

FREEDOM

80P ANARCHIST NEWS AND VIEWS

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INSIDE ►►

Damage of Depleted Uranium page 3

Papua mining gets messy page 4

A rebellious Middle East page 5

Hollywood's new radicalism page 7

THE BATTLE FOR BROADWAY

Police and sheriffs evicted protestors from 34 Broadway Market in the East London borough of Hackney for a second time on 23rd February.

Perhaps the most exciting political highlight of the winter was the community occupation at Broadway Market after the eviction of café owner Tony Platino. Police had initially kicked them out at the end of December only to see them return to reoccupy on Boxing Day.

Starting at the end of November, the occupation soon built up wide popular support and unusually positive media coverage that stretched from the Shanghai Daily News and Bahamas Financial News to the Evening Standard and the Guardian.

Broadway Market has been rapidly changing over the last five years. New boutiques and estate agents sprung up,

pubs changed hands and became the puzzling term 'gastropubs', while the relaunched Saturday market sold novelty food items at extortionate prices.

Suddenly, the majority of local residents – that is, the working class on the council estates – were aliens in the area they knew and grew up in.

To the outsider these changes were perhaps a sign of improvement and prosperity, but the direct beneficiaries of this process were few in number, with property developers in particular being at the top of the wealth pyramid.

'Progress' has been cosmetic, with deep-rooted social problems still not addressed.

The occupation was both a form of personal support to the former owner of Francesca's café, Tony Platino, who had been an obvious victim of council incompetence and at the receiving end of property magnet Dr Roger Wratten's attention; and although the campaign was very focused, it also brought in to the debate council corruption and incompetence, gentrification, regeneration, the 2012 Olympic business bonanza, and New Labour's insidious market capitalism.

The contempt that the Labour council has for the residents of the borough is astounding. Their arrogance being demonstrated by the recent 'rent-a-Trot' quote by the Deputy Mayor, who sees in all dissent the hand of world revolution – and this was just a comment about concerned local park users!



Rather like their mentor Tony Blair, they seem to be shameless at being disgraced at an international level as events on Broadway Market have done to Hackney council.

So after angry public meetings, petitions, town hall pickets, leaflet drops and of

course the defiant 24-hour physical presence at 34 Broadway market itself, where to next? Is it back to another re-occupation on the road, or another different avenue of protest? Will it become just another yarn for the participants to spin in years to come, or

will this be part of a wider process of social change?

Andy W. is one of the Broadway Market occupiers. Various members of the community have vowed to fight on to redevelop the site for community use.



EDUCATORS SPEAK OUT

Higher education workers across the UK have again gone on strike, as Freedom goes to press, after college chiefs refused to honour pay pledges offered last year.

The joint strike between the AUT and Nafthe lecturers' unions will be the first combined action since the two unions voted decisively for a merger.

The one-day 7th March strike has been followed by self-imposed marking sanctions, where lecturers, researchers and academic-related workers will not mark or take part in the exam process as part of an open boycott.

Nafthe have claimed a 23% pay increase to be delivered over the next three years, after they were assured by

senior governmental figures that one third of a major higher education funding initiative would go directly into bringing up pay in the sector.

After putting in the claim in October, the union was not met until January by national employers' body UCEA, which refused to come up with a pay offer.

The AUT have said that lecturers' pay has declined by over 40% when compared with other professional groups over the last 20 years.

Jack, from Manchester university, the largest in the country, said: "The lecturers are pretty cynical really, one-day protests are always pretty ineffective, especially in something like higher education, where everything tends to just get re-scheduled."

"The action short of a strike will probably have much more effect. Assessment refusal really puts the pressure on the government to settle up, because the parents start getting pissed off. Apparently they did it back in the '80s, no-one graduated and everyone got a raise!"

"This pay rise has been coming for about 25 years. We got screwed by

Callaghan's incomes policy, in the face of mass student apathy, the lecturers unions are all that's standing between the government, management and businesses carving the whole system up."

A pay claim policy document from Nafthe explains that: "Over the years we have seen the decline in the relative earnings of academic and academic related staff as employers have stuck to pay offers based on the increase in the teaching grant, which has been around the level of inflation and sometimes lower."

"At the same time 'other income' to universities has increased. The proportion of expenditure on staff has declined (from 70% to 58.5% over the last 30 years) whilst at the same time pay levels have become increasingly uncompetitive."

The strike follows a dispute in November last year which saw 26,600 members called out by Nafthe after a 70% yes vote for action.

220 colleges and universities saw walkouts, prompting education

PAUL AVRICH

Radical historian, Paul Avrich, has died at the age of 74. He was born in New York City on 4th August 1931. He was a noted historian and professor who authored many books on anarchist history, including books on the Haymarket Riot, the Modern School Movement, the Russian Revolution and a collection of oral interviews with American anarchists, *Anarchist Voices*.

Avrich was nominated for the Pulitzer Prize several times and in 1984 he won the Philip Taft Labor History Award.

Avrich received his BA from Cornell University in 1952 and his PhD from Columbia University in 1961. He taught at Queens College of the City University of New York and at Columbia University. He was a Guggenheim fellow at Columbia University in 1967-68 and a National Endowment for the Humanities senior fellow in 1972-73.

Avrich published his dissertation on 'The Russian Revolution and the Factory Committees' at Columbia University in 1961. In 1967 Avrich published his first book on the history of anarchism, *The*

Russian Anarchists. He went on to publish many more books on anarchist history, including *The Haymarket Tragedy* in 1984 and *Sacco and Vanzetti* in 1991.

The Library of Congress houses the Paul Avrich Collection, a collection of over twenty thousand manuscripts and publications on American and European anarchism that Avrich donated to the library.

Ronald Creagh remembered Avrich: "I know that Paul's friendliness will remain in the minds of all who have known him, just as his scholarship will be remembered by all who have read his remarkable books. He offers his readers very extraordinary information."

"Perhaps his most thought-provoking testimony is contained in his work *Anarchist Voices*, which is based on his careful, time-consuming interviews with hundreds of people."

AK Press has recently re-published *Anarchist Voices* (akpress.org). Bakunin and Nechaev by Paul Avrich is published by Freedom Press, price £1.50 (post free), available from 84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1 7QX or freedompress.org.uk

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page 6, column 5

ID costing already

Over £32m has been spent over the last two years on ID cards by the government, according to MP Charles Clarke.

Home Secretary Clarke, in a written answer to MPs' questions, said that £32.05m was spent between April 2003 and December of last year, before the bill had even cleared the Lords.

In a show of strength, 'dissenting' MPs have passed a compromise amendment to the bill, calling for a report on costs every six months for the first ten years of the scheme.

According to a report by the LSE university, the cost of implementing the cards could exceed £12bn, though it has been admitted by the government at various times that its introduction will not stop terrorism, fraud or identity theft. By comparison the total debt of the NHS, currently 'in crisis' and being forced to shut major services across the country, stands at a little over £900m. Rather than clear the debt, the government has proposed further privatisation.

Biodiesel buses

The first Biodiesel bus route in Manchester has opened after a deal was struck between new co-operative Green Gold and the Oxford Road Link, which runs from Piccadilly station to the universities.

Green Gold Biodiesel, the first garage in Manchester to provide biodiesel, is providing all the fuel for the buses. They will run on a blend of 5% biodiesel, and 95% normal diesel, reducing particulate emissions and climate change gases, as well as helping the buses to run more smoothly and quietly.

Matt Favier from the collective said: "We are extremely pleased to be helping this new service ... improving local air quality, fighting climate change and using less fossil fuel, simply by using our unique forecourt on Fairfield Street."

BT blowout

Communications union the CWU have had their most recent pay claim rejected by BT, after the in-profit company refused to make an open offer for the year. The union fears that the company will use well-publicised failings in its pension scheme to try and justify a general pay cut against the workforce. BT have said their rejection of the claim was based on lower profits due to competition, the impact of pensions, and 'external benchmarking of jobs'.

The CWU said: "The deficit and future liabilities issues do not lie at the door of CWU members and certainly should not impact on our members right to a decent pay rise. In addition, not all of our members are included in BT's final salary scheme."

George Fox appeal

An appeal is being heard at Lancaster Crown Court as Freedom goes to press for the George Fox Six. The appeal, which began on the 13th March, will probably last three to five days.

Since the George Fox Six were found guilty of "momentarily disrupting a conference" and ordered to pay £1,800 costs and given a conditional discharge for two years there has been quite a lot happening at Lancaster University.

Shortly after the trial the Vice Chancellor was reprimanded by staff, both in an open letter, and at the next Senate meeting. When directly asked to refute claims that the six had thrown chairs at him during their demonstration he remained silent, but has continued to maintain that the prosecution was justified. Supporters are asked to sign the group petition at [petitionline.com/fox6](http://www.petitionline.com/fox6).

Around the world

GUINEA: The capital of Guinea was brought to a standstill today on the first of a five-day general strike over wages and pensions.

The National Confederation of Guinean Workers (CNTG), and the Guinean Workers Trade Union (USTG), called the strike action after months of talks broke down. The two unions have around 80,000 members between them.

The government ordered all educational institutions closed on Sunday itself, most government workers, taxis (pictured below), and minibuses stayed at home, whilst shops and businesses were closed.

The UN's IRIN news service reported that daily life has become tougher and tougher in past years for the average Guinean. Rice, the staple food for the West African nation's eight million people, almost doubled between January 2004 and November 2005, with the free-market price of a 50kg bag of rice increasing from 50,000 francs to about 85,000 francs. Today a bag costs a whopping 100,000 Guinean francs or US \$22, which equates to more than half the average monthly salary of a civil servant.

As the Guinea franc tumbles against the dollar on a near day by day basis, petrol prices have also risen sharply in recent months fueling inflation, up to over 30% in 2005.

IRAN: The following letter, addressing world labour organisations, was issued in Tehran on Monday by the Tehran



bus workers' union Syndica Vahed:

The Syndicate of Workers of Tehran and Suburbs Bus Company [Sherkat e Vahed] is most grateful to all the world's labour organisations for their unsparing support for our newly-formed organisation.

The efforts and protests of Tehran Vahed Bus Company drivers and workers for their lawful, welfare [trade-union] demands, which have continued without let-up to this day, have included repeated visits to the Labour Ministry and [Tehran] Municipality, many rounds of negotiations with the relevant authorities and protest actions such as sit-ins, driving the buses with the lights on and two strikes. In the second strike, members of the union's executive board and over 850 union activists were arrested. At the moment, six of the union's executive board members are being held in Section 209 of Evin Prison on the charge of building a union [syndicate].

Furthermore, all the striking workers arrested on the day of the strike have been laid off. The authorities are refusing to address the sacked drivers' grievances; rather, they are supporting the bullying employers.

Therefore the Syndicate of Workers and Drivers of Tehran and Suburbs Bus Company declares that the demands of the workers and drivers of the bus company are rightful, lawful and welfare in nature, and that, as the workers' genuine representatives, we will stand by the workers until the achievement of all their legitimate, welfare demands. Furthermore, the Syndicate, on behalf of the bus company's drivers and workers, demands:

1. the unconditional release of all the members of the union's executive;
2. the reinstatement of all the laid-off workers; and
3. the meeting of workers' rightful welfare demands, such as correction of the basic pay, the signing of a collective agreement and election of a genuine representative.



SOUTH KOREA: Unions in South Korea launched a general strike on 28th February after the passage of a temporary workers bill by the National Assembly.

The Korean Confederation of Trade Unions began a full nationwide strike at 1 pm, protesting parliament's approval of the non-regular workers bill that unionists claim will increase the number of temporary labourers.

It said that a total of 150,000 unionists at over 150 workplaces, including 40,000 workers at Hyundai/Kia Motors, took part in strikes across the country.

The union, which represents more than 800,000 workers in various industrial sectors, also staged a massive outdoor rally yesterday in front of the Assembly.

Rail workers (pictured above) and subway workers also went on strike to demand better working conditions and employment rights.

The Korean Railway Workers' Union and the Seoul Metro Workers' Union have decided to take collective action, despite the government warning that it would refer the looming strike to compulsory arbitration. Striking workers would be forced to return to work and be banned from striking for 15 days if the Labour Minister invokes emergency arbitration powers.

Meanwhile, unionised workers of Korea Railroad (Korail) have been on a partial walkout since last Tuesday. They are asking the company to scrap its restructuring plan to reduce its workforce, reinstate some 70 laid-off workers and stop discriminating against non-regular workers.

USA: At least 150 Overland High School students walked out of class on 2nd March in protest at the administrators' decision to put a teacher on leave while they investigated remarks he made about President Bush during class, including that some people compare Bush to Adolf Hitler.

Cherry Creek School District administrators were investigating whether geography teacher Jay Bennis (pictured below) violated a policy requiring balancing viewpoints in the classroom, district spokeswoman Tustin Amole said.

Amole said Bennis was placed on administrative leave Wednesday to avoid further disruption at the school in this east Denver suburb.

She said the school had heard rumours about the protest, which included some students who objected to Bennis's comments. Students were told to return to class, but she said no disciplinary action was taken.

Amole said Bennis told school officials he had received threats as news of the allegations spread, but she did not speculate on what the threats were and or who had made them.



Prison news

Barcelona prisoners

Addresses have now been obtained for Ignassi and Ruben, the two comrades mentioned in the last issue, who were arrested in Barcelona on 9th February. Send solidarity cards urgently to:

- Ruben Masmano Bernel, (Modulo 1 de C.P. Brians), C.P. Can Brians, Apartado 1000, 08760 Martorell, Barcelona, Spain.
- Ignasi Antolino Perez, (Modulo 4 de C.P. Quatre Camins), Apartado 335, 08430 La Roca del Valles, Granollers-Barcelona, Spain.

A few days earlier, a number of other people were also arrested by police in Barcelona, and the following are still in custody:

- Rodrigo Andres Lanza Huidobro, C.P. Jovenes, C/ Padre Manjon 2, 08033 Barcelona, Spain.
- Juan Piato Garido, C.P. Jovenes, C/Padre Manjon 2, 08033 Barcelona, Spain.
- Alex Ruben Cisternas Amestica, Apartado de Corres 20, C.P. La

Modelo, 08080 Barcelona, Spain. Still in custody of course, are also the 'Barcelona 6' comrades arrested in September 2003:

- Carolina Forné Roig, C.P. de Ávila, Ctra. Vicolozano-Brieva, s/n., 05194 Brieva, Ávila, Spain.
- Rafael Tomás y Gaspar, C.P. de Topas Ctra. n-630, km. 314, 37799- Topas, Salamanca, Spain.
- Igor Quevedo Aragay, C.P. Madrid V Soto del Real, Apdo. 200, Colmenar Viejo 28791, Madrid, Spain.
- Joaquin Garces Villacampa, C.P. Madrid IV, Ctra Nacional V km 27,7, 28600 - Navalcarnero - Madrid, Spain.

More information on all these cases at www.presosalacalle.tk
Solidarity actions with the imprisoned Barcelona Anarchists are urgently called for. It should also be noted that there is no 'Legal Aid' in Spain so funds are desperately needed for their defence. If you can organise a benefit gig or other event please do so. Bank details for the various campaigns are given at the

website above. See Indymedia for details of solidarity events already organised.

Rob Coranado arrested

At the end of February, American animal rights and eco activist Rob Coranado was arrested and charged with distributing information on how to make incendiary devices. The charge relates to a talk he gave at an animal rights gathering in 2003. Following his arrest Rob was remanded in custody, the main reason apparently being that, together with fellow Earth First activist, Matt Crozier, Rob is due to be sentenced in early March for disrupting a mountain lion hunt in Arizona. Since Rob could be transferred to another prison at any time, his support campaign say that it is not currently practicable for people to write to him. Updates will be published on Indymedia.

Josh Demmit moved

American ALF prisoner Josh Demmit has now been transferred. Please write to him at: Joshua Demmit, 12314-081,

USP Victorville, U.S. Penitentiary, P.O. Box 5500, Adelanto, CA† 92301, USA.

Two new US ELF prisoners

Two more American environmentalists have been arrested and charged with involvement in an ELF arson attack on Jefferson Poplar Tree Farm in May 2001. According to the FBI they are part of a conspiracy that has already seen 11 other people indicted, and face 15 separate charges. Please send letters of support to:

- Nathan Fraser, Block 36359-086, FDC SeaTac, Federal Detention Center, PO Box 13900, Seattle, WA 98198, USA.
- Joyanna Lynn Zacher, 36360-086, FDC SeaTac, Federal Detention Center, PO Box 13900, Seattle, WA 98198, USA.

As always when writing to US prisoners, please put your name and address on the outside of the envelope. More information on the JPTF case at www.ecoprisoners.org

News

Duck and cover

Our exposure to Depleted Uranium is posing a danger that is being wilfully downplayed and ignored – John Couzin investigates

A new report has found that during the 'Shock and Awe' campaign in Iraq, radiation levels in Britain quadrupled, leading to fears that Depleted Uranium weapons used in the desert state may have affected most of Europe.

Chris Busby, of Liverpool University's department of human anatomy and cell biology, obtained the results from testing stations at the Atomic Weapons Establishment in Aldermaston and other stations within a 10-mile radius.

Depleted Uranium (DU) is a radioactive waste product which is also chemically toxic and is used by the military in armour piercing shells and bullets. When it hits a hard target it ignites and aerosolises into a fine mist of radioactive particles, if inhaled or ingested can cause cancer, leukaemia, birth defects, Gulf War Syndrome and other illnesses.

It can also enter the food chain through water and/or soil. The wind can send particles in all directions over a wide area. The area near the Dundrennan base in Scotland, where depleted uranium weaponry is tested, has the highest incidence of leukaemia in the UK.

Around 20-30 tonnes of DU waste is lying on the Solway seabed with the MoD making no attempt to retrieve this danger.

As DU is a radioactive waste, it is in breach of the Convention on the Prevention of Marine Pollution by Dumping Wastes and other Matter, 1972.

After the NATO invasion in former Yugoslavia evidence was found that NATO forces used DU on eight sites.

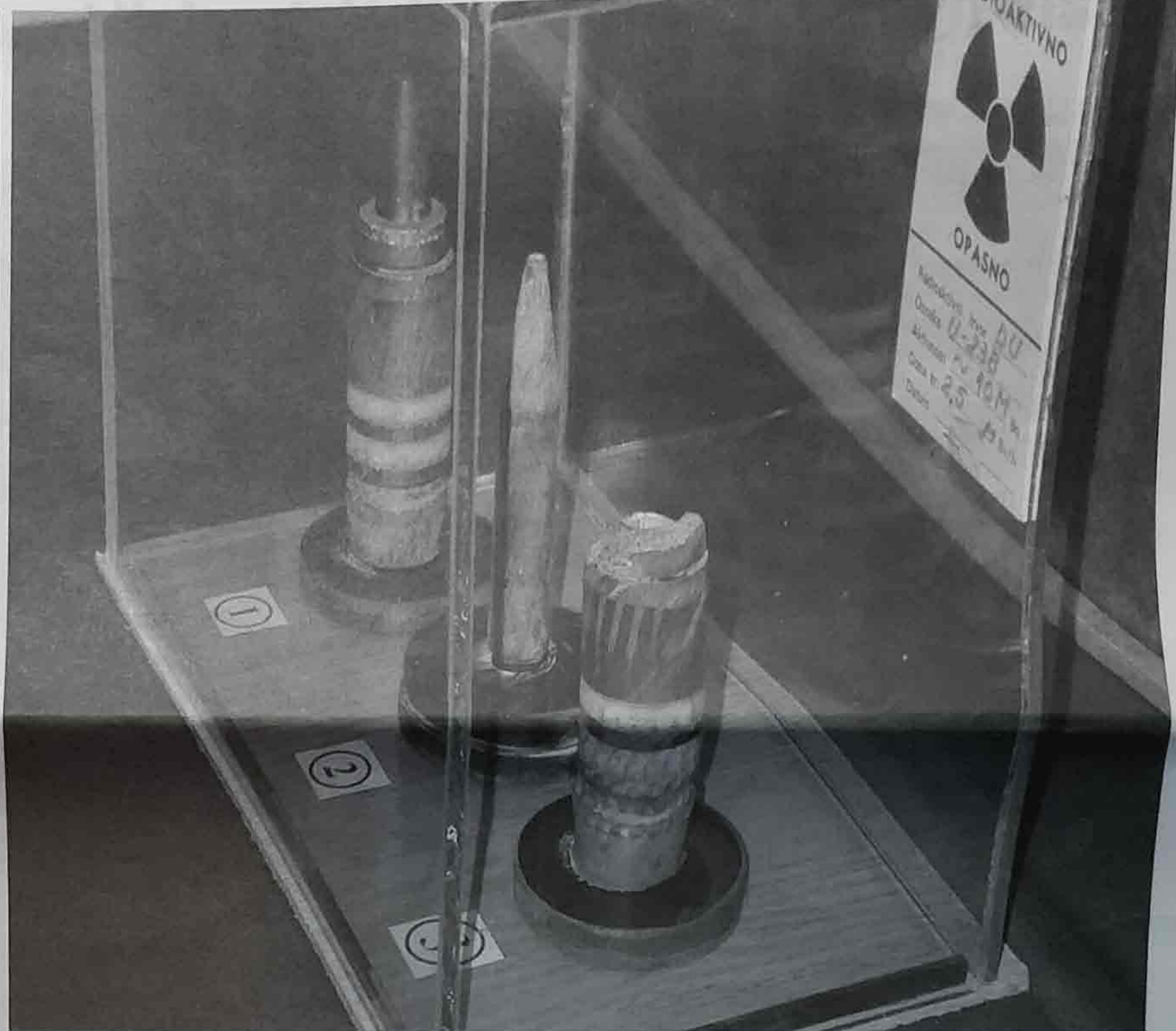
Seven of these sites were in the Republic of Serbia and one in the

Republic of Montenegro. Remains of weapons with DU were taken from the soil in these regions and contaminated soil was registered in each of these regions. From Yugoslav Army reports compiled during the war, plus investigation of projectile fragments and data about these types of weapons and how they are used, it can be estimated that NATO fired approximately 3,000 to 5,000 shells, which is the equivalent 1 to 1.5 tonnes of uranium 238.

These weapons were also used in both attacks on Iraq. The first Gulf War in 1991 resulted in 350 metric tonnes of DU being deposited in the environment and 3 to 6 million grms of DU being released into the atmosphere. Its legacy to the troops involved in the war, Gulf War Disease, a progressive, incapacitating, multi-organ system disorder, its symptoms include incapacitating fatigue, musculoskeletal and joint pains, headaches, neuropsychiatric disorders, confusion, visual problems, changes in gait, loss of memory, respiratory impairment, impotence and urinary tract morphological and functional alterations.

Uranium isotopes have been detected in urine samples of Gulf War veterans ten years after inhalation exposure. Rageh Omaar, a journalist reporting from Basra stated that Iraqi doctors have reported a 20-fold increase in cancers since the end of the first Gulf War.

It is obvious that DU is a highly dangerous substance. The fact that the states that use it are aware of this but continue to use it and put their own troops and the local populations at risk to further their own imperialist gains is



Depleted Uranium are shown for public viewing in Belgrade

just another example of the State's disregard for the people.

War is an arm of the state and it needs ordinary people as cannon fodder but has little interest in the resultant

suffering. If we wish to put an end to war and its suffering we have to find a way round the state. We have to eliminate its power by organising at community level, bring power into the

hands of the people, work in federation with other communities, creating a world of mutual aid, not profit, of co-operation, not competition, seeing to need, not greed.

Hate Mail forces charity closures

The only NGO in Britain mandated to fight the corner of asylum seekers facing deportation is due to close in May after a campaign by a far right media group.

The Daily Mail has run a ferocious campaign against NCADC after a £340,000 lottery grant was awarded to the charity, accusing the organisation of supporting asylum seekers linked to terrorism and urging readers to contact the lottery distributor of the Community Fund.

The London office of the Community Fund was flooded with hate mail which resulted in an inquiry by the then home secretary, David Blunkett into the application of community funding through the National Lottery. As a result of this hostility from the right-wing press, funders have become reluctant to give grants.

For NCADC, who need funding to keep their regional offices open 24 hours a day, seven days a week and 365 days a year, it is already almost too late. The

North East and Scotland office are now closed, the Northwest office is due to close in March, followed by the complete shutdown of the organisation in May.

One client of the charity, who didn't wish to be named, said: "We need to campaign for NCADC to keep their doors open for those who are suffering under the threat of deportation to where their human rights were severely abused. The work they are doing needs some money and this is very important because they can't achieve their objectives and help refugees and asylum seekers without it. They can't disappear because our lives depend on them."

For the past ten years NCADC has provided a back-bone of support for all anti-deportation campaigns across the UK, linking campaigns together, challenging misinformation in the mainstream press, opposing immigration controls and helping to foster 'communities of resistance'.

One campaigner said: "Please help NCADC stay open. We need to raise

£45,000 to keep the Manchester office open and £55,000 to keep the Birmingham office open. It sounds like a lot of money but it is not impossible. There will be a fund-raising meal in April at The Basement social centre in Manchester. We are hoping to put on a gig night and discussing other fund-raising ideas.

"The easiest way to help is to send money, either as a one-off donation or the best would be a standing order. It would take 750 people setting up standing orders for a fiver to keep the Manchester office open. If we cannot raise enough money and NCADC shuts down completely, all the money will go directly to assist the campaigns of people facing deportation. We cannot let the Daily Mail win." Standing order and on-off donation forms can be downloaded from ncadc.org.uk/donations/donate.htm

For more information on the Basement gig, email simple_things@riseup.net.

HSE cosy with bosses

A report brought out by the Hazards campaign has shown that the government's Health and Safety Executive have been deliberately not prosecuting offending companies and culling records of offenders from its website.

A series of 20 Freedom of Information requests have shown that the number of prosecutions by the government watchdog has dropped by a third over the last year since the executive brought in a new 'business-friendly' strategy.

HSE brought 712 prosecutions in 2004/05, down from 928 in 2003/04. It secured just 673 convictions, down from 887 the preceding year.

The executive had stressed that this was due to a new focus on 'naming and shaming' companies who broke health and safety laws on its website. But the campaign found during its investigation that the executive had actually done the opposite, stripping large numbers of names from its database.

The organisation's second big initiative is the Large Organisations Pilot Project, which invites companies to self-regulate. Of the first five companies to sign up, four have had recent criminal convictions for safety.

A private company using the Health and Safety Executive's brand will also be used for 'advisory workplace visits', but will not be able to enforce compliance on companies. Just under 10% of the executive's total budget is now spent on external consultants.

According to the Hazards report: "HSE is shifting away from inspections and the inspections it does undertake are not what they used to be. Inspectors now undertake quickie single topic inspections, instead of giving a workplace a thorough evaluation. Get one thing right and a firm may get a clean bill of health. The majority of major injuries at work do not result in a visit from an HSE inspector. HSE has neither the data nor the research to justify its shift."

News

Copper knobs

The battle over Papua's copper and gold deposits is heating up as locals fight back against their exploiters, reports Rob Ray

Mining giant Freeport-McMoran have violently cleared roadblocks thrown up by locals in protest at the company's exploitation of Papua's vast mineral resources and treatment of the indigenous population.

The Freeport mine in West Papua had been closed down on 22nd February by a crowd of over 400, but was reopened the next Saturday after discussions, according to the company.

Locals manned roadblocks and demanded an end to the Indonesian occupation and the expulsion of Freeport-McMoran. This was after police shot a local dead for trespassing on company land.

Papuans working inside the mine have also allegedly carried out acts of sabotage against the mine's pipeline system, which according to one correspondent, saw the river run clean for the first time in 30 years.

Locals in villages near to the Freeport mine had been combing the company waste tips for decades to relieve some of the grinding poverty in the community.

A decision was taken to clear the area, police were sent to the site, and found a large number of prospectors. President and CEO of Freeport McMoRan said: "The area they were doing this in is very dangerous; there have been mud slides and water events where people have drowned."

During the 'health and safety' based clearance, rubber bullets were fired, and tear gas used to disperse people, leaving five injured and one dead, according to local sources.

Further reports from inside the country have said that up to 500 heavily armed police then attempted to break up the resulting popular road blocks using live rounds.

Richard Adkerson, said in a speech to investors: "This is just part of the scenery of being in the mining industry today."

Benny Wenda, a Papuan campaigning for Indonesian withdrawal from the island, said: "This was a spontaneous demonstration, fired by the frustration and anger of ordinary people denied even the opportunity to pick over the rubbish left behind after the illegal exploitation of their homeland."

Freeport-McMoran have been repeatedly criticised on their work in West Papua by environmentalists, civil rights groups and international NGOs, and have for several decades been engaged in a major conflict with indigenous Papuans fighting to remove the company.

Freeport were alleged to have paid around \$20m to Indonesian military officers between 1988 and 2004 for their continued protection of the mining complex. Environmental group Global Witness have further claimed that one general was paid \$250,000 directly to protect the mine. Adkerson has admitted the payments, and responded by saying that any payments were within the law and pitched the figure for protection at closer to \$100m over the same period.

Lawyers in America are investigating whether the payments may have broken



The Freeport mine, and the pipeline running through the nearby forests. The mine, at Grasberg mountain, is sited on one of the local population's most revered sites.

international anti-corruption laws.

Even the Indonesian government have begun deliberations on whether to prosecute the company, this time for allegedly causing an environmental disaster through dumping into the Papuan river system.

Indonesia have nevertheless been accused of collusion with the Freeport mine in the course of its own crackdown in the country, which has seen hundreds

of violations of international human rights law, according to campaigners.

West Papua has effectively been under military rule since Indonesia invaded in 1962.

The International Federation of Journalists renewed their campaign to force the government to allow foreign media into the area after a blanket ban was imposed by the Indonesian government eighteen months ago.

The Indonesian Minister of Defence, Juwono Sudarsono, claimed at the time that the ban was required because an international presence might "encourage Papuans to campaign on issues of human rights".

The Freeport mines, on the Grasberg mountain in Papua, are thought to sit on the largest gold deposit and third largest copper deposit anywhere in the world.

Global growth, employment sloth

A major new report has shown that despite robust growth in global GDP for 2005, the numbers of people unemployed and in absolute poverty have not changed.

The International Labour Office found in its Global Employment Trends report that the world had experienced a 4.3% growth in GDP. But of the 2.8 billion workers of the world, half were still paid less than \$2 a day, the same amount as ten years ago.

The report undermines widespread acceptance within governmental leaders of the G8 group of the world's most powerful nations that expanding 'neo-liberal' economic theory helps to drag the poor out of poverty.

The highly damaging report found that the young have been particularly hard-hit in recent years by the effective regression (taking inflation into account) of wages and lack of available jobs.

The ILO said almost half of the world's unemployed are now young people aged 15 to 24, and that they are more

than three times as likely as adults to be out of work. The ILO called this figure "troublesome", given that youth make up only 25% of the working-age population.

Of the 500 million extreme working poor, less than 3% had bettered the \$1 a day poverty line. The global unemployment rate currently stands at 191.8 million people, an increase of 34.4 million since 1995.

ILO Director-General Juan Somavia said: "We are facing a global jobs crisis of mammoth proportions, and a deficit in decent work that isn't going to go away by itself. We need new policies and practices to address these issues."

The largest increase in unemployment occurred in Latin America and the Caribbean, where the number of unemployed rose by nearly 1.3 million and the unemployment rate increased by 0.3 percentage points between 2004 and 2005 to 7.7%.

Also the Central and Eastern Europe (non-EU) and CIS region witnessed a

year-over-year increase in unemployment, which stood at 9.7%, up from 9.5% in 2004.

In developed economies and the European Union (EU) meanwhile unemployment rates declined from 7.1% in 2004 to 6.7% in 2005.

'Economic shocks' such as the rising price of fuel are likely to hit the poorest and most rural parts of the world hardest over the next decade, the report suggested, because alternative structures for energy production were not available and unaffordable.

The report follows a period of extended campaigning by NGOs to 'make trade fair', at recent G8 and World Trade Organisation meetings.

But anti-capitalist and campaigning groups have attacked initiatives such as 'Make Poverty History', which saw support from unions, NGOs and celebrities, pointing out that the group have cheerleaded policy changes which are likely to reinforce poverty in the poorest countries rather than eliminate it.

Afghan sounds

It was recently announced that yet more British troops are heading for Afghanistan. St George and his malleable sidekick, St Tony, have decreed that in their crusade to save the world (especially the USA and UK) from the far-reaching tentacles of terrorism – and heroin[ism] – Afghanistan must be tamed.

British troops are being stationed in the southern territory of Helmand, with the expectation that some 3,300 of them will be deployed there by late summer. This UN-sanctioned intervention has a multi-pronged purpose: Helmand is considered to be a lawless region; under the control of drug lords, the Taliban, and an alleged al-Qaeda stronghold. Added to this, the area is fertile ground for poppies, estimated at yielding a trade in heroin valued at £650m per year.

Military bigwigs spout the well worn soundbite that interrupting the flow of the region's narcotics trade will deprive al-Qaeda of lucrative funds, and therefore

keep the threat of terrorism away from our shores. Helmand, roughly the size of Wales, is considered by the militarists to represent a fertile training ground for insurgency.

What everyone still seems to be avoiding mentioning, however, is the subject of oil. Specifically, the Caspian Sea Pipeline Project. Not so back in 1998, when Dick Cheney was enthusing, "I cannot think of a time when we have had a region emerge as suddenly to become as strategically significant as the Caspian." However, in order to make this pipe-dream of pumping black gold all the way back to the Mediterranean a reality, Afghanistan was vital.

Then came the slightly convenient 9/11, and shortly afterward troops moved in, removed the Taliban and the pipeline was back on. So frantic were the US to have things run smoothly, Congress lobbied for the overturning of sanctions against Azerbaijan, in order to allow the proposed pipe to run through that territory.

Feature

Middle East class war

Capitalism and Islam are twin parasites in the 'Arab states' – but workers are fighting back hard, reports John Shute

The Gulf city-state of Dubai is, according to recent estimates, the fastest-growing city on earth and is, after Shanghai, certainly the world's biggest building site. Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid al-Maktoum, a multimillionaire, intends Dubai to be a fantasy island catering to every taste – a hyper-Las Vegas, with underwater hotels, chains of theme parks and Burj Dubai, planned to be the world's tallest building.

The Middle East is awash with money right now, as, post-9/11, Middle Eastern investors abandon the West and bring their dollars home. The Saudis have already repatriated one third of their trillion dollar overseas portfolio, with at least \$7 billion invested in Dubai, and oil wealth from the United Arab Emirates is cast around the region in search of profit.

Dubai is, on one view, a stand-alone dreamworld in the Middle East, intended as an Arab Cayman Islands. Equally, though, in its attitude to labour rights and its super-exploitation of migrant labour, it has much in common with its neighbours.

Trade unions and strike action are illegal and the majority of the workforce are South Asian contract labourers. In 2003, Human Rights Watch described the Emirates as "building prosperity from forced labour". Asian workers have their passports and visas confiscated by recruitment agents and are crowded eight-to-twelve in squalid rooms in labour camps on the outskirts of cities. That pattern of exploitation is mirrored throughout the region.

There is an economic boom in Saudi Arabia, attracting foreign investment to the country. The fact that trade unions and strikes are prohibited doubtless increases the attraction for investors. Migrant workers constitute almost two-thirds of the workforce and hold over 90% of private sector jobs.

Migrants have to have a sponsor – an employer – to be allowed to work in Saudi Arabia, and have to hand over their passports to sponsors, and cannot change jobs. In Egypt a similar situation exists.

Most workers in Egypt have the right, in theory, to form and join a trade union, provided at least 50 workers in an enterprise request the right to organise. All trade unions are required to belong to the Egyptian Trade Union Federation, the sole legally recognised trade union centre. The ETUF is effectively the labour arm of the ruling National Democratic Party, hence independent trade unions are not able to organise legally in Egypt. The ETUF must approve a strike for it to be legal.

Strikes are prohibited in the "strategic or vital establishments where interrupting the work therein will result in disturbing

national security or the basic services provided by them to the citizens." It is up to the Prime Minister to define these establishments by means of a decree. The Egyptian state is not slow either to use the full force available to it to repress independent labour organisation. In March 2004 a thousand troops prevented an engineers' protest about restrictions on union organising. In October 2004 the police besieged the Abou Tartour Phosphate Mines to force striking miners back to work.

It would be a mistake to believe that such repression is common only to those Middle Eastern states which are the regional clients of Western imperialism. The 'Islamic Republic' of Iran, the product of a grassroots revolution in 1979, wasted no time in crushing independent labour and neighbourhood self-organisation.

The independent trade union movement had been suppressed by the Shah since the coup of 1953. In the years of the revolution Iran was alive with workers councils, neighbourhood co-ordinating groups, and organised squatter campaigns, with the oil workers to the fore. The Islamic leaders sought to portray their decapitation of the revolution as part of the inqilab-l-mustaz'afin – the revolution of the downtrodden. In fact the Islamic state has suppressed the independent organisation of the working class, and used the 'defence of the Revolution' to deflect anger at its betrayals of the poor.

Thus, variously, Iraq and the 'Satanic West' have been used to portray an external threat to the 'Revolution' as a means of suppressing internal dissent. Despite consistent repression, the Committee in Pursuit of Free Labour Organisations continues to fight for working class self-organisation in Iran against the state-lackeys of the Islamic Labour Councils. Violent attacks on independent trade unions are commonplace in Iran, with the recent assaults and imprisonments of bus drivers in Tehran being only the most recent.

The wealth of the Middle East bourgeoisie is founded on both the resources of the region – principally oil – and the super-exploitation of both native and migrant labour. The region is a giant sweat-shop with basic trade union rights crushed into the sand.

It is worth noting that those 'heralds of democracy' – the US/UK invaders in Iraq – have failed to include the right to workplace organisation as part of the 'democratic' package.

The oil policy foisted on Iraq will hand control of oil development over to foreign companies through production sharing agreements. At least 64% of Iraq's oil fields will be allocated for development by multinational oil companies, in the interests of international capital and US/UK energy security.

Meanwhile the Iraqi people are left



The 'Palm' at Jumeirah. Inset, the recently completed Ski Dubai facility, which has created an indoor ski slope with real snow in the middle of the desert for tourists.

without reliable water or electrical services, collapsing transport infrastructure and sanitation. For Iraqi workers, the labour laws of the Ba'athist state have been replaced by complete deregulation – with those still in work left unpaid for weeks on end. Contractors working in Iraq, including Halliburton Corp, have brought tens of thousands of migrant workers to Iraq from impoverished countries such as Nepal, the Philippines and Bangladesh to carry out menial jobs. The US military requires that contractors hire migrant workers to work at bases to avoid the possibility of insurgent infiltration.

All rhetoric aside, the situation of the Iraqi working class shows a common class interest shared by the Shia, Sunni and Kurdish elites and the US/UK invaders. This is reflected across the region. Whether pro-Western or Islamic, the Middle East states function through the repression of working class self-organisation and exploitation of labour in the interests of both national and foreign capital.

The dawning recognition of this allows the possibility of organising class-based resistance both to imperialism and national capital. In Gaza, Independent Workers Committees have formed to challenge the Palestinian Authority (PA)

and demand the exemption from school registration fees for the children of workers and the unemployed; establishment of a social solidarity fund for the systematic payment of unemployment compensation; the cancellation of utility debts owed by the poor; free health insurance to workers and the unemployed; regulation of the Palestinian Authority's distribution of temporary jobs; free elections to the General Union of Palestinian Workers.

The Independent Workers Committees have learned through the establishment of the Palestinian Authority (PA) and the use of PA police to suppress demonstrations by the unemployed that those who sacrificed the most during the intifada have gained the least from the PA. The fight for working class self-organisation should be seen as essential to the drive to remove the US/UK imperialists from the region – the national ruling classes have more to gain from the presence of foreign capital and foreign arms than from their departure.

Across the region, there is a coalition of interests which stretches from the Islamic Republic of Iran, via the Halliburton courtiers in Iraq to the playboys of the Emirates – focused on the exploitation and repression of the working class. James Zogby, of the

Arab American Institute recently warned that the 10 million foreign workers in the region formed a "time bomb waiting to explode".

Any struggle for working class self-organisation across the region has to extend to fighting for equal rights for the guest worker underclass, a network of solidarity and resistance which extends between all of the workers of the region – from oil workers in Iran to Sri Lankan maids in Dubai. For revolutionaries in the West, it is important to avoid getting sucked into the morass of debates around secularism vrs militant Islam, as if there were a pure legacy of the Enlightenment wherein individual rights and the separation of church and state were the products of bourgeois thought rather than gains of political struggle.

Political Islam is the form militant nationalism takes following the collapse of Stalinism and secular nationalism. The rhetoric of the mullahs serves to hide the inability of political Islam to either deliver social justice in the Islamic Republic of Iran or fight for it elsewhere. Our role is to deliver militant solidarity to those in the region who seek to combine the fight for social justice with the fight against imperialism, through the self-organisation of the working class in the Middle East.

Commentary

FREEDOM

Volume 67 Number 5

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

Welcome to the first ever full-colour fronted edition of Freedom! As much as it will pain us to wave goodbye (at least for the present) to the restrictions of red and black for page one, we've got to move with the times etc.

Much thanks must go, as always, to Aldgate Press, who have sustained Freedom for many years through a combination of close ties and an extraordinary amount of goodwill on their part. Without them the paper would not happen, and going colour was an unexpected and very welcome offer on their part.

On other matters (we'll ignore the pleas for help, just for once), building work has suddenly gotten all serious next door, with enormous drills coming and going for the foundations of this enormous residential project. To anyone who has been to the shop recently and had their thoughts drowned out, our apologies (though watching the drill at work is curiously restful).

We have also finally completed the process of sorting through the Freedom archives, which are now up to date in the autonomy club, for anyone curious about the background of important current events over the last few years or who wants to take a walk back through the various weird and wonderful incarnations of the paper.

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Next issue

The next issue will be dated 11th March 2006 and the last day to get copy to us (see contact details above) will be Friday 3rd March.

Mountain mystery

There does seem to be a bit of a mystery about Anarchist Mountain in your quiz (11th February), below is all that there seems to be about the name:

The rich strikes at Camp McKinney attracted settlers to the region. At the forks of Nine Mile Creek, almost on the international boundary line, R. (Dick) G. Sidley, who came from Ontario and whose brother was professor of English at McGill University, took up a homestead in 1885.

He gave Anarchist Mountain its name, and established the first post office. He also became the first Customs Officer on the mountain, and the first Justice of the Peace. A wagon road was cut a distance of eight miles through the timber from Camp McKinney to Sidley in 1893. It was through the Sidley port of entry and over this road that Monahan and King brought in the ten stamp mill for the Cariboo mine at Camp McKinney.

Today the miners have disappeared from Anarchist Mountain, and farming and logging have become mechanised. The loneliness and privations of early ranch life are gone, and the automobile, telephone, radio and airplane have shortened distances.

Anarchist Mountain is believed to be named for a mysterious anarchist said to be either a renegade rancher or a lonely hermit with radical ideas.

Not a lot, perhaps other readers can come up with something else.

John Couzin

Crime and community

John Shute's article on Crime and Community (11th February) was a spot-on critique on the IWCA's reformist tendencies regarding policing. Whilst their strategy of direct action is commendable, the IWCA cannot become part of what is called the 'crime control industry'. In their programme they state that they wish to see the police return to being a 'civic service'. Presumably they believe in the golden age of policing – the friendly bobby on the beat – but the police have never served the working class. (Members of the IWCA should be read Tony Bunyan's *The History and Practice of The Political Police in Britain*, which details the formation of British police forces in the nineteenth century and shows how they have always been used to contain and control the working class.)

Moreover, Shute's piece highlights the folly of electoral action: to win elections you have to appeal to an old set of ideas about how people relate to each other. Judging by their programme, the IWCA don't want to see all that much change. I cannot help but feel that rather than encouraging other working class people to vote for them, the IWCA should be encouraging them to abstain.

James

An NHS view

The NHS is a massive, overstuffed bureaucratic organisation which is badly run (actually, it isn't run at all) and which has lost sight of its purpose – caring for patients.

Morale is low too. The only surprise is that just when everyone working in the NHS thinks morale has reached rock bottom, things get even worse.

But the NHS could be taken out of intensive care and put well on the road to recovery in a week if the politicians would take the action that is needed. This is what they should do:

- Close the Department of Health in London. This massive but entirely useless organisation is a white elephant which adds nothing but confusion to health care and kills far more people than it cures. The government should sell the posh offices, fire the overpaid staff and use the money to build more hospitals and hire more nurses.

- Fire at least two out of three administrators.

- Inform drug companies that the NHS will cut the prices paid for drugs by a third. Britain pays higher drugs prices than any other country. The NHS drug bill is soaring, as are international drug company profits. Soft politicians are allowing the drug multinationals to bleed the NHS dry. This simple move will liberate billions for patient care.

- Force doctors to incorporate the best aspects of alternative care into the NHS. Heart disease can be cured without drugs – as can many cancers. Alternative cures are often safer and cheaper, as well as being more effective. The drug industry wants to get rid of the competition from safe and natural therapies because these cannot be patented and the profits are too small (plus natural therapies tend to keep people healthy and help prevent illness and that simply isn't good for business).

- Begin a massive health education programme designed to teach people the facts about healthy living. Most people don't realise it, but at least eight out of ten cancers can be prevented. Most cases of heart disease can be prevented too.

- Publish details of hospital and doctor success and failure rates. This would enable patients to vote with their feet.

- Improve hospital food. Astonishingly 40% of adults on hospital wards are suffering from malnutrition because they have been fed so badly. The food in hospitals is often inedible, chefs and dieticians need to be retrained.

- Train nurses properly. A few years ago leading nurses decided they, as a profession, would gain more respect if they had academic qualifications. It was decided that the only way a nurse should get promotion or a salary increase would be to move into management, so all the best nurses stopped dealing with patients and started moving bits of paper around instead.

These two developments have destroyed nursing as a caring profession. Today there are too many nurses who regard themselves as too important to do any practical caring – feeding patients is just too demeaning for someone with letters after their name.

Too many nurses have become jobsworths, unwilling, unhelpful and far too self-important. For decades I have been screaming that we need to bring back matrons, ward sisters (and ward clerks to deal with the paperwork). I firmly believe that hospitals went into terminal decline when old-fashioned matrons were phased out and replaced by battalions of uncaring bureaucrats.

And we desperately need to get rid of the rules that make it impossible for a consultant or a senior nurse to discipline – or even admonish – a nurse who makes a stupid, careless or thoughtless mistake. "You can't shout at anyone," said one frustrated doctor, "they'll sue you."

No-one gives a damn for the poor patients who are being maltreated. In the

end the really bad nurses are promoted to management positions, to keep them away from patients. New Labour has set up 31 separate health watchdogs and quangos employing nearly 20,000 highly paid administrators but it is estimated that over 1.4m people are injured or killed by preventable errors in the NHS.

- Stop trying to provide medical care for optional treatments on the NHS. For example, IVF treatment is not life-saving and should not be provided free of charge as long as patients who are dying remain untreated.

Why do we need state IVF when many thousands of children remain unadopted? Britain has the worst cancer care record in Europe, but we have free IVF for everyone who asks. The two are not disconnected.

This is madness. It is an outrage that patients are given sex change or breast enlargement operations or fertility treatment on the NHS when patients are dying because the NHS cannot provide basic diagnostic or treatment facilities. Providing infertility clinics on the NHS at the moment is like putting go faster stripes on a car without an engine.

Vernon Coleman

Respect for whom

This so called 'Respect Bill', does this mean an end to the police pouncing on the opportunity of ransacking people's homes, dragging the terrified victims from their beds and manhandling them into police cars to be arrested on fabricated evidence?

Then for search squads to crash through the house like bulls in a china shop, smashing everything in their way, at the same time showing no concern for privacy and basic civil rights?

Or how about an end to the wrath of mounted cavalry and baton-wielding screaming police officers upon peaceful demonstrators as witnessed at G8 2005?

Perhaps the 'Bill' means an end to innocent commuters being the target of jittery gun-waving cops, who are the judge, jury and executioner?

Stew (The Peoples Resistance Brigade)

Book reviews

page 7

and The Constant Gardener show, and to which a slew of forthcoming films will further testify. The resurgence of cinema documentary also shows the dissatisfaction of sizeable audiences with both blockbuster entertainment and corresponding current affairs spin. But while corruption and malpractice by government and business, environmental damage, and the effects of corporate imperialism on the poor at home and abroad are now gratifyingly familiar on screen, merely updating clichéd cinematic formulae reproduces traditional resolutions revolving around heroes and leaders. As Dickenson emphasises, prominent figures like Tim Robbins and Sean Penn belatedly realised that mainstream party politics is constitutionally incapable of keeping progressive promises. But then many moviegoers saw through that façade years ago, yet elections are still won by media stars (e.g. Governors Schwarznegger of California and Jesse Ventura of Minnesota) and presidential circuses still distract activists.

Hollywood liberals now initiate and

support grass-roots campaigns rather than just cosying up to Democrat stooges. But, as the Live 8 debacle again proved, any 'anticapitalism' advocating stronger states, fairer trade and global institutional charity scarcely dents the status quo. Neither will we hold our breaths waiting for serious revolutionary politics from such a notoriously dictatorial and capricious system as the cinema, whose 'talent' cherish charisma over depth or substance.

Nonetheless, its global output seeps into billions of psyches, spectacularising the obsessions and fantasies of the powerful. Along with this book's clarity in dissecting the recent history of the entertainment sector, it is most useful for understanding how the more well-meaning creative denizens of tinseltown wrestle with their consciences in Hollywood's new recuperation. Complementary analysis of how their efforts influence the lives of viewers can then illuminate cultural industry strategies for profiting from 21st century dissent.

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Hollywood's New Radicalism: War, Globalization and the Movies from Reagan to George W. Bush, by Ben Dickenson, published by I.B. Tauris, priced £14.99.

Educators

page 1

supreme Ruth Kelly to state that she would personally help close the pay gap between university lecturers and teachers by upping wages.

Following the merger vote, it is hoped the strike will herald a stop to lecturers disrespecting picket lines. Eighteen months ago AUT saw themselves abandoned by Nafthe and Unison during a two day walkout. One ex-student remembers: "The result was that AUT universities (basically old universities) got a much better deal, although it kind of split the workforce. At my university it was pretty solid though, and Unison members wouldn't cross picket lines."

"I did a load of work on it on the two days, and the staff really appreciated it. Even just going between the various picket lines, bringing coffee, food and encouragement was really well received."

Student union groups have had mixed reactions to the news, with the most negative reaction coming from Bristol's student union, who said they would "campaign against" any local actions by lecturers.

Quiz answers

1. Because the slogans on them were "provocative". The slogans included 'I've Got AIDS' and 'I Didn't Cry when the Pope Died'. The Bishop of Lublin said "to write 'I've got Aids' or 'I've had an abortion' on a t-shirt you would have to be devoid of all human feelings."
2. V For Vendetta. Writer Alan Moore has distanced himself so much from the project that his name is not even on the credits.
3. Batman, after DC Comics created a character called 'Anarky', complete with the usual stereotypes.
4. In Lewisham, 1977, to protect the fascist National Front. The NF still complained about the lack of protection after a very successful counter-demo.

REVIEW

Hollywood's New Radicalism is a fascinating account of attempts to subvert the film industry from within, says Tom Jennings

The old fashioned top-down movie business, where studio moguls reigned supreme and rigidly controlled all aspects of film production, broke down in the 1960s in the face of the commercial deregulation and restructuring, needed to cater to changing cultural and technological landscapes and patterns of consumption.

Those inspired by the countercultural and grass-roots energy of the era took advantage, extending the range of material reaching the public in films that were profoundly innovative, politically challenging and often extremely popular. Hollywood's New Radicalism intelligently documents the subsequent interplay of commercial agendas and American political retrenchment, focusing on the efforts of liberals and leftists involved in film production to reflect their social awareness in their work – eventually culminating in today's explicitly political mainstream cinema.

Sixties directors harnessed avant-garde art and European film styles and philosophies, taking advantage of the liberal atmosphere to realise freedom of cinematic expression, and their appeal to newly-affluent rebellious youth audiences massively expanded the cultural production sector. Impressive box office business attracted venture capital throughout the 1970s, which rationalised the industry's chaotic structure and narrowed content to the most predictably profitable.

Previously buccaneering individualist outsiders were absorbed into Hollywood by the 1980s when the enterprise revolution tightened corporate grips and abandoned social commitments. Aristocrats like Oliver Stone screamed betrayal, but younger, more pragmatic independents continued exploring narrative and style on the margins. Many signed with newly consolidating 1990s studios – themselves desperately seeking niche markets – only to encounter the triple whammy of Clinton's duplicity, Seattle's protest revival, and the Old Testament logic of 9/11 and its aftermath.

The discomfort of film industry professionals concerning the inability to

articulate progressive political change is best conceived in terms of the general disillusionment among the middle classes with social democracy, given their failure to predict or comprehend the unravelling liberal consensus. 1980s and '90s neo-noir, postmodern and 'slacker' stories then symbolise thoroughgoing refusals of traditional fallacies (not paranoid detachment or self-indulgence as Dickenson assumes) by those growing up without the benefits of 1960s naiveté, making possible new forms of collective mobilisation such as anti-globalisation.

However, the current Hollywood activism is unfortunately translated onto the screen using largely retrograde narrative conventions, without the stylistic and technical experimentation previously employed to reflect underlying malaises in Western society. The most obvious symptoms of war and corporate excess are thus mistaken for ultimate causes – whereas, ironically, the deeper colonisation of intimate life by the instrumental logic of commodification has Hollywood at its vanguard.

The book's argument that commercial studio pressures are decisive constraints on the degree of social consciousness allowed into films makes intuitive sense. However, the implication that suitably nimble strategies among liberal filmmakers guarantees progressive content does justice neither to contemporary political circumstances – where the intentions and interests of the intelligentsia are so widely, thoroughly and understandably distrusted – nor to a media culture in which superficial appearance is seductively fetishised to mask the depressing difficulties of real life.

It also downplays independent cinema's diverse and troubled ambivalence. Negotiating prevailing tastes and engaging deeper desires while also offering genuine critique is much trickier than the voluntaristic idealism of celebrities suggests. So radical directors often skilfully portray middle class protagonists striving to maintain their positions entangled in complex local hierarchies and histories, with very mixed consequences for those with less room to manoeuvre. Regrettably, the



latter's rich social dynamic is often simultaneously homogenised into frozen victimised masses thawed by individual heroics.

Therefore judgements of films like *Cradle Will Rock* (1999), *Erin Brockovitch* (2000), or *Dogville* (2003) as 'radical' is highly problematic given their respective nostalgia for elite 'proletarian art' when 'people knew their place'; sanctimonious self-marketing by the diligently aspirational underclass; and patronising contempt

for resentful victims of history struggling to maintain humanity. Conversely, *Bulworth* (1998) transcends charges of cynical fatalism with its respect for ghetto philosophy and disavowal of hope in professional careerism; and *Fight Club* (1999) is dismissed as reactionary nihilism despite demystifying middle class 'consumer politics' – specifically the fascistic appeal of cult violence viscerally countering the sterile slow death offered by corporate and

therapeutic lifestyles. In short, political implications surely depend on the responses and subsequent actions of viewers, not simplistic readings of film narratives as realist manifestoes or their makers' complacencies as gospel.

The Empire's New Clothes

Hollywood's New Radicalism is certainly justified in identifying a fresh wave of liberal content – as last year's *I Heart Huckabees*, *Crash*, *Lord of War*

➔ page 6, column 4

FILM

Hidden
directed by Michael Haneke (orig. *Caché*; in French with English subtitles)

This unsettling masterpiece continues Austrian writer-director Michael Haneke's merciless dissection of middle-class complacent complicity. An implacable domestic thriller, *Hidden* exploits contemporary paranoia around video surveillance, with tapes of their stylish Paris home delivered to the Laurents – highbrow TV presenter Georges (Daniel Auteuil), publisher Anne (Juliette Binoche) and their twelve year-old son Pierrat.

The affluent intellectual couple's relationship unravels as they wrestle

with memory, guilt and denial once the anonymous 'stalker' also shoots Georges' childhood home and a grubby high-rise flat. The latter is the present address of Majid, who was banished to an orphanage by Georges' parents after his own (their domestic servants) were among hundreds of Algerian immigrant protestors killed by Parisian police in the 'Black Night' of 17th October 1961. In exploring how individual biography and social hierarchy dovetail in producing history, the film provocatively punctures the self-serving vanity of Western liberal superiority.

The manipulation accomplished by its meticulous structure exploits the encroachment of media simulation on

our understanding of reality – with the efforts of the Laurents to conceal from themselves and each other the centrality in their lives of their various evasions, hypocrisies and duplicities paralleling the audience's puzzlement.

The static high-definition video photography blurs boundaries between different levels of representation – natural footage and staged action; external event and replay; internal experience of dreams, fantasies and flashbacks – with similar symbolic codes mobilised in visual design, perspective and editing. Being unsure of the status or significance of what they/we see fuels feverish imagination, failing communication and tragically escalating misunderstanding.

Compared with, say, Hitchcock's reactionary conservatism or Lynch's mystical fetishism, Haneke's forcefully innovative cinematic sadism is more expansive and forward-looking. If the clinical deconstructions of miserable bourgeois inadequacy in his earlier films indulged neurotic obsession, here the integrity of younger generations refuses the parent society's dishonesty.

The suggestiveness of Georges' infantile envy and resentment wrecking Majid's life may seem an unsatisfactorily heavy-handed allegory for differential power and the class and race hatred still fundamental to mainstream Western society. However, emotional and cognitive patterns

conducive to domination are nurtured early in the egos and cultures of the respectable middle-classes – operating precisely through misrecognition, displacement, denial and projection overlain with rationalisation and aestheticisation.

Whereas the children's rebellion (signposted throughout, and with their collusion explicit in the end-credits) shatters smug pretensions via direct solidaristic engagement – but decidedly not when *Hidden* by higher tastes and dissembling moral dispositions amongst those whose comfort necessitates ignoring the social roots and ramifications of its constitution.

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A Sideways Look

One of my colleagues at work has been studying the grievance procedure. He thinks he's got a watertight case against our employer for consistently refusing him training. I think he's right. He isn't alone in having suffered from an employer that flaunts its 'Investors in People' logo, but at the moment he's the only one pursuing it.

Recently there have been some quite angry scenes at our workplace, because of contractual shenanigans between our employer and the customer we all ultimately work for. Lots of people are angry and aren't holding back from giving management an earful. When a senior manager told staff at a briefing that "the customer doesn't like us anymore" he was put in his place: "It's not us they don't like - it's you!"

The lack of training has become an important issue - technology changes rapidly and if you've been without training for five years in most jobs you are effectively being de-skilled. A lot of anger was expressed in recent briefings about this, but so far the only training to be confirmed is 'customer care'; not really something you're going to put on your CV.

Investors in People is a tool to stop capitalists shooting themselves in the foot, their instincts tend towards treating staff like mushrooms (you know the rest!). It gets them to recognise that they do need to train their workers, particularly with the pace of change. The Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development calculate that recruitment of professional-level workers costs between £4,000 and £6,000. By training people and giving them a 'career path', they are saving themselves a lot of money on recruitment, particularly if they can fill expensive vacancies by internal promotion.

It also plays a role in defining what training is useful to the business. This then means that anything outside the scope of that definition can be refused, thus saving money.

What is surprising is that more people at my workplace aren't coming forward to put in a grievance. They know about it and help is available. I discussed this with my aggrieved colleague and we both agreed it's because people are limited in their visions of what is possible, or even permissible, at work. Some of it is undoubtedly the exhaustion that comes with an excessive workload, that saps all your energy. But many people truly think there are no other choices than those offered by the employer. However, even a simple smattering of knowledge - like knowing your rights about breaks and contracts - can put you in a more powerful position. Most managers don't know any of this - they rely on distant Human Resources departments. My manager now just automatically assumes I'm going to be better informed than him - and has even asked me about some of our

custom and practice.

If more of us had that confidence to challenge what goes on perhaps we wouldn't now be in the situation of needing to put in grievances. Don't assume there's nothing you can do about workplace issues - arm yourself with information and stand up to management

Svartfrosk

Blast from the Past

Taken from Freedom 13th March 1954, entitled Removing 'Natives' from Jo'burg Hendrik Verwoerd, Minister of Native Affairs in the Malan Government, introduced a bill this month that would empower his ministry to settle elsewhere the largest body of city dwelling industrialised Negroes in Africa.

The legislation, already approved by a majority caucus, will therefore become a law. It provides for the removal of natives from any area in the magisterial district of Johannesburg or any adjoining magisterial district and their settlement elsewhere. The legal reference to 'magisterial district' means Witwatersrand, the wealthiest industrial, financial and commercial centre in Africa and the world's principle source of gold.

A large proportion of the Negro population live in Johannesburg and Witwatersrand Negro slums and in so-called 'slums in the sky', boxlike constructions on the roofs of buildings in white sections of the city.

The power to remove and resettle Negroes of the Witwatersrand is being asked at the same time a process is being completed empowering the Ministry of Native Affairs to drive Negro squatters and tenants of various sorts off white-owned farms without the obligation to provide other homes for them.

The principle purpose of the new law is to enforce apartheid, or separation of races, on the industrial Witwatersrand, with its constantly swelling Negro labour force. However, it also is intended, the Minister of Native Affairs has stated, to enable his ministry to break up the great Negro slums and provide air, light and an opportunity for decent living for the Negro masses.

The slum population had reached a hopeless dead end. The wealthy municipality of Johannesburg has been building a very limited number of houses annually to rent to Negroes in locations. At the same time Johannesburg scheduled millions of dollars to be spent of new civic centres in white districts and expended great sums every year in improving the splendid white suburbs that stretch for miles.

Slum clearance plans have been drawn up, but recently the municipality even refused a request of the Ministry of Native Affairs to provide water stand pipes and cesspools on municipal land for natives living in shack towns with no source of clean water and no sanitation whatever.

Imagine if...

Peter 'Yes to war' Hain inspected his speech. He was pleased with it. Peter 'Yes to ID' Hain was not a man at home to Mister Irony as he checked over his speech to a union conference in Tyneside.

"Labour must learn the lessons of its own history and ensure that the priorities of a small, unrepresentative number of people are not allowed to distort our programme" the foundation hospital supporting MP muttered under his breath, as he prepared.

He was nearly ready for his speech, which would place him firmly in the driving seat in his rivalry with Alistair 'Yes to top up fees' Darling for the title of Labour cabinet minister most in touch with popular opinion 2006.

The two of them were neck and neck, he thought, but his tirade against leadership devoid of listening was a masterpiece.

Peter '£150k a year and a second home in Spain' Hain was, he knew, a true man of the people.

"We should do this not to betray our principles, as some would allege, but in order to keep our relevance as a political party," said a man whose campaigning was paid for with union money.

Peter 'helped preside over a collapse in public participation in party politics' Hain thought for a moment, and added that the party could keep in touch with the public by "broadening involvement".

Finally, satisfied, Peter 'so representative he hasn't voted with the public on one issue in five years' Hain pulled himself up off his sofa, through to a hall in which he would tell the mass of his party's supporters that they were an embarrassment.



Listings

Now pledge to form part of a human chain around the Westminster 'no protest' zone, but only if 6,000 other people join in, see pledgebank.com/protest

until 20th March To mark the tenth anniversary of the No M66 Campaign, there will be an exhibition at the Basement Social Center, Lever Street, Manchester.

11th March Peak Oil And The Capitalist System, a talk with Adrian Williams from 2.30pm, the Autonomy Club, 84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1, see eventsandissues.bravehost.com.

12th March The miners' remembered, mark their heroic struggle with a day of events and films at the Common Place, 23-25 Wharf Street, Leeds, contact maryrosecook@gmail.com for info.

15th March 'Jose Couso: State Murder!' US soldiers to stand human rights trial for the murder of a Spanish reporter in Baghdad, Anarchist Federation meeting plus antiwar documentaries from 7pm at The Square Social Centre, 21 Russell Square, London WC1

16th March The Performance Club with Mark 'not on the telly' Kelly, Sir Gideon Vein, Jamie Woon, plus MC Tony Allen at Inn On The Green, 3 Thorpe Close, London W10, from 8.30pm, see newagenda.demon.co.uk/

16th March 'Hostage cities: London and Madrid', Anarchist Federation meeting from 7pm at Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London WC1

18th March International anarchist day of action against the war with actions and events all over the world (brought to you by International of Anarchist Federations). London demo (hopefully with libertarian banners), assemble 12 noon at Parliament Square

30th March South London Radical History Group presents 'Stop the City: anti-capitalism, then and now' featuring a film on the Stop the City March 1984

at 7.30pm, followed by a brief talk by Stop the City activists and then some hopefully feverish discussion - lessons, differences, links, experiences... at The Pullens Centre, 184 Crampton Street, London SE17, for more info contact mudlark@macunlimited.net

31st March to 2nd April The Anarchist Bookfair in Zagreb (Anarhisticki sajam knjiga) to help organise or confirm participation email ask-zagreb@net.hr or see ask-zagreb.org for info.

2nd April 'Unauthorised' demo against the occupation of Iraq to mark second anniversary of the April 2004 siege of Fallujah, meet 12 noon in Parliament Square, London. A non-violent direct action workshop and legal briefing on **1st April**, see www.j-n-v.org

29th April Manchester Anarchist Bookfair at The Basement, 24 Lever Street, from 12 noon until 5pm, for more details see manchester@bookfair.org.uk

1st May Kent Anarchist Group meeting in Canterbury to bring together anarchists in Kent to discuss forming an anarchist group in the county, venue and time to be confirmed, for more info contact swaleagainstar@aol.com

4th May AGM of leading war profiteer BAe Systems, and Campaign Against Arms Trade (CAAT) have plans, for more info ring 020 7281 0297 or see www.caat.org.uk

The quiz

1. Why was an exhibition of t-shirts recently banned at a Polish university?
2. Which comic featuring an anarchist character has been turned into a film, but disowned by its creator?
3. Which superhero once featured on the front page of Black Flag?
4. Where were riot police first used in England?

Answers on page 6

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