

IT'S RACISM, STUPID

by Mark Metcalfe

It was hardly surprising that the British National Party's recent electoral challenge in the council elections in Sunderland attracted considerable attention in the national and in some cases international media and press. Standing a record number of candidates, twenty five in all, the BNP obtained over 13,500 votes. This was equivalent to nearly 14% of the total votes and in the Town End Farm ward they just failed to break through the 30% barrier.

It would be a mistake however to conclude from the sudden surge in support for the fascists that the successes the BNP have enjoyed are entirely the result of their own endeavours in raising local people's fears about the arrival of just over 1,000 refugees and asylum seekers in the City of Sunderland over the last two years.

This would be to massively underestimate the role of racism in fuelling people's fears and the failure of local politicians to develop and run active anti-racist campaigns in an area which has always had a very small black and ethnic minority community.

Even today less than 1% of the population of Sunderland is drawn from black and ethnic minority backgrounds, and the county in which the city resided until it became part of Tyne and Wear in 1974, namely County Durham, has an even lower percentage.

I've spoken to Labour Party and trade union activists who have told me of their frustration in getting such bodies to take seriously the issue of racism in the last twenty years. The common experience was that they were told 'there isn't a problem here', usually followed by 'there aren't any black people here'.

The other common objection was 'look, don't raise that, it's better to keep it quiet and then there won't be any problems.' The approach was to ignore the issues and to bury one's head in the sand. Racist ideas, views and jokes largely went unchallenged. However this didn't mean that there wasn't a problem, and the government's controversial decision at the end of 2000 to start dispersing asylum-seekers and refugees to places such as Sunderland has brought them to the fore.

Sunderland has a minuscule black and ethnic minority population, and little or no anti-racist work has previously been undertaken. With the Government not allocating increased resources to such areas so that all those living there could benefit, it meant that local people felt they were losing out. This, and the unwillingness of central and local government to create forums in which newcomers could meet and mix with residents allowed the far right to profit.

The BNP have skilfully exploited the situation, but they were already on fertile ground as racism is very strong amongst some sections of the community in Sunderland. A

(continued on page 3)

Iraqi resistance grows, while America's other war just won't go away

HI, GEORGE, REMEMBER US?

by Iain McKay

Since the deaths of Saddam Hussein's murderous offspring at the end of last month, Tony Blair has once again been trying to justify his aggression towards Iraq. The dictator's regime, he said recently, "wasn't just a security threat because of its weapons programme, but it was also responsible for the torture and killing of thousands and thousands of innocent Iraqis."

It's significant that Blair says Saddam's weapons 'programme' was the issue behind the invasion, rather than the actual existence of vast stocks of weaponry – which is what he claimed as his justification before the assault began. In other words, his story has changed again. Truly, his backtracking knows no bounds.

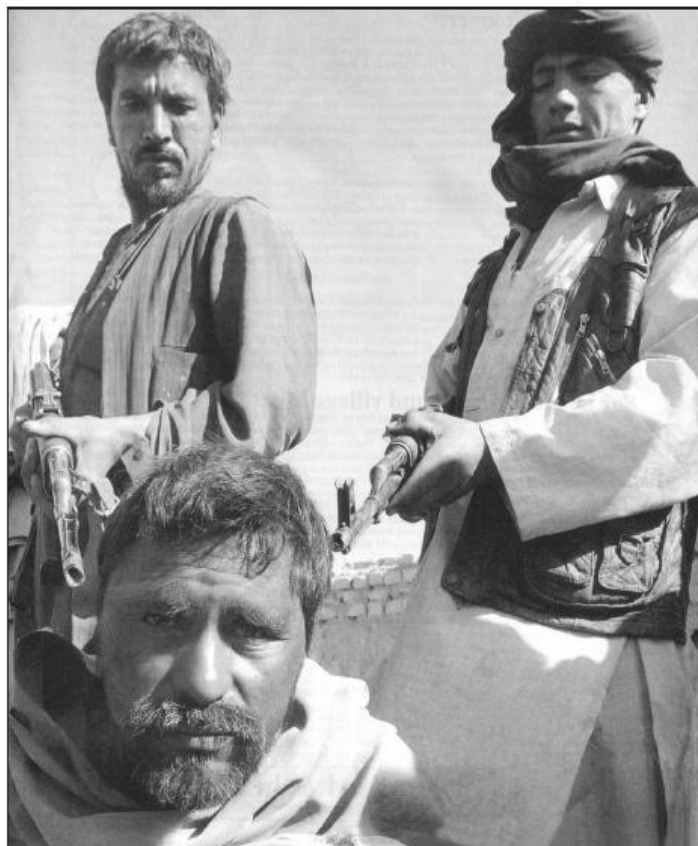
The deaths of Uday and Qusay Hussein were a wonderful opportunity for Blair to remind us of the evil nature of their father's regime, of which they were an integral part. Of course, the evil of the Hussein family wasn't what we were told we were going to war against. It wasn't, and couldn't be, the legal justification. But the clan's wickedness does have the advantage of distracting people's attention away from the weapons issue, just like the furore surrounding the circumstances of Dr David Kelly's death.

And better still, the killing of the Husseins means they can't give public evidence, either about the (lack of) Iraqi weapons of mass destruction or about Saddam's close ties to the United States establishment. How embarrassing it would have been if they'd revealed where the regime learned its torture techniques! And what would people say when they learned that many of the deaths Blair has been shedding crocodile tears over took place when Britain and America were supporting and arming Saddam?

The other thing which has to be said, of course, is that Tony hasn't yet mentioned the more recent armed gangs, which are also responsible for killing (in his words) "thousands and thousands of innocent Iraqis". These are the armed forces of the UK and the USA. The Anglo-American aggression against Iraq has already killed well over twice as many people as the number who died on September 11th. The total will probably never be known for sure.

And then there's the torture. The same day that Blair sounded off about the evil of Uday and Qusay, Foreign Secretary Jack Straw was allegedly 'considering' a report from Amnesty International in which the organisation detailed human rights violations amongst prisoners of war being held by the American military. These violations included the use of torture.

Of course the actions of British and American soldiers are small fry compared to what was done for years by Saddam Hussein and his henchmen. But he had decades to get such a high bodycount, and for most of that time he was helped along by the same



United States troops in Afghanistan are now encountering more acts of resistance than ever while large parts of the country are back under Taliban rule, it was reported at the end of last month. Despite Pentagon claims that the conflict ended when American forces seized Kabul in early 2002, Taliban and al-Qaida guerrillas are said to be launching an increasing number of attacks on the invaders. US commander General Frank Hagenbeck, based in Bagram airbase, admitted last month that Taliban and al-Qaida operatives have regrouped in Pakistan, despite the promises of Pakistani dictator Pervez Musharraf to crack down on radical Islamic groups there. He said their activity was funded by the renewed trade in opium since the end of the 'official' war. Representatives of Afghan puppet ruler Hamid Karzai have expressed concern that their American bosses don't appreciate the gravity of the situation.

• Coming soon from Freedom Press, *The Shadows under the Lamp: two essays on 11th September and Afghanistan* by Ronald Creagh and Sharif Gemie. Publication date September 2003.

politicians who sent their forces to depose him. So, while it might seem unlikely that American and British hypocrisy could ever sink any lower, it would be unwise to put any bets on it.

• Top-ranking Pentagon officials are planning to call up as many as 10,000 American reservists by the end of the year in order to boost the number of troops containing Iraqi resistance.

The *Wall Street Journal* reported last month that US forces are being overstretched by their current warfare commitments, most obviously the occupations of Iraq and

Afghanistan. One bureaucrat told the paper he'd never seen the army and Marine Corps so stretched.

It's rumoured that the Pentagon is proposing to set up rotating tours of duty in order to relieve a battle-weary military. About 146,000 American personnel are in Iraq, where they live at permanent risk of attack. More have now been killed since the invasion began than died during the 1991 Gulf War.

The reservists are members of the US National Guard. It's thought unlikely that they'd be ready for deployment until next spring.

Woodhill CSC – the end of the line

Last month *Freedom* reported on prisoner resistance in HMP Woodhill's Close Supervision Centre ('Suffering and resistance in Woodhill CSC', 12th July). Just days later, the CSC finally erupted. Several *Freedom* correspondents and subscribers have since been transferred as a result. Here, one inmate of the CSC describes what happened, while **Ray Gilbert** (one of those moved) describes the scandal of the mentally ill imprisoned there.

On Wednesday 16th July, six prisoners on A wing were refused exercise due to alleged inclement weather. The weather was hot enough to fry the screws alive, so you don't have to be a genius to imagine the in-cell temperatures on the wing, the lowest tier within the CSC.

The prison officers' mentality was fanatical and beyond comprehension, given the oppressive heat and the refusal to allow the small relief of exercise to A wing, the only thing prisoners have to break the monotony.

What followed during the heat of Wednesday night speaks volumes. Four A wing residents demonstrated their dissatisfaction with having exercise refused. Four cells were completely destroyed, observation panels smashed through, light fittings wrecked, stainless steel sinks ripped out and used to knock window panels out.

During the night shite was thrown through the smashed observation panels into the Adjudication room. Piping was dismantled from the sinks, causing major flooding.

The Mufti Squad came into A wing super-seg the next day, banging their shields. One prisoner took a bad kicking, resulting in an alleged fractured jaw. An assault resulted in bruising to another prisoner's eyes and a split nose.

Freedom correspondent Robbie Stewart was viciously attacked, then transported to

HMP Full Sutton segregation unit, while Ray Gilbert was ghosted to the unit at HMP Long Lartin.

The prisoner with the injured jaw went to Milton Keynes General Hospital to have an X-ray, and I understand that whilst there he was again assaulted. The screw who I understand assaulted him the day before did it again, despite the prisoner having complained about the officer on the Wednesday.

Where's the rule that allows officers under investigation for assault to come into contact with their victims? Where's the deterrent and accountability? Where's our protection? We, the prisoners, demand an inquiry into Woodhill's CSC.

Anon

Dealing with 'disruptive prisoners' has long been a problem for the prison system. In Britain, the "most dangerous, disruptive, violent and problematic prisoners" are, allegedly, held in Close Supervision Centres (CSCs) under Rule 46. The CSC at HMP Woodhill in Milton Keynes has two units, 6A and 6B. There are two more at HMP Durham, on G and I wings. There's also one on F wing at HMP Wakefield.

There are control cells for Rule 46 CSC prisoners at Belmarsh, Full Sutton, Frankland, Long Lartin and Whitemoor. All have two cells, except for Long Lartin with four. There are thirty prisoners in the CSC system, twelve of them at Woodhill, the flagship CSC.

You'd expect that keeping these people in one place and in total isolation, with the bare basic 'privileges', as the CSC system was originally supposed to do, would lead to resistance. If all the subversive jailhouse lawyers and serial protesters are together, how could the authorities maintain 'order'?

The answer is that everything was tried to

break prisoner resistance – psychological head games, brutality, oppression, sleep deprivation, denial of water. Originally prisoners had no beds, no windows and no radios.

But after serial challenges, prisoner solidarity won. They beat the system and Woodhill CSC was condemned by civil rights groups. The prison's bosses wouldn't admit it, but they failed. Most of the prisoners proved themselves to be too disruptive for a unit designed for disruptive prisoners, and the vast majority were returned to mainstream jails in 2001.

Now in Woodhill CSC there are windows and beds. But control is maintained instead by filling the unit with prisoners who are seriously mentally disturbed. This means that control can be imposed via large doses of psychotropic medication.

This is ideal for the prison officers as it makes prisoners so 'calm' they can't even be bothered to fill out a standard complaints form. The majority of the twelve prisoners in Woodhill CSC now should without question be managed and treated in hospital.

The longer they stay in isolation, the less chance they've got for release to a mainstream prison or the outside? I can seriously say that just four of them have no history of mental disorder, and just five aren't on any medication. The CSC is failing again!

The ones who'll eventually be returned to mainstream jails are the ones with no medical or psychiatric needs. The difference between the CSC and a hospital is that one treats patients, the other punishes them.

There are often incidents on A wing, provoked by the smallest of things, such as closing one's door too loudly, and the attitude of the officers. But when one is provoked continuously, there's little regard for the consequences for mentally ill prisoners.

The officers know they can get away with it. They've got the whole place full of these disturbed men and a completely totalitarian regime. No wonder they've little work to do, while we sit alone with just one hour's exercise a day. All we have to look forward to is a quarterly review, in the hope of 'progressing' to B wing.

The CSC system has failed, yet it's being presented as a success. But it never will be. An urgent review of the long-term containment and treatment of men with serious psychiatric needs is required.

The suits at the top will continuously try to justify the CSC, saying that "these prisoners are too dangerous to be accommodated anywhere else". If this is the case, the conditions could be made more tolerable.

In particular, there's a high level of self-harm in the CSC. Self-mutilation goes on regularly, to extreme levels. It's not uncommon for someone to cut themselves open and be refused medical treatment. Self-harm is seen as attention-seeking and attempting to manipulate the system. The more it happens, the more it's ignored.

The incidents mentioned here are desperate measures. A Close Supervision Centre isn't the right place for the long-term containment of the mentally ill.

Ray Gilbert

Let the Prison Service know what you think. Contact P. Atherton, Deputy Director General, Prison Service Headquarters, Cleland House, Page Street, London SW7P 4IN

For Ray Gilbert, the events of 16th July were just the latest in a long line of provocations by screws. According to his supporters, prison officers have long been trying to set him up on assault charges. "Those they can't silence they beat down and fit up", said one. Ray was acquitted on a previous assault charge last year.

Forthcoming events

ARUNDEL

Saturday 9th August Arundel bypass campaign walk on the route of the now-rejected bypass. Meet outside Ford railway station at 1.15pm.

BRISTOL

Saturday 6th September Radical Bookfair at The Cornubia pub in Temple Street from 12 noon to 4.30pm. This will be the first of Bristol's regular monthly radical bookfairs. For more info email gardsteingang@yahoo.co.uk

DERBYSHIRE

Sunday 24th August Red Rambles walk, meet 11am at Hurt Arms pub car park, Ambergate, for five mile walk and picnic through mixed deciduous woodland. Contact ain@ziplip.com or call 07775 977136 the day before.

ESSEX

22nd to 24th August Permaculture weekend for beginners in North Weald, covering all you need to know about a sustainable existence with practical hands-on activities. Cost £75. For further info call 01702 303259 or email landandliberty@ukonline.co.uk

GALLOWAY

Saturday 9th August Nagasaki Day and anti depleted uranium protest at Dundrennan ranges in Kirkcudbright, Scotland. See www.cadu.org.uk

GLASGOW

Saturday 6th September Demonstration to call for end of enforced detention of asylum seekers at Dungavel Detention Centre, 12 noon. Coaches to leave George Square, Glasgow, at 11am. Call

0141 337 8100 or visit <http://www.stuc.org.uk> for more info.

LEICESTER

Tuesday 9th September Leicester Anarchist Federation meeting at 8pm upstairs at the Ale Wagon pub, Charles Street. For more info see http://www.geocities.com/leicester_af/org.html

LONDON

1st to 31st August The Situationist International and After exhibition at The Aquarium Gallery, 10 Woburn Walk, WC1. Call 020 7387 8417 or see www.aquariumgallery.co.uk

Monday 11th August Demonstration somewhere in London organised by Oxford Rising Tide. Call 01865 241097 or see www.risingtide.org.uk

Friday 15th August Stop Huntingdon Animal Cruelty monthly meeting, 7.30pm at Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, Holborn.

Saturday 16th August North London Critical Mass meet outside Finsbury Park main gate, Seven Sisters Road. Contact northlondoncm@home.se

Monday 18th August Benefit for Simon Chapman featuring Inner Terrestrials at The Windmill, Blenheim Gardens, Brixton Hill, SW2 from 8pm until late. See www.enrager.net/simon

Monday 18th August Rising Tide protest over Baku-Ceyhan pipeline from 4.30pm to 6pm at EBRD, 175 Bishopsgate, EC2. We will also be there

every Thursday from 4.30pm to 6pm until October, when consultation on the public funding ends. Bring noise, colour and (fossil-free) energy.

Tuesday 19th August TACT anti-capitalist social from 7.30pm at The Foundry, 82 Great Eastern Street, EC2. Contact 07944 586416 or see www.temporary.org.uk

Tuesday 19th August Love Music, Hate Racism gig at 100 Club, 100 Oxford Street, W1. See www.twinstarrevolution.com

Friday 29th August Critical Mass meet at the South Bank under Waterloo Bridge at 6pm. Contact info@cmlondon.enrager.net

Sunday 31st August Spoken word event upstairs at The Garage, Highbury Corner, from 8pm (£3). Includes Ben Watson, Jeremy Hardy, etc.

Tuesday 5th September Anarchist Discussion Group at Autonomy Club, 84b Whitechapel High Street, E1 at 7pm. These discussion meetings will be held monthly.

Friday 26th September Baku Ceyhan Campaign and People & Planet holding demo at EBRD, One Exchange Square, EC2. For more details contact baku@gn.apc.org or call 01865 200550 or call People & Planet on 01865 245678

Every Wednesday LARC Library open from 1pm onwards, 62 Fieldgate Street, Whitechapel

MANCHESTER

Tuesday 19th August Manchester Discussion Group meeting at the Hare & Hounds, Shude Hill, near the Arndale Centre, at 8pm

Saturday 30th August Respect Festival at Platt Fields Park, Rusholme from 1pm to 11pm. For info contact Nadine Andrews, Ear to the Ground on 07977 515977 or nad@fusedmusic.co.uk

Wednesday 3rd September Manchester SolFed meeting at the Hare & Hounds, Shude Hill, near the Arndale Centre, at 8.30pm. Topic will be politics without politicians. For more info see www.manchestersol.org.uk or call 07984 675281

NEWCASTLE

Saturday 3rd September Roma and Asylum in

Britain: Global Issues, Local Concerns, one-day conference at Newcastle University, The Fenwick Room, Castle Leazes Halls of Residence, Spital Tongues. See www.ncl.ac.uk/geps/ or contact 0191 222 8362/8368 or Colin.Clark@ncl.ac.uk

OXFORD

Saturday 26th July Demonstration outside Campsfield Refugee Detention Centre, 12 noon at the main gates, Langford Lane, Kidlington, near Oxford. This is a regular event on the last Saturday of every month. See www.closecampsfield.org.uk or call 01865 558145.

READING

22nd to 25th August Reclaim the Bases summer camp in Bluebell Wood (close to Aldermaston). See www.reclaimthebases.org.uk

SURREY

Wednesday 13th August Disarm-DSEi public meeting at the Friends Meeting House, Ward Street, off North Street, Guildford from 7.30pm. See www.geocities.com/surreydisarmdseigroup/ or call 07952 653582

WORTHING

Saturday 30th August Anti-war day at the Friends Meeting House in Mill Road. Contact worthingagainstarwar@yahoo.co.uk, see www.eco-action.org/porkbolter/waw.html or call 01903 206588

YORKSHIRE

13th to 17th August Earth First! Summer Gathering in Yorkshire. See www.earthfirstgathering.org.uk or contact summergathering@yahoo.co.uk

Only a deepening of the class war can beat the BNP, says Paul Maguire

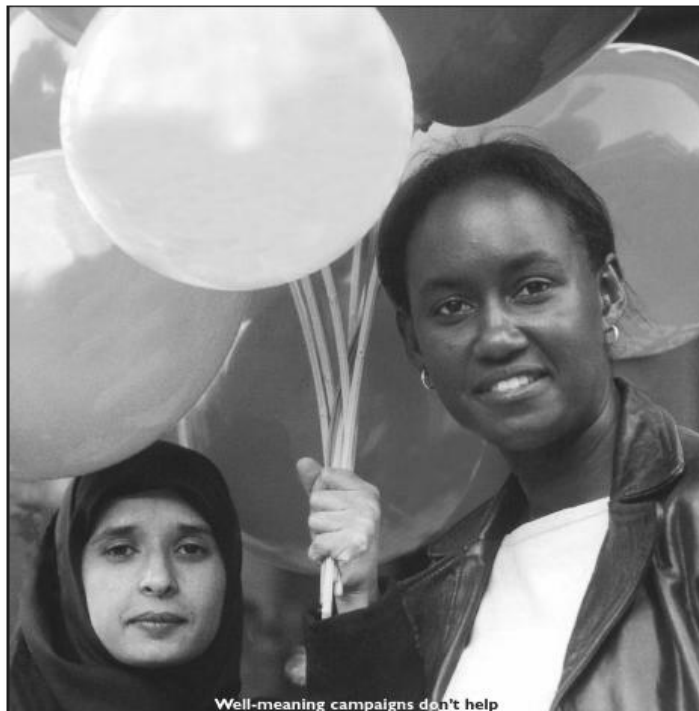
Romantic view obscures the truth

According to Michael Hardt and Toni Negri, hailed by many as the philosopher-kings of the 'anti-capitalist' movement, the desire of refugees for a better life is always a revolutionary desire, a strategy of "desertion, exodus and nomadism" which constitutes a challenge to the deterritorialisation of capital. There's a half-truth in this but it's fair to say that, for a substantial minority in the poorest working class communities in Britain, the 'exodus' appears as a direct threat to their standard of living.

At the end of last month in Hull, for example, locals fought with Iraqi asylum-seekers following an attack on an Iraqi man in which he was targeted by a hit and run driver. There's been a 49% increase in racially motivated crime in the city during the past year, an increase reflected elsewhere. The Socialist Worker/Anti-Nazi League slogan, "they're welcome here", has an increasingly hollow ring.

What's missing from Hardt and Negri's romanticisation of "desertion, exodus and nomadism" is that the poorest of the white working class have nowhere to run to. Just as theories of speeded-up communication as the driving force behind globalisation can ring hollow when you've been waiting forty minutes for a number 18 bus, so strategies based around 'exodus' can seem like a calculated insult when your family has, across generations, moved from Ireland to Durham to Chesterfield to the Potteries to Manchester, chasing dying industries and trying to stay one step ahead of the dole.

Hardt and Negri have arrived at a theory of immigration that treats globalisation's most vulnerable – the wretched of the earth, clinging to aeroplane undercarriages and suffocating in lorries – as heroes-in-waiting, while disregarding the European and north American working class entirely. The reformist left, meanwhile, offers as the basis



Well-meaning campaigns don't help

of its anti-racist strategy the demand for cheap immigrant labour by European capital (thereby simultaneously presenting immigrants as a threat to living standards amongst the indigenous working class and telling immigrants that their fate is to be modern day slaves). And all the while, the BNP vote goes up and racist attacks become commonplace.

But a different anti-racist politics is possible, one which doesn't ignore but roots itself in the reality of working class life. Yes,

we should support the demand for 'no borders' as a way of undermining capital's desire to move round the globe, exploiting static pools of cheap labour; but we should recognise that the demand for freedom of movement is one to which capital can't afford to accede.

In other words, we're talking about making our demand the basis for a strategy of solidarity with refugees here. We have to demand the right to work for incomers, whether they're refugees or economic migrants, with

full trade union protection and the same benefit and minimum wage protection rights as everyone else. And we should always ask, as the key to all this, 'who pays?'.

Playing the 'race card' acts as a useful diversion for New Labour. Instead of focusing on the transfer of wealth from poor to rich, working class communities concern themselves with who has what within themselves. We become little more than the flotsam of empire, fighting over the crumbs. Meanwhile, the bosses' slice of the cake continues to grow.

If working class communities are to welcome the incoming poor then the question of who pays is paramount. New immigrants are potential allies of the poorest of the poor here in Britain, but unless the question of 'race' is replaced by issues of class then the relationship will remain one of antagonism in some quarters.

It ought to be possible for activists to draw up a political economy of their communities, highlighting the resources leached away through cuts, the extent of housing disrepair and the cost of putting it right, the funding necessary to provide essential services for all without one section having to lose services to finance another.

Then they can urge their communities to withdraw co-operation from the state until their demands for refinancing are met. This might mean mass refusal of council tax, non-payment of rent, opposition to bailiffs, blockading of county courts on repossession days and so on.

This is possible. But there's a problem with it. All sections of the left, including anarchists and anti-capitalists, have left working class communities to the far right and are more likely to be found arguing about angels on the head of a pin with this year's student intake at Marxism than on the estates where the working class lives.

It's racism, stupid – Sunderland falls for the BNP

(continued from page 1)

small number of the many reports I've received will help to illustrate the point.

In June 2002 I interviewed the owner of a local shop, run by an Indian man, who reported that he got regularly attacked. In sixteen years he estimated that he'd had his windows smashed "over twenty times". I asked him about the police ("useless") and local politicians ("racist and corrupt").

At the same time, in June 2002 the UNITY organisation held a public meeting. UNITY is Sunderland's longest running black and ethnic minority organisation. It's run by a courageous man, Mr Khan, a man in his fifties and half-blind in one eye. At the meeting, attended by over 40 local black people, there were numerous reports from the victims of racial abuse. Mr Khan appealed for "politicians and police ... to recognise some of the specific problems that black and ethnic minorities in this city face".

A matter of a few days later, at the end of June 2002, Andrew Thorpe, 38, brutally attacked Baldish Singh leaving him unable to speak. He was racially abused. He has never recovered, speaking is difficult and he's likely to need constant care for the rest of his life. In spite of a string of past convictions Thorpe was sentenced to just six years in prison.

Against such a background it was hardly surprising that the arrival of asylum-seekers,

against a background of almost hysterical national and local reporting, would bring out the worst in some local people. The murder of Iranian refugee Payman Bahmani, stabbed to death in August 2002, was no surprise. Refugees had been reporting incidents to the police over many months, but the police simply ignored them. Mr Bahmani's housemate Mohammed said at the time, "we've had our windows broken over 25 times. We know the attackers, they abuse us and tell us to go home."

When friends, family and supporters held protests in the days after the murder the two local MPs, Chris Mullin and Bill Hetherington were nowhere to be seen. Only one local councillor attended.

In February this year, ten black students from abroad met at the UNITY organisation's premises. All of them reported being attacked. Each student had paid £7,500 in fees to attend Sunderland University, a not inconsiderable sum. All reported that when they'd approached the police they were met with, at best, indifference.

In the last six months or so councillors from the established political parties have met alongside anti-racist organisations and trade union representatives in the City Hall to highlight the dangers of the BNP. But they've failed to recognise their own role in the organisation's growth and, unless I've missed something (and I haven't), the City

Council is still unwilling to begin the process of tackling the massive racial problems and attitudes which exist.

Members of Sunderland Fans against Racism have visited a fair number of local youth clubs to talk about racism. They've asked what is said at school on the subject. The usual answer, according to one of them, is "nothing".

Meanwhile, one group of refugees has formed a local football team and entered a Saturday morning team. They have had to experience considerable racial abuse and defend themselves on occasions from physical attacks.

One game, in March, against a pub team from the Grindon area of the city was halted for a number of minutes after a fight broke out when one of the team objected to being called a 'black bastard' for the umpteenth time.

A full scale battle took place in which supporters of the pub team invaded the pitch, some already drinking cans of extra-strong lager at 11am. After it had all died down a number of players were sent off, including the player who was originally abused. The organiser of the International Cultural Centre has made an official complaint to the organisers of the local league, citing in particular "the gestures at the end, when opposing players made gestures suggesting they would get their throats cut. It was sickening."

Now that the BNP has grown to become the third biggest party in the city after Labour

and the Tories, it will of course be even more difficult to challenge racist attitudes.

Burying one's head in the sand may become less of an option, but it would appear even at this early stage that this is what most local politicians and parties will continue to do. The fact is, however, that things are going to get a lot worse before they get better. A lot of blood is going to get spilt in the meantime.

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British Airways: the wildcat returns ...

Frontline airport staff at Heathrow walked out on 18th July when British Airways management tried to impose a swipe-card clocking-on system without consultation. The workers said they didn't trust the company's motives, suspecting that the system would allow them to be sent home during quiet periods.

The wildcat strike led to 360 flight cancellations and delays which affected 80,000 passengers. It only ended on 30th July, when BA agreed to listen to employees' grievances and guaranteed that no changes to working practices would be imposed.

Needless to say, some people were less than happy at this show of militancy. The reactionary press can always be counted on to attack rebel workers for a start. One thing the media barons particularly hate is uppity wage slaves.

But what of the self-styled 'progressive' media? The *Guardian* opined that the action was "not only illegal but counterproductive." Apparently it could harm the airline's competitive position against "cut-price airlines that have a far less sympathetic attitude to the role of unions than BA."

In other words, workers should put up with management actions because otherwise British Airways might be replaced by other, nastier bosses. This sophistry of the 'lesser evil' is often invoked to justify the tolerance of injustice. It usually ends up with the 'lesser

evil' being just as bad as the greater evil it was supposed to prevent, though the people who are subjected to it aren't meant to rebel!

But rest assured, poor workers. There's hope at hand. According to the *Guardian*, there are "proper procedures to deal with" bad management actions. Yes, folks, tolerate them and complain later, that's the way. And if the complaints are 'serious', then "unions can ballot for a strike and let everyone vote on it."

Of course, this would allow BA to make other arrangements and to intimidate the workforce, but this difficult fact is ignored. So too is the fact that the 'legal' strike wouldn't happen until after the injustice it was complaining about had been committed, making the struggle against it that bit harder.

And while the *Guardian* reckons that "unions have a fundamental right to strike," it neglects to mention those workers who aren't in a union (or those in one which doesn't respond to their concerns). And it never asks the question, what's the point of striking when you're in a weak position to begin with?

The paper naturally presents itself as the defender of 'the consumer', who has 'rights' as well as employees. Well, obviously the BA strike was inconvenient for passengers - but we still have to hope they still supported the action. Indeed, as the *Guardian* helpfully reminded us, many of the passengers would have been trade unionists themselves.

If they were, they'd already know that solidarity is strength. They'd have supported the walkout. Almost all of them will have been workers themselves, whether unionised or not. They too will be subject to management impositions in their own employment, and hopefully they'll learn the lesson from the BA staff: direct action, standing up for yourself, is the only way to change things.

In terms of wages and conditions, the effects of 'staying within the law' are clear. As industrial militancy has declined, the rich have got richer, workers have had to work longer hours, stress levels and debt have risen.

The 'customer' is usually a worker too, whose conditions and wages are affected when bosses think they can get away with anything. By standing up for themselves, the BA strikers have helped improve the conditions of the 'consumer' during the forty or more hours he or she submits to a boss during every week.

It always seems strange that, under capitalism, the time we spend at work is thought of as less important than our 'free' time, in spite of the fact that employment takes a bigger chunk of our lives than leisure and has a much greater impact on our health (physical and mental), our relations with others outside work, our attitude to authority, our living conditions and our quality of life.

But then, the wage slavery at the heart of capitalism isn't considered an issue at all or it's thought of as a necessary evil, usually by those not subjected to it. Which brings us back to the media barons who control the mainstream press.

The *Guardian* argues that "walking out in the manner of the wildcat strikes of the 1960s and 1970s and causing disproportionate damage to innocent people is a course that can only be defended when a serious injustice has occurred. In this case it patently had not". Yet the alternative, which the paper advocates, is just "putting up with it" and complaining later - which simply doesn't work.

The real issue is: do we want a society of moaners who do what they're told? Or a society of free individuals who stand up for their liberty and dignity? Put like this, the answer's obvious. The BA wageslaves were right. We shouldn't just support them. Dammit, they need to be imitated.

The clocking-on system has been implemented with union approval elsewhere in British Airways. It's clear that relying on the trade union bureaucracy to defend our interests isn't a good idea. A union should be run by its members, from the bottom up. The spirit of the wildcat should infuse the union membership and its struggle. This isn't the case today. It's up to every libertarian worker to ensure that this changes.

Iain McKay

... while the Marxist left is falling apart

The authoritarian left is coming apart at the seams. While it can be difficult to unravel truth from fiction in the often-sectarian and closed world of British Trotskyism, a number of facts are emerging. At the centre is our old friend the Socialist Workers Party (SWP).

Here's what seems to be going on:

- In May, the Socialist Alliance (SA) voted to relaunch itself as "part of a coalition of broader left-wing forces", a so-called Peace and Justice Alliance. These forces include Islamic groups, Mosques and left-wing trade union general secretaries.

- The SA policy reflects the current SWP line, which itself reflects the fact that the SA is now dominated by the SWP. This approach, of building broad alliances particularly on the back of anti-war coalitions saw the only SA candidate elected in May's local elections (in Preston) but is opposed by other groups in the Socialist Alliance.

- Purges are taking place against local SA groups that oppose this line. In Birmingham the local group's AGM was packed with SWP members, many of whom had only joined the week before. They effectively staged a coup against the existing leadership.

- Large numbers of individual activists are reported to have left the SA, as has the small grouping, Workers Power. Others are likely to follow.

- Eight of the eleven pages of a recent issue of the *Weekly Worker*, paper of the Stalinist Communist Party of Great Britain, were taken up with slagging off the SWP. The paper included accusations that SWP members physically assaulted CPGB members at Marxism 2003 when they tried to hand out leaflets accusing the SWP of compromising their views on sexism and homophobia in order to attract traditional Muslim voters.

- The impact of the SWP's takeover of the Stop the War Coalition was made clear by a recent article in this newspaper ('Another kiss of death from the SWP', 28th June). Liberal journalist Nick Cohen also gave this analysis his support, writing in the *New Statesman* magazine about what he called the party's 'stupid' tactics.

- Front organisations like No Sweat, Globalise Resistance and so on appear moribund. The homepage of the Anti-Nazi League's website, for example, hasn't been updated since April.

- The *Morning Star*/Communist Party of Britain (CPB) has rejected approaches by the SWP to form an electoral pact for next year's European Elections, preferring instead (as CPB apparatchiks put it) "to reclaim Labour from the Blairite clique".

The initial reaction of anarchists to this crisis in British Trotskyism will, I suspect, be a degree of gloating. But we should pause for thought, and consider why this crisis has arisen and what it might mean for the revolutionary left in general and for anarchism in particular.

The situation has a number of roots, but it's primarily been brought about by the left's failure. The Marxists have failed to gain power, failed to grow, failed to win influence, failed to gain a toehold in the labour movement, failed to make sense of what's

going on in the working class, failed to get Socialist Alliance candidates elected and, most of all, failed to stop the invasion of Iraq.

These failures themselves stem from a variety of sources. The collapse of authoritarian socialism in Eastern Europe, an inability to grasp the importance of the new direct action politics that emerged in the late 1980s and the mistake of putting too many ideological eggs in the basket of industrial militancy have all contributed to them.

Failure has followed failure, and the Preston result and the transitory (and imaginary) 'success' of the anti-war movement haven't helped. It must have been much nicer for SWP bosses to talk to millions in Hyde Park than to handfuls in empty pub rooms. This smell of success led the SWP to shift its attention to exploiting the wider alliances that came together to oppose the war on Iraq with the aim of getting SWP/SA candidates elected in next year's European and London Mayoral elections.

It remains to be seen whether this policy will lead to a changed line on issues like sexism, but the SWP's recent decision to picket Spearminth Rhino sex clubs suggests a new 'moral' approach to sexual issues. There was little hint of solidarity with the working class women employed by these clubs. But campaigns of this sort will go down well with religious fundamentalists, whether Muslim or Christian.

Whatever the short-term gains, though, ultimately the new line will also lead to failure. More and more people are realising that campaigning in elections isn't about campaigning for change. Elections prop the system up. Once elected compromise follows compromise, as the Scottish Socialist Party is finding now and the Greens did a while back. Rather than change the system they became part of it.

Most working class people don't vote and for good reason. They know it makes little difference to their lives. They're certainly

not convinced that middle class Socialist Alliance candidates will represent them any better than New Labour ones do.

It goes almost without saying in *Freedom* that many of the problems Trotskyism faces also stem from its inherently anti-democratic nature and its obsession with control. Last month, an issue of *Socialist Worker* contained an article justifying the need for leaders! And, in groups like the SWP, the leaders aren't accountable to their members. Bakunin correctly observed that Marxists wanted to replace one set of bosses with another, calling them the 'red bourgeoisie'. Free speech and debate are stifled in parties like the SWP. Opponents are expelled.

There's a real need to build an effective revolutionary libertarian socialist movement. But are we up to the challenge? The implosion of the authoritarian left creates real opportunities for anarchists, but we have to convince disillusioned comrades to engage with the task. A simple start is to ensure that there are easy and accessible means for newcomers to find and get in touch with our movement.

Freedom has a role to play here, as do the many anarchist groups in local communities. Talk of setting up a national anarchist anti-fascist group and trade union network is also welcome and this will help. So too will the work of national groups like the Anarchist Federation, Class War, SolFed and the Anarchist Youth Network. Greater coordination is needed and more people need to get involved in the day-to-day tasks necessary to build the movement.

Since the split between Marx and Bakunin the anarchist movement has been in the shadow of authoritarian Marxism. But this is no longer the case. Anarchism is strong, and it's growing stronger. While the authoritarian left falls apart, we anarchists need to come closer together.

R.G.

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If we're going to get anywhere it's time to face some hard facts, says Steve Booth

Seven principles towards change

If we do not take our own politics seriously, no one else will ...

I start from the assumption that we want change, real change for the better. What should an anarchist magazine be about? Let's start looking at the question the other way round. What does a successful anarchist movement look like? What would it take for anarchism to be taken seriously? We must start by taking ourselves and our political ideas seriously because, if we don't, nobody else will.

As one step towards this, we need to get rid of the play-actors and dilettantes, obviously, but more importantly, any out and out negative politics. We want an ethical anarchism without theoretical waffle. We want anarchism which is comprehensible to ordinary members of the public, that can pass what I call the 'Garstang Market Test'. All this implies certain attitudes.

In making friends with, and supporting our local community, we build a climate of trust and acceptance for our ideas

All radicals need to get involved in ordinary, community based stuff – old peoples' groups, youth clubs, credit unions, sports, education, allotments, A4 Pacific locomotive preservation groups, music societies, horticultural societies – whatever's going in your area. Get involved, help make the tea, stack the chairs, talk to people, find out what they're about, what their concerns are.

Don't do this for any cynical or self-serving motive – we're not into using people. Do it for the sake of the people themselves and the community. Society everywhere is struggling, community involvement is decreasing. Just two or three extra people turning up can make a big difference. Don't just do this for two or three weeks or a month, but year in, year out, consistently, permanently. Become part of the landscape.

Why would we do this? For the sake of doing it, though the rewards are indirect and personal. We gain from this gradually, consistently, over time. The problem with society and political structures is deep-rooted and complex, there are no quick fixes, no short cuts, no easy answers.

If we're prepared to take other people seriously and on their own terms, then they'll be prepared to take us seriously and on ours. There is a give-and-take. The practical experience we gain through these activities will come in useful. We then apply those same practical principles, techniques and networks to our own political work.

If campaigns succeed, the anarchist input into them must be more visible

People judge a political movement by its results. The trouble with anarchism is that, rightly or wrongly, they don't see any. We need to be a whole lot more cohesive and (unpopular word this) businesslike in what we do.

Let's all put our heads together and try to work out just one decent anarchist campaign we can have in Britain. Let's not try to make a big change, like overturning the global capitalist system in one go, overnight – at least not until we've learned to walk before we can run.

Let's try to think of some simple project we can all get involved in, which ordinary people can identify with and make sense of. Something which brings real positive change in peoples' lives – a white bicycle scheme, a Lib-Ed school for kids who don't fit into



mainstream education, a bus depot concert and art exhibition to commemorate the anarchist artist, dear old Arthur Moyle (who died recently), a piece of wasteland turned into a park or whatever else we can think of.

Presenting and defending our case creates more political space

Failing to do this creates the impression that there's something wrong or sinister in what we advocate. This next paragraph is going to say something controversial, so brace yourselves.

Success breeds success. In the 1960s, the Kabouter Dutch Anarchists stood in civic elections and scored 20% of the vote. 'Anarchists don't stand in elections', runs the dogma. But here's an uncomfortable fact – our political ideas will be tested in public, and we can't evade this evaluation. It's that old Garstang Market test again.

If we hide away, then there's something wrong, something not valid about our beliefs. Yet the state is so corrupt, its policies such utter evil rubbish, that people are crying out for an alternative. The decent people ought to be zooming ahead at this point, on something like 30% of the poll or more.

In some places, they do win – the Kidderminster hospital campaigner, the Green Parties, the Hartlepool Monkey. Thinking long-term now, having built up real political support and infrastructure as outlined above, and under PR elections, anarchists might be elected.

And here's the crunch. We wouldn't be saying, "vote for me and we'll rule you" as all the rest do, but rather, "there's another way". We're getting in there to open up democracy, step by step, devolving power outwards, away from the corrupt and

poisonous centre, putting anarchism on the political agenda and justifying our ideas in public.

Anarchists standing in elections, talking to people, telling them that there's a better way would be just one tactic out of many, but it needs to be thought about. Bear this in mind – if the good people leave the field clear or abstain, the field is left open to the evil of New Labour capitalists, the BNP and other such groups. People are crying out for the real alternative and we've failed to give it them.

A morally defective anarchist movement will always be powerless to effect radical political change and doesn't deserve to win

All this lies in the future, and we're not yet ready for it. Something we can do in the present, though, is to network as we do already, but more so and building support mechanisms as we go. It's about the people, always about the people!

Anarchism is weighed down with too much theory, too many magazines and internet sites, not enough reality. We're publication-rich but factually weak. Let's try to invert this. Terrible capitalist and conservative newspapers like the *Sun* and *Daily Mail* are printed by the millions, but you name me an anarchist mag with a circulation higher than a few thousand.

Part of the answer to this problem lies in the moral defectiveness of the radical publications' scene. Alternative shops and distributors don't pay publishers. Radical publications are moribund because of this. If shops lack the morality to pay, and the movement tolerates this, then the movement's incapable of making any worthwhile change in society. Put your own house in order first.

People matter. No one is expendable

Each of us is important. The radical movement has so few members that, for practical reasons, we can't afford to lose anybody. But it's more than this. The state is so totalitarian, so corrupt that I believe it's the absolute negation of all values. As I've said in my booklets and many articles, Politics is an Ethical Void.

Politically speaking, the only way we can solve this problem is by building relationships which give practical form to our own value – that is, through ethics and through friendship. A protest movement without this practical form is worthless. A protest movement without mutual support and affirmation can only be built outside politics.

Without real radical political and social change to back them up, anarchist magazines remain at best speculative fairy stories and at worst dangerous exercises in self deception

If anarchism and radical politics have any ambitions to supplant the state, then certain conditions apply. The first is about our practical organisation and structure. We all have to become part of an open communication network, a series of triangles, a mesh of equal connections without any one particular line or faction dominating. This might be already coming into shape.

The second condition is about our culture, about having regular and frequent publications. This implies a proper, effective and honest distribution network, independent of the corrupt and moribund anarcho-establishment. Without this any publication becomes pointless because it won't reach anybody.

The third and most important condition is about having the political and social reality behind our revolutionary culture – backing it up, yes, and giving it something worthwhile to report about; but more importantly, building the reality of it and really starting to change the world.

There are no short cuts, no quick fixes. The hard fact is that we all get the anarchist movement we're collectively prepared to work for.

Steve Booth is the editor of *Green Anarchist*.

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What we say ...

The authoritarian left remains obsessed with the state. This is an obsession that started in the French revolution and sadly shows no signs of abating. It crops up in many ways. Take Hilary Wainwright's new book *Reclaim the State*.

In it she argues that the anti-capitalist movement will come to nothing if it can't "harness the power and the resources of the state". This is nonsense, of course. Anarchists from Proudhon and Stirner onwards have pointed out that the state is part of the problem. It's a revolutionary dead end.

In this issue of *Freedom*, we report at some length on the crisis facing the British Trotskyite movement. It's tempting to see these developments as the last twitching of the corpse that is authoritarian socialism. Let's hope so.

The aim of the Socialist Workers Party (SWP) now seems to be to form alliances with reactionary forces in order to get people elected to local councils. This is an acknowledgement that their policies have failed.

Despite setting up front organisations like Globalise Resistance, they've made little impact on the (anarchist-inspired) anti-capitalist movement. In the 1970s they were confidently predicting a membership of tens of thousands. In reality membership is barely 3,000.

The antics of the other groupings in the Marxist revolutionary socialist movement – from the Communist Party of Britain (who want to 'reclaim New Labour') to the Communist Party of Great Britain (who want to 'reclaim the Socialist Alliance') to the Socialist Labour Party (now nothing more than a cult movement for Arthur Scargill) – appear irrelevant at best and at worst, a joke.

It's interesting that use of the word 'reclaim' by Wainwright, the CPB and CPGB. This word has currency because of the actions of *Reclaim the Streets* in the 1990s. But other than using (and abusing) the term, the authoritarian left makes no effort to learn why RTS was so successful. Rather than acknowledging the strength of true accountability, participation and direct action, they remain wedded to centralism, control, committees and – of course – the state.

There's no future for the authoritarian left. Anarchism, in contrast, is much more vibrant. Its activists believe in getting involved in their local communities, in prisoner support, in directly confronting capitalism, in animal liberation, in environmental direct action, in anti-fascist work.

Trotskyism is in decline while the anarchist movement is growing. It has many strengths, of which its total rejection of the state is key. We don't want to reclaim government – we want to abolish it. That's why, to borrow a capitalist advertising slogan, for us the future's bright.

Next issue

Freedom is now on its summer break. There will be an interval of five weeks until the next issue, which will be dated 13th September. The deadline for copy will be 4th September. Contributions can be sent to FreedomCopy@aol.com

Answers to Anarcho-quiz (back page)

1. He was a spy for the Gestapo.
2. None. Even their fuhrer, Nick Griffin, admitted as such. Which makes us wonder who's more stupid, the BNP for being fascists or the voters of Broxbourne for listening to them.
3. The affluent Kent suburb of Bromley. Kropotkin and Wells both lived there. Darwin wrote the *Origin of Species* at Downe, a small village just south of the town. And the Bromley Contingent were a feature of early punk gigs in 1976, later spawning the bands Siouxsie and the Banshees and Generation X.
4. *The Good Soldier Svejk*, written by Czech anarchist Jaroslav Hasek.

Readers' views

International struggle

In response to Paul Maguire's apologies for 'sovereignty', 'democracy', 'international law' and the 'right of nations to self-determination', all in the cause of anti-imperialism ('Self-determination is a democratic demand', 26th July), it might be useful to consider some of the messages coming out of the recent struggles in Argentina.

I've heard *piqueteros* from the unemployed workers' movement speak and I've also read statements and articles coming from their movement. They make it very clear that they're involved in a struggle which is primarily a social struggle with social revolutionary potential, and with a specific class nature. They see their struggle as being immediately international.

They're not primarily interested in a nationalistic 'self-determination' by the Argentinian people, which would include the interests of the bourgeoisie, or some chauvinist populism, whether liberal or social democratic. What they need, indeed what they demand, is international class-based solidarity to break down the demarcations imposed by 'nations', including the demarcations imposed between so-called 'rich' nations and 'poor' ones.

Even in the so-called 'third world' you can find millionaires, and meanwhile there's no shortage of poverty even in the cities of America. Yes, there's a specific issue of 'imperialism', and capitalist development isn't universally even or uniform or strictly totalised. But 'imperialism' can't simply be reduced just to a question of 'America' in a comy anti-Americanism.

All states, big and small, and most parasites in the world today objectively function as tentacles of imperialism. The last thing the *piqueteros* want or need is sentimental leftists in the west cringing to the slogans of Argentinian nationalism or liberalism or social democracy.

Self-determination may well be a democratic demand. But democracy isn't anarchy and anarchists aren't democrats. Democracy means the formal collectivist 'rule of the people', and under today's mainly bourgeois economic conditions, the 'People' has come to involve a false, populist, cross-class amalgam, which subordinates the interests of workers, peasants and the unemployed to the interests of bosses and the state.

Even so-called 'workers' democracy' and 'community democracy' can become an institutional collectivist bullying of individual workers, peasants and the unemployed, and a bullying of minorities.

Paul Petard

Hang the DJ

I'd like to voice my support for James Clancey and Amorey Gethin, and their recent comments on anarchism and violence ('Readers' views', 26th July).

The idea that anarchism is synonymous with violence, aggression and riots is often reinforced, not only by violent and riotous demonstrations which are reported by the mainstream media, but also by various anarchist journals – including *Freedom*.

Your front page article last issue described how protesters in Thessaloniki "set off in militant style and soon the air was filled with the sound of breaking glass..." ('Solidarity with Simon', 26th July).

Until we can change the wider public's perception that anarchists and anarchist groups are mindless thugs and wreckers, it's

certain that the movement, if we can call it such, will remain a small and self-marginalised sect of individuals and minuscule groups (Anarchist Federation, Class War, Black Flag and SolFed), talking mostly to themselves.

Moreover, and more importantly, such constructive and worthwhile activity as is undertaken at the local grassroots level in trade unions, the peace movement, housing and food co-ops, allotments, LET schemes, Radical Routes and so on are being tarnished, even hindered, by the association with such a version of anarchism.

Our ideas are potentially very popular, and we could reach a wider public and make a positive impact in society if we could just stop shooting ourselves in the foot by appearing to apologise for and, at times, support violence.

A smashed window, a vandalised bank or a vandalised McDonalds isn't a good tactic. It isn't compatible with anarchy and the basic ethical principles of anarchism. It won't lead to the revolution.

In the past, governments and police resorted to agent provocateurs to discredit anarchism. Now it appears they don't need to, as the anarchist movement is more than happy to provide its own agent provocateurs to discredit itself.

This leaves the police free to attack, victimise and frame unfortunate anarchists like Simon Chapman and, in their own eyes, to claim a dubious justification for doing so.

On reading items apologising for or justifying violence, new people won't be likely to be turned on to anarchism. It's more likely that they'll be switched off.

Freedom could, and I believe should, portray a more positive vision of anarchism than we're currently being offered in its pages.

Jonathan Simcock

Jonathan is editor and publisher of *Total Liberty* magazine.

Appliance of science

I was most impressed with Peter Cadogan's comments on proto-hominids ('Readers' views', 26th July). I suspect he's far nearer understanding a key factor in anarchism than most anarchists will give him credit for. But I fear that the evidence for the size of groupings during our evolution, five million years ago, is speculative to say the least.

The grouping argument is a well-worn path but worth retreading, for there have been changes in biological understanding of human behaviour over the last fifteen years or so.

These are changes which anarchists have generally been reluctant to embrace, even though they're the basis of much-needed changes in the anarchist outlook.

Many anarchists are very much locked into the theories of Bakunin, Kropotkin and their ilk. Dare I say it, but we need to move on. Our technical and social environments have changed since the nineteenth century. Anarchism isn't a force to be reckoned with, largely because of its outmoded beliefs.

Anarchists have become conservative and they look back to those Good Ol' Boys who doubtless made important contributions. Even the image of feared bomb-throwing radicals has had to give way to other, more effective, groups. In most people's eyes anarchism is now simply a safe metaphor for chaos.

As Peter Cadogan suggests, the size of a working natural group is, in principle, important because it's gene-driven. This is a

knotty problem in itself. If we're gene-ruled, where is all this much-vaunted anarchist free will? Since we can't realistically look back to our hominid ancestors in order to determine the size of our natural groupings, we must depend on what's found in the present day.

There's a serious problem with this, because groupings today are so varied. Are we talking about family, tribe, village, town or what? There's undoubtedly a kin-based altruistic grouping. But beyond that, what forms a group must be mutually exploitative or cooperative alliances (take your pick). So the size of the group depends on the nature of the enterprise. Expedience determines its size.

The more people who think they'll benefit from the enterprise, the larger the group. This is the basis of our present day society. The groups are a series of overlapping and interlocking alliances. Anarchists, for example, form alliances with one another but they also form alliances with capitalists.

I disagree with Peter that we can't cope with large groupings and that this leads to hierarchies. If anything, we cope too well. Although it's a pain to anarchists, competition has given way to large groupings. This may not always be true, but it's the case at present, and to pretend otherwise is just nostalgia for our supposed lost liberty.

I don't see the anarchist problem as being to beat the present system. It's to make the present system more effective. If we have the ability for self-determination, then anarchism may be possible. What we need is to re-interpret the inheritance from our proto-hominid ancestors, which Peter Cadogan so rightly draws attention to, so that it isn't in conflict with society as we know it. This is being done but, alas, not by anarchists who, I maintain, have become hidebound.

It's a problem of the appliance of science. What prevents its application is conflicting alliances and, especially, centralised control through government. If we can understand what the underlying gene-driven behavioural controls are, we're in a strong position to bring about change. Behaviour is, as anarchists have long understood, based on the self-interest of the individual and not the interest of the state.

Peter Gibson

Peter Cadogan tells us that "during the time we acquired our present genetic programming we took decisions in small groups". The second 'we', of course, means not ourselves but our ancestors from hundreds of generations ago.

The conjecture that human temperaments are suited only to the hunter-gathering way of life, was presented as fact by the eminent anti-behaviourist Ed Wilson in *Sociobiology* (1975), and immediately rubbished by other eminent biologists.

It's since formed the basis of a school of philosophy calling itself 'Evolutionary Psychology', which is considered misguided by psychologists and evolutionary biologists (see the collection of essays, *Alas, poor Darwin*, arguments against Evolutionary Psychology, Jonathan Cape 2000).

Instinctual behaviour in humans is so overlaid with learned behaviour that the conjecture can't be falsified, but there's no good reason for thinking it's true. Domestic animals, notably dogs, are bred for temperament (as well as physique) by artificial selection over tens of generations at the most. It seems unlikely that human temperaments have remained unchanged by natural selection over hundreds of generations.

Donald Room

There's more than metal to *Terminator 3*, finds Anton Pawluk

Never stop fighting, the battle has just begun

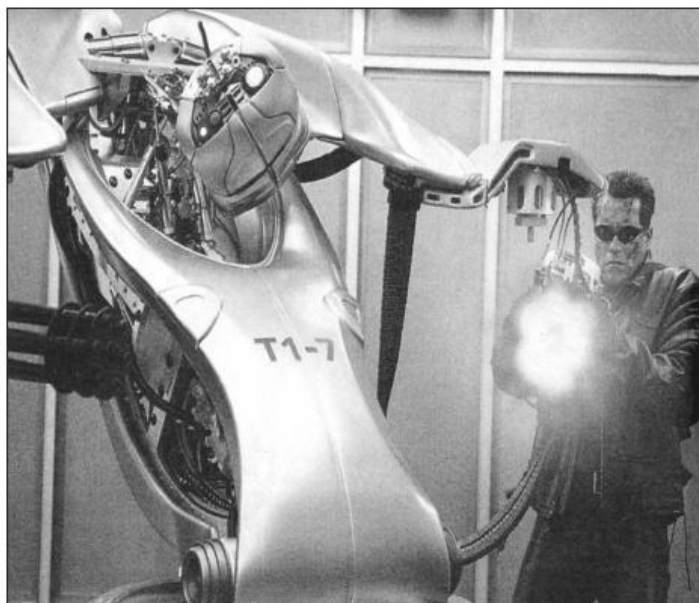
"The life you know, all this stuff you take for granted – it's not going to last". So warns John Connor, the man destined to save humankind, referring to a coming apocalypse in techno-capitalism which will see three billion people killed by machines in a nuclear war. The establishment in the United States of a global computer defence network, Skynet, intended to give the state greater powers to protect itself, will ironically lead to the empire's destruction.

Pandora's box, Frankenstein, Icarus – numerous bleakly pessimistic myths are alluded to in *Terminator 3: Rise of the Machines* to warn against technology and its misuse by power, but there's never any identification of the state itself as the driving force behind the misuse. But with a film like this, coming hard on the heels of *The Matrix* (which was also concerned with issues of technology, destiny, freedom and power), it seems the American stomach for modern capitalism is turning queasy.

The terminator sent to kill John Connor this time round comes in the guise of a woman who's immediately cast as a ruthless consumer. She materialises in the window of a department store (Arnie materialises in the desert). If she wants something (a glossy sports car, a gun), she announces that she likes it, kills its owner and takes it.

Taking her cue from a billboard advertisement for a bra, she swells the size of her breasts to unman an approaching policeman. The can change shape at will, though needless to say, she's flawlessly blond, icily beautiful and impeccably slim. She's the culmination of a highly technological, consumer culture, superseding the mannequins in the department store window that melt as she materialises there.

John Connor, now a man in his twenties, lives 'off the grid', where nobody and



nothing can find him. All-pervading technology is a net he refuses to become ensnared in. The machines can access communications networks, eavesdrop and locate anyone they want. He's a fugitive from their surveillance.

Throughout the film Connor, like the characters in *The Matrix* before him, has to wrestle with the opposition of fate and free will. He hopes to avert the nuclear cataclysm and yet he's continually reminded by visitors from the future of his destiny to lead humankind against the machines.

Terminator 3 never quite reconciles this essentially metaphysical conundrum with its more political concerns about technology and consumption. It asks how free we are to

shape our future but, unlike *The Matrix*, it doesn't go on to ask how free we are to shape our present. This, of course, is a far more explicitly political question, and it obviously demands a consideration of human power structures, coercion and social control.

As a result, the critique of power *Terminator 3* provides isn't as searching as the one in *The Matrix*, though this does mean it doesn't tie itself in knots like the other film did. Power is dangerous in this movie only when it inheres in technology. The people who construct the technology, and their reasons for doing so, are ultimately portrayed as benign. Violence and coercion are fetishised, as you might expect from an action movie. And the ending hints at the re-

establishment of traditional power structures after the upheaval.

To its credit, though, *Terminator 3* doesn't fall into the trap of imitating what it claims to deplore. Parts of *The Matrix Reloaded* (the quasi-pop-promo rave scene in Zion, for example, the shameless product placement) were almost indistinguishable from advertisements – precisely the sort of false construction of reality the film seemed to want to question. In fact, it could have given rise to a new genre all its own: advertainment.

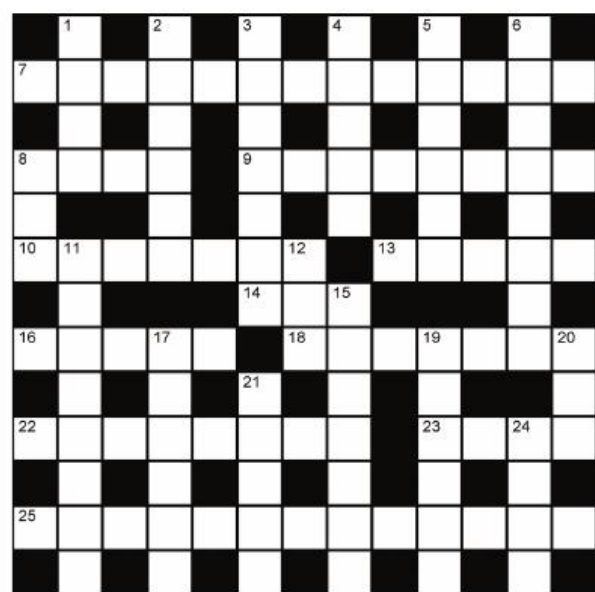
Terminator 3 never loses sight of its principal aim – to entertain. This it does in spades, with the usual dyspeptic feast of white-knuckle car chases, deafeningly explosive property destruction (enough cars are destroyed to clear the roads of congestion for a decade) and with a taut, intelligent and occasionally witty script.

The characters are thinly sketched – one shows remarkable fortitude in shrugging off the deaths of both her fiancée and her father during the course of the same afternoon (well, she's helping John save the world) – but that's a given in action movies and most viewers won't be looking for method acting anyway.

All in all, it's not very radical stuff, but nobody expected it to be. President-to-be Schwarzenegger wouldn't have made it if it was. There's more metal than mettle. Nevertheless, the film does attempt some resolution of the film's concerns with politics and free will, and it shows fighting spirit as it does so.

"Maybe the future has been written. I don't know – but never stop fighting. The battle has just begun", says the closing voiceover. And we do learn that the machines triumphed precisely because they had no central core of power. They were cyberspace, a network and because of this they couldn't be destroyed. Had they been listening to the anarchists?

Freedom Prize Crossword compiled by Bjarni Halfnelson



Across

- 7 Captive State author – boring tome, ego destroyed! (6,7)
- 8 Punk dance-style lends a little gravity to childish crap! (4)
- 9 Find Italian brigade when it returns following the outlaw. (8)
- 10 Free time, i.e. rules broken up! (7)
- 13 One eschewing animal exploitation gave away direction? (5)
- 14 Back ban – it's what the fuzz try to do to troublemakers, colloquially, at a 23 across (3)
- 16 Composer who's drunk when with Brahms! (5)
- 18 Famous old television Western series exposing bare skin (7)
- 22 Going to absurd lengths to demand party membership, we hear! (8)

- 23 Unruly popular uprising is rubbish I got into. (4)
- 25 Freethinking anarchist who believed there is no God, and carried out Orwellian acts. (7,6)

Down

- 1 Former *Freedom* editor turned over. (4)
- 2 Infections protein particles, supposedly causing BSE, disturbed prison. (6)
- 3 Recently come into existence as non-brew preparation (3-4)
- 4 Zany radio comedy troupe from song raving about nothing. (5)
- 5 Compel muddied bilge to follow nothing. (6)
- 6 Drop acts with rejigged lineup – could say 'wish you were here'? (8)

- 8 Lap up a good mate! (3)
- 11 Infectious outbreak that makes me dip ice in a jam! (8)
- 12 Spike of corn located in free area. (3)
- 15 Diggers' and allotmenters' equipment used for burying members of ancient ruling classes? (7)
- 17 Militant fanatic to laze about. (6)
- 19 Harbinger that turned into the Sun (or a flagship of Free Enterprise that turned turtle?). (6)
- 20 Ingest a strange tea (3)
- 21 Hereditary type of blood that some Republicans (and Anarchists!) might not mind spilling! (5)
- 24 Free and honest, held in hope nevertheless. (4)

Send your completed crossword to Freedom Prize Crossword, 84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1 7QX, to arrive no later than 4th September 2003. The winner will get a copy of the forthcoming Freedom book, Harold Barclay's *The State*

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KSL
Bulletin of the Kate
Sharpley Library
Number 35

The latest issue of this seven-page bulletin contains its usual mixture of historic reprints and book reviews. The reprints are of Ba Jin's 'How are we to establish a truly free and egalitarian society?' from 1921 and a June 1914 article by Leonard Abbott from *Mother Earth*, about 'The fight for free speech in Tarrytown'.

Books reviewed are Seán Sheehan's *Anarchism*, which is given a degree of approval, Kathryn and Martin Gay's *Encyclopedia of political anarchy*, which gets the thumbs down, and finally John Barker's prison memoirs, *Bending the Bars*. This is given a resounding "buy it!" from Mark Barnsley.

The review of the encyclopedia concludes with an invitation by John, editor of the KSL Bulletin, for anyone who's interested in helping to compile a class-struggle anarchist encyclopedia to get in touch. Incidentally, he mentions the Daily Bleed online encyclopedia but omits to mention the anarcho-syndicalism website (www.anarcho-syndicalism.org/as.php). Anyway, this could be an interesting project.

The issue is finished off with news that ChristieBooks have published an expanded edition of Gordon Carr's *The Angry Brigade: the cause and the case* with additional material by John Barker and Stuart Christie (both defendants in the 'Stoke Newington 8' trial). The new edition will set you back £30, but subscribers to the KSL Bulletin can get it at a discount.

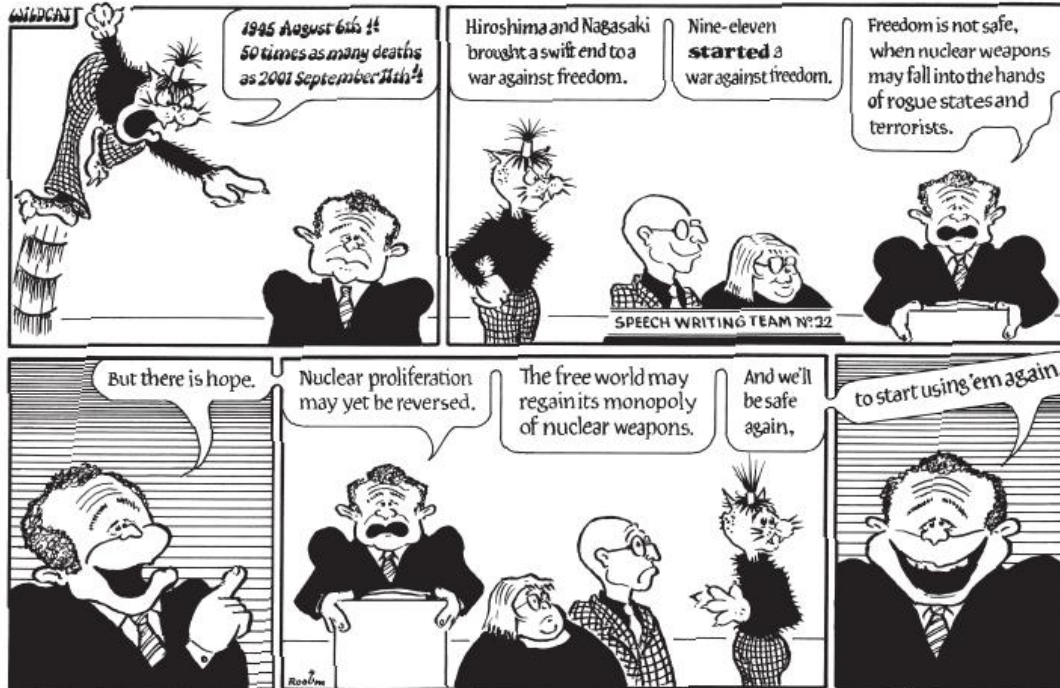
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The KSL project is well worth supporting and can be contacted at BM Hurricane, London WC1N 3XX. Subscriptions are £3 for individuals in the UK, £6 overseas (institutions have to pay £20). They welcome donations of materials as well as money.



The Mancunian

This is the bulletin of the Manchester People's Assembly. It contains news from the electricians' strike at Number One Piccadilly (*Freedom*, 26th July), as well as from the People's Assembly itself, held in June. There are short reports from and comments



on events in Britain and elsewhere, including an analysis of the occupation of Iraq, written by a former member of the British Army. "Unless the US can commit a million or so troops to Iraq, they face a long, losing war", he concludes. Copies available for SAE from *Freedom*, 84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1 7QX or call 07960 890758.



Surrey Agitator
Issue one

With a masthead that looks suspiciously like the one on dodgy local rag the *Surrey Advertiser*, this first publication by Surrey Anarchist Group contains a mixture of local news and comment on the wider world. There are articles on refugees, cuts to the local health service and whether we should support the Euro ('who cares?'). A comment piece on the funding crisis in Britain's education monstrosity says, "schools should be run by teachers, parents and pupils, not by faceless bureaucrats in the councils and government. These people don't know the problems ... yet claim to have answers to all of them". Nothing new there, then. Send an SAE to SAG, PO Box 375, Knaphill, Woking GU21 2X

A sideways look

In the 1970s, while I was growing up along the banks of the Thames, there was much media attention to the possibility of flooding. I remember television dramas where looters and other ne'er-do-wells were drowned by tidal waves crashing through run-down dockland areas. I'd look at the large-scale map of areas which were vulnerable to flooding and hopefully imagine that it would stop a few streets shy of our estate.

Much of this attention receded once the Thames Flood Barrier was completed, though as I lived downstream of it I could never ascertain what protection it offered us. Today, if we hear news of flooding in Britain, it's usually some historic country town that's laying in the sand-bags as the waters rise.

Since the wave of flooding in the last few years, there's much more awareness of building in floodplains. Quite why there wasn't before is beyond me - I'd have thought the word itself might have been a bit of a giveaway. Insurers threaten not to insure houses built in flood-prone areas, and their distraught owners protest that it's all the developers' fault (which a lot of the time it is).

On 30th July John Prescott announced the creation of new housing developments at five sites east of London. Most Londoners struggle to buy a home near where they work and the government, being the mass party of property speculators, wants to help them by getting them to commute further.

Conveniently, there's lots of derelict land in these areas and there might even be a bit of token investment in public transport.

The five areas to be regenerated are East London, Greenwich and Woolwich, Thurrock, Barking and the area of North Kent between Dartford and Gravesend.

Hang on, didn't the government make some recommendations about people stupid enough to build in floodplains? Because that's what the majority of the proposed development sites are.

Prescott's official report, called *Creating Sustainable Communities*, optimistically opined that "concentration on the development of priority areas within the Gateway substantially reduces the requirement for extra flood defences, since such areas are already protected to the maximum 1:1000 year level".

This level means that, statistically, there's a one in a thousand chance the Thames Barrier will be overwhelmed in any particular year.

But these sums were done before there was general awareness of global warming. Of the 64 occasions the Thames Barrier was closed between 1984 and 2001, fifteen were in 2001. Sustainable communities for those with webbed feet and gills, perhaps?

The last big flooding on the Thames was in 1953, when a surge tide in the North Sea devastated the east coast and Thames estuary, and flooded all the industrial areas that are going to have houses on them.

The Dutch, hit even harder by the 1953 floods, raised their standards to one in ten thousand. But maybe England is just a riskier place. After all, what would the Clash have sung about if they'd come from somewhere else?

Svartfrosk

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Anarcho-quiz

1. What heroic wartime role did the second Communist Party president of Czechoslovakia, Antonin Novotny, perform?
 2. In 2003, the fascist BNP won a council seat on suburban Broxbourne council in Hertfordshire. The main plank of their campaign was hatred of asylum-seekers. How many asylum seekers lived in Broxbourne at the time?
 3. What connects punk, *War of the Worlds* author H.G. Wells, anarchist Peter Kropotkin and Charles Darwin?
 4. Which anti-militarist classic was illustrated by the cartoonist Josef Lada?
- for answers see page 6*