

FREEDOM

80P ANARCHIST NEWS AND VIEWS

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13 JANUARY 2007

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HEAVY INDUSTRY IN ICELAND

On 1st January, activists carried out actions in London, blockading the company offices and doing banner drops from the Tate Modern and St Paul's Cathedral, as well as leafleting people on the Millennium Bridge. The destruction of Iceland's nature is happening now; for the sole purpose of building dams to provide energy for aluminium smelters, the aluminium from which will be used to make aeroplanes, weapons and unnecessary consumer goods. The largest remaining pristine wilderness in western Europe – including wild rivers, waterfalls, mountains and mossy highlands thick with flowers – is under threat in order that the US and Iceland and related companies can profit from heavy industry. The hydroelectricity from the dams is contracted for sale for 50 years to the company Alcoa, which is closing two smelters in the US and relocating to Iceland to save money.

Nature and People

There has not been a thorough environmental impact assessment or a full geological survey, yet the unique features of Icelandic nature will disappear if action is not taken. There are risks to individual species and the balance of ecosystems, some of which are actually in an officially protected area, but which will be submerged under the interests of profit. Rocky gorges and sediment ledges, which are a record of 10,000 years of geological

and climatic change, are under threat. These are unique geological features of immense interest to scientists studying climate chaos. There are many risks posed for humans too, in terms of their livelihoods being destroyed through flooding and from other side-effects of the dams, such as dust storms and dangers arising from the effects of the flooding on a substructure weakened by geothermal fissures or volcanic cracks. Aluminium smelters emit enormous quantities of greenhouse gases. In 2001, Iceland negotiated the biggest increase in permitted emissions under the Kyoto protocol in the world, due to its clean reputation. Then Alcoa moved in to exploit this situation: the ministry of environment gave Alcoa a licence to emit 12kg of sulphur dioxide per tonne of aluminium produced, which is 12 times the level the World Bank expects from modern smelters.

Political Context

The Icelandic government's public rationale for the project is that the dams and smelters will revitalise the local economy by creating jobs and reversing the current depopulation trend in the east. However, there is little unemployment and few Icelandic youngsters would be tempted by the harsh conditions of the highland construction site. Indeed, young Icelandic workers have died in the construction of the first dam and the two existing smelters have been



obliged to import cheap foreign labour.

Landsvirkjun, the national power company, has spent millions of krona on PR. However, even they admit the project will not be sustainable. Thorsteinn Siglaugsson, a risk

specialist, has suggested the project will never make a profit, and the Icelandic taxpayer may well end up subsidising Alcoa. The media in Iceland is controlled both directly and indirectly by the state. The BBC World Service lost its slot on Icelandic

airwaves just as minke whale-hunting was resumed after a 14-year ban. Gudbergur Bergsson, a write and social commentator, noted Iceland is unique in being 80% middle class, which is the easiest class to control,

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TRIDENT ALTERNATIVE

EXCLUSIVE

Billions of pounds wasted on the development of a new set of nuke subs could be spent on much needed, other things. But imagination is needed to create alternative employment for the 3,000-plus work force at the Barrow-in-Furness shipyard where these machines are built. Almost totally dependent on MoD contracts, the yard is rather like an obsolete nationalised industry, only owned by BAE Systems shareholders. Possible alternatives include work like the two fully equipped hospital ships 'Amazon Hope' and 'Amazon Hope 2'

that were refitted in recent years at Barrow. They help to make friends with people instead of frightening them with nuclear destruction. There are other kinds of subs. apart from nukes: they can be used for filming, research, tourism, the leisure industry, and to harvest manganese on the sea bed. Some of these are a niche market, but cars, phones and computers were once novelties. Drilling platforms for oil and gas are other alternatives, as are off shore technologies to make power from wind, waves and tidal energy. Ironically, the wind turbines near Barrow, in Morecambe Bay were made at the Belfast shipyard (talk about wasted miles!). All these products could be sold internationally. Barrow has time to recruit and train a research, development and sales team. Even BAE Systems cannot go around trying to sell nuclear submarines! All this only offers a reformist remedy, but according to Barrow borough councillor and chair of the pro-nuke 'Keep Our Future Afloat' campaign,

Terry Waiting the only worry is about jobs; not economic or moral concerns. This stance forgets what happened in the mid-80s at the planning of the first set of Tridents. Instead of the secure jobs promised, after a few years the work force was cut from 17,000 to 3,500. A source which cannot be named reports that back then, the subs were being built even before the politicians gave the go-ahead. The same source adds that today (when Blair's decision-making is far ahead of Parliamentary debate on this issue) the second generation of Tridents is being built at Barrow 'on the quiet'. To hide the operation, different sections are being built at various sites around the huge shipyard, assemblage taking place with the main road sealed-off for the sake of what might be called 'industrial privacy'. It would be cheaper for the state to send these workers on paid holiday for life, rather than pursue this national status symbol that successive governments

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DALE FARM

Hopes have been raised that the largest traveller site in the UK, will gain a stay of eviction in the New Year.

Two appeals in the area at nearby sites have led to one yard on Cranfield Road given a five-year allowance for residential use, and three other sites, on Gypsy Hill, have won four years each.

The victories have followed news that due to the restructuring of central government begun in May, which split off a 'Communities and Local Government' ministry from the Office of The Deputy Prime Minister, a planned judicial review on Dale Farm's future has been put off until spring next year.

Traveller campaigner Grattan Puxon received a letter from Basildon council saying that a new plan is being drawn up regarding planning over traveller sites, which could represent a major U-turn on the Tory council's controversial policy decision to put aside £3million for a legal and

direct action campaign to enforce evictions.

He said: "I think it's likely they will give us more time and I'm very happy with that. If we get a four year extension it will make ten years at the place and the administration may have changed, they may give permission to stay.

"The council will put out a new development plan and lay out which will agree time scales for finding extra sites. Involved parties will get 21 days and two weeks after that the results of the appeals will be mad known. It hopes to bring the whole process to a close within seven weeks."

Some sites are still not covered by the effective moratorium on evictions however, with protection orders at ten central plots at Dale Farm and another at Merryfield due to run out at Christmas.

The site has been called the 'last stand' for many Irish Travellers.

Rob Ray

ISSN 0016-0504



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Vol 68
No 01

NHS Cuts

Trade unions have reacted angrily to a leaked document showing the government's possible future strategy for the NHS workforce. The report recommends cutting 40,000 jobs next year, although the government denies this. Last year, however, it denied planning to cut 20,000 jobs, jobs which were gone by the end of the year. The document, outlining the NHS pay and workforce strategy for 2008-2011, shows that by 2010-11, the NHS will experience a shortage of 1,200 GPs, 14,000 nurses and 1,100 junior and staff-grade doctors. There will also be 3,200 extra consultants that the NHS cannot afford to pay, as well as an excess of 16,200 allied health professionals (AHPs), health scientists and technicians.

The draft, seen by the *Health Service Journal*, sets out controversial ways of bringing down the national pay bill for NHS staff. It says that pay for nurses could be dictated by local market rates, and that unemployment could be used to "create downward pressure on wages".

Oxford Primate Research

In 2002, Oxford University released info about a new lab to be built in 2004, replacing a lab that never got planning permission thanks to the efforts of SPEAK and animal rights activists. The new laboratory has faced numerous problems at the construction site, including weekly demonstrations, extra security measure, being over-budget and not meeting schedule targets. Due to this thousands of animals have already been saved from lab experiments. To get more involved see [speakcampaigns.org](#)

Wildcat strikes over Legal Aid reforms

Criminal defence solicitors across the country staged wildcat strikes to protest against legal aid reforms, as momentum gathered for more radical action on a national scale despite a warning from the Law Society that strikes could breach competition law.

Lawyers also accused the government of being "subversive" after a letter came to light from the Department for Constitutional Affairs (DCA) offering "intelligence about the defence community" to local criminal justice boards in relation to the strikes.

Eleven areas took part in strike action, including Cardiff, Portsmouth, Bury, Southampton and Peterborough. It is understood that only duty solicitors acted in the police station and magistrates' court, with other solicitors refusing to provide back-up. The strikes were in protest at the means-testing system for criminal defence work and Lord Carter's reforms.

There is strong support for national strike action in January, which would also involve duty solicitors refusing to act.

London law firms will be the hardest hit by impending reforms to civil and criminal legal aid, while other urban areas will also face a tough future, government research has revealed. About 16,000 union members are expected to take part in the industrial action as a response to the cuts, which comes a year after the first national strike by magistrates court staff in their 800-year history. The work-to-rule will put the magistrates courts under new pressure after a series of wildcat strikes around the country by criminal defence solicitors protesting over legal aid reforms, including a new, complicated means test for defendants.

Around the world



Bangladesh: Police in the Bangladeshi capital have fired rubber bullets at stone-throwing protesters taking part in a nationwide blockade to force electoral reform.

Several people were injured in clashes in Dhaka, local media reported.

The three-day blockade of roads, ports and railways is being organised by an alliance of political parties who want elections set for this month postponed.

The Awami League and its allies say they will boycott the 22nd January poll, alleging it will not be free and fair.

Bangladeshi President Iajuddin Ahmed says the elections will go ahead as planned.

Belgium: Belgians were thrown into a panic when a spoof television news report said their country had been 'abolished'.

Government offices were flooded with calls after the report that the Dutch-speaking Flanders region had declared independence and Belgium no longer existed as a nation.

The French-language RTBF interrupted programming to show footage of cheering crowds waving the Flemish flag and traffic jams at the new border.

Even foreign diplomats were taken in by the hoax which the station said was designed to show tensions between the French and Dutch-speaking communities.

Belgium's broadcasting minister eventually ordered the station to flash up the words "this is fiction" over the broadcast, reports the *Daily Record*.

A spokesman for Belgian prime minister Guy Verhofstadt said: "It was in very bad taste. It scared many people."

RTBF television's head of news Yves Thiran said: "Our intention was to show viewers the real possibility of Belgium no longer being a country in a few months."

Chad: New attacks by Sudan's Janjawid fighters are driving thousands of people from their homes in eastern Chad, the United Nations has said.

More than 20,000 people have fled in the past fortnight, the UNHCR said on Friday.

Most fled their homes as fighters from the Sudan-based Janjawid militias stepped up their attacks, the UN agency said.

The fresh violence has brought the number of displaced Chadians to more than 100,000.

"The latest wave of violence over the past two weeks has resulted in the displacement of an estimated 20,000 Chadians," UNHCR said in a statement.

"More than 10,000 of them fled their homes following cross-border attacks by alleged Janjawid militia in the region of Borota."

"Another 10,000 from more than 20 villages have fled inter-communal

hostilities and are now gathered in the village of Gassire, 8km north of the town of Goz Beida."

The UN said it was unable either to stop the violence or to offer adequate aid and shelter to Chadians driven from their homes.

"Resources are simply insufficient to meet the overwhelming needs," Serge Male, UNHCR's Chad representative, said in the statement.

France: Hundreds of protesters in France have rung in the New Year by holding a light-hearted march against it.

Parodying the French readiness to say 'non', the demonstrators in the western city of Nantes waved banners reading: 'No to 2007' and 'Now is better!'

The marchers called on governments and the UN to stop time's 'mad race' and declare a moratorium on the future.

The protest was held in the rain and organisers joked that even the weather was against the New Year.

The tension mounted as the minutes ticked away towards midnight – but the arrival of 2007 did nothing to dampen their enthusiasm.

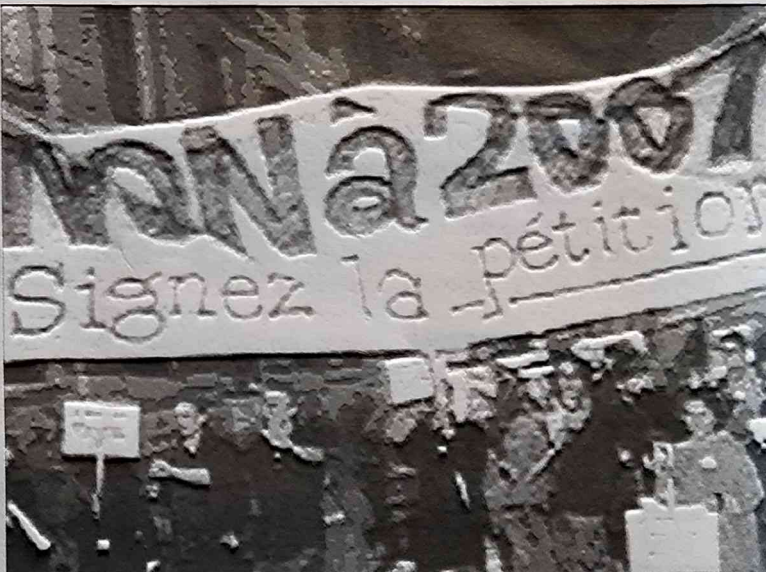
The protesters began to chant: 'No to 2008!'

They vowed to stage a similar protest on 31 December 2007 on the Champs-Elysees avenue in Paris.

See you there...

United States: News coverage of the recent illegal execution of Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein has been peculiarly unbalanced! Not a mention of who 'placed' him in his former position. Not a pixel of the otherwise widely-circulated photograph of him shaking hands with former 'Defense' Secretary, Rumsfeld. Not a whiff of the fact that Clinton (directing – also illegal – UN sanctions) was responsible for more Iraqi deaths than Saddam was. Plenty, though, on how wonderful and what a peacemaker was Gerald Ford, who also died last month. Ford promoted the deaths of one third of East Timorians in a proxy war with US-backed Indonesia. "A great, healing president."

Other recent news stories at the end of 2006 unlikely to be covered fully – or at all – include documents released by the American Civil Liberties Union detailing how the Pentagon has been spying on church meetings where opposition to military recruitment and the war in Iraq is voiced. For example the Department of 'Defense' (DoD) advised California recruiting stations that anti-recruitment protests were about to take place. The same database report also carried information on peace meetings and non-violence training sessions planned for churches around New York. Veterans for Peace was even described "...as a possible threat to Army and DoD personnel".



ESF hunger strikers

On 6th May 2006, riots erupted during the European Social Forum march in Athens. For a period of three hours and following a 2km route, around two and a half thousand anarchists in smaller groups of four to five hundred attacked banks, large department stores, police cars, government buildings, the police headquarters, riot police, riot police buses as well as 'Z-team' policemen (motorcycle team). They also attacked the US embassy, the Hilton hotel, the Italian embassy, and the riot police guarding the house of parliament.

Twenty people were arrested. Seventeen of them now await trial on multiple felony charges. Three of them have been in detention since

their arrest in May 2006.

One of those three detained since May '06 is Tarasios Zadorozni, an anarchist immigrant from the Ukraine. He began a hunger strike on 29th November to protest against his imprisonment and was subsequently moved to the prison's hospital on 10th December with health problems.

The second prisoner of the three, Gerasimos Kyriakopoulos, began a hunger strike to protest against his imprisonment on 15th December. He already had existing kidney problems and was moved to the prison's hospital on 18th December.

For the latest information on these hunger strikers, see <http://www.wombles.org.uk/article200701583.php>

Trident

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have lacked the courage and foresight to ban. Unfortunately such thinking needs imagination, and that may lead to people controlling their own lives in the sort of scenario many anarchists work towards.

Martin S. Gilbert

Iceland

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because they have the most to lose. Iceland has no military and the people seem quite passive. There has been some opposition, such as a demonstration in Reykjavik on 26th September 2006 comprising 15,000 people, yet two days later the floods started.

International Saving Iceland Gathering, Brighton, UK, 2nd to 4th February 2007, at

The Cowley Club social centre – discussions about this summers protest camp and local solidarity actions. Protest camp in Iceland from 6th July 2007, see www.savingiceland.org for regular updates.

Crossword answers

Across: 7 Automate, 8 Obey, 9 Loki, 10 Unyoking, 11 Arsenic, 14 Greed, 15 Nor, 17 H-bomb, 19 Durruti, 23 Concerto, 24 When, 26 Knee, 27 Super-ego.
Down: 1 Hugo, 2 Louise Michel, 3 Bakunin, 4 Kenya, 6 Reinvent, 9 Lea, 12 Rub-downs, 13 Cod, 16 Rudolph Rocker, 20 Reward, 21 Ian, 22 Ernst, 25 Eggs.
And congratulations to the winner of our prize crossword, the first name out of the hat was Richard Alexander, who will be receiving his prize shortly.

News

NHS boom and bust

Privatisation is continuing to bleed the NHS finances dry, finds
Richard Griffin

While hospitals are forced to continue to sack health workers in order to balance the books, the NHS is facing a shortage of key staff, including nurses, according to a leaked Department of Health (DoH) policy paper.

Panic cuts in the NHS's £4 billion annual training budget this year will the DoH itself predicts lead to a shortage of 1,200 GPs, 14,000 nurses and 1,100 medical consultants. This year up to 37,000 jobs will be lost in the health service. Shortages of nurses, doctors, radiographers, porters and others will hit patient care and lead to longer wait lists for treatments. NHS trusts are already reported to be cancelling operations as they run out of money.

As previously reported in *Freedom*, the root cause of the health services' current financial problems is privatisation. The influential health think tank Reform has, for example, reported that there is a "clear link" between hospital deficits and PFI projects. Eight of the twelve hospitals where new PFI projects were approved last year are in deficit. Despite the fact that private construction projects are bleeding the NHS dry New Labour plan to spend a staggering £13.5 billion on PFI.

Despite deficits the DoH are spending £330 million on private sector management consultants – more than enough to re-employ the health workers currently being sacked by hospitals.

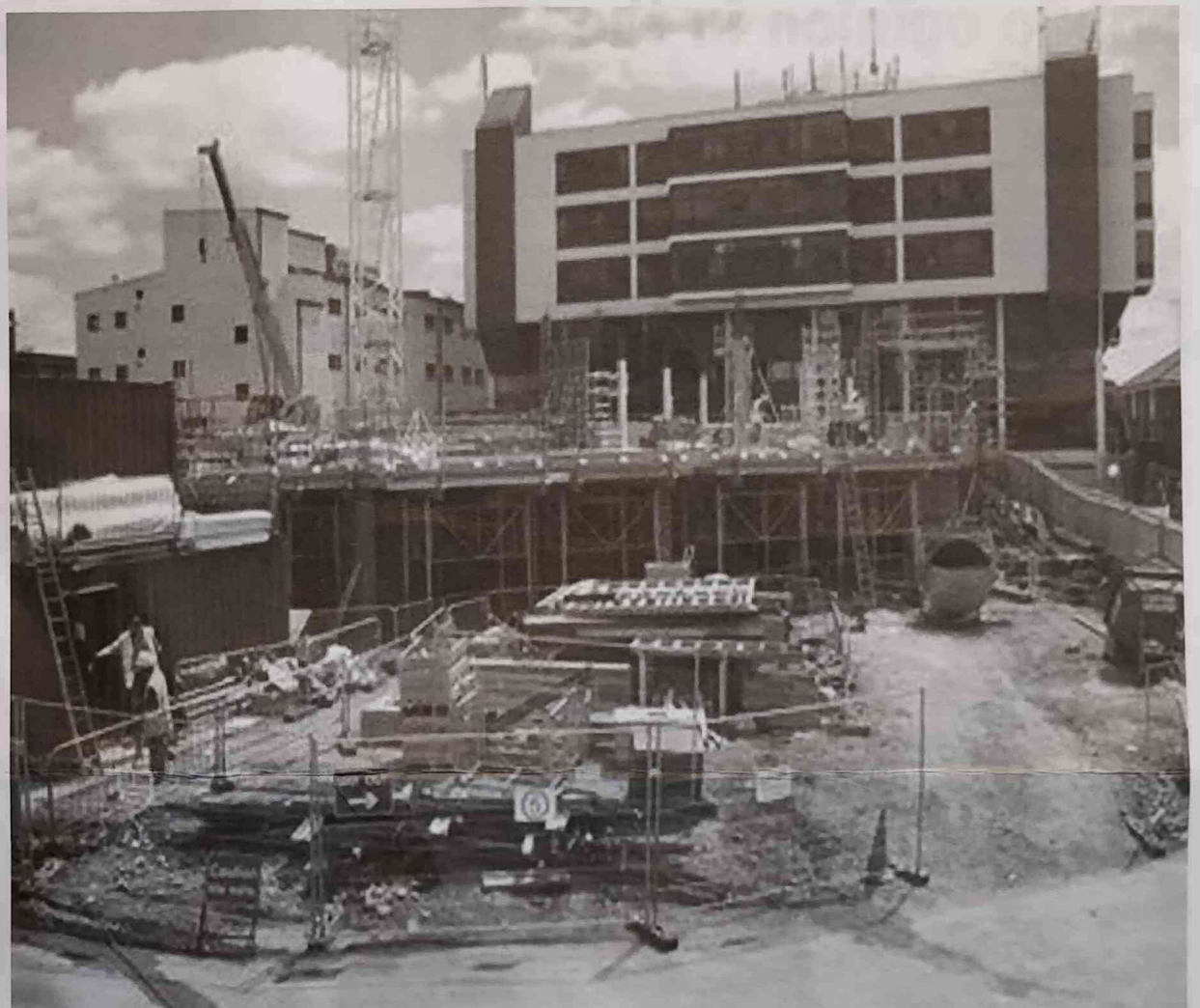
NHS spending on non-NHS provided services grew by 227% last year to £4

billion according to Reform and just before Christmas the first hospital was handed over to the private sector. From July the 60-bed Lymington New Forest Trust will be run by the private Partnership Health Group. Unison fear that this will be the first of many hospitals to be privatised.

Although the NHS's problems have been caused by government policy, particularly marketisation, it is the workers who are taking the brunt of the consequences and not just through job losses. The DoH is attempting to peg this year's pay increase to just 2% – below the rate of inflation and effectively a pay cut. The government also wants to dismantle national pay bargaining and introduce regional pay. This will mean that workers doing the same job will be paid different rates. Unison has said that they will "strongly resist" attempts to end national pay.

An IWW member and anarchist who works in the NHS told *Freedom* "what is going on is crazy. Only two years ago the government negotiated a new pay system, now they are trying to dismantle it. They acknowledge there will be shortages of staff but they are trying to reduce pay which will drive more workers out of the NHS. Morale is at rock bottom."

Despite the gravity of the situation the response of the unions is still pathetic. Yet another lobby of Parliament is planned on 23rd January – despite the previous one in November having absolutely no impact on government policy. At long



A building project at Kingston Hospital

last a national demonstration is being considered for 3rd March. In the meantime NHS jobs are lost, graduate health workers trained at the tax

payers expense cannot find work and operations cancelled. The people who suffer the most are the poor. Although not widely reported the government

has acknowledged that the health gap between rich and poor is growing.

Thanks to New Labour the NHS is in a mess and things are likely to get

Richard Boston 1938-2006

Richard Boston died on 22nd December 2006, a week before his sixty-eighth birthday. In 1996 he brought seventy new subscribers to *Freedom*, an extra ten per cent, with an article in *The Guardian Weekend*, 'Anarchy among the Anarchists'.

Richard had a tall, gangly frame, resembling that of the French comic Jaques Tati. In 1966 he was visiting Paris and went to see Jaques Tati's film studio. Tati hired him as a double, and in Tati's film *Playtime*, some shots of Tati's back are in fact of Richard Boston's back.

His appetite was tremendous. After lunch with some *Peace News* people in a café, he said "That was very nice, lets have it again", and ordered a second lunch the same as the first. The café proprietor charged him for only one meal, saying he would be ashamed to charge a customer twice, who had only eaten once.

In the 1970s he had a regular *Guardian* column, 'Boston on Beer', which was important to the 'Real Ale' movement, and later in the 1970s he published and edited *Vole*, a magazine of what is now called the green movement.

A version of 'Anarchy among the Anarchists' is included in *Starkness At Noon*, a compilation of Richard's newspaper and magazine articles. Its title is changed to 'Mere Anarchy' and it is rearranged and enlarged to make a witty, erudite advocacy of anarchism. For a newspaper column (especially one which mentioned the subscription rates for *Freedom* and *The Raven*), Richard needed 'a peg to hang it on', so 'Anarchy among the Anarchists' was about conflict with the anarchist movement.

There have always been different approaches to anarchism, and anarchist publications expressing different opinions. Some such publications over the past 110 years have denounced *Freedom Press*, and FP has never (well, hardly ever) replied in print, because public rehearsal of parochial squabbles makes us look silly.

Albert Meltzer, a witty, lucid writer and "a large fund of good stories which were often true" (Nicolas Walter) worked with Vernon Richards and *Freedom Press* from the 1930s to the 1950s. But in 1968 he turned

hostile, and for the next 28 years applied his inventive talent and wit to attacks on Richards and *Freedom Press*. When Meltzer died in 1996, some newspaper obituaries took his slanders to be true, and presented his hostility to *Freedom Press* as anarchist opposition to "academia-oriented liberals and pacifists". Richards, furious, forsook his resolution not to reply to slanders in print and published an obituary in *Freedom* headed 'Instead of an Obituary'. This provided the peg on which Richard Boston hung 'Anarchy among the Anarchists'.

If you can find a copy of *Starkness at Noon*, read 'Mere Anarchy'. It is a rearrangement of 'Anarchy among the Anarchists', with a different aim, but the basic story is still there, and it is hilarious.

Donald Room

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Protect our woodland

Skiprat reports from Titnore Woods

A few months ago, at the end of the summer I spent some time at Titnore Lane Woods, where a dedicated group of environmental activists have set up camp to oppose the development of 875 luxury houses, a new Tesco, and a car park. This will involve the cutting down of a large number of ancient trees.

Titnore Lane Treetop Camp has been in operation for seven months now, effectively protesting against the development of roads and housing in the unique and ancient woodland area of Worthing. The camp uses an extensive network of treehouses, walkways and tunnels. It is just one of the methods of resistance being used by Protect Our Woodland (POW), set up in 2002 by local residents and environmental activists concerned about the destruction of this natural habitat and its wildlife which would be lost if construction went ahead.

On 27th July the camp lost the court case and lodged an appeal. This was lost on 29th August. Since then

they have been expecting the bailiffs to arrive at any time, but five months later they are still there.

The Woodland Trust, amongst others, has joined the protest to appeal for the wood to be permanently reprieved from any construction work or destruction in any way. This natural habitat has existed for many thousands of years and is known as England's rainforest. It's a little ironic that people tell Brazil to stop destroying their forests when we are about to permanently lose our own natural heritage, of which we have just 2% left in Britain.

The camp is constantly inhabited by many people, with more coming to join the cause every day. They are very friendly and organised, however your help is needed for the camp to be even more successful. This can be achieved by donations of food, money, blankets and other items, as well as support in the form of visitors, spending time at the camp and getting involved in the work needed, or just generally spreading the word.

For more information or to get involved, please see www.protectourwoodland.co.uk.

Viewing noxious rubbish

Louis Further takes a look at the way television manipulates public opinion in the US

It's sometimes hard to explain how otherwise sensitive and warm people like most Americans can hold such odd, illogical and gratuitously aggressive views. That is until you watch the propaganda they're fed hour in hour out, 365 days a year.

North American television and radio outlets abuse their power (and the implicit trust they enjoy that they are 'serving' their audiences) by passing off as news biased features from corporate and government lobbyists. This is the practice of VNRs, Video News Releases. Their misuse like this is also illegal, actually. The Federal Communications Act requires broadcasters inform their audience "that such matter is sponsored, paid for or furnished, either in whole or in part, and by whom or on whose behalf such consideration was supplied." It emerged towards the end of last year that these deceptions are on the increase and the regulatory bodies, instead of preventing them, are at best ignoring them; at worst encouraging them.

And they're doing so at the same time as centralisation and concentration of media is making locally-originated news harder still to come by: affiliates and local outlets of the big network television stations (CBS, NBC and ABC) are scrapping all local coverage in six major US cities.

Forty six stations in 22 states were recently cited by two watchdog groups,

the 'Center for Media and Democracy' and 'Free Press', for improperly including VNRs in their output. In several cases stations are openly acknowledging their 'mistakes' and then continuing to make them. Hence these latest reports and the increased need for vigilance and opposition by 'consumers' of news.

VNRs are prepackaged items which appear to contain or constitute properly-reported information. But their subject matter is generally originated, written and produced either by a PR company or a government body with a vested interest in the product, service, policy or political stance being described and being implicitly pushed. The VNR is not identified as such when aired and the 'reporter' fails to acknowledge their source(s); they give the impression that genuine research lies behind what is being presented. The six month investigation which led to the publication late in 2006 of these reports includes a story broadcast by a television station in Missouri questioning global warming but created by oil industry lobbyists. Similarly, a consumer news story about rental cars which aired on San Francisco's KGO-TV back in June 2006 included material from a VNR produced by an insurance company. CBS 5-TV broadcast a story about the first inhalable insulin treatment

approved by the US Food and Drug Administration. Half the story was pulled from a VNR created for the drug's maker, Pfizer. And so on.

Even the industry's Radio-Television News Directors Association guidelines on the use of VNRs state: 'news managers and producers should clearly disclose the origin of information and label all material provided by corporate or other non-editorial sources.' At the same time the Association has lobbied the Federal Communications Commission (FCC), the body charged by the government to oversee broadcasting, to halt what little investigation the latter has carried out into the use of VNRs.

The FCC does include some commissioners who are opposed to both centralisation and unethical broadcasting like this. But they are the minority: "No wonder the public is having a hard time distinguishing between news and propaganda." Federal Communications commissioner

Jonathan Adelstein said in response to the findings. He was supported by commissioner Michael Copps: "Americans have a legal right to know that what appears to be independent news reports are actually bought and paid for by a private corporation."

Add to this the filth, pre-digested snippets of gossip dressed as news and barrage of anti-left propaganda pushed



daily by most stations across the country, the endless derivative drivel from the entertainment networks, right wing talk-radio and the religious radio

movement and it's little wonder that the country is as far out of touch as it is with reality and the rest of the world. Happy New Year!

Regime change in Somalia

Protests against the occupying Ethiopian army have flared in the Somali capital Mogadishu. Three people, including a young boy were killed and 17 others injured when Ethiopian troops fired on demonstrators on Saturday.

In recent weeks 15,000 Ethiopian troops, accompanied by tanks and fighter jets, supported by US warships have launched an attack on the country and overthrown the popularly supported Union of Islamic Courts (IUC), which, after declaring victory over the American supported Alliance for the Restoration of Peace and Counter-Terrorism (ARPCT) in June

had brought peace and stability to the south for the first time since 1992.

Evidence has emerged of American and British involvement to support warlords including CIA funding support for the ARPCT and the use of private security firms in order to overthrow the IUC. These actions are in violation of the UN arms embargo to the country. The ARPCT failure to defeat the IUC, and the peaceful spread of the IUC through negotiation and popular support, was the trigger for increased Ethiopian involvement.

The area has a history of being used to fight proxy wars for superpowers (though this is not to discount the agency and motivations of regional players). Christian Ethiopia is concerned about its sizeable Somali minority and Muslim population and has a history of conflict and border disputes with Somalia and Eritrea. Ethiopia has a history of supporting warlords in Somalia in an effort to destabilise its neighbour in order to ensure its own security. Somalia was Soviet client state during the Cold War, while the US backed Ethiopia. When Haile Selassie I fell in 1974

alliances switched; and Ethiopia under the Derg allied with the Soviets and the US started putting money into Somalia. As Cold War ended US lost interest in the country and let it fall apart, until the intervention after the fall of Siad Barre in 1992, which arguably fuelled the internal conflict. Now we are witnessing the US attempt to install a client regime in order to secure strategic regional interests (including recently discovered oil) from the danger of a popular backed Islamic state.

The United Nations has authorized a peace keeping force to protect the Transitional Federal Government (TFG) headed by Abdullahi Yusuf Ahmed. The TFG was created in Kenya under US auspices, and before the intervention controlled only the small town of Baidoa. Ethiopia launched airstrikes on 24 December and now controls most of the country while the ICU has disbanded, although borders are closed and US warships patrol the coast to Islamic fighters escaping by sea. The UN is expected 150,000 refugees from the fighting to flee to the border with Kenya.

IWA: the report

December saw the 23rd annual congress of anarcho-syndicalist international the IWA in Manchester, with members, friends and guest associations sending delegations from around the world.

A three-day conference was hosted by member group SolFed, which discussed the future for anarcho-syndicalism alongside votes regarding the participation of two of the international's largest member organisations, the FAU of Germany and the USI of Italy.

The IWA has 13 voting groups from Europe, the Balkans, South America and Africa, of which three have union presences - the CNT in Spain, the FAU and USI.

In a vote at the conference, USI was cleared by a wide margin of any suspicion that it might have broken the terms of membership of the international, following a commission's report on its participation in 'RSUs', a form of elected union representation similar to works councils, which are regarded as damaging to anarcho-syndicalist practice.

Of the voting groups at the conference,

nine backed the USI's position, though it was made clear that the USI should strive to extricate itself from any such bodies in future.

In a close vote, the FAU meanwhile was told to recognise expulsions carried out by the IWA following an extended period when the group continued to maintain contacts with organisations classed as 'enemies' of the international. The new secretariat, to be based in Belgrade, is to monitor them.

Communication was a strong theme for the congress, as both use technology and widespread distribution of materials from member countries has been weak within the IWA. Resolutions were passed on training, translation of materials into English, a requirement for annual progress reports from each section, and a commission will be appointed to look into improving the situation.

A relaunch is planned for the IWA within the next two years, focussing on Latin America and casualised workplaces.

The 2008 Congress will be held in Brazil.



Feature

The state pulling out

2006 was a year for the state to forget there was ever a public sector. Rob Ray looks back...

January

A second strike in two weeks sees the RMT shut down tube stations across London as workers demand private companies running the system provide enough cover to meet fire and safety regulations, after they try to impose cuts just a few months after the attacks on 7/7.

Freedom reveals major flaws in the rollout of 'WiMax', a poorly-tested and inefficient attempt to replace current wireless broadband technology with something more easily controlled by telecommunication companies. Experts in community-based wireless networking contacted by *Freedom* condemn the move, mainstream media lauds "the dawn of a new age".

February

It's all about pensions, as the major unions finally roll out a ballot for strike action long months too late, following a splitting of negotiations between local and national level civil servants. Anarchist civil servants predict a great recruiter, but a washout as union officials sell out rather than back lengthy resistance or try to enforce reform.

The government get rebuked by Europe for having the worst pension protection scheme in the EU and flouting a directive to provide for workers whose pensions are destroyed through company bankruptcy. Unions and government become locked in a lengthy legal battle as the government fights to ensure it doesn't have to pay the cost of its own mistake.

March

The Broadway Market occupation in London ends when police and sheriffs evict local people who had banded round to protect the local café from destruction. The protest got widespread coverage across Europe as a struggle against gentrification's displacement of working class communities.

The largest one-day strike undertaken since 1926 begins in

defence of pensions, with over one million people walking out and picketing across the country from local government. Anarchist public sector workers call for more widespread and longer strike action, fearing a one-day strike will be regarded as nothing more than a token gesture.

April

Nearly two million people across the US march to protest the hr437 bill, a Republican-backed attempt to criminalise 'illegal' immigration into the country. Protesters say they seek real immigration reform that is comprehensive, respects civil rights, reunites families, protects workers, and offers a path to citizenship for the current undocumented and future immigrants to the US.

A *Freedom* report uncovers a massive and increasing strain on mental health services which is far outstripping even the wave of cuts to the rest of the NHS, even as a governmental report states that existing care is inadequate. Health sector workers predict disastrous consequences if cuts, as planned, are heavily biased towards the sector despite its existing problems.

April/May

The government declares a hunger strike which had held at Colnbrooke immigration detention centre over after a sustained campaign by inmates. Press coverage of the hunger strike was curtailed, but the radical press remained almost the only group to provide reasonable coverage.

A little-heralded report headlines in *Freedom* as it shows PFI hospitals are actively draining money from frontline services in the NHS. The report adds to a litany of major problems with PFI companies and building works.

June

The government are attacked by the GMB union for trying to shut down the largest back to work scheme for the disabled in Britain, even as they attempt to shift disabled people off



benefits. Analysis by *Freedom* of the governmental report shows huge discrepancies in their methodology for deciding on the shutdown.

Freedom cocks up royally by running a front page saying 'Stick that up your ASDA price' about a GMB strike at supermarket distribution depots that is called off between the final layout and actual distribution. In fairness, the speed with which the GMB took a half-arsed deal for far less than they should have stood done surprised even us...

July

The government introduces its Welfare Reform Bill, which looks to take one million people off incapacity benefit by making them more difficult to come by and closer in outlook to the hated Jobseeker's allowance programme.

The government is caught out trying to sell off the control of budgetary decision making to private companies in an advert to a European journal. They later reword the advert after a public outcry.

August

A spoof front page is run for the silly season detailing some of the places where mass casualties could be inflicted and the government don't bother defending, but which unaccountably remain unmolested by terrorists regardless...

September

Freedom is the only publication in the UK to report on warnings from West

Papuan rebels that massive forces are building up along the border between Indonesia and Papua New Guinea and that there could be a conflict. Two months after publication, reports of possible troop movement are condemned by international bodies and is reported. This month, reports have started filtering through of conflict on the border between Indonesian troops and West Papuan nationalists.

In a damning report, *Freedom* exclusively reveals a catalogue of double standards being applied to residents and businesses being evicted due to the Olympic games, with businesses being built their own custom-made premises costing millions, and residents not even getting legal costs.

October

The Fire Brigades Union declares victory after its longest strike in 30 years in Manchester sees 1,000 people come out for 27 days in protest at major cuts being imposed on the fire service. The strike is aided by the Iraq war, as there are no armed forces to drive replacement Green Goddesses.

A peer-reviewed report in the *Lancet* medical journal finds that between 470,000 and 790,000 deaths may have occurred in Iraq due to the war. Approximately 2.5% of Iraq's population have died over and above what would have happened without the invasion. The report is dismissed by all governments despite strong scientific credentials.

November

In a *Freedom* exclusive, a leading health watchdog tears apart the New Labour Independent Sector Treatment Centre initiative, showing massive biases in favour of the private sector project have failed to make it perform better than the NHS model it is intended to replace.

APPO continue to survive despite the full force of Mexican state authority being brought down on them. However running battles have taken a terrible toll on civilians and against all sense, the hated governor remains in place.

December

Questions are raised over the IT database set up to handle vulnerable children cases for the NSPCC, with staff criticising the system as largely unworkable and even actively dangerous for the NSPCC's clients.

Protests break out in immigration detention centers across the UK, as asylum seekers react to hugely substandard conditions and treatment reported by the government's own watchdog. Disturbing anecdotal evidence emerges suggesting depression and mental health breakdown rates are so high that in one 400-capacity centre, there are an average of two suicide attempts every week.

This is a special roundup for the New Year. In the next issue we will be running part two of James Horrox's double feature on Britain's surveillance society.



Commentary

FREEDOM

Volume 68 Number 01

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 largest 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

Merry New Year and all that crap! The Freedom offices are still freezing, and I'm still knackered, but the paper may be looking up slightly; a big thank you to all the writers who have contributed something to this issue.

Our neighbour the Whitechapel art gallery will be closed for the next eighteen months so there may be fewer than usual art-lovers in the shop, however we do have a couple of new volunteers joining us so do come in and say hello!

And on the subject of volunteers, we are also looking for help with distribution and publicity, and we desperately need some help with editing the paper as well - or we might be forced to go monthly - so please don't be shy...

Finally, Freedom has attracted the interest of Channel 4. A researcher for Big Brother has been in touch with us prospecting for anarchist housemates for the new series. Apparently they are looking for "interesting people" and want the series to be "open to everyone". Winston Smith types should contact info@freedompress.org.uk for details.

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Next issue

The next issue will be dated 27th January 2007 and the last day to get copy to us for that issue will be Thursday 14th January. Send articles to us by email to copy@freedompress.org.uk or by post addressed to The Editors, Freedom, 84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1 7QX.

Lynch mob?

If the hypocrites of imperialist regimes are going to start lynching perpetrators of genocide and crimes against humanity, then shouldn't they have dangled General Sharon from a coarse noose and every Israeli leader since 1949 for their cult of sadism upon the people of Lebanon and Palestine?

But what has been played out in the court room drama and the agents who escorted the former Iraqi president to the gallows was a fleeting sense of achievement and an adaptation for the American television audience. Indeed a pathetic conciliation to fulfil the common craving created by café dwellers of down-town Manhattans.

And of course, this political assassination of Saddam Hussein has been cultivated by plutocracy; sending shockwaves throughout the Middle East to political leaders who do not conform, that they will suffer the same fate if they dare jeopardise corporate elites that breed the filth from the new American and Israeli Babylonian dynasties.

Stew

Lenin would be proud

Ian McKay's article on Local Government (18th November 2006) reminded me of an aspect of New Labour, which is seldom acknowledged amongst all the other nefarious crap coming from Number 10. It's the language used by New Labour and their imposition of their own culture and ideology. In my opinion, such a thing was not manifested so clearly in the early years of Tony's reign. However, in recent times New Labour language seems to be creeping its way into daily life more and more.

McKay's article is full of New Labour classics such as 'engagement' and 'leadership'. Anyone else subjected to the government will recognise others. Such concepts as 'ambition' and 'focus' will be familiar. Many of these words are typically used to disguise coercive or frictional behaviour. For example, in HMRC (Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs) it is common for tax-payers to be referred to as 'customers'. In my opinion, the truth is that the tax collectors are only state employed thieves. Passport applicants are now referred to as customers too. I imagine this concept will extend right across the public sector with Her Majesty's inmates being given such a gracious title. With New Labour's

'ambition' to mask over social friction with bastardised words of the English language they can hope to paint a rosy picture of a 'together' society.

However, the New Labour ideology is truly illustrated with its promotion of the 'Diversity' concept. It should be fairly obvious to anyone who has opened his or her eyes that diversity is self-evident. With New Labour it becomes a compulsory mantra. Of course, the imposition of this concept is beset with problems. Especially in view of the fact that Diversity recognises everyone except the 'un-diverse'. Not that I have the slightest sympathy with most 'un-diverse' views (fascism, etc.), but in the essence, the abandonment of the 'un-diverse' invalidates Diversity as a concept. In essence Diversity becomes a meaningless projected doctrine, which is forced on the oppressed ranks of society. For the time being 'behaviours' and 'values' are only enforced upon civil servants (as written into new contractual terms in HMRC). One can only wonder how much longer it will be before Labour's codes of behaviour find their way into all levels of society.

Berndt Hans

Unfair Comment

This week [22nd to 28th October 2006] Ruth Kelly announced that the Government would find extra money rewards for councils that had elected mayors and acted in a firmer way (presumably this means less democratic) in pushing through change ('improvements') whether or not these were popular.

We have a council that held two referenda, seeking a mandate to divide the county, was voted down both times, raised the issue a third time, but didn't put it to the vote and without consulting anyone made the division.

Equally it has twice had some form of consultation about restructuring to have an elected mayor, a cabinet system and so forth, differing options for such systems featured OD the ballots, but there was no room to say one would rather keep a less centralised system.

Which is probably why in national surveys Telford & Wrekin is described as one of the best councils in the country, though it has consistently cut social services, (the present majority were elected complaining how the previous lot had so done) and when Walsall Council tried to keep theirs it was labeled a failing council, and our chief executive was dispatched to them, to ruin theirs.

Just how dangerous this might be was shown earlier in the week, when another minister said that a monetary

reward would be given to any council that applied to have nuclear waste buried in their area.

Coal was mined out in The Wrekin long before Thatcher destroyed the industry elsewhere, there are plenty of deep holes to be found; I fear it is only too easy to imagine our councillors deciding that a grant of central government funds is more important than the increased cancer risks, etc., and that we are an ideal place to house the waste.

Historically the Wrekin district was interesting. In the eighteenth century the heart of the industrial revolution, and long before that notable in many ways, clustered round the hill from which it gets its name, on its foothills, the valleys between them; it lies just North of the Severn, between the striking hills of South Shropshire and the flat agricultural lands in the North of the county. In Roman times Shropshire was a centre of gold and lead extraction, long before that Tartessians and Phoenicians came for tin, copper and barium were also mined here. In Saxon times the woollen trade thrived. The pottery industry, now associated with Stoke on Trent, moved there from here.

Telford, which has been slapped down in the district, is a somewhat soulless New Town. They came found a dying iron industry and declining mining one, with a number of old market towns; (not exactly pit villages since as the coal was very near the surface most of the mines were small - artisan affairs, only to the east, were there large mine-employers;) slapped an out-of-town shopping centre down in the middle, proclaiming that to be the town centre, converted old foundries into mini-business parks, and filled in other gaps with housing estates. While they were doing this they allowed a good industrial rail network (which could easily have been developed as a modern metro-system,) to be destroyed.

The planners bringing in an increased population, just at the time that the local industry was being destroyed, meant enormous initial unemployment, then forced wages so far down that new industry was attracted; though for years the only heavy industry was the welfare service. Not surprisingly, whereas The Wrekin was in Chartist and early trade union days a centre of working class radicalism, Telford never before Thatcher 'boasted' a subdued work-force; an ideal home for Blairite councillors.

Why would a council want such a grant? Good question. Just as an example of how they might act; here we see the council - or rather the governing inner circle - buying up a number of closed pubs, using them using them for council schemes, announcing as it always does that this is not done with ratepayers' money, not council money; a way to get cheap support, (providing facilities with money that is not the council's) as well as a way to avoid any discussion.

Just what 'firmer' can mean in the context was shown recently when it came out that the Council was about to sell off part of the park. The major asset which was advertised to get people to come to the town in the first place was its large central park; but from the beginning the New Town authority and then the council refused to state exactly where the boundaries lay; they claimed the Park 'had no limits'.

They have been able therefore to detach and develop successive areas and once again this was in the offing. The remnant of an earlier 'hands off our park' campaign still exist, but had long ago been taken over and tamed. There were however enough people who had moved here to be near the park; there were also the remnants of the old Labour Left who refound conscience and courage; so it looked as if there would be an upsurge of protest. In fact it got diverted into gazing at its own navel.

However in its early days there were large meetings; no-one then had any clear idea what the council wanted to do, who was pushing or what, so there was no clear line. Meetings were based on discussion/debate, so as to find out what was proposed and whether it was desirable. When councillors were asked to chair such debate - and let me stress again, it was to chair debate - they were informed by the Council's legal department that to so do, would mean that councillors had "embraced a position publicly, before debate in the council chamber," and that this would mean that they would forfeit their right to vote on the issue. Needless to say those members of the Council cabinet who proclaimed the need for Telford "to move with the times ... to provide adequate entertainment facilities for visiting business[wo]men and so to build complexes within the park" were not deemed so to have forfeited their neutrality.

LO

Thanks

Thank you very much for helping me to get accommodation for the London Bookfair. Three issues back you printed my plea for it, even though my letter was put in rather sarcastic terms. I had two replies, one from an old friend. If people get in touch with me through the pages of Freedom, I shall try to put those who need accommodation, in touch with those who offer it for next year's Bookfair.

Martin S. Gilbert

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The Anarchist Quiz Book

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

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

Get your copy now for £5 (post free) by mail order from Freedom Press, 84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1 7QX (cheque/PO made out to Freedom Press) or from www.freedompress.org.uk



Quiz answers

1. Milton Friedman. 1980 saw the start of the deepest recession since the 1930s, with unemployment doubling to over 12%.
2. Chile's economic collapsed, suffering the deepest depression since the 1930s.
3. Milton Friedman (again) with his "natural rate of unemployment." Balogh called it "the incomes policy of Karl Marx".
4. The Friends of Durruti.

REVIEW

Its writer/director wanted *Mischief Night* to be 'a very silly film about very serious issues'. Tom Jennings judges it to be spot on

Penny Woolcock's Channel 4 stories set in Leeds (*Tina Goes Shopping*, 1999; *Tina Takes A Break*, 2001) located their Cutting Edge credentials in characters and events being fictionalised from the laboriously recorded experiences of estate residents, who also provided the casts. However, an equally radical departure was to carefully depict the everyday life of the UK urban deprived, rather than merely their reactions to the crises and traumas which social realist melodrama normally agonises about. Instead emphasising the resourcefulness, humour and inventiveness of a contemporary underclass struggling to stay materially and emotionally afloat, the films reportedly inspired Paul Abbott to embellish his biographical reminiscences into *Shameless* – with the latter's success prompting its production company to commission the cinematic completion of the Tina trilogy in *Mischief Night*.

The film's 2005 shoot coincided with the London bombings and subsequent police activity in Beeston (where three of the perpetrators came from and who some of the street-cast actors knew), adding immediacy to the intention to understand and undermine through comedy the increasing spatial and educational segregation of British Asians from their neighbours. The drama develops from the legacies of far closer interaction a few years ago, centering on the redoubtable Tina Crabtree (Kelli Hollis) striving for a secure home set-up for her three kids (by different fathers: "all wankers"). Their various preoccupations yield multiple storylines and diverse connections with the equally embattled, fractious and conflicted Khan family from across Crossflats Park in the days leading up to 4th November – the annual *Mischief Night* sanctioning relatively benign juvenile delinquency (egged cars, soaped windows, flaming dogshit) to complement the more mundane pervasive disrespect and darker anti-sociality of drugs, racism, crime and violence.

With design and cinematography magnifying social warmth and vitality in the area despite its divisions, the bhangra and new beats soundtrack similarly militates against grey grim

cliché as the wit and mayhem accelerate and resolve into a generational contrast of multiracial hope. Ex-con waiter Immie (Ramon Tikaram) and Tina rekindle their adolescent romance to escape unhappy situations, requiring decisive breaks with backward-looking traditions – him leaving his family and her escaping the cycle of community despair presided over by her dad, crime boss Don (Gwynne Hollis). Meanwhile, young teenagers Kimberley and Asif (Holly Kenny and Qasim Akhtar) pursue their own quests, which converge on Immie's old mate, druglord Qassim (Christopher Simpson). They succeed only by forging a more open friendship based on mutual generosity, a desire for autonomy, and an awareness of the limitations of parental choices – working-through rather than wishing-away the toxic power relations of the past in serving the needs of the future.

A Midautumn Night's Dream

Looking for deterministic narrative arcs rather misses the point, however – an urge itself obliquely lampooned in the Big Men's hot air ballooning fetish. This deft condensation of joyriding, lifestyle aspiration, and the Northern kitchen sink ritual of climbing the hill and looking down on the town, leaves Don and his lieutenants flailing out of control of their territory. The flight ends impaled on the mosque tower, thus crudely counterposing failed Western secular dreams of mastery to the comparable impotence of the Muslim hierarchy in dealing with today's complexities. Here the elders enlist Qassim's criminal muscle to repel takeover by fundamentalists (whose imam's ridiculous sermonising is taken verbatim from Abu Hamza speeches). Throughout the film such plot absurdities likewise signal the humility of the film-maker in relinquishing authorial omnipotence – instead bravely weaving the web and warp of meticulously collected grassroots anecdotes, banter and repartee to demolish pretension, free up energy and facilitate agency.

Fittingly, the children's exploration of *Mischief Night*'s mysterious adult world provides most of the bite, blithely juggling real danger and



heartache with naïve sass and insight. Macauley (Tina's youngest) and friends grapple with the insanities of respectability ("My mam's a smackhead", "Mine's a dinner-lady"), attracted to the relatively well-off 'Death Row' whose denizens – paedophiles, gangsters, lesbians – mythically link poshness with perversion. While joyrider Asif views Osama bin Laden screensavers and jihad videos as comic relief from being pressganged into drug-dealing, Tyler's apprenticeship to grandad Don entails blundering around junkie mums and courier grans. And whereas Kimberley finally shoots her newly-found Pakistani father, Immie's younger sister Sarina strategises her transcendence of patriarchy in the local urban music nightclub – a temporary autonomous

zone where lower-class youth of all races enjoy their own hybrid culture in relative peace away from the vexing intransigence elsewhere.

Cross-matching and cross-fertilising the corrosive fissures and prejudices of white and Asian communities, the film's hilarity consistently erodes stereotypes, remaining rooted in working-class neighbourhoods. Here, despite intense material pressures, upward mobility's false promises are just as destructive as the baleful allure of the law of the criminal jungle in crystallising vicious circles of isolation. The desperate rear-guard defence of ancestral families provides no inoculation, merely locking the generations into perpetual misery and the submission to oppression which carnival has always had the

function of momentarily overturning. In fact, though now celebrated only in Yorkshire, the druidic origins of *Mischief Night* – a time when fairies walk the earth – predate Hallowe'en and Guy Fawkes by many centuries. While hardly supernatural, the outcomes of this highly unusual urban fairytale "with its head in the clouds and its feet on the ground" (Woolcock) might also seem somewhat improbable. Nevertheless, its ambitious alchemy – of pragmatic irreverence for authority, laughing-off of adversity, and imaginative empathy and engagement – updates age-old formulae for survival, solidarity and resistance which are still applicable throughout the land.

www.tomjennings.pwp.blueyonder.co.uk

BOOKS

Armed Madhouse and other tales of class combat in a dying regime

by Greg Palast
published by Allen Lane
£0.00

American investigative journalist Greg Palast has more of his reports aired on BBC's *Newsnight* than in the US where he is more or less censored by the major media networks. His latest book *Armed Madhouse* is an excellent follow up to his last *The Best Democracy Money Can Buy*.

Armed Madhouse starts by looking at how the Bush regime has capitalised on the fear of terrorism to erode citizen's civil liberties, whilst at the same time blocking US security services from investigating Saudi Arabian funding of Al-Qaeda and Dr A.Q. Khan the Pakistani atom bomb developer who sold his designs to Libya and North Korea. As I write, North Korea has carried out a nuclear test! Palast makes the valid point that the oppressive Patriot Act was bought in before the September 11th atrocity. Chapters two and three make up the

bulk of the book, looking at how the US administration hatched and executed plans to control Iraqi oil production and how Bush/Cheney fixed the 2004 election and will do so again in 2008.

Chapter two the flow goes in depth to the opposing plans hatched within the Whitehouse. Neo-conservatives wanting to crank up Iraqi oil output to force down the price and destroy Saudi Arabia and Big Oil who wanted output suppressed to boost profits. This chapter demands your attention I found it hard to keep up with the different factions and personalities involved and

got a little lost in the Peak Oil theory. In the end Big Oil won boosting profits to \$113 billion in 2005.

Chapter three 'The Con' looks at how the Republicans fixed the votes in the swing states of Ohio, Iowa and New Mexico. Unfortunately the reader needs to have a little knowledge of the US electoral system to fully understand how the Republicans fix the votes. Interestingly the Republicans have been fined in the '50s and '60s for attempting to fix elections.

The last chapter exposes how Bush's policies are forcing down US wages and

dumbing down the education system.

Definitely well worth a read to anyone interested in anti-globalisation and US government misdeeds. Greg is certainly not an Anarchist, reading the conclusion of his first book will show you this. He seems to be a progressive liberal, sadly this book doesn't offer much in the way of how to counter the Bush administration other than signing up to Greg's website! Nevertheless this is still a well informed and important book to help understand the forces we are up against.

A Sideways Look

Just before Christmas, I happened to notice an advert on a bus inviting people to inform a confidential hotline about anyone they suspected to be claiming benefits falsely. On the same bus were adverts from several local councils exhorting their tenants to pay their rent this Christmas, the tone of which implied that these feckless proles might instead waste it on organic turkey, high class champagne and presents.

I got to wondering if places frequented by the ultra-rich were targeted in the same way for those evading tax. Perhaps limousines might feature a discreet little ad inviting people to inform on tax dodgers, or maybe executive gyms might be staked out by teams of investigators. Of course, this is frivolous. A quick scan of google for gov.uk domains that mention tax evasion gets 3,690. Tax cheats gets 2,200. Benefit fraud returns over 142,000. The government's priorities are clear – people who claim benefits they are not entitled to in the Byzantine world of the Department for Work and Pensions are an enemy worthy of targeting extra resources at. Tax dodgers are more likely to get honours than hounded – the few people prosecuted for tax evasion tend to be small businessmen, rather than the big fish.

The same rules apply to us all, we are told. If Richard Branson or Sir Philip Green were to fraudulently claim benefits, the state would treat them just the same as people on council estates. And if anyone on a council estate wanted to take up residence in Monaco for tax reasons (i.e. so that they didn't have to pay any!) – there's nothing to stop them. Apart from not having any money of course.

The benefit fraud industry really took off during the early '90s, when local councils who administered housing benefit were allowed to keep a proportion of the amounts they recovered from fraud, to invest in further anti-fraud initiatives. The small team in one south London council went from three people to 27 in the course of two years. It's hard to know how much of it was really fraud, given how much it suited the council to paint it as such. Ironically, the then Chair of the Housing Committee was one of their victims.

Many ordinary people who don't need benefits will of course protest that they'd rather that the money they pay in tax is used in ways other than subsidising those who are playing the system. However, this ignores the fact that benefits are actually a subsidy for business. This process has accelerated under Gordon Brown (the left's great hope!) as he has introduced more and more tax credits. In order to pay tax, you need to be earning wages above a certain level (£5,035 this year), so a lot of part time workers don't pay any.

Many other low paid workers can only continue doing the jobs they do because of these tax credits, or other benefits. This ends up being a subsidy to the worst employers, who would have to raise their pay in order to attract more workers if it wasn't for these hidden subsidies.

The message from the powers that be is simple – you can get away with it if you're rich, but we're watching you if you're poor. And we expect you to pay the costs!

Svartfrosk

New in the Bookshop

I don't know whether to be depressed by this or not, but it seems to me that anarchists are always being asked the same questions. You know the kind of thing 'who will do the crappy jobs in this free society of yours? What about murderers and rapists running amok? And just how do you propose to make it happen in the first place?'

Luckily, these questions have been pondered in the past by better minds than mine, not least in Alexander Berkman's *ABC of Anarchism*, recently reprinted in a swanky new edition by Freedom Press. Starting with as good an indictment of the injustices and sheer criminality of the capitalist system as you're ever likely to read, Berkman goes on to show that a world without bosses is both practical and achievable "without", as he puts it, "humankind having to grow wings and become angelic in the meantime".

One of the strengths of this book for me is how Berkman engages the Reader, particularly in the early chapters. You are addressed as 'you', in an easy, conversational style, as Berkman asks why you should be content to live in a world where the many are forced to work for the good of the few. Berkman is not afraid of putting his message across in simple language; a much underrated skill. Why say 'expropriation', when 'theft' will do?

A couple of weeks ago, a work colleague asked me what I was reading at the moment, and it was this book. She read a couple of pages, and said, "He's not too happy, is he?" It's not the most nuanced book review you'll ever read, but she was right. Berkman is not happy with a world run on greed, theft and murder. His passion for a better world is clear on every page of this book, or, to put it another way, 'highly recommended'.

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Imagine if...

In a time and a place not so far removed from where you're sitting, a member of the armed forces' finest stamps his feet to keep warm.

He looks around him, seeing only death, destruction and starvation as a long veil of winter drapes over the day.

Most of the destruction, he muses, was caused by him over the last while, in the course of fighting yet more pockets of Western-armed bandits, warlords and even extremist fighters.

Many of the deaths can be attributed to that too, though more can probably be blamed on the utter devastation of what infrastructure existed both during and after the invasion.

The starvation meanwhile is partly a result of infrastructure collapse but also of short-handedness, an inability to farm properly in the midst of a civil and imperial war, legal restrictions placed by the occupying power and its puppets which force seed-growers to buy non-renewable crops alongside the destruction of existing stocks.

The winter however is going to do the worst damage this month. Bombed out houses will provide scant protection from the chill, lack of food will burn fat reserves faster as the body attempts to keep itself at a reasonable temperature. The breakdown in the economy will rob families of heating, decent warm clothing and medicines when their immune systems give out before the cold.

Still, thinks the soldier, at least they're not posting sentry duty on New Year's eve in case the opposition decide to launch an attack.

Kudos if you can work out which one of the myriad civil wars and imperialist invasions I'm talking about. Happy New Year.

Listings

28th January Social Centres Gathering for discussion, practical workshops, sharing ideas, skills and experience followed by cabaret and cocktails at the 1in12 Club, Albion Street, off Fulton Street, Bradford, call 01274 734160, see 1in12.com

29th January Phone In Sick Day, apparently this date is calculated as the most depressing day of the year, so aim to bring the country to a standstill by phoning in sick, for more info call 07737020496 or see the sicknote.com

7th February Campaign Against Depleted Uranium, put pressure on the government to abandon this indiscriminate, inhumane and illegal weapon, lobby from 2pm to 4pm, public meeting 7pm to 9pm, Parliament, London SW1, for more details see cadu.org.uk/action or call 0161 273 8293

10th March The Sixth International @lternative Bookfair in Gent at De Centrale, Kraankindersstraat 2, Gent, Belgium, from 10am-8pm – as well as books, etc., there will be a programme of conferences, workshops, video showings and performances, for info see www.aboekenbeurs.be or contact aboekenbeurs@yahoo.com

17th and 18th March The Twelfth Bay Area Anarchist Bookfair at SF County Fair Building, Golden Gate Park, 9th Avenue & Lincoln Boulevard, San Francisco, USA, from 10am until 6pm (on 17th) and 11am to 5pm (on 18th) – this year back at the old location with all the space needed to walk around, to talk with other visitors, to look, to enjoy the programmes and the cafe, and over two days. Contact The Bookfair Committee, c/o Bound Together Books, 1369 Haight Street, San Francisco, CA 94117

5th and 6th April Expose Exxon Day, 24 hours of protest at Exxon (Esso) headquarters, details of events to be announced, for more info see campaigncc.org/stopexxon.html
6th to 8th June G8 Summit at Heiligendamm on the north coast of Germany near Rostock, for more see wombles.org.uk/article200609109.php

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The quiz

- Who, in 1980, predicted "only a modest reduction in output and employment will be a side effect of reducing inflation to single figures by 1982" if his ideas were applied? And what actually happened when they were?
- What happened after the same economist proclaimed Pinochet's Chile an "economic miracle" in January 1982?
- According to economist Thomas Balogh, who was "deliberately setting out to base the viability of the capitalist system on the maintenance of a large industrial reserve army" of the unemployed?
- Joaquín Pérez Navarro, who died last year, was the last surviving member of what?

Answers on page 6

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FREEDOM fortnightly ISSN 0016