

## PROTEST AND POWER

In the run up to the expected Bush protests in London, he was asked what he thought of them. His answers were pretty much as expected: smug, self-servicing, cynical and deeply flawed. He opined that he thought “Freedom is a beautiful thing” and that we were “lucky to be in a country that encourages people to speak their mind.” He stated that he valued “going to a country where people are free to say anything they want to say.” There is much more to freedom than speaking your mind, such as having a meaningful say in the decisions that affect your life, your community and your world. Unsurprising, therefore, that the unelected head of a state would concentrate on freedom of speech rather than expose his ignorance of what real freedom is.

This can be seen when Bush, when asked by reporters about the prospect of tens of thousands of demonstrators filling the streets of London against him, replied by saying “Frankly, I don’t pay much attention to what you just described.” In other words, protest all you like, we will just ignore you.

Bush’s comments do express a certain authoritarian mindset. After all, in democratic theory ‘countries’ (i.e. states) do not ‘allow’ people to protest or ‘express their opinions’. Rather, this is considered a right. In practice, of course, states do not, and cannot, operate in line with democratic theory. No, actual states exist to disempower the many and keep class society going. Such rights as we do have were never ‘allowed’ by the powers that be. Rather, they were won by long, hard struggle by the mass of the people themselves. If we had waited until the state ‘allowed’ us to protest, we would still be waiting.

Incredibly, Bush stated that he did not ‘like war’. But in a sense, he was right. He did not ‘like’ to go to Vietnam and so did not. He defended his country from the ‘Vietnamese threat’ in Texas (when he was not AWOL, of course). Perhaps

it was in the bars of Texas he came to “understand the consequences of war,” seeing the relatives of those whose fathers were not wealthy or powerful enough to get them posted to such dangerous combat zones? Or perhaps he meant by ‘consequences’ higher approval ratings and more votes (if war goes well), not to mention lucrative contracts and more profits for his corporate buddies?

Bush also commented that he could “also see the consequences of not acting, of hoping for the best in the face of tyrannical killers.” That is true, in a way. His father and Reagan before him did ‘hope for the best’ and backed Saddam.

Blair got into the farce, arguing that we can protest. However he asked us to “have the integrity to realise that without [the war], those Iraqis now tasting freedom would still be under the lash of Saddam.” Has Blair the ‘integrity’ to acknowledge that Iraq is an occupied country? And that Iraqis have been gunned down ‘tasting’ the freedom to protest? Has he the ‘integrity’ to ponder why, if Iraqis are so important, the occupying powers cannot be bothered to count the numbers they kill? Or ponder the ‘integrity’ of arguing that when Saddam orders the killing of civilians it is wrong, but when he and the Bush Junta does so it is ‘moral’?

Then, of course, there are the fruits of the freedom Blair said he invaded Iraq to sow. Does he have the ‘integrity’ to remember his words back in February, when we saw two of the largest marches in British/Scottish history? Blair took the opportunity remind us that in Iraq such protests would not be allowed. Yet his position was built on sand as he was simply arguing that we were invading Iraq in order to give them the ‘freedom’ to protest and then be ignored (but we should be glad that we are being ignored rather than shot by our ‘liberators’).

Not, as Downing Street was quick to stress, that the aim of the war was



‘regime change’. That would be illegal. Isn’t ‘integrity’ grand? Now, with no WMD found, Blair is urging us “not to argue about what has been, but to make what is happening now work, and work for the very Iraqis we all say we want to help.” In other words, do not hold us accountable for our actions or lies but rather help us occupy Iraq and transform it into what the US/UK government, not the Iraqi people, considers best. Ah, to have the ‘integrity’ to be able to talk about freedom and justify occupation in the same speech!

Of course Blair is at pains to stress that we have a ‘right’ to protest, within the law (of course). The trouble is, it is up to the state what counts as ‘lawful’. Thus a march to where Bush cannot ignore us would be ‘unlawful’ while a march to a police (and so Blair/Bush) preferred location would be ‘lawful’.

Freedom of speech only in state permitted areas is no freedom at all. Perhaps the US should be trying to bring real democracy and free speech to itself, rather than impose its flawed system of rule by the rich onto Iraq?

Anarchists should not be surprised. Bush and Blair simply expose the hypocrisy of democracy, where the ‘sovereign’ people are said to be free while being ruled by a handful of people. Even if Blair and Bush were elected by a majority, the fact remains that the people have alienated their power and are no longer free. Rather than govern themselves, they pick masters. This can be seen from the fact that while saying they wanted freedom and democracy in Iraq, Bush and Blair systematically ignored both here.

Protest marches, while important, are rarely enough. They exist to remind authority that we can think and act for

ourselves. They exist to show our fellow rebels that they are not alone and that we have the power to change things.

They exist to show that when the state defies majority opinion or acts in a way harmful to the fundamental equality which should be at the heart of a free society, the governed will resist. Yet unless that resistance expresses itself in direct action and solidarity in our communities and workplaces, protest marches can be and will be ignored.

That is our task, to build a social movement that no government can ignore, one rooted in the social power of the working class. Ultimately, protest is not part of statist democracy. Rather it is part of a movement for real freedom and real people power. It is an expression of the system which will replace statism and capitalism, libertarian socialism. That is why governments hate it.

## SPONTANEITY

It was like something out of an award-winning short arthouse film from Eastern Europe. We were walking down The Mall away from the palace, having managed to wave our ‘Bush Go Home’ banner a few feet from George and Laura’s bulletproof limo as they sped past. There in the middle of the road stood a couple of fellow protestors, holding aloft a rather nice model of Cowboy Dubya for the benefit of a gaggle of photographers. Behind them were the rows of alternating giant UK and US flags, converging on Buckingham Palace in the background. As we looked on, the

protestors nodded to us to join in the photocall, if we wanted. So we wandered over and spread the banner out along the bottom of the shot. More photographers joined the pack. There was a television camera of some sort as well. We kept kneeling, feeling like right media tarts. Now a small group of middle-aged peace women in fancy dress passed up The Mall. We invited them into the picture and they took up their places, as the shutters continued to click. After a while, I looked behind me and saw a skateboarding punk had joined the line-up, his message to Bush proudly spelled out on the bottom of

his board. This was becoming quite an event, filling up more and more of the road. The police had noticed and came over to tell us to move onto the pavement. We explained we were only there for the photos and that this was happening in the road. They seemed to take the point.

Our knees were starting to hurt and we were thinking of moving on when there was the sound of whistling up

The Mall towards the palace and a convoy of Critical Mass cyclists materialised at our side. More whistles. A few chants. And suddenly this was no longer a photocall, but a spontaneous demo. The cyclists headed back the way they had come, up The Mall, slow enough for us to keep with them, banner, effigy, and skateboard held aloft. On we went attracting cheers and stares of disbelief from the

pavements. And nobody stopped us, all the way up to the roundabout and the final police defences. So much for the security exclusion zone. So much for all the scaremongering and intimidation beamed out through the media in the lead-up to the visit. We were there. Unauthorised, unplanned – unlikely, perhaps – we were holding our own march on Buckingham Palace.

Peter K.

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# Home and away

## FREEDOM

Volume 64 Number 23

### Anarchism

Anarchists work towards a society of mutual aid and voluntary co-operation. We reject all government and economic repression.

Freedom Press is an independent anarchist publisher. Besides this newspaper, which comes out every two weeks, we produce books on all aspects of anarchist theory and practice.

In our building in Whitechapel we run Britain's biggest anarchist bookshop and host a social centre and meeting space, the Autonomy Club. We're currently developing open-access IT provision for activists to use.

Our aim is to explain anarchism more widely and to show that human freedom can only thrive when the institutions of state and capital have been abolished.

### Social Centre

Until the 14th December, the A-Spire collective in Leeds are having a series of events, workshops and meetings open to all in a new occupied building. Check their website for the exact location, and see our listings section for an incomplete list of Britain's self-managed social centres. For more info see their website at [www.a-spire.org.uk](http://www.a-spire.org.uk)

### Organise!

The new issue of the Anarchist Federation's magazine Organise! is out now, with articles on anti-war direct action, class struggle in the new economy and news from Argentina. Available from Freedom for £1.50 (add 50p postage in the UK, £1 elsewhere).

### Website

[freedompress.org.uk](http://freedompress.org.uk), the Freedom Press website, is now up and (almost) running. The site is very much a work in progress. We intend to have an online bookshop, as well as an archive of Freedom articles. If you can help us build and maintain the site, please email the webteam at [web@freedompress.org.uk](mailto:web@freedompress.org.uk)

### Circulation

We would like to increase the readership of Freedom, and an important part of this is getting better circulation. If you would like to help by selling Freedom or asking bookshops, libraries or newsagents to stock it please write to us or email [circ@freedompress.org.uk](mailto:circ@freedompress.org.uk)

### Next issue

Contributions are wanted for future Freedoms. The next issue will be dated 20th December and the last day for copy will be Thursday 11th December. You can send articles to us at [FreedomCopy@aol.com](mailto:FreedomCopy@aol.com) or by snail mail to 84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1 7QX.

If you are interested in writing regularly for Freedom we want to hear from you!

# Prisoner solidarity

Thessaloniki 7 : Greek state O

Last week, the seven prisoners on remand for charges related to the Anarchist demonstration against the EU summit in Thessaloniki, Greece in June were released! A powerful international solidarity campaign and a drawn-out hunger strike by five of the prisoners – Spyros, Castro, Simon, Carlos and Fernando – forced the Greek government's decision.

The hunger strikers all beat David Blaine, some going without food for over sixty days. They have now been transferred to a civilian hospital, but there is sadly a serious risk of them developing long-term health problems.

Demonstrations in support of the seven took place at Greek embassies and consulates around the world, and in Greece itself universities were occupied, thousands marched, buildings were trashed and several banks bombed to demand their release. International anger was provoked further by the blatant fit-up jobs of the Greek police – in the case of Simon Chapman planting molotov cocktails and other weapons on him, as reported in previous issues of Freedom.

The charges still stand, however, and the seven's bail conditions state that they are not allowed to leave the country before the trial. This means that solidarity funds are still needed as they need to pay for rent and food now, and going to trial will incur extensive legal costs. Please send cheques payable to ABC to BM Automatic, London WC1N 3XX, UK.

For more information check out the Indymedia Thessaloniki 7 solidarity page, which you can access through [www.enrager.net/simon](http://www.enrager.net/simon)

Haven

Haven is a longstanding voluntary service, providing free books and magazines to prisoners on topics such as anarchism, politics, psychology and fiction. It is funded entirely by donations and at Freedom we think it's a very valuable resource.

If you'd like to help out, send cheques payable to Haven to BM Haven, London WC1N 3XX

Anarchist Black Cross

The Anarchist Black Cross was (re-) founded in Britain in the 1960s by two anarcho-syndicalists, Albert Meltzer and Stuart Christie to support for Spanish prisoners of the Franco regime. Since then groups have sprung up across the world, showing solidarity with class struggle and anarchist prisoners by publicising their cases, writing to them and organising actions and demonstrations.

Prisoner support remains an important part of our movement, if we don't even look after our own prisoners why should anyone bother running the risk of getting involved with us?

See the Brighton Anarchist Black Cross website at [www.brightonabc.org.uk](http://www.brightonabc.org.uk)

Shannon protest prisoner

Fintan Lane of the Cork Anti-War Campaign and public relations for the Irish anti-war movement has handed himself into Garda custody and is in prison in Limerick after refusing to pay a fine for his part in the mass trespass in Shannon on 12th October 2002. During the trespass the fence of this civilian airport, also used by the US military, was taken down and 100 to 150 people went into the runway grounds. The airport is a civilian



Simon Chapman from Essex released on bail after his hunger strike

airport in the west of Ireland also used by the US military.

You can write to Dr Fintan Lane at Limerick Prison, Mulgrave Street, Limerick, and it's

probably best to include a return address as prison censors can be pedantic. For more details see [http://www.indymedia.ie/newswire.php?story\\_id=62419](http://www.indymedia.ie/newswire.php?story_id=62419)

## LISTINGS

Brighton

**13th December** Introduction to Housing Co-operatives meeting at Brighton Unemployed Centre, 6 Tilbury Place. Free admission, but book yourself a place on 01273 327480

Derby

**13th December** A tribute to Joe Strummer featuring Conflict, plus Lost Cherrers, The Subhumans, and many others, at the Supanova in Derby. For more info see [www.conflict.org.uk](http://www.conflict.org.uk)

Glasgow

**13th December** Anarchist Dayschool from 10am to 11pm at The Annexe, 9a Stewartville Street, Partick. A day of film, discussion, workshops, plus a social/benefit with music and DJs. For more info see [www.nocog.org/~autonomy/dayschool.html](http://www.nocog.org/~autonomy/dayschool.html)

London

**5th November to 24th December** Leo Baxendale exhibition at The Cartoon Art Trust Museum, 7-13 The Brunswick Centre, Bernard Street WC1, and on 11th November at 6.30pm Leo Baxendale will give a talk. For details call 020 7278 7172.

**10th November to 24th December** Billy Childish exhibition We Are All Phonies at The Aquarium, 10 Woburn Walk, WC1. See [www.aquariumgallery.co.uk](http://www.aquariumgallery.co.uk)

or call 020 2387 8417

**6th December** Zounds, Lost Cherrers and The Restarts, plus others to be announced, play at Chat's Palace, 44 Brooksbys Walk, Homerton E9, from 8pm. £5 entry. Call 020 8533 0227

**6th December** Boycott Coca Cola activist conference from 2pm to 6pm at School of Oriental and African Studies, WC1. For more info call 07743 743941 or see [www.colombiasolidarity.org.uk](http://www.colombiasolidarity.org.uk)

**6th December** Party for Palestine and Colombia from 8pm until late at SOAS Student Union Bar and Common Room, Thornhaugh Street, Russell Square. Admission £7/£5

**7th December** Anarchist Walking Group meet at Loughton tube station, 10am, for walk and bits of radical history in Epping Forest. For more info contact [mudlark@mancunlimited.net](mailto:mudlark@mancunlimited.net) or call 07952 926186

**9th December** Performance Club at Kings Head, Crouch End N8, with Nick Revell, Sir Gideon, Yap and Tony Allen. For more info see <http://www.newagenda.demon.co.uk/perfclub.htm>

**10th December** Human Rights Day protest outside Coca Cola HQ in Hammersmith at 4.30pm

**11th December** Indie Spin alternative/punk/goth/indie club feature Long Tall Shorty, The RT4 and The Kicks plus DJ Wayne Bootleg at The Rhythm Factory, 16-18 Whitechapel Road, E1. For info

contact [indiespin@hotmail.com](mailto:indiespin@hotmail.com)

**12th December** Gay and Lesbian Humanist Association talk on Federico Garcia Lorca, 7.30pm at Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, Holborn. See [www.galha.org](http://www.galha.org)

**13th December** Poetry evening with Moniza Alvi at News from Nowhere Club, The Epicentre, West Street, Leytonstone, E11 from 7.30pm to 10pm. Contact 020 8555 5248 or see [www.newsfromnowhere.info](http://www.newsfromnowhere.info)

**19th December** Class War social, email [classwar@hotmail.com](mailto:classwar@hotmail.com) for a free ticket and further info

**20th December** Freedom party at 84b Whitechapel High Street, from 2pm til late. Have it large with the Freedom massive, and bring a bottle if you can

**27th January** Indie Spin present The High Priests of Hell plus guests at The Rhythm Factory, 16-18 Whitechapel Road, E1, from 8pm til late

Every Wednesday the LARC Library will be open from 1pm at 62 Fieldgate Street, E1.

**Manchester**

**6th December** The Fifth Manchester Radical Bookfair from 11am to 5pm at Bridge 5 Mill, 22a Beswick Street, Ancoats. If you'd like to run a stall, discussion or workshop contact [info@radicalbookfair.org.uk](mailto:info@radicalbookfair.org.uk). For info see [www.radicalbookfair.org.uk](http://www.radicalbookfair.org.uk)

Newcastle

**22nd December** Dance for Peace and Solidarity benefit at Rutherford Hall, University of Northumbria from 8pm. Entry £7/£4/£3

Animal Rights

**10th December** Fifth International Day for Animal Rights with worldwide events to campaign for fundamental rights to be bestowed on non-human animals. Contact 0114 272 2220 or [info@uncaged.co.uk](mailto:info@uncaged.co.uk)

Social Centres

**Bradford:**  
1 in 12 Club  
[www.1in12.com](http://www.1in12.com)

**Brighton:**

The Cowley Club, 12 London Road

**Edinburgh:**

Autonomous Centre of Edinburgh, 17 West Montney Place, EH7  
[www.autonomous.org.uk](http://www.autonomous.org.uk)

**London:**

Freedom, 84b Whitechapel High Street  
[www.freedompress.org.uk](http://www.freedompress.org.uk)

London Action Resource Centre (LARC), 62 Fieldgate Street, E1  
[www.londonlarc.org](http://www.londonlarc.org)

Use Your Loaf, 227 Deptford High Street, SE8  
[www.eroding.org.uk/loaf.htm](http://www.eroding.org.uk/loaf.htm)



# Britain

## Capitalism by design

Modern city planning serves the interests of the rich and powerful, not us, says Richard Griffin

Capitalism touches almost every aspect of our lives. Very little is unscathed even the space we live in. Architecture, design, building techniques, property use and access are all mediated by the social, cultural and economic forces generated by capitalism. The recently redeveloped Paternoster Square, immediately to the north of St Paul's cathedral in London is a good example of this.

In 1960 William Holford created in the words of architectural historian David Watkins "a desolate landscape of grim office blocks" around Wren's cathedral. These temples of post war modernism and concrete brutalism were pulled down three years ago. This month the redeveloped square designed by a team of British architects was opened to the public.

Although a public space, it is clear as soon as you enter that the public are not free to use it as they might wish. Freedom is controlled and contained here. At all the entrances are posters sternly warning 'no skating, no boarding'. It cannot be long until private security guards appear to ensure only a certain type of public appear under the shadow of St Paul's – those willing to buy Starbucks coffee at £2.40 a cup or an overpriced sandwich from a corporate chain like Eat or Prets and then sit quietly to worship capitalism. The cathedral itself is now little more than a tourist attraction not a place of belief or meaning. The heart of society is much better symbolised by the shops and offices that will fill the buildings around the square. In the centre of the square is a Sir William Whitfield designed neo-

classical monument dedicated, currently, to nothing. Perhaps they should dedicate it to McDonalds or the stock exchange.

The Financial Times observed of Paternoster Row "this was traditionally one of London's most vibrant quarters, inhabited consecutively by mercers, butchers, booksellers and publishers." Not any more. This is bland, chain store, 'could be anywhere' territory. Under-whelming and unchallenging. Safe and compliant, just like we are meant to be.

The area the square fills like so much of central London has been redeveloped and recreated time and time again in response to fire (three have destroyed this part of London) or commercial need. From the Great Fire to the Blitz the area was famous for publishing. Bookshops used to crowd right up to the gates of the cathedral. Robinson Crusoe, the first English novel was published here in 1719. During December 1940 German bombing levelled the area. An estimated four million books were destroyed. This is also an area where the power of the state has long been visible. To the west of the square Newgate prison once stood. Public executions took place here. Now the Old Bailey fills the space. The cathedral itself, which still dominates the landscape is of course another symbol of power, albeit a waning one.

Commerce whether in the form of book selling or butchers' shops has been a permanent feature of the area. Some 600 sheep a day used to be slaughtered to feed the city in cellars beneath butcher's shops. Today money is symbolised by investment bankers



Merril Lynch whose clever minimalist building straddles the north of the square.

Paternoster Square bordered on three sides by a cathedral, a court and a finance company sits at the heart of a trinity to power. Appropriately the final side is where you exit St Paul's tube station. Currently publicly owned but in the throws of privatisation.

The design of the square itself is highly influenced by classicism. But Paternoster

is a limited form of classicism. Capitalism has robbed working people of their skills. Paternoster Square exemplifies this. Watkins again. "Because of the growth of industrialised practices from the nineteenth century ... we now have a largely unskilled workforce, mostly trained to assemble buildings on site, not to construct them properly." The buildings around the square do look like they have been constructed with

massive Lego bricks. Clean blocks lacking intimacy or interest and as the Financial Times observed "with the faintest echoes of Italian fascist architecture".

As anarchists we need to be aware that we need to struggle against capitalism wherever it manifests itself in our lives. The design of buildings and the use of space is just as important as what happens on the factory floor.

## Racial injustice

The ethnic population in the UK is around 3%, in questions to parliament the ethnic population of each prison (138 of them) not one single prison's ethnic population is less than 3%.

In total, nearly a quarter of prisoners are from an ethnic minority, this does not even include imprisoned people seeking refuge, or the figure would obviously be higher. The prisons with the highest ethnic population are female prisons. HMP Send has a 60% population of ethnic minorities, Cookham Wood 55%, Morton Hall has 59%, Downview has 56%, Holloway 40%, Highpoint 38%, Bullwood Hall with 32%, and East Sutton Park with 45%.

There are also other jails with a whopping proportion of black and asian prisoners. HMYOI Aylesbury has 44% ethnic boys under 21 years old, Feltham has 57%, Huntercombe has 47%, Rochester has 42%. All these mentioned here are women and under 21's imprisoned. There is no statistic

saying what percentage of women prisoners, the figure would be a lot higher than the 23% of all the prison population.

The highest, Morton Hall, has a 4% ethnic minority of staff. This compares to 4.3% of all prison officers who come from an ethnic minority background. There's plenty of other prisons with a massive black and asian population – the ones mentioned are just women and young offenders. There is too many to mention but this shows the clear racism in the judicial system, especially in certain areas with women. It is 'the American way' in which there is more blacks in jail than in education, and with a very small percentage of staff from an ethnic background, they are not immune from racism in prison. The vast majority of prison officers, are no different from the police and the armed forces, Sun and Daily Mail reading nationalists, brutal. The POA (Prison Officers Association) is a notorious right-wing union, and once demanded to

hold a referendum on whether the death penalty be brought back.

It'd be useful to point out that since 1990, six prisoners have been killed at the hands of the screws. Just one of the prisoners was white and, predictably, none of the screws faced charges – just lengthy suspensions on full pay! The judicial system obviously looks after its own.

Robbie Stewart (HMP Woodhill)



## Beating the bailiffs

Having debt problems? Here's a guide to help deal with this. Firstly, contact the Citizens Advice Bureau, who are busy, but very helpful. Bailiffs firms and the police break the law if they think they can get away with it. Know your rights and ensure that the Council and Bailiffs follow legal procedures.

- Your possessions can't be seized unless you've been sent a written notice by the Authority at least fourteen days before any visit. This must have details of any fees they have added on.

- The police have no power to force entry on behalf of the bailiffs or local authority, unless there is a breach of the peace

- Lock all windows and doors. Bailiffs have no powers to force entry by breaking open an outer door, which is locked or bolted.

- If the bailiffs do get in, offer what you can afford to pay, not what they want you to pay. Ask them to drop the costs they have added

- Bailiffs can only take things that belong to you the debtor. If you have a receipt proving that an item belongs to someone else, they cannot take it.

- Bailiffs cannot have you put in prison. If they never get in and you do not pay they will return your case to the court. The magistrate will then look at what you can afford to pay.

If you're still stuck and would like some help with taking on the bailiffs by whatever means are necessary contact Walthamstow Anarchist Group who will help in any way they can. They also have more advice about your rights against the bailiffs.

If you are struggling with debt, both the Consumer Credit Counselling Service (0800 138 1111) and National Debtline (0808 808 4000) offer free information and advice.

This article taken from the always-excellent Underdog, the regular freesheet of the Walthamstow Anarchist Group. For more info see [www.walthamstowanarchy.org.uk](http://www.walthamstowanarchy.org.uk)



# International

## Miami vice

**Demonstrations against the FTAA were hit with some of the most severe police repression in recent years, writes Alex Allison**

**M**edia and state demonisation began many months ago, with officials claiming that tens of thousands of neo-terrorists would lay waste to the city. Despite what George Bush said about loving countries which allowed people the 'freedom' to demonstrate, freedom of speech was suspended, congregations of more than seven people outside were banned and all coconuts were removed from palm trees to stop them being used as weapons.

Thousands of police armed with tear gas, rubber and bean bag bullets, electrified shields, tanks, water cannons, automatic and semi-automatic weapons and tazers attacked people, blocked legal trade union coaches, stole independent media equipment and handcuffed people at will.

They paid 'special attention' to the Anarchist People of Colour bloc, called for at the APOC conference reported in Freedom on 25th October. Many of them were heavily beaten and a disproportionate number were arrested. Several of them were beaten in custody and one African-American anarchist was given a brain haemorrhage.

Hopefully after the terrible consequences this repression has had on a number of

people, large numbers of indignant liberals will cease to claim that police violence is merely a reaction to violence of demonstrators, and that if we are peaceful they'll leave us alone. This is yet another glaring example of how this is not the case. When it comes down to it the media and the bureaucrats work together to demonise us, and the police try to crush us in the instance we start to fight back against the State's destructive policies. They will use violence against us the second we become a threat to profits or power – we must be prepared to defend ourselves: in the offices, in the prisons and in the streets.

The FTAA is basically an extension of the North American Free Trade Agreement between Mexico, Canada and the US to cover all of Latin America (except Cuba) too. NAFTA, like so many 'free trade' agreements has revealed itself as yet another legal way for multinational corporations to ride roughshod over the already-meagre workers' and environmental rights laws of nations governments. It has cost hundreds of thousands of US jobs as production has shifted to sweatshops in Mexico. However now growing workers' militancy and organisation in Mexico means that capitalists need easier ways to shift their production to yet more repressive regimes, with even weaker



ecological protection laws. For more in-depth analysis of the FTAA, or

more information about the demonstrations, check out [www.ftaaimc.org](http://www.ftaaimc.org) and [zmag.org](http://zmag.org)

APOC have set up a solidarity fund which you can donate to via [www.illegalvoices.org/apoc](http://www.illegalvoices.org/apoc)

## Solidarity with Serbian anarchists

**T**his letter is written with the intention of informing you about the current situation of the anarchist movement in Serbia as well as to request help from you or your group/organisation which would benefit our movement.

After several arrests that followed our syndicate's actions, Anarcho-Syndicalist Initiative (ASI) got positive media coverage from mainstream media in Serbia and thus was able to present its position publicly. A few of our press releases have been published, one by the largest Serbian weekly NIN as our response to permanent attacks on our syndicate by the Government and union bureaucrats. That event marked the entrance of anarchism and anarcho-syndicalism into the Serbian mainstream political battlefield. The enlargement of our syndicate is a threat that union bureaucrats are using to intimidate government; several ministers of the Serbian government – including the minister of police – have publicly attacked us and, all together, anarchism and anarcho-syndicalism are being talked about in Serbia.

Our syndicate is making many new connections with different sections of

mainstream unions who are showing great interest in joining us. Also we talk with many individual workers interested in joining our syndicate and subscribing to our magazine Direct Action – the only anarchist/anarcho-syndicalist magazine which covers the ex-Yugoslav region.

After steady development our syndicate has reached the point at which, we feel, there are some difficulties that we can not resolve ourselves, and this is why we are turning to you and other groups in search of solidarity. One of the biggest problems (or to be frank, the biggest problem) our syndicate is facing now is the problem of space: we don't have a space that could be used for the syndicate's work. We hold our meetings in some of our members' flats, and when we meet interested workers we do so in some of Serbian taverns. We don't have a space to stock our library, archive of our newspapers, our flags and other propaganda material – all of that is scattered around our members' apartments.

There are no alternative social spaces in Serbia. Years of war and nationalism, as well as brutal 'transition' didn't allow any such movements to develop. For some time our syndicate was

thinking about squatting some space for these purposes, but we were faced with two main problems: Firstly that the majority of empty buildings that could easily have been transformed into some useable space are already occupied by refugees from different war zones (Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo) and most of the others were so badly damaged by NATO bombing in 1999 that the money needed for their reconstruction would surpass our wildest dreams!

The only option we have left is renting a space. Buying a space is completely out of the question unless we could rob a bank or two! After some calculations we concluded that ... we cannot do it. Our membership fees and donations hardly cover the cost of publishing our newspaper and other propaganda material. Still, if our syndicate is not able to find a space for itself it will be harder to persuade people to start working with us. To explain what problems we are facing here's an example of a typical contact we make:

A person gets in touch with us at a union demonstration, usually after seeing one of our leaflets or banners. We then give them a mobile phone

number to at which they can contact us at. However this is very expensive in Serbia and for lots of workers this is the first problem they face contacting us again. Having a space would solve this problem since we would be able to give them a landline number at which they could reach us – we could not do this with our home numbers due to the danger of Nazi or Police repression.

In the end we take the person's address and we separate. If after some time of receiving our paper and leaflets they broadly agree with our ideas the same question always follows: where is your office? When we propose a meeting in some tavern or open space a lot of people become suspicious of continuing co-operation with us.

Even with this problem we were able to make great contacts and establish really important ties to the Serbian working class. However we do feel that having a permanent syndicate space would ensure us even greater success.

Apart from our syndicate's meeting and archive potential, we would use the space as a radical library with libertarian books and magazines, as well as a public meetings and presentation space.

Rent for such a place would cost us, approximately, around 500 euros a month. As we said before, we are not able to pay for that. This is the reason for this appeal. We hope that you can see the potential of such a space, and think that your financial aid could help us realise this. We are asking people to make regular donations if they can, and we are requesting collectives and groups to raise 25 euros a month for us. We hope that this amount of money is not too much for you, comrades in the 'West'.

A problem with this is banks taking large commissions from money transfers, so it would perhaps be more convenient to send six-monthly donations. We'd gladly send reminders so that you'd not have to worry about remembering! Finer details can be arranged later by email.

Miloš Rančić

International Secretary of Anarcho-Syndicalist Initiative (email [is@inicijativa.org](mailto:is@inicijativa.org))

Abolishing Borders from Below is a bi-monthly magazine written by East European anarchists, covering news of events, the anarchist movement and the general political situation all across Eastern Europe, from Poland to Siberia. It is available from Freedom for £2 (add 50p postage in the UK, £1 elsewhere).



# Kingdom of Micomicon

## It's in the genes

Is the 'selfish gene' merely excuse for Thatcherite individualism, asks Richard Frost, and is mutual aid the true human nature?

It is curious that Maggie Thatcher announced that there was no such thing as society just as evolutionary theory was becoming dominated by the most extreme form of individualism; this was in the 1980s, as the centenary of Darwin's death was being much celebrated.

Darwin had shown a receptive capitalist audience with *The Origin of Species* (1859) that life was a struggle; the contestants were individuals and the result was the survival of the fittest. Not every scientist was convinced. Kropotkin famously rebelled with his great work, *Mutual Aid*, which showed the extent to which individuals of the same and different species depended on one another in the harsh environment of Siberia. He was never accepted by the main stream of scientists and it was not until the 1960's that Darwinian individualism was forced to consider the significance of co-operative, i.e., group, evolution.

V.C. Wynne-Edwards then published a heavy work on animal dispersal which seemed to demonstrate the universal operation of altruism in the evolutionary process: individuals, he said, would subordinate their self-interest to the well-being of their group, to the point of self-sacrifice. It followed that groups were a key element in evolution and in life itself.

Darwinism treats such ideas as heresy. Darwin's evolutionary machine is driven by competition between self-interested individuals. Groups are Thatcherite agglomerations of no importance. It was not long before Darwin's followers evolved a response.

The difficulty they had had to face was that individuals do sometimes jump into fast-flowing rivers to rescue virgins in clinging white dresses and their mothers; soldiers do throw themselves over live grenades; a hen will face up to a dog to defend her chicks.

The solution was re-definition: the

unit of evolution was reduced to the gene, while the individual organism – you and me, for instance – was conceptualised as its robotic carrier. This became the 'selfish gene' theory of evolution and it has proved its fitness; it so permeates academic and popular thought that it is seldom appears in need of explanation. Listen to David Attenborough or almost any wildlife commentator on television and not many minutes will pass before some action is described as – quite obviously – serving the individual's genes.

It is a fact that the gene is in a way the basic unit of life, since it survives from generation to generation – though it is not eternal – while we individuals, having toted that bale, keep on dying.

But it is a remarkably boring bit of life, a complex of instructions written by a computer nerd; while we, along with whales, meerkats, spiders et al, are interesting: we do things; we struggle, we co-operate, we survive. If human people aren't the point of human life, then nothing is.

Leaving that aside ... the pendulum has swung away from genetic individualism, and not because of me. I attacked the theory in a widely unread book, *The Social Gene*, in 1999, and, following Kropotkin, found co-operation throughout the living world – more than enough to ground anarchism in nature. I argued that co-operation had played the major part in evolution from the beginning of life until the present. It followed, I said, that altruism, unselfishness and co-operative living were fundamental and that such behaviour was genetically programmed in social species – which includes us.

I continue to seek evidence to support my ideas and am amused to see how much mainstream thinking was already ahead of me: some of the research had been published; some has come out over the last few years. Co-operation by unrelated males in a species of newt was reported in a recent *New Scientist*.



(My conclusion – that anarchism is right and true and essential – isn't yet respectable).

I have just read Darwin's *Cathedral* by D.S. Wilson, which is concerned with understanding religions as adaptive social groups. Leaving aside religions, it contains some points I wish to steal. It quotes a lump of Darwin I should have known, and shows the complexity of his ideas. Darwin says in *The Ascent of Man* (I quote from Wilson) page 266: "...advancement in the standard of morality (of a tribe) will certainly give an immense advantage of one tribe over another. There can be no doubt that a tribe including many members who, from possessing a high degree the spirit of patriotism, fidelity, obedience, courage and sympathy, were always ready to aid one another, and to sacrifice themselves for the common good, would be victorious over most other tribes and this would be natural selection."

That appears to be group selection, but strict Darwinists, while accepting Darwin's conclusion, define the behaviours he lists as the outcome of the self-interested struggle of individual genes. I see them as aspects of our universal social behaviour.

Wilson is with me there; he says such behaviour is widespread and is the basis for the cohering of individuals into adaptive groups, which have a survival advantage over less groupie competitors. He goes on: "in general 'right' coincides

with group welfare and 'wrong' with serving acts at the expense of others in the group."

I came to exactly that conclusion in *The Social Gene*. My conviction is that we, and all social species, are genetically programmed to behave in ways which will help sustain our group. That is, we are co-operative, altruistic to the point of death, conformist, tolerant, conservative, rule making and rule keeping, etc. Hence I follow Rousseau in saying that people are naturally good.

With Wilson, and against entrenched philosophical objection, I conclude that this is a universal ethic: the basis of human morality is the well being of the group to which we belong and from which our own well being arises.

However, Wilson says not that we are naturally co-operative groupies, but that 'special conditions' are required for group behaviour (i.e. altruism, co-operation, solidarity) to evolve. He says that hunter-gatherers are co-operative and egalitarian, not because they lack selfish impulses but because selfish impulses are effectively controlled by other members of the group. Similarly the altruistic behaviour of a blackbird in warning of a predator and in the process of calling attention to itself, has to be reinforced by avian group pressure (I did not really understand how).

I am more utopian. I believe that altruism and group behaviour are very ancient adaptations, long pre-dating the

arrival of primates, mammals, trilobites or whatever. Wilson notes that the formation of the eukaryotic cell, without which no live of any complexity would exist, is an example of co-operation. That happened a good 800 million years ago. I noted recently that we share a third of our genes with bacteria.

I conclude that the genetic ABC of social behaviour was being written in the DNA of simple organisms long, long ago. Any social species which subsequently evolved inevitably carried genes for the aspects of social behaviour which it needed. No single example, whether brave blackbirds sounding a warning call or a brave human smothering a grenade, needs to be explained in itself and nor can it be: it is a manifestation of an ancient virtue, deeply entrenched, curiously grown.

I should make it clear that I am not preaching genetic determinism. We are genetically programmed to behave socially but the ways in which the social virtues manifest themselves are enormously varied. They depend on – and probably define – cultures, which are human constructs, and they are uniquely tweaked by each individual: when we are free to live the life of free people, we do what we must for the good of our community but each in our own way. In the meantime, the social virtues are used and abused in the interests of power and oppression, with often dreadful results.

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# Editorial

**A**nti-war activism in Britain seems to be reaching a bit of a lull, especially since the massive protests on 15th February. Recently the marches against the occupation of Iraq have seen dwindling numbers, maybe things will change.

London saw massive protests against George Bush, and large numbers of anarchists participated in them (sadly in a fairly disorganised way). But should we only be fighting against one person? As anarchists we should be able to recognise that the reason we have war is not because Bush is the US president, but because of the whole capitalist system. Liberals attack Bush because they think the whole system can be reformed, we've realised that it can't be. We need to be attacking the system and arguing from an anarchist perspective, not getting sucked into the Trot mindset where if we keep on attacking one person eventually everything will get better.

The SWP have also repeated this with calling for 'Blair Out', what difference will this make? Someone will just come along and replace him, it won't improve our lives one bit, wars won't end, and our working conditions won't improve. It's because of capitalism and the state that we have war, there have been wars throughout the twentieth century before either Bush or Blair was born. Britain would've gone to war in Kosovo, Afghanistan, and Iraq regardless of the Prime Minister or the governing party, because of the benefits to big business and maintaining British power.

When people called for Maggie Thatcher to be chucked out during the Poll Tax and she finally resigned things didn't get any better, Blair has just continued on the Tory party's policies of privatisation and union bashing. Blair has also carried on with locking up immigrants and we now have a massive prison population. This isn't because he's a 'Tory' it's because the role of government is always to control the people and it will always act to preserve its power and capitalists' profits. We should be aiming to build a mass working class anarchist movement, which can effectively argue, as part of our class, for the overthrowing of capitalism and the state, and start with the creation of a free society.

Whilst anarchists should take part in the anti-war movement we shouldn't let it distract us from our real aims which are the overthrowing of the whole system, it's easy to just be a militant wing of the anti-war movement and just find ourselves calling for reforms. Low turn-outs at post-February 15th anti-war demo's have also shown us that relying so heavily on recruiting out of a single issue movement isn't the best thing for us to be doing tactically. We should leave the issue hopping to the Trots and Liberals, and let them sell their papers; we've got bigger and better things to do.

## Quiz answers

1. An unofficial fan club of the BBC radio soap *The Archers*, set up in opposition to the 'official' one.
2. The *cacerolazo*, originally from Argentina, where people come into the streets and bang pots and pans (*caceroles* in Spanish).
3. The Black Hand was a fictitious terrorist movement created by the Civil Guard in 1880s Andalusia to justify repression of the anarchist and workers' movements.
4. He offered to design its stamps and banknotes.

# Commentary

## Bulletin or bull?

I'm not surprised that the latest Green and Black Bulletin wasn't signed by the member of the Wildfire Collective who penned it ('Mass society', 22nd November). I'd also be ashamed of putting my name to such nonsense. Strong words, I know, but justified given the self-contradictory and superficial arguments the article inflicted on its readers. Our anonymous comrade (whom I will call WF) seems to have taken all the traditional arguments against anarchism and turned them into arguments for 'primitivism'.

"Anarchism can't work in complex societies"? Correct. "Organisation equals government"? Of course. "Society equals the state"? You bet! "Modern society requires bureaucracy." Indeed. "Nobody will work"? Right! How depressing to see an anarchist confirm all the common prejudices against anarchism.

And what's the alternative on offer? It isn't defined, but in the 'immediate term' we get "small scale land-based culture" based on the smallest group possible. I doubt many people in the West will embrace this return to peasant life.

There's also an incredible level of self-contradiction. WF asks, "why should people's actions be defined by the resources they live near," yet the small-scale groups he favours will, by necessity, be defined the same way. It's asserted that "no community would be beholden to any other," and there's talk about "our shared future world." But such groups need not share anything, unless they have something "defined by the resources they live near" which others don't.

Then they'd "be beholden to an external need," which is bad. And WF talks about "establishing truly global classless human relations" while making communication beyond a few days' walk impossible! Which makes his opposition to 'cultural Pangea' quite ironic: his 'small groups' will only see the few 'cultures' nearest them.

WF wonders "who's going down the mine". He answers his own question, "me? No thanks". Ironically, WF doesn't offer the choice to anyone who doesn't want to live in self-sufficient small groups. Even more ironically, WF refuses those in the "global south" any say in what kind of society they live in, while simultaneously arguing that other anarchists seek a bland, globalised world similar to capitalism and can't see beyond the 'western model'.

In fact, a successful anarchist revolution in the west would be imperialist, "export[ing 'civilisation'] to those denied its 'wonders'." Does this expose an awareness that people in the 'majority world' don't particularly like many aspects of their lives and would like to see improvements (clean water and basic medicines) in their living conditions? As for the level of technology and industry they'd like, I think true anarchists should let them decide for themselves rather than trying to impose primitivist fantasies on them.

WF's vision of the future is as contradictory as it is unappealing. Talking of London, WF argues that "if the city stays" then it "cannot and will not be anarchist" due to the size of its population and the resources and organisation this would require. In return I ask, how will WF get rid of London?

If the city 'stays', WF wonders whether "those in the 'countryside' [will] still have to provide food for the beast". By 'the beast' I assume WF means London's eight million people. Is the enemy the mass of the population? For WF,

apparently it is. And I wonder how 'those in the 'countryside' would appreciate an influx of millions of starving city folk, driven from the city by who knows what?

What of WF's argument that it's impossible to organise a city the size of London in a libertarian fashion? He wonders where all the delegates would meet. Why assume that all the delegates would have to? Many issues would be in the hands of those most affected and wouldn't need wider discussion. Most communication of needs would be direct. A community would contact workplace X for supplies, which would contact workplace Y to arrange inputs and so forth. For co-ordination of wider activity, there'd be delegates of federations.

How would our "community's voice [be] heard"? In the same way as everyone else's, via an elected, mandated and recallable delegate. Impossible? It worked during the French and Spanish revolutions and in the recent revolt in Argentina and would, I suggest, work far better than any primitivist alternative.

Such a system would involve reaching agreement with others, hence compromise, but freedom isn't some immature desire always to get your own way. That's the atomised, narrow and self-defeating individualism promoted by capitalism, not the social freedom desired by libertarians.

WF says that 'workers control' means "placing technologies and skills in the hands of the few". Actually, it means the opposite – workers controlling the technologies and skills they use instead of letting bosses (the few) do so.

As for 'enforced divided labour' and 'workers self-exploitation', WF is really abusing the words. Yes, things will need to be produced and different tasks will involve different work but if this is 'enforced divided labour' then so is all productive activity, including that in WF's 'small-scale' groups. Or perhaps the work needed to get food isn't 'enforced' when the alternative is starvation? If so, then say hello to the usual capitalist defence of wage slavery.

Non-primitivist anarchists know that production "will continue to need raw resources to be built". Yes, this will cause ecological destruction. But so will the ecological destruction caused by the breakdown of civilisation: nuclear meltdowns, toxic waste and oil slicks caused by abandoned industry, all the other legacies of industrial society, which (like the ruling class) will not just disappear.

We'll need to handle these problems as we transform society. And this is where 'industrial progression' (which WF dismisses out of hand) comes in. WF can't see that technology can be used by workers to make their work easier and to eliminate the most unpleasant aspects of it.

People can see the impact of their activity and would to change things to minimise problems. Yes, solar panels will use resources but they're less ecologically destructive than coal fires in every home. Which, of course, is 'progress'.

This in turn exposes another problem with primitivism. It's the mirror image of the capitalist worship of progress (one's good, the other evil). They're two sides of the same, anti-human, coin. Anarchists see progress in a more complex light. It's surely a truism that 'progress' in a hierarchical society will be shaped by the inequalities of power within it.

This means that progress isn't as neutral as either capitalists or technophobes like to suggest. Rather than the quasi-

religious opposition to 'progress' we should be using our minds, evaluating the costs and benefits of specific concrete forms of technology and production, seeking ways of improving and changing them and, perhaps, getting rid of some entirely.

Ultimately, WF exposes the core problem with primitivism. For primitivists, technology, 'mass society' and 'civilisation' aren't neutral. All these things are inherently 'bad', hence independent of the desires of the people affected by them and the system they're part of. But once we realise that these things aren't neutral, we can see the way out. We can see that workers' control isn't 'self-exploitation' but rather the first step in modifying technology and production to ecologise and humanise it.

Similarly, the self-organisation and mass participation required by social struggle and revolution are the first steps in humanising society and civilising a 'civilisation' distorted by the barbarism of capitalism and the state. This new society will take the best of existing cultures, technologies and skills to help produce a world of unique individuals who live in diverse communities and experience diverse cultures and ideas.

To finish, WF complains that "the left claim these primitivists want Mad Max dystopias." On the evidence of this article, I can only surmise that 'the left' is right.

Iain McKay

The material in the latest Green and Black Bulletin ought not to create too much controversy. It is, after all, repeating what was said in the first one and this merely repeating the irrational nonsense that has plagued the pages of Freedom for decades.

However, by uncritically incorporating it as a bulletin the editors have made a political decision in its favour and we can therefore assume (nothing being said to the contrary) that Freedom is slipping back.

The two or three people producing this drivel must be quite pleased with themselves (for all we know they might reside in Whitehall): anonymous circulation, wasted space and no editorial demand that they respond to critique. All for no effort on their part. If the Bulletin is actually a bulletin then it should be treated as any other and reviewed (and circulated by the producers) as a separate entity. Favouritism should have no place in any anarchist set-up.

R.E.

The Wildfire Collective have asked us to say that they'll reply in the next issue to some of the criticisms fired their way.

## Gene genie

I'm pleased Brian Morris sees where I'm coming from (Commentary, 22nd November). As he says, I'm an enthusiast for sociobiology and I hope to apply its principles to anarchism. The problem is that, if I use the word 'sociobiology', nobody will listen.

My belief, which is founded on biology, is that our room for manoeuvre (self-determination) is seriously limited. We're largely locked into what we are. The gene is central to our behaviour and, as result, a leveller. I see anarchists and capitalists, in terms of genetic drives, as the same. The concepts of state, police and so on are merely descriptions of how genetic drives manifest themselves.

We need a different approach. Much anarchist thinking seems muddled to me, because it's using established concepts. For example, Brian says the state is "obviously a concept", but that

its virtue is that it "reveals social phenomena". We're in agreement on this, but we have opposite perspectives. Brian portrays the state as driving social phenomena. I see our genes driving the phenomena, which means we can forget the state and other, equally redundant, concepts. They aren't wrong as concepts, they just no longer lead us anywhere useful.

Brian says I'm advocating various things: private property and free market capitalism, to name but two. I'm not. These are examples of how, in reality, we all behave – me, Brian (I suspect), most other anarchists. This is because we are much the same. There are no 'heroic workers', 'devious capitalists', 'sadistic police'. These are (unhelpful) cardboard cut-outs. I agree that there are, generally speaking, plenty of bastards and that pointing them out is good fun, but no more than that.

Real people are 'multi-dimensional' and made from genes that have an agenda that's common to us all. If there were to be a gene-orientated anarchism, the difficulties that obstruct classic anarchism would disappear. This approach has worked very well in biology and has allowed advances undreamt of twenty or thirty years ago. It could do the same for anarchism.

Peter Gibson

## Amoral Johnny

Isn't a rejection of morals, such as disclosed by Johnny M (Commentary, 22nd November) one of the characteristics of nihilism?

John Desmond

## Saucy Jaques

The ongoing debate between myself, A.R. and Monsieur Dupont has allowed some useful clarification of our differences. As regards their most recent contributions (Commentary, 8th November and 22nd November) I'd like to respond here. To turn to Monsieur Dupont first, he suggests that I condemn the reading of "saucy French writers". Not at all, I just say they should be read critically.

Recent French thought, or at least that of thinkers who haven't retreated to outright reaction, has tried to cling on to the possibility of revolution while abandoning any notion of how revolutionary transformations might be brought about. This is most clearly expressed in the writings of Derrida and Badiou (both have, otherwise, much to offer critical theory and, saucy or not, ought to be engaged with).

Derrida suggests that revolutionary change is 'messianic', that it's groundless, abyssal, comes not from within existing conditions but from 'outside'. Badiou says that the revolutionary event is only comprehensible after the event. For its participants it exceeds what they wanted to bring about. He gives the French Revolution of 1789 as an example, an event which, he says, couldn't be predicted or understood simply from analysing the political and social conditions of its time.

We need to be clear about what's being abandoned here (less so by Badiou, admittedly). If we accept the concept of 'anti-messianic Messianism' which Derrida proposes, we have to abandon any notion of revolution as a political project and any idea of the working class (or any other existent social force) as agency.

If revolutionary change is 'messianic' then it can't be fought for, predicted, plotted – it can only come from outside. What Derrida proposes is that there are

➔ page 8



# REVIEW

## Postmodernists and liberals are trying to smother anarchism in obscurantism. Brian Morris welcomes a timely injection of sense

**H**ave you heard the good news? The state doesn't exist. It's simply a figment of the social imagination. At least, that's what some postmodernists tell us, while of course continuing to pay their taxes. Some anarchists seem to accept uncritically this idealist and rather obscurantist metaphysic.

But have you heard the bad news? The modern state exists but its powers and relevance have been completely undermined by transnational corporations, the IMF and the World Bank, and by the machinations of global capitalism. The state is fast disappearing, so some liberals and Marxists tell us.

Either way you can forget about the state, although some media radicals like George Monbiot are now advocating the formation of a world government. Heaven forbid!

Harold Barclay's excellent new book, entitled *The State*, and published by Freedom Press (publishers of this newspaper), completely repudiates both these myths. He identifies the reality of the state as a socio-historical institution and also the way corporate interests rely on the power and intervention of the modern state. Witness what's still going on in Iraq.

There's always been an elective affinity between anarchism and anthropology. See, for example, the writings of Kropotkin, Bougle and Elisé Reclus. Harold Barclay's book draws insightfully and usefully on modern anthropological studies.

Having taught anthropology at the University of Alberta for over two decades, as well as conducting ethnographic research in the Sudan, he's well-equipped to pen such a work. *The State* provides a good introduction to both anarchism and to pre-state societies.

The book is divided into four parts. Chapter One addresses the question, what is a state? It emphasises that the state is a social institution, a territorial

association with coercive powers to enforce its laws and conduct its wars. Barclay also offers reflections on the nature of social sanctions, power and authority.

But the state isn't a monolithic institution. It's a historical phenomenon. For this reason, Barclay outlines in Chapter Two the variety of states that have existed in history. These range from the Sumerian city-states and African theocratic kingdoms to the 'world' empires, such as that of Rome, China and the Islamic caliphates.

In Chapter Three, Barclay explores an issue that has long fascinated Marxists, anarchists and anthropologists, namely the 'origin' of the state. He adopts a 'synthetic' approach and briefly discusses the many factors – the 'significant elements' – that may have been important in the rise and development of state institutions: population growth, sedentarism and the emergence of the city, the development of intensive agriculture and 'hydraulic' civilisations, such as Egypt, China and India, redistributive systems, military conquest, trade and the emergence of a class system – a 'hierarchical social order' – and, finally, religious ideologies.

There has, of course, always been a symbiotic relationship between the state and both the ruling class (whether slave-owners, landed aristocrats or capitalists) and religious institutions.

Barclay has little discussion of 'class', but he does emphasise that almost all ideologies are founded on religious beliefs "if they are not completely religious systems themselves."

Concluding the chapter with reflections on how the modern state penetrates into all aspects of social life and into "everyone's mind", Barclay surprisingly makes no mention at all of Kropotkin – who wrote a classic essay on the modern state – or Foucault.

The final chapter, just eight pages long, offers some reflections on the modern



state and its future. Barclay notes that capitalist corporations need the state to ensure the protection of property, to provide subsidies and to exact military interventions when and where necessary, and that institutions like the European Union and the United Nations, besides promoting and upholding capitalism, secure also the interests of the "most

predatory states".

The United Nations is, of course, a complete misnomer. It's not a voluntary association of 'nations' but of 'states', dominated and controlled by the most powerful.

Written in a lucid style and free of academic jargon, Barclay's little book is a very useful primer. It will be especially

useful to those who think the modern state either doesn't 'exist' or is fast 'disappearing' under the impact of so-called 'globalisation' (an expanding capitalism).

*The State* by Harold Barclay is available from Freedom for £5.50 (post free in the UK, add £1 elsewhere)

## BOOKS

**You Back the Attack! We'll Bomb who we Want!**  
by Micah Ian Wright  
Seven Stories, £10.99

I'm sure many people will have seen at least one of Micah's glorious, full colour anti-war posters on the web or in a magazine somewhere. Well, here's a chance to get a copy of 47 of them, gathered together all in one place, albeit reduced in size (9ins x 6ins) but at a bargain price.

For those unfamiliar with his work, Micah takes real war posters from a variety of sources, mainly American but also Russian, Spanish, German, British and from elsewhere too. He keeps the main graphic and then, using a very similar typeface to the original, writes new slogans on them which often parody or use part of the original to produce a startling new image which itself can be used in opposing the current 'war on

terror' and its accompanying attack on civil liberties.

Most people will have their own favourites. One of mine is the 'big brother is watching you' one, which uses (oh the irony) a Spanish Communist Party poster from the time of the Spanish Civil War. There are also other ones about freedom of information, which I'm sure those who work in libraries and bookshops will appreciate. Many others bring the relation between oil consumption (especially SUVs) and the invasion of Iraq into the forefront.

For those who are hard of thinking, several authors associated with the Center for Constitutional Rights provide commentary in case the reader didn't get the point and, more importantly, at the end of the book are smaller colour reproductions of the originals.

It looks like the publisher and the artist didn't quite get their act together on copyright, as the usual publisher's

admonition not to copy anything in the book without written permission is flatly contradicted by the author's preface. This says, "I hereby order you to break the spine of this book and photocopy these posters on to larger-sized pieces of paper" for use as propaganda (and not decorating bedroom walls, which is what so many political posters end up doing.)

Lest anyone get the wrong impression about the artist, he thoughtfully provides a short biographical sketch featuring himself as a former Ranger in the 75th Ranger Regiment. This shows that military service can be educational, especially when the reality on the ground is so much at variance with official government proclamations. I suspect this won't be the last book Micah – he's already done over 150 – so we could easily be seeing another couple of these volumes in the near future.

Wonderful stuff, perhaps too US-orientated to be of much use on the

opposite of the Atlantic, but hopefully he'll provide plenty of inspiration for other artists to produce more localised versions of these posters. Highly recommended.

Richard Alexander

Available from Freedom for £10.99 (add £2 postage in the UK, £4 elsewhere)

### footnote

by Boff Whalley  
Pomona, £8.99

Boff Whalley is, of course, a member of anarcho-rockers/tired old sell-outs (delete according to taste), Chumbawamba. This is his autobiography, the story of his progress from 1970s Burnley, through 1980s Armley, to 1990s semi-fame with songs such as Tubthumping.

Though much of it seems familiar – bright working class lad finds his way through the world – the book is

engagingly written and Beatle-loving, Sinatra-singing, Juvenal-quoting Boff has interesting things to say about the state of popular music and, in particular, its political irrelevance.

Johnny M.

Available from Freedom for £8.99 (add £1 postage in the UK, £2 elsewhere)

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# Commentary

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ruptures in historical time which we can't anticipate. Derrida suggests that we work as if we can anticipate them and that this might help bring such ruptures about.

I don't want to suggest that the political – strategy, tactics – is everything or that we can plot a coherent line between activism and revolution, but I do propose that unless we develop a politics of anarchist intervention within working class communities our hopes will remain only hopes.

Derrida's 'messianism' all too easily leads to where Monsieur Dupont has ended up – rejecting the notion of an anarchist politics and practice entirely, and celebrating the anarchist milieu as a welcoming committee for the revolution.

To turn to your other correspondent, AR admits that writers like Deleuze and Spivak are prone to obscurantism. I don't think this is accidental. In Spivak's case it covers up an absence of original thought. Generally, obscurantism is a method adopted by left-leaning academics within the cultural theory domain, who want an audience outside academia but don't want to be caught out saying anything too radical in case it threatens their tenure. It's interesting that Deleuze's 'non-political' writing is lucid and well-argued and that it's only when we come to the 'interventions' of Anti-Oedipus and A Thousand Plateaus that his writing degenerates into incomprehensibility.

I don't disagree with AR that it's necessary to combat working class racism. I don't see how a simple 'respect for difference' will help. Multiculturalism isn't a means to transform the social conditions which engender racism, it's a plea for liberal tolerance. Capitalism fosters divisions within communities which have a shared history of exploitation.

There is, to be clear, no biological basis for racism. 'Race' is therefore a political concept, and racism is brought about by a politics of 'difference' pursued by Michael Howard, David Blunkett and the Daily Mail to name but three.

I don't see how we can effectively combat such arguments through 'respecting difference'. Apart from anything else, a politics of difference can't take on the 'rights for whites' arguments of the BNP because it shares the same ground. An obsession with difference also tends to have us rooting around on the political margins. We become obsessed with preserving minorities, instead of building links and, hence, majorities.

Moreover, as an anarchist-communist I'm not prepared to uncritically 'respect' any cultural formation which arises under capitalism. How does a politics of respect for difference allow us to challenge racism, homophobia, female circumcision or any other brutalising 'cultural' practice? James Baldwin once wrote that the housing projects in Harlem were hated because they revealed the real feelings of the white world towards those they consigned to live there.

I think we can extend this to argue that, on most working class estates in the UK, you can see the real feeling of the ruling class to the white working class – dumped in the same shit as those they're told they're superior to. Ideologies fragment, in part because the reality of life under capital doesn't match up to the promises it makes. That ought to be our starting point for anarchist politics.

More generally, my point at the start of this debate was that if the social make-up of anarchist groups is predominantly the student middle-class we shouldn't celebrate their 'critical awareness' but re-orient our practice so that our focus becomes building an anarchist critical awareness within working class communities. However much AR might wish to celebrate the critical abilities of students, they aren't and never will be the basis for an insurgent revolutionary movement.

Paul Maguire

## Unfair editorial

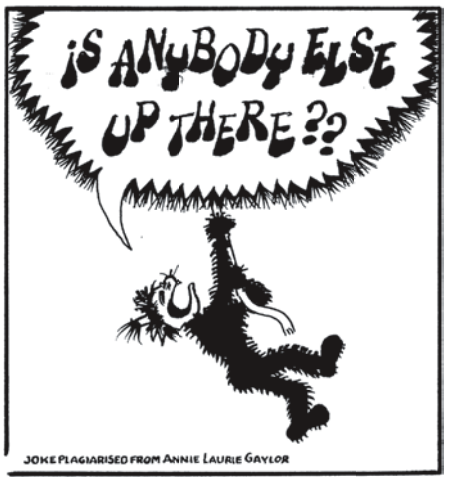
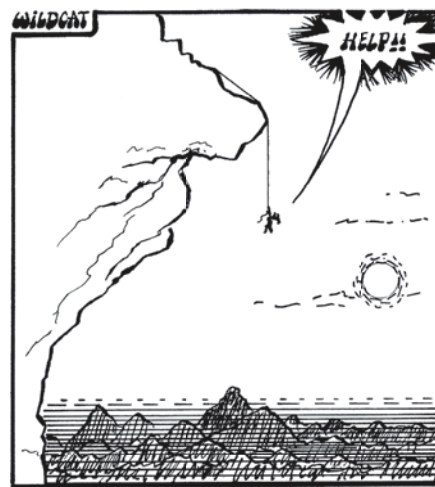
Your editorial on migration (8th November) is wrong in one important respect. "Migrant labour is essential to the economy" is emphatically not the "best" argument the left can now manage in support of immigration and migrant rights". Your editorial ignores the views of the many local campaigns and national coalitions against deportation and detention, as well as the community-based support groups that make up the asylum-rights movement. The Close Campfield Campaign, the National Coalition Against Deportation Campaigns (NCADC) and Barbed Wire Britain are just three of these.

Your editorial also ignores the arguments of many activist writers and researchers. I'd include here those associated with the Campaign Against Racism and Fascism (CARF) and the Institute of Race Relations, whose defence of migrant rights is grounded in anti-racist, anti-colonial and class perspectives and a commitment to grass-roots community resistance.

Others you ignore include Steve Cohen (author of No One is Illegal) and Theresa Hayter (Open Borders), who both write from what Freedom would recognise as a class perspective.

Certainly, there are those on the left (which left?) who, like New Labour, argue for immigration on economic grounds, though New Labour's own cherry-picking approach to 'managed migration' has been widely criticised by migration/asylum-rights activists. But one reason why some people emphasise the economic benefits of immigration is in answer to the myths of the anti-immigration brigade. Like Steve Cohen you could argue that it's wrong even to get into this discussion, but the dilemma is what to say when you're told that immigrants and asylum seekers drain 'our' country's resources, sponge off 'our' welfare, and take 'our' jobs.

My answer is to argue 'actually, they don't' and to ask 'what do you mean:



the 'country's resources' 'our jobs' etc? ". In other words, it's reasonable to talk about the social and economic effects of migration in the world as it is but, as your editorial makes clear, the argument needs moving on from there.

Freedom is right to raise the issue of how asylum impacts on working class communities. In practice, liberal multiculturalists have tended to dismiss the white working class as immutably racist (sexist, homophobic), but this isn't necessarily a view shared by people working around asylum-rights. Poor inner-city communities are also 'victims' of globalised capital and this needs to be part of the agenda.

But however irritating liberal multiculturalism can be, we should never become apologists for racism, even whilst we recognise that racism can be a kind of irrational lashing out, an expression of economic, social and cultural insecurity. In any case, some of the most unpleasant racism against asylum-seekers has come from fairly well-off areas where there few, if any, asylum-seekers live.

The other thing I'd like to highlight is the need to link the issue of migrant and asylum-rights explicitly to that of global corporate and military power. Whilst defending migrant and refugee rights we need to ask why people move in the first place. Involuntary migration, be it economic or political, is precisely that: not voluntary, the result of economic instability, ethnic oppression, human rights abuse or conflict. There are a web of connections between the arguments of the anti-capitalist and global action movements and those of the asylum and migrant rights movement. Our argument for free movement is really an argument for movement freely chosen, and this requires a wholly different kind of world. Again, I'd suggest that these connections are already being made.

Rob Peutrell

## A sideways look

It was the situationists who popularised the term recuperation. By shifting ground or allowing limited participation, the old forms of social relations maintain themselves. Unions were recuperated by allowing some modest reforms and giving them some limited say in management decisions. Green political parties were recuperated by a sniff of power. Punk was done for by recording contracts and fashion. Anarchists are usually pretty aware of this process and resist it through their libertarian organisation, accountability and militancy.

It still happens in our struggles, though. Perhaps the most surprising thing about some of the obvious attempts made to recuperate what can loosely be called the anti-capitalist movement is that they've taken so long to get going. We all know about Globalise Resistance, the Socialist Workers' Party front, as well as various other Trotskyist front groups like No Sweat. Our denunciation of them for what they are shows that anarchists are well aware of the need to organise against this kind of take-over attempt. This of course becomes ever more important as the anarchist movement grows.

The big breakthrough the anti-capitalist movement made in the middle to late 1990s was when it identified the real enemy. People fighting for social justice, against environmental destruction, against privatisation and cuts all reached a single conclusion: that their struggles were against a common enemy and that this enemy was capitalism. Within the movement there have always been those who had a vision of a non-capitalist society and those who think it can be reformed. In Britain the latter is identified with several liberal commentators, but it's personified especially by Guardian journalist George Monbiot.

Monbiot has been subject to plenty of critique in these pages before, but I want to look at one of his recent Guardian articles and, ultimately, the strange bedfellows he finds himself with. In an otherwise straightforward article about how young people aren't uninterested in politics, just in politicians (drawn from his experiences at the recent European Social Forum), he leaps to a conclusion that "we must also ask ourselves what we can do to recolonise and revitalise parliamentary politics."

He is dismissive of "new forms of participatory democracy" like the Zapatista consultas or the participatory budgets of Porto Alegre. The latter is doubly ironic as his arguments are echoed by Hilary Wainwright, who is a big fan of the Brazilian experiments, in her book Reclaim the State. (Is it just

me? I thought you could only reclaim something that was once yours, like May Day from bureaucrats or streets from cars? Of course, reclaim the state could be a useful slogan for theocratic feudalists).

But Monbiot's justification for 'reclaiming parliament' is that he reckons people haven't thought things through when they want to overthrow capitalism. He insists they've nothing to replace it with, short of totalitarianism. And while there are fans of totalitarianism at things like the ESF, even Trots agree that the Soviet Union was awful. They just disagree on the precise moment the awfulness began (Bolshevik coup, anyone?). He asks, rhetorically, "is totalitarianism the only means of eliminating capitalism?"

From someone who has claimed to be influenced by anarchism, this is woefully inadequate. The workers of Catalonia and the peasants of Aragon proved years ago that capitalism could be eliminated without totalitarianism. I don't know the details, but I'm fairly sure the Makhnovists' limited experiments in village communism did something similar. Someone with even a passing acquaintance with anarchism would likely remark that we do go on about Spain – so how can Monbiot have missed it.

To be fair, he's putting his money where his mouth is. He's been sharing platforms recently with independent Stalinist MP George Galloway, the SWP and Salma Yaqoob of the Birmingham Muslim community as part of the launch a new 'Unity Movement'. This 'Unity Movement' is intending to run candidates for election at all levels in England and Wales. Scotland is spared because the Scottish Socialist Party has already had some electoral success. The 'Unity Movement' has at its core a coalition of Stalinists, the SWP and the Muslim Association of Britain. I fail to see the logic here. Capitalism is bad, but we don't want to replace it with totalitarianism. Therefore we must use existing institutions (electoralism) to reform it. And to get elected, we will form a coalition of would-be totalitarians? Hmm.

Svartfrosk

## The quiz

1. Who or what are the Archers Anarchists?
2. What Latin American form of protest has started to spread around the world in the last couple of years?
3. Who or what was the Mano Negra?
4. What was the response of Moravian Art Nouveau designer Alphon Mucha to the founding of Czechoslovakia?

Answers on page 6

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