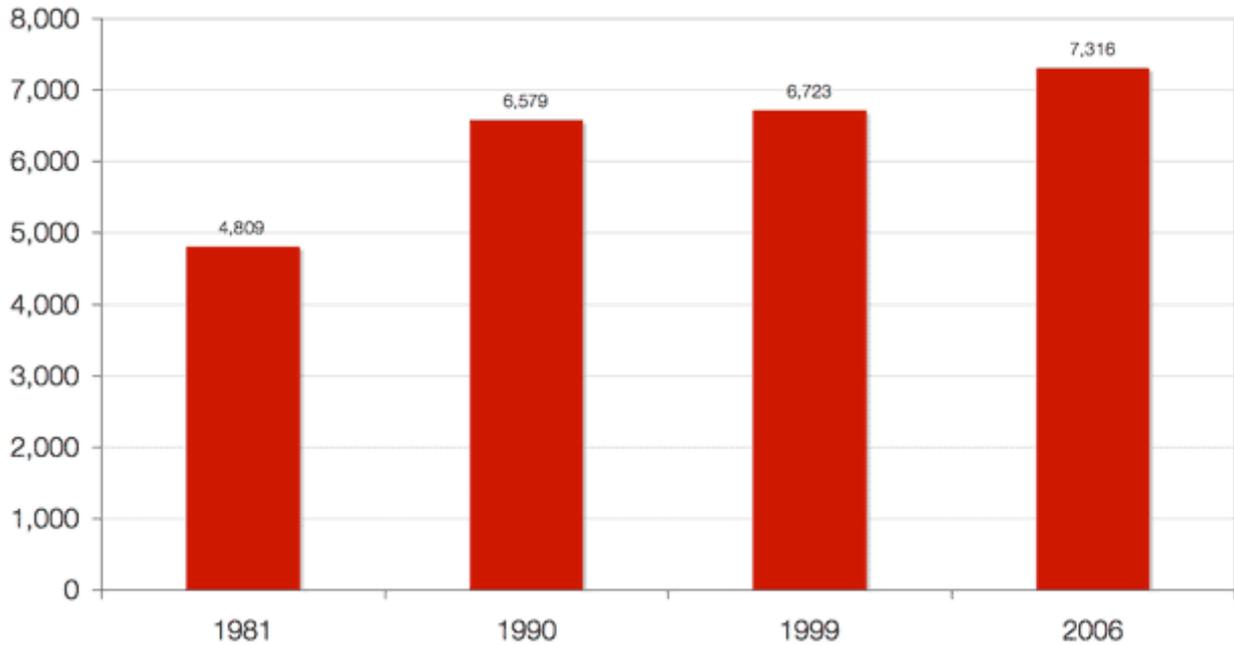
*'...the political energies among the younger generation in postindustrial societies have diversified and flowed through cause-oriented activism, rather than simply ebbed away into apathy. . . .*

*'Young people are more likely than their parents and grandparents to engage in cause-oriented action, contrary to the thesis of youth apathy. A broadly linear pattern is found among successive cohorts in every type of European society, suggesting a persistent generational shift with important implications for representative democracy.'[xxxii]*

## **The number of people who consider themselves to be 'left wing' has increased since the 1980s.**

The figures for Britain in the World Values Survey show a growth in the numbers identifying themselves as on the left. The survey asks people to place themselves on a left to right scale with 1 being far left and 10 being far right. The percentage of British people who position themselves on the left (positions 1-3 on the scale) has grown in size across all age groups. Based on demographic data from the national census,[xxxiii] it means that the 'left' consists of over seven million people, with almost 1.8 million placing themselves on the far left (Graph 27).

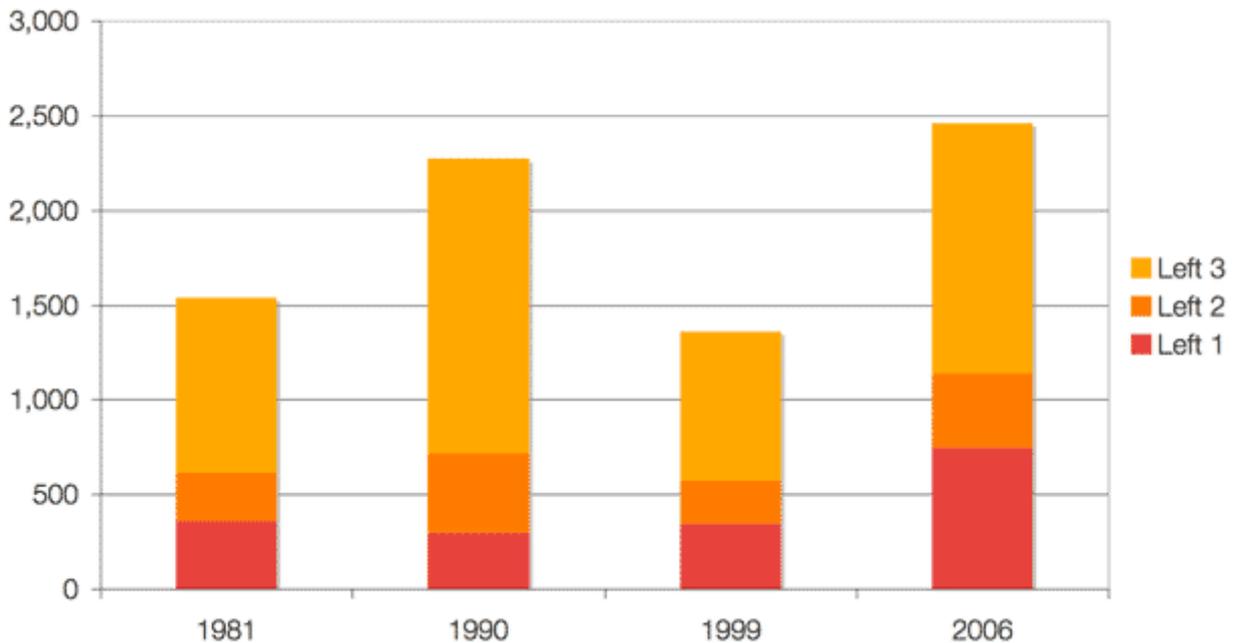
### **Graph 27: Estimates of size of the left based on self placement on ideological scale, thousands**



Source: World Values Survey

The most striking change is amongst the young. The percentage of 15 to 29 year-olds who identify themselves as on the left has grown from 12% in 1981 to 20% in 2006. When translated into actual numbers it means almost 2.5 million young people define themselves as on the left, with about 750,000 placing themselves on the far left (Graph 28).

**Graph 28: Number of 15-29 year old left-wingers based on self placement on ideological scale, thousands**



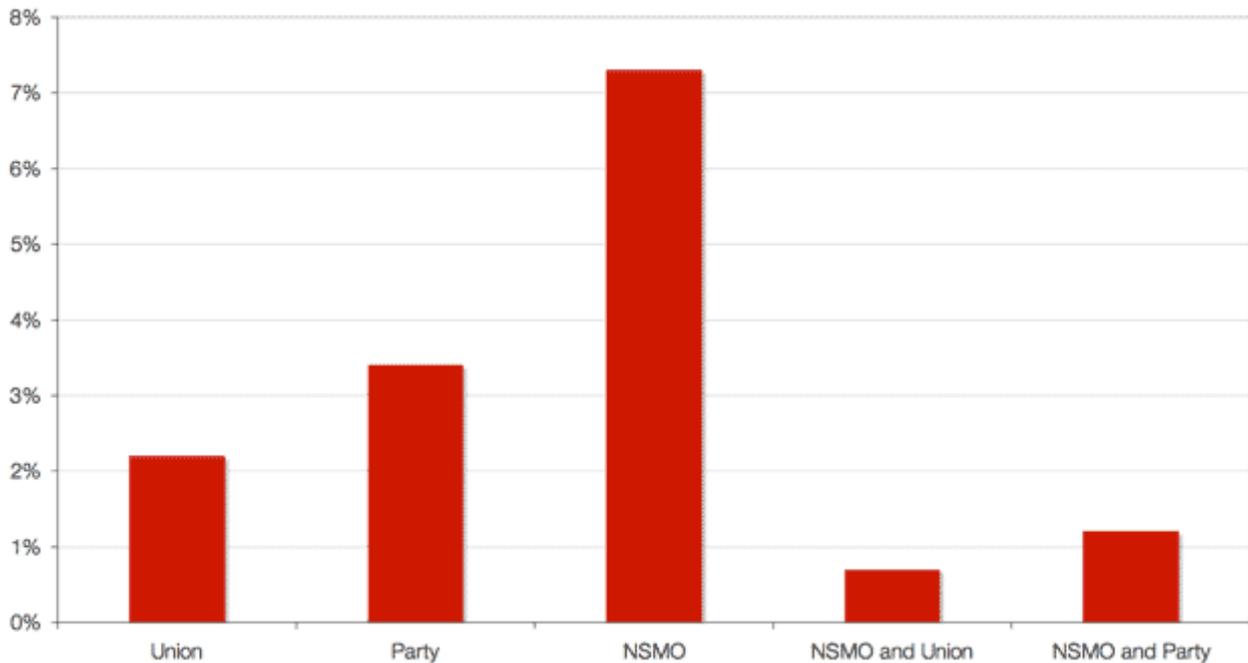
Source: World Values Survey

Over the same period the far right declined from 9.5 % of respondents in 1981 to 6.5% in 2006.

The evidence from the World Values Survey also indicates where those on the left in Britain are active

(defined by the survey as 'performing unpaid work') (Graph 29).

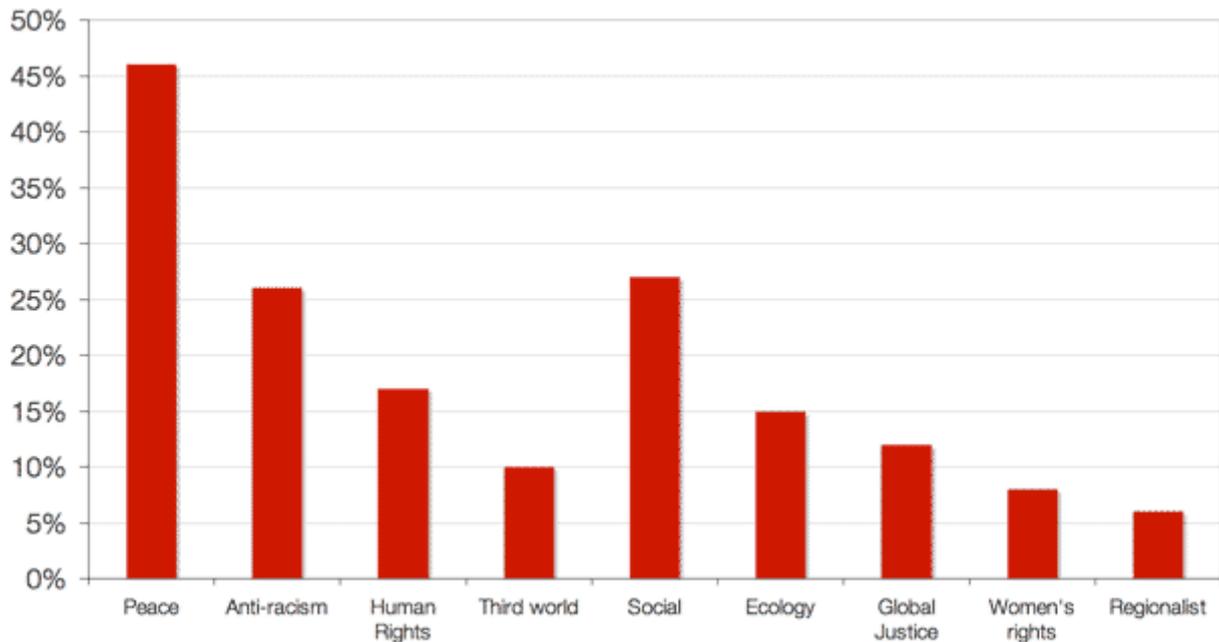
**Graph 29: Left wing activists in different groups, percent**



Source: World Values Surveys 1981-2004 Quoted in Walgrave & Rucht (2010)[\[xxxiv\]](#)

The WVS defines New Social Movement Organisations (NSMOs) as groups concerned with peace, women's issues, ecology and human rights. As the graph shows, there are more left-wing activists in NSMOs than in the unions and political parties combined, with very little overlap. However research also shows that trade union activism is a particularly strong predictor of membership in other types of civic group, as well as in political parties and forms of protest activism.[\[xxxv\]](#) A survey conducted on 1,116 people attending the February 15<sup>th</sup>, 2003, demonstrations in London and Glasgow indicates that there is a large body of people who have protested over a number of issues (Graph 30):

**Graph 30: Percentage of Feb 15th protestors with experiences in previous demonstrations**



Source: Walgrave & Rucht (2010)<sup>[xxxvi]</sup>

If these figures accurately reflect the protest profile of the two million people who attended the February 15<sup>th</sup> 2003 anti-war demonstration,<sup>[xxxvii]</sup> it would mean that 920,000 of them had previously joined a peace protest, 620,000 had joined an anti-racist demo and that 540,000 had previously joined a protest over social issues.

The same study also indicates that those who attended the February 15<sup>th</sup> protest were radicalised.

The survey asked respondents how they had voted at the last election. These figures were then compared to the actual election results to show the extent to which February 15<sup>th</sup> Protestors varied from the electorate as a whole. Five percent of respondents on the London protest said they had voted for the 'far left', 5% more than the electorate as a whole. In Scotland the figure was 13%; 10% more than the 'far left' received in the elections in Scotland.<sup>[xxxviii]</sup>

The survey then asked how respondents would vote at the *next*

election, and these figures were compared to the performance of the 'far left' in opinion polls at the time. On the London protest 11% said they intended to vote for the 'far left'; 11% more than the 'far left' registered in the opinion polls. In Scotland 23% indicated that they would vote for the 'far left', 19% more than in the opinion polls. The results therefore show that protestors were more likely to vote for the 'far left' than the electorate as a whole. They also demonstrate that the audience for 'far left' electoral parties had almost doubled. It means that on the February 15<sup>th</sup> demonstration in London around 100,000 protestors were supporters of the electoral 'far left'.

## **This is what democracy looks like**

The evidence shows that for a significant number of people, political protest is part of their participation in the democratic process. The idea that democratic participation consists *only*

of voting in elections has been weakened, and the notion that protest is a legitimate means to influence the political priorities of our rulers has been strengthened. There are two competing visions of democracy at work here.

The version preferred by our rulers is that democracy consists of gaining the consent of the governed via elections. Period. The electorate places its cross on the ballot paper and then steps back from the democratic process for five years, allowing those that are elected to govern as they see fit. The rich and powerful permit this basic democracy in so far as they are assured that it offers no threat to their property, which from the Putney Debates in the English Civil War until today has been its primary concern.<sup>[xxxix]</sup> The central feature of the British parliamentary regime is therefore the passivity of the governed.

There is no evidence to suggest that protest automatically leads people to question the power of parliament; in fact the evidence seems to show that those who protest are more likely to engage in conventional political action. Neither are all protests left-wing. However the concept of democracy is no longer limited to participation in conventional politics. Consent is not restricted to elections but makes itself felt on the streets; it is assumed to be permanently active by a growing body of people (who are still nevertheless a minority). Movements of protest are not about overthrowing the regime, they are a means of pressuring it into adopting a particular course of action. They are not a rejection of reformism but particular form of reformism. According to Charles Tilly:

*'What movements do is to "persuade states to meet their claims, by publicly demonstrating – as states increasingly allowed them to do – their worthiness, unity, numbers and commitment ... What distinguishes 'social movements' from previous popular collective actors is that they seek to act 'indirectly'. They may variously 'plead with' or even seek to 'bully' modern states, but they don't seek to overthrow or replace them.'*<sup>[xl]</sup>

However, protest movements represent a form of organic, active and participatory democracy that is in itself a challenge to the theory and practice of parliamentary democracy, which is dominated by those who have money and influence. As Gramsci put it 'the historical rationality of numerical consensus is systematically falsified by the influence of wealth'.<sup>[xli]</sup> Moreover, movements are themselves internally conflicted. There are minorities within them that seek to build on their mass-participatory democracy and extend it into a challenge to the system, pushing for forms of struggle that are both more effective and a threat to the power of the regime. Movements are always confronted with the question of tactics, the methods and means which they employ to achieve their ends.

The left seeks to win the most militant action amongst successively broader numbers of people and in so doing create a situation where movements for reform move beyond the limits of reformism. Because the state regards the mass occupation of public space as a threat, when confronted with large protests it often acts in a manner that exposes its violent, centralised, unaccountable and anti-democratic nature, radicalising participants and the movements of which they are a part.

Thus the growth in movements of protest has often involved significant conflict with the forces of the state. The police have repeatedly attacked protestors, attempted to curtail the right to protest, and targeted protest organisers and participants for arrest and trial. The state regards mass protest as a threat and responds accordingly, often provoking violence in order to discredit the protestors or drive them off the streets. The attack on the massive Gaza demonstration in January 2009 was described by one police officer on his blog as the most serious disturbances he could recall:

*'For the first time in almost 8 years (in the Met) full deployment of longshield units was authorised, it was probably around 8pm at that point. Short of watercannon, rubber bullets and teargas, this is the highest state of force we can use in a public order situation'*<sup>[xlii]</sup>

The Gaza protests were followed by the sickening violence meted out by police on the G20 protests, where Ian Tomlinson died after being assaulted by a riot cop as he walked home from work. The response to the student protests was similarly violent, with secondary school students kettled for hours in freezing temperatures, attacked by baton wielding riot police on foot and horseback.

In summary, political protest movements are a growing feature of life in established democracies. Evidence confirms that increasing numbers of people are taking part in 'unconventional' forms of political action, that this action is mainly but not exclusively aimed at governments, that contrary to notions of 'youth apathy', young people are increasingly involved in protest, that there has been no decline in interest in politics, that growing numbers of people identify themselves as being on 'the left' and that these people are more likely to be activists in protest movements than in trade unions and political parties.

Protests can have a radicalising effect on participants, and can also lead to violent conflict with the state.

The participatory democracy represented by the movements stands in stark contrast to the politics of Westminster. Any strategy for resisting austerity and fighting for radical social change must be based on creating movements of political protest.

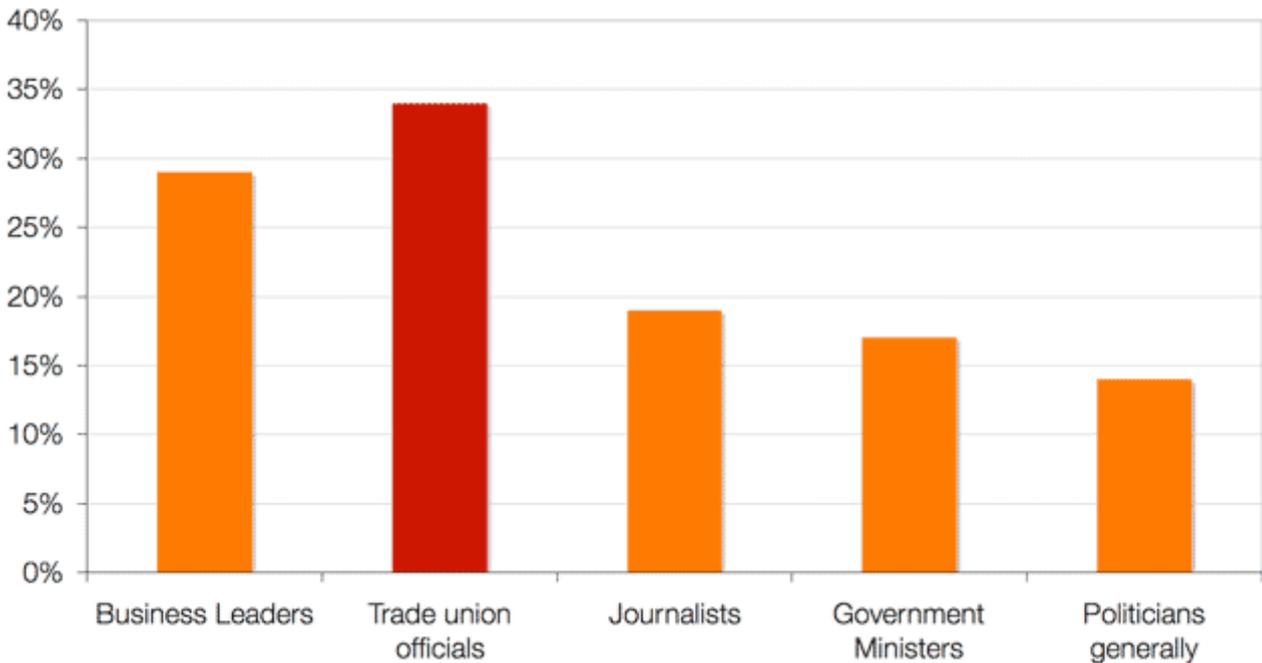
## The state of the trade unions

For all the fashionable media talk of declining trade unionism the evidence shows considerable residual strength in trade union organisation. A recent study into trade union influence concluded:

*'Trade unionism still constitutes the largest voluntary organisation in Britain; it represents 7 million employees; negotiates on behalf of one-third of employees; still dominates workplace employment relations in the public sector; and continues to influence important aspects of working life in the private sector as well.'* [\[xliii\]](#)

Compared to the fall in trust in the key institutions of the British regime the position of the trade unions looks relatively healthy. Trade union officials are more trusted than business leaders, journalists, government ministers or politicians generally (Graph 31):

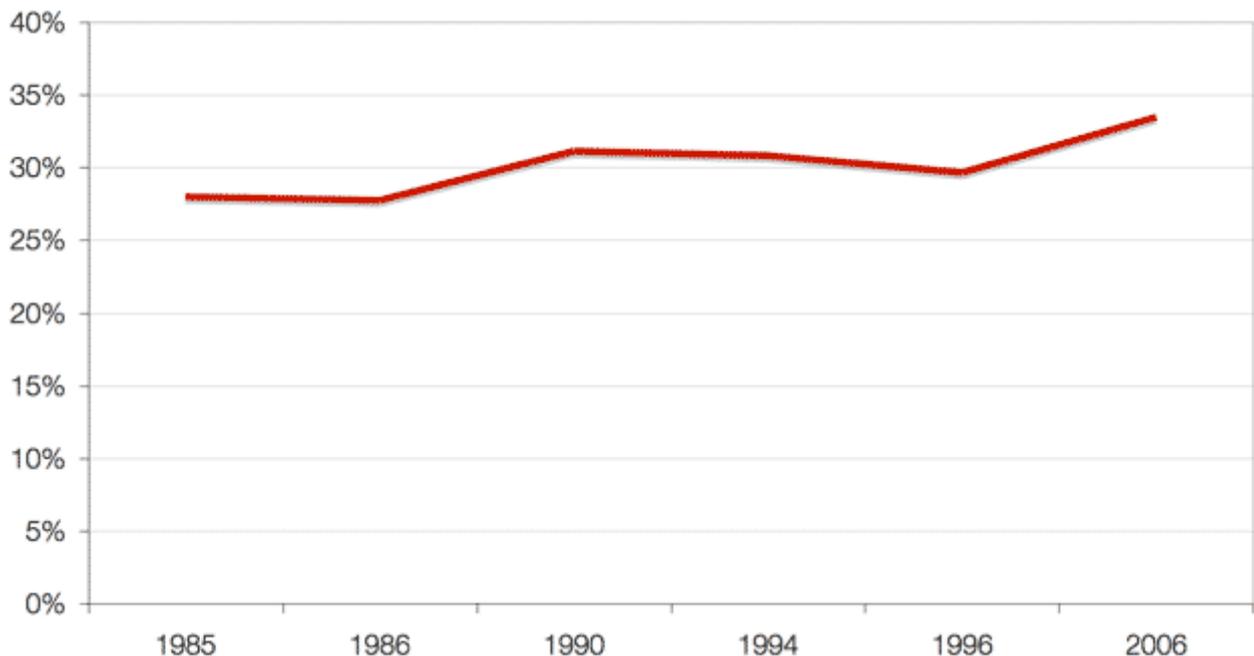
**Graph 31: ...would you tell me if you generally trust them to tell the truth, or not?  
Percent responding 'yes'**



Source: Ipsos Mori Veracity Index 2011 [\[xliv\]](#)

The proportion of people who say that 'organising a nationwide strike of all workers against the government' should definitely or probably be allowed has grown since the mid-1980s (Graph 32):

**Graph 32: Percentage agree that it should 'definitely' or 'probably' be allowed to organise a nationwide strike of all workers against the government**



Source: British Social Attitudes Survey

The TUC protest on March 26<sup>th</sup>, 2011, was the most significant union organised action for some time. Around half a million workers and their families marched in a political protest opposing the Tory-led coalition's austerity plans. The strike over pensions on June 30<sup>th</sup> showed the capacity of the trade unions to mobilise large numbers of its members. The government fared badly on the day. Francis Maude was humiliated on air as government claims that the pensions system is unsustainable were

exposed as lies. Despite the government trying to create divisions and Ed Miliband opposing the strikes, public opinion was not mobilised against the strikers.

It certainly was not the largest strike since 1926 but it was the largest strike since 2006 when up to 1.5 million public sector workers walked out,<sup>[xiv]</sup> and the two days of strike action by 600,000 Unison and Unite members in 2008. In many ways, the most impressive aspect of J30 was the thousands of mainly young female trade unionists and their supporters taking to the streets in towns and cities across Britain. Between 60,000 to 100,000 took part in these protests with anti-cuts placards and chants much in evidence. The Durham Miners Gala, boycotted by Ed Miliband because he did not want to share a platform with Bob Crow, was huge, with over 100,000 people celebrating the labour movement. The protest called by the Scottish TUC on October 1<sup>st</sup> saw around 20,000 on the streets of Glasgow. The following day the TUC demonstration at the Tory party conference in Manchester drew 35,000.

The trade union movement has demonstrated that it is able to mobilise its members in combination with other groups affected by the cuts. Political protest is central to the movement against austerity. The government is an employer, it is sacking thousands in the public sector attacking the 'social wage' of millions of people, irrespective of whether they are employed or not, or whether they are public sector workers or private sector workers. Political protest against austerity can unite those that depend on public services with those who work to provide them.

Strikes in the public sector have a different dynamic to those in the private sector. Strikes in the private sector work by cutting off the source of profits. Most workers in the public sector workers do not generate profits, so public sector strikes work in a different way, by disrupting the normal functioning of the state. If they are one-day or rolling one-day actions, strikes in the public sector are a form of political protest utilising the fact that the labour of workers is central to the functioning of the state. They therefore succeed by causing political damage to the government. It was the industrial action, the large visible protests and the failure of the government to win the argument, let alone isolate the strikers from public opinion, that made J30 an effective act of political protest.

## Strikes and union density

Yet despite some impressive indicators of continuing trade union strength, other indicators show, however, a significant and ongoing decline. This year's TUC General Council report describes the situation well:

*'The annual Labour Force Survey published by the Department for Business Innovation and Skills and National Statistics in April 2011 recorded a small decline in union density amongst employees, which now stands at 26.6 per cent. Density in the public sector remained stable at just over 56 per cent but in the private sector density fell below 15 per cent to 14.2 per cent.*

*Collective bargaining coverage fell by almost two per cent to 30.8 per cent. Collective bargaining coverage in the public sector was 64.5 per cent, a fall of almost four per cent. Collective bargaining coverage in the public sector has now fallen by ten per cent since 2000. In the private sector, less than one fifth of employees were covered by collective bargaining agreements.*

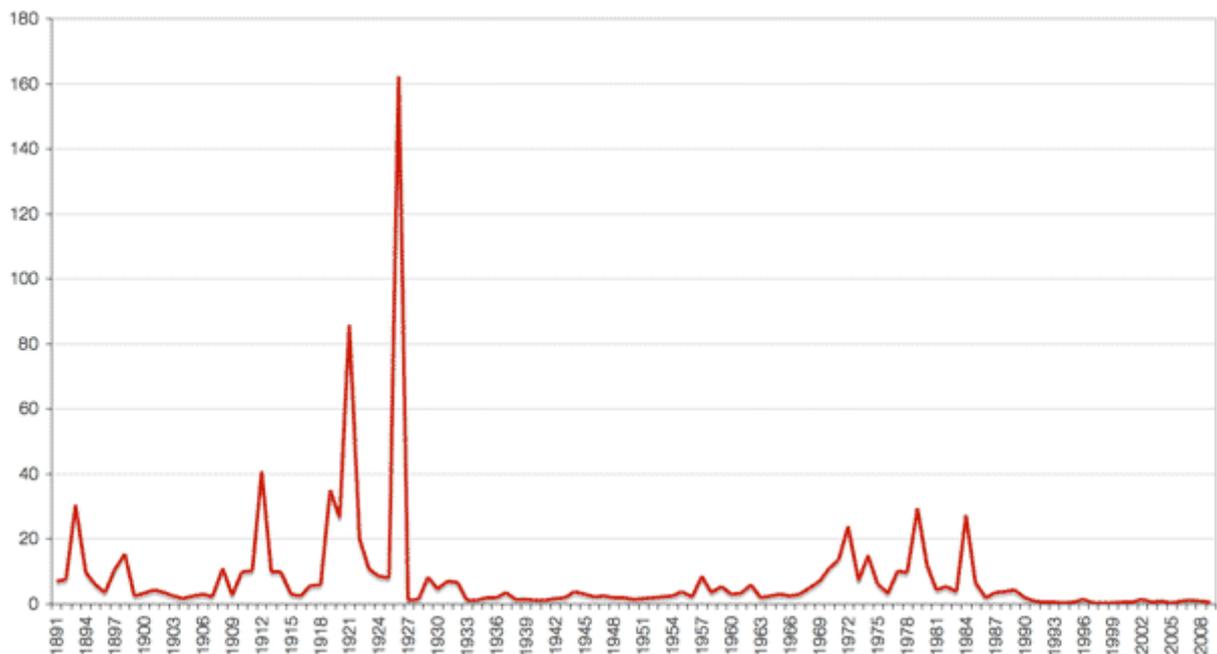
*Whilst union membership in the public sector has increased by almost 350,000 since 1995, density declined by five per cent over the same period. This suggests that during a period of significant employment growth in the sector the capacity of unions to keep pace with this and maintain and increase density in the sector was limited. The*

*government cuts programme and a likely increase in the use of outsourcing and privatisation will place additional pressures on public sector membership and density moving forward...*

*...The continued difficulties facing union recruitment in the private sector have resulted in union density dropping to less than 15 per cent in significant parts of the sector such as construction, accommodation and food service (hospitality), wholesale and retail, information and communication. In manufacturing, a sector traditionally regarded as a union stronghold, fewer than one in five workers are now union members. [xlvj]*

Figures released by the Office of National Statistics show that in the year to March 2011 the number of strike days fell to 145,000, the joint lowest since the Office for National Statistics' records began in 1931. This year's strike figures will be significantly higher (due to the pensions strike) but, as the graph below (Graph 33) shows, the last twenty years have seen the number of strike days fall to an unprecedented low level:

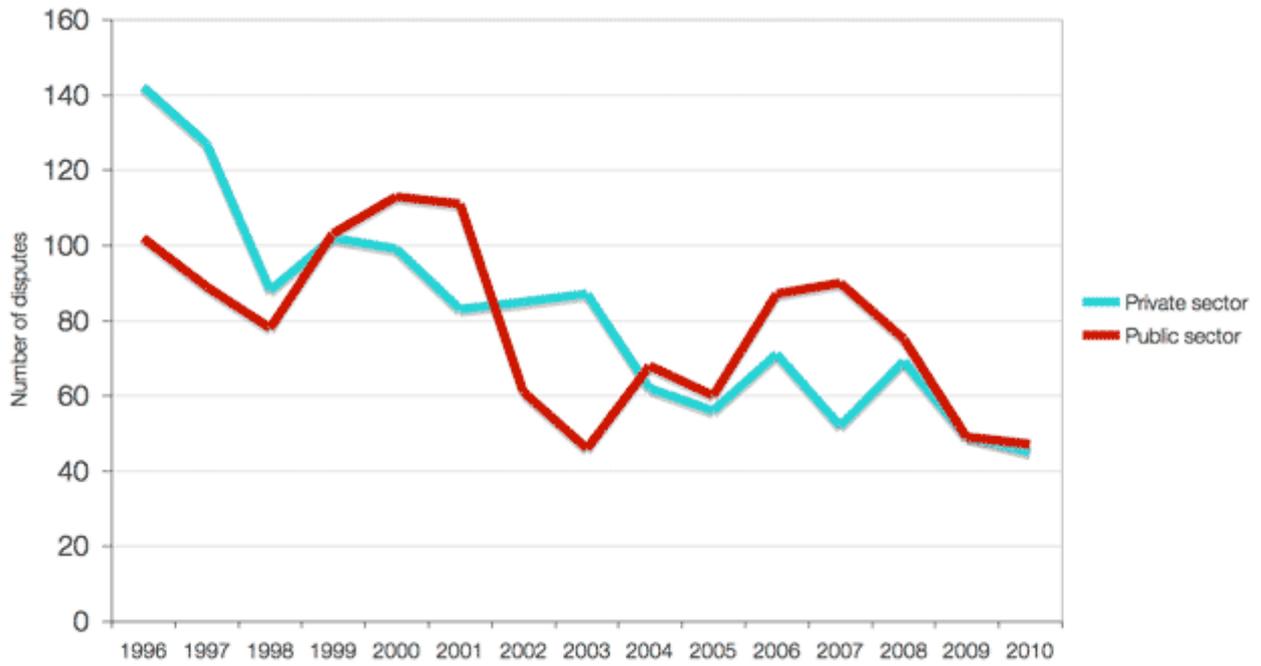
**Graph 33: Number of working days lost to labour disputes, thousands**



Source: ONS

The number of disputes has continued to decline (Graph 34):

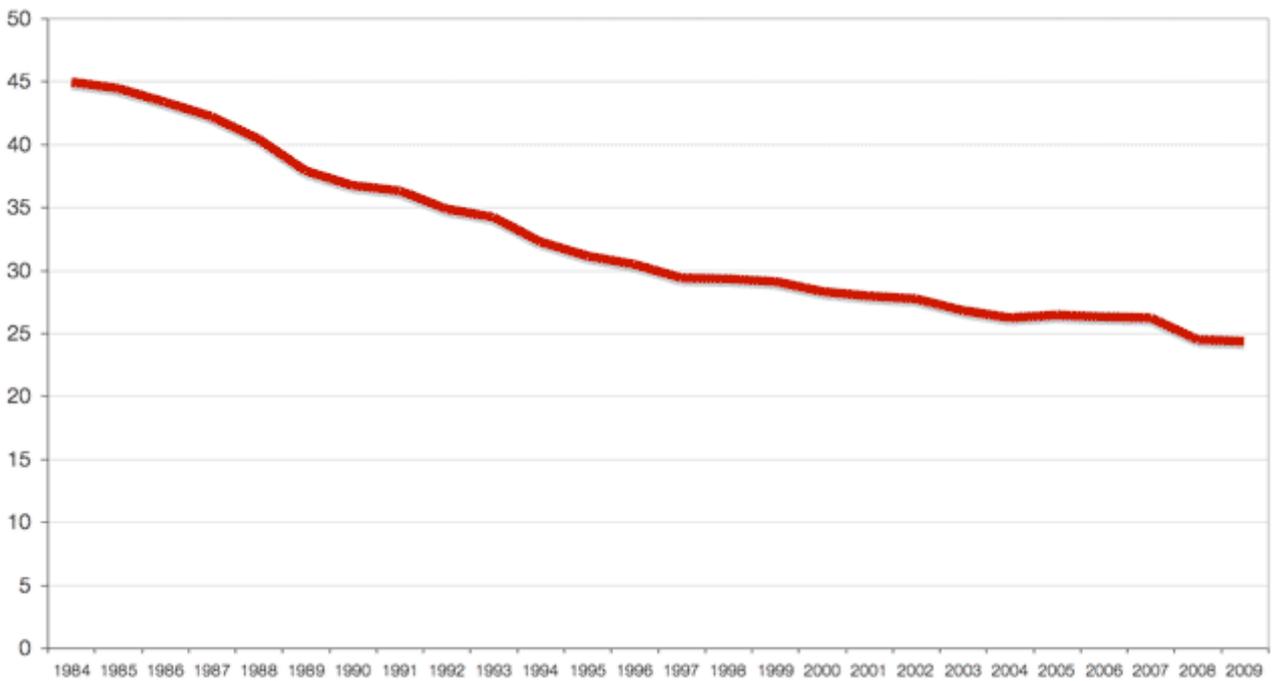
**Graph 34: Disputes in progress, private and public, 1996-2010**



Source: ONS

There has been a sustained decline in trade union density (Graph 35):

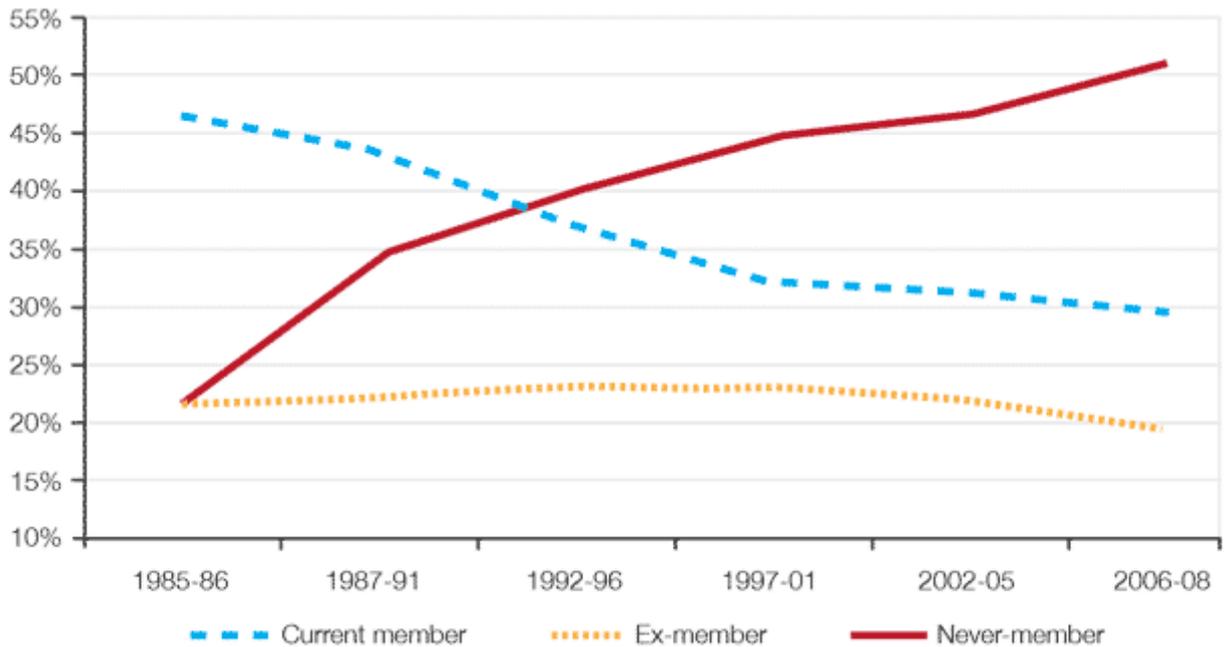
**Graph 35: Percentage of workforce who are union members**



Source: ONS (Historical data 1984-2007; LFS 2008-2009)

The percentage of the workforce who have never been a member of a trade union has continued to rise (Graph 36):

**Graph 36: The rise of never-membership among employees in Britain, 1985-2008**



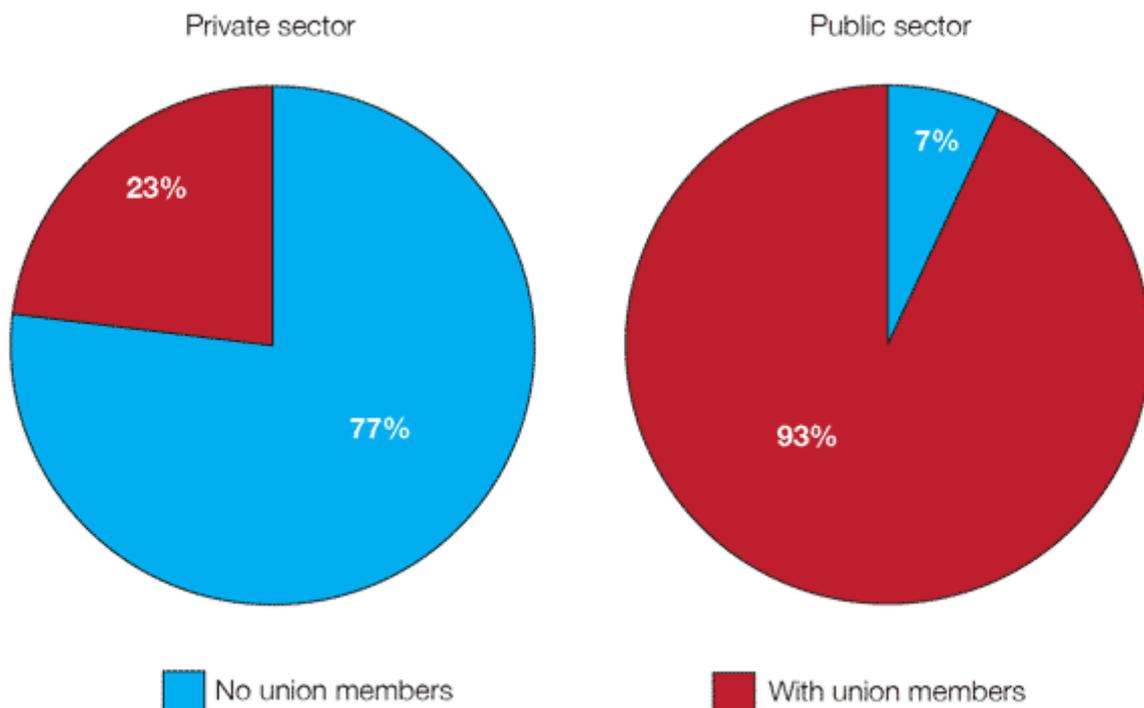
Note: Employees working 10+ hours per week.

Source: Alex Bryson and John Forth, *Trade Union Membership and Influence 1999-2009*, NIESR Discussion Paper No. 362, September 2010, p. 10. Authors' calculations from BSAS.

There is a worrying division between workers in the public sector and the private sector.

Seventy-seven percent of all private sector workplaces have not a single union member present, but this is true of only 7% of those in the public sector (Graph 37). Moreover only 8% of private sector workplaces have more than half their workers in a union, but 62% of public sector workplaces have half.<sup>[xlvii]</sup>

**Graph 37: Union presence, by sector of ownership (percentage of workplaces)**



Source: Barbara Kersley, Carmen Alpin, John Forth, Alex Bryson, Helen Bewley, Gill Dix, Sarah Oxenbridge, *Inside the Workplace: First Findings from the 2004 Workplace Employment Relations Survey (WERS)*, p. 12

The differences between public sector and private sector union density are reflected in the strike statistics. The graph below shows that the majority of strikes days are in the public sector, even though the public sector only employs about 21% of the UK workforce (Graph 38). [xlviij]

**Graph 38: Annual strike days, private and public sector, 1996-2010, thousands**



Source: ONS

Although there has been a decline in the number of disputes and strikes, the average number of workers involved per stoppage has increased (Graph 39):

**Graph 39: Average number of workers involved per stoppage, 1994-2011, thousands**

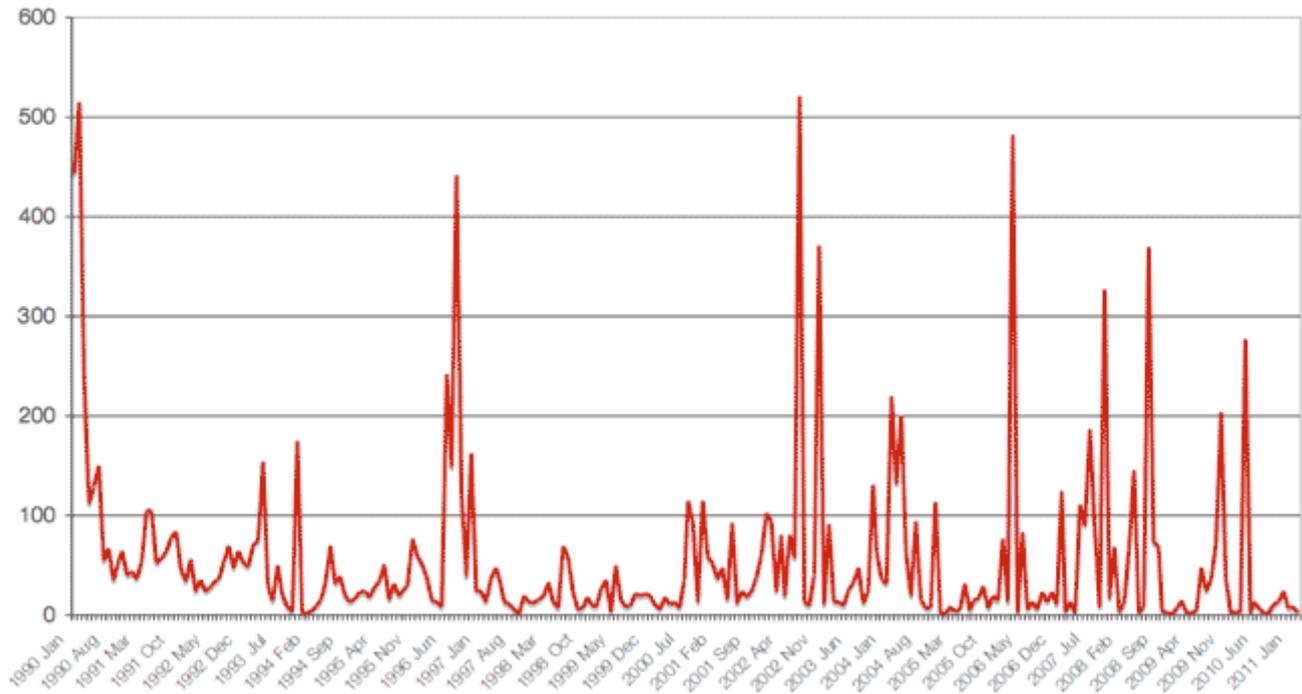


Source: ONS

This reflects a simple fact - strike action has come to be dominated by large one-day strikes by public sector unions.<sup>[xlix]</sup>

Within the overall decline registered in the annual strike figures there have been spikes in strike activity. The graph below shows the level of strike days since 1990 on a monthly basis (Graph 40):

**Graph 40: Monthly strike days, Jan 1990-Jan 2011, thousands**



Source: ONS

These spikes mark major strike action by groups of workers, mainly in the public sector. They have taken place within a continuing process of decline in annual strike activity. Significant one-day strikes involving many thousands of workers have not managed to reverse the overall trend of declining numbers of workers engaged in strikes, attract sufficient numbers of new members to reverse the decline in union membership or reverse the effects of decades of defeat.

## Young workers, low pay and precarious employment

Trade unions are not recruiting young workers in sufficient numbers. According to a Department for Business, Enterprise & Regulatory Reform report:

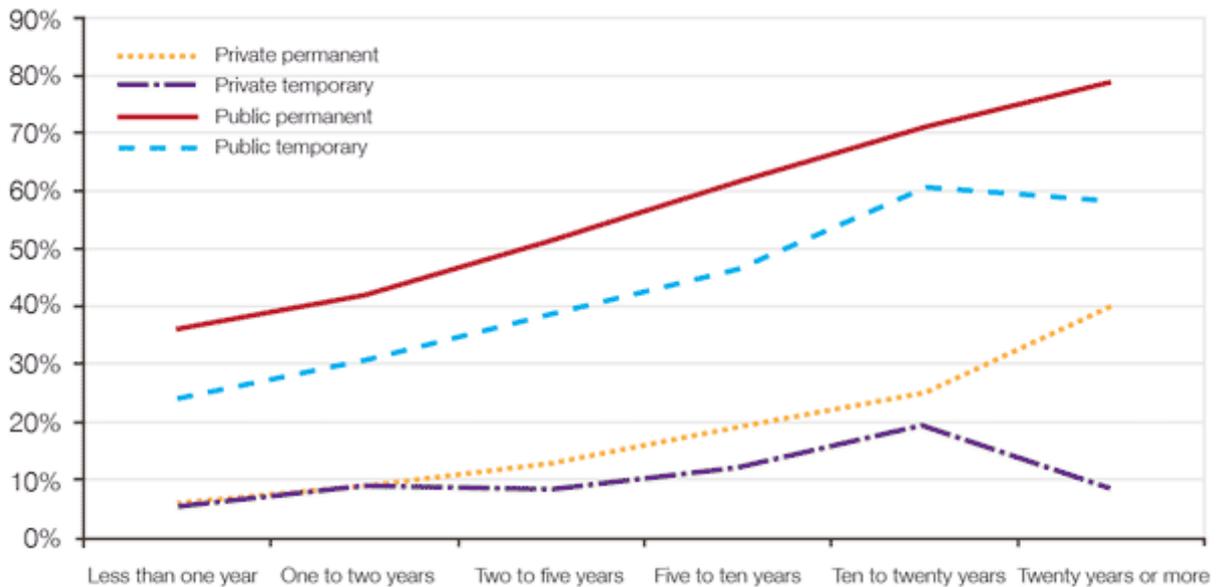
*'union densities of younger age groups have fallen compared with 13 years ago. This contrasts with employees aged 50 and above where there is little change in density over the same period'.<sup>[l]</sup>*

The trade union movement is *ageing*.<sup>[li]</sup>

To stem the decline, the unions and the left need a strategy for relating to and recruiting the 70% of young workers who are not members of trade unions.

Those in temporary and precarious work are much less likely to be in a union (Graph 41):

**Graph 41: Trade union density, permanency and length of service by sector, UK employees, 2008**



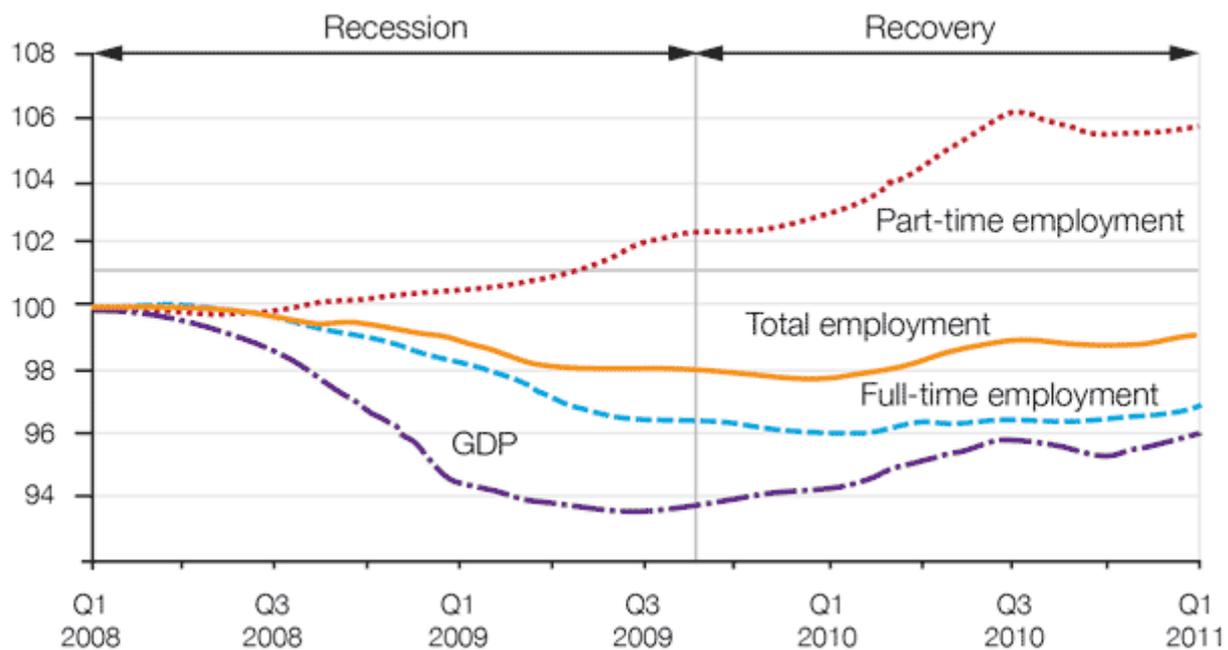
Source: Labour Force Survey, Office of National Statistics | Graph reproduced from Craig Barratt, *Trade Union Membership 2008*, Department for Business Enterprise & Regulatory Reform, p. 28.

The TUC estimates that there are around two million ‘precarious’ or as it calls them ‘vulnerable workers’ in Britain, 25% of them in workplaces with a union presence.<sup>[iii]</sup> A recent EU study suggested that the proportion of workers in precarious employment, or whose employment contains aspects of precarious work, could be larger than one third of the UK workforce,<sup>[iiii]</sup> some ten million workers.

Evidence from the ONS,<sup>[iv]</sup> and the ILO World of Work study show that the crisis is restructuring the shape of the working class. Part-time employment is growing twice as fast as full-time employment (Graph 42), permanent jobs have fallen during the current crisis whilst temporary jobs have increased.<sup>[v]</sup>

**Graph 42: Employment and GDP growth, 2008-2011**

Index: 2008 Q1 = 100



Source: ONS

The TUC estimates that there are over five million low paid workers in the UK:

*'In 1977, 12 per cent of workers earned less than two-thirds of the median; this had risen to 21 per cent by 1998. By April 2006, more than one-fifth (23 per cent) of all UK workers – 5.3 million people – were paid less than this amount (£6.67 an hour). Nearly two-thirds (60 per cent) of low-paid workers are women, and over two-fifths of low-paid workers in total are women working part time.'* [lvi]

The low paid are less likely to be members of a union:

*'Middle-income earners were more likely to be union members than either low paid or highly paid employees. Employees earning between £500 and £999 per week reported higher union densities (37.9 per cent) than those earning either less than £250 per week (16.3 per cent) or £1,000 or more per week (20.3 per cent).'* [lvii]

A sizeable portion of precarious workers are students. Increasingly, students enrolled at UK universities have part-time jobs to help fund them through their studies. In the ten years to 2006 the number of full-time students in paid employment grew by more than 50%, [lviii] and currently 56% of all full-time students undertake paid work. [lix] In 2006 over 630,000 full-time students reported having jobs. [lx] More than 65% of student employment is concentrated in hospitality and retail. [lxii] A recent study on the employment patterns of Nottingham students revealed that students make up 28% of Nottingham's entire hospitality sector workforce. [lxiii] Hospitality and retail are amongst the lowest paid sectors, the average hourly rate in retail is £9.35 and in hotels and restaurants it is £7.91. [lxiiii]

The existence of a large pool of workers in precarious and low-paid jobs is a direct threat to the terms and conditions of those on stable permanent contracts, who form the bulk of union members. Unless unions find ways of organising these workers, aspects of precarious working will increasingly find their way into the lives of all workers, just as the inferior pensions on offer to private sector workers are now

being used to attack the pensions of those in the public sector.

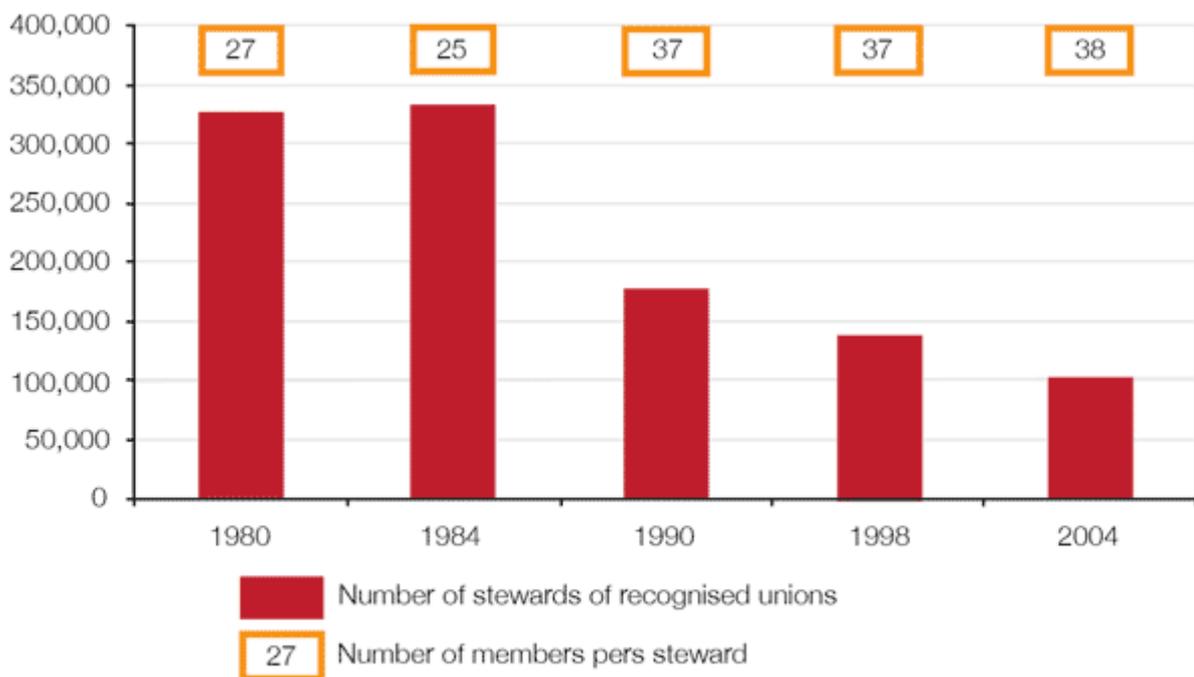
## Shop stewards

A recent report on Trade union influence describes the role of shop stewards:

*'Union lay representatives constitute a member's first port of call if they have a problem at work and are often also involved in pay bargaining. They also do much of a union's recruitment. Their continued presence in workplaces is thus crucial to a union's organizational capacity.'*<sup>[xiv]</sup>

According to the most recent estimates the number of lay officials has declined, from over 300,000 in 1980 to around 100,000 in 2004.<sup>[xv]</sup> There was a substantial decline in the second half of the 1980s, falling to an even greater degree than membership; the average number of members per lay representative rose from 25 in 1984 to 37 in 1990. Since the nineties the decline has stabilized and has fallen at the same rate as overall trade union membership (Graph 43).

**Graph 43: Numbers of union lay representatives, 1980-2004**



Graph reproduced from Carlwood and Forth, *Trade Union Membership and Influence 1999-2009*, p. 12.

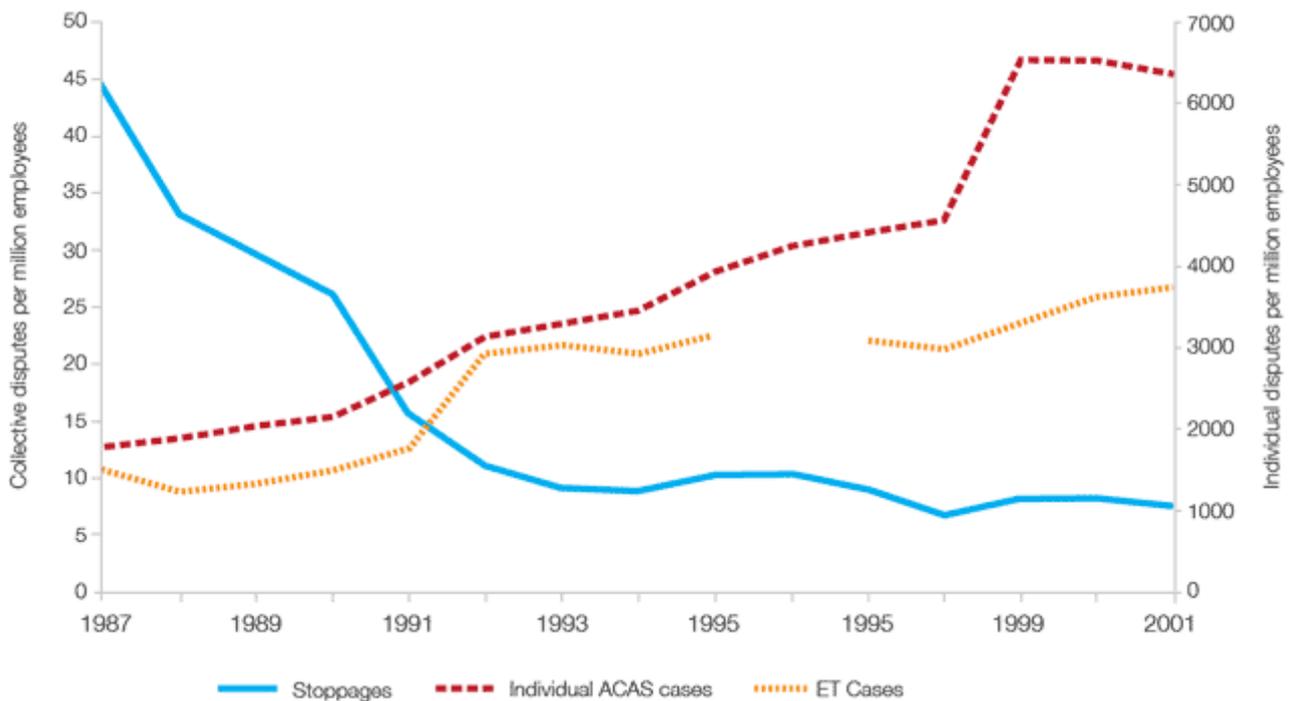
There has been a significant change in the type of role that shop stewards play compared to the late sixties and early seventies. Richard Hyman wrote about the role of shop stewards in his 1971 book *Strikes*:

*'By definition the steward is a shop-floor employee, typically chosen directly by fellow-workers because he (or increasingly she) enjoys their trust. Their negotiating authority does not derive from the union of which they are a member: until very recently, few union rule-books even mentioned the steward's bargaining functions. Nor, in the main,*

*does it derive from formal procedure agreements: most of these define the steward's powers in an extremely restrictive manner ... Their authority stems essentially from the fact that they share the aspirations of the employees, are personally involved in their experiences and grievances at the point of production, and are expected to represent their interests in negotiation with management. Should they fail to do so adequately, it is relatively easy for the rank and file to reassert control, through shop-floor meetings or less formal pressures. In the last resort, workers can replace a steward whose competence of integrity they doubt by one in whom they have greater confidence.'* [lxvij]

The position of shop stewards, and their role in the workplace today is now fundamentally different from that of the stewards of the late sixties and early seventies. The graph below (Graph 44) shows that as the number of collective disputes has declined there has been an inverse growth in the number of individual disputes in the form of ACAS cases or Employment Tribunals. [lxvij]

**Graph 44: Collective and individual disputes in the UK, 1987-2001**



Sources: ONS, ACAS and the ET Service. | Graph reproduced from Stephen Drinkwater and Peter Ingram, *Have Industrial Relations in the UK Really Improved?*, (Guildford 2005), p. 33

The increase in legal cases does not mean that tensions that otherwise would have resulted in strikes have been diverted into legal action. Research shows that only 8% of workplaces were involved in an employment tribunal in 2004. However it does imply that the role of the workplace union rep increasingly consists of individual casework, not of organising collective action. This produces a workload that is dominated by the regulation of workplace relations rather than organising active resistance.

## Workplace tensions

The low levels of strike action do not signal the victory of capitalism or the effective incorporation of workers into the system. A 2007 survey by the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development found that only a third of British employees trust senior managers and only half believe they will be dealt with

fairly if they have a problem at work.<sup>[lxviii]</sup> British workplaces are the scene of a growing disaffection that mirrors the crisis of confidence in Britain's key institutions. Described by some as an 'employee engagement deficit' this disaffection is described in a number of recent studies.

A 2008 poll conducted by YouGov for the TUC found that around one in four workers is neither satisfied with their job, nor would speak highly about their organisation as an employer. Nearly six million workers in Britain are dissatisfied with their jobs. Almost one in three workers said that their organisation does not fully engage them and less than half the workforce (46%) agree that their employer deserves their loyalty.<sup>[lxix]</sup> A study by the Corporate Leadership Council found that one in five UK workers may be disengaged. Within the public sector 22% of workers are disengaged.<sup>[lxx]</sup>

The TUC poll also found that the biggest complaint was of increased workloads (46%), with 39% reporting increased stress levels and 23% working longer hours. Just under half (42%) said that their pay had not kept up with the cost of living. Two 2011 studies identify growing tensions within British workplaces. *The State of HR Survey 2011*

, by King's College London and law firm Speechly Bircham,<sup>[lxxi]</sup> revealed that employers are facing a sustained increase in workplace unrest due to austerity measures, longer working hours and stress. The survey is based on responses from 550 senior HR professionals with a combined workforce size of more than two million. More than 50% reported an increase in staff working hours, while pay rises and bonuses continue to be withheld. Deteriorating employee relations, high stress levels and workforce disputes appear endemic, particularly in relation to bullying, harassment and relationships with line managers. Forty-six percent of respondents said that stress-related problems have gone up, while 30% had seen grievances increase over the past year.

Employee stress problems and grievances are all set to rise again in 2011. Forty percent of respondents anticipate worse employee relations, 42% expect higher stress levels and 29% see rises in employee grievances. Commenting on the findings, Richard Martin, Partner and Head of Employment at Speechly Bircham, said:

*'This year's survey findings send out a clear warning to employers. The combination of increased workplace conflict, longer hours and rising stress levels is a potent cocktail that could lead to a significant rise in tribunals and industrial action if not properly addressed.'* <sup>[lxxii]</sup>

#### The 2011 CIPD *Employment Relations Survey*

<sup>[lxxiii]</sup> published in April, found evidence that industrial action is expected to increase. Three-quarters of the 371 HR practitioners who took part agreed that the UK is entering a new, more unstable period of industrial relations. Seventy-one percent agreed employers can expect to face increasing levels of industrial action over the next twelve months. In the public sector the figure was eight out of ten. Employers are now more pessimistic about the likelihood of strike action than in the previous survey in 2008. The survey provides evidence that relations between management and unions have significantly deteriorated in the last twelve months.

However the report authors add:

*'A third of employers that recognise unions anticipate that employees in their organisation will take strike action in the next 12 months, little changed from the 2008 figure of 31%. Half of public sector employers think there will be strike action by staff in their organisation over the next year, again little changed from 2008, when 51% of public sector respondents anticipated strike action. . . .*

*Given the findings from our 2008 survey we might have expected to have seen a surge in industrial action in 2009; however, we know from Office for National Statistics data that the number of working days lost to strike action in 2009 dropped to 455,200 from 758,800 for the previous year.'*<sup>[lxxiv]</sup>

So, despite the fears of human resource managers it is no means certain that the conflicts present in British workplaces will find expression in increased strikes.

In a recent article in the British Journal of Industrial Relations entitled *What has Happened to Strikes?*,

John Godard looks at why the growing tensions in UK workplaces have not resulted in increased strikes:

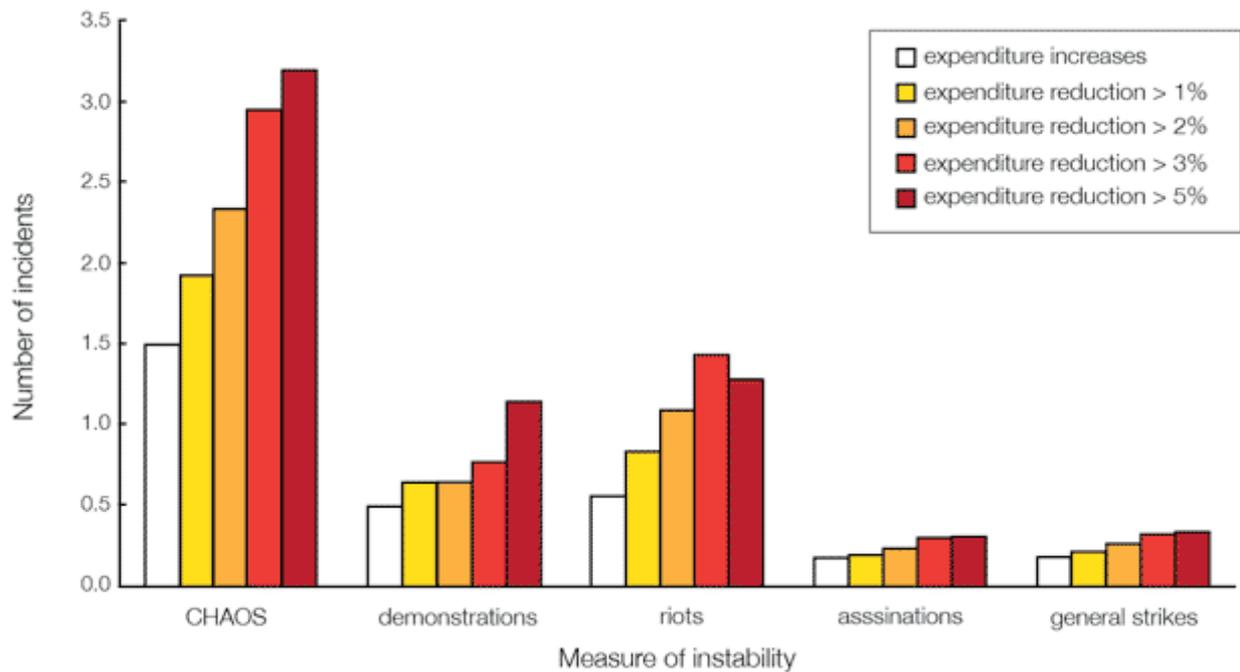
*'In effect, workers have been coerced into submission by macroeconomic conditions and, perhaps, by an increased ability of employers to rely on an array of sanctions should individuals fail to accept the new realities in which they find themselves. This may be especially true for workers in more precarious, low-skill, low-pay employment, which appears to have become more widespread. But it is likely the case for other segments of the labour market as well.*

*'Neo-liberal and managerial ideologies, have also become increasingly entrenched, if not always among workers themselves, then among political and economic elites. Where some level of resistance was once considered to be normal if not healthy, it is now considered to be exceptional if not pathological as new managerial paradigms (e.g. total quality management, HRM) requiring workers to identify with employer goals, and the discourses associated with them, have taken hold.'*<sup>[lxxv]</sup>

## **The prospect of social unrest**

A recent study by Ponticelli and Voth looked at unrest in Europe between 1919 and 2009.<sup>[lxxvi]</sup> It found a relationship between fiscal adjustment episodes and the number of incidents indicating instability - demonstrations, riots, strikes, assassinations and attempted revolutions (combined into a single measure; CHAOS: 'The data shows a clear link between the magnitude of expenditure cutbacks and increases in social unrest (Graph 45). With every additional percentage point of GDP in spending cuts, the risk of unrest increases'<sup>[lxxvii]</sup> Furthermore, 'in the case of demonstrations, the frequency of incidents appears to rise particularly fast as expenditure cuts pass the 3% threshold'.<sup>[lxxviii]</sup>

### **Graph 45: Frequency of incidents and the scale of expenditure cuts**



**Source: Jacopo Ponticelli and Hans-Joachim Voth, *Austerity and Anarchy: Budget Cuts and Social Unrest in Europe, 1919-2009* (Center for Economic Policy Research 2011)**

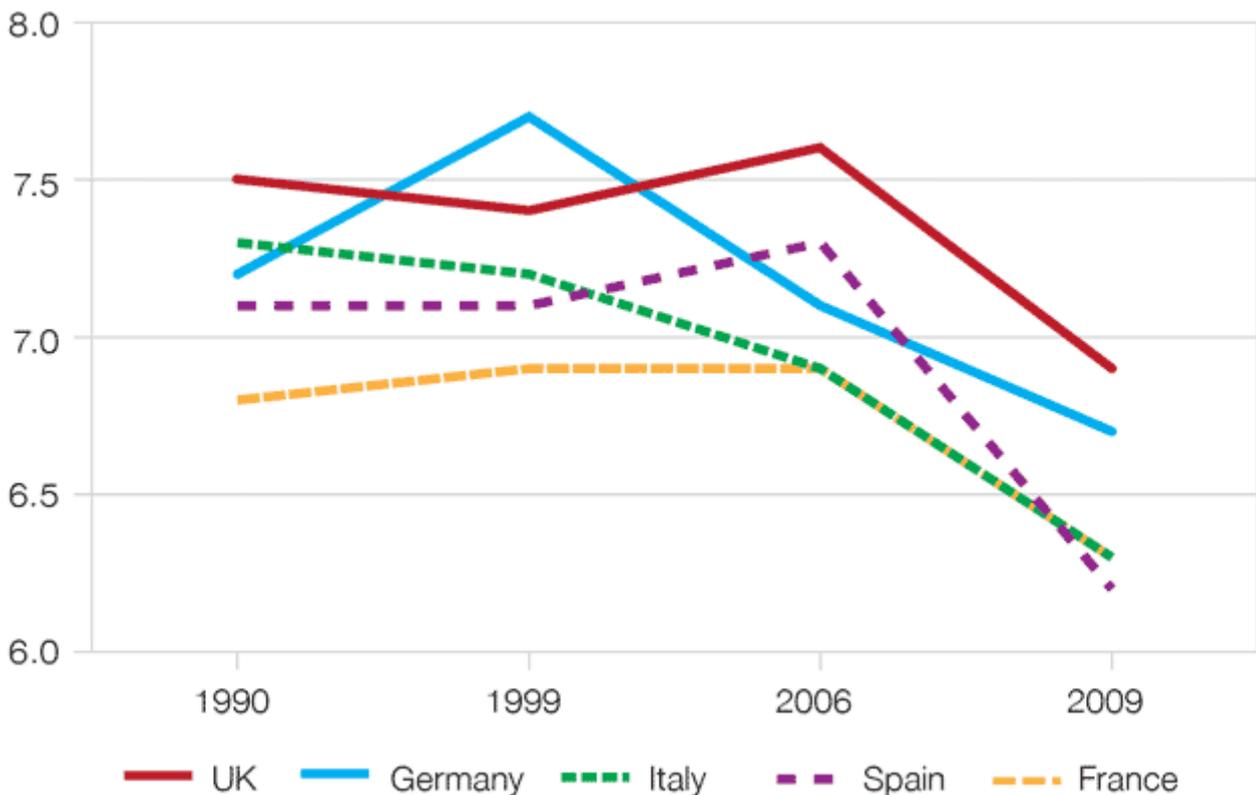
The International Labour Organisation's 2010 World of Work Survey looked at the current wave of austerity.<sup>[lxxix]</sup> Using a number of studies and opinion polls it found that:

*'Confidence in government has ... declined, as have perceptions that policies are fair or lead to a better future. These trends are most common among advanced economies. Among Western European countries, there is a perception of growing political extremism and social discontent.'*

*Recent survey data indicate that there has been a general global decline in life satisfaction [Graph 46], and historical data show that this decline is unprecedented. Compared with the data from the 1980s and the 1990s, developed economies in Western Europe and economies in Central and Eastern Europe show some of the most severe declines in life satisfaction.*

*There have been documented cases of social unrest related to the financial and economic crisis in at least 25 countries. These cases have taken the form of protest against governments' crisis responses and austerity measures aimed at repairing government balance sheets, protests against employers, and violent clashes between the government and protestors. As governments try to contain the fallout from the crisis, the social contract between state and citizen has been put to the test.'<sup>[lxxx]</sup>*

**Graph 46: Decline in life satisfaction in Western Europe**



Reproduced from ILO World of Work Report 2010: *From One Crisis to the Next?* p. 36

Note: Respondents were asked to rank from 0 to 10 how satisfied they are with their life. Mean values for each survey year are presented in the figure. Surveys were conducted with gaps of several years, ranging from five to ten years.

Source: ILS based on World Values Survey and Gallup World Poll Data.

Godard argues that the discontent within British workplaces is likely to be directed at national and global political and economic elites:

*'In current economic times, there is no doubt a widespread and growing sense of injustice, but this appears to be directed more at the political and economic system in general, especially in Britain. So while the institutionalization of conflict thesis popular in the postwar era essentially argued that the genius of the postwar system was its ability to contain the manifestation of broader labour–capital conflicts by institutionalizing and addressing them within the employment relation, it might now be possible to speak of the 'deinstitutionalization' of conflict and its manifestation outside of the economic sphere, in the form of political or social instability.*

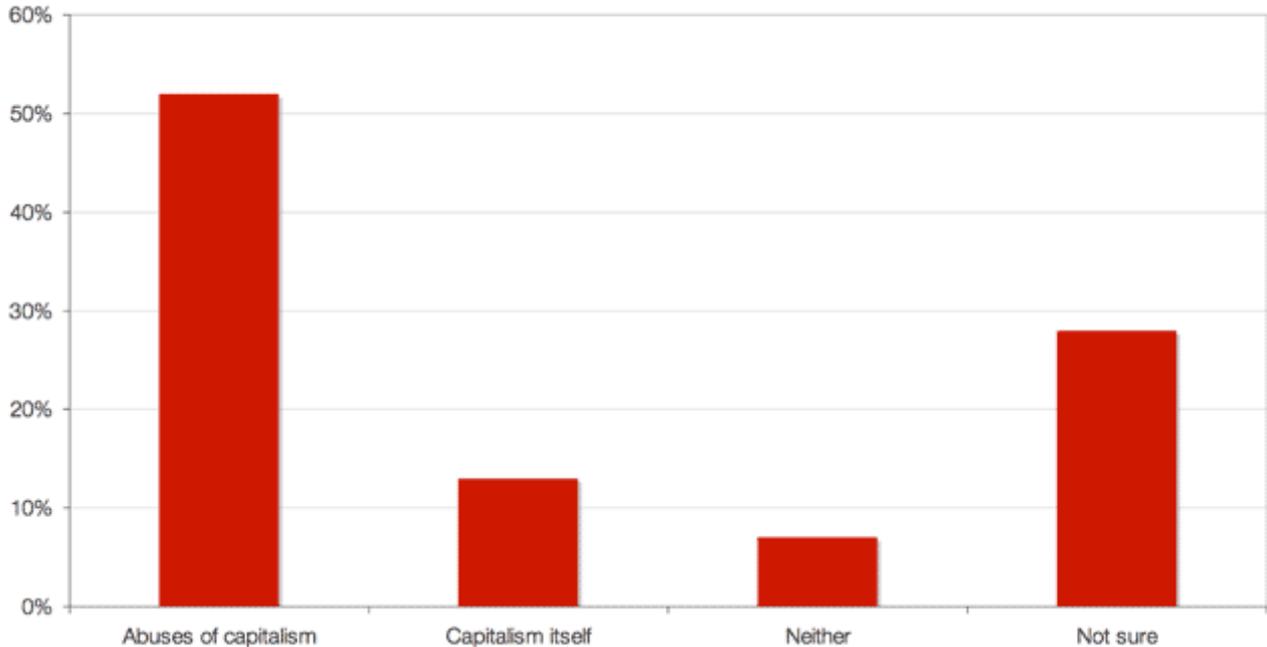
*In short, it is possible that the trends of the past three decades are coming to an end. But while this may result in an increase in overt conflict, this is not likely to result in a repeat of the industrial unrest of the past. Instead, it may come to be reflected in broader political unrest (which, indeed, much of the unrest of the late 1960s and the 1970s may ultimately have reflected), as workers attribute perceived injustice to the behaviour of national and even global political and economic elites rather than individual employers.'* [lxxxix]

The evidence shows that the British public blame the current crisis on the actions of economic and political elites. A poll conducted for the *Financial Times*

in October 2008 asked: 'Would you say that the current financial market crisis has been caused more by "abuses of capitalism" or by the "failure of capitalism itself"?' [lxxxix] Over half of respondents believed that the crisis had been caused by 'abuses of capitalism', with a further 13% blaming

'capitalism itself' (Graph 47):

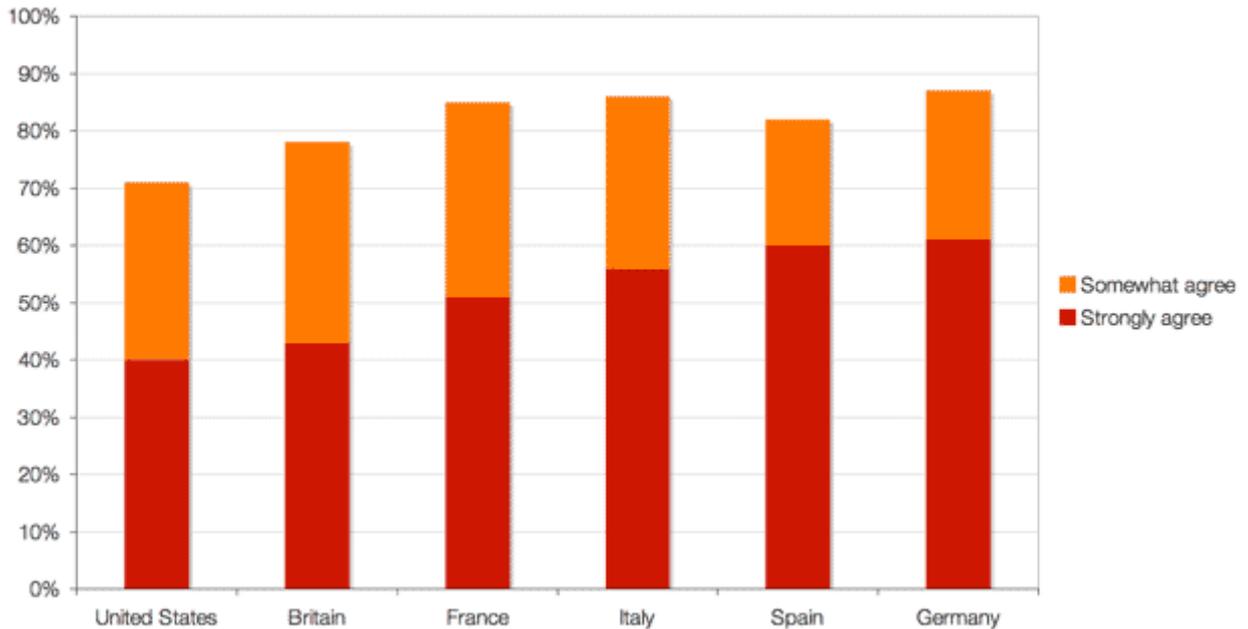
**Graph 47: Would you say that the current financial market crisis has been caused more by 'abuses of capitalism' or by the 'failure of capitalism itself?'**



Source: *Harris Interactive / Financial Times*

A Harris poll in 2010 asked 'some argue that governments should make the rich contribute more than the less well-off, e.g. by paying more taxes. How much do you agree or disagree with this idea?'<sup>[lxxxiii]</sup> Seventy eight percent of British respondents agreed that the rich should pay more (Graph 48).

**Graph 48: Some argue that governments should make the rich contribute more than the less well-off, eg.g. by paying more taxes. How much do you agree or disagree with this idea?**



Source: Harris Interactive / Financial Times

Recent polling by YouGov found that 62% think the cuts are being done unfairly.<sup>[lxxxiv]</sup> This evidence supports Godard's argument that

'workers attribute perceived injustice to the behaviour of national and even global political and economic elites rather than individual employers' and that as a result may be mobilised to take action against the institutions through which these elites operate rather than, or as well as, individual employers.

## The shape of resistance

The continued decline in strikes, union density, the confidence of members and the impact of the trade union laws mean that it is not automatic that resistance to cuts will only, or perhaps mainly, take the form of strike action. The recent wave of rioting in English cities confirms that the inequality and alienation that marks neoliberal Britain can result in violent explosions of social unrest.

Internationally the past few months have seen resistance to economic hardship and austerity measures conducted initially via movements of protest that target the undemocratic political institutions responsible for imposing austerity. In Tunisia and Egypt the movement took place against a background of growing economic hardship but consisted of weeks of political mass street protests and occupations of public squares aimed at the regimes, with strike action breaking out once the dictators began to totter.

In Wisconsin the workers responded to the attack on union rights by targeting the political body responsible; occupying the council chamber and organising 'sick-ins'. Since then the US has been swept by a series of occupations of public space inspired by the Occupy Wall Street movement, which in turn has inspired an increase in union recruitment. As a recent article in the Washington Post revealed:

*'Working America, the affiliate of the AFL-CIO that organizes workers from non-union workplaces, has signed up approximately 25,000 new recruits in the last week alone,*

*thanks largely to the high visibility of the protests.*

*According to Karen Nussbaum, the executive director of Working America, “In so many ways, Wisconsin was a preview of what we’re now seeing,” she continues: “We thought it was big when we got 20,000 members in a month during the Wisconsin protests. This shows how much bigger this is.”<sup>[xxxv]</sup>*

## The Indignados

movement in Spain was young, large, militant and involved confrontations with the state. It raised the issue of democracy, who governs: the people, or the banks and multinational financial institutions? The failure of the established left parties and the trade unions to effectively respond to austerity can lead to explosive struggles in which they are marginalised, thus weakening the resistance as a whole.<sup>[xxxvi]</sup> The movement of the squares in Greece combined the occupation of public space with a 48-hour general strike and street battles between protestors and riot police. On the 15<sup>th</sup> October the world witnessed occupations in over 900 cities with huge turnouts in some countries, Madrid and Italy among them.

In Britain the first major act of resistance to the new Tory-led coalition came with the student revolt at the end of 2010. The largest protest over the issue of fees and cuts was called by the NUS and the UCU. Starting with the occupation of Millbank, the student revolt immediately grew into a series of confrontations with the state, pulling in students from schools and FE colleges as well as working class youths, becoming what BBC journalist Paul Mason called ‘The Dubstep Rebellion’.<sup>[xxxvii]</sup>

All of these movements have challenged the legitimacy of the governing political institutions, opposing both the neoliberal policies that are based on the priorities of a tiny governing elite and the denial of democracy that is essential to the imposition of these policies. The real mass popular democratic nature of these movements stands in stark contrast to the sham democracy of parliaments voting through austerity measure, demanded by the money markets and global financial institutions such as the IMF.

## Political struggle and class consciousness

The strategy pursued by union leaderships for the past thirty years has involved a growing reliance on one-day strikes. But one-day strikes, however enthusiastically they are supported cannot succeed in breaking the government’s austerity programme. They need to be extended and fused with the growing movements of protest amongst students, the unemployed, pensioners, the disabled and all those that find themselves at the sharp end of neoliberal austerity.

Most strikes in recent years have been called by union leaderships rather than rank and file bodies. But there is likely to be a clear limit to how far this process will go. The nature of the union leadership, their fear of anti-trade union laws, their commitment to avoid embarrassing the Labour leadership, the lack of a rank and file network able to act independently of the union leaders, and crucially the low level of workers’ confidence in taking action in the face of mass unemployment and economic downturn, are all problems for those that see resistance purely in terms of organising via trade union action.

Rank and file trade union groups that attempt to provide an alternative leadership to the trade union bureaucracy have always developed out of waves of struggle. The post war conditions that gave workers the confidence to take strike action – strong sectional strength, full employment, economic growth, a strong shop stewards movement – these conditions are long gone and will not return.

So the question is how do we rebuild confidence and create new networks that can organise effective action in the workplaces, communities and streets in the absence of these conditions? The growth of

political movements of protest described earlier in this article offer the central mechanism by which the left can both organise resistance and rebuild the confidence of workers to use their power in the workplace. For increasing numbers of workers, the field of political protest is the terrain on which they are becoming aware of the necessity of challenging the system and of their power to do so.

Lenin emphasised that class consciousness was not simply about the struggles in the workplace between workers and their bosses. It is about seeing the system as one based on oppression and exploitation and which as a result requires opposition to all manifestations of the system's tyranny:

*'Working-class consciousness cannot be genuine political consciousness unless the workers are trained to respond to all cases of tyranny, oppression, violence, and abuse, no matter what class is affected.'*

*'The economic struggle merely "impels" the workers to realize the government's attitude towards the working class. Consequently, however much we may try to "lend the economic struggle itself a political character," we shall never be able to develop the political consciousness of the workers (to the level of Social-Democratic political consciousness) by keeping within the framework of the economic struggle, for that framework is too narrow...'*

Lenin fully understood that economic conflicts are a motor of developing class consciousness. But he also understood that over-reliance on this dimension of the workers' struggle would result in a narrow 'economist' or 'syndicalist' mentality:

*'Class political consciousness can be brought to the workers only from without, that is, only from outside the economic struggle, from outside the sphere of relations between workers and employers. The sphere from which alone it is possible to obtain this knowledge is the sphere of relationships of all classes and strata to the state and the government, the sphere of the interrelations between all classes.'* [\[lxxxviii\]](#)

Mass political campaigns and protest movements have attracted young radicalised workers, many of whom are not in trade unions, often working in workplaces and industries that are not unionised. The quarter of a century since the end of the miners' strike has seen a series of political protest movements. The protests against Apartheid, the Poll Tax, [\[lxxxix\]](#) the 1991 Gulf War, [\[xc\]](#) the 1992-93 movement against pit closures, the movement against the BNP including the march against their Welling HQ, [\[xci\]](#) and the massive Anti-Nazi League carnival, the Criminal Justice Bill protests, the anti-capitalist movement and, largest of them all, the huge mobilisations of the anti-war movement. All of these movements were political struggles that mobilised thousands of working class people - many of them involved significant conflict with the state.

The political movements allow those who believe that the power to change the world lies in the workplace to connect with others who want to change the world. The type of networks of activists that can challenge the Tory coalition's cuts agenda will be built via engagement with and leadership of mass movements of protest that are attracting and radicalising working people.

Movements are not homogenous in terms of class – they involve and are often dominated by other classes and social groups, but this is even true of trade unions too, though to a lesser degree, as Colin Barker and Gareth Dale explain:

*'Social movements, including labor movements, do not directly express the interests of*

*a single class. Labor movements, for example, do not simply “represent the working class” in anything like the unmediated fashion often assumed by social movement theorists. Thus, the British labor movement straddles classes in a variety of ways. It not only includes members of the working class (though by no means all of them) but also representatives of capitalist class interests (e.g., Blair and his millionaire advisors!), and also members of middle layers, most notably trade union officials, who are “middle class” not so much because of their incomes (though these can be whopping) but because of their structural position as mediators between wage labor and capital. Far from being unitary, centralized, and “monocephalous”, the British labor movement is internally fractured on many dimensions.’[xcii]*

An orientation on political movements that are composed of multiple groups and classes is central to any strategy for revolutionary change. As Lenin put it when writing about the struggle against British imperialism in Ireland:

*‘To imagine that social revolution is conceivable without revolts by small nations in the colonies and in Europe, without revolutionary outbursts by a section of the petty bourgeoisie with all its prejudices, without a movement of the politically non-conscious proletarian and semi-proletarian masses against oppression by the landowners, the church, and the monarchy, against national oppression, etc. - to imagine all this is to repudiate social revolution. So one army lines up in one place and says, “We are for socialism”, and another, somewhere else and says, “We are for imperialism”, and that will be a social revolution! Only those who hold such a ridiculously pedantic view could vilify the Irish rebellion by calling it a “putsch”.*

*‘Whoever expects a “pure” social revolution will never live to see it. Such a person pays lip-service to revolution without understanding what revolution is.’[xciii]*

## Conclusions

The form of resistance that we have seen across the world in the last few months has consisted of the mass occupation of public space in protest over austerity measures and the denial of democracy involved in imposing them. It has been accompanied by riots and violent conflict between governments and protestors. For this resistance in the streets to succeed it needs to give confidence to those who produce the wealth and provide the services that make society function, to use their collective power in the workplace.

Confidence in the central institutions of the British regime was eroded during the recent successive terms of Labour governments and this process has continued under the Tory led coalition. This decline is a product of the neoliberal assault on the post war consensus.

Trade unions are organisations that are composed of millions of working people and which represent the largest democratic institutions outside of the parliamentary regime. Despite historically low levels of strike action and declining membership trade unions have been able to mobilise large numbers of people in protests, including March 26<sup>th</sup>, one of the largest demonstrations in labour movement history. Trade unions have begun to see the importance of operating in the manner of social movements.

The student revolt convinced significant parts of the union leadership that mass political resistance to the cuts and ‘social movement trade unionism’ represent the only viable strategy to rebuild the unions. Unite leader Len McCluskey’s call for a coalition of resistance in the wake of the student revolt is an

example. The recent conference vote by the rail union TSSA to participate in 'non-violent resistance activities in conjunction with others such as trade unions, trades councils, the People's Charter, the Coalition of Resistance and local community organisations' is another.

In a rank and file version of social movement trade unionism – the resistance of construction workers to wage cuts has taken the form of a series of protests targeting major sites across the country, often bringing work to a halt. Adopting the tactics of a political protest movement they have forced one company to withdraw the wage cuts and succeeded in getting the Unite leadership to call official ballots for action.

Trade union leaders have often proven to be unreliable when it comes to mobilising the sort of sustained strike action that can win. Building a new community of activists with the capacity to act independently of the trade union and Labour leaderships is essential.

The early 1970s saw networks of rank and file trade unionists, with strong sectional strength developed under full employment, organise large strikes to resist attacks on their wages and conditions and government attempts to curtail their power. The conditions that gave birth to these rank and file networks are gone and therefore attempts to recreate them must take a different approach. Years of defeat, increasing unemployment and fear have undermined the confidence of workers to take strike action that is not officially sanctioned.

Political protest movements that challenge wars, austerity measures and the undemocratic, unjust and often violent political regime that seeks to impose them constitute the central means by which the confidence of workers to resist and a new network of rank and file activists can be built in the workplaces and communities of Britain.

The weakness, division and growing unpopularity of the current administration coupled with a decline in trust for the key institutions of the British establishment can give confidence to those at the sharp end of austerity to resist. Widespread political opposition to austerity and imperialist war, effectively organised into a political movement, can sharpen the political divisions and paralysis at the top of society. This paralysis in turn invites greater numbers of people to begin to question the legitimacy of those that govern and to articulate their own solutions to the crisis.

---

## Notes

[i] The **form of government**: the set of rules, cultural or social norms, etc. that regulate the operation of government and its interactions with society.

[ii] 'Hackgate' may have had a major impact on confidence in the police with a ComRes poll conducted on 13<sup>th</sup> - 14<sup>th</sup> July finding 63% agreeing with the statement: 'as a result of reports of police officers being paid for information by newspapers, I trust the police less': <http://comres.co.uk/poll/496/sunday-mirrorindependent-on-sunday-political-poll.htm>, accessed 21/07/2011.

[iii] Stefaan Walgrave and Dieter Rucht, *The World Says No to War: Demonstrations Against the War on Iraq* (Minneapolis 2010), p. 24.

[iv] Pippa Norris, *Democratic deficit: Critical Citizens revisited* (New York 2011), p. 71.

[v] Pippa Norris, *Democratic deficit: Critical Citizens revisited* (New York 2011), p. 74.

[vi] Pippa Norris, *Democratic deficit: Critical Citizens revisited* (New York 2011), p. 76.

[vii] *Membership of UK political parties*

, House of Commons Library, 17 August 2009:

<http://www.parliament.uk/commons/lib/research/briefings/snsg-05125.pdf>.

[viii] Pippa Norris, *Democratic Phoenix: Reinventing Political Activism* (New York 2002), p. 109.

[ix] Pippa Norris, *Democratic Phoenix: Reinventing Political Activism* (New York 2002), p. 104.

[x] Catherine Bromley, John Curtice, and Ben Seyd, *Is Britain Facing a Crisis of Democracy?*

(July 2004), Centre for Research into Elections and Social Trends, The Constitution Unit, UCL:

<http://www.ucl.ac.uk/spp/publications/unit-publications/112.pdf>.

[xi] B. Radcliff and P. Davis, 'Labor organization and electoral participation in industrial democracies' in *American Journal of Political Science* 44:1 (2000): pp. 132-141.

[xii] Mark Gray and Miki Caul, 'Declining voter turnout in advanced industrial democracies, 1950 to 1997' in *Comparative Political Studies* 33:9 (2000): pp. 1091-1122.

[xiii] Bromley *et al.*, *Is Britain Facing a Crisis of Democracy?*

, The Constitution Unit (UCL 2004): <http://www.ucl.ac.uk/spp/publications/unit-publications/112.pdf>.

[xiv] Howard Reed, *Fairness and Prosperity*

(TUC 2011), p. 5: <https://www.tuc.org.uk/tucfiles/49/FairnessandProsperity.pdf>.

[xv] Reed, *Fairness and Prosperity*

, p. 6: <https://www.tuc.org.uk/tucfiles/49/FairnessandProsperity.pdf>.

[xvi] Professor David Beetham, *Unelected Oligarchy: Corporate and Financial Dominance in Britain's Democracy*

, Democratic Audit, August 2011, p. 14.:

<http://filestore.democraticaudit.com/file/de232c951e8286baa79af208ac250112-1311676243/oligarchy.pdf>

[xvii] YouGov Iraq Tracker: <http://today.yougov.co.uk/pdfarchives/iraq-war-right-or-wrong-tracker> accessed 20/07/2011.

[xviii] YouGov Afghanistan Tracker: <http://today.yougov.co.uk/pdfarchives/afghanistan-3> accessed 20/07/2011.

[xix] YouGov Libya Tracker: <http://today.yougov.co.uk/pdfarchives/libya> accessed 20/7/2011.

[xx] *European Public Perceptions of the Israel-Palestine Conflict*

, January 2011: [http://aljazeera.net/mritems/streams/2011/3/15/1\\_1048050\\_1\\_51.pdf](http://aljazeera.net/mritems/streams/2011/3/15/1_1048050_1_51.pdf).

[xxi] <http://today.yougov.co.uk/politics/national-health> accessed 02/08/2011.

[xxii] *Financial Times*

, 30<sup>th</sup> April 2010: <http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/bfe7ed4e-5482-11df-8bef-00144feab49a.html#axzz1OPK51ICC> accessed 5/6/2011.

[xxiii] BBC News online: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-12874631> accessed 20/10/2011

[xxiv] Norris, *Democratic Phoenix*, p. 193.

[xxv] Samuel H. Barnes, Max Kaase *et al.*, *Political Action: Mass Participation in Five Western Democracies*

(Beverly Hills CA: Sage 1979).

[xxvi] *Age structure of United Kingdom, 1971-2083*

, Office for National Statistics:

<http://www.neighbourhood.statistics.gov.uk/HTMLDocs/dvc1/UKPyramid.html>.

[xxvii] Wainer Lusoli and Stephen Ward, *Hunting Protestors: Mobilisation, Participation, and Protest Online in the Countryside Alliance* (Salford 2003).

[xxviii] Britain, West Germany, the Netherlands, Austria, the United States, Italy and Switzerland.

[xxix] Norris, *Democratic Phoenix*, pp. 196-8.

[xxx] Bromley, *Crisis of Democracy?*

: <http://www.ucl.ac.uk/spp/publications/unit-publications/112.pdf>.

[xxxi] M. Henn, M. Weinstein, and S. Forrest, 'Uninterested youth? Young people's attitudes towards party politics in Britain' in *Political Studies* 53:3 (2005), pp. 556-578.

[xxxii] Pippa Norris, *Young People & Political Activism: From the Politics of Loyalties to the Politics of Choice?*

(John F Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University, 2003): [http://www.usc-pei.org/pdfs/Norris\\_YoungPeopleandPoliticalActivismPP.pdf](http://www.usc-pei.org/pdfs/Norris_YoungPeopleandPoliticalActivismPP.pdf).

[xxxiii] *Age Structure of United Kingdom, 1971-2083*

, Office for National Statistics:

<http://www.neighbourhood.statistics.gov.uk/HTMLDocs/dvc1/UKPyramid.html>.

[xxxiv] Walgrave and Rucht, *The World Says No to War*

, p. 34. The data include percentages of active group members, that is, those who 'do unpaid work', based on all respondents who clearly have a left-wing orientation – who position themselves on points one to three of the ten-point left-right scale.

[xxxv] Norris, *Democratic Phoenix*, p. 184.

[xxxvi] Walgrave and Rucht, *The World Says No to War*, p. 127.

[xxxvii] In an ICM poll for The Guardian (<http://www.icmresearch.com/guardian-february-poll-02-02-03>), 6% of people claimed that someone from their household went on the London Feb 15<sup>th</sup> Demonstration or had intended to. This translates into 1.25 million households and thus supports the StWC estimate of two million people, assuming that more than one person could come from each household.

[xxxviii] Walgrave and Rucht, *The world says no to war*, table 8.3, p. 153.

[xxxix] See Paul Foot, *The Vote; how it was won and how it was undermined* (London, 2005).

[xl] Colin Barker, 'Looking in the wrong direction? Reflections on revolutionary possibility in the 21<sup>st</sup> century

' in *Fourteenth International Conference on Alternative Futures and Popular Protest*, eds. Colin Barker and Mike Tyldesley (Manchester 2009).

[xli] Antonio Gramsci, 'The Modern Prince', in *Selections from the Prison Notebooks* (London 2003), p. 193.

[xlii] <http://www.urban75.net/vbulletin/threads/276470-A-Riot-Cop-s-perspective-on-the-Gaza-protests...> Accessed on 5/6/2011.

[xliii] Alex Bryson and John Forth, *Trade Union Membership and Influence 1999-2009*

, NIESR Discussion Paper No. 362, (London 2010), p. 19:  
[http://www.niesr.ac.uk/pdf/010910\\_144250.pdf](http://www.niesr.ac.uk/pdf/010910_144250.pdf).

[xliv] Ipsos Mori, *Veracity Index 2011*

: <http://www.ipsos-mori.com/Assets/Docs/Polls/Veracity2011.pdf>.

[xlv] <http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/uk/article697407.ece>.

[xlvi] *Congress 2011 General Council Report*, The 143rd Annual Trades Union Congress 12-14 September, London, p. 15: <http://www.tuc.org.uk/extras/GCreport2011.pdf>

[xlvii] Barbara Kersley, Carmen Alpin, John Forth, Alex Bryson, Helen Bewley, Gill Dix, Sarah Oxenbridge, *Inside the Workplace: First Findings from the 2004 Workplace Employment Relations Survey*

(WERS), p. 12: <http://www.bis.gov.uk/files/file11423.pdf>.

[xlviii] Labour market statistics - April 2011 - UK National Statistics:  
<http://www.statistics.gov.uk/pdfdir/lmsuk0411.pdf>.

[xlix] See Gill Dix, John Forth and Keith Sission, *Conflict at Work: The Pattern of Disputes in Britain since 1980* (ACAS 2008),

p. 7: [http://www.niesr.ac.uk/pdf/240708\\_152632.pdf](http://www.niesr.ac.uk/pdf/240708_152632.pdf).

[li] Craig Barratt, *Trade Union Membership 2008*, p. 21

[lii] TUC Commission on Vulnerable Employment report, *Hard Work Hidden Lives*

(TUC 2007), p. 5: [http://www.vulnerableworkers.org.uk/files/CoVE\\_full\\_report.pdf](http://www.vulnerableworkers.org.uk/files/CoVE_full_report.pdf) .

[liii] ESOPE: *Precarious Employment in Europe: A Comparative Study of Labour Market related Risks in Flexible Economies*

(2004), p. 69: [ftp://ftp.cordis.europa.eu/pub/citizens/docs/kina21250ens\\_final\\_esope.pdf](ftp://ftp.cordis.europa.eu/pub/citizens/docs/kina21250ens_final_esope.pdf).

[liv] <http://www.statistics.gov.uk/cci/nugget.asp?id=2294> accessed 6/6/2011.

[lv] *ILO World of Work Report 2010: From One Crisis to the Next?* p. 24:

[http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---dcomm/documents/publication/wcms\\_145078.pdf](http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---dcomm/documents/publication/wcms_145078.pdf).

[lvi] TUC, *Hard Work Hidden Lives*

, p. 16: [www.vulnerableworkers.org.uk/files/CoVE\\_full\\_report.pdf](http://www.vulnerableworkers.org.uk/files/CoVE_full_report.pdf).

[lvii] Barratt, *Trade Union Membership 2008*

, p. 28: <http://stats.bis.gov.uk/UKSA/tu/tum2008.pdf>.

[lviii] TUC, *All Work and Low Pay*

(London 2006), p. 6: <http://www.tuc.org.uk/extras/allworklowpay.pdf>.

[lix] TUC, *All Work and Low Pay* (London 2006), p. 9.

[lx] TUC, *All Work and Low Pay* (London 2006), p. 6.

[lxi] TUC, *All Work and Low Pay* (London 2006), p. 4.

[lxii] Figure quoted in Emma Martin: *Part-time Work and Postgraduate Students: Developing the Skills for Employment?* (Sheffield 2007), p. 30.

[lxiii] TUC, *All Work and Low Pay* (London 2006), p. 10:

[lxiv] Alex Bryson and John Forth, *Trade Union Membership and Influence 1999-2009*

, CEP Discussion Paper No 1003 (NIESR, London 2010), p. 11:

[http://www.niesr.ac.uk/pdf/010910\\_144250.pdf](http://www.niesr.ac.uk/pdf/010910_144250.pdf).

[lxv] Quoted in Bryson and Forth, *Trade Union Membership and Influence 1999-2009*

, p. 12, based on the 2004 Employment Relations Survey. Fieldwork for the sixth WERS (WERS6) is currently underway and is expected to be completed by early 2012.

[lxvi] Richard Hyman, *Strikes* (London 1989), fourth edition, p. 48.

[lxvii] Stephen Drinkwater and Peter Ingram, *Have Industrial Relations in the UK Really Improved*

?, (Guildford 2005), p. 33: [http://www.surrey.ac.uk/economics/files/apaperspdf/2003\\_DP09-03.pdf](http://www.surrey.ac.uk/economics/files/apaperspdf/2003_DP09-03.pdf) .

[lxviii] John Godard, 'What has happened to strikes?' in *British Journal of Industrial Relations*

49:2 (2011), 0007-1080, pp. 282-305; p. 292.

[lxix] TUC / YouGov, *What do workers want? An Agenda for the Workplace from the Workplace*

, p. 2: <http://www.tuc.org.uk/extras/pollreport.pdf>.

[lxx] David MacLeod and Nita Clarke, *Engaging for Success*

: *Enhancing Performance through Employee Engagement*, p. 15:

<http://www.bis.gov.uk/files/file52215.pdf>.

[lxxi] King's College London and Speechly Bircham, *The State of HR Survey 2011: Austerity or Prosperity? The state of HR in this challenging economic environment*

: [http://www.speechlys.com/state\\_of\\_hr\\_report\\_2011](http://www.speechlys.com/state_of_hr_report_2011).

[lxxii] <http://www.kcl.ac.uk/newsevents/news/newsrecords/2011/02Feb/Threattoemployersandworkforceproductivity.aspx>. Accessed 30/08/11.

[lxxiii] CIPD *Employment Relations Survey Report*

April 2011: <http://www.cipd.co.uk/binaries/Employment%20relations.pdf>.

[lxxiv] CIPD *Employment Relations Survey Report*

April 2011, p. 19: <http://www.cipd.co.uk/binaries/Employment%20relations.pdf>.

[lxxv] John Godard, 'What has happened to strikes?', p. 293.

[lxxvi] Jacopo Ponticelli and Hans-Joachim Voth, *Austerity and Anarchy: Budget Cuts and Social Unrest in Europe, 1919-2009*

(Center for Economic Policy Research 2011): <http://www.cepr.org/pubs/dps/DP8513.asp>.

[lxxvii] Ponticelli and Voth, *Austerity and Anarchy*, p. 2.

[lxxviii] Ponticelli and Voth, *Austerity and Anarchy*, p. 3.

[lxxix] *ILO World of Work Report 2010: From One Crisis to the Next?*

[lxxx] *ILO World of Work Report 2010*, p. 33.

[lxxxii] John Godard, 'What has happened to strikes?', p. 297.

[lxxxiii] [http://www.angus-reid.com/polls/34157/europe\\_us\\_blame\\_capitalism\\_abuses\\_for\\_crisis/](http://www.angus-reid.com/polls/34157/europe_us_blame_capitalism_abuses_for_crisis/) accessed 30/08/11.

[lxxxiv] <http://www.harrisinteractive.com/vault/HI-FinancialTimes-HarrisPoll-2010-07-14.pdf>.

[lxxxv] <http://today.yougov.co.uk/sites/today.yougov.co.uk/files/YG-Archives-Trackers-Economy-210211.pdf>.

[lxxxvi] Greg Sargent, *What if working class Americans actually like Occupy Wall Street?*

: [http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/plum-line/post/what-if-working-class-americans-actually-like-occupy-wall-street/2011/10/17/gIQAniVzrL\\_blog.html](http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/plum-line/post/what-if-working-class-americans-actually-like-occupy-wall-street/2011/10/17/gIQAniVzrL_blog.html) accessed 20/10/2011

[lxxxvii] <http://www.counterfire.org/index.php/articles/opinion/12416-the-two-sides-of-spains-revolt> accessed 6/6/2011.

[lxxxviii] [http://www.bbc.co.uk/blogs/newsnight/paulmason/2010/12/9122010\\_dubstep\\_rebellion\\_-\\_br.html](http://www.bbc.co.uk/blogs/newsnight/paulmason/2010/12/9122010_dubstep_rebellion_-_br.html) 6/6/2011.

[lxxxix] V.I. Lenin, *What is to be Done?*

<http://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1901/witbd/iii.htm> accessed 30/08/2011.

[lxxxix] Between 180,000 and 250,000 joined the protest on 31 March 1990:  
[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Poll\\_Tax\\_Riots](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Poll_Tax_Riots).

[xc] On the weekend before war broke out 100,000 marched against war in London, 15,000 in Manchester, 10,000 in Glasgow, 3,000 in Bristol. There were also protests in many smaller towns:  
<http://nefac.net/node/251> accessed 21/07/11.

[xci]

50,000 protested at Welling. See: <http://www.dkrenton.co.uk/welling.html>.

[xcii] Colin Barker and Gareth Dale, *Protest Waves in Western Europe: a Critique of "New Social Movement" Theory in Critical Sociology* 24:65 (1998), p. 78.

[xciii] V.I. Lenin, *The Discussion On Self-Determination Summed Up*

(1916), <http://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1916/jul/x01.htm>.

---

Featured links:

June 27-28, London. With David Harvey, Tariq Ali, Lindsey German and many more...

Help us re-make socialist politics for the 21st century