

# FREEDOM

80P ANARCHIST NEWS AND VIEWS

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## A COMPANY EDUCATION

A new government white paper on education has been released, suggesting sweeping changes to the education system.

Acknowledged openly as a form of privatisation, the paper closely parallels Tony Blair's 'reforming vision' for education, with the Prime Minister writing the paper's foreword himself.

It has been envisaged that the state sector as it currently exists will have competition introduced in bidding wars for the education remit.

Successful schools will be given greater financial freedom, while struggling schools would be given one year to improve their performance or face closure, to be replaced by one of four systems; trusts, foundations, voluntary aided schemes or academies.

Although any group being commissioned to take on an educational role will have to be non-profit, the paper emphasises non-governmental schooling, encouraging not just parents to form their own schools but faith organisations and corporate groups as well.

One example cited in the report of how an existing corporate schooling group might be structured is Telford, which is funded by two sponsors, Mercers' company (specialists in human resource consultation) and Tarmac (one of Britain's biggest construction groups).

Sixteen schools are associated with the project, with the company controlling the entire governing body of several.

Although parents will also be given encouragement to set up their own schools, there have been criticisms that the bidding process will make it difficult for parents to compete against better-funded rivals.

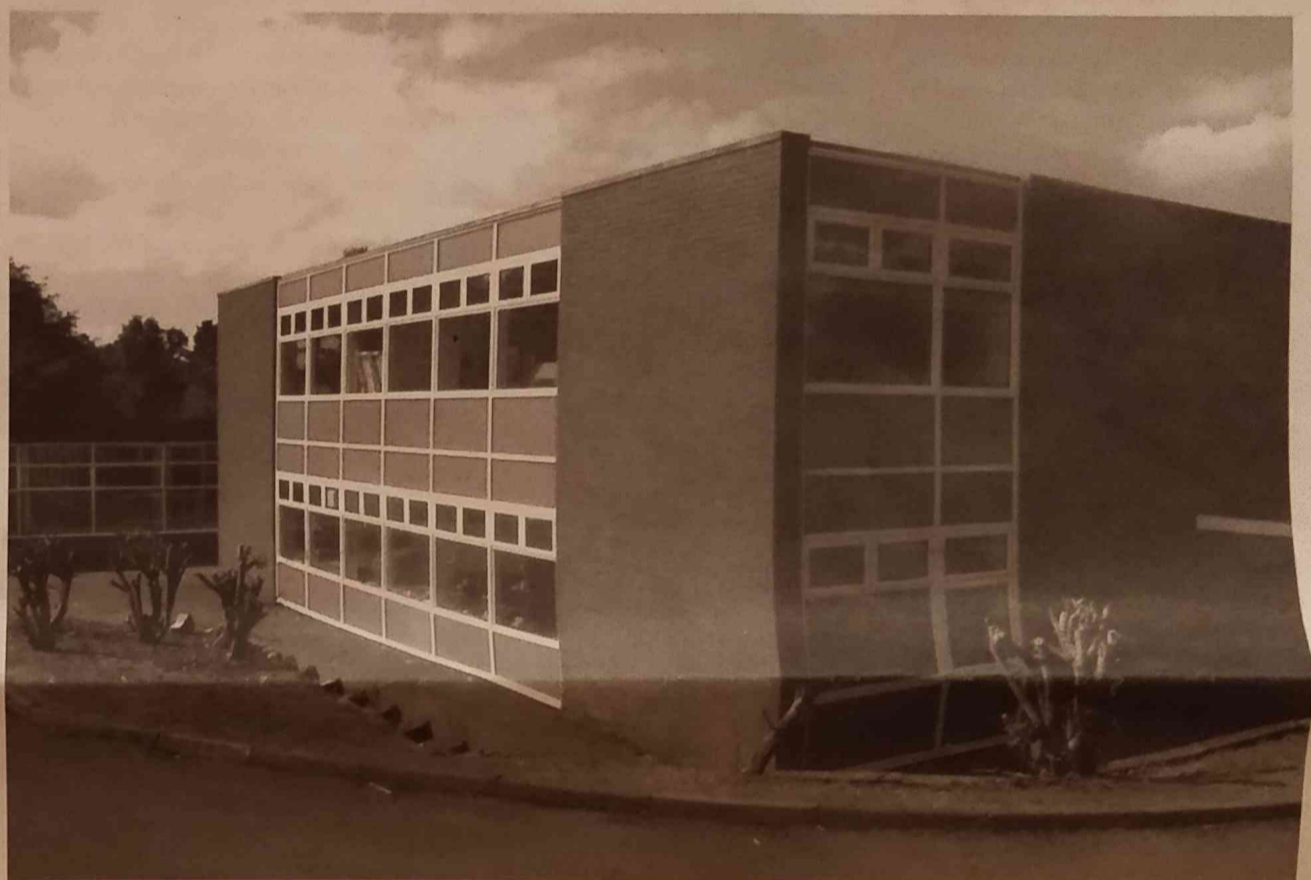
The paper also suggests giving a 'free choice' for children to go to one of their three nearest state schools. However, the competitive entry system will be retained or introduced for more popular establishments, with pupils having to take their second or third choice should they fail to beat their peers.

One teacher, contacted by Freedom, said of the proposals: "There's some interesting stuff in there like parents being able to set up new schools. But it's another thorn in the side of teachers, saying we aren't doing a good job and it's just more changes which are almost impossible for people to keep up with."

"The less the government intervenes the better, but if they are just handing control to other groups or companies which are even less accountable than that's even worse."

"There is a problem with schools already taking just the most able pupils, and heads get quite paranoid about being called a failing school. But sometimes you just don't have a chance in some areas."

"It's difficult to see how much power will be given to companies. If the whole governing board of a school is run by the Tarmac Company, are they doing it out of the goodness of their



hearts? Will they keep their distance?

"Schools are expensive and the government are trying to spend less on them – of course, if they didn't spend so much on war maybe they'd have more to spend on education."

The largest expansion announced would be the rise of academy schools over the next five years, from 27 today to 200 in 2010.

Hailed as the solution to a shortage in certain labour areas, such as construction, finance and manufacturing, academies will specifically train pupils from a younger age for certain roles.

The NUT have attacked the academy system as too expensive and have accused them of undermining the general education system.

Research by the union has shown that

academies have cost twice as much as previously estimated and, at the beginning of this year, of 11 reporting academies four were already in the bottom 200 in the country. Remaining academies have still not been inspected.

Other controversial measures include the granting of powers for schools to fine parents of truants, and powers for the head to stop and search pupils.

## A FRAUGHT OLD AGE

The preliminary findings of the Turner report – a commission on pensions expected to be highly influential on future government policy – have received a mixed reaction after they were leaked ahead of their official release.

Controversial measures to increase the statutory retirement age to 67 for state pensions have angered unions, though parallel suggestions that companies should be forced to contribute more to the pensions pot have been well received.

The commission has also suggested that the later retirement date should be

offset by a higher pensions rate – up from a basic rate of £80 to £109.

Statistics released later in the week have pointed out that approximately 3.4% of the male population who've reached 65 will die before they reach 67, significantly reducing the likely payout by effectively consigning them to 'work til you drop'.

The commission has said that the increase in the state pension is effectively a reallocation of money, largely trading a larger payout for the later start. However, the likely drop in the number of claimants through death makes it likely that extra money will be recouped over time.

Legal & General have said that in order for people to make up the two year difference and retire at 65, they would have to put around £6,000 more into the pot.

Alongside the proposals for the basic state pension it was revealed that a second state pension would be suggested,

with an opt-out available, which would be imposed automatically on individuals and companies.

Called the 'Britsaver' account, payments of around 6% of income would seem likely. The measure has been campaigned for by several unions over the past few years as an alternative to major changes to the existing scheme.

The proposals will also include the possibility of higher taxes to help fund both the Pensions Protection Fund and the government's own attempts to cover its pensions shortfall.

The government has come under fire in both aspects of its own policymaking in the last two weeks. The Pensions protection fund has been widely ridiculed as it has been unable to draw in enough funding to fulfil its purpose of providing a pensions safety net.

The fund has not taken in enough money from big business and is running

## DOWN UNDERHEEL

On 15th November there was a huge march of over 500,000 people across Australia against the government's new Industrial Relations law. They were calling for strong resistance against the bill's draconian policies.

The march, which involved one in forty of the population (or one in twenty voters), saw up to 250,000 people fill the streets of Melbourne.

The new laws give the government the right to call any strike illegal, as it gives powers to the ministry to intervene in 'essential services'. The concept of essential is defined by the minister in charge, and can cover all public and private sector workplaces.

'Third party' companies affected by a strike will also be able to order its halt if the law is passed.

The effect, according to unions, is to ban the right to strike in all but a handful of cases throughout Australia.

The bill even attacks the right to organise itself. Unions will not be able to access sites at all where the boss has

gained a 'conscientious objection' certificate because they have a belief prohibiting people belonging to unions or associations.

There will also be strict limitations on the unions right of entry by forcing any elected worker representative to prove he or she is a 'fit and proper person'. Union reps will be forced to request in writing when and why they want to visit the site and will be quarantined in one room.

The Howard government has already outlawed the right to strike for building and construction unions in legislation slammed through in August and applying retrospectively to catch unions' campaigns.

One writer in Australian Anarchist Age said: "The Industrial 'Destruction' legislation that is being lobbed into Parliament by the Prime Minister with the adroitness of an SAS soldier throwing a hand grenade into a bunker, will eventually maim and kill thousands of Australians."

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## In-house cleanout

A council press officer, fired for strongly opposing a proposed housing stock transfer at Tower Hamlets, has found support from members of the NUJ and Unison unions. At an packed NUJ chapel meeting on 9th November, Eileen Short's colleagues voted to take strike action against the council decision to make her redundant. Unison, representing two other sacked members of staff, have also lent their support.

Eileen was told she was redundant as part of a review, despite there being four other vacancies suitable for her. She is a prominent local member of pressure group Defend Council Housing.

At a protest outside the town hall on 7th November speakers from the NUJ, Unison, Natfhe, FBU and other nearby Unison branches voiced their anger at the sacking.

Messages of support to Eileen c/o Tower Hamlets Unison, 41/47 Bow Road, London E3 2BS Fax: 020 7364 5033 or towerhamlets@unisonfree.net

## FBU hullabaloo

Members of the West Midlands Fire Brigades Union (FBU) have gone on strike four days out of ten this month. The dispute, over compensation payments for anti-social working hours and travel costs following the introduction of a new shift system in the area, saw solid strikes on the 14th, 17th, 21st and 23rd of November.

Pete Gallagher, West Midlands Brigade Secretary said: "We don't want to take strike action but local managers are refusing any attempts at compromise. Managers want major changes to shifts that force us to finish work much later and work more days in the year. These clearly have a major impact on family life as well as working life. At the weekend they made cosmetic changes to their offer so they could dress it up as a compromise. But they knew it fell well short of the expectations of local fire crews."

## NUM fund flap

An investigation has alleged that the National Union of Miners has made millions from taking a cut of miners' health compensation money for legal fees they never paid. Following on the heels of another investigation which found a similar alleged misuse of funds at the Union of Democratic Mineworkers, the findings show an estimated £10m has been siphoned into NUM coffers.

Some of the money has been ploughed back into legal proceedings, as the NUM attempt to win a compensation claim for an arthritic condition known as 'miners knee'. Law firm Raleys has so far made £53m from handling 28,000 cases for the NUM, but took government, rather than union money. Of 750,000 claims that were registered for miners seeking compensation from the government for their workplace injuries, only half have been settled, with damages totalling £2.8bn and solicitors' fees worth £655m.

An independent inquiry into the coal health scheme is due in the next couple of months.

## In the post

A possible clash between the Communications union CWU and the Royal Mail over pay has followed condemnation last month of the Mail's plans to 'privatise' the back door.

Last year Royal Mail reported half-year operating profits of £217m, following a series of mass-layoffs. New figures have shown that pay rises for remaining staff have slipped against the national average despite a large performance bonus awarded for improved efficiency.

# Around the world



• **RUSSIA:** An anarchist has been stabbed to death by fascists after spending a day handing food out to the poor as part of a Food Not Bombs project.

After a Food Not Bombs action on 13th November at Vladimirskaya Square, Timur Kacharava and a few friends went to a Bukvoyed bookshop on Ligovsky prospect. Around 7pm, he and his friend Max 'Zgibov' Zgibai were smoking outside when they were attacked by a group of eight to 10 nazis. Timur suffered multiple stab wounds in the neck. Zgibov is in the hospital in a stable condition with five stab wounds.

The ambulance arrived in about ten minutes. By then Timur was dead due to heavy blood loss. Zgibov was taken to the Mariinsky Hospital. The police are investigating the incident; they have some suspects. There's a graffiti on the wall next to the place where Timur was murdered, and there are candles, pictures and flowers his friends placed as a tribute (see above).

Timur took an active part in the anarchist activities in the city, such as the Food Not Bombs group and Epitsentr infoshop. He was also active in day-to-day confrontation with nazis in the streets. He was a fourth year student of philosophy in St Petersburg State University.

Zgibov was Timur's bandmate in Sandinista! in 2004-2005. Before that Zgibov played bass in hardcore punk band

Svinokop and also is a singer and bassist in grind band Potom Budet Pozdno.

Timur will be loved and remembered by everyone who knew him. He is especially missed by his parents and girlfriend Lyubava.

• **SOUTH AFRICA:** At noon on 14th November 2005, police attacked a peaceful demonstration of settlement dwellers from the Foreman Road settlement in Clare Estate, Durban.

The elected committee of Abahlali base Mjondolo, a shack dwellers movement with 16 affiliated settlements, followed due procedure in attempting to gain permission for the march. The city council, however, illegally denied the application.

At 11am, the majority of the 3,000-strong crowd decided to march to the nearby Asherville sports field. This was a route recommended by the Mayor's office at a meeting on Friday 11th November, in the Mayor's presence.

Initially, the march proceeded peacefully up Loon Road. At the top of the road, marchers were met by a police cordon at the intersection of Loon Road and Locksley Road. At least 2,000 people were up against the police barrier. Witnesses did not observe the mandatory five-minute warning being given before

police charged the crowd with riot shields, backed up by riot trucks, plucking individuals at random for arrest.

The crowd fled back down Loon Road, towards Foreman Road settlement (see picture, below).

Police officers chased the marchers into the Foreman Road settlement, firing rubber bullets, charging with batons, and arresting protesters in the process. Witnesses saw cameras, phones and money taken from protestors by the police. Five people were arrested at the front line, 13 were in prison as Freedom went to press.

• **TURKEY:** Three sergeants from the Turkish Gendarmerie Intelligence Service (JIT) have now been arrested for carrying out a bomb attack which killed one and injured six in on the Umut Bookshop in Hakkari.

Master Sergeant Ali Kaya, Staff Sergeant Özcan Ildeniz, and a third sergeant who was not named, admitted that they had carried out the bomb attack against the bookstore on 9th November. The sergeants, who were interrogated by the Republican Prosecutor of Semdinli, Harun Ayik, also admitted that they had carried out the bomb attack outside a military residence in the city on 1st November, wounding 23 people, including

three police officers, four soldiers and 16 civilians. With that, Prosecutor Ayik merged both cases into one.

Everything unfolded after Kurdish citizens in Semdinli broke into the car from which the Turkish sergeants had carried out the attack on the bookstore. They found weapons, bombs and a suitcase in the car. Opening the suitcase, they found written plans, maps and a death-list consisting of prominent Kurds sympathizing with the PKK. The bookstore owner's name, Seferi Yilmaz, had already been checked in the list.

On the maps, the Kurdish citizens saw the marked positions of both the military residence that was bombed on 1st November and Yilmaz's bookstore. Detailed written plans about how the attacks would be carried out was also found.

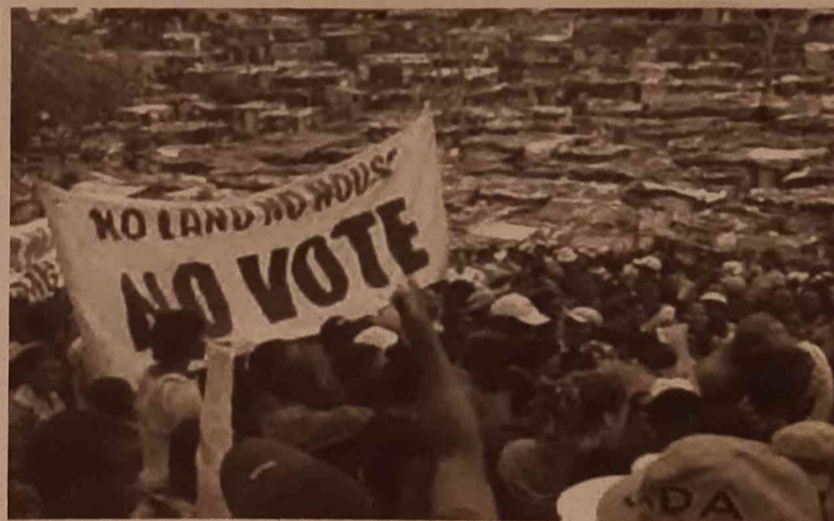
The people of Semdinli were gathered on the morning of 10th November to protest against the provocative terrorist assaults by JIT members. A police control point placed in the exit of the town was burned by molotov cocktails. Tension in the area is still strong.

• **USA:** Fred Woodworth is publisher of The Match – North America's oldest explicitly anarchist magazine. Since 1969 The Match has continued, while many other publications have failed.

Now Fred has fallen on hard times. He has recently had to undergo major surgery, but Fred has never been able to afford private health insurance.

The resulting medical bills have put extreme pressure on his situation. One supporter said: "Those of us who have been involved with the movement for many years have come to appreciate Fred's lively, jargon-free espousal of the cause of liberty and his persistence in putting it forward, year after year."

To learn more, and to find out how you can help, get in touch with Fred directly at: Fred Woodworth, c/o The Match, Box 3012, Tucson, Arizona, 85702, USA.



# Prison news

• **Eleven die after fire at Amsterdam deportation centre:** During the night of 26th October a fire at the deportation centre at Amsterdam's Schipol airport killed 11 refugees.

Due to the lack of an automatic unlocking system to open all the cells at once, the doors had to be opened individually.

One survivor also claimed that guards ignored the first fire alarm. This, together with the guards telephoning the Fire Brigade to tell them to ignore the alarm, resulted in prisoners being kept for half an hour longer in their burning cells.

As well as 11 prisoners being killed and many more injured, some of the prisoners found a way to escape. Three were caught the same night, eight are still on the run.

Solidarity actions have taken place throughout Holland, but some of these have drawn brutal repression from the Dutch police.

• **Solidarity picket of Spanish Consulate:** In November a picket of the Spanish Consulate in London was held in solidarity with Anarchist prisoners in the Spanish FIES isolation units. While organised at relatively short notice, the picket was nonetheless fairly well attended, and a large banner was displayed outside the Consulate.

• **Antifa arrests in Belgium:** Three anti-fascists have been arrested in Bruges, Belgium, for throwing a Molotov cocktail at the offices of the fascist Flemish Block. No damage was caused because the Molotov bounced off the window, but the arrested antifascists will still face long prison sentences if convicted.

• **New animal rights prisoner:** Heather Nicholson has been remanded in custody charged with allegedly insulting hunt scum. Please send letters of support to: Heather Nicholson, NR7271, HMP

Bronzefield, Woodthorpe Road, Ashford, Middlesex. TW15 3JZ.

• **Holloway protest:** On the 9th November, 25 protestors picketed Holloway Prison following the death of 30 year old Karen Ann Fletcher in custody there just over a week before. This was the 16th demonstration to highlight the deaths of women prisoners since protests began in April last year. A prison van bringing more women into Holloway was stopped by the protestors, and Pauline Campbell, whose own daughter died while in prison, was arrested for refusing to move. This is the tenth time Pauline has now been arrested for identical actions, she was released without charge two and a half hours later.

• **Jan Lawrence moved:** Jan, who was recently given eight months for sending hate mail to people connected to Huntingdon Life Science, has been moved.

Jan Lawrence NR7220, HMP Peterborough, Saville Road, Westfield, Peterborough, PE3 7PD.

• **Kevin Glover:** Kevin is an American anarchist prisoner who, previously with another anarchist prisoner, Ron Young, edits the occasional magazine Chain Reaction. Kevin has been locked-up for many years now, but he is due to be released next year. Kevin welcomes correspondence, and old correspondents please note that the address for his prison has recently been changed. Kevin Glover, #526379, 85 12th Street, Huntsville, Texas 77348-0001, USA.

• **Prison Abolition Seminar:** A seminar on prison abolition is being held in London on the 28th January next year at Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, from 2pm until 5pm. Admission is free, but donations towards the cost of the event will be welcome.

compiled by Mark Barnsley

# News

## Stock retention

**Dave E. reports that as council housing stocks plummet, a Scottish council has finally rejected the Thatcherite sell-off**

The right to buy council houses in parts of the Highlands has been suspended to protect affordable stock. East Renfrewshire is the first council in Scotland to be given permission to ban council house sales, reversing the policy introduced in the 1980s by Margaret Thatcher.

Communities Minister Malcolm Chisholm said, "There is compelling evidence of substantial pressures on affordable housing in the areas the council identified."

Margaret Davidson, Highland Council's housing convener, said the move was driven by a severe shortage of affordable housing in many areas. The right-to-buy policy in Scotland continues to drain housing stock of about 11,000 homes a year, with over 440,000 lost in the 25 years since it was introduced.

In England, the number of families waiting for a council house has soared by more than 50% during Labour's time in power, and now stands at 1.5 million.

Only one new social housing unit is built for every five sold off under the right-to-buy scheme, meaning that the supply of council properties for families on the waiting list is dwindling every year.

### Case study – Doncaster

In Doncaster, the Council owns and manages 25,000 properties – houses, bungalows and flats. Nearly half (42%) of Council tenants are over 60 years of age and over half (53%) of tenants say they have a long-standing illness, disability or infirmity. The Council currently re-lets 2,700 properties a year.

Last year the Council sold off or disposed of 1,737 homes – 5.5% of its stock. 1,685 individuals or families are now classed as homeless, three years ago the number had been just 375. The number of people in temporary accommodation waiting to be allocated homes has also risen while waiting times increased to as long as five months.

There are 13,080 applicants on the waiting list (December 2004) compared to just 5,943 in September 2003. And now the housing stock has been transferred to an ALMO after consultations and a ballot.

In November 2000, the tenants were told by Gary Allen, the Head of Housing Services, "Remember – the tenants of Doncaster will have the final say in what happens to council housing in the future. Changes to the ownership of council homes cannot happen without the support of tenants."

"Where there is a proposal for any change of ownership, Government rules require that tenants are balloted and that there is a majority decision in favour of the proposal. It is this ballot that will decide whether or not the Council will proceed with that option."

"The Council will work closely with tenants to decide on the best option for Doncaster, but tenants will have the final say on which option is introduced. Whatever option is chosen the council will ensure that tenants rights will be protected, rents will be kept affordable and council housing will meet the standards of the 21st century."

In 2005, the elected Mayor, Martin Winter, said, "You told me that the majority of you [78%] wanted the



Council to continue to own your homes – you wanted the 'stay as we are' option."

The ALMO was imposed anyway, and residents have questioned whether this will ultimately help with the provision of social housing.

After a specified period, the ALMO will be able to increase rents to the 'economic' level. Currently this would mean a 100% increase (if privately rented accommodation is compared with council rentals).

One resident commented that: "The

measures to privatise the housing stock, introduced by Thatcher, and now strengthened by Blair, will only serve to increase the financial pressures on the working class and shore up the profitability of the housing market for the privileged."

## New links to old problems

### New London IWW celebrate

The recently established London IWW group held a centenary celebration at the RampArt squatted social centre in East London on the 5th November. It was the first public event where the core group, which was established a few months ago, had a general presentation of its ideals, goals and methods.

The high point of the evening was the discussion on building autonomous workers' resistance in London. This was largely centred around trying to draw on previous experiences, such as the lessons of the Gate Gourmet dispute. The grassroots democratic model of the Workmates Collective of West London tube workers was also mentioned.

One of the prominent issues which were raised in the discussion (particularly by disenchanted, yet active members of the business unions) revolved around the benefits of dual membership (which the IWW allows) and the need for a core group of the most militant workers and unionists who could more easily develop

rank-and-file factions and networks in and across their unions.

It was argued that this would simultaneously help to provide the IWW with a larger pool of experience, resources and access to rank-and-file union members – and in turn increasing the chances for building stronger and new workplace resistance groups. (See comment, page 6, for more details.)

### NATFHE strikes in Birmingham

West Midlands Anarchists supported lecturers from all over the country who demonstrated outside the Association of Colleges' annual conference in Birmingham, as part of a national NATFHE union strike over the 13% pay gap between Further Education staff and other, along with other serious funding shortfalls.

While Education chief Ruth Kelly was making a speech, 300 to 350 lecturers held a noisy but peaceful demonstration. Afterwards a set of speeches emphasised the need for solidarity in the sector and

attacked the government's lack of action, and creating the new 'modern comprehensives' in our Further education systems.

Chris Stafford, from West Midlands Anarchists, attended. He said: "What was disappointing was that the union did not see the potential to strike a blow to the bosses, and only called out a small selection of their members."

"At my sixth form college NATFHE members were in front of their white boards teaching away whilst their colleagues where on the picket lines. If NATFHE had called out all of its members, the education system would have been shut down and the government and education bosses would have to take more notice."

"What was seriously lacking was solidarity, even inside the union which called the strike. If the NATFHE members wanted a total victory then they should not be so tame in their actions. Only solidarity will stop the state and the bosses taking our rights, pensions and pay."

## Kilburn and loot

A short-lease housing co-operative in South Kilburn, London, looks likely to be evicted in February after the board began legal proceedings against their tenants.

Brent council, which oversees the use of 33 properties on Allington Road, has demanded that residents leave so the buildings can be knocked down and replaced with low-density housing.

The Brent housing co-operative, which runs the properties, has recently lost its director and manager and is in crisis after being unable to find replacement homes for its members.

Following the council order, it began legal proceedings once tenants refused to leave under council orders earlier this month.

Lily, a tenant on the co-operative, said: "We've decided to stay. They are anticipating three months to get us out. The council have said they will not take us to court of we agree to leave in February, but our housing co-op are taking legal action against us."

"It does look hopeless. Our beef is that we received a grant from the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister for the people in South Kilburn for regeneration, and they produced a master plan which said no-one would have to move. But they are evicting us anyway."

"We will carry on for as long as possible, but we are running out of ideas."

£14m was pledged to the road as part of a wider £50m initiative from the ODPM's office to regenerate the area.

The policy, called the South Kilburn New Deal for Communities, which aims to impose the Decent Homes Standard, ignored a huge majority vote from tenants against the conversion.

Around 100 Brent co-op tenants will be homeless by the end of this year, with 200 more to follow. Lily said: "We aren't the only place. It looks like it's the end for short term lease co-ops."

# Riots go, poverty stays

The cries have died down in the banlieus, but desperation remains, reports Rob Ray

The French police have declared the riots which have engulfed France to be at an end as car burnings and arrests have returned to normal levels.

Over the course of 20 nights of rioting from 27th October to 17th November, nearly 3,000 people were arrested, and 9,000 vehicles destroyed. The French government have offered to put more funding into the most deprived areas and attempt to create new jobs in the areas as a result.

The offer, which came alongside draconian policing policies for the rioting areas, was criticised by controversial figure Nicolas Sarkozy, who said that 'positive discrimination' should be used to bring the areas out of poverty.

Sarkozy, a right-wing presidential hopeful, has been heavily criticised throughout the riots for suggesting first that it was likely to be driven by organised criminals, then calling the rioters scum and finally suggesting the deportation of all immigrants involved.

However his comments were refuted by the French courts, which found that a large majority of those brought to trial were first time offenders, most were minors and almost none had a long record of recidivism.

At Sarkozy's behest, the police introduced a 'zero-tolerance' policy towards rioters throughout the conflict, and a curfew was imposed towards the end of the rioting.

In his most controversial speech, the Interior Minister said he would: "Clean

the Cité des 4000 [in La Corneuve, Paris] out with a Kärcher [pressurised water machine]."

Right wing groups across France have supported the actions of the French government, with 90% support from the far right. French fascist leader Jean-Marie Le Pen lent his whole-hearted support.

Sarkozy has also had increased support for his actions from some sections of the left, with record approval ratings of 40% in a recent poll.

But the anarcho-syndicalist French union CNT-F have pointed out the Sarkozy belongs to a family of business tycoons, suggesting that his family and policies are at least partly responsible for the rioting.

They said: "The economic context lends itself to this – attacks on the fair labour standards act, the sécu, pensions, lowered purchasing power, increased casual labour, outsourcing ... This policy of social breakage bears its fruits – while great fortunes increase, there is the other side of the coin.

"As Guillaume Sarkozy, Chairman of MEDEF (the French version of the Confederation of Business Interests), outsources his textile factories, his brother Nicolas, minister of the interior, comes in to the banlieue to provoke the young people.

"This implosion of violence is the expression of a confrontation against a capitalist system which marginalises them".



Despite early reports that the rioters were primarily Asian muslims, subsequent information has suggested that the rioters included significant numbers of Portuguese, North Africans and 'native' French, and those interviewed in the affected areas have consistently cited economic factors as the primary reason for the riots.

The Federation Anarchiste, in an assessment of the government's attitude to the banlieus, said: "It is as if they did not know that human beings lived in these dormitory housing estates, built on the fly outside of the cities, where immigrants and poor people are kept as if in warehouses.

"These housing estates are like a condensed version of all the bad ways

to plan a city, and thus they include everything that makes life difficult. In these housing estates there is no social space to meet together.

"In these housing estates unemployment and suffering are the daily lot of the adults and the future of the children. One did not need to be a sociologist or a fortune teller to predict what would happen."

## Pay up

A court case set up by new union IWU is nearing its end in Ireland which could have implications for prison labour use throughout the country.

Fintan Lane, a member of the IWU, was jailed in 2003 for refusing to pay a fine after a peaceful anti-war demonstration at Shannon Airport.

During his 45-day stay at Limerick prison, he worked shifts in the kitchens. At the end of the first week he received a prison shop voucher worth €2.54.

Since leaving the prison last year, the IWU have campaigned to get the historian €1,978.58 – which would pay for Lane's labour at minimum wage, minus vouchers.

Since beginning the legal case, the union has established that prisoners are not – unlike apprentices, gardai and members of the Defence Forces – exempt from minimum wage requirements.

In choosing to take on the work, he counts as having a verbal contract with the prison service, it is likely he is entitled to the payment.

There appear to be no European rules on the subject.

The IWU

Six years in the making, the Independent Workers Union was launched in May 2004 by a group of Trade Union activists.

They were concerned at the state of Industrial Relations in Celtic Tiger Ireland, particularly from a trade union perspective. Their conclusion was that the much-lauded 'Social Partnership' agreements were working, but only in one direction – the employers.

They also concluded that the establishment Trade Union Movement had become managers of dissent and policemen of the shop floor, rather than the defenders and protectors of workers.

Ray O'Reilly, from the union, said: "Our mission was and is the unionising of those sectors and groups who were not unionised, e.g. American multinational and transnational companies, low paid workers national, or non-national and the huge numbers of immigrant workers.

"We find that not alone are we

attracting members from the areas mentioned but also from the establishment Trade Unions.

"The Independent Workers Union is, as the name implies, totally independent and unrepentantly revolutionary. We are and will stay outside the Irish TUC or any other group that might reduce our ability to defend and protect working people.

"Democratically founded and constituted and with a full Industrial Negotiating License we recognise and strictly adhere only to those agreements to which we are a party.

"We do not recognise or accept the term 'unofficial' strike nor the Thatcherite inspired 1990 Industrial Relations Act.

"Our aim is to smash the cosy consensus that exists between the bosses and the leaders of their purchased unions and to restore the Irish Trade Union Movement to what it once was, the militant and protective arm of the Irish Working Class."

We will attempt to get an interview with Fintan Lane for our next issue.

## Clashes in Colombia

Indigenous people on squatted farms in Colombia came under government attack on 9th November. Over 500 police with ten armoured personnel carriers tried to forcibly remove hundreds of protesters occupying the 2,000-acre Jabo farm near Caldoño, 200 miles south west of the capital, Bogota.

The Regional Indigenous Council of Cauca squatted the farm as part of their campaign to reclaim land. Guambianos, Kokonuko and Nasa indigenous people, some of Colombia's 800,000 poorly-treated tribespeople, as well as thousands of peasants demanding land, have occupied haciendas (areas of rural property) in several parts of Cauca since the 12th October under the slogan 'Freedom for Mother Earth'. This is aimed at forcing the government to comply with various long standing commitments to deal with land ownership.

Starved of resources and largely subsisting on a diet of potatoes and rice, they have vowed to occupy the farms until the government creates the funds and legal powers to give them land.

They are demanding a national agrarian reform programme to make more lands available to poor farmers. The government has responded with violence.

"The repression started yesterday and intensified today," said one of the Indian leaders, Feliciano Valencia. He said at least 35 Indians were wounded. Following clashes, the Nasa communities burned the riot police shields and other war gear that they had recovered from government forces in a ceremonial fire.

The situation appears to be approaching a stand-off as Colombia's hardline administration, rejected talks unless the Indians leave the farms.

The families on the land are calling for solidarity letters, phone calls and emails to the Colombian Embassy to make it politically more difficult for the government to allow the police and army to attack the settlements.

Communications can be addressed to: The Embassy of Colombia, 3 Hans Crescent, London SW1X 0LR. Tel: 0171 5899177. Email: mail@colombianembassy.co.uk

adapted from Schneus

# Rebellion on the details

Those who disagree with the state's policies have little to be cheerful about, reports Iain Mackay

**A** proposal to extend the ability of the police to detain without trial to 90 days has been defeated. The bill, which lost by 322 votes to 291, was stopped by a major rebellion of Labour MPs.

However, the doubling of the detention allowance to 28 days, a separate bill to supplement the failed 90-day one, passed.

The 28-day bill is identical to the 90-day one, introducing new terrorist offences of 'incitement' or 'instruction', 'glorification of terror' or 'attending a training camp' – possibly affecting some training workshops in direct action, and radical literature.

It would also have given the government leave to incarcerate foreign individuals indefinitely if they could not be deported. The bill's wording is so vague that some civil rights experts believe Cherie Blair could have been imprisoned for her remark that she could understand the suicide bombers in Palestine.

## An unnecessary evil

The defeat of Blair's draconian idea of allowing the police to lock up people without evidence for 90 days was a good sign. It showed some backbone and an awareness that the police can and will abuse its power. Sadly, though, our MPs were not against the principle of internment as such and voted to increase the detention period to 28 days. This, two years after increasing the period from seven to 14 days.

Ironically, Blair stated that "Terrorism wants to destroy our way of life." Yet Blair, by wanting to effectively eliminate *habeas corpus*, is doing just that. Sadly, the MPs only blunted the drift towards a police state.

While 28 days is better than 90, it is still the longest period for detention without charge in democratic nations. As such, the rebellion was not a major victory for civil liberties and principle – unsurprising, for if the Tories were in office they would have argued the same line as Blair.

But even this revolt on details, not principle, was too much for some. The Sun, backers of these draconian measures, called the MPs "traitors" and incredibly noted that "the limit was slashed to just 28 days."

In reality, the limit was doubled not 'slashed' and to trust the government and the police implicitly is naive to the extreme. But what do you expect of a paper which, to bolster its case, puts on its front page a victim of the 7/7 attacks who is totally opposed to Blair's plan? So much for giving the victims a voice.

What was not mentioned that neither 11th September nor the 7th or 21st July 2005 attacks would have been

prevented by allowing the police to hold people for 90 days without charge. All of those involved were not considered to be terrorist suspects nor were they under police or security service investigation before these attacks. As such, to use the 7/7 victims as the Sun did is deeply hypocritical, never mind ignoring those amongst them who opposed the policy.

But it seems ironic that Blair has now found the democratic spirit. He told ministers there was a "worrying gap between parts of Parliament and the reality of the terrorist threat and public opinion". Yet he was not bothered by this when he wanted to invade Iraq.

Where was the worry when MPs voted for war against the wishes of the majority? Back then, it was good leadership to ignore the public. And what of the other issues the public back but which Blair opposes, such as renationalising the railways or rejecting the creeping privatisation of the NHS? We know the answer – the views of the population only relevant when they coincide with his agenda.

The reality of the Iraq decision was to increase the terrorist threat and to ignore public opinion. And now Blair asserts that the issue "is doing the right thing to protect this country"!

If so, he should have listened to his own advisors and concluded that invading Iraq would increase the terrorist threat here. Could it be that the 90-day bill was primarily developed to protect Blair from the consequences of that disastrous decision?

One thing is sure, while he implies that any potential future terror attack will be, in part, the responsibility of MPs for rejecting his policy he failed to take responsibility for the actual terrorist attack which flowed directly from his own.

And what of this majority support he pointed to? Ignore the fact that we have been presented with a very one-sided version of exactly why these powers are needed. In true authoritarian manner, he appealed to an abstraction: "I have no doubt where the country is on this." Yet 'the country' does not exist.

Rather the individuals who live in a country exist and they did not all agree with Blair. So why does the PM think the people support his draconian laws? Because, apparently, a YouGov poll says that over 70% support the government's policy.

And who commissioned that poll? Sky News. Murdoch strikes again. Needless to say, the people who commissioned the poll get to specify the questions so, inevitably, skewing the results. A different set of questions (like, say, 'do you think the police should hold someone without any evidence of a crime for 90 days') would have produced a different result.



Not that the results actually back the government's position. The 72% for 90 day internment is a composite figure of two positions. 31% supported the idea that the present 14-day limit for holding suspected terrorists without charge should be increased to 90 days.

41% agreed that the 14-day limit should be increased to 90 days – but only in those cases where the police can persuade a senior judge that the time is needed to gather evidence against the suspect(s). This second option, it must be stressed, is not what the current Terrorism Bill is offering. This means that only 31% support Blair's policy as expressed in the Bill. True, this is nearly 50% more than who backed Blair in the general election but it is far from overwhelming support.

Blair talked of the compelling case made by the police? Like the compelling case made by the security services to invade Iraq? There are far more compelling cases against the law. Internment in Northern Ireland bolstered support for the IRA. The Guildford Four. Police assassination of innocent people suspected to be terrorists. The use of anti-terrorism laws against protestors (including hecklers of the New Labour elite at their own conference). The fact that the police lie (one example: they told us Jean Claude de Menzies was running and wearing bulky clothes). That the police have a long history of abusing

their powers. The list is endless.

Looking at Home Office statistics, 97% of those arrested under the Prevention of Terrorism Act between 1974 and 1988 were released without charge. Only 1% were convicted and imprisoned. Since 9/11, this pattern has repeated. Of more than 700 people arrested under the Terrorism Act since then, half have been released without charge and only 17 convicted.

Of these, only three relate to allegations of Islamic extremism. To have detained people for 90 days without charge would only have increased the risks of terrorist attacks as it could have caused further alienation in the Muslim community without any increased success in fighting terrorism.

What of anarchism? Clearly, politicians cannot be relied upon to defend civil liberties. What liberties we have are the product of struggle, of resistance to the state and its attempts to extend its power. As such, their best defence exists outside Parliament. Only a strong people, willing to use direct action and solidarity, can ensure its own freedoms.

But what if the majority seek limitations in civil liberties? In that case, the minority must seek to persuade the majority of the errors of their ways – by propaganda, debate and, if need be, direct action.

Anarchism recognises that the majority can be wrong. It recognises that progress lies with those minorities

who question the assumptions of the many and convince them that they are false. Real reforms, never mind revolution, become possible when the minority's position becomes accepted by the mass.

The case for self-management, for direct democracy, is not that the majority is always right. It is that an elite, even an elected one, will govern in its own interests. It is that, in order to be free, one must have a say in the decisions that affect you. It is that participation in common affairs has an educative role and that it raises awareness of those involved.

Given this, most anarchists see their role as defenders of freedom, both within this system and any libertarian one we may help create. Part of this task is to resist those who seek to limit our freedoms today. Another is to create organisations which can successfully mount that resistance.

Another is to create the conditions (a stateless/classless society) where such limitations are hard to introduce by eliminating hierarchical organisations and empowering everyone to participate in the decisions that affect them. This will help ensure that everyone has a keen interest in their own and other people's freedom.

Only this can defend individual freedom from both the tyranny of the minority (what we have now) and the potential tyranny of the majority.

# Commentary

## FREEDOM

Volume 66 Number 23

### 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

We've had a bit of a difficult issue this time around, after the unexpected departure of two of our editorial team due to, as is usually the case with these things, their excessive workloads, and another having to take an issue off. Best wishes to both, we thoroughly enjoyed working with you.

There was a small worry at one point whether the remaining team would be able to fill the paper, but we were unexpectedly aided by a raft of interesting stories which needed only a bit of editing done to them.

Gratifying as this was, it does mean that in terms of editorial staff, we are back under the cosh.

So yet again, we are on the lookout for people with a bit of spare time on their hands to take up roles such as sub-editing, features editing, and commissioning news stories from our existing writers.

People willing to do the mail out on a weekend would be perhaps even more important, if we are to start next year with any hope of coming out on time. Oh and the shop probably needs more staff, and if you can think of anyone willing to put in a bit of time doing up the building itself, that'd be handy.

If you are up for any of these roles, you can email [freedomeds@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:freedomeds@yahoo.co.uk), or leave your details at the office, and we'll get back to you as soon as possible.

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### Next issue

The next issue will be dated 10th December and the last day to get copy to us (see contact details above) will be Friday 2nd December.

### Wobbler potential

The recently established London IWW group seems to have given a new lease of life to the Wobblers in the British Isles.

Partly drawing on the useful perspective of minority/solidarity unionism, the Paris Solidarity Collectives and, similarly, the talks on the concept and practice of flying squads/pickets were particularly refreshing, even if far from being a historically new tactic.

In addition to the benefits propagated by Shantz and Levant, flying squads/pickets could also contribute, among other things, to the creation of an authentic 'community of resistance' – greater cooperation, coordination and general interaction within 'the broader movement', linking groups and struggles which have previously been isolated and disconnected, or at least failed to live up to their true potential.

However, there is also a possible danger of stagnating and inward-turning flying squads slipping into 'activist' roles, followed by progressive disassociation from the workers themselves.

Serious and consistent strategising is needed, which should also involve a greater openness to the labour-community model of organising. The unfolding 'regeneration' (gentrification) of East London (further legitimised and also accelerated by the 2012 London Olympics) and the probability of a council tax increase, property values and rents skyrocketing, etc. (thus effectively driving out working-class people out of the city and to the outskirts – a phenomenon which has already happened to many Cockneys during the 'regeneration' of the Docklands during the '60s, '70s and '80s) – coupled with tens of thousands expected new, mostly Eastern European (hyper-exploited) building workers, relatively militant transport workers and the great bargaining power of the many service industries closely tied to the Olympics – constitutes a potentially explosive mix which could offset a general upsurge in working-class combativity.

Obviously, there are many other strategic and tactical considerations and possibilities, many of which are more typical of the general IWW approach it is famous for. One thing is certain – there is no adequate substitute for challenging the labour dry spell, and it is high time for the British libertarian left to finally start embracing workers' struggles, agitation and organising again. I believe the IWW could have an important role to play in these efforts.

Dan Jakopovich  
London IWW

### A coward's solidarity

The TGWU motion to allow solidarity actions, restricted to 'closely related groups of workers' and subject to workplace ballots, is cowardly, unnecessarily restrictive, overly cautious, and plays right into the hands of the bosses.

Workplace ballots are a parody of democracy. Bosses are past masters at manipulating opinions among the workforce; they know experts and psychologists who are highly skilled at manipulating the minds of vulnerable people, and can produce any ballot result they want to order. Ballots leave workers open to highly sophisticated strategies designed to see off strike ballots.

Also, since strike ballots are slow, complicated, expensive to organise and highly time consuming, they can eat up a union's narrow financial resources as well as hamstringing them, leaving them paralysed while the bosses are free to organise counter-measures that can leave strikers flat footed and any action taken by workers irrelevant.

In any case, why should only workers have to hold ballots? Why shouldn't bosses have to ballot the workers before taking any action that the workers might think detrimental? Bosses should have to ballot the workforce before making cutbacks or layoffs, and any 'no' vote by the workers ought to be legally binding on the bosses, with the full panoply of penalties falling on any that refuse to comply, complete with fines, sequestrations and imprisonment.

And another thing, all those workers who might vote against a strike are nothing but a bunch of cowards and traitors, sniveling, crawling, bootlicking, backside-kissing suck-ups who think they can get further by crawling to the boss than standing up to him. I never once saw any of these, before the days of pre-strike ballots, handing back the pay-rises we got for them! They were too scared to go on the picket line but the still took the money.

By restricting solidarity action to the 'closely related' worker groups, we are leaving an open door to bosses to claim that sympathy strikers are totally unconnected to strikers; if this restriction had been in place, we would never have had the solidarity actions at Salfley Gates or Grunwick.\* There must be no limits to solidarity. To hear Tony Woodley promising 'no return to the 1970s is a disgrace. The '70s saw the highest and noblest expression of workers' solidarity this country has ever seen. To denigrate those times is the action of a coward.

Keith Ackermann

\* Editors' note: Salfley in Birmingham was the last major coke depot operating during the miners' strike of 1972. Because the miners could not close the depot on their own to win the action, 10,000 non-miners from across Birmingham manned the picket, a further 30,000 went on strike in solidarity, and closed the gates.

The two year Grunwick strike, from 1976, saw 137 people in a mainly South African and South Asian female workforce go on strike over trade union recognition. Despite the shameful actions of the TUC in first ignoring the plight of the strikers and later actively discouraging solidarity, thousands of people up and down the country offered their support, from local post office workers blacking the film-processing firm's mail, to pickets of up to 20,000 people keeping out the scabs.

Another note: This letter was sent in September, after the TUC congress, but was lost in the ether until now. Our apologies to Keith for the omission.

### Drug war damage

There is a war being waged across the globe. The aggressors – governments of the richest and most powerful countries. The defenders – those who feel that 'over his (or her) own mind or body, the individual is sovereign'.

We are talking, of course, about the current 'war on drugs' or perhaps, more accurately, the 'war on drug users'. It is real, it is violent, and it is causing the suffering of millions.

At present there are over 13,000 people,

in Britain alone, incarcerated in an already overcrowded prison system, for non-violent drug offences – their only 'crime', the desire to take 'illicit' substances such as cocaine or ecstasy.

Other, more devastating effects of this war are the deaths and violence it causes. In any war casualties are inevitable and this one is no different. From the deaths that occur during the often militarised drug seizures and inter-gang drug battles that are the direct result of the lucrative nature of such illicit trades, to the deaths caused by the adulteration of non-regulated chemicals and a lack of honest drug education.

So, what is the justification for causing such misery? According to those in power, it is to 'protect the public from the scourge of drugs', however, what they apparently fail to realise is that, by driving the whole drug scene underground and into the hands of violent criminals, it is their prescription that is making drugs such a 'scourge'.

Yet still they press on, stigmatising users and demonising the sellers, most of whom are simply providing a service to those who are specifically seeking what they have to offer. The propagandist image of the evil pusher, hanging around schools, waiting to force drugs on unsuspecting children, is largely a myth. Any person who would do such a thing is generally despised as much (if not more) by the drug using/selling community, as by the rest of society.

The truth of the matter is that those involved in the sale and use of illicit substances are largely the victims of the prejudice and bigotry fuelled by hypocritical governments who, whilst doling out alcohol and nicotine on the one hand, alienate and criminalise, on the other, those who enjoy an alternative.

So, what of those whose health is being harmed by the anti-drug sanctions? Recently, a major newspaper highlighted the plight of Afghan women who are being sold into slavery and the sex trade, due to the fact their farmer husbands/fathers are now being paid \$80 per acre for an area from which they were previously able to make \$2,000 – a direct result of the clampdown on the opium/heroin trade.

Where is the concern for their health, which is being damaged involuntarily, not through choice, which is the case with most drug users?

So, if we can rule out concern for health as a viable excuse, what other reasons could the ruling class have for the oppression of drug users? It is a sad fact that those in power do not want the people to have 'too much' freedom. The reason for this is actually quite simple: freedom of choice leads to freedom of thought.

In other words, the more options that are available to me, the more time I will spend in considering them. In general, this would appear to lead to the broadening of minds and more independent people.

Nowhere can the relationship between choice and thought be more clearly seen than in the area of drug use. While it is true that some chemicals do suppress thought and induce a certain amount of apathy, far more common are those that stimulate the mind and promote new ways of thinking.

Anyone who has ever taken LSD, MDMA, magic Mushrooms or any other, similarly psychotropic substance will recognise some truth in the above statement. The world is just not as simple as those in power would have us believe.

There are infinitely more possibilities open to humankind than a 40-hour week, followed by Friday night in the pub, and it is the fear of too many people realising this that forms the basis for the government's war on drugs.

What the instigators of this war must soon come to realise, however, is that they cannot win. Humankind has used various plants, powders and chemicals to expand minds, perform rituals or just have fun for thousands of years.

Trying to stop such uses is like the failed attempts at alcohol prohibition in the USA. It is an absurd response to what is an inherent aspect of human nature (the desire to have fun, to explore new frontiers and further push back the boundaries of knowledge and experience) and this is becoming more apparent as time goes on.

In recent months we have seen a significant increase in the numbers of people speaking out in favour of a reform of contemporary drug laws. From David Cameron to Charles Kennedy, from the Sun to the Times, people who, though perhaps not users of illegal drugs themselves, can at least see that current legislation is not working – the campaign for reform is growing.

The freedom of the individual to have control over his/her own body and mind is one of our fundamental human rights and any attempts to restrict this are the actions, not of a progressive, free state, but of an oppressive, despotic one.

Lev Dahl

\* J.S Mill, writing in On Liberty.

There's one DIY space in the UK where you can get zines like: Slug & Lettuce, Profane Existence, Maximum Rock n Roll, Heartattack & R.T.B., music from labels like: Broken Rekids, Active, Skuld, Havoc, Malarie, Flat Earth and Morfahate, books from AK Press, Freedom, Rebel Press, and many others!

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### Pensions

page 1 significantly behind current needed funding levels.

A new report by the Institute of Economic Affairs has also criticised the government's figures on the state pensions hole.

New figures compiled by the IEA, which uses a lower likely interest rate than the official government view over the next few years, have estimated a pensions gap of £817bn.

The figure is nearly twice the previous estimate, and represents approximately 69% of the total GDP for the UK.

### Quiz answers

1. He was a sergeant in the mounted police of Sao Paulo.
2. In December 2004 they evicted them by getting workmen to remove the nest. Local authorities said that the hawks weren't protected.
3. 1956, though it dissolved in 1963. It was reformed almost immediately and has continued since then as a Platformist group.
4. The words are from the anarchist Free Women of Spain, Mujeres Libres, in their 'Anthem' from 1937.

# REVIEW

## Tom Jennings judges Ms Dynamite's second album a mismatch of unremarkable smooth music and remarkably self-indulgent rant

**E**xploding out of a vibrant UK Garage underground in 2002 with *A Little Deeper*, Ms Dynamite injected conscious womanist ire and exuberant streetwise mischief into the ever-moribund mainstream of British popular music, with hit singles like the anti-bling 'It Takes More' garnering industry awards and highly creditable sales.

Since then, things done changed (slightly) thanks to her success, and record company doors have opened a crack for talented and more-or-less socially-aware British female urban artists: in hip-hop (the superb Estelle, and M.I.A.'s innovative stylistics), the drum-and-bass-derived hardcore of Grime (Shystie, Lady Sovereign), and R&B (Jamelia and Terri Walker in addition to queen Beverley Knight). Now returning after baby-mother business, Dynamite's new album is touted as a milestone as significant here as 1998's magnificent *Miseducation of Lauryn Hill* was stateside. Sadly, *Judgement Days* squanders its good intentions and self-righteous fury on what amount politically to little more than lame liberal laments.

True, the blistering attacks in the album on the state of the world are refreshing compared to the prevailing pop gloss and glitter and 'indie' whingeing and posing. The title track opens by juxtaposing the collective abuse perpetrated by the global system on women, children and the poor with that experienced individually in personal relationships.

But rather than exploring the connections, the different levels are simple-mindedly equated and those responsible castigated as sinners requiring absolution. And because "in permittin' greed and violence, then we got blood on our hands too", the appeal to conscience fatally misinterprets institutional violence by fusing politics with voluntarist ethics.

The obliteration of complexity and refusal to envisage alternatives persists through a withering anti-ode to an

absent 'Father', the heartfelt 'Put Your Gun Away' and unflinching 'Self Destruct', culminating in 'Mr Prime Minister' – cataloguing the failings of representative democracy before fading into fatalistic whining:

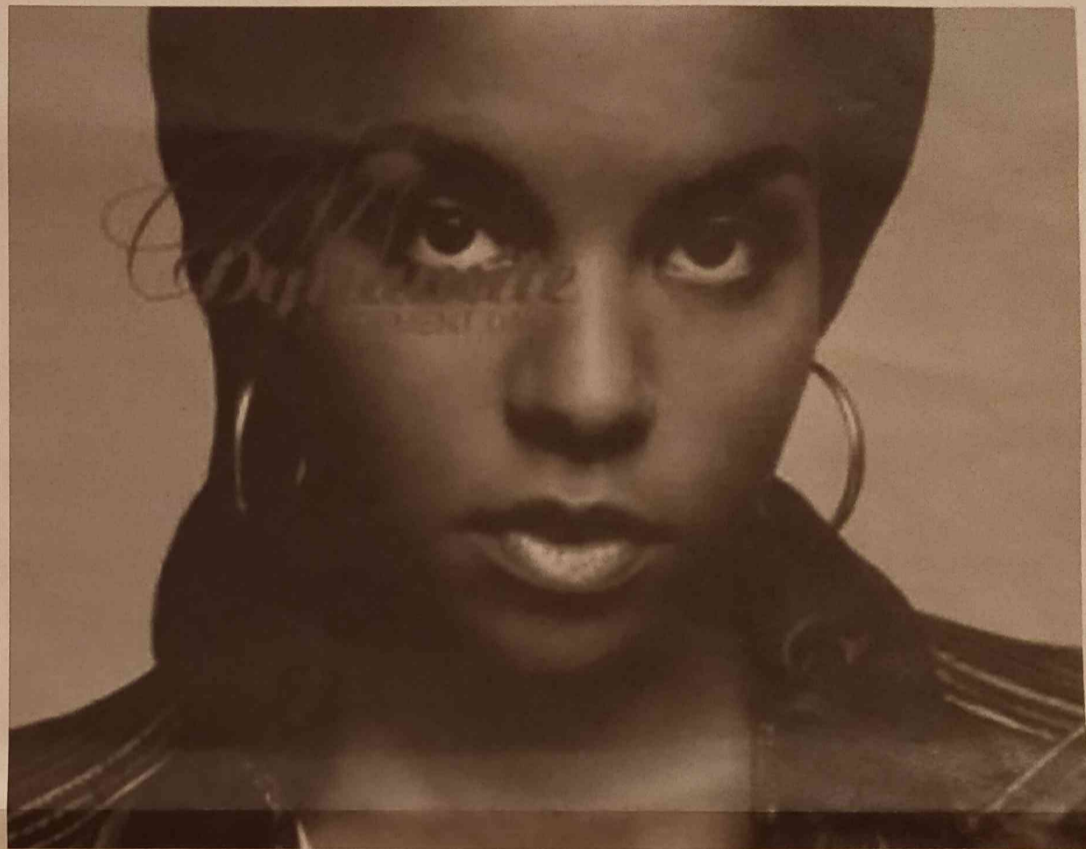
"How many hundred seats in parliament / It's so unfair but so clear / Don't none of them represent me / And ain't one of them represent my peers / And it don't matter who we vote for, nor who gets in / The poor keep dyin' and the rich keep livin' / ... You said things would change when you wanted our vote / But it stays the same, Mr Prime Minister"

Punctuating the focus on 'issues' are more wistful songs of love and loss, representing staple R&B fare. These are pleasant enough but scarcely distinctive, with neither the strength and depth of vocal rendering to convince as soul, nor much correlation with the anger and bombast elsewhere – helping explain why *Judgement Days* is so disappointing.

The formulas of the best black music have been adopted, but to serve such clumsily imposed 'lessons' that the unselfconscious energy of the first album disappears. Instead of integrated thematics mingling private and public, hard and soft, love and pain – no doubt crystallised from the dynamic give-and-take of an organic underground scene – we have an awkwardly-assembled commodity.

Next time, let's hope Dynamite returns to biographical reportage emphasising experience rather than cod-ideology, involvement over detachment, and complicity as opposed to priggishness. Thereupon witnessing and testifying to struggle articulates women's complaints from a sympathetic 'round-the-way-girl' perspective rather than generalised feminist dismissal; representing 'reality' from the neighbourhood reflects social embedding rather than separation or superiority; spiritual suffering keeps redemptive hope alive for earthly change; and 'talking to the enemy' doesn't just vent moral spleen.

As a genuine emissary of your people, the pretence is of engaging with power – but actually you're reinforcing grass-



roots awareness of the pointlessness of the conversation unless it's on your terms. At all levels, when this rich tricky texture is absent, mimicked or exploited as commercial gambit, hollow gestures result – or smug platitudes.

### MsJudged Blandishments

And unfortunately, *Judgement Days* just plays it straight. The subtly deceptive multiple meanings generated from black culture's historically-honed rhetoric are squashed flat almost as thoroughly as manufactured stars cluelessly expropriating the artful kudos of blues, soul, funk, reggae and hip-hop.

However, even your average NY studio pseudo-gangstas acknowledge the tragedy of selling their souls for the bottom dollar, exemplifying in lyrical lifestyles

the all-round damage that's done. Whereas this album's simplistic blame-game echoes conventional discourses of the moral inadequacy of the poor, while imploring power to self-reform.

Maybe Dynamite has swallowed the style-mag adoration, celebrity hyperbole and promotional hullabaloo – mistaking maudlin sentimentality for analysis, powerful fair-weather friends for influence, self-importance for seriousness, and media presence for strategic action. Hell, her pompous circumstance has even suckered her into corporate charity and the SWP's Love Music Hate Racism recruitment drive. Naff or what?

Further signs of commercial domestication have blunted the sharp edges of a bragging rapper skewering her peers with wit, now replaced by

humourless bluster from the pulpit. Sonically, the first album mingled drum-and-bass-tinged urgency with inventive melanges of reggae and hip-hop beats to counterpoint expert rapid-fire lyrics, among which even the mellow cuts sparkled.

Here the radio-friendly R&B-lite production from Chink Santana, Bloodshy & Avant and Reza Safinia is slickly competent but won't light up any party outside suburban teenage bedrooms.

Overall, *Judgement Days* is far too bland to pass muster as action thriller and much too po-faced to inspire. More damp squib than *Dyna-mi-tee* – despite her potshots at elected leaders – for now she's lost the gunpowder plot.

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

## BOOKS

### Wall and Piece

by Banksy  
Century, £20

Renowned stencil graffiti exponent and all-round public art prankster Banksy continues his long march into the (anti-) establishment with the publication this month of the glossy coffee-table volume *Wall and Piece* – a compendium of three previously self-published efforts, *Banging Your Head Against a Brick Wall*, *Existencilism* and *Cut It Out*, plus more recent material from forays into official and unofficial gallery exhibitions in London, New York and Paris and defacing the apartheid wall in Palestine.

He's presented painted farm animals in a warehouse in the fashionable yBa East End, remixed and updated classical

and modernist painting and sculpture (for example with 200 live rats as attendants in a posh gallery in the West End), snuck fake artefacts into Tate Britain and other museums, and generally thumbed his nose at the great and the good.

Despite the necessity of anonymity given media hype, moral panic and police attention to such 'vandalism', his prolific, exuberant and subversive street output in Bristol and London for over a decade has generated increasing media celebrity – which has encouraged the entrepreneurial turn.

His work now commands respectably high prices when offered for sale as contemporary 'high-concept' commodities, such that his proclamations against both the mainstream art market and the 'brandalism' of corporate advertising are

starting to look somewhat threadbare.

But he's a lot less precious than many adusting types whose moral superiority about the 'unfairness' of capitalism leads them to sneer at the proletarian vulgarity of direct expressions such as tagging (like Dr.D, who nevertheless unflinchingly adds her 'signature').

Fortunately the substance of Banksy's project retains its integrity, largely through the wit and warmth of its commonsense anti-authoritarian sensibility and the intelligence of his deconstructions of governmental complacency and corresponding public passivity.

Whether images of hip-hop rats and sinister chimps symbolise the lowly masses intimating their impending takeover of urban areas; or when fun is

poked at the evil, stupidity, duplicity and arrogance of the police and state violence; or official signage is travestied to encourage other graffitiists, harangue touristic attitudes, or highlight the general creeping fascism of the times – the question of who is allowed to occupy, mark their presence and preoccupations upon, and take self-determined action in our shared space remains central.

Most of all, Banksy wants more people – many more – to take up his call. And they are. For this generous spirit and humility I'd forgive a lot – and if he wants to sell his soul for Damien Hirst's dollars ... well, that's his spiritual funeral.\*

\* Hirst is rumoured to be investing in Banksy 'originals' at around £25k each.

## FREEDOM

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## A Sideways Look

As someone who enjoys cooking, I remember I felt that the short-lived Anarchist Workers Group were wrong to advocate communal kitchens for a post-revolutionary society. It wasn't because I particularly wanted to advocate an alternative, more the feeling of culinary dread that such a phrase engenders.

Now, however, I'm much more likely to be won over to this argument – as long as the people doing the cooking have both the necessary skills and imagination. The reason is that I found out how much food private households waste in this country. One third of it. The wastage from commercial catering is about 5%. So what's going on? And why is this so high?

I talked to a couple of friends with experience in catering. That caterers don't want waste, as it means costs are higher and profits lower, is obvious. But caterers also get deliveries timed when they need them, usually daily, and have better storage facilities and are generally better organised than the average home. They will also use more of an item – so, for example, bones from beef or chicken are used for stock, as are fish heads and trimmings. This thrifty approach to food is characteristic of peasant cuisine – and it certainly was the case for most of the last century in this country.

What changed? The villain of the piece is the big supermarkets. The accomplices are the long hours work culture and a lack of general knowledge about food.

Supermarkets have been a capitalist success story. Not only have they driven other capitalists out of business (small and specialist stores), they have de-skilled those jobs and abolished the seasons. Their demands fuel illegal migrant operations in packing houses and have turned the M25 into one big roundabout for 45 ton lorries carrying lettuce from Andalusia.

They rig the market with loss leaders, like bananas, which are significantly cheaper than elsewhere, to hide the fact that everything else isn't, and may be more expensive. Two-for-one offers encourage people to buy more than they need, but the real factor is the weekly shop. It might surprise some, but this is a very recent invention, like, more recent than the pocket calculator. It only came about because of cars (so that you can buy more than you can carry) and refrigeration. Naturally, people are tempted to buy more on this basis. And if food is so cheap, there's no need to be thrifty with it. After all, if a whole chicken can cost as little as £2.50, and a tin of chicken soup is 40p, why bother using the carcass to make stock?

If you can shop daily, which unfortunately I can't, you can buy things as you need them. No more

pots of yoghurt slowly growing a culture at the back of the fridge. That the way most of us eat now is totally unsustainable is a given. Air-freight, food miles, excessive packaging, wastage and landfill conspire in a cycle that is almost an anti-ecological one. Unless you're a rat, or salmonella.

Svartfrosk

## Blast from the Past

Taken from Freedom of 30th November 1963: Anyone who believes what the priests and the politicians say might think that the assassination of President Kennedy on 22nd November was a major event in the history of the United States, of the West, of all mankind even.

The papers and the priests and the politicians have repeated the stale platitudes we hear whenever a famous man dies (just wait until Churchill's long and wicked life end at last) and some have excelled themselves. From what we have been told during the last week, Kennedy was a saviour and his death is a world disaster.

Fortunately for our sanity, there have been some good moments in all this nonsense. There was Pravda calling Kennedy "an outstanding statesman", and Krushchev calling his death "a heavy blow to all who want peace".

There was the Archbishop of Canterbury calling him "a bastion of Christian ideals."

Now, Freedom is written by and for people who don't believe what the papers and the priests and the politicians say. We didn't think Kennedy was a major figure, and we don't think his death is a major disaster. Of course there was a tragedy, for his friends and his family, for those who liked or loved him, but this is the tragedy that recurs when the least of men dies.

There is no political tragedy, except that so many people are still slaves to the cult of personality, and still project their emotions onto stars instead of relating them to the real world. Kennedy's death was a 'happening', not a real event.

## The quiz

1. What job did Brazilian anarchist Primitivo Raimundo Soares resign from when he became an anarchist?
2. Two red tailed hawks nested on a 12th floor ledge in Manhattan. They featured in TV specials and books, but how did the wealthy residents of the block respond?
3. When was the Uruguayan Anarchist Federation formed?
4. Who wanted to write anew, the word 'woman'?

Answers on page 6



Yeeek!!  
What a horrible thought!!  
If we let people out of prison, how can we ever be as free as America??

Sir Christopher Meyer, retired British ambassador to the USA, writes: "Blair always appeared to be seduced by the ... glamour of American power."

## Imagine if...

Alan Johnson, union man, looked at his membership card as he sat in the Strangers bar at the House of Commons.

The Trade and Industry Secretary still thought of those days in the Communication Workers' Union, which he'd been part of since he was 18.

How dare people question his union credentials! He stared around him at the bar, full of hacks, politicians and people of power, and scowled.

A manservant noticed his expression and quickly refilled his sherry glass. Johnson downed it one, his weathered face creasing slightly with the strain.

He turned back to his companion. "How dare they!" He blustered. "My own people are calling a Labour sell-out! Cut me open and you'll see trade unions running through me."

His audience smiled toothily. "Just because I've pushed through retirement at 60 for public servants, refused to consider reintroducing secondary picketing, want to take away the union vote so they can't embarrass the cabinet any more, and I'm going to start privatising ... I mean," he hastily corrected himself "Give share incentives to the workforce at Royal Mail".

He stopped. It was quite a long list. "I am a unionist, aren't I Tony?"

His companion's toothy smile widened. "Yes of course you are Alan, that doesn't mean you have to be a dewy-eyed sentimentalist though."

Alan nodded. Tony was right, he wasn't a sell-out, he was still a union man, through and through. He looked around for that manservant – where was his sherry?

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## Listings

26th November Adverts and Their Enemies, a day devoted to the art of subvertising with workshops, discussion and practical tips from 12 noon at The Basement, 24 Lever Street Manchester, see [www.dosummat.org.uk](http://www.dosummat.org.uk)

29th November Airline executives will be in London for an international conference to discuss expansion of the aviation industry, so why not greet them when they gather for their Gala Dinner – dress formal and meet at 6pm, Tower Bridge, see [planestupid.com](http://planestupid.com) or email [actionupdate@hushmail.com](mailto:actionupdate@hushmail.com)

3rd December International Day of Climate Protest, to coincide with the next round of climate talks in Montreal, with days of action in London and Edinburgh, as well as simultaneous demonstrations in many other countries including USA, Canada, Greece, Turkey, Australia and Asia see [globalclimatecampaign.org](http://globalclimatecampaign.org) or [campaigncc.org](http://campaigncc.org)

3rd December Annual Dutch Anarchist Bookfair 11am till 6pm, De Kargadoor, Oudegracht 36, Utrecht, The Netherlands, see [www.kargadoor.nl](http://www.kargadoor.nl)

3rd December Hands Off Venezuela conference from 11,30am to 5,30pm at NATFHE, 27 Britannia Street, London WC1, see [handsoffvenezuela.org](http://handsoffvenezuela.org)

3rd December Manchester Anarchist Bookfair from 12 noon until 5pm at The Basement, 24 Lever Street (off Piccadilly Gardens), Manchester, see [radicalbookfair.org.uk](http://radicalbookfair.org.uk)

3rd December Showing video of John Pilger lecture to Thomas Paine Society: Propaganda and Silence in the War on Terror, 3pm at Conway Hall, 25 Red Lion Square, London WC1

4th December Should we sacrifice freedom for security? – a debate with South London Ethical Society, 3pm at Conway Hall, 25 Red Lion Square, London WC1, see [ethicalsoc.org.uk](http://ethicalsoc.org.uk)

6th December No2ID will debate with

Andrew Burnham MP (Home Office Minister) about the need for ID cards, 7pm at City College, Pelham Street, Brighton.

17th December Free market, Manchester city centre, see [dosummat.org.uk](http://dosummat.org.uk)

7th to 8th January Newbury reunion, it's ten years since the start of work on the Newbury Bypass so come and meet up with old friends and relive that freezing cold winter experience! People who weren't at Newbury are more than welcome too, see [roadalert.org.uk](http://roadalert.org.uk)

9th to 15th January Faslane Peace Camp 'Adventure Week'

28th January Prison Abolition Seminar on resisting prison construction, radical alternatives to prison and abolitionist theory past and present, at Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London, from 2pm to 5pm, for more details see [alternatives2prison.ik.com](http://alternatives2prison.ik.com)

## Introducing...

Manchester Anarchist Bookfair  
The eighth Manchester bookfair will see a wide range of anarchist groups meeting and will feature stalls from groups such as the Solidarity Federation, IWW, AK Press, and the Wombles.

An organiser said: "It is right in the middle of the city. The idea behind the bookfair is to reflect the diversity of anarchist groups and thought across Manchester and the North."

"There will be free internet access via the Basement's computers. Hot and cold food and drink will be available all day, there are no plans for any events afterwards (no jokes about sound systems and Wetherspoons)."

website: [radicalbookfair.org.uk](http://radicalbookfair.org.uk)  
email: [info@radicalbookfair.org.uk](mailto:info@radicalbookfair.org.uk)

time and place: Saturday 3rd December from 12 noon to 5pm at The Basement, 24 Lever Street (off Piccadilly Gardens), Manchester

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