

# FREEDOM

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## EDUCATION BACKLASH

### Repression of the student movement

On 10th May the ongoing student occupation at London Metropolitan University was forcefully evicted just before midnight as a small group of occupying students prepared to bed down for the night. It was a violent operation instigated by the university against its own students as bailiffs forced their way into the building along with police to evict the occupiers. Those present were attacked, threatened and physically removed from the building.

For those involved in previous occupations at the university it was a disturbing and provocative turn of events – the fact that the students were now being treated as criminals by their own university, and perhaps more worryingly where violence was being used as both punishment and a warning. Throughout the occupation students described their presence as a peaceful protest against the massive cuts to courses, whole departments and staff job losses. They had overwhelming support from the university unions and throughout the campus.

The level of violence was not accidental. Private security firms who were employed to guard the building during the occupation

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### LENS CAP TROUBLED SOULS



A troubling statistic, five young people have apparently committed suicide in five different jails in the past five weeks. All the deaths are currently being investigated, but while the families grieve and come to terms with their loss, the chief inspector of prisons responded by saying this is a reminder prisons were not a “soft touch” for young people.

Photo courtesy of M

## SHEFFIELD GETS THE ANARCHISM

Another important day in the political calendar is the Sheffield Anarchist bookfair, this year taking place on 21st May at Bank Street Art centre in the centre of town. Building on the success of last year's bookfair, which was their first ever, and despite being put together on a shoestring budget they managed to pull off an impressive day – an important recognition of the radical activity going on in the city. That the organisers felt confident enough to put on such an event and are willing to do it again this year is a telling indicator that people are increasingly hungry for radical and alternative ideas. As the bookfair proudly announces: “We live in a time of crisis. An economic crisis, an environmental crisis and, if the government gets its way, an impending social crisis. When the only thing that is on the

political agenda is cuts, cuts and more cuts it is all the more important to explore the alternatives. And there is an alternative – anarchism.” Bookfairs of this sort act as an excellent entry point into the ideas, activism, ethics, creativity and history of the contemporary anarchist movement.

This year will feature all the good parts of last year and much more. Highlights include a panel discussion by AE, Solfed and the Commune, and anarchists against the cuts, and introduction to Mutual Aid Sheffield, as well as films throughout the day and dozens of stalls. There's even a game of three-sided football planned.

Check the Sheffield bookfair website for full listings at <http://www.bookfair.org.uk/>

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## NEWS

## NEWS IN BRIEF

**FUEL PROTESTS:** Fuel protesters staged a day-long protest, culminating with a demonstration outside the Shell oil depot at Ellesmere Port in Cheshire. Earlier, about 150 vehicles staged a go-slow protest along the M56 and M53, with lorry drivers, farmers and bikers travelling in 20mph convoys.

The Stanlow Fuel Protest and Direct Action Group, which recruited supporters through Facebook, had said it intended to block the Ellesmere Port refinery's exits until their demands were met. The Stanlow oil depot produces one-sixth of Britain's petrol.

**STRIKE:** Workers in Birmingham walked out on strike in the beginning of May against the city council's major cuts programme to youth services in the area that will see a loss of 36 vital jobs.

There were pickets outside the Connexions offices in Kingsheath, Northfield and Broad Street along with an unofficial march to a rally in the city centre.

The strike was supported by IWW comrades. The council has said it needs to save £212m in the next financial year, leading to the loss of 2,450 jobs throughout departments.

**TESCO:** The store in Bristol that made headlines recently as an audacious example of people power is to reopen despite the hostility toward the retail giant.

Both Tesco top executives and the Avon and Somerset police have declared economic war against the local community who have made their feelings quite clear as to what they think of another Tesco in the area.

If a massive local campaign and full on riot isn't going to stop capitalism in action, one wonders just what will?

**UNIVERSITY FEES:** As predicted previously in *Freedom*, all universities will charge the maximum allowed for tuition fees, around the £9,000 a year, regardless of any issues around funding. The average fees of £6,000 a year or less, the level which ministers said would be the norm, has been ignored by all universities as every single one has put in a declaration to charge in excess of that. Most will be charging the top level £9,000, a figure the old Etonian Cameron told us would only be agreed in "exceptional circumstances".

**WORKERS RIGHTS:** Millionaire politician George Osborne has decided workers have too many rights which are impeding his fellow capitalists making more profit. As such, the Tory Chancellor, who comes from inherited wealth, is to set about destroying basic workers rights in a change to employment law. Workers are set to receive less protection against redundancy, dismissal and workplace discrimination in an attempt to make private sector employers hire all the public sector his government is in the process of sacking.

## LENS CAP FOR RICHER FOR POORER



A new report by the high pay commission makes grim reading as they say wage the disparity between the rich and the rest of us will soon return to the levels of the Victorian era. The top 0.1% of UK earners will see their pay rise to an estimated 14% of national income by 2030, a level not previously seen in the UK since the start of the twentieth century.

## Postal workers update

Two Liverpool sorting offices were the scenes of wildcat strikes on 9th May when over 200 postal workers walked off the job after six workers were unfairly sacked by management after a row over the use of an automated sorting machine. The sacking centred on staff fears that there was too much mail to feed through the new system and complained the machine, brought in after the closure of the sorting office at Copperas Hill, would be overloaded and the system would fail. When it did, the staff were dismissed.

When workers arrived at the two depots at Sandhills and Brunswick in the city centre, and heard of the sackings, they immediately walked out and launched an unofficial strike. To many at the sorting office it was a deliberate provocation by management in a clumsy attempt to get rid of the more militant workforce

This follows a previous unofficial walk-out on 24th April by 90 staff at the same sorting office over claims Royal Mail management had broken promises. They accused the company of withdrawing redundancy offers and said parts of the new depot were too cramped.

Meanwhile over 3,000 postal workers in London are currently being balloted to take strike action over the Royal Mail's plan to close three of its main sorting centres. These closures will lead to over 1,100 postal workers facing the threat of compulsory redundancy.

The dispute has arisen due to Royal Mail re-engaging on a national agreement which was brokered by ACAS and the TUC just over a year ago. Royal Mail wants to shut the Bow Locks and Nine Elms mail centres and the giant Rathbone Place central London delivery office with the loss of thousands of jobs. Last week they rejected a proposal by the CWU union that would keep offices open.

Also in London, St John's Wood sorting office is being closed by Royal Mail with a loss of services to that area of North West London. Other closures include the sorting office in Southall, west London, although Royal Mail claim that there will be no job closes through the shutting down of the service. Powys in north Wales is to see its main sorting office close.

The Government plans to sell Royal Mail which will end the business agreement with the Post Office leading to over 9,000 post offices. In many of those cases the post office is a lifeline for isolated or rural communities, acting as the only shop, and provides a vital service for locals, especially the elderly or those without cars. The Communications Workers Union, who represent most of the postal workers, commissioned a poll amongst 800 sub-postmasters and mistresses asking whether they thought their local post office could survive without Royal Mail business. An astonishing 92% thought that they wouldn't.



# National Days of Action

## Radical groups get upfront and active

The week of 9th to 15th May saw not one but two national weeks of action organised by radical groups against companies involved in direct attacks on ordinary working class people. Solidarity Federation (Solfed) led a week-long campaign against Office Angels, the agency that provides office temping work, after they were contacted in March by someone in regards to the company withholding wages.

After initially picketing the Wimbledon branch where the person was employed, they escalated the action and organised a nationwide week of direct action against the company demanding the worker be paid what he was owed. A co-ordinated network of actions was set up by all the local Solfed groups, along with support from international comrades from the IWA, who focused on Office Angels' parent company Adecco, as well as support from Anarchist Federation, IWW and individual anarchists. Pickets were

organised outside branches around the UK including Northampton, Reading, Brighton, London, Oxford, Nottingham, Leeds, Newcastle, Manchester, Bristol, and Liverpool.

They also orchestrated a 'communication blockade' of the business whereby people bombarded the company with emails and telephone calls about the situation and demanded that Office Angels fulfil its obligations. After much prevaricating by management, and a refusal by the campaign to accept nothing less than full payment, Office Angels finally gave in and on Friday full payment was made to the individual concerned with the apologetic press release "new information has recently come to light and we have taken this individual at his word and paid all monies outstanding."

At the same time benefit cuts protesters staged a week of action against health testing IT company Atos Origin. Atos carry out the notorious Work Capability Assessments which have been used to strip health related benefits from thousands of people, many with serious and in some cases even terminal conditions.

Actions and protests took around the country, including a Party and Picnic outside Atos Origin's UK headquarters in London. Liverpool Solidarity Federation held pickets of Atos offices on Monday, plus there were other actions in Glasgow, Plymouth, Bristol, Birmingham, Cardiff, Manchester and Truro as well as a weeklong online virtual protest.

The Week of Action follows three previous days of action against the benefit cuts which have seen Scotland's *Daily Mail* offices invaded, along with offices of Atos Origin and Welfare to Work provider A4e, as well as protests in over 30 cities and towns around the UK. The protests have been organised by a loose coalition of claimants groups, disability activists, anarchist groups, anti-cuts groups and individual claimants. Already a demonstration has been called outside the British Medical Journal Recruitment Fair in the Business Design Centre, Islington on 29th September where Atos Origin will be attempting to strip benefits from the most vulnerable.

See also Svartfrosk column on page 10.

## Education backlash

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were continually aggressive and hostile, especially to female students. Unlike the campus security who had been sympathetic towards the occupiers throughout, the private firm, paid an estimated £35,000 by the university, boasted they were there "to do a job".

To other students this situation may seem a disturbingly familiar one. At the end of March this year the eviction of the first Free Hetherington occupation in Glasgow was conducted by more than 80 officers, 18 police vehicles and a helicopter to remove 15 people. It was criticised by the Glasgow Student Representative Council as 'heavy-handed' and 'unacceptable' and although no-one was arrested, the pattern of intimidation and

criminalisation is a recognisable one. At Birmingham University in January, students occupying part of the college were removed using excessive force by university security, with the assistance of the police, where people were held down, strangled and indiscriminately punched to the floor.

Students are now being punished twice for fighting for their right to a free education. As the Tories continue to finish the work started by New Labour – forcing education increasingly into the private sector – students who stand up to such a move are threatened with not only losing their education but with a criminal record. The unrest on the streets late last year marked a new era of radical student politics, confident, large-scale

and militant – and was met with fierce repression from police with mass kettling an unprecedented level of violence and 137 arrests. There is now a massive police operation in place to identify, isolate and criminalise as many people as possible involved in those four big student demonstrations. So far 76 people have been arrested post-demonstration for their supposed involvement. As a strategy of state intervention its purpose is clear – to criminalise student dissent and punish peoples' participation with the intention of sending out a message to the rest of the student movement and quelling future unrest. As anarchists it's our job to stand with the student movement and ensure they don't fight alone.

## ANALYSIS

# No sleep still Stokes Croft

## Comrades from the Bristol Bookfair collective give us their take on the day

Bristol's annual anarchist bookfair on 7th May attracted the largest turnout yet for the fourth year running, as the vitality, creativity and politics of the anarchist movement continues to attract ever greater interest.

With the credibility of the established political parties and the capitalist system we live under at an all-time low, visitors to the bookfair lapped up the ideas, books and debates available.

It is of course impossible to tell how many people came into the bookfair as a result of the sale of the Banksy fundraising print outside, or who checked out the bookfair whilst checking out the events in the same venue as part of the Montpelier arts trail, but the increased flow of visitors from 10.20am in the morning until late into the afternoon was constant. The 850 bookfair programmes available were gone soon after 1pm, stalls and meetings were busy all day, and the bookfair café had run out of over 300 main meals by 3pm. Donations on the door were way up on last year, covering most of our costs – thanks to all those who donated.

Once again the sun shone, for most of the day at least, bringing an at times festival-like feeling to the serious business of resisting the onslaught of the ConDem Coalitions vicious attacks on the working class and creating real alternatives to the chaos and destruction of capitalism. The decent weather alongside the hot topics up for debate and the growing anger at the inequalities inherent in the failing system around us combined to see the building near to overheating. But the genuine sense of co-operation amongst visitors and organisers of the events ensured a fairly smooth running day was once again a good example of anarchism in practice. Of course there are always some minor problems, such



Outside the Bristol anarchist bookfair on 7th May.

as not enough space for eating at the café, the clash of noise in the building disrupting some meetings and workshops and the narrow stairways struggling to cope with the foot traffic during changeovers between workshops... but from feedback received so far, there were no major issues or incidents.

Outside the venue, the long queue for the Banksy print started early, and meant the sale of the print was over pretty quickly. Many thanks to those from Hamilton House and PRSC who helped ensure that all went so smoothly. (We didn't take any photos outside the venue, others did and there's some harmless ones here and here.) The local police kept an extremely low profile, bordering on non-existence, in sharp contrast to their intrusive bullying presence of recent weeks. Unsurprisingly their absence led to a lightening of the mood inside and outside the venue, ensuring bookfair participants were able to

concentrate solely on the bookfair. For the sake of the communities in and around Stokes Croft we hope this continues.

The Bookfair collective would like to express our thanks to all those who visited, participated and helped out both on the day and beforehand in so many ways. Thanks also to our coalition partners who took on key aspects of the bookfair – Bristol Indymedia, Bristol Radical History Group, and the various collectives at Kebele social centre.

We have a very few bookfair fundraising t-shirts left (see website for details).

Lastly, we appreciate feedback on the event from anyone who took part. Feedback forms are available in other formats on the bookfair website.

**Bookfair collective**

See <http://www.bristolanarchistbookfair.org>  
email: [bristolanarchistbookfair@riseup.net](mailto:bristolanarchistbookfair@riseup.net)

## Still fighting Franco

Probably the most instantly recognisable name in UK anarchism, along with the Angry Brigade, Stuart Christie remains a figure of fearsome political reputation, not least for his attempt to assassinate fascist leader General Franco in 1964.

As a young Scottish anarchist he travelled to Spain with the intention of blowing up Franco to aid the anarchist cause and rid Spain of its autocratic leader. He recounts the episode in a disarmingly honest and often comical fashion in his autobiography, *Grammy Made Me an Anarchist*, an episode

that earned him a twenty year prison sentence after being caught with explosives in Madrid and charged under a military tribunal.

Now a little older and a little less hot-headed, but certainly no less angry, Christie is once again at war with the Spanish state this time in attempt to gain recognition that the Franco regime was not legitimate and have his twenty year sentence overturned.

"I'm trying to push the Spanish government into openly condemning Francoist legal decisions as illegitimate and, in particular, to

overturn the verdicts of the military tribunals," he said.

His lawyer said Christie should at the very least be given public recognition for having suffered at the hands of an unlawful court. This would involve a process of awarding Christie what the law calls a 'certificate of personal recognition and reparation', something the current Spanish government is reluctant to do.

Christie eventually only served three of the twenty years sentence after a concerted solidarity campaign by anarchists and radicals to have him released.

## NEWS IN BRIEF

**ANTI-FASCISM:** Court room drama at least on the steps as a couple of Asian lads took on the might of the English Defence League after their outspoken yet reluctant leader Stephen Yaxley-Lennon appeared in court charged with public order offences.

Around 30 EDL supporters gathered at the steps of Hammersmith court when a couple of Asian lads confronted the racist chanting and laid into them accidentally hitting a female EDL member. The rest of the EDL present scattered in disarray.

**CENSORSHIP:** BBC producers are once again acting as moral guardians and political censors as they took it upon themselves to mask out the words of rapper Mic Righteous on Radio One Xtra. The live performance was part of a late night show recently re-broadcast where the artist as part of a political rap said "I can still scream 'Free Palestine' for my pride" where free Palestine was deliberately masked with sound effects.

A BBC spokesperson said that a late night music show was not considered an appropriate forum for political controversy.

**HEALTH:** New Labour bent over backwards to keep their plans to privatised the health service secret. No so the Tories, as policy adviser after policy adviser are happy to sell the idea publicly to interested parties.

Latest insider trader is Mark Britnell, previously a NHS manager now head of health at the accountancy giant KPMG and one of those on board to carve up the health service for the private sector, who proudly boasted to a room of executives that future reforms would show "no mercy" to the NHS and offer a "big opportunity" to the for-profit sector.

**LEGISLATION:** The Police Reform and Social Responsibility Bill is passing through Parliament now and in it is a bundle of changes and amendments to the current law.

Perhaps the most startling for us is the introduction of 18-hour legal kettling within a three mile radius of Parliament Square that makes lawful all the things that are currently unlawful about kettling. It even states helpfully that "Containment of persons or a group of persons ... shall not be a breach of any human rights enactment."

**PRO-CUTS:** Despite a lot of expensive propaganda, extensive publicity and several endorsements by rightwing and reactionary media mouth-pieces, the rally in support of the government cuts ended with no more than 100 huddled together in Trafalgar Square desperately trying to convince disinterested news crews this had been a successful venture. Speakers included Nigel Farage of UKIP, someone from the Institute of Economic Affairs and someone from the TaxPayers' Alliance.

# Anarchists organising

As pointed in the letter of Pho Nenayme (23rd April 2011, page 11), the Anarchist Federation already supports *Freedom* and the bookshop in several ways but perhaps members (new or old) could write more for it. It's good to know via this letter that *Freedom* would like more AF members to write for it. However, we also publish our twice-yearly magazine *Organise!* and our free paper *Resistance* comes out each month. Plus our members write for *Black Flag* and *Shift*, for example, and contribute to overseas papers like *Monde Libertaire*, plus we have our blog and web publication of other short pieces, so we do put a lot of effort into writing already.

*Freedom* in its present format perhaps still needs to earn its place as a paper for the whole movement as it still comes across as quite London-centric. In particular, opinion about the movement often seems to be individuals from London criticising the efforts of others and making grand claims about how the anarchist movement should progress. What was criticised about *Freedom* in our recent letters (by some of your readers outside of the Big Smoke) was of your publishing of opinion such as the 'Visibly Organising?' piece criticising the visibility of anarchist organisations in the anti-cuts movement. As we said, this opinion seemed to be based on relative ignorance of the goings on in the wider movement, something we, in AF, are in a good position to know having the greatest geographical spread of any anarchist organisation or network in Britain, a spread we use to provide Britain-wide coverage in *Resistance*. Furthermore social anarchism has in general become less sectarian resulting to a great extent from explicit efforts of organisations to work together, something that unfortunately seems to be as difficult as ever in London amongst local groupings. Our relatively small London group is not able to influence this as much as it might like to.

If *Freedom* could provide a more positive movement-building function, and be less of a vehicle for individuals to poke at the efforts of the national organisations, this would most likely encourage a lot more input from AF members across Britain.

A member of AF Nottingham group

Dean, editor of *Freedom*, replies: I certainly welcome your response, as you probably know we always put in, and are happy to promote each issue of *Organise!* and *Resistance*, and any other activity the AF is involved in. The London-centric thing is something I'm aware of and we're addressing. I honestly wouldn't mind a regionalisation of the paper where London is simply one region of many where anarchists are active. Plus we are intending in the future to do feature issues on the various centres of anarchist activity across the UK.

I think there is a debate needed about how the 'anarchist movement' in general organises itself given the period that we are going through, especially in relation to the student movement and anti-cuts movement. But I'm sure you'd agree organising as a movement is not the same as simply listing what we're involved in. That said, the 'Visibly Organising' piece [26th February 2011, page 1] was written as a talking point, an opener for debate – most of the concerns were put as questions not as criticisms. In fact the inspiration for the piece came from Bristol AF's excellent 'anarchists against the cuts' call-out which to my mind was a call for a co-ordinated, concrete, and politically involved plan of action by anarchists as a movement. If that is happening then I'm more than happy to feature, promote and cheerlead the initiative at every opportunity. If it's any consolation I do check the AF website on a very regular basis especially the news and events section.



## INTERNATIONAL

## NEWS IN BRIEF

**BAHRAIN:** Over 2,000 workers have been sacked *en masse* after a crackdown on those involved in anti-government protests. Trade unions in Bahrain said that employers have been subjected to political pressure to dismiss people who the government perceives as having been active in the protest movement.

**EUROPE:** National borders that were opened to allow all EU citizens to travel freely between countries, could soon be closed again with the reintroduction of passport controls across the continent. The issue will be discussed at a summit of EU prime ministers and presidents next month.

The Schengen agreement, implemented in 1990, eliminated borders between European states and created a border-less Europe (with the exception of the UK and Ireland). Many see the shift back to tighter border controls as the far right political parties having more influence on European parliament.

**ISRAEL:** A court issued an injunction against striking railway workers, forcing them back to work.

The wildcat strike was sparked off by the arrest of the head of the Union of Railroad Workers and nine others during a demonstration in front of the home of the Israel Railways chairman at plans by management to privatise the company.

In response to the arrests, union workers walked off the job. A temporary injunction was initially issued to ensure all IDF soldiers reached their homes – but was ignored by strikers, who refused to return to their posts until all the arrested workers were released.

**OMAN:** Soldiers moved in on the protest camp in the southern city of Salalah, the country's second largest, arresting demonstrators who were demanding higher salaries and more jobs, and dispersing many more before dismantling the tents they had pitched there since February. The army began firing shots in the air and tear gas shells to clear out protesters who had been camping outside the local governor's office.

In the conservative sultanate of Oman, ruled by Sultan Qaboos bin Said for the last 40 years, protesters have called for more democratic reforms and more employment opportunities.

**UGANDA:** The controversial and anti-gay legislation to be introduced by the government that would introduce the death penalty for 'aggravated homosexuality' has been put on hold as the Parliament has yet to debate the content and hasn't decided a future date for the discussion.

Originally a private members bill, the content was intended to strengthen the existing laws which criminalise homosexual behaviour with prison sentences up to 14 years. Aggravated homosexuality would include gay sex where someone is HIV-positive, a 'serial offender', or with someone who is under 18 years of age.

## LENS CAP A THOUSAND FLOWERS BLOOM



A mass demonstration took place in Hamburg with more than 5,000 people taking to the streets in support of Rote Flora squat, which is facing eviction, and against commercialisation of the city. The massive building was squatted in 1989 and has been the centre of political activity and autonomous social movements (which included the anti-G8 mobilisations in 2007) ever since.

## More anarchist arrests in Italy

A second wave of arrests of radicals took place in Florence at the beginning of May. The operation, led by the police and secret service departments, concluded with a total of 78 people under investigation, 22 banning orders and five under home arrest.

All are believed to be connected with the local social centre Spazio Liberato 400 colpi (Liberated Space 400 Blows), which played a huge part in the student protests of last autumn. The charges are similar to the ones made against the Bologna arrestees last month, that of subversive and criminal association, but some are more specific: damage to private or public property, illegal occupation of public buildings, violence against police officers, disruption to public services. These all refer to the direct actions and protests that student groups carried out all over Italy between November and December 2010, when huge groups of protesters occupied

train and bus stations, monuments and other public places.

The 78 people under investigation are all believed to have participated in actions that took place during those months in Florence, such as damage to banks and cash points, sabotage of CCTV installations, damage and attacks against headquarters of local political parties and international companies, the occupation of train stations and main roads.

In a statement from Spazio Liberato they say: "The media can keep portraying us as an isolated anarchistic sect if they want, but we know that out there, in the streets, in universities, in neighborhoods, there's plenty of people who know and recognise us as comrades."

More information can be found, in English, at <http://italycalling.wordpress.com/>

## Notes from the US

Many Americans – and most of the mainstream propaganda outlets – continue to shriek and whoop at the extrajudicial murder by US navy terrorists of Osama bin Laden last month. Many suggest it's a stunt. But few draw an analogy with Barrack Obama who, as 'Commander in Chief', has been directly responsible for the deaths of almost two-thirds as many children, women and men in drone strikes in the region as bin Laden was alleged to have ordered (though never found guilty of causing) on 11th September 2001, when a

cohort of fighters with passports from staunch US ally, Saudi Arabia, also did their worst.

As we know, that led to invasions first in Afghanistan (the longest war in US history) and Iraq (one of the bloodiest). And the illegal imprisonment of many innocent people in Guantánamo Bay in Cuba. At the end of April, whistle-blowing website WikiLeaks began releasing a mass of several thousand secret documents from Guantánamo which reveal that Bush and Obama knew of the

# From the Greeks' streets

## Austerity measures cause massive unrest and conflict

During the recent nationwide strike and the days that immediately followed, workers, radicals and migrants were all subject to an escalation in violent attacks by state organised forces and fascists, the level of which has not been seen on the streets of Greece for generations.

The general strike, organised by the major unions on 11th May, was in response to the government's imposition of austerity measures, backed by the interventions of the EU and IMF, which includes a wave of tax increases and the sale of state assets. Hundreds of thousands of workers took to the streets in thirteen cities across Greece with an estimated 40,000 people marching in Athens alone.

Toward the end of what had been an angry but largely uneventful demonstration in Athens, police launched an unprovoked attack on demonstrators, some of whom were encircled by riot police and beaten viciously on the ground, while more police threw tear gas and stun grenades directly into the crowd. At least 67 demonstrators needed hospital treatment for their injuries including one 30-year old demonstrator, Yiannis K., who was beaten so severely he had to be placed in a medical induced coma to prevent him dying. Due to the deliberate nature of the attack many anarchists were calling the police actions attempted murder.

The following day in the early hours, a 21-year old Bangladeshi migrant was stabbed to death in the Kato Patisia district of Athens by fascist thugs who had launched a series of attacks in this largely immigrant area following the killing of Greek man on 10th May. Fascists, under the protection of the police, roamed through central Athens indiscriminately attacking immigrants, smashing cars and in one case firebombing a family home. At least fifteen people were



A riot cop sprays tear gas at a protestor's head during clashes Athens on 11th May 2011.

injured most of whom were hospitalised.

Meanwhile demonstrations were held on 12th May in at least fifteen cities across Greece against the police brutality and repression during the general strike. In Athens a crowd of some 5,000 people gathered and were once again attacked by riot police, at the exact same point where a 30-year old demonstrator was beaten by police during the strike.

By Friday 13th May there was an uneasy stand-off between fascist gangs and anti-fascists. In Thessaloniki, a fascist gathering was cancelled after approximately 300 anti-fascists gathered at the point first, forcing the fascists out.

In Athens, there were reports that fascists stopped buses passing by Tritis Septemvriou Street, where the murder of a 44-year old man on Tuesday night sparked the tension. The fascists forced passengers out, beating those who looked 'foreign'. In Athens there

have been constant clashes with anarchists and migrants on one side against fascists and police working together on the other. Fascists, assisted by riot police, attempted to attack Athens' longest running anarchist squat, Villa Amalias, but were successfully repelled as radicals forced the nazis off the streets. In response to the provocation anarchists attacked the police station with Molotovs and setting alight police vehicles.

There has also been a protest by prisoners at Korydallos prison is solidarity with the migrants and anti-government protests.

It is incredibly tense and volatile situation now in Greece with many comrades fearing another wave of state repression against radicals and migrants. University buildings have been occupied in an attempt to create a secure base with which to organise effectively against the hostile agents of the state and fascist gangs.

## Notes from the US

### ◀ page 6

innocence of over 150 people whom they imprisoned there for years without charge. No whooping and cheering about them.

In many of the cases, even senior US commanders concluded that there was no reason for those captured to have been transferred to Guantánamo. An 89-year-old Afghan villager and a 14-year-old boy, for instance. Even the model of wristwatch worn by some of the men pursued in Afghanistan qualified them for incarceration, the documents reveal... a make of watch used as timers for explosives by al-Qaeda. Sami al-Hajj was held at Guantánamo for six years so as to be interrogated about his employer, the Al Jazeera

news network. His file said he was sent to Guantánamo in order to "provide information on... the al-Jazeera news network's training programme, telecommunications equipment, and news gathering operations in Chechnya, Kosovo and Afghanistan." As usual with Wikileaks, the news and revelations go almost completely unreported despite the enormity of what they reveal. But they are set to continue; they are factual – reflecting, or containing actual, official documents.

### War

While no fewer than 44 states are expected to run deficits in 2012, the cost of the killing

continues to astound: US\$ 1 billion (£606,700) so far to attack Libya alone.

The \$100 (£60) billion spent on the murdering in Afghanistan (a sum, incidentally, four times the Gross Domestic Product of that country) could fix those domestic deficits.

If the funds allocated to the Afghan war alone were returned to the states, thousands and thousands of jobs for teachers and other public employees could be created and saved, while basic services like Medicaid and income support for families in poverty could be kept up.

Louis Further

## FEATURE

# CRISIS AND CAPITALIS

## How the Tories are benefiting from the economic slump

Anarchists have long argued that capitalism is an economic system riddled with contradictions. These express themselves in recurring crisis, when these contradictions expose themselves for all to see in generalised misery they produce.

Some of these contradictions can be seen from the Bank of England's quarterly inflation report. In Governor Mervyn King's briefing on the 11th of May, he said growth would be weaker and inflation higher than the Bank had set out in its last set of forecasts three months ago.

"A year ago, we thought that growth in the fourth quarter of 2010 and the first quarter of 2011 would be 1.5%," King said. "That hasn't happened." He admitted that "the recent pattern of revisions to the projections over the next year – downward to growth and upward to inflation – has continued." Inflation was a problem in part due to "the increase in the standard rate of VAT" while the Bank had been forced to revise its growth forecasts down sharply over the past year as reality has repeatedly failed to meet the expectations of ideology.

In the latest lowering of the growth forecast by the Bank, this year has been reduced from 2% to 1.7% and 2012 from just under 3% to 2.2%. King admitted he had hoped for growth of 1.5% in the second half of last year but it turned out to be zero ("the level of output appears to have been broadly flat" over the last six months).

So much for Osborne's budget for growth...



King stated the fiscal clampdown would limit growth in the next two years as "household spending may have further to adjust to the significant squeeze in real incomes." In short, the reason why growth is expected to "somewhat weaker" is because of "a delayed recovery in consumption and a less pronounced boost from net exports." The report is more forthcoming – growth will be "weaker" due to reductions in "households' future real labour incomes and hence consumption."

Surely, then, we can boost growth by boosting working class income and so consumption? No, for inflation is too high and "resistance to the erosion of real take-home pay" would "put upward pressure on wages and prices." Happily, though, there were pressures on wages and prices downward with the "most obvious" being "the weak level of activity in the economy."

So for growth to rise, wages must rise; for inflation to fall, wages must fall.

King failed to explain how that particular contradiction will resolve itself but rest assured "the recent softness in activity will prove temporary" with a recovery "driven by a continuing rise in business investment." Yet why should firms invest when King admits "the outlook for growth and inflation is likely to remain unusually uncertain"?

And why is it so uncertain? Because of the Tories cuts in benefits, public sector pay, employment and services. This *increases* uncertainty for, unlike the private sector; state expenditures are steady and so create regular demand for goods during uncertain times. And is industry investing? The Bank's report admits:

"Private domestic demand growth could be boosted if more of the historically large corporate financial surpluses were spent on capital investment or transferred to households in the form of higher wages or dividends."

King did not explain why business would invest when consumer growth is so uncertain – business invests in order to meet demand and, as the Bank's report admits, "consumer spending stagnated as real incomes fell." Nor did King explain why higher wages could not eat into these "historically large" surpluses rather be passed on as higher prices. Could it be raising the more accurate "profit-price spiral" rather than "wages-price spiral" would send the wrong message?

So the Tory attack on public-sector workers and those on benefits means that growth is suffering and uncertainty is increasing. Both make it harder for the government to repay the deficit, the ostensible rationale for the cuts in the first place.

Still, King expected growth to bounce back later in the year. Why this prediction should be any more accurate than the Bank's



Above, the Bank of England building in London; below, the Bank of England and Chairman of the Monetary

previous ones he did not explain.

Meanwhile, the propaganda war is stepping up a gear. A Policy Exchange report jumped upon with relish by the right-wing media, stated that public sector workers are 40% better off than their private sector counterparts. This dubious claim has now entered the narrative of the right's attacks on workers and unions although the report is (as would be expected) deeply flawed. It does not compare like with like (as public sector workers are more skilled on average than those in the private sector). Taking into account skill, the pay gap shrinks to a mere 2% for men and 4% for women.

Of course, the real conclusion is not that public sector workers are overpaid. It is that private sector workers are *underpaid* (as the "historically large corporate financial surpluses" shows). If unionisation and struggle were higher in the private sector then so would be pay. Yet such obvious conclusions are not mentioned. Instead we get a twisted notion of "fairness" based on levelling *down* (for *us*, not for the rich obviously!).

Much of the current difference in income between public and private sectors arise because of the slump in the latter due to the



# M'S CONTRADICTIONS



Top left, Chancellor of the Exchequer George Osborne; below right, Mervyn King, the Governor of the Bank of England, the Governor of the Monetary Policy Committee.

recession. While the rich are doing well, the majority of workers have been suffering a fall in income as the Bank's report notes. This, it admits, is having a negative impact on the economy. It seems incredulous to think more reductions in pay will have a different impact.

This must be stressed. Public sector pay and employment maintains aggregate demand in the face of private sector crisis. Targeting those sectors of the economy that have a counter-cyclical effect on the economy will only make the situation worse.

However, the Tories clearly wish to utilise this crisis to weaken labour and secure rising inequalities in wealth and power. It is being used to ram through their ideological goals (with the Lib-Dems abetting them). The day after King's briefing, George Osborne proclaimed his desire to "reform" employment law to make it easier to fire workers. We are expected to receive less protection against redundancy, dismissal and workplace discrimination as well as a reduction in the consultation period for collective redundancies from 90 to 30 days. Given the existing laws on balloting for industrial action, this would weaken the ability of trade unions to resist sackings before they happen. Osborne

suggested no "reforms" to laws on industrial action although various Tories have argued that strikes have the backing of a majority of all balloted workers rather than a majority of those who vote (heaven forbid they apply that to their elections!).

Osborne attacked the trade unions as "the forces of stagnation" who "will try to stand in the way of the forces of enterprise." Blaming the workers for capitalism's contradictions is as old as that system. Proudhon mockingly noted that, for economists, "Political economy – that is, proprietary despotism – can never be in the wrong: it must be the proletariat."

Presumably, given the downward trajectory of the economy (and King confirmed it is flat-lining), Osborne considers creating stagnation *his* job and so objects (like all capitalists) to competition. In reality, as the impact of his policies show, by cutting benefits and pay *he* is the one promoting stagnation, not the unions. For as Proudhon argued in 1846 "though the workers cost you [the capitalist] something, they are your customers: what will you do with your products, when, driven away by you, they shall consume them no longer? ... if production excludes consumption, it is soon obliged to stop

itself." Osborne seems keen to prove us right.

Only by workers organising and resisting can demand be bolstered and growth protected. Yet while we need to fight the cuts, exposing attempts to divide workers as ideologically driven rubbish to force *all* wages down and arguing for levelling-upwards, we also need to explain why capitalism remains the contradiction riddled system of exploitation and oppression anarchists have analysed since 1840.

If we fail then we can expect things to get much worse before they get better. Moreover, any eventual recovery will, due to the contradictions within capitalism, just lay the foundations for the next crisis. *We* will continue to pay the costs for the crisis in their system and, as Proudhon argued, capital will continue to "make the chains of serfdom heavier, render life more and more expensive, and deepen the abyss which separates the class that commands and enjoys from the class that obeys and suffers."

Ultimately, capitalism's contradictions can only be solved by ending it once and for all in favour of, to quote Proudhon, "a solution based upon equality, – in other words, the organisation of labour, which involves the negation of political economy and the end of property."

Iain McKay

The 30th June is set to be a co-ordinated day of mass strike action by the public sector unions. Already radical and anarchist groups are organising around supporting the initiative calling for a mass show of solidarity for those taking strike action and to generalise the strike on 30th – from early morning pickets, direct actions, occupations and demonstrations to amplify the resistance to austerity.



## COMMENT

## ABOUT FREEDOM

## ANGEL ALLEY

Congratulations to the comrades who took some Freedom Press titles on sale or return to the Bristol Anarchist Bookfair. They sold £200 of stuff, thus making £100 for Freedom Press and £100 for themselves! There you go folks you can be an anarcho and still make a few bob!

Back here in London we've been to the founding meeting of the ALARM (All London Anarchist Revolutionary Movement – though some prefer M for Meeting and the crazy want M for Mob) has just been launched as we go to press. Five members of the Freedom collective, representing various arms of the anarchist movement, attended and made fulsome contributions to the debate. Freedom has always tried to be a contributor to the active anarchist movement and, while we are known around the world, it's vital that we retain our tradition of being out on the streets promoting the libertarian view of the class struggle. We welcome this great new opportunity to promote anarchist ideas in London and bring together all the multi-faceted groups working towards proletarian emancipation... and certainly not because Andy from the Freedom bookshop has been made the secretary of ALARM.

Next issue we'll report on the *Property is Theft* launch and will be able to give details of the premiere of Comrade Room's new full colour *Wildcat Keeps Going*.

## SUBSCRIPTIONS

This issue is vol 72 no 10, so if the number above your name on the address label is 7210 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, ask us to send you a standing order form by emailing [subs@freedompress.org.uk](mailto:subs@freedompress.org.uk).

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## NEXT ISSUE

The next issue will be dated 4th June 2011 and the last day to get copy to us for that issue will be Thursday 26th May. 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

For the last couple of months, Solidarity Federation has slowly escalated a relatively minor dispute about unpaid wages at the Office Angels agency until the worker concerned got his back pay. Dan worked for three days for the agency. They only paid him for one of the days, claiming they could not prove he was there. This was after assuring him that there would be no problem with there not being a time sheet, and calling him at the workplace in Surrey.

The support from SF began after Dan raised it on an internet forum. Office Angels are clearly worried about people bad-mouthing them, as they called him to ask if he was discussing on the forum. They clearly put quite a bit of effort into monitoring what people are saying about them, which would imply there are issues to be discussed.

The initial picket of the Wimbledon office, where the non-payment was authorised, didn't get very much further than the SF entering the office and the manager calling the police. Thankfully, asking to be paid for work you have done isn't yet an offence in English law. The second picket was announced in advance, and the Wimbledon office was mysteriously closed 'for training' on that day. The picket moved to Oxford Street in central London instead and again demanded Dan be paid.

The SF Local running the dispute, South London, mapped out an escalation strategy: it began locally, then was due to spread nationally and internationally, depending on when the agency settled. In the end, the

agency settled after pickets across Britain and phone calls and emails. Bear in mind, we are talking about less money than Office Angels Wimbledon would spend on paper-clips.

More pickets followed, and the Agency promised to pay Dan what he was owed in April. The pressure was kept on until the money was in the account. It didn't arrive in his account until the 13th May. I can only wonder how often this fobbing off works for Office Angels.

The strategy as whole was based on nuisance value. Public facing businesses generally do not like a bunch of people standing outside telling passers by and potential customers what they are like. You can only get so far on this, but it is a start. And in this country, at least, most businesses are vulnerable to such pressure.

There are of course limits to this strategy – if the employer is stubborn and prepared to devote a lot of resources to holding out, then it will only go so far. Just like any normal industrial dispute, in fact. Strategically, I'd much rather that the workers inside a workplace were able to take action to win their demands, but it's not the world we find ourselves in at the moment.

SF are pleased with their victory in this case and keen to hear from anyone with similar problems. It's not a major victory by any means, but the whole point is to start small and win, building confidence. You get nothing in this world without fighting for it, in one way or another.



## Kicking against the pricks

*Firstly disturbing news reaches us from Liverpool Anti-Fascists who report on the EDL targeting the News from Nowhere radical bookshop. They say:*

On Saturday 7th May, members of the English Defence League invaded the News From Nowhere radical and community book-store on Bold Street. The group unfurled a flag within the shop, chanting and shouting at the staff and customers in the shop, before finally moving on. By the time anti-fascists arrived, the fascists had gone. Shop workers reported that some of the first ones to come in had asked odd questions at the counter, including whether they carried information on the BNP, before joining the mob by the doors and shouting 'why do you support terrorists'. They accused those in the shop of supporting the Islamist group Hamas and of being 'anti-British'. A spokesperson for Liverpool Antifascists said, "the English Defence League are only the latest fascist group to try and intimidate workers at News From Nowhere for its links to left-wing and radical politics. In the 1980s, it was on the receiving end of a lot of attacks from the National Front and BNP. More recently, neo-Nazis like the British Freedom Fighters had made regular visits to the shop until deterred by anti-fascists... They are cowards and bullies and this is exactly why we stand opposed to them."

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

## Gurt lush, apparently

*At a lively and incredibly successful Bristol anarchist bookfair most of the talk was about the recent unrest in the area. Here's Bristol AF's take on the riots:*

Around 10pm on Thursday 21st April, people from Stokes Croft and St Pauls in Bristol, reacting to blatant provocation, started attacking riot police gathered from three different forces with glass bottles. What ensued was seven hours of constant clashes; police charges, volleys of glass, brick and concrete, burning barricades and the trashing of a much-loathed Tesco recently forced on a community who for so long battled to stop it opening.

The crowd became more and more angry as police refused to give justification for their presence, pushing or hitting anyone who got close to their lines. The increased tension of recent months, which has built up as austerity measures begin to kick in and the community of Stokes Croft and St Pauls feel ever more ignored and marginalised, had found a focal point and personification in the belligerence of the police. All it took was for someone to tip over a glass recycling bin.

After the initial barrage of bottles, a retreat into St Pauls. As people came out their doors to see police marching through their streets, many joined in defending against the police. A routine of the police charging then retreating under a hail of bottles and bricks started to develop. Bins were set on fire and charged

into police lines, others were used to form makeshift barricades. Around 1pm police retreated back to Stoke Croft and soon found themselves and their vans surrounded. The vans were prevented from moving off as others pelted them from a side street. Eventually the police broke out and sped away in the vans out of sight further up the road. One local resident noted; "If they [the police] don't calm down, things are getting tense enough on a range of other issues for a new pattern to develop of poor community relations and repeat rioting against a police force which has chosen political sides."

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

## No comment interview

Political mime artist and 'professional anarchist' Chris Knight has been moaning to the Communist Party paper *Weekly Worker* about *Freedom's* reporting of his antics. In a post-arrest interview he states: "Freedom Press, calling themselves the 'legitimate anarchists', announced that anarchists don't care about such irrelevant things as monarchy. I've not tracked down the appropriate bureaucracy to get myself rubber-stamped as a legitimate anarchist, but, as you know, I'm not an anarchist in any case: I'm a Marxist."

Of course we said no such thing, but never let the truth get in the way of a good Marxist. However a comment in response to the G20 policing article was posted by Trev on the *Freedom* website:

"While I agree with the general comments about the law, i.e. all their processes are a lesson in obfuscation, and it is important to deconstruct everything. We should be under no illusion that the police need 'intelligence' to beat people up – they do it so often without intelligence. Thus I am uneasy with the comments about Chris Knight.

"Chris has been not only 'one of the few' academics to put it about a bit whilst seeking social change, he has just about been the *only* academic to try really hard to promote social change and put his arse on the line, more than is normally done by lecturers. I appreciate there are good anarchists in the university but most are working hard trying to keep their jobs which is very understandable.

"Chris was sacked remember for encouraging protesters, including those who actually want to struggle against the capitalist state and their protectors – the police. Let's not delude ourselves with the old hippy idea, by pretending social change can come about without confrontation, or that what are called by some 'fantasist comments by individuals' are really the cause of police policy and practice.

"Finally I do not think Chris is 'using anarchists for their own purposes' if that was your meaning, the continuing use of anarchists by the state as a scare story and moral panic will carry on long after Chris Knight has passed away. Anarchists in the UK are so different and divided they are impossible to control, and that is a strength as well as a weakness."



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## GETTING ACTIVE

### PRISON NEWS

At the beginning of 2008 a media feeding frenzy began to build around a spate of suicides amongst young people in the Bridgend area of South Wales (estimated population 132,000). Journalists began claiming that seven of these were linked together in a so-called 'cluster', with a further ten unrelated self-inflicted deaths (some of which the tabloids labelled 'copy-cat suicides') added into the mix. By the beginning of 2009 the total of suicides in this particular age group in the area had reached 25, when the expected number would have been only five. Many column inches and news programmes were dedicated to the phenomenon.

Compare this with the almost total lack of newsprint dedicated to the five people held in Young Offenders Institutions (18 to 20 year olds) that have taken their own lives (the most recent being Ryan Clark, aged 17, the first prisoner under 18 to die since 15 year old Liam McManus in November 2007) in the six-week period beginning 9th March, and that in a YOI population of roughly 2,400 (25% on remand). This is a shockingly high mortality rate, but then who cares about prisoners, especially 'feral youth' ones?

To put this in some perspective, since 1990 148 under-19s have died in penal custody, 31 of those children aged 14 to 17 (in a population circa 2,000). The vast majority (over 90%) of all these deaths have been self-inflicted (versus 20% in the same age group in the wider population).<sup>1</sup>

Then, on 4th May, two more young prisoners were found hanged in their cells, this time in Belfast's Hydebank Young Offenders Centre, making this particular spate of suicides more closely resemble an epidemic. Add to that the damning inquest verdict earlier this year into the 2004 suicide of 14 year old Adam Rickwood in Hassockfield STC that found that the illegal use of Nose Distraction Technique (an upward blow to the septum usually applied with the side or base of the hand)<sup>2</sup> by untrained SERCO staff directly contributed to his suicide, and it becomes obvious that something is seriously wrong in the youth detention estate.

1 As rates and population groups sizes vary, the usual comparison is by deaths per 100,000 of the population. Using that comparison, the death rate by suicide in penal custody is more than 10 times the same age group in the wider population.

2 Nose and other 'distraction techniques' are set out in a previously secret Physical Control in Care manual that was finally made public in 2010 after three years worth of Freedom of Information requests by the Children's Rights Alliance for England (CRAE). CRAE have incidentally just also managed to secure the release of a related expert report on the manual that found that seven of the forms of restraint used commonly in YOIs all carried risks of injury or suffocation if used regularly.



Protesters occupying the roof of 30 Millbank in Westminster, campaign headquarters of the Conservative Party, on 10th November 2010.

● The legal defence support group **Green and Black Cross** is busy preparing its first national network gathering. The group, made up largely of anarchists and old climate camp activists, came to prominence during the student protests last November when they set up a network of support for those arrested for occupying the Millbank Tory HQ building. They have since become active in legal support for all those involved and affected by the unrest surrounding student protests and the anti-cuts initiatives. They have close working links with Legal Defence Monitoring Group, the anarchist organisation involved in providing legal observers to monitor police misconduct on demonstrations.

Currently Green and Black Cross has three active sections – Legal Support, which includes defendants support, Street Medics and Action Kitchens – and are always looking for people to get involved and help out and the conference would be the ideal place to meet them and find out more.  
GBC Network Gathering, 18th June from 11am to 6pm at SOAS, London. Check their website for more information <http://greenandblackcross.org/>

● Mayday weekend saw the **Solidarity Federation's** National Conference come to Brighton. The annual conference is the most important decision-making event in the SolFed calendar, serving to make federation-wide decisions, mandate and hear reports from national officers and commissions and to share ideas and tactics. Delegates from Brighton, Liverpool, Manchester, Northampton, North London, South London, Thames Valley and West Yorkshire locals attended.

This year saw an unprecedented number of motions, reflecting increased activity and

membership over the past 12 to 18 months. Some of the most important decisions included formally accepting the new Thames Valley local into the federation, the merger of the web, *Catalyst* and *Direct Action* collectives into a new media collective, along with two new national pamphlets, covering workplace organising and anarcho-syndicalist theory and practice

The conference was felt to be exceptionally positive and, aside from the new initiatives, projects and internal changes, it also provided an opportunity for SolFed members from around the country to get to know each other, network, debate and exchange experiences. They also welcomed observers from the Syndicalist Youth Federation (SUF) from Sweden, as well as receiving greetings from the IWA secretariat, ZSP in Poland and Organise! in Northern Ireland.

● As part of their activities for Mayday 2011, **Leeds Anarchist Black Cross** have launched a new dedicated website where you will be able to find out about supporting prisoners and read about current campaigns. You can also access a full distribution list of the stock they hold, including pamphlets, books and T-shirts.

Leeds ABC was resurrected in 2004, with the aim of supporting class-struggle anarchist prisoners, and those fighting back against the prison regime. Since then, they have hosted talks and film showings, produced pamphlets and raised funds for comrades in the UK, Spain, Catalonia, Poland, Germany and elsewhere.

The new website address is [leedsabc.org/](http://leedsabc.org/)  
Contact: Leeds ABC, 145–149 Cardigan Road, Leeds, LS61J England, email [leedsabc@riseup.net](mailto:leedsabc@riseup.net)

# Murray Bookchin in London

Written some twenty years ago, Charles Crute gives us his impressions of one of the giants of modern anarchism

Murray Bookchin, now in his early seventies, was born into a tradition of iconoclasm. His parents had emigrated to New York after the 1905 revolution in Russia – a grandmother had been a member of the (anti-Bolshevik) Social Revolutionary Party; he had been raised in a tradition of opposition to authority oriented to the notion of class oppression.

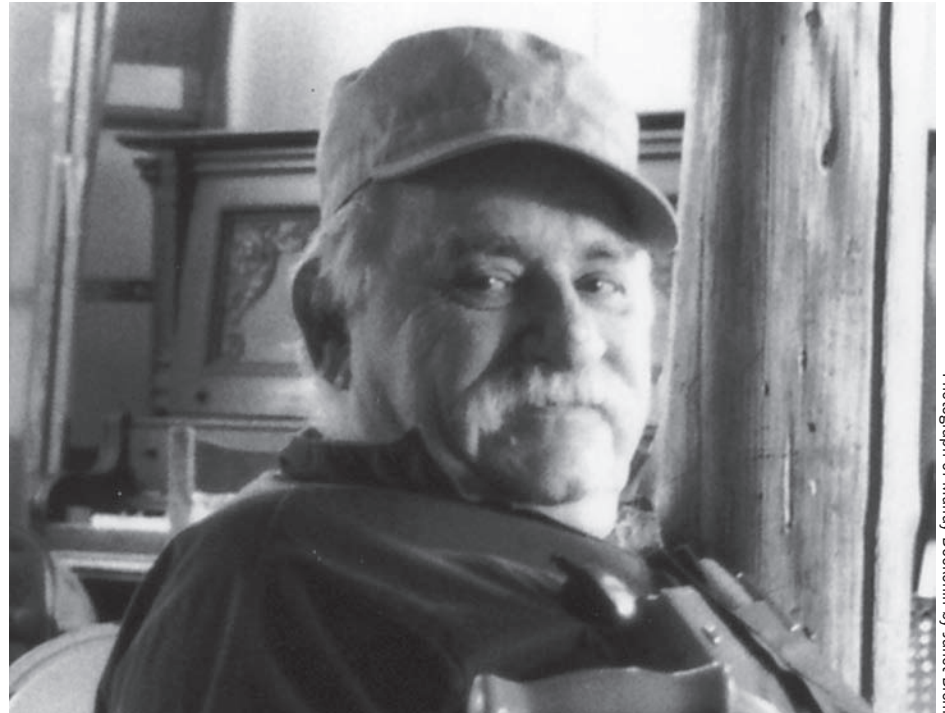
Bookchin recalled that in his young days working people were class conscious; they saw ‘the bosses’ as their opponents; battles were fought to gain union recognition. Political activists had to use rough language, to be loud and forceful in debate; the atmosphere was one of conflict. But by 1948 he became aware that the workers were becoming assimilated by the capitalist system. The new idea was that what was good for General Motors was good for America. In the aftermath of the Second World War everyone had been led to expect a cornucopia. Nuclear energy was going to bring free power, free energy, free everything. It was going to be a marvellous world, and it could have been.

He drifted away from the labour movement and became increasingly concerned with larger issues of social change. From 1952, writing as Lewis Herber, he tried to formulate a theory of the domination of nature as stemming from a capitalist economy which he identified with anarchism.

Bookchin concluded that the Marxism on which he had been brought up had not gone deeply enough. The Marxists had taught that hierarchical relationships were necessary even as they attacked class society. Marx had attacked Bakunin. Seeing things in industrial terms, the Marxists asked how a steel mill could be run without hierarchical relationships. Bookchin came to see that such relationships were not simply economic but were based on status, that they involved for instance the domination of women by men, of people of colour by whites. Anarchism is concerned to oppose the one basic concept of authority as such.

The idea of the domination of nature, said Bookchin, is a projection of human domination onto the natural world, and the ecological crisis has its origins in a social crisis. To resolve the ecological problems we have to look within our own society.

In calling himself an ‘eco-anarchist’ he was aware that he was being disputatious – he was disliked by a lot of the more spiritualistic environmentalists, and he had no use for



Photograph of Murray Bookchin by Janet Biehl

their sort of loose pantheism. His point was that before we can eliminate antagonisms between human societies and the natural world we must first eliminate antagonisms between human beings. Human inequality is at the root of the biospheric degradation of today.

The social nature of the ecological crisis The market society, said Bookchin, identifies progress with competition, with rivalry, with the spirit of dog-eat-dog. He had come to the conclusion that some of his earlier warnings were underestimates: the market system has telescoped into decades environmental damage he thought would take centuries.

The rivalry was between the big business firms in the United States and between the EEC, America and Japan. At the Earth Summit big business would dictate terms to the world’s government. The individuals who manage these firms are not people with bad intentions, but are locked into a system, and the system has to be changed. What, then, can we do?

My suggestion, said Bookchin, is that we form a counter-power to the State, a counter-power to the great corporations and a counter-power to the market. By that he did not mean communes or food co-operatives which could not challenge the giant corporations. What was needed is the re-creation of a public sphere in which people can feel they are members, not mere taxpayers; be citizens not constituents, go beyond merely paying taxes and obeying the rules. He had used the term participatory democracy, but he did not mean what John Major meant when he talked about ‘empowering the citizens of

Britain’. Nor did he mean that we should fill huge meeting places, or that we should make decisions by referenda: Shall we invade Nicaragua? Press red button for yes, green button for no.

He advocated neighbourhood centres, delegation of representatives under mandate as opposed to going to our MP or Congressman; advice centres on how to deal with the system. He warned against the dangers of parochialism of the small community, and urged the adoption of those forms of community that have been tried by history and seen to have worked. Bookchin’s term for the form of politics he advocates is Confederalism.

Bookchin concluded by warning against the ‘spiritual aspects of ecology’. He was not, he said, against spirituality but against spiritualism, a distinction many of his critics do not draw. People have to live, and only when they are fed can they talk about the environment. Unless this point is appreciated, only ‘the most exotic people, who do not shape the world’ will discuss such matters.

Break down the cities into neighbourhoods said Bookchin; it can be more easily done today than at the time of the French Revolution.

The real question must be, first, what kind of a society are we going to have, and then, what is our relationship with the natural world.

Charles Crute is an ex-editor of *Freedom*, where this article originally appeared. It has just been included in The Anarchist Library, an archive of lost and classic anarchist texts. Their online resource can be viewed at <http://theanarchistlibrary.org/>

## REVIEWS

## WHAT'S ON

## MAY

■ **21st Book launch for *Property is Theft!*** with Iain McKay at Freedom Bookshop, 84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1 7QX from 2pm until 4pm.

■ **21st Sheffield Anarchist Bookfair** for all your anarchist literature needs at Bank Street Arts, 32–40 Bank Street, Sheffield S1 2DS from 10am until 6pm, for details email [sheffield@bookfair.org.uk](mailto:sheffield@bookfair.org.uk) or see [www.bookfair.org.uk](http://www.bookfair.org.uk) – there will also be an after party at The Redhouse, 168 Solly Street City Centre, Sheffield S1 4BB from 8pm until 2am.

■ **22nd Nottingham Green Festival** with stalls, music, kids area and lots more at Waverley Street/Addison Street, Nottingham, NG7 4HF from 12noon until 6pm, email [green.festival@dial.pipex.com](mailto:green.festival@dial.pipex.com) for more.

■ **25th SchMOVIES** presents *Reclaim the Streets – the movie*, free/donation, 8pm at the Cowley Club, 12 London Road, Brighton BN1 4JA, call 01273 696104 or email [cowleyclub@riseup.net](mailto:cowleyclub@riseup.net) for details.

■ **26th and 27th Resistance** against G8/G20 in France at Deauville and Cannes, call-out for localised actions, blockades, attacks against symbols of capitalism, occupations and more... Thursday 26th will be about local struggles and the 27th focusing on social control, see the website for details at <http://nog2011.noblogs.org>

## JUNE

■ **4th Strawberry Fair**, Cambridge, after police stopped 2010 happening, we're back this year for a one-day free festival at Midsummer Common, Cambridge, see [www.strawberry-fair.org.uk](http://www.strawberry-fair.org.uk) for more.

■ **4th and 5th Anarchist Bookfair** at the Fareisaal, Oberer Quai 12, 2502 Biel-Bienne, Switzerland, with many publishers and anti-authoritarian organisations from Switzerland, France, Germany, Italy, etc., along with public readings and presentations, see <http://buechermesse.ch/2011> for details.

■ **4th and 5th Newcastle Community Green Festival**, now in its 16th year, at Leazes Park, Richardson Road, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE1 4LR, for further details see [www.newcastlegreenfestival.org.uk](http://www.newcastlegreenfestival.org.uk).

■ **4th to 6th Party Against The Pipe Festival** in Aughoose, Co. Mayo, Ireland, to celebrate a decade of resistance to Shell's Corrib gas project, festival will feature bands, circus, dance, comedy, crafts – all performers/workshoppers or if you can lend equipment get in touch at 0851141170, email [partyagainstthepipe@gmail.com](mailto:partyagainstthepipe@gmail.com), for more details see <http://partyagainstthepipe.wordpress.com/>

■ **8th Atheism UK** presents 'Dancing on the graves of gods: how science kills faith', a talk at 7pm, Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London WC1R 4RL, for info and tickets see <http://www.atheismuk.com/tickets-2/>

## TELEVISION

**The Crimson Petal and the White**  
by Lucinda Coxon

This surprisingly effective London Victoriana condenses Michel Faber's massive 2002 novel, which transcended both familiar literary conventions of sprawling Dickensian naturalism and latterday gender-centred revisionisms like John Fowles' *The French Lieutenant's Woman* and Sarah Waters' feminist fables queering typical patriarchal pitches. Lucinda Coxon's ambitious four-part adaptation (on BBC2 in April) likewise subverts UK costume drama's softpedalled apologism for aristocratic hierarchy variously seasoned with limp critique – from sundry disgusted fascinations with lavish decadence, through Andrew Davies' yuppie-friendly popularisations of Jane Austen, to recent bourgeois trash like *Downton Abbey* reinstating rigid stratification's cosy cold comforts. Director Marc Munden, whose *The Devil's Whore* (Channel 4, 2008) corroded English Civil War clichés of grim puritans and romantic royalists, now suitably queasily reinscribes the 1870s imperial capital's rotten inner-city and sinister suburbia.

In hellish Notting Hill alleyways, a teenage prostitute's discovery of a friend battered to death by a client becomes grist to the literary shit-ledger our autodidact heroine has compiled since her brothelkeeping mother first pandered her upon puberty. Sugar (played with impressive detached intensity by Romola Garai), already legendary in sex-tourist guides, beguiles feckless industrialist heir William Rackham (Chris O'Dowd, nailing the comic pathos of pretentious snobbery) who risks bankruptcy for exclusive patronage – first in a respectable townhouse, then his Surrey home as governess to a child whose secluded mother's terror of flesh and blood renders her vulnerable to both abusive medics and fashionably vacuous spiritualism. Sugar's pragmatic entrepreneurialism in escaping the gutter lends her intellectual prowess to save Rackham's business fortunes, but proto-feminism and class-hatred uneasily mingle in protecting the wife and daughter – eventually destroying him but returning her to precariousness.

A rose by any other name...

*The Crimson Petal and the White's* sophisticated allegory of sex trade as social structure



surpasses classic tropes of tragic whores and happy hookers, whether in *Fanny Hill*, *Pygmalion*, *Pretty Woman* or *Secret Diary of a Call Girl*. Rich historical and cultural references convincingly interweave prostitution and class, poverty and aspiration, family and the disciplining of bodies and souls, the development of capitalism and ideological and religious mystification in a refreshingly materialist matrix with manifold resonances. But whereas Faber forensically contrasted details of disinterested sex, ubiquitous disease and meticulous corporeal care with the breathtaking evasions of Agnes' hysterical agony and William's cringeing aestheticism, on TV we merely get vivid momentary reminders of the underlying obscene Real. Similarly, the avoidance of excessive prurient televisual attention also means downplaying Sugar's fertile expressivity, implying that degradation permits sensuality only via displaced negativity. Fleeting intimations of love for her own – and of their considerable feral intelligence – thus remain inconsequential rhetorical supplements to overdetermining unfortunate circumstance, which precludes lasting solidarity when betterment necessitates severing roots. Refusing stereotypes of hapless vulgar lower-class humility does not demand such solipsism, especially given that widespread grass-roots collective ferment in this period actually nourished substantial social reform movements. Frustratingly, the series ultimately recapitulates its precursors' deep conservatism, surrendering to a modernist individualism epitomised by final flight to a fantasied 'free' America.

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

*The Crimson Petal and the White* is released on DVD on 6th June 2011.

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## QUIZ ANSWERS

- 1952.
- Adam Smith.
- None. He lives in a farmhouse in France and has not paid British tax for years.
- They were police officers who had burgled and stabbed a doctor. When more police arrived they too were captured.

# Not so flash after all

**Jerome Baxter is somewhat underwhelmed by a recent fictional foray into America's radical past**

Although AK Press should be commended for seeking to publish works of fiction that wouldn't otherwise see print, sometimes there's a reason for that. *Flash*, which was published at the end of last year is, to put it mildly, a shameful puddle of pretentious self-indulgent wank. The book follows the life of alternative journalist, Jack Wilson, the self-proclaimed "last man in the world without a cell phone," as he stumbles across and begins researching the life and times of enigmatic Wobbly, Bobby Flash. Chapters alternate between the life of Jack Wilson in 21st century and the life of Bobby Flash, through which Miller attempts to explore the "forgotten revolutionary world" of early twentieth century California.

In Jack, we find a man who's well-intentioned, but down-on-his-luck as he seeks to survive the world of alternative journalism. In Jack's chapters we learn about his fractured relationship with his son Hank (named after, you guessed it, the Henry Chinaski of Bukowski fame), his failed marriage, his relationship with his Mum (whom he calls by her first name), and his hard-scrapple upbringing not knowing his junkie father. It's also in Jack's chapters that Wilson explores the seedy underbelly of modern proletarian life. We see "vigilantes in business suits" running maquilladoras in Mexico and sweatshops in California, engineering mass firings in response to Latino-led union drives, participating in the corporate poisoning of poor communities, and moving profitable factories overseas just to squeeze out a bit more profit. We witness racist 'Minutemen' patrolling the US-Mexican border and there's even a mass squatted commune that includes the "Thrasher Collective".



Jim Miller reads from his novel *Flash* at a bookstore in La Jolla, San Diego, California.

In Bobby we find a man who's cash-poor but rich in revolutionary spirit. Bobby participates in free speech fights and attempted revolutions while travelling boxcar style in search of work (although, oddly, doesn't mention ever having participated in a strike). His life is hard. He sees many a comrade killed by the forces of law and order and even succumbs to alcoholism for a time. But through it all he keeps his humanity, never giving up on the dream of the "One Big

Union" and its "belly philosophy". Ah, but there's a catch in all of this: early on in the book we hear of Jack's great-grandfather, "the radical", whom he never met. Wait, could it be? Could Bobby Flash be Jack's long-lost great-grandfather. Ooohhh, I just don't know...

Now this story rolls on predictably enough and there *is* some interesting history in there. However, it's Miller's never-ending litany of name dropping that really gets me. Miller is glad to wear his lefty credentials on his sleeve and pretty much every radical you've ever heard of makes an appearance at some point: Emma Goldman, Kropotkin, Bakunin, Marx, Zapata, Che Guevara, Subcomandante Marcos, Noam Chomsky, Big Bill Haywood, Vincent St. John, Frank Little, Gramsci, Mr Block, Elizabeth Gurley Flynn, Harry Bridges, and Mother Jones. Then there's the music. Growing up, 'Jack' wore Doc Martins and saw Black Flag, the Dead Kennedys, and X live. And, if he's outgrown the punk music of his youth, he's still rocking out to Jane's Addiction, Woodie Guthrie, Hank Williams, Bob Dylan, Merle Haggard, The Doors, The Who, The Grateful Dead, The Pixies, and Rage Against the Machine. Oh, and in case

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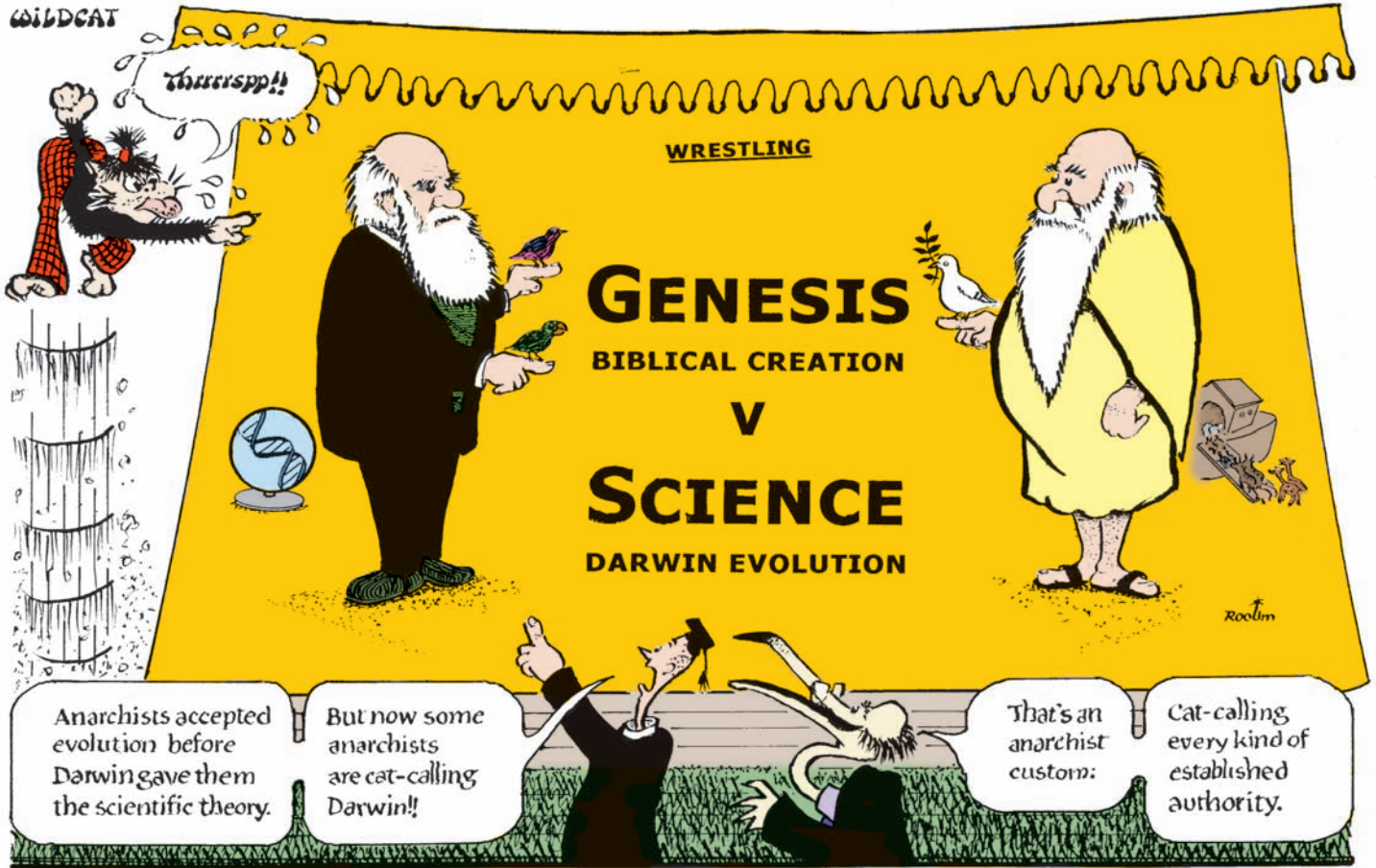
## 56a Infoshop

Was opened in 1991 by a small group of local people in the back room of Fareshares Food Co-op in Walworth. Since that time we have maintained our radical presence locally through bookselling, publishing, actions and socialising.

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**Review**

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you were wondering, Jack's pretty well read, too. Don't believe me? Just ask William Blake, Nietzsche, Norman O. Brown, Jack London, Aldous Huxley, Jack Kerouac, Hunter S. Thompson, Ralph Waldo Emerson, Henry David Thoreau, Walt Whitman, Oscar Wilde or Herman Melville. It must have been so much reading that inspired such pretentious lines as, "We just sat there, side by side, as the afternoon surrendered to the twilight, mingling with unnamed ghosts and pondering the ruins of the perfect future." Yet, such towering intellectual achievement doesn't seem to have sunk in deep enough to prevent such sophisticated gems as, "That didn't seem like something Shane would do... Or did it?"

And all this intellectual masturbation just doesn't stop. I mean, by the end of the story Jack ends up with some of Joe Hill's fucking ashes! Come on!

Anyway, my rant's going to have end there, but I'm sure you get the idea. Suffice to say that if you have an extra tenner, need something to read, and want to know some IWW history, don't buy this book. Instead go donate your money to the Starbucks Workers Union and request an email detailing some of the impressive organising they done in the past and what they've got planned for the future. It might not be the flashiest way to spend your cash, but at least it will be money well spent.

*Flash: A Novel* by Jim Miller, published by AK Press, 196 pages, £10.

**THE QUIZ**

1. It is said that Greece invented democracy, but when did Greek women get the vote?
2. Who said "The disposition to admire, and almost to worship, the rich and the powerful and ... neglect persons of poor and mean condition ... is the great and most universal cause of the corruption of our moral sentiments."
3. How much tax does Alexander Heath, a director of the rightwing lobby group the TaxPayers' Alliance, pay in the UK?
4. On 3rd May this year, villagers in Dinajpur, north-western Bangladesh, caught and detained some armed robbers. What was different about the robbers?

Answers on page 14

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