

FREEDOM

80p ANARCHIST NEWS AND VIEWS

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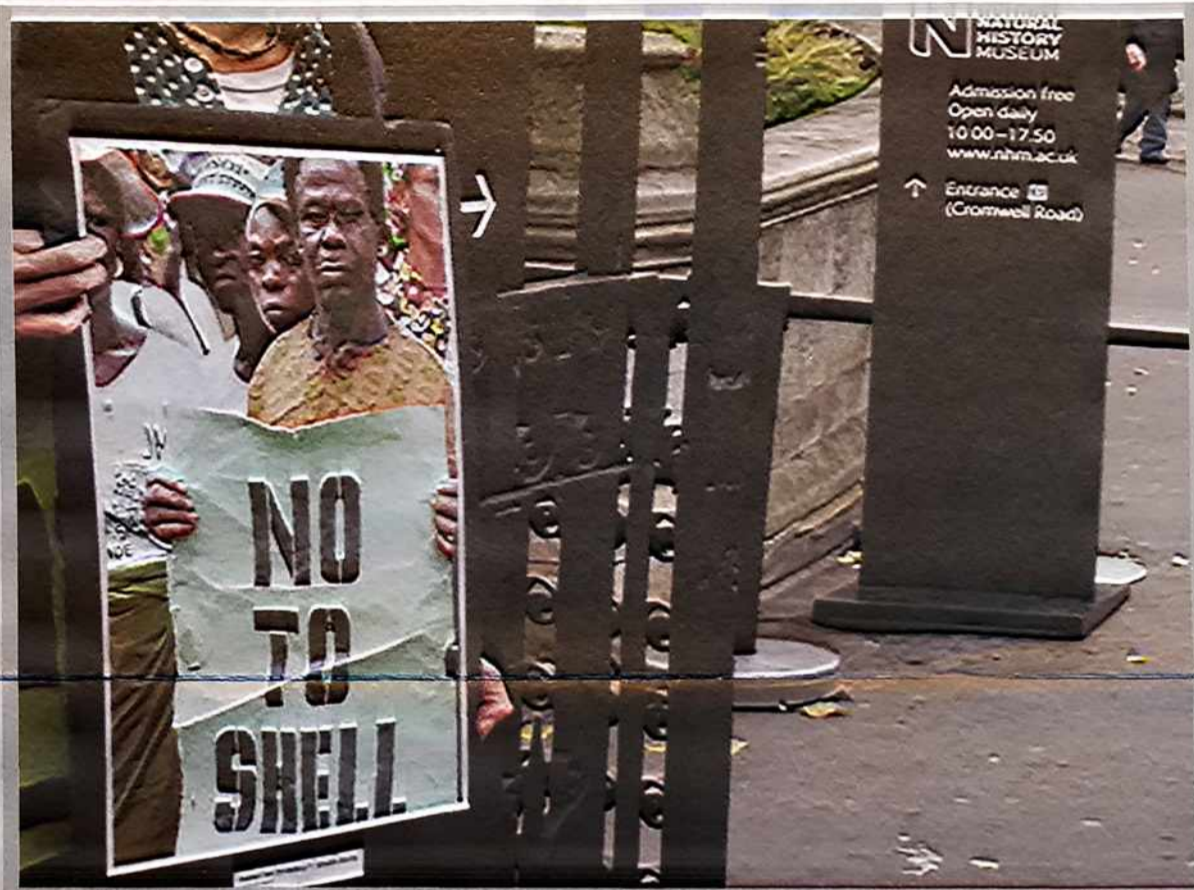
NEWS FROM A NETWORK

On the 29th September, Wellington in Shropshire saw a Northern Anarchist Network (NAN) gathering, where some 30 attended. Although it originated in the Greater Manchester area, a hand-out explains that "we welcome being hosted at conferences in other places by like-minded groups, where we can discuss common problems".

In a lively style, Brian Morris (his book on Kropotkin was reviewed in *Freedom*, 8th September 2007) spoke of the relationship between that sage and so-called 'new anarchism'. According to many academics, the 'old' anarchism – by which they mean social or class struggle anarchism – has become 'obsolete' (Moore) or 'outmoded' (Kinna) or just plain irrelevant to modern radical activists (Holloway). It has been replaced, we are informed, by a 'new anarchism'. Brian discussed the various strains of this 'new anarchism'. He showed that they were anything but 'new'. Primitivism is as old as the hills, going back to the beginning of agrarian civilisation. The anarcho-capitalism associated with Ayn Rand is just a re-vamp of nineteenth century *laissez-faire* capitalism, it is thoroughly reactionary and can hardly be described as anarchist. Both Stirnerite egoism and Nietzschean aesthetic individualism, espoused by the like of Hakim Bey and John Moore as 'poetic terrorism' are also nineteenth century.

They are, Brian felt, elitist and simply radical versions of bourgeois possessive individualism, as Kropotkin suggested. As for post-anarchism, the post structuralist anarchism associated with Deleuze, Foucault, Derrida and Lyotard (none of whom were anarchists!), Brian indicated that most of their radical, political ideas were simply 'appropriated' from an early generation of social anarchists – without any acknowledgement. The so-called post-modern critique of anarchism, mainly from early anarchists were only anti-state and ignored other forms of power, or that they held an 'essentialist' or Cartesian idea of human subjectivity, or that they lacked an ecological sensibility – Brian thought a complete misrepresentation of early class struggle anarchists that was almost caricature. So Brian reaffirmed the continuing relevance of Kropotkin's writings on anarchist communism, his critique of capitalism and the modern state; and emphasis on direct action, both in terms of creating alternatives through mutual aid and voluntary associations. This is what Richard Day has called recently 'structural renewal' and Colin Ward, long ago described as *Anarchy in Action*. Kropotkin's scientific ideas on mutual aid and self organisation, still have important lessons for to-day.

Next, billed as 'The Showdown in the Shires', was a debate between



On 28th October the Shell-sponsored exhibition of wildlife photography at the Natural History Museum in London was targeted by activists from Rising Tide and others to peacefully highlight the greenwash and irony of an oil company sponsoring a wildlife photography exhibition (see shelloilwildlife.org.uk for more)

Dave Douglas of Class War and Rachel Wittacker, a local organiser. Dave was arguing on the basis of his

letter in *Freedom* (16th June 2007) critical of the protest at Drax, coal-fired power station, which he said

failed, to show political connections between that industry and miners. For [page 6, column 5](#)

BNP MEETING BLOCKED

Nick Griffin, leader of the BNP, was scheduled to speak at Kimberley Parish Hall in North Nottinghamshire on Tuesday 16th October. Despite the rain, the hall was surrounded by around a hundred anti-fascists well before the event was scheduled to take place. The anti-fascists massively outnumbered the police as well as the BNP and their supporters.

The group surrounding the hall included trade unionists, local councillors, people who had never been on a demo before, members of Stop the BNP and Antifa activists. A line several people deep was formed across the driveway and more people blocked the pedestrian entrance.

One protester, from Kimberley, said: "This is a place where there are no racist feelings, but by being here tonight they have tried to whip up support for racism. We don't support people like that so we have come to protest against their ideas."

Griffin arrived early with Broxtowe BNP councillor Sadie Graham and some local organisers. Other than BNP head of security Martin Reynolds, there were perhaps 20 people in the meeting. About 30 BNP supporters were left standing on the other side of the road in the rain. They were mostly passive, despite cheering the police on. Some locals shouted anti-immigration slogans, until the cops arrested one of them. Although attempts were made to breach the line, they only succeeded with substantial police assistance. After putting up with chants of 'Nazi scum, off our streets' for about an hour, most of them left.

Police numbers were very low (around 15) and while they seemed to be taking things personally, they did not really have the resources to make arrests.

When police tried to push through the lines they were mainly pushed back. There were three arrests for public order offences, two of them for swearing. This resulted in two cautions and one release without charge.

The BNP supporters inside were also prevented from getting out. Eventually the police asked if Antifa would allow Griffin to leave and the stewarding group made the decision to allow this to happen. It was only this gesture that allowed Griffin to leave the building. No more than about ten people managed to pass through the lines over a period of more than two hours.

This action comes only months after police were called to Beeston Town Hall, where campaigners were protesting at the election of BNP Councillor Sadie Graham.

The BNP are campaigning hard in Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire, and planning to hold their Red, White & Blue festival in the area next year. Anti-fascists in the area are now preparing to help local people in Sutton West fight them in the 1st November by-election.

BLAIR FOR EU PRESIDENCY

Gordon Brown and Nicolas Sarkozy have endorsed the UK's former prime minister Tony Blair for the new post of EU president created by the EU reform treaty. Brown admitted that the new treaty was designed to strengthen EU structures in preparation for future expansion. The treaty will replace the current system of a six month rotating presidency with a new post of permanent EU president.

The president will serve for a five year term and represent Europe internationally on issues such as climate change, international relations and development, as well as in relations with the United States. The new post will come into effect in January 2009. Blair faces competition from the Danish prime minister, Anders Fogh Rasmussen, the prime minister of Luxembourg, Jean-Claude Juncker, and former Polish president Aleksander Kwasniewski.

As European leaders reached agreement over the new treaty in Lisbon last week, Gordon Brown

commented that Blair's current job as EU middle-east envoy demonstrates his suitability, saying that "the work that he is doing in the Middle East is something of huge international importance".

However, critics doubt whether Blair's controversial record on Iraq and Afghanistan will enable him to gain the support of all 27 member states. Britain's traditional reserve on Europe issues may also pose an obstacle. Critics suggesting that it would be inappropriate for a candidate from Britain, which remains outside of the Euro and does not subscribe to the key EU values contained in the new treaty, to assume to role.

Britain has demanded 'red lines' in the current treaty to allow the UK's employment and social security laws to remain unaffected by a EU charter of rights enshrining the right of workers to strike. Brown has come under pressure to put the issue to a popular vote which he would almost certainly lose.

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Home and away

The cost of politicians

While the government has been busy squeezing the belts of public sector workers through low pay rises it was revealed that MPs last year enjoyed a whopping 5% increase in the expenses they claim.

On top of their salaries on average MPs claim a staggering £135,850 a year in expenses. In total members of parliament are costing us £88 million a year in travel expenses, overnight stays, office costs and meals out. Cabinet ministers Yvette Cooper and Ed Balls, who are married, claim that their home is in Castleford and claim £31,974 for staying in London – this is on top of an allowance of £22,110 that all out-of-London MPs receive. Tory leader David Cameron cost us £146,022 in expenses.

The news came the day after Sir John Bourn resigned from the National Audit Office after it was shown that over three years he claimed £392,000 on meals out, first class plane travel, going to the opera and other necessary, em, 'travel and subsistence' expenses.

The independent economic think tank NIESR predicts that the government is going to be short of a few quid next year as tax receipts decline. We at *Freedom* would like to make a suggestion to the Chancellor on how he could save a few million – stop hammering low paid nurses and look at how much MPs and fat cat public sector bosses are costing!

Karaoke Protest

Five people were arrested after singing 'We Are the Champions' at a karaoke themed demo at EDO MBM's Brighton arms factory. The police reacted to the cringe-worthy songs by arresting some demonstrators under noise bylaws and then imposing conditions to prevent the warmongers hearing an encore. Those who didn't move along were nicked, while the sour-faced managing director looked on.

This major police response to a bit of a sing-song follows a successful blockade of the factory last week. All doors into the building were glued shut and two people locked themselves to the front doors with D-locks. This forced the managing director to smash his own window to get in and delayed the manufacture of deadly bomb components, which loses the company both profit and popularity with clients.

The protestors were charged with 'Conspiracy to cause Criminal Damage', and now face a jury trial.

As EDO's profits slide, the campaign against them is building. Campaigners are looking forward to the traditionally lively Halloween demo on the 31st October, when the ghosts of EDO's victims (and a host of weird and wonderful beings) come to haunt them.

SmashEDO protestors have observed that the police are using increasingly repressive measures to deal with the protests, and one compared police behaviour that was common prior to the attempt to injure protests in 2005. At the hearings, it became apparent that the police had urged EDO MBM to seek the injunction. The case collapsed, costing EDO MBM a lot of money. Since then the company's fortunes have taken a number of knocks. Campaigners have vowed to keep up the pressure until the arm's manufacturer closes the factory.

Around the world

IRAQ: The Iraqi government has decided to clamp down on security firms by formally revoking the immunity from prosecution granted to private security companies operating in the country.

The immunity granted to private contractors such as Blackwater has become controversial since a series of shootings involving foreign security guards.

The most infamous incident was on 16th September when employees of Blackwater killed 17 Iraqis in Baghdad. The Blackwater guards opened fire when they were escorting a US state department convoy through a Baghdad neighbourhood.

On Wednesday, Ali al-Dabbagh, an Iraqi government spokesman, released a statement saying: "The cabinet held a meeting yesterday and decided to scrap the article pertaining to security companies operating in Iraq that was issued by the CPA (Coalition Provision Authority) in 2004. It has decided to present a new law regarding this issue which will be taken in the next cabinet meeting."

The CPA stipulated that the "multi-national force, foreign liaison missions, their personnel, property, funds and assets and all international consultants shall be immune from Iraqi legal process."

On 9th October guards from the Australian security company Unity Resources Group fired on a car in central Baghdad killing two women, and on 18th October guards from a British security company fired on a car wounding three people.

The US government has also moved to clamp down on Blackwater and other private security firms in Iraq and Afghanistan. Officials said that US secretary of state Condoleezza Rice was adopting "immediately" the recommendations of a review panel that exposed a worrying legal impunity for security guards working in the two countries.

The panel was led by Patrick Kennedy, the state department's director of management policy, who said that "the issue is to do the job in such a way that you minimise the risk to protectees and to any innocent Iraqis

who happen to be in the area that a convoy is moving through".

In an implicit admonishment, the Kennedy panel stressed that private contractors should open fire only with "due regard for the safety of innocent bystanders".

BOLIVIA: At least 50 sex workers near the Bolivian capital of La Paz have gone on a hunger strike and threatened to march naked down the streets of El Alto, a nearby town.

The sex workers are protesting against the closure of bars and brothels by local residents who claim they are a haven for criminals and that the bars serve alcohol to minors.

According to local media reports, as many as 50 drinking establishments have been destroyed by angry residents, and they also want the local authorities to shut the rest down.

"We've all taken our HIV-Aids test and we're going on a hunger strike," the protest leader said inside a local Aids clinic where the prostitutes undergo regular checkups.

One woman, who chose not to be identified, said that if El Alto wants to get rid of prostitutes "then the government should give us a hand and take care of our children, and afterward provide us with jobs".

Prostitutes in El Alto sewed their lips together as part of a hunger strike to demand that the mayor re-open brothels and bars ordered closed after violent protests by residents last week.

"We are fighting for the right to work and for our families' survival," Lily Cortez, leader of the El Alto Association of Night-time Workers, told local television.

SWITZERLAND: The Swiss capital of Berne was turned into a battle zone at the weekend when leftwing radicals seized control of the main square outside parliament, routing the main far-right political party two weeks before a general election and catching the Swiss police off guard.

Dozens of protesters were arrested and around two dozen people injured, mostly police officers, as police deployed tear gas, water cannon, and rubber bullets to try to regain control from

gangs of highly organised, masked people who turned the small and normally sleepy capital of Switzerland into a scene of devastation.

FINLAND: 12,800 Finnish nurses, members of the Union of Health and Social Care Professionals have threatened to resign *en masse* on 19th November unless the government agrees to a 2.5% increase in pay over two years. British healthworkers accepted a 2.5% rise after unions backed off fighting the government for a decent rise. The Finnish nurses' action is part of a wave of industrial action sweeping the country which has seen strikes in the shipping, forestry, postal and steel industries.

COLOMBIA: In October protesters in Villa del Rosario, Táchira, most of whom work as commercial truck drivers, barricaded and shut down a number of roads that cross the border after the Colombian government instituted a new toll charge for crossing the border. Demonstrations were reported to be peaceful until Colombian riot units attempted to disperse them by firing teargas into the crowds, sparking violent confrontations. Rioters overturned and burned at least five cars and vowed to keep the crossings closed until the new border controls were lifted. At least three police officers and four civilians were injured during the confrontations.

INDIA: Delhi has long struggled to cope with marauding monkeys. The deputy mayor of the Indian capital Delhi has died a day after being attacked by a horde of wild monkeys.

S.S. Bajwa suffered serious head injuries when he fell from the first-floor terrace of his home recently while trying to fight off the monkeys.

The city has long struggled to counter its plague of monkeys, which invade government complexes and temples, snatch food and scare passers-by.

The High Court ordered the city to find an answer to the problem last year.

One approach has been to train bands of larger, more ferocious langur monkeys to go after the smaller groups of rhesus macaques. The city has also employed monkey catchers to round them up so



they can be moved to forests. But the problem has persisted.

Culling is seen as unacceptable to devout Hindus, who revere the monkeys as a manifestation of the monkey god Hanuman, and often feed them bananas and peanuts.

Urban development around the city has also been blamed for destroying the monkeys' natural habitat.

Mr Bajwa, a member of the opposition Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), is survived by his wife and a son, according to the Press Trust of India news agency.

POLAND: The Civic Platform Party won the recent elections in Poland as millions of angry Poles flocked to the ballot boxes to 'vote out' the government of Jaroslaw Kaczynski which had been busy trying to carry out purges of all the 'dangerous elements' from public life – the government, educational system and even the media. What the people got was a party of heartless yuppie scum eager to employ Thatcherism as soon as possible and get the money rolling in the direction of their corporate friends and sponsors.

Within less than 24 hours after their victory, the 'Platformers' had announced their plans to introduce not only a flat tax, but a single flat tax of 15% for both personal income tax and corporate. And then a new wave of privatisation. (The state treasury still holds shares in about 1,200 industries. This includes famous places like the Ciegelski factory in Pozna, where there have been many workers' struggles recently. It's 100% state owned.) The third promise of the week is to raise the retirement age to 67.

We can assume that this will be followed by the usual budget cuts, the privatisation of the public health care system, the reduction of certain benefits to farmers and 'reform' of the pension system.

Prison news

Eric McDavid refused vegan food

The jail is still denying Eric McDavid (recently convicted in a US Green scare trial) vegan food. After enduring a two-week hunger strike in March 2006, Eric was finally given vegan meals on 24th April 2006. This lasted for 15 full months. Then, without any warning or reasonable explanation, the jail cut off Eric's vegan meals one week before his trial began. Since that time, he has been surviving off the few options he can purchase from commissary (peanut butter, beans, chips) and the little food he can pull off of the meal trays they bring him (usually bread and fruit – sometimes oatmeal in the morning). Clearly, this is not enough to constitute a healthy, balanced diet. It is the jail's

responsibility to provide Eric with the food he needs to remain healthy and strong. This is obviously something they are completely able to do, as they did so for 15 months with no problems.

Eric has been contemplating what courses of action are open to him in this matter, but unfortunately, his options have become even more limited. The suit that Eric filed against the jail to secure vegan meals was dismissed by the judge, greatly diminishing any hope he had for redress in the courts. A hunger strike could be extremely risky due to the bout of pericarditis for which he was taken to the hospital in April.

Because Eric's options are so limited, in the jail and in the courts, he needs support from the outside more than

ever. This seems to be the only hope for change. In the meantime, Eric continues to lose weight, and his health will soon begin deteriorating.

It's always helpful to have Eric's x-reference number handy when calling the jail, in case the person you are speaking with asks for it. Eric's x-ref is: x-2972521. You can call the jail in the US at : 916-874-6752 or 916-874-6905, or write to Lt Ilg or Scott Jobnes, Sacramento County Main Jail, 651 'I' Street, Sacramento, CA 95814, USA.

Some things you might suggest while talking or writing to the jail are that: • The jail fed Eric vegan food for 15 months with no problems. There is no reason they cannot continue to do so.

• The jail is responsible for providing Eric with a healthy diet. Eric has made it clear that he will not eat food that is not vegan. As such, they will be responsible for any health problems that Eric suffers due to his lack of nutrition.

• The jail is paid thousands of dollars to house federal inmates. Eric address: Eric McDavid X-2972521 4E231A, Sacramento County Main Jail, 651 'I' Street, Sacramento, CA 95814, USA

Antifascists in Belarus imprisoned Maksim and Vladislav are anti-fascists from Minsk, who are doing three year sentences in Belarussian camps for their

News

Royal Bank of Scotland besieged

Climate change activists around the country have been targeting the Royal Bank of Scotland

On 15th October over a hundred climate change activists targeted Royal Bank of Scotland (RBS) branches, offices and headquarters around the country in protest at the company's massive investment in the oil and gas industries.

Demonstrations took place at the RBS headquarters in Edinburgh, London and Manchester, and at branches in Norwich, Sheffield and Truro.

In London a dozen activists from London Rising Tide held a protest outside the RBS headquarters on Bishopsgate. Despite a heavy police presence, one activist managed to clamber on the glass canopy of the building to unfurl a banner reading 'RBS: The Oil Bank of Scotland'. On the ground, polar bears held a die-in and others handed out more than 900 leaflets. The climber has now been arrested.

'Roving pranksters' were also at work in the city. 'This Company is Out of Order' signs were left on 15 RBS and Natwest cash machines. Pranksters performed invisible theatre in branches, trying to open accounts, having arguments about RBS's unethical policies in the queues, and leaving piles of anti-RBS leaflets amongst their corporate propaganda. They then went underground for some 'Tube Education', leafleting and talking to Tube passengers.

In Manchester, activists from Manchester Climate Action gathered at the RBS regional HQ on Deansgate Street. Banners were displayed reading: 'Climate Change: RBS Makes It Happen' and 'No Pipeline! Green Energy Not Gas'. Protesters were greeted by three Tactical Aid Unit

Vans and security guards, but despite police attempts to stop noise under the public order act, the samba band played and flyers were given out to workers, customers and passers by.

In Bristol, activists blockaded the entrance to the RBS corporate office at Temple Quay using lock-on devices.

Branches were locked shut overnight in Norwich and Edinburgh, delaying the start of the business day. Signs reading 'This Company is Out of Order' were placed on fifteen cash machines in central London.

The demonstrations were part of a national day of action called by the UK Rising Tide network, as a follow-up to August's Camp for Climate Action at Heathrow.

"Today's protests have been hugely successful. Together, we have shown RBS that their role in financing climate change is now in the public spotlight. In cities and towns around the country, we have made sure that RBS customers, staff and the public know that RBS, more than any other bank, is providing the financial fuel driving climate change" said Nathan Lewis, an activist from Sheffield.

RBS calls itself the 'Oil and Gas Bank', and is the primary UK funder of fossil fuel extraction. The thirty oil and gas finance deals RBS signed between 2001 and 2006 will create 655 million tonnes of carbon emissions over the next 15 years, which is more than the UK's entire annual emissions.

"Banks like RBS who profit handsomely from climate-destroying projects have stood in the shadows for too long, but they are as guilty as the oil companies. If carbon dioxide



molecules had corporate tags of responsibility, the atmosphere would be full of RBS logos mingling with those of BP, Exxon and Shell," said Rebecca Keith, from Norwich.

RBS is currently working to source

financing for a \$6 billion gas project in the Niger Delta involving Shell. The Olokola LNG project threatens to displace local communities and cause conflict. The largest rebel group in the Niger Delta, the Movement for the

Emancipation of the Niger Delta, has threatened "It is inconceivable that ... they can be protected from our ability to sabotage the Olokola facility. We will test the integrity of that protective measure."

Mentally ill in jail

Too many mentally ill offenders are jailed rather than given the specialist help that they need, the prisons watchdog has warned.

The influx has continued despite overcrowding problems in jails and repeated calls from successive home secretaries for fewer sufferers from mental illness to be locked up.

Anne Owers, the chief inspector of prisons, protested that jail had become the "default setting" for many people who posed little risk to the public. She said the quality of treatment inside jail had declined over the past five years, with sufferers encountering a series of problems. They included inadequate screening on arrival and poor communication between the health professionals charged with their care.

Offenders who have problems with emotional well-being were at higher risk of reconviction, and yet not enough was being done to support them on release.

Ms Owers acknowledged that some mentally ill offenders had to be jailed.

But she said: "There are also people who, if they were picked up earlier, need not have got so risky as they became. And there are people who are in prison with very low risk who are there simply because there's no community provision."

Arguing that resources should not be used up on people who should not be in prison in the first place, she said: "Prisons can provide better and more focused care for those who need to be there."

Ms Owers warned that the need would "always remain greater than the capacity" unless community-based mental health care services improved and offenders were directed to them "before, instead of, and after custody".

She found that 80% of mental health teams going into prisons felt unable to respond appropriately to the range of problems they met. Ms Owers said: "Prisons can provide better and more focused care for those who need to be there, but they will only do so effectively if there is

sufficient alternative provision for those who should not be there, and effective community support for those who leave prison.

"Unless those gaps are filled, mentally ill people will continue to fall through them and into our overcrowded, increasingly pressurised prisons."

Sean Duggan, of the Sainsbury Centre for Mental Health, said staffing levels in prison mental health care were only one third of what was required. He said: "We urgently need more investment, especially in primary care within prisons, to close the massive gap."

A spokesman for the Ministry of Justice said: "We are working to improve the areas identified in the report."

He added: "Reception screening is currently being reviewed, and we are working to produce guidance this year which will improve the operation of court diversion schemes for mentally ill offenders."

NO:ID art project

Finally, there is a space where underground art can claim the space it deserves in ever-more-hip London Shoreditch: for more than seven months, a group known as 'NO:ID' has been in occupation of a former housing office in council-owned Boundary Estate.

The estate, the oldest in Britain was put forward for transfer to private ownership as a way of Hackney council offloading some of its repairs costs. The prospective receivers, Southern Housing Group, promptly moved in to the former housing office only to vacate and leave it empty soon after. The premises have since been occupied by a collective of artists and activists.

Collective members live and work upstairs, while the entire ground floor hosts exhibitions which changes weekly. It is also used for screen printing and hosting a screen print shop. Large shop windows guarantee transparency and, as from October 2007, a license appears more likely

than eviction. The project has very good relations with their neighbours.

The project has been financing itself entirely by the sales of artwork and by contributions and donations.

"In the first weeks, vandals broke one shop window," says Janmaat, who works in the collective. "We then boarded it up, and Alma made a terrific mural on the boards. This picture we managed to sell, using the money to replace the window."

Exhibitions are appointed on a first-come-first-served basis, without charge and without pre-selection. The gallery motto is 'unknown art - constant change'. Exhibitions have included artists known from TAA, from the Random Artists and artIsland networks. Opening hours are Wednesdays to Sundays from 4pm to 9pm, the address is 26 Calvert Avenue, London E2.

Find out more on <http://noid.co.nr/>, or subscribe to the no:ID newsletter by sending mail to noid-subscribe@lists.s036.net

News

MEND kidnappings

MEND gunmen have kidnapped oil workers from a Shell platform in the Niger Delta

Seven oil workers, comprising three expatriates and four Nigerians, were kidnapped by gunmen at a Shell platform in Ekeremor local government area of Bayelsa State this month.

The militants reportedly engaged troops guarding the offshore oil facility in gun battle for at least three hours before taking their victims hostage. One civilian was injured. Although no casualty was recorded in the battle between soldiers of the Joint Military Taskforce (JTF) attached to the flow station and the militants.

The latest abduction came barely four days after yet-to-be-identified gunmen snatched the mother of a member of the House of Representatives, Hon. Seriake Dickson.

The gunmen stormed the Exploration Area (EA) field in 30 double horse power speed boats about 8.45am on Saturday and started shooting sporadically to scare residents of the riverine community and eventually succeeded in abducting the expatriates off to an unknown destination.

Taking responsibility for the attack, the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND) stated that the attack was launched at the EA field Vessel belonging to SPDC.

A statement signed by Don Pedro said the campaign was in response to the arrest of its leader, Henry Okah, also known as Gbomo Jomo by Angolan government, adding that the latter must accept full responsibility for this onslaught.

"By holding in criminal detention, a key stakeholder in the Niger Delta struggle, the government of Angola has crossed a line that they may never be able to go back on. Our campaigns will be strategically focused on Angolan concerns in Nigeria," the statement said.

SPDC has confirmed the abduction of seven of its workers, including three expatriates and four Nigerians. The JTF has also confirmed the incident.

MEND have issued a communiqué on Okah's arrest:

On Monday 3rd September 2007 at about 1400hrs Angola time, two Nigerians were arrested at the Luanda airport on their return to South Africa from a business trip where they had gone to inquire about the purchase of a fishing trawler. One of the individuals Henry Okah, a silent player in the Niger Delta struggle and part of the on-going peace process was framed by the Nigerian government in collaboration with some oil majors notably chevron who have always seen his position as uncompromising.

According to Henry's account, they were led away from their hand luggage and by the time they returned, officials claimed they found some alleged incriminating literature written in Portuguese, a language none of the men speak, inside Henry's hand luggage.

On the two court appearances following the arrest, the judge threw the case out for lack of merit. After this frame-up failed, another case was quickly manufactured, this time that



he should be repatriated to Equatorial Guinea to face charges of sponsoring a failed coup attempt. This we consider ludicrous considering he was never declared wanted by that government or even the interpol before this time. Henry Okah is not aware that there was even a coup attempt in Equatorial Guinea.

The movement for the emancipation of the Niger Delta wishes to serve as a warning to those behind this plot; that a repeat of the Ken Saro Wiwa type set-up will fail this time around. For the sake of the on-going peace process the Nigerian security agencies, the multinational oil and construction companies, and their local and foreign

collaborators should not take actions that will jeopardise the peace process and take us back to an era everyone is moving away from.

Commanders and fighters of mend are watching the unfolding conspiracy closely. There will no doubt be very unpleasant and dire consequences if this matter is not handled with fairness.

Anti-war protests in the US

A group which is calling itself Iraq Moratorium aims to change the face of anti-war protest by decentralising it. Believing at best that the big national demonstrations should only be part of the effort, Iraq Moratorium recently began a campaign with over a hundred focal points distributed across the United States. Protests are to be held always on the third Friday of each month. The organisers are asking participants to pledge to stop their daily routines on those days and take some kind of action. At the time of the first action in October, several thousand had signed the pledge – to wear black armbands, stand silent, put signs outside their houses, not to shop, etc. One pledger bought toy soldiers and left them in prominent public places with "bring me home" tags attached. Inspired by a similar campaign during the Vietnam war, when many were against but few acted, the organisers of Iraq Moratorium are hopeful. "I think it has terrific potential because it provides a focus at the local level so a much broader spectrum of folks can be

involved. It has the potential to involve much larger numbers of people and energise them over time." said John Humphries, an organiser in Connecticut.

On 20th October police in Washington DC scuffled with protesters during a demonstration outside the World Bank; this was after violence the previous day at another protest in Georgetown in the city. Objects were thrown at shop windows, newspaper boxes were overturned and a police officer was pushed from a scooter. On the Saturday about 500 demonstrators (students, community activists and anarchists) marched from near the White House to World Bank headquarters to denounce its policies and those of the International Monetary Fund, which were holding meetings that weekend. When the police rushed the group, shoving protesters and snatching their signs, the crowd that gathered responded with 'Our streets! Our streets!' The weekend's demonstrations were organised by a loose group, October Coalition, and drew people critical not only of those international institutions but also of

gentrification, US anti-immigration policies, DC school vouchers and the consumption of meat.

Also protesting and being arrested was a group for the first time directly confronting the world's largest mercenary army, Blackwater. Half a dozen protesters were arrested at the company's front entrance in North Carolina. They were drawing attention to the murders by Blackwater operatives of at least a dozen and a half Iraqis on 16th September this year. The protesters drove a grey station wagon covered with painted bullet holes and smeared with red paint onto the private army's land. One demonstrator lay back inside the vehicle and five others got out and lay on the ground, as if shot – as happened in Baghdad's Nisour Square where an Iraqi doctor and her son died as their car approached a Blackwater diplomatic convoy. This protest was organised by the Norfolk Catholic Worker and Blackwater Watch, whose aim – according to Christian Stalberg – is to "shut down Blackwater. It's an unmitigated disaster. They're irresponsible and totally unaccountable."

Under surveillance

It doesn't take much to fall foul of the US elite: Michael Lacey and Jim Larkin, newspaper executives from Arizona's *Phoenix New Times*, were arrested and jailed in mid October after publishing an article revealing that a grand jury was seeking to subpoena a list of names and IP addresses of people who visited the newspaper's website. The charges were quickly dropped but are indicative of the climate of fear and repression common in the country.

It's the kind of continuing repression where surveillance probably extends far further than anyone has imagined: the Vermont law firm of Gensburg, Atwell and Broderick (which represents a client in Afghanistan as well as one of the prisoners held at Guantanamo) has felt it necessary to warn its clients that it believes the federal government has tapped its phones and compromised its computer system: a Verizon (one of the largest telcos in the US) technician discovered the law firm's phone lines were 'crossed', while an examination of one

of the company's computers revealed the presence of software to disable all security measures and potentially allow snoopers access to all information on the computer.

Meanwhile senate leaders agreed to telecom immunity for domestic spying: Democratic and Republican members of the senate reached a deal with Bush towards the end of October to grant retroactive immunity to major telecommunications firms which took part in the surveillance of people in the country without court warrants.

If passed, the measure would remove any chance of bringing a series of already prepared lawsuits against the companies. It looks as though there will be a new, compliant, Attorney General to help. Michael Mukasey defended many of Bush's post 9/11 policies; the president has the right to hold American citizens without charge indefinitely; the military prison at Guantanamo should not be closed; and prisoners there should not have the right of habeas corpus.

Muppet of the week II

Part two: George Monbiot is suggesting that it's "the libertarians who bleed us dry", finds Iain McKay

Recently, I exposed the silly claims of George Monbiot as regards anarchism and its (non-existent) similarities with neo-liberalism (*Freedom*, 22nd September). After proclaiming that both neo-liberalism and anarchism aimed to destroy the state, Monbiot had to admit a few days later that the former was all in favour of state intervention – as long as it was for the rich. A fact he was well aware of, before deciding to smear anarchism via guilt by association.

Monbiot is, unfortunately, at it again. In a wonderfully self-contradictory article, he takes the claim of right-wing free market capitalists to being 'libertarian' at face value and proclaims that "Governments aren't perfect, but it's the libertarians who bleed us dry" (*The Guardian*, 23rd October 2007).

The article is not total nonsense, though. It does, via the life-story of Matt Ridley (the chairman who got Northern Rock into its recent misfortunes), expose the utter hypocrisy of most supporters of free market capitalist who attack state aid for everyone – bar themselves and their class. Ridley, Monbiot notes, "railed against all government intervention and mocked less enlightened beings for their failure to understand economics and finance" yet when his "libertarian [sic!] business model failed, Ridley had to go begging to the detested state". Yet, anyone with any understanding of capitalism and its history will know that this is standard practice, although it is rarely discussed in public. After all, it is hard to justify cutting the welfare state for the many while supporting it for the few. As Monbiot put it: "So much for the virtues of unregulated free enterprise."

Sadly, while exposing one aspect of today's doubletalk, Monbiot accepts another by allowing the right to appropriate the term 'libertarian' to describe their deeply hierarchical and authoritarian system, capitalism. How 'libertarian' is a system in which the wealthy few order about their wage slaves while the latter's liberty is little more than changing masters?

Perhaps this is not too surprising, given that Monbiot accepts the world view of the very people he claims to oppose. "Ridley's core argument" is that people "act only in their own interests. But our selfish instincts encourage us to behave in ways that appear altruistic. By co-operating and by being perceived as generous, we earn other people's trust. This allows us to advance our own interests more effectively than we could by cheating, stealing and fighting." Government should "withdraw from our lives and stop interfering in business and other human relations" (except, Monbiot fails to note, to defend private

property and the hierarchies it produces).

"Like Ridley," Monbiot is "a biological determinist" and "accept[s] the evidence he puts forward, but draw[s] completely different conclusions. He believes that modern humans are destined to behave well if left to their own devices; I believe that they are likely to behave badly." Co-operation only works if we are "part a small group of intelligent hominids, all of whom are well known to each other". However, "[i]f, on the other hand, you can switch communities at will, travel freely, buy in one country and sell in another, hire strangers then fire them, you will gain more from acting only in your own interest".

Yet who are these 'strangers' who allow you to act in this way? Who are the people in these 'communities' who tolerate such anti-social-behaviour? Do they not have any interests of their own? So it appears that only some people have self-interest – the rest are merely walking and talking automations who have no notion of what is in their best interests and tolerate such anti-social people. So, the reformist agrees with the capitalist: "Ridley and I have the same view of human nature: that we are inherently selfish." Yet, for some strange reason, these 'inherently selfish' people act against their own interests and let others 'gain more' than themselves. How strange.

Even stranger, our political rulers are of a different species than the rest of us. What other conclusion can be drawn? For Monbiot argues that "we can no longer be scrutinised and held to account by a small community. We need governments to fill the regulatory role vacated when our tiny clans dissolved." Are governments not made up by the same 'inherently selfish' people society is made up of? Are politicians, police, bureaucrats and officials not seeking, like the rest of us, to "gain more from acting only in your own interest"?

What is to stop our political rulers acting as the rest of us, namely (to use Monbiot's words) when "allowed to pursue their genetic interests without constraint, they will hurt other people. They will grab other people's resources, they will dump their waste in other people's habitats, they will cheat, lie, steal and kill. And if they have power and weapons, no one will be able to stop them except those with more power and better weapons." So to stop people acting 'without constraint' we are to give some of them (the government) 'power and weapons' even though, as Monbiot states, this will mean "no one will be able to stop them except those with more power and better weapons". Which explains his support for world government, presumably. Except, of course, who will stop the world government?



Incredibly, Monbiot is coming out with the same self-contradictory arguments anarchists have been refuting for over one hundred years. For "while our opponents seem to admit there is a kind of salt of the earth – the rulers, the employers, the leaders – who, happily enough, prevent those bad men – the ruled, the exploited, the led – from becoming still worse than they are" we anarchists "maintain that both rulers and ruled are spoiled by authority" and "both exploiters and exploited are spoiled by exploitation." So "there is [a] difference, and a very important one. We admit the imperfections of human nature, but we make no exception for the rulers. They make it, although sometimes unconsciously, and because we make no such exception, they say that we are dreamers." (Kropotkin, *Act for Yourself*, page 83)

Looking at states, we find them acting as Monbiot claims humans do: "we should appease those who are more powerful than ourselves and exploit those who are less powerful. The survival strategies that once ensured cooperation among equals now ensure subservience to those who have broken the social contract." The words Bush, Blair and Iraq spring to mind! And Monbiot wants to give the state even more powers? Why would centralising power on the world level be any better than centralising it at the level of the nation state?

Somewhat ironically, Monbiot vaguely recognises this. He states that the

"democratic challenge ... is to mimic the governance system of the small hominid troop. We need a state that rewards us for cooperating and punishes us for cheating and stealing. At the same time, we must ensure that the state is also treated like a member of the hominid clan and punished when it acts against the common good." Except, of course, the state is based on a delegation of power into a few hands, who have the means of enforcing their decisions (i.e., 'punishes us' for disobedience to its decisions and laws). That is why elites have always turned to the state – it disempowers the many so that the few can rule and fleece them. This is the case under *laissez-faire* capitalism as any other regime:

"While all Governments have given the capitalists and monopolists full liberty to enrich themselves with the underpaid labour of working men [and women] ... they have never, nowhere given the working [people] the liberty of opposing that exploitation. Never has any Government applied the 'leave things alone' principle to the exploited masses. It reserved it for the exploiters only ... nowhere has the system of 'non-intervention of the State' ever existed. Everywhere the State has been, and still is, the main pillar and the creator, direct and indirect, of Capitalism and its powers over the masses. Nowhere, since States have grown up, have the masses had the freedom of resisting the oppression by capitalists ... The state has always interfered in the economic life in favour of the capitalist

exploiter. It has always granted him protection in robbery, given aid and support for further enrichment. And it could not be otherwise. To do so was one of the functions – the chief mission – of the State." (Kropotkin, *Evolution and Environment*, page 96)

So if, as Monbiot asserts, "[h]uman welfare ... is guaranteed only by mutual scrutiny and regulation" then our task is to get rid of the state. For, ultimately, how are the powerless to punish the state when it "acts against the common good"? How is that 'common good' to be determined when the communal institutions required to formulate it (federations of community and workplace assemblies) are replaced by the state? If the people are in a position to formulate 'the common good' and have the power to 'punish' the state when it contravenes it then why have the state at all? Why give a few political, economic and social power when you know that they will abuse it and you need to organise to resist it? Hence the pressing need to abolish state along with capitalism and other social hierarchies.

Thus we have the central contradiction in Monbiot's ideology. If people are as selfish and self-seeking as he claims, then giving only some of them power is a bad idea. If we do give an elite such power, then we will need to organise to resist it. And, as anarchists have long argued, if we organise to resist it then we are more than able to do without it – i.e., govern ourselves directly.

Commentary

FREEDOM

Volume 68 Number 21

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

We're all still recovering from the Anarchist Bookfair at the moment – an exhausting but very successful day. The Bookfair organisers had clearly put a lot of hard work into the event and the new venue at Queen Mary's down the Mile End Road in East London was an excellent choice of location.

Meanwhile, back in Angel Alley, things seem to be ticking over reasonably well. Mind you, we always need help in the bookshop, and especially help with the mailout of the paper. But the area which desperately needs help at the moment is on the editorial side of Freedom. We currently have two editors doing alternate issues, and a splendid job they do, but their lives would be made so much easier if we had, say, a reviews editor, a features editor, a letters editor to help them out before they burn out (a not uncommon problem with Freedom editors!) – so do please get in touch at copy@freedompress.org.uk or by post to The Editors, Freedom Press, 84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1 7QX.

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Next issue

The next issue will be dated 17th November 2007 and the last day to get copy to us for that issue will be Thursday 8th November. Send articles by email to copy@freedompress.org.uk or by post addressed to The Editors, Freedom, 84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1 7QX.

Monbiot

In reply to Iain McKay's interesting piece on George Monbiot (*Freedom*, 22nd September), I'd like to suggest that Monbiot is not *completely* wrong in his comments that some anarchist ideas may end up working for capital. Former *Freedom* contributor, John Turner, spent much of his life working on housing and informal settlements from an anarchist angle. However his ideas ended up becoming standard World Bank practice because their emphasis on 'self-help' freed governments from the responsibility to address housing issues and their underlying causes. Another example might be the recent Bank interest in participatory budgeting.

London Squatter

Class War Federation

Taking the period from the 2006 Anarchist Bookfair to the 2007 event, Class War members can look back on a busy twelve months. Below we outline some achievements, some failings and some objectives for the future.

We printed 1,500 copies of *Class War* issue 92, and members worked hard to sell it over the summer months. With only about 50 left by the time issue 93 was published last month, we think we delivered on one of our objectives – to produce class struggle propaganda without fear or favour. As the layout of the paper has improved, so we think has our website and merchandising operations – both of which exist to promote the aims and principles of the group.

Although the *Class War* magazine *Touch of Class* received mixed reviews from within the anarchist movement, feedback sent in to us was good, and sales of over 400 from a 500 print run was respectable, if not earth shattering. With a clear agenda agreed within the group for the magazine, it is hoped to publish improved issues in October 2007 and by Easter 2008.

Several members and supporters have also developed successful blogs that have at times been able to reach where *Class War* sometimes could not – new technology and methods of operating need to be harnessed, not pooh-poohed.

The 2006 *Class War* bonfire in London Fields, Hackney was probably the largest event (apart from the bookfair) organised by anarchists in London last year. We remain very proud of it. In addition to this

members got themselves over to anarchist bookfairs in Dublin and Utrecht, regional events across the country, and as usual London Class War provided a cheery welcome to visiting comrades from abroad. Getting involved in events like the demonstration against Al-Quds day in London in early October also brought us in to touch with socialist activists, particularly Iranian exiles, who we had not met previously. Secularism could well become an important plank of our politics in the future.

It is hoped that concrete support can be provided to those struggling in Copenhagen for their community against right wing evangelicals, and that the threats faced at home and abroad due to gentrification can be both understood, and fought on a wider basis than they are now. For members in the north the John Bowden campaign provided a major focus, and one where some tangible gains were achieved.

Whilst noting the above successes, much of the weight of organising remained on the shoulders of the London group, and *Class War* remains dominated by members in the south east, East Anglia and Yorkshire. We hope the new members joining in Thames Valley will have an impact in their region, and nationally.

It has always been paradoxical that whilst being the best known anarchist group with foreign comrades, *Class War* has never been a member of any of the anarchist internationals. Despite this most days emails are received from comrades in other parts of the world, and ties have continued with activists in Australia, Russia and Poland. Interesting contacts have also been made with activists in Malaysia and Indonesia (look out for the band *Class War*) and it will be interesting to see how these develop.

Within the UK, *Class War* has continued to work hard in Antifa, and played a major role in setting up *Bash The Rich*. The new contacts met and interest generated from this campaign have showed the advantages of working outside standard anarchist campaigns and that being ignored by others in the anarchist 'movement' (if indeed there is such a thing) can at times be an advantage rather than a problem.

Opportunities and shortcomings – the next 12 months: Outside of *Class War*, it is not hard to detect a feeling of possible shift in wider society. With the political establishment now meeting in a soft, gooey centre where one Oxford educated MP merrily steals the ideas of another Oxford graduate, Eton old boys shamelessly

proclaim a classless society and the left is discredited by its inertia, middle class base and the failings of the Stop The War Coalition, a huge political vacuum exists.

Whilst there appears to be little momentum for revolutionary change, there is arguably almost as little real legitimacy when it comes to those running the existing system. The issues for *Class War* (and indeed like minded groups) remain – just what do we have to offer, and how do we best struggle on the issues that matter?

Paul Stott on behalf of *Class War*
 classwar.org

Freedom note: This was originally meant to go in as part of the bookfair responses, but due to space restrictions, we went with a shorter one on the day. As this mostly avoids duplication and has a lot of good extra background in it though we thought it should go in this issue.

The Wobbly lot

This last year has seen the IWW push forward more than ever in the UK. We are growing (almost too fast, if that's possible!), many of us are agitating in our workplaces and several shops have made significant gains towards majority union membership.

The majority of our members work in health and education, and our main campaigns have reflected this. IWW members in many ways spearheaded the successful campaign to save Glasgow University's presence at Crichton, and IWW members are similarly at the forefront of a national campaign against cuts in the National Blood Service.

We also have a growing membership in printing and publishing industries and construction, and outreach to Polish and other Eastern European communities in the UK has been well-received, as well as continuing organising in the coffee shop industry. The building of links with other revolutionary unions, such as the CNT-E, CGT-E and Workers' Initiative in Poland, bodes well for the future also.

The next year will be pivotal for the future success and sustainability of the IWW. We are looking to continue growing and fighting but also consolidating the growth and organisation we have achieved over the last couple of years.

We have grown more than threefold in two years, which is great, but also brings with it administrative challenges as we move from a small group of people who wish to form a union to operating a small but fully-functioning union. We remain small, but our rapid growth in the last couple of years has shown how much a fighting, grassroots union is needed in the UK. Over all, it is a really exciting time to be a Wobbly.

Ant, IWW

Freedom note: As with Paul's comments, this fleshes out the IWW analysis further than we were able to in the last issue.

Donnington news

If you've got a map-book handy, you no doubt can guess why it would be inadvisable for us to put the following on our web-site; it is nevertheless, we

feel, worthy of some wider publication.

We were told that Donnington is sending supplies to a new British Forces' Post Office address in Iraq (not the Basra one), which suggests a base for different sorts of activity, such as an attack on Iran.

Also that there is considerable evidence of preparations for privatisation of Donnington, one incidental and farcical bit is that transport is now done by a private carrier, recently a £30 exhaust was sent by palette transport, that is what can be put on a palette costs \$50, this exhaust, being long and thin, needed two, so the transport cost over three times the value of the goods, goods which could have been bought at any garage.

Laurens Otter

David Goodway and Five Leaves Publications have pleasure in inviting you to the launch of **The Anarchist Past and other essays** by Nicolas Walter

Monday 10th December 7.00pm-8.30pm
 Housmans Bookshop, 5 Caledonian Road, London
 (three minutes from King's Cross tube or King's Cross Thameslink station)

Nicolas Walter was a key figure in the anarchist and free-thought movements for forty years. This long-awaited collection largely covers anarchist history, especially in Russia, coming up to date with essays on the 'Spies for Peace' and Colin Ward and Murray Bookchin. Edited for publication by David Goodway

Refreshments

RSVP to David Goodway or info@fiveleaves.co.uk, 0115 9691597
 Book orders via www.fiveleaves.co.uk

NAN conference

➔ page 1

example, Thatchers's pit closures led to Chinese miners and others now working in nineteenth century conditions. Dave was arguing at some disadvantage, because the Climate Change Camp, some of whose participants; like Rachel, were with us that day, had indeed made such political connections. In spite of a hostile media, that event had been conscious-raising for those who were there. Political points were made, such as poor, third world people suffering most due to environmental damage. Well-measured comments from the floor showed that the two positions were much closer than presented on our 'Proposed Agenda', actions to save environments cannot be separated from working class struggles.

We heard of *Art and Anarchism* by Alfredo, an artist of Mayan/Spanish heritage who had experience of the Zapatistas in Chiapas, Mexico. He spoke of his anarchist ideals, their connection to his art, and desire to reflect political and cultural outlook through creations. Alfredo felt that the use of symbols to connect with a variety of people/cultures was an important aspect of his work. For details of future NAN meetings/conferences, contact martin@phonecoop.coop

Quiz answers

1. Bakunin.
2. A local newsletter from Norwich
3. They've been given long-handled batons. Unfortunately for the would-be plod of Newham's parks department, they can't use them as it is illegal for a civilian to carry an offensive weapon. I'm sure readers can think of other things they can do with them, though!
4. Italian workers for IBM carried out a demo on 'Second Life', a virtual world, over a dispute about bonuses. After this, the managing director of IBM Italy resigned and the company agreed to talks.

The Anarchist Quiz Book

Who said "I shit 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!

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REVIEW

Richard Alexander looks at *The Subversion of Politics* by Georgy Katsiaficas

This is an updated edition of a book first published in 1997 by Humanities Press International shortly before they ceased trading. The text has two more recent introductions and added comments on the work of Negri and Hardt to bring it more up to date, but the bulk of the text is that from the earlier edition.

The main focus of the book is on the German Autonomien and Italian Autonomia, much of it based on the author's own participation in these 'scenes' and is probably one of the best first-hand accounts by an 'outsider' of the autonomous groups in Germany and Italy. There are shorter passages dealing with autonomous groups in Switzerland, the Netherlands and Denmark. If nothing else the book is revealing in the differences between the various forms of autonomy practiced in different countries, in particular the way that the Italian Autonomia were rooted in the workerist (Marxist) movements, but moved away from them to create their own identity, whereas the German Autonomien were more of an outgrowth of the broader Green and feminist movements.

The principle foci for the autonomist groups was much the same everywhere in Western Europe, with an emphasis on collectives living in squatted buildings, publishing their own magazines, running radio stations and social centres, engaged in street level protests, actively creating their own reality in a society where boredom and conformity and the daily grind is the norm and expected of everyone. One of the features of autonomist groups is that they reject representation, so they opposed the practice of having 'figure-heads' (something the German autonomists reacted against in the mainstream green movement as the Green party became just another group of politicians bartering their ideals for

power) so there is a paucity of books written by participants so this account by someone who is representing their own perspective based on their own experience without claiming to represent the various autonomist groups is a valuable insight into the areas of autonomy.

Such radical opposition to everyday life inevitably brought down repression and co-option (stick and carrot) onto the various autonomist movements. In Italy they were caught between the Red Brigades and the government, and thousands were jailed on suspicion of being involved in subversive activities, whilst hundreds more fled the country. In Germany the focus was on the squatted houses they autonomists had occupied. Here a combination of offering legalised tenancies and forcibly ejecting those who refused them resulted in the break-up of the social networks, the jailing and hospitalisation of the staunchest refuseniks, and the co-option of those looking for an easier way out. The remnants lingered on but, the back was broken of the movement – but the revival of anti-globalist protests soon saw the emergence of new autonomist groups and activities.

The second part of the book is a discussion of various attempts to theorise autonomy – something which almost is self-contradictory, and not helped by the lack of any unifying theory that was employed by the autonomists themselves.

This is not to say that the activities were un-theorised, there was a considerable amount of discussion in print and in the flesh amongst the autonomists but it was assembled on the fly and subject to constant revision in the light of experience. Katsiaficas discusses several theorists' take on the autonomists. Negri comes in for critique due to his residual workerism and Seyla Benhabib (a student of



Habermas) suffers from an emphasis on the individual, which stands in direct contradiction to the autonomists' emphasis on the collective. On the other hand, orthodox class-based analyses tend to be critical of the autonomists being unaccountable to anyone but themselves, their collectives being opposed to the mass based class organisation typical of workerist movements, where a leadership tends to speak for the class, rather than the class speak for itself (also a debatable concept.) However the author's assertion that out of the multiplicity of voices there emerge some form of universal values and subject is equally debatable.

If you are looking for an assemblage

of autonomist texts in English, I can recommend the two Semiotext(e) anthologies and others have suggested that Stephen Wright's work on the autonomists is superior to this particular text. As I haven't read that I couldn't possibly comment on it, but I will say that this makes for a stimulating read. It's useful to have a potted history of (some of) the European autonomists, and having recently read *Horizontalism: Voices of Popular Power in Argentina* (edited by Marina Sitrin, AK Press, £12) one could not help but notice how Argentinians have recreated much of the theories and practice of European autonomists from their own experience. From this it would appear

that amongst those contesting everyday life autonomist practice remains a viable possibility for action in the here and now, without falling into the traps of co-option and reformism or sitting and waiting for the glorious dawn of whatever revolution one is hoping for. However it remains to be seen whether the sum total of autonomist activity can, of itself, bring about any meaningful change in the wider society or whether it will remain at risk of collapsing into a inward-looking sub-culture.

Georgy Katsiaficas, *The Subversion of Politics: European Autonomous Social Movements and the Decolonisation of Everyday Life*, AK Press, ISBN1-9048459-53-4, \$17.95/£12.00

TELEVISION

It's A Free World... directed by Ken Loach, written by Paul Laverty (Channel 4)

Ken Loach's new television drama (released for cinema abroad) tackles the theme of entrepreneurship as career option in New Labour's neoliberal dystopia, focusing on the efforts of Londoners Angie and her flatmate Rose to rise above soul-destroying low-level dead-end admin work. Sick and tired of being shat on by bosses at foreign workers employment agencies, Angie resolves to start up herself and do it properly to get a better deal for everyone concerned (especially her family; though her solid old-school proletarian dad is appalled). At first the ambition to be 'fair' and still make a decent living seems promising, and direct interaction with the hardships and tragedies of those fleeing Eastern

Europe and the Middle-East for 'better lives' gives them some insight and humility. However, the pair soon find themselves ducking and diving around the brutal logic of the concrete business jungle, where comprehensively sacrificing the interests of their employees is the inevitable price of staying afloat ...

Trading in desperation

Contriving these Eastender (anti-) heroes as strong working-class women (one a white single mother, the other Black; both, sadly, with rather superficial personalities) allows interesting twists on treating humans as objects – whether of paper-thin sympathy, patronisation, even sexual domination. *It's a Free World...* also successfully conveys the invidious positions of both 'legal' and 'illegal' immigrant workers, at the mercy of unscrupulous agencies and corrupt

employers cynically squeezing every conceivable source of profit from their vulnerability – enhanced by official neglect and worsened by State persecution and the erosion of welfare and labour rights, all reinforced by mainstream media and party-political marginalisation and stigmatisation.



Their violent fightback here effectively glosses the recourse to criminality among the most oppressed – though it's surprising that Polish workers, given their recent history, didn't try other tactics first. Or maybe they did, but this story of the gangmistresses' moral dilemmas

couldn't accommodate it – Loach's intention being "to challenge the prevailing wisdom that ruthless entrepreneurship is the way that this society should develop ... It seeks out exploitation. It produces monsters". So, unable to secure legit viability, Angie and Rose embark on even shadier ventures preying on the weak. Unfortunately, without the ethical or physical nous and 'muscle' to back up their bravado, they're completely unconvincing – despite the cod-Hobbesian spiv 'realism' about the ways of the contemporary world fitting the zeitgeist. Yet again, social-realist melodrama suffocates its narrative by ticking so many right-on boxes and exemplifying manifold 'issues' in its central characters – perhaps mirroring the disastrous fetish for elite leadership in the command socialism which inspires its makers.

A Sideways Look

For the last few years it has been fashionable for some anarchists to talk about the 'precariat'. This is a term coined from a French word, precarité, though the concept originated in Italy. Put simply, the idea is that capitalism has moved beyond the point where any bar a minority of skilled or privileged workers can expect secure working conditions. It follows that what links workers is their employment status rather than the work they do, or the fact of them being working class. Hardt and Negri have argued that this flexible labour force is now at the heart of capitalism, rather than the periphery.

While some of this analysis is useful, it also masks some of the other things going on. The Chainworker Crew of Italy defined two kinds of precarious workers - chainworkers and brainworkers. The chainworkers work in malls, shops, bars, etc., while brainworkers are those who choose a flexible way of working and can dictate their terms to a better extent because of the scarcity of their skills - computer programmers, for example. The theory goes that these two disparate groups have more in common with each other because of their precarious status than they do with the people they work alongside who have permanent status and possibly better pay and conditions.

I think this idea is potentially quite dangerous. I'm all for people making links with others who face similar problems, but there is no substitute for on the job solidarity. Without it any fight for the most precarious workers will become very difficult. But it's also bad tactics - if all new starters in your workplace are on significantly worse contracts than you, you can bet that management will be taking a look at yours soon. If some of your colleagues do unpaid overtime because they are worried about their temporary contracts being terminated, it puts pressure on you. And also means that they are likely to stay on temporary contracts - why would the boss kill the goose that lays the golden egg?

However, it would be a mistake to throw all the ideas out just because of the flawed application of some. Anyone who's worked in the last decade will appreciate the pressures from management to get us to work harder, longer and for less. I don't see this as anything other than the normal working of capitalism - when we are weak they exploit it. The National Dock Labour Scheme that was abolished in 1989 was established precisely as a result of workers agitating against the employer for an end to casual employment, so it's really nothing new.

But it is also important that when workers start to fight, they don't wait for support from those who are more comfortable. They should, of course, ask for their support, but if it is not forthcoming, it cannot be allowed to veto action by the poorest and most exploited.

Svartfrosk

The quiz

1. Which anarchist features in the Tom Stoppard trilogy of plays *The Coast of Utopia*?
2. What is the Great Commotion?
3. Newham council in East London have a private police force for their parks. What have these keystone cops recently been issued with? And what can they do with them?
4. Who held a virtual strike in cyberspace in October and what was the result?

Answers on page 6

Imagine if...

Pope Benedict cast his eye over the list of nearly 500 priests due to be beatified for their martyrdom in the Spanish Civil War.

The priests had been killed all over Spain, and would nearly double the ranks of those already declared near-saints by the Catholic church since their deaths.

Among them, some of the highest ranking of the Catholic church's representatives in the region, who at the time had been in direct control of some of the most fertile lands, had controlled the rents of the towns and villages, the movements of the landless peasants, the great farmlands and a massive array of capital assets.

They had been burned out by the workers and the peasantry, furious at hundreds of years of oppression and enforced ignorance in the name of God.

But at last, these warriors of the Lord, brave guardians of what was right and wholesome, were going to get the recognition they deserved.

They had refused to bow before the rampaging hordes of peasants who blasphemously spoke of equality. They had stood firm in saying what was right was God, Country and King, the ascendancy of cassocked elites corruptly living off the backs of millions.

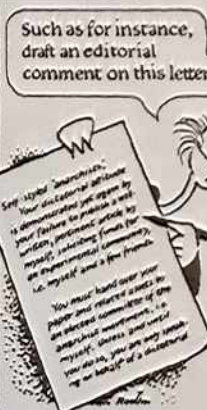
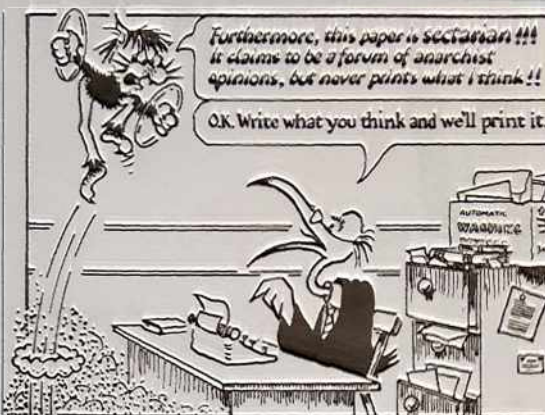
Of course, though they died, their chief supporters, Franco and the Falange, swept to power, and not one thousand, but tens of thousands of people had been killed as part of the Catholics' reprisals. But of course, they were hearthens, so what did he care?

The devil is in the details.

Prison news

page 2

activities. They support football club MTZ-RIPO, which is famous for its uncompromisingly anti-fascist fans. Maksim turned 18 years old in late July. He has been in anti-fascist movement for three years, and was one of the organisers of Food Not Bombs in Minsk, which made actions in Gorki park, Victory square and other places in the city. In December of 2006 they had an encounter with nazis, who ended up being defeated. One of the nazis figured out that Maksim was participating in the event,



and he went for the cops. Eventually Maksim and Vladislav were sentenced to three years for "aggravated hooliganism".

- Write letters of support to Maksim and Vladislav! Their addresses are
- Gubski Maxim, VK-2-21, Batowa str. 4 Bobruisk, 213800 Belarus
- Vladislav Vladimirovich, Plyashkevich, IK-10 otryad 4, Novopoltsk-5 Vitebskaya oblast, 211440 Belarus

Massive 'anti-terrorist' repression in New Zealand

In a wave of massive unprecedented state repression, over 300 police, in many cases armed, raided houses around New Zealand on the 15th October 2007 making 17 arrests.

Police are also seeking up to 60 people for questioning. The arrestees are all activists of the Tino Rangatiratanga broad based indigenous rights, peace and environmental movements.

Prominent Tino Rangatiratanga activist Tame Iti was among the first arrested at his home at 4am Monday morning. The Police will make a decision in the coming days/weeks as to whether they will apply to the Solicitor General to allow charges to be laid under the 2002 Terrorism Suppression Act. If they do get permission, it would be the first time charges have been laid under the act. Media and government have already been making connections to organised terrorism and spreading misinformation.

Names are being withheld due to the name suppression, but any letters emailed to lettersforprisoners@riseup.net will be printed out and distributed to arrestees. Or you can write to the Wellington prisoners at:

- A Prisoner, c/o 128 Abel Smith Street, Wellington NZ

Listings

Until 11th November Indymedia's photo exhibition at Basement Studios, The Foundry, Great Eastern Street, London EC2 3JL, info 07878 892486 or 07956 429059

3rd November 'Bash the Rich!' march on David Cameron's house in Notting Hill, London, see londonclasswar.org for details.

3rd November First Annual Working Class Bookfair from 10am to 5pm at St Nicholas Church, Market Place, Durham City, sponsored by North East NUM

3rd November Gagged! benefit gig with No Choice, KilnAboy and Gunrack at 8pm, Le Pub, Caxton Place, Newport, £3, email info@gaggedanarchist.tk or see gaggedanarchist.tk

3rd November National demonstration to celebrate and defend the NHS, assemble at Temple Place on Victoria Embankment, London, at 11am to march to Trafalgar Square, for more see nhscampaign.org

8th November Action on Climate Change: The Time Is Now, public meeting with George Monbiot at the Friends Meeting House, Euston Road, London, contact 020 7833 9311 or see campaigncc.org

9th November Books for Amnesty, all books £1 at Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, Holborn, London WC1, contact books@amnesty.org.uk or call 07771888825

10th November Lewisham 77, thirty years on remembering the 'Battle Of Lewisham' with a day of exhibitions, screenings and talks from those at the event and others, at Goldsmiths College (Great Hall), New Cross, London, SE14, from 1pm to 5pm, contact 07881 614119, lewisham77@gmail.com or see http://lewisham77.blogspot.com

12th November Block the Builders blockade at AWE Aldermaston, help block Britain's own WMD weapons

factory in a day of non-violent direct action, contact 07807 522454 for info.

13th November Gagged! benefit gig with Give Up All Hope, AntiMaster, Jesus Bruiser and Threat Manifesto at 8pm, Le Pub, Caxton Place, Newport, £3, email info@gaggedanarchist.tk or see gaggedanarchist.tk

16th November Gagged! benefit gig with Rejected, Plinth, Gunrack and Drop Dead Darling at 8pm, Le Pub, Caxton Place, Newport, £3, email info@gaggedanarchist.tk or see gaggedanarchist.tk

24th November Campaign Against Arms Trade (CAAT) National Gathering from 10am to 6pm at South Camden Community College, Charrington Street, London, NW1, contact anna@caat.org.uk

30th November Critical Mass where cyclists re-take the roads, see critical-mass.info/international.html#europe

8th December International Day of Climate Protest, to demand that world leaders take the urgent action we need to prevent the catastrophic destabilisation of our global climate: *Climate Change Bike Ride* assembles at south side of Lincoln's Inn Fields, London, at 10am to arrive in Parliament Square at 1pm to join the *National Climate March* (assemble at Millbank, 12 noon to arrive Parliament Square 1pm) for the main march to a 2.30pm rally at the US Embassy in Grosvenor Square, see campaigncc.org

10th December Book launch of *The Anarchist Past and other essays* by Nicolas Walter at Housmans Bookshop, 5 Caledonian Road, London, from 7pm to 8.30pm, contact info@fiveleaves.co.uk or 0115 9693597

22nd December Grand Anarchist Winter Solstice Party from 2pm at Freedom, 84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1

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