

## FIGHTING THE CUTS

### Campaign under way to challenge the Tories over their austerity measures

The start of organised campaigns to oppose the Tory coalition's sweeping cuts to public services has begun in earnest. Not only are there regional groups springing up across the UK – organised predominately around trades councils and groups coalescing around specific objectives i.e. health service, public sector, the unemployed – but several national campaign initiatives are beginning to take shape and develop an identity. This can only be a positive thing in terms of attempting to make a clear and visible contribution in the fight against the damaging effects of cutting away 25% of the welfare budget in order to shore up a failing economy.

Of course, these groups could be, and often are, simply fronts for leftist parties to push and promote their particular brand of ideological intent. This has always been the case, and it is always something anarchists should be vigilant in recognising, but to neglect or dismiss the groundswell of anger and simmering resentment building over this issue is something we do at our peril. Couched in the language of global economic crisis, the

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### LENS CAP REMEMBERING THE MURDERED



Over 300 people turned out to protest at the offices of the Director of Public Prosecutions against the decision not to prosecute the police officer who killed Ian Tomlinson. Organised by anarchists, there were impassioned speeches, notably Samantha Rigg whose brother was killed by police, before marching to the spot where Tomlinson was killed and observing a two-minute silence.

## ACTIVISTS TARGET MITIE HQ

On 12th August, an unknown group of activists attacked the corporate headquarters of asset management company MITIE Group plc in Bristol, causing extensive damage. It is reported that 43 windows were smashed during the night as the protestors made their feelings felt towards the company. Two MITIE vehicles were also attacked in the Staple Hill and Lockleaze areas of the city, with tyres being punctured, windscreens smashed and bodywork damaged.

The activists issued a short communiqué via the Bristol Indymedia news site explaining their actions: "Mitie bosses make money from the recession. They are parasites on councils, the public and their own workers who are exploited ... To the Mitie bosses we say feeling nervous, under attack and unsure of the

future? Welcome to Precarity."

MITIE has been involved in a protracted and bitter dispute with cleaners in the City of London (largely undocumented and migrant workers) over pay and conditions, sacking those who have attempted to organise under the Justice for Cleaners campaign. They have also colluded with the Border Agency and immigration police in the detention of nine cleaners who supported the ongoing campaign.

MITIE has also been targeted before, when Bristol No Borders organised a noise demo outside the HQ as part of the Co-Mutiny week of autonomous events in September 2009. MITIE, which provides services for the public sector including NHS and education, earned a total revenue of £1,521.9 million last year.

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## NEWS

### IN BRIEF

**IMMIGRATION:** The High Court has ruled the Home Office policy that denies some refugees a last-minute appeal against deportation is 'unlawful'.

The landmark court ruling came after human rights lawyers challenged the instant removal from Britain of certain categories of refugees.

In a case brought against UK Borders Agency by the charity Medical Justice, the High Court quashed the policy whereby foreign nationals can be removed from the UK with little or no warning, after individuals were denied access to justice in the process.

**HEALTH:** NHS boss Derek Smith received £248,041 for just 97 days work with the Dorset County Hospital NHS Trust. The interim boss also claimed £19,539 in expenses for travel, food and 'subsistence'.

The quarter-of-a-million pound salary was paid by an NHS trust to a recruitment agency, in exchange for three or four days work per week.

Mr Smith was brought in last year by the NHS trust in a bid to turn the hospital's finances around.

**EDUCATION:** Schools minister Michael Gove, in a rare expression of lucidity, stated the obvious when he told fellow MPs that, "in effect, rich thick kids do better than poor clever children when they arrive at school, and the situation as they go through gets worse."

Addressing the education select committee, he quoted research showing that toddlers from wealthy backgrounds with poor cognitive ability go on to outperform brighter children born into deprived homes by the age of six.

**OLYMPICS:** Despite the constant claims of global financial crisis and the need to tighten our belts, the 2012 Olympics 'delivery team' has almost reached their £1.1 billion target of domestic sponsorship deals for the Games.

Companies sponsoring the games include BP and Lloyds TSB. Austerity indeed.

**SCUM:** Bailiffs, who harassed a woman with mental health problems in attempt to evict from her home, found her dead when they broke in to repossess the property.

When social landlord Incommunities, Bradford, went to remove 52-year-old Beryl Hanson, she had already suffocated herself.

A note was found near her body which, the coroner commented, "effectively was saying that she could not take the pain any more."

**CRIME:** It seems the Tories are doing their best to prove to us they're not all that bad really. In an attempt to undo the years of New Labour control freak social policies, they are set to do away with the hated and unworkable ASBO.

The more cynical among us wait in anticipation to see what they replace it with.

### LENS CAP CLIMATE ACTION



The Campaign for Climate Action had a successful week of direct action and activities at this year's Climate Camp between 18th and 23rd August. Basing itself in the 'back garden' of the global headquarters of Royal Bank of Scotland just outside Edinburgh, the organisers hoped to highlight the link between big business and environmental destruction.

## NHS ripped off... again

Health service chiefs have come under fire after official figures revealed the excessive costs of hiring private consultancy, public relations and management advisory firms while planning cutbacks for frontline medical staff. In the past financial year a total of £313.9 million was spent on consultancy services by National Health Service Trusts across England according to new government statistics.

The Department of Health figures show how primary care trusts and strategic health authorities employed the services of private-sector companies which included overseeing media strategy to advice on cost-cutting measures all at a massive expensive to the taxpayer.

Last year a report by McKinsey & Company, the giant US-based management consultancy firm, with a yearly revenue in excess of \$6 billion, proposed sacking 10% of NHS staff – some 137,000 people – to achieve £20 billion in efficiency savings. McKinsey had close links with Tony Blair, so much so they were paid to restructure the Cabinet Office behind the backs of MPs, with several key New Labour policy advisors being ex-employees of McKinsey. In one six-month period, the Department of Health spent £9.964 million on its services.

This is the first time statistics of this kind have been collected in such a way and, despite an obvious attempt by a troubled

own economic impotency, it does reveal the unchecked financial extravagances of New Labour, and tells a sorry tale of the failure of a party so enmeshed in privatising the NHS by the back door it relinquished all responsibility on just who runs the NHS and for whose benefit.

This is further highlighted by the fact the NHS is still facing a massive £65 billion bill for new hospitals built under the private finance initiative (PFI). Figures show some NHS trusts were left with annual 'mortgage' repayments accounting for more than 10% of their turnover. Under PFI, private companies win contracts to build and maintain new hospitals and mental health units and the NHS pays off the 'mortgage' over around 30 years.

The 103 schemes were valued at a total of £11.3 billion when they were built. But when rising fees and additional costs such as maintenance, cleaning and catering are taken into account, the NHS will have to pay back £65.1 billion over the lifetime of the schemes.

What is perhaps most revealing about the poor state of the NHS is that the largest ever survey conducted by the *Nursing Times* showed that one in four nurses would consider striking if they were unhappy with their working conditions, with only 15% not willing to take any industrial action. Nurses are not known for their militant action, which could compromise the health



# Students denied best education

## Elite universities conspire to shut out certain under graduates

While most young people are busy receiving their A-level results, the country's top universities have closed their doors on ordinary students applying for places on this autumn's degree courses. Of the twenty most prestigious universities, which go to form the Russell Group, sixteen have closed their doors altogether, claiming there are no more course vacancies left, while the remaining four – including Kings College, London and Manchester University – admitted they have less than eighty places available out of 75,000 originally on offer. The result is that, despite scoring well in their A-level results, those from poorer backgrounds or with a basic comprehensive education, will be excluded from attending the top colleges.

A record 674,000 people applied for

university this year, but only 482,000 places have been awarded, according to the admissions body Ucas, leaving 190,000 students fighting for the remaining 18,000 spare places under the clearing system that gives students, who have yet to be accepted at university, the opportunity to apply for unallocated places or undersubscribed courses. It is these traditionally 'left over' courses that are made available to those from less privileged educational backgrounds.

The reason offered by the Russell Group universities for closing down its admissions so early on is the coalition government's strict limitation on the number of places funded by the state, and the financial penalties incurred by those institutions who take on extras student above their quota. While this may be a plausible explanation for limiting intake, it also gives them the opportunity to filter out those that don't fit the Russell Group criteria.

The 2008 figures from the Higher Education Statistics Agency showed that only six members of the Russell Group met government guide-

lines for recruiting state school students. In addition, 16 out of the 20 failed to recruit enough youngsters from more deprived parts of the country where participation in higher education is low. This was despite a £3bn government investment to encourage greater intake of students from working class backgrounds.

Another method used by the Russell Group universities of filtering out unwanted students from state schools is the recently revealed secret list of banned 'non-traditional' A-level subjects – those predominantly offered by comprehensives, rather than private schools. Despite the correct grades students are rejected outright due of the subjects studied on the banned list, essentially blocking tens of thousands of state school pupils getting on to degree courses.

The Russell Group represents the 20 most prestigious and most profitable universities in the UK who together received 82% of the total higher education research funding allocation in 2008. They also gave strong support to the introduction of tuition fees.

## Fighting the cuts

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government is able to slash at the structure of the welfare state, especially health and education, and implement a very traditional right-wing Tory agenda of privatisation under the guise of 'austerity measures'.

What then is the role for anarchists and organised anarchist groups in this? Perhaps interestingly a clue lies in Bob Crow's recent call to arms for a general strike urging "direct community action to defend public services" to form "the biggest show of united resistance since the anti-poll tax movement".

In concrete terms, there is a national conference in London on 27th November called Coalition Of Resistance. As this is in

its embryonic form, it means it has yet to develop an entrenched political identity, or indeed petrify into a simple leftist propaganda vehicle. There is an opportunity for anarchists, with enough backbone, and very thick skin to intervene at the ground level and ensure that if there is to be a national campaign against the cuts it no way resembles the anti-war movement, in either tone, politics or figureheads. Campaigns of this kind are only successful when there is a strong grassroots organising network, as with the anti-poll tax campaign, to prevent the spoiling effects of party politicking.

This then is a challenge rather than a commitment. Over the next few months

people, who have never protested, never campaigned or ever stood on a picket line will have to traverse the murky terrain of political opportunism, where every paper seller, every chant, every slogan uttered in the language of leftwing dogma will be vying for the support of the disenfranchised working class.

As anarchists we must be able define and defend a political position, certainly, but more importantly we must be able to contribute, get our hands dirty and not apologise for our presence. These Tory cuts will define the next five years of our political trajectory, we can either fight our corner or we can simply be written out of history, again.

## ANALYSIS

# Uniting for racism

## A report on union collusion with the bosses against a political activist

Yunus Bakhsh, a psychiatric nurse from the north east of England, has won a four-year battle for unfair dismissal against his former employer, Northumberland Tyne and Wear NHS trust.

Yunus had a 23-year unblemished record in nursing. His employer colluded with his own union, Unison, to get rid of him. Yunus was an SWP member and a union activist, and he was also joint branch secretary of Unison North of Tyne health group.

In the weeks before his suspension he had angered management by publicising their large salary increases, at the same time as leading a campaign against closure of a local care home.

In September 2006, he was suspended, with management initially refusing to give any clear reasons. They soon claimed they were acting on anonymous allegations of bullying and intimidation made against him. Staff were encouraged to come and make statements against him without proper representation or support.

In January 2007, the very organisation he was relying on for support, Unison, suspended him from the union, claiming use of the union branch office for Socialist Worker Party activities. Unison later raided the office.

Whilst on suspension he worked out that two of his accusers were fellow union activists, husband and wife Peter and Kerry Cafferty. The allegations that led to his suspension relate to his conduct at staff representative meetings and not as a nurse. As three health trusts were merging, Yunus



Above, Yunus Bakhsh with a campaign leaflet; below, support for Yunus at the Durham Miners Gala in 2008.

could have been head of the largest health branch in the UK.

Under investigation from his employer, and also the union he had been so active in, he sank into depression. The disciplinary proceedings dragged on for a further 21 months.

At the same time as fighting to keep his job, he applied to the certification officer against his union suspension, but he was denied full access to the allegations made against him. At the certification hearing he had to represent himself while Unison used its members' money to hire a barrister who was instructed by the firm Thompson's, which was usually used to support members.

He was too ill to attend his final disciplinary hearing in June 2008 and, despite doctors asking for an adjournment, he was dismissed in his absence. Determined not to give up, he had to seek his own legal representation and support from fringe meetings at union conferences and left wing events.

In January 2009 a friend introduced him to Facebook. He looked at the Facebook pages of one of his accusers, Kerry Cafferty. Kerry was a member of groups such as 'No More asylum seekers in Britain' and 'Make Britain Great Again'. Kerry and her husband, Peter, who was Unison Chair of Health Northern region, regional auditor and labour link officer, were both pictured seig-heiling. He managed to gain access to nazi website Stormfront, and here he got to the bottom of how he had been stitched up. He found postings relating to himself from September 2006 telling of the allegations that were soon to come. Further, they had pdf files of anti-BNP leaflets the Unison

During his suspension, Yunus's home was daubed with racist graffiti and his windows broken. He was clearly hated by local BNP as, in 2005, he had got a BNP member sacked – a posting in October 2005 was looking for dirt on Yunus.

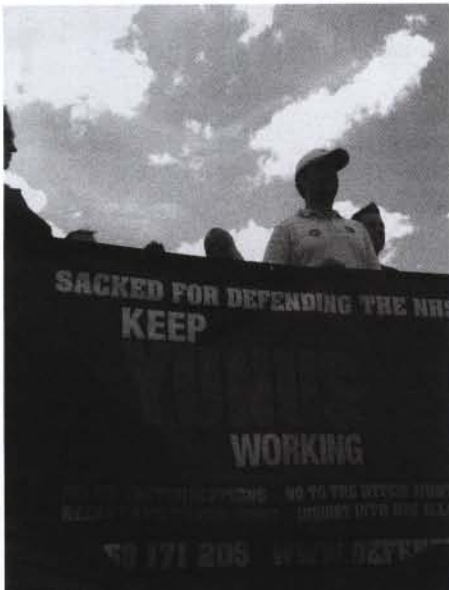
In the meantime, the branch had been closed down and those who tried to rally support for Yunus were openly shouted down by union officials. Members had no real representation and management began imposing petty changes.

At his Employment Tribunal in August 2010, he won a claim for unfair dismissal. He also won a claim for disability discrimination as the hearing had gone ahead without him being there.

The tribunal found him to be a straightforward and credible witness. The trust's head of Human Resources, Elizabeth Latham, was deemed not credible. Unknown to Yunus, she had met with senior Unison regional officer, Elizabeth Twist, to discuss Yunus. The tribunal questioned whether Latham had "found in Twist and Unison an ally and a shared sense of purpose to remove the claimant." Damages have yet to be decided.

This extraordinary, and at times outrageous, battle shows up the blatant collusion between a union and employer to both rid themselves of an activist. Unison's anti-racist credentials are surely in tatters if they allow far-right activists to infiltrate senior positions and sabotage the union's anti-fascist work.

After the tribunal Yunus called on Unison to allow an independent investigation into his union suspension. To date, Unison's website only gives a brief statement on



# Anarchist responses to sexual violence

Calling yourself a 'feminist' is great, but doesn't tell us what you're doing to dismantle patriarchy (and white supremacy/ other hierarchies) at the same time as capitalism.

The Women's Liberation Movement taught us that 'the personal is political'. Consciousness-raising led to many making radical changes in their personal lives. We can all individually change: we can question our own assumptions, alter our expectations and the ways we relate to each other, and maybe even rid our most intimate relationships of oppressive behaviour.

But in terms of collective action, what are we as anarchists doing about 'feminist issues' (for example the prevalence of rape, sexual assault, sexual harassment and abusive relationships, both within our scenes and within society at large)? There are other feminists whose reaction is to campaign for more policing and increased sentences, but how can we trust the cops and the prison system to end violence when they perpetrate so much of it?

When you talk to people about an anarchist utopia, without a government, without police, without prisons, their first question is often 'What about the rapists and murderers?' These are a very small minority of the prison population, but let's have an answer ready. Rape is way more common than murder, and if prison isn't a solution then what is?

We can only convince ourselves, never mind anyone else, that anarchism works, if we see that it does. Alongside simply imagining alternative ways of doing things, some of us need to acquire practical skills and create sustainable models, so we have knowledge worth sharing when the inevitable revolution/ economic crash/

apocalypse/ ecological crisis/ smooth transition (depending on your beliefs) occurs.

The problem of sexual violence isn't restricted to mainstream society, our 'communities' are not immune, and so many of us will actually have to deal with this kind of situation at some point. What happens when you know the people involved – maybe you're all involved in the same radical group? (and please don't tell us that anarchists/activists wouldn't do that sort of thing, as we know damn well that they do). Do we leave it to the state to arbitrate? Or do a much better job ourselves than the criminal justice system ever could?

There are groups who have written about their experiences of doing this, sharing their ideas and strategies for some kind of community-based process.

These tend to involve working with both parties – providing support for both the survivor, as they heal and recover, and the other person, as they take responsibility for their actions. This 'transformative support' is most effective when it's done by those the offender respects (if all your mates tell you that your behaviour is truly fucked up, you're more likely to listen and do something about it than if it comes from people you don't care about).

These methods only 'work' when there is a real community of people prepared to collectively go through what may well be an arduous, long, emotionally exhausting, and possibly divisive process.

It really helps if folk are already 'on the same page' in terms of basic information about sexual assault and abuse (not just the crappy stereotypes and myths fed us by mainstream media) and how to support survivors.

Let's commit ourselves to working towards a society free of rape, sexual assault and oppression, and start having conversations about these issues now. Let's create spaces where open, honest communication can take place.

Once we've learnt how patriarchy functions as a system of oppression, we can figure out how to dismantle it. We're excited to hear of new groups, both men's and mixed, starting up in other cities (like Bristol and Nottingham) with a specific focus of 'confronting patriarchy', and hope to report more on these in the future.

Also, check out some of the resources being published by the Radical Practical Feminist Self Defence group in London. These include practical leaflets such as *How to help your friend, What is Safer Sex?* and *Creating Safer Spaces*, as well as reprints of texts on *Thoughts about Community Support around Intimate Violence*, *Taking Risks: Implementing Grass-roots Community Accountability Strategies*, *Taking the First Step: suggestions to people called out for abusive behaviour*, *Going to Places that Scare Me: reflections on challenging male supremacy*, *Consent is sexy* and more. Contact them for copies. Currently writing a longer pamphlet on the subject of *Community Responses to Intimate Violence*. If you have a story ('success' or otherwise) to share, practical advice, tactics or tips for anyone in a similar situation, or anything else to contribute, please get in touch, in confidence, with [feministselfdefence@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:feministselfdefence@yahoo.co.uk)

More links and news on our website at <http://lafk.wordpress.com/>

Contact the London Anarcha-Feminist Kolektiv at [lafk@riseup.net](mailto:lafk@riseup.net)



## FEATURE

# Taking Liberties: a conversation with

## Tom Hodgkinson interviews two of our better known troublemakers

When it comes to being a professional idler, I have to take my hat off to those two grand masters of anti-capitalist slack, Ian Bone and Ray Roughler-Jones.

Bone (pictured below) is best known for *Class War*, his provocative, aggressive, radical paper. I also read Bone's excellent biography, *Bash the Rich*, an account of a working class bohemian life.

Ray Roughler-Jones (pictured below right) is Bone's old friend who I remember from my days working at Rough Trade shop in Portobello Road in 1990. Ray edits the *Roughler* magazine and puts on all sorts of events in the W11 area, often working with the actress Anna Chancellor, who starred in *Four Weddings and a Funeral*. Another project is the Youtube channel Roughler TV. He has been on the dole for about forty years. Bone is publishing Ray's autobiography, *Drowning on Dry Land*. Another release on Bone Books is *Hartmann the Anarchist: The Doom of the Great City*, a story first published in 1892 and written by a seventeen year old public schoolboy called E. Douglas Fawcett.

Anyway, I arranged to meet up these two outstanding beacons of the idling classes in Mike's Café in Portobello Road. "Blimey, this has smartened up a bit, hasn't it?" commented Bone when he walked in. Bone is well-dressed in a Fedora and a nice wool overcoat.

**Tom Hodgkinson:** Now most people think of anarchy as violent and aggressive. But to me it is all about voluntary action and

*independence. I have been talking [with Warren Draper] about an anarchy movement – called 'Anglarchy' – that is rooted in English literature, Blake and Cobbett, very practical, and not about smashing up the bus stops. Although there may be a place for that. What's your idea of liberty, anarchy, freedom?*

**Ian Bone:** Pretty much the same as yours: a world without work, a world of unlicensed pleasure. I certainly don't go for all that right-to-work bollocks.

**TH:** The recent marches and demonstrations in London, they were marching for jobs. They had banners saying, 'we want jobs'.

**IB:** That's just bollocks. It's mostly people on the Left who have this ethos, but the feckless working class doesn't want 'more and better jobs'. The Left has an image of the Jarrow marches. My grandad was an unemployed miner in Scotland in the thirties, at the same time as the Jarrow marches. He was supposed to have had a job filling the pits in, but instead, there's a great photo of him playing cards and dominos. The central question is, how do the working class become idlers, as opposed to those who can afford idleness, knowing others will provide their sewerage, drains, electricity, food, water and so on.

There is a pivotal moment in Dave Douglass's new book where he writes about the return to work after the miners' strike where many miners deliberately sabotaged the pits in order to take redundancy payments. This unseen, unheroic working class struggle for freedom from work is seldom recognised or acknowledged, so idleness as a class issue is not taken up because the Left has a different agenda, with its Jarrow heroism.

**TH:** Do you ever hear that thing where people on the hard Left accuse anarchists of being bourgeois?



Ian Bone and Ray Roughler-Jones.

**IB:** Fucking hypocrites – the SWP is entirely made up of people who used to be polytechnic lecturers wearing corduroy trousers... what's their working class composition? Virtually nil, now. But I don't really care about people's background, it's where you are now. What you can't do is do both – be politically anarchist and retain all the privileges of the previous life.

For example George Monbiot, who has done the classic thing. Monbiot is so keen on allotments that he has seven of his own. But it never occurs to him there might be six other people out there... Have you heard his thing, 'the Land is Ours'? Yes, the land is yours, you fuckin' own it, you cunt!

**TH:** And when did you both take against work?

**Ray Roughler-Jones:** It's just that nobody worked, none of our friends worked.

**IB:** No one ever worked... in *Bash the Rich* there's a story about 'turning to the working class', but we didn't know anyone who was working! We were all on the dole so we started a Claimants' Union, a union for people on the dole. We would fight to get you all your entitlements. The classic line was: "If they get you a job, we'll fight your case!" There were all the jokes about what occupation you gave when you were signing on: Father Christmas, snow clearer, and so on.

**TH:** Does the skiving thing go back for generations, do you think?

**RRJ:** It's not exactly skiving. It's hard graft to be on the dole. They never leave you alone... One time, we thought we'd better get a job, and we saw these dustmen in the pub in Swansea. They were always there at eleven in the morning. We thought we'd try that. We went down there. The interview was, 'What's your name? Right, start tomorrow.' So we went the next day. Fireball XL5 was the name of our wagon. We said to the bloke in charge, early finish is it? He said, oh yes,



# h Ian Bone and Ray Roughler-Jones

what about the eleven o'clock finish? And he said, you've got to be here thirty years before you get that shift. I remember running away from the depot.

**TH:** *So even the prospect of working till four thirty just for one day was too much?*

**IB:** Yes – we're fucking men of principle.

**TH:** *what did you do when you first got to London, Ray?*

**RRJ:** I didn't have a clue what I was going to do when I got here. I didn't know what I was going to do. I went on the dole. And nothing much has changed since.

**IB:** Ray was an accomplished shop-lifter in Swansea so was able to supplement his income.

**RRJ:** I gave all that up.

**IB:** Most people go round nicking big lumps of cheese, joints of meat and big Nescafé jars and hawk 'em round the pubs at lunchtime to get beer money.

**TH:** *So you were exiled from Swansea, Ray?*

**RRJ:** Yes. I nicked a suit with an alarm on, got chased by a security guard who got knocked down by a car but still got up and nabbed me. All the security guards used to say, 'Morning Ray'.

**TH:** *You had political beliefs behind this?*

**IB:** I didn't want to work either for the state, being an anarchist, or for some fucking capitalist company. I thought I'd never work officially, but I could do stints on the dole and survive on fuck all money with no possessions outside of a bin bag.

**TH:** *It's a gentlemanly existence, isn't it?*

**IB:** A mate of ours, John, worked as a ticket collector at Ladbroke Grove station, stood as Class War candidate in the Kensington by-election in '87. He never checked any tickets because he would read *Class War* or *The Sun* all day. After a while his bosses said, we've been watching you for four hours, and you haven't checked one ticket. You've been reading a copy of *Class War* all day. He brought a successful case saying he had been harassed. And then successfully transferred to the sick for years claiming stress!

**TH:** *Have you ever gone into a job and tried to rouse up the workers to rebellion against the bosses?*

**IB:** Well, always. When I was in the Housing Association once, I eventually got the sack for breach of confidentiality. There was some fiddling going on and I told the local paper. They quoted me, an anonymous source, but then put my name in!

**TH:** *Now what about the argument that says, there is camaraderie in the workplace?*

**IB:** Well there is, and solidarity. But people will find camaraderie in prisons or the most

desperate situations you know. There is that camaraderie, but you find other ways of getting it outside the world of work. A lot of the miners found that difficult at first, especially with Thatcher intent on destroying a sense of community through her 'no such thing as society' speech.

**TH:** *Wouldn't it be better if all that ingenuity, energy and collective action was directed towards working for ourselves?*

**IB:** There's very little fightback or imagination around at the moment. We are fed a diet of *Daily Mail* heath scares and panics. Don't go outside you might get swine flu.

Also in the eighties, if you went on a riot and weren't nicked on the day, you got away with it. Now with CCTV and telly coverage you can get nicked months or years later. No fun in that.

**TH:** *Well, what's happened to the working class intellectuals, then?*

**IB:** A lot of them have been bought off, writing opinion pieces like in-house bits of rough.

**TH:** *Or they become stand-up comedians.*

**IB:** That's another lot – even the fucking comedians have all been to Oxbridge... Sorry to say it, Tom, but they're all fucking at it. Everything from the protest movement to even the journos are Oxford or Cambridge educated – Tony Benn, Tariq Ali, Ken Loach...

One of the problems with the anarchist movement is that it's lost its libertarian impulse and its hedonism. It doesn't vigorously oppose restrictions on liberty.

We believe in free speech – opposing Griffin going on *Question Time* was fucking ridiculous, with people saying: 'I believe in free speech but...'

**TH:** *But a big part of the anarchist thing is to bust up racist marches and so on.*

**IB:** Nothing wrong with a punch up. I believe Griffin can have free speech but take the physical consequences if people don't like what he says.

I used to admire Donald Soper on his stepladder at Speakers Corner taking on all-comers. Top geezer. There's a whole gamut of things... that's what I like in *The Idler*, that libertarian, English anarchy, an affection for place and roots. I love Frank Newbold's wartime posters, 'It's Your England... Fight For It', and Orwell's English socialist patriotism. A lot of anarchists are actually just boring leftists...

**TH:** *I like those creative things that actually add to people's lives, rather than the far Left whingeing. Which is also, in lots of cases, just resentment. And resentment is the wrong attitude.*

**IB:** Nothing wrong with a bit of resentment. Resentment and bitterness! The Yippees and the Dutch Provos showed you can be both bitter and funny.

On the train Jane, my partner, has no patience with middle class twats letting their kids run amok... 'Stop these children coming up and pawing me... Harry, Harriet and Josh... you're going to get thumped in a minute.' She got off to a bad start, because their mater was reading the *Tatler*. Because she was reading *Tatler*, she thought everyone else had to look after her kids. After some strong words from Jane, the woman called the police... everyone was craning their necks – class war on the 5.20 outta Paddington!

Edited from the original interview in issue 43 of *The Idler* magazine and reprinted with Tom Hodgkinson's permission.



## COMMENT

## ABOUT FREEDOM

## ANGEL ALLEY

During the summer break we've been busy in the shop holding a barbecue in the alley as a benefit for Kilburn Unemployed Workers' Centre (many thanks to all those who helped put it on, especially to Lee who cleared up on Sunday). Also we had our first ever art evening, which featured the photographs of Max Reeves. Despite the lack of wine and canapés, a good time was, as they say, had by all. The online shop has had a boost from sales of t-shirts, though we apologise for the high cost caused by Royal Mail's daft postage pricing by size.

Thoughts are beginning to turn to the London Anarchist Bookfair on the 23rd October. So we can let you know in advance that we will once again be holding a post-Bookfair party at the shop from 7pm. As every year, we will be on the stall and/or at the party to meet our readers and listen to feedback, so here's a quick guide to who's who.

- Dean Talent, edits the paper.
- Rob Ray, a former editor, who now does the international pages.
- Scott Wakeham, reviews editor and trade book distribution.
- Andy Meinke, odd bits of the paper and bookshop bod.

Also about will be

- Donald Rooum, cartoonist in residence.
- Jayne Clementson, admin, layout, etc.

## SUBSCRIPTIONS

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## NEXT ISSUE

The next issue will be dated 11th September 2010 and the last day to get copy to us for that issue will be Thursday 2nd September. You can send your articles to us by email to [copy@freedompress.org.uk](mailto:copy@freedompress.org.uk) or by post addressed to 'The Editors', Freedom, 84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1 7QX.

## A sideways look

by SVARTFROSK

Talking to some comrades the other night, discussion strayed to the forthcoming cuts and what we can do about them. The cuts agenda and fighting it will be the defining campaign of the next few years.

Firstly, I think it is important to be clear that we are against the cuts for the right reasons. It's not because the State does a good job, or that the State should be providing services; it is simply because the cuts are aimed at the poorest and weakest.

While it is possible that the government may find a way to cut the pointless waste of money that is Trident, it is more likely that they will keep it and cut other things. In a similar vein, I've no problem with the bloated Building Schools for the Future (BSF) PFI programme being shut down, but I do want to see schools rebuilt, preferably not at the exorbitant rates of profit that the capitalists have been demanding through BSF.

In their plans for the NHS, the government have decided to re-organise (something I'm sure hasn't happened in the NHS for at least six months!) and to scrap several layers of bureaucracy. They are doing this by giving the lead role in commissioning to General Practitioners (GPs). The GPs are expected to band together in consortia to handle commissioning health care services for their patients. In practice, a few enthusiastic GP's will get involved, but will end up handing over all the work to one of the private health companies to run on their behalf. So, the layer of bureaucracy will still be there, the difference is that it will be accountable to its shareholders and will be seeking to maximise profit (as all businesses are meant to). The Health Authorities that are going are not popular or loved institutions, much like British Rail. They will probably end up being remembered fondly in the future after the

healthcare equivalent of Connex and First have run amok in the NHS.

The extension of the alleged private sector efficiency into new areas is one of the chief features of the cuts. It's there in their plans for education, health, welfare, everything, you'd be forgiven for thinking that the Tories see this as a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to cement more profits for their multi-millionaire pals. The hidden costs of previous privatisations are never brought to light when current social issues are discussed. The government and media bang on endlessly about how it is terrible there are people on the dole and jobs are filled by foreigners. In the past, the utilities and the likes of British Telecom used to train new workers through apprenticeships – it was part of their role. It's not profitable though, so they stopped. After all, why train a plumber when you can hire a foreign one already trained? The last government was always throwing money at getting broadband infrastructure sorted out as well, why did it need to? Because the utility and telecoms companies wouldn't do it if they couldn't make a profit.

One area you might expect some sympathy from anarchists towards the government's agenda is around the 'Big Society' rhetoric. Okay, I know it is just a way of covering up cuts, but there is a valid point to be made that the State actually needs to leave space for people to get on with their lives. When we get down to the detail of what's proposed, of course, it comes back to the state freeing you from the tyranny of it providing services for you and leaving you free to do them for yourself. So, wealthy shires with lots of people in a position to volunteer can expect a library, somewhere poor where people work longer days or risk losing their dole if they're not available for work, can't.





## Raoul Moat

Svartfrosk's article (31st July) on Raoul Moat's elevation to folk-hero status by some was right on the mark when it compared his initial attacks to honour killings, and I'm glad he reminds us that Raoul Moat was nothing more than a violent misogynist. But I feel uneasy that this reason for condemnation was presented practically as a counter-point to the fact he shot a David Rathband, a policeman.

Don't get me wrong – I'm not defending the police. I think it's safe to say that nearly everyone reading this has been abused or attacked by the police enough times to know that, by and large, when the order's given they'll do whatever they're told, no matter how oppressive (and to know that some, such as Simon Harwood, don't even need to wait for an order). But the same could be said of plenty of other working class people. The people whose lives are ruined by destructive oil companies, by clothes companies' sweatshops, by slavery in the cocoa fields – they could well claim that those people who work for oil companies, or in clothes shops, or who sell chocolate are actively perpetuating their oppression.

But then again, people need to work, even if it is for Topshop. The police are no different – many of them go into it for the good pension and secure pay. Just like every other working class person under capitalism, they need to work in order to survive, and sometimes the choice of boss available isn't great.

David Rathband wasn't threatening anybody when he was shot, he was simply sitting in his car. Any sense of joy which comes from the fact that he was shot doesn't have anything to do with anarchy, it's simply gloating that a member of the working class got shot and blinded by a random stranger. And his class shouldn't even matter at the end of the day – he's a human being. He hasn't killed anybody, started any wars, destroyed anyone's community. Why should anyone celebrate that a normal human being nearly got murdered by a vicious psychopath?

Anarchism's supposed to be about liberating people, not about hoping people get hospitalised by murderers. And if the shooting of David Rathband was acceptable, was commendable, then where do we draw the line? The EDL don't like the police – should we support them? Because they attacked me a couple of weeks ago – is that something we anarchists should celebrate? Or is violence different when it happens to us – does it magically turn into A Bad Thing when it happens to anarchists, and A Good Thing when it happens to police who aren't doing anything wrong?

I fail to see how thinking it's okay to instigate violence on people based on their job has anything to do with anarchism – with resisting oppression. It seems like nothing but guilty-pleasure authoritarianism to me, and should be called-out for what it is.

Chris Swann

## Wondering about Wildcat

In response to the latest letters about Donald Room's 'Wildcat' strips, I feel that I must pass comment. I found the 'Thrrrrsp!!' strip (published on 19th June) very funny and enjoyable. Almost as enjoyable as when you printed the same strip on 10th October 2009, but not as enjoyable as when I first saw it published in *Freedom* twenty-five fucking years ago.

Phil Hedgehog

P.S. Could be worse, could be that bloody 'Adam and Eve' hippy bollocks strip that ran for a year back in the late 1990s. Now *that* was shit!

## British bigotry

I applaud immigrants, summer visitors from Europe and elsewhere, 'foreigners' and progressive European and Asian and African youth for getting up the noses here of old, white, British jingoist and ageist and 'euroseptic' repressives!

I live near Bournemouth, which in recent years has become alive and cosmopolitan and youthful, and (side-by-side with the misery of homelessness and other ravages of the capitalist system of oppression), receptive to new ideas and a new, decidedly not British, ambience. An ambience which, as I delightedly told a friendly Spanish waitress, I warmly welcome. However, I actually live in a corner of Christchurch, Dorset, where things could not be different – where Thoroughly Obnoxious Reactionary Yobs (T.O.R.Y.) rule the roost: all of them old and stagnant, and

determined that I, being age 50, should be like themselves.

This applies too to my anti-vivisection work – where 'foreigners' are friendly and receptive to my condemnation of vivisection as part and parcel of the repressive profiteering machinery of the system, but where middle-aged and older white Britishers are extremely put out by my drawing their attention to anything so unpleasant. ('Out of sight, out of mind' sums them up!)

Victimised by old white Britishers for my anti-patriotism, my activism, my engaging in a youthful pastime (boxing), as well as for my frank admission of my sexuality (a preference for young women in their 20s), and pissed off by them almost every day, it is really refreshing to come to Bournemouth, just sit in cafes, visit the gym, and soak up the un-British, progressive ambience created by the influx of what are known as 'damned foreigners', but whom I welcome fully and warmly, both as an anarchist, world communist, and middle-aged man who refuses to 'grow up' in the words of one aged 50-plus bully, i.e. refuse to stagnate, as the ageists would like me to, just like them.

I live and have lived all my life with the vision of a future free of oppression, of repression, free of capitalist tyranny.

I see in the youth of other lands such as mainland western Europe a glimpse of the truly democratic non-authoritarian future: genuine friendliness, the sincere expression of one's thoughts and feelings and emotional needs without fear, shame or terror, mutual aid and warmth.

I see in the white British jingoistic 'euro-septics' the trash of the patriotic past: ready for the slag-heap.

Anthony Walker

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## GETTING ACTIVE

### PRISON NEWS

Ken Clarke, the new justice secretary, has tentatively embraced the 'Prison Doesn't Work' argument and started to talk about cutting shorter sentences in favour of 'community punishments'.

He outlined the thinking behind this change of heart in a speech to the Centre for Crime and Justice Studies, which incidentally coincided with the Scottish Parliament passing legislation seeking to drastically cut Scottish prisoner numbers by replacing jail sentences of three months or less with community service orders.

Despite being flagged up as a major policy speech about how he would save billions from the prison's budget, Clarke's text was rather light on any detail. What he *did* reveal of his plans for a so-called 'rehabilitation revolution', in addition to cutting shorter sentences, was the closure of underused magistrate courts; slashing the legal aid budget, with the possible introduction of a legal insurance scheme; more 'transparent sentencing', with the introduction of min/max sentences and increased 'judicial discretion'.

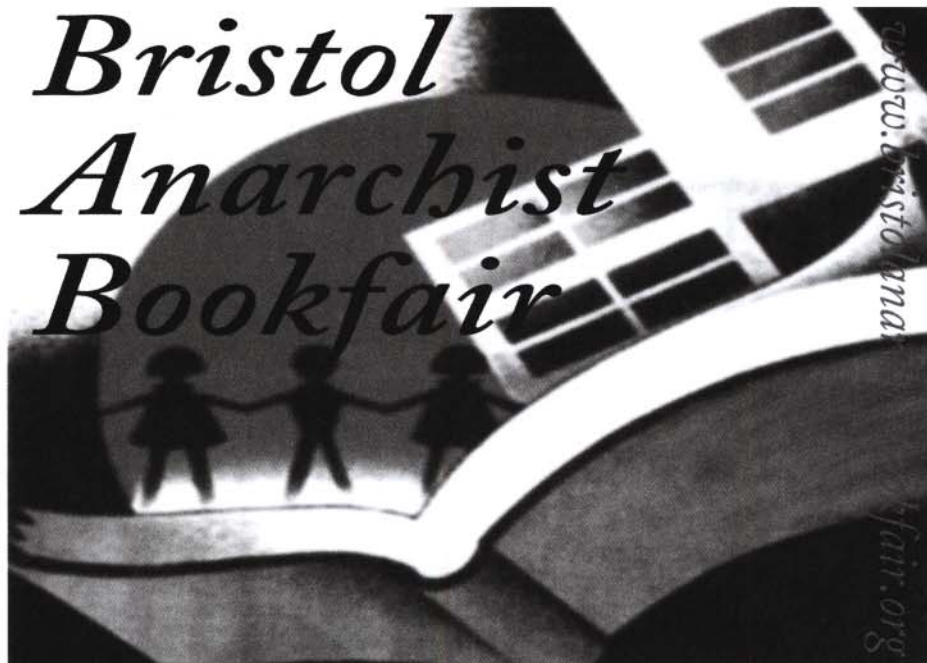
In the speech, Clarke also chose to highlight the fact that Britain has "one of the highest crime rates in Western Europe, and one of the highest prison populations," and that he aims is to stabilise numbers, and even reduce them over the long term, contradicting the purported plan to keep Labour's prison-building programme. Par for the course for a politician who claimed on the same platform that "sentencing should not be based on cost," but that he would be cutting shorter sentences in order to save money!

As a politician, he is also guilty of seeking evidence post facto from the examples of other governments to justify the decisions he takes. Clarke has come up with the instance of Canadian prison policy to justify his position. There, in the decade after 1995, the Canadians cut the prison population by 11% whilst the crime rate was seen to fall.

This all flies in the face of the standard Tory criminological thought, as exemplified by the widely-used Civitas' argument, that a better measurement would be between prisoner numbers and the volume of crime rather than prisoners per head of the population.

Spain has the highest imprisonment and lowest crime rate and Britain the lowest imprisonment and highest crime rate. But this ignores the fact that Spain imprisons significantly more people both pre-trial and for sentences of a year or less, exactly the length implicated in providing no time for rehabilitation.

Interestingly, Civitas similarly compare British crime and imprisonment rates with those in the USA, where a massive increase in the prison population over the decade after 1995 paralleled almost exactly the same fall in the crime rate as Canada experienced.



● Now in its third successive year, the Bristol anarchist bookfair just gets bigger. The programme is now finalised, and it's completely rammed. The vast majority of meetings are organised by local home-grown talent, reflecting the growing movements in Bristol.

With both the public and private sectors locally facing large job losses, attacks on benefits and services mounting, and 'green' Bristol disappearing under developments and tarmac, the Bristol bookfair is an important opportunity for local anarchists to take their campaigns out to a wider audience and share ideas and experiences.

Its all happening at Hamilton House, 80 Stokes Croft, Bristol BS1 3QY, from 10.30am to 6pm, on Saturday 11 September. Plus there's an after-party down the road at a local squat.

Full details at [bristolanarchistbookfair.org](http://bristolanarchistbookfair.org)

● Soapbox is the title of a weekend of radical feminist discussion, workshops and entertainment being organised by The Edinburgh Anarcha-Feminist Kollektive in collaboration with Lady Fest. The two-day event is planned to take place in Edinburgh on Saturday 25th and Sunday 26th September 2010.

Workshops, which will run all day Saturday, cover a wide range of topics and interests including: feminist self defence, body image, permaculture, women and poverty, feminism in comedy, feminism and sport and queer politics.

The organisers say Sunday will be a more relaxed day, focusing on making things and sharing skills throughout the day. The event will be free, accessible, child-friendly and open to all.

To get involved email [info@ladyfestedinburgh.co.uk](mailto:info@ladyfestedinburgh.co.uk). The Edinburgh Anarcha-Feminist Kollektive formed in 2009 and are active in Edinburgh, with regular organising meetings on the second Wednesday of every month from 6pm to 8pm at The Autonomous Centre of Edinburgh (ACE), 17 West Montgomery Place, EH7 5HA. See <http://edinburghanarchafeminist>.

● Members of the Liverpool Solidarity Federation distributed leaflets in the city centre on the anniversary of the 1911 Liverpool Transport Strike, known locally as their 'Bloody Sunday'.

On 13th August 1911, thousands of workers and their families, gathered outside St George's Hall to hear speakers, including the renowned trade union leader Tom Mann. At 4pm the police brutally baton-charged the crowd, injuring many. One eyewitness report described "policemen aiming cruel blows upon the heads of men, women and children ... dozens lay bleeding and unconscious, citizens were to be seen lying helpless on the ground."

Fighting broke out between workers and the forces of 'law and order' for several days afterwards, which ended with two workers being shot and killed by troops. It is remembered as a pivotal moment in working class history.

Liverpool Solfed were also involved in the Radical Workers Bloc as part of the protest against the Lib Dem party conference in the city on 18th September.

● Radical Healthcare Workers is a new on-line discussion forum launched by anarchists who work within or alongside the NHS.

Radicals working as a part of healthcare system are often isolated and left to navigate the complexities of healthcare by themselves, instead of being part of a radical community, so the forum seeks to encourage all radical healthcare workers to join the forum and start participating in the discussions there.

In addition to this, there will be a meeting for anarchist healthcare workers at the London Anarchist Bookfair on Saturday 23rd October to discuss, network and make plans around issues relevant to working in or alongside the NHS. There is no set format or agenda for the meeting, so people are invited to think of topics and announcements of relevance and interest to bring to the meeting.

# The Stuart Christie case

## The events surrounding Stuart Christie's arrest in 1964

Stuart Christie, a member of the Glasgow Federation of Anarchists and the Scottish Committee of 100, was arrested in Madrid on Tuesday 11th August. This information was not released to the British consulate by the Spanish authorities until the following Saturday. Stuart's mother, in Scotland, was informed and she has now been to Madrid to see her son, the first of the two visits being for thirty minutes.

When he was arrested, the Spanish authorities claim he was carrying five packets of plastic explosives, five pressure detonators, two electrical detonators and chemicals for making explosives. It is alleged that under close interrogation he confessed to carrying these and that they were to be used for anti-Franco activities.

It was some time before the Spanish authorities allowed the British vice-consul to see Stuart, who maintained his innocence. Of course we do not know what form the interrogation took, but the mere fact of being locked away without, at the time, knowing if anyone outside knows of your plight, is a terrible and fearful experience especially for one so young. Statements issued by such a regime as Franco's, with its record of forcible suppression of any form of opposition, are immediately suspect.

The whole thing smells of a frame-up, possibly in order to arrest a Spaniard, Fernando Carballo Blanco. The Spanish government has its agents where any active anti-Franco groups in exile exist. Before Stuart crossed to the continent, he stayed for some time in London. He has also taken part in anti-Franco demonstrations in Glasgow. At one of these, a petition protesting against the treatment of the Asturias miners which was handed into the Spanish consulate, carried his signature. It is known that this petition, together with others, were passed on to the Spanish embassy in London.

It is also well known that Stuart spoke of going to the Anarchist Summer Camp in the South of France, but in fact he never got there. He wrote from Paris to a comrade in Glasgow saying that he was going to the camp, but later on, he wrote from Perpignan, which is well past the site of the camp. He wrote again from Madrid, and this means that soon after writing from Paris something made him change his mind. It is possible that a Franco agent made contact with Stuart, most likely speaking quite good English, as Stuart knows no Spanish. Then after crossing over the frontier at La Junquera, according to a Spanish police statement, he made his way to Madrid, wearing a kilt.

The comrades in Glasgow got the news of Stuart's arrest from the early editions of the



Sunday papers, which come out on Saturday evening, they immediately got together, made placards and protested outside the Spanish Consulate in Buchanan Street.

On Tuesday 18th August, in Glasgow, with the support of the Young Socialists, YCND and Committee of 100, a defence and aid fund was set up. In London, an ad hoc defence and aid committee was formed for propaganda and legal assistance. A solicitor in this country, Mr Benedict Birnberg, has been approached for help and contact is being made with a French barrister who knows the Spanish penal code. Two demonstrations have been held in London and two in Glasgow (outside the Spanish consulate where last Saturday a Spanish flag was burnt in protest).

We know of Stuart Christie's opposition to the Franco regime and we feel that if he had carried this to the extent of 'terrorist activities' he would not feel the need to say that he was innocent. Whilst facts in this matter are difficult to ascertain we feel that agitation and assistance should be continued towards obtaining as fair a trial as possible in Franco's barbaric regime.

*Freedom, 29th August 1964*

### Christie Terror Trial?

Since the last issue of *Freedom* appeared, the 18 year old Scottish anarchist Stuart Christie has been found guilty by a Military Court of

"terrorist activities against the Spanish government" and sentenced to 20 years imprisonment. His alleged accomplice, a 40-year old Spanish carpenter, Fernando Carballo of Madrid, has received a 30-year sentence. At a trial lasting less than four hours, the Court was satisfied that the accused were guilty, and a few hours later announced the price they must pay for their guilt. Both accused, according to the reports, admitted their guilt, and Mr Neil McDermott, QC, MP, who had been instructed by the Christie-Carballo Defence Committee's London solicitors and who flew to Madrid to attend the trial, said at a press conference on his return that Christie had told him that he had made a full confession because he was caught red-handed.

*Freedom, 12th September 1964*

**Postscript:** Christie went on to serve just three years of his sentence (in the notorious Carabanchel prison, Madrid) before being freed on 21st September 1967, thanks to international pressure, with support from notables such as Bertrand Russell and Jean-Paul Sartre. The official reason given by the Franco regime was that it was due to a plea from Christie's mother. Christie went on to give a full and frank explanation of his role in the attempt to assassinate Franco in his autobiography *Granny Made Me An Anarchist*

## REVIEWS

WHAT'S ON  
SEPTEMBER

**4th** The Bastard Squad present the Bristol Anarchist Bookfair fundraiser, with live bands Zounds, Violent Arrest and Virus for a night of vintage anarcho-punk at The Croft, 117-119 Stokes Croft, Bristol BS1 3RW, from 8pm, £6 on the door, see <http://bastardsquadcollective.wordpress.com>.

**4th** End Domestic Flights Now, demos in London and Manchester to take the agenda forward on aviation and insist that at this time of climate emergency we can't afford high-emission forms of transport where viable alternatives exist, meet at 11am outside London City Airport (DLR Woolwich line) and at 4.30pm at Manchester City Airport (email [info@stopmanchesterairport.org.uk](mailto:info@stopmanchesterairport.org.uk)) – or take the big red bus from the London City Airport demo to Euston station and join our special 'train-not-plane' carriage on the train to Manchester, email [info@campaigncc.org](mailto:info@campaigncc.org) or see [www.campaigncc.org](http://www.campaigncc.org) for details.

**4th** Hackney Pride March, starts at 2pm outside The Learning Trust, near Hackney Town Hall, and ending at Shoreditch Church where there will be speakers from local community groups, bands/DJs and refreshments, see [facebook.com/?compose&cid=500970268&sk=messages#!event.php?eid=134846759871074&ref=ts](http://facebook.com/?compose&cid=500970268&sk=messages#!event.php?eid=134846759871074&ref=ts)

**6th** *Prison?*, a play by ex-con Charlie Ryder looking at the reality of prison, followed by debate at The Cube Cinema, Dove Street South, Bristol BS2 8JD, starts at 7.30pm, £3/4 on the door, see <http://bristolabc.wordpress.com> for details.

**11th** Bristol anarchist bookfair, with just about anything you could possibly want that's anarchist related: books, merchandise, films, meetings, workshops, vegan café, stalls, campaigns, networking, history, debate, ideas, theory and ways of putting it into practice for action, at Hamilton House, 80 Stokes Croft, Bristol BS1 3QY from 10.30am to 6pm, plus after-party evening, see [bristolanarchistbookfair.org](http://bristolanarchistbookfair.org)

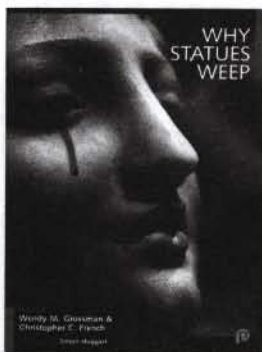
**18th** Merseyside Trades Union Council have called for a demonstration against the Lib Dem conference in Liverpool, so join the Radical Workers' Bloc and look for the red & black flags and the Liverpool Solidarity Federation banner, at Echo Arena, The Strand, Liverpool, L2, see <http://liverpoolsolfd.wordpress.com> for details.

**27th until 3rd October** No Border Camp in Brussels, a free space for sharing info, experience or expertise for actions aimed at smashing the borders that divide us all. There will be a big demonstration on Saturday **2nd October**, for more details email [nobordercamp@vluchteling.be](mailto:nobordercamp@vluchteling.be) or see <http://nobordersbxl.noblogs.org>

## OCTOBER

**2nd** Manchester Anarchist Bookfair from 11am until 5pm at The Dancehouse Theatre, 10a Oxford Road, Manchester M1 5QA, for details see [bookfair.org.uk](http://bookfair.org.uk), email [manchester@bookfair.org.uk](mailto:manchester@bookfair.org.uk) or twitter.com/abookfair.

## FILM

**Why Statues Weep**

by Wendy Grossman and Christopher C. French (eds), The Philosophy Press, £12.99

Paranormal events, such as telepathy, clairvoyance, psychokinesis, charms which improve chances in gambling, and messages from dead people may be collectively defined as events which have no scientific or common-sense explanations. Anarchists vary in their attitudes towards the paranormal, from complete dismissal (reject anything that looks like fraud) to complete acceptance (embrace whatever challenges established authority, including the scientific establishment).

According to the *OED*, 'sceptic' and 'skeptic' are both correct spellings, with 'sceptic' generally preferred in Britain and 'skeptic' in America. In Britain now 'sceptic' seems to be the general-purpose usage, while "skeptic" is used to mean sceptic about the paranormal. *The British and Irish Skeptic* was founded in the British Isles by Wendy Grossman in 1987. 'British and Irish' was dropped from the name in 1990, and also in 1990, *Skeptic* (without the 'The'), another publication covering the same topics, was founded in the USA by Michael Shermer.

Try not to get confused. The 41 articles in this book were first published in *The Skeptic*. They examine allegedly paranormal phenomena, not dismissively but skeptically. Subjects include an "alien implant" in the mouth of an "abductee", classic mysteries like the Mary Celeste, statistical methods of investigation, optical illusions, oddities of memory, self-deception and con-artists. This is an enjoyable, exciting, informative piece of literature.

There is a difference between the paranormal and the unexplained. Lyall Watson's *Supernature* is mostly about the paranormal, but also includes circadian rhythms, because when the book was first published (in 1974) nobody knew how circadian rhythms worked. Skeptics thought this wrong because, although circadian rhythms were unexplained, they could be shown to exist. One article in *Why Statues Weep* is about the placebo effect (the success of medicines whose only active ingredient is that the patients believe they work), but this mysterious phenomenon is not counted as paranormal. There seems to be a rule that for something to count as paranormal, its very existence has to be in doubt. I think some investigators would be genuinely delighted to uncover genuine instances of telepathy, good luck charms, or inexplicably weeping statues, but if they were proved genuine, they would not be paranormal any more.

Why do statues weep? Plaster always contains water, and plaster statues are sealed with a waterproof plastic coating out of which water will seep, eventually, through any tiny hole.

Donald Room

# The Anarchist Quiz Book

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

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

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## QUIZ ANSWERS

1. Income tax on real estate, which was declared unconstitutional, only to be brought back in via an amendment to the constitution.
2. Arms dealers.

3. "window box" was always high up the list of fatalities.
4. Cobblestones allegedly used in the events of May 68. Turning rebellion into money

# Plankton theses

Iain McKay finds only the vaguest of rhetoric and very little of substance in a recent inflammatory text from the Invisible Committee

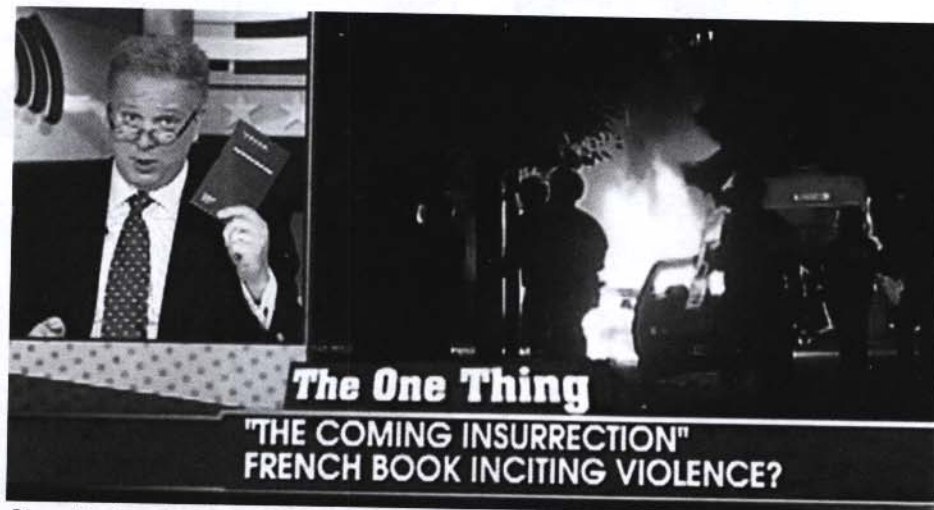
Reading *The Coming Insurrection*, the principle piece of so-called evidence in the Tarnac 9 anti-terrorism case, on my way to work made me wonder at times whether it was an elaborate hoax or satire. One thing is true, it does not describe the world as I know it. While this may be a reflection on me, I doubt it. I'm not sure that many people would recognise the world it describes.

Still, good points are often advanced, as is the striking and imaginative turn of phrase we come to expect of social protest in France. On ecology, for example, it correctly notes that capitalists "hired our parents to destroy this world, and now they'd like to put us to work rebuilding it, and – to add insult to injury – at a profit." So bits and pieces, rarely developed, are of interest but overall the work is lacking in real analysis and strategy.

Destruction is a prominent theme. Thus a "day will come when" Paris and "its horrible concretion of power will lie in majestic ruins." The book talks of "sabotaging the social machine" and ponders "[h]ow can a TGV line or an electrical network be rendered useless?" Exactly the sort of rhetoric you would expect the French Interior Minister to pick up on – but that does not stop it being stupid. What of the people dependent on said train-line and electricity? Unlike a strike, such infrastructure cannot be easily repaired once destroyed.

This is a recurring theme: ultra-revolutionary rhetoric and a remarkably reformist and quietist practice. The book does present the vision of dropping-out and tending your allotment. It urges us to organise "apprenticeship, and for multiple, massive experiments" to "understand plankton biology" and "soil composition; study the way plants interact." Comments like "understand plankton biology" do provoke thoughts of a sophisticated satire. We also discover that the commune "needs money" and that they will "have their black markets. There are plenty of hustles." Yet people fiddling welfare are less likely to cause trouble simply to avoid the state taking too great an interest in their goings on. The collective direct action of the Argentine piqueteros the authors also point to is the opposite of hustling the system.

There is a central paradox to the work. They demonise organisations and milieus while promoting their own. They proclaim that we must "[f]lee all milieus. Each and every milieu is oriented towards the neutralisation



Glenn Beck on America's Fox News channel calls this a "dangerous leftist book".

of some truth" as they "are the old people's homes where all revolutionary desires traditionally go to die." Their solution? "Form communes." And their communes are, what, exactly? Yet another milieu, surely? No, apparently, because the commune only "degenerates into a milieu the moment it loses contact with the truth on which it is founded." Nice and vague, as well as sounding deep...

As for organisations, they "aren't needed when people organise themselves." So organisations are not needed until people need them... And yet their communes do sound like organisations for they "come into being when people find each other, get on with each other, and decide on a common path... Why shouldn't communes proliferate everywhere? In every factory, every street, every village, every school. At long last, the reign of the base committees!" Yet we are also informed that an "assembly is not a place for decisions but for talk" and that decisions "are vital only in emergency situations, where the exercise of democracy is already compromised."

So general assemblies are out, until the very next page which points to the example of "the sections of the Paris Commune during the French Revolution"! They seem aware of this obvious contradiction, noting that we must seek "to set aside the fantasy of a General Assembly and replace it with an *assembly of presences*." What that actually means and how they differ are left to the reader, as is how "we must commit ourselves to their coordination" while the traditional libertarian means of co-ordination, the mandated delegate, is dismissed out of hand ("people with mandates are by definition hindered").

Yet, who can deny that "[e]very wildcat strike is a commune; every building occupied collectively and on a clear basis is a commune. The action committees of 1968 were communes"? Or that such organs of working

class power have general assemblies (or sections), discuss and make decisions, federate and mandate delegates for the coordination of their struggles, and so on? To denounce organisation while urging the creation of new organisations is unconvincing, no matter the lovely expressions used.

Is "fucking it all up" really a revolutionary strategy? No, it is just a cry of nihilistic alienation at a system which appears to be beyond influence, beyond change. Denouncing everything and postulating the most radical of spontaneous jolts based on pan-destruction and ruins may sound extremely revolutionary but it just shows that they have no real awareness of how to transform society or how a free world could function. In the end, this rhetoric is more often than not a disguise for reformist practice (at best) or inaction (at worse). And this is reflected in the book, with wishful thinking about global insurrection sitting side by side with tending your allotment, fiddling welfare and studying the finer points of plankton cultivation.

Revolution does not mean destruction. It means taking over and transforming, constructive change. It means recognising where we are now and developing strategies to get to a freer society while acknowledging, and preparing for, the difficulties social movements (never mind a social revolution) will face. Kropotkin argued that a social revolution would encounter economic disruption and would need to face those challenges. The centralisation and industrialisation of production has continued apace since those days, so it is really *not* sufficient to glibly suggest "[w]e must start today, in preparation for the days when we'll need more than just a symbolic portion of our nourishment and care" as provided by allotments and such like. Ironically, the book proclaims mainstream environmentalism as a means of ensuring "voluntary austerity" while, at the same time, urging us to acquire

**WILDCAT**

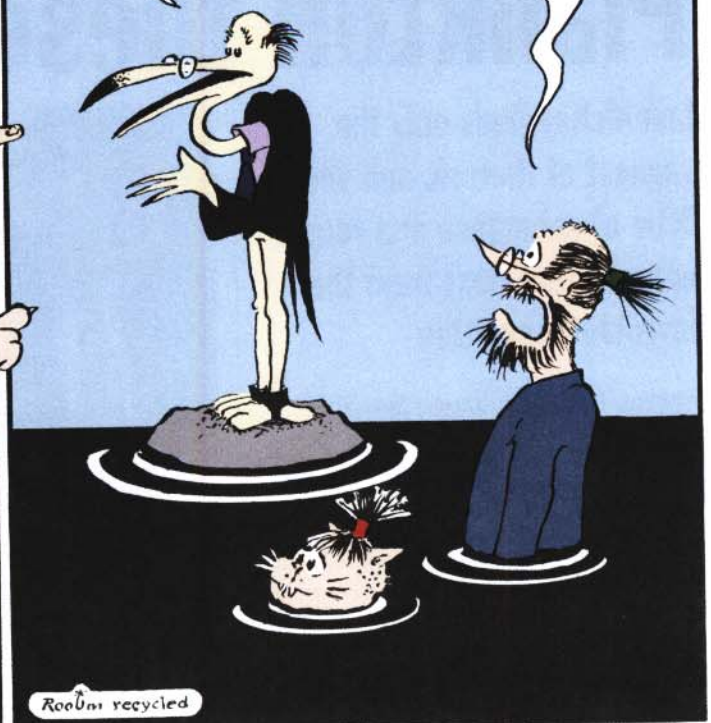
Reckless and irresponsible drilling for oil.

To satisfy the insatiable demands of car owners!!!



Why are you yelling at me?? I haven't got a car.

Good grief!!! How do you cope??



Room recycled

## Review

◀ page 15

"skills to provide, over time, for one's own basic subsistence." Basic subsistence sounds remarkably austere...

External shocks figure large. The "suspension of normality ... liberate[s] potentialities for self-organisation unthinkable in other circumstances." That our struggle as a class within capitalism may create such potentialities is not the focus. Liberation, if it comes, will come as a result of external forces – that old Marxist focus on capitalist economic breakdown as the motivator for socialism (which raises the question, if socialism *is* so wonderful why does it need even *more* misery to make people want it?).

The authors point to the Paris Commune

to show "the unique attraction of the power of fire", forgetting that the burning of Paris was a product of *defeat*. Similarly, they point to Genoa in 2001 as a positive example while failing to note that the movement was kicked off the streets by the state. Is "harassing passers-by in the street" *really* the same as "playing cat and mouse with riot police"? Is it *really* worthy of reproach and a sign of leftism if you do note the difference? Yes, it is a cliché that "[n]othing appears less likely than an insurrection, but nothing is more necessary." Yet, a riot does not equal an insurrection, and the book provides no real clue beyond the vaguest of rhetoric as to how to go from a riot to (social) revolution.

*The Coming Insurrection* by The Invisible Committee, Semiotext(e) Intervention Series 1.

## THE QUIZ

1. According to plaintiffs in a US Supreme Court case heard in 1895, what would lead to class warfare that would lead to "communism, anarchy, and then, the ever following despotism."
2. What vital trade is St Adrian Nicodemia patron saint of?
3. What floral building adornment was illegal in Paris in the 1840s and why?
4. What was found for sale on the French version of e-Bay in May 2008?

Answers on page 14

*The Anarchist Quiz Book* compiled by Martin Howard with illustrations by Paul Petard, is available at £5 (post free) from Freedom Press, to order see [freedompress.org.uk](http://freedompress.org.uk).

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