

FREEDOM

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ON THE STREETS OF REBELLION

Students expose the fragility of the government and the state

After the events of the 9th December student protests, it's worth taking time out to reflect on what has happened in the last couple of months and how things may pan out.

In the space of just five weeks, the dynamic of protest against the government's austerity measures, particularly those relating to education, has changed utterly and, let's be honest, we didn't see it coming. Despite all the media hype about protests being 'hijacked' by anarchists, for a lot of the time we've been watching events unfold from a distance. We've been criticised by some elements for not being at the heart of this, but it's fantastic that a new generation is being radicalised in such a short time and, while we should offer some political context, they seem to be more than capable of developing their own strategies and tactics.

The question is, why now? The kids involved in the current movement can see what the future holds for them and, while their political analysis may be patchy, they know enough to see that things are looking bleak. They're already facing the dire consequences of the first round of austerity cuts that are wrecking their chances of ever

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LENS CAP ROYAL ROUT



A *Freedom* photographer snaps the moment the Royal scroungers realise their trip to the theatre is going to be seriously disrupted by the student protests. An angry mob who broke away from the kettled protest in Parliament Square surround the car and chant 'off with their heads'. The heirs to the House of Saxe-Coburg and Gotha look on visibly stunned.

Photo: Max Reeves

DALE FARM PREPARES TO RESIST

The eviction operation planned by Basildon District Council against the Dale Farm traveller community is now estimated to cost a staggering £13 million. That is what Tory Tony Ball, head of the council, is prepared to spend to bulldoze ninety homes and 'clear' just five acres of so-called greenbelt which will be left vacant and derelict.

In response to this ethnic-cleansing Dale Farm families are asking supporters to come and stay with them when the eviction operation is announced. Under the name 'Camp Constant', a permanent site of resistance is being set up to help protect homes, children and old folk from the UK's most notorious anti-gypsy security firm, Constant & Co., which has earned millions in clearing travellers from their own land by

aggressive and often illegal means. The bailiffs, the bulldozers and riot police are expected early in the New Year.

Meanwhile, hundreds of students at Essex University participated in a Human Rights Week dedicated to furthering the cause of Roma across Europe, and particularly Dale Farm, the biggest traveller site in Europe. Speaking at their Human Rights Day meeting on 10th December, which also marked the 44th anniversary of the Gypsy Council, Grattan Puxon said that while students protested cuts in higher education, Dale Farm residents like Gypsies all over the UK were fighting just to allow their children to complete primary education.

For more information and upcoming support meetings email dale.farm@btinternet.com

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NEWS

IN BRIEF

COUNCILS: Fearing yet another invasion of council chambers by angry protestors and further sieges outside town hall buildings against local authorities voting through cuts on behalf of the government, Southwark council, London, has decided to cancel their budget meeting and rearrange it for less volatile times. Recently both Lewisham and Tower Hamlets council meetings were disrupted by demonstrators demanding the council refuse to bow to government demands to cut local funding and services that will severely affect all residents of their respective boroughs.

EDL: The English Defence League has had its membership and merchandising list made public. Almost 350 people have had their names, addresses and email addresses published online after hackers gained access to confidential information through their website and Facebook accounts. EDL claim to be an anti-Islamic extremist organisation, but include well known far right activists and football hooligans within their ranks, as well as pro-Zionist and overtly racist elements.

BNP: Everyone's favourite neo-fascist euro nationalist political party is promising to return 'to the streets' in the hope of regaining lost credibility through its dismal showing at the ballot box. The threat came from party leader Nick Griffin at their party conference addressing just 120 people at a secret West Midlands venue. Griffin, whose control of the party is being challenged on all sides, announced to the white-haired aging audience: "The British National Party will become more militant in physically defending British troops against Islamic militant abuse." The response from members who were none too keen to act as bodyguards for the British military was muted to say the least.

WIKILEAKS: Julian Assange, founder of the whistle-blowing website that has published incriminating military information surrounding the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, is being held in custody in the UK after a European arrest warrant was issued by Sweden, which wants to question Assange about allegations made by two women of sexual assault. It is thought by many that the US government is behind the attack on Assange in an attempt to discredit him and eventually prosecute the website owner in US courts.

MEDIA: The mainstream press still can't get their head around the idea that the student protests could be anything other than a conspiracy of extremist groups spoiling it for everyone else. Frontrunners are the *Daily Mail* who have alarmed their middle England readership with the headline: 'Anarchists from Argentina, Germany, Italy and Latvia plotted the London tuition fees protest mayhem'. Rumours that the notoriously secretive Anarchist *Foundation* instigated the Parliament Square *mascara* remained unfounded.

LENS CAP FOOTBALL'S CLASS WARRIORS



The FA Cup dream of non-league giant killers FC United of Manchester (FCUM) finally came to an end with the four-nil defeat to Brighton. FCUM have built up unrivalled support amongst radicals for their uncompromising left-wing anti-corporate stance since they were formed as a breakaway club to the money grabbing exploits of Manchester United.

Tube drivers' victimisation

The ongoing victimisation of two tube workers by London Underground (LU) has resulted in the RMT union instigating strike action a week before Christmas. Eamonn Lynch, a driver on the Bakerloo Line and RMT health and safety rep was sacked over what LU management called an "operational incident". Following his sacking the RMT made a rare and unusual application in employment law cases – if a union considers a rep has been dismissed because of their trade union activity it can make an application to an Employment Tribunal for 'interim relief' – in effect turning the dismissal into a suspension on full pay until there can be a full tribunal hearing.

In what was a landmark ruling it was clearly expressed by the judge in granting the interim relief that Lynch had indeed been sacked and victimised by London Underground on the basis of his trade union activity.

What had emerged during the interim relief tribunal was that Lynch's union/health and safety roles were referred to four times during the disciplinary hearing and as an aggravating factor in the decision of the disciplinary panel without apparent justification. That LU procedures for disciplinary action were not followed correctly and in particular that a manager with whom Lynch was known to be in dispute appeared to be involved in the decision to instigate formal disciplinary proceedings.

Because of these factors the judge ruled

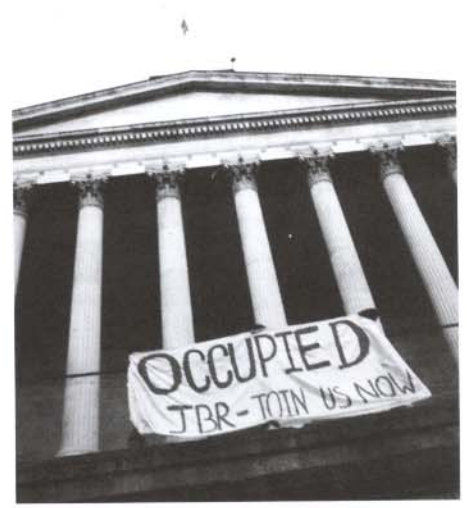
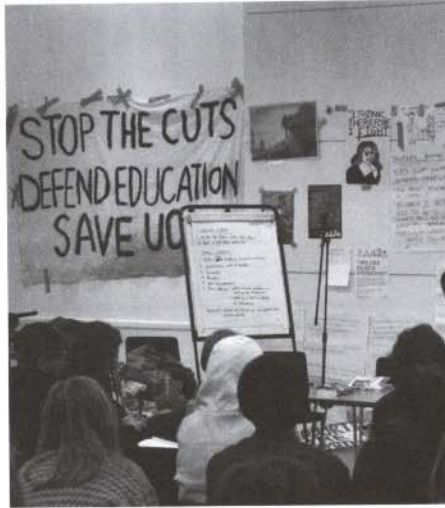
Lynch, who has had a 15 year unblemished work record, would be able to show a full tribunal that it was an automatically unfair dismissal and so granted a 'continuation order' compelling LU to pay his wages until the full tribunal hearing scheduled for March next year.

LU has so far ignored the tribunal's decision forcing the RMT to ballot drivers, instructors and station staff at both Elephant and Castle and Queens Park depots for 24-hour strike action.

Further to this, strike action took place on the Northern line sparked by internal disciplinary charges brought against Arwyn Thomas, a long-standing RMT activist and driver at Morden.

The company's case stands on the allegation that Thomas verbally abused a Tube Lines manager who was working at Kennington Station on a recent strike day. But CCTV footage shows the exact opposite. On three separate occasions, Thomas is seen calmly walking away from a volatile situation after being provoked and accosted by a supervisor and a manager who begin arguing with him. His path is blocked twice by managers as he attempts to distance himself from confrontation at the station. He has been an RMT/NUR member for over 29 years and has held various positions in the union.

London anarchists are encouraged to get involved in showing solidarity for the militant workers.



On the UCL occupation

An insider's account of one of the London university occupations

The University College London (UCL) occupation quickly became more than a local protest. It flowered into something of a national hub of activism, against Higher Education cuts in particular but also against the austerity agenda in general.

Around 200 UCL students of different backgrounds on 24th November (the national day of action) re-appropriated the Jeremy Bentham Room, a function space usually used for wine receptions and dance rehearsals, and transformed it into an open space for organising work and preparation for further demonstrations. Although UCL management failed to meaningfully negotiate, never mind concede, to any of the occupation's main demands, the occupation can be seen as an organisational success.

There are a number of reasons for this – a

few circumstantial, but most related to the organic manner in which organisation of the occupation developed. Lessons to be learnt from the occupation can and must be re-applied elsewhere as a flexible and dynamic activist model.

Visitors to the occupation were typically quick to observe the openness and fluidity of the occupation: its inclusiveness and its horizontality being key traits. Access was permitted freely with very little exception, and this played an important role in the open nature of discussion and decision-making. Decisions were made in (essentially public) large general meetings using consensus decision-making, or within smaller, non-exclusive, autonomous working groups.

Participants – large numbers of whom were new activists – were eager to note that even when they were of the minority opinion they felt enfranchised, and that their views had been given just consideration. However, when meetings drew on for a long time (don't they always?) early on this led to some complaining about the consensus system is too protracted and direction-less, ignoring

the fact that binary-voting meetings are equally exhausting with so many participants. In reality this can be a matter of facilitation (facilitators self-nominated each meeting), with chosen facilitators failing to explicitly clarify which decisions have been made how they will be undertaken; a matter of tightening bolts rather than rebuilding bridges. Ultimately, the process is thoroughly lateral and leaderless, and it thrives.

This produces and maintains the precise kind of inclusive and participatory model that many movements and organisations aspire toward. Whether many occupiers realise or not – or even like it or not – the organisation is anarchistic. All are empowered and none are elevated.

It is within this framework that all other products of the occupation have to be seen. Its successes (as well as tactical failures) stemming from this process. For activists, for organisers, and for anarchists, the student occupation at UCL represents an important and promising model for future action.

Joseph Robertson
UCL occupier

On the streets of rebellion

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accessing higher education. They know they face an unforgiving, viciously competitive job market that will leave many of them out on the margins with no prospects for the future. While the kids may not have a full analysis of the scope of the economic crisis, they know it has the potential to wreck their chances which would explain their audacity and fearlessness – let's face it, many of them have nothing to lose.

Where does this leave the State with regard to enforcing its will on the people? From the sickening scenes of police brutality it would appear that the state is acting from a position of strength. Yet if you take a look

at how the police have responded to the series of student protests, every time they've been caught on the hop. The ongoing wave of unrest has come completely out of the blue and the State and its friends in the media do not understand it and as such, cannot formulate a plan to deal with it.

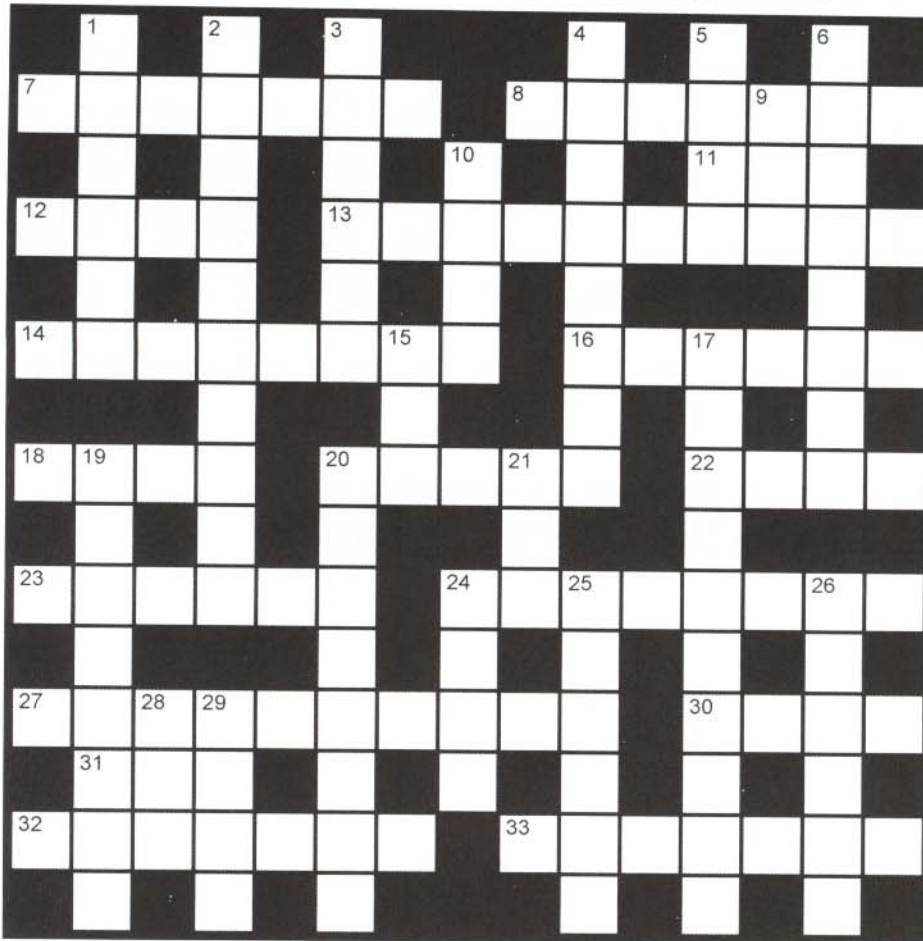
The government is allowing the police, and it seems the Met in particular, off the leash, not from a position of strength but from one of fear. They are utterly clueless as to what's going on and their only reaction is to lash out harder at each protest in the hope that it will intimidate the kids into acquiescence. The horse charges, the baton

charges, police tooled up and dressed up RoboCop style, the extensive use of FIT in a bid to intimidate protesters, the hysterical condemnation in the media – these are not the actions of a government that is confident in itself and its institutions, they are the actions of a government and a State acting from fear. Yet the tactics are not working, far from being intimidated, the kids are coming back every time emboldened and up for it.

This edited article was originally written by a Whitechapel Anarchist Group member, see <http://whitechapanarchistgroup.wordpress.com/>

CROSSWORD

Prize crossword by Bjarni Halfnelson



Across

- 7/8 13ac's 'distraction' found its quadrennial global tournament being accurately predicted by this well tanked-up punter (RIP)! (4,3,7)
 11 Entirely part of radical lifestyle (3)
 12 Winged it (like Father Christmas's reindeer?) (4)
 13 Forks around, after delirious rats have had vanadium injected, uncovering a regular Freedom columnist (10)
 14 Gravy can move about, but this is how the State traditionally sees the nomadic way of life (8)
 16 Studs strive to appear outrageous! (6)
 18 A cow up shit creek – as (thanks to the FBI) were a strange community of Seventh Day Adventists near this Texan town in 1993 (4)
 20 Device for lifting illustrative Morrisian comrade and Freedom contributor (5)
 22 Revolutionaries once apparently hiding under furniture appearing as part of anarchist-inspired society (4)
 23 Vehicles concerning American libertarian mutualist author (who managed to get both homebrew and revolution into the title of his first book!) (6)
 24 String of words that could land one inside (8)
 27 Control-freakish computer from 2001 is

in the drink, caught by broken code, a submariner like 8ac (10)

- 30 Bust – right, help! (4)
 31 In Scotland now, where kimono gets twisted after dictatorial Korean dynasty has been got rid of (3)
 32 Stitch up Halfnelson – it did for Socrates! (7)
 33 A trashy rubbish receptacle no longer found in pubs (3-4)

Down

- 1 Dishy thing where 5/7ac almost ended up (according to the Germans) (6)
 2 Fowl-pest or otherwise, here's where Bill and Ben lived! (10)
 3 Enoch's garbled notion of being a specially favoured nation (6)
 4 Secret of dismantling Britain as it would be without northern State – no tax to pay! (4-4)
 5 Drone on and on, we hear, like an old Christmas dinner-time centrepiece (4)
 6 Throbbled like an excited Dales tup! (8)
 9 Fatah, originally, got left in the post office (1,1,1)
 10 Blue, dark, and about to be savagely cut by the Condemnation! (4)
 15 Sort of culture that leads to motorways joining up through scenic areas (3)
 17 Having backbone somehow makes better rave! (10)
 19 Swapping around a week and getting aroused! (8)
 20 Badly clobbers creationist ideas, for example (8)
 21 Central in Aesop, but not in Glasgow (3)
 24 Concessions given quietly in indication of distress (4)
 25 Do mind us running around with no clothes on (6)
 26 Endlessly lick, romping over never-ending Christmas to achieve orgasm! (6)
 28 Clean up disparaging term for a northern immigrant Down Under (3)
 29 Drink without getting pissed below deck? (4)

Send your entry to 'Prize Crossword', Freedom Press, 84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1 7QX or you can email your answers to crossword@freedompress.org.uk to arrive no later than 6th January 2011. The answers and winners will be announced in our next issue.

The Anarchist Quiz Book

Who said "I shit on all the revolutionary vanguards of this planet"? Find out in the new Anarchist Quiz Book from Freedom Press, compiled by Martin Howard and illustrated by Paul Petard.

Some say that it should not be the highest priority of a revolutionary movement to ask itself obscure questions, but it's good fun and if it encourages an enquiring mind to find out more, than all the better. So agitate, educate and organise, all in this very handy question and answer format!

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FREEDOM EDITORIAL: STREETS AHEAD

We make no apology for featuring the student protests on the front cover of the paper for the third time in a row. What has happened over the past month or so could neither have been predicted nor planned for.

The devastating and inspiring impact of a radical student movement emerging before our eyes – militant, unapologetic and willing to fight for every inch of ground – is both compelling and something we shouldn't hesitate to champion as anarchists and as a political movement.

The electricity of occupations, street battles, student assemblies and attendant mass demonstrations are all part of a trajectory that is both a warning and a challenge to the status quo.

Political movements so long based on lobbying and horse-trading have been left standing as an angry new generation stakes its claim on its own future.

The wave of mass unrest sparked by the student protests has yet to ignite beyond the murmurs of expectation.

The local council cuts are building into a focus of dissent for community activists certainly, and the public sector cuts could turn workplaces into bastions of resistance (although slow to take up the initiative perhaps too closely wedded to a trade unionist agenda), but the possibility is surely now becoming the imperative.

But what of anarchists, where do we fit into all this? For the last five years the anarchist movement has been defined by ideology issued as an academic exercise, a retreat from any active engagement with any (however limited) social struggle. For almost half a decade anarchism has had no relevant input into any social movement as the fractured elements fought it out amongst themselves across the internet.

A new generation of people are being radicalised by what is happening to them now, both economically and physically, and the energy generated by confronting the institutions of the state is ideal anarchist territory, yet we are somehow unable to create an adequate response.

The age of the internet anarchist may have been swept away along with police lines in Parliament Square but we still need a movement with the ability to organise itself to have any sort of input in the coming months ahead. The future is just beginning.

As 2010 comes to a close we can look across the debris of another spent year and feel with some justification that 2011 will be even more explosive, more volatile and certainly more interesting.

As an anarchist movement, small as we are, we must prepare to be a part of that future.

To all our readers and comrades we say have a peaceful saturnalia, and get ready to hit 2011 running.

Happy in the ghetto?

Iain McKay reminds us there's more to anarchism than simply turning up

I attended the last of the student demos against the tuition fees increase on the 9th December. It was a well attended march, with students and workers across the country protesting their anger. Many of the student marchers came straight from their occupations. These were people protesting against austerity using direct action, something every anarchist advocates.

Yet, sad to say, I seemed to be the only anarchist actually trying to spread anarchist ideas by selling our publications (namely, the new *Black Flag*). It was a big demo, so perhaps I missed the other anarchists handing out leaflets, selling *Freedom*, and otherwise trying to get our ideas across to those in struggle, those both questioning the system (to some degree) in both thought and action. However, I do not think so.

Do not get me wrong – there were anarchists there. Numerous libertarian flags were being waved (there was even a little bloc of them in the march). However, they seemed to be making absolutely no attempt to get our ideas across to our fellow protestors. What a wasted opportunity!

We could have been discussing our ideas on direct action, on the need to spread the actions and occupations; our ideas on mandating and recalling delegates as a practical alternative to picking rulers every four or five years who break their pledges and patronise us; how the state exists to maintain minority rule and the class system; how austerity was not required but a means to further capitalist interests; how crisis was an inherent part of capitalism; how there is an alternative to this rotten system, anarchism.

Instead, well, who knows what the other protestors think of anarchists and anarchism.

Oh, I know. Anarchists do not like to seem to be too much like 'the Trots'. So selling papers and leafleting are out. Yet trots do other things – they leave the house, breathe, eat, watch television, read books, have sex (even if only with themselves) and a host of

other activities which no anarchist refuses to do just because 'the Trots' do them. Why stop at trying to influence our fellow workers and students? Why produce papers like *Freedom* and *Black Flag* at all in that case? Why produce books? Websites? Pamphlets? 'The Trots' do that as well.

Ironically, for all the contempt about 'the Trots', the sad fact is that many anarchists are letting them define what they do.

Yet there is a reason why 'the Trots' act as they do, they reach people. And that is the big question. Do we want to get anarchist ideas more widely known, understood, accepted and acted upon? Or do we do what we do for our own little ghetto? Are we happy to be a small minority, being able to wallow in our little circles, secretly happy to be big fish in a small pond and not have the problems of justifying our nice little theories in the battle of ideas?

After all, we are working class people who happen to be anarchists. We have as much right to put our ideas across as another person in a protest, occupation, union meeting, strike and march. To refuse to do so is to implicitly embrace vanguardist ideology, to implicitly think we are 'different' from 'ordinary working class people'. That this results in many of us self-ghettoising ourselves rather than, as the Leninists, treating the class struggle as purely an area of recruitment does not change the fundamental logic. It is not the rejection of vanguardism, it is the other side of the same coin.

I have, a long time ago, suggested that the anarchist movement should co-operate more. Produce local free-sheets, write for and sell *Freedom*, have one excellent quarterly class-struggle magazine rather than three bi-annual ones (two okay, one good one) and an annual theoretical journal. We can do that – some progress has been made on achieving this very common-sense suggestion.

We can also, I think, be more active about forthcoming demos and ensure people have stalls at them, sell papers, produce relevant leaflets, and so on. I suggested this, and helped do it, for the 15th February 2003 huge anti-war demo, so it is possible.

In short, we need to look outwards.

Iain McKay



INTERNATIONAL

IN BRIEF

CHILE: After a tight vote, members of the Collahuasi Workers' Union have ended the longest private-sector strike in Chile's history.

Employees at the AngloAmerica-Xstrata mine signed off on a 16.3% pay rise spread over three-and-a-half years by 521 votes to 398 after a tense 32-day stand-off with the company, along with concessions over healthcare and education benefits.

GREECE: Prisoners are boycotting institutional catering and will soon begin a mass hunger strike nationwide over jail terms.

The Initiative for the Rights of Prisoners has set out demands, including reductions to the statutory upper limit of jail-time, the abolition of political imprisonment, closing of under-age prisons and for the right of immigrant prisoners to serve their sentences in their own country, among other issues.

IRAN: A member of the Iranian Sugarcane Workers Union has been jailed for sending a Christmas card which 'spread lies'.

Union president Reza Rakhshan was sentenced to six months on 1st December for criticising the jailing of five leading militants and lauding the solidarity of members for winning prompt payment of wages and improved conditions in the industry.

MALAYSIA: A recent report on the use of judicial caning in Malaysia suggests that the brutal practice has reached 'epidemic proportions'. More than 60 offences are subject to caning under Malaysian law, including immigration violations, which have seen tens of thousands of people beaten.

SPAIN: There has been widespread condemnation of the Spanish government's decision to use martial law to force air traffic controllers back to work. The anarchist CNT union, which met this month for its 100th national congress, noted: "Confronting a labour problem by resorting to the military reveals the true face of a government that, like all others, does not hesitate to take off its democratic mask when it is unable to control a situation."

TURKEY: Campaigners are demanding that clothing giants stop selling sandblasted jeans, a process linked to deadly occupational lung diseases.

At a press conference in Istanbul the Solidarity Committee of Denim Sandblasting Labourers of Turkey and the Clean Clothes Campaign also called on governments to consider a ban on sandblasted products.

WORLDWIDE: The Industrial Workers of the World has officially voted to support the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) movement in support of Palestinian rights.

This vote makes the IWW the first union in the US and the third union in Canada to officially support the Palestinian United Call.

LENS CAP WORLD AT OUR FINGERTIPS



Activists march through Mexico City during the global Climate Change summit in Cancun, Mexico during December. As world leaders gathered behind barricades and police lines at the luxurious beach resort, hundreds of thousands took to the streets – indigenous communities, environmental activists, political organisations and radical protest groups – in a show of solidarity against the rich global states' control over climate change issues.

China criticises Western censorship

The campaign to close down Wikileaks and demonise its activists has reached such heights that even Chinese media groups have begun to criticise Western state and corporate censorship.

Wikileaks has been the target of a host of takedown attempts in recent weeks, with banks, internet service providers, IP address groups and money handlers all refusing to work with the group as its public face, Julian Assange, faces charges of sexual assault in Sweden.

The country that brought us the Tibetan occupation, Tinamen Square massacre and a host of repressions against free speech put out a scathing critique of Western journalism through its state-run news organ *China Daily*.

The paper's deputy editor Chen Weihua demonstrated a keener grasp of free speech than many British commentators have

managed in an editorial last week, noting: "It is apparent that when internet freedom conflicts with self-declared US national interests, or when internet freedom exposes lies by the self-proclaimed open and transparent government, it immediately becomes a crime.

"Julian Assange is a fellow journalist, or a citizen journalist in the age of new media, and uncovering the secrets of governments, corporations and interest groups is part of a journalist's job."

The extraordinary alliance of corporate and state efforts to bring down Wikileaks has gripped attention worldwide over the last few weeks, with user groups such as Anonymous, an activist offshoot of the 4chan messageboard, fighting back by taking down the websites of participating firms.

Notes from the US

President Obama has proposed a 24-month pay freeze for all civilian federal workers – members of the military are not included. John Gage, the president of the American Federation of Government Employees, called the pay freeze a "a slap at working people" while AFL-CIO President Richard Trumka said: "The president talked about the need for shared sacrifice, but there's nothing shared about Wall Street and CEOs making record profits and bonuses while working people bear the brunt."

He might also have mentioned members of Congress. According to the Center for Responsive Politics, lawmakers' personal

wealth increased an average 16% between 2008 and 2009 – 261 members of Congress are millionaires.

Unless that same Congress extends the unemployment insurance programme, millions of American unemployed workers will lose their unemployment benefits. Republicans are opposing a plan to continue to make welfare payments available to unemployed people who have been out of work for longer than six months, when such benefits usually expire.

Republican Senators also unanimously blocked The Paycheck Fairness Act in late November, which would have increased

Students fight back worldwide

Major scraps are taking place well beyond British shores

Away from the protests in Britain, students in Greece, Italy, Turkey, Iran and Bangladesh have been in fights of their own against state cuts and repression.

In Greece, high school students joined the call for walkouts during the country's strike of 15th December, which saw around 100,000 out on the streets of Athens against planned cutbacks to the public sector.

Flights were grounded and schools closed by the year's seventh general strike, while sections of the mainstream press went down as journalists joined the picket lines.

Government forces reacted by cracking down hard against the protestors, firing tear gas and charging into the crowds, to be met with thrown Molotovs, stones and sticks.

While fighting swirled around the Finance Ministry, transport ground to a halt across the city.

Students in Greece are facing threats similar to those in the UK of rising fees and cost-cutting in universities, and have responded by joining up with militant workers in both the private and public sectors for increasingly powerful protests which have rocked the government.

In Italy, the were clashes as Italian premier Silvio Berlusconi, whose austerity measures are hugely unpopular, scraped through in a vote of confidence over his leadership of the parliament.

An initially lively demonstration which saw manure dumped outside of Berlusconi's home address turned ugly as police fired tear-



gas into crowds of young people, sparking fury with cars being burned out and violent clashes (pictured above).

In Turkey, a pregnant 19-year-old student lost her baby as police kicked her repeatedly in the stomach during protests against the country's Prime Minister and university rectors.

It's also being suggested that the highly toxic Vietnam War chemical Agent Orange was deployed against protestors who were protesting ongoing repression of political freedoms in the country.

Meanwhile Iranian students, who have been fighting against severe repression amid suspensions, arrests and allegations of torture, have held a day of action across the country – and have pledged their solidarity with British students.

And in Bangladesh, three organisations of students and teachers have joined in a call for the release of a garment workers' organiser who was arrested after massive walkouts and clashed with police.

Moshrefa Mishu, a party politician who is also president of the Oikyo Parishad union, was hauled in by police on 14th December, charged with instigating garment workers to riot in Kuril on the outskirts of the capitol Dhakar.

The Progressive Teachers' Society, Progressive Students' Alliance and Students' Unity Against Capitalism have voiced concerns that the arrest will mark the beginning of another state crackdown in the industry, which has for years been marked by the militancy of its workers.

Rob Ray

Notes from the US

◀ page 6

enforcement of laws requiring equal pay for men and women. Just a week later they threatened to filibuster (block) every Democrat bill unless the party agreed to extend Bush-era tax cuts to those earning more than \$200,000 (£128,000) a year.

The Democrats duly obliged. And that still ruling party isn't idle: Obama's White House panel on reducing the deficit released its findings at the start of December: significant cuts in pensions, health and benefits for the already rich.

The gravy train doesn't end there. At the end of last month the Center for Public Integrity revealed that the Obama administration had given away billions of dollars in stimulus money to BP and some of the United States' biggest polluters.

The companies have been granted significant exemptions from even the most simple forms of environmental oversight. Nearly 180,000 'categorical exclusions' were awarded, freeing

those projects from review under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA).

Among those given a pass were coal-burning utilities like Westar Energy and Duke Energy, chemical manufacturer DuPont, and ethanol maker Didion Milling. They all have a record of serious environmental violations and blanket NEPA exemptions.

Let's end with some encouraging news though. Parents in a working class Chicago neighbourhood have recently finished a victorious 43-day sit-in to stop the imminent demolition their local school open and get a library for their children.

Unintimidated by threats from the local police and risking deportation, the parents widened their action to draw in the support of hundreds of local residents. Under the gaze of publicity, the tactics of the families to resist police intimidation worked.

Happy Holidays!

Louis Further

Martial law threatened in Mexico

Wikileaks cables have revealed that Mexican President Felipe Calderon considered invoking military law to justify a large-scale armed response against rebel groups and drug dealers – and may still do so. US advisers suggested that he could use Article 29 of the Mexican constitution to declare states of exception in certain areas, suspending freedom of assembly, free speech and the end of due process. This suggests that many of the measures taken by the Calderon administration in its attacks on state enemies – potentially including popular uprisings such as those in Oaxaca and Chiapas – have taken place on shaky legal grounds.

A journalist for the Narconews website said: "The fact that Mexican government officials are concerned that the current deployment may not be legal is quite shocking at this late point in Calderon's drug war – which has cost the lives of some 30,000 people since 2006 and resulted in more than 4,000 human rights complaints."

FEATURE

The London Metropolitan University

Freedom talks to occupying students about the education cuts

Can you introduce yourself?

We are the occupiers! Our statement introduces us as 'an autonomous, democratic, united group of students' – I think that pretty much covers it. We don't really have a group identity, and we're not affiliated to any group or party – just a collective of London Metropolitan University (LMU) students who have organised together to fight to defend education. Some of us are already seasoned activists, others are totally green. We're the representatives of the student body of LMU – we have managed to give our time and resources to fight this campaign, but we're aware that we're fighting on behalf of a much larger group.

Could you explain briefly what action you have taken at London Met and why?

Firstly we closed off the finance and HR departments at the Tower Building (north campus). Our aim, which we accomplished, was to blockade the bureaucratic heart of the University. This university has been involved in financial scandals to the tune of £36.5 million. They claimed money for modules that weren't even offered anymore.

Besides, this university is one of the very few in London that is relatively affordable to working class students. When the cuts come, these students will lose out. Also, one-third of the student population here is international, who subsidise home students. With the funding gone, these students will end up paying double the amount than they pay now. LMU will be one of the worst affected universities. One of the security guards even said that he does not see the university lasting for more than a year. With the student union doing very little, because of practical problems, we decided to take direct action.

Can you describe the events leading up to the occupation, and the situation with the security guards as of now?

The occupation was specifically planned on the 1st December and we arrived on the evening of the 2nd – it was a quick and smooth operation. At a meeting to discuss our response to the savage government cuts and the internal problems already riddling our university, we voted unanimously for direct action, then for occupation within 24 hours. Even before that we'd called two mass student meetings on both campuses to mobilise students. Because of the short time-frame we managed to keep our plans totally quiet, and coupled with meeting in a non-suggestive place (Old Street Station, equidistant from both campuses) the management

wasn't expecting us at all, which gave us a big advantage.

Security were first a little bemused, and we have had a few problems with negotiating our own regulations for our space, but the security men themselves have been friendly and professional. We're putting them in a difficult position, because even though we are fighting for their jobs too, many of our actions go directly against their purpose in the organisation. We had hoped to negotiate things like access to the occupied area for non-students, but as of today (day six) we haven't had any communications with anyone authorised to offer that. This has really been the biggest stumbling block we've had – effective agreement of terms has been impossible when no one with any decision-making power has responded to our requests for negotiation.

What are your demands?

Together we wrote a list of demands, which can be viewed on our blog at wearelondonmet.wordpress.com. These are requests submitted to the management of the university, and as such we've tried to make them achievable. Our aspirations regarding national and political issues are equally important, but the point of our list of demands is that they're things our management really can (and should!) do.

Have you started negotiations with the management yet, and what has their response been like?

We've been sending emails to our vice-chancellor, Malcolm Gillies, keeping him abreast of events here and inviting him to reply to our statements either in writing or in person. He's been ignoring us pretty solidly so far, setting the security guards on us as the 'conduit', but one morning we had a surprise visit from him requesting a meeting later. We sent a three-person delegation and insisted on filming our interaction. It is pretty clear to us that Gillies' strategy is to stall us as long as possible. He does not appear to have any intentions of debating our demands with us.

What is the response of the student union?

At first the student union voted to remain neutral on the issue of our protest, which we interpreted as tacit condemnation, but after some discussion with members, the Student Council meeting voted 24 to 1 (with four abstentions) to support our actions. That makes a massive difference to us, because as well as the material help the SU can now legitimately provide, it gives us a mandate to speak on behalf of the students. We have a large petition of support, and with both the wider student body and their representatives behind us we have a very strong position in any negotiations. The issue has been raised that we are a small



group to claim to speak for 30,000 students – this support helps us to demonstrate that we really do.

What is the vibe among the students? How are you mobilising students within the university?

The vast majority of students are supportive of our actions, once they understand what and why we're doing. Our alternative education events have been widely publicised and we're getting to talk to a lot of people about our ideas and actions. This is not a very politically active university, partially because it has a high percentage of part time and mature students, with families and full time jobs – they can't afford, as we can, to take a week or several out of their routine lives. Helping them to get active in ways which suit them is one of our priorities – letting them know that even signing a petition or attending a lunchtime discussion can make a real difference. Because it is a very dispersed campus it is difficult to bring students together. But we are doing our best by arranging meetings, talks and music events.

What about the staff? Are they in favour of what you are doing?

Staff members have been overwhelmingly supportive. We've had loads of messages of solidarity and visits, as well as offers to provide free lectures to us – they've also been very forgiving of the fact that we've been busy recently and our essays haven't

City occupation



always been our first priority! Many people have sent us donations of money, food or equipment, expressing that they would be in here with us if they could. They all know that this fight belongs to all of us, that it is too big for any of us alone.

How does the group operate?

We're very democratic and totally non-hierarchical. This has confused journalists and passers-by a little, but we've found it works really well. Each person involved has equal voting rights and standing in the group, working groups are fluid and can reform as need be. Meetings are called each morning and evening in a round-table discussion, and though they're long, the method's success is proved by the fact that most of our decisions are unanimous.

What kind of activities are you holding at the occupation?

As an alternative model of really valuable, non-profit-based education we've been holding lectures and discussions on a variety of political topics ever since we began, with open access to any students and staff of the university and members of the general public. We've held a general meeting about building a broad coalition against the cuts with members from Unison, the National Union of Journalists and RMT attending. We held a music event outside the university premises with Lowkey, Logic and Alabama 3 in order to draw students.

Have you been coordinating with the larger student movement in London? What are your thoughts on that?

Members from our occupation have been regularly attending the recently formed London Student Assembly, organised by the Education Activist Network working together with the National Campaign against Fees and Cuts and the UCU. This helps share information and support between institutions. We are in touch with Green and Black Cross and other such legal teams in case of emergencies. Many of us have been on all the demonstrations called so far.

I think that this movement is nothing less than a revolution in student consciousness. Everyone involved knows that we can only win this fight as a united front, and the future of education is too important a fight to lose. The rise in student activism goes hand in hand with a greater knowledge and exploration of social issues, and this is expressing itself in a strong and active solidarity between every group fighting against class privilege or any other kind of inequality. Good or bad, we have all kinds of groups working together – anarchists, socialists, Marxists, independent individuals, affiliated, unaffiliated, etc.

How long do you intend to occupy?

The group consensus is that we stay either until our demands are met on terms agreeable to us or until legal action is taken against us, such as a court injunction.

What have you got planned for Thursday, assuming, of course, that you are all raring to go on 'Day X3'?

We've not yet all discussed what we're doing on Thursday in detail. Some of us will be staying here to hold the fort, but obviously many of us will be out on the streets. Some students are meeting outside the university for the march to Westminster, and it's likely a contingent of us will be carrying our banner with them. Many of us are also involved in other campaign groups who are organising their own events for the national day of protest, so although we will have representation, we're not all going to be marching together in a Purple Bloc!

Have you considered what you will do should the bill on education cuts go through?

The fight goes on! The occupation will continue until our concerns about the university itself are resolved. After all, it is the university management that implements the cuts. We'll have to work out a strategy and response to whatever happens in parliament.

Personally, I predict if the bill passes this government won't survive for long. A large proportion of the population doesn't yet understand the full implications of the bill – zero humanities funding and spiralling tuition is only a symptom of an ideology which treats education as a commodity which can be rightfully denied to those who can't pay. If this bill passes, I'd guess we'll see riots on Saturday, the day pencilled in for a national demo before the vote is announced. The mismanagement of the social unrest of the last few months has taken away the last shreds of the Coalition's legitimacy, and if they vote against massive public opinion, a lot of people will be very angry. As for me, I'll defend the right to quality universal education by any means necessary.

What are your long-term goals as students? Is there a message you want to send out to the larger world?

Yeah – we can actually win this thing! We have caught the powers-that-be unawares and we can use that to our advantage. We can only succeed though if we all fight, only if enough of us are willing to put ourselves on the line. Organise, Strike, Revolt! Together we can bring this corrupt system down!

Jenny

Met student occupier, 8th December 2010

Since this interview was conducted the occupation at London Metropolitan University has ended. Within just one day, a court injunction was brought against the occupiers with false allegations and they were only given thirty minutes notice to leave. The occupation ended on the 10th December 2010.

COMMENT

ABOUT FREEDOM

ANGEL ALLEY

The bookshop and volunteers has become as much a victim of the weather as the rest of the population. Festive spirit reached us early with the various student protests engaging most of us in either doing legal duties (running around after police noting the numbers of our fabulous boys in blue who were whacking kids left right and centre), along with visiting the various student occupations in London and generally reporting from the frontline on the radicalisation of a new generation. Exciting times for sure. But with the snow on the tracks and early crimbo parties, much work has been left hanging over.

Doubtless the anarchist movement will return to form in 2011 with lots for us to do at *Freedom* as we carry on the good work of getting anarchist ideas to as many people as possible. We invite readers to do the same. Anyone who is willing to offload copies of *Freedom* – in their area, at their college or student union, or just amongst comrades in your organisation or colleagues at your workplace. There will be lots to say and do in 2011, and we always welcome contributions to the paper. In the age of the global internet, people still like the solid assurance of something they can take with them. Get in touch, details below.

As for subscription changes, we will keep you all informed once 'normal service' is resumed, weather permitting.

SUBSCRIPTIONS

This issue is vol 71 no 24, so if the number above your name on the address label is 7124 or less, then your subscription is now due for renewal. There's a renewal form on page 16 of this issue or you can subscribe online at freedompress.org.uk/news/subscribe or, if you don't want to worry in the future about remembering to renew your *Freedom* sub, ask us to send you a standing order form by emailing subs@freedompress.org.uk

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NEXT ISSUE

The next issue will be dated 15th January 2011 and the last day to get copy to us for that issue will be Thursday 6th January. You can send your articles to us by email to copy@freedompress.org.uk or by post addressed to 'The Editors', Freedom, 84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1 7QX.

A sideways look

by SVARTFROSK

Many of the commentators on the student protests have focused on the so-called 'generation war', whereby the young are comprehensively swindled as a generation by the old.

At first glance, there seems to be something in this. The government is stuffed with people who had free education through to degree level, and often got a grant as well. Successive governments have criminalised an ever-younger proportion of the population, ranging from the whole ASBO agenda to simple things like buying alcohol. The latter is particularly galling when you know that every cabinet member was almost certainly drinking in pubs before they were 18, even without the ludicrous boasts of William Hague. Pensions have been taken from most of those who work in the private sector and are in the sights of the government for the public sector. Where there are still funded pensions they are often closed to new entrants, which effectively means young people.

Much of the justification for the cuts comes from the state of the economy. Leaving aside whether the government are right or not, the economy got itself into a mess partly because of the obsession with home ownership and property as a means of acquiring wealth. For the young who will be disproportionately hit by the cuts, it is easy to see why rhetoric making that connection would encourage the view of a generation cast adrift by their elders, who have done very nicely, thank you very much.

I'm not unsympathetic to that view, but I still think it is wrong. In generational terms I am far luckier than many today, having had a free education and a house bought before the most recent price boom. I can look at those

older and see how much cheaper they got their houses, how their pensions are actually worth something, how they'll be able to retire several years earlier than me. But it won't do me any good – it's far better to focus on the things I can do something about. And to recognise that my generation was the one that came of age at the time of the miners' strike, one of the biggest defeats the working class has suffered since the Second World War.

We only ever build on what came before. When I started work, there was still a tradition of workplace organisation. Ordinary workers took on roles that had immediate, and sometimes long term gains, as their aim. Now, few people think their working conditions are something they can do anything about.

In all generations there are those who fare badly and those who do better. I can't imagine that the life prospects of someone aged 16 attending Eton and soon to go onto Oxbridge are any worse than they've always been for people of that ilk. Likewise, someone coming from a poor background is going to have to fight very hard to get anything, just like they always have had. The most positive thing I have seen in the last couple of months is a sign that the young are facing up to this challenge. The LibDems have provided an object lesson in the duplicity of politicians. The media likes to claim that anarchists are trying to lead these protests. Rubbish, we're excited about these protests precisely *because* no one is leading them. The sight of the highly-paid strategists of the Metropolitan Police being outwitted by teenagers gladdens my heart. The only response the old hierarchies of power have to the students' creativity is repression.



LETTERS AND COMMENT

On Proudhon

I appreciate the contributions of Iain McKay to a bit of the literature by Proudhon. We should not however overlook the fact that Proudhon was a very controversial as well as contradictory figure. The works of Robert Hoffman, Edward Hyams, Henri de Lubac, K. Steven Vincent and George Woodcock demonstrate this. Some of Proudhon's beliefs would not be appreciated by anarchists. Thus, he favoured compulsory military service. He was not averse to participation in the electoral process, being a candidate for office as well as serving as a deputy in the parliament. There were even occasions in which Proudhon supported Napoleon the Third. As he grew older he supported the concept of the state. In 1848 he advocated a corporate state in which there were to be five corporations, one each for manufactures, extractive industries, commerce, agriculture and a fifth one composed of science, letters and arts. The state was supposed to manage public works, statistics, public health, justice and the army. Towards the end of his life he apparently modified his view to advocate a federal

state, although much earlier he believed that his mutualist theory could be instituted with the aid of the state.

His views on sex roles and the family are certainly provoking, for he believed women were inferior to men and endorsed the power of the father within the family. Further, he opposed divorce and workers strikes. While I have not found the source, it has been alleged that he held anti-semitic views and felt that black people were inferior.

While Proudhon clearly had many shortcomings, changing his views over time he, as Iain McKay notes, understood the nature of capitalism before Marx and advocated mutualism and, despite his often statist declarations, affirmed anarchism as well, although it was likely more an affirmation of a highly decentralised federalism. I would suggest that if anarchists desire to absorb the anarchism and mutualism of Proudhon they should focus on *What is Property*, *Proudhon's Solution to the Social Problem* (edited by Henry Cohen) and *The General Idea of the Revolution of the Nineteenth Century*.

Harold Barclay

An American prisoner writes

Greetings to you all at Freedom Press in solidarity. I'm writing just to say thank you for all the years you have been sending me *Freedom*. It really means a lot to me. I don't write to you all enough – I do not have much postage – but I do really appreciate the papers you send to me. I enjoy reading all the anarchist news, and happenings around the world. And all the prison news is a good read.

Well, a little about myself. I am a 35 year old anarchist. I've been an anarchist for about 10 years. I've been in prison since 1995. I have a life sentence for beating to death a child molester in the Los Angeles County Jail. I was a Crip gang member, but have since retired from the gang lifestyle in prison.

Anyway, if you ever want to know more about me, just ask. I write to other anarchists often.

Your comrade in struggle,

Ramon



Just a few of the many innovative banners seen at recent student protests around the country.

GETTING ACTIVE

PRISON NEWS

On 29th November, prisoners in 26 of the 33 prisons in Greece commenced a co-ordinated collective refusal to eat prison food in protest against the appalling conditions in Greek prisons/hellholes. This action swiftly escalated into a parallel hunger strike, with approximately 1,000 prisoners refusing all food and another 8,000 (out of a total of 12,600 prisoners currently held in Greek prisons) only eating food purchased from prison shops. (Many Greek prisons have no equivalent of the UK prisons' canteen so anyone refusing to eat prison food is *de facto* on hunger strike.)

The prisoners' demands, issued via the Initiative for Prisoners' Rights, echo many of those that the previous New Democracy government had failed to address in the concessions it made to end a previous prisoners hunger strike in November 2008 (e.g. the abolition of pre-trial detention and of juvenile prisons, the reduction in the maximum length of sentence, etc.). Other demands seek to extend concessions already granted or to challenge those that the previous and current governments have so far failed to implement, as well as introducing new demands, such as the abolition of the anti-terrorism law and the special terms of detention for political prisoners, the immediate release of prisoners with special needs and those who suffer from chronic serious illnesses, etc.

The current hunger strike appears to be well co-ordinated and could reach the levels of participation seen in the month-long 2008 action, where upward of 7,000 prisoners were refusing all food at one point, with a number having sewn their lips together (a common tactic in Greek protests and one used in a series of on-going public hunger strikes mainly carried out by Iranian refugees outside Athens University and in a makeshift camp next to the Acropolis). Last November also saw a smaller less successful series of similar prison protests in support of many of the same demands currently being made.

In other news, the Crown Prosecution Service have announced that no charges will be brought against any of the prisoners involved in the April 2009 HMP Ashwell riot, which lasted for 21 hours and saw three-quarters of the prison wrecked. It appears that, with no CCTV evidence or reliable eyewitness accounts, there was insufficient evidence to bring charges of prison mutiny against any prisoners. And, last but not least, the dilapidated state of Dartmoor prison, where many cells are deemed 'uninhabitable', has been severely criticised by the Prisons Inspectorate and the government is expected to close it in the near future, saving the £667k a year. It currently pays in rent to Charlie Windsor.

Shortly before going to press, the Justice Department's Green Paper on the proposed reforms to sentencing and punishment was published and an article examining the proposals will appear in the next issue of *Freedom*.



Inspecting the damage after August's arson attempt on the Russian Embassy in Minsk.

Christmas is a particularly difficult time in prison, especially those who are locked up for their political activities and beliefs. At the last meeting of the International of Anarchist Federations IAF-IFA (which includes Anarchist Federation UK) in Sofia at the end of October, a statement was issued in **Solidarity with Belarus activists** several of whom continue to be locked up by the state. The IAF-IFA:

- Condemns all forms of repression against activists and the grassroots movement regardless of whether they are anarchists or not.
- Expresses its solidarity with persecuted anarchist comrades and all victims of the regime.
- Calls for the mobilisation and commitment of all to raise awareness about the complete negation of freedom in Belarus, for the liberation of all political prisoners and for an end to the dictatorship in Minsk.

Prison letters

After the attack on the Russian embassy on 30th August 2010, Belarusian anarchists, social activists and ecologists were repressed. During this autumn there was a chain of searches and interrogations in Minsk, Gomel, Grodno, Soligorsk, Brest, Bobrujsk and Novopolotsk. All in all about 50 people were interrogated. At the moment Nikolaj Dedok, Aleksandr Frantskevich, Maxim Vetkin and Igor Olinevich are under arrest. They can face up to six years of imprisonment. We call all people concerned to support the arrestees and send them postcards. There's an appeal for you to support the arrested with New Year postcards. You can write letters and cards to:

- Dedok Nikolaj Aleksandovich, Prison-8, 22a Sovetskaja str., 222160 Zhodino, Minsk region, BELARUS

- Frantskevich Aleksandr, СИЗ0-1, 2-46 Volodarskogo str., 220050 Minsk, BELARUS
- Vetkin Maxim Ivanovich, СИЗ0-1, 2 Volodarskogo str., 220050 Minsk, BELARUS
- Olinevich Igor Vladimirovich, p/o box 8, Central Post Office, 220050 Minsk, BELARUS

Additional information at <http://belarus.indymedia.org/blog/minsksolidarity>

Background information

Since the beginning of September 2010, social activists in Belarus have been faced with unprecedented pressure. After the arson attempt on the Russian Embassy on the night of 30th/31st August 2010, and with the start of the presidential campaign, over a hundred social activists have experienced 'talks', interrogations by the KGB, house-raids and arrest. Some of them are still detained.

In order to take advantage of the ability to hold activists under arrest for three days without charges, the authorities re-arrest activists every three days as suspects on other cases. Altogether 13 people have spent 153 days under unlawful arrest already. During these interrogations the activists are beaten, threatened with expulsion from their places of study, subjected to psychological pressure and are also not allowed to see their relatives.

All those repressed are activists and participants of the social, ecological, anti-authoritarian, antifascist and humanitarian initiatives. Please help us to spread this call-out as widely as possible. You can send information about solidarity actions to minsksolidarity@riseup.net. The chronicle of the events is at <http://belarus.indymedia.org/blog/minsksolidarity>

The principles and aims of anarchism

Charlotte Wilson, one of the founders of Freedom Press, discusses the nature and basis of anarchism

The key-note of the anarchist contention is, that the vitiation of social life is produced by the domination of man by man. The spirit of domination is the disintegrating element, which, constantly tending to break up society, is the fundamental cause of confusion and disorder.

This impulse in men to dominate their fellows, i.e. impose their will upon them and assert their own superiority, would seem to be an ignorant misdirection of the healthy impulse to assert human dignity, the unity of man, as distinct but not separate from the unity of nature, and the dignity and spontaneity of the individual human being as distinct but not separate from associated humanity. The misdirection of this impulse has been encouraged by the absence of knowledge as to the nature and method of natural processes, which had resulted in superstitious awe of all uncomprehended manifestations of force in external nature and in man. This awe has been utilised by the stronger and more cunning of the human race to sanction their domination.

As knowledge has penetrated the governed masses, their submission to the oppression of the dominators, whether priests, lawyers, or warriors, has decreased; and the people have revolted against the form of authority then felt most intolerable. This spirit of revolt in the individual and in the masses, is the natural and necessary fruit of the spirit of domination; the vindication of human dignity, and the saviour of social life.

Anarchism is recognition and acknowledgment of this truth, that social peace and the possibility of full social development depends on the accordance of the equal social claim of each sane adult to the responsibility of guiding this own thoughts, speech and action by the law of his own conscience, and not by the will of any other individual or collection of individuals.

Considering the spirit of domination as the great cause of human misery, and the present disorganisation of social life, anarchists declare war against its present principal forms of expression – property, and the law manufactured and administered by majority rule.

Property is the monopoly of social wealth; the claim to an individual right not only to use such wealth, but to prevent others from using it. Wealth being the product of the collective labour of society past and present, of associated mankind, can only belong to society. When it is monopolised by the force



or cunning of individuals, other individuals who have been prevented by larger and more generous social feeling, want of strength, of ability or opportunity, from monopolising also, must necessarily become subordinate to the monopolists; since they must work to obtain wherewithal to exist, and cannot work without the monopolised instruments of production. Hence the monopoly of social wealth is the main agent of domination...

The monopoly of wealth would have no chance against the sense of social justice and the needs of mankind, unless sanctioned and protected by law.

The kernel of law, which commends it to the respect of the moral sense of men, is crystallised social custom – the result of common experience, social feeling spontaneously called forth by life in common – which our written law contains. But this reasonable respect has been twice converted into superstitious awe by the dominators of men, who have pretended for law the origin of a direct divine revelation, and who have used the reverence thus inspired to cover the whole of the enactments they have made for their own advantage, and the maintenance of their supremacy.

The manufacture and administration of law by the delegates of a majority, changes nothing of its oppressive character; its only purpose remains to impose the will of certain individuals upon the rest, and to maintain certain privileges and distinctions. With the resignation of claim and monopoly of every

sort, its occupation is gone.

Apart from this, law is essentially the attempt on the part of certain persons to draw a hard and fast line for the conduct of others; and as the circumstances, motives and personal inspiration of no two individuals is the same, it is a perennial source of injustice and wrong. The pressure and the inspiration which is the natural and inevitable action of the surrounding social atmosphere upon the social sensibilities of the individual, are in all normal cases more than sufficient to secure the possibility of agreement and corporate action. With the removal of arbitrary bonds and hard and fast restraints their strength is more fully recognised, and the aroused sense of responsibility which follows the absence of coercion, tends to make opposition to social claims a matter of conscience rather than of caprice...

Anarchism is a protest against the government of man by man in every shape and form as the disturber of social life, an assertion that the free play of the social nature of free and equal human beings is the only solid basis of society.

Part of an abstract paper read before the London Dialectical Society on 2nd June 1886, and reprinted as part of *Anarchist Essays by Charlotte Wilson*, edited by Nicolas Walter (Freedom Press, £5.95). Charlotte Wilson was the principal founder of Freedom Press in 1886 and the first editor of the anarchist newspaper, *Freedom*. She had been writing about anarchism in the socialist press since 1884, and led the anarchist faction in the Fabian Society.

REVIEWS

WHAT'S ON

DECEMBER

■ **until 31st** *SiegeMemory*, an interactive documentary by Rob Conway exploring how the Siege of Sidney Street of 1911 is remembered today, weaving together interviews with working class East Enders, historians, anarchists and academics to tell an exciting story in a interactive non-linear manner – an exhibition will be showing at Freedom's Autonomy Club Gallery, 84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1 7QX throughout December during shop hours, see siegememory.net/ or freedompress.org.uk/news/tag/art-exhibition/ for details.

■ **20th** Don't let BAE get away with paying peanuts, demonstrate with Campaign Against Arms Trade at arms giant BAE's court hearing which is expected to rubber-stamp a derisory settlement of £30 million to end years of investigations by the Serious Fraud Office, but the judge has the power to challenge this. Join us outside the court to make our message loud and clear at Southwark Crown Court, 1 English Grounds (off Battlebridge Lane), London SE1 2HU (on the south side of the river between Tower Bridge and London Bridge) from 9.30am to 10.30am, see www.caat.org.uk

JANUARY

■ **5th** Dale Farm Solidarity is holding its first ever Brighton rally, meeting at The Cowley Club, 12 London Road, Brighton, BN1 4JA at 8pm, for more call 01273 696104, email savedalefarm@gmail.com or see <http://dalefarm.wordpress.com>

■ **14th** Solidarity demo for Thessaloniki Four at the Greek Embassy, 1a Holland Park, London W11 3TP at 2pm, for more on the four demonstrators facing trial on serious charges of rioting and causing explosions at the EU summit in 2003, see <http://www.salonikisolidarity.org.uk/>

■ **15th** Musical protest to cancel the arms fair at the Excel Exhibition Centre – protest during the Boat Show at ExCel to get the arms fair at that location cancelled, musical and non-musical supporters needed, meet outside the western entrance to Excel Exhibition Centre, Royal Victoria Dock, London E16 1XL from 2pm until 5pm (from Custom House DLR station just follow the signs to the ExCeL Centre).

■ **22nd** GM: Gathering Momentum, anti-GM update, networking and strategy session for grassroots and NGO campaigners. The GM threat is gaining momentum and it's time to act, and this gathering is to build links and networks to counter the coming threat: briefings from farmers and researchers, opportunities to meet and strategise with everyone from Reclaim the Fields activists to NGO representatives, community food growers to radical beekeepers – if you've ever been involved, or ever considered getting involved in GM crop campaigning, we'd love you to be there, Central London (email us for more info) from 10am until 6pm, email info@stopgm.org.uk or see www.stopgm.org.uk

FILM

Another Year

directed by Mike Leigh

Leigh's latest slice of everyday monotony revisits petit-bourgeois manners and mores with even slimmer narrative dynamism than usual. Division into four leisurely snapshots starting with spring and ending in winter disguises *Another Year's* apparent lack of ambition, evoking the meaning of 'a good life' without notably distracting dramatic contrivances. However, the seasonal motif turns out to symbolise not just ageing and the passage of time, but moral connotations of 'reaping what you sow' – materially in the fruit and veg harvested on their allotment by contented professional spouses nearing retirement, and metaphorically in nourishing an assortment of family and friends who bear considerable degrees of responsibility for the various axes they grind. Furthermore, the only real bugbears for civil engineer Tom and medical counsellor Gerri are everyone else's aforementioned miseries – particularly her infuriating work colleague Mary – testing patience but reliably flavouring their otherwise colourless existence.

A Sad Old Year

The couple conceivably condense the complacency of upwardly-mobile 1960s graduates reaching relative comfort, contrasting the misfortunes of those who've found no lasting fulfilment. Their rather gormless son Joe's new girlfriend – proud of her proletarian parents – echoes this trajectory, but in the current climate her sunny disposition (like Poppy's in *Happy-Go-Lucky*; reviewed in *Freedom*, 16th August 2008) functions more as psychological defence than the optimism of previous generations for whom the world seemed like their oyster. So sundry variants of respectable working-class failure allow Tom and Gerri (the names now intelligibly referencing the cartoon equivalents' tragicomic co-dependence) to measure life-cycle

satisfaction while, ever so subtly, without explicitly acknowledging it, they relentlessly judge and punish them as reminders of their luck rather than judgement. Thus their hospitality, bonhomie and kindheartedness also harbour charitable condescension concealing hostility – unerringly meted out to recalcitrant clients, Tom's bereaved brother and inadequate old college friend, and, most iconically, Mary's pathetic self-centred neurotic.

Meanwhile collusion in the ballet of neediness and caring prevents them from meaningfully grasping the continuing disasters of the status quo – which their suburban bubble insulates them from while also occasioning their nominal vocations (Tom testing the ground under modern society's infrastructure; Gerri dispensing pop-psychology blandishments to its deeply suffering; Joe's earnest offensiveness with its outcasts). Meticulous attention to script detail accompanies Leigh's legendary lengthy improvisation with actors – coaxing marvellous performances through attenuating individual verbal, paraverbal and nonverbal characterisations into thoroughly convincing cardboard cutouts. These magnificently capture the minutiae of mundane interpersonal, but also here erase ambiguity and any surprising complexity. Forcing a collective spectrum's shades into stark blacks and whites flattens the film's philosophically fascinating paradox of boring happiness – but, in effect, this is also liberal democracy's meritocratic impasse as well as an inevitable end-point of the director's naturalistic determinism. No wonder he sees *Another Year* as deeply personal (disdainful predictions that the critics would be "unable to talk [intelligently] about it" being largely confirmed) – not written in a country churchyard, but nonetheless representing a dark gray elegy to the vanishing hopes of his cohort's postwar progressivism.

www.tomjennings.pwp.blueyonder.co.uk
<http://libcom.org/blog/4271>



QUIZ ANSWERS

1. Guido Fawkes. Hmm, and the difference between his hero's attempted actions and the students? Merely one of scale.
2. Oliver Cromwell. He committed numerous atrocities in Ireland and signed the death warrant of a king. Now what was that about damage to a limousine?
3. The circled A of anarchism: (A)
4. Online payments company PayPal, who stopped payments to WikiLeaks after the US government put pressure on over the Embassy Cables. Still, the KKK never break any laws now, do they?

The new mutualism?

A recent vision of Economic Democracy offers up much of the old within a too thin shell of the new, says Iain McKay

Allan Engler is a lifelong trade unionist and social activist. Some may recognise his name from his 1995 book *Apostles of Greed* and his new booklet expands on his vision of Economic Democracy. "Humankind," he rightly suggests, "does not need a capitalist class." (7)

There is much in the book that libertarians can agree with. Capitalism is "based on workplace dictatorship" (15-6), for example. The question is, is Economic Democracy *really* the working class alternative to capitalism? In part, yes – but only because he repeats long-standing *libertarian* positions.

Engler does give the impression that he is a recovering Marxist, keen to salvage *something* from that tradition while, in fact, being far closer to Proudhon. Like Proudhon's mutualism, his system is based on a market exchange of products created using socialised means of production and the suggestion that "socially owned financial institutions" would ensure that interest rates "will be kept low" (61) has obvious parallels with Proudhon's "Bank of the People." Sadly, Engler does not discuss any links with mutualism, but given that Proudhon is *persona non grata* in most Marxist circles this is no surprise.

Ironically, Engler *does* mention Proudhon, quoting "property is theft." He thinks Proudhon "exaggerated" and contrasts him to Marx whom Engler argues "held that property began as the right of people to the products of their own labour" while capitalism was the right to appropriate others' labour. Which was Proudhon's position, not Marx's who was a communist and aimed (eventually) to end even that kind of property. Engler unknowingly repeats Proudhon: "If property is the right of people to the products of their own labour, capital is legalised theft." (15)

Engler is right that markets have existed "long before capitalism" (67) and that with self-employment "capitalism would not exist." (18) Libertarian communists have always argued against mutualism in that it ignores the negative pressures associated with market forces and so members of the co-operatives would be forced to work longer, harder and allocate more to investment than they would like in order to survive on the market (some call this, inaccurately, "self-exploitation" or "self-managed capitalism"). It also ties consumption to labour done rather than need. As such, he is right to argue that the "capitalist market is the problem, not the solution" (37) but he does not address whether there are problems with markets



per se which make them problematic in achieving socialist goals.

Engler, like Proudhon, is aware of some of the problems, arguing that "competitive drive to maximise profits pushes capitalist firms to simultaneously increase production and cut employment and wages. It pushes enterprises to exploit resources at unsustainable rates and to externalise environmental costs." (7) This would still affect socialised workplaces operating in a market environment. He acknowledges this by arguing that economic democracy "does not mean workers will own enterprises." Workers' ownership under capitalism, he argues, "remains a form of private competitive ownership that pushes worker-owners to focus on narrow immediate interests" as well as "tying workers' income to the rise and fall of enterprise new revenues." (47)

Communist-anarchists would agree with this yet he also argues that prices would "continue to be regulated by market forces" (67), money would "continue to measure exchange value" (68) and people would "exchange the products of one's labour." (59) He does acknowledge that "[n]one of that makes markets inherently benevolent. Forces of supply and demand reflect, reproduce and aggregate existing entitlements and disparities." (67) All true, but admitting this does not *really* address why would workplaces in Economic Democracy not be in a similar situation as ones under capitalism? Particularly if prices "will be determined within national, regional and local markets." (64)

The issue of free access is an important one if you argue that workers should get the full product of their labour. He argues that, as well as "socially owned" workplaces, there would also be "producer co-ops owned by all workers" which "could be intermediate alternatives in enterprises employing a dozen

or fewer" (60) and that the "self-employed may own their tools, equipment and machinery. They could lease land and buildings ... community ownership of land and commercial buildings will keep rents low." (59) Yet are not these individuals part of the community and so have free access to the socialised means of production? Is the "community" as the landlord to which we pay rent that different from capitalism? So if communities *do* "own social means of livelihood" (61) it seems ironic to expect members of said communities to have to *pay* to use them.

He states he is against state ownership and for "social ownership" and "community ownership" (48) yet also suggests that ownership could rest, in certain cases, with "provinces or states" or "Federal or national governments." (48) He also suggests that ownership could rest with "federations of autonomous national, regional or continental enterprises." (48) While the latter fits with social ownership (echoing Proudhon's "agro-industrial federation"), the former is at odds with opposition to state ownership.

The modern state is not neutral and should be replaced (*à la* Proudhon) with a federation of communes. This leads to another key issue, namely belief that the democratic (capitalist) state could be utilised to abolish capitalism. Engler argues that the working class "will rely on workplace organisation, community mobilisations and democratic political action. The objective will be to transform capitalism into economic democracy through gains and reforms." It is all fine and well to quote the *Communist Manifesto* on the need to "win the battle of democracy" (85) but this *has* been tried and it simply proved anarchists right. Proudhon's argument that the state was "inevitably enchained to capital and directed against the



“I disagree with what you say, but I will fight to the death for your right to say it.” That doesn't mean I'm going to publish your rubbish bollocks.
 – Voltaire's sentiments according to S.G.Tallentyre, 120 years after voltaire's death.



Review

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proletariat” and so “is of no use to change the holders of power or introduce some variation into its workings” has been more than confirmed and social democracy became as reformist as Bakunin predicted.

So while he, correctly, invokes the “mass direct action” of the IWW, *Industrial Syndicalist League*, anarcho-syndicalists in Italy, Spain and France who were “leading strikes and factory occupations” (88) he fails to learn from their ideas. However, his arguments that unions “will identify with their communities and humanity as well as their occupations” and become “organisations of human solidarity” (103) are correct, but again just repeating what anarchists

were arguing in the 1860s.

So is it the new mutualism? Not quite, but there is much in common with Proudhon's vision of a socialist market system based on self-managed co-operatives utilising socialised credit and means of production. Rather than trying to squeeze his ideas into Marxism, Engler would have been better exploring the links with mutualism, the anarchist critique of socialists using elections and the anarcho-syndicalist vision of social transformation. While there is much anarchists will agree and sympathise with, there is too much acceptance of electioneering as a strategy and a too blasé acceptance of markets.

Economic Democracy: The Working-Class Alternative to Capitalism by Allan Engler (Fernwood Publishing, Halifax & Winnipeg, 2010).

THE QUIZ

1. After the student protests at Millbank, right wing blogger Paul Staines posted a £1,000 reward for info on the student in the fire extinguisher incident. What irony-free name does Staines post under?
2. Which controversial statue stands outside the Palace of Westminster?
3. What symbol is represented by Unicode codepoint U+24B6 ?
4. Who is happy to deal with the Ku Klux Klan but not WikiLeaks?

Answers on page 14

The Anarchist Quiz Book compiled by Martin Howard, with illustrations by Paul Petard, is available at £5 (post free) from freedompress.org.uk

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