

FREEDOM

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G20 SHOWDOWN

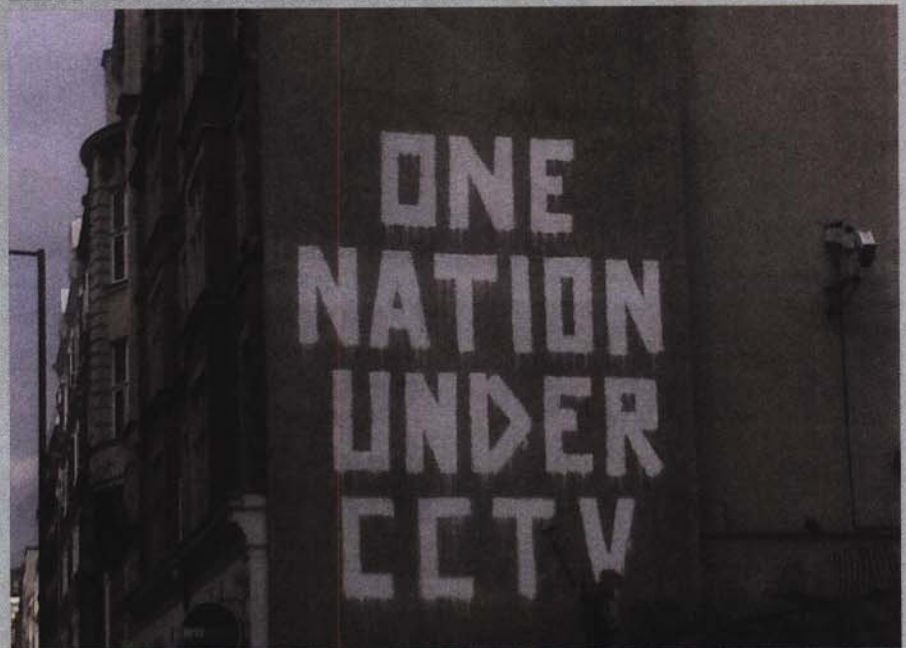
London prepares a robust welcome for world leaders

As London plays host to the latest financial summit, a week of protests, demonstrations and actions are planned to welcome the Group of 20 nations. Trade unions, NGOs, climate campaigners, anti-war activists as well as anarchists and anti-capitalists are all taking to the streets in what's predicted to be the biggest protest in the capital since the anti-war demonstrations of 2003.

On 2nd April, world leaders, including Barack Obama's first appearance on the international stage, will meet at Docklands Excel Centre in the heart of the East End for a summit on the growing economic crisis. The G20 comprises of the eight most advanced industrial nations (G8) along with other key industrial nations like India, Brazil, Australia and South Korea, and the European Union (EU), representing 80 per cent of the world's trade and two thirds of the world's population.

The global recession has already had a massive impact in the UK with official unemployment figures rising above the two million mark and millions more people facing redundancy, wages cuts and repossessions. What is seen by many as a failure of the neo-liberal free market policies of the last 20 years, **page 3** ▶▶

LENS CAP SURVEILLANCE STATE



The right to privacy is broken by a quarter of the UK's public databases, says a damning new report by the Joseph Rowntree Reform Trust, *Database State*, which also finds that another six in ten have "significant problems and may be unlawful". The UK has become the "most invasive surveillance state, and the worst at protecting privacy, of any Western democracy" reveals the most detailed study yet on data collection.

UK POLICE HELP GREEK AUTHORITIES

Officers from London's Metropolitan police force have been sent to Greece to advise the government on its current policing strategy. A delegation from Scotland Yard is to assist the Greek authorities with 'domestic terrorism' after a spate of bomb attacks in Athens on banks and businesses attributed to the group 'Revolutionary Struggle'.

After the sustained outbreak of social unrest late last year caused by the murder of a 15-year-old Alexandros Grigoropoulos by Greek police, the authorities fear they cannot contain the rise in militant activity, both on the streets and by 'guerrilla groups', especially during this current economic crisis.

Although the Metropolitan police are notorious for their public order tactics it's

terrorism unit who have been sent, including the former commissioner Ian Blair. The likelihood of UK police offering advice on riot control and public order is high though, leading to fears of the repression of Greek anarchists. "Police are reorganising their response to deal with the new circumstances that exist," government spokesman Evangelos Antonaros said. The plan is to adopt the British model of policing with 30 specialised rapid response units of 12 officers each, equivalent to our Territorial Support Group (TSG)

The relationship between British police and Greek authorities is a close one with the Met advising on security arrangements during the Athens Olympics as well as countering the November 17 movement after the killing of

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NEWS

IN BRIEF

CRIME: Just in case you are ever tempted to deviate from doing 'No Comment' to all police questions, here's a tragic lesson.

A man jailed for murdering a woman in 1979 has had his conviction quashed at the Court of Appeal after spending 27 years in prison.

Sean Hodgson was jailed for murder in December 1979. Hodgson, made various confessions to police before pleading not guilty at his trial at Winchester Crown Court. It was much later discovered that DNA evidence found at the scene did not match a sample given by Mr Hodgson.

CRISIS, WHAT CRISIS? Unemployment in the UK has risen above two million for the first time since 1997, official figures have shown. During the three months to January, the number of people unemployed totalled 2.03 million, up by 165,000, said the Office for National Statistics.

RELIGION: A US study has revealed the truth about the God Botherers. It says that "People with strong religious beliefs appear to want doctors to do everything they can to keep them alive as death approaches". So either they secretly know it's a load of hockum or perhaps suspect the Good Lord has them marked down for the Fiery Furnace for annoying the fuck out of the rest of us.

WAFFLE: Council leaders have compiled a banned list of the 200 worst uses of jargon, with 'predictors of beaonicity' and 'taxonomy' among the worst horrors. The Local Government Association says such words and phrases must be avoided for staff to 'communicate effectively'. Cliches such as 'level playing field' and inscrutable terms like 're-baselining' have been prohibited. LGA chairman Margaret Eaton said: "The public sector must not hide behind impenetrable jargon and phrases."

MARCH: Construction workers have held a rally and march in Merseyside to demand fair access to jobs. About 200 unemployed construction workers from across the North West of England took part in the rally in Liverpool city centre on Saturday 21st March.

Simple Sudoku for Munters, Caners, Kerheads and those favouring Special Brew.

Insert the numbers 1 (one) and 2 (two) into the puzzle so each rank and file (politics, eh!) has both numbers in it. The answer will be published in the next edition. Good luck!

1	2

LENS CAP THE NAVY LARK



Following last month's unfortunate crash with a French fellow nuclear ballistic missile armed submarine, we publish this picture of HMS Vanguard in the hope that should our paper fall into the hands of the secret services they can pass it onto the navies of the world to avoid futher mishaps. Vanguard is 150 metres long and displaces 15,000 tons.

IMF says crisis is bad

Including Anti-defecation statement by S. Holmes (detective) of 221b Baker Street

Here's the latest from the International Monetary Fund (IMF). "The world economy is set to shrink by between 0.5% and 1% in 2009, the first global contraction in 60 years" and "developed countries will suffer 'deep recession'." What's more, the global economic body says "the prolonged financial crisis has battered global economic activity beyond what was previously anticipated".

Just two months ago, the IMF predicted world output would increase by 0.5%. But in its report drawn up for the G20 group of finance ministers, the IMF now says that the whole world economy will shrink, and predicts that the advanced economies will suffer a decline in output of between 3% and 3.5% in 2009, and barely grow in 2010, with growth of between 0% and 0.5%.

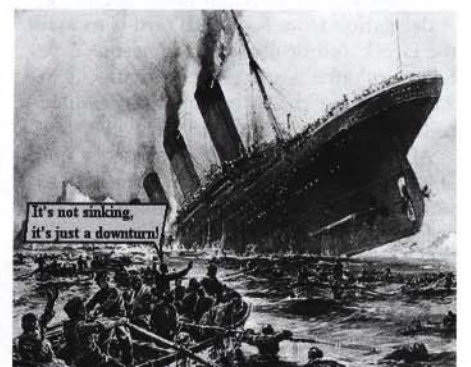
And it warns that the economic conditions could still deteriorate further if the banking crisis was not tackled head on by governments around the world. "In the event of further delays in implementing comprehensive policies to stabilise financial conditions, the recession will be deeper and more prolonged."

Wait! There's more. The IMF says its revised projections reflect "unrelenting financial turmoil, negative incoming data, sinking confidence, and the limited effect to date of policy responses with respect to the

to mention that the IMF was also warns of a serious risk that emerging economies will be unable to secure external finance, as banks and investors in rich countries withdraw their money. "The risks are largest for emerging countries that rely on cross-border flows to finance current account deficits," it says.

They go on to highlight how differing policies in different countries prejudice the chances of recovery, in particular that the US fiscal stimulus being larger and longer than other countries plans will cause difficulty forming agreement at the G20 summit.

We know lots of readers skip to the last line of boring stories so, for their benefit, the IMF says 'poor people to be fucked the world over, rich bastards likely to quarrel over new ways to fuck them'.





Anarchist conference

We've previously reported on the planning for the Anarchist Movement Conference 2009 in June. Now as things are firming up we have a shortened version of the conference call out.

As the world economy heads deeper into an unprecedented recession, the spectre of social unrest is again spreading across Europe and the World.

As the guarantees of the banks have gone, so too have the guarantees that the state can manage the emerging conflict, which could potentially turn into social rebellion unseen

in the UK for decades. So, where does that leave the anarchists?

The Anarchist Movement Conference is a chance to put our ideas on the table and rebuild ourselves. The barriers that exist need to be broken down, the experiences and ideas of those involved in anarchist politics need to be shared, discussed, critiqued and debated. The task is urgent, practical and necessary – are we as a movement mature enough to face the challenge?

How and where should we organise? Who are we speaking to? How do we relate to the wider world as anarchists? Anarchists from every federation, network and local group, those involved in diverse struggles from environmental direct-action to community work, trade unionism to DIY projects – all are invited to claim your place

at the table and help make a movement.

If we truly aim to be part of making history we need to remake ourselves as an organised, pragmatic movement to become an effective part of revolutionary change. If we do not learn from the mistakes of the past we are doomed to repeat them. This conference is both about recognising where we have come from and organising where we want to go. Be a part of it!

The Anarchist Movement Conference 2009 will happen on Saturday 6th June and Sunday 7th June at Queen Mary & Westfield College, Mile End Road, London E1 4ND. The space will include 20 rooms and a large hall as well as a creche for both days. People will need to register before hand to ensure that the conference runs as smoothly as possible.

To be involved email conference@haringey.org.uk

G20 showdown

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the current crisis in capitalism is predicted to eclipse the 1930s depression era in terms of poverty and social deprivation.

Anarchists and radicals throughout the UK will be mobilising to express an organised political presence on the militant workers bloc on the mass demonstration in central London 28th March. Groups including Anarchist Federation, Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) and Antifa, as well as local Camden and Whitechapel anarchist groups, will be supporting the bloc and many more will be joining the events on 1st April as well as the day of the summit itself. Tens of thousands of people frustrated by the current economic situation will be making their anger felt on the streets of London during the summit.

beginning of a new period of social and industrial unrest.

Events already organised as we go to press:
March 28th

- Militant Workers Bloc on 'Put People First' mass demonstration, assemble 11am Victoria Embankment, march to Hyde Park for anarchist rally at Speakers Corner, 3pm (see anarchistsoflondon.org.uk).

April 1st

- Financial Fools Day street party – Reclaim the City! Four assembly points – 11am at Moorgate, Liverpool Street, London Bridge or Cannon Street stations to converge on the Bank of England for 12 noon (see <http://www.g20meltdown.org/>).
- Climate Camp hits the City of London, converge 12.30 exactly on the European Climate Exchange, Heathwood House, 62 Bishopsgate, EC2N 4AW.

Bring a pop-up tent if you've got one, sleeping bag, wind turbine, mobile cinema, and ideas (see <http://climatecamp.org.uk/g20>).

- Anti-war Protest March and rally in central London, assemble 2pm American Embassy, Grosvenor Square. Organised by STWC, CND, Palestine Solidarity Campaign (see <http://stopwar.org.uk/>).

April 2nd

- Wake up the delegates! – 'we're going to bang on their hotel doors at the Excel Centre, Canning town to deliver our message of a world beyond capitalism' (see <http://www.g20meltdown.org/>).
- Anti-war protest march at G20 Summit. 11am Excel Centre, Royal Victoria Dock, Docklands, E16 1XL (see <http://stopwar.org.uk/>).

Check www.indymedia.org.uk for updates on actions, activities and other events.

PUBLIC SECTOR

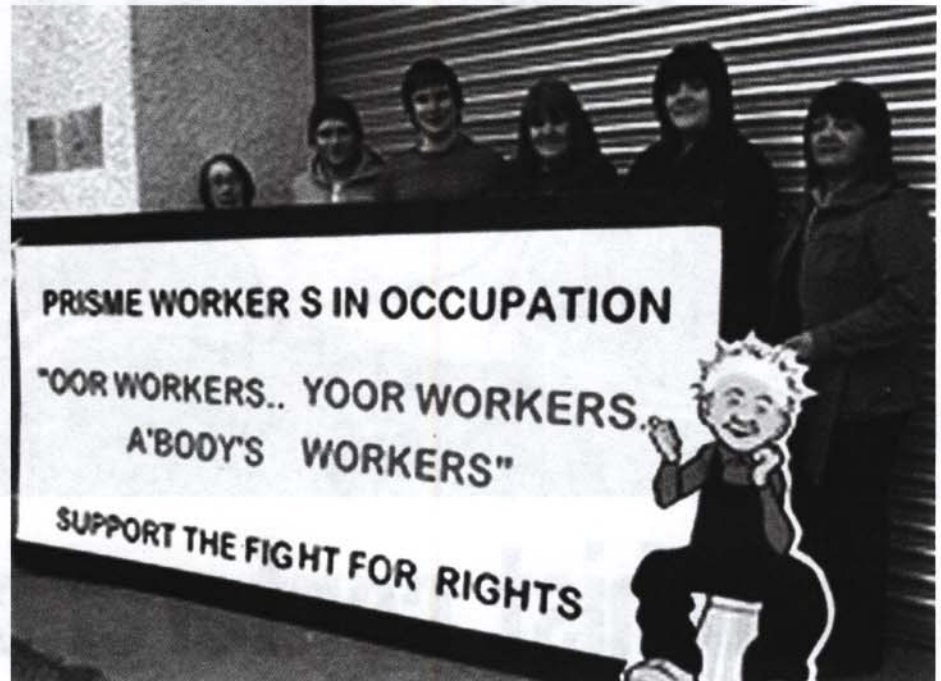
Dundee united

As reported in the last edition of *Freedom*, workers at a Dundee packaging manufacturers are still in occupation, almost a month on, after the company went bust refusing to pay out any redundancy.

On 4th March, the twelve workers employed at Prisme Packaging Ltd were all sacked without notice and despite management accepting they owed them redundancy and back holiday pay they refused to pay them. The workers immediately took occupation of the factory where they have remained ever since.

Freedom newspaper spoke to one of the workers in occupation. Matthew, who works in the admin office, revealed their determination to keep the factory open by turning it into a workers co-op. "We still have a good relationship of our customers" he said, "the machinery and equipment is all still in place. Our first priority is to get the money we're owed then we're looking at continuing production."

The support for the occupation has been overwhelming says Matthew. Waterford Crystal workers, who occupied their factory in Ireland, sent a message of support, as have workers as far away as Portugal and Brazil. With no wages coming in the occupiers are relying on the good will of locals, fellow workers, and union activists. Trade unions in Scotland have already been fundraising on their behalf, despite none of them having union membership, with others bringing down food and drink, and a popular left-wing website raising £120 in a



whip round which they hand delivered to the factory itself.

"None of us are in a union" says Matthew, "we're not radical people we just felt it was something that had to be done."

They are currently taking their case to a tribunal, which they are confident in winning, after which they will seek to turn Prisme into a workers co-op. Defiant and

upbeat they have no hesitation in continuing the struggle to preserve their jobs "some of us have been working here 14 years, we can't just walk away".

People wishing to offer support to the workers email prismeworkerssolidarity@googlemail.com or alternatively letters of support can be sent directly to them at Prisme Packaging & Design Ltd, Unit 2 Angus Works, Tannadice Street, Dundee DD3 7PT

One in three homeowners fear repossession

A total of 46,750 British homes were repossessed last year after their owners failed to keep up mortgage repayments, the Financial Services Authority (FSA) revealed last week. The figure marks a 68% increase on the number of repossessions in 2007, when 27,900 homes were claimed by British mortgage lenders. A further 68,000 homebuyers fell into arrears in the final three months of 2008, according to the data from the FSA.

These alarming figures reveal the true extent of the housing crisis, coupled with a recent survey by Which? Magazine that claims 1 in 3 people in the UK are worried about repossessions, with 43% saying they would not be able to keep up with their mortgage if the main earner in their household was out of work. With redundancies escalating across all industries many feel that mass repossessions will soon become an everyday occurrence.

It's not only mortgage holders who are feeling insecure; there could be 10,000 repossessions of properties with tenants this year according to the Council of Mortgage Lenders. In Stoke-on-Trent alone 2,000 people have added their names to the council housing waiting list in just two months as the fear of repossession and homelessness becomes an increasing reality.

The current housing crisis can be traced back to the Thatcher era policy of the right-to-buy encouraging tenants to buy their council property as a way of reducing the council housing stock. Michael Heseltine at the time said of the scheme: "This lays the foundations for one of the most important social revolutions of this century." Later the New Labour government continued the practice along with deregulating the banking system to allow banks and mortgage lenders to set up easy credit and cheap loan schemes. The outcome now is a severe shortage of social housing, which in the past was used to stabilise the housing market, leading to the potential collapse of the housing market



IN BRIEF

G20: The cost of policing the G20 looks set to be the most expensive police operation in British history.

It's estimated £8 million will be needed to protect the world leaders as they discuss the global recession.

The money is to come from pre-existing police budgets. The cost of hosting the summit itself looks to exceed £50 million.



TRAVEL: Train conductors working at depots at Bletchley, Northampton and Watford are to step up their strike action with a 48-hour stoppage starting at midnight on Sunday 29th March.

The conductors voted overwhelmingly for action over attempts by the company to pressure staff into working Sundays.

ANTI-FASCISM: The BNP are having a hard time of it of late. Not only was their 'Battle bus' decommissioned recently, along with one of their activists, by a group of anti-fascists in Greater Manchester they had to cancel another secret fundraiser in Exeter because of local opposition.

As the party's deputy leader says, "We have to keep meetings secret otherwise people turn up and cause trouble".

CANCELLED: Global fuel giants BP have cancelled their centenary celebrations, due to be held on 1st April at the British Museum, on the advice of the police over concerns about the G20 demonstrations on the same day.

THE CITY: Four union activists were recently sacked from their jobs by cleaning contractors Mitie after organising a union and winning the London Living Wage in the heart of London's financial district.

As part of Justice for Cleaners campaign they were targeted for the role they played in organising migrant cleaning staff.

Five demonstrations have been held since in support of the sacked workers.

London anarchists resurgent

Only 12 months ago anarchism in London was in its usual torporific state ... to have called it a 'movement' would have been to flout the Trade Descriptions Act.

Any attempts at co-operation were restricted to the dreadful 'info share' non-event, navel gazing about whether community or workplace was the correct terrain of struggle and a complete absence of ambition that anything could be achieved or the dynamism to attain it.

But now in the run up to the G20 events things have totally changed. There are the beginnings of a movement that can create its own momentum. Posters, flyers and cards pour off print production lines – and are grabbed by hands eager to distribute them at markets and shopping centres. A major conference is set for early June, an e-mail discussion list is well used, Freedom Bookshop and LARC fulfil their roles as hubs of the movement. At least six local groups are established buoyed by the example of the Whitechapel Anarchist Group who have shown that it is possible to produce a paper the punters will grab to read. On Sundays in Brick Lane, up to 30 anarchists are distributing their paper – elsewhere flyer distribution reaches out to Stratford and Croydon.

Plans for the G20 are ambitious. The G20 Meltdown event on 1st April aims to 'Storm The Banks' from four starting points. The Direct Action Bloc on the TUC march on the 28th March promises to be the biggest and best organised for years. On its arrival

in Hyde Park there will be an anarchist rally as opposed to the soporific offerings from the official platform. Banners are made, sewing machines whirr from Croydon to Whitechapel fine-stitching red and black flags. The Bloc and the rally will look great.

A new monthly anarchist social night – the red and Black Club – starts up, packs 'em in and by adhering to a punctual timetable manages to combine beer, gossip, and revolution. Fun events like Anarchist pub crawls and speed dating are restoring hedonism to our movement away from miserabilism. But best of all people are cooperating – last week G20 flyers were distributed at no less than eight areas of London – on the same day, comrades!

Of course some of the reasons for this resurgence are international – the recession, the failure of market capitalism to deliver the goods, the implosion of the Left and the anarchist led uprising in Greece before Christmas inspiring further street unrest from Riga to Bucharest. Our ideas are resonating with people again. In the past, however, anarchists in London would have been incapable of seizing such opportunities. Today it's not just only outside events that are refashioning our movement – it's the determined, hard working, imaginative, relentless application of about 12 individuals in London in a variety of forms who have been determined that we should have an anarchist movement at long last. It looks like we have comrades. I salute you.

Ian Bone



INTERNATIONAL

IN BRIEF

FRANCE: Workers have released a Sony executive they had taken hostage following assurances that he would go directly into talks with their union.

Chief executive Serge Foucher was captured by workers from a videotape plant in Pontonx-sur-l'Adour in the Landes region of south-west France.

The executive claimed he had travelled to the factory for a final 'courtesy visit' to over 300 sacked workers before the plant closed.

Unexpectedly, dozens of staff took him hostage and barricaded the entry to the factory with tree trunks.

IRELAND: Bosses at Irish aircraft maintenance company SR Technics have told unions that up to 600 of its 1135 strong workforce will lose their jobs this April.

Union organisers said that there had been no progress on the 26 million euro pension shortfall which SRT says it will not be funding.

No progress has been made on the redundancy package which unions have described as 'paltry'.

MOZAMBIQUE: Twelve prisoners arrested during a riot over a cholera epidemic have died in unclear circumstances in their cells.

The twelve were among 29 people arrested when riots broke out last month when Red Cross volunteers were blamed for causing a cholera epidemic plaguing the country.

Red Cross spokesman Jose Tomas said the rioters believed the chlorine used to treat the water supply was actually spreading cholera, which has killed at least 119.

CUBA: The US is turning down a Guantanamo prisoner's offer to end his long hunger strike in exchange for better conditions at the American prison in Cuba.

Ahmed Zuhair of Saudi Arabia has been on hunger strike for about three and a half years. The US military currently force-feeds him a liquid nutrient mix to keep him alive.

GREECE: Prisoner and militant prisoners' rights activist, Katerina Goulioni, has died in police custody.

Reports from IMC Athens reveal that Katerina was on the same boat to Crete with known fascist prisoner Periandros before her death.

Katerina, who was held at the prison at Thiva on mainland Greece, was under transfer to Crete. In the boat from Pireaus to Crete, the guards forced her to sit alone, 15 seats behind the other prisoners with her hands tied behind her back.

At 6am the following morning Katerina was found dead. According to testimonies by other prisoners, she was badly hit on the face

LENS CAP GERMANY



Berlin Antifa take to the streets in opposition to Germany's far-right National Democratic Party. The party, which is intent on forming a 'Fourth Reich' recently admitted it is in financial ruin and suffering from an 'existential crisis'. The boneheads are currently losing \$100,000 a month because income can't match expenses.

Canadian workers' occupation

Workers at a recently-closed auto parts supply company in Windsor, Ontario, have taken over their plant. Two auto plants in the area were shut down this month provoking about a dozen workers to occupy the Aradco plant. The group welded the doors shut from the inside and stated that they would not leave until they money owed by the bosses.

Work at the Aradco plant stopped because of a dispute between the plant owners and Chrysler, which has mused publicly about pulling out of its Canadian operations unless unionised workers make substantial concessions. The Canadian Auto Workers Union that represents the Aradco workers say that in the wake of the shutdown, the workers are owed money for severance pay, vacation pay, and termination pay totalling \$1.7 million.

The plant's owner, Catalina Precision Products Ltd., has offered the workers four weeks of severance pay or about \$200,000 in total for all 80 workers.

The plant builds parts for Chrysler who since last week have been trying to go in and collect parts and tools it says belongs to them, but the workers are not allowing it. They have been blocking trucks from coming on to the property.

Union representatives say the workers fear that if the tools and parts are removed, they will have no negotiating power.

"Some of the workers here have decided to take over the plant. That's the only thing they have in order to try to get the monies that are owing to them," said Gerry Farnham, president of the Union local representing the workers.

Notes from the United States

Water power

The issue of water – as a 'common', not a source of profit – has been a tough one to push. Heather Cooley of California water think tank the Pacific Institute, for example, recently invited Californians to "accustom themselves to the scenes from Australia" (massive uncontrollable bush fires in suburbia) as their future: Los Angeles, for example, is in a drought. In 2006–07 it received barely three inches (7.6 cms) of rain. Just two years earlier, more than 37 inches (94 cms) fell. The signs are there. Work is being done throughout

richer countries, to draw attention to a possible catastrophe. For example, residents of the small New England town of Shapleigh, Maine, joined together at the end of February to prevent Poland Spring from drawing or selling its water. Guess what? Poland Spring's parent company is Nestlé.

During an extraordinary meeting on a Saturday morning residents voted to adopt a ban drafted by Protecting Our Water and Wildlife Resources (POWWR). Last autumn residents of the town adopted a six-month moratorium on water testing; they knew that

General strike in France

French workers have pulled off their second general strike of 2009 this month, bringing the country to a stand-still in protest against President Sarkozy's economic policies.

Hundreds of thousands of workers gathered at over 200 locations across France to join massive protest marches organised by unions. The strikes severely disrupted air and rail transport and come against a backdrop of mounting anger over job losses and factory closures, as France and its European neighbours feel the bite of the current capitalist crisis.

The state rail operator SNCF cancelled 40% of high-speed intercity TGV services and half of other regional trains. Commuter trains into Paris were forced to keep running due to a new law enforcing a minimum service during strikes, but with up to half of primary teachers on strike, many parents stayed home from work to look after their children.

The unions say the 26 billion euro (£24.5bn) stimulus package for France's struggling economy, unveiled by President Nicolas Sarkozy in December, does not go far enough.

A further 2.4bn euros (\$3.2bn, £2.3bn) of measures, including tax breaks and social benefits, presented by President Sarkozy after January's strike has failed to placate them.

The workers want him to increase the minimum wage and scrap his plans to cut public-sector jobs. Recent polls show three-quarters of French people support the strikers with many commuters saying they backed the action but hoped it would be short-lived.

President Sarkozy said on Wednesday that he "understands the concerns of the French people" but has ruled out plans for further measures.

At present unemployment is likely to shoot up to 10% in the next 12 months with a further 350,000 lay-offs expected by the end



of this year. Unions are demanding that Sarkozy hike the minimum wage, increase taxes on the rich and scrap plans to cut public sector jobs.

Authorities fear that a tough six-week strike on the French Caribbean island of Guadeloupe, which ended with a deal to hike wages has emboldened workers on the mainland to take a more radical stance.

Marchers in Paris, where the largest protests took place, were enraged by what they see as Sarkozy's class-bias toward the rich. French bankers and businessmen have been granted expensive government subsidies to avoid bankruptcy while workers have suffered severe cuts.

"We came here today because it is workers

who are being made pay for the economic problems," one marcher stated. "But we didn't create these problems and we never got to share in the wealth when the economy was going well. Sarkozy has to go."

The Government's current stimulus plan includes; 11bn euros to help businesses improve cashflows, 11bn euros of direct state investment, 4bn euros of investment by state-owned firms in modernisation, 2.65bn euros of tax breaks and increases in family welfare and short-term unemployment benefits.

The Union demands include; reverse the 50% cap on income tax, suspension of public sector job cuts and more measures to protect employment.

Notes from the Unites States

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this was likely to be a foot in the pumping operation door. For the moment this looks like another small protest that has worked in the favour of those most affected.

Shackling the Sheriff

Carrying placards reading 'We Are Human' and 'Stop the Raids', about five thousand people marched through Phoenix (Arizona) on a late February Saturday in protest at a crackdown by the infamous Maricopa County Sheriff, Joe Arpaio, on undocumented guest workers.

Arpaio is notorious for his raids. He dispatches deputies into Hispanic communities in the Phoenix area. There they stop people arbitrarily and arrest anyone who cannot prove that they are a legal US resident. Under this system only those who look Hispanic are targeted. Earlier in the month, the Sheriff

undocumented workers in shackles and striped prison clothing through Phoenix under armed guard. "Walking people through the streets in chains, public shaming, it's medieval" said Veronica Perez, an activist involved in the National Day Laborer Organizing Network demo. The good news, Arpaio's run may be coming to an end. In Washington, House Judiciary Committee Chair John Conyers, called on Obama's new Attorney General, Eric Holder, to investigate allegations of misconduct by Arpaio.

Lastly, Russell Mokhiber, of new pressure group Single Payer Action ('Single-payer' is the term in the US for universal health care provision), tells it straight: "The answer is not email campaigns. Congress is immune to email campaigns. The answer is not letter writing. The answer is direct, face-to-face confrontation with the insurance industry

New powers of arrest planned for Greek cops

The Greek state plans to give police the power to arrest people who wear hoods or masks on demonstrations. Their goal is to prevent a repeat of the militant demonstrations which shut down the country last December after the police murder of a teenage boy.

Justice Ministry officials said the draft legislation would be submitted to parliament in the next few weeks. "This cannot continue any longer," conservative parliamentary spokesman Panos Panayiotopoulos said. "It must end now ... measures must be taken and those measures have to be effective."

Conservative groups are also calling for a review of a ban on police entering university campuses and broad restrictions regarding the use of surveillance cameras. Moves are also being made to shut down the Athens and Patras Indymedia websites, which published articles on and helped organise the recent protests which shut down the country.

FEATURE

What's important about this G20

The G20 in London looks set to be marked by the largest and most significant anti-capitalist protests here for ten years...

Many Readers will be wondering why *Freedom* is putting out a G20 special and perhaps think the paper has been taken over by summit-hopping hippy activists who are only militant this time because the crisis is about to wipe out their trust funds. You'll be pleased to know we're materialist enough to know that this G20 is not about to change the course of history or that the activities of protesters will make the world's leaders change their minds or as yet make concessions from pressure to the working class.

In fact this G20 resembles a crisis meeting on the Titanic – after striking the iceberg. Nothing can be done to save the ship but plenty will be tried to ensure the first class passengers get the lifeboats while those of us in steerage are locked below decks.

However we do think that this marks an important turning point for the future of capitalism and potentially for anarchism in the struggle to get rid of it and replace it with something much nicer instead. So where are we and where did we come from.

Ending the end of history.

When the Soviet Union collapsed in the early 1990s the neoliberals joyfully rubbed their greedy paws together and proclaimed in Fukuyama's words 'the end of history'. They believed or at least wanted the people they exploited to believe that there was only one political system left and that was Rampant Capitalism, oops sorry, Very Nice Liberal Democracy. A lot of Anarchists too

were cook-a-hoop at the the demise of Soviet system, foolish ones because they shot us like partridges at Kronstadt, the more savvy because with dictatorial socialism dead and parliamentary socialism corrupt and resigned to capitalism the working classes last option would be to flock to the banner of libertarian socialism where they should have been all along. How dim we were! No only did anarchism fail to grow the British proletariat elected a human grinning machine based on the backing of Brit Pop.

Globalising anti-capitalism

As so often in the past while Anarcho's and Lefties argued indulged in ever more obscure faction fighting a new movement emerged. Now youth rebels because it must and we sympathise, but sometimes it rebels for the right reasons. More impressively, out of protests such as those against the Criminal Justice Bill in 1994, the Anti-Road Building movement and Reclaim The Streets came a full blown critique of capitalism. Following the age old precept that 'I must follow them I'm their leader', Anarchists leapt on the bandwagon. To be fair much good came of this melding and it was by no means from a doers and thinker's division.

The Bradford (1998) and London Mayday (2000) conferences improved politics on both sides and generated a new spirit of co-operation that the anarchist movement had sadly lacked.

Curiously for a country with less social conflict than most major nations Britain took the lead in targeting the G7 as the representative of a corrupt system. While the 1991 G7 in London featured only a few hundred protesters, the 1998 Birmingham G8 saw thousands close down the city centre, which cops from four forces were powerless to stop. The world's 'leaders' were forced to hide out of town, a pattern since



Above left, Reclaim The Streets in Trafalgar Square left, Regent's Street in London on Mayday 2001

repeated worldwide.

It's worth recalling because now people around the world are looking at what response the G20 get in London.

9/11 and the distraction on terror

So things were going swimmingly, protests got bigger, anti-capitalism was the talk of the town and having seen state socialism tumble in a couple of years it could very well be that there would be similar rupture with capitalism going down the pan too.

A big plus to this view was that the vast military power of the Warsaw Pact availed the system nothing when people lost faith in it. Even in the bloodiest example of Rumania, when the police shot demonstrators down the army then turned on them and backed the people. There are only 20,000 trained riot police in the UK and a mere 3,500 in the capital. Not a lot to save a system whose time had come.

If you have a real and dangerous enemy it's always a good idea to come up with a made up one or at least weak one instead and this is exactly what we have seen. What has been frustrating is how having coalesced from different strands of protest the anti-capitalist movement fragmented into single issue campaigns. Doubly frustrating is the fact that so many of them such as No Borders or Rising Tide are composed of



0 stuff then?



on 12th April 1997; above right, demonstration against the Criminal Justice Bill in 1994; below the sound system at RTS in 1997.

and recognise that their aims can only be achieved by abolishing capitalism yet are working on far less ambitious projects. The ingredients have jumped out of the bowl and sit around wondering why the pastry won't rise.

Anti-capitalism is back, but will it be against capitalism this time?

For Anarchists involved in the Carnival Against Capitalism of 1999, anti-capitalism seemed to solve all our problems with terminology.

To most people anarchism meant bombs, communism meant the gulag, socialism meant the Labour Party while libertarian communism/socialism meant the same but with the chance of added sex.

While we knew that anti-capitalism could theoretically mean fascism or even a return to feudalism it seemed patently obvious that it meant an ecologically sustainable global society based on freedom and cooperation, from each according to their abilities to each according to their needs.

However as the Maydays of the early 2000s developed we saw the term twisted by the media to mean certain institutions or people and not the social relationship between people that we assumed everyone knew it was. In truth the grassroots structure wasn't there and despite noble

struggle as in the Dockers dispute of 1996/7 there was no popular movement beyond the activist scene and the politics of the crowds turning out for demo's was skin deep. Will it be better this time?

'But nothing ever happens in Britain'

If the G20 were held in Greece there would be rioting in the streets. Despite the best efforts of Commander Broadhurst and Superintendent Hartshorn scaremongering to get more money for the Public Order Department, that's unlikely to happen

during this summit. There is however a difference from when such large numbers of people last protested in Britain against the Iraq war six years ago.

The economic crisis that the G20 cannot solve will directly affect people in their pocket. After the Government ignored the Million Muppet March in February 2003 the vast majority of people said 'that's a shame but I won't do anything', leaving only a small core of activists to carry on campaigning.

Compare and contrast with the response to the Poll Tax where money was at stake. While not as straightforward an issue as the community charge the key remains the same. The people who do useful things have to pay and pay more for the mistakes of those who don't, be they politicians or bankers.

Capitalism is well known to be unfair but the current crisis is reawakening the idea that it's inefficient and wasteful. It's third major fault is that it cannot plan for the future. It could not prevent the current financial meltdown and has little hope of preventing the longer term disaster of global warming.

The working class have historically been far more cautious than revolutionaries would like when risking revolt against the State for uncertain gain just because they are badly treated. But when necessity presses, audacity becomes prudence and as awareness of the underlying issues grow we can expect growing activity and not just from activism.

The first ever issue of *Freedom* in October 1886 had a front page article called 'The Coming Revolution' which proclaimed "The commercial crisis grows worse and worse ... The political institutions in which so much faith was put half a century ago have proved a failure". So we should be cautious before we begin a poultry census but they were right when they said "we live in times of great events".



COMMENT

ABOUT FREEDOM

ANGEL ALLEY

This G20 special edition of *Freedom* has been cobbled together while our editor Rob Ray takes a well deserved break.

Rob will be back for the next issue, but after that he will be stepping down as editor – although he will continue to contribute to the paper.

In keeping with the ultra secret nature of the Freedom collective (see *Freedom* letters, 20th December) the identity of the new editors will remain top secret and certainly can't be found out by listening to Dean Talent's interview by Ian Bone on Resonance FM Radio's *Anarchism in the UK* series (anarchistinterviews.podomatic.com) or Andy Meinke's interview in *Freedom* 14th March.

At the Alley we are pleased to welcome Corporatewatch (see corporatewatch.org.uk/) who are moving into the current *Freedom* office as we move downstairs to be closer to our big piles of boxes of books.

SUBSCRIPTIONS

To work out if your subscription is due for renewal, you'll notice a mysterious number above your name on the address label – here's what it means. This issue is vol 70, no 6, so if your sub runs out with this issue you'll have 7006 above your name; if it ran out with the last issue you'll have 7005 above your name, and so on. So if the number is 7006 or less, then then your subscription is due for renewal. See page 16 for the subscription rates and a renewal form or, if you don't want to worry in the future about remembering to renew your subscription to *Freedom*, just ask us for a standing order form either by emailing subs@freedompress.org.uk or you can write to us at 'Subscriptions', Freedom, 84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1 7QX.

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NEXT ISSUE

The next issue will be dated 11th April 2009 and the last day to get copy to us for that issue will be Thursday 2nd April. You can send your articles to us by email to copy@freedompress.org.uk or by post addressed to 'The Editors', Freedom, 84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1 7QX.

A sideways look

by SVARTFROSK

Many of you will have seen the sickening 'We're Closing In on Benefit Thieves' posters. I think there's something mean-spirited about attacking the poorest at the best of times, but I can't remember a more jarringly inappropriate government propaganda campaign for some time. And yes, that includes the 'Back to Basics' one John Major ran advocating Victorian moral values while more than half the Cabinet was shagging someone illicitly (including him as it turned out).

While Sir Fred Goodwin is paid a pension of £700,000 per year for bringing a major bank to its knees, someone who does a bit of work on the side is painted as a threat to 'decent hard-working Britain'. The Department for Work and Pensions boast that they have over 600 calls a day to their 'hotline' and 3,000 fraud investigators cross checking bank accounts and using hidden surveillance, that they are fighting benefit fraud 'with every means at our disposal'. What, really? Does that include plastic bullets? Or extraordinary rendition to countries with a more ambivalent approach to torture?

It's funny how these resources are never available to the government departments chasing tax evasion. The government's famed 'light touch' regulation, responsible for allowing the banks to over reach themselves, also extended to the tax affairs of big companies. Her Majesties Revenue and Customs (HMRC) is in the process of shedding 25,000 jobs and while they are not all involved in tax inspection, the message is clear: extra resources are always found for chasing the poor, and rarely so for chasing the rich.

HMRC is so serious about tax evasion that it sold its offices to a company based in

the tax haven of Bermuda. Once again, the cleaners in the building are paying more in tax than the owners, even though the latter make fat profits. The companies that avoid tax do so because they can. They use all sorts of arguments, like it's not illegal; or they hive off elements of their business to tax havens and run their main businesses at a loss.

Barclays Bank is currently fighting in the courts to stop *The Guardian* from publishing internal documents that show how it had a team of 110 people earning seven-figure bonuses to come up with tax avoidance schemes. The hypocrisy of the Bank is outstanding, given that while they are avoiding UK tax, they are asking the British state for a handout. Now I tend to think I pay too much tax, not least because the government spends it so unwisely, but I don't get a choice in the matter and at least I get something back. Barclays are after the something back without contributing. And they're not alone.

The government's approach isn't even good economics. Currently the problem with the economy is that not enough money is being spent. Give money to big business at the moment and it sits on it, as spending it is too risky. Hence the government having to take a stake in the banks to try to get cash circulating. Give extra money to the very poorest and you can bet they'll spend it. Even if they want to save it, little things like food, bills and clothing are likely to come first.

There is a tax evasion hotline, a freephone number just like the one for grassing claimants, but I had to look for it. It would be only fair to see a few of those plastered up round Mayfair and Canary Wharf, but I won't be holding my breath.

Blog Bites

(from practicallyinsurgent.blogspot.com)

So, here we are in the midst of a big economic and political crisis and who benefits? The fucking Tories, the arseholes who actually designed the absurd economic system that left the UK so vulnerable. Now they're getting to turn round and say, ooh, it's Labour's poor economic management you see. Of course, it's no coincidence that the countries hardest hit are the ones, like ours, that built in the highest degree of dependence on the finance, construction and retail sectors of the economy, and, not to go all shouty: THAT WAS EVERYONE'S IDEA, THE ENTIRE POLITICAL CLASS.

It's not badly managed, it's not being taken advantage of by greedy businessmen (now, convenient hate figures, previously heroic wealth creators), the thing is functioning exactly how it was designed to. If you design a system in a certain way, and

everything goes wrong, you don't get to just wash your hands of it.

Outside of the Tories, guess what, just like we warned when everyone was mincing around waving their lollipops about the war, the force that is probably going to explode over the next couple of truly depressing years will be ... fascism. Already the warnings are flooding in about the BNP getting to send off their little shaven-headed white power comrades to the European parliament.

Well, why? Why is it that form of extremism that's getting play and not some variety of Leftism, or even, maybe, why not both. Because the BNP have actually been on the streets doing ordinary everyday politics and, come the crisis that's going to give them a base from which explode.

Aside from that the protests that we've

LETTERS AND COMMENT

Recession guide

I can only assume that 'A Prole's Guide to the Recession' (*Freedom*, 14th February, page 13) was reprinted as a warning to anarchists on the stupidity on taking ultra-leftism seriously. While there were a few correct comments within it (otherwise its services to political satire would have been all too obvious), in general it was so confused as to be downright misleading.

It starts off badly, proclaiming that inflation is a "means of attacking real wages (as stated by J.M. Keynes in his *General Theory*)". The first part is correct, the second is problematic – "as stated by" Keynes gives the radically false impression that he urged such a policy, which is false. Yes, Keynes 'stated' that inflation attacks real wages but only in the same sense that Wildcat did so, that is, recognising a fact. His 'preference' was for "allowing wages to rise slowly whilst keeping prices stable" (page 271). A key point of *The General Theory* was to explain why cutting wages would not result in lower unemployment (and I must note that Keynes' key contributions were 'formulated' in the 1930s, not "in the 1920s"). My article ('Welcome to your pay rise') in issue 228 of *Black Flag* discusses this in more detail.

Keynes was obviously more sympathetic to industrial rather than financial capital (he calls for the end of the *rentier* and 'socialisation' of investment). In that sense, Wildcat was right to state Keynesianism "favours industry relative to finance capital, creating more employment so as to maintain social peace". Keynes' aim was to reduce the uncertainty associated with investment decisions, using the state to stabilise the economy (including wages) in order to revive the 'animal spirits' of industrial capitalists. Needless to say, the ruling class took what it found useful from Keynes and ignored the

more radical aspects of his ideas (both in terms of policy and economic analysis).

Which is part of the problem. There is a difference between Keynes and Keynesianism (or "Bastard Keynesianism", Joan Robinson's apt description of the neo-classical Keynesian synthesis that dominated post-1945 mainstream economics). While this post-war Keynesianism was "presented as a way of saving capital from communism" (more correctly, Stalinism), what drove Keynes was the Great Depression and understanding why, even after massive weakening of the already weak position of labour, it was so deep and so long. Keynes, of course, wished to save capitalism from itself and, significantly, to improve it, civilise it (save capitalism from the capitalists). If anyone is interested in a more accurate evaluation of Keynes, his insights and his aims, may I suggest Doug Henwood's excellent *Wall Street*.

The hopes of even 'Bastard Keynesianism' where dashed in the 1960s and 1970s, when social struggle exploded. This was a key blind-spot for Keynes, like neo-classical economists in general he ignored the issue of class, market power and social hierarchy. He failed to see how full employment would strengthen the working class and produce another crisis. The socialist Michal Kalecki, who independently discovered much of *The General Theory* at the same time, recognised this and predicted that business interests would seek to reassert their position – as they did in the 1970–80s.

Wildcat is, then, part-right again when it asserted that high inflation "is generally a sign that the bourgeoisie is weak since it has to buy social peace. This is why the Thatchers of this world are always going on about fighting inflation." Yes, inflation shows that the bourgeoisie is weak – companies raise prices in an attempt to reap in circulation the profits they cannot appropriate in production (due to low unemployment and the corresponding rise in workers' power). It seems to imply that inflation is a deliberate policy (Keynesianism being the "overall political management of the economy") when, in fact, the state has no real control over the money supply (as Thatcher's failed experiment with Monetarism proved beyond doubt). So high inflation is not, by any stretch of the imagination, an attempt to "buy social peace" – and the 1970s show, strikes for wage rises in response to rising prices can be common.

The Thatchers of this world create 'social peace' by breaking working class resistance to price rises by means of high unemployment. Thomas Balogh described this policy memorably as "deliberately setting out to base the viability of the capitalist system on the maintenance of a large 'industrial reserve army' [of the unemployed] ... [it is] the incomes policy of Karl Marx" (*The Irrelevance of Conventional Economics*). This neo-liberalism is now imploding under its own contradictions, just as Keynesianism did.

The piece is correct to note the often unrelated nature of 'recovery' and working class living conditions, as in the 1980s when

again. Yes, anti-inflation policies have been the ideological and rhetorical cover for attacking wages and working class power and militancy (particularly since the 1970s and the rise of first Monetarism and then neo-liberalism). However, such insights do not make a confused article any better.

Then there is the notion that we are "supposed to regard" recession/depression "as a disaster" – defined as a "slow down in the growth of total commodity production"! Sorry, what is that meant to mean? Recessions are bad for working class people, and rising unemployment causes a distinct weakening of our power to improve our working conditions and, hopefully, transform society. And as this recession deepens there will be more than one 'formulation' which stresses "the relation between wages and profits", urging the cutting of the former to boost the latter and so recovery. In such circumstances, Keynes' actual arguments may come in handy ...

I know that it was first written in the 1990s, but that does not justify leaving in the assertion that "Keynesianism is not something likely to be revived in the near future"! Particularly when US capitalism has embraced massive stimulus packages (justified in terms of Keynesianism). It should be noted that, contra-Wildcat, (bastard) Keynesianism never went away. While its focus swapped from social to military forms, Keynesianism (i.e., state intervention) remained under Thatcher and continued to this day.

Finally, there is this assertion by Wildcat: "the only thing that can cause real economic collapse is the dictatorship of the proletariat." Sorry, but *Freedom* last time I noticed was an anarchist paper. It should not be repeating confused and misleading Marxist expressions, particularly ones that have been used to justify the dictatorship over the proletariat. I know that Wildcat were not Leninists, but I should note that there was a "real economic collapse" under Lenin which was, in part, caused by the deeply flawed economic and political policies inherited from (orthodox) Marxism. Neither urging such a collapse nor the confused politics that helped deepen it should have any place in an anarchist paper.

Iain McKay

Blog bites

◀ page 10

had over the past few months; the strikes, the demos, the throwing stuff at union reps. I mean. Nobody likes to say I told you so, but fuck me. Casualisation, agency work, subcontracting, privatisation. We said it made workers more vulnerable, we said it made them easy to fire, that in the end it was going to turn back the clock to Victorian labour relations, where we all go back to being in employment day by day at the employer's discretion. We said the unions were fucking gash and wouldn't, couldn't do anything about this. And, lo, it came to be. Half the workers at Cowley were agency. How the fuck didn't that get fought before the crisis?

Now what? Kicking millions out of work, probably millions more taking cuts or freezes. Everything still seems to cost as much, even though we've got less money. More jobless, more homeless, more cuts to the support system, more with less.

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GETTING ACTIVE

PRISON NEWS

Supporting Pavel Delidon

Anarchist Pavel Delidon was jailed at the age of 19 and could serve many years more in prison after he was arrested trying to appropriate wages that he had not been paid for a job commissioned by one of the richest women in his hometown of Stary Oskol, south west Russia.

Pavel had been active in various anti-authoritarian projects for two years, in ecological protest camps, Food Not Bombs, animal rights issues, organising concerts and street actions, when he was arrested. In the summer of 2006 he participated in the Libertarian Forum in Moscow and protests against G8 in St Petersburg.

In autumn of that year he returned to his small home town and began organising anti-militarist actions. Cleaning rubbish out of the forest, he kept writing articles and poems. There was no anarchist activity in his home town, but he managed to find some interested people and they planned to organise a concert for Mayday, but eventually just a small demonstration was organised as, at this point, Pavel was already in prison.

In December, Pavel was working with his father, repairing the home of a relative of an influential businessman who owns the biggest retail store in his home town. The work was ordered by the businessman's mother, who turned out to be a swindler, and she refused to pay for the job (1,500 roubles, around 50 euros – the average wage of a blue-collar worker in Pavel's hometown is 150 euros a month).

As is usual with this kind of work in Russia, there was no written contract and so there was no legal way for Pavel to get compensation (not that such a contract would have meant a lot anyway – Russian courts very seldom settle in the interest of the workers, and even if they do, nobody enforces it).

In late March, Pavel decided to expropriate some of the boss's property in order to get some of the wages these rich people owned him. But unexpectedly the boss was at home, and a conflict took place between them and, even more unluckily, the son-of-law of the boss showed up, called the police and Pavel was arrested and imprisoned with charges of "robbery by illegal trespassing" (statute 162 paragraph 3 of Russian criminal codex).

Pavel's mother was fired from her job the first day following the incident.

Moscow's Anarchist Black Cross would like people to write to Pasha to prison. As he speaks only Russian it would make sense to send mostly postcards, photos and drawings in case you do not speak Russian. The Pavel's address in prison is:

- Pavel Delidon, Lenino-7 SIZO, Stary Oskol, 308514 Belgorodskaya oblast, Russia.



- On Saturday 28th March Manchester Anarchist Federation is holding a day school on the current crisis from a libertarian socialist perspective. Activities include a discussion on what's happening, with a presentation on the history and origins of the economic crisis, followed by a practical discussion of how the recession affects our everyday lives and what we can do about it. All welcome.

Get in touch for help with accommodation if you will need it, email meetings@af-north.org

'What Recession Means for Us', Saturday 28th March from 1.00–5.30 pm at The Yard Theatre, 41 Old Birley Street, Hulme, Manchester M15 5RF

- Building on the success of regional bookfairs South Wales Anarchists are inviting groups, campaigns and distributors to contribute workshop ideas and book stalls for the up and coming Cardiff Anarchist Bookfair. Stall space is offered at £10 per table for national groups, campaigns and distributors/publishers/bookshops, or £5 per table for Wales-based campaigns and distributors.

For booking forms/further info please contact cosmoinnit@talk21.com by 1st April 2009.

Cardiff Anarchist Bookfair, to be held on Saturday 23rd May 2009 from 10am until 6pm at Cathays Community Centre, 36 Cathays Terrace, Cardiff CF24 4HX. Free admission.

- As part of the Campaign against the Welfare Reform Bill, coalition of grassroots organisations, including London Coalition Against Poverty (LCAP), Disabled People's

Fightback successfully staged a week of action against New Labour's Welfare Reform Bill. Between 7th–15th March, groups invaded the Department of Work and Pensions building (pictured above), lobbied Parliament and leafleted local job centres to highlight the draconian measures included in the Welfare Reform Bill. Renamed the Welfare Abolition Bill by campaigners, it will seek to make compulsory a work-for-benefits system, cut carers allowance, increase punishment for claimants and forced two-parent registration on birth certificates, including for survivors on violence, as well as further privatising the service.

- A day of action has been called by Subway Solidarity on 4th April to demand the re-instatement of sacked worker Natalia Szymanska, a young Polish woman dismissed from the Subway sandwich chain in Belfast in her fifth month of pregnancy on a dubious charge of being in breach of the company's health and safety policy. A co-ordinated picket of local Subway outlets has been organised for Saturday 4th April to highlight Natalia's case. As one activist put it "It is an opportunity for local anarchist groups to co-ordinate activities in solidarity with workers who feel they are unsupported and unacknowledged in the workplace as well as sending a message of defiance to bosses who think they can treat workers how they please".

For groups interested in supporting this initiative email callingforchange@email.com for further

Pay: what went wrong in 2007?

The libcom group's analysis of the 2007 struggles against the 2% pay cap, outlining how the unions sabotaged the possibility of successful action and how we – rank and file workers – can do it better in the future.

With the financial crisis gaining speed, it's clear that the only way workers can protect themselves from the ravages of recession is to fight back. Here in the UK, such struggles generally take place through the traditional trade union structures. These structures, while on one level seeming to be able to bring about co-ordinated action across the country, bring with them problems of their own.

A 'Summer of Discontent', Gordon Brown preaching pay restraint, union leaders talking about 'co-ordinated strike action', sound familiar? It should, because exactly the same things were being said last year. Despite some brave attempts in 2007, the working class suffered yet another profound defeat, unable to assert its own interests against both the bosses and their own trade unions – who did deals behind closed doors, ignored strike votes and dragged on consultations and negotiations for months.

Just like this year, 2007 started with a 2% cap on public sector pay rises. This led to a wave of strikes, which while some were impressive, many were stopped before they even got started and most failed to make any gains on either pay or other issues. To reverse this trend, we need to understand previous failures and learn from them in order not to repeat the same mistakes over and over again.

In Royal Mail, strikes got off to a good start in July, with rolling strikes and a work to rule caused a massive backlog, then later sparking wildcat strikes across Scotland and the North of England. As the second wave of official strikes was due to start, they were called by the CWU leadership, entering 'meaningful negotiations' with Royal Mail management. These 'meaningful negotiations' lasted for weeks, came to no firm conclusion (except that measures would be forced through at a local level where it's easier to divide the workforce), and prepared the stage for a fresh assault on pensions this year. Strikers in Liverpool who had continued with unofficial action were left out on a limb – spending many days without pay as the CWU refused to release details of deals done for fear of a massive negative reaction from elsewhere – with the workforce in most places demobilised by a slow and agonising wait.

There were also strikes by 200,000 civil servants, significant local strikes by health and local government workers in Manchester, Glasgow and Birmingham, and in the private



thousands of workers at Grampian Foods, Coca Cola, Heinz and smaller workplaces.

So with hundreds of thousands out on strike, and workers taking their own initiative in some sectors – how come this didn't lead to the 'pay inflation' we were warned about and so desperately need? Let's face it, pay inflation's about the only kind of inflation we don't have at the moment.

First we need to look at what was promised – coordinated strike action between public sector unions, 'prolonged and sustained strike action' on ballot literature. And what we got: strikes cancelled at the slightest hint of a deal, strike votes of 51% being rejected as not enough of a mandate (while in 2008 54% was a resounding mandate, maybe 3% really does make a big difference!), pay deals of 2.5% over one year being magicked into 5% over two years (or even less) – oh great! Despite all of us facing the same attacks on our wages, on our working conditions, on our weekly shopping bills – we're sliced up into a whole host of separate unions, and as such, separate issues, ballots and campaigns.

So how do we respond to this? Certainly not by appealing to the union leadership or the government! While the right wing press (pretty much all of the press), complains about Labour's close ties to the unions, they fail to mention the unions' close ties to

leader to cushy ministerial position or a fat pay check sitting in a think tank, and that's where their interests lie (since their wages go up regardless of whether ours do). Trying to replace leaders or 'democratise' the unions is another old game that was bankrupt even when union membership was a lot higher and a lot more militant – it either burns people out or catapults them into the same positions and compromises they attacked moments before.

What's needed is independent activity outside these structures – co-operation of workers across the boundaries of union, sector and the public/private divide. The bosses are simply continuing a coordinated attack that's been going on for decades – they're quite able to put on a united front when it comes to keeping wages down, hours long and prices high. But they're met with piecemeal resistance by workers divided by artificial boundaries and operating within a framework set entirely by the opposing side. Even a small number of workers can have a big effect if they're able to break out of these restrictions – taking their breaks, leaving on time, organising go-slows, producing leaflets, taking unofficial actions like wildcat strikes or occupying their workplace – without waiting for people who've got no interest in our situation except its continuation to give

REVIEWS

WHAT'S ON

MARCH

28th Thomas Paine's legacy, with speakers John Keane and Gregory Claeys at Conway Hall, 25 Red Lion Square, London WC1R 4RL, at 2pm, for more information see ethicalsoc.org.uk/events.htm

28th Manchester AF day school from 1pm until 5.30 pm at The Yard theatre, 41 Old Birley Street, Hulme, Manchester M15 5RE, see af.north.org for details.

30th Pogo Projections will be showing *After Stonewall: from the riots to the millennium*, which chronicles the gay and lesbian experience since the Stonewall riots, starts at 7.30pm at Pogo Café, 76a Clarence Road, Hackney, London E5 8HB, see pogocafe.co.uk or call 020 8533 1214.

APRIL

1st Fossil Fools Day 2009 – last year saw 35 actions in 20 cities across the UK in protest against the madness of burning fossil fuels. For what's happening this year, see fossilfoolsday.org

1st and 2nd G20 Meltdown, meet at 12 noon on 1st at Bank of England, Threadneedle Street, London EC2R 8AH to reclaim the City and party, then early morning on the 2nd at the Excel Centre in Canning Town, see g-20meltdown.org for more information.

2nd to 5th NATO Summit in Strasbourg with demonstrations, blockades and counter-summit, see gipfetsoli.org for more.

3rd to 5th Fifth Anarchist Bookfair in Zagreb, for all your anarchist and libertarian needs in Croatia, for more details see ask-zagreb.org/englistki.htm

6th Pogo Projections an evening in the company of 'Mr Critical Mass' with a slide show, talk, film and a question & answer session, starts at 7.30pm at Pogo Café, 76a Clarence Road, Hackney, London E5 8HB, for more see pogocafe.co.uk or call 020 8533 1214.

10th Benefit gig for legal support of Polish anti-fascists following actions to stop nazi marches, from 8pm at The Dome, 178 Junction Road, London N19 5QQ, see <http://scumfest.org> for details.

25th March and rally to call for an end to animal experiments, meet 12 noon at Reformer's Tree in Hyde Park, for details see wdail.org.

MAY

4th Mayday Reclaim the Streets against EDO MBM/ITT, Brighton's bomb factory, see smashedo.org.uk for more.

23rd Cardiff Anarchist Bookfair at Cathays Community Centre, 36 Cathays Terrace, Cardiff CF24 4HX from 10am until 6pm, see <http://southwalesanarchists.org> or email cosmoinnit@talk21.com.

30th Haringey Independence Day, grassroots gathering for social change at West Green Learning Centre, Park View Academy, West Green Road, London N15 3RB, from 12 noon until 6pm, for more information see haringav.org/independenceday.

DVD

Creating a Movement: The Struggle for Inclusive Education in the UK, 1990–2006

by Stefan Sczcelkun (2008)

This thought-provoking third *London Counterculture and People Power of the Nineties* DVD (see review of Nos. 1 and 2 in *Freedom*, 17th June 2006) documents members of a grass-roots organised network around disabled people, parents and children arguing against the mainstream education system excluding all sorts of kids – often against their express will, but with practical alternatives unavailable – and shunting them into 'special' institutions. However enlightened the latter are (usually quite the opposite, being even more badly-resourced), this segregation inevitably stigmatises and seriously damages socialisation and life-chances as well as reinforcing ignorance and prejudice in wider society. Yet despite considerable evidence that – when it's done properly – integrating those with disabilities and emotional and behavioural difficulties into normal schools enriches the lives of all concerned, established professional and political parties consistently avoid countenancing its general application even while paying lip-service to UN and EU human rights conventions and accords.

Anti-Ability Apartheid

The four crisply-shot and edited sections here include short introductions by AllfIE campaigners, film of their 1998 London protest successfully occupying the Department of Education, stages of a 2003 'consultation' exercise where DoE bureaucrats politely ignored everything they said, and a final interview with founder Micheline Mason. Overall, *Creating a Movement* illustrates both the strengths and weaknesses of 'single-issue' efforts, however noble. Clearly this is an extensive, growing patchwork of individuals, families and initiatives building active links, nourishing each other's courage and capacity to confront indifferent authority – and I'd have liked more about their autonomous activity not revolving around immediate demands on the State. Otherwise it might seem that tail-ending the twists and U-turns of government spin can leave you on a hiding to nothing, especially given the current tick-boxing



Images: Stefan Sczcelkun

orthodoxy chasing narrow 'employability' skills for disappearing jobs as the pedagogical benchmark of official human worth.

Nevertheless, despite severe logistical odds, this group generates from specific sufferings a general critique of the ways social hierarchies divide and dominate us all. With no unctuous PC pretentiousness – no doubt helped by its leading lights being articulate working-class folk – the most moving passages in the interview and potted life-history accounts by younger and older diversely-abled proponents convincingly expand individual questions of discriminatory injustice into ultimate meanings of human solidarity and community. This contrasts with the summary dismissiveness of a catalogue of arrogant expertise failing to seek or take account of the lived experience of those whose fate they pronounce on – whereas the development of AllfIE demonstrates the tangible collective benefits of respect for difference irrespective of abstract moral imperatives. As Micheline Mason implies, such work prefigures a vision of liberation for a world "in which exclusivity is not an organising principle, a society in which all people are brought up to live well together".

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Creating a Movement is available for £8.50 plus £1 p&p, from the Alliance for Inclusive Education, 336 Brixton Road, London SW9 7AA, tel: 0207 737 6030, or online at www.allfie.org.uk.

QUIZ ANSWERS

1. They were summoned to Winchester, where they were "they taken one by one, and deprived each of the right hand and the testicles beneath ... And that was all in perfect justice, because that they had undone all the land with the great quantity of base coin that they all bought."
2. Currency not backed by a physical reserve, such as gold. Some free market capitalists tend to obsess about fiat money. It's value
3. A currency not backed by a government. It was pre-First Gulf War Iraqi dinars, used in Kurdish regions that refused to use the post Gulf War 'Saddam dinars' and were isolated enough that Saddam's government couldn't force them. They fell out of use after the country was reunified under the occupation.
4. The Battle of the Beanfield. The police, hyped up from attacking the miners all the previous year, smashed people's homes and

A class act

Tom Jennings attributes this film's success to its subversion of educational orthodoxy veiled in high-liberal and Hollywood homilies

A particularly interesting contemporary French film-maker is Laurent Cantet, whose eclectic social-realist sensibility yields pointed deconstructions of power relations in class society. After two poignant tales of corporate soullessness and alienated masculinity (*Human Resources*, 1999; *Time Out*, 2001), *Heading South's* (2005) Haitian sex-tourism tragedy more ambitiously (and unevenly) savaged affluent Western femininity and racism. His latest apparently more modest feature depicts a suburban Parisian high-school year-group, yet *The Class* unanimously won the Palme d'Or at last year's Cannes Festival, becoming a national cultural *cause célèbre* hailed by leftist, moderate and far-right commentators alike – incorporated into 'progressive' curricula as well as diatribes about the impending demise of the Republic. Riots in the *banlieux* and growing unrest against Sarkozy's neo-Thatcherism doubtless help explain the attention, but comparable acclaim and unexpectedly massive audiences ensued abroad – perhaps reflecting sundry international nerves jangling about integrative citizenship lynchpins of 'education, education, education' as late-capitalist social-democratic, aspirational and multicultural consensuses collapse.

François Bégaudeau stars as Mr Marin (= 'mariner', ambiguously invoking navigator or deckhand; either way, 'all at sea'...), an idealistic and clearly highly-skilled young language and literature instructor struggling to convey the intricacies of French verb tenses to variously recalcitrant and intelligent 14-year-old charges of European, African, Arab and Asian descent. The texture and tenor of their sparring steps forward and back are captured pitch-perfectly – all the more astonishing given that virtually the entire fantastic cast are non-actors exhibiting the fruits of over a year's improvisations borrowing Bégaudeau's novelisation of his own junior-high teaching experiences at a school closely similar to the deprived Belleville district's Françoise Dolto school setting that these teachers, kids and parents actually attended. Loosely-stitched vignettes selected from his three-term report were filmed using multiple handheld cameras, along with staffroom and parent's evening interludes fleshing out the ecosystem's procedures and the tenuous battle to maintain motivation and order along with the illusion of coherence in the establishment's mission. A superbly-rendered, engaging and



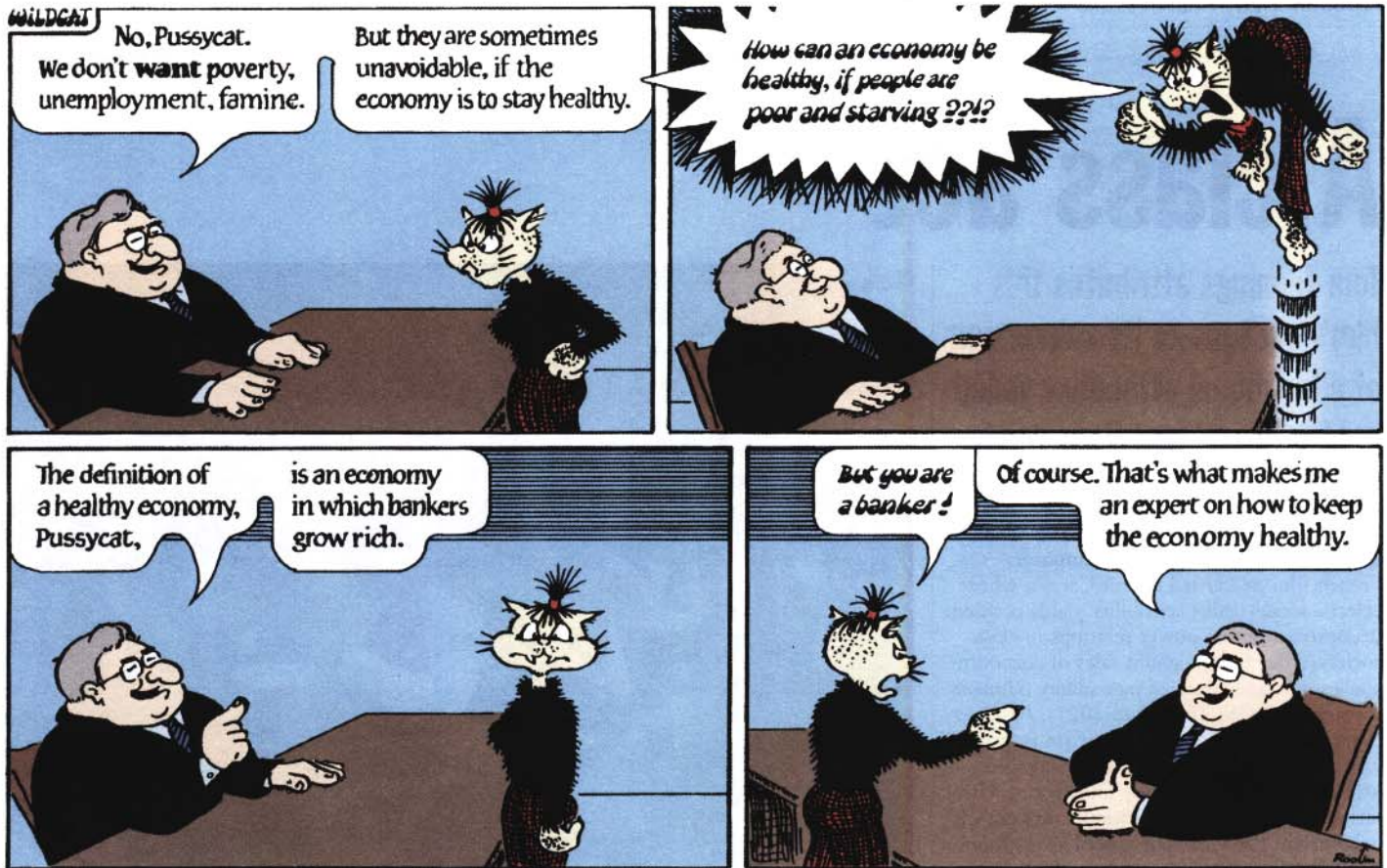
film's guileful construction moreover gestures beyond the heroic paternalist individualism ostensibly portrayed.

Class encounters of the secondary kind A dishonourable tradition of classroom movies sick-makingly sentimentalises teaching professionalism in elitist institutions – in the UK's *Goodbye, Mr Chips* (dir. Sam Woods, 1939; musical by Herbert Ross, 1969), *The Browning Version* (Anthony Asquith, 1951; Mike Figgis, 1994), *The History Boys* (Nicholas Hytner, 2006) or the *American Dead Poets Society* (Peter Weir, 1989). Conversely, encounters with lower-class studenthood are perennially hackneyed Hollywood fare in *Blackboard Jungle* (Richard Brooks, 1955), *To Sir With Love* (James Clavell, 1967), *Dangerous Minds* (John N. Smith, 1995), *Half Nelson* (Ryan Fleck, 2006) and *Freedom Writers* (Richard LaGravenese, 2007¹) – the latter's ghetto kids also 'discovering' oppression via *The Diary of Anne Frank*; but rather than being recuperated, Khounbia in *The Class* refuses to read aloud from it. Thus French cinema occasionally displays more courage and depth in tackling conventional themes – from Jean Vigo's iconic insurrection in *Zéro de Conduite* (1933; inspiring Lindsay Anderson's *If...*, 1968) to *Au Revoir les Enfants* (Louis Malle, 1987), *It All Starts Today* (Bertrand Tavernier, 1999) and *L'Esquive* (Abdellatif Kechiche, 2003²) – while also regularly pandering conservative nostalgia (e.g. *Être et Avoir*, Nicolas Philibert, 2002; *Les Choristes*, Christophe Barratier, 2004).

Allowing both resistive and reactionary readings, *The Class* cleverly camouflages its equivocal stance in the tragic arc of disruptive Souleymane – whose inevitable expulsion

baleful personal consequences. However, Marin loses his cool when the female student representatives protest his treatment, dubbing them *pétasses* (skanks) – not consciously realising the word's heavier ghetto signification (tarts, sluts) – and the class goes apeshit. Crucially, this isn't merely an unfortunate one-off 'mistake'. It exemplifies the teacher's scornful superiority that they always already suspected lurked under his approach – though hidden by tenets of Socratic dialogue, dispensing knowledge by supposedly encouraging novitiates to question themselves (but not the wise master's neutrally philanthropic position). So they gleefully overreact to proof both of his duplicity and that of the educational discourses subordinating them which seamlessly flow into social hierarchies outside. Effortlessly condensing class, race and gender differentiations into his slur, furthermore, his sophisticated command of hegemonic 'correct' language leaves him clueless about their equally rich vernacular – not even knowing that he doesn't know. Nevertheless, when Esmeralda later lets slip she's read Plato – off her own bat independently of his strictures – this can be erroneously inferred to retrospectively justify his and the system's strategies (if only they were managed more 'efficiently').

As more perceptive critics³ hesitantly recognise, strenuous even-handed efforts in *The Class* can't conceal the privilege accorded to professional perspectives – hardly registering the pupils' lives outside school or amongst themselves away from teacher. Yet while some justice is done to their problems, potential and agency despite mainstream education's systemic stratification functions, the balance still inexorably tips towards authority and



Review

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its vicissitudes. In 'advanced' Western society generally, such manoeuvres are usually scrupulously mystified in ideology and bureaucracy, but here – through his sly exploitation of generic inspirational-teacher melodramatics – Cantet both appeals to conformist viewers and exposes their cosy self-justifying clichés. He concludes that "school is a space where wonderful things can happen ... but it is also a segregating machine".⁴ Though in this case often due to happy accident more than transcendental pedagogy, we glimpse that quantum leaps of individual or collective understanding may occur if resources, agendas and facilitation don't lock into disciplining for outcomes alien

to those subjugated (the original title *Entre les Murs* – 'Between the Walls' – referencing this imprisonment). But we rarely see so strong a mainstream hint that present structures and philosophies specifically cripple the generalisation of such aims.

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The Class, directed by Laurent Cantet (France, 2008).

Notes

1. Reviewed in *Freedom*, 19th May 2007.
2. Refreshingly unusual in decisively shifting focus from teacher to pupils. See also this director's excellent *Couscous*, reviewed in *Freedom*, 30th August 2008.
3. Especially Richard Porton in *Cinema Scope* magazine, No. 35, 2008 (www.cinema-scope.com).
4. Quoted in Ginette Vincendeau, 'Rules of the Game', *Sight & Sound*, March 2009.

THE QUIZ

1. What did the Anglo Saxon Chronicles describe happened to mint-men after the coinage was debased in 1125?
2. What is fiat money?
3. What was the 'Swiss dinar'?
4. What did a vicious police attack on the Peace Convoy in Wiltshire in 1985 become known as?

Answers on page 14

The Anarchist Quiz Book by Martin Howard, with illustrations by Paul Petard, is available from 'Book Orders', Freedom Press, 84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1 7QX for just £5, post free.

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