

FREEDOM

80P ANARCHIST NEWS AND VIEWS

17 SEPTEMBER 2005

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NHS FACES CUTS ACROSS THE UK

The NHS is facing a crushing new blow, with soaring debts leading to the possible loss of up to 8,000 NHS jobs over the next few years, according to a new report. Across the 28 Strategic Health Authorities (SHAs), six are overtly discussing massive cuts, while others are closing beds and dropping services to meet their required targets.

Figures compiled by Health Emergency, an NHS watchdog sponsored by Unison, have revealed widespread weaknesses in the national budget. In their newsletter they said: "A snapshot estimate of the available figures suggests a total shortfall of more than £1.6 billion across 22 SHAs: the 51 most financially challenged NHS Trusts face deficits and savings targets totalling almost £650 million."

Trusts are being asked to deliver £1.6bn in 'efficiency savings' in order to receive totalling almost £650 million.

Trusts are being asked to deliver £1.6bn in 'efficiency savings' in order to receive full funding for the year. If they don't make the cuts they risk opening up a wide gap between expected care and ability to pay. 29 hospitals and mental health trusts are going to have to find more than £10m each to stay in the black, with another 22 requiring £5m at least.

The group have cited a huge series of cuts appearing in newspapers and government information across the country, particularly in Hertfordshire, Lincolnshire, London, Suffolk, Worcestershire and West Yorkshire.

The situation is being exacerbated by an apparent move to promote private practice at the expense of NHS funding. Local PCTs have been told by central

government to begin greater allocation of funding to private hospital sources, taking funding away from the NHS. By the end of the year, 10% of all PCT funding will go to private sources, with a long-term goal of 15%, although according to health secretary Patricia Hewitt, that figure is not being regarded as an upper limit.

'Failing' hospitals which do not turn a profit will be closed down, a particular concern as according to the national audit office, one quarter of all NHS trusts couldn't break even last year, with worse figures predicted for this year.

One third of trusts are in perilous financial circumstances, they said. The policy shift has raised fears that the ultimate motive for Labour may be privatisation of the NHS.

Dr John Lister, Information Director ultimate motive of Labour may be privatisation of the NHS.

Dr John Lister, Information Director for pressure group London Health Emergency said: "It's hard to tell which figures are the most worrying: the huge sums to be saved through identified spending cuts, or the fact that tens of millions of 'savings' assumed by the SHAs have yet to be identified. Patricia Hewitt in May announced £3bn was available for the NHS to buy in more services from high-cost private hospitals, despite the capacity of the NHS to deliver better value: the money is clearly available to rescue vital services and save our NHS. If she refuses to act it will be clear she is happy for NHS organisations to fail."

Sir Nigel Crisp, the NHS chief executive, denied the charges. He said: "These



figures are totally misleading. They appear to be a mixture of projected efficiency savings and projected deficits. Any suggestion by Health Emergency that the NHS is facing cutbacks on such a scale is scaremongering of the worst order."

But Health Emergency point to the practical impact on a huge number of PCTs where millions of pounds are having to be recouped through reductions in

service. Large reductions such as in North-west London (£189m), Gloucestershire and Wiltshire (£175m), County Durham and Tees Valley (£152m) and Hampshire and Isle of Wight (£125m) are likely to bite, while Brighton and Sussex was most challenged, needing to cut roughly 12% of its annual income to stay afloat.

Rob Ray

Case study of likely effects: West Suffolk PCT is £42.5m in debt, which has led to projected job

losses of 440, with 103 beds going and two surgical theatres closed. PCT boss Chris Brown noted that the PCT had two choices, to "provide 85% of the service to 100% of the people or a 100% service to 85% of the people." This is only the worst, but all Suffolk PCTs are cutting services and jobs. It is thought likely that three hospitals will close and beds will go in almost every facility across the county. Three of the trusts are considering sale of their land to claw back money.

GATE GOURMET EXPLAINED

Mrs Kaur, a worker at Gate Gourmet for over six years, tells the story of the workers' fight against management.

Have conditions changed over the past few years?

When Gate Gourmet was under British Airways management we used to provide the food for 45-55 flights. In recent years we have provided food for over 80 flights, and this on the same rate of pay and working hours, not on overtime. Many a time we have asked for some sort of pay-rise but we were always told that this was not possible due to the company 'losing money'. One of our major complaints with the organisation of Gate

Gourmet was that there seemed to be too many levels of management.

On the one hand we were being told the company was losing money and on the other hand more management team members were being introduced, and in 2002 many of them had their wages increased, from £17k to £25k.

How did the dispute start?

On the 9th August we were told that the seasonal temp workers were being brought in. I asked why this was being done, seeing as the company had wanted to get rid of 630 staff [according to the original offers of redundancy in June].

I was told that these temp workers were being brought in to cover some of the staff that had left - some 15 people, hardly enough to justify the 130 temps that were actually employed. These concerns are what sparked off a meeting called by the workers.

dismissed but what I have heard from friends and colleagues was quite shocking. Women had water chucked on them and were dragged from the building by management; it's disgusting behaviour. People were not allowed to get water, to go to the toilet ... and some of these people were diabetic and pregnant.

What has the personal impact been on you?

Well obviously the income has substantially decreased but it is the mental impact that is worse I think. When you are so used to getting up every morning and going to work, suddenly not having anything to do all day is extremely strange. My family have been extremely supportive.

How do you see the dispute progressing? I think the company's aim is to ultimately break the Union. People are desperate, they need the money and the solidarity is breaking.

POSADA STAYS FOR NOW

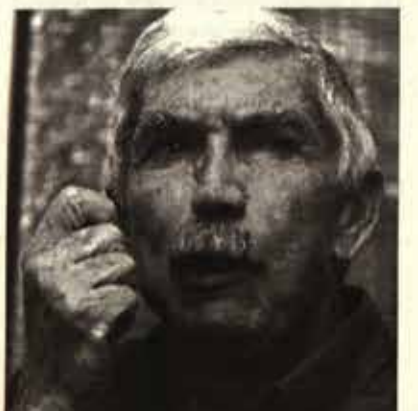
Luis Posada Carriles, a terrorist who blew up a Cuban airliner killing 76 people, remains in the United States after immigration judge William Abbott declined to issue a deportation order sending Posada to face justice in Venezuela.

Posada had already avoided being returned to his native Cuba, after attorneys for the Department of Homeland Security agreed he was likely to be tortured by the Castro regime. Venezuela has also applied for his extradition, which Posada's legal team has declined to fight, indicating that such a claim would involve revealing details of violent anti-Castro activity that would be embarrassing to his former employers - the US government.

Posada was involved in terrorist activity against the Cuban government after fleeing the island in the wake of the 1959 revolution, participating in the CIA sponsored Bay of Pigs invasion in 1962. His lawyer claims that he had been a CIA agent up until the 1990s and that the US should grant him citizenship or

Posada's involvement in the arms trafficking to the Contra insurgency and a close relationship to infamous Marine Corps Lt Colonel Oliver North.

Protesters gathered outside the courtroom in El Paso, Texas, demanding justice for the victims of the 1976 bombings and other crimes committed by Posada, including an Italian tourist killed in a 1997 hotel bomb which Posada bragged of organising in the New York Times.



ISSN 0016-0504



Home and away

Power struggle

Gas and electricity price hikes that were passed by regulators earlier this year have come into effect. Over five million people will face higher bills as the second of three major suppliers impose the rises.

Powergen have announced a 7.2% rise in residential electricity prices and 11.9% for gas, following EDF, who last month pushed up prices by 10.7% for electricity, 12% for gas. British Gas will put up their own bills by the end of the year.

A new report by economic group Global Insight has revealed that British families are paying up to £186 more every year compared to Europeans in non-privatised countries.

Lockerbie fake

A high-ranking police officer has given lawyers defending Ali Mohamed al-Megrahi, convicted of the Lockerbie bombings, a signed statement implicating the CIA in a plot to frame him.

The officer, who was ranked at least assistant chief constable, claims a crucial piece of evidence – a circuit board found during the investigation, was planted as the CIA 'wrote the script' to incriminate Libya.

The circuit board, found several miles away from the crash site, was part of timer device used to detonate explosives and manufactured for only Libya and the East German Stasi.

Rumours have circulated for several years that the bombing was a set-up, with one retired CIA officer making similar allegations in 2003.

Superunion attacked

A union of middle managers have threatened to walk away from union Amicus if the proposed superunion merger goes through, claiming the new group would be 'too left wing'. The Communication Managers Association (CMA) have become increasingly belligerent since negotiations opened between Amicus, the GMB and TGWU about the possibility of a merger in 2007.

The association, representing around 13,000 middle managers at Royal Mail, think the left wing focus will neglect them.

The TUC, which has been heavily criticised for its pro-new Labour stance, has rejected the claims, saying a larger, consolidated union would help to avoid competitions for membership and have the ability to pool resources.

Passports to pay

Passport costs could rise by nearly half next year to help finance the introduction of ID cards, months before the bill designed to introduce them has been ratified. The move is widely regarded as an attempt to claw back some of the projected £80bn cost of the cards, which both Charles Clarke and the minister in charge have admitted will not have any role in stopping terrorism or fraud.

The cost for a photo passport rises in 2006 from £42 to £60, and in February the traditional passport will be replaced by an e-passport.

Biometric passports will become regular issue by July of next year, regardless of any changes to the ID bill, so send off now folks.

Gender fucked off

The pay divide has not lessened since New Labour came to power, and may be getting worse, according to a new study. A salary comparison website, Payfinder.com, found that women still earn just over three-quarters of the equivalent male salary. Average yearly earnings for men are £30,948, while women earn £23,977.

Around the world

DENMARK: The Danish police has raided part of Christiania in Copenhagen. About 200 riot police stormed the freestate and quickly sealed off 'Fredens Eng' (The meadow of peace) which is a part of the site, where people live in trailers.

In one of the biggest mass arrests in Denmark ever, the police made over a hundred arrests. There are various reports of injured people. Most people have been charged with not following police orders, although some with charges relating to violence against the police.



Christinia had been self administrative, meaning no permit was needed to 'build' new property or have trailers parked up on it's grounds. Newly introduced law, means trailers have to leave, so new development can take place.

The people from Christiania have resisted this new legislation for years. They wish to keep their autonomy and self-managed decision-making structures that have kept the place running for over twenty years.

ITALY: Last month a new anti-terrorist law came into force in response to the London bombings. The decree followed a public debate which often strayed into racism, according to media group Statewatch.

Al Qaeda have issued threats against Italy due to its presence in Iraq and attitudes expressed by MPs and ministers from the Lega Nord.

Giuseppe Pisanu, the Italian Interior Minister, said that measures in the decree were not "exceptional" but an "intervention to make existing norms sharper and more incisive in the fight against terrorism."

Statewatch said: "Although the claim was aimed at reducing concern over the measures that were to be adopted, a closer reading of the law suggests that it features the adoption of 'exceptional' measures on a permanent basis."

MEXICO: Over the 7th, 8th and 9th of September, Mayan groups of the Yucatan, Mexico, will hold the P'uj, the search to hunt the deer, that represents the capacity of the Mayans to organise themselves around a common objective.

The P'uj will be a mobilisation to lift the word and the memories of the Mayan people from where the government has sewn forgetfulness. The three-day march will depart from Cistell, the place where the indigenous rebellion led by Jacinto Can Ek in 1761 began against the Spanish colonisation, and will arrive in Merida, the capital city of the Yucatan, where they will present a document to the local congress.

The document is the manifestation of a group of mayans who oppose the creation of a local law of indigenous rights, in so much as it does not reform the Mexican constitution in a way that would respect the San Andreas Accords, which were signed in 1996 by the EZLN (Zapatistas), the representatives of various indigenous peoples and representatives of the Mexican government.

MIDDLE EAST: The accounts of two Yemeni detainees said to have recently been transferred from the US detention facility at Guantánamo Bay in Cuba have described another US detention regime just as sinister, yet more secretive, than Guantánamo. The men



appear to have been victims of the US administration's policy of secret detentions around the world. For over a year and a half they had effectively 'disappeared'.

Thousands of detainees remain held in US custody in Iraq and hundreds remain in US custody in Afghanistan, some of them having been detained without trial and virtually incommunicado for more than a year.

Several thousand other detainees are believed to be held in the custody of other governments at the behest of the

USA. In addition, however, the USA is holding an unknown number of detainees in secret, incommunicado custody in unknown locations and unknown conditions.

Amnesty International has received reports that in the context of the 'war on terror' the USA has established secret detention facilities in a number of countries. These could include Jordan, Pakistan, Egypt, Thailand and Afghanistan, and in the US base on the British Indian Ocean territory of Diego Garcia.

UK: Kent police have impounded the entire 60,000 print-run of the BNP 'newspaper' Voice of Freedom on the grounds it is inciting racial hatred.

The September issue of the publica was impounded at Dover on Sunday whilst en route from a printworks in Slovakia (its previous printer was a Saudi firm) to a distribution facility Leeds, and will hopefully be pulped.

A spokesman said officers were working with the Crown Prosecution Service.

USA: Colin Powell, the former US secretary of state, has attacked the Bush administration for its actions in Iraq saying the post-war planning for the country has been chaotic and could lead to civil war.

The general expressed deep regret his actions in pushing the war in the UN, and has admitted that the evidence he had was neither factually correct enough to justify the invasion.

He also admitted there was never evidence linking the events of 11th September to Saddam Hussein.



Prison news

Yarl's Wood

Two women have been taken to Bedford Hospital as fears grow for the health of the Ugandan hunger strikers in the fifth week of their protest. Four women hunger strikers remain in Yarl's Wood protesting against their deportation and the conditions in detention. One very ill and weak woman was taken on a 12-hour journey to Dungavel Detention Centre in Scotland, where she remains on hunger strike.

Other women, including spokeswoman Harriet Anyangokolo, have been released having at last secured legal representation and the opportunity to get their case reconsidered as a result of their protest. But at least two women have been deported, one of whom was stopped by corrupt immigration officials in Uganda demanding she give them all her money or they would hand her over to the police. She is now in hiding. There has been no contact with the other woman. The Home Office refuses to take any responsibility for monitoring the safety of those it returns.

Some of the women affected are:

Ms Gloria Chalimpa (HO Ref: C111 7339/3 Port Ref: SEV/02/5277) who has been in detention since 24th June 2005 and is due to be deported on 22nd September. She suffered years of repeated rape from the age of six, when the Lords Resistance Army (LRA) killed her parents and abducted her.

She was trained as a child soldier how to fight and use guns. She was sold to a 'sponsor', who also raped her and later arranged for her to study in the UK. On a visit back to Uganda she was arrested and imprisoned for kissing another woman in a nightclub. She managed to escape and returned to the UK. But when she claimed asylum she was put on the 'fast-track' procedure and detained in Yarl's Wood.

Ms Madina Irimeri (HO Ref: G 1121198/2 Port ref: AFC/561670) has been detained for three months in the UK and is due to be deported on 20th September. She was detained in military barracks in Uganda where she suffered rape and other torture. The Home Office refused to believe her account when she claimed asylum.

Ms Irimeri's lawyer failed to keep her informed of what was being done on her case, and she never saw what was submitted to the authorities. No expert report was commissioned by her lawyer for her appeal hearing to document Ms Irimeri's account of her experiences and investigate their impact on her. An affidavit she had got from Uganda confirming her account was dismissed by the adjudicator because it was a fax.

Ms Enid Ruhango (HO ref: R1095499 Port ref: LBE/393901) was detained on 17th May and has also been in Bedford Hospital after she collapsed in Yarl's Wood on Sunday.

She was raped by Ugandan soldiers looking for her husband who was in the LRA, and again when she was taken into detention. She was raped again by the man who brought her to the UK. She is HIV positive. Again no expert evidence was commissioned by her lawyer to document her experiences and needs. The Home Office and the adjudicator at her appeal dismissed her account claiming the availability of free HIV/AIDS treatment in Uganda.

G8 update, from the Legal Defence Monitoring Group

Most of our time is currently spent sorting out the aftermath of the G8 as part of the G8 Legal Support Group. The Group fielded legal observers at all the actions in Scotland throughout the week. Around 360 people were arrested and court cases are now taking place. Although some people were remanded (one person for six weeks), no one is currently in prison. The Group issued a statement condemning the policing and have appealed for witnesses.

More details can be found at the website g8legalsupport.info where updates will also appear.



News

An unusually cool summer

Research by the Met Office suggests that climate change will have a major impact on our food supply and weather, reports Rob Ray

Climate change will destroy crops, increasing the number of people at risk of starvation by up to 50 million, according to a report given at the British Association for the Advancement of Science Festival of Science in Dublin on 5th September.

In the UK, heatwave summers like the one in 2003 which killed 15,000 people across Europe will be regarded as 'unusually cool' by 2050.

The report, published by the government funded Hadley Centre, paints a deeply concerning picture of the impact of global warming, and warns that without massive changes in greenhouse gas output, the changes will be inevitable, and irreversible.

Other effects predicted using newly developed methods by the Met Office-linked research team to cut down uncertainties in predicting global climate change over the next 50 years have shown in preliminary results:

• A 90% probability that the planet will

• At many locations, extreme temperatures to increase more than the seasonal average. At some locations, seasonal average rainfall is predicted to decrease, while the intensity of extreme rainfall will increase.

Less certain possibilities include:

• The oceans' thermohaline circulation (movement of the sea along underwater arteries which transfer hot water from south to north and returns cold) collapsing. The effects of an abrupt collapse of the circulation would cause significant cooling over much of the northern hemisphere.

• A de-glaciation of Greenland may be triggered some time in the next few

centuries. A new simulation indicates that more than half of the Greenland ice sheet could be lost over the next 1,000 years, with a contribution to sea level rises of up to 4m.

• Gulf stream to slow by 20% by mid-century, though unlikely to switch off altogether.

• Significant degradation of the Amazonian basin, and massive die-off in the rainforests due to low rainfall/higher temperatures.

The report had particular concerns about the continuing viability of the global heat sinks, such as in the Labrador Sea, which have until now significantly reduced the impact of fossil fuel use.

It said: "About half the carbon dioxide emitted by fossil fuel burning is absorbed by natural 'sinks' in ecosystems and the oceans. Were it not for this, climate would already be changing faster than it is.

"But there are concerns that this free service provided by nature may run out

The ability of vegetation and soil to absorb carbon dioxide concentrations in the atmosphere is also a cause for concern, it said: "In some parts of the world, where rainfall decreases and higher temperatures increase evaporation, vegetation will die back. Thus, instead of carbon being drawn from the atmosphere, it will actually return to the atmosphere to enhance already increasing concentrations."

Soil is due to become a net producer of CO₂ by 2050, speeding the process of global warming still further.

During the festival in Trinity College, Dublin, a separate talk by Steve Long, a crop scientist at the University of Illinois,



discussed recent interest in a theory that increasing CO₂ levels would stimulate crop growth enough to offset any danger posed by rising temperatures. He dismissed the idea. Extensive testing under controlled conditions, he said, showed a significant loss of crops

regardless of CO₂ levels. "Current projections of global food supply under climatic and atmospheric change are likely to be very optimistic," he said.

Professor Long illustrated his point with the results of experiments with soya beans, the most important

leguminous crop, which, it was found, would yield 20% less by 2050, as a result of increasing ozone, a pollutant related to photochemical smog.

See <http://www.the-ba.net/the-ba/Events/FestivalofScience/>

Hatfield execs walk

A campaign for changes to the rules governing manslaughter convictions has found renewed support in the wake of the Hatfield rail crash trial, which last month saw rail executives cleared of responsibility for the deaths of four people on 17th October, 2000.

Campaigners want the rules – which currently allow for prosecution only if it can be proved there is a 'controlling mind' instigating the deaths – altered, with support unexpectedly coming from the Crown Prosecution Service after the trial finished.

The construction company Balfour Beatty and five rail executives had been taken to court on manslaughter charges, which were thrown out by presiding judge Mr Justice Mackay two months ago.

Mackay said at the time: "I am not permitted to give reasons for the decision. I must ask you to accept my ruling."

The decision angered campaigning groups and disturbed the CPS. Director

of public prosecutions, Ken McDonald QC, said on Tuesday 6th September:

"I stand by the decision to prosecute for manslaughter and breaches of health and safety law. We felt there was sufficient evidence in this case and the seriousness of what was alleged meant the public interest demanded a prosecution.

"However, the judge's ruling on manslaughter demonstrates again the very real difficulties the Crown has in securing convictions against corporate businesses or individuals."

Instead Balfour Beatty were found guilty by a jury of breaking safety rules before the rail crash, which also injured 102. The ruling will see the company fined for Health and Safety Act violations on 3rd October, at the end of a nine month trial and a five year wait for the families of those affected.

Bob Crow, general secretary of rail union RMT, said: "When there's money to be made there's no shortage of executives ready and willing to pocket

fat bonuses, but when there's some responsibility to be taken for something going horribly wrong, there's a deafening chorus of 'not me, gov'."

Jonathan Goldberg, defending one of the executives, told the jury: "These men worked in an under-funded, under-invested industry, which had been neglected by governments of all parties for over 40 years and which had recently undergone a botched and unworkable privatisation."

During the trial it was pointed out that workers on the line had warned bosses up to two years before the crash that the line was unsafe. They had proposed a 20mph speed limit and urgent repairs over a 36-hour period to the affected area.

In a year of hugely increased profits, this professional recommendation was ignored.

A draft bill designed to impose a "duty of care" on executives will be put to the parliamentary scrutiny process shortly before Christmas.

75 or bust

A study by the Employers' Forum on Age (EFA) has found that the majority of workers won't want to work beyond 65 and, of those that do, most either cannot afford to stop or are private sector managers.

Around 52% of the 1,600 people questioned stated that they regarded their retirement age as just reward or disliked their job enough to discount staying.

Of the remaining half of the working population, it was estimated that 40% comprised of private sector managers whose attitudes to work and pensions were 'relaxed', with most of the rest of the workforce citing their personal financial situation as the primary reason for wanting to stave off retirement.

The report, Attitudes on Age, also found that only one in five workers thought they would be fit to continue working into their 70s, though that total may be skewed by age discrimination factors.

Ms Sam Mercer, director of the EFA said: "Our research reveals that age is

irrelevant when it comes to people's attitudes to working for longer – over half of all workers want to retire as soon as possible. This should worry Government, given the need to extend working life to counter our ageing population and the looming pension crisis."

The report concluded: "The finding is a stark warning to Government in advance of the introduction of age discrimination regulations in October 2006.

"The report suggests a 'one-size-fits-all' approach by the Government and employers to tackle working for longer and retirement will be ineffective."

The Pensions Commission is due to report its own findings on the pensions issue in November. Pensions minister Stephen Timms has said a separate consultation document on the subject will be published next spring.

A major shakeup in age discrimination law will come into effect in October of next year.

News

Constitutional farce in Iraq

The proposed Iraqi constitution is the product of bribery, American pressure and is almost completely illegal, reports Jack Ray

The founding document of Iraq's new Republic, set to be put before the people by referendum on 15th October, has come under fire from all sides, provoking anti-constitution demonstrations across the country. Reports on the process have also criticised the heavy-handedness of American Ambassador to Iraq Zalmay Khalilad and his team with accusations that members of the drafting committee were offered multi-million dollar bribes to support the document.

Under the Transitional Administrative Laws (TAL) established by Iraq's interim administration under Iyad Allawi the process was due to be finished on 15th August, but difficulties in reaching an agreement meant that an amendment was made to the law allowing for an extension to the 22nd. In the event that

continued after the submission of the 'final' draft with US ambassador Khalilad insisting that changes could still be made to the draft as late as the 7th September. American interference in the constitutional process has been the subject of widespread complaint, even from their Kurdish allies. Mahmoud Othman, a Kurdish constitution committee member said "The Americans say they don't intervene, but they have intervened deep. They gave us a detailed proposal, almost a full version of a constitution." Most of the negotiations on the constitution being conducted by American and British diplomats shuttling between individual delegates, side-stepping open committee debate. Saudi newspaper Al-Watan even reported Sunni negotiators being offered \$5m apiece by Washington to sign off on the

point, the national assembly was to be dissolved and further elections called. Instead, the constitutional process was illegally continued until the 29th, where the constitution was submitted without the consensus of the drafting committee – a precondition of the Sunni delegates' involvement in the process. The draft was then illegally submitted for public referendum without a national assembly vote.

Andrew Arato, a constitutional expert at the University of Chicago said, "It is an absurd idea, and probably a novelty in the history of constitution making that a constitutional assembly need not vote at all ... who is submitting the text to the population and by what right?"

The chaotic constitutional process

Coalition interests were obvious in the final draft of the constitution; an early draft appearing in June contained the provision "social justice is the basis of building society", replaced in the later version with Article 25 outlining neo-liberal plans for the constitution: "The state shall guarantee the reforming of the Iraqi economy according to modern economic bases... encouraging and developing the private sector". The strong position of popular cleric Grand Ayatollah Sistani was also reflected in the document's second article outlawing civil legislation that contradicts "the establish laws of Islam" and seeing Islamic Sharia Law as a "fundamental source" of legislation.

Opposition to the constitution has



come from a wide variety of sources. The Sunni muslim representatives on the constitutional committee walked out in protest at the final draft being presented without their consent. Their group had already been on the receiving end of often violent attacks from their own communities for even participating in the process, and the constitution looks set to be rejected in huge numbers among the Iraqi Sunnis. Former insurgent cleric Moqtada al-Sadr also strongly rejected

the new constitution, calling a mass demonstration in eight cities involving 100,000 people to oppose the document. Opponents have formed a broad united front against to fight the constitution, with complaints centring on the federal rights insisted upon by the Kurdish minority. The constitution has to be passed by at least eight out of Iraq's nine provinces, with at least two predominantly Sunni district almost certain to reject it.

Meanwhile, violence across the country has not abated, with insurgents taking control of Al Qaim, on the Syrian border, reportedly executing collaborators with the coalition and erecting signs reading "Welcome to the Islamic Republic of Qaim" on the main entrance to the town. US troops had previously launched an offensive to take back the town from insurgents in May, before leaving to assault another stronghold, Tall Afar.

Homeless and hunted

Peasants forced out of their homes by the violence of right-wing paramilitaries have occupied empty homes in the Colombian capital of Bogota. On 29th August more than 1,300 refugees arrived in trucks and buses at Patio Bonito, a building site in the Kennedy district of the city, where they occupied 163 unfinished homes which had stood unused for six years.

The families had been forced into taking direct action in the face of a government indifferent to the plight of three million Colombians displaced in the country's 40 year old civil war. Many had been fleeing paramilitary groups such as the AUC, who carry out murders of community activists, human rights observers, trade unionists and supposed supporters of the leftist insurgency.

The new residents quickly set about making Patio Bonito hospitable with children joining their parents in pulling weeds, cleaning houses and setting up kitchens while the city government

responded by sending in ESMAD, the riot police who killed 15 year old anarchist Nicolas Meira earlier this year. The authorities blockaded the entrance to the site, refusing to let people in or out. This continued until the protesters came to an agreement with the city council, leaving the camp on 8th September in exchange for food subsidies, access to education and school uniforms for their children, and a promise that they would be found housing.

The offer, made under the national media spotlight, was not extended to other refugees and amounts to just a third of the monthly subsidies currently being offered to demobilised paramilitaries. The recently enacted Law on Justice and Peace, which sets the terms of the disarmament and disbandment of the AUC has come under severe criticism by NGOs and human rights organisations, with the UN describing it as an "implicit amnesty". The AUC and its allies are estimated to be responsible

for 80% of all human rights abuses during Colombia's civil war and are said to work in close co-ordination with Colombia state security forces. Under the plan, AUC members will receive a monthly payment of \$156 for two years in addition to a \$3,500 grant in order to set themselves up in a business in exchange for handing in their weapons. The offer is dependent on the AUC maintaining a ceasefire that Amnesty International claim has already been broken, "paramilitaries continue to operate as a military force, to kill and threaten human rights defenders and local community activists, to recruit and act jointly with the security forces ... thousand of human rights abusers have already benefited from de facto amnesties under the law."

Much of the land taken from the Patio Bonito families has been illegally seized as a result of paramilitary activity, part of 4.5m hectares taken by force.

Massacre at Port-au-Prince

The wave of state violence in Haiti continued on 20th August with at least 20 people killed attending a football match in Port-au-Prince. The massacre, carried out by Haitian National Police (HNP) and armed civilians occurred at half-time during a 'Tournament for Peace' in the slum of Martissant.

HNP officers instructed the tannoy announcer to tell the crowd to get down, before opening fire on the three to four thousand spectators.

Armed civilians identified targets in the crowd – supposed supporters of ousted President Jean-Bertran Aristide – and the attackers reportedly macheted people trying to escape the football ground.

Shortly afterwards police cars and ambulances arrived to take away the bodies.

The United Nations mission in Haiti, tasked with keeping the peace investigated the incident and declared "This was a horrible and unacceptable incident,

from which we must take all the lessons."

The UN's role on the island has come under international scrutiny, with allegations of complicity in government repression and a leading role in the deaths of dozens of civilians in a 6th July raid.

Meanwhile, human rights organisations have condemned a recent World Bank report describing "a year of progress" in Haiti, calling the article – which boasts of the creation of new schools, roads and jobs – an "inexcusable whitewash."



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Feature

Dead city

A summary of New Orleans reports from the ground in the aftermath of hurricane Katrina, edited from raw Indymedia text

Hurricane Katrina could have killed tens of thousands of people, aided and abetted by the actions of an American government who, in the words of Kanye West, 'don't care about black people'. Below are edited versions of some of the best reporting on Indymedia New Orleans.

Self organisation sans the state

Two paramedics stranded in New Orleans give their account on 2nd September, as the first reports of looting and anarchy start to surface:

"Two days after Hurricane Katrina struck New Orleans, the Walgreen's store at the corner of Royal and Iberville streets remained locked. The dairy display case was clearly visible through the windows.

It was now 42 hours without electricity

yogurt and cheeses were beginning to spoil in the 90-degree heat. The owners and managers had locked up the food, water, pampers, and prescriptions and fled the City.

"Outside Walgreen's windows, residents and tourists grew increasingly thirsty and hungry. The much-promised federal, state and local aid never materialised and the windows at Walgreen's gave way to the looters. There was an alternative.

"The cops could have broken one small window and distributed the nuts, fruit juices, and bottle water in an organised and systematic manner. But they did not. Instead they spent hours playing cat and mouse, temporarily chasing away the looters.

"We were finally airlifted out of New Orleans two days ago and arrived home yesterday [Saturday]. We have yet to see any of the TV coverage or look at a newspaper. We are willing to guess that there were no video images or front-page pictures of European or affluent white tourists looting the Walgreen's in the French Quarter.

"We also suspect the media will have been inundated with 'hero' images of the National Guard, the troops and the police struggling to help the 'victims' of the hurricane. What you will not see, but what we witnessed, were the real heroes and heroes of the hurricane relief effort: the working class of New Orleans.

"The maintenance workers who used a fork lift to carry the sick and disabled. The engineers, who rigged, nurtured and kept the generators running. The electricians who improvised thick extension cords stretching over blocks to share the little electricity we had in order to free cars stuck on rooftop parking lots. Nurses who took over for mechanical ventilators and spent many hours on end manually forcing air into the lungs of unconscious patients to keep them alive.

"Doormen who rescued folks stuck in elevators. Refinery workers who broke

into boat yards, 'stealing' boats to rescue their neighbours clinging to their roofs in flood waters. Mechanics who helped hot-wire any car that could be found to ferry people out of the City. And the food service workers who scoured the commercial kitchens improvising communal meals for hundreds of those 'stranded'.

"Most of these workers had lost their homes, and had not heard from members of their families, yet they stayed and provided the only infrastructure for the 20% of New Orleans that was not under water."

Words from the refugee camps

Jordan Flaherty on 2nd September writes: "I just left New Orleans a couple hours ago. I travelled from the apartment I was staying in by boat to a helicopter to a refugee camp. If anyone wants to

officials towards the victims of hurricane Katrina, I advise you to visit one of the refugee camps.

"In the refugee camp I just left, on the I-10 freeway near Causeway, thousands of people (at least 90% black and poor) stood and squatted in mud and trash behind metal barricades, under an unforgiving sun, with heavily armed soldiers standing guard over them.

"When a bus would come through, it would stop at a random spot, state police would open a gap in one of the barricades, and people would rush for the bus, with no information given about where the bus was going. Once inside (we were told) evacuees would be told where the bus was taking them - Baton Rouge, Houston, Arkansas, Dallas, or other locations. I was told that if you boarded a bus bound for Arkansas (for example), even people with family and a place to stay in Baton Rouge would not be allowed to get out of the bus as it passed through Baton Rouge.

"You had no choice but to go to the shelter in Arkansas. If you had people willing to come to New Orleans to pick you up, they could not come within 17 miles of the camp.

"I travelled throughout the camp and spoke to Red Cross workers, Salvation Army workers, National Guard, and state police, and although they were friendly, no one could give me any details on when buses would arrive, how many, where they would go to, or any other information.

"I spoke to the several teams of journalists nearby, and asked if any of them had been able to get any information from any federal or state officials on any of these questions, and all of them, from Australian tv to local Fox affiliates complained of an unorganised, non-communicative, mess.

"One cameraman told me 'as someone who's been here in this camp for two days, the only information I can give you is this: get out by nightfall. You don't



want to be here at night.'

"There was also no visible attempt by any of those running the camp to set up any sort of transparent and consistent system, for instance a line to get on buses, a way to register contact information or find family members, special needs services for children and infirm, phone services, treatment for possible disease exposure, nor even a single trash can.

"While the rich escaped New Orleans, those with nowhere to go and no way to get there were left behind. Adding salt to the wound, the local and national media have spent the last week demonising those left behind. As someone that loves New Orleans and the people in it, this is the part of this tragedy that hurts me the most, and it hurts me deeply.

"No sane person should classify someone who takes food from indefinitely closed stores in a desperate, starving city as a 'looter', but that's just what the media did over and over again. Sheriffs and politicians talked of having troops protect stores instead of perform rescue operations.

Images of New Orleans' hurricane-ravaged population were transformed into black, out-of-control, criminals. As if taking a stereo from a store that will clearly be insured against loss is a greater crime than the governmental neglect and incompetence that did billions of dollars of damage and destroyed a city.

"This media focus is a tactic, just as the eighties focus on 'welfare queens' and 'super-predators' obscured the simultaneous and much larger crimes of the Savings and Loan scams and mass layoffs, the hyper-exploited people of New Orleans are being used as a scapegoat

to cover up much larger crimes.

"City, state and national politicians are the real criminals here. Since at least the mid-1800s, its been widely known the danger faced by flooding to New Orleans. The flood of 1927, which, like this week's events, was more about politics and racism than any kind of natural disaster, illustrated exactly the danger faced.

"Yet government officials have consistently refused to spend the money to protect this poor, overwhelmingly black, city. While FEMA and others warned of the urgent impending danger to New Orleans and put forward proposals for funding to reinforce and protect the city, the Bush administration, in every year since 2001, has cut or refused to fund New Orleans flood control, and ignored scientists warnings of increased hurricanes as a result of global warming.

"And, as the dangers rose with the floodlines, the lack of coordinated response dramatised vividly the callous disregard of our elected leaders."

Don't forget the prisoners

One local wonders, where have all the prisoners gone?

"I joined members of Families and Friends of Louisiana's Incarcerated Children (FFLIC) these past few days walking through shelters in Louisiana and Texas trying to help families connect up with their children who had been locked up in detention centres and/or loved ones who had been in OPP.

"All adult OPP prisoners who are still in state custody are currently being held at either Angola or Hunts. There is word also that people who were being held at OPP on less than a \$1,000 bond

either will or could (depending on who you talk to) be released if a family can and is able to provide some kind of address. Other family members have been told that records are not available yet, but once the computer system is up, they intend on holding hearings in 'a couple of weeks' to process releases.

"We have not been able to find out how many of the 6,000-plus OPP prisoners are accounted for. The New York Times today reports that Sheriff Gusman claims the prisoners have all been moved outside the city. As of this morning, however, it seems the OPP computer system was still down, so it's hard to fathom how the Sheriff could credibly make such a claim.

"We have heard disturbing accounts of the evacuation of OPP. It seems Gretna in Jefferson Parish was evacuated as well but we have no information on when or how it was evacuated.

"We also know now that at least some of the people who were arrested during the general evacuation are now being held at Gretna in Jefferson Parish. The media reports earlier in the week reported people arrested were being held in the Greyhound station. We don't know whether this is still the case, and haven't been able to get a phone number for families to call. FFLIC has not confirmed that all youths have been accounted for.

"We do not yet know where people age 16 or under who were arrested during the general evacuation are being held. Families scattered around nine states are desperately trying to find out where their kids and other family members are being locked up."

See letters on page 6 for more on New Orleans

REVIEW

Iain Mackay finds in *Workers' Power* an extraordinarily insightful and well researched work of history and theory

Maurice Brinton was the pseudonym under which Christopher Pallis (1923-2005) wrote and translated for the British libertarian socialist group Solidarity from 1960 until the early 1990s. Brinton's translations of libertarian socialist Cornelius Castoriadis' work (under the pseudonym 'Paul Cardan') contributed immensely to enriching libertarian politics in the English speaking world. However, Brinton's own work was just as important (and in many ways, wider in scope) than Castoriadis', as can be seen from this collection.

The book has a diverse range of documents: as well as articles on numerous subjects, there are reviews, introductions to other works and his own pamphlets. The latter include the classics *The Bolsheviks and Workers' Control* and *The Irrational in Politics*, the former a groundbreaking account of the Russian Revolution and the latter a popular introduction into the ideas of revolutionary psychiatrist Wilhelm Reich which explores the role of sexual repression and authoritarian conditioning in creating

continuity of class society. His vivid eye-witness reports from upsurges of popular self-activity: the Belgian General Strike of 1960-61; France in May 1968; and Portugal in 1975 and 1976 are windows into what is possible once people start to shake off their chains and feel they have power over their own fates.

Freedom was at the core of Brinton's vision of libertarian socialism. He knew that genuinely libertarian politics had to be anti-capitalist, as both it and Stalinism "seek to subordinate the great majority to the needs of their ruling groups ... Men want to be more than well-fed servants. The desire to be free is not a pious liberal phrase, but the most noble of man's desires. The precondition of this freedom is, of course, freedom in the field of production - workers' management. There can be no real freedom and no real future for humanity in an exploiting society. The path to freedom lies through the socialist revolution."

Brinton stressed that working class people, due to their position in society, resisted hierarchy and, as a consequence of their experiences, could draw revolu-

tionary conclusion (helped, of course, by those who had already made that journey). As a necessary consequence of this perspective, he rightly viewed a revolutionary organisation as an instrument that working class people could use to transform society rather than seeking to lead them. In other words, the basic anarchist idea of revolutionaries influencing the class struggle as equals rather than as repositories of the correct revolutionary ideology which others should follow (whether they want to or not). As Bolshevism showed, the latter mentality leads to the inevitable substitution of party power for workers power.

Similarly, stressed that any revolutionary organisation should try to prefigure as much as possible the future society we want in its structure and decision-making, in other words by practising 'self-management'. Again, the similarities with anarchism are clear. Finally, Brinton argued that a genuinely libertarian organisation had to encourage people to rely on their own efforts rather than trust in leaders. As he put it, "We consider irrational (and/or dishonest) that those who talk most of the masses

(and of the capacity of the working class to create a new society) should have the least confidence in people's ability to dispense with leaders."

His dismissal of Leninist organisation in the essay *Revolutionary Organisation* is short but devastating. He notes that while Leninists argue that "to fight the highly centralised forces of modern capitalism requires an equally centralised type of party" this "ignores the fact that capitalist centralisation is based on coercion and force and the exclusion of the overwhelming majority of the population from participating in any of its decisions." Equally, while Leninists claim that such organisations are robust under state repression in reality they are "particularly vulnerable to police persecution" for when "all power is concentrated in the hands of the leaders, their arrest immediately paralyses the whole organisation. With their usual inconsistency, the Trotskyists even explain the demise of their Western European sections during World War Two by telling people how their leaders were murdered by the Gestapo!"

A key part of his work was to study past revolutions, particularly the Russian, in order learn from the past and not repeat it. This meant critiquing Leninism. Having come through the Leninist myth, he was well placed to destroy it which he did in his most important and influential work, *The Bolsheviks and Workers' Control, 1917-1921: The State and Counter-Revolution*.

In great detail, Brinton documents the anti-worker economic policies of the Bolshevik regime and shows beyond any doubt their links with their pre-revolution ideas on what socialism was. It is a very well-researched piece of history, chronicling the economic aspects of the Russian revolution and recounting the battles that occurred in the workplace between different visions of socialism and what they meant in practice. He traces the elimination of the Russian factory committees of 1917-18



and the role Bolshevik ideology and policy played in it. He shows that the standard claim that Bolshevik authoritarianism started as a result of the civil war is not supported by the facts.

It cannot be stressed enough how important and ground-breaking this work is. Brinton shows that rather than base the new socialist economy on the organs workers had created themselves, as anarchists argued, Bolshevism saw these (at best) playing a minor role within an economy structured around institutions created by and inherited from capitalism. As he stressed, "only the ignorant or those willing to be deceived can still kid themselves into believing that proletarian power at the point of production was ever a fundamental tenet or objective of Bolshevism". The Bolsheviks, as Lenin had promised, built from the top-down their system of "unified administration" based on the Tsarist system of central bodies which governed and regulated certain industries during the war. So within six months of the October revolution, Lenin had replaced private capitalism with state capitalism. It is this process, and its ideological roots, which Brinton chronicles so ably. There are flaws with the book of course. While Brinton mentioned some political developments in his chronology, he failed to interlink the economic and political policies of Bolshevism as well as he could have. This, of course, would have increased the length of the

book considerably but Bolshevik authoritarian policies were not limited to just undermining economic democracy. To be fair, source material was not as available then as it is now. Similarly, at the time there was little on working class resistance to, and organisation against, Bolshevism. Subsequent research has strengthened Brinton's analysis rather than refuted it.

While his politics were extremely close to communist-anarchism (editor David Goodway calls them "fully anarchist" in his excellent introduction), Brinton's perspectives on anarchism were too shaded by his Leninist background. This can be seen from his review of Paul Avrich's book *The Russian Anarchists*. While he is right to bemoan the anti-organisational and anti-theoretical tendencies of Russian anarchism (something all too commonly shared in the English speaking anarchist movement), he does get basic things wrong, like Kropotkin's ideas on the role of mutual aid in society (his comment on Kropotkin "idealising the autonomous social units of a bygone age" is equally ill-informed).

Brinton's dismissal of Kropotkin is based on Avrich's summary of his ideas rather than a reading of the source material. While Brinton quotes Avrich maintaining that, for Kropotkin, "co-operation rather than conflict is at the root of the historical process" Kropotkin said no such thing. In reality, Kropotkin stressed that mutual aid was a factor in

evolution along with mutual aid. At no time did he deny the role of struggle, in fact the opposite.

Equally, only someone who read Kropotkin could claim, as he did, that his "aim is to convince those who oppress the masses" he stood for "a co-operation that transcended the barriers of class reality is different. To quote Kropotkin: 'What solidarity can exist between capitalist and the worker he exploits? Between the head of an army and the soldier? Between the governing and the governed?' (Words of a Rebel, p. 130) Clearly Kropotkin was well aware that co-operation could not be a simple matter between classes. Even Mutual Aid (which was essentially a work of popular science rather than a book of revolutionary anarchist propaganda) was not blind to the importance of social struggle and the role it played in society.

Ultimately, these are minor issues. The core ideas of Brinton in terms of the importance of self-management and the need for revolutionary theory and practice to take into account all aspects of hierarchical society, his consistency and logic, remain as relevant today as when they were written.

For *Workers' Power* by David Goodway (ed) and Maurice Brinton, AK Press, £12 (available from Freedom, add £1.20 towards postage and packing inland, £2.40 overseas).

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