

STILL ALIVE, STILL FREE!

Alfie Meadows escapes again with 'hung jury'

"But is he lucky?" Napoleon used to ask of a promising general. With Alfie Meadows it's very much a case of is the glass half full or half empty. You might think he's lucky to be alive after the cops belted him over the head, he's lucky there was still an NHS to perform life saving surgery on him, lucky there's still legal aid so he was represented in court, lucky some people doing jury service in Kingston believe you have a right and duty to defend people who are attacked by the police and lucky that he can carry on with his course until it gets abolished by the cuts. So not that lucky at all then.

Here's a quick summary of the case, but more details can be found on the Defend The Right To Protest website.

From 26th March to 18th April five people (Colin Goff, Zac King, Alfie Meadows, Vishnu Woods and Jack Locke) were all on trial at Kingston crown court for violent disorder during the student demonstration on 9th December 2010.

Colin, Vishnu and John were acquitted, while the jury was unable to reach agreement on Zac and Alfie after three days of deliberations.

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LENS CAP GIGANTASEAL STRIKES BACK!



While debate continues in the anarchist movement over relations with our non-human comrades, some have been taking direct action for themselves as recorded in this snap taken by Freedom's ace wildlife photographer Guido Littlechap.

THE MARCH FOR ENGLAND

Antifascists from London travelled down to Brighton on 22nd April to link up with comrades from Brighton Anti-fascists (BAf) and protest against the March For England (MFE) due to take place in the town.

MFE is the usual rag bag collection of failed football hooligans, pissed up dim-wits and EDL hangers-on that know the local Wetherspoons inside out but very little else. Despite claiming to be 'non-racist', previous marches have degenerated into racist abuse and last year fascist infiltrators amongst the kettled counter-demonstrators were responsible for a number of attacks on protesters.

This year was to be a different matter and BAf are to be congratulated for all the ground-work put into organising an effective and well-stewarded militant response that saw upwards of 600 people on the streets severely

delaying the march, curtailing the route, drowning out the dejected marchers and giving the cops a run for their money too.

Whilst the counter demo was genuinely representative and the chant 'Whose streets? Our Streets' actually had resonance, the MFE consisted of about 80 people, far down on the 300 organisers expected. EDL banners and an Essex Infidels flag were unfurled at the station and the march contained known EDL faces from Portsmouth and Brighton. However a 'firm' of London and local EDL led by Joel Titus have earned themselves the nickname 'Marlborough Light-Weights' after a smaller group of anti-fascist stewards confronted them on two occasions, sending them packing.

All in all a good day's work. A very strong message was sent that fascists are not welcome!

London Antifascists

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NEWS

ROUNDING UP OCCUPY

Outside Mile End the winter has not been kind to Britain's Occupy movement, with large sections of 2011's big tent movement shutting down under a combination of legal orders and cold weather.

But supporters of the loose-knit community are preparing for a hoped resurgence in interest as a dry and warm summer draws near and the Olympics behemoth continues to settle its concrete bulk over East London.

The early pace has been set by Occupiers at Leyton Marsh, who began a blockading action against attempts to grab public parkland for an Olympic basketball court at the end of March.

After a promising start, protestors ran into legal problems as the courts were called in on 4th April, ruling that they were at the site illegally. Police went in five days later, arresting six Occupiers for breach of the peace as they broke up the camp.

Simon Moore, 29, Daniel Ashman, 27, and Anita Olivacce, 25, were jailed for five days each.

Despite a legal challenge, the court ruled on 18th April that the protestors had no right to challenge against their eviction, giving the government the green light to snatch yet more of London's precious green space.

In Finsbury Park meanwhile, the main site of London Occupy since its eviction from St Pauls in February, the mood is more upbeat with celebrations of its six-month anniversary taking place on 22nd April and actions being planned to go on throughout May as Freedom went to press.

Protests, teach-ins and open days are all part of a 'spring awakening' which organisers hope will re-energise interest in getting people out against government austerity and the rule of the 99%.

In a statement, Finsbury Occupy said: "Occupy London is set to strike back as people around the world take to the streets to mark one year since the Indignados reclaimed their squares in Spain and Greece, and six months since the Occupy movement went global.

"The next wave is about to begin. Put May Day, 12 May and 15 May in your diary."

Full details of the plan for London can be found at occupy1x.org.

• Outside of the capital it's been a case of one-up, one-down.

On the one hand an occupation took place on a campus at Oxford Brookes at the end of April despite torrential rain which was still in place as this article goes to press, with plans for talks, music, banner making and an ongoing debate with students and the media of the nature of the economic crisis.

On the other, one of the longest-running Occupations in Nottingham has announced it is to close after legal manouvers from the council threatened to cause serious financial damage to volunteers.

LENS CAP LEGO'S 99%



Picture: OccupyLondon

With St Pauls now the subject of a blocking order to stop Occupy supporters setting up in the area, one supporter finds some acceptable reinforcements...

Occupy: the new Hoovervilles

The protests have failed. A large group came together and inspired themselves with stories about how the world could be changed if everyone stood together and, for a few weeks, it seemed they might be right.

They claimed to be part of the revolutions in the Middle East. Occupy Wall Street was fighting in the belly of capitalism. St Pauls clergy tripped over themselves to resign. But civilians being gunned down in Egypt, Libya and Syria isn't a strong argument for pacifism. The smarter Occupiers moved from the cold and took a more political stand, turning a UBS building in to a Bank Of Ideas. But without the 99% joining up they lost their spaces, eventually being evicted.

The politicians moved on to Finsbury Square and Leyton, leaving the inspired homeless to

split into 57 varieties of occupation, spreading across London to pass on a mix of pacifism, conspiracy theories and spiritualism.

The common theme to all the camps at the moment is that they are mostly made up of homeless people. Bolstered by homeless kids, people with mental health problems and unemployed migrants, casualties of the cuts, the doss houses are full and there's no temporary housing.

Occupy are at the point of building shanty towns on the scraps of urban wasteland and open parks. Where can people go except to the camps? There's a tent and coffee for you. If you pay lip service to a Rainbow Tribe you've got shelter for a few weeks... better than a night alone on the streets.



NEWS



Protests against workfare, from left to right, in Brighton, Wimbledon's CWU headquarters and Catford in south east London.

Workfare protests

Work-for-benefits is now under attack on two fronts

The government's attempt to impose work-for-benefits schemes on benefit claimants has run into severe problems in the last month as legal issues mix with continuing protests at participating companies.

Workfare, which requires jobseekers to work for private companies or face a loss of benefits, is being challenged in high court by Cait Reilly in June.

Cait was forced to quit her voluntary work in a museum, which was directly relevant to her career, so she could stack shelves at Poundland – or face losing her only income.

She is claiming the sanction is an affront to her human rights and, if she wins, the ruling could open the doors for up to 50,000 affected jobseekers to do the same.

Meanwhile A4e, the firm administering Workfare, has simultaneously come under

scrutiny after no less than six of its employees were arrested following allegations they had lied about how effective they had been in getting people into work.

A4e, which is owned by former 'back to work' Tsar Emma Harrison, is the main company covering the back to work 'market' created in the wake of Department of Work and Pensions privatisation schemes.

And beyond legal challenges, organised protest and disruption is growing as an anarchist-organised national day of action saw private companies picketed in twenty towns and cities across Britain on 31st March.

This was followed by a number of one-offs which have dogged firms from Tesco to Holland & Barrett, and even the headquarters of the CWU union for its leadership's role in supporting Workfare at the Royal Mail.

More actions were rolled out on Mayday organised by the Solidarity Federation (SolFed) and community organisation the Edinburgh Coalition Against Poverty has scored a victory as it used direct action

tactics to win the right for claimants to have representatives attend meetings with A4e.

Despite these growing problems, the government has continued to try and tough it out, backing down in its demands for compulsory work only in the cases of young unemployed people and where high street chains have withdrawn support – and even this may only be temporary.

Claimants over the age of 18 can still be caught in the government's rapidly-expanding Mandatory Work Scheme or the Community Action Plan aimed at the long-term unemployed.

In a statement, SolFed noted: "Bosses prefer not having to pay for workers. Instead, we are all paying to subsidise their profits. Protests have already forced some to pull out of the scheme. Let's make it all of them."

Notable participating companies: Citizens Advice Bureau, Remploy, Disability Works, A4e, Serco, G4S, Atos, Primark, Burton, Boots, McDonalds, Arcadia, Holland & Barrett

Still alive, still free!

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There will be a decision on whether to retry them on Friday 27th April, and if so the earliest date will be in October.



Vishnu and Jack were also up for arson, to whit burning two park benches to keep warm (it was minus four that evening). Vishnu was acquitted of this but Jack found guilty – we can only guess because the video showed him doing a little jig of joy round the fire. He has been sent for a pre-sentence report and will find out on the 17th May, but he has a very good chance of avoiding custody.

As we go to press the Hilliard brothers are starting their retrial for violent disorder and more cases are coming, so look out for updates on the website.

In our next issue we will have a review of the student protest cases, but in the meantime our congratulations to these defendants and good luck to those due to come.

CHANGES AT THE PAPER

This issue of Freedom is the first to have been produced without Dean Talent for two years, as he and the collective have parted ways. We wish Dean all the best and thank him for his work on the building, the paper and the website over the last while.

With the editor gone and the appointment of a new editor looming, the collective as a whole is taking the opportunity to take a step back and ask where we wish to go next with the newspaper.

We've got our own ideas on this but would welcome your feedback and indeed if you have a bit of free time, your help!

We're back on the hunt for writers, sub-editors, people to help with marketing and distribution, and are looking at ways to raise money to keep the old thing ticking over. Get in touch!

THE BIG PICTURE



On the 10th anniversary of the death of former Civil Rights activist and Anarchist John McGuffin, local activists including former friends and comrades gathered in Derry's Bogside and gave the iconic monument a fitting rebellious make-over with the red and black colours of anarchism. Over the next fortnight the black flag of anarchy will fly over Free Derry corner in a fine tribute. No Gods No Masters!

<http://www.derryanarchists.blogspot.co.uk/>

NEWS

Squatting: criminalisation and then what?

On Tuesday 27th March, the House of Lords passed the Legal Aid, Sentencing and Punishment of Offenders Bill, sending it back to the House of Commons.¹ This event, pretty much unreported in the mainstream press, caused waves in the squat scene since section 145 of the bill proposes to criminalise squatting in residential buildings. As SQUASH (Squatters Action for Secure Homes) commented, "the proposed legislation will have impacts on the most vulnerable people in society, will empower unscrupulous landlords and will burden the justice system, police and charities".²

A report by SQUASH has made it clear that the cost of criminalisation will dwarf any presumed benefits.³ Presumably most people reading this will agree that criminalisation is a step in the wrong direction and much has already been written about the legislation in general terms so in this short piece we aim to focus specifically on the impacts for political activism.

Occupation as resistance takes many forms. Recently, perhaps because squatting has been under threat, there have been plenty of actions – Cardiff has a new social centre (the Red and Black Umbrella),⁴ the previously rented Forest Cafe was squatted in Edinburgh,⁵ the Hinkley Barnstormers drew attention to the planned construction of a new nuclear power station in the West Country,⁶ the Citadel of Hope (an old Salvation Army hall) was cracked in Sheffield⁷ and campaigners replaced a phased out homeless shelter with a squatted project in Brighton.

Alongside these great initiatives, there have been plenty of illegal evictions of other projects. In London, the School of Ideas was illegally evicted the same night as the St Paul's occupation, and then quickly demolished.⁸ Previously, a freshly squatted Iraqi bank (empty since 1994) had been evicted by chainsaw-wielding cops who pretended the building was in diplomatic use and thus the Section 6 was subject to legal exemption.⁹ In Lancaster, Occupy squatters took a building and were illegally evicted soon after.¹⁰ Squats have also been illegally evicted in Brighton,¹¹ Bristol¹² and Peckham.¹³

This only serves to indicate that political squatting is already difficult in this country and a proposed law change will not have much impact. Just as those desperately in

need of a place to sleep will still enter derelict buildings, activists will still use the empties – there's more than enough to go round in this time of austerity. Only a small percentage of Britain's estimated 720,000 empty buildings are actually squatted.¹⁴

A group of squatters recently opened a shop in Brighton, selling fruit and veg by donation. It's been wildly popular and shows what can be done with the empty properties blighting every high street. Of course the shop is zoned commercial, not residential (although it comprises one land registry item with the flat upstairs) so it would be 'safe' under the proposed legislation.

It remains to be seen how residential will eventually be defined and as a supposed legal brain said recently "that there will at some point be an offence of squatting in commercial buildings [...] seems inevitable. The question is simply how soon".¹⁵ Stand by for smear stories in the media about raves and dangerous artists using warehouses.



If we take a brief look at Europe, in Spain squatting was criminalised in the late 1990s and interestingly, the numbers of squats subsequently increased. The law appears to be unenforceable, with only a few cases being brought so far. In the Netherlands, the squat ban introduced in October 2010 only seems at present to be being applied in Amsterdam, where nevertheless new squats are still being opened, such as the Valreep social centre.¹⁶ It has been subject to various legal challenges.

Here, Mike Weatherley¹⁷ and other opportunistic politicians will now most likely move on to their next chance to grab the limelight. The law will become law, but slowly and with many challenges.

Meanwhile the squatters will keep on squatting. In London we do not expect the Met to bother with squats more than usual, they've got bigger fish to fry, although social centres and the like will still receive undue attention. In Brighton we expect the police to be all over this new law, and a lot to hinge on interpretations of how exactly 'residential' is defined.

So as far as we get into it in this short article, the impending criminalisation of squatting in residential buildings appears not



to change very much. We expect some confrontations, but as you can see, those battles are already being waged. Once squatters are illegalised, despite broad public sympathy they will soon be portrayed as domestic extremists / terrorists, the 'bad' activists as opposed to the 'good'. This may sound paranoid, but there are already precedents, such as the Bloomsbury Social Centre being profiled by the Met's SO15 Counter Terrorism unit.¹⁸

In the meantime squatting offers us all a chance to contest definitions of public space and to establish autonomous spaces from which to organise. Whether these spaces are defined as illegal or not seems quite frankly irrelevant. Keep on squatting!

Footnotes

- <http://services.parliament.uk/bills/2010-12/legalaid/sentencingandpunishmentofoffenders/documents.html>
- <http://www.squashcampaign.org/>
- <http://www.squashcampaign.org/2012/03/cost-of-new-squatting-law-could-be-790m/>
- <http://redandblackumbrella.squat.net/>
- <http://www.indymedia.org.uk/en/2011/12/489555.html>
- <http://earthfirst.org.uk/actionreports/content/hinkley-point-barnstormers-occupiers-aim-stop-edf-land-trash-video-and-flyer>
- <http://en.squat.net/2011/12/29/6150/>
- <http://occupylsx.org/?p=3815>
- <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/crime/protesters-evicted-from-building-linked-to-iraqi-embassy-6295728.html>
- www.lancasterguardian.co.uk/news/occupy_campaigners_angry_at_police_arrests_1_4132436
- <http://indymedia.org.uk/en/2012/04/494570.html>
- <http://indymedia.org.uk/en/2012/04/494655.html>
- <http://en.squat.net/2012/03/10/london-100-police-illegally-evict-social-centre/>
- <http://www.redpepper.org.uk/criminalising-squatting-is-the-real-crime/>
- <http://www.estategazette.com/blogs/property-law/2011/10/residential-squatting-criminalised---is-commercial-far-behind.html>
- <http://valreep.wordpress.com>
- <http://www.mikeweatherleymp.com/photos/iron-maiden/>
- <http://en.squat.net/2012/01/26/london-student-centre-branded-terrorist/>

ANALYSIS

Palestinians hungry for freedom

Barely a week goes by these days without Palestinian detainees announcing a hunger strike in protest at their treatment by the Israeli prison system. Yet, the world has been pretty much kept in the dark as mere snippets of information trickle out about what is turning into a cascade of resistance. Now, as Palestine's marked Prisoner's Day on the 17th April, 1,200 prisoners declared an open-ended hunger strike. Demands include an end to prolonged solitary confinement and night searches of prisoners and their cells.

The protesters are in good company. At the end of March, Hana Shalabi was finally released from administrative detention, ending her 44-day hunger strike. However, despite being in critical condition she was exiled to Gaza instead of being able to return to her family home of Burqin in the northern West Bank. There were approximately twenty other Palestinian prisoners on hunger strike in solidarity with Shalabi, a small percentage of more than 300 Palestinian's currently being held without charge.

Another striker, Hasan al-Safadi was rushed to hospital on Friday 7th April after fainting on the 33rd day of his refusal to take food. Also in hospital are Omar Abu Shalal, Bilal Diab and Thaer Halahla. All are being held without charge. What is



glaringly obvious is the need for international solidarity activists to work tirelessly to highlight these acts of non-violent resistance and help bring Israel's hidden policies to light. According to the Israeli Prisons Service, as of August 2011 there were more than 5,000 Palestinian prisoners.

These protests follow the agreement reached between Israel and Khader Adnan, whose administrative detention will not be renewed beyond 17th April following his 67-day hunger strike beginning in December last year. Still, he remained shackled to a hospital bed in northern Israel, with armed guards overseeing his recovery. Adnan was previously held in the notorious Ofer Prison, partly run by Anglo-Danish security company G4S. With his release date now behind us there are unconfirmed reports that Adnan has returned to his home in the West Bank.

Israel's administrative detention policy allows the state to hold detainees for unlimited periods of time without trial or



formal charges. Initial detention is scheduled to last for six months, but this is simply extended as the expiry date approaches – and can be renewed indefinitely. Obviously, Israel needs some sort of legal footing to justify the imprisonment of people for simply disagreeing with military occupation, but the parameters are so loose as to make them meaningless.

The mainstream media have been ominously quiet on the issue, perhaps because both Adnan and Shalabi's stories open a can of worms that would force the world to acknowledge Israel's barbaric treatment of Palestinian prisoners. This treatment flies in the face of any modicum of human rights, and is in grave breach of the Geneva Convention (although, as the US fails to adhere to any of these principles, it is difficult to see why Israel would bother).

Shalabi's plight also exposes the verbatim reproduction of Israeli propaganda by even the supposedly critical press. She was one of the prisoners exchanged, to much fanfare, when Hamas agreed to release Israeli soldier Gilad Shalit back in October 2011. Whilst the world was fed stories of convicted terrorists being unleashed to commit further crimes, in truth the large majority should not have even been behind bars in the first place. Many were held in administrative detention.

Whilst exact figures are vague, as with previous prisoner swaps a number of Palestinian's released alongside Shalabi in the Shalit deal were swiftly re-arrested and again disappeared into the Israeli prison system. Others were banished to Gaza, which is essentially an open air prison with

more than one and a half million inmates, some exiled to neighbouring countries.

For what it is worth, the Fourth Geneva Convention prohibits the transfer, by an occupying force, of a population from occupied territories – much the same as it prohibits the transfer of a population into an occupied territory as Israel is also doing with its colonisation of the West Bank. It is a classic case of 'do as I say, and not as I do'. The day before Shalit was kidnapped on the Gaza border, Israeli forces slipped into the Strip and whisked away the Muammar brothers.

Gilad Shalit's father Noam recently caused uproar when admitting he would kidnap Israeli soldiers if he were Palestinian. He also highlighted the fact that Hamas's actions were similar to those techniques used by Jewish paramilitaries against the British in what was then Mandate Palestine, noting "we also kidnapped British soldiers". The legal framework for Israel's policy of administrative detention is also a hang-over from the same period, enacted by the British in 1945 at the height of Jewish resistance.

<http://mondoweiss.net/2012/03/hana-shalabi-now-hospitalized-our-freedom-is-even-more-precious-and-more-powerful-than-their-cells.html>

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2012/mar/15/gilad-shalit-father-kidnap-israel>

<http://english.al-akhbar.com/content/latest-palestinian-hunger-striker-hospitalized-after-fainting>

<http://www.amnesty.org/en/appeals-for-action-Israel-End-use-of-administrative-detention>

COMMENT

Breivik's defence

Anders Breivik did not say 'self defence'

Anders Behring Breivik does not deny that he killed eight people and injured 200 others in Oslo, then went on to shoot and kill 69, mostly teenagers, at a youth camp on the island of Utoya. On the first day of his trial on 16th April 2012, he was reported in the English-language media as telling the court, "I acknowledge the acts. But I do not plead guilty. I did it in self-defence".

He spoke in Norwegian, and reports in English quoted the word of the court interpreters, who much later issued a 'clarification'. What Breivik said was not "I did it in self-defence", but "I did it out of necessity".

The misinterpretation may not be inexplicable. The word 'self' does not always mean 'self' in the ordinary, mundane sense of a self-aware person. Sometimes, for instance in political cartoons, nations or populations may be symbolically depicted as

persons, and some patriotic propagandists appear to take the metaphor as literal truth, speaking as if the nation, or whatever, is a real person with thoughts, beliefs, and ambitions of its own, independent of the individuals who comprise it.

This way of thinking may have been current among the militaristic nations of classical antiquity, and is certainly present in modern fascist ideology. Max Stirner, the author of *Der Einzige und sein Eigentum* ('The ego and its own'), is commonly reckoned a precursor of anarchism, because he advocated that individual persons should make decisions for themselves, and not sacrifice themselves to causes like patriotism. But Hitler's mentor Dietrich Eckart, a deeply patriotic fascist, proclaimed himself a follower of Stirner, because when Stirner wrote of 'self', Eckart thought he meant the German nation, as a separate, self-aware entity.

Whatever Breivik actually said, he seems to have swallowed the crazy idea that the European race is a more important 'self' than himself.



FREEDOM STOCKISTS

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- **Cowley Club Social Centre**, 12 London Road, Brighton BN1 4JA, tel 01273 696104 email cowleyclub@riseup.net <http://cowleyclub.org.uk/>

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- **Birmingham Bike Foundry**, 1539 Pershore Road, Stirchley, Birmingham B30 2JH, tel: 0121 459 7276, email: info@birminghambikefoundry.org <http://birminghambikefoundry.org>

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INTERNATIONAL

NEWS IN BRIEF

GREECE: On-going austerity demonstrations in Greece have been stepped up following the tragic death of Dimitris Christoulas. Dimitris was a 77-year-old retired pharmacist who had found himself poverty stricken due to government austerity measures. During the rush hour he travelled to the Greek Parliament building, stood outside, and then shot himself through the head. His death sparked a new wave of demonstrations and increased police brutality. His suicide note explained that he had chosen to take his own life as he did not want to have to rummage through bins for sustenance, choosing instead to take his own life. He also called on the 'young people' of Greece to take up arms and hang the traitors of this country at Syntagma square, just like the Italians did to Mussolini in 1945".

RUSSIA: Automotive workers at a factory in Kaluga who supply Volkswagen have ended a strike after they thought they had won significant victories relating to pay, and union recognition. This was in spite on many attempts by the company to break the strike. Bosses brought in university students, office staff, construction workers, and workers from rival car manufacturers in order to carry on production. The striking workers had managed to prevent scabs and deliveries from entering the site. Unfortunately, since the strikers returned to work they have seen scabs receive bonuses; they have been threatened with dismissal, disciplinary measures, or demotion if they do not leave the union. The bosses are also in the process of taking legal action against the union relating to the legality of the strike.

CANADA: Anti-fascist activists and hundreds of people from the local community managed to prevent an annual 'white pride' march from taking place in Edmonton. Within minutes of the march commencing, anti-fascists blocked their path and chased them off the streets. The fascists took refuge in an underground railway station and had to be provided with safe passage out of the city by the police. No Pasaran!

USA: The FBI has raided a facility in New York, seizing a server that is used by Riseup and other progressive groups. The removal of the server means that hundreds of email accounts have been closed as well as email lists belonging to anarchist groups, gay rights groups, community groups, and free speech groups. Riseup have described the act as a "sledgehammer approach" shutting down hundreds of accounts in their search for one anonymous person.

LENS CAP PALESTINIAN PRISONERS ON HUNGER STRIKE



On 17th April 2012, Palestinian prisoners held in Israeli prisons launched a mass hunger strike demanding an end to administrative detention, isolation and other punitive measures taken against Palestinian prisoners including the denial of family visits and access to university education. For updates see <http://www.addameer.org/etemplate.php?id=470> and see also page 6 of this issue.

Police close down social centres

There has been a massive police operation in the Exarcheia district of Athens which has seen two anarchist social centres closed down and all occupants evicted. At around 5pm on 20th April the police smashed windows and doors to gain entry and arrested all 20 people who were inside. The two anarchist spaces had only been occupied for two weeks, one of which was due to have an opening event the following day.

It is believed that the decision to close down the centres had been taken by I. Tentes, a prosecutor at the Athens High Court whose career had started when he was appointed to his post by the right-wing military junta in the early 1970s.

The police are claiming that the centres are being used as "laboratories for explosives", despite there being no evidence to corroborate their allegations. The Greek media are claiming that the evictions are just the first stage of a wider operation to close down anarchist havens around the city.

Just two days after the evictions, one of the centres has been re-occupied by hundreds of people, who removed the steel plates that covered the doors and windows. The police were looking on, but made no attempt to prevent them from entering the building.

Following the re-occupation, over 1,000 people attended a solidarity concert organised by the social centre collective.

Notes from the US

Economy

The state of Michigan seems to be nearing the appointment of an unelected an emergency manager to take over the city of Detroit. Freedom has reported before on this trend, where (as the economic crisis deepens) cities and municipalities seize the opportunity to put in unelected managers to run them – often in the interests of capital and the élite.

Health

New research by the National Women's Law Center shows that women are paying US\$1 billion (£630 million) more each year than

men for the same health insurance coverage. In the states that permit 'gender rating' 92% of the top plans charge women more – even though most of those plans do not cover maternity care! In most states, female non-smokers are also charged more than male smokers – again because they are women.

Surveillance

An exposé in *Wired* magazine in mid-March revealed details of the United States' largest spying outfit, the National Security Agency's (NSA), latest huge spying complex – quietly being built in the middle of nowhere – in

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INTERNATIONAL

Wildcat strikes in Poland

Metalworkers fight back against casualisation

Around 400 metalworkers employed at the Huta Batory ironworks in Chorzów, Poland started a wildcat strike on 2nd April. The bosses had been dismissing staff on a weekly basis, including 50 in the previous week. They then replaced them with agency workers who were paid around 50% of permanent staff wages. The management have made no secret of their intentions and have announced that their long term aim is to have around 80% of the workforce on temporary agency contracts.

The workers had become disillusioned by negotiations between their ineffective trade union and the company management, and decided to walk off the job. They immediately blockaded the factory entrance and refused to let any deliveries in or out.

The bosses responded by hiring large groups of private security guards to try and break the strike. Word quickly got around the local community and later that day several hundred people travelled to the factory to support the strikers. Several buses full of security staff arrived, but they were confronted by a hostile crowd and decided to drive away.



Notes from the US

◀◀ page 8

Bluffdale, Utah. It's apparently part of a secret NSA surveillance program codenamed 'Stellar Wind' and will occupy almost a million square feet and cost nearly US\$2 (£1.3) billion to complete with an estimated annual energy cost alone (the capacity to pump 1.7 million gallons of liquid a day, manage air and sewerage as well as cool the server farm) of US\$40 (£25) million. The site will be self-contained and self-sustaining – for up to three days in an emergency.

The purpose of those servers – which are likely to have almost unimaginably massive speed, power and storage capacity? To intercept, tap, monitor, gather and listen in on virtually all emails, (cell-)phone



Members of the ZSP (Polish section of the International Workers Association) went to picket the company headquarters in Warsaw, but unfortunately they found the offices to be closed.

Later that day the company announced that they intend on closing the factory, sacking over 100 people who they believed to be trouble makers with immediate effect, and locking out all the remaining workers.

Two weeks after the strike started, bosses organised a shareholders meeting in Warsaw. Members of the ZSP joined ironworkers in picketing and disrupting the meeting.

Tellingly, the only item on the agenda was regarding the decision to close the factory, timescales and how assets were to be liquidised.

Workers are convinced that the decision by the bosses to disregard the agreed 'negotiation arrangements' with the unions, and to recruit agency workers was a deliberate attempt to provoke a dispute and enable them to sack large groups of workers for going on an illegal strike. This would have the added benefit on enabling the bosses to 'bypass' expensive group redundancy agreements.

Alchemia, the company that runs the ironworks has recently issued its annual accounts which showed that it had made an 800% increase in profits over the last twelve months. The company is owned by one of the richest families in Poland, who have a large portfolio of other companies and are alleged to have a fortune of around 1.8 billion.

conversations and exchanges of data originating inside the US as well as abroad. Also included are private individuals' Google searches, parking receipts, travel itineraries, bookstore purchases and the like.

According to the *Wired* report's author, James Bamford, the NSA lost its lead in the 1990s, failing to predict various attacks on the US inside and outside the country. To rectify that, it apparently plans to capture, if necessary decode/decrypt and detect patterns in... everything!

As similar attempts in the UK to track almost anything that moves are announced, a new investigation by the American Civil Liberties Union (the equivalent of Liberty)

revealed at the start of this month just how widespread such activities by the police are in the United States. Over 200 police departments which admitted to tracking mobile phone calls also acknowledged that they have routinely obtained warrants to do so. So routine, in fact, that phone companies now make manuals available to the police which explain the range of data stored and pricing plans (!) for police to obtain it.

Louis Further

Resources

American Civil Liberties Union: www.aclu.org
National Women's Law Center: www.nwlc.org
Wired magazine: www.wired.com

ECONOMICS

Rich holing that boat we're all in



George Osborne's budget has only seen the light of day for five weeks, however criticisms are already mounting that the government's cuts regime has backfired as figures released on 25th April show Britain plunging into a double dip recession.

A recession is defined as two consecutive quarters of contraction. The economy shrank 0.2% in the first quarter of 2012, with an overall drop of 0.5% since October primarily caused by a fall in construction output and a smaller downturn in manufacturing. The first double-dip since Thatcher follows a

period of economic flatlining and a failure to reduce the deficit despite cuts. This period of stagnation dates almost exactly to the introduction of the coalition's austerity programme.

The mid-term outlook is also gloomy: contraction is expected to continue into this quarter, extending the downturn to nine months. Overall this recession is the longest in the past century.

Some economists believe the economy may be stronger than these figures – based on gross domestic product – suggest, and are

looking to other surveys that report somewhat cheerier statistics, particularly for the construction industry. Repeated across business papers is the sentiment that news of a double-dip will retard growth by eroding consumer confidence, sinking the economy into a more serious recession than already exists.

There are not many ways to dress up these figures though or to hide daily hardships from consumers, so the government and its critics will be forced to take this seriously.

Osbourne has already announced that he will not sway from the austerity programme, and he reiterated that his strategy is supported by business groups and the International Monetary Fund (IMF). However the IMF's forecast for 0.8% growth this year looks increasingly unlikely. At this point the government seems intent on continuing the cuts, despite the figures being "very, very disappointing" and clearly showing that austerity is not generating the promised results.

Attempts by the coalition to shift the blame for the contraction on the Eurozone crisis doesn't hold water, as construction is largely sheltered as a domestic economy. There has been a 25% reduction in public sector net investment last year, including the building of new schools and hospitals.

A contraction in the economy can only mean further hardship, compounded by the coalition's mismanagement of the budget and a stubborn – if unsurprising – conviction to stand by their austerity programme no matter what the data says. However, we can take heart that the anti-cuts demos, campaigns, and groups are right: austerity simply isn't working.

The Dutch Experience: hypocrisy and fear

The Dutch government has collapsed after only 18 months in power. Prime Minister Mark Rutte and his cabinet resigned after they were unable to reach an agreement with other parties over the 2013 budget, including proposed austerity cuts in the Netherlands. Queen Beatrix accepted the resignation, however Rutte will stay in power as a caretaker government while Dutch political parties decide how to proceed. Elections may be held as early as 27th July.

Rutte's liberal-conservative coalition had strongly backed the Eurozone's fiscal union treaty, urging that Greece be penalised for falling behind on implementing spending cuts. Rutte also supported Germany's proposal in January to strip Greece of sovereignty.

Despite repeatedly lecturing on the value of austerity to Southern European countries, the Netherlands was carrying a higher deficit than Portugal or Italy, yet retaining its AAA

credit rating and seen as a stable haven within the central Eurozone countries. Only four of the Eurozone's 17 nations still possess the coveted AAA rating.

In the current round of budget talks, the Dutch deficit was revealed to be 4.6% of gross domestic product, well above the 3% limit for Eurozone countries. Rutte's proposed budget included €19 billion in spending cuts, in order to bring the deficit down to 3% next year. The government could be fined €1.2 billion if unable to reach this target.

Talks collapsed amidst political opposition to the cuts from the Labour party, the Dutch Central Bank and the government's own Central Plan Bureau. Rutte's minority government was finally prompted to resign after far-right politician Geert Wilders walked out of the budget talks.

The Dutch have been was a driving force behind tough Eurozone rules, particularly

the 3% deficit limit and in 2011 proposed that heavily indebted states be taken into 'guardianship' under the direct control of a European commissioner. As caretaker, Rutte will submit a provisional budget on April 30th and is still intending for cuts to be integral to this.

However as the debt crisis creeps northward and the Netherlands' credit rating is threatened, the coming elections will be decided on whether the country should stick to its own Eurozone rules and impose similar devastating cuts prescribed to Greece.

While left-leaning parties are also against the proposed austerity cuts, it is Geert Wilders who has the international spotlight in the wake of the collapse. Comrades in the Netherlands have a many-pronged battle ahead of them: austerity, politicians in Brussels, the caretaker government and far-right nationalism.

HISTORY

The African Forum

London anarchists in the 1950s had some influence on African politics after the end of British rule in Africa. This may not be important, but it would be a pity to forget it

The Malatesta Club was an anarchist social club with its own hired premises, founded in 1954. It hired its premises full time, but did not use them full time. On some evenings, it rented its room to other organisations, one of which was the African Forum, a group of politicians from the British Empire in Africa, hoping to take power when their countries became independent. Oppression was rife in the colonies, but all the inhabitants were British subjects with the same legal rights, in London, as other British subjects. Black Britons, however, suffered from the widespread belief that black people were inherently inferior to white people.

Members of the African Forum came to see what anarchist club nights were like, and four of them became regulars of the Club.

Manny Obahiagbon, professionally known as E.E. Obahiagbon, was the one who had the idea of hiring the room. He published and edited *The Nigerian at Home and Abroad*, printed by Express Printers, which was owned by Freedom Press. Philip Sansom, who managed Express Printers, was also the prime mover for the foundation of the Malatesta Club, so Manny was there from the beginning.

Manny was a Benin, a scion of Benin nobility (the European-imposed border of modern Benin cuts through the ancient Kingdom of Benin, putting part of it in Nigeria). Rita Milton, who worked at Express Printers, said she believed he was an anarchist, but I think this was because she found him attractive. In fact, he was more of a Marxist.

Manny taught me the rudiments of Nigerian politics, which I found useful in the 1970s, when the Prime Minister of East Nigeria, one of the British delineated regions, declared it an independent country, 'Biafra', to prevent it from being divided into smaller regions by the new federal government. Some British radicals were misled into thinking this was a move for freedom. Manny also taught me some useful Yoruba greetings. In 1963, I heard that he was publicity officer of the Nigerian Timber Corporation.

Mohamed Ali, as he was known at the Malatesta Club, turned up on television in



Drawn in the Malatesta Club by Rufus Segar in 1956

1963, as a Zanzibari politician named Abdulrahman Mohamed Babu, suspected of being a Maoist. He told his television interviewer, "While I was in London I was attracted to anarchism, but anarchism requires a certain political sophistication, which is not available in Africa".

He had visited China in 1959 to negotiate (successfully) for the promise of Chinese financial aid when Zanzibar became independent. He had said he would never join a Zanzibar government which had Abeid Karume as president, but when Karume became president, he joined, explaining his u-turn unashamedly, with a toothy smile, "That's politics".

In 1964, when Zanzibar and Tanganyika were amalgamated in the new country called Tanzania, Babu moved to Dar-es-Salaam to join the government of Julius Nyerere, and secured a grant from China, additional to the aid which was already there, for the building of the Tanzania railway.

In 1972, Babu's old rival Abeid Karume was assassinated. Babu was found to be implicated and sentenced to death, but freed by Nyerere in 1978. He died in London in 1996.

Wenike Briggs was a descendant of Young Briggs, the famous nineteenth century chief of the Ijo people in south-eastern Nigeria. Wenike came to London to study law, and returned to Nigeria as a barrister, after showing photographs of himself in his barrister's wig to his friends at the Malatesta Club. Following the first elections after

Nigerian independence, he became Minister of Education in the federal government, and subsequently in several other federal governments of different political complexions. Later, he was a lawyer of some local importance.

Susuke Omubu was another Ijo, a journalist employed in London as a sub-editor on the *News Chronicle*.

Omubu, a lively guitarist, entertained at the Malatesta club with African-style songs of four bars, continually repeated. One song, in English, was 'Never marry a white woman, or you will go hungry', changing after many repetitions to 'Never marry a white woman. All you get is fish and chips'. Much hilarity was caused among the Africans when English people joined in songs in African languages, such as for instance 'Funfun l eye nsu, funfun leye nsu', which is Yoruba for 'Whiteness is shat by birds'. An English woman invited him home and offered him food, by which he said he was insulted, because where he came from, food was only offered to beggars. A well-educated man, he must have known that in England it is good manners to invite visitors to tea, so his pretence of feeling insulted was very rude.

After Wenike Briggs returned to Nigeria, Omubu saw himself as the senior Ijo resident in London, and took the name of Omubu Briggs. When he returned to Nigeria himself, it was as editor of a newspaper owned by Wenike Briggs.

Donald Room

WELCOME TO THE NEW, TRANSPARENT NHS

Private health firms' tax grab exposed

While in public they have been presenting themselves as the future of the NHS, a Corporate Watch investigation into the accounts of five of the major private healthcare companies has found a use of tax havens and tax avoidance schemes that Barclays or Vodafone would be proud of.

Spire Healthcare

Spire is one of the biggest private healthcare providers in the UK. It treats 25% of its patients through the NHS, providing operations such as hip replacements. Spire was formed in 2007 after private equity firm Cinven bought 25 hospitals from Bupa for £1.4bn. Since then it has acquired 12 more hospitals to take its current total to 37. The company has said it is aiming to be a "provider of choice" to Lansley's new GP commissioning groups.

Spire is highly profitable: its revenue rose by 4% to £643m in 2010 and it posted an operating profit of £123m. Much of that was eaten away by the £108m in interest it had to pay bank loans taken out by Cinven to finance its acquisition of Spire. But even after that has been paid, there should still be £15m of taxable profit remaining.

However, in addition to the interest on the bank loans, Spire has paid £65m in interest on almost £600m of loans it owes to the company Rozier, which is another subsidiary of Cinven, based in Luxembourg. Rozier's accounts show it paid almost the same sum to its owner in 2010 as share yields. In Luxembourg these shares are treated as debt, so Rozier deducts the interest from its Luxembourg tax bill (in the process almost wiping it out). UK tax authorities meanwhile will treat it as dividends which count as income, not profit, so the money Cinven receives from Rozier will also be tax deductible.

Spire has only paid any tax at all in the last three years because HMRC has deemed some expenses "not deductible for tax purposes."

Care UK

Care UK is one of the biggest private providers of NHS treatments, is the largest operator of independent sector treatment centres and also operates GP practices and out-of-hours services, NHS walk-in centres and Clinical Assessment and Treatment Services around the country.

The company has had contracts with all of the current Strategic Health Authorities, works with one in three Primary Care Trusts and is currently bidding to take over the management of the NHS George Eliot Hospital in Nuneaton. It also runs 85 residential homes and provides care for over 17,000 people across the UK.

Previously a publicly listed company, it was bought by the private equity company Bridgepoint Capital in 2010. The new owners restructured it, increasing its levels of debt and introducing a tax avoidance scheme that sees interest payments on borrowings and dividends on shares channelling money out of the company.

Care UK lost money in 2010 due to the costs of restructuring, but while its owners will enjoy healthy returns when it returns to profitability the public finances may not.

Care UK paid £41m in finance costs in 2010.

£25m of this was the interest on a £250m bond it had to issue for Bridgepoint to buy it in the first place. £8m is going in interest payments on £130m of loan notes – essentially IOUs – Care UK issued on the Channel Islands stock exchange straight after its acquisition.

Usually when a UK company borrows from a non-UK company it has to pay 25% of the value of the interest to UK tax authorities. But there are exceptions to this, one being the Channel Islands stock exchange which is eligible for a "quoted Eurobond exemption" – meaning the interest payments are taken off Care UK's taxable earnings.

In addition, £8m a year is going straight to the Bridgepoint fund investors that bought Care UK as dividends on £126m of "cumulative preference shares" which do not allow voting rights but guarantee a



Illustration drawn by Giulia Barbera after the 9th October 2011 demonstration to save the NHS.⁹

dividend every year even if the company is not profitable.

When the Bridgepoint fund bought Care UK, it invested £130m into the company. However, it put £126m of this into these preference shares, with only £4m going into ordinary shares.

Circle Health

Circle Health took over the management of Hinchingsbrooke hospital in recent months, becoming the first private company to win a contract to manage an NHS hospital. It has also operated NHS services in Burton, Nottingham and Bradford, private clinics in Stratford and Windsor and a private hospital in Bath. A self-described "social enterprise," Circle has been among the foremost advocates of competition in the NHS.

Circle was founded in 2004 and the costs of its rapid expansion have meant it is yet to make any significant returns for its owners.

purchasing on behalf of four London NHS trusts. It has strongly argued more patients should use private providers within the NHS.

GHG is owned by a consortium of companies including private equity firms Apax Partners, London & Regional and Brockton, alongside South African hospitals giant Netcare which holds a controlling 50.1% share.

The GHG deal was financed by borrowing and issuing bonds for a total of £1.9bn from a variety of third party sources. As this was all set up pre-credit crunch, the interest rates are low, though conditional. The prospectus for almost £400m of asset-backed bonds issued by the company in May 2007 for example makes clear that companies within the group must be resident for tax purposes in the UK.

Even here the potential for remains. Each of the 47 hospitals owned by GHG are owned by separate subsidiaries, all incorporated in the British Virgin Islands. These are registered in the UK for tax purposes, as insisted upon by the terms of the bonds, but they are still British Virgin Islands companies. This means that when Netcare and partners come to sell GHG, they can transfer the ownership of the hospital-owning subsidiaries to the new owners in the British Virgin Islands, potentially avoiding UK stamp duty.

Ramsay Health Care

Ramsay, Australia's biggest private hospital chain, bought Capio UK in 2007, acquiring its 22 hospitals and nine Independent Sector Treatment Centres for NHS patients. Almost 60% of Ramsay's work is from the NHS, a proportion that has increased for the past five years. A 9% revenue increase in 2010 came in large part from the increase in NHS work the company was getting through the Choose and Book system.

Ramsay's accountants will be more interested in their parent company's tax authorities than HMRC. In 2010, Ramsay UK borrowed £57m from RHC Finance Ltd, a subsidiary of its Australian parent registered in the Caymans, to finance the acquisition of a 57% share of French firm Proclif, now re-branded as Ramsay Sante. This led to £1m leaving the UK for the Cayman Islands in interest payments.

Why the company routed the financing for its investment through the Caymans is unclear as RHC Finance's accounts are not made public. When asked, Ramsay UK told Corporate Watch that RHC is a subsidiary of its Australian parent and the UK company does not have any information about its operations.

A longer and fully-referenced version of this article is available on the Corporate Watch website: corporatwatch.org/?lid=4251

But its accounts show that, when it does, those owners are well placed to minimise their tax burden.

Circle's corporate structure is far from the social enterprise model its publicity claims.

Circle Health Ltd – the company that actually provides healthcare – is 50.1% owned by a company called Circle Holdings, with the other 49.9% owned by Circle Partnership. Circle Partnership is part-owned by Circle employees and is the social enterprise part.

But while this may mean some of its staff benefit when the company starts making a profit, as it is registered in the British Virgin Islands, these benefits will not be shared. Companies registered in the Caribbean island do not have to pay tax on dividends from investment in a UK company.

Companies registered in the British Virgin Islands do not have to make their accounts public – and Circle did not respond to Corporate Watch's requests to see them – so

we cannot see exactly how much of the Circle Partnership is owned by its employees. But Circle Holding's financial statement shows that at least 10% of shares in Partnership are held by a company called Health Partners Limited, a "wholly owned subsidiary of Health Trust (Jersey), a family trust of which the Chief Executive Officer [former Goldman Sachs bigwig Ali Parsa] is a beneficiary" and which, as suggested, is registered in Jersey – another tax haven!

General Healthcare Group

GHG describes itself as "the leading provider of independent health care services in the UK". It owns BMI Healthcare, the biggest private healthcare provider in the UK. BMI has a network of over 70 hospitals and clinics, which treat NHS patients through the Choose and Book system, and is looking to sign more NHS contracts in the near future.

In December last year it signed a contract to provide procurement and consumables

"It was well worth the one-off payment to get better sooner."

Choose one-off private treatment with Spire Healthcare >>

96% of our patients said they'd recommend a Spire hospital.



INTERVIEW

Broke but making films

Award winning film-maker, writer and director Greg Hall talks...

Long serving anarchist Greg Hall is an award-winning film-maker, writer and director of *The Plague* (2004), *Capital* (2007) and *SSDD* (2010).

How did you come across radical politics? The first event that evoked a political response in me was the anti-war build up before the attack on Iraq. I was at art school and I remember we organised some street parties amongst the students and went along as a contingent to the big demos. I was coming away from the protests with bundles of propaganda.

Radical politics began to have more of an effect on me. In my second year I was making a film project about the 121 squat set in the 1980s, looking at the Brixton riots and the anarchist community while everyone else on my course was making costume dramas.

My interest in politics led me to the London Action Resource Centre and 56a, then I came across Ian Bone's *Bash the Rich*. I was on the fringes of the political scene and went to a few Class War meetings, mainly because they were in a pub and it was an excuse to have a pint with Ian.

I wanted to get involved with political work but things had been dead since the WOMBLES, so a few of us decided to form the Whitechapel Anarchist Group and it kind of became a big thing, bigger than it actually was. It gained a media reputation; really WAG was just a crew of good people that wanted to have fun. Radical politics had become so boring and sectarian that we just wanted to have fun, we learnt our politics as we did it, it was a good laugh.

Has politics influenced your films? George Orwell was asked "Do you think art and politics should sometimes be separate".



Above, a still from *Bruised* with characters Mick and Ru; below, Greg on the set of *SSDD*.

Orwell's answered "to even suggest that is a political argument". For me film-making, media, culture, it's used for political means. Everywhere we look from billboards to TV there is a continuing war of communication. I feel that as a film-maker I need to stand up and put ideas out there that can combat the dominant culture.

All you get now is a remake of Shakespeare, a rom com, a 'how wonderful Britain is' take on life. Films coming out about the Queen, Margaret Thatcher or the King's lisp. They're not critical, they don't engage the audience into asking questions. If there's a film set on an estate then it's got to be a gangster film, working class youth depicted as violent stereotypes.

In my films I try to show real life, reflecting working class culture because there's an authenticity there, even if it's broken into little pockets. In *The Plague* a lot of my best actors were untrained, they were kids from those estates. If you're making a story about kids from a gang, you might not be from that exact experience so getting an actor that brings an authenticity and realism to it that does not exist in main stream cinema.

What do you see as the future of film?

Even though a lot is changing in terms of online distribution, you're never going to get away from people wanting to come together and watch a film, which is what cinemas used to be. But, the multiplexes have been shutting down any sense of individuality in cinemas, they're all showing the same films.

What really is lacking is the infrastructure for independent film-makers to work together to get their films out. You can put your film online, but without marketing no one will see it. At the same time a lot more people can make films, but that doesn't mean a load of good films are coming out. A lot of people aren't really saying anything, just making cheaper versions of the mainstream. As independent and underground film-makers, we have to be telling stories that will engage an audience.

What's your next project?

I've just shot a short film called *Bruised* which I co-wrote and co-produced with the main actor, Paul Marlon. It was made for under £100. It follows two characters, Mick and Ru. Mick takes part in illegal street fights, with Ru as his manger. We shot it in Dartford, a post-industrial white working class area. At points it's very real, at points cinematic, at points very funny.

It was made just to get it out there, not looking to the film industry but trying to build a network with underground and independent film makers.

It's going to have its world premiere on 11th May at the Bootleg film festival in Toronto, a film-maker-led festival. The UK premiere will be on 14th May at Write-Shoot-Cut in Edinburgh, with a London screening 18th May, and then going online on 19th May.

You can buy Greg's films and follow his work at brokebutmakingfilms.wordpress.com



PRISON NEWS

A brave new outsourced world?

Another month of Coalition policy making gone by and more of the already tarnished veneer of the 'Rehabilitation Revolution' has peeled away to further reveal what we already knew: a) that the policy bares little or no resemblance to anything any rational person would consider to be in any way revolutionary; and b) the notion of the 'rehabilitation' of ex-prisoners was never really the core issue.

Yes, the ideological *raison d'être* of the policy was to cut so-called 're-offending' by newly released prisoners, but alongside the more pressing motive force – saving money by cutting the prison population, and rehabilitation ("to restore to health or normal life by training and therapy; restore the standing or reputation of; restore to a former condition" – *OED* definition) was never the bottom line.

In fact, the central piece of the Coalition's criminal justice legislation, the Legal Aid, Sentencing and Punishment of Offenders Bill (LASPO), was originally due to actually include the word Rehabilitation (i.e. LASRO) but No. 10 decided that they needed the 'hang 'em, flog 'em' faction in the Tory Party (not to mention in the Media) on board in order to get it passed through Parliament. Not that it has had such an easy ride despite that, with the House of Lords particularly miffed at the curtailing of Legal Aid provision, but it has passed the final hurdle in that chamber, though with a further 11 amendments for the government to try and ditch when it comes back to the Commons on 17th April.

There was of course another core ideological driving force behind the policy, one that is conveniently smoke-screened behind the supposed need for cost-cutting: the mass outsourcing of government 'services' under the 'Payment by Results' banner, and in particular, as much of the criminal justice sector as the Tories could get away with, given the need for a certain amount of policy horse-trading with the Lib Dems. And the past month has seen a further invasion of the tentacles of the private 'security' sector into the State's business.

Chief target has been the provision of community sentence monitoring and, by inference, the Probation Service. Already part-privatised via the Trust model, it now appears that it is due to be flogged off to the highest bidder as the direct result of a newly announced consultation into making community sentences 'tougher', i.e. more exacting and attractive to yer average *Daily Mail* reader, via "intensive community punishment sentences", involving the greater use of electronic tagging, curfews and travel bans. Thus, the last vestiges of the old Probation model, helping ex-prisoners to re-settle in the community, will be consigned to the scrapheap in favour of the of the Service effectively becoming just another wing of the Prison Service – we can't afford to send



people to prison, so let's send the prison to them.

Most post-release prisoners are already subject to exacting licence conditions, in some cases amounting to external exile. Add to that the introduction of the early release Home Detention Curfew tagging experiment that has at least managed to free-up a few prison places, and the model is obvious (not that there is any evidence available for the effect of HDC on re-offending rates and electronic monitoring itself has been shown to be no more effective than other forms of community punishments). No doubt the heavy-duty lobbying by up to 30 companies last year when the previous eight-year tagging contracts held by G4S and Serco, and worth around £1bn, were up for tendering had something to do with it, especially as the industry was touting new hi-tech tags that can monitor a wear's blood alcohol levels in addition to carrying out standard monitoring in real-time.

Given that there are a potential of 100,000 to 120,000 new 'customers' a year, it's a market many want to get into. Currently a 90-day tag costs the taxpayer around £1,100, assuming no additional callouts (to reset the tag, etc.) compared to roughly £11,000 for a similar length stay in prison, but this new model is unlikely to save the government that much money in the long-run given the number of breaches of both HDC and, more particularly, licence conditions that lead to recall to prison, in the latter case often for the most mundane of reasons.

In another announcement, newly released prisoners will be subject to yet another intervention by private service providers, this time with regard to benefits. Now any prisoner who intends to claim benefits upon leaving prison will, in addition to having Jobcentre Plus staff process benefit claims

whilst still in prison, will also be referred onto the Work Programme (WP) from 'Day One' (as the DWP press release ostentatiously calls it) or who subsequently claim Jobseeker's Allowance within 13 weeks of release. Plus, WP providers will get £5,600 if they manage to get an ex-prisoner into work and keep them there for two years.

All the same JSA sanctions will apply to prisoners of course. So, not only will they have the current problems that apply to any newly released prisoner – licence conditions, probably having to live in a bail hostel, attending probation meetings on time, trying to re-establish contact with friends and family, and generally finding one's feet after being stuck in an environment where all your decision-making and most of your thinking was done by someone else – they will have to effectively do any job they are offered (not much change from being in prison then).

Except this plan completely ignores the key hurdle that prisoners face when finding a job post-release: the vast majority of companies refuse to employ ex-cons, and the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act, even allowing for Ken Clarke's recent low-level tinkering, remains an effective barrier to prisoners even getting so far as the interview stage. No amount of bribery (of potential employers) or coercion (sanctions) is going to overcome this barrier...

But hey, a select few will get rich just trying and screw those who fail to make the grade in this brave new outsourced world. So prepare to be nicked by G4S coppers, held in a G4S custody suite, escorted to a G4S-run court* by G4S guards, sent to a G4S factory-prison, release on a G4S tag, supervised by a G4S probation officer and shoved on a G4S-run workfare scheme.

* How long before there are G4S-provided judges?

COMMENT

**ABOUT FREEDOM
ANGEL ALLEY**

Despite the unhappy events described on page 3 of this issue, the work at Freedom Press continues apace.

For the benefit of new readers, and a refresher to our old ones, the building at 84b Whitechapel High Street contains the bookshop, the *Freedom* office, store room and 'Autonomy Club' meeting room, which also doubles as an art space for exhibitions (currently showing some of Tracey Moberley's Haitian photographs). Also in the building are the offices of the Advisory Service for Squatters, Corporate Watch, Solidarity Federation and London Coalition Against Poverty. In addition, numerous groups use the building for meetings and as a postal address and we're always happy to help where space and time allow.

On the social side of things, we seem to have had a lot of birthdays recently and we will restrict ourselves to embarrassing only the oldest of the comrades by wishing many happy returns to Donald Rooum, our resident cartoonist, on his 84th birthday. We've also been cementing relations with our neighbours at London Action Resource Centre, who had a packed Red and Black Club on the 20th April.

With summer nearly upon us it's now warm enough to have the shop door open and we may soon have some outside events in the alley – watch this space!

SUBSCRIPTIONS

It's now even easier to work out when your subscription is up for renewal. The number above your name on the address label now tells you the year and month when your subscription runs out. There's a renewal form on page 16 of this issue if you need it, or you can subscribe online at freedompress.org.uk/news/subscribe. Don't forget that donations are always extremely welcome, or you may like to take out one of our supporter subscriptions.

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NEXT ISSUE DEADLINE

The next issue will be dated June 2012 and the last day to get copy to us for that issue will be Saturday 12th May. You can send your articles to us by email to copy@freedompress.org.uk or by post to 'The Editors', Freedom, 84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1 7QX.

A sideways look

by SVARTFROSK

In all the opposition to education cuts and the ramping up of fees, adult education hasn't had a lot of airtime. There are basically four reasons people want adult education: for basic skills, to learn something they need to improve their job opportunities, for fun and to have a second opportunity.

Despite pretensions otherwise, all are under attack. Basic skills education is needed for those who didn't pick up enough at school, or have come from somewhere else where English is not spoken. One of the things the last government did was to talk about the responsibilities of immigrants, but they did at least make a point of funding some teaching of English as a second language (ESL). I know enough people working in this sector to see it as a soft target for swingeing cuts. After all, the people who need to learn English are often marginalised anyway, and a particular area that has been cut has been ESL for women. So we have the situation where the right wing press complain about immigrants not speaking English, their husbands don't see the need for their wives to communicate outside the home, and the women themselves cannot afford to pay for private lessons.

The other three are usually provided by local council's adult education departments, FE colleges and a couple of specialist universities such as the Open University (OU) and Birkbeck. Adult education has long been a soft option to cut and every year the list of courses offered seems to get smaller and smaller. The range depends on the facilities, but usually includes languages, arts and crafts and basic skills. Fees depend on whether it is for a qualification or not,

but are usually fairly reasonable. As a lot of these courses are aimed at pensioners, though, the timings can be completely impossible for anyone holding down a job.

FE colleges mainly cater for 16–19 year olds, but will run evening classes as well. They are often tied into a range of qualifications and include things that would have been part of apprenticeships when they happened.

The specialist universities were set up to allow working class people, especially those who'd not done well at school, a second chance. Birkbeck is increasing its fees and the OU is tripling fees for its modules, so that the equivalent of an undergraduate year will cost £5,000. Apparently OU management think they will pick up undergraduates who cannot afford to leave home to go to a conventional university. Birkbeck is thinking along the same lines. Both point out in their justifications that the new fees regime brought in by the Tory-LibDem coalition allows for part time students to get loans, which was always the argument against massive fee increases before. Given that a lot of students using these universities are people dipping their toe into higher education for the first time, do they really think many are going to do this at £2,500 for a couple of books, an online forum and a handful of tutorials? It seems to me it is a case of "welcome young undergraduate, piss off older worker."

One loophole that I intend to exploit when I'm older, if they've not closed it, is that if your income doesn't reach over £21,000 a year you don't have to repay anything. Now all I have to do is catch up with that ever-increasing retirement age.



FEEDBACK

Anti-Fascist Network

This letter is just a quick heads up to say that in the next few weeks all libertarian/anarchist groups, and the syndicalist unions, will be receiving an invite to join the new UK Anti-Fascist Network (AFN). Below is just a short introduction to the network and is made up in part from the AFN unity statement that groups will be asked to display, as well as parts of a letter we are sending out.

The Network comes in response to recent events that have seen all out fascist tactics on the streets of the UK pass by without sufficient opposition. We believe it is every libertarian's duty to oppose fascism, for the benefit of the communities we live in and for the rights of others and ourselves, to operate freely without the fear of threats and intimidation.

The Anti-Fascist Network seeks to join together small and large groups alike, with the aim being to eventually ensure anti fascists are never outnumbered on the streets. As a part of the network we will not tell people how to campaign in their areas, what politics they should adopt, or what form of Anti-fascist activity they should choose. We will however support each other to defeat all forms of fascism and organised racism.

The Anti-Fascist Network came about when groups such as Brighton Antifascists, Portsmouth Anarchists, Plymouth Antifa, and Welsh Antifa met to discuss how we could combat the rise of fascism on the streets in our areas. Since the first meeting we have been joined by representatives from Bristol Antifascists, Wessex Solidarity, London ALARM, Nottingham Antifascists, 3CAFA, and Liverpool AF (sorry for those I have forgotten to mention). The network has already had some success, which groups will be hearing about soon.

Even if we cannot support each other physically, we can work together to share anything from information and skills to legal aid and propaganda. Everyone has a place in the Anti-Fascist Network. It's a job that no one wants to do, but while the threat is there we must be prepared to defend ourselves and each other.

Individuals who want to join a public email list to share information about the activities of the far right can sign up by sending a blank e-mail to antifascistnews-subscribe@lists.riseup.net – this list is public so please do not treat it as secure, it is good for sharing general information, that may already be in the public domain as well as last minute call outs etc. There will be a private e-mail list for trusted groups to sign up to.

Many of us, myself included, ignored the far right for too long... it's time to stop the rot!

AFN

<http://antifascistnetwork.wordpress.com/>

Beating the fascists

Charlotte Wilson, the founder of Freedom Press, wrote (anonymously) about what anarchists believe, in the first issue of *Freedom*: "Therefore, we reject every method of enforcing assent, as in itself a hindrance to effectual co-operation, and further, a direct incentive to anti-social feeling".

Anarchism is opposed to all intimidation, or influencing behaviour by means of threats. Against chattel slavery: 'Do as I say or you will be beaten or deprived of food'. Against wage slavery: 'Do as I say or you will be reduced from poverty to destitution'. Against military conscription: 'Join up to kill the subjects of other rulers, or you will be imprisoned or shot'. And of course against what is sometimes described as government at its most primitive level, mugging: 'Give me what you have, or I will bash you'.

The ideal of anarchism is a society where all relationships are of voluntary co-operation, and nobody ever makes threats to anybody. But we recognise that we do not live in an ideal society, and therefore that some threats are regrettably necessary. People who drive cars without regard for the safety of other road users face the threat of being deprived of their cars. People who go in for raping, killing people, or (not to put too fine a point upon it) mugging, face the threat of various social sanctions.

And there are even cases where anarchists might approve of threats against expression of ideas. Those who organise propaganda campaigns, in favour of racial discrimination and oppression, face the threat of being hit on the head with beer bottles.

DR

Help London ABC

We always need money, the majority of which gets spent on postage and, when possible, sending postal orders and stamps to prisoners who are low on funds. We also need cash for printing costs, such as flyers and prison guides.

We welcome any donations, no matter how large or small; both money and stamps are always useful to us. If like us, you don't have much cash then you could always organise a benefit or bake sale for us. If you do it in London then we will usually be able to help out and we can always publicise events on our blog. At the moment the easiest way to get donations to us is to drop them directly into Freedom Bookshop, Angel Alley, 84b Whitechapel High Street. If you are outside of London then get in touch with us at london_abc@riseup.net and we can figure something out.

A big thanks to everyone who has donated or raised money for us so far.

London Anarchist Black Cross

<http://network23.org/londonabc/>



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GETTING ACTIVE

WHAT'S ON

MAY

■ 1st and 15th Practical Squatting Evening at Offmarket, 68 Dalston Lanes, London E8 3AH from 7pm to 8pm, contact offmarket@riseup.net or call 07583870733 for details.

■ 1st Divine Kingship in England and Africa, a lecture by Chris Knight and Camilla Power at the St Martin's Community Centre, 43 Carol Street, London NW1 0HT from 6.15pm until 9.00 pm, for details see radicalanthropologygroup.org.

■ 3rd, 10th, 17th and 24th London group of The Anarchist Federation meets weekly on Thursday evenings at Freedom Bookshop 84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1 7QX. If you would like to attend please email london@afed.org.uk beforehand.

■ 8th Jesus of Nazareth in Anthropological Perspective, a lecture by Chris Knight at the St Martin's Community Centre, 43 Carol Street, London NW1 0HT from 6.15pm until 9.00 pm, for details see radicalanthropologygroup.org.

■ 8th and 22nd Practical Squatting Evening at 56a Infoshop, 56a Crampton Street, London SE17 3AE from 7pm to 8pm, see http://www.56a.org.uk/ for details.

■ 12th News from Nowhere Club presents The Voyage In: Bangladeshis and London, with Tulip Siddiq at The Epicentre, West Street, Leytonstone E11 4LJ, buffet 7.30pm, talk starts 8pm, for details see http://www.newsfromnowhereclub.org/.

■ 15th Blood sacrifice and the Hunter's 'Own Kill' rule, a lecture by Chris Knight at the St Martin's Community Centre, 43 Carol Street, London NW1 0HT from 6.15pm until 9.00 pm, for details see radicalanthropologygroup.org.

■ 18th The Red & Black Club at LARC, 62 Fieldgate Street, London E1 1ES from 8pm, Dissident Island Radio will be broadcasting live as the local anarchists host a traditional east end knees-up.

■ 20th The Netpol 'Kettling Police Powers' conference at the Bishopsgate Institute, 230 Bishopsgate, London EC2M 4QH from 10.30am to 4.30pm, for further details see http://kettlepolicepowers.wordpress.com/

■ 22nd Noam Chomsky's 'Cognitive Revolution', a lecture by Chris Knight at the St Martin's Community Centre, 43 Carol Street, London NW1 0HT from 6.15pm until 9.00 pm, for details see radicalanthropologygroup.org.

■ 27th Take the flour back! day of action against the Rothamsted genetically modified wheat trial, meet at 12 noon, in Rothamsted, Harpenden, Herts, for further details see www.taketheflourback.org

■ 29th The origins of symbolic culture in Africa, a lecture by Ian Watts at the St Martin's Community Centre, 43 Carol Street, London NW1 0HT from 6.15pm until 9.00 pm, for more information see radicalanthropologygroup.org.



● The All London Anarchist Revolutionary Movement (ALARM) are holding a Annual General Meeting on 13th May. Currently the location is secret squirrel so check out the ALARM website for details.

In its first year ALARM had a number of exciting adventures and will hopefully be pulling off some more fun stuff in the year to come. As it says on the tin, ALARM is for all London (and anyone visiting - no visa required) anarchists to work together on projects requiring intergroup co-operation and strategic thought.

We don't have the full details as the planning meeting is after we go to press, but early indications are for an open format with people very much encouraged to bring their ideas along on the day.

See http://www.soundthealarm.org.uk/

● This year's conference by the Network for Police Monitoring, Netpol, brings together activists, lawyers and others working at the sharp end of challenging unlawful, violent, racist or excessive policing, to look at the concept of Total Policing - the London-based policing initiative with an elusive definition. Are we seeing Total Policing or, in reality, a Total Lockdown?

While the Total Policing concept is the brainchild of Metropolitan Police Commissioner Bernard Hogan-Howe, it is an idea, with its 'robust' attitudes towards any form of misdemeanour, that has the potential to

extend beyond the boundaries of the M25. The success or failure of Total Policing looks likely to set the tone for policing policy throughout England and Wales.

This conference will be looking at the ways in which our lives and freedoms are being affected by the Total Policing approach both in London and across the country - and asks how we can defend what we have, and resist any further erosion of our civil rights.

Entry by donation: a suggested donation £5/£10 and includes lunch, with the opportunity to join us for informal discussion and networking (to ensure your lunch, please register in advance at http://kettlepolicepowers.wordpress.com/ registration/).

The Netpol conference will be held at the Bishopsgate Institute in London on Sunday 20th May from 10.30am to 4.30pm, for further details see http://kettlepolicepowers.wordpress.com/

● We make no apologies for giving another plug to Smash Edo, the big anti-arms demo in Brighton on Monday 4th June. In our next issue we will be reporting back on the Mayday noise demo outside the arms factory. As always there will be a highly trained team of legal observers present and, while we sincerely hope no laws are broken, should the police prove over enthusiastic the recommended solicitors in Brighton are Kelly's, tel 01273 674 898.

More details can be found at smashedo.org.uk



SPORT

Dead heat for the Queen

With the Jubilee nearly upon us, the powers that be are plugging the Epsom Derby as national celebration of 60 years of Queenary. Er Maj is a big follower of the nags and doubtless knows all the past winners of the race, such as 1782's Assassin or 1802's Tyrant, but may yet be puzzled over the meaning of the name of the 1807 winner, Election. We on the other hand would like to see a black horse win, but the chances are slim as only two have since 1780, Smolensko in 1813 and Grand Parade in 1919.

The 'sport of kings' may not have a very anarchist ring to it, but there is a history of radicalism and popular culture surrounding Epsom. The long tradition of the London mobile vulgus descending on the downs for a day of revelry has revived in recent years, particularly since the big race was moved from its traditional Wednesday slot to Saturday in 1995. While we have not booked a Freedom stall for the day, it has become traditional for London anarchists to join the throng for, after all, we are aiming for a social revolution and if you can't dance or at least win a few bob...

Readers will be familiar with story of Emily Davison at the 1913 running, but would perhaps not agree with the sentiments of the



telegram sent on behalf of the then Queen to Herbert Jones, Anmers' jockey: "Queen Alexandra was very sorry to hear of your sad accident caused through the abominable conduct of a brutal and lunatic woman". Hopefully this year the royals will also receive a message that all is not hunky-dory in their realm and that radical change is in the air though we hope not at such a cost.

While Freedom is a pillar of internationalism, we can only hope for a repeat of the merriment of 1907, when Orby became the first Irish-trained winner of the blue ribbon of the turf, when his trainer was congratulated by an old woman with the words, "Thanks be to God and you sir, that I have lived to see a Catholic horse win the Derby".

Shooting down the Olympics

◀ page 24

the other sounds like a glorified fire truck. One is unlikely to be used unless a rogue state with planes decides to use one on the Olympics. This scenario in itself is unlikely. The other could take your eye out whilst you protest about the egregious spending and the social cleansing and so forth.

In one sense, the question should be 'why are we hosting something that needs to be defended like this so close to such a high populace?'. That question aside, the scenario

for which these weapons system are being placed in various London locations is both extremely unlikely and, if it were to occur, very likely to result in massive numbers of deaths to quite a substantial number of very ordinary people. It has no use in a public order, civil liberties or common crime fighting situation. Its just not possible to make use of it like that.

I would be very concerned if a shiny Ground Based Air Defence system caused us all to

forget the more mundane trampling on the population in the name of national pride (and tenuously, sport) that is going on around us. Alongside displacement of the poor, the changes in policing and the acceptability of soldiers patrolling London's streets in times of perceived danger to the state is the real and lasting damage these Olympics will bring, and I think its towards these that we should put our energies in defence of freedom and a non-militarised society.

SUBSCRIPTION RATES

Table with 4 columns: Location (inland, Europe, outside Europe surface, outside Europe airmail) and 4 rows: Freedom (annual subscription, 12 issues), Claimants, Regular, Institutions, Supporter.

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REVIEWS

FICTION

A Penny Drops

For the third time that week, Connie dialled Steve's mobile. It was still dead. Steve had not now been seen for two weeks. Connie had asked around and Pete hadn't seen him either. It wasn't unknown for activists to burn out and just disappear for a while, but to do so without any trace was unusual.

Steve had come to the group without much back story – it was Pete who had introduced him a couple of years ago, vouching for him as having been ex-AFA and a good comrade. No one else really knew him but he'd been a real asset. He turned up on time, did what he said he would and was always willing to use his van. Connie thought about how many times it had just been her and Steve turn up to something.

He was always cagey about what he did for a living as well, describing it as “ducking and diving”. She knew he did deliveries for the taxi firm by the station sometimes, and sometimes spent time in Amsterdam. She'd thought he was involved in drug dealing and hadn't liked to ask.

She ran her mind back over the last few actions the group had done. The last one failed because Steve's van broke down. Another failed the previous year when he took a wrong turning and got caught in a police road block. But then, lots of actions Steve went on worked well, too. Was she jumping to a conclusion here? She called Dave.

“I think we do have a mole, Dave,” she said.

“Let me guess: Pete?” he said.

“No, listen. Think about it – who has just disappeared? Do you know much about Steve? He's not at home and neither his mobile or landline work any more.”

“He could've just burned out. It's been a bit of bad time,” answered Dave.

“So where is he?” she asked.

“I dunno,” replied Dave, “but I can find out I think. I'll call you back.”

An hour later, Connie's phone rang.

“Dom's come up with something,” said Dave.

“Yes,” replied Connie.

“He trawled through all the emails on the group list from Steve and checked the IP addresses. Most of them were normal, but one stood out as being from the Metropolitan Police.”

“The Met! Not even our local cops?” she asked.

“Yes, it turns out we were more important than we thought,” answered Dave.

“Okay I'll call the others, and try to talk to Pete,” said Connie, sighing.

Martin H.

To be continued...

BOOK



Mutual Aid: An Introduction and Evaluation
by Iain McKay,
AK Press, £4

Throughout the Thatcher era and beyond I have been defending through books, reviews and letters to *Freedom* and the *Green Anarchist* the integrity, importance and contemporary relevance of an early generation of class struggle anarchists – specifically Bakunin and Kropotkin. For they have been denigrated, ridiculed and dismissed not only by liberal scholars and Marxists (as one would expect) but also by self-proclaimed anarchists, usually those enchanted by Christian mysticism, sociobiology, primitivism and so-called postmodernist theory. Likewise, for more than a decade Iain McKay and his associates have been producing an invaluable and comprehensive *Anarchist FAQ* as a resource, outlining and defending anarchism as a form of libertarian socialism. McKay has now produced an excellent pamphlet on Kropotkin's *Mutual Aid* – an expansion of his earlier introduction to the re-issue of Kropotkin's classic by Freedom Press. Well

researched and free of academic jargon, it provides a succinct introduction to Kropotkin's social philosophy, as this relates to the concept of mutual aid – the inherent sociality and co-operative nature of human life.

Even though it deals with some rather complex ideas relating to natural selection and evolutionary theory, it is an engaging text. In particular it offers some worthwhile and telling critiques of the sociobiologist Richard Dawkins, the Marxist Pat Stack, and the geneticist Steve Jones, indicating the limitations of their writings, particularly the degree to which they misrepresent or distort Kropotkin's ideas on mutual aid. Although McKay does not mention Lynn Margulis's pioneering studies of symbiogenesis with regard to biological evolution, he does stress the need to distinguish between mutual aid and symbiosis, and emphasises that Kropotkin's study, as a work of popular science, was crucially about mutual aid or co-operation not about symbiosis. In this regard Margulis also misunderstood Kropotkin.

Given the continuing relevance of Kropotkin's ideas on mutual aid – the well-known LSE sociologist Richard Sennett has just published a book entitled *Together: The rituals, pleasures and politics of co-operation* (2012) – Iain McKay's pamphlet on mutual aid is highly recommended to readers of *Freedom*. It includes a useful note on further reading with regard to Kropotkin's life and work.

Brian Morris

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QUIZ ANSWERS

1. They were all Paymaster General in the eighteenth century. The office controlled all payments in and out of the armed forces, the holders used the opportunity to enrich themselves.
2. Before conception! Governor Jan Brewer signed it into law on 12th April. It criminalises abortion after twenty weeks, but dates the start of that period from the woman's last menstruation.
3. The 1713 Treaty of Utrecht signed with

Spain granted the company the *asiento*, the right to trade slaves with the Spanish colonies in the Americas.

4. Because DEFRA is working with pesticide manufacturer Syngenta and has directed funding to looking at fungal infections, mites and environmental factors. The research that found the links at Stirling University “wasn't really funded at all” and researchers had done it in their “spare time”.

REVIEWS

Prisons of the body and of the mind

Hamilton Richardson once again unpacks the not-so-veiled implications of some timeless children's classics

Unsettling echoes of Josef K

If *1984* or *The Trial* had been a children's book, *Mr Messy* would be it. No literary character has ever been so fully and categorically obliterated by the forces of social control. Hargreaves may well pay homage to Kafka and Orwell in this work, but he also goes beyond them.

We meet Mr Messy – a man whose entire day-to-day existence is the undiluted expression of his individuality. His very untidiness is a metaphor for his blissful and unselfconscious disregard for the Social Order. Yes, there are times when he himself is a victim of this individuality – as when he trips over a brush he has left on his garden path – but he goes through life with a smile on his face.

That is, until a chance meeting with Mr Neat and Mr Tidy – the archetypal men in suits. They set about a merciless programme of social engineering and indoctrination that we are left in no doubt is in flagrant violation of his free will. “But I like being messy,” he protests as they anonymise both his home and his person with their relentless cleaning activity, a symbolism thinly veiled.

This process is so thorough that by the end of it he is unrecognisable – a homogenised pink blob, no longer truly himself (that vibrant Pollock-like scribble of before). He



smiles the smile of a brainwashed automaton, blandly accepting what he has been given no agency to question or refuse. It is in this very smile that the sheer horror of what we have seen to occur is at its most acute.

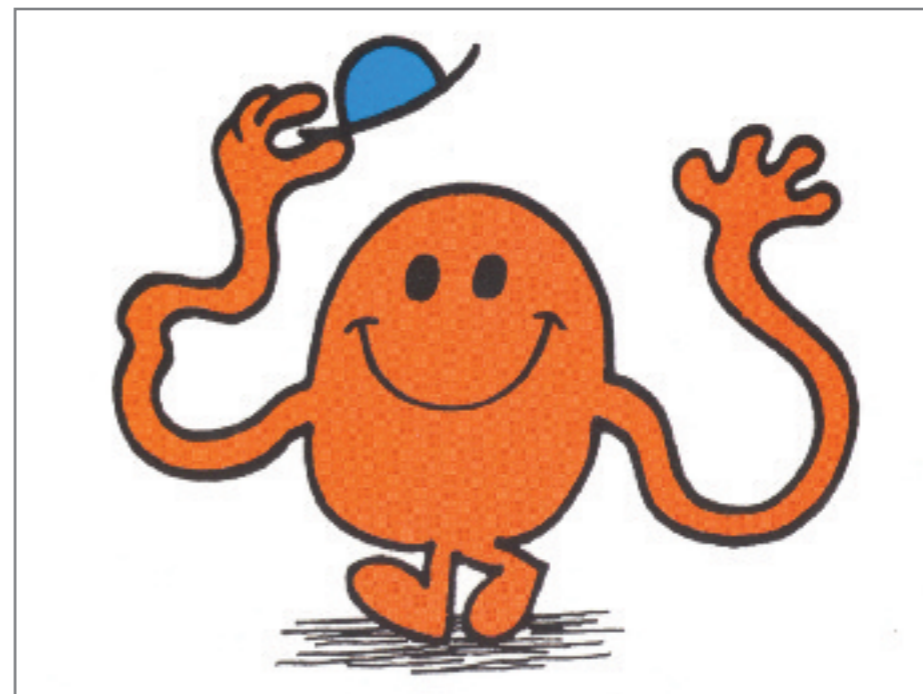
Somewhere behind this blank expression though is a latent anger – a trace of self-knowledge as to what he once was – in the barbed observation he makes to Neat and Tidy that they have even deprived him of his name.

The book ends with a dry reminder from Hargreaves that just as with the secret police in some totalitarian regime, our own small expressions of uniqueness and volition may also result in a visit from these sinister suited agents.

Mr Messy (Mr. Men Classic Library) by Roger Hargreaves, £2.50.

Freud helps Hargreaves loosen his tie Hargreaves' first work, and regarded by many as his masterpiece, *Mr Tickle* is some-thing of a rarity amongst the Mr Men books. Elsewhere, we see much exposition on the pitfalls of excess – such as in *Mr Greedy* and *Mr Messy*, for instance – but a distinct lack of discourse on personalities that are over-rather than under-regulated. A case in point might be another work, *Mr Fussy*, which stands out as an opportunity glaringly missed. Despite a faintly ridiculing tone to the prose, this is essentially a lamentation on how others cannot live up to the high ideals and perfectionism of its titular central character. It is at best an ambiguous critique of repression, and Mr Fussy escapes the moral judgment so often dished out to others in the series.

So what a glorious anomaly we find in *Mr Tickle* – a breath of fresh air from the unrestrained id. The all-consuming sensual delight he offers relentlessly disrupts the social order. A postman drops all his letters in a puddle, the tickling of a policeman causes a traffic jam, and the unbearable reverie he inflicts upon a station master



ALL THAT IS SOLID MELTS INTO AIR



Sig Waller grew up in Swansea, Wales, and Saarbrücken, Germany. She studied Fine Art and Art History at Goldsmiths College, London, and after graduating worked in animation, music videos and design. In 1995 she moved to East Berlin, where she became involved in the local art scene and is currently based in both Brighton and Berlin.

“How will future intelligence make sense of our times? Which aspects of our civilisation will survive the years and how will they be interpreted? My work explores the dark borders of our culture of excess, drawing attention to human destructiveness, human frailty and the delicate balance of life on Earth. We may have it all now, but what does the

future look like? I am interested in the archaeology of the present, in utopian visions of the future crumbling into dystopian decay – and in hope born from despair.

“There is black humour behind a lot of my ideas. Wit functions as critical social anthropology, helping us acquire an alien perspective, and letting us view the world as

think that Hargreaves’ purpose is to challenge the external Social Order. Rather, it is to loosen the vice-like grip of an interior foe: the overdeveloped superego.

We note that Mr Tickle himself is no slave to sensory delight – quite the opposite; he is a model of psychological equilibrium. At the end of his day’s escapades he relaxes in an armchair, sated and quiescent. Our hero preaches a message of catharsis – a call to arms against becoming too bogged down by self-suppression and normative regulation. Via psychoanalysis, we arrive at an Aristotelean middle way, and

are left with the gentle realisation of our need to give a measure of expression to desire and joy.

Because one thing we can be sure of is that the more we repress the pleasure principle, the more we guarantee that sooner or later we will fall victim to an overpowering and fervid release from the id.

And rest assured, it will be at just that hour we fail our Superego the most.

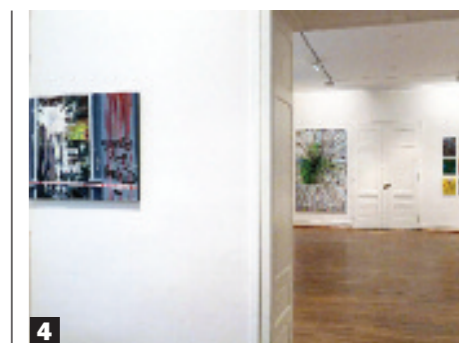
Mr. Tickle (Mr. Men Classic Library) by Roger Hargreaves, £2.50.

Review

◀ page 21

brings the local rail network to a temporary standstill. There is something almost Bakhtinian about the manner in which he tickles a dour schoolmaster until he loses control in front of his class.

But Mr Tickle is not Stirner’s Egoist, nor does he proclaim “Do what thou wilt shall be the whole of the law.” And if he is a terrorist, his weapons are laughter and ecstasy. Though his principal targets may well be those who wear uniforms – those who exercise, embody and therefore are most in the grip of Authority – we would be mistaken to



if we had just arrived from another planet.” Sig Waller’s current series of work is about contemporary forms of protest. If anyone has any interesting photos or memorabilia please get in touch with Sig via her website, sigwaller.com as she’d like to include them in the project, which is a work in progress.

- 1 All that is solid melts into air: Smash the banks 2011, mixed media on canvas, 70 x 90 cm
- 2 All that is solid melts into air 2011, oil on canvas, 70 x 90 cm
- 3 All that is solid melts into air: Stop the war 2011, oil on canvas, 70 x 90 cm
- 4 Exhibition view: ‘Who is?’ / ‘Wer ist?’ Saarländische Galerie Berlin, 2011
- 5 All that is solid melts into air: Atomkraft? Nein Danke 2011, oil on canvas, 60 x 90 cm
- 6 Burning desire: Burning car II 2012, oil on canvas, 75 x 75 cm
- 7 All that is solid melts into air: The lovers 2012, oil on canvas, 90 x 70 cm



SPORT

Shooting down the Olympics

Graham Martin takes a look at how the Games play with civil liberties

There's been a lot of general anger on twitter and facebook recently concerning the positioning of missiles on residential buildings for use during the Olympics. It's a terrifying thought in some ways, but its also kind of irrelevant to civil liberties, and a very big



distraction from the more worrying, and lasting, changes brought on by the games.

There are a great many things going on around the Olympics that are incredibly worrying developments, both for civil liberties and for public well-being. A police officer may enter your house to remove a window display that is felt to be offensive. A demonstration anywhere close to an Olympic site will face immense repression. Major corporations with hideous human rights records are using the Games to gain legitimacy when they should be facing massive court cases or even dissolution.

Whilst I understand exactly why missiles on apartment blocks is terrifying, it's not really the biggest issue, just perhaps the most visible. There are several reasons for this. The first is that, in order to store ordnance on a roof for more than a few months, an awful lot of staffing will need to be committed. The longer they're up there, the more likely it is that someone will try to nick them. It's a very short term development, in comparison to any damage to civil liberties. Budgets are too tight to keep that stuff up there for any length of time.

The other main reason is that these are pretty specialised weapons. Most modern weapons are. These things are for shooting down aircraft. Now, the odd pub joke about

needing to hire an airship to invade Buckingham Palace for a protest aside, none of us are likely to be the targets for such a weapons system.

A rooftop Ground Based Air Defence system sounds pretty terrifying, but compare it to, say, a water cannon. One of those sounds like something in a futuristic dystopia, and **page 19** ▶▶

THE QUIZ

1. The Earl of Ranelagh, the Duke of Chandos, Robert Walpole and Henry Fox all founded fortunes on brief tenures of which office?
2. At what point does life start according to a law passed by those crazy Republicans in Arizona?
3. What was the supposed big commercial advantage of the South Sea Company, which caused an economic bubble in 1720?
4. Two new studies have linked honeybee colony collapse to neo-nicotinoid pesticides. Why were none funded by the Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs?

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