

London bankers warned to dress down amid violence fears

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The city of London is bracing for widespread disruption over the next week as protesters plan a wave of anti-capitalist demonstrations in the lead-up to the G20 summit of world leaders next week.

Police have warned workers in the financial district to dress down and not draw attention to themselves as protesters target bankers in what is feared will be violent clashes on the scale of the May Day anti-globalisation protests from 2000 and 2001.



Violent protests at the World Trade Organisation meeting in Seattle in 1999 caught authorities off guard.

Up to 100,000 demonstrators arrived in the city from all over the world chanting anti-globalisation slogans.

The National Guard was brought in to restore order and the mayor imposed a curfew. Hundreds were arrested and storefront symbols of American corporate might - McDonald's, Starbucks and Gap - were left in ruins.

The British Government does not want a repeat of that in London next week as the likes of US President Barack Obama, Russian leader Dmitry Medvedev, as well as China's Premier and Australia's Prime Minister Kevin Rudd converge on the city for the G20 summit.

But Foreign Office Minister Lord Malloch Brown appreciates the level of fury in the community against those seen as the villains of this economic crisis.

"Frankly there's enough anger out there amongst all of us who are watching what's happening on bankers' salaries and bonuses," he said.

"I think the hardliners are going to have a sympathy they haven't had for quite a while."

'Financial Fools' Day'

Protests will start with a rally this weekend backed by the unions and aid organisations. Thousands of people are expected to march from London's embankment to Hyde Park.

April 1, the day before the G20 summit, is being dubbed 'Financial Fools' Day'. The G20 Meltdown group is planning to reclaim the city of London.

Four horsemen representing the economic apocalypse - war, climate chaos, money crimes and homelessness - will set off from railway stations encircling the city.

Posters for the G20 Meltdown campaign carry pictures of a man in a suit hanging in a noose. Some anarchist websites are running 'burn a banker' appeals.

Oscar Reyes is one of the organisers of the G20 Meltdown. He is running a 'climate camp' which will pitch tents across the city.

"In that sense it creates some sort of disruption in front of where carbon trading is happening. But we say that the bigger disruption really comes from that whole infrastructure itself," he said.

Mr Reyes says Australia should learn from the failure of emissions trading in Europe.

"We've seen at the moment that obviously Australia is talking about a cap-and-trade scheme," he said.

"Here in Europe ... we have the largest such scheme in the EU's emissions trading scheme. And the lessons from that is that it's not worked to reduce emissions."

City workers and bankers in the square mile have been told to dress casually in order to avoid attracting attention but not all bankers are worried about the protests.

"I'm actually thinking of putting on a three-piece suit and an extra tie just to provoke them," said one banker.

"It's sad... I mean, we're not doing anything, we're just doing our job, nothing more," said another.

Overnight a parliamentary committee accused police of increasingly using heavy-handed tactics against protesters, including anti-terrorism legislation and what they called the intrusive filming of demonstrators.

It concluded that in Britain police action had often inflamed situations they were supposed to control.

This is not a good omen for the Government ahead of the G20 summit, which the Prime Minister has acknowledged is likely to be the most challenging police event in the UK's history.

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