Rent Strike Endgame! MC and Scribe Pack

What are the MC and Scribe?

- MC (Master of Ceremonies): begins each turn by describing the situation within the university. They also judge what the negative or positive consequences will be for groups based on their dice roll each turn.
- Scribe: takes notes on what happens over the course of the game so players and MCs have a record of how their universities develop and change. This can either be on a notepad or on big sheets of paper around the room (good if you have multiple groups)

Rules (read out at the beginning)

- The aim of the game is to organise a successful rent strike at a UK university and generally spread other disruption to the marketisation of higher education.
- The game is played over **three turns** lasting **10-15 minutes each**.
- Groups should be around **8-10 people**. They represent a new 'Cut the Rent' campaign at their university. Each group plays in a different, disconnected university from the others.
- All groups take their turns at the same time. Groups cannot collaborate with each other.
- During a turn, players may select **any two resources** from the list below and **use them to help them complete two tasks**. Both resources can be applied to both tasks.
    - A task is anything that could be considered a single project, for example organising a demonstration, running a series of workshops on eviction defence, producing a website with videos and articles supporting the aims of a strike.
    - The MCs may ask players to elaborate on the specifics of a task the players have set for a resource if they feel it necessary to understand how it will work. Tasks should be detailed - "Holding a demonstration with the environmental society" is a task, but where is it held, what are the demands, what kinds of tactics are used?
- Once players have described their tasks the MC will decide how difficult each task would be to complete and assign an appropriate dice roll modifier, ranging from **-2 (very difficult/unlikely to succeed) to +2 (very easy/likely to succeed)**.
- Players then **roll two sixsided dice for each task they are attempting to complete**. If the combined roll after the dice roll modifier has been taken into account is 0-6, the task fails (two negative consequences). On a 7-9 it succeeds but there have been some unforeseen consequences (one positive consequence, one negative consequence). On a result of 10+ the task was an unqualified success (two positive consequences).
- At the end of the third turn the game ends, and players will discover what has happened to their university after a year of interventions.

Resources for groups

1. Labour society: Enthusiastic and supportive of your campaign and almost entirely pro-Corbyn, but inexperienced in organising direct action and grassroots campaigns outside #Labourdoorstep. They have contacts with the local Labour MP and other Labour Party contacts/CLPs.

2. Sympathetic PhD student: Has been around the university for 5 years with good local knowledge of the campus and university management. Also has free printing.
3. People and Planet / Environmental society: A weird mixture of cursed liberal environmentalists and more militant activists who have experienced in organising direct action through movements like Extinction Rebellion.
4. Trade unions on campus: These include the local UCU branch (academics) and Unison branch (cleaners). They both have a good union density and the UCU branch went on strike last year over pensions.
5. Security staff union: These are largely BAME migrant workers who have recently become organised through the more militant union IWGB and held demonstrations on campus in the past year.
6. Students' Union space: Includes meeting rooms and a good-sized gig/club venue which can easily be booked by students.
7. Local renters union branch: Recently started. Primarily based on a local council estate, they are inexperienced but very motivated, and also keen to work with local students.
8. Student media: Has a big reach on social media and on campus who are keen to report on local campus campaigns.
9. NUS VPs: Two newly elected VPs are elected from a left slate in the prior elections. They are both very busy but also excited about your campaign and have lots of useful contacts and a small budget.
10. Student anti-racist action group: Caused major disruption on campus the year before after a two month long occupation of a university management building in protest at a racist attack on campus and wider institutional racism, which won major concessions. Seeking to build on the energy of the previous year's occupation.

The Scenario

Turn 1 - Beginning of Term 1

The game environment is a university in the United Kingdom. The university is based in a major city, such as Leeds, Manchester or Sheffield, however it has a central campus and a relatively decent campus culture - people read the student newspaper, and the SU elections gather a significant amount of attention every year, for example. The sabbatical officers at the SU are generally apolitical careerists and unsympathetic to direct action and standing up to university management, but one sabb has some friends in the activist circles at the university and is sympathetic to left-wing activism.

Tuition fees have been cut by new Prime Minister Boris Johnson in a flagrant attempt to win kudos with younger voters as rumours circulate about an upcoming general election, but on the ground this has the effect of cutting university funding even further. As a result, the university has sold off two of its halls to a private student accommodation company in order to raise cash. Over the summer, the halls have been given minor cosmetic uplifts while average rents have been hiked from £120/week to £160/week. Other university-owned halls, from cheaper to more expensive, have also had their rents increased by above inflation rates, 5%.

In response to this, inspired by multiple rent strikes that happened the previous year in Bristol and UCL, you, a group of second- and third-year students in the university, have decided to launch a 'Cut the Rent' campaign and try to organise rent strikes in the university halls. You are aiming to rent strike from second term onwards but know this will be difficult and will try to strike from term 3 onwards.

Turn 2 - Beginning of Term 2 (January)
Management have begun to cotton on to your campaign and have upgraded the security of all the halls on campus over the Christmas break, meaning it is now much harder to doorknock halls and get direct access to student residents - you have to get through two card readers to get into a flat/kitchen.
At the same time, however, your campaign hears of some students in one of the halls you don't have any links with yet complaining about a burst boiler which flooded their flat on social media (on the university's 'confessions page'). This has sparked a few other people sharing their shit experiences in halls on social media.

Turn 3 - Beginning of Term 3 (April)
Bailiffs, backed by security guards and police have suddenly evicted 3 students involved in organising the strike. The eviction ended with scuffles taking place, leaving students with visible bruises. Other strikers are intimidated and a level of fear and anger is palpable. However, the conservative society has filed a motion in the SU condemning the strikers for the violence. Friendly journalists ensure the eviction is publicised, bringing national media attention. You have strong public support and the temporary ability to mobilise large numbers very quickly. You have some money available from a friendly trade union and friends on other campuses. It is possible more evictions could occur at any time, you have to do something as soon as possible…

Positive and negative consequences

*These are **examples** (invent your own or improvise too!) of consequences the MC can give to groups based on the outcome of their dice roll. If the combined roll after the dice roll modifier has been taken into account is 0-6, the task fails (two negative consequences). On a 7-9 it succeeds but there have been some unforeseen consequences (one positive consequence, one negative consequence). On a result of 10+ the task was an unqualified success (two positive consequences).*

Positive
- **Expand a resource** – Tell the players one of their resources has grown significantly in number. For example, the renters union could swell in size to number the vast majority of the estate's residents. This can be useful to avoid players spending too many tasks on recruitment, and allow them to get onto something more interesting
- **Give a resource more power** – One resource can be given something they control which would be available in subsequent turns. For example, the environmental society start an occupation of a university building giving them more leverage over management. A good tactic for when you think players should have a bit more to work with and need to see some concrete gains from their actions.
- **Change the mood on campus** – The general feeling on campus should come up after most tasks, but to reward players the MC could say that a majority of uni students and workers are now firmly in favour of a particular tactic or resource. For example, after a successful task by the Black Lives Matter group road blockades will now be supported by a majority of drivers who encounter them. Useful when you think players should be encouraged to pursue an interesting direction.
- **Strengthen a connection** – This can be between two (or more) resources or between resources and other groups or organisations. This is particularly useful to encourage players to continue down an interesting route they've taken, or to give a little direction to players who are struggling for ideas. For example, the Labour society have an excellent link with the Environmentalist society. A good way to get players to explore collaboration.

- **Remove a problem** – Something the players were working to create or prevent resolves in their favour. Can be used to reward players or to get them out of wasting too much time on something you know to be a bit of a red herring

Negative
- **Reduce a resource** – A resource can get smaller in size, perhaps due to inactivity, burnout or drifting away from its original purpose. For example, the anti-racist group might dissipate and reduce in numbers, having lost focus without an occupation to organise around. Handy for getting players to stop using the same resources and try something new.
- **Destroy a resource** – Take a resource out of the game, either for a set number of turns or permanently. For example, the sympathetic PhD student buckles under the stress of academic precarity and drops out. Use this to get rid of dead wood, to throw your players an interesting twist or push back against them if they've gone a bit off the deep end and set a ridiculously overly-ambitious task.
- **Change the mood on campus** – As before in the positive column, but this time it takes a turn for the worse. For example, the student newspaper runs a negative fearmongering story about your campaign. This is good for getting people to try a different tactic.
- **Destroy or weaken a connection** – Two groups might fall out, or lose touch due to not working together enough. For example, the anti-racist action group calls out some of your members on social media for racist microaggressions. A way to gently (or not so gently) encourage players to utilise connections, or to throw some interesting tension that needs to be resolved into the path of a group of players who've had things a little too smooth.