

FREEDOM

80P ANARCHIST NEWS AND VIEWS

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INSIDE ►►

Metronet page 3

Those dirty Libcommies page 5

Rebellion reviewed page 7

Svartfrosk column page 8

UNION BOSSES' NUCLEAR STITCHUP

In a move which has sparked controversy in green and progressive groups, Britain's largest union has signed a 'preferred bidder' agreement for nuclear power provision, effectively sealing its position as a supporting actor for the industry.

Unite, the newly-merged union formed from Amicus and the TGWU, have signed a joint statement with Atomic Energy of Canada Limited (ACEL) which would see the company aiming to employ 70-80% British workers should it win major construction projects.

The announcement suggested that up to 10,000 jobs could be created in the UK through the deal, if a full programme of nuclear power station building is given the go-ahead by the government.

Unite's agreement represents the culmination of a lengthy pro-nuclear campaign which has seen substantial union dues thrown into pushing for nuclear power, something which has angered green campaigners.

A spokesperson for environmental campaign group Greenpeace told *Freedom*: "If you look at the alternatives, solar, wind etc., they are going to create jobs as well. We reckon that even looking at offshore windfarms, if they were to provide 30% of electricity by 2020 it would create 76,000 new jobs.

"Nuclear power stations are so expensive we may only be able to get a couple running by 2020, but renewables can be done now, and will be encouraging employment. To be honest, they've

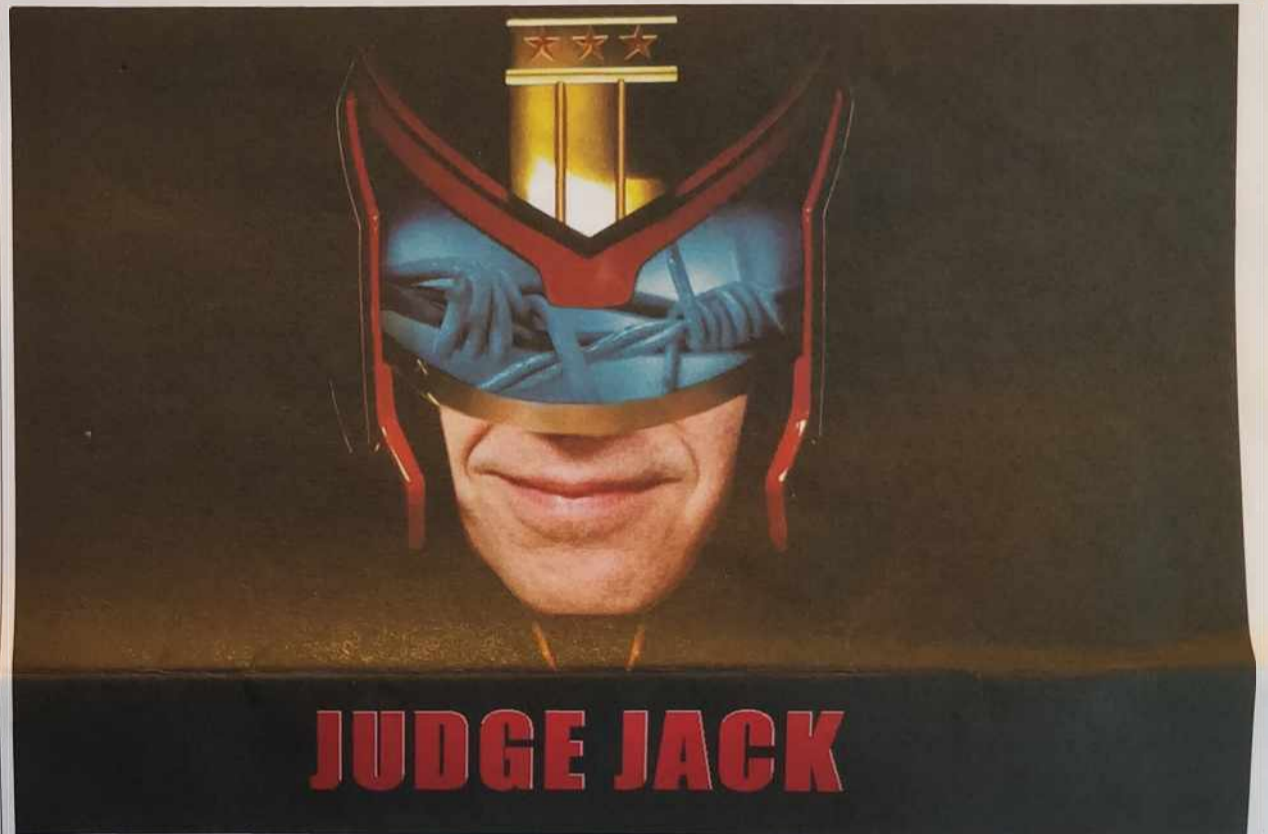
nailed their colours to the wrong mast."

Amicus, the GMB and the TGWU, all of which have employees in the industry, have come down firmly on the side of nuclear power over the last two years, stating that the move will secure energy supplies and produce minimal CO₂ emissions.

A spokesperson for Amicus said: "A new generation of power stations will mean thousands of skilled jobs. We aren't opposed to renewables and we think more needs to be done to develop new technology but there doesn't seem to be much keenness from companies. So we support green as part of a wider strategy."

In a statement alongside the agreement, Amicus called for a new generation of nuclear power as part of an energy policy which should, according to the union, also include investments in clean coal technology in order to reduce carbon emissions, to "ensure security of supply and keep energy costs down for consumers and employers".

The move comes as a new report is brought out suggesting that the UK could be made all-but carbon free and produce an excess of electricity with the next 20 years, if a series of major changes were carried out which excluded both fossil fuels and nuclear power in favour of an integrated network of community power supplies connected to a direct-current link to areas where green power potential could be best exploited.



The report, from the Centre for Alternative Technology, suggests that using existing technologies, particularly decentralised power production and new storage methods for electricity, was brought out on 9th July and would, it claims, see power replace gas as the main source of energy in the UK.

While an early preview from writer George Monbiot has mentioned this may be optimistic, it largely explodes the theory that nuclear power is inevitable. When coupled with similar plans in Europe and the possibility of using both Scandinavian and Saharan environments to supplement the extra, Monbiot claims this would effectively

clear any deficits, and wipe out excess CO₂ production.

However with the state, big business and three of the UK's biggest unions are all onside with nuclear power, green groups are fighting a difficult battle to force the great and the good into movement. Autonomous change may be the only change.

POSTAL STRIKE SOLID

Last month saw the first national postal strike for eleven years as Communication Workers Union members struck for 24 hours against a below inflation pay rise and threatened job cuts. Over three-quarters of the membership backed the stoppage in a ballot.

Across the country the strike was solid with over 130,000 workers taking action shutting mail centres, halting deliveries and closing Royal Mail offices. Counter staff also took action in protest at the low pay offer, effectively a pay cut with inflation running at 4.5%. In many areas postal workers ignored the law on picketing. At Brighton and Coventry, for example, there were over forty strikers on picket lines at 4am,

rather than the six 'allowed' by the government.

A union member explained the reasons behind the dispute to website libcom.org: "Royal Mail want to implement a cost-cutting business plan that will cut 40,000 jobs, cut our pay and pensions, as well as see hikes in stamp prices, fewer collections, later deliveries, reductions in weekend service and more post office closures. They're doing this because the profitable bits of the business - like business bulk mail - have been opened up to competition, but the private companies pass the mail over to us for the less profitable 'final mile' delivery and the Royal Mail is trying make up the profits by cutting service levels and our terms and conditions."

Workers are angry after being told that the post office couldn't afford to increase their 2.5% pay offer despite giving Royal Mail boss Alan Leighton a whopping 20% bonus a year, taking his salary to around a million pounds. The basic pay for a postal worker is just £323 a week.

Workers are also concerned with

health and safety issues with pressure to carry heavy loads and proposed changes to the way that they are paid and changes to shift systems. Fundamentally the dispute is about the post office seeking to maximise exploitation of their workforce. "They want a 'hire and fire' workforce" a striking postal worker from Brighton explained, "with more temporary, part-time and agency workers they can just lay off when it's quiet, which means no guarantee what your pay's going to be one week to the next. And we're not going to stand for it!"

Further strikes are expected. As we go to press, the next strike day was announced as 12th-13th July.

• The number of working days lost through strikes soared last year according to official statistics. Total days lost in 2006 rose from 157,400 in 2005 to 754,500 with 80% of stoppages in the public sector. Much of this can be attributed to national strikes in that year against attacks on public sector pensions.

OLYMPIC DREAMS

Following glowing endorsements of China's preparation for the Olympic games from the International Olympic Commission, reports of ongoing repression against the general public have prompted strong criticism of the People's Republic.

The Commission continues to declare itself fully confident that China is organising the event well, despite ongoing brutalities against thousands of people across the Eastern regions and reports that millions have been unhomed by the building process for the games.

The expression of confidence ignores the Commission's own dealings with Beijing, in which an improvement to human rights activity had supposedly been promised as part of the deal allowing the games to go ahead there. In April 2001 Liu Jingmin, Vice President of the Beijing 2008 Olympic Games Bid Committee said: "By allowing Beijing to host the Games you will help the development of human rights."

Jacques Rogge, president of the International Olympic Committee said a year later: "We are convinced that

the Olympic Games will improve the human rights record in China."

Amnesty International has strongly criticised Beijing for keeping labour and human rights activists imprisoned for political purposes, pointing to a number of pro-democracy activists who have been kept in prison for decades for organising against the regime.

But the detention of pro-western political figures is only the tip of the iceberg. Groups across the country fighting for better working conditions or to defend their homes have come under sustained attack.

Transitory workers from the west of the country have been hardest hit in recent years, with incidents such as one reported earlier this month, where 300 people striking over unpaid wages were beaten by armed paramilitaries, becoming more frequent as inequality deepens in the country.

Free trade unions are barred in the country, and the use of forced labour is widespread while labour activists continue to be attacked and imprisoned.

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Home and away

EDO acquittal

Two anti-war activists who scaled the well-trodden roof of Brighton arms dealers EDO MBM for a rooftop occupation have been acquitted on a charge of Aggravated Trespass by Brighton magistrates. Last August during the Israel/Lebanon conflict they hung a banner from EDO's roof reading '16 Children Killed In Qana, Lebanon. EDO Profits From Murder'.

The District Judge refused to consider arguments showing links between the company and war crimes but found that the two intrepid edificers could not have heard police warnings to come down from the roof, and did not believe they'd intended to disrupt the operation of the factory. She said that the occupation was clearly a publicity stunt designed to attract media attention and had been very successful in doing so, having gained international coverage in the UK, France, Germany, the USA and even Iran. (Well done, lads!)

Siemens strike

PCS members employed by two Siemens companies have delivered an overwhelming vote to take strike action over pay. In a ballot which asked two questions members voted by 72% to take strike action with 86% saying they were prepared to take action short of a strike. This followed pay offers of 3% from the company which are significantly below inflation and would lead to a cut in living standards for some of the lowest paid employees in the multi-national company.

Premier job losses

Nearly 600 jobs are expected to be lost in a series of factory closures by Premier Foods.

The company, which is closing six factories, aims to make total savings of £113m by integrating two of its recent acquisitions into the main company.

Two factories in Manchester are to close, along with four more in Bristol, Ledbury in Herefordshire, Middlewich in Cheshire, and Reading. The company said it would invest "significantly" in five other factories.

NUT on march

A major trade union in the UK has led a march on a Government Ministry in London to protest against plans by the British authorities to axe scores of teachers from Jamaica and other countries.

The National Union of Teachers (NUT) organised the event as part of a major lobbying effort aimed at preventing hundreds of Jamaican teachers from losing their jobs at the end of the academic year.

Teachers who were recruited from the Commonwealth have been told that they will lose their jobs in August if they have not gained Qualified Teacher Status.

What a guy

The UK's largest health union, Unison, has welcomed the appointment of Alan Johnson as Health Secretary as "someone we can do business with".

The union has recently moved to co-ordinate any strike action from Local Government workers and NHS workers as part of a 'broad front' to defend pay and fight cuts to public services.

Alan Johnson, an ex-union boss noted for his devotion to Blairite policies, was the man responsible for pushing tuition fees through the house of commons, and has a reputation as a militant defender of foundation hospitals.

Around the world

AUSTRALIA: Earlier this month a US-Australian wargame exercise off the Great Barrier Reef, Queensland, was halted by a white whale.

Hundreds of campaigners under the name Peace Convergence had held a non-violent protest in the region the week before, with some taking direct action and entering the test area, evading capture for days. But then along came Migaloo, who forced a military retreat. Nearly 30,000 US and Australian military personnel, with 120 aircraft and 30 warships including nuclear aircraft carriers and submarines, were involved in Exercise Talisman Sabre, near Rockhampton, but the sonars used in this kind of warfare are known to kill whales and dolphins, as well as other fish and turtles.

The International Whaling Commission condemned the use of sonar in the Great Barrier Reef marine park last month, citing the lethal effects of the low frequency sonar used by military submarines on marine mammals, which causes them to panic, surface too quickly, suffer the bends with sometimes lethal consequences.

COLOMBIA: A new Amnesty report says paramilitaries are still operating and colluding with the security forces to eliminate and intimidate union members.

Although the number of unionists killed has fallen since the recent hand-over of AUC guns, last year saw 77 trade unionists killed or 'disappeared'.

Since 1991, some 2,245 members of trade unions have been killed, 3,400 threatened and more than 130 have 'disappeared', according to figures from Colombia's National Trade Union School.

Trade unionists involved in labour disputes and campaigns against privatisation are particularly targeted, Amnesty's report says.

In related news, relatives of 22 people killed by Colombian paramilitaries have filed a US civil damages lawsuit against the Chiquita banana company after it admitted paying off violent guerrilla groups.

The victims died between 1997 and 2004 in the banana-growing region of Uraba in northwestern Colombia.

In a March agreement with the US Justice Department, Chiquita Brands International Inc. agreed to pay a \$25 million fine to settle a criminal complaint accusing it of paying the AUC more than \$1.7 million from 1997 to 2004.

FRANCE: Undocumented workers at the fast food chain in Paris occupied the Buffalo Grill in Viry-Chatillon after being sacked and reported to the authorities.

The migrants, mostly of African origin, many with years of employment at the chain, face expulsion from the France of Nicolas Sarkozy to their country of origin.

Last year, a popular immigrant Buffalo Grill worker announced his candidacy for workplace representation elections. In February 2007, his irregular employment status was 'anonymously' reported to the police, who proceeded to inspect the employment papers of the chain's more than 600 foreign workers. Four were fired and others pressured to resign.

FRANCE: A spate of suicides amongst workers at French car plants reflects the fact that large numbers of workers are being driven to take their own lives by workplace stresses.

In France there are 300-400 suicides a year directly attributable to working conditions according to Christian Larose, vice-president of the social and economic council of the CGT. Roughly one worker is killing him/herself a day because of the job that they have.

The first two workers killed themselves at their workplace, the third at home, leaving a note blaming workplace stress. The company has announced an internal inquiry.

PAKISTAN: Hungry victims of the monsoon-spawned floods in southwestern Pakistan rioted Friday, protesting slow, meagre aid reaching their marooned villages where many feared the receding waters would yield numerous bodies.

Police fired tear gas and shots into the air but failed to disperse a crowd of several thousand villagers who broke into and ransacked the mayor's office in this city in southwestern Pakistan ringed by floodwaters.

The widespread flooding struck after Cyclone Yemyin dumped torrential rains on the area Tuesday.

Protesters said they had waded through chest-deep water from outlying areas to voice their anger about the dearth of relief aid. Only packets of biscuits and bottles of water had been received, they said.

"Every family is looking for one or two members. They are all missing," said Chaker Baloth, who walked more than 25 miles through the night to reach this city of some 150,000. Others feared they would never see their missing family members again.

The government said the official death toll in Baluchistan province was 14, with more than 24 missing, although local media reported much higher numbers.

Farqooq Ahmed Khan, head of the National Disaster Management Authority, said accurate figures were not available because of widespread communications disruptions in the stricken areas.

Khan told reporters in Islamabad that the military had rescued about 1,600 people, including 600 fishermen in the Arabian Sea.

Military helicopters continued to drop relief supplies, but many of the more than 800,000 people hit by monsoon flooding in southwest Pakistan appeared to have received little or nothing.

SOUTH AFRICA: The Zabalaza Anarchist Communist Federation (ZACF) of South Africa and Swaziland has expressed concern over the pinning of racist pro-Boer actions on 'racist anarchists'.

Right-wingers in the South African town of Potchefstroom removed street-signs with the names of liberation figures and replaced them with those of Boer leaders. But the Potch City Council attributed the actions to "racist anarchists".

In a statement, ZACF wrote: "We presume that Mohau is simply politically naive in putting about his mistaken attribution of these acts of vandalism. However, his comments have the unfortunate effect of besmirching the good name of the small, but active anarchist movement in southern Africa."

The ZACF wishes to point out that the first trade unions for people of colour in southern Africa, the Industrial Workers of Africa founded in 1917 and the Indian Workers Industrial Union founded in 1919, were established by anarchist-syndicalists of all colours including Thomas William 'Bill' Thibedi (who later became a communist), Bernard Sigamoney, Andrew Dunbar and Johnny Gomas.

"Anti-racism has always been and remains a fundamental ethic of the anarchist movement. Today, the ZACF, engages in constructive educational work, both within South African townships as well as within the pro-democracy movements of Swaziland and Zimbabwe. Other anarchists are similarly involved in progressive projects that make no distinction of gender, colour or creed."

Prison news

John Bowden

The 13th June is the Second International Day of Solidarity with John Bowden and various actions are being organised:

- **London** There will be a solidarity picket of the Parole Board HQ at Grenadier House, 99-105 Horseferry Road, SW1P 2DD, from 12.30 to 2pm. Bring placards and banners.
- **Edinburgh** A solidarity picket of the Scottish Parliament from 3pm. Bring placards and banners.
- **Brighton** card-signing, letter-writing and access to a telephone provided by Brighton ABC, from 12 noon until 5.30pm at the Cowley Club, 12 London Road.
- **Leeds** solidarity actions plus a get-together to sign cards, write letters, etc., from noon through the afternoon at The Common Place.

For more information on John Bowden and details of actions visit myspace.com/friendsofjohnbowden

In June, John Bowden wrote: "On the 29th May, less than a week after a demonstration staged outside the Scottish

Parliament in protest at my treatment, the administration at Castle Huntly Open Prison ... hurriedly held a 'case management' meeting to decide on a strategy of neutralising further protests on my behalf and prolonging my time in prison on less obviously vindictive and politically motivated grounds.

The meeting, held at Glenochil high security prison, where I'm currently being held, was attended by an array of prison service employed social workers, psychologists and governors, and chaired by the Deputy Governor of Castle Huntly Prison, James McKay.

No-one at the meeting dissented from the view of McKay that although my stay in maximum security should be prolonged and intended to negatively influence the decision of a Parole Board hearing to consider my release in August, in terms of trying to nullify further protests on my behalf and adverse opinion of the prison system it was no longer expedient to maintain the lie that my removal from an open jail had been as a result of my contact with a

'terrorist' group on the outside ...

The public protestations of the group concerned, Anarchist Black Cross, a perfectly legitimate and non-violent prisoner support group, now rendered the lie untenable.

A fortnight after the meeting I was informed by a senior member of staff at Glenochil that ... I would remain in high security conditions to be 'psychologically risk-assessed' instead. In fact, I had already been 'risk-assessed' by a senior forensic psychologist in 2003 and his opinion was that I presented absolutely no danger or risk to the public and should be transferred to an open prison in preparation for complete release...

The solidarity shown towards me by supporters on the outside has produced cracks and divisions in the ranks of prison officialdom, and Audrey Park, the Governor of Glenochil, has now broken rank and insisted that the inexorable intensification of protest on my behalf be defused by returning me to an open prison. On the rock of solidarity their wave of repression is being broken and

there is now a mood of desperation characterising their attempts to keep the cell door closed on me.

In the face of their deceit and inhuman attempts to deny me freedom after 25 years in prison my defiance remains implacable and unyielding, and I will continue to fight their vicious abuse of power as I've done for the last quarter of a century. In the words of the Uruguayan poet and writer Eduardo Galeano, 'We are as small as the fear we feel, and as big as the enemy we choose'."

ABC Scotland

The first meeting to form an Anarchist Black cross group in Scotland was held on 7th July at the Autonomous Centre of Edinburgh.

A blog has been set up to help people get in touch at abcsotland.wordpress.com with a draft proposal for the new group, which has been set up in part inspired by the solidarity work seen around the John Bowden case.

Mark Barnsley is away

Public Private stitchup

Rob Ray follows up two years on from the last time Metronet got itself into trouble, and finds nothing has improved

Troubled Public/Private Partnership (PPP) company Metronet has filed for an Extraordinary Review following weeks of pressure from London Underground, to investigate how it has accrued up to £2bn in excess costs.

The company is in severe financial straights after loan companies refused to give them any more money, junking their credit status.

In calling a review, Metronet is attempting to claim £1bn from Transport for London (TfL), the state body which regulates the rail system, to help pay for its Tube renewal work. Further costs could be claimed from other sections of the group later in the year, also thought to total around £1bn.

Metronet accuse TfL of effectively shifting the goalposts by demanding more improvements but not putting in extra money to cover them. TfL strongly deny this, and on the contrary have argued that the company is entirely responsible for the overruns, as it is owned by its suppliers.

Transport for London may end up having to foot the bill even if they win the case, with bosses at the infrastructure company threatening to walk away and leave TfL with the liabilities.

Metronet has come under sustained criticism since it took over the contract to renew London's underground services from a range of sources, including unions, watchdogs, the mayor's office, and Transport for London.

Tim O'Toole, managing director of London Underground, said: "We believe Metronet has not performed in an economic and efficient manner and

that its financial position is a result of it and its shareholders failure to properly plan, manage and execute its maintenance and renewal activities."

In the most recent report on Metronet from the PPP Arbitrator organisation set up to monitor its progress, it was found that the two arms of the company had between them refurbished just 14 of the 35 stations they had been expected to have completed at this point, and 34.9km of surface rail replacement, against 49.1km agreed in the contract.

In deep tube reconditioning, the results have been even worse, completing less than half of the 18.7km of contracted work.

However, according to the PPP Arbitrator, as of March 2006 costs had come in substantially on target, meaning the money has been spent, but with less to show for it. It was found that the standards which would be expected of a "benchmark operator" have not been met, with the work done so far being "poorly delivered".

In a statement, the arbitrator said: "Neither Metronet BCV nor Metronet SSL has carried out its activities, over the period from 4th April 2003 to 31st March 2006 as a whole, in an overall efficient and economic manner and in accordance with Good Industry Practice."

The company was also strongly criticised for failing to put in a full and frank report of its buying process, despite repeated requests and substantial warning.

The report echoes findings from two years ago on Metronet's performance, reported on by *Freedom* in 2005. That



GEORGE MELLY, 1927-2007: One of the most colourful characters ever to be associated with anarchism, Jazz star, writer, comedian and entertainer George Melly has died. "I still support its principles: don't interfere with people, let them get on with it, let them learn to live together, let them learn to love each other."

year it was found that the company had fallen up a year behind schedule while simultaneously overspending.

The scandal uncovered was that Metronet, part-owned by construction contracting giant Balfour Beatty, had been buying substantial services from its parent company at above-odds

prices, and receiving poorly-funded work in return. Payment to its investors meanwhile was double what it should be.

Unions have called for the sector to be re-privatised following the latest problems, saying that cost overruns while shareholders are still taking

profits out of the business, followed by requests for the state to bail out the problem, show the weaknesses of the PPP project.

Rumours have surfaced however that other companies are already holding informal talks to take over should Metronet go into administration.

Same old Brown policies

Anyone wondering if Gordon Brown would be on the side of working people need look no further than his new cabinet for the answer. The former head of the CBI - the bosses' union, Digby Jones is now Minister for Trade and Industry. Jones, who refused to join the Labour party and won't even say whether he voted Labour in the last election, is one of a slew of new appointments from business in positions of power in Brown's government.

Lord Stevens Brown's international security advisor is a director of amongst others LGC Group Holdings and Invicta Capital a company which *Corporate Watch* points out "is an investment and legal services firm which last year ceased funding the British film industry, when Gordon Brown himself closed a tax loophole that they were using".

Stevens and Jones are joined by Shriti Vadera, the new Parliamentary Under Secretary of State in the Department for International Development. She spent fourteen years at UBS Warburg, a giant investment bank, heavily involved

in privatisation across the globe. There is another privatization link in the Brown government. Sir Alan West the Security Minister chairs a company called QinetiQ's Defence Advisory Board. West played a crucial part in privatising the former Defence Evaluation and Research Agency in 2001, as QinetiQ energy. Jeremy Heywood, who was Managing Director and co-head of Morgan Stanley from December 2003, and is now Brown's head of 'domestic policy and strategy'.

None of these people were ever elected. No one has voted for them yet they are taking up positions of power that will influence the way we live.

Brown's government is one dominated by corporate interests. Digby Jones who opposes workers' right to strike - once calling on the government to 'face down' the unions, said on appointment that "business and wealth creation should be at the heart of government policy".

John Hutton the new business enterprise minister (funny they don't have a workers' rights minister) said

last week that the government would be "aggressively pro-business". This means in addition to the appointments like Jones bringing in business advisors like Alan Sugar, whose company has large public sector contracts and JP Garnier of GlaxoSmithKline who lives in America and does not pay any taxes here.

As anarchists we argue that people need to be allowed to take control of their own lives. We argue for real democracy not the sham that leads to unelected businessmen who make money out of the state running the government. It is almost a joke that some one like Jones who isn't a member of the Labour party and didn't even vote for them is now a Labour minister. The trouble is the joke is on us.



Mass deportations

Thousands of Congolese refugees are to be deported from the as part of a crackdown on those in 'irregular situations' - with the Congo pledging to round up everyone sent back.

British ambassador Andy Sparks announced at the end of last month that up to 4,000 people could be flown back to the war-torn republic, despite warnings from human rights groups that the area is highly unsafe.

Congolese officials have said they will hold and identify everyone sent back, leading to fears that refugees face severe reprisals from the state.

In an interview with Radio Okapi, a progressive radio station based in the Democratic Republic of Congo, Ruphin Kilimpimpi, the legal adviser for the Directorate-General of migrations (DGM) said: "To make it possible our country to accommodate in dignity these compatriots, there are preconditions. The first precondition is the identification."

The move comes as France and Amsterdam make similar noises about

mass deportations of Congolese, with 177 people announced to be deported in May by the Dutch ambassador.

Professor Mwahila Tshiyembe, president of the Federation of the Congolese of France said that it is not the moment to expel the Congolese living abroad. The country which has just left several years from war, does not have means of dealing with those expelled, he explained.

In the UK, a writer from the Congo Support Project said: "People are still dying as a result of conflict, and human rights violations, killings of civilians and recruitment of child soldiers continue. Deportees are handed over to the security services, and if they are wanted by the authorities they are immediately detained and brought to prisons where they can easily die within a year, due to beatings, torture and lack of food."

The group held a demonstration against the deportations on 3rd July. Contact defendasylumseekers@yahoo.co.uk for more information.

News

ASIO watches

Freedom looks into underhand tactics from the fast-growing Australian secret state

Agents from the Australian Security Intelligence Organisation have been caught out attempting to recruit a student activist to spy on students, anarchists and socialist groups for them.

Daniel Jones, leader of the University of Sydney Students Representative Council, was approached and offered amnesty over charges against him related to his activities at a G20 summit in Melbourne, in return for information about a number of groups he had contact with.

An operative known as 'Ahmed' approached Jones early last month and asked him to provide regular information saying his organisation could "help with" charges laid during student protests last year.

The agent, who said he was attached to New South Wales Police, also offered money in exchange for further mole work, specifically looking to find out more about upcoming protests at the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) forum this September.

Ahmed had a substantial amount of information on Jones' own feelings towards other political groups he had worked with on the protests, and attempted to use this to his advantage. The information seems to have been largely gathered through monitoring of an e-list frequented by Jones.

When contacted by Australian media groups, neither 'Ahmed' nor New South Wales Police were prepared to talk on the subject.

Specific information was requested

on anarchist collective Mutiny, who bring out a monthly newsletter in New South Wales, along with on the International Socialist Organisation, Solidarity, and Resistance groups.

Mutiny is thought to have become a target after it published an open letter on anarchist newswire A-infos to try and convince groups coalescing around the APEC forum not to condemn people caught up in fighting with the police.

The recruitment effort follows a series of raids at Sydney University by anti-terrorism squads in mid-March, which saw five homes ransacked and photographed by police in connection with the G20 protests.

A number of serious charges were laid against the five people arrested, including Jones. Aggravated burglary, conduct endangering a person, riot, affray, unlawful assembly, and criminal damage were all on the list.

While socialist groups have decried the state's excessive monitoring, anarchist groups have tended to note that state monitoring of open websites and debate should be assumed. @ndy, on his blog 'slackbastard', reiterated that few new tactics have emerged in recent months, but the willingness to use them openly may have changed. He wrote: "What may be considered 'new' is the legal and political context in which these activities are now taking place, and the attempt to align militant protest with terrorism ... with all that implies for those deemed to be engaged in 'politically-motivated violence'."

Highly controversial changes to the



LOCKDOWN: The Pan American Games began on 13th June in Rio de Janeiro. The Games have not brought only parties and sport to the city, but security forces as well. Over 20 civilians have been shot dead as part of the crackdown, designed to make the area 'safe' for athletes and audiences, according to local indymedia reports.

anti-terror laws made in the aftermath of the destruction of the twin towers have given ASIO substantially more powers.

The most controversial measure saw the Australian Security Intelligence Organisation given the power to detain people suspected of having information relating to 'terrorism' offences and to force them to provide such information.

Warrants from a prescribed authority can authorise detention for a total of seven days and ASIO can apply for further warrants after a detainee's release. ASIO can demand membership lists, diaries, mobile phones and tap into people's computers either internally or from outside.

ASIO's capabilities to exercise such powers have also improved dramatically

in recent years. The intelligence agency's budget for 2005/06 was \$181.099m compared to \$142.449m in 2004/05. It is set to grow to \$233.059m this year.

In its annual roundup of activities, ASIO states that it "Continued to make a valuable contribution to countering the efforts of foreign states that seek to intimidate people in Australia who they see as dissidents".

Above the Law

In 1992 the National Security Archive made a request under the Freedom of Information Act for details of CIA activity both inside (which is illegal) and outside the United States.

At the end of June 2007 nearly 700 pages were released to the public via the National Security Archive, although some 10% of the material supplied was still censored.

The documents detail state-sponsored terrorism in the form of assassination plots against foreign leaders like Fidel Castro (for which the Mafia was hired), Patrice Lumumba (of the Congo - in an attempt to poison him), General Rafael Trujillo (dictator of the Dominican Republic) and General René Schneider (the Chilean army commander).

Although these original attempts were not all successful, some men were subsequently murdered - thus achieving the CIA goals although the CIA has always denied involvement. US journalists including Michael Getler, then of the *Washington Post*, and columnist Jack Anderson and his team

of investigative reporters were among the many wiretapped.

From the 1970s activists, civil rights and anti-Vietnam war protesters were amongst 10,000 citizens who were spied upon and routinely followed and on whom CIA files were kept and 300,000 were listed; mail between the United States and China and the Soviet Union was intercepted; mind- and behaviour-altering drugs, like LSD, were administered to members of the public without their knowledge or agreement.

For example, these documents contain a memo detailing CIA experiments with drugs that American drug companies had rejected. In the case of MK-ULTRA, civilians in the United States were given substances injected with plutonium in order to observe their effects as possible 'truth serum's and ways to obtain control over 'enemy agents'.

"These are the top CIA officers all going into the confessional and saying, 'Forgive me father, for I have sinned'," said Thomas Blanton, director of the private National Security Archive.

The current director of the CIA, Michael Hayden, could only comment, "Most of it is unflattering, but it is the CIA's history."

It's also illegal: the National Security Act of 1947 explicitly gave the agency no (police) powers, and it implicitly prohibited the agency from carrying out such activities inside the United States.

But - as several other developments at the same time show - the Bush regime is continuing the tradition of acting above the law: also in June the White House refused to comply with a subpoena to make documents pertaining to the recent firing of attorneys available.

John Prados of the National Security Archive says, "Today's activities [are much more extensive than those of the 1970s], in terms of the scale in which we're carrying these things out and, in some senses, the sinister activities and techniques that we've so blithely resorted to."

Louis Further

DRC conflict

After the first democratic elections in 40 years in 2006 and the end of a decade of brutal civil war, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) remains unstable, corrupt, and desperately poor. Hundreds died in violence in Bas-Congo and Kinshasa earlier this year and urban unrest and gangsterism is on the rise according to a new Amnesty International report.

War began in 1998 and is estimated to have led to over three million deaths and two-and-a-half million people displaced. After President Mobutu's overthrow in 1997 neighbouring countries became involved.

The DRC is estimated to hold 12% of the world's copper and almost half the world's cobalt, used in mobile phones, as well as uranium, colombo-tantalite, diamonds, gold, and timber. Katanga province alone has proven reserves valued at \$300 billion.

In June, a military court in DRC acquitted three former employees of Australian-based Anvil Mining Ltd of complicity in war crimes. Anvil Mining's

Dikulushi mine was the first in the DRC to enjoy World Bank backing and in 2005 they were issued with a guarantee for \$13.3 million despite concerns raised over their human rights record. Other corporations profiting from the situation include Anglo-American, Ashanti Gold, Barclays, Bayer, and De Beers.

In 2003, as part of the peace process, DRC was pledged \$3.9 billion by the Paris Club and given a debt reduction of 80%. These transactions appear to be a concession granted by Kabila's backers, in the US, France and Belgium, to facilitate greater corporate exploitation.

The World Bank subsequently arranged privatisation of the state-owned diamond and mining companies and renegotiation of all existing mining and forestry contracts. The resulting deals for major corporations including Freeport McMoran account for 75% of the state's mineral assets. Remuneration in these contracts, at 1.5% to 2% of net sales revenues, is a tenth of usual practice.

Feature

A bunch of dirty Libcommies

Wayne Foster interviews John Stevens, a founder member and one of the 'committee of ten' who run the highly successful libcom.org

libcom.org is a constantly expanding online resource that seeks to promote working class self-organisation through publishing news, theoretical texts and historical articles. In the last year, site traffic has risen from 40,000 visits per month to over 100,000 and there are now 2,600 active users. The site contains over 7,000 articles ranging from brief reports to full books and has recently seen a major upgrade.

Wayne: Why did you decide to set up and devote so much energy to an online resource?

John: I think we reflected on our previous political activity and our experiences of the anarchist movement. We looked at the strengths and weaknesses of what people were trying to do, and we considered it in the context of our situation. We had to find a form of activity that was appropriate in the UK in the 21st century at a time of low class struggle.

We're very conscious that most of our generation have no experience of collective struggle. The most basic ideas of solidarity which were commonplace 20 years ago, such as not crossing picket lines, are largely unknown to young workers today.

So we think it's important to get out all the information we can about workers' struggles, to let people know that in the past and present workers have struggled to collectively improve their lives.

We decided our time would be best spent in 'propaganda' activities – that is, getting out and sharing information, news, and libertarian communist ideas. (It should be noted that people in the libcom group are involved individually in other activities and other political groups like the Solidarity Federation, Antifa, etc.)

Some of us tried print publishing but we became frustrated with the nature of the medium. With online publishing we could slash running costs, attract a massively increased readership, remove the pressure of deadlines and allow all content to remain published permanently. Using the web also means that people who might never see an anarchist publication can stumble across articles on our site – we get 60,000 search engine referrals a month.

We have content directed in two directions. Firstly, and most importantly, at working people generally; secondly at people who would identify as political radicals, activists, socialists or anarchists.

For these aims the site is split into different areas. We have specially formatted content areas, where all articles meet a strict style guide. In the news, thought, organise and history sections all articles are under 2,000

words and are aimed at the educated layperson.

Our second set of content areas is directed mainly at politicians, and includes the library and the forums. These have much less stringent guidelines, and in the library articles are included as written, without extra clarification.

Our broad hope is that in some small way we can let people know that collective struggle and solidarity are not dead, that these things still go on, that workers can and have improved their lives and conditions by collective direct action.

This distinction seems to involve lapsing back into an activist mentality, where revolutionary activity centres on converting people to an ideology.

I would disagree with this because for those of us in the libcom group, the website is our collective activity but we engage in activities outside of it which we would also consider to be part of our 'revolutionary activity'.

On 'activism', I'd like to clarify the terms. A dictionary definition of activism is "The use of direct, often confrontational action, such as a demonstration or strike, in opposition to or support of a cause". This is fine.

What we want to avoid is the situation where people become obsessed with 'doing something', even if what they are doing is useless. We can't create mass struggle out of nothing, and we don't support 'activist-ism' which is undertaking elitist small group actions for their own sake.

Our news and history articles don't end, like so many anarchist texts, with the words 'and that's why you should be an anarchist'. They outline events, explain a particular issue as it affects workers, describe what workers attempted to do about it, and consider if they succeeded or failed and what lessons other workers can gain from the experience.

That said we don't attempt to hide our politics by pretending we're not really revolutionaries or communists in order to be populist.

Libcom has a narrower political position than other online resources, certainly compared to Indymedia, a-infos or infoshop. Why did you reject the 'neutral independent reporting' approach to take a specific ideological position?

Partly our site is narrower than indymedia simply because it is smaller, the pool of contributors in particular is far smaller. But yes we do have well-defined political ideas, and a high level of political agreement within our collective. We believe in our ideas so we want to propagate them. At the same time we do not want our site to help air ideas which we think are counter-productive to

building working class power.

We are not proponents of 'big tent' anarchism, especially when we would have to share a tent with misanthropic anti-socials, paedophiles, end-of-the-world primitivist cultists, etc. We also wished to avoid the problems a lot of open publishing sites have with rubbish posted to them like paranoid conspiracy theories, anti-Semitic Islamist articles, Zionist propaganda, 'national anarchism' and 'libertarian' capitalism and other assorted shite.

But we're a young collective, all in our early to mid-20s, we certainly don't think we have all the answers. We have a very high level of agreement, but there are issues we're still discussing internally to some extent. Mostly the role of political organisations, anti-fascism, syndicalism and the nature of the unions.

You say you've tried to avoid perpetuating political activity detached from everyday life. How have you gone about this?

I think a lot of people can end up emulating the first set of anarchists they come across. You decide you're an anarchist, then you meet some, see what they do and figure that's what you should do too. Most of us fell into this trap when we first became involved in anarchist politics.

Partly due to their better use of new technologies like the net, the activist-ism wing of the movement had a much

higher profile than the social anarchist wing. In particular the world's biggest Anglophone site, infoshop.org, plays a big part in defining the anarchism-as-a-hobby approach, and this is very different from anarchism as a method and tendency for improving our everyday lives. We think we have helped reverse this. Because we are the biggest anarchist website in the UK, lots of English-speaking anarchists looking to find out more or get in touch with others will now do so via our site.

You've been involved with this project for several years now, what have been the highlights for you?

Well, the main one has to be our coverage of the struggles against the CPE employment law the French government attempted to introduce which would have allowed bosses to sack workers under 26 for no reason. We had the most comprehensive coverage of this struggle available (in English) anywhere in the world and featured in the *Guardian*, *Washington Post*, *BBC*, and other places.

When some people went to a picket at a refuse workers strike in London that they read about on our forums, they saw that one of the strikers had printed a history of another strike of bin workers in Brighton from our site and taken it to distribute to his co-workers.

We've also got in touch with a number of people via our forums that

we would probably have never met in real life, which has been great, particularly a few people from Turkey, Japan, Egypt and Israel. An interview we did with one of our group, a former sex-texter, was top of google for 'sex text' for eighteen months which was quite impressive!

Another member of our group is a university student, who has seen texts on libcom given on his course reading list, including articles on Hungary '56 and even our whole race archive. We have heard of threads on our forums being widely read, and even being printed and discussed at meetings which was good to hear.

Current ongoing discussions in our forums about disputes in the public sector amongst postal workers, NHS, local government and civil service staff have also been a highlight for me, and very much reflect what we want libcom to become.

The answers in this interview represent John's personal opinion. While the finished interview has been approved by the rest of the group, it doesn't necessarily reflect their ideas in their totality.

Libcom's annual hosting costs £1,000. They fund this by their membership dues and from donations from users and supporters. In 2007 they want to publicise the site further, and a small donation can help them continue and expand their project. In order to donate please go to libcom.org/notes/donate

Commentary

FREEDOM

Volume 68 Number 14

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

One thing which has been noticeable, and welcome, in the last year or so has been the level of improvement much of the anarchist press has seen, both in looks and, to a certain extent, content.

A timely *Direct Action* hit the shops, with one of its best covers in years and what seems to be an improved direction. *Industrial Worker*, the newspaper of the IWW, has been conducting surveys of how its content is impacting and asking what people think of their new look. Newsletters meanwhile are becoming more numerous, and with online publishing are getting a wider audience than ever before.

Online too, with groups like libcom adding to the loveably chaotic Indymedia, blogging and viedomaking becoming ever easier, *Freedom* is standing alongside more friendly faces than ever before.

However, this growth should not be taken out of context. It is reflected in a more general growth across the country, and world, of communication. If anything, it is even easier to be sidelined as individual publications in this morass.

Hence the importance not only of writing the good word, but of spreading it...

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Next issue

The next issue will be dated 28th July 2007 and the last day to get copy to us for that issue will be Thursday 19th July. Send articles to us by email to copy@freedompress.org.uk or by post addressed to The Editors, Freedom, 84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1 7QX.

Utopian (Euro)Visions?

Good to see Dave Douglass writing in *Freedom – Pit Sense Versus the State* (Phoenix Press, 1994), after all, is a touchstone for class-struggle anarchism, and I'll always be interested in what he has to say. Appreciated the crack on Terry Wogan's xenophobia, too (2nd June issue), but it was a little disconcerting to then read the suggestions for a more participatory Eurovision Song Contest. Sadly, Dave's inclusive non-competitive "international folk and rock concert" would leave not only me, but many millions, out in the cold.

I daresay there was no intention to exclude soul, reggae, R&B, bhangra and hip-hop, for example. 'Rock' was presumably meant to imply something like 'popular music in general' (minus the purely commercial). Trouble is, thanks to 'progressive' media like the *NME* and stars such as Eric Clapton, Lou Reed, David Bowie and Morrissey (among many others), as well as official cultural institutions and music corporations, the dominant ideology of pop lionises folk and rock as serious and authentic. Other contemporary formations (along with their exponents, especially those marked 'black' and/or 'working class') tend to be dismissed as frivolous, degraded, corrupt and dangerous – until they can be incorporated and later safely relegated to a mythical golden age and retrospectively respected after all. The upshot being, therefore, that those at the sharp end now, marginalised and stigmatised (and worse) by such bullshit, know exactly what 'rock' means from their perspective. Consequently, it quite easily follows that ships pass in the night...

It just goes to show how otherwise irrelevant, harmless variations in everyday expression can become loaded with whole different realms of connotations, depending on your position and experience. Plus we're all prone to minor unthinking lapses from time to time (I certainly am, anyway), whereas wankers like Wogan leak whoppers like colanders. Yet while we don't want to quibble over trivial distinctions and nit-picking recriminations, this does seem a frustratingly tricky kind of subject to tackle publicly without being sidetracked by clashes of taste or having to wade through all that right-on PC crap. And that's even before wider discourses are taken into account, such as the current vogue for misconceiving 'racism' as merely a problem of white working class ignorance, conveniently overlooking

how situations are set up and manipulated to start with, in particular historical contexts and with certain interests at stake. Then, hey presto, the only apparent solutions are either outright denial or spurious debates gloating over, humiliating and hammering anti-social culprits (as in the recent *Big Brother* debacles). Still, without the myriad forms of low-level implicit bias, explicit prejudice wouldn't succeed in dividing us – and the Wogan piece just happened to include what looks like a hint of the former while forcefully exposing the latter.

Tom Jennings

The Lives of Others

Tom Jennings fascinating review of the Oscar winning film *The Lives of Others* in *Freedom* (16th June) is too systematic and consequently misses a vital point. The point is the Stasi secret police agent Gerd Wiesler may be of an "arid authoritarian character" who is "one sad nasty bastard", but the film shows him to be a sincere bastard. Though Mr Jennings may well be a postmodernist to whom sincerity and good faith are not relevant it seems to me in terms of this film and perhaps our understanding of the nature of totalitarian regimes it is very important.

It is clear from the beginning that Stasi Captain Wiesler believes in the virtue of what he is doing as a means of promoting 'socialism' and protecting it from what Jennings might call "arrogant pricks (like, perhaps in the film, Georg Dreyman) making good art". This is contrasted with the attitude of Wiesler's bosses (both in the Stasi and East German Party) who lack his sincerity. As Jennings suggests this film is a portrayal of corruption. By corruption here I mean betrayal of the ideals of state socialism, and the film shows how members of the apparatus betray the ideals of state socialism in the interests of career advancement and personal gratification.

Wiesler comes to be aware of the bad faith of his superiors and is transformed in the course of a just over two hour film in much the same way as the hero in Ken Loach's film *Land and Freedom* on the Spanish Civil War had his mind changed by events and he ripped up his communist party card. This is difficult to portray because as Bertold Brecht pointed out people don't change at that rate in real life.

Jennings says "there is no record of any Stasi man ever behaving like this [Gerd Wiesler]" and that his "unlikely

redemption is as nauseating as it is disingenuous". Interestingly those anarchist critics of last year's Spanish film *Salvador Puig Antich*, the young anarchist executed by garrote in the 1970s, also questioned the authenticity of his being befriended by a prison warden in one of Franco's jails. Yet we know that George Orwell, when a member of the then illegalised POUM on the run from the communist authorities in Barcelona in 1937, was met with praise and a handshake when he confessed his 'illegal' allegiance to a senior official (see *Homage to Catalonia*). Similarly recently a former senior manager, Alan Wainwright from Mold in Wales, has exposed the blacklist operating in the British building trade on a blog on the internet and the Department of Trade & Industry has just begun an inquiry into it. Moreover, Stuart Christie, in his latest autobiography *Granny made me an Anarchist*, writes of 1975 when he and his companion were still living in Wimbledon and a police inspector called and "advised me that 'a number of people' were extremely annoyed" and "he recommended that I would be well advised to get out of town..." Strange things do happen, and under any system of government it is reasonable to believe that deviance is possible within the hierarchy, even among the Prussians of East Germany.

Brian Bamford

Win from within: privatisation

Experience informs us that privatisation is the opposite of everything that business and the government view purport it to be. In fact the private sector is inefficient, with a lack of expertise in public service provision, being a more expensive way to invest due to the existence of shareholders – who expect their dividends, usually meaning so called 'business tycoons' cutting services or reducing their quality, lobbying, suing or begging the government (that is tax payers) for more money. In relation to their own ex-publicly employed staff, the privateers carry out a determined class war, which is dressed up and disguised using such terms as reorganising, restructuring, downsizing, rightsizing, streamlining and modernising.

All of these are likely to involve or lead to erosion of pay and conditions, job security, quality of product and service, equality at work, union representation, pensions, health and safety and eventual redundancy.

How to fight back:

Front load the fight from when it is first discovered that the government are considering privatising your industry. The stronger the fight you put up against privatisation before it comes in, the better off you'll be if and when you're actually privatised.

Uniting with other rank and file activists, use your unions democratic structures relentlessly to raise the need for the union to help build a campaign and support your fight against the planned privatisation with their vast array of resources; researchers, industrial and legal experts, printing, press officers, sponsored MPs, etc. (all paid for by the members!).

Maximum publicity should be aimed for in workplaces, and toward the public via national, local and left media (newspapers, radio, television)

and the trade union movement. All the aspects of privatisation: erosion of service, health and safety, exorbitant costs to service users/tax payers, etc., as well as impact on the employees should be put forward in a firm and clear manner.

Maximum solidarity must be built by holding workplace meetings open to all workers, regardless of employment status or union membership, and producing leaflets appealing to other workers and other union's members, the general public, service users and your workplace's agency workers, contractors and temps. Everyone possible!

A fighting programme is needed that's progressive, flexible, and controlled by the rank and file members, continuously renewing and adding to the actions listed above. Every means available to stop the planned privatisation needs to be used; from appealing to employment and health and safety legislation; to mandating shop stewards to negotiate with management and using direct action. Decision making needs to be focused on the membership, as ultimately wins are not made through negotiation but through industrial strength and that means 'people taking action', or it's not a credible threat.

Victory depends on much more than your ability to resist privatisation, and the reality is you will probably not prevent it despite your best efforts.

Even though the stiff resistance to the infrastructure privatisation of London Underground Limited (LUL) ultimately failed, many binding concessions had to be accepted by the privatised companies, who unlike the state backed LUL, are very aware of the financial cost of upsetting their militant workforce.

Identify the weaknesses within the PFI contracts and exploit them to the maximum.

If the privateers get a penalty for failing to provide one service, that area, by realising their industrial strength, can then use this to maximise gains for all members across the company.

Since privatisation in 2003, infrastructure workers employed by Metronet have successfully fought off every attack from the company, and have outstripped London Underground's publicly employed staff in every pay rise.

Resistance is Fertile.

Anon

Based on the experiences of a tube track worker, RMT activist and Northeast London Solidarity Federation affiliate working for Metronet. Metronet is the private consortium maintaining two thirds of London Underground's infrastructure.

Quiz answers

1. *Abolish Restaurants* is an illustrated guide to the daily misery, stress, boredom, and alienation of restaurant work, as well as the ways in which restaurant workers fight against it. It was produced by a group called prole.info, from whom it can be downloaded. And it can be coloured in.
2. Anarres is a planet with an anarchist society in the novel *The Dispossessed* by Ursula Le Guin.
3. P&O Seafarers, after the company demanded 500 job cuts and cuts in pay. The workers held out but were stymied by their union, the NUS, blocking solidarity action.
4. The USI, Italian Syndicalist Union, by militants who disagreed with the CGL's policy of supporting the Socialist Party

The Anarchist Quiz Book

Who said "I shit on all the revolutionary vanguards of this planet"? Find out in the new Anarchist Quiz Book from Freedom Press, compiled by Martin Howard and illustrated by Paul Petard.

Some say that it should not be the highest priority of a revolutionary movement to ask itself obscure questions, but it's good fun and if it encourages an enquiring mind to find out more, than all the better. So agitate, educate and organise, all in this very handy question and answer format!

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REVIEW

Tanya Stephens' new album reinscribes class-conscious ethics at reggae's core. Tom Jennings rides its rhythms

Tanya Stephens' fourth album, 2004's *Gangsta Blues*, arguably moved contemporary reggae onto a new level – both lyrically, with its critical (and self-critical) intelligence and hatred of oppression; and musically in combining the passionate lower-class panache of the ragga dancehall with roots, Lovers Rock, and lighter, singer-songwriter instrumental showcasing her gorgeous rich contralto. *Rebellion* (VP Records) is even better, so I'll suspend my usual overheated over-interpretations and let the artist speak for herself.

Sure enough, the opening 'Welcome to the Rebellion' sets an agenda for present conditions in culture and politics: "Came to pass in the days of glorifying everything wrong / That the standard for girls became a bra and a thong / Wholesome values like curling up with a good book and a bong / Went out the window along with making a good song / ... So I say to you now, the Rebellion is urgent / Stand before you not as queen, but as your humble servant / Fake leaders claim thrones without building kingdoms / Same as the music business in Kingston / We need to fight for the future for our daughters and sons / Instead you're tripping your brothers, fighting for crumbs / But we will not be deterred by knives or guns / Go tell it on the mountain; the Rebellion has come."

Such pronouncements are placed pithily in the history of Black struggle in 'Come A Long Way': "Tell me now Malcolm, do we hurt your pride? / Can you hear me Rosa, was it worth the ride? / Can you see me now Marcus, we're still not unified / So tell me now Martin, is this why you died? / So we've come along way from picking cotton / Many never thought they'd live to see the day when Bush pick Rice / But if all you've become is another house nigga, baby / Tell me, was it worth all the sacrifice? / Get outa my way while I climb to the top now / But be sure to catch me if I fall from grace / Cause heaven forbid if what I chase should reject me / You know I'm gonna need a warm black embrace / We used to stack guns, prepare for revolution / Was the only way of getting wrong put right / Now we think all our problems can be solved with shooting / And we've

forgot why we started to fight."

Meanwhile, 'Do You Still Care?'s interlocking stories amplifying the implications of prejudice weave together the baleful power of dominative discrimination – from a white cracker offered a liver transplant but whose donor is black, to justifications for war exploiting culture and ideology. More controversial in the Caribbean context is Stephens' consistent public stand against homophobia: "Bigga was hustling on the corner, making some cash / When he bumped into some beef that he had from the past / He watched the guns raise and the bullets fly / In disbelief as his friends all jumped in their rides / Left him in the gutter, didn't care if he died / He was rescued by a car with plates that said 'Gay Pride' / It would have been fatal, the shot in your head / They saved your life, though you always said 'chi-chi fi dead'."

Then, having critiqued organised religion's mystifications – scathingly in 'Sunday Morning' and obliquely in 'You Keep Looking Up' ("Don't be compelled to look above / Look around you, look with love"), 'Warn Dem' muses furiously on ghetto poverty and desperation – with its video (on the DVD accompanying the album with unplugged performances and interviews) showing a young blood carjacking before robbing a pharmacy, finally using the proceeds (an oxygen mask) to save an asthmatic baby's life: "Things bad now but, trust me, them could get worse / Unless of course we come together and do something first / And all the mothers just gwaan pray / Cause it go tek a lot more than a politician fe save the day / When we actions nuh mirror what a come from we lips / Simply means we must be a nation of hypocrites / Politicians come from among us, as far as I can see / If somen wrong with them, somen must wrong with we / A we mek them, a we elect them, and all the crap them a dish a we a take them / So it's a little insane when we start complaining when the bullets start raining / When a we a the creator fi the harm them."

This song's epilogue characteristically reiterates Stephens' trademark humility and humour to heighten and season her most trenchant insights: "You know what? Me can't promise you say the youths dem a go drop the Beretta / Hell, me can't even promise you say me



a go act better / But one thing's for sure, we can mek a effort / And that a the least we can do before we lef earth."

Tanya Stephens' first three albums (*Big Tings A Gwan*, 1994; *Too Hype*, 1997; *Ruff Rider*, 1998), incidentally, were among the best – and most pleasurable barbed – of the obscene 'slackness' subgenre popularised back in the day by Yellowman and Shabba Ranks'. Here again several tracks explore the pragmatics of sexual relations, emphasising womanist strength and autonomy and emotional and sensual directness and honesty – with no politically correct pieties and the sharpest tongue and most hilarious wit ever put on wax on the subject. The lyrics of 'Spilt Milk' give a characteristic taste: "You're spilt milk, no use crying over you / It's only natural that a rogue will do what a rogue will do / And besides goodbye there's really nothing

left to say / Cause if you never spilled, then you woulda gone sour anyway / ... Swearing I'd be lost without you, but it was your loss / I'm not even angry any more / I've mopped bigger messes than you up off my floor / You're just another chore."

This tale of love's disappointment concludes upbeat: "I'll find a better wood; the forest full up of trees". But whether expressing lust, anger, affection, bitterness or sympathy for ghetto men and women; luxuriating in pleasure or lamenting lack of fulfilment; these personal narratives reliably correlate – naturally, unpretentiously and, apparently, effortlessly – with wider levels of analysis too.

Nevertheless it's rather early, on the strength of two albums, to compare her significance for this era with Bob Marley's previously. She certainly has high-profile support (including leading

Bobo DJs such as Sizzla and industry heavyweights like Dr Dre); however, *Rebellion's* sonic backdrop does occasionally sound somewhat anodyne (in searching for crossover appeal?), and a decided dearth of club-friendly beats behind the down-to-earth lyrical populism risks losing touch with the grass-roots². However, if the musical progression could match the patter, Tanya Stephens may surpass Marley in chanting down Babylon – not least in appreciating the complexities of class, gender and race with recourse neither to righteous mysticism nor simplistic faith in better leaders.

www.tomjennings.pwp.blueyonder.co.uk

1. As greatly illuminated in Carolyn Cooper's crucial book *Sound Clash* (Macmillan, 2004; reviewed in *Freedom*, 19th March 2005).

2. As also noted in my review of *Gangsta Blues* in *Variation*, No. 22, 2005.

FILM

This Is England
directed by Shane Meadows

The latest project from the foremost cinematic chronicler of contemporary Britain is, unexpectedly, a period piece depicting the 1983 rites of passage of 12-year-old Shaun (Tommo Turgoose) finding acceptance among skinhead scoundrels convivial enough to include Milky, a Black lad (Andrew Shim), punks, and even New Romantics.

Their summertime teenage kicks are then disrupted by the arrival of the



charismatic Combo (Stephen Graham), who has incorporated fascist rhetoric picked up in the nick into a bitter, resentful worldview. Gang members refusing to kowtow melt away, and Combo leads those remaining into National Front meetings and increasingly malevolent racist attacks – until the brutal beating of Milky awakens Shaun from thrall to this bad surrogate dad.

Based on writer-director Shane Meadows' own memories, the flawless filming and pitch-perfect performances

beautifully capture the peer group mitigation of adolescent pain metamorphosing into adult conflict. Richard Griffin (*Freedom*, 21st June) has already discussed skinhead class orientation, diversity and ambivalence (and in the industrial town of my 1970s youth, two-tone adherents included middle-class and Jewish kids as well as working-class misfits into music and style; whereas the most violent were not necessarily racist). However, whether in subcultures or the mainstream, surface

multiculturalism can merely mask rather than undermine prejudice. *This Is England* glimpses such complexity before, regrettably, backing hastily away.

The best UK social realism painstakingly conveys the texture of experience in precise times and places – here, the fallout from Thatcherism and the Falklands tantalisingly paralleling New Labour and Iraq. However, just as denial, displacement and repression influence psychological

A Sideways Look

Democracy is the sort of thing that hardly anyone ever says they're against, with the exception of fascists of either the secular or religious variety. It is assumed that it is the best way of doing things and most people just accept it.

What people rarely do is look at what it might mean. There is a difference between the political systems of the UK, US, etc., which I shall term 'Democracy', and the idea that the people should decide, which I shall term 'democracy'. 'Democracy' requires an imperfect vote every few years. It is rare in most 'Democracies' to find much difference between the parties and what little debate there is between them is controlled by a media owned by or run by an elite whose values are basically the same. I won't pretend there's no difference between News International and the BBC, but you'll find both equally hostile to any working class political organisation.

We are taught that 'Democracy' is the best system from an early age. My daughters' school has a School Council, whose representatives are elected. We are told it is the best way to run things and that it is far superior to dictatorships, or even worse, 'communism'. Many column inches are devoted in the press to its crisis, as fewer and fewer people bother to vote, especially the young. Perhaps the young are learning by example. The School Council recently discussed new playground equipment and decided they wanted it to be the brightly coloured metal framed stuff. This was a sensible decision, as the current wooden-framed equipment gives the children splinters, and any new wood wouldn't be looked after in the future. However, their view counted as one vote in the ballot the parents' association held. And so did each of the parents who filled in a form! As you can probably guess, the middle class parents were more likely to do this, and more likely to want wood for aesthetic (and eco) reasons rather than practical ones. It's not that the children's views didn't count, they just weren't important.

The reason that 'Democracy' and 'democracy' are conflated is clear – it suits those in power to pretend that we all have a say. If that were so, then why does that say stop the minute you start work or go to school? Why is it that Gordon Brown cares more about what Rupert Murdoch has to say than you or I? In the last general election, many inner city areas had a turnout of less than 50%. Local elections are lucky to see half that. Fewer than one in eight electors in the Borough of Lewisham voted for Executive Mayor Steve Bullock – and he gets paid over £70,000 a year for it!

Most people want what's implied in 'democracy' – a say over what goes on in their lives. Unfortunately, 'Democracy' is effectively synonymous with capitalism, under which what people want

will always be secondary to what the markets dictate.

Svartfrosk

Imagine if...

Des Browne MP was looking at his two cabinet briefs, the Ministry of Defence, and Scotland. At first glance they seemed to have little in common. He looked up at his chief aide with a questioning eye.

"What am I supposed to do with this? Is Gordon trying to tell me something?"

His aide shrugged, never the talkative one, and laid a couple of early papers on his desk. Blaring out across the pages – 'Recruitment crisis in the army!'

He grimaced. The latest statistics showed personnel was down to 98,000 – around 5,800 people short. People simply weren't joining up any more, and who could blame them? The MoD was stuck in a cycle of having to send out people more and more often to continue shooting increasingly well-armed Iraqis, so more people were buying their way out, meaning extra shortages... Des couldn't think of a way around it, other than the dreaded conscription.

"What a mess" he sighed. "Where am I going to find people willing to join up?"

His aide nodded, and placed some more papers down, this time from Scotland. More news, and leader articles on how army recruitment in poverty stricken areas was up, especially in schools. Complaints were going in about how the government were allegedly targeting the least educated and most desperate parts of the populace, lying to them about the situation and what they could expect... Ah.

Des smiled. "Gordon's a ruthless sod, I'll give him that. Get me the head of defence recruitment on the phone, we have a 5,800-squaddie-sized hole to fill with Scottish kids, and suddenly, I appear to be in a perfect position to ease the process."



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The quiz

1. Who wants to abolish restaurants?
2. Why is an Australian anarchist bookservice called 'Anarres Books'?
3. Which group of workers struck for 16 months in Dover in 1988-9?
4. What was founded in Modena in 1912?

Answers on page 6



Film review

page 7

development, wider socio-cultural processes weaving dominant discourses into everyday life get lost in translation into individual perspective.

For example, vicious attitudes towards Black and Asian people have deep roots in white working-class areas – particularly among 'respectable' elders – which eroded as younger generations growing up together suffered similar institutional contempt. Nevertheless, housing, policing and immigration policies consistently revitalise them; so alien ideologists may parachute in to vampirise youth aggravation, but community and official collusion (conscious or not) seals the deal. Of course, such commonplace tacit support for hatred failed to register in Shaun's awareness, and thus elude *This Is England*.

Meadows doubtless understands this problem, but went along with the media marketing spin which Richard Griffin rightly sees as a misconceived attempt "to reclaim the skinhead movement" – whereas greater depth and breadth hover right at the film's heart. Backstories were developed for the characters during lengthy rehearsals, and Combo being mixed-race fortuitously arose from the fact that Stephen Graham is too.

Unfortunately, the golden opportunity to unravel the implications of intrinsic impurity and hybridity throughout this mongrel nation's history was forfeited by isolating pathology in dysfunctional families – a persuasive, if predictable, macho mythos both in the micro-dynamics of violence and as metaphor for the disarray of Englishness. The result is surely superb cinema, but higher ambition could have achieved so much more.

www.tomjennings.pwp.blueyonder.co.uk

Listings

13th June Second International Day of Solidarity with John Bowden, details at myspace.com/friendsofjohnbowden (see also page 2 of this issue).

13th to 15th July Tolpuddle Martyrs Festival, with Tony Benn, Billy Bragg, Chumbawamba, Mark Thomas, the Badgaddies and many more, at Tolpuddle, Dorset, free (charge for parking and camping) call 0117 947 0521, email southwest@tuc.org.uk or see tuc.org.uk/tolpuddle

18th to 22nd July Earth First Summer Gathering, five days of low-impact eco-living, playing, planning and plotting in East Anglia to avert the destruction of our precious planet, email efgathering@aktivix.org or see earthfirstgathering.org.uk

20th July The inaugural Black Cat Press lecture, Terry Liddle on Slavery Ancient and Modern, 7pm in the SPES Library, Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London WC1 (Holborn tube), see eventsandissues.bravehost.com

20th to 29th July A-Camp 2007, an anarchist summer camp in Austria, for details see a-camp.info

21st July Offline's Lambeth Country Fair after party, with DJs playing ska, punk, new wave, Motown and more, plus display of the winning Alternative Vegetable Sculptures entries, all from 8pm to 2am at Prince Albert, 418 Coldharbour Lane, Brixton, London SW9 8LF, see urban75.org/offline

10th to 13th August AR2007 International Animal Rights Gathering 2007 will be held at Appelscha in the northern Netherlands, near to a forest with camping, on the day before (9th), there will be an Animal Rights march through Amsterdam, focusing on fur and vivisection targets, see ar2007.info

11th August Worthing Anarchists Summer Gathering from 11am to 5pm, Camp Titnore, Durrington, followed

by social.

14th to 21st August Camp for Climate Action – after the success of last year's at the Drax Power Station, this summer the camp will take place at a location near Heathrow Airport to highlight airport expansion and the role of the aviation industry in carbon emissions and climate change, for more info see climatecamp.org.uk

19th to 24th August No Borders Camp in the Gatwick area, a space to share information, skills, knowledge and experiences, and to plan actions together against border controls, for more email g-anbc2007@riseup.net or visit <http://noborders.org.uk>

27th to 30th August Smash EDO Summer Action Camp, direct action against the war machine, with workshops on effective campaigning, actions against EDO MBM and lots of fun together, call 07875708873 or see smashedo.org.uk

11th September Disarm Desi, a day of actions against the Defence Systems and Equipment International (DSEI), the arms sales expo held every other year at East London's ExCel Centre, see dsei.org for more.

19th to 24th September Gatwick area No Borders Camp, a space to share information, skills, knowledge and experiences, and to plan actions together against the system of border controls, see <http://noborders.org.uk>

27th October Anarchist Bookfair 2007 at Queen Mary & Westfield College, Mile End Road, London E1, from 10am to 7pm, with books, speakers, workshops, meetings, films, creche, exhibitions, food, and so much more, see anarchistbookfair.org

3rd November 'Bash the Rich!' march on David Cameron's house in Notting Hill, London, see londonclasswar.org for details.

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