

## GEARING UP FOR THE BIG ONE

### March 26th and the massive anti-cuts mobilisation

Preparations are well under way for what is likely to be largest political march and rally the UK has seen in a generation. It is being organised by the TUC in response to the coalition government's programme of fast and deep public spending cuts. Calling itself March for the Alternative: Jobs, Growth, Justice, it has the backing of all the major Trade Unions and well as the support of the New Labour elite – it is no surprise that party leader Ed Miliband will be addressing the rally. Predictably enough the march will move past the Houses of Parliament and onto to Hyde Park where a rally will echo with the familiar taunts of the left.

Yet the memory of the million-person anti-war march still lingers and the 26th could yet prove to be more ineffective left posturing. This is why a robust anarchist response is always essential for such occasions (see page 5 of this issue for radical initiatives already in preparation for the day). The London Student Assembly is organising an 'education bloc' drawing its inspiration from the energy and dynamism of the recent student protests, and is predicted to be the most militant and imaginative on the demonstration.

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### LENS CAP COP A LOAD OF THIS



The secretive graffiti artist turned major success Banksy has come to the aid of two Russian anarchist artists. The controversial street artist known for his stencilled anti-authority images offered up £13,000 in bail to ensure the pair were freed from custody after nearly four months awaiting trial for overturning police cars in St Petersburg.

## MAJOR VICTORY FOR RAIL UNION

On Friday 4th March the RMT union won a massive legal victory as the courts overturned an earlier ruling against an injunction brought by Serco to prevent Docklands Light Railway (DLR) workers going on strike.

The Court of Appeal's landmark judgment on industrial action is set have repercussions for employers everywhere intent on using 'legal technicality' to prevent legitimate strike action.

The judgement reverses the decision of the High Court who grant an interim injunction to the effect of preventing the RMT from calling upon its members to take industrial action against the government services company who run the DLR in the heart of London's financial centre. Accordingly for the first time in the UK, the Court of Appeal recognises the right to strike in the context of the UK's

obligations under international law.

Previously companies had sought to stop balloted strike action by pursuing grievances through the courts on minor infractions of process, regardless of the fact union members had voted overwhelmingly and democratically in favour of such action. There has been a series of cases over the last few years where judges have intervened to override the democratic process interpreting trade union legislation in ever more restrictive ways. This ruling will hopefully now put a halt to that trend.

Years and years of prohibitive government legislation, by both the Tories and Labour, has meant trade union activity has effectively been tied into bureaucratic legal procedure. The trade union laws in the UK remains one of the most restrictive in the western world.

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## NEWS

## NEWS IN BRIEF

**ENVIRONMENT:** The people behind Climate Camp have decided to call it a day after five years of putting climate change at the forefront of social concerns. After a week-long meeting in Dorset from 21st to 27th February which involved over seventy 'core' activists a statement was issued to the effect that they will not organise a national Climate Camp or organise national gatherings as 'Climate Camp' or the Camp for Climate Action in 2011. This closure is intended to allow new tactics, organising methods and processes to emerge in this time of whirlwind change.

**MEDIA:** The Murdoch media empire took another step towards completion with the decision by the Tories to wave through his controversial takeover of BSkyB making way for News Corp, the world's third largest media conglomerate, to gain a near monopoly on the UK's media outlets – including the majority of UK newspapers, plus television channels and magazines. Cameron has spent a great deal of energy befriending the influential newsmaker, both in public and in private.

**OIL:** Two of BP's most senior directors have taken bonus payments for their work in the year of the Gulf of Mexico oil spill. Byron Grote, finance director, and Iain Conn, head of downstream, had their £800,000 and £724,000 salaries and benefits topped up with rewards of £380,000 and £310,500 respectively. BP's annual report also revealed that Tony Hayward, the former chief executive who left the company after the worst of the crisis, will get almost £100,000 a year for his work as a non-executive of BP's Russian joint venture TNK-BP. He left the board in October with £2m in salary and severance payments, plus a £600,000-a-year pension

**POLITICS:** The recent Barnsley by-election, a seat vacated after a fraud scandal, saw the New Labour candidate and ex-Sandhurst officer polling more than all the other candidates put together, but only on a very low 36% turn-out. UKIP were officially second place over the Tories and BNP respectively. Interestingly the Lib-dems were beaten into sixth place. Perhaps more tellingly was the lack of representation to the left of Labour, suggesting the leftists desire to allow New Labour free reign to become the official voice of anti-cuts anger.

**POSTAL:** The government has given the contract to provide the outlet for benefit payments to the private sector company Pay Point, undermining its commitment to the Post Office. A quarter of a million benefit recipients, including pensioners and those on disability allowances, who previously relied on the Post Office for their service will have to cash in their giro cheques at off-licences and petrol stations under government plans. The Post Office is to remain part of the public sector in the big Royal Mail sell off.

## LENS CAP LET THEM READ BOOKS



Photo: Suguru Nishio

Acclaimed film director Peter Mullan, who made the gritty film *Neds*, criticised the class bias of the literary world on World Book Day claiming there are no books for working class boys and there needs to be more literature which young men can relate to. We at *Freedom* say you can't do better, Peter, than our very own *Beating The Fascists*.

## Oh Liberty, what crimes are committed in thy name!

Not often we get to use that quote\* at *Freedom!* However the news that the well known do-gooders, or should that be do-badders, at what used to be the National Council for Civil Liberties have accepted a request from the TUC and the Metropolitan Police to provide legal observers on the 26th March demonstration more than merits it.

Here's the quote from James Welch, legal director at Liberty: "It is heartening that the TUC and Metropolitan Police are working together to ensure a free and peaceful protest on March 26th. Liberty is honoured to accept their invitation to provide independent monitoring."

Whatever criticisms we have of the Unarmed Wing of the TUC (as Professor Knight would call them) it's their demo and they can ask who they like to legal observe, although they turned down approaches from the Network for Police Monitoring. But for Liberty to take an invite from the cops is a new low. Apparently the police will have legal observers working with them in the control room at New Scotland Yard.

We don't know if Liberty own a dictionary, but if they do it can't be a very good one as far as the word 'independent' goes. We are more perplexed that, with all their legal firepower at hand, they have failed to grasp the concept of the 'adversarial' legal system where the 'defence' works to help the defendant not the cops who are trying to prosecute them. Also on legal points and without wishing to re-open the atheism-awful violence/non-violence debate, Liberty seem to have taken

a worse position than the law. Rather than just be peaceful, people have a duty to prevent a 'breach of the peace' and can use reasonable force to do so, directing it at those responsible. Guess who we mean here!

Too often in our movement we mock the cops for stereotypical thickness, but here they have pulled a smart trick indeed. If Liberty take over legal observing then it doesn't just mean the end of effective support for defendants, it also provides the cops with a unit of informers at no extra cost. If protestors react against these stool pigeons it makes it much harder for real legal observers to operate. As a movement we need to make it clear to Liberty and anyone who works with them that this will not be tolerated.

\* Marie-Jeanne Roland de la Platière, better known as Madame Roland, a supporter of the French Revolution, uttered the words *O Liberté, que de crimes on commet en ton nom!* (Oh Liberty, what crimes are committed in thy name!) as she bowed before the clay statue of Liberty in the Place de la Révolution before placing her head on the block.

The Green and Black Cross, together with the Legal Defence and Monitoring Group, will be running 'real' legal observers on the day who will be giving unequivocal support for protestors and definitely not working with the police. If you want to be one contact them for details of training day.





# Giving women's emancipation the big lie

It is the centenary of International Women's Day. Women have had more than 150 years of 'emancipatory' struggles; feminism is passé and post-feminism is in. So, women's empowerment is a foregone conclusion, right? Wrong. The Backlash is back in new Armani pin-stripes. Case in point: the USA.

Invigorated by Obama's incompetence, Republican politicians, egged on by right-wing 'pro-family' groups are bringing anti-abortion laws back – in disguise. Consider the 'Pregnant Women's Protection Act', otherwise called 'No Taxpayer-Funding for Abortion Act' and a cluster of other bills introduced in several states like South Dakota, Texas, Kansas, Georgia, etc. The various implications of these bills are:

- a woman seeking abortion must get state approval first;
- she will be forced to take a sonogram test in order to emotionally blackmail her by showing the foetus;
- miscarriage (yes, you read it right) and unapproved abortion will become crimes (on the part of the mother, the doctor, and

- anyone else who could have helped her) punishable by death or life imprisonment;
- state health reform bill will not cover abortions;
- those under private insurance will have to pay penalties for having abortions;
- military women will be forever banned from having abortion in military hospitals overseas (!) even if they are paying from their own damn pockets;
- the only exception for abortion is 'forcible rape' (undefined), which excludes most forms of rape, and incest only in the case of minors; And, most importantly,
- Christ-crazed nutters going around murdering abortion-providers will be regarded as 'justifiable homicide'.

Thankfully, the bill in South Dakota was withdrawn after it generated a lot of bad press and the clause of 'forcible rape' has been replaced by the general term. But the campaign to nullify the constitutionally guaranteed right to abortion is going stronger than ever, what with 29 Governors of States and the mayor of DC being Republican.

If we relate all this to Channel 4's daily propaganda of anti-woman, anti-human Christian values on *4thought.tv*, we begin to understand that something somewhere has gone terribly wrong. We have to admit that by adopting a male-defined discourse of 'rights', we have inadvertently caused the strengthening of those very structures and institutions that enslaved us, such as religion and family, and others that have found novel ways to enslave and traumatise people, such as the state and capitalism. Power is still in someone else's hands, and women in power are not symbols of 'success' but symbols of our collective failure to challenge power itself.

We must use the opportunity provided by IWD to start from scratch, to abandon the dubious discourse of 'equal rights' and learn to understand what emancipation really means. To paraphrase Bakunin slightly, a woman cannot be truly free unless the world around her is equally free.

See page 5 for why International Women's day is celebrated.

## Gearing up for the big one

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There will also be familiar uncompromising rhetoric at the rally from those practiced in the art of political shadow boxing, but the reality, as we know, is very different. New Labour councillors have been just as voracious in approving and voting through the Tory cuts – from the grotesque spectacle of Labour councils setting riot police on demonstrators outside town halls, to UNITE in Lambeth putting pressure on its own union members to vote in favour of the council cuts. This Janus-faced approach by the bureaucrats of the left hasn't gone unnoticed and many ordinary people, angry at losing their jobs and essential local services, are becoming

increasingly agitated by the lack of practical solidarity being offered up by the rich unions and supposed party of opposition.

For most of us 26th March will offer an opportunity to come together as a determined and collective voice of dissent against a government emboldened by its class privilege that is intent on making us pay for their crisis of capitalism. It's in this that we find the momentum to challenge the coalition's austerity measures.

Like a modern day premiership football team, the cabinet is made up almost exclusively of millionaires keeping their influential backers satisfied. Almost all government

ministers have come from privileged backgrounds, had the best education money could buy and have never had to worry about paying bills, rent arrears (why would you if your second home is being paid for by the taxpayer), or the increases in fuel and food prices. Yet it is these people now entrusted to represent the interests of the vast majority of ordinary working class people. The contradiction isn't being lost.

The next issue of *Freedom* will be out on 26th March with a 'demonstration special' edition of the paper. We hope to see you there, somewhere, doing something.

## ANALYSIS

# Local government protests

*Freedom's* on the spot reporters give their feedback on some of London's town hall protests in response to our elected representatives voting through the Tories local authority spending cuts.

## LAMBETH

On 23rd February the people of Lambeth occupied the Town Hall for almost two hours, turning the site of the Labour-controlled council's cutting spree into a popular assembly dedicated to fighting austerity. This also surpassed Lambeth's wild '80s legacy as the first time that the council chamber had been taken over.

From 6pm three to four hundred people had been gathering outside the Town Hall on Brixton Hill in a demonstration called by Lambeth Save Our Services. We made a vigorous racket, with cars honking in support. We came to oppose £37.5 million cuts to Lambeth services that affected everything from libraries to playgrounds, park rangers and lollipop crossing monitors.

With one public gallery allegedly reserved for delegations and the other for council leader Steve Reed's cronies, the council said the public can have the pleasure of watching the procedures on video in another room. No one was having that! People pushed past security, up the stairs into an empty gallery. We shouted for all galleries to be open to the public. Ironically, the mayor implored us to sit quietly and 'let democracy work'. But we continued calling for an open meeting and no cuts.

Meanwhile, police and security had been trying to stop more people from entering the Town Hall. But everyone finally made it through the front door and into the chamber to resounding chants of 'Occupy! Occupy!'. The councillors scuttled off to another hall, where they approved the cuts under heavy police guard.

We took control of the chamber and set up an open mic. Children spoke against the closure of their adventure playground. Residents, students, council and workers from a variety of sectors and unions discussed how we can resist the austerity regime and reclaim wealth and resources that are stolen from us. There



Photo: Guy Smallman



London town hall protests at, above, Hackney; below left, Lambeth; below right, Camden.

was talk of Egypt and the workers' occupation in Wisconsin; ideas for 'our day of rage' on 26th March.

The peoples' assembly voted down the proposed cuts unanimously.

For more info see [lambethsaveourservices.org](http://lambethsaveourservices.org)

## CAMDEN

On 28th February over 400 people marched in Camden against the proposed slash and burn budget which seeks to plug a £100 million funding shortfall by losing a thousand jobs and cutting play centres, libraries, nurseries and centres for older people. The demonstration was called by Camden united against the cuts, a mixture of left-wing trade unionists, labour party activists and local campaigners.

The demonstration started promptly at Mornington Crescent and marched through the heavily populated working class estates of Somers Town in the back streets of Camden. The demonstration was joined by an energetic contingent from the UCL occupation as well as a dozen anarchist comrades from Camden and further afield.

When the march crossed the busy Euston road into a side street by Camden Town Hall there was an attempt by Unison stewards and police to move the demonstration into the nicely prepared pen, however chants of 'stay on the road' and 'don't go in the pen' by a number of comrades gave confidence to the crowd to maintain their position and close

proximity to a now heavily policed side entrance. After several minutes of loud chanting an attempt was made to storm the doors. Crowd control barriers were dismantled and removed by protestors, and a manic attempt to force our way in was prevented by the police. As we weren't going to be allowed in, we decided to take the Euston Road, with barricades and people blocking one of London's busiest roads for over an hour. The police suspiciously did not attempt to remove the blockade even though traffic was being backed up for miles on six lanes during a rush hour.

Negotiations were being made with council officials to allow members of the public into the town hall. After some time it was agreed that 90 people be allowed into oversee the inevitable. The budget was passed in the Labour-dominated council, supported by the Labour Party. Paradoxically the demonstration had the local St Pancras & Holborn Labour Party listed as one of the main supporters!

The battle continues as many more will sooner or later realise that this issue is not going away and we will all be adversely affected.

## HACKNEY

About 300 people braved a cold and windy 2nd March to vent their anger on Hackney Councils cuts programme. With the front doors locked and the cops with their shields already out a frontal assault seemed unwise. So while fifty folk went in to the public gallery to heckle, the rest of the crowd marched round the town hall banging on the various side entrances pursued at a slow pace by the forces of reaction.

After completing a circuit we took the constabulary by surprise by trooping down Mare Street and blocking the road (ambulances excepted) for two hours.

To be fair Hackney Town Hall has seen more vibrant demos than this but it's early days and the councillors at least know that the people of Hackney will not take their complicity in the Governments 'War on the Poor' lying down.





## NEWS IN BRIEF

As preparations continue for the first national demonstration against the cuts on 26th March (organised by the guardians of the left at the TUC), we take a look at those initiatives already being promoted by anarchist and assorted radical groups on what is set to be the largest political demo since the heyday of Stop the War, although potentially a lot more militant and angry.

**RADICAL WORKERS BLOC:** The Anarchist Federation has issued a statement in support of a radical workers bloc, although it falls short of committing itself to organising one. The statement itself is politically concise directing itself towards the anarchist-communist community that will hopefully bear fruit on the day. As they say, “We should all be visible as a distinctive and critical part of a labour movement, as a counter movement to the tried, tested and discredited strategy of the trades unions to bargain with the state in our interests.” *Freedom* will, if and when such the initiative develops, keep its readers updated via the website about the times, meeting points, and intentions.

**PINK AND BLACK BLOC:** Queer Resistance, a group of queers and allies from across the UK who have come together to fight the cuts, will be organising a meet up for the demonstration, in response to the government’s programme of fast and deep public spending cuts. They want to march in solidarity with other anti cuts groups and ensure a visible queer presence and invite people from across the lesbian, gay, bi, trans and queer (LGBTQ) communities as well as friends and allies to join with us. <https://www.facebook.com/event.php?eid=181582421881050&ref=ts>

**NETWORK X:** The radical network formed earlier this year in Manchester has called for “creative disobedience, an example of unmanageable protest ... Strikes, occupations, civil disobedience, in short: *direct action* is what really gets results for the working class against the bosses and their government.” To build links between these different sectors of the working class it is necessary to go beyond the structures of official trades unions. They will also be offering legal advice, food and shelter for the demonstration. <http://networkxuk.wordpress.com/>

**RESIST26:** The brainchild of the arch prankster and academic eccentric Chris Knight. The intention is to occupy Hyde Park, which is to be the destination of the march and site of the TUC rally and create ‘peoples assemblies’. They also intend to have five post-demo parties at strategic points in central London. <http://www.resist26.org/>

**BLACK BLOC:** A Facebook page has been created whose meeting point will probably be outside one of the stations near Victoria Embankment. Precise details will be given nearer the time. You have been warned.

# Why we celebrate 8th March

## Two Irish anarchists give their view on International Women’s Day

International Women’s Day (IWD) is an inherently political event that started in 1910 when Clara Zetkin proposed that it be celebrated every year around the world at the Second International Conference of Socialist Women. This action was inspired by national women’s days in the States during the women’s suffrage and trade union movement that had been organised by socialist women including the Irish American Elizabeth Gurley Flynn. The types of actions and demands on IWD have varied over the years, including a massive strike action that fuelled the Russian revolution in February 1917.

There has been an institutionalisation of the IWD, such as United Nations and many governments’ recognition of the day yet IWD has avoided being commodified and many grassroots actions still take place. There still is a need for the day and for the issues that an international day like this pushes forward. There are issues of care work not being paid or underpaid. There are issues with single mothers and getting back to work, with immigrant workers and the abuses they face by being bound to their employer and working in isolated and often abusive situations.

In Ireland migrant workers, care work and exploitation of flexible work are compounded with Irish women not having the basic rights over their bodies and sexuality. With abortion

still illegal in Ireland there are many fights to be had here at home.

Tobie

On International Women’s day we get to highlight those of us who are politically active, those who are fighting for a better world, those who know that there can be a better world. I don’t know their names but I know I have linked arms with women at Shannon Airport protesting against the war. I’ve stood in front of bin lorries with women from the estate I live on. I have met women as we marched, leafleted, picketed and posters for the right to have an abortion on Irish soil.

There are many, many ways in which life is difficult for women in Ireland, from our pay packets, to the fact that we get little support if we decide to have children and no support if we decide not to have children. We have to wait weeks (and sometimes months) for something as simple as the result of our smear tests. Like men we live in a country which can’t provide housing, medical services and security, basic human needs for all citizens. Yes there is a lot to be angry about and a lot to change.

Thankfully, many of us, like those women who marched in the cold 102 years ago, are not willing to make do with what we have been offered. International Women’s Day is a celebration of those women who make things better.

Aileen O’Carroll

International Women’s Day centenary on 8th March 2011. There were 1551 events globally to mark the economic, political and social achievements of women. This year was themed around access to education and decent work for women.



Members of the Irish Women’s Workers’ Union on the steps of Liberty Hall, c. 1914. The Union was founded in 1911.

## INTERNATIONAL

### IN BRIEF

**GERMANY:** Train drivers called an apologetic strike on 4th March for three meagre hours between 8.30am and 11.30am in a bid to force their private employers to hike the wages of some 26,000 drivers.

It was their second strike in three weeks, the last one being the Friday before. However, in the face of a stubborn response from their employers the train drivers' union, GDL, will be voting on 7th March for an indefinite strike. The RMT can take heart.

**GLOBAL:** The International Labour Organization will be holding the final discussion on the Convention for Domestic Workers in Geneva from 1st to 17th June about getting countries to recognise domestic workers' unions, and providing them the same legal rights as other workers – such as pay, working hours regulation, social security, etc. There is much opposition to this move from the EU and other governments.

Domestic workers, most of whom are women, will use the International Women's Day to garner support for their cause.

**INDIA:** Enraged by the sudden sacking of 11 workers by Powmex Steel, factory workers in the state of Orissa set fire to the car of the company's Deputy General Manager resulting in his death. The incident occurred on 3rd March even as workers of that factory are on strike demanding higher wages. According to reports, no one has been arrested yet.

**PERU:** Four miners were killed and many others severely injured as military forces opened fire in a campaign against 'illegal' gold-mining in the Amazon basin Madre de Dios. The incident occurred when around 2,000 illegal miners and supporters set up a road-block to resist and protest military intrusion and violence. FT.com puts the number of protesting miners as high as 15,000. Shaken, the government has decided to halt the campaign and recognise the miners as legal.

**SAUDI ARABIA:** Shiite minorities took to the streets on 3rd March in protest against Shiite political prisoners, including a cleric who called for political reform.

Twenty two protesters have been arrested and all protests and marches have been banned. Anti-government and anti-monarchy feelings are gathering storm in this major oil-producing darling of the west.

**UNITED STATES:** In a rhetoric that most in Britain will find familiar, the city council of Allen Park in Detroit has used budget deficit as an excuse to sack its entire fire department of 25 workers, despite fierce opposition from the public and the fact that the fire department had conceded to the council nearly a million dollars from its budget last year in order to hold on to its jobs.

### LENS CAP CROATIA KICKS OFF



Several thousand, mostly young, anti-government protestors marched through the Croatian capital on 28th February calling on the government to resign and conservative Prime Minister Jadranka Kosor to step down. This was the largest in three separate days of protest that saw mass demonstrations across Croatia. MASA (The Network of Anarcho-Syndicalists) issued a statement in support of the people in their struggle.

## Stirrings of revolt in Iraq

Inspired by the revolutions in North Africa and their Middle-eastern neighbours, Iraqis organised by several civilian groups and trade unions marched in their thousands in various cities on 25th February, dubbed as the 'Day of Rage' against poor social services, employment, corruption and stifling of freedom.

The day saw many government offices burnt and security forces clashing fatally with protesters who threw stones at the police. The security forces attacked protesters with tear gas, water hoses, gunfire and sound bombs. As a result many people have died. The *Washington Post* puts the number at 29. Journalists were detained and beaten.

Protests have however spread across Iraq – as many as 15 cities. In early March several hundred protesters took to the streets on foot, defying full and partial curfews imposed

across the country, including Baghdad. Protest marches were declared 'illegal' even before 25th February.

America's puppet Prime Minister, Nuri al-Maliki, heading a dubious government in a shaky region has hastily 'promised' doles, the creation of over 280,000 public sector jobs, and not to stand for election in 2014, none of which are enforceable. A near-\$1 billion deal with the US military to buy F-16s has been cancelled to provide rations and social benefits instead. Protests have resulted in the forced resignation of four top officials, including the mayor of Baghdad. Maliki has further given his cabinet an ultimatum of 100 days to provide results or face reshuffling.

While there is a curious silence about these events on television media here, the US embassy is keeping mum about it as well.

## Notes from the US

Further news from the goings on in Wisconsin

Republican Governor Scott Walker was elected last November with a substantial dollop of support from the infamous Koch brothers and the right wing Tea Party. Almost immediately he crafted a bill to cut the pay and benefits of most public sector workers as well as to eliminate practically all their collective bargaining rights (see last issue of *Freedom*, 26th February). Anticipating trouble, Walker notified the state's National Guard to be on ready to respond to unsatisfied state, county and municipal employees. Throughout

the second half of last month (tens of) thousands of protesters mounted just such a series of actions – they marched on the state capitol in Madison, held well-organised protests at the University of Wisconsin-Madison and at high schools around the state. By the third week in February protest had spread to the neighbouring states of Ohio (where thousands rallied at the State Capitol in Columbus against Senate Bill 5, which would force public sector workers to abandon collective bargaining, to fund a larger share of their health insurance premiums,



# Ivory Coast at the cusp of war

Well over 300 Ivoirians have died, says the UN, and 130,000 have fled the country since a political tussle that began after the presidential elections in November last year. Laurent Gbagbo, backed by the military, is stubbornly holding onto the presidency despite his defeat by his rival Alassane Ouattara in an election which was overseen by the UN. The country is riven between the north controlled by armed supporters of Ouattara and the south, dominated by armed supporters of Gbagbo. International observers and politicians are all warning of a lapse into civil war in Cote d'Ivoire. BBC reports that five women on a pro-Ouattara march have been shot and killed by security forces.

Economic sanctions imposed by the west-backed Ouattara and the US, the EU, UN, the African Union and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) to force Gbagbo out are quickly strangling this Francophone nation considered the most 'developed' in West Africa. All export of cocoa, one of the nation's chief sources of income, has been halted. Since Ivory Coast is the world's largest supplier of cocoa, the ban has resulted in price-hike several times over, while half a million metric tons of cocoa beans are rotting in warehouses.

Around 700,000 small farmers depend on commercial cocoa production for survival. On 17th February hundreds of farmers marched to EU Headquarters in the capital, Abidjan, shouting 'Shame on the EU' and 'No to economic slavery' and burnt sacks of cocoa beans in protest. They said that without cocoa they and their families 'risk dying'. The embargo on cocoa is supposed to last till mid-March.

While the Central Bank of West Africa has frozen Ivory Coast's bank accounts, foreign



In the Ivory Coast, residents flee on foot carrying their belongings.

banks are shutting down. ATMs have stopped dispensing money. Gbagbo, in a desperate attempt to pump money back has nationalised several foreign banks like Citibank, but it hasn't helped since they are controlled from elsewhere. West Africa's stock market has moved from Abidjan to Bamako, Mali.

Because of its strategic and economic position, a civil war in Ivory Coast is likely to disturb geopolitical stability severely, especially with North Africa caught up in a revolutionary turmoil and eleven elections

scheduled all over the continent this year. Food prices are set to soar since rice, edible oil and wheat imports have stopped. Inflation is on the rise. The 'international community', especially ECOWAS is bent on imposing stability even by military intervention.

At the moment Ouattara, who is a former deputy managing director of IMF (a tell-tale sign), is operating his government from a hotel protected by UN security forces. Meanwhile, Gbagbo has cut off electricity and water supply to the north making millions of ordinary people suffer.

## Notes from the US

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and switch to a so-called 'merit-based' pay system) and even more conservative Idaho, where pro-labour protests saw hundreds of people out in Boise and ten other cities against a plan to sack more than 750 teachers and restrict their rights to collective bargaining. Overnight occupations of public buildings in Wisconsin have followed and there is an air of real resistance amongst those on the ground.

As protests continued, and the establishment continued to laud the protests of others in the Middle East, Walker again refused to negotiate over the bill. It's emerged that he's been in close and regular touch with Americans for Prosperity, an organisation funded by the Koch brothers. Tim Phillips, its head, confirmed that his group had worked behind the scenes to try to encourage a union showdown in Wisconsin.

In a statement, Wisconsin's professional football team, the community-owned Super

Bowl champion Green Bay Packers, backed the workers' right to collective bargaining, saying that: "Wisconsin's long-standing tradition of allowing public sector workers to have a voice on the job has worked for the state since the 1930s. These public workers are Wisconsin's champions every single day and we urge the Governor and the State Legislature to not take away their rights."

In Indiana Democratic lawmakers fled the state to deny the Republicans a quorum for more such measures. Michigan Governor Mitch Daniels was on record on National Public Radio (NPR), which the Republicans want to abolish as being unable to explain how removing workers' collective bargaining rights could help reduce state deficits and acknowledging that the main purpose of the measures is to undermine the unions.

Louis Further

## Greek strikers hospitalised

Since *Freedom's* coverage (our last issue, 26th February) of the hunger strike of nearly 300 non-documented migrants, the strike has entered a serious and crucial phase. The migrants, all from North Africa, who have lived and worked in Greece for up to seven years, are in their 37th day of hunger strike as of 4th March, 240 in Athens and 50 in Thessaloniki.

Ninety eight have been hospitalised in a 'pre-comatose' condition with severe dehydration, heart and kidney problems, with more strikers in similar danger. Many are refusing even water. There have been continuing demonstrations and sit-ins by support groups to force the government to recognise the migrants as citizens.

Greek authorities, however, are considering granting temporary residence to the strikers while they 're-examine' the latter's status.

## FEATURE

# HOW TO GET YOU

## A practical guide in accessing data protection information

I have an unusual hobby. I use the Data Protection Act to get data the police – the Met's Forward Intelligence Teams (FIT) and its CO11 public order directorate – have gathered on me. So far, I've got one FIT photo of myself and numerous Met 'criminal intelligence' reports about myself. Here's how you can do it too (for more on FIT teams see [www.fitwatch.org.uk](http://www.fitwatch.org.uk)).

The Data Protection (DPA) covers personal information about yourself. You can use DPA on any organisation, public or private, that has data on you, including images. This includes CCTV cameras operated jointly by the police and local councils, for example. It's different to the Freedom of Information Act, which is about material public bodies hold that's in the 'public interest'.

Why make a DPA request from the police? Surely it just attracts more of their unwanted attention? If you've somehow managed to be a Scarlet Pimpernel, unknown to the police up to now, best keep it that way and not request data off of them. However, the police have data on a ridiculous number of people involved in protests, so we've mostly attracted their attention already.

The point of units like the Forward Intelligence Teams is to intimidate, and asking them for data they've got on you shows them you aren't intimidated. Sharing info obtained through the DPA could even get people off in court cases, by showing inconsistencies in the police's stories. And it annoys the police to have to account for their FIT teams' actions, because there isn't really any justification for them, even in law. And it's a lot of entertainment for a tanner.

Following the Anthony Wood judgment, you may be able to get your data deleted, as keeping it could be 'disproportionate'. Although many suspect it's never really deleted, just moved somewhere else.

If you've got a pending case, talk to your lawyer before making a DPA request. Police can refuse to release data connected to a 'pending prosecution'. And you can probably get more data, quicker, through pre-trial 'disclosure' to the defence.

Just because you haven't 'done' anything, it doesn't mean they haven't got data on you. I've got no criminal record and I have several pages of data on the CO11 public order database logging my appearance at 18 demos, actions or meetings over the years. The data records me being 'seen' or 'identified' only. Journalists come under surveillance just for covering demos (see [www.londonfreelance.org/fl/0804fit.html](http://www.londonfreelance.org/fl/0804fit.html)) as do legal observers.

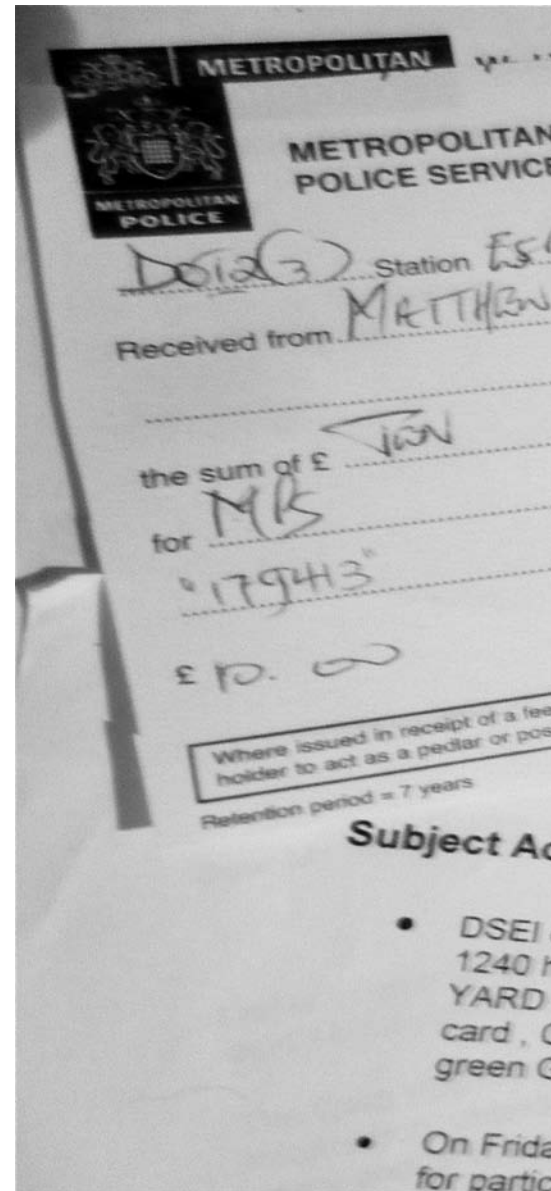
The most difficult thing about making a DPA is actually getting off your arse and doing it. You only have the rights you exercise.

Before you make a DPA request, phone the excellent Information Commissioner's Office (ICO, [www.ico.gov.uk](http://www.ico.gov.uk)). Their advisers can tell you whether your request would have any chance of getting a result, and suggest how to ask the 'right' questions.

Research the police operation where you think you were spotted. If you're fuzzy on the details of the incident, look up the archive pages of Indymedia (see [www.indymedia.org.uk/en/newswire/archive.html](http://www.indymedia.org.uk/en/newswire/archive.html)). This takes you back in time to remind you which demo was when.

Be clear about which police force – the Metropolitan Police (the Met), Kent, Sussex, Transport Police, etc. – you're asking for your data. Go to the website of the police force, and look for headings like Freedom of Information, Data Protection, Your Right to Information or Subject Access. (See [www.met.police.uk/information/info\\_about\\_you.htm](http://www.met.police.uk/information/info_about_you.htm) for the Met, which has links to all other UK police forces' websites.)

You are making a Subject Access Request under the DPA. The Data Protection Officer of the police force you're asking is obliged by law to assist you in formulating a request.



Phone that police force's Data Protection Officer (or one of the Information Managers in a bigger force). Don't be fobbed off with their 'customer service assistants'.

Data Protection Officers are employed by the police, but they're not cops. They want to give you that information you want, despite the efforts of real cops to prevent them. You can ask the police force's Data Protection Officer questions before you make a DPA request. Ask them, what sort of database would this information be held on? Would a particular form of wording work? Is the question you're asking too broad?

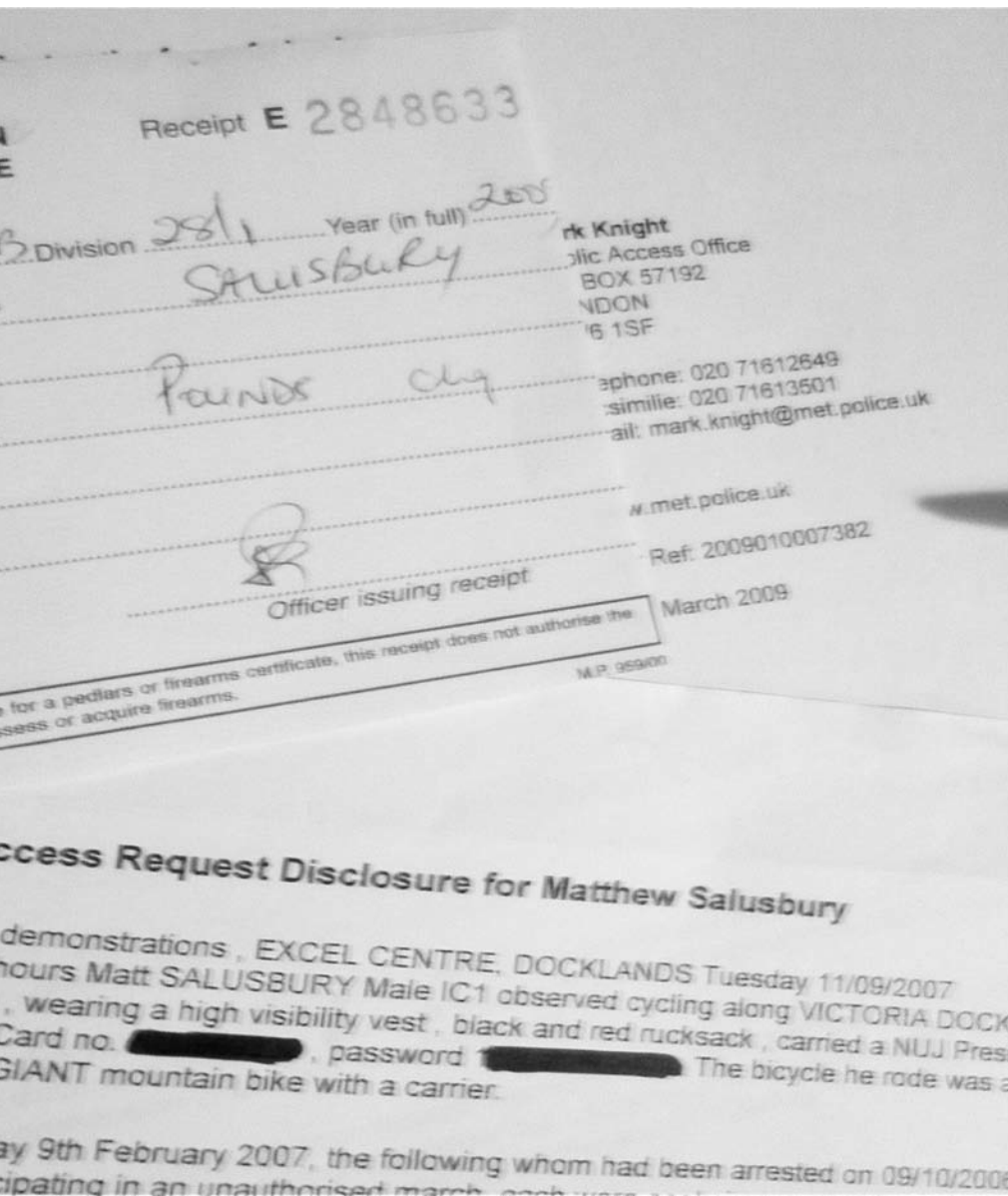
Each police force has their own form they want you to fill in to make a Subject Access Request. The forms will ask you for a photocopy of your passport's photo page if you have one, and two proofs of address less than three months old. If you don't have a passport, a birth certificate will do. Some



FIT watching me and scribbling notes, May Day 2010.



# OUR POLICE FILE



police forces specify on the form that they do insist on seeing the original of your ID. A DPA request costs £10 by postal order or cheque.

Legally you don't need to fill in the police forms, you can just request information by letter. However, it's better to fill in the police form. This avoids giving the police an excuse to delay replying. Your request probably won't fit cramped spaces in the form, you can fill in 'See accompanying letter' and explain in the letter what data you want.

You can do a DPA request on someone else's behalf with their permission. That person needs to add a letter authorising the (named) person filling in the forms for them.

The Met's Subject Access Request form asks you 'What happened you to cause you to have contact with the police?' The Kent Police just ask for 'details of the information sought'. In this section of the form, put

something along the lines of: 'subject of police surveillance (CO11 public order directorate, Forward Intelligence Team, Evidence Gathering Teams and other units)'.

People sometimes forget to ask for a stop and search record, and find they need one later. These, for example, came in handy for the judicial review on stops and searches at the 2008 Kingsnorth Climate Camp. To request one of these, ask for something like: 'Any stop and search records, stop and account records for police stops involving myself'.

If you make a 'blanket' request for all information held on you, it'll be sent back. Ask for all information held on you that's on a particular database, such as Crimint. (Ask the Data Protection Officer what their police force's databases are called.) A lot of intelligence on which demos you've been on gets passed by various police forces to the

Met's CO11 public order database, so if you travel around to attend actions, it's worth making a DPA request to the Met as well for this data.

If you make a mess of the form, they'll send it back telling you what's wrong, and you won't be charged a tenner.

Keep a copy of everything – including the date you send your Subject Access Request – first class signed for post – to the address they give you. Start counting, 40 days from when they received your request is the legal deadline for them to respond. You'll probably get a letter sooner saying they've received your request. Your letter will have a receipt for your £10, quote the receipt number when you ring to see what's happening.

When the 40 days is coming up, ring the force's Data Protection Officer. Ask what's up. Often they'll call you or write to you near the deadline to ask for two more weeks. The Information Commissioner advises granting them an extra 28 more days, but no more, and to confirm this in writing.

Any data on you (the 'disclosure') usually arrives by signed-for post. If you're not happy with the disclosure and you think they're bullshitting you, they probably are. Call the ICO first for advice, then write to the person you wrote to before, saying what you think is wrong with it.

It then gets complicated, but you just might be able to (eventually) get the ICO to make the cops come up with some of the data they're withholding from you. The cops routinely plead that finding your data will take 'disproportionate effort', in which case get onto the ICO who will (slowly) argue the toss with them.

ACPO guidelines mean that your data will be routinely deleted after seven years, unless they police feel there are reasons – such as, apparently, your 'known associates' – for retaining it.

You can use the DPA to see if any of those shadowy ACPO 'domestic extremism' units ([www.fitwatch.org.uk/domestic-extremism](http://www.fitwatch.org.uk/domestic-extremism)) have anything on you. People have managed to get their personal data from NPIOU and Netcu – such as copies of injunctions served against them. The NPIOU has a database on individuals, to see if this has data on you, contact ACPO ([www.acpo.police.uk/contact.asp](http://www.acpo.police.uk/contact.asp)). Get a move on, though, as it looks like all these 'domestic extremism' units will be absorbed into the Met sometime around July.

More people should do DPA requests to the cops. I'm only an 'expert' on this because no one else is doing it.

The Fitwatch conference on police surveillance and infiltration is on Sunday 17th April in London. Details will be on [www.fitwatch.org.uk](http://www.fitwatch.org.uk) shortly.

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## COMMENT

## ABOUT FREEDOM

## ANGEL ALLEY

Just to show that even the wise anarchists at *Freedom* make mistakes, in our last issue (26th February) history article on Marie Louise Berneri we forgot that her book *Journey Through Utopia* is now out of print and not still available at the bookshop.

However it is one of the titles we have on disc and is almost 'ready to roll', so to speak, so if comrades are interested in seeing this book let us know and if there is sufficient demand we will do a short print run.

Thanks this week go to our Polish comrades who put on a benefit at the shop to raise funds for just such projects of proletarian propaganda. A fun night was had by all with music, films and a fine selection of Polish delicacies. We are still counting the coppers, but will report a final figure next issue. And speaking of figures, we are happy to report a 23% sales rise on last year or, to be more honest, 14% up on 2009.

Observant comrades will notice that the paper is now on different paper. For this we have to thank the good folk of Aldgate Press who have gone to great trouble and expense to upgrade us and give it a slight yellowish 'newspaper' tinge.

## SUBSCRIPTIONS

This is issue is vol 72 no 04, so if the number above your name on the address label is 7204 or less, then your subscription is now due for renewal. There's a renewal form on page 16 of this issue or you can subscribe online at [freedompress.org.uk/news/subscribe](http://freedompress.org.uk/news/subscribe) or, if you don't want to worry in the future about remembering to renew your *Freedom* sub, ask us to send you a standing order form by emailing [subs@freedompress.org.uk](mailto:subs@freedompress.org.uk) or you can write to us at 'Subscriptions', Freedom, 84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1 7QX. Unfortunately our sub rates will be soon be increasing, so renew at the old rate now if you want to avoid paying the higher price.

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## NEXT ISSUE

The next issue will be dated 26th March 2011 and the last day to get copy to us for that issue will be Thursday 17th March. You can send your articles to us by email to [copy@freedompress.org.uk](mailto:copy@freedompress.org.uk) or by post addressed to 'The Editors', Freedom, 84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1 7QX.

## A sideways look

by SVARTFROSK

In the confusion of mottos that came out of the French Revolution, the Republic eventually settled on *Liberté, Égalité et Fraternité*. The usual English translation is Liberty, Equality and Fraternity.

Liberty and Equality are often discussed, even if sometimes they are seen as opposites. Fraternity gets missed out. The political compass quiz on the internet, which is quite good at differentiating between libertarian and authoritarian as well as collectivist and individualist misses out any real questions about fraternity. Why is it not addressed? Is it too hard to pin down?

The French Republican Revue of 1834 stated: "Any man aspires to liberty, to equality, but he can not achieve it without the assistance of other men, without fraternity".

Leaving aside the less than inclusive language, fraternity is a state of being, and also an organisation. The former is the state of brotherhood, and mutual support, which was much more important before the welfare state and remains so where there is no welfare. As an organisation, it implies it is voluntary and its members have come together freely, not for religious, political or family reasons. There used to be thousands of friendly societies across Britain, set up by ordinary workers to help each other out. The early unions originated in them, as did building societies, co-operatives and mutual assurance companies.

Obviously, such organisations declined in Britain after the introduction of pensions and later unemployment benefit. I'm sure I'm not the only one to find it a bit galling

that the ConDem government imply that we should return to the days of the friendly societies when they detest the motives behind working class self-help. The 'Big Society' might be a joke, but it is a joke at our expense. Working class self-organisation used to fill many of the roles taken on by the state in the twentieth century. The idea of welfare was warned against in syndicalist literature from the 1910s. Cameron envisages something entirely different, where the great and the good and the religious pick up the pieces from the state withdrawing.

I was talking to someone the other day who made a very valid point about the lack of fraternity. We will be in sore need of some fellow-feeling as things get tougher. It's not something that will be automatic or that we can predict with any confidence. The effect of tabloid values and harsh reality television is corrosive of shared social values. It ratchets up fear of crime and makes people afraid to interact. Some use the State's benefit cheat lines to settle personal disputes; alienated youth is quick to reach for knives and guns, often over slights of a very minor nature. Does this matter? It depends on how people react when the going gets tough, and I think that is one of the certainties we face – ecological damage and high oil prices both foreshadow difficult times ahead, even without government policies to make things worse.

The media and government have been telling us for decades that greed is good, so perhaps we ought to be glad that there is any sort of fraternity at all.





## Visibly organising?

Those of us in the Anarchist Federation who have read the article are a little peeved at being mentioned by name, along with SolFed, as being all but invisible in the anti-cuts campaign and supposedly having “sunk back into the shadows” since Millbank (“Visibly Organising?”, *Freedom* vol. 72 no. 4, 26th February 2011). It came across as some sort of editorial so we’ll treat it like one and aim to set things straight.

Firstly we are not the trots. We don’t aim to spend all our time self-promoting and we don’t seek to lead the movement. We took a national decision at our October meeting not to try to set up a national anti-cuts organisation but to work in local campaigns and help set them up where they didn’t exist. What would you have us do? If we set one up, we’d no doubt be ‘vanguardists’ or ‘leftists’ or something. Anyway, we have indeed called for another radical workers and student block for the 26th March TUC demo, with no illusions! And we continue to discuss ideas jointly with SolFed, remaining positive about producing joint leaflets.

Nationally as an organisation we have written a huge amount about the cuts in our publications. Loads of people commented on how significant the last *Organise!* magazine was, and we were the first to do a thorough analysis of the Big Society and voluntarism and other aspects of interest to libertarians, we are pretty sure, and we have covered the effect of welfare reform in great detail. We helped to set the class-struggle agenda at Network X. We’ve been visible on all the earlier demos and have many student members active at their universities, actually running a bit of a risk in how visible they are.

Where is the evidence that many non-aligned anarchists are sustaining a significant level of anti-cuts activity other than in London. Certainly no more than what we are doing whilst also putting energy into running our organisation. We know of ‘anarchists against the cuts’ initiatives in some towns, in which we are involved, but these are nothing like on the scale of the broader campaigns that we are also involved with. As such we see the need to be involved in both, and we have been part of the organisation of local demos and marches like those you mentioned. It will no doubt vary town to town, so you’d need to survey what we and others are doing outside of London to get a proper picture of our relative impact.

Anarchist organisations like ours are still small, getting relatively smaller as a mass movement hopefully grows! If so we will all become even less visible. We could try and seem bigger than we are but self-inflated PR stunts suggesting the economy is in meltdown and could collapse tomorrow with one last push will surely come across as ludicrous to many.

We are left wondering, why are *Freedom* slagging off organised anarchists in the lead article of a paper that we sell on our stalls at demos, promote in social centres and in the AF’s library in Nottingham. A good number of our members are worried about their jobs

and some have already received redundancy letters so you don’t need to tell us how serious all of this is. We can at least agree that if there are any anarchists out there who are not yet involved with the anti-cuts movement, then they should be. But getting involved is much more than making a splash on the TUC’s demo and will mean working hard in local campaigns to build communities of resistance and help create the potential for a social strike, if we are lucky and if the trots don’t drop everything to try and get Labour or themselves into power in May.

Members of the Anarchist Federation

## On Proudhon

First, I would like to thank you for publishing my letter on my new Proudhon anthology *Property is Theft!* a few issues back [29th January 2011]. Unfortunately, a quote by Proudhon was somehow chopped from it. Not that big a deal, of course, except the run-up to it was kept in!

The letter in *Freedom* states: “I’ll end with this little extract from Proudhon’s 1858 magus opus, *Justice in the Revolution and in the Church*, where he indicates the solution to System of Economic Contradictions he analysed 12 years previously.” Unfortunately the actual quote is missing. Here it is:

“Thus labour, reconciled by its free nature with capital and property, from which wage-labour banished it, cannot cause a distinction of classes any more, which breaks the vicious circle and puts society, as well as [economic] science, safe from any contradiction.

“Then, add the innovators, the ideal dreamed by the first economists can be carried out:

“The land to those who cultivates it;  
“The profession to those who practice it;  
“Capital to those who use it;  
“The product to the producer”

So there it is – I hope it was worth the wait!

As I made clear in my review of *System of Economic Contradictions*, Proudhon’s ideas are a mixed bag for modern libertarians. As well as proclaiming many key anarchist ideas, he was also wrong on many issues. Hopefully, my new anthology will show that the former far outweighs the latter and why anarchists today, no matter how revolutionary and (libertarian) communist we may be, should have an interest in his ideas and his contribution to the commonwealth of ideas which is anarchism.

Iain McKay

## In favour of the census

I admire the record of my friend the late Philip Sansom, who served a short prison term for refusing to fill in a census form. And of course I commend the many who dodged the census in order to evade the poll tax.

But in this society, we all have to compromise with the authorities (Philip declared his income to minions of the state in National Insurance, in order to qualify for an old age pension).

This year, I advocate co-operation with the census, in order that published population statistics are as accurate as possible. In particular, I suggest we should all do our bit against the injustice of religious privilege, by declaring ourselves to have no religion.

Donald Room

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## GETTING ACTIVE

### PRISON NEWS

Another fortnight, another North African country in revolt – and this time round it is Libya, a country notorious for the medieval state of its prison and the routine massacre of its inmates. In fact it could be argued that it was a demonstration commemorating one of these prison massacres – that of nearly 1,200 prisoners in Tripoli's Abu Salim security jail on 28th June 1996 – that ultimately sparked the Libyan revolt.

On 12th February members of the Committee of the Families of the Victims of the Abu Salim Massacre, mostly black-clad women carrying portraits of their fathers, husbands, sons and brothers, had mounted their regular four-year-old Saturday protests in Benghazi (where the majority of the dead prisoners were from) demanding the return of the bodies of the dead and full acknowledgement by the Libyan authorities. But three days later when security forces arrested the Committee's lawyer Fathi Terbil, who himself lost a brother and two other family members in the massacre, members of the Committee immediately called a protest outside the police headquarters. Thousands joined the demonstration and the call for a countrywide 'Day of Rage' was made. The rest, as they say, is soon to become history.

For years the Libyan authorities denied that the Abu Salim massacre had taken place and for years many of the families continued to take food and clothing to the prison believing their relatives were still alive, even though they were never allowed to see them. Beginning in 2001 however, the authorities started to tell some of the families that their family-members were dead, often merely presenting them with a death certificate that simply stated that he had died in 1996 in Tripoli. No other information was made available to them and some families have still not been officially informed. No bodies have ever been released. Gaddafi himself didn't publicly acknowledge the massacre until 2004. (I recommend the Human Rights Watch report *Truth and Justice Can't Wait* background to the massacre.)

As in Egypt, the Libyan Days of Rage and the sudden threat to State power have resulted in a number of mass prison break-outs, mostly in the east of the country. One of the largest of these was at Benghazi's Al Kuifiya prison, where at least 1,000 prisoners escaped and joined the rebellion, torching of the general attorney's office, local banks and police stations.

In the west of Libya the picture has been mixed and many attempted prison rebellions have been dealt with savagely, including in Abu Salim prison itself.

At Tajoura hundreds of prisoners were recaptured after on breakout, but the entire prisoner population of Jdayda jail on the outskirts of Tripoli managed to escape when the prison was set on fire following the execution by prison guards of three attempted escapees.



A round up of all the latest anarchist printed media and radical propaganda. Anarchists' stock in trade has always been based on communication, and the movement's spring offensive shows the fine art of agitprop hasn't been lost. All the newsheets below are free and available from Freedom Bookshop, or visit their respective websites to order or download your copy. We say support your local anarchist movement.

● *Resistance* #129, Anarchist Federation. The UK's largest anarchist organisation comes out fighting with a range of articles that capture the mood of the times: Tunisians tumble tyrant; Rotherham resistance against cuts; Heinz means no beanz workers strike again; Argyll locals beat school closures; Jobcentre staff sign off work; trade unions fight to lose; victory for community group in Leeds; Gaza youth revolt

<http://www.afed.org.uk/>

● *Catalyst* #25, Solidarity Federation. Despite being a few months old the articles remain relevant especially for comrades involved in workplace resistance: Did Millbank trashing mark the start of a militant anti-cuts movement?; interview with a housing benefits claimant; interview with a French teacher who participated in the general strike; pensions under threat; Know Your Rights: a brief guide to the law around redundancy.

<http://www.solfed.org.uk/>

● *Workers Solidarity* #119, Workers Solidarity Movement. Ireland's long-running and only nationwide anarchist group with articles on government attacks on healthcare; change won't come from the ballot box; thinking about anarchism: can Ireland go it alone?; people power in Tunisia; the budget and the rich; Wikileaks: terrorists or freedom fighters?

<http://www.wsm.ie/>

● *Totally Independent* #19, Haringey Solidarity Group. HSG remain the template with which all local radical groups organise. People in the north London borough have a lot to be proud of: Haringey Alliance for Public Services; anti-cuts update; schools out – student protests; NHS – under the knife; big society big con; Europe is revolting; local action round up; groups active in Haringey.

<http://www.haringey.org.uk/>

● *Hereford Heckler* #18, Hereford Solidarity League (February/March 2011). Probably the best designed and most varied in content, for

a local news-sheet it certainly punches above its weight: Herefordshire schools under threat again; locals to re-open community pub; anti-cuts protest; Mayday to be scrapped; Forest of Dean riots 1831; council war on open spaces; sports round-up.

<http://herefordheckler.wordpress.com/>

● *On The Streets* #1, Whitechapel Anarchist Group. WAG's new venture already featured in the last issue of *Freedom*.

<http://whitechapelanarchistgroup.wordpress.com/>

● *The Pork Bolter* #100, Worthing's radical freesheet (February 2011). A magnificent 100 issues on and still rabble-rousing on the south coast: police spy in Worthing; stop the cuts; Titnore woods still at risk; strange business of councillor's care links; hand over kids to bankers says MP; council axe-man unplugged; Worthing says hurrah to Tesco Town status!

<http://www.eco-action.org/porkbolter/>

● *Rough Music* #25, monthly radical newsletter. Described by *Schnews* as "Brighton's lippy young upstart of a radical newsletter" but proving its worth: Brighton's undercover cop; new community garden springs up in Worthing; Brighton Hunt Sabs kicks off the cubbing season; the anarchist response to the homeless crisis; latest on Lewes Road Community Garden.

<http://roughmusic.org/>

● *Schnews* #760, the weekly direct action news-sheet produced in Brighton and an institution of the political protest movement. Required reading for anyone serious about their actions: Cameron waves arms about in Middle East; new Sussex detention centre; protesters occupied the council chamber in Leeds; anti-supermarket activist group SaboTaj in court; Belgium, migrants revolt; Bristol, a hub of activity; UK Uncut bank bail-in action.

<http://www.schnews.org.uk/>

● *The Ox-Fly* #3, Anarchists in Oxford. New kids on the block with a lot to say for themselves: local groups ignored by council; 'Bosswatch' website – have your say about poor workplaces; large scale library closures; Mitie out-sourcing company and detention centres; new Solfed group set up in Thames Valley; winning the argument or winning the fight?; anarchists march on Cameron's constituency HQ.

<http://aio.theoarc.org.uk/>



# Rudolph Rucker's anarcho-syndicalism

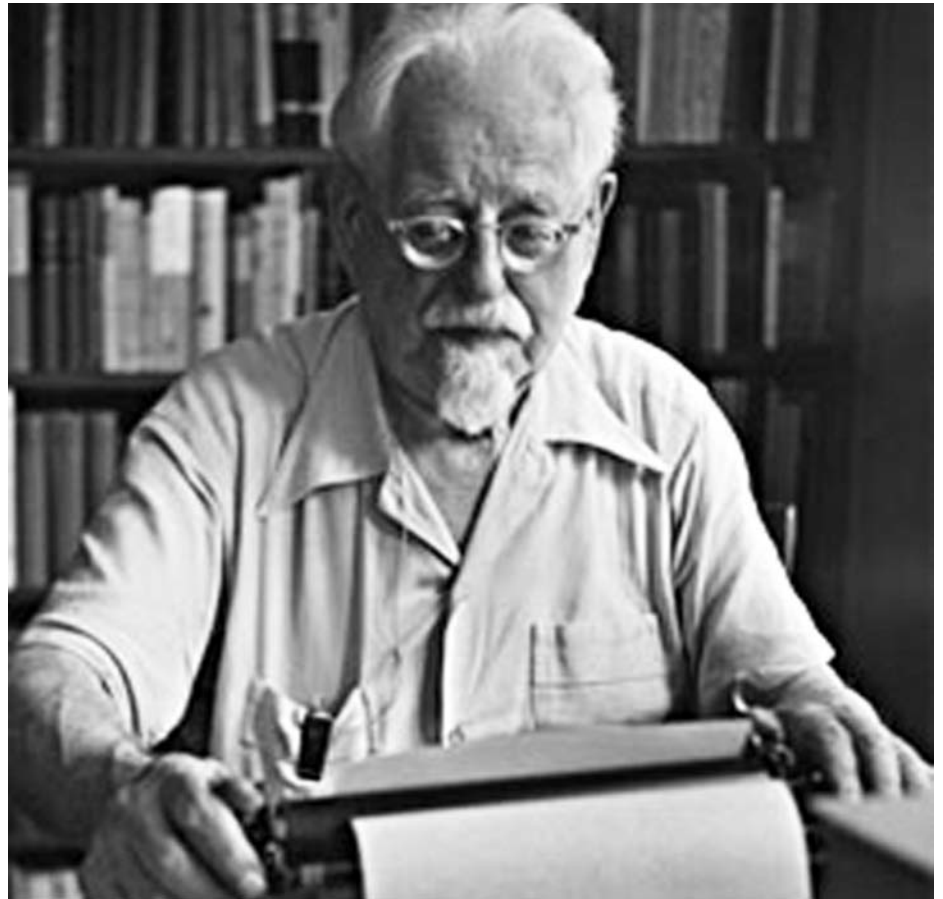
## The legacy of an extraordinary radical

Rudolf Rucker was born in Mainz, in the German Rhineland, into a Catholic family of skilled workers with liberal views. His parents died young, and he was sent to a Catholic orphanage. He was apprenticed as a bookbinder, and followed the trade as a travelling journeyman for several years. He became a socialist in his youth, and joined the Social Democratic Party; but he supported the leftwing opposition group of Die Jungen (The Young), was expelled in 1890, and soon moved towards anarchism. He visited several parts of Western Europe, following his trade and his political interests. He observed the second congress of the Second International in Brussels in 1891, began contributing to the anarchist press in 1892, and left Germany to escape police harassment in 1892. He lived for a couple of years in Paris, and then settled permanently in Britain in 1895.

Although Rucker was a Gentile, he became involved in the Jewish anarchist movement. He learnt Yiddish, lived in the Jewish community, and became the lifelong companion of Milly Witcop (1877–1953). He quickly became a prominent speaker and writer, on cultural as well as political topics, and for 20 years he was the most liked and respected person in the movement. In 1898 he edited *Dos Fraye Wort* (The Free Word), a new Yiddish weekly paper in Leeds, for a couple of months, and then became editor of *Der Arbeiter Fräint* (The Workers' Friend), a revived Yiddish weekly paper in London, and in 1900 also of *Germinal*, a new Yiddish monthly.

The Jewish anarchist movement became larger than the native movement. A federation of Jewish anarchist groups was formed in 1902, the circulation of the papers and other publications increased, and a thriving social club was opened in Jubilee Street in East London in 1906. Rucker was the most influential figure in the movement, representing it at the International Anarchist Congress in Amsterdam in 1907, and becoming a member of the International Anarchist Bureau established there. The Jewish anarchists were very active in the growing trade union movement, and Rucker favoured the development of anarcho-syndicalism as a new form of anarchist theory and practice.

In 1914 Rucker vigorously opposed both sides in the First World War, and after a few months he was interned as an enemy alien. Soon afterwards the *Arbeiter Fräint* was suppressed and the Jubilee Street club was closed. The Jewish anarchist movement in Britain never really recovered, and most of its members were later attracted to Zionism or Communism.



In Britain, there was a vigorous syndicalist movement before the First World War with strong libertarian tendencies – especially among the Jewish workers in East London, where Rucker himself was so influential – and there were several attempts to form a specifically anarcho-syndicalist organisation during the 1930s. The Anarchist Federation of Britain turned towards syndicalism after the Second World War and became the Syndicalist Workers Federation in 1950, but this too declined. However it was later revived as the Anarchist Syndicalist Alliance and then in 1979 at the Direct Action Movement, which has produced many publications and has been involved in several industrial struggles.

However, the basic principles of anarcho-syndicalist – self-management, autonomy, direct action, spontaneity, mutual aid, libertarianism in general – are nowadays represented not so much by the militant working-class movement as by other social and political movements which transcend class loyalties. Obvious examples include peace and green movements, youth and student movements, women's and gay movements, communalist and cooperative movements, and the informal manifestations of the spirit of revolt which have revived the old attitudes of nihilism and bohemianism in the alternative and underground culture. If the traditionalist concept of anarchism expounded by Rucker

has been continued in the International Workers Association and by such writers as Daniel Guerin and Noam Chomsky, more revisionist concepts which have been pioneered by many libertarians during the nineteenth century, and which have been expounded and developed by several writers down to Murray Bookchin and Colin Ward in our own day, should also be taken into consideration in any attempt at a balanced account of anarchism. Nevertheless Rucker, in seeing anarchism primarily as a product of libertarian tendencies in the labour movement and anarcho-syndicalism as the final result of his process, was giving a true picture of the emergence first of the historical anarchist movement during the late nineteenth century and then of one of its most important forms during the early twentieth century (though he himself had increasing doubts about the value of syndicalism, especially towards the end of his life). So his exposition of anarcho-syndicalism at the peak of its influence is both a precious document of its time and a valuable reminder in our time of the continuing importance of an essential element in the complex ideology of anarchism.

Nicolas Walter

originally published in *The Raven*, March 1988

*Anarchism and Anarcho-Syndicalism* by Rudolf Rucker is published by Freedom Press, £3 (post free).

## REVIEWS

## WHAT'S ON

## MARCH

■ **12th** Countercultural Connections with speaker/performer Michael Horovitz, a News From Nowhere Club event at The Epicentre, West Street, Leytonstone, London E11 4LJ, 7.30pm buffet (bring something if you can), 8pm talk and discussion, for details call 020 8555 5248 or see [newsfromnowhereclub.org](http://newsfromnowhereclub.org).

■ **12th** Mothers march for everyone's survival and welfare: end cuts, poverty and discrimination, organised by Global Women's Strike, assemble Trafalgar Square (north side) London at 12 noon, women and men, young and old – bring your demands to the march, for details email [gws@globalwomenstrike.net](mailto:gws@globalwomenstrike.net), call 020 7482 2496, join GWS on Facebook and on [www.twitter.com/WomenStrike](http://www.twitter.com/WomenStrike) or see [www.globalwomenstrike.net](http://www.globalwomenstrike.net).

■ **19th** Schnews benefit gig with the Inner Terrestrials and The Sporadics with films, DJs and stalls from 8pm at Hectors House, 52–54 Grand Parade, Brighton BN2 9QA, £6 entry, for details call 01273 685913 or see [www.schnews.org.uk](http://www.schnews.org.uk)

■ **26th** TUC National Demonstration Against Cuts, assemble 11am at Victoria Embankment for march to Hyde Park, see <http://marchforthealternative.org.uk/> for details (see also page 4 of this issue for some of the alternative initiatives planned for the day).

■ **27th** David Rovics and Robb Johnson at The Grosvenor, Sidney Road, Stockwell, London SW9 0TP, an Acoustic Insurgency production from 8pm until 11pm, no support acts so arrive early, £5/£4.

## APRIL

■ **1st to 3rd** Zagreb's Seventh Anarchist Bookfair at Galerija Nova, Teslina 7, Zagreb, for more information or to book a stall see [www.ask-zagreb.org](http://www.ask-zagreb.org) or e-mail [anarhisticki.sajam.knjiga@gmail.com](mailto:anarhisticki.sajam.knjiga@gmail.com)

■ **9th** Guerrilla Gardening with speaker Richard Reynolds (the founder of [guerrillagardening.org](http://guerrillagardening.org)), a News From Nowhere Club event at The Epicentre, West Street, Leytonstone, London E11 4LJ, 7.30pm buffet, 8pm talk and discussion, for details call 020 8555 5248 or see [newsfromnowhereclub.org](http://newsfromnowhereclub.org).

## MAY

■ **7th** Bristol anarchist bookfair 2011 – in the tradition of May Day, resistance and alternatives to cuts, an anarchist antidote to a week of royal weddings, local elections and dodgy referendums, and more cuts, offering all things anarchist with stalls, meetings, films, vegan café, kids space and more, plus an after party nearby as well, at Hamilton House, 80 Stokes Croft, Bristol BS1 3QY from 10.30am to 6.30pm, see <http://www.bristolanarchistbookfair.org> for details.

## FILM

**Mammoth** directed by Lukas Moodysson

Acclaim for early work – small-town Swedish dramas *Show Me Love* (1998) and *Together* (2000) – included Ingmar Bergman dubbing Lukas Moodysson a 'young master'. Perhaps over-emboldened, his subsequent trajectory spiralled rapidly downward. *Lilya-4-Ever's* (2002) denunciation of sex-trafficking culminated in a Russian teenage suicide after her erstwhile boyfriend's procurement yielded assembly-line degradation in Stockholm, before *A Hole In My Heart's* (2004) frenzied, fractured trashing of DIY porn's ugly distortions of sexual expression similarly rammed home late capitalist culture's dehumanisation. Finally, surreal psychodrama *Container* (2006) not only deconstructed Moodysson's own grandiosity, but decisively self-destructed residual audience sympathy and interest. Now, a surprisingly mainstream English-language *Mammoth* has international A-list actors spicing the original melodramatic thematics with his moral-political pot-pourri of Christian socialist pro-feminism (the Swedish title 'Mamut' being a diminutive for 'mother' in various languages).

High-flying computer games designer Leo and paediatric surgeon Ellen's daughter Jackie, aged 7, is looked after in their New York yuppie penthouse by Filipino nanny Gloria. Her own young sons back home become increasingly distressed at her absence, whereas her employers also regretfully neglect parental duties – travelling to Asia sealing corporate deals, and through traumatic overwork tending a child victim of urban social breakdown. All-round unsatisfactory family relations then inexorably escalate. Despite hipster decency shunning business amorality, Leo consorts with Thai prostitute Cookie, herself separated from her infant; whereas Ellen's jealous hostility at Jackie and Gloria's growing closeness accentuates the latter's homesickness, while her eldest's acting out exposes him to American paedophiles. The story climaxes with Ellen's patient dying, Gloria going home and, after giving Cookie expensive gifts she can't sell, Leo happily reuniting his cosy unit – before planning the search for a new nanny.

Love's labours glossed

The film's skilful cinematography and performances effectively convey the "self-defeating parental sacrifice" (as Moodysson



puts it) resulting from neoliberalism's global disaster – where, counterpointing human distress, even blindingly obvious ironies and metaphors convince (like the basketball 'made in the Philippines' Gloria sends home for her son's birthday, or a fountain pen inlaid with fossilised ivory embodying the zenith of consumerist value). Nevertheless, mechanical plot contrivances strain credulity in balancing tragedies of disconnection among rich and poor, and excesses of trite sentimentality are too conveniently manipulative. Pretension and condescension replace understanding and feeling, as trendy fascinations with globalisation exoticise its victims – with local lower classes driven further beyond the pale, increasingly unsuitable both for bourgeois exploitation and its dumping of social costs. Correspondingly, the film idealises the Western middle-class nuclear family, whose self-important angst precludes extended community caring or other cultural complexities or potentials at home or abroad. Moodysson's grand statement of the danger to humanity of nurturance becoming extinct is certainly woolly by nature, oblivious to a herd of historical elephants in the room in addition to the stifling corollaries of courtly mother-worship. But the extravagant, undeserved hatefulness of the critics is revealing – misinterpreting both *Mammoth's* success in nailing the grounds of their privilege, and its failures mirroring their inability to imagine alternatives.

[www.tomjennings.pwp.blueyonder.co.uk](http://www.tomjennings.pwp.blueyonder.co.uk)  
<http://libcom.org/blog/4271>

*Mammoth* is out now on DVD.

## QUIZ ANSWERS

1. A group of peasant miners in the Urals who used dynamite against the bourgeoisie and police around 1901. They thought the world was divided between the 'followers of Jehovah' (who were the poor and workers) and the 'followers of Satan' (who were the rich, parasites, rulers). No compromise between the two was possible.
2. "the dolphins had always believed that they

3. It closed the Seattle office.
4. It is a pale imitation of Wikipedia, a hodge-podge of American conservative opinion passing itself off as fact that makes Wikipedia look like a reliable source. Popular articles include 'Evidence for Christianity' and 'Counter Examples to Evolution'.



# Did the sub-text illuminate the tribute?

**Jim McFarlane attends a recent memorial concert to a recently deceased socialist song-writer and finds old political divisions still loitering in the background**

A full house of socialists congregated in St Andrews' venue, Glasgow, as part of Celtic Connections for the memorial concert for Alistair Hulett who died tragically young a year ago on 28th January 2010.

At almost three hours in length the concert featured an opening set by Gavin Livingstone, Jimmy Ross and ex-members of the Malkies, the band which had been the last collective musical undertaking in 2010.

Thereafter, Rory McLeod's four-song tribute had the theme of their common subscription to the need for songwriters and socialists generally to be the 'memory of the class', and in particular the past working conditions endured.

Dick Gaughan then strode on to the stage. In sharp contradistinction from Rory's quirky, nervous articulation of his own internal dilemma over which songs to air, Dick has no equivocation. Dick, unlike the other performers, confessed that most of his contact with Alistair was sharp debate (read disagreement) on socialist revolutionary politics, i.e. Trotsky vs Stalinism. Fortunately, the songs Gaughan performed, including *Thomas Muir of Huntershill* (in Paisley) were strong, with the exception being a song he had written as a 'new year resolution' after his own internal debate. Interestingly, and to his credit, Dick made a point of singling out his



Above, Roy Bailey and Tony Benn; below, Alistair Hulett, who died in 2010.

wrath for New Labour rather than find easy ground by jibes about the Coalition.

After the break there was a much more sombre but moving three-song set from Karine Polwart, now based in the Scottish Borders, who broke with the precedent of McLeod and Gaughan by singing a Hulett song, the moving *He Fades Away* about a West Australian victim of mesothelioma, after opening with a highly relevant Burns classic: *A Man's A Man for A' that*. In between she sang, with harmonium backing, *Tongue That Cannot Lie*, a story about True Thomas, as he was known, a famed 13th century poet and prophet in the song inspired by Chris Wood's rendition of the old supernatural Border ballad *Thomas Rhymer*.

James Fagan and Nancy Kerr were more upbeat. Either side of an instrumental, evoking Alistair's own combo with Dave Swarbrick – who along with other comrades like Robb Johnston,\* and Andy Irvine, were there in spirit – the duo did two of Alistair's songs and

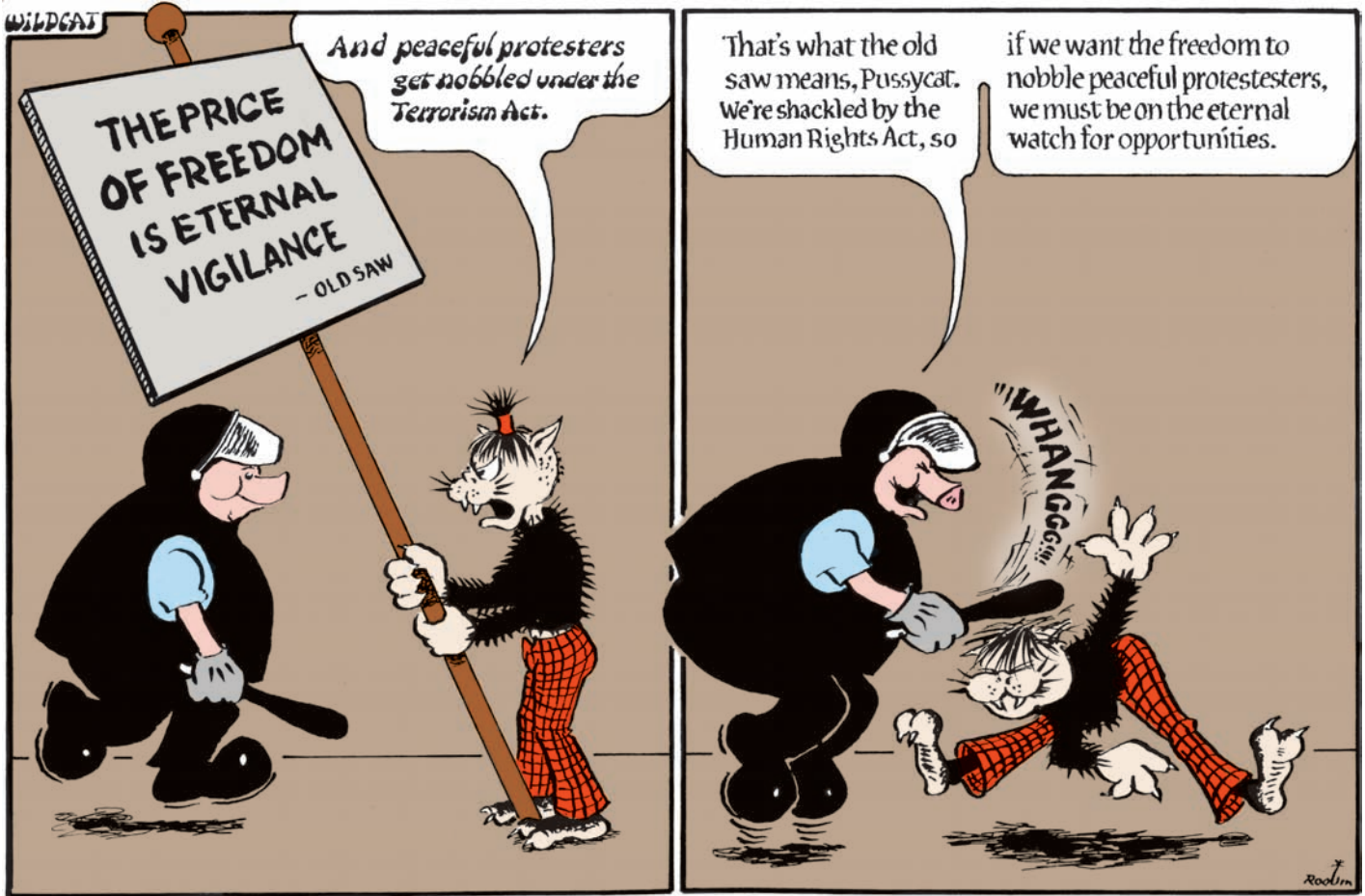
a Kerr number about the symbolic Fox.

Energised as they were, they were inevitably upstaged by the self-proclaimed geriatric, Roy Bailey, whose act latterly embodies being a crooner, retired radical academic, interpreter of radical writing and would be Ronnie Corbett. Invoking the memory of the woman who used to come on to the stage at the end of Morecambe & Wise shows, Roy sang songs by Leon Rosselson as well as Alistair, but set a new mood for the proceedings, albeit submerged for most in the mantle of tribute and genuine reverence for the abrupt departure of Hulett.

His version of a song about the seedy district of King's Cross, in Sydney, backed by Fagan, Kerr and McLeod, revealed Alistair had no memory of writing the song, a commentary on the tragic wasted lives in this forlorn ghetto. But Bailey had started (before distracting the audience – and himself) – with jokes about the degeneration of short term memory in domestic life with his wife Val) a poem about life in a Florida Retirement home and, in reference to his partnership with Tony Benn, the challenge of physically getting on to stages.

The sub-text, more transparent to some, emphatically stated opposition to a version of socialism that relied on 'discipline' in favour of a socialism based on freedom, dissent and personal exploration. Clearly he saw this as a legacy of Hulett's writing, despite the obstacle of Alistair's dogged allegiance to the SWP, but more clearly, he was drawing a distinction between himself, the majority of the performers, and Dick Gaughan and the old Communist Party legacy. He did, however, commend Dick for his invocation of the spirit of Hamish Henderson's *Freedom Come All Ye!* The concert ended with Karine Polwart accompanying Roy on a version of the universal song, by a US Songwriter, *Holly Near* – no doubt eschewed by many in this era of PC allegiance to multiculturalism – in opposition to religion, deities and the institutions spawned





## Review

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by their adherents.

I will leave readers to draw parallels with their secular equivalents in terms of 'sects' and revered, almost biblical icons, like Lenin. The concert, ended by Fatima, Alistair's partner, with her moving tribute to the new Alistair Hulett Memorial Trust and their intentions, both in Australia and Europe to promote radical writing about 'social justice', and how the event had been put together by the modest John Hamill, one of his closest buddies.

It was a memorable event, no doubt viewed by everybody with differing perceptions, from a great night's entertainment as part of Celtic Connections, to an emotional closure and/or new beginning through the Trust to

Alistair's memory. Nevertheless, the concert illuminated a sub-text of continued distinction between authoritarian and libertarian socialism, and perhaps less to the fore on the night, between socialism through social revolution rather than seizing power through Parties representing the class. Whether with the clear intention or not, both Bailey and Gaughan, in their opposition, did illuminate the proceedings!

\* Robb has written a tribute in R2 magazine, which acknowledges his differences with Alistair over Trotskyism as distinct from a more libertarian socialism. He has his own mp3, *Patterns* [2.9 Mb], about Alistair which can be downloaded free from Irregular records, and did a brilliant *Man walks into a Pub* gig at The Star Club on 24th February, with floor-spots by local radical trio, The Catskinners, and Robb's pal, Maggie Holland.

## THE QUIZ

1. Who were the 'followers of Jehovah'?
2. According to Douglas Adams, "Man has always assumed that he was more intelligent than dolphins because he had achieved so much ... the wheel, New York, wars and so on ... while all the dolphins had ever done was muck about in the water having a good time." What did he say the dolphins thought?
3. In 1988 phone canvassers for Greenpeace in Seattle joined the IWW. How did Greenpeace respond?
4. What is Conservapedia?

Answers on page 14

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