

# FREEDOM

80P ANARCHIST NEWS AND VIEWS

www.freedompress.org.uk

19 MARCH 2005

INSIDE ►►

Why the wealthy vote Labour page 3

Bolivia on the brink page 4

Exclusive McLibel interview page 5

Jamaican dancehall culture page 7

## NO WAR BUT THE CLASS WAR!

Since the war against Afghanistan, the Stop the War Coalition has had a presence on our streets and it has helped build one of the largest social movements in British history. It was able to mobilise well over a million people for the 15th February 2003 demonstration in Central London, but its heyday seems to be over. Despite being called the Stop the War Coalition it has failed to stop any of the wars it has campaigned against, although this is more down to UK foreign policy than failings of the StWC itself.

But the StWC does have its failings and a fear of direct action is but one of many. The major organisations behind it are the Socialist Workers Party (SWP), CND, and the Muslim Association of Britain, a reactionary Muslim organisation. Whilst the thought of the 'revolutionary socialists' of the SWP getting close to a religious organisation was absurd to us, it seemed like a brilliant idea to them and they created RESPECT a political party that spends most of its time trying to get Muslims to vote for George Galloway.

Since its conception the StWC has been dominated by the SWP, but from looking at the old version of the Coalition's website only a single member of the steering committee appears to come from the SWP, if we look a bit closer, there are a number of leading

SWP members on it, as well as number of assorted Trotskyists and leftists. As usual this has meant that a popular social movement has appeared and been held back by leftie groups opposed to direct action and more interested in building their parties. Anti-war demonstrations have now become little more than yet another recruitment drive and have lost their mass public support that we saw prior to the Iraq war.

But this is exactly the same situation that we were in after the invasion of Afghanistan, we have been here before, and the US is threatening to take further action, maybe against Iran or Syria. After the campaign to prevent the invasion of Afghanistan had failed, and the US started to threaten Iraq, people started to put their energies back into the fight against war, a month before war began we saw the February 15th demonstration, and on the days around war breaking out there were wildcat strikes by school students across the country.

So we must ask ourselves what could happen if the occupation of Iraq continues and if the US takes further military action in the Middle East, we will have an opportunity to help build a movement that will have mass public support, and the levels of militancy witnessed prior to the Iraq war are likely to increase. We



Capitalism and war really are a load of horse shit

just have to hope that the endless sloganeering of the SWP et al. has not put people who got involved in previous campaigns off. If Bush and Blair do try

and go to war again we need to take part in the anti-war movement on a grassroots and national level, but we can't let it become yet another single

issue. We need to keep saying why these wars are happening, because of the capitalist system which thrives on war.

Jim M.

## NO ID CARDS – FOR NOW

The Identity Cards Bill has been temporarily derailed after months of public and behind the scenes lobbying. According to a report in The Independent, an unnamed Government Minister has said that the ID Cards Bill will not be pushed through the House of Lords before the end of Parliament and the General Election. Phil Booth, NO2ID National Coordinator said, "This is a great victory, although the fight goes on. We must continue to apply pressure until the Government abandons its plans altogether."

Opposition to the controversial scheme has been widespread. The Conservatives have withdrawn support for the Bill and the House of Lords is hostile toward it. The Scottish Parliament called the proposed identity card "an unacceptable threat to civil liberties."

The Government's current line is that an ID card will help in the fight against terrorism. However Privacy International has reported that "Detailed analysis of information in the public domain in this study has produced no evidence to establish a connection between identity cards and successful anti-terrorism measures." Despite the current climate of fear used to justify the ID card, US State Dept figures show that, in fact, international terrorism is at its lowest for 25 years.

The Government estimates the ID card project will cost up to £3.1bn. In November 2004 the Government acknowledged that the cost of the scheme over ten years would be £5.5bn. We will pay for this largely out of our own pockets. An 'enhanced' biometric passport, which includes entry on the national register, will cost around £85. An ID card without a passport will cost between £35 and £40 and there will be a charge for renewal of the card.

Failure to obey an order to register or providing false information will constitute an 'offence'. Penalties range from £1,000 fine to two years imprisonment. A penalty of up to £2,500 can be levied for failure

to attend an appointment for a scan of your fingerprints and iris.

The plastic card is only one part of a much larger scheme. The National Identification Register, the heart of the system, would establish a central population register, containing a wide range of details of every UK citizen and resident from 16 years. The scheme requires every individual to be given a unique number, the National Identity Registration Number (NIRN), and requires individuals to submit to fingerprinting and 'other' means of physical identification. The Bill establishes a large number of new crimes and offences to ensure that people comply with the ID requirements, and people wishing to work, use the banking or health system, travel or receive benefits, will be required to produce the card.

No common law country in the world has ever accepted a peacetime ID card. No European country has such a comprehensive or invasive card system. As one critic put it, "The idea of democracy is to make the Government answerable to the people; ID cards make the people answerable to the Government.

Julian Gibson

## US TO ATTACK IRAN

George W. Bush has 'signed off' on plans to bomb Iran this June, according to Scott Ritter. The former UNSCOM weapons inspector broke this 'shocking' news in a speech at the Capitol Theatre in Washington State last week.

Talking on America's duty to bring an end to the illegal invasion of Iraq, Ritter said that plans for a June attack had been submitted to President Bush, and that the President has approved them. The purported reason for the planned aerial bombardment is to destroy Iran's alleged nuclear weapons program.

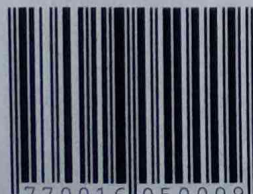
It's no secret that Iran is the next strategic target for the Bush administration in their plan for 'full spectrum dominance'. And the administration has been conducting secret reconnaissance missions since last summer. According to reporter, Seymour Hersh, "Defense Department civilians, under the leadership of Douglas Feith, have been working with Israeli planners and consultants to develop and refine potential nuclear, chemical-weapons, and missile targets inside Iran ... Strategists at the headquarters of the US Central Command, in Tampa, Florida, have been asked to revise the military's war plan, providing

for a maximum ground and air invasion of Iran ... The hawks in the Administration believe that it will soon become clear that the Europeans' negotiated approach [to Iran] cannot succeed, and that at that time the Administration will act."

Bush has denied the claims. "This notion that the United States is getting ready to attack Iran is simply ridiculous. Having said that, all options are on the table," He said to laughter and a smattering of applause, "you never want a president to say 'never.' But military action is certainly not – it's never the president's first choice. Diplomacy is always the president's first – at least my first choice." It has yet to be confirmed whether the people of Iraq and Afghanistan agree with him.



ISSN 0016-0504



9 770016 050009

Vol 66 No 6



# News

## Hypocrisy!

In a show of hypocrisy which is staggering even by New Labour standards, Foreign Secretary Jack Straw warned Syria it risks being "treated as a pariah" if it fails to withdraw its forces from Lebanon. He stated that Syria had no choice but to leave Lebanon, saying that "it has got to, it is very clear," noting "every one of its neighbours is saying you have got to leave."

This from a government whose troops are currently occupying Iraq against the wishes of not only its neighbours but also its population!

Bush echoed this, urging the end of occupation. He went further, denying that you could have democracy while under occupation. Except, apparently, when it is Iraq and the US is doing the occupying!

And while the Bush Junta dismisses any suggestion of a timetable for its withdrawal from Iraq, Straw informs Syria that it had to withdraw "in a sensible, swift but phased way" in order for the country to "come back into the fold of the international community." Bush went further, calling for the immediate removal of troops.

"If they don't," he said, "they really will be treated as a pariah."

Like Bush, perhaps? Met by the leaders of the 'civilised' world rather than being arrested as the war criminal he is?

Politics? Better to call it what it is, hypocrisy in the service of power.

When Bush announced that the war was over back in May 2003, he also stated that Saddam's torture rooms had been closed. But just as he was wrong about declaring the end of conflict, he was wrong about the torture rooms.

This was admitted by the State Department itself in a recent report. It detailed an array of human rights abuses last year by the Iraqi government, including torture, rape and illegal detentions by police officers and functionaries of the interim administration that took power in June. It cited "reports of arbitrary deprivation of life, torture, impunity, poor prison conditions - particularly in pre-trial detention facilities - and arbitrary arrest and detention."

While the report has some harsh words for the interim Iraq government's human rights record, it states the US puppet regime "generally respected human rights, but serious problems remained." Does that mean a verbal commitment by a client regime is what counts as respecting human rights rather, than say, not torturing or raping people?

Strangely enough, the State Department report, while happy to attack Iraqi abuses, fails to mention American ones. It ignores the war crimes committed at Abu Ghraib and elsewhere (in Iraq and around the globe).



# Wealthy vote Labour

## The rich are more happy to vote New Labour as they know it is in their interest, says Richard Griffin

People living Wimbledon are nicely off. They enjoy average weekly earnings of £565 a week, slightly more than those in Hampstead (£519) and nearby Finchley (£515).

Wimbledon, Hampstead and Finchley are in fact amongst the top ten richest constituencies in the UK. Something else also links them though. They are all represented by Labour MPs. In fact half of the ten wealthiest constituencies in the UK vote Labour. In contrast just three vote Conservative.

Weekly earnings in Carmarthen West, Britain's poorest constituency are half those of Wimbledon. While its voters do return a Labour MP, only three other of the ten most deprived areas of the country do. The poorest areas of Britain are more likely to vote for, well, any other party than Labour frankly - SNP, Lib Dem, Plaid and in one case (Totnes) even Conservative.

Commenting on the analysis which was compiled by The Financial Times, Rick Nye director at pollsters Populus said "Tony Blair and Margaret Thatcher between them managed to undermine the traditional class base of British politics. About a third of ABs [the highest socio-economic group] vote Labour". Nye is wrong. Class politics are very much alive and well and form the basis of British liberal democracy. The reason why so many people in Wimbledon - where the average house price in £392,000 vote Labour is that

they know it is in their interest. New Labour like the Thatcher puts the interests of the wealthy above the working class. Hardly surprising then that the working class is turning its back on Labour.

The same logic applies in the poorest parts in Britain. Voters in areas where average weekly earnings hover below £250 are just as likely to vote Liberal Democrat than Labour. They know that Labour won't help them so why bother to vote for them? In fact why bother to vote at all?

At the end of last month Labour announced that it would increase the national minimum wage. Union leaders fell over themselves saying how brilliant the rate rise was while in contrast business leaders beat their brows and warned of job losses, company failures and other dire consequences (all rubbish, of course). The national minimum wage this October will increase to the princely sum of £5.05 (up from £4.85 now). This will be just £186 a week. In Kensington and Chelsea the average weekly earning are £703. The two figures are not unrelated.

Under Labour the poor have got poorer and the rich richer. In 1991 the top 10% of the UK's population owned 47% of the country's wealth. Under Labour their share has risen to 56% (in 2001). The share owned by the top 1% has also grown from 17% to 23%.

## Hatfield NUM shuts

Hatfield Main branch has shut up shop and the pit is closed. After 87 years of struggle the legendary branch of the NUM is no more. On 20th December, at the NUM Yorkshire Area Council meeting, David Douglass attended as Union Delegate for the Hatfield Main Branch for the last time. He was Branch delegate from 1979.

It was only natural that 'Danny the Red', as he was known, received an award for his work in the branch. At the 5th February commemoration of the end of the Miners Strike of '84/85 and farewell rally for the group, speakers all showed their appreciation for Dave's tireless hard work. While some speakers mentioned that they had not always agreed with Dave, his work was 'second to none'. One memory was of him pushing through a decision that he himself was against. Asked why he was pushing for it he was quoted as saying: "If that's what my members want that's what they get. End of."

In 1994/5 he became Branch Secretary at Hatfield Main but after the pit was privatised the NUM no longer had any recognition there. In 1994 he also opened the Miners Community Advice Centre in Stainforth so that he could help the people from the mining community - working miners, ex-miners and their widows and dependents. The centre also acts as a political, sociological and

Trade Union Centre, taking up the causes affecting the Mining Industry and Mining Community. Some of the most inspiring speeches came from members of the 'hit squads' of '84/85 - memories of hard fought battles across the country for hearts and minds as well as, and most importantly, for the right to work. One of the funnier stories came about an older ex-miner who had been visited by the police at his home address. He fought six of them. Only problem was they had only popped round to tell him his previous charges had been dropped!

There were only a couple of downsides to the evening. One was the lack of people. While there are thousands who live in the community and few who weren't touched by the events of the strike, there were only approximately 200 who turned up. One ex-miner said: "I apologise you've come all this way and hardly anyone from this community bothered to turn out. I'm ashamed of them."

Secondly, apart from Class War, who jointly put this event on with the Hatfield Branch and the Mining Community Advice Centre, there was, apart from a few European syndicalists, no sign of anyone else showing their solidarity. That possibly indicates the lack of any political motivation in wider society, which sadly we all should be ashamed of.

Rick Dutton



Wimbledon High Street - Wimbledon is amongst the top ten richest constituencies in the UK

Real net income for the poorest tenth of the population has actually fallen under Labour by 8% at a time when real incomes have risen by 40% on average.

Given these statistics it is hardly surprising that the poor have abandoned Labour. Voting Labour is against their interests, unlike the rich folk of Wimbledon and Hampstead. For the rich Labour is increasingly the

party of choice. It keeps wages down. It limits employment rights. It creates a 'business friendly' environment. It keeps taxes low. The poor pay a higher proportion of their income in taxes than the rich. Labour unlike the Tories invest in free goods like the NHS (an efficient NHS is much better than having to pay to go private). It all goes to show what a sick joke electoral politics is for the poor.

## Theatre of corporate dreams

The NHL has finally been called off this season, brought down by corporate profiteering, and the same attitude is damaging our football league, illustrated by Malcolm Glazier's new hostile bid for Manchester United.

Glazier isn't a football fan but is interested in the money he could make from the club. Shareholders United - the group set up to keep Old Trafford out of hostile hands - are fighting him all the way with a full on campaign of direct action. If this fails, then thousands have pledged to walk away from the club they love, do an AFC Wimbledon and start a fans owned Manchester United from scratch.

The fans say a breakaway club, provisionally titled FC United could attract ten thousand supporters, holding their games at Salford's Rugby Football League ground. They would start life at the bottom of the football pyramid in the North-West Counties League - ten levels below the Premiership, playing clubs like Daisy Hill, Blackpool Mechanics, Ramsbottom United - and of course Trafford (average attendance 104).

One FC United insider said: "We haven't given up on defeating Glazer, but we have to have contingency plans in place. It's like preparing for an evacuation in wartime - you don't want

to do it, but there might be no other option. People shouldn't think this is some kind of crazy idea. We have already had pledges of money and support from a lot of fans involved in the anti-Glazer campaign."

FC United have published an eight point charter that spells out that ownership will be held by a supporters' trust. These include: all profits to be reinvested in the club; the club will never carry a sponsor on the front of its shirt, while tie-ups of any kind will only be accepted from reputable companies; support among the youth of Manchester and Salford will be a priority and actively encouraged; discounts will be available to all under-18s and OAPs - which is really how football clubs should be run in the first place.

A breakaway Man United would send shock waves through the footballing world. It would certainly give yet another shot in the arm for non league footie as a whole and give the North West Counties League quite a bit of exposure.

As Freedom goes to press, Supporters United are attempting to raise enough capital to buy a 25% stake in the club, enough to block Glazer's take-over bid which requires more than 75% of shareholders to agree to it.

Warren

# Thirst for freedom

## Blockades, strikes and demonstrations – a revolution is beginning in the Andes, reports Jack Ray

### EXCLUSIVE

Two weeks of sustained direct action by the social movements has left the Bolivian government in turmoil, with the President offering his resignation and the entire Left uniting against the old political class.

Emerging from blockades protesting water price rises, installation costs and disconnections in the city of El Alto, solidarity actions have paralysed much of the country and so frustrated Carlos Mesa that the accidental President offered to quit rather than bow once more to the demands of the social movements. The move was opposed by the two largest right-wing political parties in the Bolivian congress with the backing of the US ambassador David Greenlee.

On 21st February the Federation of Neighbourhood Groups (FEJUVE) in El Alto began blockading the city, demanding the cancellation of the water contract awarded to French Corporation Suez, and its replacement with a democratically managed socialised water company. Other aims, including raising taxes on the country's natural gas reserves, calling a constituent assembly and the rejection of any free trade agreements, were subsequently raised, with large solidarity blockades emerging across the country, strongest in Cochabamba and Sucre.

On 7th March Mesa offered his

resignation to the Bolivian congress in an attempt to have the position of his government reaffirmed. Small demonstrations in favour of the President were organised. The following day, blockades in El Alto were only maintained by the two poorest districts of the city (Districts 7 and 8), and campesinos allied to the Movement Towards Socialism (MAS – the largest leftist party) stood down from their blockade of Sucre and the government seemed likely to be backed by all parties in the Congress.

By 9th March this fragile peace had unravelled. Mesa was forced by the MNR and MIR (the largest right-wing parties) to reduce the taxation levels promised in the crucial hydrocarbons bill from 50% to 32%. The MAS refused to back the government and instead attended an extraordinary meeting of all the social movements in Bolivia, effectively ranging the popular democratic left against the representatives of the existing political system.

Blockades have subsequently re-emerged, with dialogue between the social movement alliance and the government finally breaking down on Friday afternoon. The Mesa administration is now deciding how to proceed, hesitantly moving toward criminalising the protests and breaking the blockades by force. One minister rather hopefully remarked "If the justice system acts, I don't think the movements will radicalise,"



progress toward repression was slowed by the refusal of public prosecutors to work on criminalising the protest.

The Social Movements have promised more mobilisations, with El Alto and the Chapare region being announced as

the main bases for co-ordination and all the participating organisations declaring themselves mobilised.

## On the run in the sun

Despite recent attempts by the Spanish and EU authorities to pressurise the Moroccan government to take steps to reduce the flow of migrants, people traffickers are expanding their business. Twice in February, two large boats were found off the coasts of the islands, one with 153 and the other with 227 people on board. The boats are scarcely fit to set sail, so worthless that their crews jumped ship in small inflatable speedboats in order to avoid the authorities.

Drawn by the lure of the ostentatious wealth of the so-called developed countries of Western Europe, African migrants are paying astronomical sums to people traffickers to get them into Fortress Europe via the Canary Islands.

Two French journalists recently travelled to Morocco to document the trip that the migrants attempt.\* Estimates of the costs of this trip vary, but range from £700 to £1,500.

Migrants are driven across Morocco to the Saharan coast, where they are left to hide from the Morocco police patrols while the traffickers knock together a 'patera', a basic wooden boat around

6m in length. These homemade vessels have been found with up to 45 people on board, meaning that the value of a trip can be as much as £50,000 to the traffickers. Handed a compass and equipped with a tiny outboard motor, the migrants are shoved off with instructions to sail west for six or seven hours, then turn north and continue until they see the mountains of Fuerteventura.

When the 'patera' that carried the French journalists was intercepted by the Guardia Civil, the first instruction was to switch their video camera off. NGO's have documented numerous allegations of brutality, as well as several instances of deaths of migrants in the GC's custody. Migrants are detained for up to forty days in an attempt to establish their nationality, in order to have them returned to their country of origin. If this period expires they are shipped off to mainland Spain, disappearing into European factory, construction and farming industries (as reported in various Freedoms).

Gareth Gordon

\*Grégoire Deniau, 'Yo llegué en patera', El País Semanal, 28th November 2004.

## American justice

Padilla

The same day a (Bush-appointed) federal judge in South Carolina, Henry Floyd, ordered that the administration must release US citizen Jose Padilla – or charge him with a crime within 45 days. Padilla has been imprisoned for over thirty months as an 'enemy combatant' without charge and without appearing in any court to challenge his detention.

The justice department, which alleges that Padilla was planning to carry out a 'dirty bomb' attack inside the US, has already announced that it will appeal against Floyd's decision.

Agent Orange

The justice department is also fighting back to protect those responsible for past war crimes. A class action lawsuit in a New York court this month is seeking billions of dollars in compensation for Vietnamese citizens. They were exposed to Agent Orange during the Vietnam war when America and corporations such as Dow Chemical caused health disorders and birth defects in hundreds of thousands of Vietnamese. The Red

Cross estimates that 150,000 children have been born with birth defects since 1975 because of Agent Orange.

The National Academy of Sciences has concluded that US terrorists sprayed over three thousand Vietnamese villages with Agent Orange affecting between two and five million people. The justice department's response? That the suit is a 'dangerous threat' to the president's power to wage war.

Brooklyn's Abu Ghraib

In the days following 9/11 over a thousand people of (apparent or actual) Middle Eastern origin living in the United States were detained – many without reason, charge or cause by the Immigration and Naturalisation Service.

Over eighty detainees were kept at the Metropolitan Detention Centre in Brooklyn at that time. Now a group of those imprisoned there have explained how they were subjected to abuse and torture. In this class action lawsuit they have detailed humiliation, sleep deprivation, physical and sexual abuse ... frequent stripings, strip searches, sometimes up to six a day, and objects

being inserted into those being searched.

The pretexts for the kidnappings were often minor visa violations or traffic offences. Or because members of the public phoned in tips that those subsequently picked up and tortured were 'acting suspiciously'. In one instance this stretched to a group of five Israeli Jewish removal workers in New Jersey who were photographing the events of September 11th across the river from the roof of the building from which they worked.

Louis Further



media hacklab

Technology for social change, independent media, free software and open access IT

Open every day from 12 noon to 6pm at Freedom 84b Whitechapel High Street

www.hacklab.org.uk

# Feature

# The McLibel interview

## Freedom talks to Helen Steel and Dave Morris about their fifteen year legal battle with McDonalds

**T**he McLibel case began in 1990 when the McDonald's Corporation issued libel writs against people involved with London Greenpeace (an anarchist environmental group which pre-dated the more well known Greenpeace). McDonald's demanded an apology and the withdrawal of the group's anti-McDonald's leaflets. The leaflet brought together criticisms of McDonald's business practices made by different movements in relation to the environment, workers rights, cash crops, nutrition, advertising to children and exploitation of animals. It used McDonald's as a high profile company to take an overall look at the effect of multinational corporations on society.

The McLibel trial itself lasted from 1994 to 1997, with an appeal in 1999. Despite all the odds stacked against the McLibel Two (burden of proof on them, no jury, no legal aid, McDonald's spending £10m on the case, etc.) they succeeded on many points. The courts ruled that McDonald's marketing has "pretended to a positive nutritional benefit which their food (high in fat and salt, etc.) did not match"; that McDonald's "exploit children" with their advertising strategy; are "culpably responsible for animal cruelty"; and "pay low wages, helping to depress wages in the catering trade"; that it was fair comment to say that McDonald's employees worldwide "do badly in terms of pay and conditions"; and true that "if one eats enough McDonald's food, one's diet may well become high in fat, etc., with the very real risk of heart disease."

Incredibly, despite these damning rulings made against the company the McLibel Two were ordered to pay £40,000 to McDonald's. The McLibel Two have refused to pay a penny.

On 15th February 2005 the European Court of Human Rights declared that the case was in breach of the right to a fair trial and right to freedom of expression.

*What implications for freedom of speech and the right to protest do you think the outcome of this case will have?*

Although we won the case in Europe the ruling actually fudged most of the issues we had argued, and as a result may not have that much impact on freedom of speech. What has had and will have a far greater impact is the mass defiance campaign which has shown that oppressive laws can be rendered unworkable if people defy them.

Early on in the legal proceedings the McLibel Support Campaign (MSC) was set up and run by volunteers on a shoe-string from someone's bedroom, and

through open collective meetings. The MSC called for many international days of action against McDonald's throughout the trial and immediately after the verdict. Thousands of people signed a pledge to say that whatever happened in the court proceedings they would defy the company's censorship efforts.

Two days after the Judge had given his mixed ruling in 1997, and ordered us to pay McDonald's damages, protests took place at over 500 UK stores and elsewhere around the world. Around three million leaflets had been distributed in the UK alone since the writs were served. This showed McDonald's that it was futile to attempt to use the legal system to silence people, and they then abandoned their original claim for costs and an injunction to prevent leafleting. They have also never attempted to enforce the damages.

The MSC also ensured that the detailed information about McDonald's that was emerging from internal company documents and cross-examination during the trial was publicised around the world. This acted as another layer of protection for freedom of speech. The pioneering mcspotlight website was set up in 1996 as a library of information on the case and the company - it has been accessed over 100 million times since.

The MSC was also responsible for most of the media publicity, and the networking with wider movements. It offered support to residents opposing local McDonald's stores, workers standing up to the company, parents challenging McDonald's sponsorship in schools etc. A sister group in Nottingham, the Veggies collective, helped co-ordinate the growing mass leafleting and protests, as well as sending people down to London throughout the trial to provide practical support.

Overall the case spectacularly backfired for McDonald's. They had issued legal proceedings as part of a long running and largely successful strategy of legal threats to their critics. Instead, this time the campaign had turned the tables and put the company on trial - all their business practices received massive scrutiny during the trial, and the leafleting mushroomed. They haven't issued libel writs in the UK since, and also other companies have been warned not to 'do a McLibel'.

*What else helped you to fight the case?*

Our background as activists involved in diverse struggles (such as in supporting the miners strike, the anti-poll tax movement, environmental direct action, local campaigns, etc.) gave us a lot of experience and inspiration to draw on.



There's a myth created by the media that we fought this case alone. In fact it was a collective effort - we could not have fought this long battle without a network of personal support from friends, babysitters (Dave is a single parent), and a whole range of volunteers helping in different ways. And the overwhelming support and encouragement we received from all directions. Regarding the court case, so many people volunteered their time and efforts as witnesses, experts, researchers, in-court helpers and legal advisers, etc.

Where we were 'on our own' was in speaking in court and finding our way round the 40,000 pages of documents. However, although this was exhausting, it was very empowering to be able to challenge corporate executives face to face, without them being able to walk away.

*Were there dilemmas you faced as anarchists involved in such a high-profile case and campaign?* Dilemmas included: how to participate in court procedures without recognising their right to dictate what the public can say; and having to focus on McDonald's yet wanting to avoid being drawn into a 'boycott McDonald's' line. We also made a commitment to avoid any 'anti-americanism'.

The campaign, in trying to maintain media coverage, tended to focus on the more extreme practices of capitalism and the legal system, rather than their very existence. The establishment media was superficial, inaccurate and largely

uninterested in the campaign as a whole, yet we relied on it to publicise the case. In many ways we were lucky it was McDonald's that sued us, guaranteeing a high profile. We were uncomfortable with the idiotic focus on us as a 'heroic duo', but speaking to the media was the only way we could ensure getting quotes in about some of the issues and the campaigning.

Despite these dilemmas we feel that the wider McLibel campaign contributed to the growth of the modern anti-capitalist movement in a number of ways: the long-running, high-profile, yet radical grass-roots nature; the focus on the overall effects of a global industry (food) rather than just one aspect; the success in defying censorship; and the calls, albeit vague, for resistance and alternatives to the current system.

*McDonalds say the world has moved on since this trial and the company has changed - do you think this is true?* No. McDonald's, in common with other multinational corporations exist to make profits for the benefit of their shareholders and directors - to that end they continue to exploit workers, children and other consumers, the environment and animals.

In the years since the trial finished McDonald's profits have dropped, at least partly due to the increasing public awareness of the unhealthy nature of junk food and increased risks of obesity, heart disease and cancer as a result of this type of diet. McDonald's have introduced so-called 'healthy'

options to their menus, but rather than this being through their concern for the public's health, it is merely an attempt to capture customers who wouldn't eat their usual fare.

The reality is that McDonald's trumpet every minor change and use it as an opportunity for PR and greenwash, but fundamentally the whole system remains the same.

*What advice would you give to anti-capitalist leaflet writers about avoiding libel cases?*

People should be free to distribute any criticisms which they feel are justified - just as they must have the freedom to organise, demonstrate and campaign against oppression and injustice. Such freedoms have to be continuously exercised and fought for - especially in the current repressive climate. What we publish should be based not on libel laws, but on whether we believe the statements to be true. Our concerns should be who we are trying to communicate with and making our publications as accurate and understandable as we can. We will only gain the respect and trust of the public when they can see that what we write is reliable and not invented to suit our own purposes - as happens all too often with the mainstream media and politicians, etc.

*What sort of advice would you give to people who are facing legal threats?*

We would always encourage people to stand up to bullies - whether



# REVIEW

## Carolyn Cooper's *Sound Clash* sees contemporary reggae as rebel music, still – Tom Jennings is mightily impressed

**B**ritain, the 1970s: skinheads rocked steady to ska and punks embraced reggae as their dance music of choice. Disaffected white youth across the UK embraced these Jamaican ghetto fables set to irresistibly pulsing beats, primarily due to the resonance they felt with the incendiary politics woven into the lyrics alongside spiritual yearning for unity, love and relief from suffering. Then – after Bob Marley's international canonisation and the multicultural populisms of two-tone and UB40 – UK roots, dub and lovers rock production, recording and performance thrived for a while among Jamaican diasporans and the new converts. Over time, though, much of the youthful energy dissipated into trip-hop, jungle, bhangra and drum and bass, leaving reggae as another nostalgic niche commodity for collectors ...

Except in West Indian communities, where the explosive 1980s Kingston dancehall style known as ragga quickly took over – paralleling the rise of hip-hop in America, and sharing its cutting edge minimalist aesthetics, vocal gymnastics and scandalous lower-class content. Largely ignored or dismissed by the commercial mainstream and critics, reggae dancehall is now entrenched in urban club playlists, and strongly influences R&B and rap on both sides of the Atlantic. Even better, like its predecessors, it embeds uncompromisingly radical sentiments in its profane and sensuous sound and fury.<sup>1</sup>

Carolyn Cooper's *Sound Clash: Jamaican Dancehall Culture at Large* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2004) is the first book-length critical examination of ragga's ambivalent cultural politics. The social space of the dancehall is contextualised as an authentic and vigorous response of the postcolonial Caribbean urban poor to their repression by vicious governmental gangsterism bolstered by utterly regressive and hypocritical class/race elitism and reactionary official Christianity. The author captures the

ways the dancehall vibrates with tensions juggling acceptance of the status quo (such as in scapegoating unacceptable lifestyles or glorifying consumerism) and containment via the safe release of frustration (hedonism and the carnivalesque traducing of authority) – a dialectic common in genuinely grass-roots cultural forms. What elevates *Sound Clash* beyond academic interest, however, is its careful attention to the emancipatory potential arising from this unruly environment. Drawing sustenance from the mismatch between the hatred and disgust shown by their 'betters' compared to their own passionate enjoyment, audiences and performers mutually nurture and reinforce each other's prowess. In the process abolishing boundaries between production and consumption, success is measured concurrently as a dance event for punters and in the lyrical and musical dexterity and creativity of selectors and DJs, so that experimentation, provocation and excess are (within the collectively agreed rules of the sound clash) required on both sides.

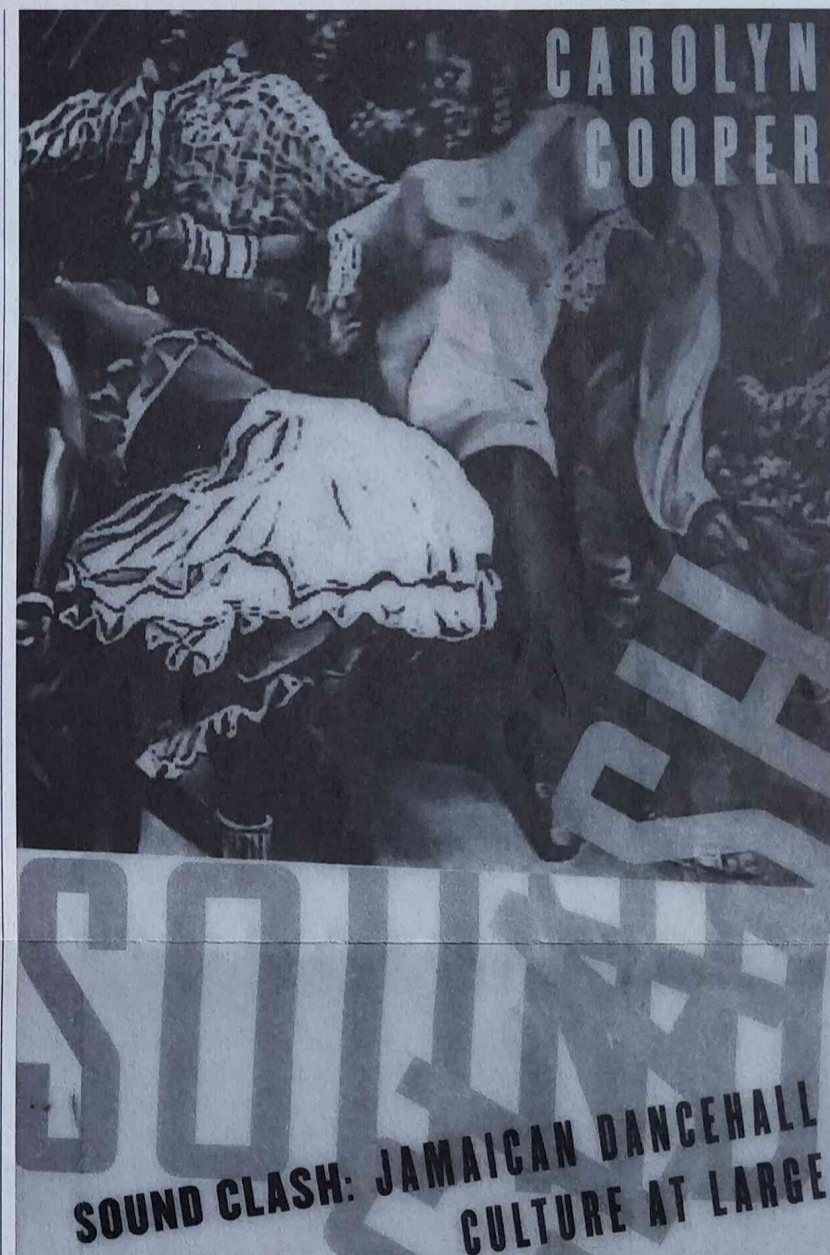
### A (new) message from Rudy

As a scholar of literature, the author carefully inscribes superstars like Marley, Shabba Ranks, Bounty Killer, Capleton and Lady Saw in their backgrounds and milieus rather than the unique creative geniuses preferred in bourgeois worldviews. Their sophisticated poetics evoke and evolve the oral, rhetorical strategies and devices originating in Africa and plantation slavery so as to encapsulate modern versions of impoverishment.<sup>2</sup> Dismissing Western politically correct liberal distaste as merely high-and-mighty ignorance echoing Jamaican elite class hatred, Cooper interprets the lyrics' grounding in Jamaican ghetto life, where even the most troubling themes – such as violent macho, homophobia and misogyny – reflect 'border clashes' negotiating the deepening fractures and fissures in the island's increasingly brutal and desperate body politic. The dynamic of border

crossing also illuminates the global migration of ragga and its adherents, smuggling its intrinsically oppositional stances into local fusions with rap and Asian styles, for example.<sup>3</sup> The metaphorical patois allusions to guns as verbal weaponry, the righteous burning of Babylon merging revolution with hardline Bobo rastafarianism, and, especially, the obscenities of sexual slackness, all serve as 'hidden transcripts' defeating the understanding of detached observation – allowing and reinforcing flights of free expression in a heavily policed party scene: "simultaneously resisting and enticing respectable culture" (page 2).

The close analysis of sexual politics in dancehall lyrics will surprise many readers the most. Despite both forms reserving their harshest critique for middle class morality, classic reggae largely conforms to traditional patriarchal conventions whereas ragga celebrates realistic and egalitarian relations between the sexes. True, male performers seem to gleefully and duplicitously wallow in the objectification of women's bodies while also urging strength, pride and independence. But the personification of all these traits by hugely popular and immensely powerful women artists like Patra, Tanya Stephens and Lady Saw – who are, if anything, even ruder while fully maintaining integrity and class clarity – demonstrates that the language of display, pleasure and erotic commodification is deployed precisely to subvert the sexual (and the social, economic and political) status quo.

Of course, formations such as reggae cannot map directly onto political struggle and movement. But whether in Jamaica, the Caribbean diaspora or via wider influences in popular genres and subcultures, the achievements of this music can continue to inspire out of all proportion to the clout of its humble downtown creators. Their exhilarating reformulations of the contradictions inherent in our increasingly polarised world under barbaric 21st century capitalism transform daily life emotional and material agonies into collective



imagination and possibility – when the sneering of the superior denies such potential altogether. Respect is due to Carolyn Cooper for going against the prevailing grain, arguing so fiercely and cleverly on behalf of the dispossessed.

[www.tomjennings.pwp.blueyonder.co.uk](http://www.tomjennings.pwp.blueyonder.co.uk)

1. See Norman Stolzoff, *Wake The Town and Tell the People: Dancehall Culture in Jamaica* (Duke University Press, 2000) for a comprehensive history of the dancehall

industry. Reggae's general significance for today's urban music is discussed in my 'Dancehall Dreams', *Variant* No. 20, 2004 ([www.variant.org.uk](http://www.variant.org.uk)).

2. the literary angle being fully covered in Cooper's equally groundbreaking *Noises in the Blood: Orality, Gender and the 'Vulgar' Body of Jamaican Popular Culture* (Macmillan 1993).

3. and in films such as *Dancehall Queen* (dirs. Rick Elgood/Don Letts, 1997) and *Babymother* (dir. Julian Henriques, 1998).

## EATING OUT

**Cantor's Fish & Chip Shop**  
Chapelton Road  
Leeds, LS6

Situated only ten minutes walk from the bottom of my street, Cantor's is a Chapelton landmark and legend. It's a fair way from Hackney, but then so are a lot of places.

The décor is unpretentious (more than can be said for a certain piece in a recent issue of this publication), with formica and stainless steel dominating to a large degree.

Behind a counter almost the size of a saloon bar, a traditional menu displays a variety of Anglo and Caribbean dishes, and for the hungry vegan, veg

patties await.

Sadly, there are no books or magazines to while away the time as one waits in the queue, but posters and a pile of flyers for local reggae and dancehall nights can be found in abundance.

Two of us staggered in after a night on the piss, enjoying the warmth of the counter, if not that of the two legendary matriarchs sitting behind it. The experienced Cantor's punter will not be offended by the apparent lack of interest shown to them. Buttering these women up with unctuous praise in this column is unlikely to get you a smile, let alone a date, and it may cause readers to bite their lips with

embarrassment for the author, if not wonder why space is being wasted with such rubbish. That said, a more direct approach is unlikely to win you any friends in Cantor's either, these women are there to serve food, not to be drooled over, and oil is strictly for the chips.

Having placed our order without return comment, we continued to wait in line, with the air thick with patois, and exhaled alcohol fumes.

Despite the lack of cross-counter engagement however, the uninitiated will need to watch out for the split-second when the matriarch serving you will catch your eye with her steely gaze. This is the signal for you to add salt

and vinegar if required, and also to say whether you want your victuals wrapped up or not. Miss the signal, and you risk being sternly rebuked, mocked by more experienced punters, and of course missing your salt and vinegar.

Prices are reasonable, with annual increases timed to coincide with Chapelton Carnival. As for the quality of the food, some love the chips, others consider them limp and soggy.

Cantor's is open every day and night except Sundays, and well worth a ten minute walk.

Mark Barnsley  
(with apologies in advance to Rob)

**FREEDOM**  
ANARCHIST BOOKSHOP

84b Whitechapel High Street

London E1 7QX

tel/fax 020 7247 9249

**OPENING HOURS**

Monday to Saturday

from 12 noon to 6pm

You can also use our mail order service  
or order books online via our website.

[www.freedompress.org.uk](http://www.freedompress.org.uk)

# People power in Lebanon

The right has, unfortunately, attempted to appropriate the Cedar Revolution in Lebanon as vindication of Bush's invasion of Iraq. The argument is that moves towards 'democracy' in the Middle East (no matter how feeble and superficial) are a logical flow from Bush's war, coming from the realisation by the dictators in the region that since he got re-(s)elected he will be a position to invade their countries.

Ignoring the obvious problem with this theory, namely that the US military machine is bogged down in Iraq and is in no position to invade anywhere else, the key issue with this theory is that it downplays the role of the Lebanese in their own struggles. Like the right's attempt to give Reagan the credit for ending the Soviet Union, this "great man" theory of history steals the glory from those who took to the streets and places it in the hands of people who would happily have supported their mass murder if they had protested against a US backed tyranny. Just compare, say, the support for death squads in Latin America to the praise for the 1989 people's revolts in Eastern Europe.

As in 1989, the key players in the struggle are the people directly involved. After all, when people took to the streets all across the Stalinist states they had seen the West look the other way as the dictators had repressed revolts in East Germany (1953), Hungary (1956), Czechoslovak (1968) and Poland (1982). It was unlikely, to say the least, that they expected the Americas to start a war over them given this track record. Rather than Reagan bringing down Stalinism, it was the heroism of those subjected to it that did so. That the right ignores this in favour of hero worship is belittling those popular movements and says a lot about their rhetoric and idea of liberty.

The same can be said of Lebanon. The events there are disconnected from the invasion and quagmire of Iraq. They were triggered by the assassination of ex-PM Rafiq Hariri and Bush's doctrine of pre-emptive war had nothing to do with it. So why do Bush supporters make a link between Iraq and Lebanon? Simply because they know little about the Middle East beyond Bush's interactions with it. As with the history of revolts against Stalinism, they are ignorant of the dynamics within these states and, of course, the role the US has played in the past. Combine this with a proto-fascist love of the leader principle and we have the link.

As such, the history of Lebanon is of vital interest. The country had a relatively free parliamentary democracy between 1943 and 1956. In 1957, the CIA intervened covertly in the Lebanese elections to ensure that the constitution would be amended to allow far-right Maronite President Shamun to have a

second term. Shamun's followers obtained a solid majority in the elections, which the opposition considered rigged and deprived of a legal platform from which to voice their political opinions, they sought to express them by extra-parliamentary means. A small civil war broke out, with Shamun lying to the Americans that the opposition were Communists. The Marines were duly sent in 1958 and, once safely in power, the Maronites created a police state. It should be remembered here that the US also overthrew the democratically elected government of Iran in 1953 and helped install the Ba'ath Party in power in Iraq.

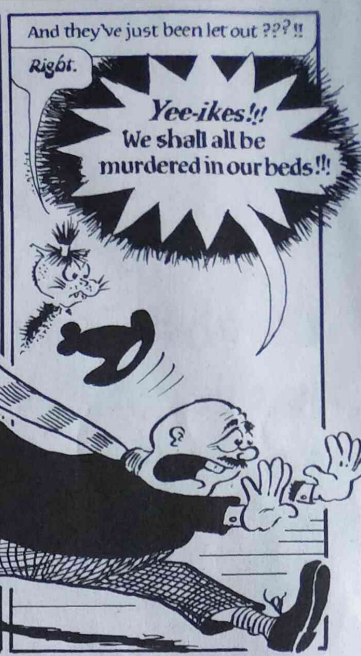
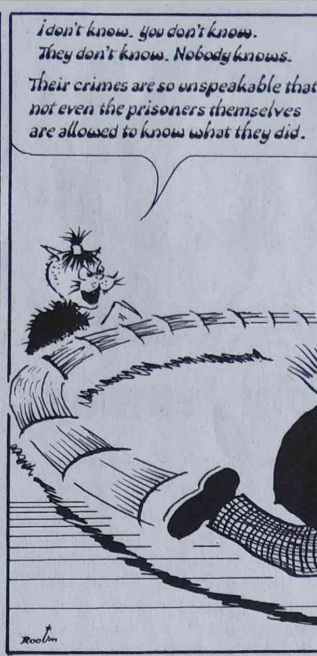
In 1975, another civil war broke out between the Maronites and the Arab population (including Palestinian refugees). In spite of creating a militia, the Phalange (modelled on Franco's and Mussolini's Black Shirts), the Maronites started to lose to the oppressed Shi'ites and Palestinians. It was this, the prospect of a PLO-dominated Lebanon, that caused the Syrians to act. After getting approval from the Israelis through Kissinger, they sent forty thousand troops into Lebanon and massacred the Palestinian fighters, saving the Maronites.

In 1982 the Israelis mounted an unprovoked invasion of Lebanon as they sought to destroy the remnants of the weakened PLO in Beirut. The Shi'ites of the south were radicalised by the Israeli occupation and threw up the Hizbullah, which pioneered suicide bombs and roadside bombs. The Israeli occupiers were forced out in 2000. Syria, however, retained about fourteen thousand troops in the Biqa Valley. While some parts of Lebanon supported the withdrawal of the Syrians, other parts did not. The Shi'ites, and especially Hizbullah, supported the Syrians, as did many Sunnis.

Then the Syrians same mistake as Shamun did, seeking to keep Emile Lahoud as president. When his six-year term was about to expire last autumn, the Syrians ensured that the Lebanese constitution was amended to allow him to remain for three more years. This angered the Lebanese public and Rafiq al-Hariri resigned. When he was assassinated, the Sunni community concluded (despite lack of evidence) that the Syrians were responsible and that they had to go. With the Sunni's joining other Lebanese communities in wanting to get rid of the Syrians, the crowds managed the downfall of the government. The last time such cross-community opposition happened was in 1943 and it ended the French Mandate.

So, as with Eastern Europe, the US approach to Lebanon has hardly been as a defender of freedom (however defined). In fact, in 1991, under Bush senior, the US quietly supported the Syrian assault against the Lebanese nationalists in power at the time - the same people whom the right are cheering today. That suggests Syria is

➔ page 6, column 5



## A Sideways Look

Like many people I find Jamie Oliver intensely irritating, with his mockney accent and constant presence advertising Sainsbury's on television. Alarming, I find myself on his side thanks to his new series on school dinners.

He has spent some time making a television series on school dinners, based at Kidbrooke School in the Borough of Greenwich. The council's budget for ingredients for the school dinners is 37p per child. When he arrives they are eating pizza and chips, burger and chips, unmentionable processed recovered meat and chips and sometimes for variety, just chips.

It doesn't take a lot of imagination to work out what sort of things are on the plate with the budget involved. The potato smileys and turkey feet are amongst the cheapest food imaginable, because they are made up of the very cheapest bits imaginable, mixed up with a load of additives. When more profitable parts of an animal have been used, the carcass is pushed through a giant sieve to produce a slurry of protein, which is then re-formed with polyphosphates and gums. Mmm ... delicious. This is where a lot of ham and processed poultry comes from - if it's something you ever buy, take a look at the packet and it should say if it's reformed or recovered meat.

Oliver's task is actually acutely political - he has to persuade the kids to eat something that isn't shit, the dinner ladies to cook rather than just reheat stuff straight from the factory and, toughest of all, the politicians that they ought to invest more in school meals. The kids are tough, raised on McDonalds and a lot of them never having eaten food prepared from raw ingredients, but he gets there in the end. The dinner ladies end up working

harder (and needing more staff) but with much greater job satisfaction. Cooking is a skill and it's a lot more rewarding doing a skilled job than merely putting turkey twizzlers in industrial ovens.

For the politicians, it ought to be a no-brainer. Kids who eat a balanced diet concentrate better in class and are less disruptive. Thanks to his contacts - and using cheaper ingredients which are still healthy, like thigh rather than breast of chicken - Oliver manages to bring school dinners in on the 37p per head button. He has publicly stated that it ought to be at least 50p, not least because not every council is going to have his contacts in the catering trade to be able to get such good deals. It also can't happen without better pay and an investment in training for the staff.

Interestingly, the devolved Scottish assembly has been running the 'Hungry for Success' scheme in their schools for a couple of years now. It looks to source good quality food locally and ditch the deep-fat fryers. You'd have thought Labour ministers might be proud of their colleagues achievement, but Oliver was explicitly warned off mentioning Scotland in his meetings with ministers. The Scots have invested £63 million to start improving the country's horrendous diet-related health problems.

It's a pretty poor state of affairs that it takes a celebrity chef to launch a campaign about the quality of school dinners. Oliver never mentions the elephant in the room, the capitalist system and its relentless drive for profit, which is the reason men in boardrooms are prepared to serve additive-riddled reshaped animal globules to small children. But he's angry about it and trying to change it, which is at least a start.

Svartfrosk

## Blast from the Past

From Freedom of 22nd March 1947:

"A new phase has now been reached in the manoeuvres in the oil war of the Middle East. A few weeks back an agreement between British and American oil companies, supported by political pressure on Persia, sealed off the production of oil in the Middle East as an Anglo-American province, with the obvious intention of countering Russian attempts to gain a share.

The Russians are now entering the Near East in a new guise - as oil salesmen. It is a known fact that Russia, even with the Caucasus and Rumanian fields under its control, suffers from an oil shortage. That was one of the reasons for its efforts to gain political control over Persia ... No doubt the Kremlin sees this as a case of casting its bread upon the waters; by giving up a little oil now to gain political contacts in the Middle East, it hopes to push its influence always nearer to the vital oilfields in whose operation it eventually hopes to gain a share. But it is something the English and Americans will not give up without a struggle, and we can therefore count the Middle East oilfields as a major battlefield in any future war."

## The quiz

1. How many people were killed by lettuce in the UK in the year 2000?
2. What do Bill Gates, Milton Friedman, WTO Director Renato Ruggiero and Sylvester Stallone have in common?
3. Which revolutionary union celebrates its centenary this year?
4. What was the Anarchiad?

Answers on page 6

## SUBSCRIPTION FORM

Send to Freedom Press, 84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1 7QX

- Please start a NEW subscription to Freedom for ..... issues
- Please RENEW my subscription to Freedom for ..... issues
- I enclose a donation
- I'd like to pay by Standing Order and have completed the form (see right)
- I enclose £ ..... payment (cheques payable to Freedom Press please)

Name .....  
Address .....  
Postcode .....

## STANDING ORDER FORM

Please return to Freedom, 84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1 7QX

To the manager (your bank)  
Bank name .....  
Bank address .....  
Postcode .....  
£ ..... each month/quarter/year (delete as appropriate) starting on (date) .....  
Name(s) of account holder(s) .....  
Account number ..... Sort code .....  
Signature .....

For bank use only  
Please pay this sum to Freedom Press, account number 82946905, sort code 72-00-05, Alliance & Leicester Commercial Bank plc, Bridle Road, Bootle, Merseyside GIR 0AA

## SUBSCRIPTION RATES

	Inland	Europe	outside Europe (surface)	outside Europe (airmail)
<b>Freedom (24 issues) half price for 12 issues</b>				
Claimants	16.00	-	-	-
Regular	20.00	29.00	29.00	41.00
Institutions	28.00	36.00	36.00	46.00
Supporter	48.00	60.00	60.00	72.00

Get in touch with us for details of bundle rates. Note that we have a new 'supporter' sub rate. You can also use the Standing Order form to ensure that your subscription always gets paid on time, or if you want to make a regular donation to Freedom. All prices are in £ sterling.

You can now subscribe online at [www.freedompress.org.uk](http://www.freedompress.org.uk)

FREEDOM fortnightly ISSN 0016 0504