

FREEDOM

80P ANARCHIST NEWS AND VIEWS

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STICK THAT UP YOUR ASDA PRICE

Following months of tension building, thousands of depot workers have hit Asda in the back pocket with a five-day strike after a succession of strike-breaking tactics failed to halt the dispute.

In an increasingly bitter struggle to keep the GMB union from gaining recognition in its major distribution centres, Asda have attempted to attack the legality of the ballot for action, and allegedly, have employed strike breakers, intimidated staff and increased targets in preparation. *Freedom* has been investigating the tactics being employed by Asda across the country, and found a litany of likely strikebreaking tactics being listed by the workforce.

In Chepstow, it has been reported that as the balloting process began, the 'seagulls' (management, so called because they shit on you from above) attempted to up the amount of stock being picked pre-strike from 1,400 cases to 1,800, and that redundancies earlier in the year saw many of the more militant membership lost.

Increased stockpicking targets have reputedly also been imposed at Falkirk, Grangeworth and Wigan. The tactic seems to be designed to lower the picking levels necessary over the strike period.

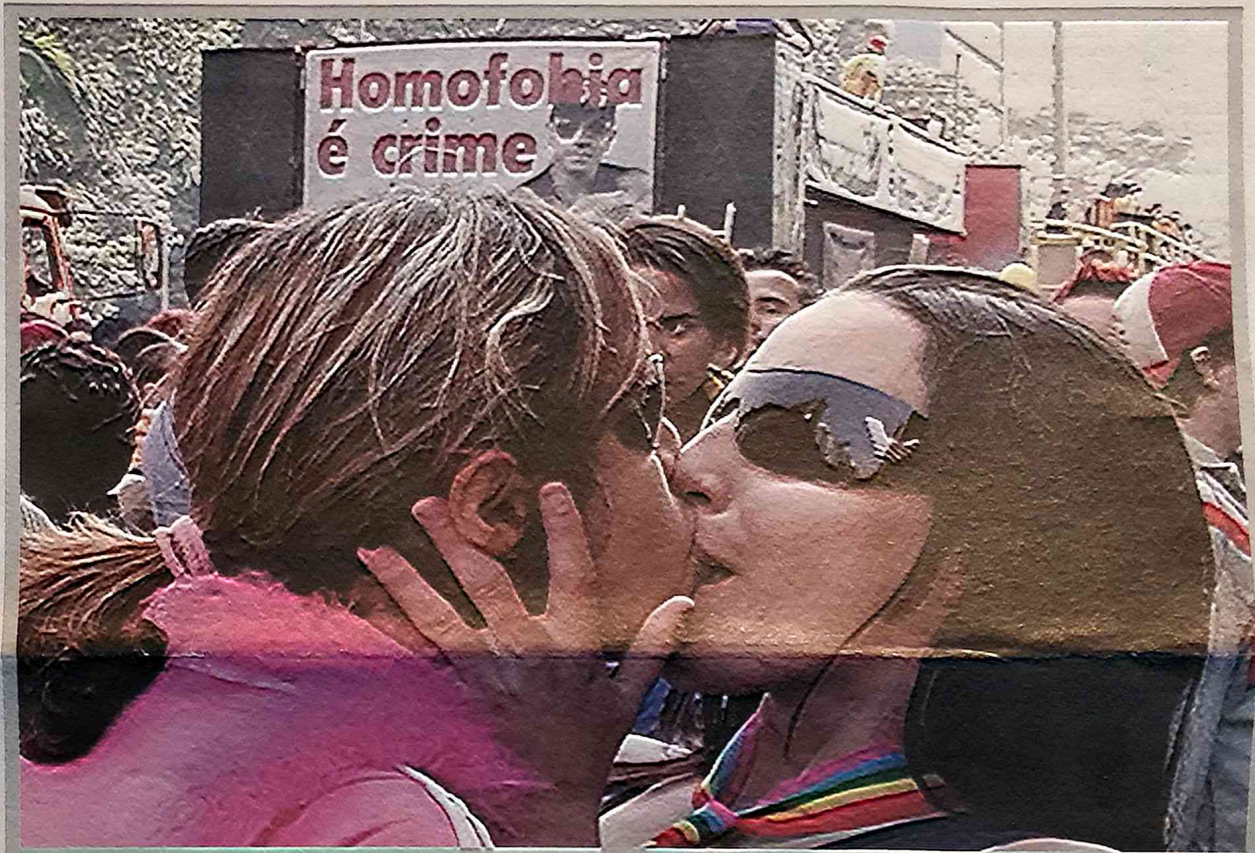
Jobs have also been threatened should the strikers lose. At Erith, workers have said that 10% of jobs could be cut.

In Grangemouth, a large number of new faces have been reported, with one worker believing enough to undermine the strike have already been brought in. The new workers are on short-term contracts, and would likely be dropped next January.

All depots are reporting an increase in the number of temps being employed as 'world cup help', and on a national level, the GMB have formally warned 62 employment agencies not to send scabs to the affected areas.

Eddie Gaudi, an organiser at the company's Skelmersdale depot in West Lancashire, spoke to *Freedom* about the situation there. He said: "We've been trying to get the membership up to the 51% mark but it has been stagnant at about 200 people [38%]. At the moment people have been brought in one-to-one and the management have been trying to get them signing up to strike break, offering to bus them in. Eighty agency workers have been employed on the site recently.

"There has been a fantastic response though. 150-plus people have signed up across the county in the last three weeks, people seem to be actively promoting the union and it's not just in Asda, as a lot of these are generic issues. There has been support from across the world. Germany, Norway, teamsters in the US - people are starting to realise that the unions are still here. This is a fight that we can't afford to lose"



The gay pride parade in Brazil drew a crowd of around 2.4million people in the largest such demonstration Sao Paulo has yet seen. The annual parade, now in its tenth year, is the largest such parade in the world, and was themed as a massive, colourful protest against homophobic attacks in the country. The event, though on a sombre subject, was in effect a vast street party.

Three-quarters of the voters at twenty depot stations across the country voted for a full strike, despite legal challenges

over the validity of the ballot. Members of the GMB at twenty centres across the country, including

Dartford, Didcot, Bedford, Chepstow, Falkirk, Grangemouth, Wigan.

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FEMINISTS NEEDED!

A London-based library collective desperately needs volunteers to help it find funding and new premises, as it faces the loss of large amounts of irreplaceable literature from its archives.

The Feminist Library was founded in 1975 as a research centre into women's studies and consequently developed vast archives relating to the women's liberation movement.

It is currently stored in premises on Westminster Bridge Road owned by Southwark Council, who subsidised rent for the organisation since 1988. However, two years ago the money officially stopped, and the library's future has been uncertain ever since. Volunteers are currently negotiating with

various universities; including Middlesex, LSE and UCL, in search of a suitable alternative space, although they would prefer for the collection to remain as a complete body of material.

Charlotte, who has been involved with the library for a year and a half, gives her view on why the funding was cut: "I don't think we fit in with Southwark Council's agenda - a feminist archive can't have a broad enough appeal."

Due to a severe shortage of active members - there are only six people in the management collective - the library hasn't been open to the public for 12 months. A working group has been assigned the task of archiving the stock and compiling a catalogue to be uploaded to the internet. Their website isn't functioning at the moment as they are searching for a new cheaper host.

The collection consists of political pamphlets, self-published 'zines and books, posters, journals and articles, many of which are unique copies unobtainable elsewhere. These documents chart the history of social change from the perspec-

tive of grassroots feminist agitators; glossed over in the school curriculum and dismissed by the contemporary media and politicians, they form an invaluable resource. Unlike the Women's Library, the information is lent out to members, in order to make it as accessible as possible. Creative writing workshops, discussion groups and talks were held regularly at the centre, and a newsletter was published for the benefit of users and local residents.

The library building is shared with many other community groups - the African Research and Information Bureau, the Confederation of Indian Associations and the Eritrean Education and Publication Trust.

Whilst membership is open to all on an annual subscription basis, entrance has been by appointment only because there aren't any paid workers. The centre relies on donations and subscription fees to cover its running costs.

Adding to the crisis, last month volunteers had to respond to an urgent

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AUSSIE MIGRANTS

High levels of racism right across Southern Australia are making a farce of the country's 'points' system of immigration, according to a new report.

Research by the federal Employment and Workplace Relations Department found skills shortages across 45 different trades, despite a large influx of skilled immigrants. It was found that racism is the main factor in denying immigrants skilled jobs, with most having to work as unskilled labour.

It has been found by major recruitment agencies that up to 90% of skilled migrants from India, Asia and the Middle East could not be placed in jobs, but no problems were experienced in placing white incomers.

The news comes as Australian Prime Minister John Howard brings forward his new Migration Amendment (Designated Unauthorised Arrivals) Bill 2006, a plan to incarcerate in offshore concentration camps all unauthorised boat arrivals.

The bill, which has whipped up further

friction as it suggests incarcerating children as well as men and women, would allow the government to deny legal aid to asylum seekers, disregarding human rights law.

Barrister Nicholas Poynder, in his submission regarding the bill, said: "Over the years I have seen various Australian governments tie themselves in knots trying to avoid their responsibilities under the refugees convention. However, I have never seen anything like this unauthorised arrivals bill for such a barefaced and impudent attempt to deny our obligations."

A large body of evidence has been collected regarding racist attitudes in the Australian population in recent years, with one recent report suggesting that one in seven people in New South Wales, and one in nine in Queensland, are openly racist.

Widespread attitudes included the belief that inter-racial marriage is not acceptable, that some races are 'better' than others, and that cultural diversity is not good.

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Thatcher's school strikes

Teachers at Kesteven and Grantham in Lincolnshire, Margaret Thatcher's old school, have gone on a second strike in protest at a staff restructure.

This follows on from one day of strike action last week. Chris Keates, General Secretary of NASUWT, said: "Attempts at constructive dialogue and 'action with a halo' designed not to disrupt pupils' education have been greeted with an intransigent attitude from the school management."

Square still there

A threatened eviction of The Square, a squatted social centre in London, is yet to happen as the paper goes to press. Freedom contacted them, and were told that the continuing large presence at the site made it unlikely that it would be evicted over the 23rd to 25th June, as bailiffs don't work weekends.

A Square resident said: "I think just one guy turned up yesterday and then left again."

Libcom hacked

Newswire and libertarian website Libcom is back online, after being the victim of a hacker attack in May.

Libcom (short for Libertarian Communist) has been going through a major upgrade, but weaknesses were found in some of its forum, gallery and newswire software. All three went down, and the team were forced to revert to a backup forum.

On the backup forums, a poster claiming to be HAAKER_1 said: "I hacked this site for Palestinian and Iraqi and all Muslims people, fuck America and Britain people" (sic).

Jack, an admin on the site, said: "[Hackers are] just anti-social little pricks."

Drax attack

Thousands of climate change activists will converge on Drax power station – the single largest emitter of carbon dioxide in the UK – for ten days of direct action this summer.

Alison Templeton from the Camp for Climate Action said: "The only solution to climate change is a drastic cut in our energy consumption. Drax continues to belch out emissions while we are staring catastrophe in the face. It has to go."

Activists are planning a Camp for Climate Action in 'Megawatt Valley', near Leeds, home of Drax, Eggborough and Ferrybridge power stations. The camp promises education about climate change, sustainable living, and direct action targeting those responsible for the worst emissions. The camp will be held from 26th August to 4th September.

Fines for engineer death

Royal Mail and Romec Ltd have been fined a total of £250,000 and ordered to pay costs totalling £47,000 after Romec engineer and CWU member Ian Dicker, 47, fell to his death at the West London Mail Centre, Paddington, in July 2003.

Ian Dicker was working on the main roof of the West London Mail Centre installing a new lighting system and also supervising an apprentice. The two men were working next to fragile skylights which were not boarded or marked as being dangerous and there was no safety guard rails to prevent someone falling. Mr Dicker stepped forward to inspect the apprentice's work and fell 30 feet to his death through one of the fragile skylights and into a corridor below.

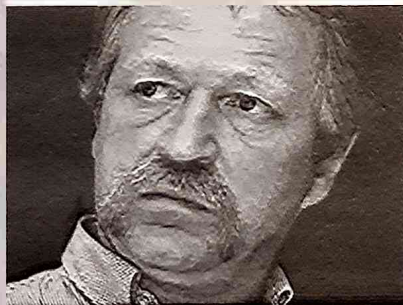
Around the world

CAMBODIA: Cambodia's leading trade and teachers unions say they will hold a nationwide strike on 3rd July to demand a higher wages and a shorter working week. The leader of the Free Trade Union, Chea Mony, and the president of Cambodia's Independent Teacher Association, Rong Chhun, have announced the strike in a joint statement. The two labour leaders say the government has not responded since their May Day demands for better working conditions. They say there is discrimination towards trade unions and the use of child labour has not been addressed.

Factory workers are pushing for a monthly wage increase from \$US45 to \$80 and are demanding a cut in weekly working hours from 48 to 44. Teachers are requesting a wage boost from \$25 per month to \$100.

FRANCE: Alleged anarcho-syndicalist Jose Bové has said he will run in the French presidential election next year, believing he will pull left-wing votes from the main opposition Socialist Party.

The farmer and small-business ally, who has staged a series of spectacular stunts to promote anti-capitalism across the EU, told the French paper *Libération* he was "ready to take on the responsibilities of going to Elysée Palace", referring



to the presidential office in Paris.

Bové (pictured above), a sheep farmer whose exploits have included damaging GM crops and attacking McDonalds shops, said that no-one else had the "capacity to bring together" all of France's far-left factions.

JAVA: With the memory of the recent tsunami which hit Aceh still fresh, now another natural disaster has hit Indonesia, this time on the island of Java with 65% of Indonesia's 206,264,595 inhabitants (BPS, 2000). As many as 5,000 people living in the Province of Yogyakarta and some regions of the province of Central Java died as a result of their houses collapsing from a 5.9 magnitude earthquake on the Richter Scale (6.3 on the Moment magnitude scale). The main earthquake occurred at 05:55 local time (UTC+7), Saturday 27th May 2006 and continued for about one minute. It was

followed by several aftershocks.

For the people who survived, there is still the need for help from all sides including medicines, nutritious food, blankets, tents, mattresses for temporary shelter, kitchen things, clothes, building materials, money, etc.

Help can be sent through IMC Jakarta in Yogyakarta, the contact people are Jicék or Tjuan. The address is: Jl. Kaliurang KM. 7 Desa Kayen, Rt.05 Rw.44 Yogyakarta, or you can call Jicék on (+62) 81578007490 or Tjuan on (+62) 81328234208

SPAIN: Workers at the logistics centre in Sant Sadurni d'Anoia, Barcelona, of the Spanish supermarket chain Mercadona are entering the fourth month of their indefinite strike. The strike is organised by the CNT anarcho-syndicalist trade union. Mercadona, whose slogan translates as 'supermarkets of trust', is Spain's biggest national supermarket chain by sales, with 990 outlets across the country and 54,000 workers. The company likes to pride itself on its claim that 100% of its staff have permanent contracts.

In reality, employees have found that their jobs are not quite so secure once they start demanding their rights. At the start of the year local conflicts were

ongoing in the provinces of Almeria, Cordoba and Huelva after supermarket workers suffered unfair dismissals and mistreatment. In March a court in Cordoba ordered the chain to pay 30,000 euros compensation to a worker who was the victim of harassment.

USA: On Friday 16th June a delegation of the IWW Starbucks workers union entered Starbucks at 57th and Lexington. Workers on the shop floor put on their IWW union pins and let the company know that they too were members. They stopped work as they presented their demands to their store manager Patrice Britton. District manager Veronica Park arrived and quickly singled out the leaders. Isis Saenz and Charles Fostrum were told to count their registers and clock out. They refused and were then taken into the back room. Management yelled at the two to clock out and they continually refused

After ten minutes workers were finally allowed to go back to work. This is the 5th Starbucks store in NYC to establish a public organising committee and make collective demands from the company. Some of these demands included a guaranteed 30 hour work week, an end to the one minute lateness policy, and an end to unfair firings.

Prison news

Garf Gabbard

Garf Gabbard is in prison following his arrest at an animal liberation demo. He expects to be released in January 2008, and requests comrades and friends to send him letters of support and propaganda. (When sending to Garf or other prisoners, it is advisable to send printed matter and letters in separate envelopes as the vetting procedures vary, and printed matter often takes longer to get through.)

Garf's current address is: TV4271 Garfield Marcus Gabbard, HMP Noorland, Bawtry Road, Hatfield Woodhouse, Doncaster, DN7 6BW

Rob Los Ricos released

By the time this issue of Freedom goes to press, Rob Thaxton, or Rob Los Ricos as he now prefers to be called, will have been released from Oregon State Correctional facility after spending over seven years behind bars.

Rob was arrested on 18th June 1999 at a Reclaim The Streets demo in Oregon, organised as part of an international day of action, which saw activists taking to the streets all over the world. When the Oregon demo kicked off, Rob threw a rock at a charging cop, and subsequently received an 88-month sentence for assault and riot.

During his time in jail Rob has maintained his links with the activist community outside, by whom he has been well supported, as well as establishing links with other activists in jail, being instrumental in founding the ill-fated Anarchist Prisoners Legal Aid Network for example. Rob has also written extensively during his incarceration, producing a number of publications,

including a 'zine co-authored with fellow anarchist prisoner Jeffrey 'Free' Luers.

While Rob needs to try to rebuild his life, he plans to do some public speaking, and no doubt has plenty of plans for other publishing projects. We at Freedom wish him good luck for his release and for the future. Welcome back Rob.

Free political prisoners in Burma

An online petition calling for the liberation of political prisoners in Burma can be found at petitiononline.com/fppb/petition-sign.html.

More information about the situation in Burma is at aappb.org

Green Scare events

Over the weekend of 9th to 11th June, more than forty towns and cities around the world held events and actions in solidarity with the so-called 'Green Scare' defendants in the US (11th June also marks the sixth anniversary of Jeff Luers' imprisonment). In the UK these included a demonstration against repression in London and solidarity benefits in Brighton and Leeds. More information on the 'Green Scare' repression at greenscare.org

West Papua

Help is needed to support 16 students who are being held in prison in West Papua and are currently on trial for taking part in a demonstration in which five police officers and one protester were killed. Following recent successful protests in West Papua which closed the Freeport mine for a number of days, costing millions in lost revenue to the mining companies, students held a solidarity protest outside the university

in Abepura where the clashes with police took place.

In response the police launched house-to-house searches and patrols in and around Abepura during which a number of student dormitories were badly damaged. Vehicles were stopped and searched and Papuan passengers were dragged out, kicked and beaten. Students from the Central Highlands appeared to be targeted in revenge attacks reminiscent of those that took place in Abepura in December 2000 when three students were killed and dozens more were tortured in police custody.

A total of 57 people, mostly students, were arrested. Hundreds of others fled to the surrounding hills to find sanctuary. Sixteen people are being held by the police as suspects. They are facing a number of charges, including murder and subversion. An unknown number of others wanted by the police are still in hiding. There have been reports of torture against two of the detainees.

You can support these prisoners by phoning the prison guards and telling them we are watching them, not to mistreat the prisoners and to give the prisoners our messages of support. These actions have proved successful before, bringing better conditions to prisoners and even allowing for charges to be dropped. Phone the prison and the police on the numbers below. The most important thing is just to say the prisoners names a lot, even if they don't understand English, and make it clear you are phoning from abroad.

- The prison phone number is +62 967 581705
- The address is Lembaga Pemasarakatan Abepura, Jl. Kesehatan, Jayapura,

Papua, Indonesia

- You can also phone the police on +62 967 533763 or +62 967 531829.

Cards and letters of support can be sent to the prisoners at the above address. The prisoners names are: Ferdinandus Pakage, Nelson Rumbiak, Elyas Tamaka, Luis Gedi, Selpius Bobi, Markus Kayame, Patrisius A, Thomas Ukago, Penius Waker, Musa Asso, Othen Dapyal, Elkana Lokobal, Moses Lokobal, Mon Jefri Obaja Pawika, Matias Mihel Dimara and Blesieur Mirin.

325 Magazine: issue 3 out

After an unexpectedly long delay, the insurgent anti-prison magazine 325 is back with another 60 pages of anarchy, prison revolt, and social war! The latest issue features articles from a year of anarchist, anti-capitalist activity, including an interview with Jean-Marc Rouillan, a French Action Directe prisoner; an interview with former Spanish FIES prisoner Laudelino Iglesias Martinez; Breaking out of the Ghetto, lessons from the CPE struggle, which is a report about the French labour struggle from an insurrectionary participant; as well as reports from the 2005 Anti-Prisons Gathering in Barcelona and from the G8. There's also a report about the police attack on the European soundsystem event, 'Czechtek 2005'; an article on squatting in Brighton; and another on imprisoned LSD chemist Casey Hardison.

325 costs £1 per copy, plus postage. For single and bulk orders, enquiries etc, contact 325@hush.ai or write to 325mail, c/o ABC, PO Box 74, Brighton, BN1 4ZQ.

News

All change, but no difference

Richard Griffin looks into a spate of 'high impact' initiatives in the NHS which seem set to continue its downward spiral

At the end of June the Department of Health set up a Social Enterprise Unit to "encourage social enterprises to involve staff and service users in designing and delivering services tailored to meet people's needs while achieving a greater value for money".

Critics suspect that the last point about 'value for money' is actually the main reason this Unit has been established.

No area of the health service is immune from this fetish for the market and all things private sector. Last month saw the launch of yet another drive to "modernise mental health services", this time in the form of so-called "high impact changes" which Health Minister Rosie Winterton said will "drive better service efficiency".

There is no doubt that mental health services faces serious challenges, including severe staff shortages. Earlier this year Unison pointed to the need for a more "positive image of mental health nursing that will attract and retain staff alongside improved career opportunities, better childcare and continued professional development". However the current financial crisis in the NHS has led to mental health trusts cutting posts rather than investing in staff. Cuts mean that existing staff have to carry ever higher case loads.

While community mental health services need to be expanded to help keep people out of hospitals, out of hospital services are in fact being cut back. Areas where there are gaps such as crisis resolution and GP services remain underinvested in despite growing demands on services.

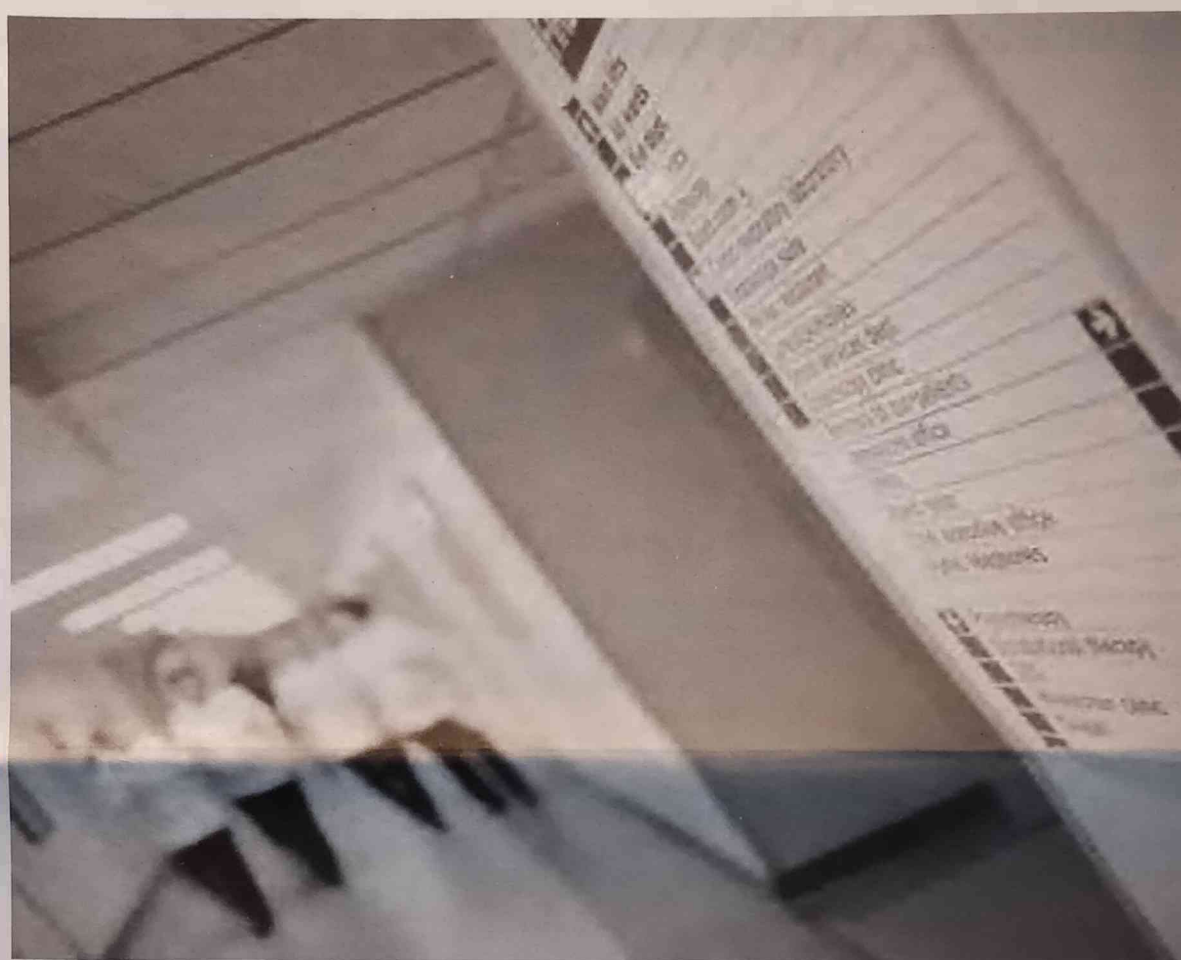
Mental health services within hospital are faring no better. Acute services face a large number of problems including,

according to *The Guardian*, "over-occupancy of beds, high staff vacancy and sickness levels and subsequent use of bank and agency staff, too little engagement between nursing staff and patients, patient boredom, poor physical environments and increasingly complex service user needs." Financial cuts mean that acute wards are being closed.

Reduced services hit the most vulnerable in society. If a person in mental distress receives appropriate support swiftly then they are much more likely to recover or remain well for longer periods. With a reduction in support services, recovery times are likely to increase.

Faced with these problems Labour's response has been to launch ten high impact changes designed apparently to provide more streamlined, effective care, tailored to meet the needs of individual patients. These include:

- Treating home based care and support as the norm for the delivery of mental health services. This may lead to a further reduction in services such as 'clubhouses', the drop-in points for patients who have trouble integrating with society.
- Avoid unnecessary contact for service users and provide necessary contact in the right setting. Mental Health patients have complained across the country that communication and an ability to make contact with the service, already short of funds, has been difficult.
- One high impact change is "improve service user flow by removing queues". In English this means that people should not have to wait for



services, but how is this going to be achieved at a time when the government is cutting services back and staff shortages are rising?

Launching the document, which has been produced by the Care Services Improvement Partnership (CSIP) for the Department of Health, Rosie Winterton

said: "We know that patients want community-based health services, greater control and a more personalised service. Unprecedented levels of investment in mental health services have already resulted in real benefits for patients."

However, as has been repeatedly reported in *Freedom*, the reality is very

different. Already some 13,000 jobs have gone across the NHS and more are due to follow.

Job losses and cut backs in employment of agency staff mean that already hard pressed.

Hospital workers will have to work even harder.

Builder blacklist fears rise

Electricians have begun a picket outside a major Manchester building project, claiming they have been victim of a blacklist still operating across the electrical contracting trade.

Several people have come forward to back allegations by a former manager of a blacklist allegedly operated by his company following revelations which were published in *Freedom* (8th April 2006 issue).

At the time of writing, three workers who were involved in the 'DAF' dispute have been made redundant on the Manchester Royal Infirmary site – a six year prestige project. The DAF dispute in Manchester, which started in May 2003, was an example where it was claimed pressure was applied on the sub-contractor DAF to blacklist certain workers by a major contractor.

In the end the case went to the Industrial Tribunal last summer and the workers won their case – though DAF went bankrupt before it could pay the money.

Blacklisting is alleged again at the

Royal Infirmary and a picket outside the site has been set-up with some backing from union branches, trades' councils and local political bodies.

In the North other electricians who worked on jobs such as the Jubilee Line Extension and on the Pfizer project in Kent, where there were industrial disputes, have had trouble getting work and have even had trouble keeping jobs when they get them through agencies or with sub-contractors.

Brian Bamford, editor of *Northern Voices*, an anarchist magazine following the case in the North, said: "A year ago, when I was Secretary of Tameside Trade Union Council on behalf of the Greater Manchester County Association of TUCs moved a motion calling for an end to this kind of blacklisting, the General Council of the TUC replied that the DTI [Department of Trade and Industry] was reluctant to act owing to the lack of concrete evidence of blacklisting."

"With the whistleblowing former manager, Mr Alan Wainwright, heading

to take his case denouncing blacklisting to the Civil Court in Birmingham in November and the Manchester MRI electricians lining-up to go yet again to the Manchester Industrial Tribunal screaming about the 'blacklist', I wonder how much longer the General Council of the TUC can sit on their arses?"

In April, another worker contacted *Freedom* and *Northern Voices* after the disclosures of blacklisting earlier this year and has now given a statement to Wainwright, who has set-up a blog (at blacklistedelectricians.blogspot.com) which aims to expose the national blacklist and to gather evidence for his civil action.

Mr Keevil claims he has been unable to find work with another JIB (Joint Industry Board) company since leaving the employment of Drake & Scull on the Jubilee Line Extension project.

The Jubilee Line Extension was the site of a major dispute in the late 1990s.

Rob Ray and Brian Bamford

Olympic land-grab

A draft 'Opportunity planning framework' has been put forward by the Olympic committee for a major series of clearances of land in the Lower Lea Valley are of London.

The clearances, which are likely to be enforced through a series of Compulsory Purchase Orders, threaten a large number of residents, and over 200 people have already been forcibly evicted from the area.

Common lands are also to be squeezed, as allotment holders are to be moved onto what are currently open public spaces elsewhere in the city.

Katy Andrews, who has been campaigning for months about the proposed orders, said: "What's likely to happen next is almost too awful to contemplate. The Olympic Delivery Authority gives absolute carte blanche to over-ride every bit of planning law ever enacted, including common land, covenants, the allotments act, etc."

The framework found that: "Large areas of derelict industrial land and poor housing. Much of the land is

fragmented, polluted and divided by waterways, overhead pylons, roads and railways." The Opportunity Area Planning Framework seeks to "build on the area's unique network of waterways and islands to attract new investment."

Residents disagree with the analysis however, and according to Katy: "The Lower Lea Valley is not characterised by brownfield sites, it is a thriving industrial hub, probably the largest concentration of industry in London after Park Royal."

"It is not divided or fragmented by waterways, roads and rail but linked by them. This is yet another example of government spin to make the destruction of a third of Hackney Marshes and six years of disruption to local people for six weeks of organised competitive sport somehow palatable."

"I will be interested to respond to the consultation document and hope that many others do as well – most of these consultation papers are never looked at."

Teachers terrorised in Mexico

A terror attack by the Ortiz government has seen the annual education strike turn into a far wider protest, finds Ellen Kemp

In May of this year the teachers of Oaxaca State – the second poorest state in Mexico – began a strike calling for widespread improvements in education, extra funding for schools, more help for children of poor rural schools, and higher salaries. The strike is very traditional, this year being the 26th year of annual striking, however this year events were to take a different turn.

On 15th May, around 70,000 teachers marched in support of their demands in the Oaxaca City the state capital. The governor, Ulises Ruiz Ortiz, refused to negotiate with the teachers, and one week later they set up a tent city in the old colonial part of the city. Furthermore on 2nd June Ortiz threatened to dock the pay of teachers and sue them for breach of contract.

The first week of the tent city was festive with the teachers enjoying much support from the local population. The governor's refusal to enter into dialogue led the teachers to blockade state government offices, disrupt the collection of tolls from car drivers and blocking access to the airport. Posters and propaganda for the 2nd July presidential elections was also torn down. A further march of 120,000 people took place on 7th June, supported by other local unions and other organisations.

The teachers strike was rapidly becoming an embarrassment to Ortiz and the forces of law and order. On the 14th June some 3,000 riot police attacked the tent city. Warrants were issued for the arrest of the union's leadership. A

building used by the union radio station, Radio Planton, was also attacked. At first the police gained the upper hand with the teachers losing ground and their belongings and temporary homes.

The fight back began and after six hours the teachers and their supporters regained the centre of the city. The media attempted to misrepresent the battle by claiming that the teachers were using Molotov cocktails and guns, this was not the case. At first there were reports of several deaths but this has not been confirmed since that day.

Not only did the state lose the physical battle but also were beginning to lose the political battle. The 16th June saw an even larger demonstration in support of the teachers and against the corrupt governor Ortiz, with around 400,000 demonstrators (see picture, right). Ortiz, who belongs to the corrupt Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) who ruled Mexico for several decades until the 1990s, is accused of siphoning off state funds to pay for the PRI's presidential campaign.

One local described the changing political scene: "But the movement is not longer about teachers, it is now a popular movement. Even before the violence, there was a popular sentiment against the state government, but this latest rights violation has caused the people to declare that it is for Ortiz to resign."

The teachers' union have now organised a popular assembly "to create a permanent space for citizens to exercise



their guaranteed constitutional rights and assume a political position in analysing the social and political realities that presently prevail in the state." Some 170 people representing 85 organisations attended the first meeting. The union is hoping to organise an even bigger demonstration in the coming weeks

and is calling for the disruption of the presidential elections in Oaxaca State.

Ortiz has tried to organise popular support against the teachers, with a 'March for the Defence of Education', that took place on 22nd June. This so-called support consisted of 10,000

demonstrators, many of whom were paid to attend and were bussed in from other towns. The teachers and their supporters were concerned that the march would be used by *agent provocateurs* to stir up reasons for the forces of the state to unleash another round of violence.

Victory in Greek universities

The Greek government has backed down from plans to part-privatise the country's university system after a massive academic backlash.

The 407 universities, representing 90% of the total, were occupied in the wake of a bill announced by the ruling 'New Democracy' (ND) party proposing measures to undermine university immunity to police interference and the rule of free education for all.

Despite a major groundswell of popular support, sections of the Greek Communist Party, which regularly polls third across the country, opposed the uprisings and called for the standing down of the occupations.

Up to 15,000 people demonstrated in Athens, with tens of thousands more from all walks of life taking to the streets across the country in solidarity. Despite entreaties from the government for 'dialogue', union and student groups refused to negotiate.

ND subsequently agreed, alongside the leadership of the second-placed social-democratic party PASOK, not to

risk an attempt to push through the bill this summer because of fears of a continued uprising in the sector.

Anarchists have been prominent in the fight against the bill. One Greek anarchist wrote: "We believe that the decision was taken because of the pressure of the student movement, but, much more, because of the emerging danger (for them) of a connection of the students' movement to workers, the unemployed and high school students."

"Beyond this, we saw clearly who was with the students' struggle and who not. The masks fell. The leaders of the National Workers' Federation of Greece (GSEE), taking directives from the headquarters of PASOK, did not call a strike for support.

"We think there was a collaboration, but also pressure from the bureaucracy of GSEE for the government to strike a deal, because the workers would be quick to organise without them – which would be good for neither PASOK, who have a reputation of 'sitting on the bench' during mobilisations, nor for ND, who

want to spread the idea that nothing can be achieved by direct action.

"There is a fear that a resurgence of the movement connected with the workers would help ferment a class spirit which would cause a full frontal challenge to the laws in education and workplaces."

Following the freezing of the bill over the summer, it is thought that a revised bill is in the process of being drafted, repealing some of the less palatable aspects, in an attempt to buy off some of the major and defuse tensions.

The major sticking points for the bill included:

- Limiting the time allowed for students to complete courses
- Allowing easier police access to university grounds
- Ending the free academic books for students policy
- Disallowing student transfers between universities
- Allowing administrators to be non-academics
- Allowing the founding of 'non-profit' private institutions

What flights?

Following demands from a major NGO to condemn countries in the EU for having a 'hear no evil, see no evil' approach to rendition flights from the US, the Council of Europe have largely washed their hands of the matter. In a speech Terry Davis, Secretary General of the Council of Europe, said that countries around Europe had no safeguards in place to catch illegal rendition flights, and suggested that they be put in place.

However, despite invoking article 52 of the European Convention of Human Rights to gather evidence of the extent of the flights, Davis refused to place any potential guilt on the governments involved. He said: "The main purpose of my action under Article 52 of the European Convention of Human Rights is not to look for wrongdoers and sanction them. If human rights have been violated, the victims can and should seek redress and compensation through national courts and ultimately, if necessary, through the European Court of Human Rights."

Europe's governments have repeatedly denied their complicity in the US programme of 'renditions' – an unlawful practice in which numerous men have been illegally detained and secretly flown to third countries, where they have suffered additional crimes including torture and enforced disappearance.

The move allows western governments whose own laws do not allow them to commit torture or imprison without due process to maintain an air of legality in their own countries while violating international law in secret.

It is thought that the number of rendition flights that have so far taken place reaches into the hundreds, with EU states UK, Germany, Sweden and Italy (with further allegations of flights from Shannon airport in Ireland) implicated.

Amnesty said: "Persistent denials from European states of their involvement in renditions and the lack of any meaningful response from the EU apart from the Parliament, pose a serious problem."

Feature

Fighting for the NHS

Richard Griffin looks into the anarchist response to Labour's 'privatisation by the back door' policies

The NHS is in crisis. Last year it was officially £512 million in deficit, although the influential Kings Fund think tank has estimated the true overspend to be twice this amount. The BMA and other health unions have placed the blame firmly at the feet of the government and their market reforms. As ever it is the workers and patients who are suffering as services are cut and jobs lost.

Freedom interviewed four anarchists who work in the health service or have been involved in campaigns to fight cuts. Nick is a trainee occupational therapist, Chris is a Theatre Support Worker who has been a Unison steward for ten years (both Sol Fed members), Rob Ray has been active in local campaigns to defend mental health services and Andrew works in NHS education and is an IWW member.

How is the current financial crisis affecting you and services where you live?

Chris: Last month Northampton Hospital (NGHT) Chief Executive Andrew Riley announced budget cuts of almost £20m. The county's three Primary Care Trusts are merging into one. Cuts to staffing and other services 'have yet to be decided'. Wherever possible any reductions will be – we are told – 'through normal staff turnover'. This means leavers will not be replaced compounding long running pressures of understaffing, low morale, sickness and burnout.

Staff at NGHT have anticipated severe cutbacks for some while – the unofficial figure put about was 10%, (possible redundancies of 200 to 400), although management played down the option of redundancies as they continue to do. Older staff I have spoken to hope that there might now be incentives for them to bring their retirement forward. Other more recent employees – such as much needed Eastern European nurses filling gaps in operating theatres and on wards – suspect that they might be the easiest section of the workforce to dispense with under the 'last in, first out' rule. Beyond these groups it is difficult to speculate where the axe will fall.

Nick: The current financial crisis leaves us all in a lot of uncertainty. We've started our training on the premise that the NHS is always short of new health professionals, but now it seems that cutbacks may mean that there aren't enough jobs to go round. As NHS provision of healthcare is cut back and outsourcing to the private sector increases we may find ourselves forced to work outside the NHS under less favourable conditions for both ourselves and the public we will be working with.

Rob: In Suffolk the crisis is hitting us particularly hard – we have some of the biggest deficits per head in the UK – and mental health has been cut first because it's an easy target. The two major halfway houses for mental health patients which give them the support they need to live outside a full hospital environment, have both closed. Two other hospitals are under threat. Everywhere else is losing beds and services.

Andrew: Training is vital to ensure that NHS staff have the right skills to treat patients properly. The NHS also pays for the training of many of the people it recruits, like Nick. Education though is seen as a soft target during times of financial pressure. We are likely to see a big cut in training expenditure this year and next. Staff and patient care will suffer. We could also see a return to the situation under the Tories where the health service trained too few nurses, midwives, doctors and therapists.

How effective have unions been in responding to the crisis?

Chris: NHS unions have been making a lot of noise about opposition and supporting possible industrial action but dragging their feet. UNISON leadership is consistently ineffective and have failed to support previous calls for demonstrations and campaigns to support workers who have resisted PFI and privatisation of ancillary services at Dudley and Hillingdon. UNISON did support a national rally of Parliament 11th May called by the Royal College of Nursing.

Although there are many well-run and effective UNISON branches some have pursued 'partnership' with management. In Northampton we knew savage cuts were imminent two months ago. Despite this there has been no information or guidance from the branch for stewards and members who are enthusiastic to organise an anti-cut/privatisation campaign.

UNISON still continues to sell itself as a 'member run union' but our branch executive has never held a branch meeting open to members and is happy to have an office near management in the most inaccessible part of hospital for staff. The branch Executive recently overturned a decision to maintain agendas and minutes of meetings.

Andrew: The response has been pathetic frankly. Other than the national rally Chris mentions and some local protests unions have done next to nothing. They are letting the government off the hook. Rather than one lobby of Parliament there should have been a major national demonstration and industrial action to defend jobs and services. The unions just don't want to rock the boat.



Talks between NHS unions and the government are taking place about the future of the NHS' pension scheme what are your views on this?

Nick: 'Our' union leaderships have already sold out future workers in health, civil service and teaching in a disgusting Government-TUC deal to raise the retirement age for new starters whilst keeping existing workers on the current retirement age – for now. This means that in a few years we'll have a workforce on a two-tier pensions system and I'm sure the government will be back using that as an excuse to raise the retirement age for the older workers as well. The leadership of the health unions make a big deal of wanting to recruit trainee health workers and to sell out a supposedly valued section of their membership like this is shocking, even by the despicable standards of the likes of the Unison executive.

How do you think anarchists should respond to the current crisis?

Rob: The local anarchist response has been fractured. Lacking any presence inside the unions, and poor contacts in the worst-affected areas, our activities have mainly been restricted to acting as an organising point for the various

existing campaign groups across East Suffolk, and making contact with groups in Cambridgeshire and Norfolk. We have also been doing our best to publicise the fast-changing situation via our work with www.easf.org.uk, and through our contacts in the unions, though to the credit of the major press, they are at least doing a good job of publicising what's going on, even if they aren't attempting to offer alternatives. Hopefully, as our contacts improve and we can help get everyone round tables to get a better handle on the situation, we can get together a proper plan and ideas that don't depend on begging the health secretary for handouts laden with strings.

Nick: The most important thing is for health service workers and users to get talking to each other about what this means and what we can do about it. In my experience the unions have become more of an individual insurance policy than a forum for collective decision-making and action to defend or improve our jobs and services. We need to be trying to organise workplace bulletins, assemblies and public meetings in which we can plan ways to take more control of the health service that we work for

and depend on. Anarchists should be part of this process. Ultimately collective direct action is the only option if we want to achieve anything worthwhile.

Chris: Anarchist union health workers in Northampton have been attempting with other anti-privatisation protesters locally to set up a campaign against on-going NHS privatisation and Foundation Trust plans for almost a year. NGHT unions, apart from Amicus, have been unresponsive. The union's failure to respond to most recent cuts encourages us to work more independently of bureaucracies and more closely with community and Trades Council activists who have been building campaign against other recent drastic cuts to libraries, care homes and abolition of Youth Service in Northamptonshire.

We are supporting proposed next meeting of Socialist Forum about NHS privatisation and will promote this to NGHT staff. Also will work more closely with libertarian health worker comrades who produce Northampton 'Health Worker'. This group are ex-Unison members who left in disgust over Agenda for Change (the new NHS pay agreement).

Commentary

FREEDOM

Volume 67 Number 13

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

Well, not to start the column with yet another plea for help, but we've had a request both for long term and short term help at the bookshop this issue, as we are chronically short of staff to keep the place open.

If you are looking for a way to fill an afternoon where you can sit and read, chat with London anarchists, and generally pass the time slowly but usefully, pop into the bookshop and ask about the shifts. The pay ain't much but the company's great.

And of course, as was admittedly said last week (but what the hey, a reminder never hurts), our latest booklist has been printed, with a snazzy spectacle-related cover – five points to the person who can match the specs style to a bearded anarchist philosopher. There is loads more interesting stuff in there.

On less plug-related news, following our reporting of problems that the Whitechapel Library has been experiencing, we are happy to announce that there is a light, of sorts, at the end of the tunnel. Activists involved with trying to set up a new building have found a small, but apparently usable, temporary location. More next week hopefully.

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Next issue

The next issue will be dated 15th July 2006 and the last day to get copy to us will be Thursday 6th July.

You can send contributions to us by email to copy@freedompress.org.uk or by snail-mail to Editorial, Freedom Press, 84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1 7QX.

One year on: G8

It is now a year on from the mobilisations for the G8 in Scotland, and perhaps, a series of articles will follow regarding how much was achieved in the anarchist presses.

Or perhaps not. Frankly it all seems to have gone a bit quiet, with tumbleweed blowing across online forums, pubs buzzing with a new, football related extravaganza, and daily life continuing very much as before.

Looking at the Dissent website, a depressing picture of the 'progress' it has brought can be seen. In October, the last article regarding action goes up, a plea for support for jailed activists.

The next piece comes in January, and carries the inevitable plug for a book (*Shut Them Down*) written by key figures in the mobilisation. What the money will be used for is not really mentioned (though some seem to have gone to regional groups for resale), but well, you've got to have a book haven't you?

The last two posts, which went up midway through this month, list information about the next great G8 event, in Russia.

It seems to be a far smaller mobilisation – apparently there are some fears that Russian police won't be as kind as their counterparts here and there's apparently a really scary far right presence (they actually kill people).

Is that it? Is that the great leap forward that the tens, perhaps hundreds of thousands of pounds spent, the endless hours put in by dedicated people cooking, organising, reporting, fighting, marching and demonstrating was meant to make?

The G8 leaders barely heard the din, the decisions were made anyway. Make Poverty History was a triumph, and according to the latest reports from NGOs absolutely nothing happened to reduce poverty abroad (let alone, say it quietly, here in the UK).

Meanwhile nothing positive seems to have happened to the anarchist movement, it seems not much larger than before and certainly no better organised.

It is thought that excess funds raised and some of the organising that produced the anti-G8 spectacle helped open a couple of social centres.

But how many more could it have been if the energy we saw last year had been directed towards the building of

self-sustaining, community supported and led initiatives, social centres, libraries, street parties, well designed information for the everyday, etc?

We live in a society of sixty million people full of isolation, fear, mistrust, and dependence on the state for protection and succour. It is a society with huge problems in inequality, social cohesion and exploitation. Beside that, the advent of a bare few thousand 'pressuring' the most powerful people in the world is as nothing, and the results of Gleneagles are an elegant showing of this limitation.

This is not to denigrate the effort. Personally, I would like to see the organisation, mobilisation and hard work so heroically displayed last year to be repeated, perhaps every year if it could be done.

But here's the crack. I would like it to be done away from the long, hydra-headed shadow of the G8. It should be a continuing mobilisation, pure and simple, to give everyone, activist or no, the opportunity to fight on their own terms against their exploiters and know that they are not alone.

It should be a mobilisation of communities, of workplaces, with the objective not a one-off protest, but the creation and support of a sustainable, growing, life-long culture of mutual aid and solidarity in the class struggle across as many communities in the UK as possible.

It should be the lengthy, dull, repetitive process of finding out what the people around you need, and fighting their corner with every resource at your command until they trust you enough to do the same, and perhaps even help fight someone else's corner in turn.

It should in fact be anarchism in action, every day, until Orwell's jackboot is lifted.

Rob Ray

Religions R' Us

The anarchist group Class War has recently become aware of a website called Islamophobiawatch. The group sent an open letter to the site following the publication of their latest issue, complete with Class War's very own potted history of the prophet Mohammed. At Class War's request ('in case they forget to publish our letter'), we reproduce it here:

Dear Mr Pitt,

Your web site Islamophobiawatch has come to our attention. We notice that among those who have been denounced as 'Islamophobic bigots' are the National Secular Society, the Worker-Communist Parties of Iraq and Iran, Peter Tatchell and his (gay rights) organisation OurRage!, and Rowan Atkinson(?).

We are disappointed that Class War should be omitted from this list. As real revolutionaries we are, of course, opposed to all and any attempt to cheat and hoodwink our class with superstitious lies about magic and miracles.

Thus we are proud to be Islamophobic, just as we are proud to be 'Christianophobic', 'Judeophobic', 'Hinduphobic', 'Buddhaphobic', and whatever other mumbo-jumbo bullshit that the black crows of the Priestocracy try to foist upon us.

As proof of our suitability for inclusion on your hitlist/blacklist may I draw your attention to our latest issue (*Class War 90*) and the article on Islam. Just so you won't think that we may have put that article in just for the glory of being on your hate list, check any other issue of *Class War*, or our website and you'll find numerous insults to both Mohammed (piss on him) and his modern day would-be Torquemadas.

We look forward to your abuse and the chance to be included with such illustrious company.

Yours,

Darren Redstar

Class War International Secretary
(cwintsec@yahoo.co.uk)

Abuse and threats can also be sent from fundamentalist half wits to Class War's National Secretary at cwintsec@yahoo.co.uk

Asda

page 1

Skelmersdale and Wakefield, voted 3-1 in favour of the walkouts.

Asda are threatening to sue over alleged breach of ballot however, alleging that GMB have asked people who are no longer part of the union or indeed the business – though critics have pointed out a lack of interest would be more likely to lead to no voting than overturning a 3-1 majority.

Paul Kenny, general secretary of the GMB, has in turn accused Asda of 'unprecedented interference' in the ballot. Earlier this year, an employment tribunal ordered Asda to pay £850,000 for illegally inducing employees to give up collective bargaining.

The GMB union has 25,000 members working in Asda Wal-Mart's 300-plus stores and 20 distribution depots out of the total workforce of 140,000.

Rob Ray

Feminists

page 1

plea by Women's Health, an independent information service which has regretfully shut after 30 years. Closure had put their own library under threat.

Gemma

Contact: The Feminist Library, 5 Westminster Bridge Road, London SE1 7XW, tel 020 7928 7789, email thefeministlibrary@beeb.net

Review

page 7

"the primary mode" of decision-making, while at the same time realising this can be difficult to achieve.

As for economy, one ought not to impose one model, but allow both communal and individual methods, as long as "no one exploits others".

In order to achieve our libertarian goal, we must place "an emphasis on mutual aid, cooperation, personal responsibility and techniques of peace".

Oh, and anarcho-cynicism? Like Proudhon, Barclay feels a full and complete anarchist society is unlikely, but is certainly something worth striving for, even if we can't get it. But like Gustav Landauer, he also believes that "if enough people avoided the state and looked to other social relationships, the state itself might be undermined".

Harold Barclay retired from the University of Alberta in 1989 and now lives with his wife, Jane, in Vernon, British Columbia. He gardens, writes and takes an active interest in the anarchist movement.

Longing For Arcadia: Memoirs of an Anarcho-Cynicalist Anthropologist by Harold Barclay, is available for £10 post free from Freedom Press (or \$24.16 US from Trafford Publishing, 6E-2333 Government Street, Victoria, BC, V8T 4P4, Canada).

Harold Barclay's Culture and Anarchism (£8.50) and The State (£5.50) are available from Freedom Press, and he has also contributed articles to The Raven no 7, no 8, no 18, no 19, no 27 and no 30, available from Freedom Press at £3 each, and all post free.

FREEDOM

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Quiz answers

1. The Sveriges Arbetare Centralorganisation, or SAC, the Swedish syndicalist union, formed in 1910 from a congress called by the Committee.
2. The 1905 Russian Revolution. A procession in St Petersburg led by Father Gapon to present a petition to the Tsar was fired on by troops. Unrest from this nearly overthrew the Tsar and threw up the first soviets.
3. Iain M Banks, writing about his "Culture" series of novels. He said that space is too big a place for control systems to survive for long.
4. The Charter of Amiens, drawn up by French syndicalist militants in 1906.

HISTORY OF THE MAKHNOVIST MOVEMENT
1918-1921
by PETER ARSHINOV

The Russian Revolution was the time when the old order was totally swept away. Nestor Makhno stood for freedom, and his struggle to destroy both the old and the new oppressors is as powerful today as it was then. It was in prison in 1911 that Peter Arshinov established a close personal and political friendship with Makhno, which continued after their release, and Arshinov's history of the Makhnovists is undoubtedly the most important source work available.

Now available at £9.90 (post free inland) from Freedom Press

REVIEW

Larry Gambone finds the life and journey of 'anarcho-cynicalist' Harold Barclay a fascinating one in *Longing for Arcadia*

This is a book I read in one sitting. It's one you just can't put down. *Longing for Arcadia* is not only an interesting and entertaining biography, but is also a primer on anarchism.

Anyone unfamiliar with anarchism reading this book would come away with a good grounding in libertarian thinking.

One of the most interesting parts for me, however, was how the author got to be an anarchist in the first place. His parents were New England Protestants of Nova Scotian ancestry and thus tended to be dour, distant and puritanical.

His mother was authoritarian, right-ist and somewhat concerned with appearances. Naturally, an intelligent child would rebel. But with the negative came the positive, for Barclay also learned to be self-reliant and to love books. At an early age, he became dissatisfied with the Protestant sects and from that point developed his political and social interests.

At age fourteen he wrote a manifesto for the 'Progressive Peoples Party' (a party of his own invention) which included workers' control and agrarian aspects, both issues of lifelong importance. The agrarian interest stemmed from summers working on his Grandfather's farm, where modern mechanical and chemical farming methods were largely ignored in favour of the traditional.

At sixteen Barclay joined the Young Peoples Socialist League of the Socialist Party and campaigned for presidential candidate Norman Thomas. He soon found more in common with the World Socialist Party and the Socialist Labour Party, for at this time the SPUSA espoused a rather tepid and statist social democracy.

But he saw these groups as ineffective, tiny sects and thus stayed on with the Socialists.

After graduating from high school,

Barclay decided to take up farming and went to an agricultural college. There he read Spinoza and Kant and associated with the Quakers, whom he admired for their lack of an authoritarian hierarchy.

In 1944 he came upon an anarchist publication called *Why?*, the reading of which made him critical of Marxist ideology and theory.

Marxism overlooked the fact that forms of exploitation and domination existed other than the economic, for "the problem of human societies was also one of power".

His interest in the Socialist Party waned. Granted conscientious objector status during the war, he served with the Civilian Public Service in a camp constructing forest roads. He started an agitation paper in the camp and was briefly imprisoned for going on strike.

After the war, he took up teaching in Wyoming, but got into trouble for his unwillingness to pander to Bible-pounding hyper-patriotism. Barclay returned to farming and in his spare time read Thoreau and Proudhon, both of whom became major influences on his thinking. At age 25 he enrolled in Boston University, studying anthropology, but received his MA and PhD from Cornell. Attracted to the decentralised nature of Kabyle (Berber) society, he opted for Middle Eastern Studies.

He taught for a number of years at the American University in Cairo and did important field research in a Sudanese village. After his sojourn in the Middle East, Barclay then taught in a mid-western college in the super-patriot belt, a somewhat unpleasant experience. From there he moved to the University of Oregon. By this time the Vietnam War was raging and he applied for a position in Canada at the University of Alberta at Edmonton.

The department chair hired him thinking he was a Marxist and, on discovering that he was not, Barclay got into trouble with the authorities once



Many resisters to the Vietnam War burnt their draft cards

again, but was nonetheless to remain at the University of Alberta until retirement, and even became Department chair (in spite of once proposing, tongue in cheek, that a course should be taught on the Ethnography of Antarctica).

While in Alberta, he helped organise a group to aid US Vietnam War

resisters, and later became Edmonton 'agent' for the Rhinoceros Party, an anarchistic party spoofing the quest for political power. Barclay wrote *People without Government and Culture and Anarchism*, two important works of anarchist anthropology.

Barclay's anthropologically-based conception of anarchism should be of

interest to all anarchists. He feels it is wrong to dismiss small scale societies as having no relevance to the modern industrial system. An anarchist society can only function if it is based upon resolution of conflict, as is often found in small scale societies, rather than with guilt and vengeance. Consensus must be

➔ page 6, column 5

FILM

Paradise Now
dir. Hany Abu-Assad

This outstanding film fictionalises preparations for a Tel Aviv suicide bombing by young Palestinians Said (Kais Nashet) and Khaled (Ali Suliman) from the West Bank – happy-go-lucky car mechanics metamorphosing into deadly serious terror protagonists. Viewer expectations and sympathies are juggled by deploying thriller, comedy, romance and rites of passage narrative conventions – within an overall arc of tragic realism – rendering intelligible the context, conditions and complications accompanying this act of extreme violence.

Writers Hany Abu-Assad and Bero Beyer effectively detail the humiliations and hopelessness of everyday life in the colonised territories under Israeli military

stranglehold – its victims' experience blending with their social and cultural history in trying to make sense of an unbearable existence, responding with a complex range of political and personal orientations.

An Israeli/European co-production, *Paradise Now's* perilous filming in Nablus included the kidnapping of one crew member and the subsequent flight of others, near-miss mortar and missile attacks, and baleful suspicion from both the IDF and local militias. Thereafter completed in the director's home-town of Nazareth, the traces of conflict in the final cut are far more restrained – subtle indications of the absurdities inherent in maintaining community routines in a ruined war zone being preferred to grandstand posturing.

Abu-Assad's previous features heightened tragicomedy to salute

ordinary Palestinians' courage and persistence. Here it highlights ambivalence in attitudes and preoccupations – for example puncturing the fundamentalist austerity of the martyr video ritual with references to water filters (West Bank water being, in effect, Israeli sewage), malfunctioning cameras and the noisy snacking of bored onlookers.

Clarifying the Muddle East
Nevertheless, though the fateful mission is finally accomplished despite all the poignant doubts expressed, an inspired move was having Said's tentative love interest Suha (Lubna Azabal) – the daughter of a militant hero returning from exile – articulate the hopes for peace, negotiation and co-existence held by many in the 'West' (including the film-makers).

But after so many broken promises of justice and democracy from privileged outsiders, elements of Islamic fervour do furnish a faltering rationale for atrocity in the brutal isolation of the present; whereas Muslim customs simultaneously facilitate a semblance of dignity amid daily degradation. Even so, more secular personal and collective pursuits of agency and meaning – not to mention various vested interests for control of what little remains – clearly hold sway. After all, as one of the planners shrugs, "If we had airplanes, we wouldn't need martyrs".

Abu-Assad knows that "the system of capitalism ... [offers] no solution for the differences between rich and poor", instead inventing enemies "in order to keep authority, to keep power, and hope that some miracle will happen". In tackling its highly-charged themes so

effectively, *Paradise Now* itself represents something of a minor miracle – especially compared with other recent efforts at Middle-East illumination (e.g. Syriana's patronising paraplotics or Spielberg's odious *Munich*). If his next film – about a Palestinian taxi-driver in LA – can successfully bring the same sensibility to bear on contemporary America, it should be well-worth looking out for.

Tom Jennings

www.tomjennings.pwp.blueyonder.co.uk

1. Quoted in: B. Ruby Rich, 'Bomb Culture', *Sight & Sound*, April 2006, pages 28-30.

2. As'ad Abu-Khalil's comprehensive demolition of the latter can be found at <http://angryarab.blogspot.com/2005/12/spielberg-on-munich-humanization-of.html>

A Sideways Look

The 321 bus in South East London is totemic for these times. It runs from Tesco to Sainsburys.

I should be more explicit, it runs from Tesco at Footscray to Sainsburys at New Cross. I mean, how confusing would it be if it ran from Tesco in Lewisham to Sainsburys in Lewisham.

We tend to think of a lot of the geographical information that surrounds us as being fairly unchanging, at least compared to other events in our lives. But a quick look at the changes I know show the difference. Twenty years ago, the bus that's now the 321 ran from Sidcup Bus Garage to Moorgate. The bus garage is now a business park, so the bus stops at Tesco instead. And it couldn't possibly get from Footscray to Moorgate in modern traffic, so it is split into two slightly overlapping routes - something that has happened to a lot of long bus routes.

It used to stop at Lewisham Cambridge Arms and the Yorkshire Grey in Eltham. Pubs are another feature of our landscape that have been transformed. The Cambridge is long gone, for a roundabout scheme that is itself to be scrapped in the next few years. The Yorkshire Grey is now a McDonalds, though locals still know the outside roundabout as the Yorkshire Grey. Our journeys are faster and longer and aren't marked by coaching inns, which might betray some individuality, but the faceless identikit motorway services or mainline railway terminals, each with the same multi-nationals on their uninviting food court. We are stuck in a feedback loop of needing to travel further to find an unpackaged experience, all the while contributing to the spread of the banal and packaged. I pity the unwary traveller in the modern British cityscape, lost as to where they find themselves, with only the same few supermarket hoardings to guide them.

Nor is it just pubs that fall victim to development and cease to be landmarks. Sometimes names are changed for other reasons. I can still remember getting the East London Line through Surrey Docks station. It was re-branded by the London Docklands Development Corporation as Surrey Quays. Many of the older residents have gone and soon the new name will stick - aspirational and associated with leisure, rather than the rough, working class word association that comes with docks.

Sometimes we forget on how many levels capital shapes our thoughts. It is easy to see the attractions of going to live in the mountains where some of the physical presence around us is, in our time scale at least, permanent. These musings do, of course, beg the question of what we can do about it. There is now a groundswell of local campaigns against the big supermarkets, probably the worse culprits in impoverishing the urban landscape. Some would argue that there is nothing we can do about the everyday geography of our lives, but I would counter that merely by

contesting it, we are playing our own role in shaping it.

Svartfrosk

Blast from the Past

Taken from Freedom of 28th June 1969, entitled 'On the Barricades':

We are at 23 Audrey Road, Ilford. The room is crowded, people are happy.

At the moment, Sikh comrades are coming in. They are trying to have a meeting. They are discussing what can be done.

In another house nearby, comrades are also squatting in a house which the Council tried to destroy. But they have put the floorboards back and they are holding the top floor against all comers.

People here are elated. They have defended their home today against the hired thugs of Redbridge Council.

This is the home that Mr and Mrs Fleming try to live in with their children. Mr Fleming is an epileptic.

His wife collapsed when Quatermain and his thugs burst into their home.

A doctor was called, but he refused to treat her saying: "She is not my patient." But squatters came from everywhere.

Quatermain is not only a thug, but he is also a fool. After he occupied the house temporarily, he left the front door open. In came the squatters and out the thugs went, humiliated and defeated.

The karate expert Quatermain (what is his real name?) got a black eye. He was shown up for what he is: a cheap confidence trickster who can just about beat up women and kids (without catapults). He hit Olive Mercer in the belly with an iron bar. She lost the baby in her, but here he lost out.

The consensus of the meeting here was expressed by the tall bruiser next to me: "He is a pig, ignorant man."

There are now about a hundred people in this diminutive room-cum-kitchen.

Here in this room is the beginning of a movement.

'What to do next?' How to make sure that thugs like Quatermain think twice before they try to enter other people's homes.

People here know that the real enemy is not Mr Q. It is Redbridge Council, their Financial Committee, their General Purpose Committee, their Development Committee. Behind them there are the whole might of the State.

Curiously, the police in the district are wavering. Their power is threatened, they don't want private armies. If any eviction is done, they want to do it. They are dead angry with the local Council. The truth to be told, someone tripped Mr Q up, one look at the feet could tell you who he was.

People here now know that we are capable of organisation, there are people here at a moments notice, who don't need leaders, who are prepared to act.

LIBCOM Public safety is our top priority.

The threat of terrorism forced us to arrest an old Labour Partyite who heckled the PM,

Put 9 bullets into the head of an inoffensive Brazilian mechanic,

Shoot a chap for having a weird beard.

Keep anyone we don't like the look of locked up indefinitely.

And invade a few countries.



Can't even spell committee.



Imagine if...

Just to make a point to his predecessor at the home office, John Reid had cleared out all the knives from his house to prevent them falling into the wrong hands as part of the government's UK-wide amnesty.

At 12am, as he attempted to cut up a tomato for his midnight snack with a rolling pin, he felt that binning every single one might have been a mistake.

Nevertheless, it had been a massive PR success, with weaponry of every sort being turned in - 17,715 in the first week alone - around one knife per hundred families. Policemen grimly holding up ceremonial star-trek daggers had appeared in every paper in the country.

"That'll sort out some of those devious criminals knifing people all the time" he thought.

Giving the tomato up as a bad job, he decided to stroll down to the supermarket without his escort - Reid being the tough old rogue that he was - for a sandwich.

Within seconds of leaving his garden he was jumped by two men wielding knives. Through a choke-hold he asked, amazed, "Where did you get them? Don't you know there's a knife amnesty?" They glanced at each other wearily.

"You're the third person to ask tonight. You do know Tesco do a really good butcher knife for about seven quid yeah?"

As one of them stabbed him through the heart and rifled through to find his wallet, the other remarked in a sharp sort of way, "Bastards, eh? Who'd have thought we'd keep our weapons?"



Listings

Until 1st July Art Not Oil, various venues, for more details email info@artnotoil.org.uk or call 07708 794665 or visit artnotoil.org.uk nationalpetroleumgallery.org.uk or londonrisingtide.org.uk

1st July East Anglia Social Forum in Norwich from 9.30am until 5pm, for details and location see www.easf.org.uk

4th July Independence from America Party outside US space communication base Feltwell (near USAF Lakenheath) at 6pm, contact Mell on 01986 892723, or see lakenheathaction.org

7th to 15th July Indymedia film festival to inspire resistance to the G8 agenda, see indymedia.org.uk/en/regions/london

15th to 18th July G8 2006 to be held in St Petersburg, Russia, to find out more check out http://g8-2006.plentyfact.net or http://spb8.hardcore.lt/

15th to 29th July Earth Activist Training in Gloucestershire, for details email eat2006@riseup.net

21st July International protest camp in Iceland where a series of gigantic dams are already under construction in the eastern highlands and the natural habitat of many rare and endangered plants and animals will be destroyed, see savingiceland.org

26th to 30th July DIY: Against the State, an activist and anarchist convention in Freiburg, Germany, with workshops, bands and more, plus a big Reclaim The Streets party on the Saturday, contact d.i.y.against@gmx.de

28th July Radical history walk of Greenwich Gate of Greenwich Park at 3pm, for details call 020 8850 4187 or email rliddle@freeuk.com

29th July to 12th August Trident Ploughshares international disarmament camp for 15 days of direct action at Faslane and Coulport naval bases in Scotland, for further details see

tridentploughshares.org/article983
26th August to 4th September Camp for Climate Action in north of England, see www.climatecamp.org.uk

19th to 21st September IMF/World Bank Monetary meeting in Singapore where global loan sharks backed by western governments and big business meet to rake in the money from the poor. see targetwto.revolt.org/node/307

30th September Tenth European Hazards Conference in Jurmula, Latvia, over this weekend, for details see hazardscampaign.org.uk/docs/riga.htm

8th October Lakenheath Airbase demo at main gate, for details call 01508 550446 or see lakenheathaction.org

21st October The 25th Anarchist Bookfair, from 10am to 7pm at the Voluntary Sector Resource Centre, 356 Holloway Road, London N7, see anarchistbookfair.org.

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The quiz

1. Which organisation was formed from the activities of the "Lund Committee"?
2. Which major revolutionary upheaval was sparked by a procession of workers carrying religious icons?
3. Which science fiction author contends that a space-faring civilisation would be anarchist?
4. Which landmark workers charter has its centenary this year?

Answers on page 6

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