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RECLAIM MAYDAY!

May 1st is a day of special significance for the labour movement. While it has been hijacked in the past by the Stalinist bureaucracy in the Soviet Union and elsewhere, festival of Mayday is one of worldwide solidarity. A time to remember past struggles and demonstrate our hope for a better future. A day to remember that an injury to one is an injury to all.

The history of Mayday is closely linked with the anarchist movement – indeed, it originated with the execution of four anarchists in Chicago in 1886 for organising workers in the fight for the eight-hour day.

It began in the 1880s in the USA. In 1884, the Federation of Organised Trades and Labor Unions of the United States and Canada passed a resolution asserting that “eight hours shall constitute a legal day’s work from 1st May 1886, and we recommend to labour organisations throughout this district that they direct their laws to conform with this resolution.” A call for strikes on the day was issued to support this demand.

In Chicago the anarchists were the main force in the union movement, and partially as a result of their presence, the unions there did strike. In Chicago alone, 400,000 workers went out. On 3rd May 1886, police fired into a crowd of pickets at the McCormick Harvester Machine Company, killing at least one striker, seriously wounding five or six others, and injuring many.

Anarchists called for a mass meeting the next day in Haymarket Square to protest the brutality. According to the Mayor, “nothing had occurred yet, or looked likely to occur to require interference.” However, as the meeting was breaking up a column of 180 police arrived and ordered the meeting to end. At this moment a bomb was thrown into the police ranks, who opened fire on the crowd. How many civilians were wounded or killed by the police was never ascertained.

A reign of terror swept over Chicago. Meeting halls, union offices, printing shops and private homes were raided. Such raids into working-class areas allowed the police to round up all known anarchists and other socialists.

Eight anarchists were put on trial for accessory to murder. No pretence was made that any of the accused had carried out or even planned the bomb. Instead the jury were told “Law is on trial. Anarchy is on trial. These men have been selected, picked out by the Grand Jury, and indicted because they were leaders. They are no more guilty than the thousands who follow them. Gentlemen of the jury; convict these men,

make examples of them, hang them and you save our institutions, our society.”

The jury was selected by a special bailiff, nominated by the State’s Attorney and was composed of businessmen and a relative of one of the cops killed. The defence was not allowed to present evidence and the special bailiff had publicly claimed “I am managing this case and I know what I am about. These fellows are going to be hanged as certain as death.” Not surprisingly, the accused were convicted. Seven were sentenced to death, one to fifteen years’ imprisonment.

An international campaign resulted in two of the death sentences being commuted to life, but the worldwide protest did not stop the US state. Of the remaining five, one (Louis Lingg) cheated the executioner and killed himself on the eve of the execution. The remaining four (Albert Parsons, August Spies, George Engel and Adolph Fischer) were hanged on November 11th 1887. They are known in Labour history as the Haymarket Martyrs.

In 1889, the American delegation attending the International Socialist congress in Paris proposed that 1st May be adopted as a workers’ holiday. This was to commemorate working class struggle and the ‘Martyrdom of the Chicago Eight’. Since then Mayday has become a day for international solidarity.

The authorities had believed at the time of the trial that such persecution would break the back of the labour movement. They were wrong. In the words of August Spies when he addressed the court after he had been sentenced to die: “If you think that by hanging us you can stamp out the labour movement ... the movement from which the downtrodden millions, the millions who toil in misery and want, expect salvation – if this is your opinion, then hang us! Here you will tread on a spark, but there and there, behind you – and in front of you, and everywhere, flames blaze up. It is a subterranean fire. You cannot put it out.”

At the time and in the years to come, this defiance of the state and capitalism was to win thousands to anarchism, particularly in the US itself.

Anarchists stay true to the origins of Mayday and celebrate its birth in the direct action of the oppressed. Oppression and exploitation breed resistance and, for anarchists, Mayday is an international symbol of that resistance and power – a power expressed in the last words of August Spies, chiselled in stone on the monument to the Haymarket martyrs in Waldheim Cemetery in Chicago: “The day will come when our silence will be more powerful than the voices you are throttling today.”



SMASHING FASCISM

As we go to press we have received reports from Jean-Marie Le Pen’s visit to the UK, which was disrupted by anti-fascist and anti-racist protesters, which reflects an increase in anti-fascist activities in the build up to the June elections.

Le Pen the leader of the far-right French National Front was mobbed by hundreds of anti-fascist protestors when attending a press conference to publicise the BNP’s European election campaign (see picture above).

He found himself trapped inside a car he was sharing with BNP leader Nick Griffin with demonstrators throwing full dustbins at the windscreen before lying down in the car’s path.

According to newspaper reports the police guarding the ‘secret’ venue, a hotel in south Manchester, were overwhelmed by the protestors who surged forward, hurling missiles and shouting ‘scum’. The BNP also provided their own security who

clashed with anti-fascists, both sides took injuries, but despite this the car was still blockaded into the car park whilst it was pelted with eggs, stones, rotten vegetables, and rubbish.

Eventually the police managed to clear a path for the car and the aged fascist managed to escape (sadly).

The BNP is standing candidates across the country in the European elections, and is also standing in the London Mayoral and Assembly elections, and because seats are handed out depending on the share of the vote each party gets, and the low voter turn-out the BNP may be able to win a number of seats. BNP leader and posh land-owner, Nick Griffin is standing as a candidate for the North Western European constituency the area where BNP has its most councillors. How much of a difference they would be able to make if elected is arguable, but it will improve their image and make them look like a more viable political party.

Last weekend also saw a BNP family day in Wickford, Essex being disrupted by anti-fascists. A hundred anti-fascists gathered outside Wickford station, the BNP re-direction point, which led to the eight BNP stewards present there being trapped inside the station by the police. This left around 20-30 fascists without directions to the ‘fun day’ who just hung around the area.

The National Front also held their regular march in Bermondsey with massive police protection, apparently the police feared their may have been clashes with new national anti-fascist organisation, Antifa, who had stickered the entire area.

The NF are threatening to march in Finsbury Park against Abu Hamza’s mosque again, on Friday 14th May. If you’re interested in opposing them we suggest you contact Antifa, whose website at www.antifa.org.uk, by post at Antifa, Box 36, 84b Whitechapel High St, London E1 7QX.

FREEDOM

Volume 65 Number 09

Anarchism

Anarchists work towards a society of mutual aid and voluntary co-operation. We reject all government and economic repression.

Freedom Press is an independent anarchist publisher. Besides this newspaper, which comes out every two weeks, we produce books on all aspects of anarchist theory and practice.

In our building in Whitechapel we run Britain's biggest anarchist bookshop and host a social centre and meeting space, the Autonomy Club. We're currently developing open-access IT provision for activists to use.

Our aim is to explain anarchism more widely and to show that human freedom can only thrive when the institutions of state and capital have been abolished. Freedom's editors wish to present a broad range of anarchist thought, and as such the views expressed in the paper are those of the individual contributors and not necessarily those of the editorial collective.

Helping Out

Sincere thanks to all those who have sent donations recently, they couldn't have come at a better time and every little helps. Of course donations, payable to Freedom Press at the address below are still much appreciated, as this paper is produced at a loss.

New submissions are also always welcome for inclusion in Freedom. In particular we would like news pieces of under 500 words - stories about ordinary people using direct action to improve their lives are very much appreciated! Also feature articles with an in-depth look at a particular subject, event or person of around 1,700 words are needed. We try to put anything not used in the paper on www.enrager.net/newswire

If you would like to sell the paper on a sale-or-return basis, email or write to our Circulation team.

Antifa stickers

New national anti-fascist network, Antifa, have just done their first print-run of stickers. If you would like to get some please send a donation or some stamps with a self-addressed envelope to Antifa, Box 36, Whitechapel High Street, London E1 7QX.

Contact details

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Next issue

Contributions are wanted for future Freedoms. The next issue will be dated 15th May 2004 and the last day for getting copy to us will be Thursday 6th May. See contact details above for where to send your letters/articles.

If you are interested in writing regularly for Freedom we want to hear from you!

Say no to prison slavery

As part of last Saturday's national day of action against prison slavers: Wilkinson's, the local groups Bristol Anarchist Network and Bristol ABC organised an action against Bristol's very own outpost of the Wilkinson Empire.

The action began with pre-emptive stickering as activists moved through the aisle marking products as having been produced using slave labour. Next other activists moved to do a trolley-dash: as trolleys full of products to the tills and loudly refused to pay for them, thus blocking the aisles as a frantic staff struggled to keep the consumerism of the Wilkinson's Empire going.

Meanwhile outside, a second group unfurled a banner decrying the prison slavery that forces workers to toil for £1 a day while the Wilkinson's boss adds to his already accumulated pile of £300 million. Following this the activists set up a picket outside the shop to hand out leaflets and talk to shoppers. The response from the public was overwhelming positive with many people expressing their disgust at the slave wages and inequality of the bosses personal wealth. People as varied as ex-prisoners to pensioners turned away from the shop, taking their businesses elsewhere rather than supporting the slavers. An ex-Wilkinson's employee, angry at his old bosses exploitation of prisoners, signed up to join in with future actions. Two pensioners, chatting to the activists, engaged in a thoughtful

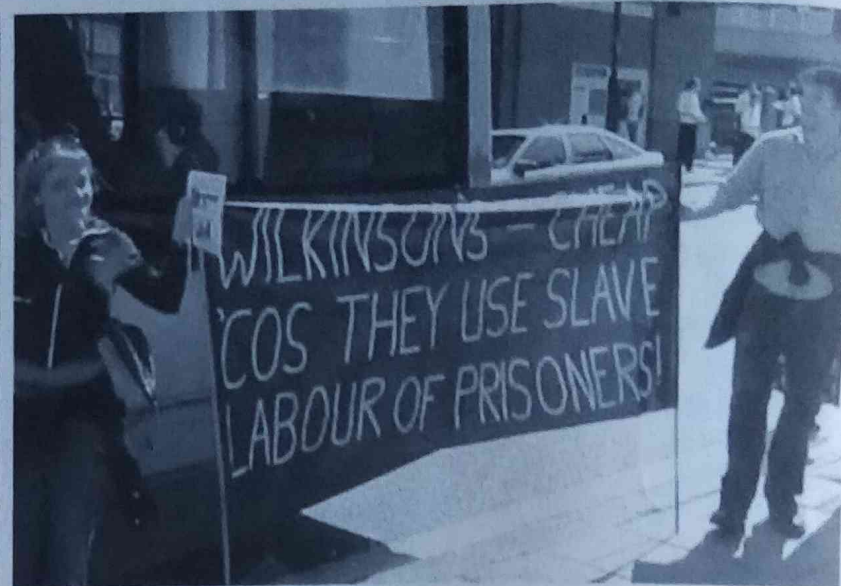
analysis of events by drawing a parallel between the prison sweatshop of Wilkinson and the closure of the Dyson factories as the labour moved to south Asian sweatshops - so underscoring the reality of the global-to-local situation that our politicians are either unwilling or unable to grasp.

In all the action distributed 700 flyers, turned away prospective customers from the store and disrupted the smooth running of the Wilkinson Empire.

Here is the text of the leaflets that were handed out, produced especially for the national day of action.

"Throughout history ruthless people have always been willing to use the slave labour of captive workforces. In the 21st century this still continues, with greedy companies exploiting the slave labour of British prisoners to make fat profits at the expense of society. Gangmaster Tony 'Whiplash' Wilkinson owns the Wilko's hardware chain, he's one of the country's richest men, sitting on a personal fortune of £300 Million. He's grown rich by paying his workers a pittance, denying them union rights, and by using the forced labour of British prisoners, something which is only possible because of heavy subsidies from the tax-payer.

Over the past half decade there have been savage cuts in prison education budgets and all pretence at empowering prisoners with trade skills has been



abandoned in favour of them working for greedy private companies like Wilkinson's. Prisoners are forced to work for these companies, if they don't they're punished, being placed in solitary confinement, not being able to have contact with their families, being denied parole. They have no unemployment rights, no trade union rights, no pension rights, they don't even get National Insurance contributions paid. Companies like Wilkinson's not only use prisoners as a cheap source of labour, often paying them less than £1 a day, but they use them as a way of driving down the pay and conditions of their other workers. In prison labour they have found the

equivalent of a domestic third world country, at least one company sacked its entire workforce and replaced them with prisoner slaves.

Tony Wilkinson likes to present himself and his company as having a 'caring outlook', giving jobs to 'the community', but the fact is he is a latter-day slave-master, understaffing his stores, underpaying his staff, and ruthlessly exploiting the slave labour of prisoners to increase his massive wealth still further."

If you would like copies of the above leaflet to download or more information on the Campaign Against Prison Slavery see their website at www.againstprisonslavery.org

LISTINGS

Brighton

18th May Public meeting against water fluoridation, with invited medical and Human Rights speakers, at Hanover Centre, Southover Street, from 1.30pm to 4.30pm.

Dublin

1st May Join the anti-EU festivities on the the streets with RTS parties, street blockades and forging links with Ireland-based activists. For more info, see www.dublinmayday.org

Lancashire

Saturday 1st May Laying wreath at Memorial outside the Corn Exchange, Preston, at 12noon.
Saturday 1st May Mayday March, meet Thurman Street car park, Lancaster at 11am, then five hours of boring-as-shit speeches or ... huge picnic in the fields behind George & Dragon, St. George's Quay, Lancaster, from 12noon. Bring food, drink, games, positive attitude, furry creatures, large and small people. Jugglers and drummers will have the piss taken mercilessly.
Saturday 1st May Spontaneous Combustion: bands and more at Gregson Centre, Moor Lane, Lancaster, from 7pm, £2 on the door. The Sanity Clause, Eastfield, Confrontation, bellydancing, soapbox provided
For spontaneous rants, bring cds - the theme is protest.
Saturday 1st May Underground Sound Mayday party at the Crypt, Meeting House Lane, Lancaster, from 9pm to 1am, £3 (£2 b4 10pm) with brains, the

whip and gez.

Sunday 2nd May May Hungover Sunday Gathering, Gregson Centre, Moor Lane, Lancaster, 1pm to 5pm
Children's films, political films, displays, discussion and other stuff. Parent-managed kid's space. Grub.
Sunday 2nd May Thorpey's Red Rose Club, Yorkshire Street, nr. Turf Moor, Burnley, 7pm, £2 on the door
The Sanity Clause, Eastfield, Burn All Flags, One Man Stand

London

1st May Mayday Picnic from 3pm in St James Park. We should stress that this is genuinely a picnic and nothing else, so please bring what you would expect to find.
1st May Join the Libertarian bloc for the TUC march on International Workers Day. Provisional meet up 12noon, Clerkenwell Green
8th May Annual Cannabis March and Festival, carnival-style march from Kennington Park (assemble 12noon) leading to an all day free festival in Brockwell Park, Brixton - licence permitting.
<http://www.thecannabisfestival.co.uk>
8th May Annual James Connolly/Bobby Sands march through Central London. 020-8442 8778 <http://wolfetone.org.uk/>
15th May Memorial/benefit gig for Chris Groner - who sadly passed away in March. With PAIN and other 'ChrisG' bands @ Chats Palace, 42-44 Brooksby's Walk, London E9. For info <http://www.chris-groner.com/>

17th May Resist the eviction! Bailiffs are due at the Ex-Grand Banks occupied social centre, 156-158 Fortress Road, NW5 (Tufnel Park tube). Café and other fun from 10am. Call 07956 975490 for more info

Every Wednesday the LARC Library from 1pm at 62 Fieldgate Street, E1.

Yorkshire

1st May Banner Theatre present Burning Issues: The Miners 1984-2004, to mark the twentieth anniversary of the 1984/5 Miners Strike, at Yorkshire Miners Gala, Locke Park, Barnsley at 2pm. See www.bannertheatre.co.uk/

Nationwide groups

Anarchist Federation
Box 2, 84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1 7QX
www.afed.org.uk
Antifa
Box 36, 84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1 7QX
www.antifa.org.uk
Class War Federation
PO Box 467, London E8 3QX
www.classwaruk.org
Earth First!
www.earthfirst.org.uk
Industrial Workers of the World
PO Box 74, Brighton, BN1 4ZQ
www.iww.org.uk
Solidarity Federation
PO Box 469, Preston PR1 8FX
www.solfed.org.uk
For details of smaller and local groups see www.enrager.net/britain

Social Centres

Autonomous Centre of Edinburgh (ACE)
17 West Montgomery Place, Edinburgh
www.autonomous.org.uk
The Cowley Club
12 London Road, Brighton BN1 4JA
www.cowleyclub.org.uk
Freedom
84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1
Kebele
14 Robertson Road, Easton, Bristol
BS5 6JY
www.kebele.org
Lancaster Resource Centre (LaRC)
The Basement, 78a Penny Street, Lancaster
www.eco-action.org/lancaster
London Action Resource Centre (LARC)
62 Fieldgate Street, London E1
www.londonlarc.org
Occupied Social Centre
159 Fortress Road, London NW5
www.wombles.org.uk
SUMAC Centre
245 Gladstone Street, Nottingham
NG7 6HX
www.veggies.org.uk/rainbow/
Use Your Loaf
227 Deptford High Street, London SE8
www.squat.freereserve.co.uk/
useyourloaf.html
1in12 Club
21-23 Albion Street, Bradford, West
Yorkshire, BD1 2LY
www.1in12.com
56a Infoshop
56 Crampton Street, London SE17
www.safetycat.org/56a

ID cards are here

As testing of identity cards begins, exactly how far away is the surveillance society, asks Alex Allison

Blunkett's dream of a marked society took a step forward this week, as Blair decided there were no longer any civil liberties concerns to stop him fast tracking ID cards.

This year large-scale testing of the biometric data technology will begin, as ten thousand volunteers will have their faces, fingerprints and irises scanned. The national computer database, which will store this information for every citizen is scheduled for launch in 2007. In reality though this project will probably suffer the same setbacks as other government IT projects, such as the bungled national Air Traffic Control system, which finished years late, and billions over budget due to the incompetence and plain corruption of the private companies subcontracted to create it.

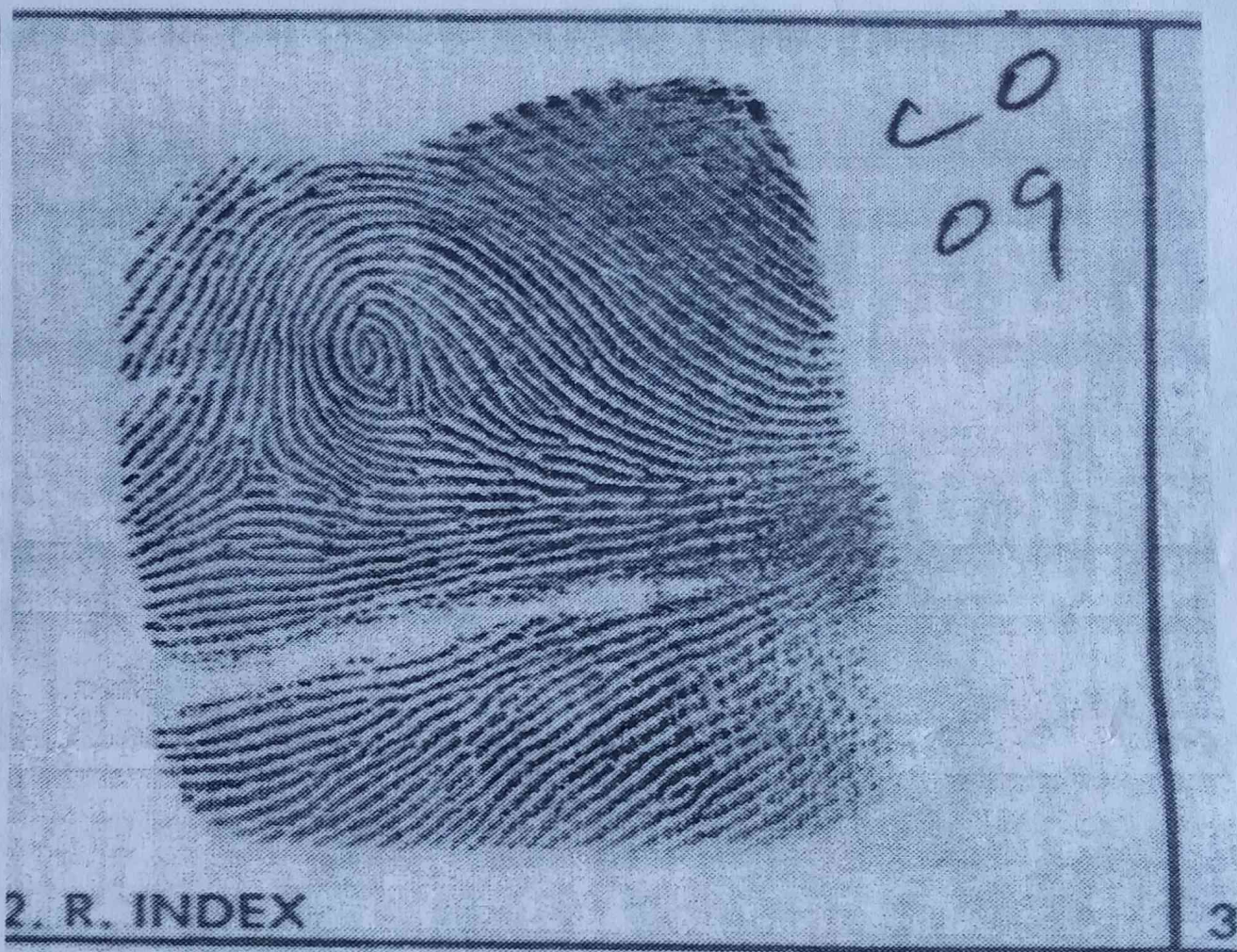
The year 2007 will also see that biometric data being embedded into passports – which will see the price of passport renewal rise to almost £70 – as well as driving licenses two years later.

Personal ID cards will be mandatory for all by 2014, and although the Home Office claim that carrying ID cards at all times would not be compulsory it is obvious that life could be made very difficult for those who

choose not to: Police will be given powers to detain any individual who fail to produce one on demand, and take them to a police station to have their fingerprints and eyes scanned. We will also be forced to shell out an estimated £35 to fund our own repression! Carrying someone else's ID card, passport or driving license could also land you in jail for ten years, as possessing false identity papers will also become a specific offence.

Apparently this is all necessary, according to David Blunkett last weekend, because "some 35% of terrorists ... use multiple identities and forge other peoples' identities." Well, how good of them to complete the questionnaire! If only they had arrested all of the terrorists they had surveyed maybe we wouldn't need the cards. And of course ID cards would not have stopped the September 11th hijackers, since most of them used their own passports anyway. Secondary concerns about stopping 'NHS tourists' it seems may have been chucked out the window, as Jack Straw has for now blocked the usage of ID cards as a prerequisite to receiving medical treatment – a move which would see the end of a universal, free health service.

For more info see www.defy-id.org.uk



In brief

Alternative Easter

Hebden Bridge in West Yorkshire celebrated an alternative Easter when a group of local people squatted the long-empty former Tourist Information Centre in the middle of the town, renaming it People's Information Centre.

This was done to protest at the sale of this publicly owned building to the private sector for commercial development, when there is a serious lack of affordable housing for young people in the area. The event received widespread publicity in the local and wider Yorkshire press.

Over four days the building became an autonomous space for the free exchange of goods under the banner "Bring what you have spare, take what you need and enjoy a free tea, coffee or soup", so creating a microcosm of the money-free society. And people in their hundreds did just that, filling the visitors' book with comments praising the initiative. The developers were not well pleased, but helpless, and the police after a visit wisely decided not to interfere.

The action, for me, was summed up by one of the many posters lining the walls, commenting on the long-standing need for a skateboard in the town: "When it takes the people in charge 16 years to

decide to build a skate park (something the skaters themselves could have sorted out in about a week) then I know why I am an anarchist."

See the Hebden Bridge autonomous website at www.hebdenbridge.co.uk which also has an interesting and ongoing discussion about anarchism.

H.S.

Popetown

Those poor old Catholics, they get such a rough ride you can't help but feel for them. That ever humble and unassuming faith is celebrating Easter by shutting down a new BBC cartoon comedy called 'Popetown', on the grounds they feel persecuted. Two million was spent on the cartoon, which has been deemed so much more shocking than *The Passion of The Christ* – a two hour demonstration of what ancient torture looks like close up – that it should be dropped from UK screens.

Catholicism, with over a trillion dollars in assets and a billion adherents, is the most powerful religious organisation.

Senior UK officials condemned Popetown, which portrays the Pope as a childish despot and his Cardinals as sinister and corrupt, as a serious threat to the church. Joseph Devine, bishop of Motherwell, said in the *Times*: "We

view this as an irreverent, gratuitous and publicly funded attack on our faith. It is impossible to imagine such an irreverent approach being taken to Islam or Judaism."

Who says Catholics have no sense of humour?

Oil for Questions

BP's annual meeting is all too often plagued by bad tempered types asking awkward questions, so it was nice this year to see it all went off without a hitch thanks to some truly audacious security measures.

Several BP investors (that's right investors, those pesky people who actually own a stake in the company) were barred from the glamorous Royal Festival Hall, London on the grounds their awkward queries might pose a security risk.

Two Azerbaijanians and a Georgian, representing three groups monitoring BP's controversial new Baku-Ceyhan pipeline, travelled thousands of miles to attend the meeting and ask technical questions about the environmental and social impact of the project.

The famed goodwill of Britain's biggest oil giant quickly came to the fore, as the three were surrounded with unprecedented numbers of police and thrown out, despite holding shares and entirely valid passes

to the event.

Greg Mutit, a member of environmental group Platform, witnessed the bizarre scene. He said, "Frankly, it makes BP look as though they have something to hide from their own shareholders as well as the general public."

BP's annual general meeting was disrupted last year by protesters throwing stink bombs. The wanton barbarity of such actions led the board this year to introduce strict measures allowing the ejection of everybody from the hall.

Security was tight, with guards posted not just at the doors, but around the building and even in lavatories (it remains unclear what the board thought subversives might get up to in there).

Freedom confidently expects that BP will be even more successful in keeping out the unwashed masses next year – I mean who do these shareholders think they are?

Strange time inside

Friends and supporters of Alan Lord, a prisoner who was at the centre of the Strangeways siege fourteen years ago, have called for his case to be reviewed because they claim his continuing imprisonment is unfair. He was 'snatched' on the 23rd day of the standoff in April 1990 whilst on his way to meet negotiators.

The riot and ensuing siege was the longest and most expensive disturbance ever in a British prison and led to the Manchester prison's closure and refurbishment, hundreds of prisoners had to be temporarily locked up in police cells across the country.

Lord was imprisoned in 1981 for murder and was given fifteen years behind bars, but is still inside, his supporters claim that this is an act of revenge by the prison service who were embarrassed by the small number of prisoners that held out for so long at Strangeways. The prison service says his case is under review.

Manchester Bookfair

The sixth Manchester Radical Bookfair will be taking place on Saturday 5th June from 11am until 5pm at Bridge 5 Mill, 22A Beswick Street, Ancoats, Manchester.

The bookfair will be covering anarchism, peace, direct action and social change, and there will be books, stalls, ideas, discussions and workshops.

For more information or to book a stall, write to Manchester Radical Bookfair, c/o PO Box 29, South West PDO, Manchester, M15 5HW, or contact info@radicalbookfair.org.uk

For the latest updates see the website at www.radicalbookfair.org.uk

International

Destroying Iraq in order to save it

As the resistance escalates and the death toll on both sides rises, comparisons with Vietnam are hard to avoid ...

At the height of the Vietnam war, a US officer informed the world that he had to destroy a village to save it. Today, with the current insurgency claiming over 700 dead Iraqis and nearly 100 dead American troops in April, the US has been applying that perverse logic for some time.

Rest assured. Blair has told us that the insurgents are just Saddamites, Islamic fundamentalists and terrorists. The US army told us that 95% of Iraqis killed are insurgents. Iraqi doctors disagree. In Fallujah, which the US has promised to 'pacify', they report at least half are civilians, with many women and children among them. This is Blair being tough. How many of the politicians who supported the war for 'humanitarian' reasons will visit their graves? Why is American willingness to kill as many Iraqis as necessary to secure its goals not worthy of mention when Saddam's was? Because the US talks about liberty and democracy as it kills civilians? The state terrorism of the occupation which expresses itself most obviously in the collective punishment of Fallujah must be denounced along with the slaughter visited upon the civilians of Basra. Sadly, too many people consider the killing of civilians acceptable as long as 'we' do it.

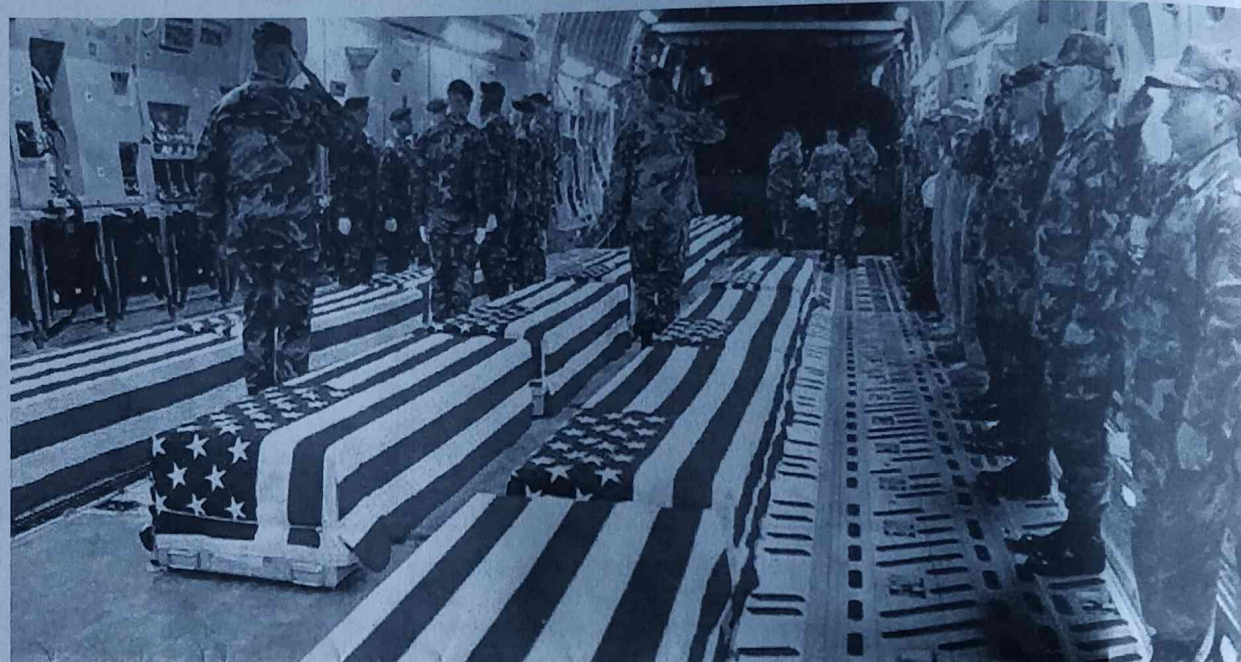
But the US siege is not just killing civilians directly. It is also targeting them indirectly. Fallujah's power station was bombed. The bridge across the Euphrates was closed, ensuring that the bulk of the town's inhabitants could not go to Fallujah's main hospital. According to many eyewitnesses, US snipers are shooting at ambulances. This was confirmed at a press conference by the Iraqi Minister of Health, who condemned the acts not only in Fallujah but also in Sadr City, Baghdad.

At Najaf, a similar American incursion is on hold as the Grand Ayatollah Sistani has warned that its consequences would be an even larger Shi'ite uprising.

There is a massacre going on, but the western media seems more concerned in reporting the deaths of coalition troops than getting reporters into Fallujah. None of the outrage at Saddam's crimes against Iraqis can be seen. Clearly, when America wages war on residential areas with battle tanks, bombers and helicopter gunships it is different. And best not to mention British troops killing of fifteen people in Amara. The media even reported the American offer for insurgents in Fallujah to turn in their weapons and its promise not to resume its attacks while rebels are disarming with a straight face.

'Fear and violence'

Perhaps the American violence is to be expected. As Lieutenant Colonel Nate Sassaman of the US military put it last December: "With a heavy dose of fear and violence, and a lot of money for projects, I think we can convince these people that we are here to help them." This appears to have been US policy in Iraq from the start. The bombing of mosques, the strafing of slums and the sniping of ambulances all add up to one thing: a heavy dose of fear and violence. Strangely, it does not seem to be working. The world's sole superpower (and its poodle) actually does seem to believe that if they can kill enough people and destroy enough property, the Iraqis will warm to their occupiers. The occupying troops, who share more in common with ordinary Iraqis than the rich politicians and business people who sent them there, are being asked to kill or be killed in order to convince Iraqis that they are there to help them. The insanity of war has never been clearer.



Mom, we're home – the picture they tried to ban of the bodies of US troops returning from Iraq

And few Iraqis are helping their occupiers. Even the US-trained and supplied Iraqi police and defence forces are fighting the occupation. In Fallujah two Iraqi battalions simply refused to fight, saying that "We did not sign up to fight Iraqis." If only the coalition troops could be that brave.

End the occupation

This occupation must be ended. The 'transfer of sovereignty' Bush and Blair keep twittering on about is no such thing. It is just the US appointing another set of Iraqi politicians to be their puppets. It is another lie, like the lies which justified the imperialist invasion to begin with.

Luckily some are seeing sense. The Spanish Prime Minister Zapatero seems to be making good on his campaign promise to withdraw all Spanish troops from Iraq, ordering the withdraw all

Spanish forces from occupied Iraq "as soon as possible". The president of Honduras has done likewise.

In response, Bush voiced regret at the "abrupt Spanish action," which shows Bush's grasp of reality. The decision was hardly 'abrupt', given that from the start of his election campaign Zapatero promised to withdraw Spanish troops from Iraq. The Spanish people voted for that policy. Unsurprisingly, Bush is showing his usual contempt for democracy by his suggestion that Zapatero, like Blair and Aznar, place US imperial interests above the wishes of his people. And, moreover, Zapatero knows that the Spanish will take to the streets if he acts otherwise. Why should the Spanish suffer even more for Bush's lies and US imperial interests?

What now? Should we, as some desire, rush to the ballot box? The next meaningful election is a year away and any

'protest' vote (assuming it will materialise, which is doubtful) before then can and will be ignored. We are paying the price for years of left fetishism for party building and parliamentarianism. Instead of building a movement rooted in our workplaces and communities which can take effective (direct) action we have a series of sects, the biggest of which is busy repeating history by watering down its principles to get as many votes as possible.

Until we get our act together, it seems likely that whatever set of liars are in office can ignore the people they claim to represent. That means that as well as opposing the occupation, we must start the hard task of creating a movement which can turn words into action. A movement based on direct action, solidarity and the importance of anti-parliamentarianism. No easy task, but one which is essential if we want to change the world for the better.

Dublin Mayday

This Mayday in Dublin will see protests against the EU Summit being held there, many of them organised by libertarians. The run up to the protests have seen the sort of media hysteria that will be familiar to anarchists in Britain. The headline 'Anarchist army plans bloodbath in Ireland' sums it up.

The last couple of years has seen a rapid growth of the libertarian movement in Ireland from a couple of dozen activists to a few hundred. All of the various groups and organisations regularly meet up at the Grassroots Gathering, a series of meetings held

every six months or so in a different Irish city. Eight have been held to date.

The Dublin offshoot of the Grassroots Gathering, the Dublin Grassroots Network, is organising the European summit protests. We felt it was important to organise libertarian protests against the summit not simply because we favour more militant tactics but also because we wanted to put forward a libertarian critique of the EU.

To this end as well as organising the protests we are distributing 50,000 leaflets explaining why we are doing so and attempting to get some of our message across via the mainstream

media as well. In summary our arguments are as follows;

1. The EU is the driving force for the privatisation and cutbacks associated with neoliberalism. A body called the European Round Table of Industrialists, a 'lobbying' body made up of the top five EU corporations, sets this agenda.
2. The EU's racist immigration policies, known as Fortress Europe, have killed ten times the number of people killed by the Berlin wall. These policies are attacks not only on immigrants but also on all workers because they serve to create a low paid and insecure workforce.
3. The EU is increasing a military

alliance serving to protect the interests of European capital. The Irish government claims to defend neutrality but in reality we are already a refuelling base for the US war effort in Iraq.

4. The EU is the excuse for increasing taxes on ordinary workers while decreasing taxes on corporations. Over the last year in Dublin a very bitter battle has been fought against one new tax (the bin tax) in which over twenty people were jailed.

We also considered it essential to organise a libertarian campaign because opposition to the EU in Ireland is traditionally associated with narrow-

minded right wing nationalism. Left opposition has seldom broken with this agenda to any great extent. So we are also putting forward a positive call for a Europe where 'everyone has control over their own lives and an equal say in the decisions that affect them'.

You can find out a lot more about the protests and why we are organising them at our website which is at www.struggle.ws/eufortress

Andrew Flood

The author is a member of Dublin Grassroots Network and also a member of the Workers Solidarity Movement. For more info see www.struggle.ws/wsm

Feature

Do the drugs work?

Take the drugs but don't let them take you for a fool – a look at the global drugs industry by Marie Jean

Hypocrisy is rife around the issue of drugs. The basic law of supply and demand is deemed okay when it comes to arms dealing but not for drug dealing. They are both commodities people want, but one is regarded as fair, the other not. It all seems a bit fraudulent.

Italian anarchist Malatesta had certain views about the evils of the cocaine trade and the wretchedness of the addict, but he hated state interference in the form of prohibition. He said: "the more severe the penalties on consumers and traffickers, the greater will be the attraction of forbidden fruits ... and the greater the profits made by speculators avid for money."

The 1930s Prohibition of Alcohol in America simply led to the regeneration of the Mafia and an increase in alcoholism that was so acute it led to the founding of Alcoholics Anonymous. This would suggest that drugs policy and draconian laws do nothing to help drug addicts or social problems, simply leading to increased desperation on the part of addicts.

The cycle of crime and violence instead intensifies, as gangsters fight each other for control of the lucrative black market trade – a trade often financed by the state itself. We find ourselves in the ludicrous position of being in a state which finances the drugs trade while targeting its customers as criminals.

State support for drug dealers

Mussolini, the Italian fascist, all but eliminated the Mafia in the 1930s, as he saw them as a threat to his power. It was the US government who financed Mafia informers during the Second World War, which kept organised crime alive in America. Mafia families quickly moved into the drugs trade once prohibition of alcohol had been repealed.

The crack trade in South America went into a boom period, after the right-wing Contras were financed by the CIA to ferment a civil war in Nicaragua to prevent the Marxist Sandinistas from being elected to government in the 1970s. CIA and FBI involvement in covert drug smuggling of heroin and cocaine from Asia to South America was exposed in the Iran Contra Scandal in the 1980s.

Crack-cocaine first appeared as an organised trade in East LA, something now seen by some historians as being deliberately introduced to undermine the black liberation movement. In poor black areas it took off like wildfire, with the tacit consent of the CIA and FBI who even acted as double agents under the guise of covert operations, to ensure that the trade flourished.

Now, in Afghanistan, in order to remove the Taliban from power the US have financed Afghan warlords who control most of worlds heroin trade, accusing the Taliban of being the opium producers. Whatever the other philosophies of the Taliban were, part of their draconian policy was to ban opium production, jail farmers, and execute drug addicts. Who's fooling who here?

Even Gore Vidal, the American writer and member of the Gore family political dynasty and no great hippy, likens the current war on drugs to the war on terror, as a self-perpetuating hypocritical war being waged in the interests of the state. He said: "If drugs did not exist our governors would have invented them in order to prohibit them and make much of the population vulnerable to arrest, seizure of property and imprisonment."

It's not the drugs but what they represent

In the 1960s drug-taking, from Marijuana and LSD, to heroin and cocaine became a recreational activity and also came to symbolise the youth rebellion from the USA and across Europe. "Let those who doubt drugs doubt that which is here" read the San Francisco graffiti in 1966.

Allen Ginsburg the poet and peace activist wrote back in 1967 that "the dope menace in America has become a national hallucination. Heroin addicts status as monster criminals is a glaring example of an extraordinary viciousness inherent in [our] society."

Even more extraordinary nowadays, as drug-takers become the scapegoats of state machinations to destroy individualism and attack any kind of counterculture activity. At the same time the 'drugs problem' is used to ferment racism, often being seen as black ghetto based organised crime, or the workings of foreign states to corrupt Western civilisation.

A good example of this kind of attack is the Christiania community in Denmark, a long standing commune set up in the 1960s with widespread support amongst the Danish population.

Cannabis was generally available within the community and tolerated by the police, where it caused no particular problems. Harder drugs were not allowed in.

The last election brought in a more right-wing government, and one of their first moves has been to threaten this community. Their small outlets for selling cannabis within the commune have been taken down, ritually burnt by the residents themselves, and they have been threatened with prosecution for 'drugs'. The new prime minister has stated he intends to evict the community and build luxury flats on

the site.

The state's way out

The UK government is now putting money into rehabilitation centres, often run by right-wing behavioural psychologists cashing in on the social problems created by prohibition – with little success.

Irony compounds infamy with Tony Blair's latest solution for the UK, which is not liberalisation, tolerance and understanding, but the creation of an FBI style organisation simply recreating the American situation ripe for corruption and 'covert' operations.

Legalise it

Legalising cannabis! That old chestnut. Whether it's harmful or not is irrelevant. Alcohol, nicotine and lead in petrol are all perfectly legal, but equally harmful. Everyone can get legally drunk, addicted to alcohol, and many commit appalling crimes of violence whilst 'under the influence' – alcohol binges which are often continued the next day chasing a 'hair of the dog'.

The pollution of the environment along with the proliferation of the arms trade is harmful but all perfectly legal! Yes the problem of illegal drugs is on our streets and of course causing serious problems. But is this problem just an artificial creation by the state to create public panic and protect private greed through prohibition?

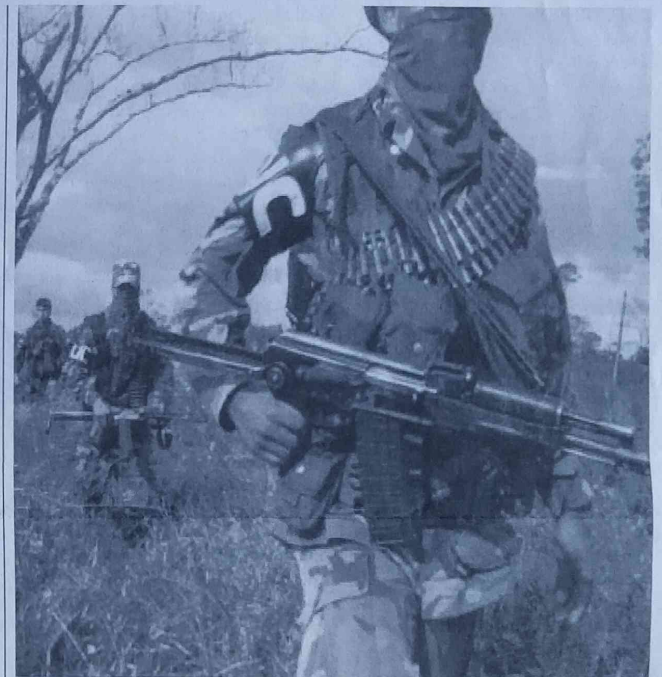
We had the glorious comedy of MP's rushing to admit they had smoked cannabis prior to the war in Iraq to grab votes. Then as Bush and Blair climbed into bed with each other, this liberalisation was suddenly reversed, and dope smokers again vilified. At the moment the declassification of cannabis seems a double edged sword and is simply a way of keeping the 'crime' of smoking cannabis in the police armoury, allowing for the fact that people want to smoke it but making it impossible for them to buy it in a safe place.

The 'Zero-Tolerance' strategy adopted by and backed by the state of removing supply goes against the most basic principles of capitalist economics, where supply creates demand, leading to worse crime as addicts and gangsters become more and more desperate to find more supplies.

Drug addicts are the ultimate consumers, constantly having to satisfy their demand for this commodity which becomes increasingly expensive – chasing dragons.

Libertarian high idealism

So without knowing all the answers I am simply reflecting on the double standards of the state's propaganda about the drugs trade. People always have and always may take drugs to



War on drugs? AUC paramilitary death squads in Colombia.

enjoy themselves. It seems to me people should have the freedom to make that choice for themselves as legislation simply does not work. From an anarchist perspective I would agree with Malatesta's observations on the cocaine trade and apply it today to all illegal drugs including marijuana and heroin. He argued as anarchists "we suggest another solution – make the use and sale of cocaine free from restrictions where it would be sold at cost price or even under cost" and, provided with information, let the people decide for themselves. He carries on "Since the penal laws have proved impotent, would it not be a good thing to try out the anarchist method?"

For Malatesta, his suggestion involved humanist freedom based on educated choice. This humanist solution has in fact been tried in the modern day context, and been found to be more successful than methadone programmes, but, the government in the UK refuses to acknowledge their success and makes it impossible for doctors to implement such programmes.

A glaring example of state perpetuation of the drugs problem was the closing of a project in Liverpool run by Dr David Marks. He prescribed pure heroin to addicts, and, began to help addicts overcome their addictions or deal with their habit in a private safe way. The state closed down the project and Dr Marks was forced to go to Australia in order to carry on with he believed to be a more successful programme for combating the problems

of addiction and the social problems of crime that go with it.

I do not intend to minimise the pain, violence, and crime that characterises the whole issue of drug addiction, including alcohol and tobacco. But really who are the real criminals here? Junkies? Crack-heads? Inmates of rehab centres and prisoners?

Or the state, which perpetuates the drug problem through its double-dealing 'secret' agents, the arms dealers, the producers of weapons of mass destruction, the polluters, the corporate cartels, and the city traders who control the whole economic infrastructure in the interests of profit and 'fair' capitalism. The state, as the ruling class, keep some drugs illegal to give them leverage to attack alternative lifestyles and to criminalise whole sections of the population who don't fit in one way or another.

At the same time it uses the trade to ferment political instability where it suits them and bolster repressive and brutal regimes across the world. Cycles of crime and violence that go hand in hand with prohibition perpetuate public fear and moral panic so the state can literally get away with murder (in Iraq, for example) and pass increasingly authoritarian laws taking us all for fools.

The question we should really ask is why we live in a society of double standards, hypocrisy and downright conspiracies, where the pain of life is so unbearable that so many people choose to obliterate themselves with drugs rather than participate?

Editorial

Blair's flagship promises are fatally holed below the waterline. Reports of crass waste and bureaucracy gone mad within British public services have surfaced time and again over the past seven years, and until recently the Labour government have blamed everything on the piss poor Major administration. Now, however, leaked cabinet papers show that £20 billion has been flushed down the drain, and that efficiency in such services as the NHS, schools and the police has plummeted.

Is this really any surprise? Rather than seeing education, for example, as a positive and constructive experience for pupils, where they learn what they want to learn and what will help them in their development, the government has seen it as a factory to produce a workforce which will prove pliant and complacent to even the most extreme demands of employers. The accompanying bureaucracy has left teachers, pupils and parents united in their antipathy to a government whose watchwords were once 'education, education, education'.

The experience of the health service has been similar, where arbitrary targets have taken priority over the provision of healthcare as and when it is really required. If you are lucky enough to suffer from something the government deems a priority, you will get treated. If, however, you suffer from an obscure ailment it may be best to call the undertaker now. If you live in postcode X you may be treated, in postcode Y you won't. And to keep tabs on what's going on in the increasingly Byzantine world of targets and budgets the largest growth area in the health service has been in the number of paper shufflers. It gets the number of unemployed down – but the number of people in socially useful jobs hasn't been increased.

It's all very good to chuck money at problems. However, it generally helps to have an idea of what you want the increased expenditure to achieve. Though Blair and all his filthy minions trumpet their successes the reality of the situation is that their unsurpassed stupidity has neither improved the services available nor maintained them at their previous standard.

Under capitalism, governments rule badly or worse. The unfortunate misrule of the present shoddy administration is a signal example of unrestrained capitalism, where decline is presented as improvement, failure as success, and lies are truth.

Whether at home or abroad, the Labour party's grubby politics are clearly not working. The other parties competing for power are no better than the sponging Labour party: at best they could mask their abject failures better. As capitalism stumbles from one fiasco to another, it becomes increasingly obvious that there must be a better way. There is – it is called anarchism.

Quiz answers

1. She told a Guardian reporter that South Africa has to buy arms instead of medicines because US president George W. Bush might attack South Africa. I wonder what she'll say if Kerry gets elected?
2. Scopes was convicted, despite his fundamentalist opponent being humiliated in cross examination. His conviction was quashed on a technicality.
3. The song was called 'Charles Windsor' and reflected a deep-seated desire on the part of the band to overthrow the existing social order. The reference to the Cortina dates it rather, though.
4. Mikhail Gorbachev.

Commentary

Dissident

"If you are a libertarian and a parent, then you must be a libertarian parent, or what does it mean to say you are an anarchist?" asks Steve McKee (Freedom, 17th April).

Although posed in terms of a question the clear implication here is that anarchist parents are failing their children, and anarchism, by not behaving according to principle. On what evidence is this based? Has Steve actually spoken to any 'anarchist parents'?

Has it occurred to Les Ismore that anarchists are so few that were we all to move into one constituency it is unlikely we would affect the outcome? If we were able to do so in our own areas we would be on the way to building a movement that would be large enough to affect events: through direct action, making discussion of electoralist diversions unnecessary.

Then we have Peter Gibson asserting that, "... most anarchists are both anti science and conservative." Really? I had assumed until now that the basis of science is empiricism so some sort of survey would seem to be appropriate. I wasn't asked, were you? Having maintained an interest in science since I first entered a public library I'm sure I'm not alone in the movement in giving the lie to this silly statement. The anarchists I've met are keen to look at the evidence in any given situation. Like science, that's the rational basis of anarchism.

We could argue the science of GM crops until the cows come home; the central question is why is the technology being introduced? I doubt many Freedom readers swallow the line that it's all in an altruistic cause, to feed the hungry of the world.

Roy Emery

Voting

In the old days people were offered bribes and free beer to encourage them to go to the polling booths and vote (spoil their ballot papers!) in elections. If Les Ismore really believes it is so vitally important for us to vote then why doesn't Les revive such fine old traditions and offer us money and booze?

I am not being cynical, I am being dead serious. Just what is our positive concrete tangible incentive to bother voting in support of this or that professional parasite politician so they can join the ruling class and carry on oppressing and exploiting us? Why should we want to make them feel loved?

The only reasons we might end up wasting our time at the polling booth are all negative. We might be blackmailed into voting for the usual social democratic bourgeois imperialist warmongering gangs in order to keep some more overtly fascist and racist party out. But this is a stitch up.

All the bourgeois political elements that Les sings the praises of, nationalist, liberal and Labour MPs, cross party groups of Scottish MPs and civil society activists, are so many creeps, gangsters and rackets.

Paul Petard

"The truth is we hardly vote anymore. In England we already have the opportunity to vote for four or five bodies; the Welsh and the Scots have more. But the figures are pathetic. More polls, less interest apparently" – The Financial Times.

It now seems to be a universal truth widely acknowledged that people aren't

interested in voting for politicians. While they may vote in high numbers for the contestants of Pop Idol they cannot be bothered to vote for who sits in the Houses of Parliament. From a high in 1951 turnout in British general elections have on average steadily declined until 1997 when the decline became a nose dive. In 2001 only 52% of under-25 year olds and half of 25-34 year olds voted. Turnout in the next election is expected to be even lower. At some point this is likely to raise questions of legitimacy (as seen in America where turnout is even lower).

Linked to the decline in electoral participation is a view that people no longer trust politicians or the political process. When asked whether they thought 'MPS lose touch with people' only 14% disagreed, while 63% of the British population feel that political parties are only interested in votes and twice as many think that government's do not care as think that they do.

Elections are, of course, the corner stone of liberalism. In the West the dominate political ideology, outlasting both fascism and Marxism has been liberalism. In its neo-liberal form it is now being exported across the world under the forces of globalisation. Anarchists have always rejected liberalism while also acknowledging its insights on the rights of individuals. Malatesta once wrote that 'liberalism is a kind of anarchy without socialism'. I doubt whether there are many anarchists who could not agree with the fourth clause of the French Revolution 'Declaration' that "political liberty consists in the power of doing whatever does not injure another."

Of course anarchists aren't liberals. We reject the notion that the state and its laws can ever be the locus of moral authority or that a contract can be drawn up between the rulers and the ruled that is anything other than in the interests of the powerful and the rich. An important issue for us though is to understand the extent of the decline of liberalism and the reasons for it. Declining support for liberalism coupled with the collapse of Marxism should create opportunities for anarchism. One though does not follow the other.

Following the last general election the official British Social Attitudes survey polled people about their views on the elections and politics more generally. The results make interesting reading (www.natcen.ac.uk). The survey shows that over 30% of people had little of no interest in politics, 35% had little interest in the 2001 election, just over half agreed that there was a gap between what government's said and what they did and 55% felt that they had no say in politics.

When asked whether they thought voting in Britain could change anything 35% thought that it couldn't (only 5% more thought that it could). It would seem that over a third of the British population agrees with the anarchist's that voting makes no difference. Finally a quarter felt 'dissatisfied with democracy'.

These results provide meaning to the declining turnout in elections. Many people do not feel that governments represent their interests or that voting changes anything. They are very cynical about political parties and politicians. At long last it might seem that a sizeable chunk of the population has woken up to what anarchists have long been saying about liberal democracy: it does not deliver the goods.

However when asked whether 'democracy only works if people vote' 82% agreed and 65% felt that not

voting was 'seriously neglecting their duty'. This suggests that there is still considerable support for the notion of liberal democracy, although that support is in decline.

The survey also gives some indications about participation in other forms of democracy. Only 5.3% said that it was very likely that they would participate in a demo or protest (41% said it was very unlikely). The survey was though carried out before the anti-war protests of last year when a lot of those 41% did actually demonstrate. 15% said that they would boycott a good or service and 12% had volunteered for community work (only 2% thought it likely they would work for a political party).

The decline in participation in and support for the institutions of liberalism could be temporary, although the decline does appear to be long term and there are little signs that politicians doing much to regain the trust of the electorate, quite the opposite in fact. It is more likely that liberalism is in longer term and terminal decline. Liberalism (and modernism and capitalism) are part and parcel of the so-called Long Twentieth Century (1870s-1970s). That's now behind us.

Social and political change rarely takes place overnight. Liberals like the Levellers, Thomas Paine, John Stuart Mill, the working class and artisan societies of the eighteenth century, the Chartists and Suffragettes campaigned over a long period for the right to vote, often against prevailing public opinion or at least indifference. Change takes place as part of wider social and economic currents. Western society seems to be at another point of change as capitalism enters its late stage. Part of this change seems to be a decline in liberalism. That can only be good news for anarchism.

Richard Griffin

Les Ismore's defence of voting seems to me to totally miss the point. Why stop with just voting for "the party/candidate we feel closest to"? Why not join these opposition parties and make them closer to us? Or even stand ourselves? Why stop there? Why waste our votes in parties which will not get in? Why not join New Labour and try to change it? Such has been the path of many a radical seeking to be 'practical' and rather than change the system they simply changed themselves.

So, I feel, Les asks us to ignore our ideas and instead urge reforms of the state so that politicians can create anarchy for us. As if. The history of every radical party using elections is the same sorry tale of opportunism and betrayal. He says we should vote for parties which give "a firm promise" to reform the voting system. Like Labour gave a 'firm promise' to not introduce fees? He points to Sweden as a better society but the last time I noticed it still had a state and capitalism. It may be nicer in some ways than America, but is that really the best message we anarchists can come up with?

And, of course, the most obvious issue. We are anarchists. We do not think that governments and politicians can fundamentally improve our lives. The state is an instrument of oppression, designed to keep class society going. Changing the personnel will not change the system and radicals taking part in elections spread the illusion that it will and that change comes from above.

The main point of anarchist anti-election campaigns is to spread the anarchist message that real change comes from below and that we can only change our lives for the better when we act for

ourselves. Come election time we are the only people who raise this message. It seems pointless to join the chorus of these seeking votes. Firstly, and most importantly, it fails to raise anarchist politics or our alternative. Secondly, the various parties seeking office have lots of non-anarchists ready and willing to do this. So joining in with the authoritarian parties will simply divert time and energy from anarchist propaganda and activity.

As regards individual anarchists voting that seems to be beside the point. Some anarchists in the US, for example, may consider Bush so terrible that a trip to the ballot box is planned. I can see their point as there is no libertarian alternative which can stop the state by direct action (as yet). But that does not raise the anarchist message at a time when people are more interested in politics nor propose an alternative which breaks the cycle of one set of politicians misruling us in favour of capital for another.

As Edward McKenna put it in the same issue, "Anarchists' demands cannot possibly be met by parliament as they entail people taking change of their own lives." That is the message we should be spreading and anti-election campaigns are a way of building a movement which can change those demands into reality. That means promoting libertarian alternatives such as federations of workplace and community assemblies, co-operatives, direct action, solidarity, rank and file control of struggles and organisations, and such like.

Iain McKay

Gee'd up

Some interesting contributions about GM in the letters column of Freedom (17th April 2004), but no attempt to answer the two main contentions:

1. Urging the state to ban something, not known to be harmful, is incompatible with anarchism.
2. Anarchism does not imply blanket hostility to GM technology.

Donald Room

I read Peter Gibson's letter in reply to my article against GM. I'm not sure how to reply as he fails to address any of the issues I raised. Instead he subjects us to personal attacks, gibberish about "the hidden power of the gene" and the unscientific claim that genetically modifying crops is the same as cross breeding. Until such time as he presents rational points against my arguments I'm inclined to ignore him. Rest assured, though, I am not "demonising genes" (whatever that means) nor am I "anti-science and conservative." I simply fail to worship at the shrine of progress and subject both it and scientists to scientific analysis. I would recommend Bakunin's essay God and the State for those interested in where I am coming from.

Iain McKay

You all had a GM feeding frenzy at Donald's expense. I thought the Johnny's contribution was distasteful. The arguments do, however, highlight the blind search for anarchism. The GM question is, as I said, a side issue. The arguments were not about GM but having a sufficiently open mind to accept change and find a philosophical or political position that is not occupied. My complaint is that anarchists grind on with the same old stuff which, as far as I can see, has little to do with anarchism.

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REVIEW

Despite Mayday's fame little is known about those to whose memory it is dedicated. This book could rectify this, says Iain McKay

Hurrah for anarchy! were the last words of two of the anarchists hanged by the state in 1887. The real reason for the Haymarket Martyrs' deaths was their anarchism and role in the eight-hour day strikes which were rocking America. 'Anarchism is on trial', proclaimed the state and a packed jury and biased judge ensured their conviction. Four were hanged on 11th November 1887, and another cheated the hangman by committing suicide. Three others had their sentences commuted to life imprisonment. Six years later, the new Governor of Illinois pardoned the Martyrs because of their obvious innocence, saying "the trial was not fair." By then, the 1st May had been adopted as international workers' day to commemorate the Martyrdom of the Chicago Eight. Mayday had been born.

While the Haymarket events radicalised a whole generation of people, influencing them to become anarchists, including Emma Goldman and Alexander Berkman, very little is known about the politics of the Chicago Anarchists. This is, in part, deliberate. How many times have Marxists talked about May Day and failed to mention the anarchism of the 'labour leaders' involved? Or that the anarchists were union activists? In anarchist circles, there is little material written by the Martyrs available. Luckily, this has changed with the republication of Albert Parsons' book *Anarchism: Its Philosophy and Scientific Basis*.

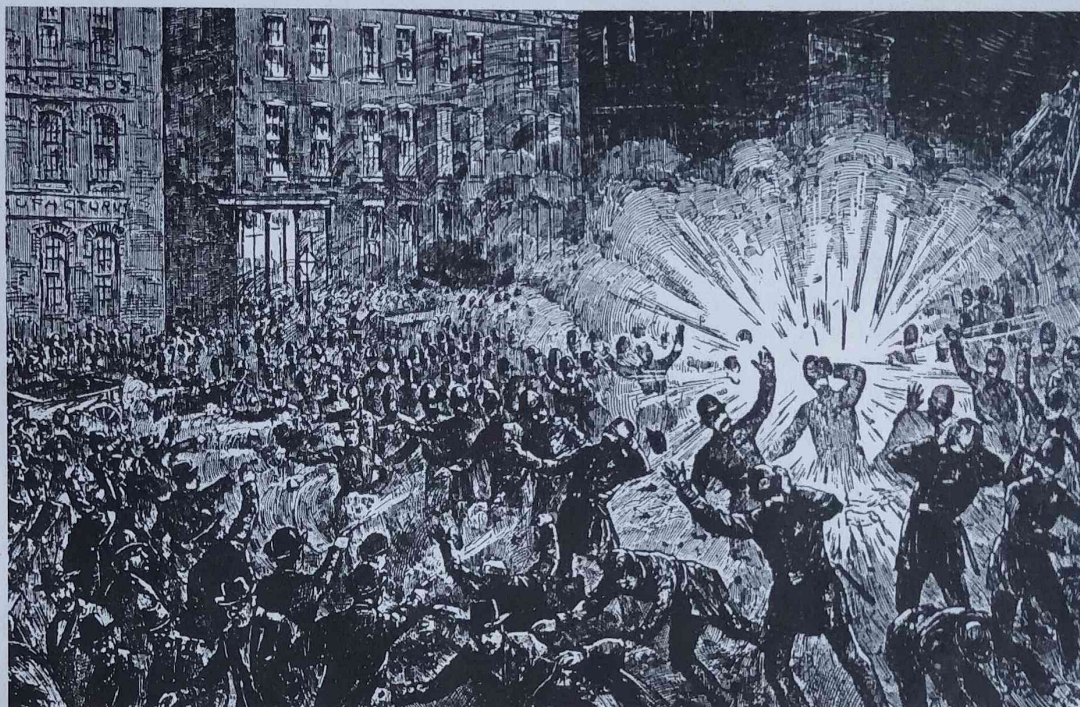
Albert Parsons was the only native-born American among the Martyrs. A former Confederate soldier, he became a socialist after the civil war. Soon seeing the pointlessness of the ballot box, he turned to anarchism. Its direct action and union organising proving to be far more effective in the class war than the socialist strategy. He compiled this book in prison awaiting execution to explain the ideas of anarchism. And it succeeds.

Albert Parsons argued that "anarchy

is the social administration of all affairs by the people themselves; that is to say, self-government, individual liberty ... the people ... participate equally in governing themselves ... the people voluntarily associate or freely withdraw from association; instead of being bossed or driven as now ... The workshops will drop into the hands of the workers, the mines will fall to the mines, and the land and all other things will be controlled by those who possess and use them." For "wealth is power ... The chattel slave of the past - the wage slave of today; what is the difference? The master selected under chattel slavery his own slaves. Under the wage slavery system the wage slave selects his master" and he refused "equally to be a slave or the owner of slaves."

Modern anti-capitalists have raised the slogan 'the world is not for sale' and would agree with Parsons when he argued that the "existing economic system has placed on the markets for sale man's natural rights ... A freeman is not for sale or for hire" While nowadays wage labour is commonplace, in 1880s America it was different. The first few generations of workers had just become wage slaves and hated it. Parsons spoke for them (and us!): "the wage system of labour is a despotism. It is coercive and arbitrary. It compels the wage worker, under a penalty of hunger, misery and distress ... to obey the dictation of the employer. The individuality of the wage-worker ... is destroyed by the wage-system ... Political liberty is possessed by those only who also possess economic liberty. The wage-system is the economic servitude of the workers."

Yet the Martyrs were not just critics. They constantly stressed the positive and constructive aspects of their ideas. Michael Schwab, for example, argued that "Socialism ... means that land and machinery shall be held in common by the people ... Four hours' work would suffice to produce all that ... is necessary for a comfortable living. Time would be



left to cultivate the mind, and to further science and act ... Some say it is un-American! Well, then, is it American to let people starve and die in ignorance? Is exploitation and robbery of the poor, American?" No, this was not meant to be a trick question!

They equally rejected the false notion of a "workers' state." "Anarchists," wrote Adolph Fischer, "hold that it is the natural right of every member of the human family to control themselves. If a centralised power - government - is ruling the mass of people ... it is enslaving them." However, "every anarchist is a socialist but every socialist is not necessarily an anarchist ... the communistic anarchists demand the abolition of political authority, the state ... we advocate the communistic or co-operative methods of production."

The Martyrs were utterly unapologetic for their activism and anarchism: "I say to you: 'I despise you. I despise your order; your laws,

your force-propped authority.' HANG ME FOR IT!" (Louis Lingg). Equally, they did not try and hide their revolutionary ideas. They knew they faced class justice and knew that "only by force of arms can the wage slaves make their way out of capitalistic bondage" (Adolph Fischer). Yet the injustice meted out to the Chicago Eight failed to crush the labour or anarchist movements. They were born from resisting capitalism and would remain as long as it does.

The new edition lacks a modern introduction which could have summarised the events and their aftermath for a reader who is unaware of them. However, for someone who knows the general history of the Haymarket events and wants to read what the Martyrs thought and did then this book is essential reading. Moreover, it includes essays by Elisee Reclus, Dyer D. Lum and C.L.R. James (anarchists whose works are extremely

rare these days) as well as the original two articles by Kropotkin which became the pamphlet *Anarchist Communism: Its Basis and Principles*.

As such, it is a well rounded account of the ideas of the Chicago anarchists, why they became anarchists and their role in the events that created Mayday. While undoubtedly dated, the book is essential reading for those interested in the ideas and history of anarchism. The Martyrs accounts of their lives and activism show why people have died fighting for a better future, for anarchy, far better than any pseudo-neutral history. As Michael Schwab wrote: "Anarchy is a dream, but only in the present. It will be realised." This book should inspire others to fight to realise that dream.

Anarchism: Its Philosophy and Scientific Basis by Albert R. Parsons, published by Freedom Press of the Pacific is available from Freedom at £17.50 (plus £1.75 towards postage and packing in the UK, £3.50 overseas)

BOOKS

Mayday and Anarchism: Remembrance and Resistance from Haymarket to now edited by Anna Key
Kate Sharpley Library, £3

This is a tidy pamphlet from KSL consisting of several anarchist texts relating to Mayday and in particular, but by no means exclusively, the Haymarket, Chicago, events and martyrs.

The death sentences of five was considered a judicial lynching and a few years later the then state governor pardoned the remaining three defendants who had been sent to prison. Three of the defendant's speeches and the state governor's pardon statement are included in the pamphlet.

The pamphlet reprints a variety of

communiqués, historical items from places as far afield as USA, Spain, England and Chile are also included. To bring the selection up to date there is the Reading Anarchist's sarcastic leaflet issued to those on an official Mayday march in 1983 and an excerpt from a longer piece by the Bash Street Kids in 2000 on the demonstrations of the late 1990s.

Several threads run through many of the pieces, including attacks on the reformist trade union and labour movement, the importance of direct action and militant struggle against capital and more latterly against participation in demos as another form of alienation and passive consumption.

It is just possible that compulsive anarcho-bibliophiles will have most if not all of the texts collected in this pamphlet, but at a mere three quid it'll

not break the bank and therefore can be warmly recommended not just for its historical value but also as part of the on-going debate as to the nature of 'celebrating' Mayday as a day of struggle.

Richard Alexander

Available from Freedom for £3 (add 50p towards postage and packing in the UK, £1 elsewhere).

The Rise of the BNP and how to counter it
Revolutions Per Minute, No 11, £1

This well-written and well researched pamphlet looks at the recent successes of the BNP and how they came about from a working-class anti-fascist perspective. It analyses the role that New Labour and the media have played

in creating a situation that has allowed the far-right to make a breakthrough into mainstream politics. Also the way that the BNP under Nick Griffin has changed from a party of street hooligans to a semi-respectable political party, and have been able to use concerns about asylum seekers to stir up ethnic-hatred.

The pamphlet also looks at the role Anti-Fascist Action (AFA) played during the early '90s, effectively smashing the BNP off the streets in the East End of London, and calls for anti-fascists to try and involve themselves in any groups seeking to carry on in this tradition. This pamphlet isn't huge (24 pages) of which many towards the back are adverts, but for the low price is well worth buying.

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Commentary

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You're all over anyone who deviates from guarded conservative views. Four legs good, three legs bad and deviants need a public spanking.

What the anarchist contributors to Freedom want is to socially engineer change. They have this in common with all other political movements. The end appears to be rather immaterial. If one has the means to produce change then it can be applied to any philosophy. It is a power trip. Force the buggers, Donald in particular, to think as I think. The fascination with GM is it is an engineering problem and hits at the very core of what we are. Anarchists have always backed social engineering ('toys for boys'). This is the dream of frustrated and inadequate sociologists, psychologists and anthropologists. Society has never socially engineered anything least of all anarchism. It is simply not possible because they imagine free will. Culturally we carry on as we always have because we are driven by our genetic constitution. Genetic manipulation, to everyone's annoyance, appears to offer a way around this impasse and it is probably unstoppable.

The advocates for social engineering argue that the concept of an unchanging society is shown by history to be false. We now use knives and forks and no longer shit in the fields. It is very true but we still think as we have always thought. That has not changed. The emotions that drive us are those of our prehistoric ancestors. The only thing that has changed is our technology. We are distinguished from other animals only by our supreme technological ability. It wasn't learnt, it evolved. The application of technology is also controlled by inner drives and desires. The difference between our behaviour and technology is that our technology is recorded. So long as we personally benefit from it we have it for posterity. The approach of authoritarian anarchists is to 'ban it'. This is derisible. Anarchists are not in the banning business and those who are, there are many, are not anarchists. As I keep saying, most anarchists are misguided socialists.

The hope is that technology will save us. I believe it will bring about anarchism. The supremacist arguments for social engineering are going nowhere. In the broad scheme of things anarchists who adhere to the safe old arguments will be marginalised. I doubt that the readership of Freedom has been growing (per capita) over the years (we are not told what the numbers are because, I suspect, they are static). There is no evidence of success for the reasons I have given. I see the anarchists as sad bunch because they can do no better than wag disapproving fingers at scientific progress and the likes of Donald who draw their attention to it.

Peter Gibson

Satisfied

I loved the Libertarian parenthood feature in the last Freedom (17th April);

it raised a lot of interesting points that we should be discussing as anarchists. I think it reflects the positive changes that have been taking place at Freedom. I've been reading the paper for the last four years and cannot remember having seen it being so good. I think the new design works well with the new editorial group, however young and immature they may be. May the good work continue!

Jack Phillips

Dogville

Apologies to Tony (Letters, 17th April) for mystifying him with my film review of Dogville (3rd April). It's nothing to do with being 'thick' (charitable of you, Tony, for interpreting it that way - rather than calling me a pretentious git). To me, it's more about trying to get across a series of subtle and complicated points (well I reckon they are!), but condensing them into a very tight word limit. Having said that, I've suffered for many years from Irritable Vowel Syndrome, which often results in both constipated prose and verbal diarrhoea. It would have been easy to put the arguments in simple language - but it would have taken five times as many words (or more). But that's no excuse if it leaves readers feeling shat on. I'll try to do better.

While I'm on, it seems that the editorial group is changing again. I've been reading Freedom since the 1970s, and it's never been better - keep it up. But there's only so much you can do with eight pages ...

Tom Jennings

Fash bashing

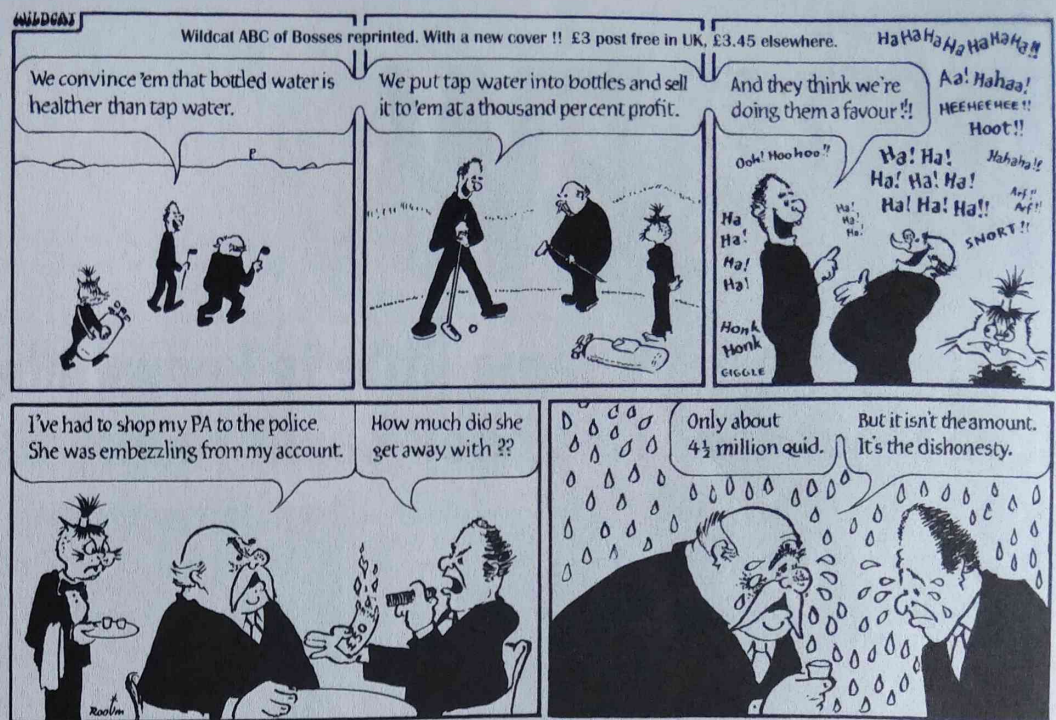
In response to the letter from H.S. (Freedom, 20th March) I do not believe that beating up BNP supporters is the most effective way to combat fascism. I think we need to recognise that fascism is a political ideology in its own right, and one that is a threat to us all. The best way for us to stop fascism is to deal with the problems that make people turn to the far-right, poor quality housing, a lack of investment of schools, alienation - all the reasons that people should be turning to us.

Under Nick Griffin the BNP have been addressing people's concerns and have been more active in white working class communities than we are.

We should be trying to build a mass working class anarchist movement, which would make the fascist threat irrelevant, but I think there is always the need for physical confrontation. Fascists have traditionally tried to control the streets and groups like Blackham's National Front still try and use this strategy, we need to stop them doing this and beating them up is the best short-term response, as the successes of Anti-Fascist Action in the early '90s show.

I welcome the launch of Antifa and hope that it will allow anarchists and other anti-fascists to work together to carry on these successes.

Jim M.



Anarcho rip off

I have just read the review of the Stuart Christie book General Franco Made me a Terrorist. While I think the review of the book is probably very good - as I haven't read it, I am amazed that there is not more criticism of a fellow anarchist publishing books that cost £35. And from the review it seems like volume one was the same price, and I guess from this volume three will be as well.

A nice little earner - rehashing your past life and profiting from fellow anarchists prepared to pay to read it. Stuart Christie obviously was a 'name' within the anarchist movement, but to then play on this and try and charge other anarchists £35 to read about his life seems a bit rich to say the least. And then for one of Freedom's reviewers to say at the end of the article "If you can afford it please buy a copy" is bollocks. The reviewer doesn't explain how giving Christie Book £35 will help make the book "available to more people and buying this edition will help bring such a happy situation about." One way to get more working class and interested people to read it would be for Christie Books to use their facilities to produce it at a more affordable price. One that is attainable by ordinary people, not the fucking middle classes and rich who can afford to pay £35 for one book. That's nearly a week money to some of us who can't, or won't, get a job.

When will celebrities in our movement realise that they should be doing what they do because they believe in it, not to make money out of it from fellow comrades. Nick it, borrow it, see if somebody has put it on the internet, but for the sake of your wallet don't pay £35 for one book - unless you have far too much money and sense.

Tony

A sideways look

Perhaps the most shocking thing about the case of Joyti De-Lauri, the PA who stole millions from her bosses at a bank, is the amounts involved. The high fliers at American investment bank Goldman Sachs regarded her as a model PA and trusted her to organise all those important events they were too busy to organise themselves, like a romantic holiday for their wife. In return she forged their signatures to write cheques to herself and lived a life of luxury. She got away with it for so long because the bankers were so rich they didn't know how many millions they had in their different accounts. A problem that affects us all, I'm sure.

De-Lauri faces jail and was remanded for sentencing, itself fairly unusual for a white collar crime, though her investments in Cyprus suggest a bolt-hole for someone who might have had to do an Asil Nadir. But to move on from the secretary, what about her victims? The last, Edward Scott Mead was a top takeover specialist who earned £50 million in shares when the firm floated in 1999. His deals include privatisation in twenty countries. Goldman Sachs themselves are involved in almost every area of investment. Their priorities include advocating the privatisation of social security in the US and deregulation of their industry. In August 2002, a congressional investigation was launched into whether they had issued biased advice to protect their corporate clients, which included Enron. They hyped the bubble that was Enron right up until its collapse. Their web-site identifies key opportunities in the 'privatisation of pension systems', which sounds like an opportunity for workers to be ripped off to me. No wonder these bankers keep busy - if they paused to do something other than have affairs or lose track of their millions they might have time to think about what they're really doing.

In 2001, some documents were leaked from the World Trade Organisation, a body that supposedly exists to regulate trade but is really there for the advantage of the rich. These included minutes of secret meetings of the Liberalisation of Trade In Services committee between April 1999 and February 2001, which showed that government officials negotiating working hand-in-glove with the interested banking community. Guess who turns up represented here, yup, Goldman Sachs. The meetings they attended even discussed which consultants and academics should be hired to answer their anti-corporate globalisation critics. Goldman Sachs aren't the vilest bunch of capitalists

around, but that's not the point. Banking, particularly in the volumes they conduct, is about profit. The top performers get rewards that are out of all proportion to normal people's incomes by generating more profit. And more profit means more exploitation.

To my mind there is a huge difference between stealing to live and stealing to fund a luxury lifestyle. Joyti De-Lauri was guilty of the latter. But when you get down to it, so are the people she stole from.

Svartfrosk

Words we use

LIBERTARIAN
The term 'libertarian' originally meant proponent of liberty, or some one generally opposed to authoritarian forms of politics.

It was also used by anarchists to describe themselves, in part due to the negative associations with the term 'anarchy' which were mostly caused by State or media smears. Also, after the crushing of the Paris Commune in 1871 anarchism and anarchists were outlawed for decades in France and so they were forced to call themselves by a different name. The French word 'libertaire' was adopted, and still used by many up to this day.

Today it is still used throughout Europe to apply generally to all those who seek radical change using non-hierarchical methods, including syndicalists, council communists, situationists, autonomists, radical ecologists and many others.

In the US, and to some extent here, the term has been hijacked by right-wing free market fundamentalists - who don't like government because it makes their corporations pay taxes. But we think it's about time we reclaimed our name!

Alex Allison

The quiz

1. South African health minister Manto Tshabalala-Msimang recommends a diet of beetroot, garlic and olive oil to fight AIDS. How did she compare the country's health budget with its military spending?
2. Who won the famous 'Monkey Trial' in Dayton, Tennessee, where teacher John Scopes was accused of teaching evolution?
3. East London band McCarthy, whose members included anarchists and communists, sang "In the back of an old green cortina, you're on your way to the guillotine." Who was the song about?
4. Who said "democracy without limits is anarchy"?

Answers on page 6

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