

FREEDOM

80P ANARCHIST NEWS AND VIEWS

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DISENFRANCHISING VULNERABLE

The GMB have brought out a new report which seriously undermines a burgeoning government attempt to strip down the country's largest employer of disabled people.

Remploy, which supports over 9,000 disabled and severely disabled people in its factories and back to work schemes, is being scrutinised by the Department of Work and Pensions in order to cut the vital service.

The GMB union have attacked governmental attempts to break up Remploy, which is the largest employer of disabled people in Britain, and have heavily criticised insinuations by the National Audit Office that the entire business is "not really sustainable in purely economic terms".

Investigating shop stewards and senior figures at the GMB and Amicus unions have found that "The factory businesses have been loaded with corporate and other costs in order to make those businesses appear in a poor light. Similarly, Interwork financial data has been presented in such a way as to suppress the actual costs of that operation and to make it look like value for money."

In a report brought out on 5th June, the unions have suggested a plan to save the jobs of 5,000 workers by drastically changing Remploy's "top heavy management system", which it concludes is not only hugely expensive, but is not committed to the job. The groups point to examples such as the

Chief Operating Officer (COO) of the company. In the last financial year (ending March 2005) the COO's annual salary package excluding pensions was some £101,300 (up 10.7% from 2004). However, she has three other current directorships as well as being Remploy's Chief Operating Officer, and has sat on several other panels in her five years at the company.

Freedom's own analysis of the National Audit Office's report found some startling weaknesses. Direct comparisons are made between Remploy, and its sister service with New Deal.

New Deal has on the face of it been more successful, with one in three participants put into work at less overall cost to the government, compared to one in six Remploy scheme members.

Average costs to Remploy per head have actually dropped over the last decade, from £10,175 to £8,200 per head. Operating costs have risen massively however as the population employed by Remploy or via its employment finding scheme has enlarged and management costs have spiralled, along with rising manufacturing outlays.

However, a footnote in the NAO report acknowledges that: "We would expect participants on Workstep to have substantially more barriers to employment than those on New Deal



Engorged: The Three Gorges Dam becomes fully operational as the final breaks are destroyed and water rushes in. One million people were displaced to allow for a massive expansion behind the dam, which is the biggest in the world. Human rights and environmental campaigning groups have attacked the project, which is projected to provide 3% of China's power needs, saying apart from the displacement already caused, there will be a huge pollution buildup behind the dam, and destruction of rare wildlife habitats.

for Disabled People." It also goes on to note, that this year's figures have been substantially warped by massive startup

costs for a single business startup – cycle – which drag the average costs per head up.

The trade union plan's main recommendations are that Remploy be
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A TAXING SOLUTION

Analysis of the small print of the government's pensions bill has revealed that poorer sections of society could be hit by cuts to their Savings Credit schemes on retirement.

Pensioners retiring as the new regulations come into force, already deprived of their pensions until 68, would lose a portion of the credit – which had originally been designed as a tax-free savings scheme for the poor – depending on how much above the basic state pension it made them.

The current credit system allows those who have saved for a low income on top of the basic state pension to receive savings credits as a reward, calculated on every pound saved above the basic

pension up to a guaranteed level of £114.05. But while the basic state payment will increase over the next 30 years, no provision has been made for the Savings Credit to do so.

It has been estimated that almost 1.5m pensioners would find themselves worse off by amounts ranging from £80 to £450 a year per person, and those on very low incomes could receive nothing whatsoever.

Labour pensions minister James Purnell defended the allegations by saying that median wage earners would be doing substantially better, and that pensioners would be saved the burden of means testing by the changes.

Meanwhile in the private sector, a new survey has found that the trend for closing final salary pension schemes to existing members is likely to pick up pace over the next few years.

The survey, which 159 larger employers took part in, found that even if companies were not planning to close the schemes off, employees were being expected to pay more and work longer hours in exchange.

The average contribution rate per member has risen from 4.6% to 5.2% over the last two years, even as the promise of a stable payout declines, and is likely to rise to 6%, according to industry analysts.

The survey finds that employees are not only being asked to pay more but to work beyond 65, with 78% of companies in the survey expecting their normal retirement age to rise in the next two years, compared with the 65% of just two years ago.

Only a third of final salary pension schemes – which have the best return over the lifetime of a worker as they based on wages at retirement, as opposed to taking an average of wages, are still open today, with two-thirds having closed to new members. But closure of schemes to existing members has been relatively rare until now.

Nearly 50% of all final salary plans with 1/60ths accrual now require members to pay over 5% of their salary towards their pension, compared to a quarter who did so just two years ago.

STUDENT DEMOS

Greek students have occupied three-quarters of all Greece's academic departments in an attempt to resist education reforms proposed by the conservative government. Mass demonstrations on 25th May, 1st June and 6th June resulted in anarchists and activists battling police.

The students are fighting for the withdrawal of proposals that will strip students of rights won by previous generations of activists. The state wants to withdraw funding for free text books, end practices allowing students to resit exams, and to stay at university for longer than one and a half times the length of their degrees.

These rights are vital to Greek university students, who receive no grant for their studies and often have to extend their degrees so they can work to pay for food and housing. They also wish to introduce managerial staff to run the universities – administration is currently under the jurisdiction of academics – and end college transfers for poor and disabled students.

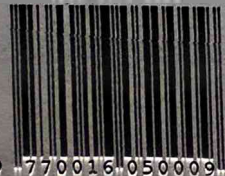
The proposals also wish to bring an end to the 'campus sanction', which means

that police can only enter Greek university campuses with the express permission of the university 'asylum committee'. This right is a legacy of the 1973 student uprising against the military dictatorship, and is frequently a source of tension, particularly among the large anarchist community at Athens Polytechnic.

This is not the first time that the student movement has had to resist unwanted reforms, with previous attempts failing in 1991, '92, '95, '98 and 2001. Many Greek campuses are highly political and sympathetic to revolutionary groups, with student unions often organised horizontally, with mass assemblies of the students co-ordinating the protest.

The latest protests emerged in opposition to all the main political parties, including the opposition Social Democrats and the Stalinist KKE. Yet such is the extent of unrest among students that even more conservative departments such as University of Macedonia and the Faculty of Physical Education and Sport Science at Thessaloniki have been occupied.

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Home and away

Mental health lapse

A disability charity has found that businesses are ignoring the mental health of their workforce.

A survey by the Shaw Trust found that only 3% of public and private sector managers believe they have an effective policy to cope with stress and mental ill-health, while eight out of ten have no mental health policy at all. The survey, which covered 550 senior managers across the country, also found that three quarters of managers thought that less than 5% of their workforce would suffer health problems – nine out of ten claimed there was no problem at their workplace.

Figures brought out by the Trust estimate however that up to 25% of the workforce would suffer from a problem in any given year, as they include stress and depression, unlike most managers.

Privatisation = cuts

Following a decision last year to privatise the Office for National Statistics, moves to cut and relocate jobs at the group ahead of the sale have prompted a ballot for strike action. Two thousand members of PCS working for the Office for National Statistics (ONS) have been balloted by PCS and sister union Prospect comes as the ONS plan to cut over 800 jobs, relocate 750 posts out of London and 150 out of Titchfield, Hampshire. The union maintains that the scale of the cuts, the flawed logic of the relocations and glaring weakness of the business case underpinning the plans, will undermine the ability of the ONS to function properly.

ONS has suffered from poor financial and strategic management since it was set up in 1996. Staff have some of the lowest pay rates in the civil service and after years of underfunding, poor training and development, morale is at an all time low.

Yahoodunnit

In a letter to Yahoo! Europe's vice president Dominique Vidal, journalists' union the NUJ have condemned Yahoo after the search portal provided information to Chinese authorities helping to identify several campaigning journalists.

Shi Tao was sentenced to 10 years in prison for forwarding a government email to the foreign press. The authorities had tried to warn journalists of the 'danger' posed by the return of dissidents on the 15th anniversary of the Tiananmen Square massacre.

Jiang Lijun was sentenced to four years in November 2003 after Yahoo! provided information that helped identify him. He was sentenced for writing articles that called the Chinese government 'autocratic' and said he favoured a western-style democracy.

Li Zhi was sentenced to eight years for discussing pro-democracy issues in a web forum and for emailing pro-democracy campaigners.

Walmart 'family' ballots

GMB has given official notice that the national strike ballot process in Asda Wal-Mart's 20 distribution depots is underway. The Electoral Reforms Services (ERS) will conduct the official strike ballot and ballot papers have been issued.

GMB members in Asda Wal-Mart's distribution depots want to secure proper national bargaining with the company covering pay, conditions and union facilities in all 20 distribution depots. The members employed in the depots want to see Asda Wal-Mart paying a bonus after the company made £775 million profit in 2005.

Around the world

ALGERIA: Over 3,000 workers have gone on strike at vehicle manufacturing giant Sonacome against worsening conditions inside the company's Rouiba factory (pictured below).

The entire factory of Rouiba is in a state of unrest after 3,200 workers downed tools for three hours on 2nd June, to draw attention to the dangers that are surrounding the factory – the biggest in Rouiba.

The strike was triggered by increased thefts of spare mechanical components in the factory worth, according to a preliminary estimation, more than Cn1 billion in just ten days. Workers have alleged that the thefts are designed as a deliberate financial haemorrhage to weaken the factory to make it easier to shut down.

The strike saw workers' opposition to government plans to close the company. Criticism has also been levelled at 'the sneaky way of recruitment that contradicts the collective convention that was signed between the syndicate and the general direction', for ignoring agreements to give priority to sons of the company's retirees in recruitment.

Mokdad Messouadi, general secretary of the local union of Rouiba, said in a declaration to El Khabar that syndicate branches of the zone expressed their full backing to the demands made by workers at the company, and their defence of this symbolic company.



BOLIVIA: In a tiny nod to extreme pressure for land reform in the country, president Evo Morales has given 18,600 square miles of state land to indigenous peasant communities as part of a new programme of land reform.

Following a walkout of big landowners from talks, a ceremony was held with peasants receiving deeds to land currently owned by the government. A further 58,400 square miles are promised, along with suggestions that big landowners would finally have some of their unused lands taken.

But amid celebrations over the breakthrough, there has been cynicism by analysts over Morales' desire and ability to see through major agrarian reform against the landowners.

Although Morales, who is well aware of the ability of the general populace to force him out, has talked strong rhetoric over the nationalisation of major corporate resources, both current trends and historical precedent point to minor improvements rather than radical reform.

In negotiations over oil and gas with major multinational companies, Morales has been using the threat of nationalisation as a lever to attempt a settlement over taxation of multinational profit-taking in the country.

In attempting to split 'productive' and 'unproductive' land from his proposed reforms, he is similarly trying to lessen the blow to the landowners in future, but even this is likely to generate major difficulties.

Historically, land reforms have actually favoured big landowners, with 79 million acres redistributed to large owners and only 10 million to peasants between 1996 and 2003.



CANADA: Around a thousand protesters gathered in downtown Montreal on 27th May as part of the 'Status For All' National Day of Action for Immigrant Rights.

There were also demos and activities across Canada, including Vancouver, Toronto (pictured above), Ottawa, Peterborough and Fredericton.

In Montreal, demonstrators gathered at Phillips Square, the heart of the downtown area. The demo began with a press scrum, which turned into a speak-out by various migrants who are faced with deportation, or who have successfully resisted removals. Migrants from Mauritania, Iran, India, Algeria, Romania, Somalia and elsewhere spoke to a packed crowd at Phillips Square.

Kahninehta, a Mohawk elder from Kahnawake, opened the demonstration, followed by Jean St-Vil of the Canadian Haiti Action Network. Smail Behloul and his family, activists with the Action Committee of Non-Status Algerians and Solidarity Across Borders, who marched last year for one week as part of the 'No One Is Illegal March on Ottawa' also opened the demonstration.

KAZAKHSTAN: There was a huge clash on 31st May in a suburban shantytown community of so-called *samozakhvatchiks* (squatters) between residents and

numerous detachments of police as the residents tried to protect themselves against developers moving in.

Anyone visiting Bakai would no doubt get the impression that they're in an urban combat zone as they would see demolished homes, broken pieces of lumber, people's household possessions, children's toys, an overturned pram, all scattered randomly throughout the area. Women with faces marred by grief and tears stand around the ruins of their homes. It's as if this place has just been bombed.

Earlier that morning the Bakaizcy were celebrating Children's Day, treating their own kids as well as children from the nearby orphanage.

The residents let down their guard, took down barricades and look-out posts as they were counting on a timely and peaceful resolution of their conflict with city authorities through representatives they've sent to the Majilis (lower chamber of Parliament).

Taking advantage of the element of surprise, the guardians of social order were able to rather quickly dispatch five local homes but as they attempted to proceed further into Bakai they met progressively stiffer resistance. By 10 o'clock police detachments broke through to a house that has been the centre of attention and scheduled for demolition as early as 12th May.

This is where a massive scuffle between residents and the police took place, as locals hurled rocks and bottles towards the police. The *oponovzcy* (riot police) used special tactics once again. According to those who participated in the clash with the police, nightstick beatings were meted out not only to the adult men but to the women and young teens as well.

Prison news

Il Silvestre defendants transferred

Some of the Italian eco-activists, from Il Silvestre, arrested on the 4th of May, and accused of using explosives to damage an electricity pylon in a protest against nuclear power, have been transferred. Their new addresses are:

- Silvia Guerini, Carcere 'La Dozza', Via Del Gomito 2, 40127 Bologna, Italy.
- Benedetta Galante, Casa Circondariale, Contrada Capo di Monte, 82100 – Benevento (BN), Italy.
- Federico Bonamici, Casa di Reclusione, via Nuova Poggioreale 177, 80143 Napoli Poggioreale (NA), Italy.
- Giuseppe Bonamici, Nuova Casa Circondariale 'San Michele', Strada Casale 50/A, 15100 Alessandria, Italy.
- Costantino Ragusa, Casa Circondariale 'S. Vittore', Piazza Filangeri 2, 20123 Milano, Italy.

Sergio and Gabriele, the two anarchists who were also arrested on the 4th May for allegedly stealing a car, have been released from prison, but are still being held under house arrest.

ELP name Oregon 16 informants

Earth Liberation Prisoners has recently released another statement on the Oregon 16 naming two people as informers and

withdrawing support for them. The statement reads as follows: "Based on information sent to us by some of the Oregon 16 defendants, as well as statements by lawyers close to the cases, and looking at the proceedings at the 2nd of June 2006 bail hearing for Nathan Block and Joyanna Zacher, ELP is removing Chelsea Gerlach from our prisoner list. We are also withdrawing our support for Suzanne Savoie (who is currently on bail). Chelsea Gerlach and Suzanne Savoie have both been named by some of their co-defendants, as well as by some of the lawyers, as cooperating with the authorities which has included making statements against others. We have not yet confirmed the full extent of their cooperation with the authorities (and there may be others who they have named), but we have confirmed that both Gerlach and Savoie have made statements against Nathan Block and Joyanna Zacher."

Rooftop protest at Featherstone

At the beginning of June several prisoners at Featherstone Prison, a category C jail near Wolverhampton, took part in a rooftop protest. The protest ended peacefully after seven hours.

No extradition for Roberto Catrino Lopez

A small victory has been won in the case of former Spanish FIES prisoner, Roberto Catrino Lopez, arrested while 'on the run' in Holland, and whom the Spanish authorities wanted extradited. The extradition request was for the moment turned down on various grounds, including the fact that the Spanish authorities were deemed not to have provided sufficient information about the case, that Roberto had actually completed more than two thirds of the sentence he was serving in Spain (and so should ordinarily have been released) and also Roberto's ill-health (he is HIV positive). Despite the failure to extradite him, Roberto remains behind bars.

Jerome White-Bey moved

Jerome White-Bey, founder of the Missouri Prison Labour Union has been transferred. His new address is: Jerome White-Bey, #37979, Southeast Correctional Center, 300 East Pedro Simmons Drive, Charleston, MO 63834, USA.

Italian Lotta Continua pardons

Italian President Giorgio Napolitano has pardoned a member of the group that

carried out one of Italy's most notorious killings. Ovidio Bompreschi, of the Lotta Continua group, was serving a 22-year jail term for the murder of Milan police chief Luigi Calabresi in 1972. Justice Minister Clemente Mastella says he will also seek a pardon for Lotta Continua leader Adriano Sofri.

Calabresi's death was commemorated on a set of stamps last year, but he is still widely blamed for the death of anarchist Giuseppe Pinelli who fell to his death from the fourth-floor window of Milan's police headquarters in 1969. The incident inspired Dario Fo's play *Accidental Death of an Anarchist*.

Banner drops in Leeds

As part of a Day Of Action in support of imprisoned anarchists in Barcelona, and to highlight the current wave of repression there, activists in Leeds did a number of banner drops off motorway bridges and prominent buildings.

Dark Nights

The 325 Collective have just produced another edition of their newsheet *Dark Nights*. Copies are available to download at www.325collective.com

New union, old disappointments

Activists have attacked a new education union as it backs down over promised university pay reforms, reports Rob Ray

Unionists have spoken out against a settlement concluded by the new UCU lecturers' union just days after it was formed from an AUT and Nafthe merger. Following talks over the best way to end a union boycott of marking and setting examinations, UCU have sent an offer to ballot worth 10.37% over the next two years, with a further 2.5% increase for the year after. The boycott has been suspended for a minimum of three weeks until the balloting process is completed.

In a personal internal statement to activists, handed to Freedom, chief negotiator and joint General Secretary Sally Hunt said the union had fought hard for more money, but admitted that it had failed in its primary duties. She said: "These have been some of the most difficult national negotiations that I have been involved with in my career. The employers have failed to speak with one voice, have adopted aggressive strike breaking tactics and have been dragged kicking and screaming towards prioritising more money for staff."

"Sometimes as a negotiator you have to recommend something which you think falls short of what you think the people you represent deserve. We have achieved something, but not enough in my opinion and one reason for this is the utter failure of our current national negotiating structures to work effectively. That is why I have called for an urgent review of bargaining arrangements."

But shop floor activists have condemned union chiefs for a far wider range of faults, agreeing that university bargaining group UCEA have not had enough influence on vice-chancellors' offices, but levelling similar criticisms at UCU's own management team.

Richard, an active unionist at a major Northwestern university, said: "The initial action whilst it was widely supported to start with, was seemingly poorly understood by members – many it seemed did want to undertake action but not anything that might harm students' and would have preferred some other form of action."

"The leadership seemed more intent on posturing to the press than keeping members or local branches informed. There appeared to be a lot of hard ball posturing, but little attempt to get backup from the members who would have to deliver on it."

"As for the offer, well... the first two years are not too bad, but the final year looks suspiciously like the same offer that was beyond the pale a few days ago but with 'or RPI, whichever is highest' tagged on."

Rob, a member of SolFed's new Education Workers' Network, agrees, and believes that communication between union leaders and the shop floor has to drastically improve. He said: "One issue brought home by this action is the need for more frequent 'department and school-based' meetings instead of the once-a-term campus-wide efforts that many local UCU associations seem to think is sufficient. A positive point was that regular meetings around the dispute were held in some departments in some universities."

"On the positive side, UCU members are to be applauded for taking this action. It is to be hoped that the form, patchiness and isolating nature of the action along with incompetence higher up the union will not affect members' resolve next time round. For EWN and



On 10th June, people in over 50 cities around the world took part in naked bike rides as a protest against oil dependency and car culture. Between 600 and 1,000 cyclists, along with a few rollerskaters, rollerbladers and others took part in the London event.

other activists, our role is to build on these positive aspects."

Money that had been docked by individual universities from lecturers supporting the boycott will be given back.

Between now and 2008, UK universities will receive an extra £3.4 billion in funding. Universities promised the government when top-up fees and the other extra funding was announced

that "in general at least a third of that money would be put back into the salaries and conditions of their staff", as real wages for lecturers have fallen by over 40% in the last decade.

Thinking outside the square

An eviction order is due to come into force at the end of this month for the anarchist-led squatted social centre at Russell Square Gardens.

The Square, which has been the largest project of its type over the last few months, was occupied at the beginning of this year with the aim of bringing together a variety of groups to campaign for social change.

Owned by the University of London, the building had stood empty for some

time before being opened, and has since played host to a large number of gatherings and fundraisers, but is due to be evicted at some time between the 23rd and 25th of June.

Alessio, who has been heavily involved in The Square since it began, said: "The university of London took us to court in January and gave us an eviction date six months after, so initially we thought that they liked us, or were scared of getting too much media interest."

"We had a meeting last Sunday [4th June] which decided to resist the eviction and put a call out to people to come down and help us."

"That weekend we want to do some events to consolidate what we have done – a political musical festival. The main thing is trying to present the entire place to people who are going to come down that weekend for a final push to get the message of the place across. We also want to document what has gone on."

"We want to get as many groups as possible to sign the call to show the extent of the networks around The Square. We're

also pushing it with the education trade unions as a lot of lecturers have used the place and make links for next time."

Matt is for the moment a resident at The Square. He is not sure yet where he will end up if the eviction is successful. He said: "I think I've learned a lot from it. There have been loads of gigs, parties, film showings, meetings. A lot of people have been using it as a meeting space."

"I wouldn't say it has been a wide range of people but it hasn't just been one type of person either. You do get people which places like the Rampart [another squatted social centre in East London] wouldn't because it's so central and people don't have to go out of their way to find it."

"It's a fantastic place to live but it can be quite stressful. I'm up for living in a social centre again I think. There's still 25 or 30 people living here, though 90% of them will probably move on to new places, and who want to get another social centre going again as well."

See londonsocialcentre.org.uk for updates

Freudian slip?

In response to the mounting criticism of the police raid on a house in east London in which a man was shot, Blair said he supported the police "One hundred and one per cent – and the security services." Anyone who has read 1984 will know the symbolism of that particular number.

Blair opined that you could "only imagine if [the police] fail to take action and something terrible happened what outcry would be then, so they are in an impossible situation." Except, of course, that was his rationale for invading Iraq and we know how that turned out and how 'reasonable' that intelligence turned out to be. So Blair is giving the police and secret state carte blanche to do what they like, when they like. A bit like US and UK foreign policy, then.

Blair defended his creeping police state, insisting that combating crime will have to take precedence over civil liberties. As usual, he appealed to that old maxim: things have changed. He asserted that there is "an ugly side to

today's crime that is different from when we were growing up" as organised crime is "far more vicious". More vicious than, say, the Krays and their gang?

Unsurprisingly, he urged more powers to the state, "more summary justice, more summary powers, more ability for quick and effective action to be taken, even if it will cross the line that most people normally think of as there in terms of civil liberties." Yes, 'summary justice', that well-known oxymoron. But rest assured, only the guilty need fear summary powers and if you are not guilty when the intelligence was acted on, the state will ensure that you will be afterward.

No sacrifice of your liberty by Blair will be considered too great by him.



FESTIVAL OF RESISTANCE
JUNE 23rd/24th/25th
THE SQUARE
occupied social centre

Chileans struggle for school change

Jack Ray looks at the strong organisation and resolve backing Chile's young radicals

Protests by hundreds of thousands of high-school students have been gathering momentum over the last three weeks, culminating in mass demonstrations, school sit-ins and strikes on 5th June.

Angry pupils want to redress the imbalance between public and private schools and abolish the Organic Constitutional Education Law (LOCE) originally enacted under the dictator Augusto Pinochet. The protesters, mostly between the ages of 11 and 16, were joined by teachers and college students sympathetic to their cause. Despite the young age of many, the authorities responded with massive violence, deploying water cannons and tear gas to attack the crowd in Santiago. Small numbers of demonstrators returned fire with rocks and paving stones.

Large protests also occurred on 29th May, with 600,000 pupils joining a nationwide school strike, and thousands occupying school buildings. The following day, 500,000 marched in demonstrations, and met violence from the paramilitary Carabineros police force, who arrested over 700 people.

Many Chileans were shocked and horrified to see pictures of teenagers and children being attacked by the police. Protests continued for a further two days, with the total number of arrests rising over a thousand.

Embarrassed by the repression, new President Michelle Bachelet was forced to sack the Carabineros Special Forces chief in the wake of the brutality.

More was to come as the government failed to defuse the crisis over the week-

end, despite promising further spending on state education. On 5th June the strikes were bigger still, with over one million students absent from classes.

Yet again trouble flared at a Santiago demonstration, as riot police battled protesters and used the same heavy-handed tactics as the previous week. Despite having sanctioned a further \$200m for education the week before, President Bachelet was forced to offer another \$32m in emergency payments.

The school students goals have not though been met: the protests are aimed at the introduction of a new curriculum, as well as free bus transport for school children, and a reduction in the fees paid to sit examinations to enter college. The government has claimed it cannot afford to pay for the bus transport, but will attempt to alleviate examination fees for poorer students.

Chile faces a massive gap between the quality of education available to private and state school pupils, with 50% of the latter and 91% of the former able to pass examinations enabling them to enter higher education. Many want a much deeper reform to the entire education system, and a closure of the gap between the two sectors. 87% of Chileans reportedly support the demonstrators according to opinion polls.

The government has now attempted to incorporate student leaders into a commission to reform the sector, with 12 students taking their place alongside 48 other experts in looking into the possibility of reform. Some leaders of the Co-ordinating Assembly of Grade School Students have given the move a



cautious welcome, asking the government to allocate more places to the high-schoolers. The national trade union federation CUT has given feeble support to the movement, backing its goals but repudiating the strike action.

Many have remarked on the astonishing degree of organisation by the students, who have autonomously organised sit-ins and demonstrations around the country, as well as mass meetings to discuss ideas for action and what kind of educa-

tion system will be needed in the future. One activist commented: "It's no longer only about reclaiming free bus passes and exams, now ... it's about the complete reconstruction of the education system."

Landless storm Brasilia Congress

More than a thousand landless peasants stormed the Brazilian Congress on 6th June in protest at the slow pace of land reform in the country. Some 500 protesters were arrested and are still being held in Papuda Prison, Brasilia.

The protesters were members of the Movimento de Libertacao dos Sem Terra (Movement for Liberation of the Landless or MLST), a radical splinter group of Brazil's largest social movement (the Landless Workers Movement - MST). The MST was anxious to disassociate itself both from the action and the smaller MLST.

After governing for nearly four years the Workers Party government of President Lula da Silva has made little progress over its promises to distribute land. Brazil has one of the most concentrated land ownership structures in Latin America, with just 3% of landowners holding two thirds of agricultural land.

The Workers Party came to power with the support of the landless movement, on the back of promises to enact land reform, but has continually delayed plans to start the requisition and redistribution process.

Last year the MST staged mass demonstrations to force Lula to re-commit to a manifesto promise to rehouse 400,000 families by 2006. Much of the project money is said to have been redirected to the repayment of IMF debts. By last year the government had only managed to house just 80,000 families. Protesters want the immediate release of the \$800m allocated for the reform project.

The action on 6th June saw demonstrators force their way into the Congress building by using a Fiat car as a battering ram, and destroying glass doors with stones. They were then stopped at the front entrance of the chamber, as they fought security guards. Protesters said that they had

intended to peacefully present a petition, but became more aggressive as they were attacked by security officers. "It was a peaceful action but the police attacked us," protest leader Bruno Maranhao (a member of the Workers Party national executive) told reporters.

Since 1985 Brazilian landless activists have been involved in campaigns of peaceful direct action to address poverty among landless peasants, winning land titles for 350,000 families in two thousand settlements around the country. 180,000 families currently occupying land are still awaiting legal recognition by the government.

Frequently land invasions have been met with violence organised by the state and large latifundista landowners, with community and movement leaders often killed. In February last year, five landless workers were killed when gunmen attacked Minas Gerais, burning a hundred homes and beating the inhabitants.

America's class war

While Bush is busy getting his electoral base fired up by banning gay marriage, his real base is busy raking it in. Government figures out this month show that US companies have increased their share of the economic pie at a faster rate over the past five years than at any time since figures began in 1947.

Profits have climbed by 123% over the same period, soaring from \$714.5bn to \$1,595.4bn (also the fastest increase since records began). Profits from current production as a share of national income have risen from 7% in mid-2001 to 12.2% at the start of this year.

Corporate America is enjoying one of its best periods. During the dot.com boom of the late 1990s, companies only managed a 90% increase in profits over a four and a half year period. The picture for the workers who created these profits are less rosy. As profits have increased as a share of national income, the return going to workers has fallen

from 58.6% in the middle of 2001 to 56.2% in the first quarter of 2006. Wage increases are lagging behind inflation and companies are slashing healthcare and pension benefits for workers.

Unsurprisingly, fat profit margins and low wage growth (i.e. stagnant or falling real wages) have been positive signs not only for the bosses. It is good news for the Federal Reserve, as it means it may not have to raise interest rates as capitalist power and profits are not under threat from uppity workers. Rest assured, if this happens the state will act swiftly to re-introduce the natural order.



Feature

New Labour, new scoundrels

Iain Mackay analyses the latest New Labour fad of eulogising 'traditional values' into the face of his brave new Britain

Samuel Johnson is rightly famed for saying that "patriotism is the last refuge of the scoundrel". As with the Tories before them, New Labour is doing its best to prove him right.

Given the utter disaster of Major's 'Back to Basics' nonsense in the 1990s, you would think that New Labour would have more sense to repeat the same mistake. But, as Blair proves everyday, slavishly following Thatcherism comes naturally to him, even its mistakes.

You can always tell when a government is on its last legs: it starts going on about 'traditional values'. It makes sense though. A regime which has lost the respect of the people will complain that people no longer respect 'traditional values' (i.e. authority).

Rather than adjust their activities to gain respect, politicians simply blame the people they claim to represent and scold them for thinking for themselves.

To solve the problem of the population respecting their intelligence more than their politicians, New Labour is urging that children be taught 'traditional British values' in school. This is, it is claimed, part of an attempt to challenge 'extremism' and promote a more cohesive society.

The latter part is understandable as the market tends to break up society, to weaken the social bonds and interpersonal empathy in favour of seeing others as things, as means to an end. Given that the market utterly destroys 'traditional' values and society, it

always seems contradictory for conservatives to advocate it.

Look at Thatcherism, which transformed British society and, in turn, provoked the 'back to basics' campaign. New Labour is in the same predicament. On the one hand, an utterly ideological support for the market and, on the other, a hypocritical lament about its social impact (and the rush to increase state power to combat it).

New Labour's proposals are for all 11 to 16-year-olds to learn about free speech and democracy in the UK, as well as the contribution made by different communities. The irony of discussing free speech and democracy in an institution where neither exists is not mentioned. But what can you expect, reality will be the last thing this proposal will reflect.

The aim is to see how best 'core British values' can be incorporated into the school timetable. The arrogance is staggering. To suggest that there are uniform values for the 60 million inhabitants of a nation as diverse as Britain is as ridiculous as implying that these values set us apart from other people and nations. As such, 'British' values do not exist as 'Britain' does not exist in any meaningful way except as a state.

We are a diverse people, many of whom (like most of my fellow Scots) do not even consider themselves 'British'. Moreover 'we' are divided by class and hierarchy. What is considered a 'value' by, say, a trade union member will not be shared by her boss nor will the sexist have the same set of 'values' as a feminist.

That specific peoples should be free to fully develop their own cultural capacities is something anarchists obviously support. The world would be a drab place indeed if the magnificent mosaic of different cultures is replaced by the largely homogenised world created by modern capitalism and the state. Yet 'official' attempts to define 'core values' is doomed to failure precisely because it is self-contradictory. As Rudolf Rocker put it in *Nationalism and Culture*, the "nation is not the cause, but the result of the state. It is the state that creates the nation, not the nation the state."

Every state is an artificial mechanism imposed upon society by some ruling elite in order to defend and make secure their interests within society. Nationalism was created to reinforce the state by providing it with the loyalty of a people of shared linguistic, ethnic, and cultural affinities. And if these shared affinities do not exist, the state will create them by centralising education in its own hands, imposing an 'official' language and attempting to crush cultural differences from the



people's within its borders. Hence the current attempt to define 'traditional British values', to stop actual people living in Britain developing their own values themselves.

That these official 'values' apparently include the tradition of free speech and the view that Britain was founded on freedom and democracy should present New Labour with an interesting challenge. Britain dates back to 1707 (with the merging of the Scottish and English Parliaments) or, at best, 1606 (with the union of the crowns under James VI). By no stretch of the imagination can the resulting state be said to have rested on freedom or democracy. Indeed, attempts to expand freedom and introduce democracy were resisted (often violently) by the ruling class.

So freedom and democracy are all very recent aspects of 'British' life. Universal suffrage dates back to 1928, for example. All increases in liberty were fought tooth and nail by the ruling elite. As such, they are hardly British 'traditional values', given that they did not exist for most of Britain's existence.

Nor are they particularly 'British' as freedom and democracy have been fought for across the globe, with varying degrees of success. Unsurprisingly, the British state has a

long career of oppressing democracy and liberty at home and abroad (and will that grand British tradition of invading other people's countries make the list?).

According to Education minister Bill Rammell "there is a need for a debate and the essential values already taught in citizenship classes, like freedom, fairness, civil responsibilities, democracy are there." What utter, utter rubbish. 'Fairness'? In a country where inequality in wealth and power has been rising for decades? 'Freedom'? In an economy where most people are wage slaves and the 'management's right to manage' (i.e. 'the workers duty to obey') has become the basis for economic life? 'Democracy' when the people are asked to vote every five years for a bunch of muppets who will ignore your wishes and protests (not to mention their own manifestos) to please big business and US imperialism? 'Civil responsibility' when New Labour have been systematically undermining civil liberties and enhancing police and state powers? What a joke!

But 'civil responsibility' gives the game away. Given that freedom means not only questioning authority, but resisting it, we can be sure that 'liberty' will be twisted to justify authority (aka the 'respect' agenda). The aim of these proposals is to indoctrinate young

people into believing that liberty means doing what your superiors tell you, that your 'duty' is not to question authority but to follow it: "Yes, you have liberty but your 'civil responsibility' is not to exercise it! So get back to work."

Every society is marked by hierarchies of wealth, power, class, sex and race, including the UK. Progress has been made in challenging and changing 'traditional' values, in breaking down 'traditional' hierarchies in the name of freedom and equality. It is these communities and people, those who have rejected the ruling class and its 'traditional' values wholeheartedly, who have been the real champions of liberty and democracy in this country (and across the world).

Will they and their values be discussed or will the myth that we are (and have always been) one happy family prevail? Not too difficult to answer as mentioning these people and their struggles would explode the myth that freedom and democracy are 'traditional British values'.

It is never a good idea to invoke the times when we knew who we had to look up to and who to sneer down at. That New Labour invokes the mythical past to bolster its authority today shows how reactionary that whole agenda is. As if we needed any more proof.

What you need to know

All new immigrants to the UK have to learn the most important information about their new country. Such pressing concerns include:

- Who the head of the Church of England is;
- What the main Christian festivals are;
- What MPs are ('springers') is not acceptable;
- How official debate is reported in the media;
- Where 'Geordies' might be spoken;
- What sort of work children do;
- What the Queen's official title is ('old sponger') is not acceptable;
- What a quango is ('sponging club') is not acceptable;
- What the Commonwealth is ('it's means for the above spongers to pretend they're important') is not acceptable.

'Correct' answers to these questions (e.g. official debate is apparently provided by a free and independent press and not, as the rest of us thought, by cultures in suits) are provided in a handbook provided by the government.

FREEDOM

Volume 67 Number 12

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

It's sweltering at the Angel Alley offices, as summer starts to heat down - and it wasn't much cooler in Norfolk as one of the editors visited to sell papers, chat and do a quick talk on journalism.

Although turnout at the Norwich Bookfair was perhaps hurt by being on at the same time as the first England game of the World Cup, it was reasonable in terms of sales.

The venue was stunning, and very, very weird, being in a massive church hall owned by the council, filled with ornate paintings of former Norwich Mayors and dominated by a huge canvas featuring Lord Admiral Nelson.

On more homely matters, the Freedom Press book list is ready, featuring all our latest titles and what's on offer, so if you want to know what you're missing out on, let us know and we can send you a copy.

Finally, our neighbours upstairs should get a mention this week, as the ASS are involving themselves with some more work as new squats open in the capital, and the Square is threatened with eviction.

Good luck to all at the Square from Freedom.

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Next issue

The next issue will be dated 1st July 2006 and the last day to get copy to us (see contact details above) will be Thursday 22nd June.

NUM policy shift

Anyone reading the current edition of the official NUM journal *The Miner* will detect an unmistakable shift in policy direction toward nuclear power. Astounding I know, but unmistakable nonetheless.

Over the last five years, we have seen a softening of attitudes and weakening of our policy on nuclear power among sectors of the NUM National and regional leaderships. On more than one occasion, the leadership has had to be reminded that the NUM policy is total opposition to nuclear power and for the total closure of all nuclear power generation with the exception of scientific research projects.

Why on earth would the leadership of the NUM be either flirting with let alone courting the nuclear lobby? We don't know, one can only speculate that either a potential merger with pro-nuclear AMICUS is on the cards or else Blair's pro nuclear evangelism will not allow Labour loyalist wings of the union leadership to totally confront the drive to nuclear power despite our formal commitment to do just that.

The front page of the current edition in its large font fourth paragraph argues, "Imported coal prices are now higher than British coal prices and nuclear power stations will take years to build and bring on stream" (our emphasis) that isn't the point is it? We don't object to them on grounds they 'take years to build'. We don't want them to be built at all! In the feature article by NUM National Secretary Steve Kemp he correctly argues "In the past five months our electricity generating requirement has been met by coal to the tune of 50% as gas gets more and more expensive, nuclear power stations will take years to build and renewables are nowhere near making a significant contribution."

However, the point is why should he be talking as if it is inevitable or desirable that nuclear energy stations are going to be built or should be built? More oddly he argues about "the danger of one fuel dependency".

We should recall that this 'danger' came from us, the miners, the one fuel dependency was coal, it was only a danger because it gave the miners a degree of strategic power which the Tories and subsequently New Labour found Anathema. This was the reason they run down the mines to virtual extinction in the first place.

Clearer still Steve goes on to say "All the talk about nuclear power being the answer is not viable in the short term...". This can only mean that it is the answer in the long term, or what other interpretation could one put on the conclusion?

The underlying cause of the change of attitude rests with the changed

political complexion of the current NUM leadership, which is now the most pro-Labour in twenty-five years. Obviously, this isn't to say it is uncritical of Blair and its more blatant Tory perspectives, but it has taken on board the language and presumptions of the PLP, and stands to the right of many current union leaderships in its belief in Labour and Labour policies.

The 'Leadership Comment' talks about the trust, which Tony Blair once had. Not in our neck of the woods he didn't. It talks about the "better policies which are being pursued by the current government" (!).

Intuitively it talks of "many of the reforms that have been introduced were needed". Reform is double-speak for making things much worse for working class people and their organisations. They aren't reforms at all, they are overwhelmingly steps back to more blatant and naked free market capitalism. Nowhere does this 'leadership' even mention an alternative to Blair's New Labour Party, or that we can be anything other than stuck with it. A bit like nuclear power in the minds of this 'leadership'.

The truth is we need neither nuclear power short term or long term, or New Labour and the completely parliamentary rotten road show. We need to fight for control of the planet by the people of the planet. We must undoubtedly address the crisis posed by global warming and the naked pollution caused by unsafe coal production. But coal is still a fuel to provide the bulk of the world's energy albeit if burned in clean burn technologies and is accompanied by the replanting of the world's rain forests, the lungs of the planet.

Socialism, energy and the environment are the tasks of the working class worldwide, the NUM was once among the clear-sighted in that vision, sadly, its political eyesight is badly deficient these days and clearly requires the remaining NUM membership to get back involved with their union and take an active part in its future policies and perspectives.

David Douglass

India and education

The recent turmoil in India over reservation quotas for the lower castes should go without saying be a very important issue to us. Not only is India one of the most populous and diverse nations on earth, its ruling elites have with their expanding economic base, set their sights on firmly becoming an important world power in the future. This of course as we know will come at the expense of India's workers and poor.

When India's government announced back in May, further reservation quotas of 27% for the 'backward classes' in addition to the 22.5% already in place for higher education, we could only anticipate objections from those castes who hold a virtual monopoly. Aided and abetted by India's partisan mainstream media we have seen strikes in medical centres, student walkouts and numerous protests over the issue. India's education system was modelled along similar lines to its colonial rulers, and thus the old boys network has remained pretty much unchallenged, this is why a quarter of India's population can account for holding

three-quarters of the education posts. This of course all happens alongside staggering levels of illiteracy amongst the lower castes, which is key to job prosperity and employment.

While this is the case we should be under no illusions about what affirmative action is, and what it will do in this context. Behind arguments of 'empowerment' and improving 'social mobility' there are two undeniable facts, firstly that there is a reformist agenda at work which doesn't address the real nature of who controls resources and how they are distributed fairly and secondly that programs of this nature will only benefit the better off amongst the designated group and not those most in need of a helping hand.

One could argue that the reservations would contest and undermine the status of middle class Indians. But this argument is flawed because well-off Indians will of course flock to other educational institutions outside of India as they always have done. But the central issue which is overlooked is that the reservations will entrench castes and communities as it has done so many times in India and we could very well see a Hindu revival off the back of this, all the while this type of conflict is taken directly out of the arms of the state. Of course this policy is in its planning stages, but you can see the logic of where it leads. Marx was right when he said that Liberals and Conservatives differ only in the way they maintain society, and I think this is sorely misunderstood within anarchist circles. Both the anti and pro reservationists are clearly wrong.

It's argued by some historians that prior to British withdrawal from India, that the rising Indian political elites had control of most of the infrastructure in India but were so split into little competing fiefdoms each trying to carve their respective niche that they struggled to find time to challenge their colonialisers. In many respects we all have to overcome these deficiencies imposed on us from outside, but it's only a united and combative working class that can overcome these challenges and it's the only movement that ever has.

Adam Britner

The vulnerable

page 1

split into four individual sections each separately funded and accountable. The four sections would be Manufacturing, Managed services, Interwork (this section would continue with the work of Remploi's employment agency service) and Co-operate (the massive group of people encompassing the controlling Board which would lose its overseeing role, the human resource functions and other overarching services). The plan proposes that each of the other three sections could buy services from the corporate body if required and if not then it could be scrapped.

Despite the findings of the report, the unions remain sceptical about proposals to close plants. They said: "Very many will not be able to hold a job in mainstream employment. For those fortunate to get and keep a job their pay, terms and conditions are likely to be inferior to what they currently receive. That is not an attractive option."

Review

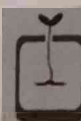
page 7

with those from earlier in the twentieth century, there are links to his documentation of self-build shanty communities, including images of surviving examples at Shepperton-on-Thames, near Edinburgh, in the Tyne Valley, and on the Gower peninsula.

The most substantial and important contribution to the site, however, is the revised version of his book *Conspiracy of Good Taste: Class Oppression and Culture* (Working Press, 1993; with a new Conclusion added in 2001), laying bare the role of professional arbiters of artistic value in modern Western society - dictating from above acceptable forms of expression and lifestyle, thereby disallowing the creation of culture and the material lifeworld by ordinary people from the bottom-up, and consequently softening us up for the intimate government of everyday life. The British examples of William Morris and the Arts & Crafts proto-fascist purification of vernacular design, Cecil Sharp's sad evisceration of folk culture, and Clough Williams Ellis's bureaucratic wage-slave housing plantations illustrate the early tactics used - firstly to tame the rebellious dispositions perennially rooted in working-class culture; then as templates for the more sophisticated imposition of consumerism to short-circuit the re-emergence of its autonomy.

Stefan Szczelkun's multi-faceted deconstructions, reclamations, celebrations and exhortations to sociable human imagination represent a thorough going and effective corrective to the inhuman consequences of class elitism and state prescription.

London Counterculture and People Power of the Nineties, by Stefan Szczelkun, Redz under Bedz DVDs, Nos. 1 and 2, £10 each (incl. p&p), from: www.stefan-szczelkun.org.uk



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Quiz answers

1. In the northern hemisphere, near Newfoundland. Penguins aren't generally found in the northern hemisphere. The word penguin was originally used for the now extinct great auk and that is how the islands got their name.
2. David ben Gurion, the first Israeli prime minister. She apparently never attended any official functions.
3. The Durutti Column got their name from a misspelled situationist leaflet that talked about the 'Return of the Durutti Column'. The correct spelling is Durruti.
4. Stealing books from other shops to sell in theirs. See http://www.fiveleaves.co.uk/radical_bookselling.html

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REVIEW

Tom Jennings appreciates two DVDs which add to Stefan Szczelkun's documentation of grass-roots culture

These skilfully shot and assembled video documents each contain two short films depicting important events and grass-roots protests and campaigns from the last decade. DVD one, *London Counterculture*, starts with a digital video record of "J18: the post modern revival of Stop the City, enacted on the streets of the City of London, 1999. The experience of one person with a camera at this historical and unique protest against global capital. The closest thing to being there yourself."

Mixing impressionistic still images with an evocative soundtrack and direct point-of-view edited footage as the day progresses, moments of celebration increasingly overlap scenes of confrontation with police, hinting at the darkening mood which characteristically accompanies carnival's tendency to overflow the limits set for it by power. The second film, shot on Hi-8 and entitled 'Memorials to Diana: spontaneous popular expressions of loss and treason in Hyde Park, September 1997', is a contemplative forty minutes with Szczelkun's camera roaming in a leisurely fashion among acres of floral tributes and scrawled doggerel dedicated to the maverick so-called 'people's princess'.

DVD two, *People Power of the Nineties*, includes a short edited Hi-8 video (shot with Thomas Zagrosek) at a South London eco-warrior camp in 1998/99, including on-site interviews with two of the protesters. This was a successful action against the development of a multiplex cinema on a wild corner of Crystal Palace park, showing how dedicated determination – especially given widespread local support and suitably imaginative tactics – is capable of warding off the depredations of capitalism in its ongoing global quest to enclose the commons for primitive accumulation.

Then, 'Reclaim the Streets and the Liverpool Docks' (April 1997)

celebrates the first large-scale example of the spectacular demo technique which emerged in 1990s Britain from a resurgent class awareness among newly-politicised younger generations, allied with the traditionally radical communal militancy of this locked-out workforce in "the temporary occupation of urban areas by huge playful crowds – a kind of instant carnival that came out of the eco road protest movement."

Subjects of forthcoming DVDs include campaigns around disability activism and inclusive education, grass-roots film group Exploding Cinema, the Sharsted Street shared ownership self-build co-op, and archives from Kennington Park – along with a new series of digital video artworks by Szczelkun starting with *Housework X*, a project in which a plywood shed on wheels was dragged across South London in an exploration of second generation immigrant loss and relocation, continuing with an archive of self-produced t-shirts hinting at the creation of culture through the social production, negotiation and recognition of meaning and difference.

This impressive breadth and depth of coverage shows the general significance of work such as the Redz Under Bedz project in supplementing the negligible inclusion in the existing historical record of self-produced representations of working-class experience, struggle and cultural expression – where the scant information that can be gleaned is typically framed within the agendas, tastes and structures of knowledge of middle-class disciplinary interests.

Documents of dissentment
Stefan's website (stefan-szczelkun.org.uk) explicitly deals with these larger philosophical questions as well as containing a wealth of texts and images enlarging on some of the themes tackled in the DVDs – employing throughout his enjoyably down-to-earth practical utopianism which, combined



Banner photographed during the Reclaim the Streets/Liverpool Docks demo (1997)

with serious theoretical ambitions, always avoids patronisation or academic obfuscation.

Of particular interest here is the fascinating short essay on Diana, which explores the ambivalent and contradictory significance of the strong feelings generated among ordinary people. This really ought to be included with its DVD – in fact both would benefit from extra material aimed at viewers unfamiliar with thinking seriously about the kind of collective action portrayed.

The films do stand up by themselves

as effective physical records, supplementing the memories of those involved and interested which might otherwise fade in these times of incessant mediated novelty trivia. However, their utility in encouraging the potential for future activism might be enhanced with carefully chosen text and images – within the DVDs and/or as printed inserts.

The website is packed with various highly original and thought-provoking reviews and short essays on art and folk expression, discussions contrasting popular and high culture, taste and aesthetics, and a history of Working

Press – a working-class writers and artists self-publishing group responsible for unique and valuable output which would otherwise never have reached the public domain.

In line with the author's emphases on grass-roots self-organisation and on the production of culture as well as its consumption and policing, there is also a comprehensive account (also submitted as a PhD thesis) of his own involvement in umpteen local artistic collectives in the 1980s and 1990s. And, contextualising these recent narratives

➔ page 6, column 5

BOOKS

Big Pharma
by Jacky Law
Constable, £12.99

Imagine a short course of cheap medicine that completely cured the cause of an illness. Where is the profit in that for the drug manufacturer? Much better is the drug which only treats the symptoms of an illness.

The patient will have to take the medicine every day for the rest of their life and if the medicine starts to cause bad side effects then this will require yet another pill. Chalk up another never-ending sale.

Big Pharma is a good introduction to the vastly profitable world of the pharmaceutical multinationals; how they invent medical conditions, fiddle their supposedly scientific clinical medical trials, poison us with drugs like the SSRI's and Vioxx and more.

The rot was always there, but it really took off in 1984 with Glaxo's anti-ulcer drug Zantac, their big blockbuster which is a drug with sales of over \$1bn a year.

In fact nearly all peptic and gastric ulcers can be cured with a short course of antibiotics, but Glaxo got away with it for years.

If you want to know what is wrong with modern medicine, read this book. The bibliography is also recommended.

Mo Mosely

The Conservative Nanny State
by Dean Baker
Center for Economic and Policy Research, free online*/£3.85 print
This new book has been published on the internet which should be of interest to anarchists.

In America, as here, the right have been pushing a particular perspective on the

economy, namely that they favour 'free market' policies. Indeed, they have so skewed the political spectrum that the notion is that they stand for economic 'liberty' while the left stand for statism. In reality, of course, capitalism has always relied on the state (to create it and to maintain it). Baker's book is a timely and well argued account of this truism using the home of neo-liberalism itself as its base.

The books subtitle, *How the Wealthy Use the Government to Stay Rich and Get Richer*, gives you a taste of what to expect. He covers much ground, including obvious areas (copyright, bankruptcy laws, corporations, etc.) as well as the more indirect forms, such as the Federal Reserve Board manipulation of the economy to keep workers in their place by maintaining a 'natural' rate of unemployment (thanks to New Labour, this policy is being applied here).

The Conservative Nanny State shows that the idea that capitalism is based on the free market is completely untrue. It explains how the right is as strongly anti-free market as the system itself, pushing trade, monetary, tax and intellectual property policies that make the rich richer and the rest of us worse off. Anarchists should hardly be surprised, as we have always argued capitalism is based on using the state to help the elite.

Baker is one of those rare birds, a left-wing economist as well as being co-director of the Center for Economic and Policy Research (cepr.net/) in Washington. He writes well and explains his subject in an easy to read way and it requires no background in economics. Highly recommended – and free!

Iain Mackay

* Available at conservativenannystate.org

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A Sideways Look

On the face of it, child tax credits seem like a good idea. Children cost money, particularly child care. It makes sense to help parents particularly on low incomes and help women stay in work. However, there are two big problems with them. Firstly, their intention is not primarily to help working parents, and secondly, they are administered so badly as to make them a risk rather than a benefit.

There are two tax credits: child and working. Gordon Brown introduced them as an alternative to benefits. As an upholder of the Protestant work ethic, he wanted something which would reward those in work. The child tax credit is paid to parents in work with an income of up to £58,000, so most qualify, though the amount is gradually diminished as income increases. It is paid direct to the family. Working tax credit is paid via the wage packet and is paid to anyone with a sufficiently low income, regardless of whether they have children. It can include up to 70% of childcare costs, up to £300 a week.

The big question of course is why pay credits rather than benefits? Partly, it is Brown's intention to be seen to be rewarding the 'deserving poor', rather than the tabloid stereotype of teenage single mums. But underlying it all is the government's intention of subsidising employers who pay badly. The CBI might bleat about the minimum wage, but are happy to let this subsidy pass without their usual jibes about red tape. A universal benefit gives no incentive to take that low-paid job with Asda - a working tax credit does. Asda's parent company Walmart has a history of using state benefits to top up their workers low pay and benefits in the US. Big business demands subsidies to suit its needs while claiming that those paid direct to workers make the economy 'uncompetitive'. None of this is surprising to anarchists, but it does mean that working tax credit is not just another benefit, but is firmly located as a tool of workfare.

However, even if they weren't a tool of social control, offering back a fraction of what is taken from us, there's still the problem of their administration. One of the few apologies that Blair has made was over the overpayment of tax credits, so you can imagine how bad it is.

The administration is like other benefits such as income support or housing benefit, except that Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs (HMRC - the old Inland Revenue) carries it out. You fill in a form with your details, how many children you have, your income, your child care costs. If anything changes, you notify the tax credit office and they recalculate how much you are entitled to. Except, unlike other benefits, this one is effectively calculated yearly. If you get a pay rise, or your childcare costs change, this can happen at any time in the year. You can phone the tax credit people

and tell them. They then do nothing and hit you with a big bill for an overpayment. HMRC say that you do not have to pay if it was their fault, but rarely admit that anything was their fault. The Citizens Advice Bureau has handled over 150,000 cases involving tax credits. Where overpayment was involved, in over half the amount was greater than £500, hardly a trifling sum. Some parents have resorted to loan sharks to pay them back!

Even the Tories think that the overpayments should be written off. So much for 'Prudence' Brown - does anyone really believe he's any better than Blair?

Svartfrosk

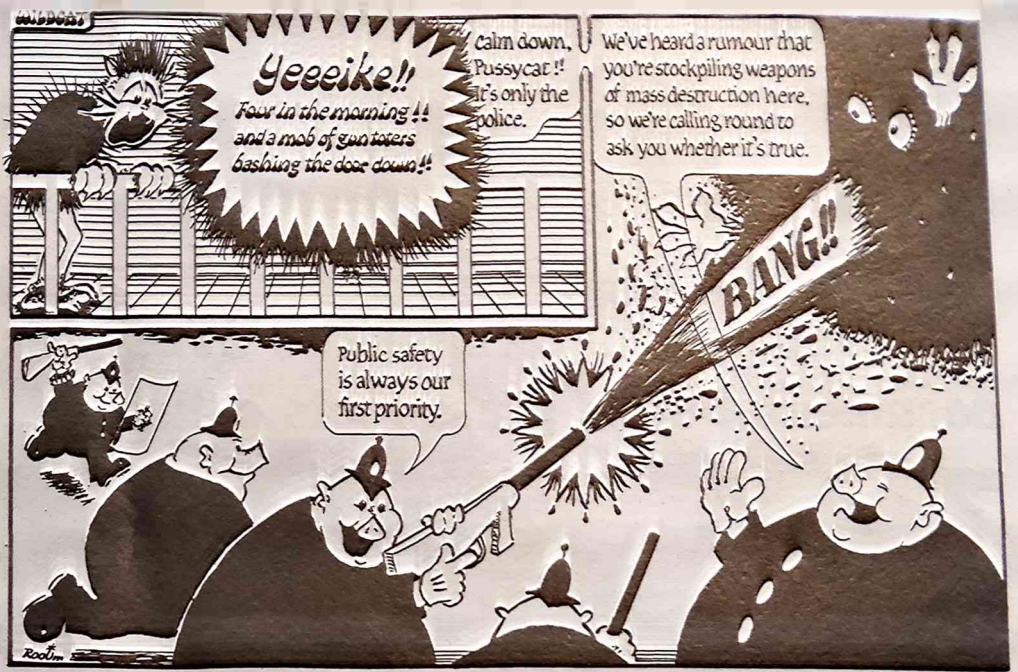
Blast from the Past

An excerpt taken from Freedom 26th June 1999, entitled The Euro Elections, 'J18' and the Black Panthers - Chickens coming home: On 18th June, in what purports to be an exercise in freeing ourselves from the shackles of capitalism, a good many of us will converge on the City of London, to take part in 'an international day of protest, action and carnival aimed at the heart of the global economy, the banking and financial centres'. If proof were needed of our movement's resort to entirely symbolic activity, none better could be found. Most people who suffer at the hands of capital don't do so in the heart of the City, they suffer through paying high rents on run down estates while local resources go to service local authority debts to the City, they suffer through hospital waiting list increases as bed capacities and staff numbers are lost due to health authority private finance deals. They suffer through exploitation at work, through higher prices and lower wages, through the increased cost of entertainment - football season ticket costs, club door prices, etc. Their quality of life is diminished through the actions of capital, but a demonstration in the City will do nothing to alleviate the conditions of exploitation. Hence, none of those most in need of liberation from the "roar of profit" (Reclaim the Streets leaflet) will go near such an event, because the "sounds of rhythms of party, carnival and pleasure" are a poor substitute for money in your hand and decent accommodation, and will take us no closer to their realisation.

The quiz

1. In which hemisphere are the Penguin Islands? Why might this be unusual?
2. Who was the anarchist Paula Green married to?
3. Which band's name is a wrongly spelt version of an anarchist formation? And why?
4. According to a guide to Britain's radical bookshops, what was the anarchist Rising Free bookshop in Islington famous for in the late '70s?

Answers on page 6



Imagine if...

David Cameron put on his shoes of No-Nonsense, and slipped on his Shirt of Straight-Talking, doing up his Cufflinks of Justice as he thought about his next move.

Beside him stood the fresh-faced Shadow Chancellor George Osborne, who himself was wearing his Dark Suit of Cutting-Through-The-Bullshit.

The pair of them were ready for battle. This week, David had decided to show (theoretical) solidarity with laid off workers at HP sauce, and protect the reputations of public servants - an unheard of trait. Just weeks earlier, he had called UKIP a bunch of closet racists.

His party didn't know where to stand. What was the membership to think? First this following act to Michael Howard had denounced the old vampire's main strategy of blaming travellers and immigrants for all the world's evils, then he had reneged on the party's age-old commitment to calling all public servants except the powerful ones a bunch of wasteful spongers. What next? Equality for women? Reducing the MoD's budget?

It was just as well he was a neo-liberal dedicated to ongoing privatisation, repeal of benefits for the poor and division of workers for the sole benefit of a rich elite really, or the honeymoon period would be well and truly over.

David admired himself in the mirror. His Cufflinks of Justice fell off. "Why are they always doing that?" he wondered, as he put them in a drawer and rolled up his sleeves again.



Listings

Until 1st July Art Not Oil, various venues, for more details email info@artnotoil.org.uk or call 07708 794665 or visit artnotoil.org.uk nationalpetroleumgallery.org.uk or londonrisingtide.org.uk

23rd to 26th June Global Animal Rights Gathering organised by Shac (shac.net) For info contact info@ar2006.info or see ar2006.info

24th June Climate Gangsters Party with Campaign Against Climate Change at the American Embassy, Grosvenor Square, London, from 2pm until 6pm, for more call 0207 833 9311, email info2006@campaigncc.org or see campaigncc.org

25th June 'The Right To Live', a walk around radical Camberwell with the South London Radical History Group, meet 2pm, Camberwell Green, corner of Camberwell Church Street, for more see www.past-tense.org.uk

1st July East Anglia Social Forum in Norwich from 9.30am until 5pm, for details and location see www.easf.org.uk

4th July Independence from America Party outside US space communication base Feltwell (near USAF Lakenheath) at 6pm, contact Mell on 01986 892723, or see lakenheathaction.org

7th to 15th July Indymedia film festival to inspire resistance to the G8 agenda, see indymedia.org.uk/en/regions/london 15th to 18th July G8 2006 to be held in St Petersburg, Russia, to find out more

check out <http://g8-2006.plentyfact.net> or <http://spb8.hardcore.lt/> 15th to 29th July Earth Activist Training in Gloucestershire, for details email eat2006@riseup.net

21st July International protest camp in Iceland where a series of gigantic dams are already under construction in the eastern highlands and the natural habitat of many rare and endangered plants and animals will be destroyed, see savingiceland.org

26th to 30th July DIY: Against the State, an activist and anarchist convention in Freiburg, Germany, with workshops, bands and more, plus a big Reclaim The Streets party on the Saturday, contact d.i.y.against@gmx.de

28th July Radical history walk of Greenwich and Deptford, meet at the Blackheath Gate of Greenwich Park at 3pm, for details call 020 8850 4187 or email tliddle@freeuk.com

29th July to 12th August Trident Ploughshares international disarmament camp for 15 days of direct action at Faslane and Coulport naval bases in Scotland, for further details see tridentploughshares.org/article983

26th August to 4th September Camp for Climate Action in north of England, see www.climatecamp.org.uk

30th September Tenth European Hazards Conference in Jurmula, Latvia, over this weekend, for details see hazardscampaign.org.uk/docs/riga.htm

RESIST THE EVICTION OF THE SQUARE!

ASSEMBLE 9am Friday June 23rd outside 21-22 Russell Square, London WC1



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