

# FREEDOM

£1 [www.freedompress.org.uk](http://www.freedompress.org.uk)

Vol 72 No 04 • 26 FEBRUARY 2011

## VISIBLY ORGANISING?

### Do anarchists exist in the current wave of social unrest?

On Saturday 19th February over 50 branches of Barclays banks were closed down by co-ordinated actions across the country orchestrated by UK Uncut, a direct action based initiative targeting those businesses currently avoiding paying tax (Boots, Philip Green, Tesco and Vodaphone who alone have withheld £6bn in unpaid tax) and institutions that have benefited from public money bail-outs, notably the big high street banks Barclays, RBS and NatWest.

On the same day a range of local anti-cuts groups organised demonstrations against their respective councils who are all in the process of voting through massive cuts to spending, affecting essential services, in order to comply with the coalition's enforced austerity measures. Thousands took to the streets in Bristol, Nottingham, Brighton, Shrewsbury, London, York, Pontypridd with rallies, marches and pickets.

If we take this in hand with the massive student anti-tuition fees protests and subsequent occupations of campus buildings, it forms an impressive array of political objectives that catalogue the anger and determination of an increasingly radicalised population. It could [page 3](#) ▶▶

### LENS CAP HACKED OFF!



Over 700 people from London's most militant borough didn't let the wet weather dampen their spirits as they marched defiantly through the streets to Hackney town hall on Saturday 19th February to protest against the cuts which will have a devastating impact on the area. Accompanied by the samba band, the Whitechapel Anarchist Group were out in force in cross-borough solidarity.

Photo courtesy of Che

## SAME OLD NEW LABOUR TRICKS

The three main political parties once again show there's little to choose between them when it comes to listening to the people they are supposed to represent.

Labour controlled councils, despite the angry anti-cuts rhetoric doubtless carefully scripted by the spin doctors at Labour Party central office, are making bigger cuts and are making them more quickly than their Tory or Lib-dem counterparts.

Figures from the GMB, the local government union, show Labour councils are getting rid of 50% more posts than the Conservatives at local level.

The figures come from the councils 'at-risk' notifications issued to employees ahead of proposed funding cuts to all local authorities by the government. Labour authorities have

issued on average 745 job 'at-risk' notifications, compared with 498 and 414 respectively from Tory and Lib Dem councils.

Cameron's Tory elite are targeting the bigger metropolitan councils, traditionally coming under Labour control, who are suffering the greatest budget cuts, with a 7% reduction in 'spending power' on average, compared with 5% in Tory areas and 6% in Lib Dem areas.

But instead of defying the financial impositions by voting against them, Labour councils have embraced the Tory cuts and thrown all their energy into ensuring their implemented.

It should be remembered it was a Labour controlled council in Lewisham that called [page 11](#) ▶▶

### INSIDE ▶▶

**Royal wedding souvenir** page 2

**Anarchism and big society** page 4

**Battle of Wisconsin** page 7

**Reports from Egypt** pages 8 and 9

**Svartfrosk column** page 10

**Reviews** pages 14 and 15

ISSN 0016-0504



## NEWS

## IN BRIEF

**ART:** Cheeky anti-cuts activists took their message to the bloated art world by bringing to a halt the world's top auction houses.

Over 100 anti-cuts activists disrupted Sotheby's Contemporary Art auction in London, in the middle of bidding for an Andy Warhol print, in protest against bankers' bonuses and funding cuts to public services and the arts. A dozen protesters inside the auction rooms staged a noisy protest in what they termed the 'Orgy of the Rich'. The Warhol eventually went for £2.8 million.

**CRIME:** Under the new criminal behaviour orders (the Tories answer to New Labour's ASBO) police and community support officers will have the power to order someone over the age of 10 who is behaving in a 'disruptive manner' to leave an area for two days, which can be done without court approval.

Needless to say 'disruptive manner' is not defined so it will only be a matter of time before the order is used against demonstrators the police find unpalatable, i.e. anarchists.

**DEFENCE:** The British government has approved the sale to Libya of a wide range of equipment for use against civilians, including teargas and 'crowd control ammunition' (currently being used to quell pro-democracy protestors) official reports show.

Export licences increased significantly over the first nine months of last year, valued at more than £200m according to the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills.

Official UK guidelines say the government will "not issue an export licence if there is a clear risk that the proposed export might be used for internal repression" – which begs the questions just who it is supposed to be used against?

**SECURITY:** G4S, the multinational security company hired by the government to deport refused asylum seekers, was repeatedly warned by its own staff that potentially lethal force was being used against deportees. Their evidence was secretly submitted to the home affairs select committee in the aftermath of the death of an Angolan, Jimmy Mubenga, who was killed while being forcibly restrained on a flight from Heathrow in October.

Meanwhile G4S still holds contracts worth £600m with several government departments, managing four prisons, three immigration removal centres and also escorts around half of all prisoners to and from court.

**UNEMPLOYMENT:** Official employment statistics for January show an unexpected increase in the jobless total by 44,000 to 2.49 million, with women and the young suffering the most from latest wave of job losses.

The Tories were relying on the figures to prove that austerity measures were key to the economic recovery, but in Cameronesque-style a spin doctor responded "The labour market data are disappointingly softer overall and fuel our suspicion that unemployment is likely to trend up gradually in 2011."

## LENS CAP COMING UP GOOD



For those who are preparing for the onslaught of media sycophants and establishment groupies tugging their forelocks and grovelling at the feet of the country's two latest benefit scroungers, an enterprising company have produced the necessary accompaniment to all the royal wedding hyperbole. An ideal souvenir on a day we're sure to forget, available at all good anarchist outlets soon.

## Occupational hazards

Since the beginning of the year, three spaces have been occupied inspired by the anti-cuts movement and student occupations. All promote the idea of self-organisation and political autonomy along with accessibility to radical ideas.

The Really Free School in London has just been evicted from Guy Ritchie's abandoned townhouse in the heart of the student district, and immediately moved across the road to a disused pub on one of London's busiest shopping junctions, where they continue their programme of alternative educational talks and lectures (previous speakers included Paul Mason from *Newsnight*).

In Leeds, the Cuts Cafe was opened for a week offering daily workshops on such topics as surveillance, unionism, benefits, free education and the NHS, and could justifiably boast "... what a success. The place has been buzzing, great workshops, tasty food and lots of exciting conversations. Great turnout, the dance and film night was packed."

But perhaps the most interesting of the occupied spaces is The Free Hetherington. Here one of the occupiers gives *Freedom* an exclusive insight into the initiative:

"Since 1st February, students at Glasgow University have occupied and re-opened the Hetherington Research Club, a former post-graduate social club that ran into financial difficulties a year ago and was forced to close down by university management. Unlike occupations elsewhere, which have focused on administration buildings or lecture theatres,

with the now re-named 'Free Hetherington' we've gone for something quite different. What we're now operating is a fully functioning social centre – a space for students and staff to socialise and relax in a non-commercial environment, and to utilise as a hub of anti-cuts activism. The move to re-open the building, which lay empty for a year, has been incredibly popular on campus, with lots of staff offering their time to give free lectures, and we've made the space available for bookings by student societies and community and activist groups.

"The response from Uni management has so far been minimal – beyond formalities with campus security, we've heard very little. But with proposals at stake to clash £20m from the university budget over the next three years, they clearly have their eyes on bigger issues at the moment. A mass movement is emerging on campus against these cuts, which look set to see a number of courses, including nursing, social work, several modern languages and the department of adult education, which caters for 5,000 adult learners, scrapped entirely. Recently 2,000 marched on a meeting of the university court, and the lecturers' UCU union are balloting for strike action. The Free Hetherington has emerged at the heart of these struggles, and we're now hoping to hold the space indefinitely."

Open to all, The Free Hetherington, Glasgow University Campus, 13 University Gardens, just off University Avenue near the Queen Margaret Union, G12 8QQ, see <http://freehetherington.wordpress.com/>



Tower for drilling horizontally into the Marcellus shale formation for natural gas, just north of Pennsylvania in the USA.

# A history of profit and death

Through time and space, the proof of how easily industrialists would kill for a quick profit comes thick and fast.

Our latest example centres on the poisoning of communities for the sake of energy money, while also throwing in a weird reference to the historic anarchist troublemaker Alexander Berkman.

Shale gas is this decade's gold rush, according to the mining industry. Simply by drilling into the bedrock of the world, setting off copious amounts of explosives down there and then pumping the crater full of poisonous seawater slurry we get lovely burnable gas.

The only fly in this plan is that astonishingly, even with concrete barriers in place to contain the slurry, it turns out the process, known as fracking, isn't 100% safe.

Toxic chemicals leaking into the environment have poisoned nearby drinking water in its main testing ground of Pennsylvania USA,

most notoriously shown in the film *Gaslands*, where affected residents pulled off the neat trick of setting fire to 'drinking' water as it flowed out of their taps.

Equally worrying have been rising numbers of massive gas leaks and explosions.

As a result, today there is a court case being brought state-wide to try and put a moratorium on extraction until the safety of the process has been better proven. It may be a while – on 352 wells on the state's 'Marcellus' deposit alone inspectors found 85 violations last year.

And in a twist to the tale, the case is taking place in the very courthouse where union members were put to trial after the infamous Homestead steel mill strike in 1892, a conflict which saw Alexander Berkman attempt to assassinate the brutal industrialist Henry Clay Frick for his Pinkertons' murder of the mill workers. So here we are over a century later and Frick's spiritual descendents are killing working people in a whole new way.

So what's their next stop? Blackpool.

The northern seaside town is the first foothold in Europe for gas firms' fracking about, with three sites being looked at by private firm Cuadrilla Resources on nearby Fylde – Grange Road, near Singleton, Preese Hall, Weeton, and Anna's Road, Westby.

Green research institution the Tyndall Centre has already sent out a strong warning over the speed of the exploration and building process, arguing in a report commissioned by the Co-op that a moratorium should be put on future exploration until the wider environmental concerns have been "fully addressed."

Locally, Green Party councillor Philip Mitchell is compiling a petition which asks for the exploration work to be put on hold and on a national level, a Select Committee has been formed by the government to look into the future of shale gas. *Plus ça change.*

Rob Ray

## Visibly organising?

◀ page 1

be argued that the unrest we are witnessing now isn't ideologically driven but a gesture of defiance against the erosion of all the social expectations that have been hard won over the years – the right to a free education, basic public services, a job. As such it's both universal and defensive.

The radical left hasn't deviated from its traditional methods of organising, an approach that can be mapped out in the formation of a myriad of front groups (Coalition of Resistance, Right to Work, etc.), and figureheads from trusted trade union leaders to hypocritical Labour MPs pretending that the last 13 years didn't happen in an attempt to become the legitimate voice of dissent and

colonise the discourse by consuming any and all political and practical strategies. The role usually adopted by anarchists is to fight tooth and nail to prevent this.

Which brings us to the question: where is the anarchist movement? Do we have a role to play in amongst all this political upheaval and social conflict? Are we even necessary?

We have two organised and functioning federations who made a noble effort to create a visible presence in the form of a 'radical workers bloc' on the first big student demo where Tory HQ got trashed. After which they have sunk back into the shadows. There's no doubting the efforts and energies members of the Anarchist Federation and

Solidarity Federation put into their organisations, but how is that effort translated into a something tangible and visible? There are of course thousands more anarchists who aren't part of any formal organisations, who do turn up and get involved, as committed individuals if not as part of an anarchist movement.

March 26th is fast approaching, the left's big day in terms of stamping their identity on the anti-cuts movement. It is where the radical left, the trades unions and the New Labour party leaders formally join together as official opposition. Is it a day the anarchists mobilise as a movement to offer an alternative?

## ANALYSIS

# Anarchism and the Big Society

Iain McKay gives Cameron's big idea the heave ho

In *The Independent* (16th February 2011), Brian Lincoln from Edinburgh wrote a letter discussing David Cameron's 'Big Society' and anarchism: "In proposing the 'Big Society' as the antidote to 'big government', has David Cameron converted to anarchism, the political philosophy which most wants to get the state out of everything? In an 1896 text, the Russian revolutionary Peter Kropotkin explains that anarchism 'seeks the most complete development of individuality combined with the highest development of voluntary association in all its aspects, in all possible degrees, for all imaginable aims'. Familiar?"

Yet this is a selective account of anarchism, completely ignoring its economic ideas and the means advocated to achieve it. This can be seen from the text quoted, namely Kropotkin's *Anarchism: Its Philosophy and Ideal*. Yes, Kropotkin does argue for free association but he recognises that this is only truly possible in a society without class division for "we know full well today that it is futile to speak of liberty as long as economic slavery exists." Thus capitalism meant the worker must "sell his labour power for less than it is capable of bringing in" and Kropotkin points to "the fatal consequences of the present forms of property."

Thus: "when we analyse the evils of the present economic system, we see – and the worker knows it full well – that their essence lies in the forced necessity of the worker to sell his labour power ... he renounces the benefits his labour might bring him in; he abandons the lion's share of what he produces to his employer; he even abdicates his liberty; he renounces his right to make his opinion



heard on the utility of what he is about to produce and on the way of producing it."

Similarly, it is doubtful that Cameron would conclude that "this ideal presents itself based on the necessity of Communism, imposed on our modern societies by the eminently social character of our present production." Anarchy, argued Kropotkin, "refuses all hierarchical organisation and preaches free agreement." This applies economically as well as politically. The hierarchical capitalist workplace based on wage-labour must be replaced by the self-managed socialist one based on associated-labour. Anarchists, unlike the Tories, "loudly ask for the return to the community of all riches accumulated by the work of preceding generations" and the "holding in common of land, mines, factories, inhabited houses, and means of transport."

Again, unlike Cameron, anarchism sees free association as being created from below rather than legislated from above: "Communist organisation cannot be left to be constructed by legislative bodies called parliaments, municipal or communal council. It must be the work of all, a natural growth, a product of the constructive genius of the great mass. Communism cannot be imposed from above; it could not live even for a few months if the constant and daily co-operation of all did not uphold it. It must be free."

Again, unlike the Tories, anarchism sees a free society being created by the direct action of the working class: "The worker perceives that he has been disinherited, and that disinherited he will remain, unless he has recourse to strikes or revolts to tear from his masters the smallest part of riches built up by his own efforts."

Unlike the attempts by the Tories to restrict the right to strike and to organise unions, Kropotkin stressed the need for "collective revolt – strikes and working class

insurrections." This was the means by which "they will be able to start the destruction of the present economic system" as well as the state which protects it, that "mutual insurance society of landlords, bankers, priests, judges, and soldiers." The means of production would be seized and run by those who use them, for "how can the peasant be made to believe that the bourgeois or manorial land belongs to the proprietor who has a legal claim ... how make the worker in a factory, or the miner in a mine, believe that factory and mine equitably belong to their present masters"?

Would Cameron be praising such actions as the 'Big Society' or would he be invoking 'Big Government' to crush such revolts? The answer is all too obvious.

To conclude, it is not a wise thing (unless you wish to discredit anarchism!) to suggest Cameron's vision of a privatised society is similar to anarchism's socialised one. It staggers belief that anyone could suggest David Cameron has 'converted' to anarchism or seeks the same society as Kropotkin. Yes, anarchism is for free and self-managed association but it is premised on a transformation of economic relations and property. Cameron has not decided to become a (libertarian) socialist nor, like Kropotkin, renounce his own social position to work for the self-emancipation of the working classes from our slavery from capital and its defender, the state. Quite the reverse as the cuts and the Tory agenda he is trying to hide begin his 'Big Society' rhetoric are aimed at increasing our slavery to capital. The road to private serfdom, if you like...

Suffice to say, anarchism has never been purely anti-state and to suggest otherwise is to impoverish it. As can be seen from Kropotkin's 1896 text, we recognise that free association cannot exist as long as capitalism does.

## IN BRIEF

**BRISTOL:** Forest of Dean Tory MP Mark Harper was besieged by an angry mob of 300 people over the proposed government sell off of all publicly owned forest land. The unadvertised meeting was packed inside and out as the demonstrators, which included children and pensioners, chanted slogans such as 'Tunis – Egypt – Forest of Dean' all evening. The Oxbridge accountant and member of the rightwing Freedom Association had to be rushed from the building in a police van which was then pelted with eggs.

**LUTON:** The English Defence League once again tried to whip up social divisions as they paraded through the city centre with a heavy police escort on another of their big day's out. An estimated 1,500 EDL supporters, accompanied by the usual frenzy of inappropriate sloganeering and ghoulish football chants, were guided through the streets, which for many is the group's spiritual home, to offer up its customary blend of reactionary speeches and little Englander rabble-rousing before being escorted back on their coaches and off home again.

**OXBRIDGE:** As predicted, the race is on for the elite universities to see who can charge the most. Despite assurances by the privately educated minister for universities, David Willetts, that the £9,000 top limit will only be allowed in 'exceptional circumstances', it now emerges senior managers at Oxford and Cambridge are intent on charging the maximum permitted as a matter of course. An internal report reveals Cambridge university wants to almost triple its fees to £9,000 as soon as it can by autumn next year, with Oxford bleating that fees of less than £8,000 would lose the university money.

**SHEFFIELD:** The threat of a 48-hour strike by journalists at Sheffield Newspapers NUJ Chapel was enough for management to back down and capitulate on forcing through compulsory redundancies. Nearly 60 journalists won a new deal with management to resolve a dispute over plans to halve the number of production jobs at the regional newspaper empire Johnston Press 'editorial hub' in the city. This went along with the demands by the workers to offer freelancers the opportunity for permanent contracts, something they've been fighting months for.

**SOUTHAMPTON:** Council workers took their protest against the cuts just that little bit further by invading the town hall to stop the Tory controlled council voting through its austerity measures. Binmen were among those who got into the building and banged on the doors of the council chamber where councillors were passing the controversial budget. Activists were removed from the public gallery for heckling and jeering the finance director as he tried to justify limit council workers pay. Council staff will be forced to accept pay cuts to help balance a £25m black hole along with 250 job losses.

# Advisory Service for Squatters

## Fourth in the series of groups who operate out of the Freedom Press building

The Advisory Service for Squatters (ASS) was formed in 1974 after a split in the Family Squatters Advisory Service (FSAS) over the issue of support for licensed versus non-licensed squatters. The rift was resolved and FSAS was no more, as was their funding from Shelter (expressly for the purposes of short-life and hard-to-let housing leases, thus precluding support for unlicensed squatters).

Since then, the ASS has been run entirely by an unpaid collective of volunteers – no workers, no bosses and no pay. Our role is to give legal advice not only to squatters but anyone in need of housing advice. We publish the *Squatter's Handbook*, currently in its thirteenth edition, and can also provide practical legal advice on some of the day to day aspects of squatting such as dealing with cops and owners and can help with police complaints.

The government has been making noises recently about making squatting a criminal offence; prior to the last election a proposal was made for new legislation against 'intentional trespass', which, amongst other things, would have the practical effect of criminalising homelessness.

Dutch comrades have been resisting legislation forbidding squatting since a similar law came into effect in Holland on the 1st October 2010.

A recent UK media campaign against squatting has also prompted the Ministry of Justice to release a wildly misleading and legally erroneous set of guidelines for home-

owners who've popped out to the shops only to find themselves locked out by squatters upon their return. Needless to say, this is a rare occurrence (not to mention already a criminal offence!).

In reality, what ASS volunteers tend to see most of in the course of our work are victims of violent, illegal evictions, homeless people who have been denied the housing they are legitimately entitled to by councils and tenants who are being wrongly treated as squatters by cynical and unscrupulous landlords and borough councils.

In spite of those within the current government who are openly salivating for the criminalisation of trespass (Eric Pickles, Grant Shapps *et al*) remember that *squatting is still legal*. The Hague has also ruled in reference to the Dutch *kraakverbod* that it is a contravention of the European Convention on Human Rights to evict squatters without a prior ruling from a judge. The criminalisation of squatting in the UK is clearly therefore a much more complex and troublesome to realise than the government and mainstream media would have us believe and would involve a sizeable and dramatic change to current UK legislation.

Now, as ever, the ASS needs more volunteers and help. We also need cash, which, as our volunteers are mainly statutorily homeless, would predominantly be spent on drink and drugs. Squatting is still free, legal and necessary!

The ASS is open between 2pm and 6pm Monday to Friday for help and advice. You can call us or drop in any time we're open. As we are staffed by volunteers, it's normally a good idea to ring before coming by to double check that someone will be there. Call us on 020 3216 0099 or see our website at <http://www.squatter.org.uk/>



## INTERNATIONAL

## IN BRIEF

**FRANCE:** A worldwide conference featuring activists and radicals from Europe, Tunisia, Japan, the US, Canada, Mexico, Chile, Peru and Argentina, was held in Paris under the banner 'For a new Europe: university struggles against austerity' to discuss and organise a network based on common struggles. It called for days of action from 24th to 26th March, against banks, debt system and austerity measures, for free education and free circulation of people and knowledge. They will meet again in London in June.

**IRELAND:** Up to 3,000 student nurses and midwives took part in a march and rally in Dublin in protest at Government plans to phase out and ultimately eliminate the payments that they receive during their mandatory 36-week placement periods in hospitals. This coincided with an hour-long lunchtime protests at 13 hospitals across the country. The protests are the first stage in a campaign against Government plans to phase out and ultimately eliminate payments to student nurses during their mandatory 36-week work placement in hospitals.

**ITALY:** the far-right Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi, personal friend and political ally of Tony Blair, is being forced to stand trial accused by of paying for sex with an underage girl. The 74-year-old billionaire will also face a charge of abuse of power for allegedly pressuring police to drop theft charges connected to the same girl. It is claimed he spent 13 nights with the girl at his private villa. It is unclear if it's the same villa the religious puritan and war criminal Tony Blair shared during their holidays together.

**PUERTO RICO:** Police have finally withdrawn from the main University of Puerto Rico campus in San Juan after a two-month occupation to quell unrest amongst students. Riot squads took over the campus in December following a massive student strike against fee hikes and privatisation. Some 200 people have been arrested and scores of students beaten and injured during the occupation by state forces, prompting professors and university workers to walk out for two days last week in sympathy with the students.

**MEXICO:** On 15th February, over 12,000 members of the Section 22 teachers union blocked major highways in the southern Mexican state of Oaxaca and cancelled classes in more than 15,000 schools after teachers protesting a visit by President Felipe Calderón were attacked by police. Protesters called for the resignation of local political and education leaders, including the Public Safety Secretary Marco Tulio Lopez. Protesters also torched a government vehicle and beat the Oaxaca state Public Safety Secretary Marco Tulio Lopez when he tried to call for calm. Federal Police opened fire with live rounds and tear-gas grenades, resulting in at least 14 people wounded or hospitalised.

## LENS CAP A WHALE OF A TIME



A major victory for the Sea Shepherd marine conservation group, whose motif is the Jolly Roger, as Japan recalls its whaling fleet from the Antarctic early after being hounded across the southern ocean by seaborne activists trying to disrupt the illegal whaling operation. Their early departure has raised hopes that the hunts could be halted altogether.

## Arab unrest spreads

In the wake of the popular uprising in Egypt that saw the overthrow of the president Mubarak, anti-government protests have erupted across much of the Middle East, including Bahrain, Yemen, Jordan, and Libya and Algeria in north Africa.

Social unrest has been met with violent repression by state forces on almost all occasions.

Security forces in Libya and Yemen have shot and killed numerous anti-government protesters, while thousands of pro-democracy activists in Bahrain having suffered brutal attacks have returned to a major square following the withdrawal of security forces.

Over 20,000 anti-government protesters gathered in Sanaa, the capital of Yemen to demand the removal of President Ali Abdullah Saleh. Students, activists and opposition groups chanted slogans against the ruler, comparing

him to Tunisia's ousted President. A common feature of all the protests seems a spontaneous popular expression of dissent, a call for greater freedoms and dispossession of the ruling elite.

The current wave of unrest is something of a conundrum for western leaders. On the one hand it could signal the start towards a more social democratic form of rule in the region, on the other political instability and the removal of key figures, especially those who have been groomed by western foreign policy, could see the unravelling of profitable multi-national economic interests. BP for example has a high stake in the oil fields of Libya, a deal brokered by the then prime minister Tony Blair. And it is Tony Blair, supposed peace envoy to the middle east, who has so far been conspicuous by his silence.

## Notes from the US

## Economy

Some of the themes we've been looking at in recent issues of *Freedom* continue to intrigue.

**Debt:** The Congressional Budget Office now estimates that the US federal deficit is going to reach a record US\$1.5 (£0.9) trillion in 2011. It seems as though the deal struck between president and law maker to extend Bush-era tax cuts is the main cause.

Obama's next budget (for 2012) has just been announced: essentially a freeze with key social programs axed or curtailed – heating

for low income families, education, social services, for example. But military spending increases. Republicans, too, have plans: US\$74 (£46) billion in cuts, which include a 10% reduction to a food project for pregnant women and their children, firing of 4,500 police, drastically down-funding the federal high-speed rail initiative, and gutting the US Environmental Protection Agency by 17%.

And more on Congress' attack on women's health as part of its legislative programme

# The Battle of Wisconsin

## Public sector workers respond to attack on collective rights

The announcement by Republican Governor Scott Walker to end the collective bargaining rights of all public sector workers in Wisconsin was met with thousands upon thousands of workers flooding the state capital, bringing the city to a standstill and storming the Capitol Building in anger at the proposed legislation. So far there has been four days of protests and rallies including a mass walk out by teachers and students. An estimated 40,000 people flocked to Madison, the state's capital, and surrounded the senate building in a show of solidarity for the unprecedented attack on basic labour rights, in scenes some compared to what was happening in Egypt. One protestor commented "It was similar to Tahrir Square, that's the only thing I can think to compare it to."

Walker wants to remove all collective bargaining rights, except for salary, for roughly 175,000 public employees to balance a \$3.6 billion budget shortfall. Any requests for a salary increase higher than the consumer price index would have to be approved by referendum. He also wants to force state employees to contribute 5.8% of their salaries to cover pension costs and more than double their health insurance contributions.

Walker claims the measures will save \$137 million and remained unapologetic about its effects "I'm just trying to balance my budget," he said. "We don't have anything to give. Like practically every other state in the country, we're broke. And it's time to pay up."

## Notes from the US

◀ page 6

next time – for instance, it may soon be the law in South Dakota that to kill a provider of abortion is 'justified homicide'.

### Hypocrisy

Just as Obama was condemning the crackdown on protest in Iran in the third week in February, yet ignoring both the same in Bahrain (where the US has bases for its own weapons of mass destruction) and conveniently forgetting two members of his own cabinet who supported Egypt's Mubarak in recent weeks, Hillary Clinton spoke out against attempts to stifle freedom of expression using the internet: "We believe that governments who have erected barriers to Internet freedom – whether they're technical filters or censorship regimes or attacks on those who exercise their rights to expression and assembly online – will eventually find themselves boxed in. They will face a dictator's dilemma, and have to



What hasn't been widely reported is that Walker and the Republican-controlled Legislature gave away \$117 million of public money in tax breaks for businesses and private health savings accounts, less than a month ago. He also rejected \$810 million in federal money that the state would receive in building a rail line between Madison and Milwaukee.

But for those workers the attack on their rights is not one of balancing the books but a direct assault on union organising. The mood of the protests were said to be jubilant and defiant. A contingent of firefighters, who won't be affected by the bill, came out in solidarity and were met with thunderous applause. A group of students on their own

initiative stormed the Capitol Building, followed by masses of rank-and-file workers who occupied the Capitol rotunda where people packed onto four floors of the building chanting 'tax the rich', and 'kill the bill', waving banners and placards, including one declaring 'Welcome to Cairo'.

The effects of Wisconsin is already having far reaching consequences, already public sector workers in Ohio and Indiana are gearing up for all out confrontation when the same measures are introduced there. Ironically Wisconsin, traditionally one of the more progressive states, was the first to let public employees organise and bargain collectively, it was also first to grant workers and unemployment compensation.

choose between letting the walls fall or paying the price to keep them standing. Governments that arrest bloggers, pry into the peaceful activities of their citizens, and limit their access to the Internet may claim to be seeking security. In fact, they may even mean it as they define it. But they are taking the wrong path."

The irony here? These comments come at a time when Senators Joseph Lieberman and Susan Collins are planning to re-introduce powers under the Homeland Security Act (2002) to give the US president powers to shut down internet services in the country; and government lawyers were appearing in a court in Virginia to argue their case against WikiLeaks' Julian Assange and subpoenas against Twitter, seeking to oblige the company to hand over all correspondence involving the whistle-blowing site were being pressed again.

Louis Further

## Greece: hunger strikes continue

A massive march took place through the streets of Athens on 18th February in support of the 300 immigrants who continue their indefinite hunger strike (February 18th was day 25 of the strike) to demand the legalisation of all immigrants and equal rights with Greek workers.

On 25th January the 300 migrants, who work without papers or any civil rights, began what is perhaps the largest hunger strike in Greek history. Mostly from north Africa and employed in menial jobs, they occupied the Law faculty at Athens university, with 50 more in Thessaloniki, calling for "the same political and social rights and obligations as Greek workers." The workers decided to organise the hunger strike after they held a series of 'democratic assemblies', asking anarchist and anti-racist organisations to support and organise solidarity campaigns.

## FEATURE

# Anarchists report from the Egypt

**An anarchist from Lebanon, organising solidarity with people in Egypt, gives a report on the situation in Egypt, followed by interview with Nidal Tahrir, from Black Flag anarchist group**

The revolution in Egypt has been spontaneous and self-organising, spreading from Cairo and other major cities to the countryside, where in some areas Bedouins took up arms against the police and the military. The revolution has not been peaceful, but in most cases it has been unarmed, owing to the simple fact that most people don't have recourse to weapons beyond stones, clubs, spray paint, and molotov cocktails, all of which have been used against police forces in abundance. When government paramilitary thugs attacked the protestors on Tahir Square (the incident initially described by Western media as a clash between Mubarak supporters and Mubarak opponents), they were expelled with violent force.

Because Egyptians have lived under dictatorship for so long, only the elderly have any experience street fighting, so a major form of solidarity by comrades in other countries has been the creation of informational flyers in Arabic explaining what are essentially Black Bloc street tactics. Given the participation by anarchists and anti-globalisation activists in this direct aid, the reference to the Black Bloc is not intended as metaphor or exaggeration. Another major form of solidarity was reconnecting Egypt to the internet. Either through personal connections or even, in many cases, faxing infosheets to random fax numbers in Egypt, hundreds of people outside Egypt showed protestors in Egypt how to get around the blocks and reconnect to the internet.

Participation in the uprising has been general and multigenerational. In a country of 80 million, three million have regularly come out in Cairo and many millions more in other major cities. The rural population is less likely to mobilise in central locations but they have participated in the uprising in other ways.

Many Western media outlets have tended to focus on male participation in their images, but from the first day many women have participated in protesting and street fighting. The comrade we talked to in Tahir Square is a queer anti-authoritarian, so when she says "everyone is united" we are inclined to interpret this differently than if a union representative had said the same thing.

The masses gathered in Tahir square self-organise through an assembly that has issued communications and organised the feeding of the people there, the cleaning of the streets, and self-defence from government thugs. Multiple times, foreign media have quoted spokespersons from youth organisations who claim to represent the protestors. Every single time this has occurred, the spontaneous assembly of the square has released an unequivocal statement that they have no representatives. Emphatically, no organisation is behind the protests or has been particularly relevant within the protests. Many factories and workplaces are also organising committees.

The Muslim Brotherhood has been on the streets along with everyone else. Their representation is no more than a quarter of all the participants, and they are not in a particularly strong position. Either cynically or because they too are caught up in the insurrection, they are making no move to increase their power or lead the uprising, nor would they be able to do so. The comrade on the square emphatically stated that the fear of an Islamic takeover in Egypt is the paranoia of the Western media and nothing more. The discourse of the protestors' spontaneous assemblies, which is the only power in the country next to the military, which has chosen generally not to intervene, has consistently stressed goodwill and solidarity between Muslims, Christians, and atheists (in a cultural context where usually the existence of atheists is never even mentioned).

The demands of the protestors are overwhelmingly for rights and democracy. A common demand is for elections within nine months, with no power-holder in the transition period being allowed to run. The attitude of the protestors and their intense experience with self-organisation suggests at least the possibility that Egyptian society will not go back to sleep after elections, but that there is potential for increasing struggle.

## INTERVIEW WITH AN EGYPTIAN ANARCHIST

*Please tell me your name and what movement you are from.*

I'm Nidal Tahrir, from Black Flag, a small group of anarcho-communists in Egypt.

*The world is watching Egypt, and even moving in solidarity. However, due to the internet being cut, information was difficult to find. Can you tell me about what has happened in Egypt in the past week? What did it look like from your perspective?*

The situation in Egypt is so crucial right now. It began with an invitation to the day of rage against Mubarak regime on 25th January. No one expected an invitation to a day of rage which came from a loose



group, a Facebook page, not really organised, called 'we are all Khalid Said'.

Khalid Said was an Egyptian youth who was killed by Mubarak police in Alexandria last summer. It was that Tuesday which started everything, it was the spark for the whole fire. On Tuesday big demonstrations were in streets in every Egyptian town, on Wednesday began the massacre. It began with trying to finish the sit-in in Tahir Square on Tuesday late night, and continued in the following days, especially in Suez town. Suez has special value in every Egyptian heart. It was the centre for resistance against Zionists in 1956 and 1967. In the same district that fought Sharon's troops back in Egyptian-Israeli wars, Mubarak police carried out a massacre, at least four people killed, 100 injured, gas bombs, rubber bullets, fire guns, a strange yellow substance thrown above people (maybe mustard gas). Friday was called the Jumu'ah of Rage. Jumu'ah is Arabic for Friday, it's the national weekend in Egypt, in many Islamic countries also, it's the sacred day in Islam, because there are



# otian uprising



the big prayers on this day, called Jumu'ah prayer. It was planned for demonstrators to go on a march after this prayer, at noon. The police tried to prevent the marchers, with all of their power and violence. There were many clashes in Cairo (downtown, in Mattareyah – east of Cairo), and all over Egypt, especially in Suez, Alexandria, Mahalla (in the delta, one of the centres of the working class). From noon to sunset people marched in Cairo downtown, to a sit-in in Tahrir till the removal of the Mubarak regime, chanting one slogan, 'The people demand the removal of the regime'.

At sunset, 5pm CLT, Mubarak declared a curfew and brought the army into Egyptian towns. This curfew was followed by a planned escape by police, letting out the criminals and thugs which called Baltagayyah, and police planned a great escape of criminals in many Egyptian prisons to scare people in Egypt. With no police, many army troops couldn't control the street. It scared people, and it was followed by a news jam on Egyptian television channels, radio and news-

papers, about Luddites in many towns, about thieves firing at people. People organised 'people committees' to secure every street. It was welcomed by the regime to make people more scared about instability in the country, but it was also a point we could start from to build workers' councils.

*As of Wednesday, there have been clashes between pro- and anti-Mubarak people. Is that the correct way to describe it? Who are the 'Mubarak supporters'? How are these clashes affecting the attitudes of average working class Egyptians?*

It's absolutely wrong to call it clashes between anti- and pro-Mubarak. The pro-Mubarak demonstration consisted of many Baltagayyah and secret police to attack the protesters in Tahrir. It only began after Mubarak's speech yesterday, after Obama's speech too. Personally I think Mubarak feels like a slaughtered ox that tries to throw its blood over its slaughterers; he feels like Nero, who wants to burn Egypt before his removal, trying to make people believe he's a synonym for

stability, safety and security. In this way he has really made some progress. The holy national alliance now has been formed against Tahrirites (Tahrir protesters) and Commune de Tahrir.

Many people are saying, especially middle class people, that the demonstrations must end because Egypt has been burned, famine has begun, and it's not true at all. It's only an exaggeration. Every revolution has its difficulties, and Mubarak is using fear and terror to stay longer. Personally I'm saying even if the protesters were responsible for this situation, even if this is so, Mubarak must leave, he must go out, because of his inability to deal with the situation right now.

*What do you see happening in the next week? How much is the position taken by the US government affecting the situation there? Nobody can figure out what will happen tomorrow or next week. Mubarak is a stubborn idiot, and the Egyptian media is making the biggest media campaign in its history to detain the protests on Friday, 4th February. There are calls for another million march to Tahrir, called 'Jumu'ah of salvation', the position taken by the US government is affecting us more than the demonstration. Mubarak is such a traitor who could kill the whole people, but he can't say no to his masters.*

*What has the participation of class struggle anarchists been? Who are their allies (obviously keep security in mind)? Anarchism in Egypt is not a big trend. You can find some anarchists, but it's not a big trend yet. Anarchists in Egypt joined both protests and popular committees to defend the streets from thugs. Anarchists in Egypt put some hope in this councils. The allies of anarchists in Egypt are the Marxists of course, we are not now in the moment of ideological debate. The whole of the left is calling for unity and argue about anything else later. Anarchists in Egypt are a part of the Egyptian left.*

*What forms of solidarity can be built between revolutionaries in Egypt and revolutionaries in the 'West'? What can be done immediately and what should we do in the long term? The most difficult obstacle Egyptian revolutionaries are confronted with is the cut-off of communication. Western revolutionaries must put pressure on their governments to prevent the Egyptian regime from doing this. That's for now, but no one can say what will happen in the long term. If the revolution wins, then western revolutionaries must build solidarity with their Egyptian comrades against expected aggression from USA, and Israel. If the revolution is defeated then there will be a massacre for all Egyptian revolutionaries.*

## COMMENT

## ABOUT FREEDOM

## ANGEL ALLEY

This episode of Angel Alley is pleased to report that we have finally cleared the backlog of sending out the paper. All should now be running smoothly so if you still missing any previous issues then it's probably some evil vendetta we're running against you personally. If you haven't got this issue you won't be reading this anyway.

Another long overdue event is the arrival of the second print run of *Beating The Fascists*. This means we now have enough stock to do some proper marketing and getting it out to mainstream bookshops.

Unfortunately we have to disappoint comrades who have invited us to the forthcoming Bristol Anarchist Bookfair. This isn't laziness but a deliberate policy to encourage groups to take books on sale or return.

Finally we'd like to thank Jim Huggon for donating copies of two old Kropotkin's Lighthouse pamphlets, *A Report of Speeches and Discussions from the Anarchist Summer Camp, Cornwall, England 1969* and *A checklist of Freedom Press Publications 1886-1927*. Both are for sale in the shop at £5 and £1 respectively and will soon be added to our long list of titles available post free on the website

## SUBSCRIPTIONS

This is issue is vol 72 no 04, so if the number above your name on the address label is 7204 or less, then your subscription is now due for renewal. There's a renewal form on page 16 of this issue or you can subscribe online at [freedompress.org.uk/news/subscribe](http://freedompress.org.uk/news/subscribe) or, if you don't want to worry in the future about remembering to renew your *Freedom* sub, ask us to send you a standing order form by emailing [subs@freedompress.org.uk](mailto:subs@freedompress.org.uk) or you can write to us at 'Subscriptions', Freedom, 84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1 7QX. Unfortunately our sub rates will be soon be increasing, but you can still renew at the old rate for now.

## CONTACT DETAILS

Freedom Press, 84b Whitechapel High

Street, London E1 7QX

Tel/fax: 020 7247 9249

[www.freedompress.org.uk](http://www.freedompress.org.uk)

Enquiries: [info@freedompress.org.uk](mailto:info@freedompress.org.uk)

Copy/Letters: [copy@freedompress.org.uk](mailto:copy@freedompress.org.uk)

Subscriptions: [subs@freedompress.org.uk](mailto:subs@freedompress.org.uk)

Bookshop: [shop@freedompress.org.uk](mailto:shop@freedompress.org.uk)

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

## NEXT ISSUE

The next issue will be dated 12th March 2011 and the last day to get copy to us for that issue will be Thursday 3rd March. You can send your articles to us by email to [copy@freedompress.org.uk](mailto:copy@freedompress.org.uk) or by post addressed to 'The Editors', Freedom, 84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1 7QX.

## A sideways look

by SVARTFROSK

Spin has entered the language as something politicians and their media advisers do to stories. It's probably fair to say that it is just an extension of politics and that there is rarely a benevolent aspect to it. The coalition came to power and promised that the excesses of spin under Labour, particularly Alistair Campbell, would be at an end. As the old joke goes, how do you tell when a politician is lying? Their lips move. And while the coalition have not yet been guilty of the sort of lies Campbell dreamed up to justify the Iraq War, they are at it too.

I've no particular love for council chief executives – most of them are hatchet-men and -women of the worst sort, but it is pure spin to suggest that their salaries are comparable to the Prime Minister's. For a start, most of them earn in the £100,000 to £200,000 range, a lot to you or me but peanuts compared to most bosses in the private sector. None of them, as far as I know, have grace and favour living quarters in the centre of London or rural Buckinghamshire. No business organisation is going to pay silly money to hear them lecture when they have left the job. And perhaps most telling in today's terms, they tend to be time-served local government managers with a more ruthless streak than their colleagues, unlikely to have the financial background of a multi-millionaire pursuing his class interests under the humbug of 'we're all in this together'.

The cuts the government have imposed on local authorities are draconian. They hit the poorest hardest, as they have also cut a lot of the support that goes to poorer areas. Hence Manchester, Merseyside, Inner London, Newcastle and Hull were hit hardest and Dorset, Surrey, West Sussex and Buckinghamshire has the smallest cuts. None of this is really surprising, all governments look after their own supporters. What is

ridiculous is the spin that this can be solved by paying chief execs of councils less and merging back-office functions. Many back-office functions are outsourced already, meaning the service is merged and the council feeds money into a service company's profits. I've worked for a local council or one of their suppliers for years – I cannot remember a year when there weren't cuts or redundancies.

Enough of the bad news, how do we respond? The media and both sides of the Parliamentary divide want to make this an argument about how and when to cut. The left, particularly the Socialist Party, want to make this a rerun of their 'finest hour', the fight over rate-capping in the 1980s. They want Labour councillors to refuse to implement the cuts and take the risk of being surcharged and banned from being a councillor. Never mind that the fight then was lost and the famous fighting Liverpool councillors were reduced to sending their staff redundancy notices out by taxi.

There is no legal way to fight the cuts. You cannot fight them by electing better politicians, because they are all bound by the same rules and, in the unlikely event of them going down the illegal budget route, would be replaced by government appointees. I don't think anyone needs to go through the motions of this classic Trotskyist transitional demand to see it as a dead end. What does that leave? Only direct action. Direct action by workers and service users. The unions are off to a slow start, desperate to keep control of what looked like a movement before Christmas.

We'll see what March 26th brings. Public services, benefits, welfare, health – all these are concessions made by our rulers for fear of us becoming revolutionary. We've been quiet too long.



## LETTERS AND COMMENT

**Donate your old Books.**

The ravening wolves of capitalist depredation are constantly howling around Angel Alley seeking the destruction of our noble bookshop. You can help keep these fey hounds at bay by donating books that you no longer want so we may sell them on to knowledge-hungry proletarians for a pound apiece (more to rich arty types who only came in 'cos they got lost on the way to Whitechapel Art Gallery).

**Sale or Return**

All Freedom Press titles as well as a variety of Rebel Press, Phoenix Press and Attack International titles are available to anarchist groups on a sale-or-return basis. You take the books, we keep a list of what you had, you try to flog the books at stalls, events, book fairs, etc. You bring the unsold ones back and give us 50% of the money for the ones you sold. Anarchist idea are thus propagated amongst the toiling masses, Freedom Press doesn't go bust and the establishment of a global human community based on freedom and co-operation moves a step closer.

**Anarchists report from the Egyptian uprising**

◀ page 9

*What will the main tasks be once Mubarak leaves? Has there been much planning about this on the street level? What have anti-capitalist revolutionaries proposed?*

The main task now, speaking about street demands, is new constitution and a provisional government, and then new elections. There's much planning about these issues from many political trends here, especially the Muslim Brotherhood. Anti-capitalist revolutionaries are not very big in Cairo – the communists, the democratic left and Trotskyites are calling for the same demands about a constitution and new elections. But for us, as anarchists, we are anti-capital and anti-state too – we will try to strengthen the committees that have been formed to protect and secure the streets, and try to turn them into real councils.

*What do you want to say to revolutionaries abroad?*

Dear comrades, all over the world, we need solidarity, a big solidarity campaign and the Egyptian revolution will win.

Special thanks to Northern Eastern Federation of Anarchist Communists (<http://nefac.net/>), for the interview, and Infoshop News (<http://news.infoshop.org/>) for the sources of information.

**Same old New Labour tricks**

◀ page 1

in the riot police with dogs and horses to attack demonstrators protesting the cuts outside the Town Hall late last year, and peaceful protestors were attacked by police during the Labour controlled Islington council voting through their spending cuts recently.

**Being cautious about cautions**

Word reaches us that a lot of people who were arrested at Millbank on the 10th November have been offered 'a caution' by the police.

'What's that and where can I get one too?' You ask, guileless eyes aflame with lust for filthy lucre or at least a stress-ball type gimmick with 'I've met the Met' on it.

Well it's bad news kids. They're not a reward but a punishment! It's an admission of guilt for which you don't go to court to be sentenced but are told off by the police. Nevertheless it looks like you're getting away scot free. However consider this.

**Does it stay on my record?**

A simple caution is not a technically a criminal conviction, *but* it will be recorded on the police database. It may also be used in court as evidence of bad character, or as part of an anti-social behaviour order (ASBO) application and the record will remain on the police database, along with photographs, fingerprints and any other evidence taken. If you are cautioned for a sexual offence, you could be placed on the sex offenders register. If a crime victim requests your name and address for civil proceedings, the police are legally obliged to give this information out, so you may still be sued for damages. Countries requiring foreign nationals to obtain entry visas may

require applicants to declare cautions on their application forms or at interview. Their immigration rules may mean that a person who has received a simple caution is refused entry as though he or she has a criminal conviction. A caution will appear on a subject access request made by the offender under the Data Protection Act 1998. It may also be disclosed for employment vetting purposes and your employer will be told immediately if you're in a notifiable occupation.

**Who benefits?**

In short the cops and the Crown Prosecution Service. They get a high clear up rate without the inconvenience of proper investigation or a fair trial. It also makes it much harder for you to sue the police later for their misconduct. Individual cases differ and there may be circumstances where taking a caution is in your interest (e.g. Mr J.T. Ripper will you accept a caution for carrying a bladed instrument in a public place). However don't do it until you have carefully considered the pros and cons. Remember you are entitled to have the evidence against you disclosed to you and your lawyer before you take a caution

You can read more (and if you're offered a caution should *definitely* read more) here: <http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/+http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/aboutus/publications/home-office-circulars/circulars-2008/016-2008/index.html>

LDMG

**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](http://www.freedompress.org.uk)

## GETTING ACTIVE

### PRISON NEWS

Further news has been leaking out of Egypt about the prison uprisings that occurred during the early days of the recent protests, despite a concerted effort by the authorities to clampdown on access to all prisons. Many of these uprisings involved mass breakout attempts and in most cases prison guards responded with live fire, killing an unknown number of prisoners across the country.

In one of the most serious incidents, guards at al-Qatta prison deliberately killed at least 65 prisoners following an escape attempt by a small group of inmates on 28th January. Officers in the prison watchtowers then started firing live rounds at the prisoners "in an attempt to kill as many people as possible, and not in an attempt to deter the uprising, as regulated by the prison law," according to a statement from the Egyptian Initiative for Personal Rights (EIPR), the organisation collating the information currently available on these incidents, much of it coming via illicit mobile phone calls from the prisoners themselves.

In the ensuing chaos, a senior prison officer was killed. In retaliation, guards with shotguns spent the following three days going from cell to cell randomly executing inmates. Water and electricity was cut off to the prisoners for a week, and prisoners trying to get to a water tank in the prison yard were shot. There was no food, the kitchen having burned down, and prisoners were forced to catch and eat cats. All this time the dead and decomposing bodies were left in the cells, with prisoners being forced to wrap them in blankets and store them in empty cells as guards refused to allow them to be removed. Some reports claim that prisoners were still being fired upon when trying to move dead bodies to the main gate two weeks after the initial incident occurred.

At the same time, those outside the prison trying to find out what has happened to their relatives have been prevented by the prison authorities from visiting and a number of scuffles have broken out with further reports of prison guards again using live fire to quell the disturbances.

#### Ford Open Prison

The tabloid press continues to mine the rich seam of prisoner-baiting opened up to them by the New Year's Day riot at Ford open prison. The funniest recent article is by *The Sun's* 'crime editor'. This rather shifty looking character apparently smuggled himself into Ford one morning at dawn, where he allegedly persuaded a prisoner to photograph said reporter in front of a stash of alcohol, cannabis and a mobile phone, all on the prisoner's own mobile. Needless to say, the posed photos taken by *The Sun's* own photographer outside Ford look exactly the same as those supposedly taken inside the prison by prisoners. What a con!



WAG's latest publication *On The Streets* contrasts the Poll Tax Riots, pictured above, with Stop the War.

- A new group, involving many anarchists, has been set up to support workers and claimants in Sheffield. **Mutual Aid Sheffield (M.A.SH)** is a voluntary group providing solidarity and support for strikes, work place actions and community struggles through direct action.

Initially its intention is to help every member of the group with problems with landlords, housing issues, benefit claims, problems with access to public services, bullying and victimisation, sexual harassment, discrimination and unpaid wages.

The group is open to any worker or unemployed person across any sector and it is independent of all political parties and trade unions and is also non-profit making. The group makes it clear it is not a service but what they offer is an approach and a network of support that is effective in addressing any problems in the workplace and/or claiming.

Their website is at <http://mutualaidsheff.org/> or email [mash@hushmail.org](mailto:mash@hushmail.org) for more details.

- A group of SolFed members, who work or have experience in the door-to-door sales and charity fundraising industry, have started a blog under the name **Door-to-Door Workers' Network** for those working in door-to-door sales and fundraising jobs.

The aim is to build up a useful resource offering advice, information and support. In the long-term, it is hoped the blog will evolve into an active component of SolFed's Private Sector Network, helping to facilitate solidarity and self-organisation among rank-and-file workers.

Visit the Door-to-Door Workers' Network website at <http://door2doornet.wordpress.com/>

- Another SolFed offshoot is the **Education Workers Network** who have just published their new bulletin (#6). With its emphasis heavily on the recent student unrest it offers an insight into the academy schools programme (privatising education through the back door) as well as a resistance round-up and overview of the student struggles.

The EWN is open to all those working in education whether porters, lecturers, cleaners, teachers, clerical staff, technicians, and seeks to work to provide support to those in education and to do so through self education and activism.

For those who work in education, from whatever perspective contact [ewn@ewn.org.uk](mailto:ewn@ewn.org.uk) or visit their website at <http://www.ewn.org.uk/>

- Another new publication is the **Whitechapel Anarchist Group's** eagerly awaited and much anticipated full length paper, *On the Streets*. It offers up WAG's usual incendiary mix of provocative articles and militant propaganda from an unapologetic working class perspective, it's both critical and confrontational voicing the anger and concerns of the forgotten, disenfranchised masses.

Not unsurprisingly the cuts take up much of the free eight-page paper. There are articles on social cleansing, the rise in support of reactionary ideas both in the EDL and BNP, Cameron's big society gets a pasting, while there's a useful guide to when the government cuts actually come into effect and a neat little history lesson with Anti-Poll Tax vs Stop The War. Rabble-rousing with a revolutionary intent.

*On the Streets* is now available from Freedom bookshop or visit WAG's website to order your copy: <http://whitechapelanarchistgroup.wordpress.com/>

# Marie Louise Berneri

**Anarchist, political activist,  
editor, author...**

Maria Luisa Berneri was born on 1st March 1918 in Arezzo near Florence, the elder daughter of Camillo and Giovanna Berneri. Her father, originally a socialist, became an anarchist in the early 1920s, and was soon one of the best-known (and at times most controversial) intellectuals in the Italian anarchist movement. He was a teacher who after Mussolini's seizure of power in 1922 refused to accept the demands laid upon the teaching profession by the Fascists, and in 1926 he went into exile in France. In Paris his – and his family's – home soon became a centre of anti-Fascist activities, and his two daughters grew up in a highly politicised environment.

Adopting the French version of her name, Marie Louise obtained her baccalauréat and in the mid-1930s started to study psychology at the Sorbonne. She soon became involved in the anarchist movement and participated in the production of the short-lived paper *Revision* (with Luis Mercier Vega, alias S. Parane, alias Ridel).

**It is not by changing ministers – such guilty men! – or issuing declarations that fascism and capitalism will be conquered. The problem is more complex than that. We do not intend to add our voice to those who delude the workers that their 'leaders' will get them out of the mess. The problems need a complete transformation in the present attitude of the working class (War Commentary, December 1940)**

At the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War her father went to Spain and, after a short period of active fighting on the Aragon front, eventually took up residence in Barcelona in order to edit the Italian language paper *Guerra di Classe*, perhaps the most clear-sighted revolutionary anarchist paper to come out of the Spanish Revolution. Marie Louise went twice to Barcelona, the second time after her father's assassination by Communists in May 1937; subsequently she came to England, where she joined her companion, Vernon Richards, and spent the rest of her life. (They married to give her the protection of British nationality.)

Her sister Giliane remained in France where she studied psychology and in the years after the War also became active in the anarchist movement. Their mother Giovanna, who during the 1920s and 1930s had become



more and more involved in anti-Fascist activities and eventually the anarchist movement, was during the War arrested in France, interned for a while in the South of France, and then eventually handed over to the Italian authorities; she was imprisoned in Italy till the end of the War, and then after the Liberation became one of the most prominent and active anarchists in Italy.

From 1936 until her death twelve years later, every activity undertaken by Freedom Press was infused by Marie Louise Berneri's personality. Already in Paris she had been closely involved (with her father and Tom Keell) in the preparatory discussions and collecting of funds for *Spain and the World*, which Vernon Richards started in December 1936. After coming to England in 1937 she took an active part in the production of the paper, and between February and June 1939 she took part in the attempt to provide some formal link for the anarchist movement by the production of *Revolt!*, the successor of *Spain and the World* (with Vernon Richards, Albert Meltzer, Tom Brown, Mr and Mrs Leach, and Sturgess). She also was one of the small group which started *War Commentary* in November 1939. Already knowing Italian, French and Spanish, she quickly mastered English and became one of the main editorial writers, specialising in international affairs. She was an effective public speaker, paper-seller, and meeting organiser. But above all she was the emotional and intellectual centre of the group.

At the end of the Spanish Civil War she was active in organising relief for Spanish orphans and refugees. Her wide contacts in and knowledge of the international movement gave her great authority among anarchists, but her libertarian principles and personal modesty prevented her from misusing it. In April 1945 she was one of the four editors

of *War Commentary* who were tried for incitement to disaffection, but she was acquitted on a legal technicality (a wife cannot conspire with her husband), and when her three comrades were imprisoned she took the main responsibility for continuing the paper into the post-war period. She maintained her interest in psychology, and she was one of the first people in Britain who discussed the work of Wilhelm Reich, in an article 'Sexuality and Freedom' in George Woodcock's *Now 5* (August 1945).

At the end of 1948 she gave birth to a still-born child, and on 13th April 1949 she herself unexpectedly died from a virus infection. She was a highly intelligent and deeply committed revolutionary anarchist; she was also a remarkably beautiful woman and a widely loved personality. Her sudden death at the age of only 31 was a tragedy not only for her friends and comrades but for the whole anarchist movement.

Apart from her many contributions to the Freedom Press periodicals, she added an interesting postscript to *Vote – What For?* (1942), a new version of Malatesta's anti-election pamphlet of 1890, and she wrote a substantial part of the Freedom pamphlet *The Russian Myth* (1941), partly reproduced in her *Workers in Stalin's Russia* (1944), a detailed and influential booklet describing the real situation in the Soviet Union.

After her death the Marie Louise Berneri Memorial Committee produced *Neither East Nor West* (1952), an anthology of her editorial articles from 1939 to 1948. Another posthumous publication was *Journey Through Utopia* (1950), a survey of utopian ideas which was originally published by Routledge and is still available from Freedom Press.

Taken from *Freedom: 100 Years* published by Freedom Press.

## REVIEWS

## WHAT'S ON

## MARCH

■ **5th Campaign Against Arms Trade Spring Gathering**, a day-long event to focus on our work to end DSEi, the huge arms fair taking place in September in London. The gathering will cover case studies of the impact of British weapons sales, top tips on working with the media, tackling the arms companies' spin, how to take on local arms producers and more, so come along for a great introduction to CAAT for new people and an energising, informative day for all at MERCi, Bridge 5 Mill, 22a Beswick Street, Manchester M4 7HR from 10.30am until 5pm, to find out more call 0207 281 0297, email [annemarie@caat.org.uk](mailto:annemarie@caat.org.uk) or visit <http://www.caat.org.uk>

■ **6th Squattastic**, our task is at hand, we must save squatting, occupations are alive but under threat so join us for discussions, action and supper from 2pm until 6pm at Colorama, 52 Lancaster Street, London SE1 0RY, for more details and information see <http://squattastic.blogspot.com/>

■ **12th Countercultural Connections** with speaker/performer Michael Horowitz, a News From Nowhere Club event at The Epicentre, West Street, Leytonstone, London E11 4LJ, 7.30pm buffet (bring something if you can), 8pm talk and discussion, for details call 020 8555 5248 or see [newsfromnowhereclub.org](http://newsfromnowhereclub.org).

■ **12th Mothers march** for everyone's survival and welfare: end cuts, poverty and discrimination, organised by Global Women's Strike, assemble Trafalgar Square (north side) London at 12 noon, women and men, young and old – bring your demands to the march, for details email [gws@globalwomenstrike.net](mailto:gws@globalwomenstrike.net), call 020 7482 2496, join GWS on Facebook and on [www.twitter.com/WomenStrike](http://www.twitter.com/WomenStrike) or see [www.globalwomenstrike.net](http://www.globalwomenstrike.net).

## APRIL

■ **1st to 3rd Zagreb's Seventh Anarchist Bookfair** at Galerija Nova, Teslina 7, Zagreb, for more information or to book a stall see [www.ask-zagreb.org](http://www.ask-zagreb.org) or e-mail [anarhisticki.sajam.knjiga@gmail.com](mailto:anarhisticki.sajam.knjiga@gmail.com)

■ **2nd Campaign Against Arms Trade** day-long event to focus on our work to end DSEi, the huge arms fair planned to take place in September in London, a great introduction to CAAT for new people and an energising, informative day for all at RISC, 35-39 London Street, Reading RG1 4PS from 10.30am-5pm, call 0207 281 0297, email [annemarie@caat.org.uk](mailto:annemarie@caat.org.uk) or visit <http://www.caat.org.uk> for more.

■ **9th Guerrilla Gardening** with speaker Richard Reynolds (the founder of [guerrillagardening.org](http://guerrillagardening.org)), a News From Nowhere Club event at The Epicentre, West Street, Leytonstone, London E11 4LJ, 7.30pm buffet, 8pm talk and discussion, for details call 020 8555 5248 or see [newsfromnowhereclub.org](http://newsfromnowhereclub.org).

# BAKUNIN ON STATISM

## Iain McKay revisits another neglected classic of anarchist thought

*Statism and Anarchy* is the first complete English translation of the last work by the Russian anarchist Michael Bakunin. Given his influence, it is surprising that this 1873 work was his only book and even this is technically incomplete (referring as it does to a second part which was never written). It aimed to influence Russian populism and the 'to the people' movement, although most of it is an account of European history in the nineteenth century.

If that were all, there would be little interest in it, but Bakunin also prophetically critiques Marx's "dictatorship of the proletariat" as nothing more than a dictatorship *over* the proletariat (176–81). It also sketches Bakunin's vision of an anarchist society and the social forces that will achieve it, both important (and much distorted) aspects of his ideas.

Marshall Shatz has provided an excellent introduction. He does repeat the usual stereotype that Bakunin's agent of social change was the lumpen proletariat while, in fact, Bakunin viewed *all* exploited and oppressed social classes as agents for revolution – artisans, peasants, proletarians. Bakunin's actual position on such key revolutionary issues is in *Statism and Anarchy*, but unfortunately these insights are often buried within discussions on other matters.

While, for example, Bakunin discussed the obvious need to defend a revolution in previous works, here he states "the sole

means of opposing the reactionary forces of the state" was the "organising of the revolutionary force of the people" (156). Marxist myths notwithstanding, Bakunin's opposition to "the dictatorship of the proletariat" *never* reflected a naïve belief that a revolution did not need defending! Similarly, his syndicalist ideas are mentioned almost in passing when he argues that the proletariat "must enter the International *en masse*, form factory, artisan, and agrarian sections, and unite them into local federations" for "the sake of its own liberation" (51) as it "indicated to [the proletariat] the ways and means of organising a popular force" (32).

The key to understanding Bakunin's critique of Marxism is to understand his analysis of the state. The state "stands outside the people and above them" (136), "the government of society from above downward" (198) and resulted in the "actual subordination of the sovereign people to the intellectual minority that governs them" (13). While recognising that the modern state defended the capitalist class, Bakunin rejected Marx's reductionism and argued it could and did have interests of its own. He pointed to Turkish Serbia where economically dominant classes "do not even exist – there is only a bureaucratic class. Thus, the Serbian state will crush the Serbian people for the sole purpose of enabling Serbian bureaucrats to live a fatter life" (54). The same would occur under the so-called "workers' state" of the Marxists simply because it was a state and, consequently, was a centralised, top-down structure.

Statism, then, was the "government of society from above downward" rather than a social organisation federated "from below

page 15 ►►

## PRIZE CROSSWORD ANSWERS

The answers to our prize crossword which appeared in the 18th December issue.

**Across:** 7/8 Paul the octopus, 11 All, 12 Flew, 13 Svartfrosk, 14 Vagrancy, 16 Rivets, 18 Waco, 20 Crane, 22 Reds, 23 Carson, 24 Sentence, 27 Cephalopod, 30 Raid, 31 Noo, 32 Hemlock, 33 Ash-tray.

**Down:** 1 Paella, 2 Flowerpots, 3 Chosen, 4 Scot-free, 5 Boar, 6 Pulsated, 9 PLO, 10 Navy, 15 Car, 17 Vertebrate, 19 Awakened, 20 Conflict, 21 Nae, 24 Sops, 25 Nudism, 26 Climax, 28 Pom, 29 Hold.

The first correct entry out of the hat was RA from Carmarthenshire.

## QUIZ ANSWERS

1. She was given an informal police caution, which has meant she lost her job as it showed up on the Criminal records Bureau check.
2. The war criminal and committed democrat visited Egypt five times while PM – at one time Mubarak even paid for his flights.
3. The Countryside Alliance, who always

claimed to be about more than fox-hunting. Seems the 'more' was "the significant revenue potential".

4. It remained above that level every month for the next 21 years until July 2000. And during Thatcher's time in office, the definition of 'unemployment' was adjusted a dozen times in a futile attempt to reduce the figures.

# M AND ANARCHY

◀◀ page 14

upward.” He recognised that a democratic government did not change this as it was simply electing rulers. Thus socialism was to be created “not by the orders of any authority, even an elected one ... but as the natural development of all the varied demands put forth by life itself.” Revolutionary ideas rested in the people and so “no scholar can teach the people or even define for himself how they will and must live on the morrow of the social revolution. That will be determined first by the situation of each people, and secondly by the desires that manifest themselves and operate most strongly within them” (198–99).

All revolutionaries should do was participate in social movements, make these instinctive notions conscious by debate and argument. Unsurprisingly, he rejected those “managers of all popular movements” (136) who would “impose ... an ideal social organisation ... drawn from books” (135). A category which, he suggested, included Marxists as they wanted to seize state power and so *automatically* place themselves above the people. They were blind to the reality of state power.

Bakunin sketches the two alternatives suggested by Marxists: peaceful reform by electoral struggle and violent revolution. The former, he correctly predicted, would mean “the election to the German parliament of one or two workers” and was “not dangerous.” In fact, it was “highly useful to the German state as a lightning-rod, or a safety-valve.” Unlike the “political and social theory” of the anarchists, which “leads them directly and inexorably to a complete break with all governments and all forms of bourgeois politics,” Marxism “inexorably enmeshes and entangles its adherents, under the pretext of political tactics, in endless accommodation with governments and the various bourgeois political parties – that is, it thrusts them directly into reaction” (193, 179–80).

While Marxists like to assert anarchists argue that working people should ignore politics, *Statism and Anarchy* explicitly rejects this. Bakunin pointed to a group in Germany that argued workers “were supposed to disengage themselves systematically from all political and social concerns and questions about the state, property, and so forth.” This “completely subordinated the proletariat to the bourgeoisie which exploits it and for which it was to remain an obedient and mindless tool” (174).

As well as predicting Social Democracy’s descent into reformism, his warnings about the realities of a Marxist regime came to be in Bolshevism. The party hierarchy *did* “concentrat[e] in their own hands all ... production ... under the direct command of state engineers, who will form a new privileged scientific and political class” (181). It was “the highly despotic government of the



masses by a new and very small aristocracy of real or pretended scholars. The people are not learned, so they will be liberated from the cares of government and included in entirety in the governed herd” (178–79).

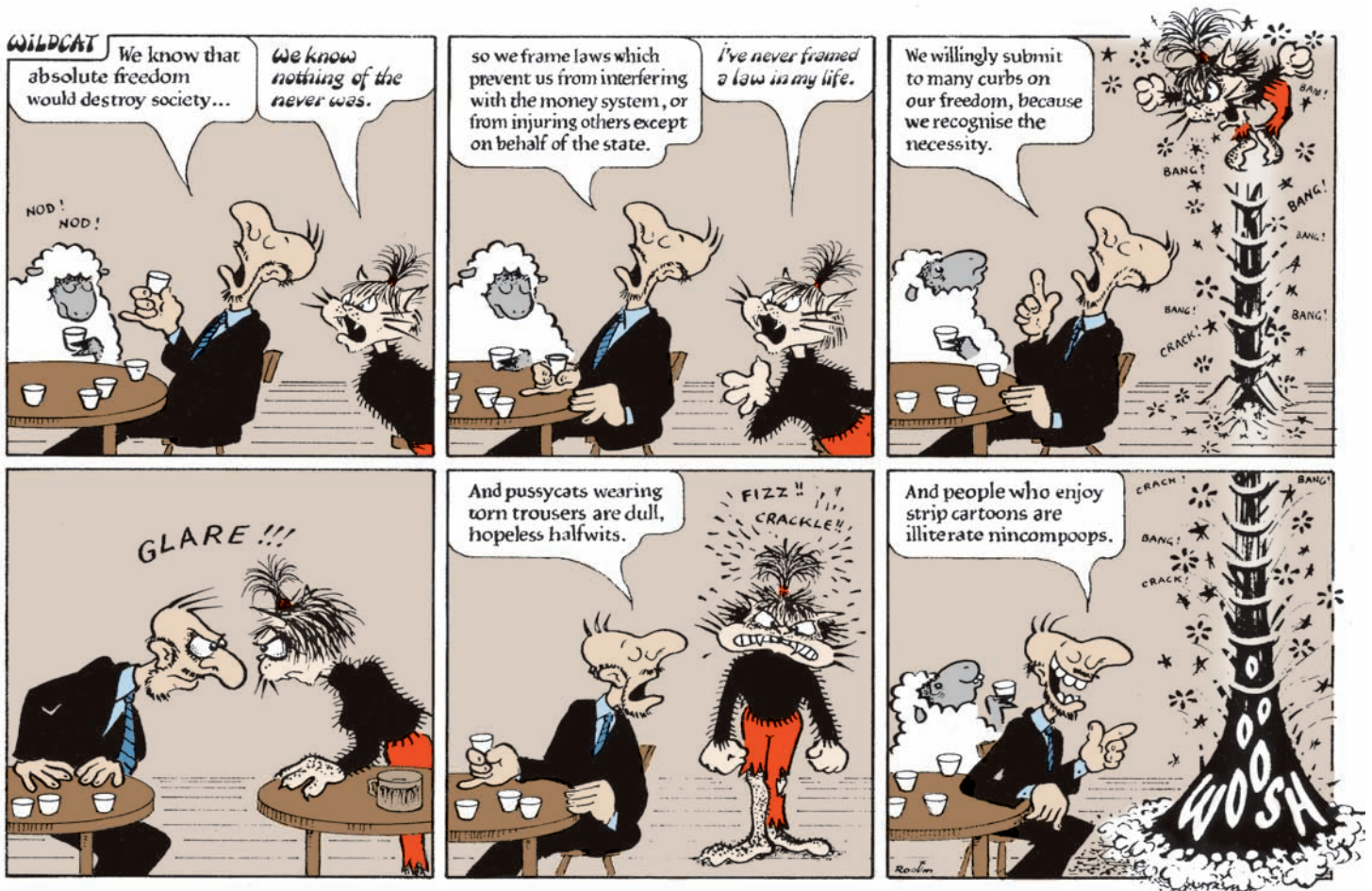
In this *Statism and Anarchy* was truly prophetic. Yet while it is fair to proclaim Marx ‘a Jacobin’, Bakunin’s suggestion that Marx’s “favourite dream is of a political dictatorship” was unwarranted (182). Far better to argue as he does at times that, in spite of their best intentions, Marxists would create a new class system simply because of their impoverished analysis of the state and the hierarchical social relations it creates between governed and government.

While many Marxists view their new state as a radical democracy, Bakunin disagreed. If it truly were the case that the “entire nation will rule” then “no one will be ruled. Then there will be no government, no state.” However, this was not what was meant: “By popular government [Marxists] mean government of the people by a small number of representatives elected by the people.” This was “a lie behind which the despotism of a ruling minority is concealed” made up “of former workers, who, as soon

as they become rulers or representatives of the people will cease to be workers and will begin to look upon the whole workers’ world from the heights of the state. They will no longer represent the people but themselves and their own pretensions to govern the people” (178). Marxism in power proved the correctness of this prediction.

Attempts by Leninists to blame “objective circumstances” (civil war, economic collapse, etc.) for this confirmation of Bakunin’s arguments are unconvincing. Space precludes any real discussion but suffice to say Bolshevik authoritarianism *predated* the start of the Civil War. Given that Leninists mock anarchists by (inaccurately) suggesting we think the capitalist class will disappear without a fight after a revolution, it seems self-contradictory to blame Bolshevik tyranny on something (civil war and its resulting economic disruption) they think is inevitable!

Given this analysis of the state, Bakunin argued that revolution *must* be “an end to all masters and to domination of every kind, and the free construction of popular life in



## Review

◀ page 15

accordance with popular needs, not from above downward, as in the state, but from below upward, by the people themselves, dispensing with all governments and parliaments – a voluntary alliance of agricultural and factory worker associations, communes, provinces, and nations” (33). In short, a system of workers’ councils (one based, as he stressed in earlier works, on mandated and recallable delegates).

Bakunin stressed that not all social structures were states. Thus a “federal organisation, from below upward, of workers’ associations, groups, communes, districts, and ultimately, regions and nations” could not be considered as the same as

“centralised states” and was “contrary to their essence.” The end of “sham popular sovereignty” would create “real as opposed to fictitious freedom” (13). This would be based on a self-managed economy, with co-operation being the “just mode of future production” and “all forms of land and capital” becoming “collective property” (201). In short, “a popular federation with it based on emancipated labour and collective property” (22) – a socialism *from below*.

To conclude, this is an important, if flawed, work. It is fair to say that this is a book best suited for extracts within an anthology – but what extracts they are!

*Statism and Anarchy* by Michael Bakunin, edited by Marshall Shatz, published by Cambridge University Press, £18.99.

## THE QUIZ

1. How did the police treat a mother who left her three year old with his fourteen year old brother in the Thames Valley in 2009?
2. How many times did Tony Blair holiday in Egypt as a guest of deposed dictator Hosni Mubarak?
3. Which countryside lobby group is most upset about the coalition backing down over selling off the forests?
4. When Thatcher took office in May 1979 proclaiming “Labour isn’t working” unemployment was 5.3%. When did it fall to beneath that figure?

Answers on page 14

## SUBSCRIPTION RATES

	inland	Europe	outside Europe (surface)	outside Europe (airmail)
<b>Freedom (annual subscription, 24 issues)</b>				
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](mailto:subs@freedompress.org.uk)

**FREEDOM** fortnightly ISSN 0016 0504



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 .....