

WORLD WAR III?

The UK, USA and France in discussions over proposed military intervention in Syria

The lessons learned in Iraq conveniently forgotten at the tantalising prospect of flexing military muscle and impressing their big boy pal, the UK and France are currently negotiating with the US on the possibility of a war with Syria. They claim it is an attempt to retaliate against President Bashar al-Assad's alleged use of chemical weapons against civilians.

British defence secretary Philip Hammond, who worrying managed to confuse Assad with Saddam Hussein in an interview about the Syrian situation on *Newsnight*, has tellingly suggested that failing to attack would harm the UK's infamous 'special relationship' with the US. The US knows that Syria has a big ol' pile of natural resources. France is still reeling from the "cheese-eating surrender monkeys" comment. Go figure.

A UK parliamentary vote on 30th August saw a 285 to 272 defeat against military intervention, lulling many into an understandable false sense of security, warm in the fuzzy glow of "true democracy in action". It [page 3](#) ▶▶

LENS CAP NO TO WAR WITH SYRIA!



Demonstrators gather outside Downing Street as thousands of campaigners protested against the UK government's plans to go to war with Syria.

BALCOMBE FRACKING FIASCO

A misguided toff has become the first person in England to invite potential frackers in for a cup of tea (ahem).

Simon Greenwood is the current laird of the Balcombe Estate, which at the moment is a beautiful piece of English countryside teeming with wildlife.

Back in 2010, Mr Greenwood used his feudal rights to sneak through a planning application which would allow US energy company Cuadrilla the right to pump hydrochloric acid, polyacrylamide, ethylene glycol and ammonium into 'his' part of our green and pleasant land. And now they've come to claim their prize. Mr Greenwood says he is sharing his shale because he doesn't want to stand in the way of "business and diversification of the estate".

Not only is fracking a horrible eyesore

and a great method of fucking up areas of natural beauty, it is also an ace way to contaminate drinking supplies with methane and toxic chemicals and trigger earthquakes. A sensible 85% of Balcombe residents canvassed said they were completely opposed to the idea of fracking in the area. Weeks of protests, with numerous arrests, have continued throughout August. Those oily folks at Cuadrilla have consistently responded by insisting that they are not 'actually' fracking... Yet.

Drilling will stop at the end of September due to a legal glitch, putting pay to plans to land a six-month extension. Activists hope the new round of consultation will provide an opportunity to stop Cuadrilla from re-submitting a further application.

Charlotte Dingle

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ISSN 0016-0504



NEWS

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LENS CAP BALCOMBE



Photograph © Guy Smallman

A sign hung in the trees on 6th August by anti-fracking activists in Balcombe, West Sussex, where Cuadrilla is carrying out exploratory drilling. There are worries locally this will lead to the search for shale gas in the area (see page 1).

Anti-gay law spurs violence

A law designed to prevent the spread of “propaganda of non-traditional sexual relations to minors” has been blamed for a spike in homophobic attacks in Russia. The law, which was passed in June, is apparently an attempt to promote ‘traditional’ values and – wait for it – combat falling birth rates. The population in Russia has been a prominent political issue for some time now. It fell by from 145.2 to 142.9 million between 2002 and 2010. Elena Mizulina, the head of the Committee on Family, Women and Children in the lower house of Russian parliament and a firm supporter of Putin, wrote in a 50-page proposal: “The social conduct that’s being aggressively imposed on Russia is inherent of Western civilization, with its fetishising of human rights, including those of sexual minorities.” She is currently campaigning for further apparently procreation-inducing rulings including taxing divorce and paying people to have at least three children.

Violators of the law can expect a fine of up to one million rubels (£19,159) – but Russia’s gay and bi inhabitants have more than that to worry about than that. It seems encouraging the murder, suicide and emigration of gay and bisexual Russians has become the one exception to the government’s policy of fighting population decline. A chilling spate of attacks has followed in the wake of the anti-gay act becoming law. The Occupy Paedophilia/Occupy Gerontophilia group has taken credit for a large proportion of these attacks – which, as its name suggests, it carries out under the guise of preventing the spread of paedophilia. Group members lure victims in by posing as gay men online.

The victims are then tortured at length while a group member videos them (*pictured below*). Favoured torture methods include forcing people to drink urine as a ‘cure’ and anally raping them with various objects. The videos are spread across the internet so that the victim’s friends and family will see them. Many victims are forced to recite family names and address details on camera. Some of these victims – targeted not for paedophilia but for gerontophilia, in an attempt to dissuade them from meeting older gay men online for sex – are as young as 12. At least one death and one suicide have resulted from these attacks so far and the group shows no signs of winding down its vigilante ‘justice’ system.

LGBT activists are calling for a boycott of the 2014 Olympics, which are due to take place in Sochi. A nice gesture, but not nearly enough.

Charlotte Dingle





Lewisham A&E escapes closure

Plans to downgrade Lewisham hospital and close its Accident and Emergency and Maternity departments have been overturned

On 31st July, a High Court judge ruled that health secretary Jeremy Hunt's plans to narrow down the services offered by Lewisham Hospital in South London were 'unlawful' and breached the National Health Act of 2006. The move followed months of intensive campaigning – including enormous protest marches through Lewisham – which attracted nationwide attention.

Hunt put forward the money-saving proposal following a financial fiasco involving the South London Healthcare Trust, which had begun to lose over £1m a week. An administrator parachuted in to deal with the problem suggested cutting services at Lewisham

as a partial solution. Hunt announced the plans to Parliament in January, assuring his fellow politicians that the changes would save lives. How, he didn't really explain.

Patients who normally use the A&E and maternity services at Lewisham Hospital were told they would have to seek treatment a considerable distance away – over an hour's travel in rush hour traffic – at the notoriously underperforming and already overcrowded Queen Elizabeth Hospital in Woolwich, where apparently (on top of everything else) the lukewarm hospital grub is some of the worst in the country. Sending these patients to Woolwich would mean a staggering 750,000 people relying on the same Accident and Emergency department.

With the future of the National Health Service hanging in the balance, the battle of Lewisham Hospital is seen as a landmark victory by many of those who wish to retain a free healthcare system. Mr Hunt's failure to downgrade the hospital was part of the first attempt to use the new Unsustainable Providers Regime, aimed at weeding out 'failing' NHS organisations. It certainly went

some way towards highlighting exactly the level of public outrage that such decisions can provoke, as well as showing just how dangerous and short-sighted it can be to bring administrators in from elsewhere to make decisions they're not really qualified to make.

However, resting on our laurels is definitely not an option. Mr Hunt has since appealed against the High Court decision and is attempting to have another go at decimating the hospital's services – with hints at possible amendments to the law in order to enable him to progress with the downgrading. Meanwhile, threats to other links in the NHS chain continue to crop up, with services provided by hospitals in Trafford (the birthplace of the NHS), St Albans, Watford and Hemel Hempstead amongst those currently facing an uncertain future. The powers that be insist that closing these 'failing' hospitals is a vital part of reorganising the country's healthcare system and making it more effective. The truth may be a little more sinister.

Charlotte Dingle

World War III?

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is true that this vote will technically prevent Cameron's plans to join the fight, but it still leaves room for the US and other countries to go charging in, perhaps with a little clandestine 'hand' offered from the UK behind the scenes. Where there's a will, and especially if it's the will of a powerful politician and skilled PR-man manipulator, there is often another way...

The US has now stalled action but Obama, who is intent on going ahead with the attack, has vowed to "continue to consult" with Cameron on the possibility of joining forces. I don't know about you, but that sounds fairly ominous to me.

French parliament will put the issue to the vote on Wednesday 3rd September, but President François Hollande so far openly supports the idea of attack, because he hates cheese and is *not* a monkey... and a bigger boy made him do it.

Russia is kicking up a fuss and telling the US to back off until there is more evidence of what exactly is really happening in Syria and who did it, which leads us to another possible reason for the war – a daring red flag to America's number one enemy. Asked what Russia would do in the event of a US attack on Syria, President Vladimir Putin merely uttered darkly "We

have our ideas. We have plans..."

Russia's reticence is to be commended. The chemical weapons alleged to have been used by Assad have not yet been examined, nor is there conclusive evidence that it was Assad who used them rather than the rebels. Indeed, many are deeply puzzled by the idea that the government would have used the weapons at a time when it was actually on a roll and doing pretty well, thank you very much. Nobody seems to want to admit to selling the chemical weapons to Syria, either, which is a whole other kettle of fish. Watch this space.

Charlotte Dingle

THE BIG PICTURE



On 10th August thousands took to the streets in London to protest against the anti-gay laws recently introduced in Russia in what may have been the largest LGBT rights protest in recent years. The new Russian law will punish people for homosexual 'propaganda' and has attracted international condemnation (see also pages 2 and 24).

All for naught

Richard Challinor on the worrying rise in exploitative zero-hour contracts

The recent mainstream news has discovered that many people – some 250,000 according to the Office for National Statistics, or 1,000,000 according to the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development – are contracted for zero-hours, meaning they oscillate without forewarning between manic business and unemployment in everything but name. The question that has been asked is, do these contracts benefit the worker?

The implicit corollary of this question is, of course, that they do benefit the employer. The BBC has with some relish made this point in interviews, but employers from Sports Direct to Buckingham Palace are keen to point out that they also benefit the employee. Let us examine this.

The argument was often made by Milton Friedman, beau of the free marketeers, that the only thing worse than a poorly paid and oppressive job is no job at all. By denying workers the opportunity of a below-living wage, to sell a kidney for a month's rent, or to prostitute themselves for food, we are

making their situation worse, replacing a dire one with a terminal one. By these lights, our moralising and legislating in these regards is solely to assuage our more bourgeois sensibilities. Even putting aside the protestations our human decency and empathy demand, I see a strong analytical objection here, and one that many non-anarchists would agree with if pressed to confront it. zero-hour contracts are coercive.

The poor and unemployed do not consent to their hunger, their need for shelter and warmth, rather these are forced on them by their having the audacity to be alive. Neither do they consent to their need for stimulation, purpose and improvement, these being forced on them by their being human. So it follows they are not to be judged or bargained with for these satisfactions – they own the right to them intrinsically. That elementary principle of morality, that a person is only praised or blamed for what they freely choose, demands that these needs be met without scruple or debate.

When a person seeks employment from another person, a person who holds power over them by virtue of superior capital, we have already given up these principles of morality. The employee is selling their rights, prostituting their person, out of need. Simon Linquet put it powerfully: “It is want that

compels them to go down on their knees and ask the rich man in order to get from him permission to enrich him... these men it is said have no master; they have one, and the most terrible, the most imperious of masters, that is need.”

It is to be said that this is a free contract? How strange. Don't sign my contract if you would rather starve... what freedom! As has been noted by Noam Chomsky and others, under capitalism we are a commodity, and it is not for the commodity to choose how it is assigned. It benefits an employer to buy labour to the extent and at the time and place that will maximise its profits. The humanity of the commodity does not enter into the cost benefit analysis. Indeed, it benefits an employer to have applicants in need. *The Jungle* by Upton Sinclair shows us where this road has led, and will lead again. He writes: “Here in this huge city, with its stores of heaped-up wealth, human creatures might be hunted down and destroyed by the wild-beast powers of nature, just as truly as ever they were in the days of the cavemen.”

The objection above applies to all wage slavery, but how much stronger is the objection as the conditions worsen and the recompense dwindles. To ask whether a zero-hour contract benefits the employee is to ask whether prostitution benefits the heroin addict. Yes, if the questioner is willing to narrow their scope to the point of blindness. Zero-hour contracts are on the lower strata of the pyramid of oppression, just below other wage slavery, and just above outright bondage. The blocks of this pyramid are the labour and misery of each worker, and contrary to the fantasies of the free market, the blocks at the bottom are more structurally important than those at the top.

When the employer invites an applicant for interview, or mulls over their projected timesheets, does he or she think “I am truly free only when all human beings, men and women, are equally free. The freedom of other men, far from negating or limiting my freedom, is, on the contrary, its necessary premise and confirmation” as Mikhail Bakunin did? His concern, evident in this quote, for the wellbeing of others is inspiring – and so alien! Capitalism has anointed and pedestalled greed and self-worship above all else, and while we are surely creatures with greed in our constitution, we are not solely that base property. We also possess compassion and selflessness, of the sort that peeks through here and there and is celebrated by religion. In this system we live under, these tendencies are perhaps formally celebrated, but structurally abhorred – concern for another as yourself, or even any concern at all, is seen as odd. A portion of our humanity has been excised and fed to the other, the mental cannibalism at the centre of capitalism that mirrors the feeding of the poor to the rich.



ANALYSIS

A tangled web

Steve Ash on the government's proposed default internet filters

On 21st of July the Coalition government announced that legislation on control of the internet would be introduced later in this year, with the professed aim of “tackling the commercialisation and sexualisation of childhood”. The principle method announced will be a filter on all ‘pornographic’ material, both legal and illegal, which will be set as default by ISP companies and require an active opt-out by their customers. That is, a box will be ticked in each customer’s online internet control panel enabling the blocking of various sites deemed ‘unsuitable for children’, which the customer has the option of unticking (even though many of them are probably unaware that such a panel even exists). Other measures will include a blacklist of certain items and terms on all search engines, and the illegalisation of ‘extreme pornography’, including depictions of rape, whether real or theatrical. Websites with streaming videos will also be regulated by content.

Despite the stupidity of all censorship, such measures might have achieved understandable broad support among the public had they genuinely targeted illegal and abusive material, yet the government insists all ‘sexual material’ will be covered. If this draconian plan was simply this, its assault on sexual freedom and affirmation of puritanical sexual repression (arguably responsible for most abusive ‘sex crimes’) would be enough for serious concern – yet it is far more complex. Simply put, filters are not very intelligent, they are automatic blocks on certain terms detected in the data stream. Therefore, there is no guarantee that sites providing information on sexual health and education will not also be blocked. More ambiguous distinctions between pornographic, erotic and artistic material will certainly fall foul of the filters, as will any site using language the filters tag as ‘pornographic’. Such a draconian bill has never before been implemented in any democratic country and has set alarm bells ringing among many civil liberties groups, such as the Internet Watch Foundation.

The bill is being championed by Claire Perry MP, a censorship-obsessed Tory who has been pushing for a porn firewall since 2010 and is now acting as Cameron’s advisor on the issue. Perry’s website was hacked by an unknown activist soon after the announcement, and she accused the *Sun* columnist Guido Fawkes of carrying out the attack. But the deeper impetus has been broader. In 2010 the newly elected coalition government announced their intention to regulate the internet, and in December 2010 the UK Culture



Minister revealed government proposals regarding web sites with pornographic and other content. And here lies the deeper issue, as the filter has been declared by government sources to go beyond pornographic material and cover all corrupting sources. What this means exactly is still uncertain, but according to the Open Rights Group, ‘broad indications’ from consulted ISPs confirm that the material to be filtered under ‘Parental Restriction’ includes pornography, violent material, extremist and terrorist related content, anorexia and eating disorder websites, suicide related websites, alcohol, smoking, esoteric material, and related web forums, as well as any web blocking circumvention tools.

I asked an ISP employee what constitutes extremist content and what ‘esoteric material’ meant and I was told “anything opposing liberal democracy, and any ‘black magic’ or non orthodox religious content”! Perhaps not a representative answer, but a worrying one from an employee of a large ISP. Of even more concern is the fact that the filter will be managed by the Chinese firm Huawei. Recently the Intelligence and Security Committee of the Houses of Parliament declared that “the alleged links between Huawei and the Chinese State are concerning, as they generate suspicion as to whether Huawei’s intentions are strictly commercial or are more political” – though it added that it had not found any evidence of wrongdoing.

The changes will immediately affect all new ISP subscribers once the law is pushed through, but the government experts all

subscribers to be covered by 2014. All the big ISPs seem solidly behind the proposals, though several smaller ISPs have said they will refuse to take part, much to the government’s anger.

When passed many say this will put Britain on par with China for internet censorship. Of course a reasonable objection is the fact that the censorship system is optional not mandatory. However, as internet watchers point out, few users change their defaults once set by their ISP, even if they know how to. Thus the vast majority of users will be unknowingly censored, which given the way the web works will be an extremely restrictive imposition. This is a typical ploy of the current government, often called a ‘choice architecture’ solution. Essentially, this means choice is presented in a way structured to limit the possibility of realistic choice.

It is clear that the filter project has very little to do with ‘protecting children’ and everything to do with treating adults like children and censoring the internet on a wide range of issues. The government has also hinted that those who opt in might be flagged as ‘potential criminals’, to which the only ethical response would be the universal unticking of all filters by all those who oppose this. As many have observed this also looks like an attempt by the coalition to hide behind a moral crusade against child abuse, but not only does it do nothing to prevent such abuse, it actually detracts from real abuses fostered by this government and scandals deep in the heart of the establishment.

THE SOCIAL THEORY OF ELINOR OSTROM



In 2009 the Nobel Prize for economics went to Elinor Ostrom – the first woman ever to be awarded the Economics prize. Elinor Ostrom is actually a political scientist, who won because of her fresh approach to social theory.

Elinor Ostrom (*pictured above*) has challenged the conventionally taught 'Tragedy of the Commons', where economists assume that individuals are ruthlessly selfish and if these individuals together commonly own a resource, this resource will eventually be destroyed, including destruction of the environment. Their proposed solution is to privatise common property or regulate it by central authority.

Ostrom's life work has been the study of forests, lakes, groundwater basins and fisheries. And shows that the commons can be an opportunity for communities to manage a resource themselves and, given the right to self-organise they can democratically govern themselves to preserve the environment.

At the policy level, Ostrom's findings support the many indigenous and peasant movements across the developing world, where people are trying to manage the land as they have done for centuries, but run into conflicts with both governments and global corporations who have their own short-sighted and greedy agendas.

Other economists who have studied this are confirming that communities in Brazil, India, West Africa and even the United States have managed the resources in a sustainable way when given rightful access to their own assets.

Ostrom's methods are more hands-on and scientific than many economists who are purely theoretical (to the point of being ideological in my opinion). She used satellite analyses of resource depletion and field studies as well as behavioural experiments, so her conclusions are based on actual human behaviour rather than the received wisdom of economic theorists that we are all selfish individuals. In fact resource users frequently develop sophisticated mechanisms for decision-making and rule enforcement to handle conflicts of interest, which are based on local experience and knowledge.

Ostrom's approach could help us forge a better relationship with the environment and become more realistic about the economy generally.

Jane Silverman

Class struggles

Shaun Riley on learned helplessness in relation to capitalist education

Learned helplessness occurs when an animal or non-human animal is repeatedly exposed to an aversive stimulus that cannot be escaped. Consequently, the animal will stop attempting to avoid the stimulus and behave as though he or she is helpless to avoid or change the situation, even when these opportunities are present. This behaviour can lead to effects on emotional health, such as depression, low self-esteem, and suicidal ideation.

Inherent in the capitalist education system is the perceived, unquestionable authority of the instructor over the pupil. It is within this hierarchical relationship that the student runs the risk of acquiring learned helplessness. This outcome is to be expected within an education system that holds as its objective the moulding of young, free, creative minds, into subservient, spiritless masses intended to serve the 'workforce'.

From early on, the student recognises the futility of trying to assert his or her will against the rule of the instructor, as in most

cases it will continue to be denied. It is from this constant denial of individual or collective (such as the consensus of students in a classroom setting) autonomy that the student or students will develop a defeatist mindset, i.e. they will begin to believe they will inevitably be defeated by the 'superiors' despite any efforts they might take to promote their own interests. Therefore, the student will often subordinately accept the teacher's authority, even bearing the most senseless of rules, as well as the consequences for breaking them.

This form of institutionalised conditioning can only be eradicated by a radical social revolution and subsequently an educational revolution, whereby capitalist education is replaced by an anarchist form. It will be then, that one's will, spirit, and individuality, as well as his or her true human potential can be realised.

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INTERNATIONAL

NEWS IN BRIEF

COLOMBIA: Over 200,000 farmworkers joined a march through the Colombian capital city, Bogota, to demand government subsidies and greater access to land. Several protesters were arrested for blockading traffic around the city centre.

Organisers are escalating the movement, and have stated that truckers and miners will be joining them, and they will bring the country to a standstill.

Government lackeys have accused armed guerrillas of infiltrating the protest in an attempt to stoke up trouble, and claim that they will not 'accept anarchy'.

RUSSIA: Four Russian anarchists, Oleg Kapustyanov, Ruslan Rostov, Tumur Doronin and Artyom Sher, have been remanded to jail in an attempt to pressure them into pleading guilty to charges associated with their anti-fascist activities. More specifically they are accused of attacking a group of neo-Nazi football hooligans earlier this year.

Despite it being dark and the alleged perpetrators wearing masks, the fascists claim to recognise the local anarchists as their attackers.

The evidence against the four is non-existent, hence why they have resorted to keeping them in jail since April, hoping they will plead guilty, to speed up their release. The local support group can be contacted at dobrodobrey@riseup.net.

SOUTH AFRICA: Durban Councillor, and rich person, Rick Crouch, has issued a warning to all land owners to be on constant alert for invasions by 'hard to get rid of' squatters. He claims that the threat of squatters is increasing – even in the city's most affluent areas! He kindly provided a plethora of guidance on how to prevent squatters, and then how to deal with them should they end up on your land estate.

As a politician it's a shame – although no surprise – that Crouch would rather spend his time writing anti-squatting guidance for stinking rich landowners, than he would fighting for a better life for the millions of South Africans who have no homes, no food, clothes, money, or hope.

UNITED STATES: Around 120 truckers have brought the port of Oakland to a complete standstill, despite the best efforts of the local police to keep the port working.

Truckers are angry about unacceptable delays in the pick-up and drop-off process (they are paid by the load). Furthermore they are being forced to replace all trucks made before 1997, in order to comply with new emission regulations. Many of the drivers are 'one man one truck' self-employed, and could not afford to buy new trucks without financial aid. New trucks can cost well over \$150,000 and are beyond the reach of most self-employed contractors.

LENS CAP USA



The gangsters at FPI Management, a US real estate company, got more than they bargained for when they decided to steal a \$400 deposit from a former tenant in Seattle. Following the leafleting of all FPI properties, and a noisy picket outside their headquarters, the former tenant received a cheque for the stolen amount. Direct action gets the goods!

Chinese police clash with Tibetans

Hundreds of heavily armed police officers have been deployed across Eastern Tibet in a bid to crush Tibetans who are protesting against illegal gold mining in the area.

Upon arriving in the area, senior police officers ordered all protesters to surrender, or they would be 'killed or subjected to torture'. They refused, and were subsequently attacked with tear gas and rubber bullets by the police. Reports are that at least four people have been killed and dozens more, seriously injured.

A local man named Khentsa, responded to the Chinese demands by saying: "You can kill us but we will not let mining take place here. It is our responsibility to protect our environment, which is a source of water to many other areas."

The illegal – but sanctioned by the state

anyway – gold mining project is damaging vital farm land and the water supply network.

As he was viewed as a leader, Khentsa and his wife were both arrested. His wife was later released, however, Khentsa has 'disappeared' without trace.

There are now roadblocks and checkpoints at all entry and exit points around the local towns. The armed forces and the police now control all access and movement. They have also blocked all mobile phone signals and are preventing any relatives from visiting the scores of Tibetans hospitalised during the troubles.

In the true tradition of the Chinese state, they claim there are no trouble whatsoever, and the entire story has been made up by western agitators.

Luther Blissett

Notes from the US

Dictatorship

The United States bullying continues around the world.

In mid-July an investigation by the Bureau of Investigative Journalism gave more information on its claims that the CIA specifically aimed to murder those rescuers attending the scene of earlier drones terrorist attacks by the US. A report by a Pakistani

journalist commissioned by the Bureau found that five so-called 'double-tap' strikes took place in mid-2012. In total, these attacks killed 53 people and injured 57. The legal charity Reprieve conducted a parallel investigation, which found that eight civilians died in one such US terrorist operation in Pakistan a year ago. Reports had emerged a

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Death by ticket inspection

Zero tolerance approach by ticket inspectors in Greece leads to fatal incident

Over a thousand Greeks have fought running battles with the police in Athens as they protested the death of a Greek teenager during a ticket inspection.

Thanassis Kanaoutis, 19, fell to his death when the doors on the bus he was travelling on unexpectedly opened whilst the bus was in transit. He was in the middle of an altercation with a ticket inspector who had accused Thanassis of not having a valid ticket.

The bus company have produced witness statements that claim Thanassis pressed the emergency door release and jumped out to avoid paying a fine. This is contradicted by other witnesses who claim that the inspector pushed him out of the door. That latter version of events is gaining credibility as it has transpired that Thanassis landed on his back.

Many Greeks are linking the incident to the country's deepening economic crisis. Thanassis, like many other ordinary Greeks, could not afford a bus fare of around £1 and this, coupled with ticket inspectors who have been told to take zero tolerance approach to people who cannot afford to pay for transport, has made the problems much worse.

As an incentive to for them to target working class people with no money, the inspectors have been given a bonus scheme that enables them to gain an astonishing 72% cut of all fines that they manage to impose on people.

Opponents to the severe austerity measures in Greece – i.e., anyone other than the political



classes – are calling on the government to make public transport free for the poor, unemployed, students, and pensioners.

A group advocating direct action, called 'I won't pay', are pushing a campaign of civil disobedience and non-payment across the country's transport network, and is rapidly gaining widespread public support. The government has offered no comment.

More than 1,000 people attended the funeral of Thanassis Kanaoutis, before descending on central Athens. Rubbish bins were set on fire, cars overturned, buses vandalised and stones were thrown at the police – who responded with tear gas and rubber bullets. At least four people were arrested.

Following the troubles, much of Athens' transport infrastructure was temporarily suspended, as the government feared there would be revenge attacks on ticket inspectors and transport department property.

Following the tragedy, there have been widespread protests and solidarity actions across Greece. Many buses have been stopped, damaged, covered in graffiti, and ticket inspectors have been asked to reconsider their loyalties.

A government lackey released a statement saying that Thanassis' tragic death would be 'fully investigated'. He went on to accuse those who would link the death to the economic crisis of 'populism no better than grave robbery'.

Luther Blissett

Notes from the US

◀ page 8

couple of weeks earlier proving that Bush and Obama had used the Authorisation for the Use of Military Force (AUMF) – a decree, use of which the US President is the sole arbiter – 30 times since September 11 2001 against an alleged 'nation, person, or organisation'.

Resistance

In California in July, over 3,000 of the state's prisoners stepped up their hunger strike in protest against inhumane conditions. These include poor food, prolonged (for years, decades even) solitary confinement in concrete cells with no window or access to natural light. And what are some of the possible reasons for such cruel and unusual punishment, which amounts to torture? Having certain items of art in your cell, sporting particular tattoos designs, receiving a birthday card

from the wrong person or being accused (often with or without proof) of suspicious behaviour by fellow prisoners.

At the end of July thousands of fast food workers went on strike in seven US cities in what looked like the largest strike of its kind in the country's history. The cause: impossibly low wages. The demand: a nationwide living wage of US\$15 (£9.80) an hour. Walkouts began early on 29 July in branches of McDonalds, Burger King, KFC, Dominos, Wendy's and other restaurants across Chicago, Detroit, Milwaukee, St Louis, Kansas City and Flint, Michigan, as well as New York City.

At the same time and following the Martin-Zimmerman case protesters in Florida marked 13 Days of 'Bigger Than Stand Your Ground' occupation. The rally

(#theTakeover) is one of a number of demonstrations mounted by the new Dream Defenders coalition. It is calling attention to the "systemic criminalisation of black and brown youth" and insisting that Florida Governor Rick Scott hold a special session of the legislature to repeal the Stand Your Ground law, address the dangerous and ongoing practice of racial profiling, and amend the "war on youth that paints us as criminals and funnels us out of schools and into jails".

Louis Further

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ECONOMICS

Lost in translation

Anna Aslanyan looks at the shambles which surrounds the Ministry of Justice's outsourcing of interpreting services

Should public services be provided by public servants? Over the recent months, many UK institutions looking to cut their costs increasingly think that it does not matter, so long as they are run on the cheap. The Ministry of Justice (MoJ) is but one example of this.

A contract privatising court interpreting services in England and Wales has been in place since February 2012, causing numerous problems in courtrooms, from delayed hearings to collapsed trials. The £42m annual contract was awarded to Applied Language Solutions, a company subsequently bought by the outsourcing firm Capita, which promised to cut the annual £60m interpreting bill by 30%. Whether it can deliver remains a huge question in light of the last eighteen months' developments.

After the Framework Agreement was signed, an MoJ spokesperson admitted: "There have been an unacceptable number of problems in the first weeks of the contract and we have asked the contractor to take urgent steps to improve performance." They were referring to incompetent interpreters hired by Capita, who had failed to turn up on some occasions and made irreparable mistakes on others. When a Romanian interpreter mistranslated a defendant's statement that he was 'beaten', saying 'bitten' instead, a retrial had to be re-ordered at Snaresbrook Crown Court. This

case, far from being isolated, cost taxpayers around £25k.

Previously members of the National Register of Public Service Interpreters were booked directly by courts and received a flat fee of £85, a quarter-hourly rate after three hours and expenses. This has been replaced by an hourly rate of £16 with no travel expenses. No wonder the majority of registered members are boycotting the agreement – such working conditions can easily leave you out of pocket. Although interpreters have never been especially highly paid, many professionals see their job as a vocation and take pride in it, unwilling to compromise on their standards. When a fellow *terp*, translating for a defendant accused of "perverting the course of justice", tells him, simply, that he is a 'pervert' – another egregious example of the quality of performance MoJ seems to be content with – it does make you despair of your profession.

Interpreters' protests outside Parliament, organised shortly after the changes were implemented, produced a few headlines but no practical results. Professional Interpreters for Justice (PI4J), an umbrella group representing 10 organisations, went on to launch a more sustained campaign. To keep the MoJ under pressure, its activists have written to their MPs, signed petitions and monitored court hearings. Their efforts culminated in a parliamentary debate on 20th June 2013, when a number of MPs condemned the MoJ's handling of the contract which is still going wrong after 500 days. Geoffrey Buckingham, chairman of Association of Police and Court Interpreters, said: "PI4J was vindicated during this debate and we were delighted to hear the Members of

Parliament recount the contract's failures and highlight where the Justice Minister has gone wrong in misleading statements about performance and savings."

Sir Alan Beith, the Liberal Democrat chairman of the Justice Select Committee, called the situation 'deplorable' when court staff were "strongly pressed by the government not to cooperate" with his committee's enquiry. After Justice Minister Helen Grant (who was not supported by any conservative MP in the debate) had given her statement, Beith said the minister "will not have convinced any of us that the situation is acceptable and sustainable [nor] that the savings figures take adequate account of the additional cost to the system." Andy Slaughter, Shadow Justice Minister, said in the debate that Grant was the only party to ignore the advice of PI4J. Stressing that the courts had been unwilling to help him with his own investigations of the 'shambles', he said: "The MoJ did not want the full facts to emerge. They know [that] about half the courts are still finding their own interpreters. The MoJ is not acknowledging that it's getting worse. The costs of failure of the contract must now be investigated." Alan Johnson, the former Labour home secretary, said he had never known three reports (from National Audit Office, Public Accounts Committee and Justice Select Committee) "to be so consistent in their condemnation of a government policy."

The chaos that ensued in courtrooms after Capita came into power, attributed by the agreement's proponents to teething problems, has now reached its next stage, that of stagnation. Her Majesty's Courts and Tribunal Service has recently written to professional court interpreters, thanking them for their work in the past and advising them to register with Capita. That missive heralded the start of a new, super-efficient era of Google Translate (in another episode of this ongoing travesty of justice, a court clerk had to use the internet tool to facilitate a hearing). Professional interpreters keep fighting, having recently prepared a new proposal as an alternative to the existing contract, while their potential charges are being kept in custody – at a considerable expense.

While the MoJ is being persuaded that its outsourcing exercise has gone too far and needs to be reversed, another one is being planned. Legal aid may become the next casualty in this war between the public and the private: a reform aimed at saving £220m a year is now under consultation. Justice Alliance warns: "The removal of choice and the cuts in funding will mean you will be getting a service where the cheapest defence lawyers will get a legal aid contract." Today some defendants are at least able to understand what the charges against them are: if their lawyers are hit by yet another dysfunctional agreement, they will be deprived of this basic right, too.



Defence strategy

With the EDL planning another march through Tower Hamlets in September, Louise Reynolds discusses their favoured tactics and asks how we can organise the most effective counter-protest

On Saturday 7th September the English Defence League (EDL) are attempting yet again to march through the East London borough of Tower Hamlets. Tower Hamlets has a high Muslim population. It is also the home of the Freedom Press bookshop and HQ, which is situated next to Whitechapel Art Gallery. The EDL are billing this march as ‘the return’, despite the nearest they getting so far being a static rally outside the borough. Unless, of course, they’re counting the memorable highlight of September 2011, when their coach was smashed up and chased out of Whitechapel by hundreds of locals, they’ve just not made it in yet. Right now people across the East End and beyond are organising to make sure they won’t make it in this time either.

The EDL make some extraordinary claims that belie the fact that they just don’t know – or want to know – the area at all. They claim white East Londoners need ‘rescuing’ from their Muslim neighbours. They cite the ‘Muslim patrol’ as a serious moralising force in the community, rather than a couple of bullies who’ve shouted a bit of abuse in the street, and who’ve not been seen for months. They scaremonger with ridiculous claims about ‘growing hostility’ and ‘brutal assaults’ against non-Muslims, which may get a rise out of racists from outside of Tower Hamlets, but as residents white, black and asian will contest, in reality there is no such tension to talk of at all.

The end goal of the EDL’s demonstrations is vague. Whenever such a demo is announced, the EDL forums buzz with unspecified glee; the sentiment is one of defiance that basically boils down to ‘showing’ the Muslims something, usually that white people in England ‘still’ exist. There are blatant attempts at provocation, with threats to bring along a hog roast on 7th September, so local Muslims can smell the pork and presumably be offended. It appears some EDL are already resigning themselves to being so far away from the actual borough of Tower Hamlets, and so powerless to do anything, they must rely on the blowing of the wind to propel their hatred towards their targets, as well as any Jewish or vegetarian inhabitants in the area. The EDL claim to want to ‘create



debate’, but many of their members seem to prefer to update the old, racist dog-shit-in-the-letterbox tactics with more tailored offensiveness, including tweeting pictures of bank notes smeared with pig fat to be spent at Muslim businesses, throwing bacon sandwiches on to roofs and leaving a pig’s head on a mosque.

As for those organising against the march on 7th September, the UAF, the local council and trade unions under the label ‘United East End’ have called for a ban, with the local mayor Lutfur Rahman writing a letter to Home Secretary Theresa May urging her to stop the EDL’s ‘message of hate’ reaching Tower Hamlets. The UAF have ingratiated themselves with one of the local places of worship, the East London Mosque, and want to monopolise dissent, reportedly labelling those organising outside their clique as ‘thugs and drug dealers’ according to attendees at their public meeting at the mosque. Their main aim is to get out “huge numbers on the day which will ensure the EDL are kept away from Tower Hamlets”. If past experience is any indication, this is likely to manifest as a rally or short march taking place some distance from where the EDL will actually be congregating on the day, complete with ‘urban’ music to entertain the attendees and prevent any real anger or opposition being expressed. In other words, lots of people standing around declaring their anti-racism will ensure the police do the actual job of keeping the EDL away from them, perhaps even letting them march in another part of the borough. They say they intend to create a ‘family atmosphere’ in protest of the EDL, but also stated that if

it looked like there may be clashes, they would endeavour to “keep the women and children off the streets”. United indeed!

London Antifascists, a group made up of local antifascists, anarchists, radical trade unionists and socialists, is part of the nationwide Anti-Fascist Network (AFN). They take a militant stance, being against a state ban and instead for the community actively defending itself by directly disrupting any EDL attempts to enter or march through the borough. There have been regular meetings and local activities publicising the march and urging everyone to get out onto the streets on the 7th September. London Antifascists and South London Antifascists are holding a night of debate and discussion on fascism and anti-fascism in the East End, with food, speakers and organising at the Rag Factory in Heneage Street, E1, on 31st August. On the day of the march the AFN will form a bloc, identifiable by a banner, and aims to be mobile and fluid in order to react quickly to disrupt the EDL’s as yet unconfirmed plans.

By marching through our community the EDL attempt to create division where there is unity, and spread racial tension where there is none. It’s up to us as residents and antifascists to get as many people as possible out on the streets on 7th September to ensure the EDL do not get to parade their hatred through the streets of London unopposed.

Updates from London Antifascists will be available on the day from the twitter account @THstopEDL. More information can found at <http://londonantifascists.wordpress.com/>

FEATURE

THE TRUTH WILL O

Jamie Ranger looks at the recent leaking scandals – and asks how they can help us to promote anarchist politics

It could easily be said that the media narratives of the lives of infamous American whistle-blowers Edward Snowden and Bradley Manning have drifted away from the secrets they exposed in the United States military and security operations, and towards a focus on the personal background, motivations and current developments of the individuals themselves. Suddenly, it is of the utmost importance to find out that Bradley Manning was bullied at school, that Edward Snowden was a financial supporter of Ron Paul's presidential campaign, and that Russian airport lounges aren't the most comfortable places to get a good night's sleep.

Although no respectable media outlet has gone as far as to misinterpret either whistle-blower as an 'anarchist' of sorts, it is perhaps even more interesting if you consider both of these men as very much in favour of the *status quo*. Bradley Manning intended to go to college via a military scholarship; Edward Snowden was an able, willing and well-paid member of a government organisation and a supporter of the current political settlement in the United States. These men weren't ex-communist sleeper-agents activated 20 years too late. They weren't fundamentalist ideologues or political dissidents that took their news in pamphlet

form. They were well-educated, strait-laced white guys who saw that the institutions that they had presumed to be trustworthy were in fact undermining their own personal expectations of public morality, transparency and responsibility to the citizens they are supposedly sworn to protect. They weren't the enemy, they weren't even credible exemplars of the enemy within. They were generic everymen, and that should be the story. They were moral citizens reacting to the repugnant quagmire of corruption, secrecy and bloodshed surrounding them. It is quite obvious to anyone who isn't a right-wing reactionary that Bradley Manning and Edward Snowden are hardly villainous Shakespearean malcontents devilishly leading the righteous freedom fighter 'America' astray. They are just people who were willing to risk their own lives for the betterment of the common good. A rejection of secrecy in favour of hierarchical transparency, and even against their rational self-interest, their consciences were stronger individually than the collective will of the American military-industrial complex in full GI Joe gusto.

A 'traitor' is someone who betrays his or her sovereign state, commits an act that undermines state security, encourages antagonism towards the state, or makes any direct attempt to overthrow the state. Given that both Manning and Snowden were substantially patriotic Americans that intended to serve their state in their respective career paths, it has been an unwise move on the part of the American right to serve up these examples of very normal, standard American archetypes as treacherous moles, stabbing their noble and virtuous country in the back with that rapier-sharp thing called 'facts'. But it would be the contention of these whistle-blowers, and indeed, the contention of this article, that it is not the citizen at the level of the political subject that is benefitting from the lack of transparency in security operations, or the violent excesses of the United States military. Quite the contrary. The mismanagement of the state's operations on this level (if you're an optimistic social democrat or a liberal) or simply the ideologically necessary operation of the last remaining empire (if you're a pessimistic Gore Vidal fan) appear to be that which undermines national security in the long term, not those who expose these counterproductive idiosyncrasies. Surely a whistle-blower in any form is just the vigilante equivalent of the hierarchical transparency that democratic governments with their oft-quoted constitutions, checks and balances (or in the case of the UK, its independent inquiries all the way down) ought to be, and indeed claim to be, instilling regardless? Who are states protecting us from on the international stage exactly, other than other states? What does the common American guy fresh out of high school have against a mother-of-two in



Afghanistan trying to buy some dates at a market stall? What does this same man have against a few orphans kicking a football around and daydreaming of playing for Real Madrid? It is the contention of this article, and indeed many an anarchist, that it is only when the political subject is swayed by false promises of glory and heroism, or coaxed by economic necessity (miscalculations and motivations that anyone ought to find sympathy with) and placed into a role as the extension of a state's military prowess, does a civilised civilian change. He is in danger of becoming a shell-shocked chimera of the self that he entered with. That of a desensitised brute, the sort of "machine man with machine minds and machine hearts" (courtesy of Chaplin's final speech in *The Great Dictator*). The sort that laughs hysterically and boisterously as children are ripped apart, limbs detaching from timid, youthful bodies, with an appreciation for the aesthetic of an explosion engulfing a village of civilians bordering on the psychotic, all with a half-baked understanding of utilitarianism labelled with that unsettlingly neutral moniker 'collateral damage'.



UT



It is these aforementioned ex-civilians, products of a system with promises of golden pensions and the chance to make their lives as exciting as the movies they show in the cinemas. It is these guys who are willing to put their lives at risks to put food on the table for their wife and kids, and in the case of the Wikileaks, who show the rare but unfortunately present displays of sociopathic tendencies that Bradley Manning exposed. Unsurprisingly, Manning's narrative has quickly shifted from perhaps an inquiry into the psychological effects of the war, to the controversial logistics of the US military enrolment process, and indeed a broader intellectual discourse on where and why the limits of public conceptions of morality appear to end once you put on any sort of state-endorsed uniform. As for Snowden's revelations, the government appear to be willing to act unconstitutionally, unequivocally in their own interests, and in complete contradiction to their rhetoric of personal freedom, in order to gather information needed to pursue [insert topical foreign insurgents of the day]. The Orwellian prophecies of even the most disturbed

conspiracy bloggers were suddenly appearing, albeit by chance, on the front page of the *Guardian*, as leaks exposed the state as suspicious of its own citizens, a totalitarian mind-set that is almost farcical in its oblivious hypocrisy.

So what is the reaction of the United States to these brave defenders of justice, morality and democracy? Bradley Manning is currently appealing against the pathetically harsh sentence of 130 years imprisonment, whilst Edward Snowden embraces Putin with sheepish reluctance, trying not to tarnish his own personal manifesto of human rights and democratic transparency. Meanwhile, arch-egotist and hacker extraordinaire Julian Assange is still operating from inside the Ecuadorian embassy in London, lest he be dragged kicking and screaming via Sweden to the United States, presumably to be charged with bizarre and unusual offences against the faultless moral authority of the two-party state.

How can anarchism make its own impact on proceedings? These recent cases of whistleblowers appeal to anarchist ideas in many different ways, albeit with the caveat that

none of the aforementioned 'traitors' to their respective nations would be overtly enthused by the notion. They share a belief in educating the population in terms of politicising the relationship between the state and the individual political citizen in an age of neo-liberal consensus, they support notions of state accountability (although none would go as far as to claim that the state is fundamentally an institution that is incapable of being rectified in some form or another), and they support calls for hierarchical transparency and exposing hypocrisy, although not as far as to hold hierarchical institutions in contempt, rather healthy suspicion. Not only have they revealed certain information about the hidden operations of statecraft, that often hold the civilian's rights in contempt, but also brought this idea into mainstream political discourse. A topic of conversation often exclusively pored over by political cynics, radical thinkers and that much bigger internet group of well-intentioned conspiracy freaks, has now become an accessible talking point as relevant in political discussions as the relationship between the public and private sector, or immigration policy. This ought to be seen as the opportunity for a victory for sustained pressure for advocacy of human rights, democratic transparency, and knowledge over ignorance that can seized upon by anarchism. Seized in order to reinvigorate the down-hearted activist, the political misanthrope, and the anti-authoritarian community with the purpose of pushing for a smaller, less ideological and less top-heavy statecraft with a view to producing more horizontal forms of international diplomacy and citizen-state relations in the long term.



INTERVIEW

Life with the undercover cops

Comrade Goldsmith interviews activist Merrick Badger, who was part of a group infiltrated by police officers

Background

Ever since the anti-Vietnam war demonstrations in 1968, the police have been keen to infiltrate political organisations, mainly leftwing ones, in order to try to pre-empt civil disobedience.

The identities of an estimated 80 dead children have been used by undercover police.

- The use of dead children's identities by undercover police officers was not confined to the Special Demonstration Squad. It was also a practice employed by the National Public Order Intelligence Unit – a unit that was only set up in 1999 – as Deputy Assistant Commissioner Patricia Gallan of the Metropolitan police revealed to the Commons home affairs committee.
- Police officers having sex with activists in groups they infiltrated was not authorised, and could not be justified morally, Gallan said. She could not envisage any circumstances under which a commander would authorise this.
- The names of 42 dead children were used by undercover officers to create fake identities but their families have not been told because of the risk to police, a report has said.
- The identities were of children born between 1940 and 1975, and officers preferred those who had died between the ages of four and eight.
- The McLibel leaflet was co-written by undercover police officer Bob Lambert.
- Bob Lambert posed as a radical activist named 'Bob Robinson' [pictured below protesting outside The Dorchester Hotel in 1984].



Comrade Goldsmith: So tell me a bit about what happened...

Merrick Badger: When we first uncovered Kennedy [pictured right] our top priority was the protection of the people closest to him – particularly his girlfriend at the time.

There was a lot of emotional response among activists – feeling very wary. Part of that is that you've just had your life invaded in the grossest terms. As activists we have a culture of not putting yourself forward. Doing media work is quite looked down on among activists which I think is by and large healthy. It's certainly not regarded as the pinnacle of what we do. We tend to use false names so that you don't end up being a figurehead. The media love stars – look what happened to Swampy.

The women concerned were the most impacted and it was decided not to do anything that might make things harder for them both personally and legally. It is



interesting that Peter Francis has said that he doesn't want to pull the rug from under their feet because they should be on the front end of it.

People have started talking more and more as Peter Francis has been talking more. It's changed how a lot of us feel about the media because I think *The Guardian* has done a lot of incredible work around this that we couldn't have done. They of course have direct access to the undercover cops for example. We've been cautiously working with *The Guardian* and they've been absolutely impeccable even when you've told them things in confidence."

CG: So did you have any direct dealings with these officers, did they impact on you directly either in your personal life or as an activist?

MB: Yeah, loads. For a start Mark Kennedy became involved with a girlfriend I'd been in a long term relationship with. They know how to ingratiate themselves. With the political work he was quite keen to let things go ahead.



For example the G8 camp at Stirling was very deep in Climate Camp, so was Watson [policewoman 'Lynn Watson', pictured left]. They were in on all of that and the secret planning and taking the land in the middle of the night. Interesting also, that they'd been on the inside on a lot of stuff, and there were several actions where when people turned up it was scuppered.

Of course that happened at Ratcliffe [on Soar] and that brought the whole thing into the light. You had 114 people there – well, 113 and a police officer [Mark Kennedy]. You have to wonder, the climate movement was really on the ascendant in the second half of the last decade. In Britain more than anywhere else in the world and it's not a coincidence that Britain ended up with the best climate change legislation in the world. You have to wonder if we hadn't had coppers in our midst what we would have pulled off, what that would have inspired throughout the country, the pressure that would have put on governments, what that would have inspired throughout the world and the difference between the kind of response to climate change that we've got and what we would have had. There are people who are going to die in that difference; there are whole species that are going to go down in that difference. The personal stuff with me and Kennedy is one thing, but it's the impact on the political stuff that makes me fucking angry with him.

He and his colleagues worked to infiltrate and undermine anti-fascists exactly at the time that the BNP and the EDL rose and you've got to wonder how well they'd have done if the anti-fascists hadn't been scuppered. They've been the capable and effective fascist activists, pro-capitalist activists and pro Climate Change activists that you could get and you don't know how much more was stopped before it even got going. That's the stuff that makes me really fucking angry with him.

Merrick Badger's blog is available at <http://bristlingbadger.blogspot.com/>

Privatised prisons failing

● As many of you will know, Angola Three member 70-year-old Herman Wallace was diagnosed with advanced liver cancer at the beginning of June. Herman and Albert Woodfox, 65, the other remaining member of the Angola Three still in prison, have both spent 41 years in solitary confinement. The other member of the three, Robert King, was released in 2001. Wallace and Woodfox continue to use every means available to them to try and gain their release. Albert, for example, had his conviction overturned for the third time earlier this year, but he remains in prison while the state appeals. Herman, however, lost his latest challenge, and continues to fight in the courts. Now, for Herman, that release is even more pressing as his cancer is terminal.

Herman wants to spend what time he has with those he holds nearest and dearest and not to die in prison. To that end, the Angola Three's long-term network of supporters have begun a campaign to get that release before it's too late. After a month's worth of pressure, Louisiana's Hunt Prison has reduced his classification from maximum to medium security and transferred him to a 10-bunk dorm inside the prison hospital, where he has access to a day room and does not have to wear leg irons. Herman even got to meet Albert and Robert for the first time in several years, thanks to a court order granting them time to meet jointly with their attorneys in the lead up to the civil case next summer. Hopefully, Herman will get his day in court but in the meantime you can support the demand for his compassionate release at www.angola3.org

● At the time of writing, the hunger and work strike being pursued in Californian prisons in support of five core demands from prisoners in State Secure Housing Units (SHUs) had reached its fifth week. SHUs are the most restrictive version of solitary confinement used in American prisons. Currently somewhere between 200 to 400 prisoners (due to restrictions on communications, the exact numbers are unknown and the Department of Correction's figures cannot be trusted) are refusing meals. Many of the men are experiencing dizziness, confusion, vision problems, nausea, and vomiting even after drinking only water.

So far CDCR officials have refused to negotiate. Instead they have targeted those they consider the 'leaders' with further restrictions and have launched a propaganda campaign aimed at demonising those participating in the protests. They are labelling them 'irredeemable criminals', gang members solely interested in controlling the drugs trade. This completely ignores the Call to End Hostilities, which has been operating across ethnic lines at Pelican Bay since 2012. If there are no 'gang wars', there is no need for the SHUs.

It will come as no surprise that the very nicks that the prison privatisation lobby has been holding up as the ideal for their brave new world of a future 'marketised' prison estate are the ones that come bottom of the latest Ministry of Justice Prison Annual Performance Ratings. These worst performing jails are the G4S-managed HMP Oakwood, Serco-run HMP Thameside and the state-run HMP Winchester.

The crumbling edifice of Winchester prison, with its violence and drugs problems, has long been on the list of prisons in need of closure – including the list published in the latest pro-privatisation 'research' from Policy Exchange, a right-wing "independent, non-partisan educational charity" as the *Guardian* laughably labels it. Nothing controversial there then – unlike the appearance of the two latest hi-tech, low-cost new state-of-the-art super-prisons alongside it in the list of shame.

The £150m mini-Titan HMP Oakwood has been a farce from the beginning. First there was the expensive remedial landscaping needed to shield nearby residents from the new prison's visitor centre, which had been built a storey too high. Once it opened, further problems presented themselves: the showers that turned themselves on in the middle of the night and spewed scalding-hot water across the floors, an electrical system that short-circuited every time the lights were turned on and the £7m superkitchens that initially failed to produce any food. Then G4S, who signed a 15-year contract worth £468.3m to build and run the 1,600-place prison, were caught cherry-picking only the most compliant of prisoners, rejecting of nearly 60% of prisoners sent to

them in the first months following its high-profile opening.

The other prison propping-up the table is £100m 900-place HMP Thameside, built and run by Serco on a 2½-year contract worth £41.5m. It allegedly has high levels of violence and use of restraint, lack of resettlement and purposeful activity, and 60% of prisoners are locked up during the working day, with some spending 23 hours a day banged-up in their cells. Neither nicks stand out as particularly good adverts for a privatised prison service.

Now G4S have hit back with a PR barrage, the latest in a long line that they have had to launch following the Olympics security fiasco and, alongside Serco, the alleged mass fraud involved with their electronic tagging contracts. They have appointed a new prison director, and he has pledged to force prisoners "to do a full 40 hours [work] or miss out on wages" (even though there are only 400 work places), introduce "zero-tolerance on drug abuse" and declare a "war on drugs", a problem highlighted in the Inspectorate's latest performance warning. However, he appears less 'gung-ho' when it comes to the other major problems that HMIP identified – the very poor lack of education and healthcare delivery for prisoners, where less than half of all prisoners have access to education and paramedics have had to regularly be called into to treat inmates.

They may be cheap to run, which is why Policy Exchange has held Oakwood up as an example of how to run the prison system more 'efficiently', but they are certainly not a cheerful option for anyone spending time in them at Her Madge's Pleasure.



COMMENT

ABOUT FREEDOM

ANGEL ALLEY

Another jolly month passes at Freedom Press. Upstairs at the Advisory Service for Squatters, preparations are underway to mark the first anniversary of the anti-squatting legislation on 1st September, while down here we digress into examination of the commercial aspects of the book trade.

Many thanks to all those contributing secondhand books. Last month we sold 180 of them bringing in, wait for it, £180 (that's 'cos they cost £1 each). For keeping the business going, this is more important than it might seem. Books we buy from commercial publishers are typically at 33% discount to us, but 50% or 60% discount to big chains and supermarkets. With full price books we simply can't risk ordering interesting but not sure-selling titles because if one in three of them ends up not selling then we make no money at all. So well done to all those who have and who will be donating books, and we'd like to encourage buyers to come and check out our secondhand section – they do all go at a quid, so you too may even get a *Slow Burning Fuse* for a nicker.

Of new titles our current top seller is *Undercover: The True Story of Britain's Secret Police*, the tale of the Special Demonstration Group and its successors – a must-read for anyone involved in perfectly legal peaceful protest and of passing interest to revolutionary anarchists as well.

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CONTACT DETAILS

Freedom Press, 84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1 7QX

Tel/fax: 020 7247 9249

www.freedompress.org.uk

Enquiries: info@freedompress.org.uk

Copy/Letters: copy@freedompress.org.uk

Subscriptions: subs@freedompress.org.uk

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A sideways look

by SVARTFROSK

At the beginning of August, the High Court ruled that the decision to close Lewisham Hospital's Accident and Emergency and Maternity departments was unlawful. Mr Justice Siber found that Matthew Kershaw, the Special Administrator of the neighbouring South London NHS Trust had exceeded his powers and Jeremy Hunt the Health Secretary had breached the NHS Act 2006 when he approved the plans.

The legal action was brought by the Save Lewisham Hospital Campaign and Lewisham Council and was funded in part by crowd-sourcing. I am pleased that the cuts were struck down, but the government were given leave to appeal, and they surely will. Likely to make a large part of the government's case is that they consulted on these measures.

I responded to the consultation, as did thousands of others locally. It was roundly rejected and the point was made by the Campaign, and by others, that the "consultation" was weighted in favour of what Hatchedman Kershaw wanted to do anyway. It cost millions of pounds even though he only had a budget of £400,000 or so. And not included in the consultation was any sort of alternatives to cutting Lewisham.

It strikes me that there are two things we can draw from this consultation and generalise from. Firstly, it was irrelevant, because they'd already decided what they were going to do.

Secondly it was designed to draw people away from arguments about what we need by focussing on inconsequential details. We need a good free health service with emergency

departments that are accessible to the millions of people who live nearby. We need a solution to the disastrous PFI experiment that caused the South London NHS Trust's bankruptcy and results in the NHS spending millions on servicing hedge funds rather than treating patients. We ought to be able to leave it to competent administrators to work out where particular services are best placed.

Thirdly, it was sufficiently complicated and opaque that people could easily end up agreeing to cuts without understanding what they meant. This last point was underlined when the Campaign had to produce a guide to how to fill it in, because medically informed people within it were so worried about the leading questions.

Consultation is part of politics and business as usual. I have been "consulted" about my kids' school changing its governance, but in reality I had no idea what it meant and I only got the one side of the argument so I am none the wiser on that. Someone I know was consulted about the closure of his department where he worked. He was very angry about management's refusal to look at any other options other than closure. His consultation has now ended with redundancy and closure. A few years ago my street was "consulted" on a parking scheme. I've still not met anyone in the street who said yes, but we got it anyway.

The next time someone offers to "consult" – take it with a pinch of salt. Better still, go on the offensive. It is a fig leaf and one we don't need to stand for.



Face the music

Mike Murphy ('Crass war', *Freedom*, May) is of course looking in the wrong place for rebel music. Crass and their ilk were never mainstream chart-fodder, and punk music, like any Golden Age, was only briefly a force for dissent and social change in the mainstream. Then, as now, DIY culture and dissenting voices in music exist away from the capitalist cultural centre (and we have more and better tools for dissemination than ever). It is not in the music biz's interests to support and promote non-commercial and oppositional currents. Accordingly, it is up to us who oppose the status quo to seek out and support the alternatives, the DIY, the small and unknown artists. It is a constantly repeated complaint: "Where is the new rebel and protest music?" It's all over the place and there's loads of it! Maybe we should all get out more!

James Bar Bowen

Not so comradely...

To talk about the International Brigade ('Los Camaradas Ingleses', *Freedom*, July) without touching on the fact that it was under the control of the Communist Party is foolish. Not mentioning that the Communist Party's role was to destroy the anarchist revolution, in an anarchist paper, seems strange. Some were brave people with good intentions, who could deny that? But "My enemy's enemy is my friend" is a dangerous game to play.

John

Royally amusing!

Thanks very much for sending the June and July issues of *Freedom*, which I enjoyed very much. I found them lively, interesting and well written. It's good that you do humour as well, since humour seems to me one of the redeeming features of human life. The piece on the royal baby was very funny I thought, as well as having a sharp underbelly. It was also nicely laid out which is (in my experience) unusual in political magazines.

John P.

Pogo to go

I was really upset to hear about the imminent closure of Pogo Cafe after nine years of being in business. It came as a real shock to me and as a Hackney resident and Pogo regular I will feel its loss very keenly. I only hope it manages to resurrect somewhere in some form or another.

Trisha Brown

Big Brother in the bedroom

Anti bedroom tax campaigners from around Lothians have met in an emergency meeting and issued a statement condemning City of Edinburgh Council's policy of quizzing people on their expenditure on alcohol, cigarettes and satellite TV and using this information

in deciding whether to award tenants Discretionary Housing Payment.

"This has led to newspaper reports portraying DHP claimants as scroungers and wasters. In fact research by the Scottish Government and COSLA reveals that at least 80% of households affected by the bedroom tax contain disabled people," state the Lothian Federation of Anti Bedroom Tax Groups. "We believe this policy is an incitement to hatred against disabled people – these questions must be removed."

"In fact City of Edinburgh Council is attacking people with severe disabilities by unfairly denying them Discretionary Housing Payments. The Council is counting Disability Living Allowance and Personal Independence Payment as income when calculating if a claimant needs DHP. This is completely wrong. DLA and PIP should be completely disregarded as available income, because it is paid to cover the substantial extra costs incurred by people with severe disabilities."

Faced by a challenge by disabled claimants, Glasgow City Council recently changed its decision and disregarded DLA in such a DHP case. The Anti Bedroom Tax Federation maintain that City of Edinburgh Council must do the same. "Councillor Cammy Day told north Edinburgh campaigners on 17th June that he disagreed with DLA being counted for DHP purposes – this needs to be changed now. This discrimination against the disabled must end."

"Instead of attacking disabled claimants

the Council should be using its powers to increase the amount available for DHP by 2.5 times," urge the Lothians Anti Bedroom Tax Federation. The *Evening News* recently reported that 72% of Edinburgh Council tenants hit by the bedroom tax are in rent arrears. "More, properly trained staff are needed to make sure Discretionary Payments reach all in need."

The campaigners have further charges. "City of Edinburgh Council have admitted they are not assessing claimants individually to check if they are entitled to an exemption from the Bedroom Tax. As a result the Council hounded a disabled tenant for rent arrears despite the fact that she had overnight carers stay every night and was thus exempt. Eventually this tenant, Margaret, became so ill that she had to give up her tenancy."

"Despite the Council's welcome no evictions policy, in other respects the Labour-SNP administration seem to be enthusiastically implementing this totally unjust Tory/Lib Dem legislation," say the Anti Bedroom Tax Federation. "Extra staff are being deployed to phone and harass tenants about rent arrears. A seriously ill disabled tenant who has overnight carers on average two to three times per week, has been refused an exemption on the grounds that her carers are not staying 'regularly'. We urge all who care about justice to join with us in opposing this unfair attack on the poor and disabled."

Edinburgh Against Cuts

www.edinburghagaincuts.org.uk

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GETTING ACTIVE

WHAT'S ON

AUGUST

■ **7th to 11th** Earth First! Summer Gathering near Bexhill, see <http://efgathering.weebly.com/> for details.

■ **10th** News from Nowhere Club presents *Political Biography* with speaker Rania Khan at The Epicentre, West Street, Leytonstone E11 4LJ, buffet 7.30pm, talk starts 8pm, see <http://www.newsfromnowhereclub.org/> or call 0208 555 5248 for details.

■ **16th** The Red & Black Club at LARC, 62 Fieldgate Street, London E1 1ES from 8pm, Dissident Island Radio will be broadcasting live as the local anarchists host a traditional east end knees-up.

■ **22nd** Reel News film night at The Grosvenor, 17 Sidney Road, Stockwell, London SW9 0TP, from 7.30pm until 11.30pm, see <http://reelnews.co.uk> for more.

SEPTEMBER

■ **3rd and 17th** Practical Squatting Evening at LARC, 62 Fieldgate Street, London E1 1ES from 7pm to 8pm, for more see <http://www.squatter.org.uk/>

■ **5th, 12th, 19th and 26th** London group of The Anarchist Federation meets weekly on Thursday evenings at Freedom Bookshop, 84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1 7QX. If you would like to attend please email london@afed.org.uk beforehand.

■ **7th to 14th** Week of action against DSEi, see www.stopthearmsfair.org.uk for more.

■ **10th and 24th** Practical Squatting Evening at 56a Infoshop, 56a Crampton Street, London SE17 3AE from 7pm to 8pm, see <http://www.56a.org.uk/> for details.

■ **14th** News from Nowhere Club presents *Conflict and Competition: The Rise and Fall of London's Docks in the nineteenth century* with speaker Dr Tom Wareham at The Epicentre, West Street, Leytonstone E11 4LJ, buffet 7.30pm, talk starts 8pm, see <http://www.newsfromnowhereclub.org/> or call 0208 555 5248 for details.

■ **20th** The Red & Black Club at LARC, 62 Fieldgate Street, London E1 1ES from 8pm, Dissident Island Radio will be broadcasting live as the local anarchists host a traditional east end knees-up.

■ **21st** Swindon Radical Book Fair from 11am until 4pm at Central Community Centre, Emlyn Square, Swindon, SN1 5BL, see <https://www.facebook.com/events/429915787127188/> for details.

■ **26th** Reel News film night at The Grosvenor, 17 Sidney Road, Stockwell, London SW9 0TP, from 7.30pm until 11.30pm, see <http://reelnews.co.uk> for more.

OCTOBER

■ **12th** News from Nowhere Club presents *Before the Plebs: Independent Working Class Education in the nineteenth century* with speaker Keith Flett at The Epicentre, West Street, Leytonstone E11 4LJ, from 7.30pm, see <http://www.newsfromnowhereclub.org/> or call 0208 555 5248 for details.



● The first London Bookfair was held at the ill-fated autonomy centre in Wapping. In what turned out to be the coldest day of the year, half a dozen anarchist publishers spread out their wares, and when hardly anyone turned up they played a pool tournament. It was a nice time and everyone said: "let's do it again next year". So we did. No one imagined then that three decades later, the **London Anarchist Bookfair** would still be going strong, attracting over 3,000 people. It's been a huge success and is a celebration of our history and our hope for the future.

Each year we've grown with more stallholders, more meetings and more people turning up on the day. Increasing numbers of people is why we have gradually changed venues, each time to a bigger place.

In the 1980s we saw widespread working class resistance. The militant strikes and urban uprisings of the mid '80s, and the defeat of the poll tax.

In the 1990s Labour rushed into wars for oil and the Coalition that replaced them now use the threat of economic collapse to go to war against the poor.

No one can seriously think that there is any future in the charade of parliament and political parties. Resistance is growing again on the streets, in workplaces, on campuses and central to it is self-organisation as it becomes clearer that wherever we need to fight we need to do it for ourselves.

One of last year's speakers described the London Anarchist Bookfair as possibly the

biggest annual anarchist event in the world. We see it as a tiny part of a movement that seeks to stir up resistance and solidarity. It's a space to set out our ideas, experience and arguments, to get involved and to show that whatever the state throws at us doesn't isolate or crush us. More than anything the Bookfair is a chance to meet other people who want to build a new world. It's proof that anarchism doesn't have to mean lack of organisation.

Last year there were a few problems with the venue, including some of the meeting rooms being too small, crowding on the main staircase and the lift being out of action for part of the day, which made it difficult for people with mobility problems getting from floor to floor.

We spent the time after the bookfair looking at other possible venues, but we couldn't find anything that suited the event better than Queen Mary's, but we have been chatting with the venue and have identified some bigger rooms for meetings, and we can use other staircases for getting around the building. This should solve a lot of the problems of 2012 – although the problems are of our own making, as the bookfair is just too successful!

The 2013 London Anarchist Bookfair will be held on Saturday 19th October from 10am to 7pm at Queen Mary University of London, Mile End Road, London E1 4NS. See <http://anarchistbookfair.org.uk/> for details.

Lazio racists banned

Italian Serie A (top division) football team, Lazio, have been instructed to close sections of their stadium for the opening weekend fixture of the new football season as a sanction for the wholesale racist chanting of their supporters.

The main 'north' stand at Lazio's Olympic stadium was the scene of thousands of fans hurling foul racist abuse at several players from Juventus at last season's Italian cup final. The abuse of black players has continued throughout the pre-season friendlies that Lazio have played.

During the course of last season, the Italian FA found Lazio guilty of racist behaviour by their fans on four occasions. Their punishment was a derisory fine and a minor game had to be played behind closed doors. Imagine issuing a club that thinks nothing of spending £20 million on a player, a £5,000 fine, and expecting it to have an impact.

Racism in Italian football would appear to be spiralling out of control. *Freedom* has

covered two incidents in the last six months where players have abandoned games due to racist chanting. Initially sympathetic to the players cause, the Italian FA are down saying it is the referee is to decide whether chanting is racist, not the player being targeted.

Speaking on the racism at Lazio, former player, Ousmane Dabo, stated: "The monkey noises towards the Juve players hurt me. I don't understand why people continue to make these sounds considering they are only damaging their own fans because the Curva will now be closed, but it also damages Lazio on an international level, both in terms of stadium closures and their reputation. People throughout the world think all Lazio fans are racists. In France, people ridicule me for being a Lazio fan because I'm black and this hurts me a lot. I tell them that Lazio fans are not racist but, when you hear the chants like on Sunday, what can I say?"

AC Milan, Roma, and Inter-Milan have both been charged over incidents of mass

racism, but what hope can the footballing authorities have of making changes when the President of Inter-Milan describes opposition players using racist language?

Lazio have strong links to far-right street gangs across Rome, many of whom use football as an outlet for their disgusting beliefs. Lazio were the team that Mussolini supported, and more recently the venue for former player Paulo Di Canio's numerous fascist salutes.

Luther Blissett



Athletics homophobia row

◀ page 24

We never had any problems, these problems in Russia, and we don't want to have any in the future." She went on to say that she is in full support of the law.

Insbayeva has many large sponsorships from Russian business, and has strong links with influential figures in politics and the media. It would seem that rather than just answering a random question by a journalist, it was part of a stage managed propaganda exercise to show the worlds media that Russians are in support of the new legislation.

If the intention was to stop athletes using their positions as international personalities to support the movement against the 'anti-gay' legislation, then it had about as much

success as BBC Radio banning Frankie goes to Hollywood. Immediately after her remarks had been broadcast many athletes spoke out against her.

The American middle distance runner, Nick Symonds, who won a silver medal in his event, the 800m, stated that he would be dedicating his medal to his gay and lesbian friends back home. He went on to say: "It blows my mind that a young, well-travelled, well-educated woman would be so behind the times. She said 'normal, standard people' in Russia? Guess what – a lot of these people with Russian citizenship are normal, standard homosexuals. They deserve rights too."

Many other athletes painted their nails the

colours of the rainbow flag, and two women shared a kiss on the podium as they received their medals.

Realising what a shit-storm her comments have provoked, she has since apologised, claiming she had been misinterpreted and that her grasp of English is not what it should be. Surely nothing to do with pressure from her sponsors, or pressure from the IAAF, for whom she is an ambassador?

Despite the massive propaganda fail, the Russian Sports Minister has gone on record to state that athletes will be arrested at next year's Winter Olympics, should they be found to be 'promoting' homosexuality.

Luther Blissett

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REVIEWS

FICTION

All about time

Dougal Mackenzie looked at his watch as the team slowly trooped into the meeting room.

“Sorry we’re late,” said Sarah. “We’ve all got loads of work to do.” MacKenzie glared.

There was a plate of biscuits in the middle of the table.

“Biscuit anyone?” MacKenzie asked.

Silence.

“Right, you’ve all had the emails. I have a number of things to talk to you about so that you come into line with LobCo’s normal procedures.” Dom shifted in his chair. Ged looked out of the window.

“And this is all in the company handbook as well, is it?” asked Lucy.

“Of course,” said her boss. MacKenzie then outlined procedures for reporting sickness, other absence, booking leave, all in the LobCo way. Which was not all that different from before.

“The other important thing I will introduce is time-sheeting. LobCo is operating an internal trading account, therefore we all need to account for our time. I have arranged for Jenny from head office to come in and show you how to use the website, but it is very simple. And this will form part of your work duties from now on.”

The following Tuesday, Jenny from Head Office sat down with Sarah. Forty minutes later, Sarah came away muttering darkly. She caught up with Dom at the coffee machine.

“It’s really clunky and slow and they have the cheek to pretend they’re a technology company,” she said.

“Interesting. I read the entire company handbook. Time-sheeting is not in it at all. Despite MacKenzie’s insistence, this isn’t part of our contracted work.”

“You read the whole lot, Dom? I worry about you.”

“I know, it wasn’t fun, but one of the things I’ve learnt since LobCo took over is that they don’t seem to know their own procedures.”

On Wednesday, after they’d all been shown the time-sheeting system, Dom and Lucy went to see the boss.

“We think the new time-sheeting system is a waste of time and counter-productive,” said Dom.

“There wasn’t a code for admin in the list that Jenny left. What should we use for the two hours a week we will spend filling them in?” asked Lucy.

“There is no admin code. You have to spread the time spent on each task across all of them,” replied MacKenzie.

“Actually, we don’t. If you want this done you can extract data from the call request system and fill it in yourself,” said Dom.

“Oh no, it is something you must do, it is contracted,” said MacKenzie.

“We’ll see about that. But for now, we’re not doing it,” said Dom, and he and Lucy turned and left.

Martin H.

To be continued...

BOOK

The End of the World

by Reverend Billy, OR Books (New York and London), £7.00

The End of The World suggests we may be at the “global going-crazy tipping point” of an already unfolding consumerism-fuelled climate change enviro-apocalypse, the ‘Shopocalypse’, in which our lizard-brain instinct of fight or flight has been replaced with ‘stop and shop’. With surreal gallows humour, *The End* is heralded by an imagined “white-hot two-day blowout sale at Best Buy”. A wonderfully vivid opening scene relates non-stop breaking news reality disaster movies still playing on the iPhones clutched in the cold, dead hands of the piled-up mounds of corpses after it’s all over.

But the Rev’s take on the *End of the World* is strangely uplifting, with an obvious love of people and of life, even if all life on earth is about to disappear. The Shopocalypse described by the Reverend Billy is “an apocalypse of accumulated silence” in which “the most basic and far-reaching policy of the United States leadership at this time is to do nothing, say nothing and change nothing”.

As Reverend Billy reminds us: “We are part of the tornado”, urging the reader to take personal responsibility for the coming Shopocalypse, and to take steps to avert a

climate change Armageddon through political activism, or as his Church of Stop Shopping Choir so succinctly put it, ‘Changealujah!’

The End of the World reminded me of those little Spectacular Times situationist pocket-books of the 1970s and 1980s. While *The End of the World* is about the same format, a little thicker, it’s much better, and funnier. Instead of just ‘critiquing’ stuff, as situationist tracts tended to, the Reverend Billy and his associates have actually gone out and done some of the things *The End of the World* describes. One chapter recounts an impromptu assembly held by Occupy mass-arrestees in an underground cell under a New York police station, another a guerrilla Thanksgiving dinner in the lobby of the Bank of America.

Don’t worry, the Reverend Billy’s not a real vicar, but the alter ego of New York actor and street performer Bill Talen, and the Church of Stop Shopping’s ‘Forest Faith’ enviro-creed owes more to Occupy Wall Street than to any of “the disastrous religions”. The Reverend makes occasional trips to the UK. Some readers may even have caught his Church of Stop Shopping’s performance in Angel Alley – right outside Freedom Bookshop – this summer, followed by a ‘happening’ at a branch of HSBC.

Matt Salusbury



QUIZ ANSWERS

1. A group that opposed the Salvation Army, in particular their marches against alcohol. They used skull and crossbones as a banner and mocked the Salvationists by subverting their slogans, and sometimes physically attacked them as well.
2. Because they offer terms of employment to subs that state “the nature of your work as a casual is intermittent and will vary from week to week. There is no obligation on Guardian News Media to provide you with work continuously or otherwise”.
3. It donated the money to the local Conservative Association towards re-electing Treasury Minister Sajid Javid. Much more use than some qualified staff, I’m sure.
4. An interview she gave where she called Islam a country and said Jews follow Jesus went viral. Sadly, Australia has no shortage of anti-immigrant politicians and it’s only the ones who do something stupid who have to step down.

The hidden heroes of C19

Justina Jase takes a journey through a rebellious Victorian underworld

In the preface to *Eminent Victorians*, Lytton Strachey wrote that “the history of the Victorian Age will never be written” because “we know too much about it”. Strachey’s flippancy was symptomatic of the general attitude toward popular historical narratives on the rise in the nineteenth century, which saw the marketplace inundated with unwieldy volumes of diaries, journals, letters and autobiographies. Much has been written subsequently about the Victorian era and its most illustrious characters, such as Oscar Wilde, Lord Alfred Tennyson, Charles Dickens, H.G. Wells, Arthur Conan Doyle *et al.* Yet very little attention has been paid to the marginalised. This is something that Clive Bloom attempts to rectify in *Victoria’s Madmen* – a “tale of conflicted existential heroes and heroines” who failed to make it into the popular textbooks.

The 20 episodic chapters of Bloom’s collective biography are tied loosely together by a somewhat tenuous connection, which is at times difficult to make. The most conspicuous link between these putative madmen is not, in fact, their madness – for hardly any of them are certifiably insane – but their reluctance to accept and conform to the prevailing social mores and conventions. Most interestingly, perhaps, Bloom suggests that it was the disenfranchised – who went on to form their own factions and groups – that have had the most considerable impact on the course of nineteenth century history. While there is certainly something to be said for the likes of Madame Blavatsky (*pictured above*), who sought social equality for all irrespective of race, creed, sex, caste and colour; Dan Chatterton (*pictured below*), a furious communist pamphleteer advocating atheism and birth control; and Aleister Crowley, famed for founding his own ethical



Madame Helena Petrovna Blavatsky in 1888 with the Theosophical Society President-Founder Col. Henry Steel Olcott.

philosophy (Thelema), these people and their endeavours were hardly revolutionary. And even here, in a work dedicated exclusively to them, they appear quite trivial and somewhat overshadowed by their more famous contemporaries.

It is, in fact, the ritual namedropping that adds a really tantalising aspect to the book, which is studded with references to and anecdotes about George Bernard Shaw, Karl Marx, Robert Louis Stevenson, Thomas Hardy, Dickens, Wilde, Conan Doyle, Wells and others. Certainly, curious and unfamiliar personages feature throughout. These include a prominent painter convicted of patricide; a self-described religious seer, who believed she was pregnant with the new Messiah at the age of 64; a cunning Englishman who ripped off Marx; and a revered politico with a sideline in fascism to name but a few. “There seemed three choices for survival,” says Bloom, “there was either the nihilistic individualism of bohemians who would overcome the travails of life and the degeneration of ugliness of society by an aesthetics of doomed beauty, there were the socialists who would heal society with world revolution and there were those who kept firm to a belief in the return of the Messiah. The sacrifice of the alienated but superior artist would lead to fascism, just as that of the alienated revolutionary socialist would lead to communism and religious mania would lead to delusion and failure.” What is most interesting, perhaps, is that at a time of great tumult and change these diverse and irreconcilable movements and people seemed to coexist in relative harmony.

Bloom contextualises the causes and causalities of these various factions within a larger historical narrative, charting how the rise of secularism, Bohemianism, orientalism, the occult and numerous new ideologies led to the renunciation of old-world traditions and values. “For most thinking Victorians,” he explains, “the period hung between the problems of doubt and belief, science and the spirit, social reform or revolution, and these in turn led to a certain dynamic.” This dynamic, says Bloom, came to define the Victorian age as one of irresolvable contradictions, notable for its material, technological and scientific sense of progress yet haunted by forebodings, moral decay and disaster. *Victoria’s Madmen* does well to dispel the popular misconception about the eponymous age being one of sombre conformity by highlighting the ambitious and contrarian nature of both its people and the monarch who ruled them. Although (“the possibly fickle and treacherous”) Queen Victoria is essentially confined to the role of a spectre, Bloom suggests that it was she who – by the virtue of her own eccentricity – inspired the same in her subjects, some of whom came into contact with the matriarchal monarch during botched assassination attempts and several break-ins into Buckingham Palace. Bloom also has some interesting ideas about the disparate national reaction to the Queen’s death in 1901, which seemed divided between a deep mourning on the one hand and a hearty rejoicing on the other.

Victoria’s Madmen leaves little doubt about the fact that nineteenth century England was

THE ARTS

MODERN PANIC

Freedom Press had a stalls at the very first two Guerrilla Zoo events all the way back in 2005 at Corsica Studios, South London. Eight years later the fourth of their hugely successful Modern Panic exhibitions opens in November, in Apiary Studios, London. *Freedom* catches up with Creative Director/ Curator James Elphick for a chat.

So what is Guerrilla Zoo and how did it come about?

I founded Guerrilla Zoo way back at the start of the millennium, but its first real big event didn't happen until 2005. The concept was to form a rolling collective of new artists, performers and musicians and showcase their work alongside established acts to give each platform to reach new audiences. Key to creating the event was the internet and early art activism email discussion threads which helped form the line up, crew and promote the first event, which itself was all about art activism movement – entitled 'Kulture Jamming'.

The early events were quite like indoor festivals, with things 'happening' everywhere and all at once at our resident club, Corsica Studios, in Elephant & Castle, London. The premise being that there was a choice to see something different than the usual/regular event format, where you could get all your

culture in one night and at an accessible price. Go to see an art exhibition in one room, film or a performance in another, live music in another, or peruse some craft market stalls. With so much happening at once, if you didn't like something you could just move to another room and come back five minutes later to something completely different. Everyone got a 'unique experience' which very much applies to our events now.

What would you describe as the philosophy of Guerrilla Zoo?

Guerrilla Zoo has a manifesto that we originally published online, which helped guide the direction of the company enabling it to freely move in various creative directions and not keeping the format stuck to one eventually predictable rut. The most important element for us is to create a space where people are transported from their world into ours for a moment, an hour or a night! Our influences are all the artists, performers and musicians we work with, what better way to celebrate them than to have them part of our event or even dedicate a 'season' of events to them.

The project seems to be a bit of a large family. What, if anything, unifies all of it?

I unite the project under its creative direction

and curation. As much as I would like the collective to be autonomous, someone needs to be the driving force for our projects and that person happens to be me. Each project brings new collaborations and I'm always open to creating new ideas and productions.

Guerrilla Zoo seems to be intrinsically subversive. How overt/covert is that political dimension?

Yes it is, subverting the audience is very important to us and keeping things fresh and relevant to them personally. There is a political dimension but it varies and is often covertly subtle as politics can turn some event-goers off. Themes are introduced stealthily as people should know what's happening in the world and that's reflected in the work/performances.

There seems to be a sort of retro feel with the sub-cultural/occulty/Jodorowsky vibe... What sort of vision of the world does it have.

Subculture is where all culture originates from and is the source for some of the most grandest of ideas. With the Jodorowsky events I wanted to celebrate a man who had influenced countless people and bring his work back into the public eye from its obscurity. I am doing similar events in 2014/15 with other cult greats, such as William S. Burroughs.



Modern Panic – Photograph © Max Reeves



It's Your Funeral – Photograph © Meriel Guillenfin Edwards

Book review

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a politically, economically, artistically and spiritually fecund place, inhabited by intrepid men and women searching for a new approach to modern life. And it is here, while charting the progress of the Victorian society as a whole, that Bloom showcases his strengths as a painstakingly assiduous chronicler, piecing together often overlooked fragments of social history. The book's extensive scope, however, listing innumerable radicals, anti-monarchists, secularists, communists,

socialists and mystics detracts somewhat from Bloom's original intention. A vast majority of the key characters resurface from chapter to chapter by way of professional and personal connections, and are appraised individually. But due to their numbers these evaluations appear surmising rather than comprehensive, lacking real depth and insight. Still, Bloom sheds some much needed light on "the mutterings of marginalised people" which he says "the nineteenth century

heard only as a distant undifferentiated murmur, but through which the Edwardian twilight and beyond was to become the cacophony of the twentieth century". And so, perhaps, Strachey was right, perhaps a definitive history of this most pivotal age will never be written because we both know too much about it and too little.

Victoria's Madmen: Revolution and Alienation by Clive Bloom, published by Palgrave Macmillan, £20.

Each project has its own conjured world manifested by these visionaries, which I try to tap into and bring to life.

You must have critics?

Modern Panic is a provocative, controversial and surreal art exhibition, inspired by the Panic Movement and has divided many. Who is to say what is good and what is bad other than the viewer themselves? This itself mirrors only what that individual finds personally acceptable due to their nature, upbringing and what they deem pleasing to their soul. The work is chosen to directly connect to the viewer and provoke them, so if I get a reaction be it positive or negative, I know it's had the desired impact and that the art has connect to them, love it or hate it!

What's on the horizon?

Guerrilla Zoo has always stayed close to its roots of connecting with new talent and pushing the boundaries of traditional events. The rooms we used to curate back in the early days have become events themselves, with a regular *enfant terrible* exhibition of the art world called Modern Panic, an annual wild dress-up event called The Goblin King's Masquerade Ball, a performance event showcasing new performers in dark comedy setting called *It's Your Funeral* (pictured left) and various other one-off events from theatre productions, vast 'seasons' of events to parties!

Upcoming Events (thanks Freedom for supporting).

- *It's Your Funeral* will be on 12th September and 10th October @ Bethnal Green Working Mens Club
- Modern Panic IV will be held on 8th to 17th November 2013 @ Apiary Studios

Here are a few links to get you started:

- www.guerrillazoo.com
- www.itsyourfuneralparty.com
- www.goblin-king.co.uk
- www.burroughs100.com



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SPORT

Athletics homophobia row



Double Olympic pole vault champion and darling of Russian sports fans media, Yelena Isinbayeva, has caused uproar at the recent athletics world championships in Moscow by launching an astonishing attack on fellow athletes who have spoken out about Russia's new 'anti-gay' laws.

The new laws, passed in June, have stirred up controversy throughout the world. Anyone who is found to be 'promoting'

homosexuality to people under the age of 18 will receive large fines and possibly a prison sentence.

At this month's world championships, Isinbayeva won her third world championship. As Russia's most popular athlete and a gold medallist at a home-town tournament, she was bombarded by the media and all over the news. She took the opportunity to speak out about Russia's 'anti-gay' laws and about

the athletes who have shown solidarity with persecuted gays and lesbians in Russia. She said: "If we allow to promote and do all this stuff on the street, we are afraid about our nation because we consider ourselves like normal, standard people. We just live with boys with woman, woman with boys. Everything must be fine. It comes from history."

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THE QUIZ

1. What was the Skeleton Army?
2. In early August, *The Guardian* began running an expose of poor working conditions and criticised Sports Direct and Cineworld for their use of zero hours contracts. Why might *The Guardian* be a tad hypocritical on this issue?
3. Moundsley Hall care home in Bromsgrove was slated by the Care Quality Commission who found the home had "too few qualified, skilled and experienced staff to meet people's needs". So what useful service did Moundsley Hall shell out £11,000 on?
4. Why did far right candidate Stephanie Banister withdraw from the upcoming Australian elections?

Answers on page 20

