

FREEDOM

£1 www.freedompress.org.uk

Vol 71 No 12 • 19 JUNE 2010

IN THE FIRING LINE

Political activists are being targeted by a new European-wide initiative to monitor the activities of 'political extremists'

The UK government has signed up to a European surveillance programme that allows state forces to gather and share personal information, and monitor the activities of suspected 'radicals' from across the political spectrum.

A confidential report obtained by Statewatch, the civil liberties monitoring group, reveals a programme of 'systematic data collection' by police and security agencies across the EU as part of a strategy of surveillance that undermines both individual civil liberties and the right to privacy and association.

The plans, originally intended to monitor potential Islamic terrorism threats, has now been widened to include threats posed by left wing, anti-globalisation and pro-nationalist activists.

The Council of the European Union agreed the plans in April, without debate or consulta-

page 3 ►►

LENS CAP DEMOCRACY VILLAGE LIVES ON



The protest camp that sprung up in Parliament Square during this year's Mayday protest is still hanging on in there despite legal steps to have them evicted. A mini camp of some 50 tents has become a permanent tourist attraction and protest site highlighting the failures of our democratic system.

Photo: Rikki, Indymedia

THE POLITICS OF TWITTERING

Twitter, for the uninitiated, is a social networking website akin to Facebook and Myspace, with the caveat that messages can only be 140 characters in length. Around 105 million people are signed up, 300,000 more join weekly; generating 67 million 'tweets' (messages) a day. On a daily basis Twitter lists the ten topics most tweeted about worldwide, and makes this list available to all users. Often reflecting global media or sports, these 'Trending Topics' are noted with a # in front of the subject, for example '#WorldCup' or '#Elections'.

On 31st May a sexist Trending Topic appeared on the list and rapidly overtook '#Flotilla' for the top position, '#ihatefemaleswho' became most tweeted subject in the world for nearly two days. Users – both men and women – unleashed a

dick...DIE...PLEASE!!!', '#ihatefemaleswho think they run the relationship', '#ihatefemaleswho sit around a dirty house and act like they cant clean up...you need 2 be kicked the fuck out...'. The onslaught of sexist garbage reached a peak of several hundred tweets per second worldwide, quickly becoming threatening and violent '#ihatefemaleswho can't take a joke...or a punch!'.

Like most social networking websites, Twitter exists to make money. It is indicative that Twitter did not remove the topic from the list – as they did with the hoax obituary of teen icon Justin Bieber earlier this year – because mass sexism doesn't threaten their reputation or finances. This is a troubling expression of what many comrades are already aware of: sexism is on the rise, even amongst the younger Twitter

INSIDE ►►

Stop and search wrong page 3

Italian antifascist festival page 4

Spain's general strike page 7

Marx and capitalism pages 8-9

Svartfrosk column page 10

Reviews pages 14 and 15

ISSN 0016-0504



9 770016 050009

NEWS

IN BRIEF

AFGHANISTAN: The war is going badly – mostly for the people of Afghanistan, but with reliable statistics lacking we continue to monitor the occupying forces.

Up to 10th June the invaders suffered 35 fatalities, including five British. This compares with 38 in the whole of June 2009.

The British total deaths is now 294, small fry in historical terms – the 1903 to 1904 expedition to Tibet cost 613 lives but, combined with the obvious lack of success, it is to be hoped that the movement to end the war will show a similar increase.

COURTS: Even us anarchists are sometimes shocked by the legal system.

A recent case at City of Westminster Magistrates involved a man who had self-harmed on an underground station.

He was prosecuted for having a bladed instrument in a public place and also criminal damage (costs caused to London Underground to mop up his blood).

Thankfully the magistrates in his case broke from sentencing guidelines by not imprisoning him and refused the Crown Prosecution Services application for an ASBO banning him from “intentionally or recklessly spilling bodily fluids on London Underground property”.

OIL SPILL: As many as 40,000 barrels (1.7 million gallons) of oil a day may have been gushing out from a blown-out Gulf of Mexico well, doubling many estimates.

The US Geological Survey says that flow rate could have been reached before a cap was put on the well on 3rd June. After putting the cap on the well BP claim to be catching 15,000 barrels a day, leaving us to wonder what’s happening to the other 25,000.

SEA ICE: The area covered by Arctic Sea ice continues to shrink.

As of 10th June, it was 9,177,000 square kilometres – 1,177,000 less than the mean between 1979 and 2008.

Once again we translate for our readers into the international unit of measurement, the Wales. That means there are 56.3 Wales’s less ice.

Worse is to come as measurements of ice volume by the Polar Science Centre show it is thinner than previous years as well.

EGON RONAY: Restaurant critic Egon Ronay has died at the age of 94 after a short illness. He died on Saturday 12th June at his Berkshire home with his wife and two daughters by his side, said close friend and broadcaster Nick Ross.

Ronay wrote his first guidebook in 1956 after managing several restaurants and contributing to the *Daily Telegraph*. He continued to publish the books for three decades, helping to usher in the era of restaurant reviews. Ronay had been born in Hungary in 1915.

LENS CAP SPORT’S NOT JUST FOR WOMEN!



No prizes for guessing the identity of the venue for the next World Netball Championship but, with just over a year to go before the big event, we challenge readers to name the men-only global championship happening now in South Africa.

Shouty McHeadwound innocent

Harvie Brown, the protester whose bloodied face and vocal remonstrations against the police provided one of the more memorable images of last year’s G20 demonstration – memorable enough for Charlie Brooker to coin him his very own nickname – walked free this week after a jury took just 30 minutes to clear him of charges of violent disorder.

Media framing of the events, when several hundred protesters being ‘kettled’ by police near the Bank of England led to angry confrontations, portrayed Shouty as the ringleader of a violent mob of rioters intent on attacking the police. But this, it transpires, was far from being the case.

Once again, the police version of events has been called into question, the case before Isleworth crown court having established that his injuries – two head wounds and a broken tooth – were in all likelihood the result of the somewhat less than good services of their own officers.

Wielding their batons with free abandon, police attempted to push the protesters back

with little concern that those at the front were unable to comply because of pressure from the crowd behind. Shouty, one of those unlucky enough to be caught at the front, bore the full brunt of the police assault.

Television coverage at the time, subject to customary bias, interpreted Shouty’s understandable protestations about such treatment as an attempt to goad the police into violence. Evidence brought before the court suggests they needed no such encouragement. Rhona Friedman, for the defence, commented: “Members of the jury were seen to flinch at footage of police officers deploying baton strikes against people in the crowd. When asked to decide who was guilty of unlawful violence and who was not, the jury could not have more clearly decided in Mr Brown’s favour.”

Shouty, who faced a three year prison sentence if convicted, denied either that he had been a ringleader or that he had been attempting to foment an attack on police. “I was shocked when I was released from the police station in the early hours of 2nd April to see that I was plastered all over the newspapers and described as a violent agitator at the G20 protests,” he said after the trial.

“I was distressed that I was made out to be the aggressor. I was also very upset that the emphasis of the reporting, which I felt should have been on the demonstration against the causes of the financial crisis, had turned into a focus on what was described as anti-police behaviour.”

Freedom eagerly awaits further revelations in the courts should officers face charges over the death of Ian Tomlinson. But we





The week-long camp in August 2008 at Kingsnorth, a dual-fired coal and oil power station on the Hoo Peninsula at Medway in Kent

Stop and search tactics wrong

Climate camp activists win massive victory as police admit their actions were unlawful

Kent Police have finally admitted their policy of stop and searching climate activists at Kingsnorth power station during the week-long protest in 2008 was not lawful and have agreed to pay compensation to three people who challenged the action in the High Court.

Back in January 2010 The High Court ruled in favour of the claimants, including well-known London activist Dave Morris of Haringey Solidarity Group and two children, that the controversial mass search operation by Kent police went beyond the realms of legality.

This week, The Chief Constable of Kent Police went further, admitting that the entire

stop and search operation was a violation of the public's human rights to privacy, freedom of expression and freedom of association. The Chief Constable has now agreed to put this admission in a letter to the 25 other police forces involved in the Kingsnorth operation, in which he also notes that "lessons must be learned". He will also write a letter of apology to the three claimants.

It is now clear that the estimated 3,500 searches that took place that week were also unlawful and solicitors are investigating the possibility for others to claim compensation.

The solicitor acting for Mr Morris and the two children commented: "Kent Police has been forced to make a remarkable admission. It is that the outcome of one of the most expensive policing operations ever in the UK was a massive violation of the human right to protest. That human rights breaches occurred on this scale, were not identified by the two internal police investigations into the operation, and ultimately had to be

exposed by the activist and two tenacious children and who brought this case says something very worrying about policing of peaceful protest about vital issues like climate change."

The week-long family-friendly public camp, organised by Climate Camp in the summer of 2008, involved extensive discussions and workshops, collective sustainable living, protests and direct action against government plans to expand coal-fired energy production in the light of its disastrous contribution to greenhouse gases and climate change. The power station's expansion plans have since been suspended.

The case was won despite police efforts to deny there was any systematic stop and search policy at the camp. Their position collapsed after a key document came to light that revealed the police 'bronze commanders' in charge of the operation at Kingsnorth were systematically giving briefings for blanket stop and searches.

In the firing line

◀ page 1

tion from national or European parliaments. The secret document offers a means in which greater co-ordination of information to be gathered and passed on. Part of the initiative is to "facilitate and improve information sharing between agencies, institutions and Member States".

Intriguingly the targets of surveillance are not those who plan or commit terrorist acts, which is already covered by criminal law, but people and groups who hold radical views which include the unspecified "extreme left" and "anti-globalisation".

This is particularly troubling for political activists in the UK, who have no association with violence or terrorism, but who may find themselves monitored, along with family members, friends and work colleagues because of their political beliefs.

The UK has the most sophisticated intelligence gathering operation in Europe with an

hold data, and gather intelligence on a variety of activists, causes and campaigns.

In the UK, the police have developed a centralised monitoring apparatus to spy on "domestic extremists", an umbrella term with no legal definition which, in practice, includes law-abiding environmental protesters, anti-war activists and anti-racist campaigners. Several agencies keep information on a central database that has been criticised for having no accountability, such as the private body Association of Chief Police Officers (Acpo), and the central intelligence database of the National Public Order Intelligence Unit (NPOIU) which has previously admitted holding over 1,822 images of political protestors on a permanent record. It is believed NPOIU also hold such information as names and addresses, vehicle registration numbers, descriptions, political affiliations, friends and associates, political events and

The implications of Statewatch's new revelations are far reaching, as a further step in a long-standing attempt to create a pan-European database of individuals whom police suspect could cause trouble at large demonstrations.

EU officials, principally led by Germany, have tried repeatedly to widen the shared data on suspected terrorists and serious criminals to include political activists, defined in documents as "troublemakers" who attend "large public gatherings".

In commenting on the document, Tony Bunyan of Statewatch warned: "Under both plans any and all 'radicals' could be targeted and everyday political life could become contaminated by unseen and unaccountable suspicions manufactured by agencies of the state. Open, legitimate political discussion and activity could be yet another casualty of the 'war on

ANALYSIS

Bologna's antifascist festival

Freedom were invited to attend this annual festival organised by the autonomist and anarchists movement in Bologna. The radical history and present struggles of our Italian comrades and their ability for creative realisation continues to inspire a new generation.

Bologna, Italy, again hosted the annual Social Festival of Antifascist Culture, an initiative that started in 2009 and organised mainly by 'Ex-Mercato 24', a social centre based in Via Fourivanti, which is a popular working class neighbourhood in central Bologna in the process of mass urban gentrification.

Italy was the birthplace of Fascism as a political and social force and, through its 20 years of political and cultural domination from the 1920s until the outbreak of the Second World War, the policies and practices of fascism as culture and as social repression continue to leave their mark on Italian identity and politics. With such real comparisons increasingly evident in the current government of Berlusconi's right-wing PDL, resistance to it has been characterised within the history of resistance to fascism specifically. From the festival's main call-out it explains that: "Fascism is first and foremost, a 'culture', a way of being, of behaving. It is the desire to dominate people, nature, the territory. It is arrogance, the negation of every right, the repression of dissent and the negation of and contempt towards difference." It continues that "the 'culture' of yesterday's fascism is alive and well. It has transformed itself, changing its organisations and delegations and continues to carry out fascism's dirty work, up until this day. The 'culture' to fight against belongs to this fascism of today."

The festival promoted antifascism on the level of a social and cultural offensive, a level which in itself manages to communicate further than purely sharing a political affinity with antifascism. Culture is a area of conflict often used as social critic and social reinforcement of the existing economic and political hegemony – it is one area perhaps in the UK that has slowly been recuperated within a commodified and commercial form of acceptable rebellion – leaving perhaps many die-hard anarchists like ourselves to reject it as any-



thing but revolutionary. Our prejudices on this front were fundamentally challenged during our time at the festival.

Within the conference itself, which lasted from 28th May until 6th June, many workshops ranging from anti-nuclear power and veganism, to the testimonials from the experiences of migrants in the south of Italy and the campaigns against the new extreme right ideologies, may be considered from a UK perspective beyond the traditional remit of what we in the UK defined as antifascism. The youth-based movements which formed punk in the late 1970s, the fusion of Afro-Caribbean reggae, all the way through to urban hip hop and rave culture – with its strong anti-authority and anti-police rhetoric – there are certain parallels even for us in the UK where cultures of resistance and the music it generated were as much part of our movement as the politics were.

Our talk, as part of an international panel of speakers from Germany, Austria, Bosnia and Greece, illustrated our experiences in the UK, the history of the far-right and reactionary ideologies from the National Front of the 1970s through to the electoral success of the BNP and the formation of the English Defence League. There were many similarities of how fascist and reactionary ideologies have grown in once fairly strong and rebellious working class communities and have managed to occupy the radical space once held by the left.

Though we managed to, in the short space of time and through a translator, convey the uniqueness of the UK situation, we had hoped to expand further the complexities of fighting new movements like the EDL, the issues of new forms of domination by religious dogmatism in muslim communities – and the possibility for opening up a working class perspective on all these areas.

Around 200 people attended the debates during the days, though that grew to over 1,000 people in the evening when the concerts, theatre, bars and excellent restaurant provided the social aspect within the festival. Here it seemed that all of Bologna came together, with children, families, old and young, crusty 'punkabestias' to SHARP skins all intermingled. In one of the two bars on site, folk singers from Rome sang anarchist songs from the early twentieth century, with their audience barely in their late teens singing along. The social was just as important as the politics – in fact there was no separation between the two, which made the whole event seem organic and natural.

We are at a massive disadvantage in the UK to replicate such environments. Whereas Italian culture on the whole has a concept of public, free festivals, frequenting public squares and minimal street violence, we wondered how such a thing would have worked in the UK. Of course there are similarities like the Climate Camp in Kingsnorth where hundreds of local youths, children and families came nightly to tour the camp and chat with the campers with no sense of antagonism or tension.

For us the major difference is that we are perhaps more anti-social, more individualised and less empathetic with each other. This for me was the main message I got from my time at the festival – to build a social movement means we need to appeal on the social and cultural level, we must represent ourselves on this level, which means being open, dignified, friendly, non-judgemental. These are all traits that, for some of us, it is easier to be than others coming from a deeply alienated



IN BRIEF

EAGLES: Not content with their 'get orf my land image', farmers have added to their bad press by a 'get orf my air' opposition to the reintroduction of Sea Eagles to the East Coast of England. Hearing that Natural England had withdrawn financial support for the project Farmer Jimmy Butler said he was delighted. "It's an absolute total relief to us. This was madness in the first place," he said.

"This bird would have killed a lot of our pigs, jeopardised our income, and jeopardised our business in total. We are so relieved we can now just get on with keeping pigs."

AIRBASE: A new commander takes over the US Air Force 48th Fighter Wing based in Suffolk. Colonel John T. Quintas replaces Colonel Jay P. Silveria in a change of command ceremony at RAF Lakenheath. The outgoing officer relinquishes command to his successor by passing the unit flag in a formal military formation.

Colonel Silveria will become the new Air Combat Command Inspector General at Langley Air Force Base in Virginia, USA.

HURRICANES: Little (fortunately) has happened in the North Atlantic Hurricane season so far, but as we write a storm does seem to be brewing 1,425 miles east-southeast of the windward Islands. Updates will follow here but you can track the storm's progress at <http://www.nhc.noaa.gov/>.

HORSE: The annual Man versus Horse race in the heart of the Welsh countryside has been won again by a four-legged entrant. Sly Dai, ridden by Llinos Mair Jones from the contest's home village of Llanwrtyd Wells, Powys, triumphed in two hours seven minutes and four seconds. Man has won only twice in the 31 years of the race.

ROYAL ASCOT: By the time you get this the toffs horseracing festival will be over but, having had our fingers burnt in the Derby, the editors of this paper are now advocating a strict strategy of only backing horses with proletarian names, Workforce having romped home by seven lengths at Epsom. So we reckon Dick Turpin represents the best chance of a redistribution of income from the rulers to the ruled in the Jersey Stakes on Wednesday – laugh at us when we're wrong again.

CRIME: Speaking of wealth redistribution, playwright Alan Bennett's wallet was stolen by pickpockets during a 'distraction' scam in north London. The thieves stole the writer's wallet, containing £1,500, in Camden High Street while pretending to clean his coat after spattering ice cream on it. The theft took place after midday on Friday and the Metropolitan Police are looking for three suspects. Bennett, 76, is best known for his *Talking Heads* monologues, *The Madness of King George* and *The History Boys*. No arrests have been made in the case – shame.

Fighting for Hackney's childcare

On Sunday 30th May 2010, Friends of Hackney Nurseries (FHN) organised a fun family event in London Fields, Hackney. There was face-painting, a raffle, storytelling, banner-making, lots of cake and much general merriment. Although a good time had by all, especially the children, the reason behind the funday was serious and the event was intended to inform and bring people together around the very real threats to childcare provision in Hackney.

Community nurseries across the London Borough of Hackney are facing serious funding cuts, which will result in some of the poorest working families in the borough losing their nursery places. In April at least eight community nurseries received letters from the local education authority, The Learning Trust, saying that with immediate effect there would be funding cuts of up to 50% at the nurseries, equivalent to 200 children losing their subsidised nursery places, leading to the serious threat of nursery closures, and hardship and distress for parents, workers and children.

The FHN group, which successfully organised against huge cuts to nursery provision in the 1990s and early 2000s, re-formed to fight these cuts and to fight for decent, affordable childcare for all in Hackney. The group is comprised of parents, nursery workers, local residents and community activists, with many feminists and anarchists responding to the call to join this struggle.

The Learning Trust has denied that there will be any funding cuts to nurseries, preferring to call it a 'reallocation of funds'. Hackney council representatives and Mayor Jules Pipe publicly denied any knowledge of the planned cuts, admitting that the council has very little knowledge of what the Learning Trust does.

The Learning Trust responded to these denials by saying it had fully consulted with the council in the 'reallocation of funds' and with nurseries too. The nurseries affected have not been consulted at all, nor have the parents who use the nurseries. "Where exactly have the funds been reallocated to?" ask FHN, "We don't know" say the council.

Hackney council was stripped of its right to provide education services in 2001

following widespread criticism that the then bankrupt council was the worst education authority in the country and financially incapable of providing education services to some of the most deprived children in the UK. At the direction of the Secretary of State for Education and Skills, education services in Hackney were handed over to The Learning Trust, a non-profit-making, independent education trust set up by the government, and the first body of its kind in the UK.

It is clear that with the change of government and massive cuts to public services imminent, the struggle for decent, free or affordable childcare provision is just heating up and not just in Hackney, but across the UK. It is important that anarchists recognise the significant impact these cuts will have on the working-class women who are primarily affected by nursery cuts, and respond to these attacks accordingly. The withdrawal of public funds will affect all nurseries, and consequently our children's opportunities will be diminished. We must organise and resist not only against these cuts, but against the sexist notion of childcare as women's work and the resulting under-valuing of this work under capitalism. Laura Schwartz of FHN and Feminist Fightback, in a call out entitled *Girls (and boys?) Come Out to Play, or Why the Fight Against Nursery Cuts Must Involve People of All Genders*, calls "on the male-dominated Left to take this campaign seriously, and to join us today and in the future – not just to defend existing and unsatisfactory public services but to fight for a better way to organise our society and our lives". London Anarcha Feminist Kolektiv would like to echo this sentiment. Childcare, who does it and how it's organised, affects us all and as anarchists we would like to work towards the collectivisation of child rearing, with everyone taking responsibility for the next generation.

London anarcha feminist kolektiv
www.lafk.wordpress.com

The Friends of Hackney Nurseries meet regularly and are gearing up for a long fight. All are welcome to get involved. For more information visit www.friendsofhackneynurseries.wordpress.com



INTERNATIONAL

IN BRIEF

CANADA: The Canadian government is preparing to forcibly assimilate Barriere Lake's customary governance system using an archaic and rarely invoked piece of Indian Act legislation – Section 74.

By breaking the community's connection to the land, the Canadian and Quebec governments hope to make it easier to get round existing resource-use agreements barring clear-cutting in their traditional territory.

CHINA: Police deployed tear gas to dispel protesters, arresting dozens and injuring several people in Taiyun City, in China's Shanxi Province earlier this month. The violent protests allegedly erupted over confiscated properties amid government corruption.

Residents of Di Village in Taiyuan City say that Ma Jincai, the local Communist Party chief and head of their village, is corrupt. According to the villagers, Ma expropriated their land with the promise of building houses for them. But after the buildings were completed Ma refused to give them to the villagers. Some residents were left without a place to live and their farmland was also taken away.

EGYPT: An Egyptian security official has declared the blockade of Gaza a failure and said his country will keep its border with the Palestinian territory open indefinitely. Keeping that crossing point open long term would ease the blockade imposed by Israel three years ago. It also restores a link to the outside the world for some of Gaza's 1.5 million Palestinians.

Egypt opened its border with Gaza soon after Israel's deadly raid on an international flotilla of activists.

FRANCE: Sarkozy's ruling UMP party has threatened to raise the statutory retirement age to 60 as part of an austerity plan to save 80 billion euros by 2014.

GERMANY: The Berlin Higher Region court has overturned a ruling made against the anarcho-syndicalist group FAU saying that it could not call itself a union.

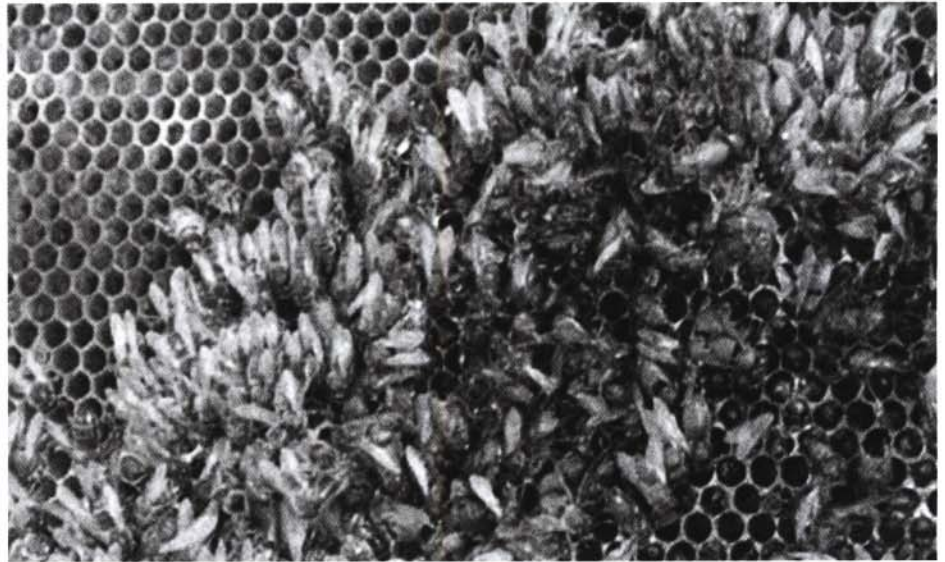
In the new ruling, FAU was said to have had its basic rights of free speech infringed, which opens the door to a legal challenge against recently-imposed fines against the union.

SWEDEN: Rioters in the Swedish capital of Stockholm, have burned down a school building and thrown stones at police in a second night of disturbances.

The trouble began on Monday after a group of youths in a suburb with a mainly immigrant population were refused entry to a school dance.

Police say up to 100 youths went on the rampage, throwing stones and setting several cars alight. Two people were detained but later released.

LENS CAP A WORLD WITHOUT BEES?



Dead bees litter a hive as die-offs continue worldwide. Widespread mass deaths, a major threat to crops depending on the honey-making insects for pollination, are not due to any one single factor, the World Organisation for Animal Health has said. Parasites, viral and bacterial infections, pesticides and poor nutrition resulting from the impact of human activities on the environment have all played a role in the decline.

Hurricanes to hit Haiti homeless

Things are set to go from bad to worse in Port-au-Prince, Haiti, as hurricane season hits with no progress in sight for thousands of promised shelters for the victims of January's catastrophic earthquake.

NGO workers and journalists on the ground are reporting a move by landowners with refugees squatting their land to begin a slew of evictions within the next couple of months.

The changing mood reflects months of stagnation in the area as shelters for tens of thousands of street homeless fail to materialise despite gigantic emergency loans offered to the country as part of a controversial rescue package tied to neo-liberal economic reforms.

Weather experts are predicting a 'highly active' summer of heavy rains and hurricanes in the region, which have already caused misery across the capital city with the tarpaulin tents

used by most homeless people unable to keep out even light rains.

Around 1.5 million people were designated homeless in Port-au-Prince after the 7.0 magnitude earthquake struck, prompting promises of a complete rebuilding of the city using billions of dollars pledged by international sources.

However early on this was linked to the moving of 400,000 people out of the centre of the city, effectively sealing plans to socially re-engineer it along the lines of Paris, sealing off poorer sections of society in suburbs between the wealthy hub of Port au Prince and rural areas.

Even this though has not materialised, prompting a rising level of anger which manifested in an attempted – though repressed – rally on 18th May.

Notes from the US

Coverage of the oil spill has rather overshadowed recent racist legislation in the state of Arizona. SB 1070 gives extensive powers to law enforcement personnel to challenge the immigration status of those whom they stop for 'other' reasons.

Akin to the hated 'SUS' practice of the 1980s in the UK, this means that the police, sheriffs and other arms of the state can identify latino immigrants by appearance first, then invent reasons for stops... speeding, jay-walking, suspicion of shoplifting, etc.

In its education system for example Arizona lawmakers have enacted an extraordinary measure which would close a Mexican-American studies courses in the Tucson school district (LEA).

Classes that are "designed primarily for pupils of a particular ethnic group" or that "promote resentment toward a race or class of people" are to be banned. This because such curricula allow pupils to learn how ethnic groups have influenced history.

Even more jaw-dropping is a move by

CNT: Make Spain's general strike indefinite

Union warns one-day outings not enough to deter public sector cuts

As Spain gears up for a possible general strike against massive public sector cuts and attacks on job security passed by the ruling Socialist Party the anarcho-syndicalist CNT union is calling for it to be made indefinite.

Following a damp squib public-sector strike on 8th June the union is warning that "gesture strikes" are not going to be enough to force the government to change course.

Writing after the event, they said: "The government's plans to stabilise the economy through reducing the public deficit by 11% have placed the cost of the economic crisis on the shoulders of the disadvantaged.

"It is evident that the proposals are designed to satisfy banks and employers by compromising with the neoliberal designs that prevail in the EU.

"Yet the subsidised unions have not yet found a reason to mobilise – there is therefore a complicity in the official trade unions over these matters.

"If there had been earlier mobilisations the government would have dared to present the measures announced and would have had to cut elsewhere. It would have had to seek income where the money really is – on the bench, through corporate taxes, inheritance, hedge funds, etc.

"We believe it is a mistake to continue 'negotiating' labour reform, which is simply a concession to employers. The only



Public sector workers in Barcelona march during June's general strike.

possibility for correcting this situation is to fight this economic aggression through social confrontation, to continue and expand protests to all sectors."

Larger TUC-style unions called the 8th June strike, which the left claimed got 75% of public sector workers out (state sources put it 16%) and saw tens of thousands of people on the streets in protest. The public sector accounts for around 2.5 million jobs in Spain.

However the measure has made little impact on narrowly-passed plans to slash 5% from public sector pay, part of a 15 billion euro package of austerity measures being implemented in the next few years.

Other measures include the uncoupling of pension payments from inflation, an end to

tax breaks for new parents and cuts in public investment and development aid of up to 6 billion euros.

The Party is also taking the opportunity to 'free up the labour market' by making it easier to hire and fire workers, a measure which would be likely to help drive a general strike outside the public sector.

Its actions as Spain is threatened by international markets over its debt ratio are widely seen as a betrayal of the electoral promises which put the Socialist Party (PSOE) and Jose Zapatero into power in 2004 on the back of widespread discontent with the right, though anarchist groups in the country have pointed to its actions as emblematic of party politicians' inability to drive through real change.

Notes from the US

◀ page 6

Arizona's Education Department ordering schools to dismiss teachers who speak English with a heavy accent or who use ungrammatical speech.

And Miller Valley Elementary School of Prescott, Arizona, painted over the faces of the dark-skinned children depicted on a mural in its grounds. School management ordered the artists to lighten the children's skin tone. The head teacher, Jeff Lane, only reversed his decision after protests.

The fear is that this lead taken by a state known for its elite's racist stances in a variety of areas will be copied in other areas. Law-makers in a fifth of the country's other states (Utah, Oklahoma, Colorado, Ohio, Missouri, Georgia, South Carolina, Mississippi, Texas, and Maryland) have all called for similar laws.

Eric Bedingfield, a Republican in South Carolina, for instance, introduced a bill at the end of April which also requires law enforce-

status. Its language is practically identical to the most controversial part of the Arizona measure.

However this has all produced a storm of protest and opposition. Arizona's own Pima County Sheriff Clarence Dupnik (who calls the law "unconstitutional") says he won't enforce it.

In late May three dozen or so people were arrested in New York during a protest against SB 1070. Protesters, including city councillors and trade unionists, joined arms and blocked traffic outside a government building.

Direct action at the grass roots level, of course, is more likely to have an impact: several sports teams have decided to boycott venues in Arizona. Certain local authorities – in California, for example – are cancelling supply contracts with businesses in the state. And a new coalition of civil rights and labour groups announced a nationwide boycott of Arizona businesses.

US training Mexico troops for black ops

Research by the Narconews group in Mexico suggests that special forces troopers from the US are involved in training native forces and could even be involving themselves in the assassination of state enemies.

Information released by former CIA contract pilot William Plumlee points to US involvement in Mexican special forces operations which have left a number of narco-traffickers dead, including kingpin Arturo Beltran Leyva last December.

Direct US involvement had not previously been confirmed by personnel at this level, although strong evidence exists that the CIA has itself been involved as an ongoing trafficker of drugs to the US in the last few years.

The news raises fears among left-wing groups in the country that US black ops techniques may be finding their way into Mexico's armed forces and from there into the hands of its

FEATURE

Is Marx's analysis of capitalism

Jonny Ball examines the concept of capitalism as defined by Marx and asks are we entering a new epoch that once again justifies a revolutionary approach to social change?

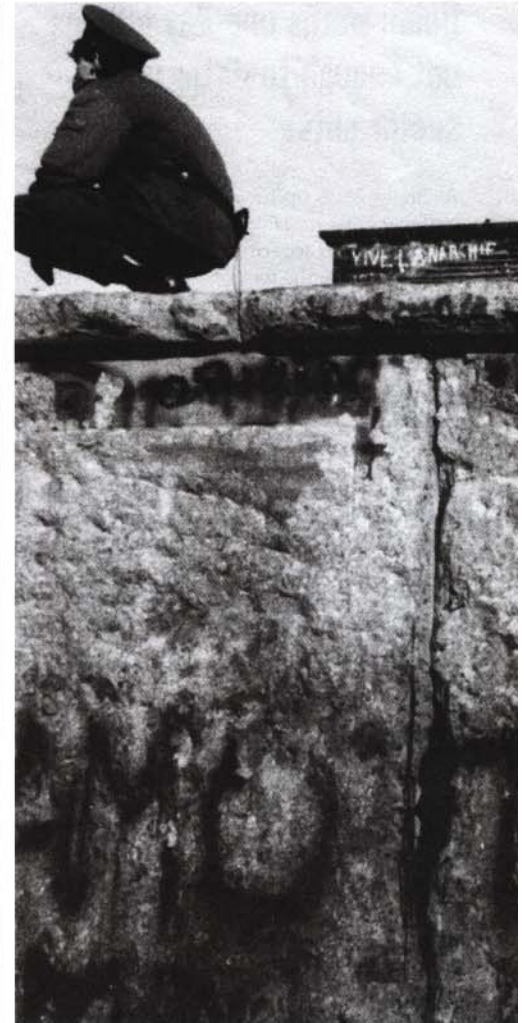
PART ONE

After the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, and the subsequent collapse of the USSR, some observers proclaimed, 'the end of history'.¹ Marxism in practice had failed, the cold war, the war of ideologies had been fought and won by the forces of neo-liberal capitalism and we were entering the final epoch of human history and achievement; a triumphant profit-driven economic model practised harmoniously the world over, with no realistic resistance posing any realistic threat – 'the end of history.' For many, the Soviet Union represented a bastion of real living socialism, a bulwark against US imperialism and a workers paradise that rivalled the market economies of the West. Vladimir Putin, in true populist fashion, described the break-up of the Eastern bloc as, "the greatest geopolitical disaster of the twentieth century",² and many orthodox-Marxists and hard-liners on the left were left with cold feet, their faith shattered as they saw swathes of ordinary working class people in communist states marching against the ruling communist parties – the so-called vanguards of the working class. Much of the

left embraced social-democratic politics, toning down their Marxist rhetoric and pragmatically replacing it with market-socialism or 'socialism with Chinese characteristics' – state-managed capitalism. All this would suggest that Marxism has reached its sell-by date, and that recent history has left Marx's analysis of capitalism in tatters.

However, the recent economic crisis has brought about a general mood of discontent and resulted in an almost unanimous hatred of bankers, real-estate agents, stock-brokers, market speculators, all these agents of capitalism, amongst the general public. This is coupled with the widespread abhorrence held for politicians after the series of expenses scandals, their perceived mismanagement of the economy and their obvious detachment from the population. We still live in a society built on exploitation and alienation and characterised by massive inequalities in wealth and power that were exacerbated by the banking crisis. These features of capitalist economics; cyclical crises, alienation, social and economic inequality and exploitation through wage-labour are all expounded in Marx's critique of capitalism, *Capital*, and are all still hallmarks of our society.

Capitalism is based on the constant drive for profit, the extraction of value from the workforce and non-stop growth in spite of its consequences for the environment and humankind; economic growth is seen as an end in itself, an absolute good – growth for growth's sake – with GDP figures exalted as the omnipotent indicators of happiness, progress and success. In Marxist theory, the profit of the bourgeoisie is based on the theft of surplus value from the proletariat, who will squeeze as much profit out of their employees as is possible in their insatiable



Above, the partly destroyed Berlin Wall, view from the 'roaring twenties' were quickly halted by

appetite for profit and expansion. According to Marx, this principal *modus operandi* of *Capital* has several damaging consequences. It creates inequality and class antagonisms since the working classes are paid less than what they produce and the rest is appropriated by the capitalist class as surplus value, this is their basic method of accumulation. Furthermore, this unregulated anarchic system of production and consumption leads to inevitable cyclical crises of boom and bust, crises caused by overproduction and under-consumption.

Politicians are proud to boast *laissez-faire*, 'competitive' markets that 'attract investment' and essentially leave the owners of the means of production to operate and exploit with impunity. In their attempts to drive down costs and simultaneously increase production, the captains of industry will suppress wage increases even as their profits soar, leading overall production to rise at a far quicker rate than overall wages – demand stagnates as supply increases, which affects the long-



still valid today?

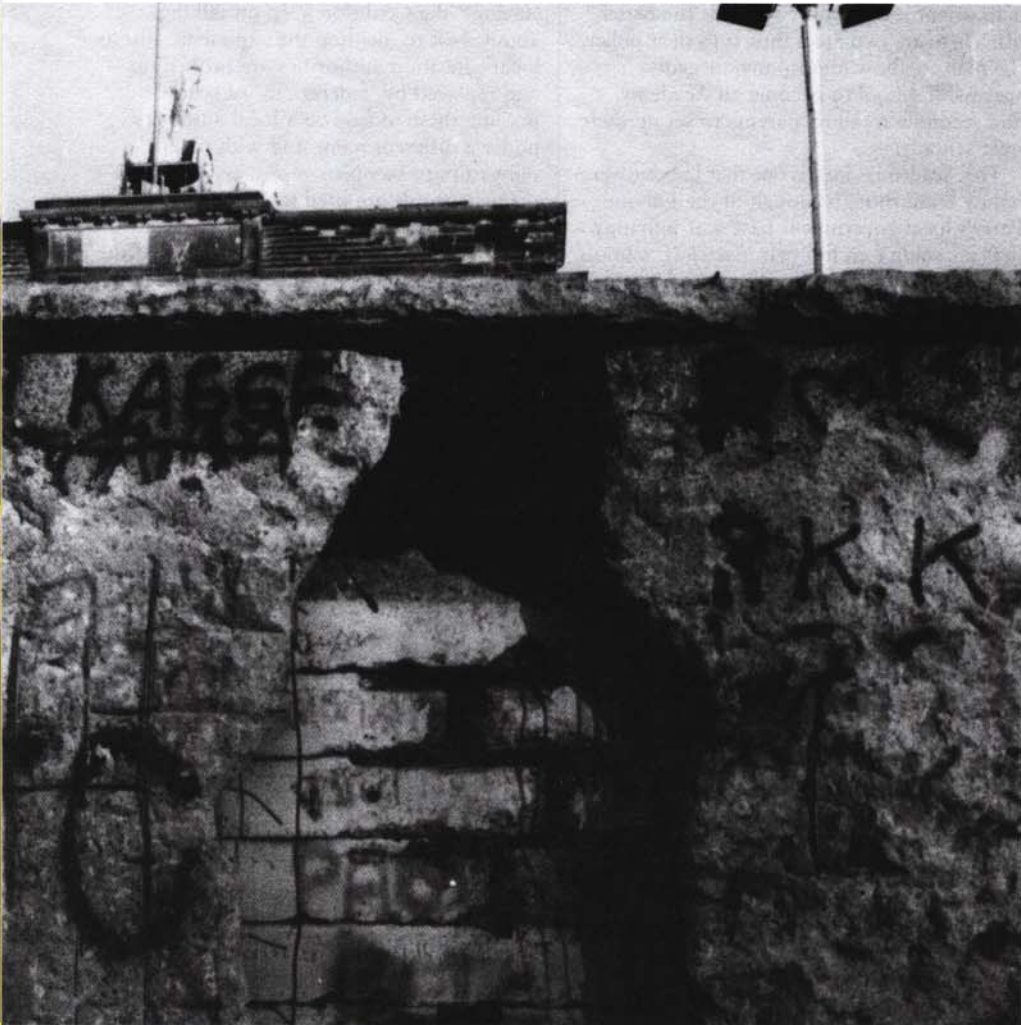


Photo: Stefan Richter

the west with Brandenburg Gate in the background, November 1989; below left, the fast riches of the stock market crash of 1929.

in constant fluctuations between recessions, depressions, and periods of growth. “In these crises there breaks out an epidemic that, in all earlier epochs would have seemed an absurdity – the epidemic of overproduction. Society suddenly finds itself put back into a state of momentary barbarism.”¹ Absurd indeed to turn having too much of something into a societal crisis. Speculators see opportunity in such conditions to make quick and easy money from the well-timed buying or selling of shares, debts, real estate, currencies and raw materials, which only adds to the uncertainty and instability which comes from a turbulent market. In analysing the conditions that brought about the depression of 1929, the Marxist writer George Jackson points out that production increased, “without a corresponding increase in the ability of the great labouring masses to buy back what was being produced, [which] precipitated a sharp fall of the price in food-stuffs in one of the world’s agricultural centres, the United States. It was under-

to the fatal stock market crash of 1929.”⁴

Crises are not so much of a problem of overproduction, as this in itself is not a problem if people have the purchasing power to buy back what they produce, but the trigger in any recession is in fact, underconsumption. For all their triumphalist talk of ‘ending boom and bust’ when they came to power,⁵ the New Labourites actually spurred on the current financial crisis by continuing down the path of the neoliberal, Thatcherite economic model. Treasury policy and macro-economic management in the Brown days was no different from when Ken Clarke was Chancellor in the last Tory government. Blair and Brown were all too happy to cosy up with the financial and banking sectors and the Confederation of British Industry, with Blair keen to prove that the days of militant labour were over, declaring themselves architects of an economic boom built on debt, a housing bubble and levels of consumer-spending that were only made possible with the expansion

This was until the housing market collapsed in the US in 2001 under the weight of sub-prime mortgages, revealing a massive hole of debt, defaulted loan repayments and dodgy investments in banks all over the world. Credit, on which the economy was built, dried up, spending shrivelled and the entire banking industry was on the brink of collapse until governments on both sides of the Atlantic stepped in with a multi-billion pound bailout package, which they euphemistically called ‘quantitative easing’ – an affirmation of the Marxist theory of state as an instrument of class rule, a tool in the suppression of the proletariat by the bourgeoisie, with the bailout we witnessed this theory in action as the state stepped in to prop up the people and institutions of the capitalist class and rescue the entire system from its self-inflicted demise.

As Marx pointed out, “the rule of the bourgeois democrats, from the very first, will carry within it the seeds of its own destruction”⁶ and with each economic downturn and each sign of resistance his words become ever more resonant. Liberal Democrats like to present their Treasury spokesperson, Vince Cable, a former executive at Shell Oil, as a sort of sensible psychic messiah for his prescience of the looming global recession, but the revealing insights of Marxist economics and Marxist critiques of capitalism show that this recession and all recessions are inevitable in a market economy whose sole aim is to increase profit margins and the dividends of shareholders.

Footnotes:

- 1 *The End Of History and the Last Man*, Francis Fukuyama, marxists.org/reference/subject/philosophy/works/us/fukuyama.htm
- 2 Soviet break-up was geopolitical disaster, says Vladimir Putin, quoted in the *Telegraph*, telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/europe/russia/1488723/Soviet-break-up-was-geopolitical-disaster-says-Putin.html
- 3 *The Communist Manifesto*, Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, Penguin Classics, page 226.
- 4 *Blood In My Eye*, George Jackson, Black Classic Press, page 147.
- 5 FactCheck: no more boom and bust?, *Channel 4 News*, channel4.com/news/articles/politics/domestic_politics/factcheck+no+more+boom+and+bust/2564157
- 6 Address of the Central Committee to the Communist League, Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1847/communist-league/1850-ad1.htm

In Part Two in the next issue of *Freedom* we look at how much Marx’s critique of political economy and the capitalist system bears itself out in today’s global crisis, taking in labour theory of value and class divisions and their relevance on our current

COMMENT

ABOUT FREEDOM

ANGEL ALLEY

Summer is upon us and 84b is buzzing like a gigantic beehive as the proletarian movement rushes around gathering the nectar of revolutionary ideas and spreading the pollen of popular dissent. We have been working closely with local groups to head off the threat of an EDL march in Whitechapel on the 20th June – an update will be in the next issue.

However we have some sad news to report. Durruti the *Freedom* dog (that is in symbiotic relationship with, and certainly not owned by one of the editors' partners) was wounded in action with a ferocious pitbull, who we think was called Franco, while walking in an Edinburgh Park. Durruti nobly resisted the provocations of the nazi mutt and used the War Resisters International approved peace-building technique of inserting her nose into the pitbull's mouth to induce a calming trance. Unable to resist this non-violent tactic (plus the good kicking from Durruti's human auxiliary) the fascistic hound retreated, having suffered severe blood stains to the inside of the mouth and doubtless worn teeth and jaw ache. Durruti, in contrast, had no more than evisceration of her facial muscles, a flap of skin hanging from her mouth and, after a quick trip to the emergency vet, will be off the antibiotics and pain killers by the end of the month. Her scars will be no more than permanent. The Committee for Awards Medals and Decorations has given Durruti the Goldman Gong second class.

SUBSCRIPTIONS

This issue is vol 71 no 12, so if the number above your name on the address label is 7112 or less, then your subscription is now due for renewal. There's a renewal form on page 16 of this issue or you can now subscribe online at freedompress.org.uk/news/subscribe

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

Bookshop: shop@freedompress.org.uk

Freedom Press Distribution (for trade book orders): distro@freedompress.org.uk

NEXT ISSUE

The next issue will be dated 3rd July 2010 and the last day to get copy to us for that issue will be Thursday 24th June.

You can send your articles to us by email to copy@freedompress.org.uk or by post addressed to 'The Editors', Freedom, 84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1 7QX

A sideways look

by SVARTFROSK

The new government has immediately started to make clear its plans for education, which is to orient it even more towards the better off. There are two main thrusts to their policy, the plan to allow almost any allegedly successful school to become an Academy, and secondly to allow parents to set up their own schools.

The Academies idea is one that Labour were happy with, though enough of the Labour Party's local government base was unhappy that it couldn't go full pelt. Basically, schools can opt out of local authority control, set their own admissions policy, pay rates and make changes to the curriculum. In theory they have a sponsor, which can be a university, a charity, or a loony right wing evangelical Christian car salesman. The sponsor gets some control over the school, such as most notoriously being allowed to teach creationism in science classes.

Immediately after the policy was announced, there was a head teacher on the television saying how the local authority kept back lots of money that she wanted to use for the school. She claimed that the school lost out on £400,000 and received only £40,000 worth of services. This seems pretty unlikely to me. The costs just for running the payroll for a decent-sized secondary school are likely to be around that alone.

It is clear that the increase in Academies is about privatisation – it's just not about directly privatising the schools themselves. The relatively invisible back office functions run by the local authority are what are being targeted. Presumably having dozens of schools run their own admissions policy, with one or two secondary moderns left in

local authority control to soak up the kids who don't get in, is another one of those 'savings' the Coalition keep on talking about. Not to mention the experience lost as local education authorities are broken up and replaced by 'federations' of schools pooling these functions; a local authority under a different name and with no obligation to be open.

Once people are used to support services being run by private companies, it is only a matter of time before schools are pushed the whole way. On a separate note – why is it that someone running payroll for a school in a local authority is non-productive in public discussion, but when they are doing the same job for Serco or Capita they suddenly become productive? Or am I missing the general ignorance of most right-wing economic debate?

Yes, local authorities are often incompetent control freaks. Why does anyone imagine that private companies, or even educational charitable foundations, can't be the same?

The second policy announced by the coalition deserves a bit more consideration. While I think their motives stink, the idea that parents can get together and run what some have called 'free schools' is at least one that ought to get anarchists interested. Who do we think the current system fails the most? The poorest, most marginalised, the squarest pegs in the roundest holes. What would work best for them? Call me cynical, but I doubt that anyone trying to set up a school based around giving the students freedom over what they learned would get past the first hurdle. That doesn't mean I wouldn't support someone trying, though.



Statement from the Freedom Collective

Over the last few months the Freedom Collective has been in negotiations with the authors of a history of Anti Fascist Action (AFA).

Knowing the sensitivities involved, we agreed with the book's authors to consult with people in the anarchist movement, particularly those who had been involved in AFA, before going ahead.

We prematurely announced on the 25th May on the Freedom Press website and elsewhere that we would publish the book and gave a publication date and pre-publication offer before this consultation process had occurred or a final decision taken by the Freedom Collective.

Since then we have listened with care to the comments made both directly to us and on various forums about the publication of the book. We would particularly like to thank those who have taken time to read the manuscript and have given us the benefit of their advice.

At a Freedom Collective meeting on Monday 7th June we reviewed the situation and decided that Freedom Press will publish this book, with the title *Beating the Fascists: A history of Anti Fascist Action*.

Nukes flyer

I was disappointed to see that the 'Stop Nuclear Power' insert in the 22nd May issue of *Freedom* puts forward the anti-nuclear arguments from the same old parochial (some would even say nationalistic) standpoint. Unfortunately, the nuclear power industry does not just consist of the enrichment, reactors, reprocessing and waste management sectors. There is also a key part of the nuclear fuel chain, uranium mining, which is only mentioned once in the paper, and then only in reference to CO2 emissions.

Uranium mining is in many ways the most environmentally destructive and health-hazardous sector of the nuclear industry. Fissile uranium being only present in very small concentrations means its mining is very volume-intensive; mostly via open-cast mining, producing vast tailing heaps, together with radio-toxic leaching and run-off from tailings ponds. Then there are the radio-toxic effects on workers and those that live near the mining, the former being much more pronounced in the few remaining underground mines around the world.

That this all happens abroad (Australia, Canada, Kazakhstan, Niger, etc.) has long meant that, with the honourable exception of the old 1980s Anti-Nuclear Campaign, almost all anti-nuke campaigns have largely ignored mining and its environmental effects. Ironically, the same seems to be true for the Rare Earth metals essential for much renewable generation technology, and whose mining is already laying waste to vast areas of Inner Mongolia and Australia in much the same way that uranium mining does here.

I wonder if these two facts are connected or if the omission is just due to narrow nationalism.

Ian Bros

The editors reply: As you may guess, we are quick to disclaim responsibility for the content of any flyers that come with subscribers' copies of Freedom – except for the Anarchist Bookfair one in the last issue, which we wholly endorse. Truth is that people leave far more flyers with us in the Bookshop than they take away, so if we have time we bombard our subscribers with random leaflets we save from the fate of recycling. We hope that the authors of the leaflet (or anyone else) will reply to us.

Swedish struggle

We write to you with a call for international solidarity. The Swedish syndicalist union SAC is involved in the biggest blockade struggle for at least the last ten years in Sweden. Hundreds of people have been involved in the picket lines since 26th February. The company that we are in conflict with is Berns Londoner, owned by the British concern London Regional. We beg of you to help us in this fight.

The background: a large and fashionable night club/restaurant/hotel has for ten years systematically been using staffing companies for the cleaning of the vast buildings. Newly-

arrived immigrants, both with and without residence permits, have been given wages far below standard, work seven days a week and often do 22-hour shifts. The SAC has decent working conditions.

The result of the night club blockades has been that Berns' bosses have moved the janitors from one staffing company to another. Our members have worked at Berns, supervised by Berns work leaders, for up to seven years and for three different companies. All the time, conditions have been criminal. Berns has a responsibility for these people, since they have moved them from one staffing company to another simply to avoid responsibility for their exploitation. Now the last of the links in the chain Berns has organised, the staffing company NCA, has fired all janitors at Berns hotels because of economic problems. Berns still needs cleaning and has used the situation to select a few janitors to offer continued work to, but all the syndicalist janitors have been left without work. Berns has done this even though the syndicalists have worked longer at Berns.

In Norway there is a law of 'solidarity responsibility' which states that companies have vast responsibility for their sub-contractors. This is not the case in Sweden. The question about unsafe labour and exploitation of undocumented comrades is an international question.

Emil Boss

Stockholm's LS of SAC Syndikalisterna



SABCAT.COM
WORKERS CO-OPERATIVE



SCREEN PRINTING
T-SHIRTS, HOODIES ETC

Low minimum order
Artwork Assistance
Fast Turnaround



0843 289 5369
info@sabcat.com
SABCAT PRINTING

Norton Canes Docks, Lime Lane, Pelsall, WS3 5AP



GETTING ACTIVE

PRISON NEWS

Two big health-related prison stories have hit the headlines in the past fortnight: the joint report from the Care Quality Commission (CQC) and the Inspectorate of Prisons (HMIP) into the provision of health-care in the Prison Service by the NHS; and the *Coming Clean – Combating Drug Misuse in Prisons* report from the Policy Exchange think tank.

Until 2003, all health provision within public prisons in England and Wales was organised and paid for by the Prison Service itself, employing doctors and nurses that often couldn't get jobs anywhere else. Being part of the 'system' meant that prisoners usually ended up loosing out, receiving inadequate and cursory provision. Additionally, the large disparity in the size of establishments meant that health provision varied markedly across the prison estate. So in 1999 it was decided to hand it all over to what became local NHS Trusts.

Yet, four years after the transfer was completed, healthcare provision remains patchy and inadequate. Just as the constant tinkering with the structure of state health-care has resulted in the breaking up of the NHS into local PCTs, the regulator of prison health provision has passed from the Healthcare Commission to the newly formed quango the CQC. In their first report they note all the usual Nu Labour tropes: increased box-ticking via the "embedding management and clinical governance systems" and in "the way IT systems are used to record and analyse information on the quality of care."

Brilliant for the bureaucrats, but what about the patients? Well, the diagnosis seems to be stable but showing no overall improvement and, in one area, relapsing. The big areas of concern include the lack of continuity of healthcare around prisoners' transfer and release, which appears to be deteriorating. The solution? "A new system of statutory registration, with enforcement powers if standards of care fall below required levels."

The other areas of concern are "services provided for drug misusers" i.e. maintenance and detox programmes. The provision of both of these is covered in the *Coming Clean* report which, typical of right wing think tanks, is much more concerned with cost-cutting than prisoners' welfare, highlighting the costs of introducing the Integrated Drug Treatment System set up in 2006 following an out of court compensation settlement with nearly 200 prisoners over the 'inhuman or degrading' nature of short-term nature of detoxification programmes.

The report is critical of all areas of prison drug treatment programmes, estimated to cost £109.1m this financial year. However, just as interesting are the estimated figures it gives for the prison traffic in drugs (£100m), the number of corrupt prison officers (1,000 or seven per nick) and the fact that a screw bringing a gram of heroin into prison every week (about the size of two paracetamol tablets) would earn more than twice their basic salary.



The Rosspoint Solidarity Camp gathered recently at Broadhaven Bay in County Mayo

● Supporters from around the world joined in the annual gathering over the weekend of 4th to 7th June at the **Rosspoint Solidarity Camp** at Broadhaven Bay, County Mayo, in support of the Shell to Sea campaign. A large contingent of cyclists travelled from Britain via Merthyr Tydfil in Wales where another campaign is focussed to stop an ugly open-cast coal mine which is destroying the environment, polluting air and water and endangering the community.

The gathering at Rosspoint has been held every year since the jailing in 2005 of the Rosspoint Five – local residents who refused, for reasons of health, safety and clean environment, to allow Shell/Statoil to lay an experimental high-pressure raw gas pipeline through their properties. The Irish government had, in an unprecedented move, provided the multinationals with compulsory purchase orders. The five were given indefinite prison sentences but were released after three months following massive public outcry. A later hearing vindicated them when the original pipeline route was rejected because of its dangerous proximity to dwellings.

A new route is now being put forward, but is still considered unacceptable by Shell to Sea who believe that the only safe way to bring the gas ashore is by refining it at sea and bringing it in at low pressure. The dangers have been well highlighted by disasters worldwide, including the Piper Alpha explosion; the pipeline explosion at Carlsbad, New Mexico, in August 2000 when a family of

completely wiped out; the outrageous death and destruction in Nigeria and now the BP oil disaster.

The Merthyr to Mayo cycle rally called at Castlerea prison to support fisherman Pat O'Donnell and fellow Shell to Sea supporter Niall Harnett who are both now serving jail terms for obstructing police who had been brought in to ensure Shell employees were not hampered in their work – the Irish government takes care of big business without regard for the livelihoods of the local community and the health of their environment.

The whole project was pushed ahead without consulting local people – the refinery, 9km inland (selected because it was state-owned forestry land), is now approaching completion and the seaward pipeline laid. But there is still no legally permitted nor locally agreed inland route. Local campaigners have had their lives permanently disrupted for more than ten years but remain committed to preventing the pipeline from going ahead.

● The new issue of the *Hereford Heckler* hits the news stands this week. A healthy looking issue no. 14 covers articles on Hereford's housing crisis, radical history of agricultural unions, the BNP as well as reports on the world blind football championship and Hereford's gay pride.

The *Hereford Heckler* continues to keep the people of Hereford informed and entertained, and is a must-read for any community-minded people.

Zomia and the history of state-making

As children, we all studied 'history' in school. Initially we studied national 'history', and later on as we moved up the intellectual ladder we studied international 'history'. When we weren't studying the glories and achievements, and the development of our particular nations, we were studying 'ancient history'. Things were made to appear quite cut-and-dry. At first there were savage, nomadic, foraging tribal humans; then there were competing kingdoms, big and small, under various rulers; finally, as we grew to be more 'civilised' we naturally evolved into groups of nation-states. And though we are not now living happily ever after this is still the 'end of history', that in the liberal, parliamentary democracy 'we' have achieved the highest political development humanly possible.

Apart from the numerous exceptions that we can find to this neat historical chronicling everywhere in the world, especially if we study the non-European geopolitical area since the immediately pre-colonial era, there are plenty of dissenting voices even within the academia against this linear, unproblematic version of political evolution. There is nothing 'natural' about the evolution of the nation-state; nor is it a spontaneous choice of the subject population. The area designated as Zomia in Southeast Asia is a powerful case in point.

Zomia, just to be clear, is not a country, it's not a kingdom. The term, which originates from the vernacular languages spoken in the area, means remote highlanders. It also refers to the geographical territory that these highlanders call their home. The territory we are talking about is an enormous mass of roughly 2.5 million square kilometres, including the east of India, Burma, chunks of China, Thailand, Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia. James C. Scott, whose book *The Art of Not Being Governed* which he calls "an anarchist history of upland Southeast Asia", presents a scarcely historicised account of this region.

In traditional, mainstream histories, we commonly read how the settlement of a community on a river basin and the agricultural cultivation of the land were the beginning more or less of a 'civilisation' proper – beginning in fact of 'culture'. These terms are used to imply a hierarchical social structure, of courts, palaces and kingdoms. Cities were automatically the only or the greatest foci of 'culture'. People, they said, naturally gravitated towards these centres because of the wealth, security and the exuberance they offered. All these facts are not in dispute. What is disputed, however, is the partial and smoky nature of these facts. Left out in these accounts is the fact that many communities chose *not* to be part of these kingdoms because of various reasons – taxes, slavery, conscription, war, bonded labour and so on (more or less the same reasons, under changed labels, that cause



Hill farming in the highlands of Kachin in southeast Asia.

Kingdoms were forcibly populated by less than holy methods. Marauding armies conducted regular sweeping exercises to capture people from fringe communities, villages and other remote areas, not only for slaves but also to populate the centres of kingdoms. Many rulers even resorted to providing special incentives, tax concessions etc to get the populations to stay, and to cultivate wet-rice (in the case of Southeast Asia), because of its high yield per square kilometre. This way they could monitor the crops and claim them through taxes. Traditional school histories also do not reveal the fact that populations fleeing from these budding empires (or nation-states) was quite a common occurrence. Socio-political mobility and instabilities do not sit well with those historians who have a stake in presenting a particular view of history. It must be remembered that most pre-colonial chroniclers were court chroniclers, or were part of the rulers' coterie. They had to appease their patrons, and project the best possible image of their kingdoms.

So, where does Zomia figure in all this? In post-modern parlance areas like Zomia can be termed the alternative space. Remote, inaccessible areas like high mountain ranges, thick swamps and jungles become the refuge of those peoples who refused to be incorporated into expanding and tyrannical empires. Some of these were formerly independent, land-cultivating people who resisted and lost, others loose-knit but

hunter-gatherers, etc. But historicising does not simply limit itself to deliberate selection of facts; the discourse also involves the glorification and justification of certain terms like 'civilisation', 'culture', 'progress', etc., by opposing them to other terms like 'barbarians', 'savage', 'ancient', etc., which were projected as undesirable. Those who could not be controlled were not simply strange – they were somehow less than human. Everything – from their dress to their food habits – were cited as proofs of their backwardness, while these were actually signs of adaptation, and other practices like nomadism may well have been a deliberate attempt to elude capture and assimilation.

This does not mean that there are no populations that were 'left behind' – that remained untouched by the civilising process. It does not mean either that the runaway communities had better, more 'progressive' social systems, although their mobile, amorphous lifestyles afforded them many freedoms that populations firmly subjected to a highly centralised, fixed and policed systems could never have had. All that the historical accounts such as the one explained here suggest is that there are truths that are kept well-hidden, and there are stories that are never told. History too is a story: told by someone, to someone, for some reason. There are as many histories as there are historians.

REVIEWS

WHAT'S ON

JUNE

21st Showing of *The Free Voice of Labor: The Jewish Anarchists* (Paul Avrich, 1980, 58 mins), 7.30pm at The Cowley Club, 12 London Road, Brighton, BN1 4JA, blending participant's interviews with stills, newsreel footage and selections from old motion pictures, this documentary gives a fascinating and penetrating insight into the lives and struggles of Jewish anarchists in the USA, see cowleyclub.org.uk for details.

26th to 1st July Afghanistan Peace Walk from London to the military prison in Colchester where soldier Joe Glenton is being held for his refusal to fight in Afghanistan, meet 10.30am on Saturday 26th at Ministry of Defence, Whitehall Place, London SW1A 2EU for a day of counter-recruitment activity, then on Sunday 27th it's Unarmed Forces Day, meeting again at 10.30am at the Ministry of Defence for the start of the walk to Colchester, call 0845 458 2564, email afghanpeacewalk@googlemail.com or see www.j-n-v.org for details.

JULY

4th Annual Independence from America, this demo focuses on the American base at Menwith Hill, North Yorkshire, with speakers Mark Thomas, Peter Tatchell, musicians and more, outside the American base at Menwith Hill HG3 2RP from 2pm until 7pm, for details phone 01423 884076 or see caab.org.uk

8th July Amnesty secondhand book sale from 11am until 3pm, the Brockway Room, Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London WC1R 4RL, all books will be priced at £1 or £1, phone 07771888825 for details or see bookevents.webs.com

10th A celebration of Colin Ward's life and work from 2pm at Conway Hall, 25 Red Lion Square, London WC1R 4RL, all welcome, see fiveleaves.co.uk for details.

23rd to 27th Peace News Summer Camp, join people from the British peace movement for five days of exploration, celebration and empowerment at Westmill Farm, Watchfield, Oxfordshire, SN6 8TH, £15 to £60 depending on income, call 0207 278 3344, email admin@peacenews.info or see peacenewscamp.info for details.

AUGUST

4th to 9th Earth First! Summer Gathering, Derbyshire (exact location tba) a weekend of workshops around ecological direct action, skill sharing, networking, at a location to be announced nearer the date, for details email summergathering@earthfirst.org.uk or see earthfirst.org.uk, entry will be £20 to £30 according to what you can afford.

27th to 30th Animal Rights Summer Gathering, a weekend of talks, discussions and workshops on a wide range of issues and activities related to animal rights campaigning, as well as a chance to relax and socialise with like-minded people, to be held somewhere near Northampton, email 2010@argathering.org.uk

MAGAZINE

The Cunningham Amendment
Vol.11, No. 4

As we all know anarchy is 'the beautiful idea' and only anarchists are beautiful, as the saying goes. It's refreshing to know that anarchists still produce beautiful journals such as *The Cunningham Amendment*.

First off, if you haven't come across *The Cunningham Amendment*, you're in for a treat. These books are real works of art, hand-set and hand-printed on machines from another age using salvaged type, discarded inks, and reviving the colour wash techniques of the chap book.

Indeed, all very true, but the real beauty

in the *The Cunningham Amendment* is its humour. Slogans and statements laid out as old-fashioned trade adverts, interwoven by more biting political comment. With incredible design that puts to shame most other anarchist journals, the *The Cunningham Amendment* is a labour of love by the East Pennine Anarcrisps. It's so hard to pigeon-hole *The Cunningham Amendment*, so why not just go pick up a copy? And this issue even has a pop-up section!

Tom C

The Cunningham Amendment is available from good anarchist stockists or from: TCA, 1005 Huddersfield Road, Bradford, West Yorkshire BD12 8LP

**FREEDOM
BOOKSHOP**
84b Whitechapel High Street
London E1 7QX
020 7247 9249

Open Monday to Saturday
from 12 noon until 6pm
Sundays 12 noon until 4pm

If you can't get to the shop, why not use our mail order service or order books via our website at www.freedompress.org.uk

QUIZ ANSWERS

1. Sea lions, seals, sea otters and walrus. Not normally found in the warm waters of the Caribbean. A cut and paste job from the Alaska one, perhaps?
2. Disgraced Lib Dem David Laws, who had to resign as Treasury Secretary (in charge of cuts) after he was caught fiddling £40,000 in expenses.
3. The 1972 British election, of Labour vs Conservative.

4. Ten per cent, from escapes and releases in 1972. The rest all died in China and

The captain kicks the cabin boy...

... and the cabin boy kicks the cat. So goes inequality. Jules Elysard finds a weapon with which to beat the capitalists – but not hard enough

In one of many ultimately fruitless arguments I was once foolish enough to enter into with an anarcho-capitalist, I was bluntly informed that inequality simply was not a significant social or political problem, or at least, to the extent that it was, it paled before the infinitely more pressing problem of individual liberty. I wish I had *The Spirit Level* to hand at the time with which to beat said capitalist roundly about the head.

If such churlish violence offends, bear in mind countless pleas that they might actually condescend to read anything on the subject fell always upon deaf ears. A pity, because had they taken the trouble to read this one, they might well have learned a thing or two. And, however good it might have made me feel – and, oh boy, would it have been good – beating them about the head with it would, of course, have taught them very little.

The chief premise of this book is one that readers of *Freedom* will find largely uncontroversial. Simply put, according to Wilkinson and Pickett, inequality is the single most corrosive factor at the root of a very real social malaise afflicting the rich countries of the world, most notably in anglophone countries such as the USA and UK.

They identify in these countries a seeming incongruity, one that many of us would recognise, between runaway material success and often abject social failure. Growth, they argue, when it comes to realising improvements in our well-being, is no longer the issue. “Economic growth, for so long the great engine of progress, has, in rich countries, largely finished its work. Not only have measures of well-being and happiness ceased to rise with economic growth but, as affluent societies have grown richer, there have been long-term rises in rates of anxiety, depression and numerous other social problems.”

And they adduce many such problems: low levels of trust; diminished social mobility; a greater prevalence of mental illness (including drug and alcohol addiction); lower life expectancy and higher infant mortality; widespread obesity; children’s low educational performance; higher levels of teenage births; increasing violence; more homicides; higher imprisonment rates and harsher regimes of punishment. All of these the authors attribute to just one over-riding factor: inequality. Where there is greater inequality in the



distribution of wealth, these problems – with a consistency that excludes any possibility of chance correlation – will all but inevitably prove more prevalent.

The authors draw convincingly on numerous studies to demonstrate the connection, populating the book with a bristling arsenal of graphs and charts, all of which show a clear, inescapable trend: more equal countries are happier, healthier, wealthier, more compassionate countries. The broad thrust, which they so amply defend, is that unequal societies, because they are more rigidly hierarchical, because they place a greater emphasis upon status as an indication of worth, are more prone to status anxiety and all the mental and physical ailments that attend it.

Whether you are anxious to defend the inflated self-image your precarious position at the top affords, or burdened by low self-esteem in the demoralising knowledge you are at the bottom, inequality amounts to a form of ‘structural violence’, one that is often realised in actual physical aggression. Social status stratification systems “are fundamentally based on power and coercion, on privileged access to resources, regardless of others’ needs. In its most naked animal form, might is right and the weakest eat last.” The captain kicks the cabin boy and the cabin boy kicks the cat.

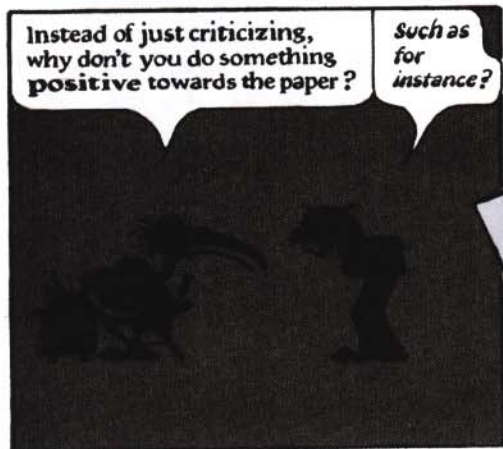
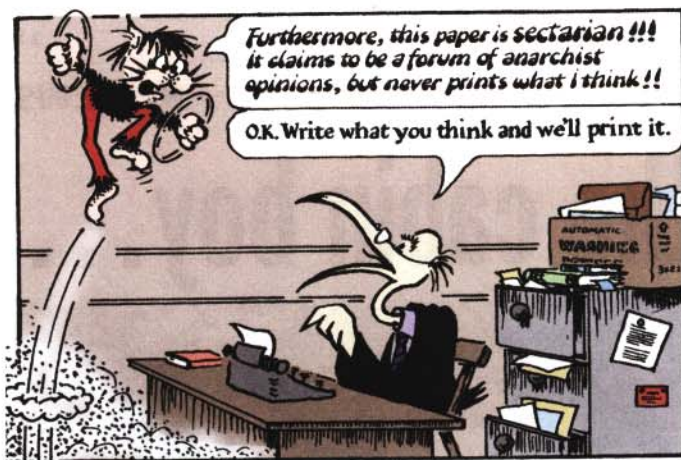
Against this, they advance a very different social inheritance based on equality, mutuality, co-operation, reciprocity, social obligation and recognition of each other’s needs. An inheritance they trace back as far as our primate ancestors – the bonobos (pictured above) making a welcome return to the pages of *Freedom* (see vol 70, no 18, 26th September 2009) – and the broadly egalitarian, hunter-gatherer societies constructed by immediate forebears within our own species. At the root of such societies they find a very different ethos of sharing, neatly encapsulated in a quotation from Marshall Sahlins: “Gifts make friends and friends make gifts.”

So far, so good. Problems arise, however,

authors propose. They accept that “what is required amounts to a *transformation* of our societies.” They recognise the tyranny of corporations and their fundamental incompatibility with any social system that could reasonably be described as democratic: “It is not possible to discuss ways of reducing income differences without discussing what can be done about these bastions of wealth, power and privilege.” They urge the building of stronger unions, and argue for “economic democracy” which amounts effectively to the formation of workers’ collectives through the implementation of employee share-ownership and participative management methods. They cite the Mondragón co-operatives in Spain as a shining example.

But as Mikel Zabala, the HR chief at Mondragón, said in a recent article in *The Economist*, far from being hotbeds of radicalism, such cooperatives are “private companies that work in the same market as everybody else... We are exposed to the same conditions as our competitors.” Indeed, our authors seem actively to welcome this continued embeddedness in the market. One of the strengths they identify in cooperatives is that, as well as redistributing wealth from external shareholders to employees, a workplace such as Mondragón “improves productivity and so has competitive advantage.” Therefore, “far from being impractical, the implications of our findings are probably more consistent with the institutional structures of market democracy than some people – at either end of the political spectrum – would like to believe.”

The transformation they look to is one “which will not be furthered by a departure from peaceful methods”. Nor, it seems, from capitalism. It is a transformation “unlikely to be achieved by tinkering with minor policy options,” yet, in spite of talk of the need for a new vision to inspire us, they also propose such admittedly progressive but ultimately rather insipid initiatives as plugging loopholes



Thrrrrrpp.

Review

◀ page 15

in the tax system, limiting 'business expenses', increasing the top rate of taxes, and legislating to limit maximum pay in a company to some multiple of the average or lowest paid. So, by implication, no departure from the state either.

They are good enough to quote Bookchin ("Capitalism can no more be 'persuaded' to limit growth than a human being can be persuaded to stop breathing"), and yet they fail to grasp the full implications of his statement, resorting instead to a system of solutions seemingly based upon the naïve assumption that the rich will surrender their privilege and power merely on the strength of some good arguments, or that they will *volunteer*

to be expropriated by the governments they control.

All in all, it amounts to a rather thin, Social Democratic gruel based on the presupposition that, if we could only be nice capitalists like the Swedish or the Japanese (a designation our comrades in those countries might wish to question), then we would truly find ourselves that bit closer to the end of history so prematurely announced by Fukuyama. There is much that is worthwhile in this book. Much that is great for beating the odd (anarcho-) capitalist about the head – but ultimately, if we are really to achieve a classless society, we will need more powerful ammunition than this.

The Spirit Level: Why More Equal Societies Almost Always Do Better by Richard Wilkinson and Kate Pickett, Penguin Books, £9.99.

THE QUIZ

1. What wildlife were mentioned in a provision in BP's disaster plan for the Gulf of Mexico?
2. According to scourge of welfare scroungers Iain Duncan Smith, who is "very straight"?
3. What is hasbara?
4. What proportion of the wild population of endangered Chinese water deer live in the UK?

Answers on page 14

The Anarchist Quiz Book compiled by Martin Howard with illustrations by Paul Petard, is available at £5 (post free) from Freedom Press, 84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1 7QX (cheque payable to Freedom Press) or from freedompress.org.uk.

SUBSCRIPTION RATES

	inland	Europe	outside Europe (surface)	outside Europe (airmail)
Freedom (24 issues) half price for 12 issues				
Claimants	16.00	–	–	–
Regular	20.00	29.00	29.00	41.00
Institutions	28.00	36.00	36.00	46.00
Supporter	48.00	60.00	60.00	72.00

Get in touch with us for details of bundle rates. Note that we have a special 'supporter' sub rate. You can also use the Standing Order form to ensure that your subscription always gets paid on time, or if you want to make a regular donation to *Freedom*. All prices are in £ sterling.

For more details contact subs@freedompress.org.uk

Please return completed form to: Freedom Subscriptions, 84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1 7QX

- Please start a NEW subscription / RENEW my subscription to Freedom (to avoid errors, please circle required subscription rate, see right)
- I enclose a donation
- I'd like to pay by Standing Order, please send me details

I enclose £ payment (cheques payable to Freedom Press please)

Name

Address

Postcode