

FREEDOM

80P ANARCHIST NEWS AND VIEWS

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8 JANUARY 2005

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DRAGGING THEIR FEET

The scale of the disaster in Asia following Boxing Day's earthquake is biblical in scale – over 150,000 dead, five million homeless and lacking basic amenities including fresh water. Over £15 billion worth of damage has been done to already poor communities and fragile economies. Some 200,000 jobs in tourism in Thailand alone are at risk.

In the immediate aftermath of the disaster the world's thirty richest countries pledged just £130 million worth of aid (the figure has now risen). Indonesia alone estimated it needed at least £145 million. In total ten countries have been affected. The war and occupation in Iraq is costing \$300 million a day.

While states and governments dragged their feet the response from ordinary people has been impressive. The British government initially gave just £15 million for disaster relief. In contrast the British people during the first two and a half days after the tsunami donated over £25 million. While the public dug deep into their pockets Tony Blair decided to continue his holiday in Egypt leaving it to junior ministers like Hilary Benn to direct Britain's response.

Across the globe trade unions have been mobilising. Sweden's metal workers rapidly gave 100,000 euros, a union in Cyprus £20,000, Indian trade unions have donated food parcels, clothes and medicine, while the Canadian Auto Workers Union has

pledged \$150,000 and Indian transport workers have donated a day's pay.

The disaster has raised fault lines between the US and UN. American neo-conservatives believe US interests should always come ahead of those of the international community. This was most vividly seen in the build up to the war in Iraq when the majority in the Washington had no interest in obtaining a UN mandate for invasion. The earthquake in Asia has provided the neocons with another excuse to have a go at the UN. Bush, for example, has directly attacked Jan Egeland the head of the UN's relief agency. Egeland accused – quite rightly the US of being 'stingy' in its international aid contribution. America gives just 0.14% of its national product in aid – less than any other industrialised nation. The aid America is giving to the Asian earthquake victims is not being directed via the UN, a clear message from the US about what it thinks about it.

America is not alone in attacking the UN. Hilary Benn, international development minister has also used the tsunami as an excuse to have a go at the UN accusing its relief agency of being ineffective. While it may be the case that an international agency like the UN is bureaucratic and inefficient moves to criticise it like Benn's are more to do with establishing US hegemony than genuine concern for the poor.

While described as a 'natural disaster' the consequences of the earthquake are



very much human made. The slow response of the world's richest nations has increased the chance of disease and famine, entirely avoidable deaths. The World Health Organisation has warned that more people may die from illness than the direct consequences of the earthquake.

Earlier in the year a regional disaster planning meeting in South East Asia had decided that the risk of a tsunami was not high enough to justify the cost

of an early warning system. In the last hundred years tsunamis have killed around 50,000 people in the Indian Ocean rim. It took one and a half hours from the original quake for the waves to hit land. That would have been long enough for many of the people killed to have moved 1-2 km inland and escape the effect of the wave.

Regional conflicts including relentless attacks by the Indonesian government as part of their on-going conflict with

the Free Aceh Movement has exacerbated problems. Some 30,000 people in Aceh province are believed to have died. The war in the north of Sri Lanka has also hampered relief.

Anarchism could not of course stop earthquakes but a world based on mutual aid and cooperation would ensure the victims of natural disasters were put first not the interests of the state.

Richard Griffin

FREEDOM, IRAQ STYLE

After destroying Fallujah in order to save it, the US military has drawn up plans to keep the population (sorry, insurgents) under control. Perhaps unsurprisingly, the mistakes of Vietnam are being repeated again. The people of Fallujah will be liberated by being imprisoned.

With the fighting in Fallujah (mostly) over, the US military is planning to keep insurgents from regaining control of what is left of the city. To do this they plan to turn it into a police state rather than the democracy the US claimed to be bombing for. The occupying troops

plan to funnel returning Fallujans into so-called citizen processing centres on the outskirts of the city to compile a database of their identities through DNA testing and retina scans (all of which sounds remarkably similar to the data to be held on New Labour's ID cards. Perhaps Blunkett can get a new job administering the system?). The 'liberated' citizens will then be given badges displaying their home addresses that they must wear at all times.

All of which is a tad strange, given that before the assault on Fallujah the US asserted that the 'anti-Iraqi' insurgents were 'foreign fighters' (unlike the 138,000 American troops pounding an Iraqi city to rubble and forcing over 200,000 Iraqis from their homes into the squalor of refugee life). Needless to say, the assault also failed to stop the insurgency (just as the deaths of Saddam's sons, his capture and the transfer of 'sovereignty' all failed to mark the turning point the pundits claimed).

It gets worse. One idea raised would require all men to labour in military-style battalions for pay. Depending on their skills, they would be assigned jobs in construction, waterworks, or rubble-clearing platoons. Trotsky would be proud – US imperialism has appropriated his idea for militarisation of labour! Would not it be easier, and more honest, just to tattoo the identification numbers on their wrists and sew some sort of symbol (incorporating their ID and address) onto their clothes?

So as well as wasting nearly \$150 billion (and counting, not to mention the US Defence Department asking for an extra \$100 billion) the invasion and occupation of Iraq has further eroded the already extremely weak ethical standards of our so-called civilised society. The Bush Government has created the circumstances in which the US military openly discuss using slave labour. But what can you expect? We

SHED NO TEARS

When David Blunkett boasted, characteristically, that he would make his predecessor as Home Secretary, Jack Straw, "look like a woolly liberal," I doubt there were too many people who believed this was possible. But Blunkett certainly the most right-wing home secretary this country has had in living memory, and he revelled in the fact. Straw may have been at least as Draconian as Michael Howard before him, but he didn't have 9-11, an event, which if one were needed, gave Blunkett's authoritarianism and xenophobia full-rein.

In the wake of Blunkett's overdue resignation a picture is being painted, with himself as the primary artist, of 'an honourable man brought low by love'. The career of this vain, arrogant, conceited individual was not brought to an end because of Blunkett's private life, something he has done his utmost to deny the rest of us, but because he is a liar and corrupt, neither of which are new.

I first met David Blunkett in 1974, and later suffered under him when he was

leader of Sheffield City Council, and neither his dishonesty, his corruption, nor his right-wing views are recently acquired. He's simply been better in the past at hiding them. First and foremost though, David Blunkett has been a ruthless careerist and, like Margaret Thatcher before him, he's blubbing now.

Thatcher was a great political ally to Blunkett in his Sheffield Council days, he could cover up the corruption and incompetence of his administration by blaming everything on central government: Northern Grit squaring up to Whitehall. Thatcher was of course despised in Sheffield, leaving the local Labour administration as secure as a one-party state, and they ran it accordingly. As Blunkett well knew, during this period, you could have put a red ribbon on a dog, and people would have voted for it.

In the 1980s Sheffield City Council may have had a publicity machine worthy of Stalin's Russia, but any talk of 'socialism' was never more than empty

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FREEDOM

Volume 66 Number 1

Anarchism

Anarchists work towards a society of mutual aid and voluntary co-operation. We reject government, and all forms of exploitation and domination.

Freedom Press is an independent anarchist publisher, founded in 1886. Besides this newspaper, which comes out every two weeks, we produce books on all aspects of anarchist theory and practice – see our website for a full list.

In our building in East London we run Britain's biggest anarchist bookshop and host the Autonomy Club meeting room and the Freedom Hacklab open-access IT space.

Our aim is to explain anarchism more widely and to show that people can work together and use direct action to practically improve our lives and build a better world.

Freedom's editors wish to present a broad range of anarchist thought, and as such the views expressed in the paper are those of the individual contributors and not necessarily those of the editorial collective.

Angel Alley

From the Freedom newspaper group, Happy New Year to all our readers! We had a welcome break over the festive period and are now getting back into the swing of things, albeit while being very chilly since our boiler has gone up the creek. Again.

Regulars will notice that this issue has no cartoon from Morgenmuffel, and for this we apologise, but Isy is off travelling and we hope to have some more cartoons later in the year.

But many thanks to all who have supported us in 2004. We've been putting the paper together for a year now, and are still finding our feet in some areas, so thanks for bearing with us. We hope we can all help Freedom flourish in 2005!

Donations

We haven't yet sorted through all our Christmas post so we haven't any figures on donations as yet. However we would like to encourage people renewing their subscriptions to please consider becoming Supporter Subscribers, or adding a little monthly gift to help us keep going. Many thanks!

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Next issue

Contributions are wanted for future Freedoms. The next issue will be dated 22nd January and the last day to get your copy to us will be Thursday 13th January (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!

News from the inside

Freedom for prisoners

As many of you may know, Freedom provides free subscriptions to anyone in prison. If you have friends or family in prison, or regularly write to a prisoner, if they are interested we will be happy to send them a free sample issue or sub. If you are a prisoner yourself we can provide subs to any of your fellow inmates if they wish. Please also feel free to write to us with any news about your imprisonment, developments in your case or anything else!

Update on Aachen prisoners

The three remaining Aachen prisoners Jose, Gabriel, and Bart remain strong and are pleased to be receiving letters of support from comrades 'outside'. Spain has requested Gabriel's extradition, but it's very unlikely that this will occur before the group stand trial, possibly as early as January or February. Please keep the letters and cards going, and would anyone speaking Castillian consider dropping Jose a line, he only speaks Castillian and so is even more isolated than the others. The addresses of the prisoners, once again are:

- Bart De Geeter, JVA Düsseldorf, Ulmenstasse 95, 40476 Düsseldorf, Germany
- Gabriel Pombo da Silva, JVA Aachen, Krefelder Strasse 251, 52070 Aachen, Germany
- Jose Fernandez Delgado, JVA Bielefeld-Brackwede I, Umlostrafle 100, 33649 Bielefeld, Germany

The prisoners mail is no longer going through the Aachen prosecutor, but through the Landgericht (state court), so it's quicker to write to the prisoners (individually) c/o AZ: 52 KS 22-04, Landgericht Aachen, postfach 52034 Aachen, Germany.

Willi Frediani transferred

William Frediani, who together with Alessio Perondi, is accused of 'subversive conspiracy' in Italy has recently been transferred to Spoleto high security jail in Perugia. His new address is William Frediani, Casa di Reclusione, Via Maiano 10, 06049 Spoleto (PG), Italy.

Essex Boys case referred to Appeal Court

The case of Michael Steele and Jack Whomes, convicted in 1998 of the murder of three alleged local drug-dealers in the so-called 'Essex Boys' case has been referred back to the Court of Appeal. Crucial to the men's conviction was the evidence of Darren Nicholls, a grass who it has now emerged had already made a lucrative deal to sell his story to London Weekend Television. Commenting on the matter, Jack Whomes solicitor, James Nichol, said: "This is the latest case in a long line in which people have been wrongly convicted on the say-so of a prison grass. It's a scandal and time that either the Government legislated or the Court of Appeal took steps to exclude the evidence of prisoners."

Anarchists go to Fairford armed with kite!

Prior to his overdue departure David Blunkett finally admitted that the dangerous 'armed anarchists' who were searched by police under anti-terror legislation at RAF Fairford last year were not armed with "cudgels and swords" as he had stated at the time, but with a kite!

The idea that peace demonstrators had arrived at a demo tooled-up with cudgels and swords seemed ridiculous to everyone except Blunkett and the police.

Asked how many times stop and search powers were used by police in the vicinity of Fairford, Blunkett replied that 2,254 'stop-searches' had been conducted. Asked whether swords were found, Blunkett replied that a range of items had been seized. "Contrary to my understanding at the time, I now understand that these did not include swords."

Ten year old girl arrested in US

A ten year old school girl at an elementary school in Philadelphia, USA, was handcuffed and taken to a police station. The reason? A pair of scissors were discovered in her school bag, breaking the school's strict no weapons policy. The cops decided as she hadn't threatened anyone with the 8-inch blades she had not committed a crime and let her go, but she's still waiting to hear whether she'll be expelled to a special disciplinary school. The girl was

reported to have "cried and cried" with "no idea what she did wrong."

compiled by Mark Barnsley

New Year

Salud friends and comrades! I wish all of you the best for the new year – strength, power and always a burning flame in your hearts.

Greetings from the gaol.

Thomas Meyer-Falk

c/o jva z.3117, Schönbornstr. 32, 76646

Bruchsal, Germany

www.freedom-for-thomas.de



LISTINGS

Bristol

Every Sunday the Kebele Kafe from 6.30pm, 14 Robertson Road, Easton. For info call 0117 9399469

Gateshead

11th to 13th February Labour Spring Conference – inside the conference Neo-Labour tell us how caring they are while announcing proposals to crack down on dole scroungers and immigrants, the unions wring their hands and do fuck all. Outside the People of Gateshead get to have armed police and random stop and searches to make them feel safe.

London

9th January 'The role of the Vatican in the Rwanda massacres', a lecture by Linda Melvern at the South Place Ethical Society, Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, WC1, at 11am. For more info see www.ethicalsoc.org.uk/events.htm

13th January Tony Allen and friends including Sir Gideon Vein perform and read selections from the Freedom Press book *A Summer in the Park – a journal of Speakers' Corner* from 6.30pm at Borders Bookshop, 203 Oxford Street.
27th January Indymedia Cinema at the Other Cinema, 11 Rupert Street, W1. Call 020 7734 1506 (nearest tube Piccadilly Circus or Leicester Square).
28th January Critical Mass, meet up at 6pm on the South Bank, under Waterloo Bridge, to leave by 6:45pm. Make sure you bring some noise, light, life, leaflets and enthusiasm with you!

(and a bicycle or something that rolls but doesn't use petrol)

Newcastle

11th to 13th February Projectile: an anarchist festival of film and ideas, exploring the past, present, and future of anarchism, and featuring rare and radical films, music, entertainment, talks and discussions. For more info see www.projectile.org.uk

Sheffield

21st to 23rd January G8: Direct Action Trainers' Workshops organised by Seeds for Change Collective. In the run up to the 2005 G8 Summit, a series of weekend workshops for activists who want to share their direct action skills. By the end of the workshops you'll be equipped to run direct action training sessions and helping other activists prepare for effective action. For more info call 0845 458 4776, email DATW@seedsforchange.org.uk or see <http://seedsforchange.org.uk/free/diary#oxlangla>

International

20th January Worldwide General Strike! on the day George W. Bush is inaugurated for another term as US President. Call in sick, take a personal day. The first worldwide general strike in history with protests everywhere. See www.inaugurationmedia.org
27th February to 6th March Olive Cooperative tour of Palestine, looking at the environmental effects of the

Occupation. See www.olivecoop.com
26th March The Tenth Annual San Francisco Bay Area Bookfair, from 10am to 6pm at Golden Gate Park, Ninth Avenue and Lincoln Way
6th July Global Day of Action at the opening day of the G8 Summit www.agp.org or www.dissent.org.uk

Nationwide groups

Anarchist Federation
Network of anarchist-communists
Box 2, 84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1 7QX
www.afed.org.uk
Antifa
Militant anti-fascist organisation
Box 36, 84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1 7QX
www.antifa.org.uk
Class War Federation
Class struggle anarchist group
PO Box 467, London E8 3QX
www.classwaruk.org
Dissent
A network of resistance against the G8
www.dissent.org.uk
Earth First!
Ecological direct action network
www.earthfirst.org.uk
Industrial Workers of the World
Revolutionary DIY union
PO Box 74, Brighton, BN1 4ZQ
www.iww.org.uk
Solidarity Federation
Anarcho-syndicalist organisation
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 7QX
www.freedompress.org.uk
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
The Rampart
7a Rampart Street, London E1
SUMAC Centre
245 Gladstone Street, Nottingham NG7 6HX
www.veggies.org.uk/rainbow/
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

In Brief

Taxing times

While it is perverse that millionaires and skilled workers who earn more than £31,000 are both taxed at the same rate (40%), it is even more perverse that the highest proportion in tax is paid by those on the lowest income. The bottom 10% have (on average) 53% of their income absorbed in tax. For the top 10%, it is only 33%. Thatcher's shifting of the tax burden from the rich paid off.

Shooting the messenger

Senior army commanders have expressed fears that the increasingly vocal anti-Iraq war movement is discouraging thousands of young men from considering a career in the armed forces.

The source of the problem is, apparently, high-profile campaigns against the war, often led by bereaved parents and supported by celebrities and political figures. There is an acute recruitment crisis in Scotland and it is spreading to the north of England and Wales. The problem is also evident in the Territorial Army which has bolstered the regular Army's ranks in Iraq.

Perhaps, just perhaps, the recruitment problem is due to the fear of being sent to kill or be killed in an unnecessary war based on lies from corrupt politicians acting on behalf of an unelected US President beholden to US multinational corporations? Or, perhaps, it has something to do with not wanting to be bullied, humiliated and raped at Deepcut and other barracks? Or, perhaps, the desire not to be turned into an unquestioning killing machine? No, obviously not.

Perhaps we can solve the problem. Let's conscript every politician and media hack who supported the war. Let all those who supported the war and who happily sent others to fight it join them. If that happened the world would be a far more peaceful place and, perhaps, the army would find other things to complain about.

Sick, sick, sick

The US has spent over \$87 billion conducting a war in Iraq. The UN estimates that less than half that amount could provide clean water, adequate diets, sanitation services, and basic education to every person on the planet.

At a time when the Iraqi child malnutrition rate since the occupation has doubled, the Pentagon is spending over \$5.8 billion a month on the war in Iraq.

Big Bush

After Iraqi insurgents killed eighteen American and four Iraqi soldiers in Mosul in December Bush claimed that those who died had been on "a vital mission for peace."

In reality, they died to ensure his reelection and for US imperialism. Moreover, given that the US invaded Iraq and started this unnecessary, immoral war which has killed a hundred thousand on the basis of lies, Bush is yet again saying that 'war is peace'. Orwell's estate should start suing the Bush Junta for plagiarising 1984!

The miners, 20 years on

In March there will be a series of events in Doncaster and Newcastle, co-organised by the NUM, IWW and Class War. See www.minersadvice.co.uk/events.htm for more information.

Save Colchester bus station

Plans to close the central bus station in Colchester are being met with stiff opposition, writes Jack Upton

Colchester council are currently trying to push through plans to allow the sell off of the local bus station, opening up the land it is now situated on for commercial development. The bus station is used by many people, especially older people, those living in remote surrounding villages and the poor. It is situated near the centre of town – an ideal location for a central bus station. However, the logic of capital also dictates that this is also an excellent position for private development. With the council, as usual, being hand in hand with property developers, there is little surprise as to which direction they are pushing.

The council plans to close the bus station in 2005, saying a new bus station will open in 2008. This will be far less central, much smaller and in a far less safe location. Colchester bus station is the centre of bus routes for the surrounding area, and is the starting point, as well as changeover point for drivers for the region. It has 21 stands, is relatively busy, even with recent reductions in routes servicing outlying regions. Although the present bus station is currently far from perfect, there is nothing that minor investment in refurbishment couldn't solve. The suggested replacement would almost certainly involve more cancellation of bus services to outlying regions. It would also be covered, which would be far worse in terms of air quality inside for both drivers and passengers. It would also mean fewer buses going to the High Street. You really have to question the logic of this, in a town like Colchester which is experiencing rapid growth.

The change will also leave Colchester without a bus station for three years, even by the council's best estimate. And we all know how successful projects such as this have been at being completed on time... Until then, buses will simply have to stop, start, change drivers and all these related things on an already busy street on the edge of town – not exactly what you want for the elderly, nor will it do much good for the already appalling traffic congestion found in Colchester.

In an attempt to sweeten the pill, the council have resorted to what can only be described as a campaign of misinformation. The council claim they have to close the present bus station to make way for the new Visual Arts Facility (VAF). This is simply not true. The VAF will be tucked away in one corner, and with a minor adjustment to the VAF's proposed position, the present bus station could continue to operate as now. Colchester Anarchist Group supports the VAF project, which amongst other things, will house the best collection of modern Latin American art in Europe. Visitors are expected to come from far and wide, and will be a great benefit to the town, but not at the cost of the towns public transport infrastructure.

Colchester Council are playing the oldest trick in the book. They really want the site for commercial development, not primarily for the arts. To try and push this through they tell us we cannot have this arts facility without getting rid of the bus station, and they hope nobody will notice the commercial development until it is too late. This policy is an attempt divide the people of Colchester against each other. It's not uncommon to hear people say 'We don't want that new arts centre!' when they are told they have to give up their bus station to make way for it. Meanwhile, supporters of the arts accuse us of being philistines, and living in the past. However, the doesn't take into account the simple fact that the bus station and the VAF are not mutually exclusive. The enemy of this new facility isn't those wishing to save the bus station, but council greed.

There is vast amounts of local support for keeping the bus station in its current location. There have been three separate council consultations over the last three years, all of which have shown overwhelming support for not moving the bus station. There have also been two separate polls in local newspapers, one of which in the Essex County Standard showing 94% (yes, ninety four) support for it remaining where it is. The other, in the East



Anglian Daily Times, despite much of the data being collected in a local art gallery, alongside council lies that moving the bus station was the only way we could receive the new arts facility, still showed 64% in favour of it staying. The local 'Save Our Bus Station' campaign (which members of Colchester Anarchist Group have been heavily involved in) has collected in excess of 8,000 signatures in ten weeks. And yet still, the council tries to sneak through these plans without public debate, with plans to hold a vote on final plans within days of their publication. We have little hope the council will take any notice whatsoever of this, however we feel it is of great importance to expose just how much in opposition to public opinion the plans of the council are.

This project is part of a wider Colchester council scheme to redevelop the entire area around the bus station, which will see widespread gentrification of Colchester in the name of profit for land developers. There is a wide array of groups involved in the campaign against its closure alongside 'Save Our

Bus Station', including local Residents Associations, the bus users group and even Bob Russell, our Lib Dem MP (despite this project being pushed by our Lib Dem/Tory coalition council). As more and more of the councils lies around this project crumble away, and their blatant profiteering is exposed, local opposition grows, and there are plans by those involved in the campaign to take it further. Our upcoming plans include the further spreading of information and countering council propaganda, protests outside relevant council meetings and continued petitioning, as well as whatever action is deemed necessary should the council attempt to push this through against the will of the people of Colchester. The struggle, as they say, continues...

Jack Upton is a member of Colchester Anarchist Group.

For more information on Colchester's Save Our Bus Station Campaign, contact Tim Oxtan at oxton@onetel.com or Colchester Anarchist Group at CAG@riseup.net or our website www.colchesteranarchistgroup.org.uk



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www.hacklab.org.uk

Upping the price

Major events from Glastonbury to Cambridge's Strawberry Fair could be facing huge costs if a new government plan comes into force.

Changes to the licensing system would impose taxes of between £5,000 and £50,000, depending on the number of people attending. Events of more than seventy five thousand people would attract the top sum, with events of more than six thousand people facing £5,000 costs.

The amounts are to be paid to local councils, and are supposed to be used to pay for health and safety checks. Although councils are allowed to

charge for one-off events already, the department of culture, media and sport wish to create an official sliding scale, raising concerns that councils will no longer waive fees for events such as school or hospital fundraisers.

Smaller events with around six thousand people, or low-profit enterprises such as the Strawberry Fair, could be put out of business altogether.

The annual London Anarchist Bookfair costs around £5,000 in total and brings in between two to three thousand people. If the event grew large enough, a minimum tax of £5,000 could make it all but impossible to host legally.

Tony, an organiser for the book fair, said: "The future of the bookfair would be in doubt. I guess we'd work out a way to get around it out of sheer bloody mindedness but it would be difficult to see how. Raising an extra £5,000 would literally be raising double what we do now. It's not needed anyway, big venues like ULU (where the book fair was held last year) already carry out incredibly rigorous health and safety checks."

The plan could come into force as early as 7th February, leaving almost every big event in the country out of pocket.

A few bad apples?

Far from being the isolated actions of a few 'grunts', the torture of prisoners was ordered from on high, writes Iain McKay

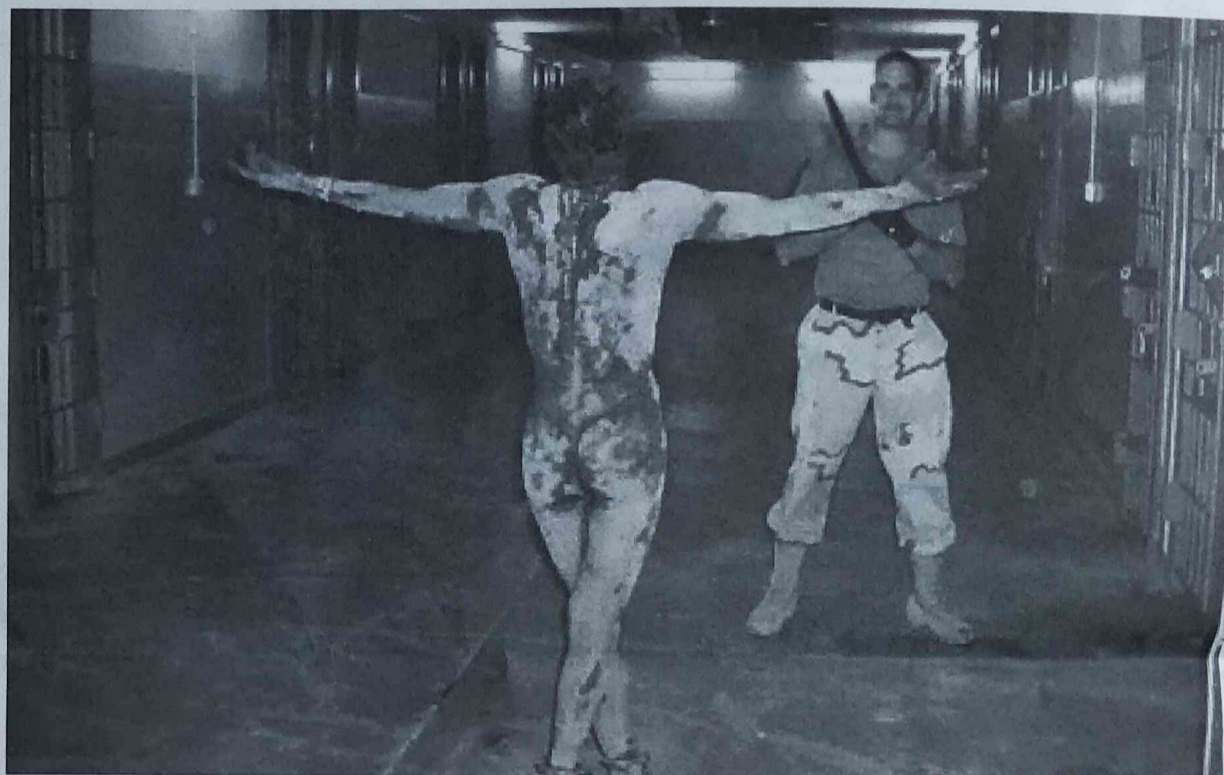
When the torture of prisoners in Abu Ghraib came to light, the US Government quickly asserted it was the fault of a few 'bad apples' at the bottom of the hierarchy. Those at the top were ignorant of such acts, they claimed. Given such documents as the infamous CIA torture manual and the goings on at Guantanamo Bay, the chances of this were pretty low. As usual, those who obeyed the orders were made solely responsible. These tactics are too widespread in use for them not to be known about and authorised at the top.

Yet the real source of the abuse is coming to light. In late December the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) released a document which suggests that top officials of the Bush Administration gave permission for the abusive interrogation techniques which horrified the world. Bush himself apparently issued an Executive Order authorising the use of inhumane interrogation methods against detainees in Iraq. ACLU executive director Anthony Romero said the documents meant top officials could no longer avoid public scrutiny and blame low-ranking troops acting on their own.

The document is a two page FBI email which refers to a Presidential Order directly authorising inhumane

interrogation techniques. It was sent in May 2004 from 'On Scene Commander - Baghdad' to a handful of senior FBI officials. Here is a key extract: "Although we have no reason to believe any of our personnel disobeyed our instructions and participated in interrogations that utilised techniques beyond the bounds of FBI practice but within the parameters of the Executive Order (e.g. sleep deprivation, stress positions, loud music, etc.), some of our personnel were in the general vicinity of interrogations in which such tactics were being used, and because of their proximity to the sites of these interrogations, heard or saw things which would be indicative of interrogations utilising the techniques authorised by the Executive Order.† Examples are loud music interrogators yelling at subjects, prisoners with hoods on their heads, etc."

The email refers again to "interrogation techniques made lawful by the Executive Order" and notes that the "things our personnel witnessed (but did not participate in) were authorised by the President under his Executive Order." In total Bush's order was mentioned ten times. The email notes that the FBI has prohibited its agents from employing the techniques that the President authorised. Another e-mail, dated December 2003, describes an incident in which Defense Department



interrogators at Guantanamo Bay impersonated FBI agents while using 'torture techniques' against a detainee. Other records include a June 2004 'Urgent Report' to the Director of the FBI that raises concerns that abuse of detainees is being covered up.

The ACLU is urging the White House

to confirm or deny the existence of such an order and immediately to release the order if it exists. "The methods that the Defense Department has adopted are illegal, immoral, and counterproductive," said ACLU staff attorney Jameel Jaffer. "It is astounding that these methods appear to have been

adopted as a matter of policy by the highest levels of government."

* The released documents were obtained after the ACLU filed a lawsuit against the government for failing to respond to a Freedom of Information Act request. They can be found at: www.aclu.org/torturefoia/released/fbi.html

Shed no tears

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rhetoric for Blunkett and his pals.

Under Blunkett, more than half of the council's own 32,000 employees earned basic pay below TUC guidelines, and 10,000 of them were paid less than the Council of Europe 'decency threshold'. Women workers got a particularly bad deal, earning far less than their male colleagues, and getting fewer promotions. There was also evidence of racial discrimination, with only 1% of council employees being black, a quarter of what it should have been, and rumours of a 'colour bar' in the Town Hall's heavily subsidised restaurant, where no black person had ever been employed.

Blunkett presided over a huge homeless problem in Sheffield, while massive numbers of council-owned properties lay empty for years. Early in 1983 'Peace City' was somewhat embarrassed to find that a group of young peaceniks had squatted one long-empty council-owned building and turned it into a 'peace centre'. In response, Blunkett's pal Roger Barton, then Chairman of the 'Nuclear Free Zones Committee', personally went round and cut off the electricity to the building. Blunkett however, faithfully promised the young pacifists that they would not be evicted, a promise he quickly broke.

As homeless figures in the city continued to soar, other long-unused council-owned properties were occupied. The council's response was always swift and ruthless. Facing immediate eviction one group of squatters wrote to Blunkett personally to ask for a stay of eviction while they found somewhere else to live. With typical arrogance Blunkett replied, "It would seem to me that anarchy can hardly expect reasoned and structured responses within the system which is being attacked." After the eviction the building stayed empty for several more years.

Blunkett's administration also waged a long and bitter war against travellers, even evicting them in the middle of a TB epidemic. The treatment of Sheffield travellers led to a perinatal mortality rate of nearly 50%.

A big part of maintaining the illusion necessary to running Blunkettgrad was the notion of 'squaring up to Thatcher', so from time to time various 'stands' were made, with Blunkett & co promising to 'stand firm' against the Tories on various issues. Things were made easier by the fact that to a very large extent the Council 'owned' the unions, the tenants associations, the peace groups, and just about every political front, tendency, and organisation operating in the city.

One Blunkett 'stand' was against bus-fare increases. The city's famously low

fares had actually begun to increase a few years earlier, but in 1986 Thatcher's deregulation of public transport threatened to send them spiralling. After more hot-air Blunkett again capitulated, and as always he aimed to crush any uncontrolled dissent ruthlessly. As a member of a group opposed to the fare increases I was sent to prison for putting up a poster advising passengers not to pay. I wasn't prosecuted by the police, I hadn't committed a criminal offence, but by the Labour council, for not having planning permission.

As Home Secretary, Blunkett's abuses of human rights and civil liberties have been staggering. He has introduced internment without trial for suspected foreign terrorists, is introducing military camps for children, and barely a day goes by without him dreaming up another crackpot neo-fascist scheme to attack civil liberties, criminalise working-class communities, and put more and more people behind bars. Under Blunkett the British prison population has risen to more than 75,000. Held in appalling conditions, which Blunkett has consistently ignored, growing numbers of these prisoners are driven to suicide, slashing open their veins with slivers of glass or razor-blade, hanging themselves from heating pipes only inches above the floor, or choking on their own vomit through swallowing pills. Callously, Blunkett has

refused to meet the mothers of some of the young women driven to these acts of desperation, while his only comment on prison suicides has been to quip that he was inclined to open a bottle of champagne after Harold Shipman killed himself.

Blunkett has long had a vicious tongue, and as his former cabinet colleagues have witnessed recently, he is not slow to use it. He once famously accused single mothers of deliberately getting pregnant to jump the council housing queue. There was no basis for this accusation at all, but these were young working-class girls, who might need a helping hand, and perhaps a bit of advice on contraception. Not rich, already married, right-wingers who didn't need his sleazy favours (and who might also now be reconsidering the issue of birth-control.)

David Blunkett sought to hide his corruption by playing the 'my private life is my own' card he is trying to deny the rest of us. The man who has assured us, in relation to ID cards, that if 'we have nothing to hide, we have nothing to worry about' has come unstuck, and those familiar with his 'computer-like' mind are probably taking his recent bad memory with a pinch of salt.

Blunkett's assistance with passport and visa applications on behalf of his rich former mistress sits hypocritically with the hard-line stance he has taken with those fleeing war and torture abroad.

This is the man who told Kosovan and Afghani refugees to 'get back home'.

And without wanting to twist the knife too much, his current fixation with acquiring a family, even if it's somebody else's, sits uneasily with his past history. The day after his election as an MP, Blunkett announced he was leaving his wife and children in Sheffield and moving in with his 'research assistant' in London. His marriage may, as he has recently said, been "a loveless relationship", but he had found it politically expedient to hide that fact for a long time, and he's now finding out that middle-class women don't disappear into the background quite so quickly or so conveniently.

Just like Thatcher before him, the only person David Blunkett is able to shed tears for is himself, snivelling that he doesn't feel sorry for himself and that he'll "try to have something of a Christmas", he sounds like Albert Steptoe. Whatever happens to Blunkett, and unfortunately we may not have seen the last of him, he's sure to have a better festive season than the families of the record 93 British prisoners who killed themselves last year, those locked up without trial in prisons or detention centres, or the vast number of other victims of his reign as home secretary. Shed no tears for Blunkett, he can shed them himself.

Mark Bamsley

Letter from America

Religious nuts, one-man wars and pseudo-science: Louis Further paints a dark picture of the USA in 2005

Here come the 'Four more years' of George W. Bush. About to be inaugurated in a fortnight's time, Bush will spend about as much on the event in Washington DC as is spent in Iraq every four hours.

Anarchist groups from all over North America are planning to draw attention to the illegitimacy of government, war, capitalism and imperialism in general, and to Bush's presidency and destructive, greedy regime in particular.

Not Listening

At the start of a new year, let's look at the wider North American scene and at some of the significant developments over the holiday period. The common theme is that Bush's administration shows no sign whatsoever of acknowledging even nominal responsibilities to the majority of people here. Nor, as anarchists, should we even begin to expect it to. What is new and disturbing is the increasing blanket disregard by the Bush cartel not only for the law but for any need to cover their criminal tracks.

But as the country stoops closer to overt fascism, neither decency nor local or international law seem to matter. Certainly the mainstream corporate propaganda of what's happening both in this country and in the rest of the world ('Around the world in eighty seconds' and 'World News Minute' are typical) presents a very benign view of the US impact in South and Central America, the Middle East and on the environment. Those trying to use the 'mainstream media' to draw attention to State terrorism and crimes are labelled, ridiculed and marginalised. For days following the tsunami on 26th December, the headlines on many television channels were about queues for post-Christmas bargains, celebrity gossip and an unseasonable batch of rain showers on the west coast with seasonal delays at airports in the Midwest.

For example, two days before Christmas it was announced that Bush is to re-submit twenty nominations for federal judgeships of figures known for their hostility to abortion, civil rights and the environment. Even members of the US senate (for example Democratic leader Harry Reid) have called the nominees 'extremist' and said the senate should not reconsider them. One of these, William J. Haynes II, faces questions over his role in a Defense Department legal memo which said the president couldn't be prosecuted if he were to authorise the torture of suspected terrorists. This resubmission appears to indicate a symbolic move towards more authoritarian control by the Bush regime and a dismissal of the notion of consent between the Republican and Democratic factions.

No Limits to War

A week before Christmas, Newsweek magazine broke the story of a secret Department of Justice (DoJ) memo from September 2001. It makes the case that there are effectively 'no limits' on presidential power to wage war – with or without congressional approval. Although Newsweek's Michael Isikoff had previously covered the existence of this document, here for the first time were the details: "The President may deploy military force pre-emptively against terrorist organisations or the states that harbour or support them, whether or not they can be linked to the specific terrorist incidents of September 11 ... the president's decisions are for him alone and are unreviewable." Then, "the President's broad constitutional power to use military force to defend the nation ... would allow the President to take whatever actions he deems appropriate to pre-empt or respond to terrorist threats from new quarters."

According to the September 11 Commission, another memo written by Under Secretary of Defense Douglas Feith five days before this DoJ memo suggested "hitting terrorists outside the Middle East in the initial offensive, perhaps deliberately selecting a non-al Qaeda target like Iraq." Even if it weren't for the scenarios foreseen by the Project for the New American Century, this text strongly suggests that the Bush regime had been planning illegal military aggression against Iraq earlier than was claimed during the almost nightly 'WMD' propaganda campaign two winters ago.

Buried

The 25th September 2001 memo came from the department of then White House counsel, Alberto Gonzales. Gonzales is now Bush's nominee for attorney general; this ought to be a controversial choice for a legal position in that the memo, prepared presumably under his oversight, concludes that 'the president's powers are so expansive that he and his surrogates are not bound by congressional laws or international treaties – including, for example, those proscribing torture during the interrogation of detainees.'

It is tempting to deduce that the main reason for issuing this legal opinion is the warning that Gonzales himself had given to Bush over two years ago that members of his administration were vulnerable to prosecution for war crimes (indeed the Centre for Constitutional Rights is already preparing just such cases in Germany against senior members of the US regime) as a direct result of controversial 'methods', which – it now emerges – were directed by secretary of defense Donald Rumsfeld. An internal memo from 25th January 2002, also obtained by Newsweek, urges Bush to

declare the aggression on Afghanistan "exempt from the provisions of the Geneva Conventions" such that "neither the War Crimes Act nor the Geneva Conventions" would apply to the detention conditions of al Qaeda or Taliban prisoners at Guantanamo Bay in Cuba.

Gonzales wrote that there is an advantage to declaring that Taliban and al Qaeda are 'fighters' and not prisoners of war (they have frequently been termed 'enemy combatants'): those detained by the US would not then have protection from the Geneva Conventions. To US officials this has the appeal (in the words of the later memo) of "substantially reduc[ing] the threat of domestic criminal prosecution under the War Crimes Act."

FBI

The 2002 memo includes a lengthy discussion of the War Crimes Act, which it concludes has no binding effect on the president because it would interfere with his powers as commander in chief in determining "how best to deploy troops in the field."

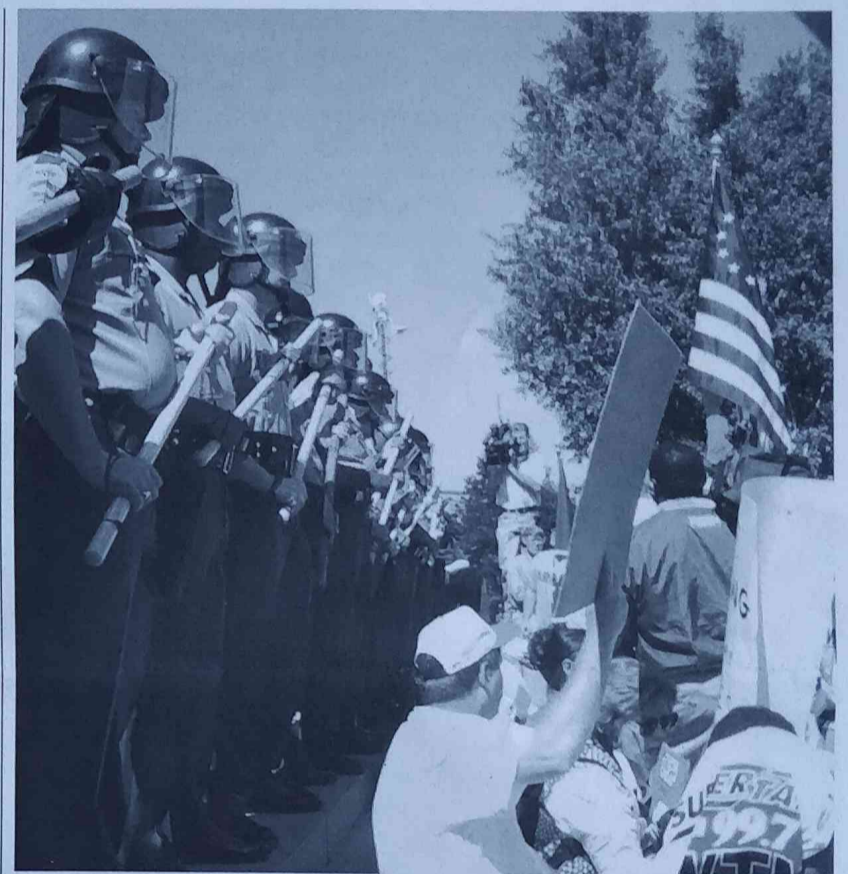
On 23rd December 2004 the editors of the Washington Post accused the Bush administration of committing war crimes both in Iraq and at Guantanamo Bay, while a few days earlier Joe Conason, editor-at-large for The New York Observer wrote a piece called 'Torture Begins at the Top' about a recently-disclosed FBI memo indicating that orders to abandon traditional interrogation methods came directly from Rumsfeld.

According to Conason, as the FBI, the pentagon and other US defence and intelligence agencies considered how to handle the prisoners from Afghanistan, the FBI advised two generals, Dunlavey and Miller (prominent in the Abu Ghraib scandal having moved to Iraq after setting up the system at Guantanamo), against abusive techniques in Guantanamo. Their response to the FBI advice was to the effect, "You can try your methods, but we have our 'marching orders' from the SecDef" (meaning Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld).

Meanwhile vice-president Cheney's Halliburton and other private military contractors (whose personnel constitute 10% of the forces in Iraq) have begun advertising campaigns in El Salvador, Colombia and Nicaragua to recruit ex-soldiers to work in Iraq as re-enlistment falls dramatically and the pentagon admits that over 5,000 US soldiers have deserted.

Inuits

Early in his first term, Bush dismayed environmentalists by refusing to endorse the Kyoto Protocol. Indeed, amongst the more egregious crimes of his first four years has been systematic and persistent environmental destruction. In the summer of 2004 the pentagon itself



Whatever things 2005 holds for the people of the US, a weakening of state power is not one of them.

identified climate change as the greatest threat to the United States; above both the ailing economy and the bogey of 'terrorism'.

Now the Inuits (more than 150,000 seal-hunters scattered around the Arctic), are planning to seek a ruling from the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights to the effect that, by contributing substantially to global warming, the United States is threatening their existence. The Inuits have depended on the ice in the Arctic to reach seals and food sources; and have used it to travel between villages. Now at times the ice is too scarce to build igloos whilst out hunting.

Sheila Watt-Cloutier, Chair of the Inuit Circumpolar Conference, which represents the Inuit inside the Arctic Circle, said: "We want to show that we are not powerless victims. These are drastic times for our people and require drastic measures. We have lived in harmony with our surroundings for millennia, but that is being taken away from us."

Although the Commission has no powers to enforce its rulings, a declaration that the United States has violated the Inuits' rights could create the foundation for a lawsuit, either against the United States in an international court, or against American companies in a US federal court.

Tuvalu

Just after Christmas, Enele Sopoaga, ambassador and permanent representative of Tuvalu to the United Nations, expressed concern publicly that the Pacific island nation, which stands thirteen feet above

sea level at its highest point, faces oblivion if global warming causes the sea to continue to rise.

Against the startling observation that for the first time grass has recently begun to take root in the Antarctic and the background of the tenth round of international talks on climate change in Buenos Aires, another assessment last November by 300 scientists for the eight countries with Arctic territory – including the United States – reached the fairly uncontroversial conclusion that 'human influences' are now the dominant factor in climate change.

Pseudo-science

That global warming is largely caused by human activity is, however, still disputed by some US government agencies and departments. Instead, pseudo-science is quietly and steadily replacing accepted physics, biology and chemistry, etc.

With major funding for Bush coming from the petrochemical industry, it seems highly unlikely that the current regime will attend to climate change in any way.

The likely scenario is for The Commission to receive the Inuit petition, forward it to the United States as respondent because, the Inuit too are arguing, the United States is responsible for 25% or more of the greenhouse gas emissions that are contributing to this climate change; the petition further argues that the United States has an international obligation to prevent these human rights violations.

Editorial

The help being offered by the UK to relieve Tsunami victims has been 'overwhelmingly generous', according to the media. Over £100 million has been raised already from private sources, with the government pledging as much again as of 1st January.

The generosity! Less than £1 per person privately, and government aid worth less than half a per cent of what we're prepared to spend on ID cards.* We should be so proud of our country, with our open hearts, tear stained eyes and feather-light wallets. Of the G8 our giving lags behind only America.

Or alternatively, perhaps we should be looking deep within our culture of selfishness augmented by only the merest hint of guilt that perhaps, just perhaps there are people out there who deserve the cash more.

Charity organisations are often a product of this guilt, allowing us to give 'just a few pounds a month' to buy ourselves redemption, when we know full well that the West rips off ten times that every second of every day.

In terms of solving world poverty it is an insult, a slap in the face to millions who give up their lives in semi-slavery to provide our goods.

It is also an insult to our communities, which are often going through the depths of their own crises while we go on and on about the peoples of lands far away.

Solving the problems of those infinitely damned beings is not generally something we, living in the West, can make better by offering snippets of the money the corporate monsters we created have grudgingly given to us. That can only be achieved through those people's efforts on their local stage, and solidarity from us on the international one.

But this situation is different. It is not a case of ongoing, man-made death and crisis. It is a terrible, cataclysmic and hopefully one-off event in our lifetimes.

It is something that can, with enough aid, be mitigated and possibly brought under control, regardless of any influences capital would bring.

In fact, like with the Exxon-Valdez disaster, this will be a very good year for capital. Rebuilding is always good for GDP, which is presumably why the markets continue in bullish form.

Particularly if governments don't have to fork-out too much.

It is a situation which could just as easily have happened to us, and still could. In the Canary Islands there is a volcano called La Palma which if it collapses will cause a Tsunami big enough to wipe out the South of England and East coast of America.

Morally and practically it is a good idea to give, especially taking into account the following figures: The US gave \$241 billion in charity in 2003 minus government contributions. Of this, individuals gave a total of 83.5%, foundations gave 10.9% and corporations just 5.6%. Effectively, this suggests that it won't be corporations bailing out South East Asia, it is down to us.

£100 million? It should be the starter, not the main course; but be careful who you give to, recent reports warn that much of the money is going to put up tourists in decent accommodation.

* Charities Oxfam and Christian Aid have cast doubt that even this amount will ever materialise, after similar pledges have foundered in recent years. Of \$1.8 billion promised by governments to Afghanistan two years ago, \$600 million hasn't arrived.

Commentary

Philippines

I am writing in response to your leader article on the Philippines. I have been visiting, reading and writing about the country for five years, so I was pleased to see a place close to my heart on the front page of Freedom. Worryingly, since 16th November at least one witness to the violence has been murdered. Its generally unwise to mess with families as powerful as the Cojuangco's.

Countries like the Philippines only make the news when something 'big' happens: usually a devastating typhoon but also so-called Islamic terrorism and now this. The fact is, however, that the murder of human rights lawyers and journalists is common-place in the Philippines. Furthermore, such killings rarely lead to any prosecutions in the law courts. During elections, vote-buying is the norm with politicians getting votes not on issues of principle but on the proceeds of what is known as the 'pork barrel' - money allocated to politicians to spend on projects in their region, but which is commonly believed to be spent on enriching local political networks. Finally, what of the ordinary people? One in seven Filipino families experience hunger on a weekly basis. Precarity is a major problem, as is unemployment. What happened at Hacienda Luisita was not a sign of increasing radicalism or the state getting particularly jumpy; its normal. The Cojuangco Family that owns the mill is one of the richest families in Southeast Asia, and whatever allegations have been made against it in the past it always emerges unscathed. The reality of politics in Southeast Asia is of powerful patrons and weak clients, and the Cojuangco's are very powerful patrons indeed (Cory Aquino, who came to power after the arriviste Marcos, was a Cojuangco - the fall of Marcos did not precipitate a 'return to democracy', but rather a return to oligarchal rule). What can be said is that the colonial legacy left by the Spanish (1565-1898) and the US (1898-1946) has deeply traumatised the country, and the post-colonial elite has shown little interest in anything other than its own enrichment. However, a fiscal crisis of immense proportions looms, and the weak Macapagal-Arroyo government is unlikely to be able to stave off collapse for long. It remains to be seen what forms of solidarity emerge from the forthcoming chaos.

Paul-Francois Tremlett

Pic nit-pick

Sorry to subject Freedom readers to further 'nit-picking' re the famous baton-swing photo from the 1984-85 miners strike, but Bob Potter is incorrect in what he says about it. The woman pictured is neither an Orgreave resident standing in her front garden, nor as is



commonly claimed, a 'miner's wife'. She is professional leftie, and photographer, Lesley Boulton, a resident of Broomhall, Sheffield, and the wife of a sculptor.

While Lesley may have been shaken a little by the feigned baton charge, she was extremely thrilled by the subsequent publicity, buying the entire stock of Guardian's in the local newsagent when the photo appeared on the front page for instance, and it did wonders in terms of her career.

Mark Bamsley

Bookfair

As one of the organisers of the London Anarchist Bookfair I would like to respond to Edward McKenna's letter in the last issue of Freedom. Edward raises two points, which I will try and respond to.

I'm not sure I agree with Edward that there were less people at this years bookfair. He is correct though, that we decided not to do any stickers. This was mainly because very few seemed to be put up in 2003. We can reassess this for 2005. As for posters, we got 1,000 printed and distributed around London and the UK. Some people may not have managed to get theirs flyposted. This is always a problem. If you can help put posters (or stickers) up in your area (especially London) next year, please contact us.

If numbers were down the ESF may have had something to do with it, as it was a few weeks before. People I know from outside London said mates couldn't afford to come to London twice and the ESF took priority (well the Beyond the ESF anyway). Also moving the bookfair to November (venue problems) may have had some effects.

Edward's other point is ULU (the venue) and I think, all of us who organise the bookfair would agree with him. It costs us between £2,500 and £3,000 for the whole venue. Add to that the drink and food money and they make a decent sum from anarchists. ULU staff were both heavy handed at the end and unhelpful during the duration of the event. We will be talking to ULU about these problems and how to overcome them, but we have already started looking for other venues to hold the 2005 London Anarchist Bookfair at. The problem is finding a space big enough to hold all of us. This year we could have had 90 stalls (56 max at Conway Hall) and had over 40 meetings, videos, performance space and a creche. Also the words 'anarchist bookfair' and having Special Branch phoning them up puts a number of venues off us.

If you have any ideas for large venues; can help next year take stickers or leaflets; or will help with posters in your area (state which part of London), feel free to contact me at the address below.

Tony

woodywood2@blueyonder.co.uk

... so to January

The doors of his temple were thrown open during times of war and closed in times of peace. A suitable thought as we enter 2005 when the two-facedness of the G8 and corporate greed will become apparent. The novelty of the British Prime Minister insisting that Africa, and global poverty, will move up the agenda has worn off. In the face of the catastrophe - the cataclysm - in Asia, it might be a suitable time to push it back down again. Certainly the

jockeying for position, the game of so-called priorities, will keep the world (sic) media enthralled; the G8 leaders will throw themselves into the round of debate with gusto exactly because that is what the debate is doing - going round in circles. Can we really expect voices to be heard calling for thinking outside this round? Will the suggestion that, at a time of such devastation, the instinct of mutual aid above all must be heard? Is there an agenda for the character of the reconstruction to be based on human and environmental need, rather than the pursuit of the Yankee dollar as it has in Iraq?

More likely than not, critics of the G8's solutions will be labelled as idealists or fantasists for daring to suggest that, in this time of dire crisis, radically different ways of running the planet should be pursued. Instead, we should prepare ourselves for the absurd and insulting and be ready to explain our anger at what we are being told. President Bush and his clique of apologists for environmental destruction will use the unpredictability of nature as illustrated by events in Asia to maintain their refusal to sign up to Kyoto. To be aware of the fundamentalist Christian thinking that drives neo-Conservative policies towards the environment is a disturbing experience. The 'end times' involve cataclysms and the destruction of the planet because it is all part of 'God's plan'. Hell, it's in Revelations! Which is what the Earth is expected to become whilst all the born again float up to heaven. Sorry, Mr Blair, but your quasi-humanist / Christian stewardship of 'God's creation' has as much chance of a snowflake in a fundamentalist Christian hell of being top of the agenda during the discussions at the G8.

Poverty and environmental degradation are part of the capitalist package. This is seen in state capitalist China which, though trying to avoid the excesses of the Soviet model, has clearly become less embarrassed about both its ideological and pragmatic ambitions. The status of China in relation to the G8 is intriguing. Certainly, it could expose the dualist hypocrisy of President Bush that he worships at both the feet of God and Mammon.

Hod

Pen pal

Hi! I love your newspaper. I learn something new from every issue.

I'm writing to ask you to print my address for a pen pal. I'm looking for someone who I can ask my zillions of questions about anarchism. I don't have a lot of money for postage so my letters would probably come once a month packed with questions.

A bit about myself: 24 year old female serving 15 years for vehicular homicide. I have 8-10 more to go depending on how I behave. Punk-hippy mix (likes Mohawks and vegetarian chilli!!!). Been plotting to overthrow the government since elementary school, but new to the 'scene'.

Thanks. I've been writing down all my ideas and questions for the past few months. I didn't know where else to go. Hope you can help.

Keep up the great job. I love the new cartoon and the Top Ten Lists. Oh and the pop quiz is fun even though I hardly ever guess right.

Beth Dadd

U15134-B1109U, LCI Women's Unit,
11120 NW Gainesville Road,
Ocala, FL 34482, USA

Iraq style

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live in a political culture which talks about occupation as 'liberation' without laughing and are ruled by self-proclaimed 'democratic' government which fail to see the fundamental injustice in indefinite incarceration without trial and even the use of torture. This is a desperate and truly saddening state of affairs which displays the real face of the state.

All this is part of making Fallujah a 'model city', to use the expression of US commanders and their appointed Iraqi puppets. To achieve this they are using the coercive measures allowed under the martial law imposed last month by Iyad Allawi (whose US appointed government the US military is claiming suggested these ideas).

So here is 'liberation' US style, the turning of Iraqi civilians into a categorised and labelled pool of slave labour who will be forced, at gun point, to clear rubble their guards created out of their homes and town. This treatment, moreover, is considered as being a 'model' and, consequently, will be unlikely to stay in Fallujah.

The Bush Administration really is the best recruiting agent Bin Laden has.

America

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Then the Commission would begin by hearing testimony from Inuit women and men and from lawyers speaking on their behalf; it would next hear responses from the United States; and then ultimately arrive at a determination as to whether there is a violation of human rights.

But as international law plays a smaller and smaller part in US government thinking, even a binding court ruling is unlikely to induce Bush to change course.

What all these developments have in common, then, is the casting off of even an acknowledgment both of the law as written by successive US capitalist regimes and of any desire to fake even token responsibility to the wider community. The State has ceased even to pretend to listen. Failure to pay lip service either to public opinion or the law is a defining characteristic of fascism. There are others - all now present in the US: The apparently unstoppable and near total identification of corporate and State interests; the growing power of a 'popular cadre' (here, the christian fundamentalists with their self-proclaimed monopoly on ethics); a dedicated and effective propaganda machine; this greater reliance on pseudo-science. And, significantly, the cult of ears closed to any opinion but that which seeks to confirm an existing visionary and implicitly God-given agenda. It's pretty clear what's planned for Bush's Four More Years.

Quiz answers

1. People wouldn't obey the rules. Quite right, too.
2. Dare to be a Daniel, by Tony Benn, takes it's name from stanzain a nineteenth century hymn about making a stand for your beliefs. Wilf McCartney's pamphlet covers syndicalist union organising in the catering trade in pre-First World War London.
3. As the "nettle in our conscience". "Whenever the state became too powerful, when it became too intrusive in people's lives ... when it became too cruel, her voice was there."
4. Buenos Aires, Argentina, where La Voz de la Mujer was published from 1898-99.

REVIEW

Colin Ward's very short introduction to anarchism, though not perfect, sheds light on many interesting areas, suggests Anarcho

Colin Ward's new book is an introduction to anarchism, produced as part of the 'very short introduction' series of the Oxford University Press. Ward, for anyone who does not know, is one of Britain's most famous anarchists writers. His work, on numerous subjects, is uniformly excellent and, unsurprisingly, this new book is as good as you would expect.

He paints a compelling picture of anarchism as a people's movement, opposed to both the state and capitalism. He covers the major moments of anarchism's revolutionary achievement as well as providing a good summary of its major ideas and ideals. In many ways this little book feels like a sequel of Ward's classic *Anarchy in Action* and is as inspiring as that book is. As in that book, he covers federalism and freedom in education as well as discussing ecology and the blights of crime, work, nationalism and fundamentalism from a libertarian perspective. Needless to say, he also discusses the Spanish revolution and mentions the anarchist role in the Mexican and Russian revolutions. He correctly notes that the Zapatistas in the Chiapas and the landless peasant movement in Brazil are modern continuations of the anarchist influenced aspects of the Mexican revolution. Sadly there is no mention of Argentina's popular assemblies and occupied factories although Ward does mention the anti-capitalist movement and protests of recent years.

A particularly noteworthy aspect of the book is Ward's mention of non-Western anarchist traditions such as Japanese, Chinese and African anarchism. He uses them to illustrate the tendency for libertarian ideas to develop in different cultures and different times. He also gives over two chapters to specific forms of anarchism, namely green and individualist. He usefully links anarchist ideas to modern ecological concerns and ideas, showing how anarchism has advocated ideas on decentralisation and ecology which predate the 'official' green movement by decades.

Ward also summarises the contribution of such notable individualist anarchists like Stirner and Tucker. He also exposes

the nonsense that they can be considered forefathers of the so-called 'libertarian' right, rightly rejecting any suggestion that the likes of Rothbard and other ideologues for "untrammelled market capitalism" are anarchists. Sadly, not a few 'experts' lump these proprietarians (a more accurate description of their ideology) in with genuine libertarians simply because they have appropriated the name 'anarchist' and 'libertarian' to describe their reactionary ideologies. In reality, genuine anarchists have always been as critical of capitalist property rights as they have been of the state. Any libertarian who considers the 'libertarian' right as friends or being related to anarchism really are ignorant of what both sides stand for and, moreover, a total liability to the movement.

Of course no book is perfect. There is no real discussion of why anarchists stress the need for direct action as a means of social change or, surprisingly, why we reject the ballot box. Equally, the anarchist role in resisting fascism in Italy is not discussed in spite of its obvious relevance today. Similarly the major schools of anarchism, namely anarchist-communism and anarcho-syndicalism, are not really defined. The former were as concerned about the organised industrial workers as an agent of change as the latter and both stress the need to organise all workers, not just those in factories.

In addition, when Ward asserts that anarchists "are seldom to be found in the diminishing world of career employment in formal industry or bureaucracy" I have to disagree. In all my time in the movement the vast majority of the anarchists I have met have been either wage slaves (as I am now) in capitalist enterprises or the state bureaucracy or students (as I once was). And, contra Ward, having worked in a small business, I can say that while the owners (as former workers) did not want to be wage slaves they had no problem with being bosses. The workforce was ordered about and exploited as in any larger capitalist firm.

As such, anarcho-syndicalists (like other revolutionary anarchists) will not agree with Ward that small businesses are a haven of co-operative labour between equals and, therefore, consider the classical forms of anarchism in the workplace (class struggle, direct action, unions, solidarity) as still extremely relevant. So while Ward is right to note that "being your own boss" is an important libertarian tendency in society, I feel he has overestimated its potential as it is expressed now. Whether this feeling can be used to promote co-operatives or a desire for a social revolution to abolish capitalism with workers' self-management is a task anarchists should set themselves.

Which points to a flaw in his definition of an anarchist organisation. Ward argues that they should be voluntary, functional, temporary and small. Yet surely any genuine anarchist organisation must also be participatory as well. Without self-management, voluntary association simply means



An eco-house in Wales. Anarchists argues for decentralisation years before the Green movement.

picking your master. Little wonder anarchists have supported it from Proudhon onwards. Similarly, when Ward states that anarchist organisations are small and temporary I feel he is simply wrong. Size and permanence are a matter of what is appropriate for what the organisation does. Some organisations may have to be (relatively) large (hopefully achieved by federalism). Other organisations will have to be permanent (the rail network and health care spring to mind). As such, I would suggest that a theory of anarchist organisation must be voluntary, participatory, functional and of appropriate size and permanence.

However, the key problem in the book is easy to see. Ward, correctly, roots anarchism in the activities of people during normal (non-revolutionary) times, showing how some key anarchist ideas (like federalism) have been and are being applied by non-anarchists to meet real needs and solve real problems. His chapter on working class self-help as a potential basis for an anarchist alternative to the welfare state is of particular note. Yet if drawing on libertarian tendencies in everyday life is the great strength of the book, it is also its major weakness. This is because it, almost by definition, excludes situations when 'everyday' normalcy becomes questioned, new social organisations and possibilities are created and revolution is, potentially, in the air. While Ward does discuss the social

movements and revolutions inspired by anarchism this is mostly limited to the past (or on other continents) and so the vision of anarchism as a movement of collective action and change in the West does not come across strongly. Indeed, the reader may draw the conclusion that anarchism today consists of little more than lifestyle changes, which is radically false.

Ward, rightly, stresses the importance of applying our ideas in the here and now. He indicates how that has, in its own quiet way, changed the world for the better in a "long series of small liberations that have lifted a huge load of human misery." He quotes Herzen, for example, on the obvious fact that a "goal which is infinitely remote is not a goal at all, it is a deception." However, being an evolutionist does not exclude being a revolutionary. Supporting reforms in a libertarian direction within capitalism is something all anarchists should do, yet this is not, and has never been, enough. Those who think creating or shopping at a co-operative equals social change are just as wrong as those who reject such activity out of hand as irrelevant. Only collective action and organisation can secure change and, just as important, protect it from attempts by state and bosses to erode it. Our task is to work out how to apply of anarchist ideas today in such a way which create alternatives which foster and bolster a revolutionary social movement. While lifestyle changes are important in the

here and now, few anarchists consider this as enough in themselves. We also subscribe to the strategy of direct action in social struggles which created the potential for the Spanish revolution Ward summarises so usefully.

Yet while these drawbacks in the book are important, it is still a good introduction to anarchism. Hopefully it will encourage people to find out more about our ideas and, hopefully, inspire more people to help change the world in a libertarian direction.

Anarchism: A Very Short Introduction by Colin Ward, Oxford University Press, £6.99

Crossword

Here's the solution of the Freedom prize crossword in our last issue.

ACROSS: 1 Ibid, 4 Elba, 6 Chico, 9 Rig, 11 Bare, 12 Gourami, 13 Pap, 15 Bowdlerise, 17 Oral, 18 Unlit, 19 Closed shop, 23 Last, 25 Nova, 28 Anarchists, 32 Pagan, 33 Fuse, 34 Open letter, 37 Len, 38 Aviator, 39 Paid, 40 IRA, 41 Steel, 42 Trot, 43 Stew.

DOWN: 2 Beano, 3 Dread, 4 Egghead, 5 Brutish, 7 Hoi polloi, 8 Cowpats, 10 Wake up, 14 Aria, 15 Bacon, 16 WTO, 20 Stage-name, 21 Sun, 22 Our, 24 Taser, 26 Opulent, 27 Vase, 28 Anomie, 29 Abetter, 30 Culprit, 31 Set, 35 Tapas, 36 Elite.

And the lucky winner of our prize crossword is Richard of Carmarthenshire, who will be receiving his prize shortly.

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A revolutionary questionnaire

Having been involved with anarchism for some years now, it has come to my attention that we are getting nowhere. We have failed to install class-consciousness in the working class. Our ideas remain alien to proletarian workplaces, housing schemes and football stadiums (except Celtic Park where there are some fine revolutionaries). I think one of the main reasons for our marginalisation is that too many anarchists are middle class wankers, little rich kids or underclass wasters. Too many anarchists do not know how to relate to the working class because they do not understand their culture. It's time that we sort out the real proletarian comrades from all the parasites that fuck up our movement. So I've devised this test to establish who is actually any use as a revolutionary. This is very serious and I hope that those who fail will put the movement first and have the decency to resign from anarchist politics. Good luck!

When you were a kid, where did you go on holiday?

- A. Butlins Wonderwest World.
- B. Blackpool.
- C. Camping in the Lake District.
- D. Tuscany.

Your dream date would involve...

- A. Shagging Kat from Eastenders in the home dug out at Ibrox.
- B. A few pints down the local with Gail Porter.
- C. Drinking herbal tea with Tracy Emin and two lesbian friends.
- D. Overthrowing the government in Equatorial Guinea.

What do you do when you're feeling unwell?

- A. Scram tae big Malky's fae a ten score tae jag, then straight doon the clap tae check oot if ye've goat the AIDS, ken?
- B. Alka-seltzers and a big fry normally put you right but failing that it's hair of the dog with the lads from work.
- C. You're interested in alternative therapies, especially herbal remedies and crystal healing. If that doesn't work you would contact a Reiki practitioner through LETS.
- D. Make use of that bloody BUPA thing you forked out for.

What car do you drive?

- A. One without an alarm.
- B. Your brother in law does the deliveries so you borrow his white van now and again.
- C. You're too environmentally conscious to drive. It's time to Reclaim The Streets from car culture. You haven't driven since before Twyford Down.
- D. You don't drive! You have a little Asian man to do that for you.

'Respect' is...

- A. Something you say to yo homeys when they've popped a cap in some punk's ass.
- B. The chorus to a song your missus

dances to after she's had too many Bacardi Breezers in Yate's Wine Lodge.
C. A fundamental for meaningful and non-exploitative relationships with humans, non-human animals and mother earth.
D. A Trotskyist front group you secretly bankroll as a tax scam.

'Semi' refers to...

- A. The legitimacy of your 'business'.
- B. Something blokes get when they read *Nuts* magazine.
- C. A phase of the moon.
- D. Poor people's houses.

The silver spoon is...

- A. That pub in Harlseden where T-Lay sold you the sawn off shotgun that never worked right.
- B. The type of sugar you put in your char when you knock off for a tea break at the factory.
- C. An essential piece of equipment for an ancient herbal remedy to syphilis.
- D. Still stuck in your mouth.

'Peace' is...

- A. Something you are carrying that you bought off T-Lay.
- B. Something the wife packs for you to have with your char at the factory.
- C. Something that needs to be given a chance.
- D. Sometimes beneficial to investment.

Bakunin is...

- A. That cheap vodka they sell at the Hamilton.
- B. Er ... The tall lass from the Russian volleyball team?
- C. An aristocratic nineteenth century theorist and revolutionary whose politics were needlessly violent, anti-Semitic and misogynist.
- D. Your great, great grandfather.

How did you score?

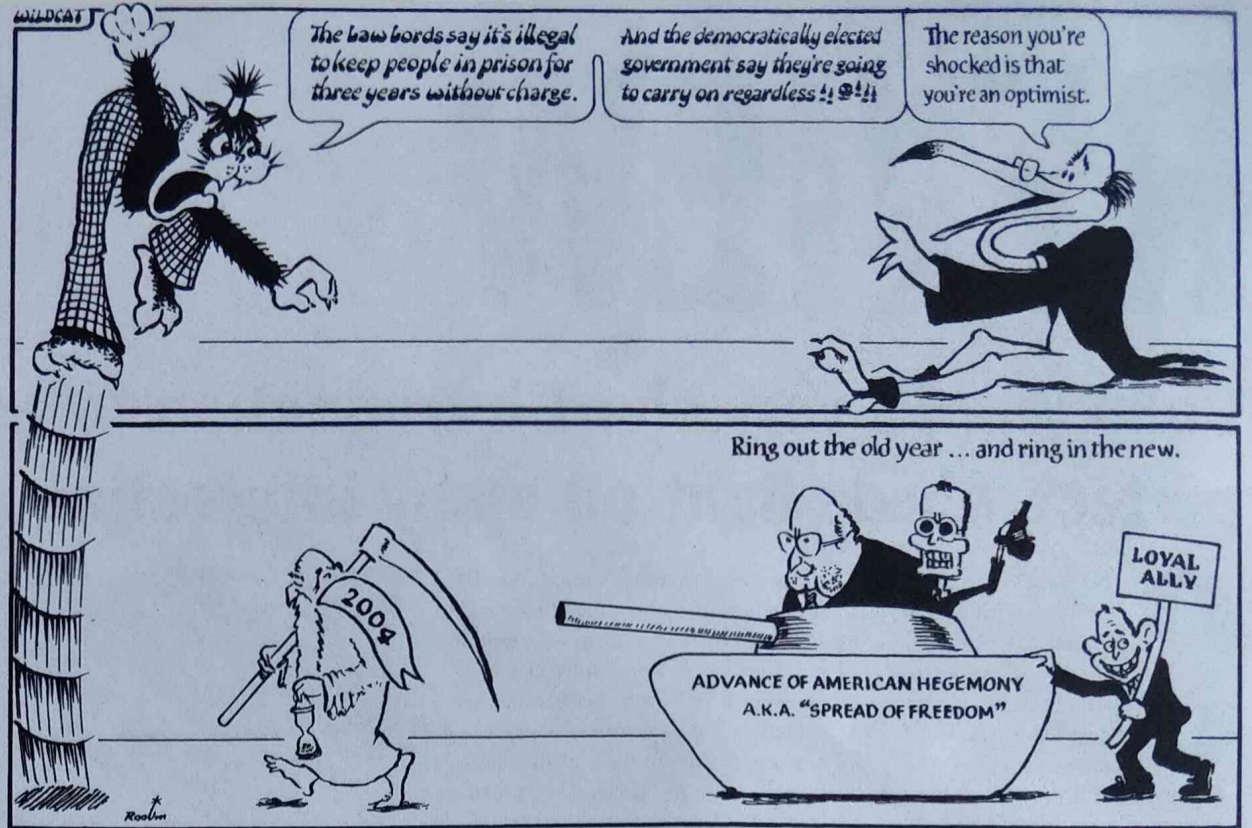
Mostly A's? You sub-proletarian lumpen pauper. How the fuck are you going to help us seize control of the means of production? Anti-social bastard, the IWCA will be calling soon...

Mostly B's? Congratulations! You are a true proletarian! You understand working class culture, you are the most revolutionary section of the working class! Your prize? Discount membership to the Class War Federation and free subscription to their paper as well as a years supply of Tetley, a Ken Loach box set and a cloth cap in your football team's colours. Well done comrade!

Mostly C's? You middle class life-stylist piece of shit! When the revolution comes we'll hang you from a lamppost by your dreadlocks. You're an affront to proletarian decency you decadent sandal wearing, pot smoking hippy fucking liberal fuck!

Mostly D's? Sack the butler, get a guilt complex, convince yourself Openly Classist have something useful to say and eventually take ketamine with the crusties.

Wayne Foster



Blast from the Past

From Freedom of 13th January 1968, on the strike at engineering firm Roberts-Arundel as it entered its second year:

"Fed up, but full of fight, the Arundel picket line stands, in this the last round against the company dictator Pomeranz.

Faced with the brute force and ignorance of mad management, these Stockport strikers have had it rough. Four of those who first came out are now dead. Many have been sick, others injured and a lot of their wives have been bad with their nerves.

The novelty soon wears off when, in weather cold enough to freeze the balls off a brass monkey, you go on picket. It's worse than working! Now even the union strike pay's run out and it all depends on factory collections.

We all hope Pomeranz is not having us on when he says he'll shut on 12th January. If he's lying this time anything could happen. The way we feel just now we'd go to any lengths to shut him ...

When you read this it might be all over, but we can't be sure. Just as we can't be sure that the scabs were also given notice.

Most pickets fancy Pomeranz will fake a shutdown and then open up after the fuss dies down. He's never said he'll sell the factory and it seems he could still keep some of his well-paid scab workers on.

£144 million

Total money raised by Band Aid from 1984 up to November 2004.

£150 million

Ethiopian debt repayments to the West, 2004.

A sideways look

My partner works for an American firm. They sent her a Christmas card, only it wasn't - it said 'Happy Holidays' in six different languages. Now, I'm a humanist who happily sends people Christmas cards on the grounds that neither I, nor generally the recipient, believe that Jesus was the son of God or that he died for our sins. I am happy to go along with what is really only the most recent appropriation of an ancient northern hemisphere tradition of feasting and over-indulgence at mid-winter. (If I have to choose a god, can it be Bacchus?)

We live in a largely agnostic country where few contemporary religious figures are taken particularly seriously. Millions of people still believe, some even act on their faith, but I sit here and think of openly religious people and the first to come to mind are Blair, Bono, Cliff Richard, the Archbishop of Canterbury, Abu Hamza ... none of them are very appealing.

The United States, despite its constitutional separation of religion and state, is barkingly Christian. From the fundamentalist General Boykin who dismissed the Muslim god as 'an idol' to the various states who teach creationism, a muscular, Old Testament Christianity permeates what its government does.

So why the daft 'Happy Holidays' cards? Are non-Christians in the US so put upon that they have to kick up a stink about this?

Of course, it's really all a capitalist plot. Roosevelt changed the time of Thanksgiving to November, because shopkeepers thought it would extend the profitable 'holiday' atmosphere. Macy's Department Store in New York started a tradition of having Santa Claus at the end of their Thanksgiving

Day parade, thus meshing two holidays into one. Add in the Jewish Hanukkah and the non-religious African-American Kwanzaa which was founded in 1966, and you have 'holidays'.

This makes precious little sense to me and I think it would make even less sense to someone who spoke French or Chinese. Thanksgiving is something with no relevance outside the US (and there's probably quite a few people who'd have preferred the Indians not to share food with the pilgrims). Still, it's an extra day off in a country where the average annual leave is two weeks.

And it's creeping over here - I took my daughter to the cinema after Christmas where the screen wished us 'happy holidays' and advised us to place our trash in the receptacles provided. As I didn't have any trash, I left my litter on the floor. I'm sure these messages get translated for films shown in other countries, so why don't they bother for us? Britain is allegedly a big market, more people speak a variant of British English than do all the Scandinavian languages put together. But it seems we're far too busy being worried about the threat from Brussels to worry about the threat from Hollywood.

Svartfrosk

The quiz

1. In Alan Bennett's play 'Getting On', what happened to the small anarchist community?
2. Which Labour politician's recent autobiography shares a title with an anarchist pamphlet from the 1940s (reissued by the Kate Sharpley Library)?
3. How did American writer Floyd Dell describe Emma Goldman?
4. In which city was the first anarchist feminist paper published?

Answers on page 6

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