

FREEDOM

80P ANARCHIST NEWS AND VIEWS

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27 NOVEMBER 2004

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TWO MILLION STARVING

Millions of Britons are now victims of malnutrition, with the most vulnerable sectors of society at risk. Massive cutbacks in care provision have left the sick and elderly receiving inadequate food and insufficient attention in hospitals and care homes. Scandalously, the UK, one of the world's wealthiest nations, is unable to meet the basic needs of its most insecure citizens.

The British left continues to express interest in issues in proportion to the distance they are from the UK: marching against wars and sanctions in countries thousands of miles away – valid though these are – and ignoring the two million starving on our own doorstep (Or of course re-launching patronising fundraising events posing themselves as the glorious white saviours of Africa.) But some people are paying attention.

Health care professionals and patients' interests groups joined forces earlier this month to launch campaign group Patients 1st for Nutrition. They publicised a shocking report, largely ignored when it was first released in 2003, revealing widespread malnutrition in the world's fourth richest country.

Hospital patients are particularly at risk, with around 60% of patients estimated to be suffering from malnutrition. In addition, 50% of those in residential and care homes are now thought to be starving, with lack of government support and provision compounded by fewer places available as care homes continue to close. The report found inadequate staffing and

poor quality food are to blame, particularly where especially vulnerable residents are concerned. Often hospital patients or care home residents who are unable to feed themselves are unable to receive the attention that they need from over-worked staff. Underfed, their condition will continue to deteriorate with under-nourishment causing breathing difficulties, increased risk of infection, muscle wastage and reduced strength.

In modern Great Britain there exists a developed country unable to adequately feed 15% of all its elderly population. Outside of health facilities, it is becoming increasingly difficult and expensive for poor people to eat healthily (Freedom, 26th June 2004) with many edge-of-town estates being virtual 'food deserts', often miles from sources of fresh food.

As the National Health Service is run into the ground and sold off, failing private companies are given huge state subsidies to boost their profits and millions of working class patients suffer. All the while the rich sit in luxury private hospitals – again subsidised by the state and the taxes of ordinary workers who cannot afford them themselves.

Dr Carl Dunford, of Patients 1st, last week told the press "The fight against malnutrition in at-risk groups needs to step up a pace." As must the fight against the capitalist system which puts profits before people. After all, that's what causes starvation across Britain and the rest of the world in the first place.



"Thank God it's them instead of you ..." – er, it is us, Bob. You twat.

CHINESE WILDCATS

Subject to some of the most brutal excesses of modern capitalism, many Chinese workers are beginning mass protests, strikes, blockades and rioting. The Communist Party dictatorship is facing mounting opposition to its plans to offload 70,000 state owned factories to private ownership, largely because preparations have entailed forcing massive redundancies and wage cuts on their already overworked and bullied workforce.

Two months of protests were centred in the Shaanxi and Anhui provinces, with a seven week strike at the No.7 Cotton works in Xianyang being notable

– thousands of workers blocked a main railway line on 31st October. At Xian, the capital of Shaanxi, one thousand workers have occupied a bus terminal for over a month in protest at plans to sell-off their factory.

Tianwang Textiles factory has been particularly militant. Faced with accepting a severance pay offer of one month's pay per year worked and then returning on lower wages 7,000 workers have walked out, preferring to face up to state authorities rather than accept the new conditions. Just four days into their action, workers forced 1,000 riot police armed with water cannons to back down.

Their demands have had to include the right to elect their own union officials. Chinese labour law dictates workplaces must be allowed to unionise, but crucially just one trade union – the All-China Federation of Trade Unions (ACFTU) – is allowed, with its entire personnel comprising of

state appointees. The determination of the government to maintain this grip over organised labour has produced a rather bizarre conflict. Foreign multinationals who have traditionally worked to union-busting company guidelines (Walmart, McDonalds, Dell, Kodak, Samsung and KFC have been cited) have repeatedly tried to keep the ACFTU from establishing itself in their Chinese businesses – unprepared to accept even this strange, contrived union. This leaves two sets of capitalists (the Communist Party and the multinationals) fighting over control of the workforce. The CCP are determined that they must control workers' bargaining positions in these foreign dominated industries (or potentially face an independently resurgent workforce), with investors concerned more with maintaining their existing rules of exploitation that they practice elsewhere.

Regardless of this fratricidal argument,

WHAT IS FREEDOM?

If you are reading Freedom for the first time, or at least the first time in a while, here is a short introduction to who we are, what we're trying to do, and how and why you can and should get involved. A brief mission statement is always included on page 2, but seeing as lots of extra people will be reading this at the Anarchist Bookfair we thought we would take the opportunity to go into a little more detail.

Freedom is the world's oldest anarchist publication, founded over 119 years ago by Charlotte Wilson along with Peter Kropotkin and others, and has been published continuously – with some small breaks – ever since. As you can see, it is currently an eight-page fortnightly, and those who have not seen it in a while will hopefully notice a fair few changes in style, design and content.

Looking at the big picture, our aim is to rival the corporate and state media machines of the world, not biased in

the interests of government and big business, but in the interests of ordinary people wanting to live joyous existences, free from the drudgery of largely pointless jobs. In the short-term this is not going to happen.

However – what is a realistic goal, is that despite our fragmented movement, we can make a regular, attractive and interesting newspaper that consistently makes rational, sensible anarchist arguments on major issues, and spreads news of people using anarchist tactics of direct action and solidarity to build better lives and a better world. With some in-jokes. And a newspaper that is stocked in bookshops, newsagents, libraries and universities across the country, to help anarchist ideas become the predominant ones among people wanting social change.

This is attainable – Freedom despite all odds continues to be the most frequent English-language anarchist journal in the world, it does look good,

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FREEDOM

Volume 65 Number 23

Anarchism

Anarchists work towards a society of mutual aid and voluntary co-operation. We reject government, and all forms of exploitation and domination.

Freedom Press is an independent anarchist publisher, founded in 1886. Besides this newspaper, which comes out every two weeks, we produce books on all aspects of anarchist theory and practice – see our website for a full list.

In our building in East London we run Britain's biggest anarchist bookshop and host the Autonomy Club meeting room and the Freedom Hacklab open-access IT space.

Our aim is to explain anarchism more widely and to show that people can work together and use direct action to practically improve our lives and build a better world.

Freedom's editors wish to present a broad range of anarchist thought, and as such the views expressed in the paper are those of the individual contributors and not necessarily those of the editorial collective.

Angel Alley

Again the paper is out late, due to unfortunate technical problems at almost every stage of production, and for that the collective apologises profusely. On the positive side the problems with the paper we print on seem to be resolved, with near-roach-able card for two issues and dodgy toilet paper for one we now have nice, thin, smooth white paper.

There is only one issue left this year, so we would like to remind people to renew their subs if they are due to expire soon (it will say 6523, 6524 or 6601 above your name on the address label); this will save us time and money by not making us send out so many forms. You could also use the opportunity to subscribe via a standing order payment, possibly with a little donation added in!

Donations

Standing orders (amounts per year): LM, £48; JS, £12. Total donations now stand at £1,153 – please help us hit our £5,000 target by the end of next year, by becoming a supporter subscriber, making out a standing order or just giving us a couple of quid if you have it spare.

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Next issue

Contributions are wanted for future Freedoms. The next issue will be dated 11th December 2004 and the last day to get your copy to us will be Thursday 2nd December (see contact details above for where to send your letters/articles). If you are interested in writing regularly for Freedom we want to hear from you!

News from the inside

Freedom for prisoners

As many of you may know, Freedom provides free subscriptions to anyone in prison. If you have friends or family in prison, or regularly write to a prisoner, if they are interested we will be happy to send them a free sample issue or sub. If you are a prisoner yourself we can provide subs to any of your fellow inmates if they wish. Please also feel free to write to us with any news about your imprisonment, developments in your case or anything else!

Mordechai Vanunu re-arrested

On Thursday 11th November, at 9am, at least thirty armed Israeli police stormed St George's cathedral in Jerusalem and arrested Mordechai Vanunu. Vanunu, the Israeli nuclear whistle-blower originally kidnapped by Israel, and held in prison for eighteen years, was released just a few months ago, but is still not allowed to leave the country. The arrest was apparently

instigated by an Israeli Knesset member, Yuval Shteinitz, who accuses Vanunu of continuing to pass on Israeli nuclear secrets, and took place at a time when world attention was focussed on the death of Yassar Arafat.

Later the same day Mordechai was released uncharged, but was then placed under house arrest for seven days. Vanunu told friends that he was well and glad to be back, but that he remains a prisoner as long as he is forbidden to leave the country.



Commenting on Mordechai's arrest, the author Daniel Ellsberg said: "The only secret Mordechai Vanunu has left to tell the world is the one he revealed on the day of his release from eighteen years in prison, 21st April 2004: 'I am a symbol of the will of freedom, that the human spirit is free. You cannot destroy the human spirit'."

Prisoners protest at HMP Acklington

On the night of 8th November, three prisoners at Acklington prison in Northumberland caused 'extensive damage' in a protest which lasted for more than three hours. The prisoners were protesting at their allocation to the jail.

Leeds ABC established

An Anarchist Black Cross group has been established in Leeds. It will be working with Brighton ABC, the Campaign Against Prison Slavery, and

the European ABC network to support political prisoners and oppose the prison state.

As always funds are needed. Contact them at Leeds ABC, PO Box 53, LS8 4WP.

Animal rights activist acquitted

On the 13th November animal care volunteer and Community Mental Heath Worker Donald Currie of Bournemouth was found not guilty of burglary after admitting he removed fifteen battery hens from a farm in West Sussex.

In what is believed to be the first case of its kind in the UK the jury at Hove Crown Court took just two hours to return a unanimous verdict of Not Guilty.

During the two-day trial the farmer told how he readily takes birds he finds in the waste pits below the cages, from where Mr Currie took the birds he was

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LISTINGS

Bristol

Every Sunday the Kebele Kafe from 6.30pm, 14 Robertson Road, Easton. For info call 0117 9399469

London

27th November Anarchist Bookfair at ULU, Malet Street, WC1 from 10am to 7pm. See www.anarchistbookfair.org
28th November 'Robert E. Grant, the man who told Darwin the theory of evolution', a lecture by Donald Room at the Ethical Society Library, Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, WC1, at 11am.

Newcastle

11th December Projectile preview at the Side Cinema (see below)
11th to 13th February 2005 Projectile: anarchist festival of film and ideas, exploring the past, present, and future of anarchism, and featuring rare and radical films, music, entertainment, talks and discussions. You can also catch Projectile at the London Anarchist Bookfair on 27th November. See www.projectile.org.uk

International

26th December International Pizza Punk Day, so mark this day in your calendar to practise the ancient arts of mutual aid, voluntary association and, of course, vegan pizza making workshops. See www.eroding.org.uk/pizzapunx.htm
6th July 2005 Global Day of Action at the opening day of the G8 Summit www.agp.org or www.dissent.org.uk

Nationwide groups

Anarchist Federation
Network of anarchist-communists
Box 2, 84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1 7QX
www.afed.org.uk
Antifa
Militant anti-fascist organisation
Box 36, 84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1 7QX
www.antifa.org.uk
Class War Federation
Class struggle anarchist group
PO Box 467, London E8 3QX
www.classwaruk.org

Dissent

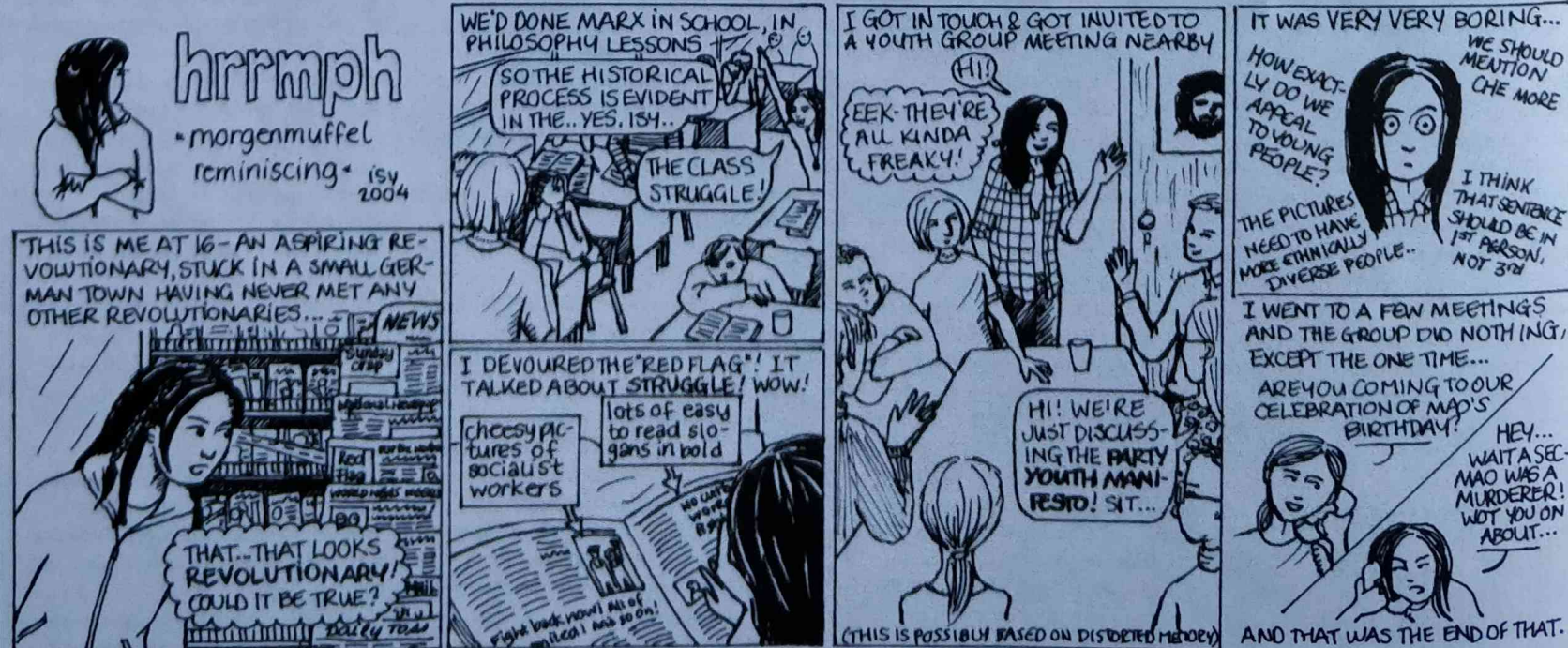
A network of resistance against the G8
www.dissent.org.uk
Earth First!
Ecological direct action network
www.earthfirst.org.uk
Industrial Workers of the World Revolutionary DIY union
PO Box 74, Brighton, BN1 4ZQ
www.iww.org.uk
Solidarity Federation
Anarcho-syndicalist organisation
PO Box 469, Preston PR1 8FX
www.solfed.org.uk
For details of smaller and local groups see www.enrager.net/britain

Social Centres

Autonomous Centre of Edinburgh (ACE)
17 West Montgomery Place, Edinburgh
www.autonomous.org.uk
The Cowley Club
12 London Road, Brighton BN1 4JA
www.cowleyclub.org.uk
Freedom
84b Whitechapel High Street, London

E1 7QX

www.freedompress.org.uk
Kebele
14 Robertson Road, Easton, Bristol
BS5 6JY
www.kebele.org
Lancaster Resource Centre (LaRC)
The Basement, 78a Penny Street, Lancaster
www.eco-action.org/lancaster
London Action Resource Centre (LARC)
62 Fieldgate Street, London E1
www.londonlarc.org
The Rampart
7a Rampart Street, London E1
SUMAC Centre
245 Gladstone Street, Nottingham
NG7 6HX
www.veggies.org.uk/rainbow/
1in12 Club
21-23 Albion Street, Bradford, West Yorkshire, BD1 2LY
www.1in12.com
56a Infoshop
56 Crampton Street, London SE17
www.safetycat.org/56a



You can get Isy's 'zine from Freedom for £1 (plus 60p p&p inland, £1.20 elsewhere).

News

In Brief

Work kills and maims

A recent government report has shown a rise in all types of workplace injury, from work related sickness right up to fatalities. An astonishing 2.23 million workers reported that their job had either caused illness, or exacerbated an existing condition.

No less appalling are statistics showing that 30,666 workers were seriously injured at work last year and 129,143 were hurt so badly they were unable to work for three days or more. Most disgustingly, there was a 3% increase in corporate killings, with construction, agriculture, fishing and forestry particularly dangerous, forming nearly half of the 235 deaths.

Lynx mauled

Workers for package delivery company Lynx struck for 48 hours from the 5th to 8th November, causing significant disruption to the company's operations. Further action is planned for the 24th and 25th November. The dispute is over a below inflation pay offer, and threats to workers' wages through reduced hours.

Sacked by security guards

Seven hundred and fifty ground staff for airline Swissair turned up to work on 16th November only to be told by security guards that their passes had been revoked, the company had been put into liquidation and they were now out of work. The company had offered no warning or consultation with employees and did not even have the courtesy to inform their staff in person. Heathrow security guards were left the task as workers turned out for the night shift, only to be refused entry. Swissair's ground handling company Swissport is itself the product of a previous spell in administration. The company has been attempting to attack working conditions for some time and this action seems typical of their treatment of employees.

They just make you worse

Some of the most profitable drugs on the books of multinationals GlaxoSmith Kline and AstraZeneca are possibly unsafe, according to a senior doctor at US drugs watchdog FDA.

According to Dr David Graham, five drugs are on the list: Accutane (an acne treatment), Bextra (a painkiller), Crestor (a hugely successful anti-cholesterol product), Meridia (a weight loss drug) and Serevent (an asthma treatment). Alleged effects from the various drugs include kidney disease, muscular break-down and increased chance of death.

The FDA, along with GSKJ and Astra Zeneca, have distanced themselves from his comments, which call the entire testing and watchdog procedure of both the US – and indirectly the UK – into question.

Global Warming hits Alaska

The first confirmed victims of global warming have surfaced at the northern-most edge of Alaska in the US.

An Inuit tribe living in the village of Shishmaref will have to leave their homes after the permafrost they live on has melted.

Rising global temperatures have destroyed natural barriers formed from the ice which protected their homes from the worst of Alaska's coastal storms, and their houses have become dangerously unstable. It will cost an estimated \$400 million to relocate them.

Supermarket slaves

Investigators find British stores complicit in people smuggling, bonded labour and much, much more ...

A recent study by the Ethical Trading Institute (ETI) has revealed the use of bonded labour in the UK agriculture industry, as well as massive violations of health and safety legislation, excessive working hours and sub-minimum wage pay rates.

The damning report seems to be merely the tip of the iceberg; the ETI was merely trialling its assessment regime on six firms hand picked by supermarkets who are part sponsors of the research. These businesses (concerned with preparing and packing agricultural produce) then nominated a labour provider (or 'gangmaster') with whom they currently held a labour supply contract. It seems likely that these firms were the cream of the crop, the best face that this industry felt it could present to the world.

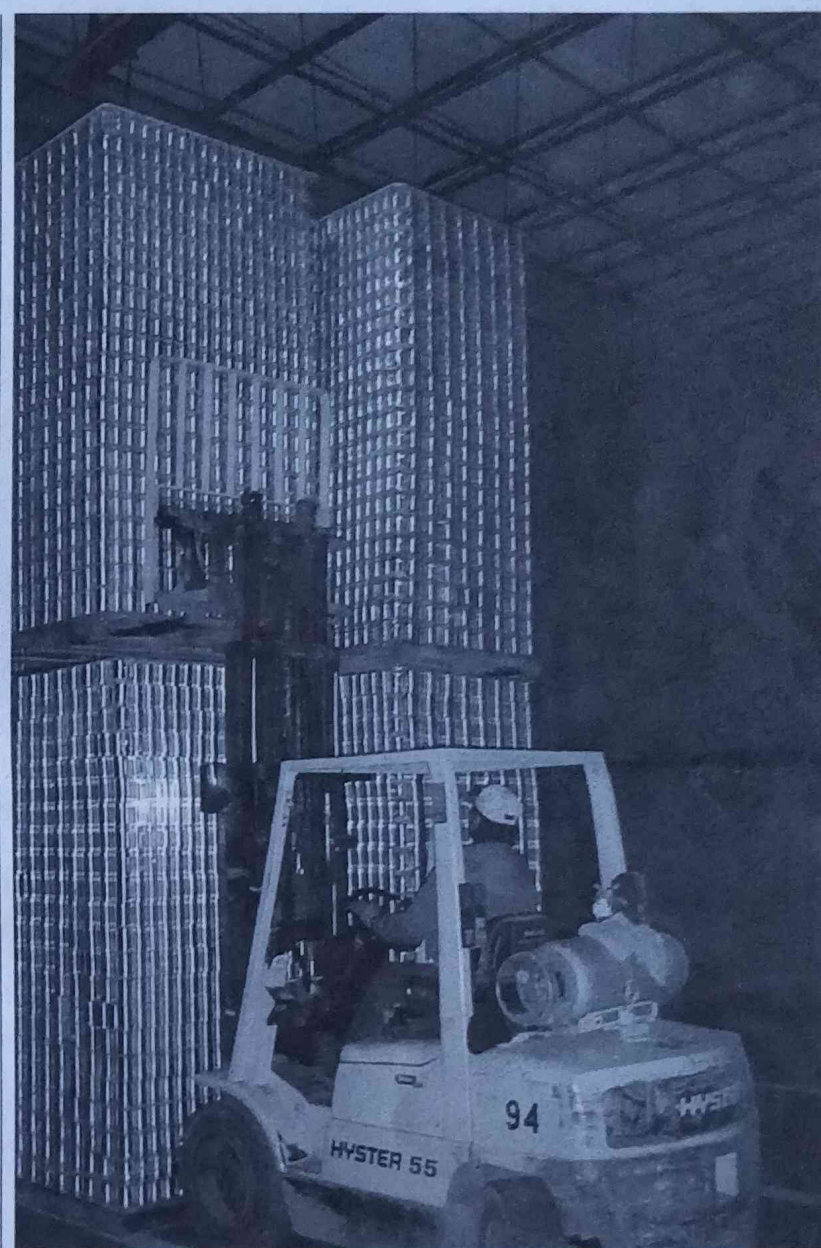
Nevertheless, investigators were able to find a startling array of violations of their code of practice, with all the gangmasters reported for health and safety violations and a complete failure to monitor the activities of subcontractors, often the very same people-traffickers who brought the workers to the UK. The report comments that "it appears to be common practice for workers to receive no health and safety training, even when using potentially dangerous machinery," adding that in one instance a young person was made to drive a fork lift truck without training – a task usually requiring a licence.

The report also noted repeated violations of minimum wage and working time legislation. Labour providers deducted payments from

workers by charging for 'administration' or 'transport' without adequate pay slips or explanations to employees. Two out of the six companies were also cited for 'critical' violations of the working time directives failing to give even one day off per week, with five employers failing to adequately document hours worked. The non-payment of overtime was described as 'commonplace'.

Most disturbing though was the revelation that one of the six gangmasters was engaging in bonded labour, where workers "did not feel free to leave their place of work until they repaid debts that had been incurred prior to the arrival in the UK" – essentially being kept as slaves by their employers for the foreseeable future. Another four labour providers were reported for "major violations" of "the right to freely chose employment" with the report concluding that "other workers may be subjected to this form of coercion which, though against our code, is not necessarily illegal." It seems highly likely that this practice is fairly common in the UK agricultural and food processing sector and that the authorities are presently powerless (and perhaps too disinterested) to stop it.

The extent of exploitation and black market labour present in an industry that continues to fuel the large supermarkets and much of the service sector, contrasts strongly with the rhetoric of the right-wing press – the rags of the commercial media use immigrants as the scapegoats for Britain's problems while their paymasters are taking huge profits on the back of their indentured servitude.



Postman Prat and Fireman Sham

Royal Mail chairman Alan Leighton has proven to be less than honest about the health of his company's finances in the media, as their annual report for this month has shown up vast holes in the pension budget.

Under current accounting measures Royal Mail are an astonishing £4.6 billion in deficit, after thirteen years of missed payments, and face an annual retirement savings bill of some £800 million a year.

Although some money is being put aside to cover the accounting hole, Royal Mail's chief financial officer has said that payments will have to rise to £500 million per annum over the next few years to keep up with payouts.

This would wipe out the group's projected operating profits for the year – approximately £400 million – with £100 million still to find.

It was alleged by unions in October that Leighton was planning to privatise sections of the Royal Mail via a partial buy-out of stock by workers. If the current financial situation isn't resolved quickly, however, this plan may have to be put on hold.

Firefighters are threatening action over an attack on their pensions. New proposals suggest firefighters retire five years later, in addition to cutting ill health pay to workers who they claim are fit enough to do other work. The government claim that the present scheme is too expensive and too generous, enabling workers to retire at 50. Yet firefighters have already paid for the scheme through giving 11% of their wages as pension contributions.

The scheme is only now under threat because fire service employees don't pay into a specific pension fund, money simply goes back into the fire service accounts, with pension plans paid out of current expenditure. Fire bosses are accused by the FBU of 'doing a Maxwell' and simply spending the pension pot. This scheme was originally designed to keep both workers and public safe by enabling the ablest firemen to be on the frontline and recognising the lower life expectancy of workers in this field. Although the government rejects this argument for people running into burning buildings, police officers will retain their right to retire at 50.

SET kicks Darling in the privates

One year after the notorious Connex was pulled from running the Kent to London railway franchise, their publicly owned and run replacement has put most of it right.

South Eastern trains (SET), the only train service in the UK not in private hands, has improved punctuality, safety, cleanliness and customer satisfaction since it took over last November, according to rail reports.

The huge success of SET has embarrassed Transport Secretary Alistair Darling, who has consistently attempted to paint them as a relic of a bygone economic age.

Questioned in the house of commons, he said: "There has been an improvement, but that is largely due to what Network Rail has done in reducing track delays."

SET's results have not been reflected in the performance of their rivals South West Trains and Southern however. Whereas the public group have improved punctuality by 2.3%, South Western have improved by only 0.2%, while Southern have actually got worse by 2.8%. South Eastern are now far

and away the most punctual major southern train service. They have also cleaned the service itself up.

SET managing director Michael Holden, in a report, said: "We have reduced complaints by over 1,000 people a month."

A new fleet of trains with double the mileage between break-downs has been introduced, which has contributed to increased praise from customers, as has hiring new staff to clean up rubbish and graffiti.

The improvements have moved SET from rock-bottom in the government's league table of train services to mid-table in just twelve months.

The Strategic Rail Authority, who own and operate the SET franchise, have reputedly come under pressure from Darling's department not to publicise this success, as the government fear it may increase calls for the failing national transport system to be placed back under public management.

SET carry 120 million passengers every year, and have spent £600 million on new and improved rolling stock since 2003.

Nigeria strikes out

Compromise has undermined the Nigerian Labour Congress's role for the fourth time in three years, reports Rob Ray

A hike in the state-controlled price of cooking and heating fuel for some of Africa's poorest looks set to stick after a threatened general strike over the matter was dropped by unions. Negotiations between John Oda, head of the Nigerian Labour Congress (NLC) and Olusegun Obasanjo, President of the Nigerian government, have stopped a General Strike due on 16th November.

A lack of electricity or gas supplies, along with a shortage of rail transport, means that Nigerian society runs almost exclusively on liquid fuel, with kerosene being the staple means for most to cook food or warm themselves.

A ten point rise in the price of liquid fuel, from 44 naira(N) per litre to 54N, had brought the country to the brink of a national shutdown. This has now been reduced to a five point rise, in exchange for the co-operation of the NLC and their most important members, the two oil unions NUPENG and PENGASSAN.

But it is the fourth time in three years that prices have 'halfhiked' in this way, and has led to a widespread drain on the resources of Nigeria's poor.

In August 2003, a similar process saw prices rise from 26N to 34N. The government had originally suggested 40N, but negotiated the lower sum with NLC leaders after a one-week strike.

As the price is now, barely a year later, 49N this can hardly be counted as

a victory. In each of the last four incidents, strikes have never lasted more than eight days – the projected point at which strikes would have a major impact on Nigeria's well-prepared government is two weeks.

The NLC, a Nigerian umbrella union representing most of the country's major sectors, backed down over demanding a full retraction of the most recent rise on 15th November, just hours before strikers were due to come out.

The move has left grassroots militants across the country vulnerable to revenge sackings and clampdowns, while the most disadvantaged sectors of Nigerian society will be hit hard by rocketing costs.

Nigeria, the eighth largest oil producer on earth, imports fuel due to a lack of refineries. This has until recently been subsidised by the government, who are now trying to withdraw that help, despite a recent decline in the international price of petrol.

The majority of Nigeria's 130 million population live on less than 260N a day. The price of kerosene is 100N a litre in rural areas.

The Nigerian economy has declined over the last year, according to a governmental report. Living conditions have worsened and there has been zero growth in vital areas of the economy such as agriculture, despite a series of recent deals signed with China.

Inflation is up 19.7% to September, compared to a rate of 1.1% in the UK.



Santiago, Chile: Thousands battle police with Molotov cocktails and rocks in Chile's capital last week as 70,000 people marched against the meeting of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation Forum. US President George Bush's visit to the country was a catalyst to the demonstrations, and organisers were pleasantly surprised by the massive turnout.

International news in brief

Strikers massacred in the Philippines

Filipino police and armed forces have murdered 14 people whilst dispersing a picket at the Hacienda Luisita sugar mill on 16th November. Workers in the Central Azucarera de Tarlac Labour Union (CATLU) had barricaded Gate No.1 of the factory, with farm-workers in the United Workers Labour Union (UWLU) blocking the mill's other gate.

Acting on the orders of the Department of Labour, local police with elements of the 69th and 703rd Infantry Battalions of the Philippine army, attacked workers with water cannons, rifles, truncheons and teargas. This resulted in a catastrophic death toll, a further 35 gun shot wounds and 133 arrests, with hundreds more injured and missing. Among the dead were two small children living nearby who died of asphyxiation from the tear gas.

Five thousand workers began their strike on 6th November after 327 farm workers in the UWLU were dismissed, including its union officials, over a pay dispute and a long running row over land distribution. Workers for Hacienda

Luisita Inc. (HLI) take home just 10p a day after the company takes away deductions for debts; usually incurred because the company has reduced working time and reduced income to below starvation levels.

Jack Ray

The next edition of freedom will include a larger feature on the unfolding story in the Philippines.

Fallujah freed?

According to Lt-Col Pete Newell, the US forces "want Fallujah to understand what democracy's all about." Substitute 'imperialism' for 'democracy' and you get the reality of the situation. For the second time in six months, the town of Fallujah has suffered American attack. Back then the outrage created by reports of large civilian casualties forced the Americans to withdraw. Not this time. The 'liberation' of Fallujah will be achieved, regardless of how many are killed and how much is destroyed.

The occupying forces have learned some lessons from the failed conflict in April. After doing preliminary bombing

to soften up their targets, US forces started the ground assault of Fallujah. One of the first targets was the hospital. This was occupied explicitly to stream reports of civilian casualties, with the occupiers stating that it was the source of rumours about heavy casualties. "It's a centre of propaganda," claimed a senior American officer. Patients and doctors were initially handcuffed but later freed although few of Fallujah's wounded will be treated there as it is across the river from most of the town and US troops seized both bridges.

The true extent of civilian casualties will start coming out only once the US military's grip on the city loosens. According to one Red Cross official at least 800 civilians have been killed (the number is likely to be higher) Since hospitals and information itself are the primary initial targets, the only conclusion can be that the occupier wants to cover up in advance the atrocities it will commit as it tries to 'liberate' Fallujah for the third time in two years.

Iain McKay

Chinese wildcats

page 1

Chinese people will no doubt continue to find an outlet for their grievances. Workers involved in these large protests can complain about some of the most outrageous working practices anywhere in the world. At the Computime factory in Shenzhen, over 3,000 workers protested with lengthy strikes and road blockades, among their grievances was the fact that they had to undertake a seven-day, fourteen-hour week to receive less than half the province's minimum wage. The management regime was so strict workers had to apply to 'squad leaders' to take a toilet break, signing in and out as they went, and facing fines for taking too long. Those workers were also prepared to brave riot police so their voice might be heard (and they did eventually win a 170% pay rise).

The Chinese 'Worker's State' has responded with a policy of concessions and arrests. Ding Xiulan and Liu Meifeng, both women textile workers at the Zhongheng textile factory in Jiangsu province, were arrested at the beginning of November for their part in a seventeen-day strike and protest action in Early October; charged with

'disturbance of social order' and declared to have 'stirred trouble'. News of their arrest follows large sentences handed out to strikers at the Xing Ang Shoe factory arrested last April; Wan Jiateng receiving three and a half years, Chen Nanliu, Ma Chengwai and Qu Pengtao getting three years each. All these sentences were handed down in closed door 66 minute trials. Their demands? Daring to complain about months of underpaid wages, with the company taking the bulk of their pay (for 66 hours a week) for food and accommodation.

Despite the brutality of government repression, the severity of conditions in Chinese workplaces will inevitably continue to produce this kind of protest. Whilst the government continues to mete out violence and repression to those struggling under the impact of 'growth' and 'development', it will never crumble as the USSR did to a palace coup of frustrated apparatchiks at the head of a mass movement. It can only stumble upon the increasing numbers of industrial and rural workers that are building its 'economic miracle' but not participating in its spoils.

Jack Ray

Feature

G8 dissenters

World leaders are heading to Britain in 2005 ... and some people are planning to piss on their parade, writes MH

The year 2005 will be a busy one in UK politics. There'll be the ongoing slaughter and mayhem in the Middle East; the UK presidency of the EU; a general election; and it is the UK's turn to host the G8 for the year, with the showpiece G8 summit in Gleneagles, Scotland, from 6th to 8th July, to be opened by whichever liar happens to be PM at the time.

The G what?

G6, G7, G8, G20, G23, G ... whatever, and not a g-spot in sight, although the summits are pretty orgasmic for the shakers, makers and bankers present, as they calculate the profits to be made from the rest of the world.

G8 stands for 'Group of eight major industrial democracies', although not necessarily the eight richest countries in the world, nor the most democratic! It started life as the G6, in France in 1975, as the world was gripped by an oil crisis (déjà vu anyone?) amid fears of worldwide recession and depression. The UK had just received a major loan from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) to ease its own financial crisis. The aim was to deal with the major economic and political issues of the day, to ensure a growing global economy, and increasing global profits – or macroeconomic management to those in the know. In essence, the management of capitalism, or more bluntly – global governance.

The G8 has no HQ, offices, constitution, rulebook, nor legal standing. It is an ad hoc club for the world's ruling elite, attempting to dictate the course of world events and enforcing its will upon the world's economy. With the collapse of the Soviet bloc, Russia was allowed in from the cold as an observer from 1991, and full club member in 1998. Russia will take its turn to host the G8 in 2006.

Confusingly the G8 has a ninth member, the EU (a 25-country bloc), in recognition of its economic power, although it cannot have 'host' status.

The G20 is an appendage of the G8, and includes the next eleven most economically powerful and/or strategically important nations, for obvious reasons. China, India, Argentina, Brazil and Saudi Arabia are in this group. It is a 'forum' of finance ministers and central bank governors from the twenty members, that seeks to achieve stable and sustainable world growth that benefits all. China and India are the likely next additions to the G8, purely because of their economic power and growth.

How does the G8 work?

The G8 has the one annual showpiece summit located somewhere in the host nation – Gleneagles in 2005. The host nation – Gleneagles in 2005. The host to a degree dictates the agenda. Blair is

focusing on Africa (hence his Commission to Africa), climate change, and sustainability. The Middle East may well crop up too! Russia's recent decision to ratify the Kyoto agreement is merely a ploy to gain entry to the WTO. They along with the US and China produce so many harmful emissions that Kyoto is worthless, so expect a row between them and the Europeans. Another row between the US and Europeans may occur over the EU's proposed ending of its arms embargo on China, imposed after the Tiananmen Square massacre in 1989.

But all year round ministers and advisers from the G8 meet, with reps from other countries it wants to influence, in attempts to smooth and calm political and economic crisis, and keep the global economy flowing and growing. Essentially it impresses on everyone that it is in everyone's best interests, to do what the G8 says. Simple as that, probably best summed up as the 'carrot and stick approach'.

The G8 operates, like an unseen hand, through the IMF, World Bank, or International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (WB), and World Trade Organisation (WTO). The first two were formed as part of the Bretton Woods agreement in 1944 to sort out the economic and political messes caused by the Second World War and the worldwide depression in the 1930s. Presently, the G8 controls about 45% of votes on their boards, as opposed to say the 3% of votes going to the worlds 41 most indebted nations. The WTO, formed in 1995, as successor to GATT (General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade), to govern international trade relations. In practice, these three bodies, along with the G8, facilitate the expansion of international capital, in its pursuit of profit.

So whilst the G8 does the politicking and outline policy forming, the IMF, WB, WTO, and of course the UN, are its enforcers, and also its cash collectors. Their 'carrot' is aid, debt relief, investment, expertise, military and logistical support; their 'stick' is loans, debt collection, trade agreements (and barriers and tariffs), economic restructuring, political and military intervention, famine and disease.

Isn't it G for globalisation?

Well it might as well be. Globalisation is fundamentally the rule of the market economy via the removal of barriers to free trade and the closer integration of national economies, which is what the G8 and its enforcers want. It accelerated from the late 1970s onwards, in the guise of neo-liberalisation, and encouraged by its political acolytes Thatcher and Reagan. And it worked, the top 20% have got incredibly richer, the top 10% even more so. The rich/poor divide in the west, and the global

north/south divide, has been accentuated.

The globalisation of capital lies behind most of what happens in the world today. France, Germany and Russia may have appeared opposed to the war in Iraq, but they agree with the principle of opening up Iraq and other Arab states to market forces via globalisation. They just weren't keen on the process, and the sight of the US marching roughshod over their views to gain greater control of the area than them.

The G8 and globalisation in practical terms means opening up every sector of a nation's economy to the market economy; privatisation of the public sector, welfare state, transport networks, utilities (gas, water, electricity); the casualisation of labour through insecurity, short-term contracts, and union bashing; cutbacks in benefits in value terms and through increased inaccessibility; manipulation of people's savings and pensions funds through speculation; the movement of finance, investment and jobs to wherever labour is cheaper and profits greater; the exploitation of the developing worlds resources and labour markets; aggressive foreign intervention and where necessary invasion; and of course the war on terror.

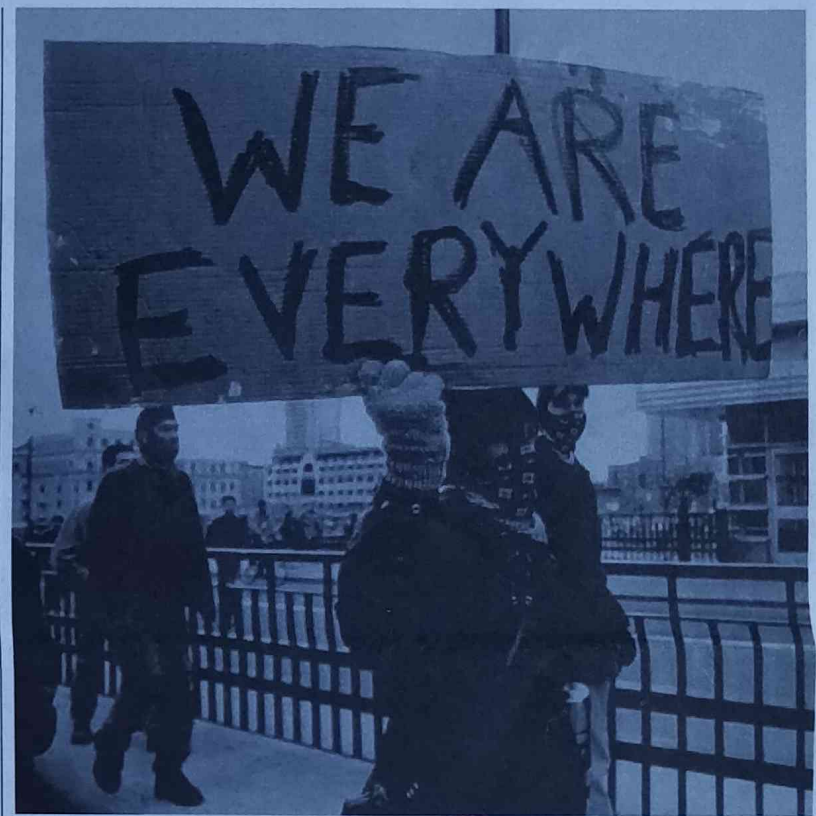
Here comes the opposition!

Fact: people in developing countries (the third world, the global south) have been struggling and rioting against the devastating effects of globalisation for several decades now, just as they did against colonisation. Fact: globalisation has left the majority of people in these countries poorer. Fact: the 'west' has got richer. Fact: we've done this at their expense.

The G8 and its enforcers seem to believe that if there's no pain, then there'll be no gain. For people in the developing world it's been all pain, with only their own tiny ruling elites and foreign investors benefiting. Famine, disease, wars, poverty – thanks to globalisation. To put it bluntly, capitalism kills much faster and in greater numbers than any suicide bomber or tin-pot dictator. You won't read that in the western media, nor will you read that the opposition grows daily. Throughout central and south America, Asia and Africa, there are enormous social movements resisting the attacks of globalisation and state repression – through land squatting and redistribution, factory occupations, wildcat and general strikes, co-operatives and collectives, autonomous zones, self-management, carnival and uprisings – resistance on a daily basis.

Dissent! Today, tomorrow, everyday

The media would have it that the badly named anti-globalisation movement emerged at the Seattle WTO summit in 1999; they may give a nod to the People's



Global Action-inspired Carnival Against Capitalism on J18 that same year; they sometimes acknowledge the 50,000 anti-debt campaigners and Reclaim the Streets protesters who converged on the G8 summit in Birmingham in 1998.

They may even mention the Zapatista uprising in south Mexico in 1994, but they will never inform you in the proper context of the worldwide resistance.

The fact is, our resistance in the west is pitiful compared to events elsewhere, and outright anti-capitalists remain a minority in the wider movement. Yet our presence at just about every G8, WTO, IMF, WB, EU, UN, NATO summit since 1998, has forced these capitalist institutions into the public eye and put them ever so slightly on the back foot. Violent protests, and a variety of social movements, have captured news headlines and brought these organs of exploitation and control into western public consciousness, and given heart to our brothers and sisters in the developing world struggling anonymously for their lives – they are not alone.

Now these institutions have on their agendas debt relief and even cancellation; increased aid; the treatment of HIV/AIDS and other diseases; human rights and repressive regimes (in the developing world); sustainability; even climate change. They engage on first name terms with the Non Governmental Organisations (NGO's) demanding reform and trade justice/fair trade, and invite them in as responsible observers. They invite very rich celebrity campaigners (Geldof, Bono, etc.) to sit on their commissions and speak at their conferences. Sadly, they do this as part of the process of recuperation, of buying off the reformers

and 'responsible' campaigners, in exchange for their complicity in a system that exists to make money for the few (see Freedom, 23rd August 2004).

Make no mistake about it, the politicians and theoreticians of the capitalist class are not stupid. Some of them, such as Blair, are even motivated in part by moral concerns, and an incoherent sense of fairness and equality. Others really couldn't care less. But they all can see that a stable developing world, with a veneer of democracy, manageable debt, a healthy workforce, a growing economy, and access to natural resources, is just what globalisation needs – because capitalism has to continue to expand.

For 2005 a new network has evolved in the UK, Dissent – a network of resistance against the G8. Explicitly anti-capitalist and adhering organisationally and politically to the broadly libertarian PGA Hallmarks, Dissent aims to be an ongoing vehicle for those seeking more than reformism and opportunistic sloganeering. It may not stop the G8 in 2005, but every act of resistance on our parts, however small, sows a seed for greater things to come, and gives us a glimpse of a possible future world. A world based not on greed, profit, exploitation and repression; but on solidarity, mutual aid, direct collective action, peace and environmental harmony.

Who's in the G8?

1975: US, UK, France, Italy, Germany, Japan

1976: Canada

1977: The EU begins attending

1998: Russia (observer since 1991)

Editorial

As is well known, capitalism seeks to turn everything into property. Hell, it even thinks of liberty in terms of property in the person (and, consequently, glorifies that alienation of genuine liberty called wage labour). Taking this pathology to its logical conclusion, the assumption is that your children are your property as well rather than being individuals. The Bush Junta has drawn that conclusion.

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), led by Bush appointees, is planning to use poor children as guinea pigs in new study on pesticides. It is seeking input on a new proposed study in which infants in participating low income families will be monitored for health impacts as they undergo exposure to known toxic chemicals over the course of two years. It aims to see how chemicals can be ingested, inhaled or absorbed by children ranging from babies to three years old. While this may sound a bit grim, the happy chappies at the EPA have entitled their new study CHEERS (Children's Environmental Exposure Research Study).

Of course, no one is forced at gun point to take part. No, economic coercion is the means. The poor will be paid for by the state using their property in the form of \$970, a free video camera, a T-shirt, and a framed certificate of appreciation. A bargain!

Needless to say, in the land of the free (market) there are some parents desperate enough to take them up on this. Participants of the study were chosen from six health clinics and three hospitals in Jacksonville, Florida where just over half of births are from non-white mothers and 62% have only received an elementary or secondary education. While the study does not require that participants increase their chemical use, the applicants have to regularly use toxic chemicals around the house. This will likely lead the low income applicants to increase their toxic chemical use in order to be eligible for the funding so putting their children at increased risk.

And who is funding this research? The EPA received \$2.1 million from the American Chemistry Council (ACC), a chemical industry front group that includes members such as Dow, Exxon, and Monsanto. Critics of the study point out that the source of the funding will guarantee the results will be biased in favour of the chemical industry. Not forgetting, of course, the ethical issues of using the impoverished children of the poorest, least educated and most desperate people as test subjects.

It gets worse. ACC and EPA have known for decades about the high level of toxicity of the specific chemicals being studied in this project and their negative effect on humans. This is fully documented in study after study. The key is that the products have a long term impact on health while the new study is for two years meaning that the ACC can advertise the positive results of the EPA study as there will be no obvious short term impact. As well as improving advertising, it will be used to lobby for weaker regulations on these products. A technique has been used by the ACC for decades.

On November 11th, the EPA announced suspension of the study's launch until early 2005 for the sake of 'final review'. The Organic Consumers Association is using this delay to petition for the permanent ending for this abuse of low income children by the chemical industry. Good luck to them.

Commentary

Cyberspace

Richard Griffin did a good job of bringing up some important issues in regards to the anarchist movement and the internet (Lost In Cyberspace). I think its important that someone has put these ideas out in the open but I also think his article has its limitations.

I would challenge the belief that the internet is as egalitarian as it seems. While certain parts of it may seem to lend themselves to anarchism as an overall system I doubt that it is any more egalitarian than other forms of communication. RG already points out one of the problems – the restrictions from governments and ISPs on content. One also mustn't forget the costs involved in setting up a large online project (purchase of equipment/ server space) and the technical expertise required. Even projects like Britain's enraget.net have people overseeing how it grows and functions.*

One of RG's main arguments is that the interweb is a form of substitutionism for 'real' action or politics. But when one stops to think about this – is it really? Maybe people wouldn't be putting their spare time into action if the internet didn't exist – they would just be finding other ways to amuse themselves.

Online message boards and mailing lists are popular for a number of reasons and the most important must be that they are so accessible to just login and chat. To write an article for a newspaper or leaflet – to actually sit down, properly formulate ideas and address people formerly on paper takes a hell of a lot of effort. The nature of the medium is what is important in how people choose to spend their time, the number of systems and processes which one has to go through to post online are minimal compared to writing an article for a magazine. Of course I'm not saying one is better than the other.

It would be interesting to look at the statistics (which obviously don't exist) to see if the link between the decline of interest in 'serious politics' and growth in the use of projects such as enraget.net is even related. Are people looking at the internet to blame without considering the other options?

RG also mentions that much of what is posted online is "of little appeal" to people outside the movement. This criticism is impossible to apply to just material online alone, the majority of propaganda circulating in print around the anarchist movement and indeed oral propaganda is just as inward looking. The advantage of the internet is that people have an immediate means of challenging this, through email, etc. – unlike an anonymous leaflet handed out at a demonstration.

Lastly RG rolls out the old argument of the internet "not being real life". I believe this is a cultural viewpoint very prominent in the UK. The internet is just as real as anything else – it takes up physical space, uses physical resources and requires the same mental processes to digest as a newspaper or speech. Obviously its not a substitute for meeting people but it is often a very good way of finding new people to meet up with in the real world – especially in our ever increasingly spatially spread out lives.

I know from personal experience that a large number of people wouldn't have got involved in the anarchist movement in the last few years if it wasn't for being able to type 'Mayday Protests' into Google.

The internet is now an essential part of life in Britain. It is changing how we have to organise as anarchists. It cannot

be dismissed as not being real. The answer, of course, is about balance. The internet isn't the end all and be all of activity but I think people often see the internet as convenient to blame for the problems we face as anarchists in the UK.

The internet is here, its simple to use and accessible – we need to harness it and fit it into how we work, not struggle against it.

rkn / enraget.net

* A great article on what the internet was to mean for the future when it first came into existence and what really happened is at http://uts.cc.utexas.edu/~7Eswilson/research/wilson_peterson.pdf

More mining

Further to Donald Room's letter about Freedom Press's support of striking miners from Bates Colliery (now closed) near Newcastle, some miners also stayed with me and I held a number of fund raising functions selling Freedom and asking for support at my college and local community centre in Camden.

In hindsight the most interesting issue I remember discussing was Arthur Scargill's decision not to hold a ballot over whether to go on strike or not. As it was near the end of the strike both the miners and myself decided that there should have been a ballot for tactical reasons. Trot Scargill's undemocratic decision not to trust his members to support him gave the Thatcher government the ammunition it needed to destroy the NUM by splitting the membership and sequestering its funds. An example of, where ignoring democratic procedures, and anarcho-syndicalist principles, in favour of centralist authoritarian decision-making within the union was a major factor in the defeat of a strike which had overwhelming support.

Blame the Trots or Trade Unions in general?

S. Trapovska

Want ads

A class struggle anarchist / libertarian communist group is forming in Romford and the surrounding area. To get involved email romfordanarchists@hotmail.com or call 07774 641587 and leave a message.

Hey punx, do you want to part with your old records/tapes/zines or shirts? I'll pay you good prices for good condition items.

Contact Clint on 07780 634884, shortfuserecords@hotmail.com or visit Aldgate Press.

We're looking for short (preferably under two thousand words) histories of radical events, strikes, revolutions, wars, etc., from a libertarian/working class point of view for a people's history web site.

Contact admin@enraget.net or write to us at enraget.net c/o Freedom, 84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1 7QX.

Rilindje Fara e Mirë Bibliotek Projekt (RLP) is a radical non-profit free reference library in Tirana, Albania. If readers would like to donate any radical printed matter, videos, CDs, etc., this would greatly help our project. We have no PC or internet access so we feel very isolated.

Contact RLP(A)2, Postfach 256, CH-4142 Muenchenstein, Switzerland.

Roman A. Dogan for RLP-Albania

I've been in communication with Manchester AF about starting a Federation here in Sheffield. We are hoping to set up a meeting to discuss how to build here in Sheffield. Contact sheffield_anarchists@yahoo.com for more info.

Joe

Freedom

page 1

it has some highly talented volunteer writers and is stocked in a number of commercial establishments, where it is bought and read outside the anarchist ghetto. But we've got a long way to go still. If you can help out with any of the following, get in touch via our contact details on page 2, or if you are at the Bookfair visit our stall or come to our meeting in room 3C from 4pm to 5pm.

Firstly, we need to stabilise our funds. Producing anarchist outreach material is expensive, especially if we want to keep the cost low, and provide low-cost or free subs to prisoners, the unemployed and groups in the so-called 'developing' world. For this we need cash. If you can please subscribe (see page 8) and if you can afford it and appreciate what we do, why not get a supporter sub, or set up a standing order donation? We're trying to raise £5,000 a year in SO donations. Help us hit our target!

Secondly, we need to expand – with a few more people contributing articles and helping edit we could bump the paper up to a 12-page tabloid: a respectable length! So please get in touch, get writing, or finding interesting stories and help out (see page 2 for contacts).

Thirdly we need better distribution. After all, we think anarchist ideas are the most useful ones to change society for the better, so we want to communicate them as widely as possible. Many booksellers and newsagents will stock Freedom if they are approached with our terms and conditions, which you can get from our circulation team. In addition, why not try to persuade your library to stock Freedom? Some pay for subscriptions but others will stock it if it is donated, so you could buy your local one a sub, or alternatively take in all of your copies after you're finished with them.

Finally we always need a hand with the mundane stuff – making a libertarian paper's not all jetting off to international conferences and hobnobbing with the North London meeja elite, so if you can spare the odd afternoon to come to the office and help stuff envelopes and the like it would be very much appreciated.

We really believe we can build a solid, effective tool to spread anarchist ideas, educate ourselves and keep large numbers of people across the country in touch with the movement. We'd like you to get on board.

John S. For Freedom

Prison news

page 2

arrested leaving with, and returns them to the cages.

While giving evidence he also acknowledged he puts down rat poison in the pits to control the infestation, which suggests that rat poison is probably entering the human food chain as the birds gobble it greedily as a scarce food source.

The jury accepted the defendant acted with honest intent and that the average person on the street would agree with him.

Catalan political prisoner in isolation

Laura Riera is a Catalan woman prisoner who was sentenced to seven years in prison after being tortured into signing a confession admitting involvement with the Basque group ETA. She has been in prison since August 2001, and since this March has been held in isolation.

Please show solidarity by writing to her at: CP Madrid 5, Apartado Correos 200, Colmenar Viejo 28770, Madrid, Spain.

Zahid Mubarek inquiry

The inquiry into the murder of Zahid Mubarek in Feltham prison by his racist 'cell-mate' Robbie Stewart continues to hear evidence. Stewart has been described as being "a vicious racist who fantasised about violence against non-whites," being "obsessed with the symbolism of fascism," and having "a deep-seated hatred of black and Asian people."

Every one of the three hundred letters Stewart wrote from Feltham prior to committing the murder bore a swastika, and after beating Zahid to death shortly before his release Stewart daubed a swastika on the wall of the cell. Police investigating the death found a letter from Stewart threatening to "take extreme measures to get shipped out, kill me fuckin padmate if I have to, bleach me sheet and pillowcase white and make a ku klux klan outfit and walk out me pad with a flaming crucifix."

In a bizarre turn of events, since the killing Stewart has been busy contacting both Marxist and anarchist groups claiming conversion to their respective ideologies, sickeningly he has even described himself as "an anarchist political prisoner."

More sickening though, was the offer by Prison Service gruppenfuhrer Martin Narey to plant a tree for Zahid Mubarek within the walls of Feltham! Zahid's uncle, Imtiaz Amin, rightly rejected this insult, telling Narey that he'd rather see him flatten the place.

News compiled by Mark Barnsley

Quiz answers

1. The Ukrainian Jewish anarchist Samuel Schwartzbad shot him in Paris in 1926, with three shots. As he did so, he shouted "This for the pogroms; this for the massacres; this for the victims."
2. The Brick Lane Mosque, formerly an ultra-orthodox synagogue and before that a Huguenot Protestant Church. In the early 1900s, Jewish anarchists used to offer the congregation bacon sandwiches or invite them to a dance on holy days.
3. He said it "gives me some faith". Pass the sick bucket!
4. The Carman's Union (cart drivers) whose organiser was Ted Leggatt, and the Shop Assistants' Union led by John Turner.

REVIEW

Collins' biography of the white working class argues that state-sponsored multiculturalism divides us, writes A. Saddleback

The fact that most people in the UK are white, and that most of them are working class is an obvious one. However, most class-based movements have taken great care not to divide working class life into 'white' and 'coloured' aspects. It is only recently that some people have started to identify the needs of a specifically white working class. In the final chapter of his book Collins listens to an elderly Southwark resident reacting to a council leaflet that lists the 'diverse cultures' of Southwark. "They don't mention us English," Joe says. "You wouldn't think we'd ever existed would ya?" Collins comments, "The white working class have never needed to define themselves or be defined before. It's the story I've tried to tell in this book."

The far right have also started to jump on the bandwagon, aping the multicultural liberal language by arguing that they just want equal recognition for whites. This is the point where Collins' concerns overlap with those of Nick Griffin, but it's a narrow point. The BNP may chase working class support in areas like Bermondsey but in the end its aim is cross-class white power, rather than social equality. Collins' main concern to tell the story of a class that has been the bedrock of London for centuries; those exploited to create this Western financial centre, and who are now derided by liberals and lefties as 'white trash' or 'scum off the estates.'*

During the years of mass immigration into the UK right-wingers, from Tory Enoch Powell to fascist John Tyndall, have tried to gain support by exploiting the fears of the white British population. Many groups fought against this reactionary line. During the 1970-80s these included left-wing organisations such as the Anti-Nazi League and Rock Against Racism, plus the Labour-run councils and authorities, and movements that came out of the African, Afro-Caribbean, Indian and Pakistani communities; all of these movements were part of a struggle, not only against racism, but against the general attacks on the working class as a whole.

This book is written years after the dust of those struggles has settled. Most of the anti-racists' leaders have lost any focus on class a long time ago. Institutions were created by the government to contain the struggle, and so the social movements gave birth to a 'race relations industry' that bought off the former leaders of anti-racist groups. The latest mainstream anti-fascist grouping Unite Against Fascism, now happily includes Labour, Tory, Liberal, and Ulster Unionist politicians in its ranks as well as the Socialist Workers Party. Successful Black politicians like Trevor Philips, Lee Jasper, Dianne Abbot and Paul Boateng are part of the New Labour success story, but areas like Abbot's Hackney constituency remain desperately poor. Instead of a politics based on supporting social struggle, mainstream anti-racist rhetoric has embraced 'multiculturalism'. In

practise this has left most non-white Brits to be labelled as inherently part of one culture or another. For example, a president of a community association may be seen as the 'leader' of his community by the council; but this ignores the fact that this leader comes from a particular upper class, male, political stratum within 'his' community. For Collins, one big result of this fixing of people into rigid 'cultures' has been the growing awareness that the white majority have been left out. In a 'multicultural' society they are often considered to be the one group with no claims to an ethnicity at all.

Starting his book with the murder of Stephen Lawrence in 1993, and the way the liberal/left press used the case to reveal their real disdain for the whole white working class, Collins tries to trace the roots of white working class life in Southwark, one of the oldest London boroughs. Unfortunately the historical part of Collins' book is the weakest one. Notions of 'whiteness' are a recent invention, and so it's hard to write about the 'white working class' in the nineteenth century. Until the twentieth century the outsiders in Southwark were mainly the Irish and the Jews; recent immigrants from rural areas or Scotland would also have been seen as foreign – but this has nothing to do with 'white identity', rather an age-old influx of new cultures as people are drawn to the city.

The book really takes off when we reach 1961, the year of Collins' birth, and we start to get to grips with his experiences of the white working class world around him, that was by then becoming identified against a non-white immigrant population. He treats their concerns about immigration seriously, instead of assuming that they were due to a 'backward' mentality. Resources really were scarce, just as they often are in modern day areas where asylum seekers are housed; scarcity and competition can easily lead to ethnic friction and tension. We can't try to deal with these problems unless we recognise that there are real reasons why asylum seekers may not be welcome in an impoverished area – and real reasons why they are not housed in well off areas.

The biggest enemies of Collins' class were, of course, not to be the migrant workers, but the white politicians who ruled London. While the residents were battling to hold their community together, the streets were ripped apart and new 'deck access' tower blocks introduced, these quickly became monuments to planning stupidity; dark, dirty, unsafe and crime-ridden. Many of the white 'tribe' that Collins has documented took the route out to the suburbs, where the streets were wider, and there was said to be less crime and more trees. The class system followed them there, however, just as the trendy young middle class then moved into the luxury city centre flats after the tower blocks were demolished.

Because of its pursuit of the story of a specifically 'white' working class, Collins' picture of Southwark inevitably



The likes of us – Collins' book is no nostalgia trip.

has bits missing. He himself points out that blacks and Asians are a key part of working class life; the grassroots is where most inter-ethnic contact happens – contact as lovers as well as enemies. The middle and upper class are far more likely to keep to their own tribe, but this doesn't stop middle class journalists from thinking they know best. Journalists and sociologists have reviewed this book and have often whinged that Collins spoils his argument with 'polemics' against the liberal commentators who pass judgement on the white working class. These reviewers are simply defending their own, of course, and they fail to see that Collins' book is not simply a safe little nostalgia tale of Lambeth-walking honest barrow boys. It is a plea for real action to stop the white working class being abandoned by those who should be defending it.

Collins is trying to show us that an English identity still exists, and that we ignore it at our peril. As an anarchist I reject any theory of culture that tries to pigeonhole me because of my parents' religion or my skin colour. Unfortunately, this is exactly what state-sponsored multiculturalism seeks to do, and the effect is to separate people from each other. Culture is produced at the base of society, by our interactions every day, but state multiculturalism tries to simplify this fact into a few token gestures that seek

to label people as simply 'Muslim', 'Jew' or 'Catholic'. There are all too many authoritarians who are all too eager to go along with this view – from Bin Laden to Bush is not very far, they are both fundamentalists for their 'culture', just on different sides.

So why am I praising a book that defines people according to 'whiteness' – a category that doesn't really exist? Collins is trying to tell the story of people facing a world they did not create, and how they deal with this. One way is to create an identity that he calls 'tribal', and that is connected to family, area and also class. Too often left and anarchist activists seem to tolerate non-white 'tribal' identity far more (an obvious example would be the SWP's love-in with authoritarian Muslim religious leaders), and tend to shy away from anyone who might be contaminated by white racism. If we keep on doing this we are also cutting ourselves off from real struggles.

Towards the end of his book Collins talks about striking taxi drivers, Mothers Against Guns and local credit unions, "This is the real modern face of urban activism, by those attempting to reclaim their neighbourhoods. It doesn't attract the numbers or the column-inches it warrants. And holds no appeal for the professional protesters who can be relied on to take to the streets of urban areas on selective issues, or those found outside the Elephant & Castle

tube station, flogging copies of Socialist Worker to students.' In many parts this book is muddled, contradictory and unclear, but it's worth reading just for passages like that. The only real alternative to the state's multiculturalism is a real, diverse, culture of resistance!

* SWP central Committee member Julie Waterson at the 2003 AGM of the Socialist Alliance.

Michael Collins, *The Likes of Us: A Biography of the White Working Class* (London, Granta, 2004) 274 pages, £12

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Eye Spy

... at The Anarchist Bookfair!

Well the Bookfair is finally here. To mark this momentous occasion, those lovely people at Michelin have put together a special Eye-Spy just for us! Tick the boxes throughout the day, and there will be a special prize at the Freedom newspaper stall for the person with the highest score.* Enjoy!

1 point: common as muck

- A hippie.
- A nutter.
- A punk, British.
- A group of punks drinking, British.
- An SWP member coming to check out genuine socialism.
- An anarchist who used to be in the SWP.
- An old man with a beard. Possibly old enough to lead you to ponder whether or not he fought in Spain...

2 points: Clapham common

- The Socialist Party of Great Britain stall.
- Someone from Fight Racism, Fight Imperialism.
- A punk, Euro.
- A group of punks drinking, Euro.

5 points: nineteen to the dozen

- The oversized AF stall used to exaggerate their influence in the movement.
- A primitivist talking absolute shite.
- Me, all of a sudden enthusiastic at the site of all these anarchists in one room, starting to think that this year we'll be able to sort out the libertarian socialist movement in Britain.
- A video of Seattle or Genoa playing to a packed room followed by a film about a strike with just the director, his new girlfriend and some Irish anarchists, talking amongst themselves, present.

10 points: ten a penny

- An Anarcho-Celebrity e.g. Donald Rooum, Jean Weir, Mark Barnsley, Nick Heath, etc.
- Someone from Class War wanking over the Poll Tax and how they were the only group that mattered.
- An animal rights person who is saying things that mean they're obviously not an anarchist (e.g. 'This Paki was eating a burger so I spat on him' or 'McDonald's workers should all be killed') even though they claim they are.
- Someone who is certain that they overheard fascists planning to attack the bookfair.

50 points: rare as hen's teeth

- Someone from SolFed bitching about the CGT.
- Anyone buying a copy of The Raven.
- An 'anarcha-feminist' moaning about how no one listens to her because 'malestream' (read: class struggle) anarchist movement hates strong women when in reality no one listens to her because she's obnoxious and

refuses to listen to anyone (man or woman).

- Someone in an England shirt being shunned for being a 'Nazi'.

100 points: rare as rocking horse shit

- An anarchist back from holiday/living abroad whinging about how shit the movement is in the UK.
- An ageing activist talking bollocks to look like a hardened, experienced, intellectual super-activist in a bid to sleep with younger, inexperienced girls who are new to radical politics (all the while these girls are looking for the quickest way to leave without hurting the old man's feelings).
- A pamphlet called 'Anarchy for the New Millenium'/'Anarchy in the 21st Century'/'Anarchy in the New Age' or something else about how Anarchism has to radically change its analysis since the revolutions in capitalism since 1999.
- A member of the London Psycho-geographical Association playing a 'hilarious' 'situationist' prank like a fascist bomb hoax, or burning books.
- Stuart Christie.

500 points: one in a million

- The enraget.net [Ed - Freedom, shurely?] stall!

Maximum score: 1,075

by Ed Goddard, enraget.net collective

* The 'prize' may not be a tangible physical object, it may be more of an, er, experience.

And don't worry, our world reknowned Top Ten List™ will be back next issue. You can contribute on enraget.net/forums

Imagine if ...

Prince Charles stepped out of his bath and was rubbed down with a towel. He felt better for a good soak, he thought as his manservant wrapped him in a dressing gown.

It had been an awful week for the prince. His attempts at growing an organic polo helmet had met with resounding failure, and the scientific community still wouldn't accept his 'brown sludge' theory of nanobots destroying earth scenario.

What was even worse though, his dire warnings that the dull-witted masses didn't know their place any more had - bizarrely - not gone down well with the press.

Mummy had rolled her eyes when she found out, muttering, "Bloody idiot, and he wonders why he'll never be king. It's not just the big ears you know." That had stung. Charles wasn't just any old idiot, he was a royal idiot. Mummy shouldn't say things like that.

It was all that Elaine's fault, what was it with these women that they kept embarrassing him? Why couldn't they concentrate on what they were good at?

As his servant talcum powdered his pee-pee, Charles decided to write another letter to himself. He'd title it 'Women and oiks: they should know their place'.

It sounded like a winner.



A sideways look

Duvet days are a recent US import where employers recognise that workers will throw a sickie and try to formalise it, thus managing and regulating it. It is an improvement that some managers recognise why you don't want to crawl out of bed at some unearthly hour just to turn up at some pestilential hell-hole for your daily dose of exploitation and alienation. And it's good for your sanity, whether an employer-sanctioned sickie or not. But it ain't gonna change the world.

I recently acquired a copy of Volume Three of Stuart Christie's expanded autobiography from those good people at the Kate Sharpley Library. It is costly, but an interesting read. And there are plenty of things we can learn from it in the here and now.

In the run up to the October 1968 anti-Vietnam War demonstration, the Anarchist Black Cross and Black Flag put out a leaflet about "the futility of supposing that anything could come of a violent demonstration such as had been suggested by the Marxist organisers." Instead, they advocated 'Monday Militancy'.

What was meant by this was a commitment for the whole week, not just protesting at the weekends. Personally, I find it difficult to spend much time at weekends doing anything other than recovering from the week's work and trying to get done those things I haven't managed to do during the week. (Maybe I need more 'duvet days'). But then, one of the things about being an anarchist to me is to fight against power where I find it and try to hold it accountable as far as I can. More doer than duvet.

What's needed now is definitely a good dose of 'Monday Militancy'. The

CBI bleat about the minimum wage while company directors get a 12.8% raise. The gap between boardroom and workers' pay was, once all the bonuses had been taken into account, 2,600%. The government occasionally makes noises about regulating this free-for-all, but isn't likely to. There is only one thing that will - workers standing up for themselves and fighting for pay rises and other benefits. We live in a country where tax credits and other benefits effectively subsidise low-paying employers. If we want to hit capitalism we need to do it where it will take notice - in the pocket.

I know some readers will wonder how this is relevant to them - they're studying or are unemployed or retired. But the message of Monday Militancy is to struggle for freedom in all aspects of your life. And anarchists should be consistent. There's no point in fighting against sweatshops on Saturday if you go to work on Monday for an anti-union employer.

The re-election of George W. Bush means that Western capitalism will be itching to expand into new areas. It also guarantees the continuation of the American right's crusade against places where the oppressors take their cue from a different holy book. The evidence of Iraq is that people will quite happily go to a weekend demo against the war in large numbers, but they will be ignored.

Only direct action will have a serious impact on Blair's ability to back up Bush's next crusade. At present it's unlikely that many workers in Britain outside the public sector would take industrial action against a war. But taking action on political things hinges on a culture of resistance in the workplace. Which brings us back to Monday Militancy.

Svartfrosk

Blast from the Past

From Freedom of 23rd November 1974, on recent factional in-fighting within Italy's fascists: "It seems that party splits and the setting up of new political fashions is not a monopoly of the left-wing authoritarian lunatics. In fact it is with some surprise that I report the imminent splitting of the Italian neo-fascist party, MSI. Dare I say it, the MSI, if it does not sort out its internal differences, is fast approaching a state of anarchy. The first sign came when Antonio Ranieri, a notable representative of the neo-fascist union CISNAL in Bari, resigned. As Ranieri said, 'CISNAL is a union which constantly makes fascist propaganda and does not look after the interests of its workers'. How surprising! The split has approached a beautiful reality through leaders of the various factions vying for power. Hence another authoritarian party bites the dust."

\$180 million

Alleged bribes by Halliburton in Nigeria.

\$4 billion

Potential contracts it would buy.

The quiz

1. How did Simon Petliura, former Ukrainian leader who ordered pogroms killing 60,000 Jews, die?
2. Which London building has a unique religious history, and who was accused of 'provocative behaviour' outside it?
3. How did sanctimonious singer Bono react when he picked up Tony Blair's guitar and found it in tune?
4. Which unions had anarchists as full time organisers in the 1890s?

Answers on page 6

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