

FREEDOM

80P ANARCHIST NEWS AND VIEWS

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OAXACA IS BURNING

The past two weeks have seen a dramatic escalation in the social struggle in Oaxaca as the Mexican state seeks to reassert its authority over a city that, since regional police were forced from the city in June, has been largely autonomous from state control. On the pretext of the murder of five communards (including New York Indymedia video journalist Brad Wills) by pro-government paramilitaries on 29th October, on the 30th a huge force of thousands of armed federal police smashed through the network of barricades that had been established around the city centre and made their way to the city's central square, Zocalo, where they established themselves. The operation cost the lives of at least two Oaxacans.

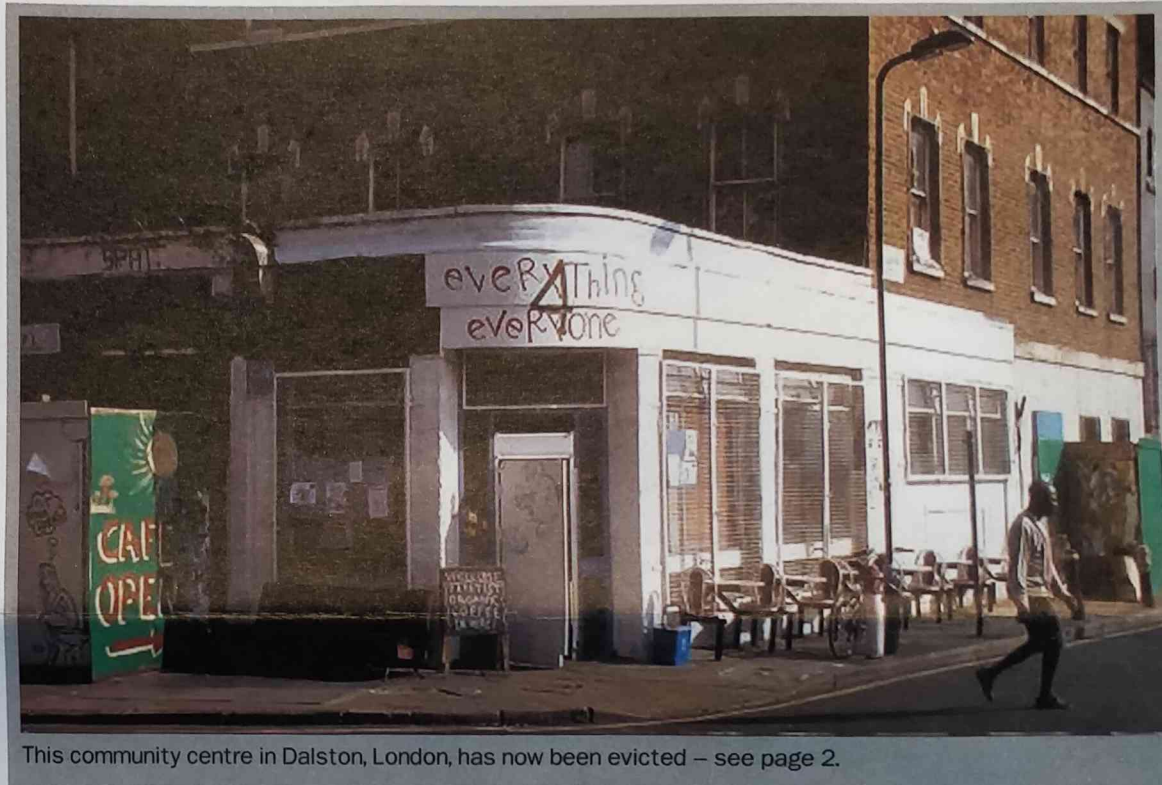
This latest escalation comes at the end of a long unfolding of social struggle in Oaxaca. Beginning with a teacher's strike in May, police provocation led on 14th June to the cops being forced out of the city by the teachers and others in solidarity with them. Over the next months, university and public buildings were occupied, and public life reorganised on a collective and immediate basis as state power collapsed.

The most visible example of this was the foundation towards the end of June of the APPO (the popular Assembly of the People of Oaxaca) a federal organisation composed of representatives from regions and neighbourhoods of the city, as well as

unions, NGOs and political parties. The APPO has claimed absolute jurisdiction over the city, but this is a little disingenuous: in fact, everywhere a more spontaneous direct democracy has flourished, most clearly in the streets where APPO's pacifistic exhortations have had little impact on people's actual tactics.

The early days of November saw a series of skirmishes take place as police sought to clear barricades in the areas of the city around the Zocalo. The most significant such battle was at City University, on 2nd November. The university is of some significant importance to the movement, housing the last communised radio station University Radio as well as the headquarters of APPO, displaced from their Zocalo encampment by the police manoeuvre on 30th October.

As the police operation began in the early morning, a call-out on University Radio drew thousands from the surrounding area to defend the barricades securing the road in front of the university. Six hours of highly disciplined and intense fighting marked the battle, as the students and workers fought the police backwards and forwards with home-made rocket launchers, molotov cocktails and rubble, while in the rear were teams of street medics and ammunition factories. After six hours of fighting the police were forced to withdraw, having made barely any headway and suffered significant casualties.



This community centre in Dalston, London, has now been evicted – see page 2.

A protest march on the 5th November drew 'hundreds of thousands' according to an NYC Indymedia report; when the march approached the Zocalo (heavily reinforced by the state for the day) several hundred broke off towards it; they were met by a row of APPO stewards, arm in arm, blocking the

way: they were told to 'avoid confrontations'. On the 7th November a series of bombs exploded in various government offices; they were claimed by various leftist groups but disowned by the APPO.

On the 11th November the APPO held a meeting to elect a 'permanent leadership'; we have seen these

manoeuvres before. The police have reaffirmed their intention to assert 'social order' and crush the movement. The people of Oaxaca have won many great victories these past months despite their leaders – the time is coming that they will have to win them against them.

INEQUALITY IN THE UK

Britain's top bosses are enjoying an unprecedented pay bonanza under Labour. The earnings of FTSE company chief executives are currently worth a staggering 98 times more than the wages of a typical worker. Put another way, for every pound a worker gets their boss gets nearly a hundred according to the research commissioned by the TUC. The gap is two and a half times larger than it was five years ago when chief executives earned 39 times as much as full time employees.

Last year the total earnings of chief executives rose by a staggering 40% fuelled by excessive bonuses and other so-called 'incentives'. Their basic pay rose two to three more than workers'.

Brendan Barber general secretary of the TUC called the escalating pay gap "not just socially divisive but economically divisive" noting that the super rich are pushing up house prices and distorting wage rise figures.

The bosses' union, the CBI, attempted to justify the fat cat earnings arguing pathetically that companies had to offer 'competitive packages'. The CBI did not, however, seek to describe how it was that chief executives are worth almost a hundred times what their workers are.

While, as *Freedom* reported last month, the government and Bank of England have been calling for workers to exercise wage restraint nothing is said about the bloated earnings of the very rich.

As one anarchist told *Freedom* "the minimum wage is just £5.35 an hour. Most workers will be lucky to get a 4% rise this year and if they do rising mortgage payments will eat that up. The bosses though are rewarding themselves 40% increases. What do they do

any way? They aren't the ones who produce the wealth."

When the minimum wage was increased over the summer – by the princely sum of 30p an hour – the CBI winged that "many companies will struggle to absorb the increase". Funny that they can afford to pay six figure packages for those at the top but not a living wage for those at the bottom!

2005 figures from the Office for National Statistics show that 1% of the UK population owns 23% of UK wealth while the richest 10% own more than half. The wealthiest 50% own 94% of wealth. Statistics show that the wealthy have got wealthier over the last ten years (Social Trends 35, Office for National Statistics (2005), Table 5.25)

Remember, that is declared wealth. The Office for National Statistics does not know the correct figures on wealth as much of it is in investments. The gains of 'economic growth' are not 'trickling down', unsurprisingly given large disparities of power such wealth brings.

NHS CRISIS (AGAIN)

Despite axing 20,000 jobs, cutting services (particularly public health programmes), shutting wards and slashing staff training budgets, the NHS is still heading for a £100 million overspend this year. Hospitals and community centres are struggling to balance the books following last year's £1 billion overspend.

Dr Beverly Malone, General Secretary of the Royal College of Nursing, said: "These figures confirm our worst fears. They are clear proof that we need a long-term plan to tackle the deficits crisis as a matter of urgency. If not, services will continue to be hit, jobs will continue to be lost and patients will continue to pay the price."

The number of hospitals reporting deficits has increased – from 120 last year to 175 this – despite the government sending in so-called 'recovery units', in reality hit squads, many private sector consultants. Redundancies will cost the NHS £70 million this year.

The government has been accused of plunging the NHS into chaos and of

having no coherent plan to solve the crisis in the NHS. As *Freedom* has reported, private sector companies continue to make massive profits out of the NHS. Unison general secretary David Prentis at a rally of health workers last month warned that private sector companies are taking over the NHS.

Up and down the country people are protesting against cuts and closures. Keep Our NHS Public report 25 separate campaigns. At last month's Anarchist Bookfair, libertarian health workers, including Sol Fed and IWW members, met to discuss their response to the growing crisis including taking action against private companies and developing links between health workers. "It has never been more important for radical health workers to come together" an anarchist health worker said. "The unions aren't really interested in challenging Labour. They have done nothing to stop job losses." For more information on the health workers network contact: healthworker@iww.org.uk

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Home and away

Coronet Five not guilty

The Crown Court case against five people arrested after last year's Anarchist Bookfair concluded yesterday with the last of the defendants being found not guilty.

One defendant was acquitted after testimony from his arresting officer revealed that he had been arrested by mistake. Two other defendants had their charges dropped down from Affray to Section 4 of the Public Order Act. The jury returned not guilty verdicts on the four remaining defendants.

During the trial, the sense of the police decision to close the pub was called into question, as too were the circumstances of the first arrest, which it appeared was illegal.

The defendants' experiences together show how easy it can be for police officers to arbitrarily arrest innocent people and subject them to a stressful ordeal lasting a full year.

Dalston Lane

Nearly nine months of struggle for the Everything 4 Everyone community centre on Dalston Lane was brought to an impasse by dozens of police in a pre-dawn eviction of the squatted theatre on Thursday 3rd November. Conceived as a long term project, the collective have plans for its continuation at a new HQ in the Dalston area in the immediate future. It was always the capitalist system more than the planning permission they were trying to change.

everything4everyone@riseup.net

Education's ecological footprint

Clearly, environmental policy is yet to reach the SOAS university directorate. In the university's newly updated 'mission statement', there is not a single phrase relating to the environment. The University of London's mission statement – the co-ordinating body of 20 independent London Colleges – too, has not a single mention of environmental policy.

'People and Planet', a student action group, are lobbying university managers for change. The UK Higher Education sector emits three million tonnes of CO2 into the atmosphere every year, and is responsible for over one million journeys daily. Charles Clarke stated in 2003 that "Schools, colleges and universities comprise more than 5% of all buildings in the UK and it is therefore vital that their resources are managed efficiently and in an environmentally responsible way." Three years later, this message has yet to reach the directorates of London's leading universities – it's high time we woke them up.

Plane Stupid!

On the 6th November, activists acting under the banner of Plane Stupid took part in a day of action against short haul flights to coincide with the start of the UN Climate talks in Nairobi. The Easy Group HQ in London was blockaded by activists using chains and D-locks. London Rising Tide invaded Civil Aviation Authority offices brandishing a giant cheque for £9.2 billion – the amount taxpayers subsidise the airline industry annually. A group in Manchester dropped a banner over a busy high street and leafleted local travel agents. In Leeds Bradford airport, protestors put up stickers with facts about flying and climate change.

Shell Hell

The Old Street Shell petrol garage in London was closed down twice on the evening of Friday 10th November by protestors highlighting Shell's repression

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Around the world

And this week's reason America is in Iraq is ...

Karl Rove, the Republican's major election strategist, added yet another reason to explain why American is in Iraq. Apparently, the US needs to occupy that country in order to ensure that terrorists would not be in control of its oil wells. Why this would be so bad is not explained, given that according to the Republicans 'terrorists' had been controlling them under Saddam and have been in control of Iran's oil wells since 1979.

There is another major irony here. During the run-up to the war, Bush and Blair were strenuously denying that the invasion had anything to do with oil. Now, apparently, that is why they are there. That US corporations have some very profitable contracts to process said oil is, of course, beside the point.

THE NETHERLANDS: A wildcat strike at one of Europe's biggest commercial shipping companies has brought stavedoring to a stop for the second day in protest over working hours by dockers in the Netherlands.

Containers at the European Container Terminals (ECT) – usually up to 70,000 per week – nearly came to a standstill because of the lack of workers, said the company's director, Jan Westerhout.

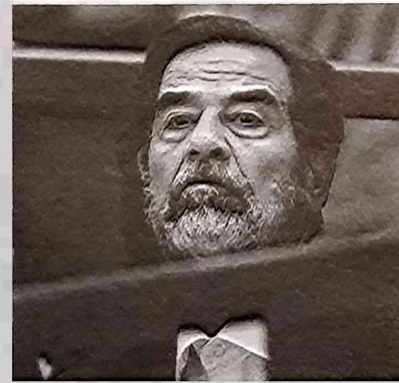


"We are trying to keep truck treatment alive, but there is hardly anybody at work," he said. "Throughput is almost frozen."

A proposal involving more flexible work times is said to have been agreed with labour unions.

SUDAN: Violence in Darfur continues with a Norwegian international humanitarian organisation withdrawing on November 10 due to government obstruction. A spokesperson for the organisation said: "We have been suspended by the government for the last two months for no clear reason. We have tried to get into dialogue with the authorities to discuss whether we can come back, but they do not seem interested." The move is estimated to affect 300,000 internally displaced persons in the region. The violence in the area has spread across the border to Chad where 220 villagers were killed last week and villages burned down just miles from relief camps. A thousand people are reported to have now fled their homes. The UN has called for the Chinese, who have oil interests in the country, to put pressure on the Sudanese government to stop the killing.

IRAQ: Saddam Hussein was convicted in an Iraqi court of crimes against humanity and sentenced to death. The trial has been criticised by lawyers and human rights organisations as being farcical at times and beset by problems such as the murder of lawyers and intimidation of witnesses. Saddam has been sentenced to hang for the deaths of about 150 Shias following an assassination attempt against him in 1982 in the town of Dujail. The judgment sparked protest by Sunni groups and predictions of violence. Pro-Saddam demonstrations were suppressed by the army. Television stations showing the



protests were shut down and raided by Iraqi security forces.

PERU: Protesters from the Achuar Indian communities have won an agreement for an Argentine oil drilling firm to stop dumping toxic waste into the rainforest. The Native Federation of the Corrientes River halted Pluspetrol Norte's oil production, demanding a clean-up of the dangerous waste produced by 30 years of drilling.

The group signed an agreement on Monday with Pluspetrol and the Peruvian government, promising to end all dumping of oil waste into the rain forest by 2008. A spokesperson for the group has said "This is an important achievement for the indigenous people, for the Achuar, because it is the first time the population protested like this, for 15 days, against the grave contamination."

ITALY: A toilet which flushes to the sound of Italy's national anthem has been impounded by police. It was on display at the Bolzano Museum of Modern Art and was the work of two local artists.

Prosecutors say the Fratelli d'Italia anthem is a national emblem which should be protected.

Defence barristers for the museum argue that while the anthem has

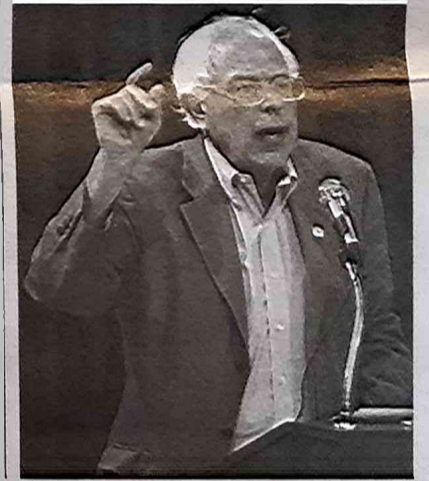
patriotic and sentimental value, it is not a national symbol.

A judgement is due later this week.

Arguments will then begin over whether the case marks a precedent – or whether it's just a flash in the pan.

USA: Amidst the Democratic mid-term election victories on 8th November, an independent won the Senate race in Vermont. What is significant is that he is a self-proclaimed socialist and so the first socialist senator in US history. The previous best result in a Senate race by a socialist was in 1930 when Emil Seidel won 6% of the vote.

Bernie Sanders (pictured below) is an unapologetic socialist and proud of it and has won eight consecutive elections to the US House of Representatives after being elected mayor of Burlington in 1981. However, do not get your hopes up too much as his vision of socialism is, well, simply reformed capitalism. According to Sanders, "Twenty years ago when people here thought about socialism they were thinking about the Soviet Union, about Albania. Now they think about Scandinavia. In Vermont people understand I'm talking about democratic socialism."



Prison news

Chris Tierney

A former prisoner who is dying from a brain tumour has been recalled to jail for swearing at staff at a care home. Christopher Tierney is paralysed down one side of his body, losing his sight, and is displaying behaviour which doctors say he cannot control.

After having served 18 years in prison for the murder of his wife in 1986, Mr Tierney was diagnosed with a second brain tumour in 2004, and was released the following year. Despite brain surgery and chemotherapy, his condition has continued to deteriorate and he is described as behaving erratically and is subject to mood swings.

Ella Pybus, a trustee of the charity Brain Tumour UK warned that Mr Tierney is likely to die in prison; "It is cruel and inhuman for a man who has served his sentence to be returned to prison to face a lonely and degrading death because of behaviour caused by a condition he cannot control, one that cannot be treated and that will end his life prematurely."

Chris Tierney is being held at HMP Norwich.

Benefit gig for Mumia Abu Jamal

On Sunday 19th November there will be a benefit for Mumia Abu Jamal, who has now spent 24 years on death row. The event will include film, discussion, spoken word, live music and DJs, and starts at 7pm at the Grovesnor pub, Sidney Road, Stockwell, London.

ABC benefit

A benefit for Leeds ABC is being held in Hull on Saturday 25th November at the Afro-Caribbean Centre on Park Street. It starts at 6.30pm, and the night will include top techno from Andy Mailey, punk and hip-hop spun by Saoirse, and '80s sounds played by Applemax (£5/£3.50 on the door). As always the proceeds of the benefit will be used for the direct support of anarchist and class struggle prisoners.

Jose Delgado transferred

Aachen prisoner Jose Delgado, who has been on a hunger protest for some time now, has been transferred to Rheinbach prison, where his conditions are even worse than before. Jose's new address is Jose Fernandez Delgado, JVA Rheinbach,

Aachenerstr. 47, 53359 Rheinbach, Germany.

Gagged

The latest issue of the South Wales Anarchist newsletter *Gagged* is now available to download as a PDF file at http://lists.riseup.net/www/d_read/gagged/gagged14.pdf As well as other news, this issue contains articles about the Anarchist Black Cross; a report on the death of Lisa Woodhall, who recently died in Eastwood Park prison; and lots more prison and repression news, including a 'Copwatch' section.

Leeds ABC on MySpace

Being too clueless to set up their own website, Leeds Anarchist Black Cross have joined the hordes of sell-outs sucking at the corporate nipple and joined MySpace! The Leeds ABC page can be found at www.myspace.com/leedsabc and it contains details of the two pamphlets produced by Leeds ABC this year, a list of prisoners, some useful links, and currently you get to listen to Sham 69's 'Borstal Breakout' while you're viewing it!

ABC at the Anarchist Bookfair

This year's Anarchist Bookfair saw the best attended ABC meeting in living memory! A number of ex-prisoners spoke at the meeting, including several who had travelled from Spain.

It is to be hoped that the contacts established at the meeting can be built upon to produce more solidarity for the increasing number of people from our movement (and those outside it) locked behind bars.

Many thanks to Brighton ABC for organising the meeting. Their website can be found at brightonabc.org.uk

Crap arrest of the week ... for dressing up at Halloween!

One Halloween reveller got nicked in the States for dressing up as Osama Bin Laden and holding a toy gun, reported SchNews. This was way too scary for cops who charged him with 'Criminal Threatening'. It turns out that the arrested man was Tom Connolly, the lawyer who revealed President Bush's drunk driving arrest in 2000, and he said he intends to plead not guilty.

compiled by Mark Bamsley

News

Lenin would be proud!

Iain Mackay finds that New Labour's recently published White Paper on local government has an Orwellian twist

The new Local Government White Paper has recently been published. As to be expected, there is much talk of 'democracy' while undermining it. The key concept is 'leadership' and local democracy "needs strong, visible leadership". Rest easy, though, for New Labour has the answer: "All executive powers of local authorities will therefore be vested in the leader of the council." Local democracy is best protected when a single leader is given *tutti* power, obviously.

Sadly, "the framework local authorities [currently] operate can be a barrier to the kind of leadership that prosperous communities require" as council leaders "have short mandates – normally only one year – limiting their ability to take tough decisions." Yes, accountability to the electorate does stop strong leaders doing what they like! And in a nice Orwellian twist, these proposals are packaged in terms of producing "more accountable local leadership".

Being New Labour, the White Paper does provide local authorities with 'choice'. There "will be three choices of leadership model: a directly elected mayor, a directly elected executive of councillors, or a leader elected by his/her fellow-councillors with a clear four year mandate." Even better, the council "will be able to move to the model of a directly elected mayor by resolution of the council and in consultation with local people." But do not fear, that does not mean ordinary people actually having a say as authorities can "adopt the mayoral model, following consultation with

their communities, but without the need for a referendum."

The White Paper complains that only 12 local authorities "have introduced the strongest leadership model, an elected mayor". Even worse, "only a relatively small number give the leader authority to act alone". So having failed to get the people to voluntarily pick a 'strong' leader rather than collective organisation, New Labour gives local councils the choice of which kind of leadership model to impose on the general public (in their own interests, of course). In other words, local councils have a choice in which way to abolish themselves.

Rest assured, though, as the non-executive councillors (i.e. those without any power) will be 'democratic champions'. At least the many local councillors who currently "feel that they have no defined role in the council process" can feel better knowing that they will have no role in the future as the "stronger, clearer executive leadership" will be making the "tough decisions". And these 'tough decisions' apply quite widely, as "each model" will have "all executive powers ... vested in the mayor or leader who will have responsibility for deciding how these powers should be discharged – either by him or herself or delegated to members of cabinet individually or collectively." Like their directly elected counterparts, the indirectly elected 'leader' will have a four-year term in which to wield that power as they see fit.

After all, "engagement with the electoral process is hampered by the confusion caused by the sheer number



City Hall, offices of the Mayor of London

of local elections." Thus reducing the number of elections to one simply picking a 'strong' leadership every four years will increase democracy. Obvious, really, that the best way to "empower citizens and communities" is to exclude

them from decision making by fostering "stronger and more visible leadership" onto them for four years at a time.

While it may be easy to see this paean to the Führerprinzip (leader principle) as another example of New

Labour's creeping fascism another source is more likely. Suffice to say, it is nice to know that all that reading of Lenin when they were student radicals has proved so useful to the New Labourites now they are in office.

Homage to Catatonia

When was the last time the mass of British students organised to effect social change? In 1926 during the general strike ... driving the trains, as scabs.

So it came as no surprise to see how, when university provosts and the government threatened plans to raise the top-up fee cap from its present £3,000 to £5,000 when the scheme comes under review in 2008, the NUS said, well, that does it. Students have been pushed around too long, they've seen education become just another commodity on the market, watched intelligent friends being betrayed over and over by a bureaucratic system that prizes the sycophant over the scholar, drudgery over creativity, attendance as much as performance and now how many more years of their lives will be wasted to pay for the privilege of being socialised into the middle class? That's not on. We, said the NUS, will organise a march. From the University of London Senate House to Trafalgar Square, by the most roundabout route possible. That will show them.

Sure enough the day on Sunday 23rd

October broke on several thousand students patiently waiting for a well policed (and in this post-SOCPA London, self-policed) jaunt past the great (empty because weekend) halls of government. Which only begs the question, since exactly *none* of the students would be effected by a raise in top-up fees, why did such a famously late rising group of people find themselves on coaches to London from as far away as Scotland? Was it simply for a jaunt in our fair city? Or was it in protest of a much more immediate issue, *the student condition as such*? Like the usual marches there were the NUS bureaucrats, the obscure Trotskyoid sects, even our favourite boys and girls in (mostly) black, but there was also the visible presence of students who identified the threat of higher fees and a more exclusive university as part of a greater threat to the very conditions of students, the same threat that is the rule of every capitalist business in the world: increase productivity, attack conditions.

Making themselves most visible amongst these latter were a group calling themselves Students Against

Students (UCLSAS). Having quickly gained notoriety for printing a leaflet severely critical of NUS president Gemma Tumelty and distributing it to, amongst others, her mother, they marched behind the banner 'The University is a Factory: Strike; Occupy'. Kudos to them for getting the semi-colon in. But with the possibility of students, lecturers and staff uniting to wage their common struggle against the managers of the university looming on the horizon and the knowledge that the struggle must come out from under the smothering blanket of a weak and bureaucratic NUS a new front against capitalism may be opening.



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Nano-battle fields

At the nano-military conference on 30th October 2006, delegates were "keeping pace with the military application of nano and microtechnology research and development" for the UK's "vital ... technological edge ... to be maintained in national defence". Amongst other applications, the military are currently working on nano-sized capsules containing chemical/biological weapons designed to break open and release their contents under specific conditions and 'Uniform and Armour for Future Battle Fields'. Groups like Corporate Watch and the Etc Group are investigating the risks of various military and non-military applications of nanotechnologies, as well as the risks workers are put under when exposed to nanoparticles in industrial development.

\$9 billion per year is being invested in nanotechnology by the world's most powerful governments and richest corporations (including IBM, DuPont, Syngenta, Exxon, Pfizer, L'Oreal and Kraft). For corporations, nanotechnology opens up a whole new world of possible applications and product opportunities across all sectors of the economy. These

products are already on the market, but there are no regulatory frameworks designed specifically to deal with nanotechnology anywhere in the world. Workers, consumers, non-human animals and nature are being exposed to nanoparticles that have not been tested. Engineered nanoparticles are now found in hundreds of consumer products including cosmetics, sunscreens, fabrics, paints, furniture varnishes and even some food products. Despite emerging evidence of the serious risks of nanotoxicity, the government is not listening to calls for a halt to the commercial release of products containing engineered nanoparticles. Another aspect of the conference was to discuss the "increasing commercial aspect of nano and micro systems outlining current market trends and addressing issues such as patenting MNT technologies".

We gave out leaflets, held a banner and talked to passers-by and delegates. Our aim was to draw attention to the implications of nanotechnology, both on the front line and in your dinner. Join the email list at: <https://lists.riseup.net/> www.info/nanotechnology

News

Representative Unionocracy

Rob Ray looks into the giant union merger which is touting itself as the solution to globalisation

Two of the largest international union confederations in the world have merged to create a new body to 'tackle the challenge of globalisation'.

The International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU) and the World Confederation of Labour (WCL) dissolved on 31st October amidst a flurry of preparation for the founding congress of the new International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC).

The new union laid out its principles from the 1st to 3rd November, declaring: "The Confederation commits itself to promote and to act for the protection of democracy everywhere, so that the conditions for the full exercise of all human rights, universal, indivisible and inalienable, may be enjoyed by all. It shall defend everywhere collective rights and individual liberties, including freedom of thought, expression and assembly."

It also expressed "unwavering support for the principles and role of the United Nations, and for its unique legitimacy and authority to stand as an effective guarantee of peace, security and development, commanding the respect and adherence of all in the international community."

Explicitly, it encourages closer relations with 'civil society' and political groupings, though it warns that these shouldn't impinge on the independence of member unions.

"The creation of the ITUC will solidify the trade union movement's capacity at the national and international levels", declared Guy Ryder (pictured), the

former General Secretary of the ICFTU and new General Secretary of the ITUC. "Stronger, we will exert more influence on companies, governments and the international financial and trade institutions. The founding of the ITUC is an integral part of the process of uniting the power of trade unionism," he added.

Criticism has been levelled at the new union's brand of internationalism however, which focuses strongly on lobbying and legislative pressure to achieve labour law improvements rather than actively intervening to help win union struggles.

A member of an anarcho-syndicalist group SolFed said: "These so-called internationals – the British TUC being one of the largest members of the new ITUC incidentally – have little in common with real internationalist principle."

"The ICFTU as was celebrated its centenary a few years ago, and even their self-written histories sound like a litany of liberal, ineffectual protest politics designed as much to undermine the militant unions and badmouth communists as to help with workers' rights. Yet every year, unionists via their subs help pay for this monolithic waste of time to continue."

"They shouldn't be merging, they should be dissolving and depriving bureaucrats the opportunity to spend our money asking the state to be nicer to us."

One member of the Anarchist Federation, contacted by Freedom, said: "So two organisations nobody at work



has ever heard of are merging. Great for the fat cats. A fantastic opportunity [for them] to fly round the world, gathering information, dining on expense accounts, sucking up to the bosses and the states.

"How does it affect us? My guess is that it'll make no difference whatsoever.

The unions and bosses will still try to shaft us at every opportunity. The class struggle will still go on."

The new union will represent 166 million workers across 156 countries, with the ITFCU's traditional Western and South American base being added to the more African-centric unionism of

the WCL, which was also one of the foremost Christian unions, and had been formed in 1920.

The first move of the new union has been to ratify the creation of a 'Council of Global Unions', whose main function will be to recruit more people and promote internal cooperation.

Showing some initiative

The US 'midterms' (the elections to decide which of the two wings of the capitalist elite controls the centralised legislature) have come and gone. Of course there's been no real change. Robert Gates who replaces Rumsfeld as 'Defence' Secretary is a war criminal deeply implicated in the 1980s Iran-Contra scandal, for example. Although these elections are not of any real interest to anarchists, for over a century election time in the United States has also afforded a regular opportunity for local, sometimes populist proposals, to be voted on in what would be referenda in Europe.

On 7th November there were 205 'ballot initiatives', as they are called, on such issues as abortion, animal rights, child care, education, immigration, the environment, same sex marriage, affirmative action, work place reform and minimum wages. Their conduct and outcomes are sometimes a more accurate indication both of lobby groups' abilities to muster resources and the degree to

which voters are informed than the personality-led charade of 'races' for Congress.

And can give cause for hope: South Dakota voters rejected a ballot measure that would have banned nearly all abortions there; voters in Missouri approved stem cell research. Five states (Arizona, Colorado, Missouri, Montana, Nevada and Ohio) approved minimum wage increases. The success in the Missouri initiative, for instance, increases the state's minimum wage to \$6.50 (£3.40) an hour and indexes the wage to the cost of living. This ought to make sure that inflation doesn't diminish its value. About 150,000 Missouri workers and their families will benefit from this.

Arizona, Michigan and Georgia voted for new or revived measures that protect animals in one way or another. Washington passed renewable energy measures (although California – a much greater polluter-State – voted them down) and voters in Michigan, New Jersey and New Mexico endorsed water conservation

and open space measures. South Dakotans opted for a tobacco tax and Arizona, Nevada and Ohio for some level of smoke-free zoning. California and Oregon rejected moves to oblige doctors to notify parents of minors seeking reproductive rights information or an abortion.

Meanwhile a referendum of a more conventional kind seems likely in Massachusetts. In three dozen House of Representatives Districts a non-binding pro-peace question insisting that Bush and the Congress end the war against Iraq immediately and withdraw the American presence made it to the ballot. Then was supported three to two. Although likely to have little impact on the government, it is an indication of the strength of opinion. Barbara Chalfonte, who co-ordinated the referendum effort in Western Massachusetts, commented, "This is just one day in a larger, bigger picture of a grass-roots effort. Here's a direct measure of the way people feel about the war in Iraq."

Louis Further

Peter Fryer 1926-2006

The writer Peter Fryer was best known for his book *Hungarian Tragedy* which covered the Soviet invasion and repression of Hungarian uprising in 1956.

He joined the Young Communist League in 1943 and the Communist Party in 1945.

He became a reporter for the *Yorkshire Post* after leaving school in 1943. He left in 1947 after refusing to cancel his membership of the Communist Party and joined the *Daily Worker*, becoming their parliamentary correspondent.

In 1948 he was sent to Hungary to cover the show trial of László Rajk, falsely accused of being Titoist spy. Rajk was executed in 1948 and Fryer felt guilty at his what he saw as his 'acquiescence' in this.

He was sent back to Hungary in 1956 to cover the 'counter-revolutionary' uprising against the Soviet Government. Held up at a border town on the road from Vienna to Budapest, Fryer saw his first dead bodies – 80 people shot during

a demonstration. It was a turning-point. An apology that "we have absolutely no experience of electing people" at a workers council meeting was the last straw – so much for 'peoples democracy'.

His reports, describing the popular uprising of students and workers being brutally suppressed by the Stalinist regime, were suppressed – causing him to leave the paper.

He published *Hungarian Tragedy* shortly after his return to England. The book caused a split in the Communist Party and large numbers of people to leave. Fryer moved on to edit *The Newsletter*, a publication of the trotskyist group The Club. He spent the next quarter of a century writing widely; on Portugal, censorship, black British experience, and music. In the late 1980s Fryer returned to political dialogue, writing a column for the weekly *Workers' Press*.

He is survived by Norma Meacock, his partner, and their son, two daughters

Feature

IWW: union for all workers

The union's relationship with the anarchist movement and the relevance of the organisation today is explored

The Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) in Britain is growing. *Freedom* talked to three of its members about why they joined the union, its relationship with the anarchist movement and the relevance of the organisation today.

Freedom: Why did you join IWW?

Barbara: I am in an unusual employment situation. I am employed by elected representatives [members of the Scottish Parliament] who are also my comrades in the party of which I'm a member and activist. However there was no obvious trade union to be a member of. The vast majority of us were employed at the same time, shortly after the last Scottish Parliament elections and were encouraged to join the National Union of Journalists by a comrade. However I was unhappy about this as my work does not involve any journalism, and to be a member of the NUJ you have to state what percentage of your work is journalism. When I asked the full time organiser who came to recruit us, he was patronising and sexist – using phrases about me like “just a secretary”. I challenged him, but he only made it worse with more inappropriate comments. There was no way I could join the NUJ. I looked around and decided that I would join the IWW. I liked the idea that it's a union for all workers, no matter what kind of work you do. I also like the idea of one big union. Quite a few of my colleagues also joined the IWW as dual carders and we now have a job branch in the parliament.

Richard: I'm with Sam Dolgoff in that I think it is vital workers organise together at work to defend their interests. Reformist unions are part of the problem. Not only do they sell their members out, they also seem to spend more time squabbling amongst themselves than fighting for workers. I support the notion of One Big Union, which IWW stands for. I work in the NHS where there are over 20 unions representing everyone from porters to doctors.

Graham: There are plenty of people on the 'left' who have a false idea about the IWW because they don't understand the difference between economics and politics. They come to a 'left' position as a political decision and then make the mistake of thinking that, because the IWW is against the boss system, it is a 'left' organisation, when in fact it's an economic organisation that intends to use the economic power of the working class to replace the dominant economic power of capitalism.

Everything flows from that. I joined the IWW because I work for a living, and am robbed as a member of the working

class by the capitalist system, and I reckon the IWW is the only group with a real plan for dealing with the inequalities that capitalism creates and maintains. It seems to me that the other organisations of the working class, both formal and informal, are just playing into the hands of the capitalist class, so joining the IWW was the only option I felt I had. Joining for any other reason is not what the IWW is about, but I have stopped being surprised by 'lefties' thinking we fit their schemes.

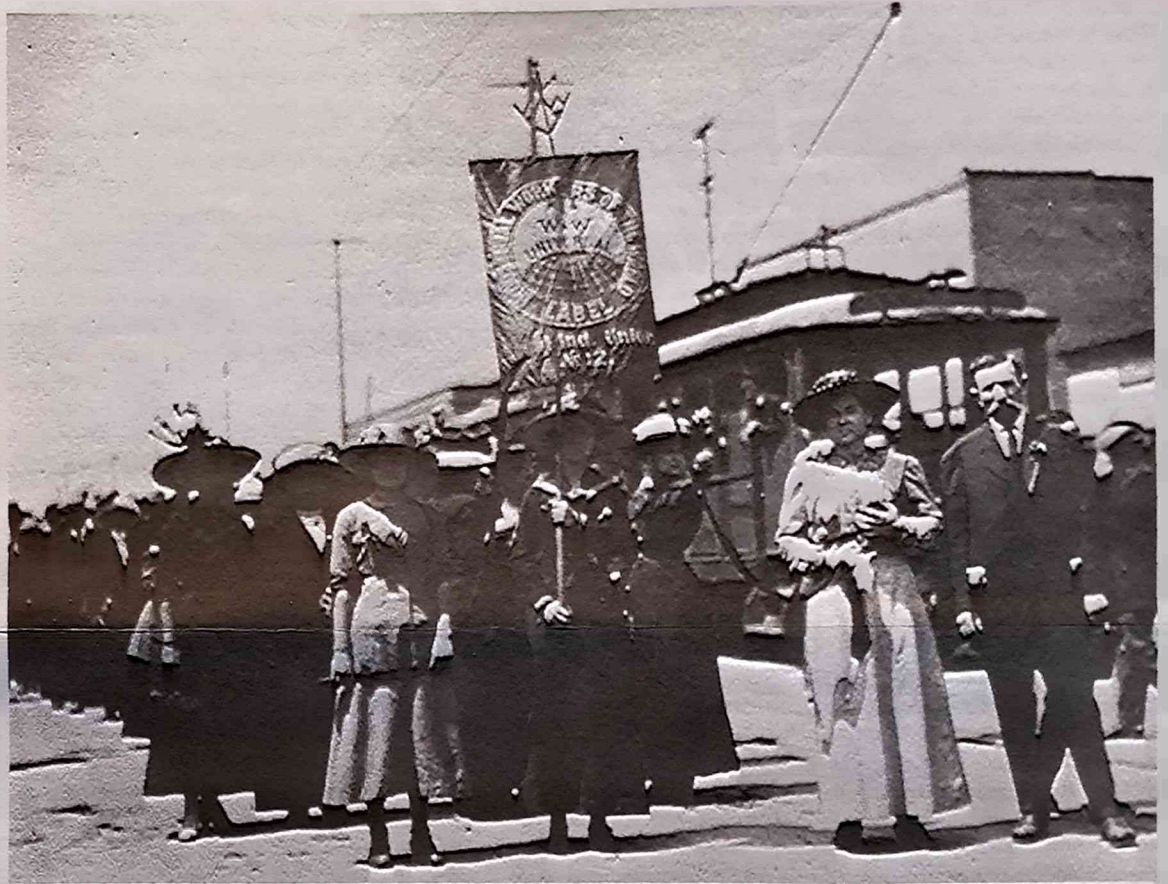
Sometimes people just cannot see how to act in their own best economic interest.

Freedom: The IWW is not an anarchist organisation but you work with the anarchist federations and have a number of members who are anarchists. What is the union's relationship with anarchism and the anarchist movement?

Graham: Anyone is welcome to join the IWW so long as they work for a living and seek to build a new society in which those who do the work get the full product of their labour. Of course we have a common root with anarchism in that we date our inception from pre-bolshevik thought and forms of organisation, when the likes of William Morris and Hyndeman, Kropotkin and Sam Kitts could, to some extent, work together, and that may be the reason why some anarchists find common ground in the IWW and join us. But the IWW maintains an elected structure of officials and delegates, and responsibility to the membership and the class is an important part of being a member. What we reject though, is the sort of political manipulation that leadership groups require, so there are distinct pros and cons that anarchists should think about before they join. We are a self-policed and self-disciplined organisation.

Barbara: I'm not really in a position to answer this as I'm not an anarchist! As a member of the Scottish Socialist Party I'm always aware that the IWW does not affiliate to political parties and I totally respect this. However, I sometimes feel like other members don't think of anarchist organisations as political organisations, and there's an assumption that anarchist literature, leaflets etc is ok to hand out at IWW meetings/events, but socialist publications must be kept for the pub, and then I feel like I have to continually explain myself! I believe that the IWW is for all workers, regardless of membership of political groups/parties, etc. – within reason of course, I doubt we've got any tory party members!

Richard: As an anarchist one of the things that attracted me to IWW, even though I knew it wasn't an anarchist union, was its non-hierarchical



libertarian structures and approaches. I am really pleased that we are working with AF and Sol Fed to develop the Education Workers Network and with Sol Fed to link up radical health workers. Working together while respecting our differences can only strengthen us all. At the end of the day we are all fighting for the same thing – the end of wage labour and exploitation.

Freedom: The IWW celebrated its 100th anniversary last year – what is the union's relevance to workers today?

Barbara: I think that workers today need the IWW more than ever – the 'official' unions are mostly just doing the bidding of the government, unable and/or unwilling to do anything radical. They act as mediators between workers and bosses, rather than standing up for the workers. Many unions are paralysed by layer after layer of bureaucracy, with little or no real democracy for its members. Therefore, although the IWW is small at the moment, it's growing steadily as workers realise they must stick together and fight for their own demands. That in my opinion is what unions were originally for, and the massive businesses that they are now with their own credit cards and loans, etc., have grown so far from what they were meant to be that they're unrecognisable.

Graham: The union's relevance remains the same until the job is done. Our problem is, as ever, to get enough on

board to move the lorry along. The means of getting the message across has changed, and the boss class is slicker now than it was a hundred years ago and controls all the means not only of production but of manipulation too, to a greater extent as time has passed, but that's no reason to give up, to become leninist, or to tip organisation out the window. I went to a lecture by the late Sam Dolgoff some years ago, an anarchist and a member of the IWW, and he was asked by a member of the audience why, considering all the struggles he had been involved in without succeeding in overthrowing the capitalist system, he persisted in banging his head against that wall. His reply was something along the lines that he understood that as long as we keep going, the boss has to fight us to beat us, every single day. We on the other hand only have to win once, because we have a different definition of what it means to win. That has stuck with me – we only have to win once. Until then, the fight is the same.

Freedom: The IWW allows its members to also belong to reformist unions like T&G – why is that?

Graham: Members of the IWW can join any coffin club they choose; why would we as an organisation want to exercise the authority over ourselves that tells members what else they can or can not do? Would you consider it any differently if we were to exercise authority over the religious or secular, sexual or drinking preferences of the

membership? It seems an odd question, and almost sounds like a complaint. Why shouldn't members of the IWW carry our good democratic ideas into any other organisation that their own circumstances lead them to join, political or social? I would be glad if there are members of the IWW in any political parties, religious and social groups, spreading the anti-capitalist ideas of the IWW.

Back in the late 1960s I was at a packed meeting of working class libertarians in the ground floor hall at Freedom Press, when at the end of a diatribe Ron Marsden rephrased the famous Joe Hill quote into “Don't moan – organise”. We won't get there any other way, and I reckon the IWW is still the best step forward.

Barbara: Until the IWW has grown in size, I think it's right that we have the dual-card approach where members can also be members of 'mainstream' unions such as T&G. For day to day practicalities, such as representation in grievances etc, workers should make use of the structures of these unions. Also, while the majority of workers are in these unions and not the IWW at the moment, I think it makes sense that IWW members also participate in their trade union, rather than separate themselves from their colleagues. They can also spread the word about the IWW within the other unions and help the IWW to grow!

Commentary

FREEDOM

Volume 67 Number 22

Anarchism

Anarchists work towards a society of mutual aid and voluntary co-operation. We reject government, and all forms of exploitation and domination.

Freedom Press is an independent anarchist publisher, founded in 1886. Besides this newspaper, which comes out every two weeks, we produce books on all aspects of anarchist theory and practice – see our website for a full list.

In our building in East London we run Britain's biggest anarchist bookshop and host the Autonomy Club meeting room and the Freedom Hacklab open-access IT space.

Our aim is to explain anarchism more widely and to show that people can work together and use direct action to practically improve our lives and build a better world.

Freedom's editors wish to present a broad range of anarchist thought, and as such the views expressed in the paper are those of the individual contributors and not necessarily those of the editorial collective.

Angel Alley

Another edition of *Freedom* lovingly crafted and on its way to readers worldwide. Big up to all writers who managed to approximate the copy deadline! Despite a number of new contributors we are still on the lookout for possible (or returning) *Freedom* journalists – contact details are below.

We are planning to do some more strategic thinking about the direction of the paper over the next couple of weeks and consequently readers' feedback on the paper would be appreciated: What do we do well? What should we do more of? What sucks? Any and all comments, questions, threats, etc., can be sent to the address below. *Freedom* has been through a fair few changes over the years – where do we go next? Watch this space!

Issues with lateness are being addressed but the mailing team are still understaffed and underpaid (!) – willing volunteers will be highly appreciated. In terms of remuneration we can offer good company, good conversation and copious quantities of tea!

So, thanks to everyone who's helped out on this one – I got nothing else to say – till next time...

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Next issue

The next issue will be dated 2nd December 2006 and the last day to get copy to us for that issue will be Thursday 23rd November. Send 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.

Thoughts on Islam

Some years ago in the pages of *Freedom*, long before the religion of Islam became a political issue, I wrote a short note on the 'Anarchists of Islam'. I mentioned the fact that although politics and religion are intrinsically connected in Islam, there is a tradition of 'rebel Islam', and that one particular sect, the Kharijites, were essentially anarchists believing that "Power belongs only to God". There is also a saying of the prophet which suggests that the nearer one is to government the further you are from God. Yet in a recent issue of *Freedom* 'Class War' stridently proclaimed that it is 'proud' to be described as Islamophobic – expressing its opposition not only to Islam but to all forms of religious expression. The term Islamophobia, it is worth noting, was first used by Islamic fundamentalists in Iran to describe Muslim women who refused to wear the veil. There are then many forms of Islam, as there are many kinds of anarchism.

Anarchism as a political tradition has always held an ambivalent relationship towards religion, mainly because anarchists have long recognised – long before Paul Chambers – that religious ideas and practices may not only bolster state power and sustain systems of exploitation (as well as being institutions of oppression in themselves, witness the Catholic Church) but also in certain contexts may serve as religions of revolt. Anarchists have therefore long embraced the dissenting traditions within Christianity, and have paid homage to the likes of Gerrard Winstanley, William Blake. Mention may be made of Leo Tolstoy, Nicolas Berdyaev, Aurobindo Bose (described in my *Ecology and Anarchism*), Dorothy Day and Mohandas Gandhi.

It is in this context that a recent issue of *Anarchist Studies* (14/1) is of particular interest, for it brings to the fore the divergent attitudes that anarchists have towards Islam. The issue is focused around a seminal paper written by its editor, Sharif Gemie, entitled *The Trial of Fatima: Anarchists, Muslims, and the Monde Libertaire 2003-2005*.

He notes that among anarchists, a particularly militant strand of anti-clericalism developed in France, directed against the influence of the Catholic Church on schooling, and its frequent support for right-wing causes. What troubled Gemie was that in a context in which the hegemony of the American empire was being justified through the use of anti-Islamic slogans, and the far-right were exploiting anti-Muslim sentiments, it was despairing to see anarchists expressing support for state repression. The universalism of the Enlightenment, to which the French

anarchists continually appealed, had little to do with promoting human values or cross-cultural understanding. Gemie suggests; it only expressed a narrow, nationalistic, blinkered form of French particularism. It thus had more to do with identity politics than the radical universalism of the Enlightenment.

Many of the contributors to *Anarchist Studies* emphasise that Islam is not a monolithic system, and like all religions takes many different forms. Thus, as both Paul Chambers and Beltran Roca stress, religion in certain historical contexts, and this applies equally to Islam, can be interpreted as a progressive force. This is hardly news. Anthropologists and Marxists have been stressing that for generations, emphasising that religion may be an oppressive force upholding systems of power, as well as being a catalyst for revolt (see my book, *Religion and Anthropology*, 2006)

Harold Barclay, who has conducted anthropological research in Egypt, while acknowledging that Islam has traditionally been associated with authoritarian structures, notes in his response that the religion itself is highly decentralised, and regrets the tendency of some anarchists to view all things Muslim as intrinsically evil. Support for the state regulation of dress by some French anarchists, Barclay writes, is clearly contrary to anarchist theory and practice. But Barclay firmly denies that he is an 'apologist for Islam'.

But in emphasising the 'polyvalence' of religion, and the fact that Islam contains, as he puts it, "A multiplicity of liberatory elements," Beltran Roca almost ends up denying the reactionary aspects of radical Islam. Even though, throughout its history, Islam has always formed a symbiotic relationship with the state. Religion, Roca informs us, is not the 'opium of the people'.

Yet again, throughout history religion, including Islam, has been largely an oppressive institution, supporting state power and all forms of authority and exploitation. There never was a tyrant who did not appeal to religion in some form to justify his position. Roca also has the quaint idea, that until Foucault came upon the scene, anarchists recognised only coercive power. This represents a complete misunderstanding of the anarchist tradition, as I tried to show in my book on Kropotkin, which has a long discussion of Foucault (*Kropotkin: The Politics of Community*, 2004). It is also worth pointing out that when Foucault described power as 'productive' he was not referring to something benign and creative, but to forms of power exercised by the modern state and industrial capitalism – biopower, surveillance, discipline, governmentality, pastoral power. This is the reason why, long before Foucault, anarchists were critiquing the 'productive' modality of power called religion. What is important,

however, about Roca's contribution is that although he makes some rather derogatory remarks about anarchism and the Enlightenment (following the academic fashion!), in fact – contradicting himself – he pleads that we must defend the values of the Enlightenment: liberty, equality and fraternity. Equally important, while emphasising the importance of upholding cultural diversity – as does L. Susan Brown – Roca also stresses that cultural relativism if taken to extremes, can degenerate into a dangerous, reactionary force. Indeed, in spite of all the rhetoric about 'difference' and cultural 'identity', and the continual denigration of the Enlightenment and universal values, one has to acknowledge that identity politics and the emphasis on 'difference' has its dark side. This is manifested in fascism, racism, nationalism, ethnic violence and, of course, religious fundamentalism. It has always troubled me to see anarchists joining the ranks of De Maistre, Hitler and Mussolini in denouncing the radical values of the Enlightenment tradition.

What is troubling then about the current issue of *Anarchist Studies* is that although it makes great play on the positive role of 'diversity' and the progressive aspects of religion, specifically Islam, it completely underplays the reactionary and oppressive nature of religion. Yet in the 21st century religion is only rarely linked with radical politics; it is mainly linked with bigotry,

intolerance, and support for oppressive regimes and reactionary and authoritarian politics. For example, in Sri Lanka Buddhism has become closely identified with the state and with Sinhalese nationalism, leading scholars like Tambiah to write about the 'betrayal' of Buddhism, for like anarchism Buddhism has always expressed universal human values.

Bush's regime in the United States, the most powerful state in the world, is bolstered and kept in power by a bigoted and powerful fundamentalist Christian lobby. This lobby is anti-feminism, anti-homosexuals, anti-ecology and anti-Darwin. Bush, like Blair, claims to have a hot line to God. Likewise, in India a militant and violent form of religious ideology, Hindutva, has been in the resurgence, a form of Hindu nationalism intrinsically linked to a nuclear state and the advocacy of free-market capitalism. And, finally, of course, in Islamic states like Saudi Arabia and Iran, whatever their doctrinal differences, a fundamentalist form of Islam is currently practiced.

Now widespread, especially in Africa, and supported by these states, a radical form of Islam is now afoot, one that envisages an Islamic state (a theocracy) and the implementation of Sharia law. Such a law sanctions by divine edict the murder of apostates (Muslims who reject their faith), the stoning or flogging of adulterous women, the persecution of homosexuals and any writers or artists who dares to criticise Islam. Muslim clerics are free to denounce secularism but woe betide anyone criticising Islam. We are in fact seeing throughout the world an unholy alliance (if I may be allowed such an expression) between religion and both capitalism and authoritarian politics. These are the 'sombre trinity' of which Flores Magon wrote – state, capital and religion.

Anarchism has always championed both universalism, the importance of human values, and cultural diversity. Add in defending Muslim women – against state repression, and expressing solidarity with the oppressed, anarchists should not go to the other extreme and become

apologists for religion. Still less, as Paul Chambers implies, should they become a 'cheerleader' for the faith. Supporting individual Muslims in their struggles does not imply that we should adopt a religious metaphysics, nor that we should kow-tow, like the Socialist Workers Party, to radical Muslim clerics. We should repudiate both God (religion) and Mammon (capitalism).

Brian Morris

Republicans: evil and stupid

Republican scumbag Senator Rick Santorum has obviously not been paying attention to either US foreign policy or *Lord of the Rings*. He actually argued that America has avoided a second terrorist attack since 9/11 because the 'Eye of Mordor' has been drawn to Iraq instead.

Apparently, Tolkien's fantasy novel is one of his favourite books and used the analogy to put the increasingly unpopular war in Iraq into terms any school child could easily understand. "As the hobbits are going up Mount Doom, the Eye of Mordor is being drawn somewhere else," Santorum said, describing the tool the evil Lord Sauron used in search of the magical ring that would consolidate his power over Middle-earth (changing Earth to East would produce a better Tolkien analogy).

"It's being drawn to Iraq and it's not being drawn to the US," Santorum continued. "You know what? I want to keep it on Iraq. I don't want the Eye to come back here to the United States."

So, US foreign policy is based on allowing Iraqis to be killed in their hundreds of thousands so that Americans can feel safe? Does that mean 655,000 Iraqis are worth less than 2,973 Westerners? Unsurprisingly, Santorum failed to note that the reason why 'the Eye' is 'on Iraq' because 140,000 American troops invaded it and are currently occupying it. This means that 'the Eye' need not bother looking to America to target Americans (over 2,780 dead so far). Obviously, US troops figure as highly in Santorum's world view as Iraqis – both are cannon fodder to get his sorry, corrupt arse re-elected.

IM

News in brief

► page 2

of local people in country Mayo, Ireland, and linking it to the 11th anniversary of the murder of the Ogoni 9 in Nigeria, where Shell is proven to have been involved in the killing of Ken Saro-Wiwa. There were also protests at Shell's sponsorship of Wildlife Photographer of the Year exhibition at the Natural History Museum.

Quiz answers


1. Escapologist Harry Houdini. In *The Secret Life of Houdini*, authors William Kalush and Larry Sloman claim he worked for William Melville at Scotland Yard and monitored Russian anarchists' activities in Britain and the US.
2. Ricardo Flores Magon. A selection of his work is published as *Dreams of Freedom* by AK Press.
3. It was started in 1914 by Mary Patterson, Zelig Emerson and Sylvia Pankhurst. Pankhurst continued publishing it until 1924.
4. *The Women's Dreadnought*, reflecting Pankhurst's origins in the Suffragette movement.

The Anarchist Quiz Book

"Who said 'I shit on all the revolutionary vanguards of this planet'?" Find out in the new Anarchist Quiz Book from Freedom Press, compiled by Martin Howard and illustrated by Paul Petard.

Some say that it should not be the highest priority of a revolutionary movement to ask itself obscure questions, but it's good fun and if it encourages an enquiring mind to find out more, than all the better. So agitate, educate and organise, all in this very handy question and answer format!

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REVIEW

A slew of new Dead Prez releases deepen and diversify revolutionary US hip-hop, reports Tom Jennings

A two-year hiatus following the landmark RBG: *Revolutionary But Gangsta* (reviewed in *Freedom*, 15th May 2004) ends with several projects from far-left hip-hop duo Dead Prez. Despite RBG's success, and endorsement from rap mogul Jay-Z, Sony dropped them after swallowing Loud Records. Independent moves now yield M1's debut, two mixtapes with the Outlawz, and Stic.man's *The Art of Emcee-ing* how-to book+CD and his forthcoming album. Their trajectory reinforces the cross-pollination of post-Panther rebellion with street-level music and class-based 'reality' rap. So M1 has produced for other artists (including Mississippi's David Banner), established publishing company 'War of Art' (punning on Sun-Tzu), toured with Wu-Tang Clan's Ghostface, and signed with jazz guitarist/producer Fabrizio Sotti for *Confidential*.

The resulting melange of R&B melodies and hooks (satisfyingly rendered by the legendary Cassandra Wilson and newcomer Raye) mixes current NY, West Coast, and dirty South club hip-hop beats in a successful lyrical-musical synthesis thanks to guest MCs like Styles P (ex-The Roots) on 'Comrade's Call', ATCQ's Q-Tip on the sexual politics tip ('Love You Can't Borrow'), and rising star Somali refugee K'naan (soulful lead single 'Til We Get There') – as well as M1's own mother (fresh from 12 years inside for drugs offences) on the thoughtfully downbeat 'Land, Bread & Housing'. These strategies dovetail with thematic subterfuge, thinly-veiling revolutionary rhetoric in everyday stories – a sonic populism 'making sense' rather than 'intellectualising'. The title track links repression in the present and the '70s while celebrating contemporary resistance:

"If you're looking for Assata Shakur, she's right here / It's her, me and 2-Pac over here, having a beer / Cheers – a toast to a lovely revolution!"

And if the Dead Prez tactics recall 2-Pac's stillborn 'conscious thug' project, 'Don't Put Down Your Flag' explicitly

preaches gang unity in the wider struggle, whereas 'Til We Get There' captures the overall thrust of anger combined with hopefulness:

[M1] "That's what's called solidarity / When we struggle it's therapy, after chaos we get clarity / My enemy's enemy is my man, remember? / I ain't tryin' to be endin' up in this man's dilemma / We only here for a minute – it's what you make it, so live it / See, I'm a ryder and I'm gonna be remembered / For those of you not born, to those of you not here / I wish you the best and that's real."

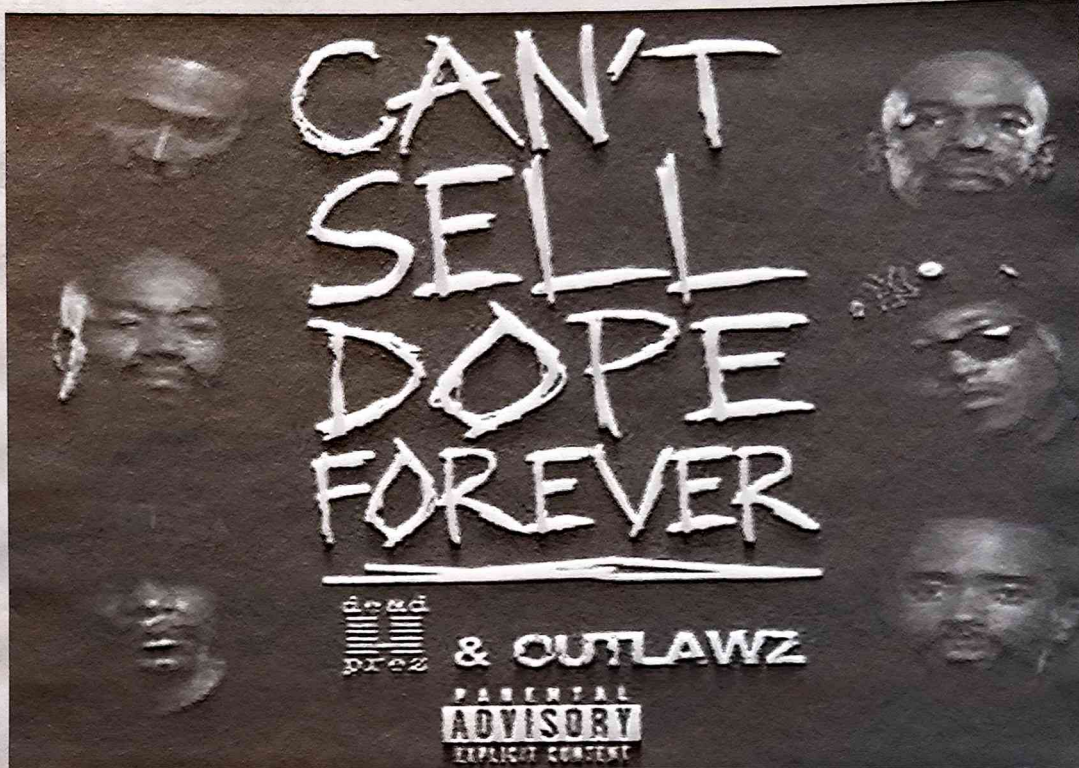
[K'naan] "This ain't ya average, when they portray us they say 'all savages' / 'Cause we have it, blast it, won't stash it / 'Cause we fight to the death and manage / To makes songs of struggle and to habits / And damn it, if I don't get even / It's chant down Babylon season / Die for New Orleans to Cleveland / 'Til we even, we not believin'."

Zero Sum Game

With M1 positioning himself as a remotely radio-friendly quasi-mainstream rapper, Stic.man and California's Outlawz explore inner-city Black youth career options in two mixtapes: *Soldier 2* *Soldier* fruitfully deploys military themes, tropes and metaphors to powerful effect, but *Can't Sell Dope Forever* is more fully accomplished in dissecting the deadly fascination with the drugs game. The subject has intimate resonance with all concerned – several of the Outlawz are former dealers, including Young Noble whose mother and brother were both addicts. Also involved are Stormey, Kastro and Edi Don (ex-members include Napoleon and Fatal, with 2-Pac and Khadafi both murdered), the group being most famous for *Still I Rise* (1999). They have a long-standing collaborative ethic, though usually stressing the 'gangsta' side of the equation – but with Stic, they're serious.

Can't Sell's opener, '1Nation', straightforwardly frames the problem as gang versus class war:

"Listen up, all these guns we got between us / We can point 'em the right



way and come the fuck up / Dope money and turf ain't worth your life / Doing it for the struggle, that's how you earn your stripes."

The title track sympathetically fleshes out the cold-hearted reality:

[Young Noble] "It ain't too many dope dealers retiring / It ain't too many old prostitutes vacationing on the islands / Instead of knock 'em down, my focus is to inspire 'em / But he ain't got no job, and she on welfare / All he do is go rob, she do the blowjobs / For '06 Bonnie and Clyde, life is so hard / We need some motivation, we need some inspiration / We need to be more creative in our ways to get paper / The block will have your ass in a box for your duration / Homie, I ain't tryin' to preach to you, I'm just sayin' / The government the bigger gang, and they ain't playin'."

Later, 'Like a Window' has Stic.man agonising over his junkie brother, musing

on the interests ultimately served:

"It's a war even though they don't call it a war / It's chemical war unleashed on the Black and the poor / And who benefits? The police, lawyers and judges / The private-owned prison industry with federal budgets / All them products in the commissary / Tell me who profits – it's obvious / And it's going too good for them to stop it."

Finally, 'Believe' succinctly critiques consumerism and decisively reconnects the political-economic analysis to daily life:

"You ain't gotta smoke crack to be a fiend / A fiend is just somebody who's addicted, it could be anything / Too many of us addicted to the American Dream / We're high from the lies on the TV screen / We're drunk from the poison that they're teachin' in school / And we're junkies from the chemicals they put in the food."

With Dead Prez proving the potency of political street-cred over banging

beats, veteran G-Funk raptivist Paris also steps up alongside an astonishing array of old- and new-school, hardcore and conscious, artists on *Hard Truth Soldiers, Vol 1*; and, somewhat bizarrely, produced and wrote the lyrics for Public Enemy's misfiring *Rebirth Of A Nation* (check guerillafunk.com). So, suburban white middle-class subcultures may be abandoning hip-hop, and all manner of self-righteous haters delight in pronouncing it dead. Meanwhile, the momentum grows of an unholy lowlife alliance of bling-obsessed narcissists, psychotic nihilists, and prophets of organised revolt. I know who I'm listening to.

www.tomjennings.pwp.blueyonder.co.uk

Confidential by M1 (CD/DVD) is out now on Koch Records.

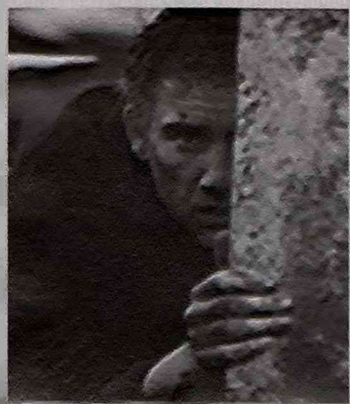
Can't Sell Dope Forever (Affluent Records) and *Soldier 2 Soldier* (Real Talk Entertainment) by Dead Prez & Outlawz are available on import.

FILM

Children Of Men directed by Alfonso Cuarón

This latest blockbuster from Mexican film-maker Cuarón paints an ominous picture of the near future, with a global virus having left humanity infertile. Bulldog Britain somehow soldiers on, demonising tidal waves of illegal immigrants escaping societal meltdown everywhere else, its increasingly totalitarian government trumping the public's despair at impending extinction with internal terror and short-term 'homeland security' repression while benevolently distributing 'Quietus' self-euthanasia kits for those who don't succumb to 'day of judgement' fundamentalism. As the upper classes numbly barricade themselves in to brazen out amageddon, a rag-tag resistance

dodges the security forces around an exceedingly grubby and battered but recognisable London, in which death squads, random bombings and cages full of foreigners on their way to incarceration



litter the rubbish-filled streets. So far, so tantalising.

Awoken from drunken disillusionment by reminders of personal tragedies past, Clive Owen's cynical civil servant Theo then flip-flops around the Home Counties trying to save the world's only pregnant woman, fetching up in Bexhill-on-Sea rendered as a monstrous concentration/refugee camp. Their flight is captured in superb action sequences with bravura handheld single-takes, modulated with sentimental moments of stillness amidst the bloodbath as the unexpected sight and sound of infancy resurrects human caring among military, rebels and bystanders alike. However, the narrative is far less daring than its filming. Whereas *V For Vendetta* scuppered every ounce of political nous in its literary source, crime writer P.D. James' similarly

dystopian novel had none to start with – the magnificent set design and cinematography here representing a journeyman director doing the stylistic best of a bad job in terms of depth.

Slouching towards Bexhill

So, opposition to the fascist state from the urban guerilla 'Fishes' (i.e. the symbol used by clandestine early Christians) signposts the messianic underbelly of moral politics. This rainbow coalition of former anti-war, civil rights and green activists is riven with 'broad front' contradictions – only demanding human rights for refugees; yet launching armed insurrection! Utterly lacking the socio-political underpinnings to wring interesting speculation from its pandemic/police state scenario, *Children Of Men's* naff nativity parable crumbles into faith in

scientific progress – the mythical 'Human Project' run by "the best brains in the world" on the good ship 'Tomorrow'. Cuarón twists James's high-church, high-Tory spiritual self-flagellation, echoing John Wyndham or J.G. Ballard's bleakly bilious postwar UK sci-fi critiques of bourgeois anomie. The redemptive convergence of rationalist wishful-thinking with pseudo-religious ethical superiority, promising salvation from the jackboot, is instead its shoehorn – with the blind liberal management of capitalism actively fostering disaster. Theo's death delivering (Black refugee) madonna and (female) child to safety then merely finesses the conclusion that middle-class heroism (physical or philosophical) – like this film – can suggest no solutions.

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A Sideways Look

For once, I'm going to give Jack Straw the benefit of the doubt on his recent speech on the niqab, the face veil worn by some Muslim women. I don't think he was trying to stir up anything more than a debate and wasn't intending to inflame anti-Muslim prejudice, though he should have realised that this would be a likely outcome. If you read what he wrote, all he did was to ask some Muslim women to remove the veil when he saw them in his constituency surgery, leaving it up to them whether they complied. It is also at some risk to his position as there is a large Muslim population in his constituency and offending them would make him vulnerable, possibly even to someone advocating the veil in the name of socialism.

The niqab covers all of the face except the eyes and is not mandated by the Koran. It is not common at all in many Islamic countries. In the immediate aftermath of Straw's comments, many Muslim women were heard in the media saying how liberating they found it to be dressed so modestly, or that it was something between them and their god and had nothing to do with anyone else. However, it's more than just a difference of opinion with those women from an Islamic background who feel constricted by the dress codes and the peer pressure makes it a wider issue. The pressure on women to conform is always greater where conformity is visible.

I think some of this is reflected in the case of Aishah Azmi, the teaching assistant who took an industrial tribunal against the school she worked at after she was asked not to wear the niqab when teaching. It became an issue after children complained that they couldn't hear her. However, she didn't wear it at the interview and didn't tell the school she intended to wear it. It's not a tremendous leap of imagination to see this as a deliberate provocation, designed to increase the strength of conservative forms of Islam.

I don't think it's any accident that the more restrictive the dress codes for women, the harsher their treatment and more restricted their roles. One only has to look at the Taliban, Saudi Wahabbism or the Iranian mullahs to see this. I don't see how any creed which insists on its members wearing certain clothes at all times in public can be anything other than reactionary.

However, once you've reached this conclusion, the next step isn't nearly so simple. Some on the left and many on the right, call for it to be banned. In France and Turkey the hijab, or headscarf (which covers less than the veil) is banned from public places and the effect has been to strengthen Islamicists. In France some Muslim girls and women have become more isolated from wider society and under more control by their men. The state has no business telling people what they should or shouldn't wear and

while I think the British state is unlikely to go down this road, there are vociferous tabloid campaigns by the usual (racist) suspects.

Whatever I think about the choices, free or otherwise, that Muslim women make, it is clear that women shouldn't be attacked for it.

Svartfrosk

Blast from the Past

Taken from Freedom of 13th November 2003, entitled Mission accomplished? Let's recap. It has been proven conclusively that Saddam not only did not have Weapons of Mass Destruction, he did not have WMD programmes. It has been proven conclusively that he had no links with 9/11 or al-Qaeda. So much for the initial lies and excuses for the war. What of the last one, the one tacked on when the public simply refused to believe the others: the so-called 'moral' case for war.

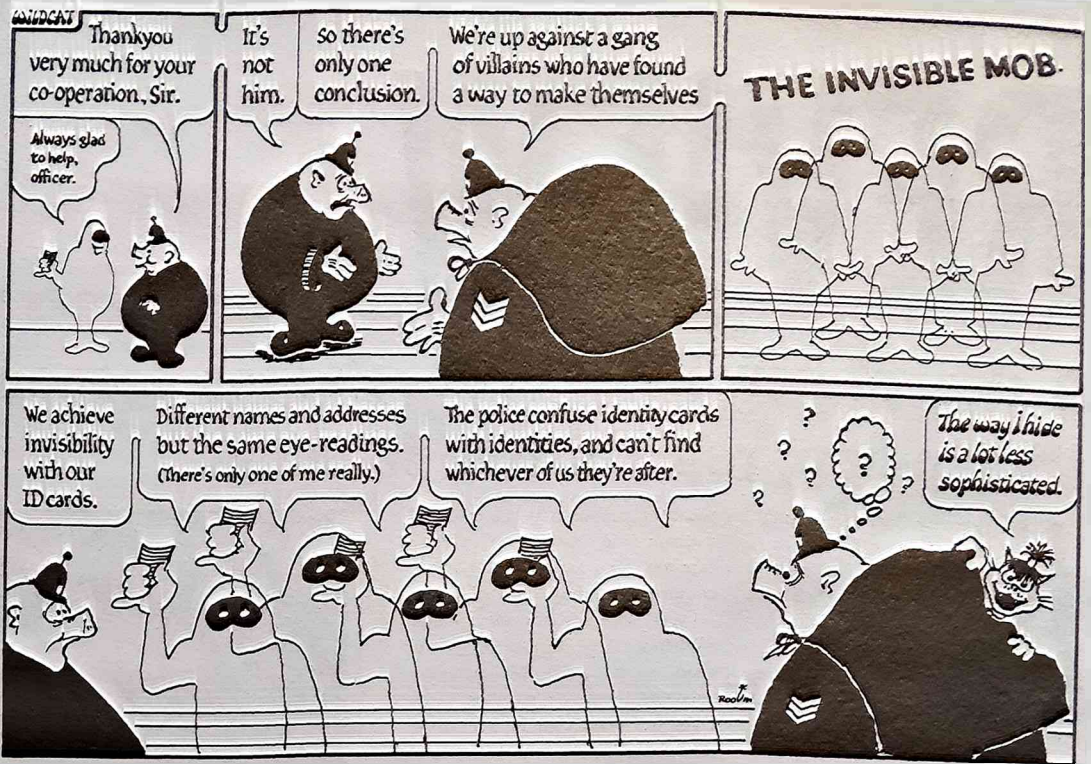
Given its hypocrisy, it was easy to dismiss. The long practice of US-UK support for dictators like Saddam suggested that it was nonsense and subsequent events have proven this to be the case. Now the real human costs of the war are becoming known. According to *The Lancet*, the respected British medical journal, the invasion forces (mainly the US air force) killed at least 100,000 Iraqi civilians (most reportedly killed being women and children). This is significantly higher than previous estimates, based on media reports, of up to 16,000. Little wonder the US forces announced that it would not bother counting the numbers it killed - during and after the invasion.

So where does that leave the 'moral' case for the war? Given that it is often alleged that Saddam's regime killed 300,000 civilians, this means that the US-UK have killed a third as many civilians in a year and a half as Saddam did in nearly a quarter of a century. Even the 300,000 figure is unconfirmed as, so far, only 5,000 or so persons have been found in the mass graves Blair used to justify his war (graves, incidentally, which date back to when Saddam was an ally to the US and UK or to after the first Gulf War when the US preferred him to a popular uprising). All of which is hardly very moral, no matter how you look at it or try to spin it.

The quiz

1. Who, according to a recent biography, spied on Russian anarchists?
2. Which important anarchist activist had a broad selection of his work published in English for the first time this year?
3. Who founded and published the *Workers' Dreadnought*?
4. What was it originally called?

Answers on page 6



Imagine if...

Tony was having trouble with the ID database. No matter how hard he tried, he couldn't get the information he was after.

"Darling?" He called across the study, "Have you been messing about with the national ID database again?"

His wife shrugged. "If you don't want me looking into Gordon's shopping habits you shouldn't leave yourself logged in."

Tony tried not to smile. It had been his pushing the project which had revolutionised politicians' and bureaucrats' ability to understand, and sometimes imprison, the population.

For just the tiny cost of £500 a head, illegal immigration, crime, terrorism and identity fraud had changed dramatically. There'd been a lot more of it, to start. At least until the police computer had been stopped noting down everyone ID'd as an illegal terrorist immigrant who'd thieved their card.

Over time, the system had gotten better, and had been tied in to RFID chips tracking what people bought, and search engine observation programmes looking at what everyone read about. Along with CCTV, it had become possible to know to the minute what someone was doing with their time.

Of course there were the occasional problems. Criminal gangs and far right groups who had infiltrated the secure system by simply taking low level council admin posts now controlled much of Manchester and London in a complex series of blackmail scams. Terrorists had timed their attacks for when they knew most people would be on holiday.

But amidst the chaos, at least it was possible for politicians to spy on their subjects. That was what democracy was all about.

Listings

17th to 19th November Introduction to renewable energy weekend in Wales, three-day long courses at the Centre of Continuing Education, University of Wales, Aberystwyth, in Mid-Wales, see greendragonenergy.co.uk/courses.htm for more info, or an on-line enrolment form at aber.ac.uk/addysg/geninfo/enrol

18th November End Occupation of Iraq, a meeting at Friends Meeting House, Euston, London from 11am to 5pm, contact iraqfocus@riseup.net

21st November Preston SolFed public meeting, "Why does the scam always rise to the top?", from 7.30pm at DISC, 103 Church Street, Preston, for info call 07707256682 or see solfed.org.uk

23rd November Performance Club presents Simon Munnelly (Mr Experimental), Sir Gideon Vein (deceased and still at large) with MC Tony Allen (mixed ability shaman) plus regulars and guests, Inn On The Green, 3 Thorpe Close, London W10, newagenda.demon.co.uk/

25th November Buy Nothing Day, spend the day without spending, to find out more see buynothingday.co.uk or adbusters.org/campaigns/bnd

30th November Special meeting of Worthing Alliance with guest speaker Milan Rai, author and anti-war activist, plus news and views from various local campaigns, Upstairs at The Rest, Bath Place, Worthing, from 8pm, for more see eco-action.org/porkbolter

2nd December The Eighth Utrecht Anarchist Bookfair at De Kargadoor, Oudegracht 36, Utrecht, The Netherlands, from 11am-6pm, cultural programme by the 2dh5 festival, see www.2dh5.nl, info.peetje@antenna.nl

2nd December National anti-war demo at RAF Brize Norton, where British troops are flown to and from Iraq and Afghanistan and from where Iraqi and Afghani asylum seekers are deported,

assemble at 12 noon at Carterton, Oxfordshire, see stopwar.org.uk or email swindon_stopwar@yahoo.co.uk or tel 07764563855

19th December Preston SolFed public meeting, "Why Santa is a bastard", from 7.30pm at DISC, 103 Church Street, Preston, for info call 07707256682 or see solfed.org.uk/

10th March The Sixth International @lternative Bookfair in Gent at De Centrale, Kraankindersstraat 2, Gent, Belgium, from 10am-8pm - apart from books, etc., there will be a programme of conferences, workshops, video showings and performances, for info see www.aboekenbeurs.be or contact aboekenbeurs@yahoo.com

17th and 18th March The Twelfth Bay Area Anarchist Bookfair at SF County Fair Building, Golden Gate Park, 9th Ave & Lincoln Blvd, San Francisco, USA, from 10am-6pm (on 17th) and 11am-5pm (on 18th) - this year back at the old location with all the space needed to walk around, to talk with other visitors, to look, to enjoy the programmes and the cafe and two days, contact The Bookfair Committee, c/o Bound Together Books, 1369 Haight Street, San Francisco, CA 94117



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