

FREEDOM

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ANTI-CUTS PROTEST SPECIAL

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IT'S KICKING OFF BIG TIME

March 26th and a movement on its feet

This is a special edition of *Freedom* brought to you by the anarchists.

Usually *Freedom* covers social and political news from around the UK and across the world, but today we are focusing on the anti-cuts protest.

If we take a look at the state of the economy, which is on the verge of bankruptcy, and look at the state of an education system that excludes the vast majority of ordinary people, if we look at the state of the government with their smiling rich-boys club and big business racketeering, and the state of the opposition with their spin-doctor politics and their previous 13 years in power to be proud of... If we look at the state we are in, shouldn't the question be: why hasn't it kicked off sooner?

There is an undeniable air of expectancy and sense of determination about the day, and if there's a message from the anarchists it is one anger and mistrust for the institutions that got us here.

If we bring anything with us it is a reflection of the mood of the times. This paper is for you.

LENS CAP SOLIDARITY



The militant workers bloc will be forming up at the University London Union as part of the education feeder march in solidarity with the all students who have been politicised by the current attacks on the education system as anarchists applaud and support the new generation of radicals.

HARINGEY ORGANISING

Haringey Solidarity Group (HSG) is a libertarian/anarchist group in north London that believes in local organising across communities, workplaces and neighbourhoods in order to replace the current system that supports profit and power with decision-making by local communities that serves the real needs of people. The practical functioning of the group revolves around a monthly meeting and paper mail-out, but activities extend well beyond that.

HSG is also deeply involved in the Radical London network that seeks to establish local radical groups in every borough in London and ultimately across the country. This network helps to establish new groups, provide support for current activities and also helps to establish a link between

different local activism in London.

Part of the way HSG supports libertarian action on a day-to-day basis is to organise around specific needs in the community and try to collectivise the grievances that people have with the current system. We therefore have a Housing Action Group (with plans to re-establish a Claimants' Group too) which operates partly as a campaign working group of HSG, as well as a semi-autonomous support group for people who want to take action around their own housing issues.

Originally, it was set up to look at the idea of fighting house repossessions, by using a method of 'direct action casework' developed by London Coalition Against Poverty. However, it was difficult to get hold

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ANTI-CUTS PROTEST SPECIAL

LONDON INDYMEDIA

Several alternative media projects are working together on reporting and documenting the demo and direct actions planned for 26th March – and they need your participation. See below for how to send reports and check the website for updates.

- On the day, text your news updates direct to the Indymedia London website: 07943 103736 (sms only, not mms).
- Call indymedia direct if you have important news: 07929 469640 (when/who/what/where).
- x26Radio will broadcast all day. Your audio reporting will be needed. To record a message call 020 3239 4569 on the day – relevant recordings will be streamed on-air.
- There will be a live blog capturing tweets and media published from the streets.
- After the demo, upload your reports to Indymedia London – just hit the ‘publish’ button, or use the ‘link to other media’ option to share links to other good coverage.

Check the website for updates soon at london.indymedia.org
 radical >> grassroots >> alternative >> citizen media
 #26march #resist26 #m26 #demo2011 #solidarity

Your local activist media project

Indymedia London is a news website which provides an interactive platform for reports from London on the struggles for a world based on peace, freedom, co-operation, justice and solidarity; and against environmental degradation, neoliberal exploitation, war, racism and patriarchy. It is an open participatory media project that's been reporting on demonstrations, direct actions and campaigns for a better world for ten years.

On the website you can publish your reports, writing, photos, videos or audio. You can also highlight good content on other websites, blogs and platforms to share with others. Reports cover a wide range of issues and social movements – from neighbourhood campaigns to grassroots mobilisations, from critical analysis to direct action.

With participation from people on the streets we produce up-to-the-minute timelines of what happens on big demonstrations, and pull together information to document the truths and politics behind street protests and campaigns. We also support anonymous publishing and protect the privacy of contributors and readers. We believe in and support DIY media and autonomous alternatives to corporate web tools.

There's also a mobile friendly version of the website (mob.london.indymedia.org) to make it easier to stay up to date and follow breaking news time lines.

London Indymedia <http://london.indymedia.org/>

LENS CAP PAPERBACK WRITERS



Taking their inspiration from the radical Italian autonomist movement, book bloc activists prepare to defy police lines using cleverly designed shields as a way of defending themselves against police violence, and also promoting their favourite writers.

To fight the cuts, make the country ungovernable

The thing about the cuts is they're not simply a response to a 'crisis', the solution to which is a return to capitalism as 'normal'. The normal looked much the same, with privatisations, pay freezes, workfare, casualisation... Thus we need to reject the idea these cuts are simply 'ideological Tory cuts', which is something put about to imply the solution is a rational, Labour government. Rather, the cuts are opportunist. As Peter Mandelson said a month before the elections, "we should not waste the crisis".

The ruling class narrative is re-casting their long-term agenda of attacking the working class as a necessary response to the crisis. What has changed is the speed with which these attacks are being made against us. There is continuity but acceleration: the attacks on the working class happening under the guise of cuts are therefore very similar to the attacks that happened before the crisis, only with renewed vigour that ministers have compared to Mao's cultural revolution.

In response, the Solidarity Federation has raised the strategy of making the country ungovernable. This means wild demonstrations and occupations, strikes and breakaway marches, disobedience and direct action. Much of this has already been happening, with town halls invaded and occupied and demonstrations breaking out of kettles to roam free. But we need much more if we're to reverse austerity in Britain and beyond.

The current situation also highlights a more long term problem of the lack of independent workers organisation. It's all very well calling for strikes, but so long as the TUC maintains its grip on the workers movement these are likely to be one-day set pieces at best, lost before they even begin. Without

organisations of our own, anarchist and other militant workers are limited to propaganda work on the industrial front – the front which can perhaps inflict the most economic damage and thus make austerity measures cost more than they're supposed to save.

For this reason, the Solidarity Federation has also been making renewed efforts towards a completely different kind of workers movement. A whole generation of workers raised since Thatcher lack experience of industrial struggle, so we've developed a workplace organiser training programme. Learning from the successes in the UK and abroad, it aims to give workers the tools to take direct action on the job, whether they're in a union or not. We're also developing the capacity to support workers with trouble at work or with their landlords, using direct action methods. We're networking industrially, initially to produce targeted propaganda but hopefully to co-ordinate direct action in the future.

In the meantime, we'll see you on the streets. But the class struggle, intensified under austerity, is here for the long haul. So must we be!

Solidarity Federation

For enquiries about the workplace organiser training, please email training@solfed.org.uk
 Solidarity Federation (SolFed) consists of locals which support the formation of future revolutionary unions and are centres for working class struggle on a local level. Our activities are based on direct action – action by workers ourselves, not through intermediaries like politicians or union officials – our decisions are made through participation of the membership. We welcome all working people who agree with our aims and principles. Contact www.solfed.org.uk/



The war on claimants

Jon Gaynor asks why the government is blaming the victims

The government is getting tough. Not on bank bosses, whose bonuses are back to pre-crisis levels. Not on tax avoidance by big companies, whose taxes are being cut. No, it's the unemployed who are being cracked down on. With the news full of stories about the 'workshy' soon being made to clean the streets for their dole, you'd think that large-scale unemployment caused the economic crisis, not the other way round.

We shouldn't be too unfair to the government. They don't just plan to harass the jobless into working. They also want to manufacture new jobs in the depressed heartlands of urban Britain by offering – surprise – tax breaks for businesses. These new 'enterprise zones', which the government claims can revitalise many local economies, have been touted as a quick fix for the economy and the jobs market. Unfortunately, the evidence shows they don't work. According to new research from the Work Foundation,¹ the overwhelming majority of jobs they create are simply poached from elsewhere in the country, and the boost to employment only lasts for a few years before the area slides back into depression. On top of that, each job costs on average £23,000 – more than the median annual salary in the UK. Obviously, the treasury can't afford to keep millions of unemployed fed, but they can afford huge PFI projects like this.

Nonetheless, the main thrust of the government's strategy for growth so far is simply to penalise jobseekers. This is apparently undertaken in the belief that

they can make unemployment that degrading and unbearable that claimants will take whichever work they can find. March saw Tory Work and Pensions minister Chris Grayling outline new levels of conditionality attached to claiming benefits: the unemployed will be made to do various kinds of community service, including cleaning streets, litter picking and painting fences. Like community service it is compulsory, and like community service it is unpaid. While the 'mandatory work activity' being imposed on claimants is not new, and was introduced in Labour's welfare reform bill, it is being placed at the discretion of jobcentre advisors who can decide to subject any claimants to it who would 'benefit from the habits and routines' of unpaid labour.

Faced with the accusation that the government is simply punishing the unemployed at a time when its cuts are set to add hundreds of thousands more to the dole queues, the Tories and Liberals insist that jobs are out there. Late last year, Work and Pensions secretary Iain Duncan Smith argued that long-term unemployment in towns such as Merthyr Tydfil was down to people not bothering to commute to neighbouring towns and cities where work is available: "The truth is there are jobs. They may not be absolutely in the town you are living in. They may be in a neighbouring town ... we need to recognise the jobs often don't come to you. Sometimes you need to go to the jobs." The unemployed needed to stop being "static" and "get on the bus" to where the jobs are.

Such arguments are not only offensive, coming as they do from a cabinet stuffed full of millionaires and aristocrats, but are also utterly wrong. According to research conducted by the PCS union,² there are 15,000 unemployed people in Cardiff

chasing just 1,700 jobs – nine jobseekers for each job. Furthermore "the number of people out of work in Merthyr and Blaenau Gwent combined was more than the total number of job vacancies for the whole of Wales." In March, the TUC published research³ – unhelpfully broken down by party control of constituencies – showing that in Labour seats (in other words mainly seats which are urban and usually poorer), there are nine Jobseekers allowance claimants per job vacancy. Even in Tory seats (usually suburban or rural and frequently more affluent), there are almost five claimants for each job. This excludes the long-term unemployed on other benefits, such as Income Support.

Ultimately, this shows us that the problem isn't with the outlook or mindset of claimants, or with millions of 'workshy scroungers' living on handouts. It's just maths – when there are more jobseekers than jobs, you get mass unemployment. Bashing the poor is simply a scapegoating exercise when those who genuinely caused this crisis, the capitalist class, get tax cuts and free reign to return to pre-crisis bonus levels. Even if it was the case that the long-term unemployed need to be cajoled into working, who honestly thinks that an employer is going to pick them over the many thousands laid off since the crisis?

Footnotes

- 1 <http://www.theworkfoundation.com/research/publications/publicationdetail.aspx?oItemId=283&parentPageID=102&PubType>
- 2 http://www.pcs.org.uk/en/news_and_events/news_centre/index.cfm/id/805C3E5F-1FBC-4647-8542B4A1D9A439F6
- 3 <http://www.touchstoneblog.org.uk/2011/03/job-vacancies-twice-as-sparse-in-labour-held-constituencies/>

ANTI-CUTS PROTEST SPECIAL

If you get arrested...

Do you have to give the cops your name and address?

Our ongoing legal issues theme continues with another common problem for protestors. Here's the position as we see it (in England and Wales anyhow).

You do *not* have to give your name and address unless under a specific legal obligation (*Rice v Connolly* 1966). Refusal to give your name and address cannot amount to obstructing the police in the course of their duty under section 89(2) of the Police Act 1996, but giving a false name and address can.

There are a number of laws which make refusal or giving a false name and address to a constable a crime. All have a maximum penalty of a fine. These are:

1. Anti Social Behaviour

If you are reasonably believed to be committing anti-social behaviour (section 50 Police Reform Act 2002).

Anti social behaviour is defined as behaviour likely to cause harassment, alarm or distress, the same as the offence under section 5 Public Order Act 1986.

Given that any prosecution should be tied to a section 5 (or more serious) offence, a stand alone case seems to invalidate the 'reasonable belief' as, if the constable had reasonable belief (a higher standard than the reasonable suspicion he would require to arrest for section 5), why isn't it being prosecuted? Presumably because the CPS don't think his belief credible enough to give at least a 50% chance of conviction.

We know of no test case on section 50. If and when one arises we imagine the following arguments to be used on appeal against conviction disregarding disputes as to the facts.

- Necessity. You didn't want to give your address to the police as you feared it would be used by them to harass you or they would give it to the press or far right groups making you vulnerable to attack.
- European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) Article 6, Fair Trial. The argument is you should not have to incriminate yourself by remaining silent. This failed in Strasbourg for a motoring case but this may be different.
- ECHR Article 8, Privacy and Family Life. Intrusions have to be not only lawful but 'proportionate' and 'necessary in a democratic society'.
- ECHR Articles 10 and 11, Freedom of Expression and Freedom of Assembly. Being forced to give your details on a demonstration would have a 'chilling effect' on legitimate protest.

2. Driving.

If you are the driver of any vehicle, including pedal cycles, you can be required to give your



Police 'kettle' protesters at the G20 Climate Camp on Bishopsgate, London, 1st April 2009.

name, address and date of birth (Road Traffic Act 1988, sections 163–168).

3. Obscure

Pedestrians reasonably suspected of failing to obey directions of a constable directing traffic (section 37, Road Traffic Act 1988) who fail to give details commit a crime under section 169 of the Road Traffic Act.

If you are a reasonably suspected of poaching in daytime (Game Act 1831, sections 31–31A), disrupting a public meeting (Public Meeting Act 1908) or disrupting an electoral meeting (Representation of the People Act 1983, section 97). Pedlars must give their name and address on demand to a constable (Pedlars Act 1871, section 17).

Police Community Support Officers

There are different rules for PCSO's which bizarrely give them wider powers than the police to demand your name and address if they reasonably suspect you of certain offences or anti-social behaviour (schedule 4, Police Reform Act 2002).

Lastly, when you *don't* have to give your details, but your mate down the pub reckons that you do.

Kettles

The cops often ask people for their name and address as a condition of leaving a kettle, frequently in conjunction with a search for weapons under section 60 of the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994 and a demand to remove masks under section 60AA of the same act. As they have to fill out a stop and search form, it makes it look more official and tricks many people into

giving details they don't have to.

The legal basis of kettling is totally separate from stop and search, being the common law duty to prevent a breach of the peace (*Austin v Met Police* 2009) and also gives no power to take people's names and addresses. The cops presumably will claim that being willing to give your name and address makes you less likely to breach the peace and thus you can be safely released, but this has not been tested in court. It seems feeble reasoning but the courts give the cops great discretion in carrying out their duties, however dimwittedly they do so. For example, in the very first kettle at Euston on 30th November 1999, the cops asked people if they had come to protest peacefully or violently.

Stop and Search

You don't have to give your name and address, whatever type of search is carried out. This includes section 43 and section 44 of the Terrorism Act 2000, the Conservation of Seals Act, the Protection of Badgers Act, the lot.

Arrest

If you are reasonably suspected of a crime a cop may arrest you if, and only if, it is necessary for a reason listed in section 24 of the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984. One of these is if they cannot ascertain your name or address. In theory for a section 50 you could be arrested on this ground, then give your details and be released by the police only to be then summonsed for not giving your name and address! You are under no legal obligation to give your name an address at any stage in the police station.

STORM WARNINGS FROM THE RIGHT

In this time of deepening economic recession, where people are openly questioning the role of government and capital, we are provided with a rare opportunity to engage the population with ideas that challenge the status quo and offer new forms of social organisation. To that end we feel confident that our ideas are finding new outlets, reaching a new audience and gaining a new credibility. But there are also elements of reaction that develop in response to this, taking advantage of the same political uncertainties and social tensions. We have yet to see this fully emerge (although the EDL certainly hint at future forms) but the further capitalism slips into crisis the greater the need will arise for it to defend its position. When class conflict becomes entrenched and transparent, capitalism seeks to protect itself by any and all means. Just as the workers movement in the 1970s successfully defined itself as militant opposition to the prevailing forces of capital, so the far right in the form of the National Front and British Movement emerged to gain a significant foothold and popularity amongst sections of society, promoting the politics of social division within the working class. If we are not careful the deepening resentment and social pessimism amongst the most affected may again find solace within voices of the far right.

Fascism as an ideology expresses itself as the rearguard action of capitalism, through the promotion of ultra-nationalism, a moral and racial superiority, a stark authoritarianism, and crucially a physical force violent presence on the streets. During the 1980s and 1990s it took the concerted efforts of a committed group of militant anti-fascists to successfully confront the far right and literally force them off the streets. Anti-Fascist Action (AFA) are still remembered and feared by neo-nazi gangs, racist thugs and members of far right nationalist parties as being unrelenting in their stated aim to confront fascism both physically and ideologically. So successful were AFA in their objectives that the BNP had to retreat completely from 'street politics' and re-invent itself as a parliamentary euro-nationalist party.

Not only did AFA redefine the spectrum of how fascists operated they also offered us a warning on the far right's ability to adapt to their circumstances. In the final chapter of *Beating The Fascists*, AFA set out the task ahead in challenging the new forms of far right expression, and offers up the question "what happens if an extreme right party emerges that immunises itself against the charges of nazism? What happens when, with generational shift, the strength of anti-nazi feeling and memory of war fades?" What does happen is in part entirely up to us. We have been warned.

Beating The Fascists: the untold story of Anti-Fascist Action by Sean Birchall, published by Freedom Press, £15.

What is anarchism?

Well that depends on who you ask. But most anarchists would agree it is an 'anti-capitalist' and revolutionary political philosophy that rejects the state and all forms of institutional authority. Anarchists therefore have developed anti-statist responses/interpretations of communism, unions, property, collectivism, gender and issues surrounding all forms of power.

Anarchism has its origins in the struggles fought by workers and peasants at the turn of the nineteenth century who refused to see the end result of the struggle as a matter of replacing one 'bad' leader with another.

Anarchists then, as now, desired nothing short of the complete transformation of society, one where the individual and the broader community are freed from the tyranny of exploitation at the hands of intolerance, bosses, landlords and governments.

Anarchists oppose capitalism as it is an exploitative social relationship – one that benefits a few at the expense of the majority. They oppose the state, as it is the dominant means by which capitalism is facilitated, i.e. the state will deploy its forces (police/army) to quell social unrest therefore re-establishing 'the rule of law' which is just another way of saying 'normal' capitalist social relations between workers and their bosses. The state formation is also opposed as it centralises power into an authority or expert 'class' that rule 'above' the needs of the individual or the community.

Over the last two hundred years, anarchism has evolved to take on board other sympathies and traditions, most notably from the feminist, anti-colonial and ecological movements. Anarchists actively oppose all forms of

discrimination based upon race, gender, sexuality, physical/mental ability, and propose 'direct democracy' as a means by which social life (be that of work or in the community) can and should be co-ordinated. In place of capitalism anarchists propose 'free association' as the means by which a group or community can come together to complete a task to the benefit of that community.

Anarchists have played important roles in struggles for human liberty and dignity, but their history is often tragic, resulting in betrayal or murder at the hands of other supposedly 'leftwing' revolutionaries. Anarchists were most visible in history during the 'two great European revolutions' of the twentieth century, notably the Russian Revolution and Spanish Civil War.

In Russia, anarchists fought against the forces of reaction, the Whites (Monarchist) and later against the Reds (Bolshevik) when it became clear that they intended to impose their authority on the revolution. During the Spanish civil war, anarchist militias were instrumental in the peoples struggle against fascism, although a combination of betrayal and poor weaponry doomed the Spanish people to a fascist dictatorship that was to exist inside Europe until the 1970s.

In more recent years anarchists have been present in a variety of sites of struggle/protest. They have been active in organising community struggles and initiating support for striking workers as well as rioting outside the summits of the rich and powerful nations: an anarchist can usually be found wherever there is a struggle. Look out for some today – they may be closer than you think.



ANTI-CUTS PROTEST SPECIAL

BOOKS

Freedom Press is the oldest anarchist publishing house in the UK. Established in 1886 by Peter Kropotkin, amongst others, it continues to provide an outlet for anarchist classics as well as up-to-date radical literature. All our publications can be ordered online via the website, or bought directly from our bookshop. These are our latest publications:

Beating The Fascists: The Untold Story of Anti-Fascist Action

Sean Birchall

Described by Dr M. Hayes, senior lecturer at Solent University as “the best book on British anti-fascism post war” *Beating the Fascists* is a remarkable story of how a group of militant anti-fascist during the 1980s and 1990s organised to rid the streets of far right extremists. Told by the founding members of AFA and key organisers it's not only the definitive account of Anti-Fascist Action, but also the most thorough, honest and compelling history of anti-fascist activities over the past 25 years.

Anarchy

Malatesta

Errico Malatesta was an important anarchist thinker and militant, writing and editing a number of influential radical newspapers. He was member of the Naples section of the International Workingmen's Association and spent time in prison and as an exile for his beliefs. In *Anarchy* he sets out to explain the fundamental tenets of anarchism in what he considered it his best work. This classic piece of polemic was first published in 1891 and has been in continual demand ever since.

Mutual Aid

Peter Kropotkin

One of the world's foremost anarcho-communists with his principal scientific offering written while he was living in exile in England in the late nineteenth century. Kropotkin advocated a communist society free from central government and based on voluntary associations between workers. In this his most influential work, Kropotkin argues that in nature, co-operation is as important as competition – a direct challenge to classical Darwinism.

William Blake: Visionary Anarchist

Peter Marshall

This short study draws on Blake's complete writings, his poetry and his prose. It offers a lively and perceptive account of his thought, ranging from his philosophy, his critique of existing society and culture, to his vision of a free world. Marshall presents Blake as a forerunner of modern anarchism and social ecology, and reveals the light which shines behind his symbolism and mythology. Blake is considered a seminal figure in the history of both the poetry and visual arts.

LENS CAP FINGER ON THE PULSE



Deterritorial Support Group radical artists – who describe themselves as “anti-authoritarian communists. We believe in the popular power of unmediated struggle” – give a clear message to those struggling for power: you're still part of the problem... Check them out: <http://deterritorialsupportgroup.wordpress.com/>

Haringey organising

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of people who were facing repossession at a time when they wanted to take action. This campaign is still on the back burner, and may re-emerge depending on developments in the way the economic crisis unfolds.

Other issues taken up by the group include fighting ‘gatekeeping’, where homeless people are dissuaded by the council from accessing housing services and are pushed into the private sector instead. We begin by writing a letter, demanding a response from the council, and if they fail to resolve the issue, we have taken our demands in the form of protests inside the council offices. This side of what we do enforces our entitlements and exploits the grey areas, but we also campaign on wider issues.

Most recently, we have been trying to build a local campaign around the changes that are being proposed to social housing – charging rents at 80% of market level and scrapping security of tenure – plus cuts to housing benefits and other welfare benefits. There are about 43,000 housing benefit and/or council tax benefit claimants in Haringey, plus 13,000 incapacity benefit claimants. Both these groups are going to be facing cuts to the amounts they receive – that's a lot of people with the power to disrupt the system.

HSG has also been active in recent local anti-cuts activity and were instrumental in setting up the Haringey Alliance for Public Services (HAPS), which is a wide grouping

of residents associations, trade unionists, service users' groups and local community associations as well as political campaigning groups, founded to fight the cuts where we live. The initial meeting came out of discussions around a successful event previously organised by HSG – Haringey Independence Day – that brought together all the local groups in Haringey to share ideas, contacts and ways of organising.

As part of the alliance, HSG has produced propaganda and taken part in demonstrations, as well as helping to organise a strategy day looking at how to fight cuts locally. We now need to maintain this local organising and build towards direct action across industries and communities, making links between workers' and service users' and ultimately making the cuts unworkable.

Alongside recent action around cuts, we produce a quarterly newsletter, written by members of the group that gives a libertarian perspective on local developments and provides ideas for action. We distribute this throughout the borough, door-to-door and on street stalls. Haringey Independent Cinema, a monthly screening of thought-provoking films, with a pub discussion afterwards, also came out of an idea from HSG, though it began and continues to run with people outside of HSG as well as those inside the group.

HSG is beginning to run its activities out

Wot? No government?

'Anarchy' is a word that has a very bad reputation these days. The mere mention of it causes most people to imagine nothing but rows of burning cars, roaming gangs of looters and senseless violence in the streets. Anarchy, we are told, means nothing but the very breakdown of social order itself. Yet is it the truth? Is government really the vital foundation of our society?

To say that we would tear our society apart without a government standing over us, brandishing the stick of authority, is to say we are in reality no more than helpless infants. That everything we have built and shared only exists by the grace of our loving masters, protecting us and saving us from ourselves. Society is government, government is society forever and ever, amen.

Yet where is this government in our day-to-day lives? Is it the government who care for the sick and the dying in our hospitals? No, it is the nurses and the doctors. Is it the government who drive the trains and the buses? No, it is the many transport workers. Is it the government who build and repair



our homes? No, it is the construction workers. The government may employ these people, but that makes them no different from any other boss; they do none of the work but take all of the credit. Yet if it is the working people who take care of the day-to-day practicalities of life, where then is this invaluable government without whom we would all be so lost? What functions does the government provide that we could not replicate ourselves?

We are not a society of infants. We do not need a government to save us from ourselves. Anyone can look at the state and see that it is not the all-knowing, all-caring power it

pretends to be. No, in truth it is we who must save ourselves; from a system in which profit is more important than living life, which looks down upon the very working people without whom modern society could not exist.

That is what the word 'Anarchy' truly means. It describes a time when ordinary people will run society together in common, running it in our own interests and not in the interests of the rich and powerful. To paraphrase a very famous revolutionary slogan: 'The government needs us, we do not need them'.

MO

Haringey organising

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of a new office – a converted loft space in a local housing co-op. We hold meetings there and keep equipment, including a colour photocopier which can be used by local groups at cost price.

HSG came out of the local anti-Poll Tax campaign over twenty years ago, and continues to believe in the strength of local organising to spread libertarian ideas and build a mass anarchist movement. In the battles that are on the horizon, we believe in the importance of being rooted in your community, to build relations with peers and neighbours and to avoid being isolated while continuing to advocate strongly for our politics through practical example and collective action.

To find out more see www.haringey.org.uk or get in touch by email info@haringey.org.uk or call 0845 223 5270.

Indymedia London

Your local activist media project

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On the website you can publish your reports, writing, photos, videos and audio. You can also highlight good content on other websites, blogs and platforms to share with others. A well used calendar of events including meetings, workshops, talks and protests provides a good way to advertise events in London and find out what's going on.

With participation from people on the streets we produce up to the minute timelines of what happens on big demonstrations, and pull together photos, videos and audio to document the truths and politics behind street protests and campaigns.

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To get involved visit:

london.indymedia.org

radical publishing since 1999!

ANTI-CUTS PROTEST SPECIAL

SPECIAL SOUVENIR ACTION

A – Education Bloc feeder march

ULU, Malet Street, WC1, 10am

What began as a simple bloc has turned into a full blown feeder march due to the massive positive response. Taking their inspiration, militancy and dynamism of the recent school, college and university students' protests. In terms of energy and imagination definitely the place to be.

• Anarchist Bloc

Promoted by Anarchist Federation (London) who will be joining with the radical students at ULU. There will be red and black anarchist flags and banners, plus people distributing radical literature.

B – South London feeder march

Kennington Park, SE11, 10.30am

Along with the education feeder march, it will be the biggest 'unofficial' bloc on the demonstration. South London is being hit particularly hard by the Tories cuts and the increasing anger and resentment is being turned into effective local action. Destined to be one of the most passionate and vocal blocs on the march.

• Radical Workers' Bloc

Called by South London Solidarity Federation and Anarchist Federation, it will form part of the South London feeder march and probably the biggest and most visible anarchist presence on the demo.

C – Start of TUC march

Victoria Embankment, 11am

Forming up between Waterloo Bridge and Blackfriars Bridge. The large numbers expected mean there is certain to be an extended wait until it is allowed to move off.

• The Bigger Society Soundsystem

A collection of speakers, designed to be mobile using pushchairs, 12 volt electronics and leisure batteries, playing the soundtrack to the day. "It's our revolution and we're dancing to it."

• Buggy Bloc

Victoria Embankment Gardens

Meandering from Embankment to Hyde Park. Babies and buggy boarders, spread the word... kids against cuts being seen and heard! Joining the myriads to oppose the squandering of our future.

• Women's Bloc

Victoria Embankment Gardens

Supported by Women Against the Cuts, Southall Black Sisters, Million Women Rise who are calling on all women to stand in solidarity together against the cuts that will affect the most vulnerable in our society the most. Come dressed in purple and green with pots and pans or anything else to make



a lot of noise! There will be a direct action following the march.

D – TUC Rally

Hyde Park, advertised to begin at 1.30pm and go on until 4.30pm

In addition to the stage and giant screens, there will be refreshment facilities and extra toilets. As well as private security. Ed Miliband, New Labour leader and 'same

cuts but slower' doctrine will be speaking. A robust response to Miliband's politicking is expected.

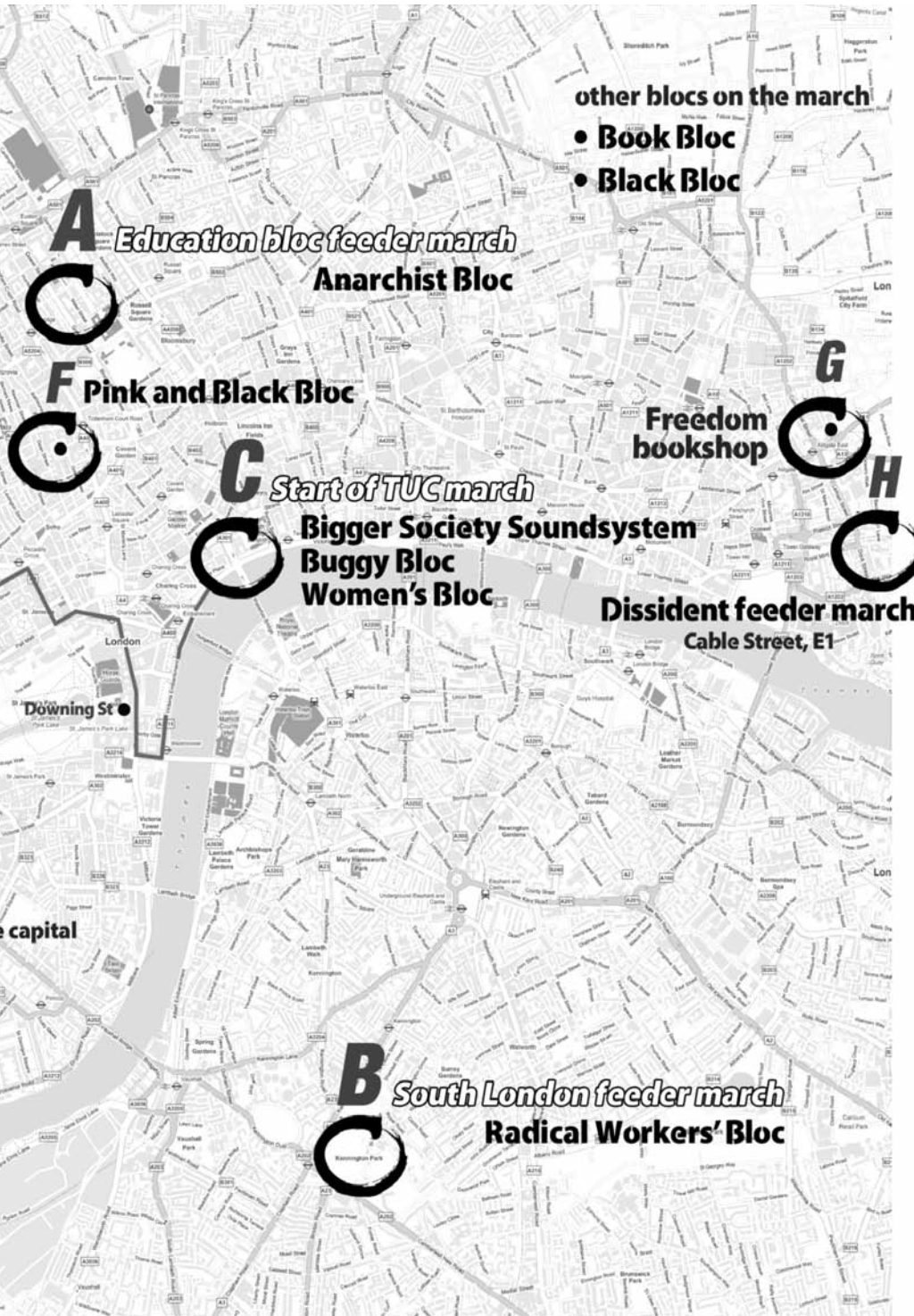
E – Occupy For the Alternative

Oxford Street, 2pm

UK Uncut. A massive simultaneous shut down of banks and tax dodgers on London's Oxford Street – flash mobs, bail-ins and occupations along the length of Europe's

ANTI-CUTS PROTEST SPECIAL

ON MAP FOR 26th MARCH



biggest shopping street. Then at 3.30pm there will be a massive final convergence, ready for a spectacular mass occupation of a secret target.

F – Pink and Black Bloc

Soho Square, 10am

Queer Resistance is a group of queers and allies from across the UK who have come together to fight the cuts! They want to

march in solidarity with other anti cuts groups and ensure a visible queer presence and invite people from across the LGBTQ communities as well as friends and allies to join with them.

G – Freedom Bookshop

84b Whitechapel High Street, E1

The oldest anarchist publishing house in the UK, the longest running anarchist newspaper

and one of the few remaining political bookshops in the country. Come and say hello.

H – Dissident Feeder march

Cable Street, E1, 11am

From the East End to the action taking back the city streets en route to revolution departure points on the way.

OTHER GROUPS AND BLOCS

Legal Observers

There will be hundreds of legal observers from the radical movement present to document the unlawful behaviour of the police and help protesters with legal advice (including handing out bust cards). These are committed political activists and unlike the Liberty police-sanctioned observers are not in collusion with state agencies.

Legal Defence Monitoring Group and Green and Black Cross. Plus FITwatch who will be monitoring police surveillance tactics on demonstrations.

Book Bloc

Homemade shields in the shape of enlarged books to protect people from the attacks of police batons.

Black Bloc

Not a group but a tactic whereupon individuals come together wearing all black attire for maximum anonymity. Key elements are: collective action and mobility. You have been warned.

Shut Down London

Coordinated roving flash mobs promising to "stop traffic, run wild, make as much noise, get as much publicity".

Resist26

An umbrella network (and brainchild of arch prankster and academic eccentric Chris Knight) for various events and activities and media spectacles planned throughout the day, including the mass occupation of Hyde Park Stay 4 One Day.



ANTI-CUTS PROTEST SPECIAL

ABOUT FREEDOM

ANGEL ALLEY

Freedom newspaper was founded in 1886 by Charlotte Wilson as a “journal of Anarchist Socialism”. Since then there have been short breaks, but in spite of many police raids over the years, editors jailed and a fascist fire-bomb attack, *Freedom* is today not only the oldest but also most frequent anarchist paper in these islands.

We have been based in Angel Alley since 1968. The building used to also house independent printing cooperative Aldgate Press, but in 1994 they set up next door in Gunthorpe Street. This enabled us to have a bigger bookshop on the ground floor, while upstairs is our office and a meeting room used by all sorts of radical groups. Also in the building are the offices of the Advisory Service for Squatters, Corporate Watch and the London Coalition Against Poverty.

Freedom Press is run by a small collective that reflects the spectrum of anarchist organisations. We do not set out to recruit people, but rather we are a coalition of activists in various anarchist groups working on a joint project. Wherever possible we try to adopt a non-sectarian position and to promote co-operation among anarchists.

While diverse in views, *Freedom* remains within the same tradition of class struggle anarchism as when the paper was founded.

SUBSCRIPTIONS

This issue is vol 72 no 06, so if the number above your name on the address label is 7206 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 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 or you can write to us at ‘Subscriptions’, Freedom, 84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1 7QX.

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NEXT ISSUE

The next issue will be dated 9th April 2011 and the last day to get copy to us for that issue will be Thursday 31st March. You can send your articles to us by email to copy@freedompress.org.uk or by post addressed to ‘The Editors’, Freedom, 84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1 7QX.

A sideways look

by SVARTFROSK

The demonstration called by the TUC against cuts on 26th March promises to be one of the biggest for a long time. It is also likely to be quite militant. For many people, there will be specific reasons. For others it will be a general sense of unease at what the government are planning.

However, the cuts proposed are not ‘ideological’ cuts. Of course, the Tories enjoy making them, as was shown when they cheered the announcement in Parliament. But Labour are just as complicit – many of the Tories’ alleged ideological cuts are a continuation of Labour’s policies. The cuts are part and parcel of the normal workings of capitalism. It is always seeking to extract more profit, even if it means old folk dying on trolleys in privatised hospital corridors. The government’s plans to cut pensions for public sector workers and make them work longer are not primarily because they hate public sector workers (though they do), but because pensions are a liability that Capital and Serco don’t want. A good pension, like employment rights in general, is something that is a barrier to privatisation. Whoever heard of a worker getting a better deal after privatisation?

The TUC unions ought to be making a very big fuss about pensions right now. They didn’t when private sector workers lost them over the last fifteen years, so I’m not holding my breath. The last thirty years have seen endless cuts in most areas, this is the norm.

What can be done? Obviously, workers can strike or take other forms of industrial action. But there are a lot of barriers: it is virtually impossible to have a legal strike; the workers are scared about their jobs; and where they

aren’t, the unions act as a brake. There will be riots, but the British state is cannier than the Egyptian one and won’t fall just like that. UK Uncut have led the way with economic disruption, to the extent that commentators from rabid Murdoch puppet Glenn Beck to smug Tory Toby Young have attacked them. The fact that UK Uncut’s actions are targeted is something that scares the establishment – and it *is* worried. One of the principles behind it, of holding people and companies responsible for their actions, goes against the grain of how our country has been run for so long – one law for us and another for them.

What we need is a change of attitude – this society is offering us less and less. The state is effectively pulling out of a lot of areas, leaving only police stations and schools. It has failed to deal with rising prices except by keeping wages down; it has actively worked to enhance inequality; it allows free flow of capital, but not labour; it has responded to people living longer by cutting pensions and attacking healthcare; it replies to some of the weakest workers’ rights in Europe with plans to make them weaker. We ought to be able to see clearly in whose interest it operates. It follows that only we can help ourselves, the state has chosen the side of the wealthy and powerful, the side it has always been on.

We must be free from illusions; the only people who are going to deal with services being closed are us. The only ones who will face up to a domineering boss are us. Who will fight job centre bullies? The corrupt exercise of authority? The silent takeover by anonymous companies who pay their workers peanuts and their bosses millions? Together we are strong – let us realise that strength.

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The crisis in capitalism

From financial crisis to rebellious contagion

Since the official declaration of a systemic crisis in capitalism, broadcast live on 24-hour rolling news channels, the crisis has failed to be replaced by a substantial recovery. The domino effect reflects the reversal of the relative strengths of the countries involved, as the state becomes the only means by which apparently anti-state free markets ideologists can continue to survive. Propped up by placing the entire population's ability to produce wealth as guarantors of their debt, the debt contagion from weaker states continues to spread and the extremities of the impact of the financial crisis is exported in the form of IMF fiscal policy.

The austerity we are seeing in every European country, enacted by socialist, conservative, liberal and green governments illustrates that all political persuasions who govern us are united by their attachment to serving the interests of capitalism and the tiny elite of super rich that control the purse strings. These are more than just 'Tory Cuts' but the expression of an entire ruling class of exploiters unable to offer any alternative but attacks on barriers to capital expansion – the erosion of workers' rights, pensions, state owned companies, public sector and so on. This is a crisis that no one can vote their way out of, and therefore has also become a crisis of political representation.

For every crisis, movements develop to respond, with outbreaks of struggle that express common values. They maintain an uncontrollable dynamic of their own, as those that attempt to lead without consent are thrown to the way-side, and those that stand on the fence become increasingly irrelevant. Movements are often born out of a sudden rupture and immediacy that manages to break out of the present, creating meaningful moments that act as calls for action.

From London to Cairo to Tunis to Benghazi, the lack of a dominant representation, the process of running neighbour hoods, towns and cities, shows that far from needing a leadership, the leaderless are the leadership. Self-organisation is a tension that continually exists. Challenging the notion that someone, some group or party has to be in control. Is it a coincidence that in the majority of revolts, the lack of a central authority, has produced such spectacular results? People are angry and they don't need anyone to tell they're angry.

What had appeared to be a compliant and passive middle ground, whose contract with capital was passivity in exchange for stability has been ripped up and is now forced to renegotiate as the attacks on the social wage intensify. We will see many more forced into

fighting back, as interest rates rise forecasted for this year further compounds the problem for mortgage owners. This is a rebellion from the centre, not the margins and that is why what we are seeing is a significant reordering of relationships, aspirations and militancy, which seek to find new modes of articulation.

The use of digital social media like Twitter, YouTube and Facebook are significant, not in their originality (the printing press was just as revolutionary) but the speed in which information travels is faster in circumventing the 'authoritative' media and transforms the one way path, from the producer to the spectator into real communication.

As Egyptian riot police fire American manufactured tear gas, to disperse crowds fighting for the same democratic values of those that manufactured the tear gas. Greek riot police are trained by New Scotland Yard, to ensure the popular rebellions in Athens against the IMF are better dealt with. A family's house is repossessed in Luton the same time as migrants are ordered from their beds to

be deported, by decisions made in the same building. Those who believe in free education take to the streets in search of their democratic society but instead are met by the riot police's truncheon, too happy to show them the limitations of their protests. The universality of these attacks have made the universality of rebellion a contagious choice.

From demonstrations against tax avoiders to occupations of universities, disused buildings and direct action. The movement needs to expand into an offensive that demands more than just the demands of the status quo. The radical currents of debate must become accessible, available and engaging to a wider audience.

The universality of these rebellions do not only share a common cause, intersecting with the economic and geopolitical imperatives behind them, but also as a common effect where values emerge and are reflected within this turmoil, indicating a powerful resistance to austerity that raises the question of the possibility of social transformation.



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ANTI-CUTS PROTEST SPECIAL

PRISON NEWS

As in many countries, prison labour is a key feature of the American prison system. In state and federal penitentiaries across the country a massive captive workforce is put to work everyday making a huge range of items on behalf of Unicor, the Federal Prison Industries arm, or individual State prison labour organisations. These products can range from the classic example of car number plates via US Army helmets, webbing, backpacks and boots up to things like office furniture, body armour, cable assemblies for Cobra attack helicopters and circuit boards for Patriot missiles. Try booking a flight ticket by phone and you are likely to end up talking to Federal maximum-security prisoner. All these bring in big bucks for the Federal prison service and ultimately US government coffers.

However, whilst Prison Industries has long been the poor relation of the Prison Industrial Complex, being massively outshone by the profits private companies can accrue in actually providing the prison places and guarding the prisoners themselves, the hiring out of that captive labour force is increasingly becoming a significant resource at the state level as budgets are being slashed. So much so that large numbers of state employees are currently being made redundant, only to see their jobs replaced by prison labour. So, instead of plantation-era relics like the chain gang, with prisoners working the fields of State farms or litter-picking on highways, they are increasingly being used to carry out tasks like vehicle painting and maintenance, the cleaning of courthouses; wetsuit-clad prisoners are performing underwater welding repairs on public water tanks.

This increasing industrialisation has also led to an increase in militancy amongst prisoners seeking to increase the pittance they are paid in prison wages (some state prisoners earn as little as 16 cents an hour for what is often a 50-hour working week) and gain better working conditions, including proper safety equipment and properly trained first-aiders on site. These are the very issues that led to the recent Georgia prison strike (see *Freedom*, 15th January 2011), the forming of organisations like the Missouri Prison Labor Union and what could be the first officially State-recognised prison labour union in British Columbia, the aptly named ConFederation, Canadian Prisoners' Labour Union, Local 001.

Meanwhile in Airstrip One, the coalition government is also seeking a massive increase the use of its own prison labour resources. Private companies are being actively encouraged into the Prison Industries system, ostensibly to provide 'training' but this is merely a cover for the outsourcing of work to prisons. A classic example of this is Speedy, the plant tools hire company, which has run workshop schemes in UK prisons since 2005. They currently operate from four prisons employing over 100 prisoners, yet they have recently closed 37 depots making around 300 workers redundant.



Democracy as the alternative, time for the self-organising revolution

Today many thousands of people are 'marching for an alternative', but to my mind very few, if any, are expressing a truly convincing or appealing alternative to short term cuts and the long term privatisation, degradation of public services and dominance of profit-seeking business that has been happening without interruption for at least 30 years.

The closest thing to an alternative in the anti-cuts movement is summed up by the slogan 'tax the bankers', and while this is fine as far as it goes, if we taxed bankers enough to pay back the bailout we might be able to stop the cuts and get back to where we were in 2007 but, correct me if I'm wrong, that was no golden age worthy of nostalgia!

However, no politician of any colour is even going to go this far because among all the other crises old and new there is a serious crisis of democracy. The cuts have made the lack of democracy more obvious than ever before – when all three main parties and the media agree that 'cuts need to be made' ignoring all the evidence and opposition outside of that cosy club something is seriously wrong, and when Nick Clegg u-turns on student fees the emptiness of the rhetoric of 'the democratic process' is plain to see way beyond the usual critics.

I think we need to bypass all politicians and their institutions and come together face to face on a local level to do the open, democratic discussion and planning that politicians aren't interested in. We need to follow this up by making plans and putting them into action ourselves. We need to do

this everywhere and build horizontal solidarity between communities.

In my local area we have had a very diverse and often exciting period of campaigning against the cuts, but the particular cut that I am fighting has been agreed and is due to be enacted in two months – New Cross Library is due to be closed on 28th May. In addition the local children's centre and family learning centre both face a similar fate, not to mention many other services that are to be downgraded, cuts we don't know about yet and changes to benefits, housing and the NHS which affect everyone.

In response we've set up 'The Future of New Cross' – a series of public meetings, conversations online, on the doorstep and in the street to get everyone talking to everyone else and working together on an alternative that we can build into something which looks much more like real democracy. We might decide to occupy or even more formally take over services that the council wants to close but we simply won't accept the funding cuts – in the first instance we'll continue to fight to get the money from the council and the government (who are still wasting most of the money they do manage to get hold of) but also, instead of relying on the government to tax big business and the council to distribute it, we will demand money directly from the corporations (and not just those that are on the current list of tax dodgers – none of them pay a far share).

Some people might worry that this is the big society but I'd say that it's the complete opposite. It's self organising – not the Tory idea of people with time on their hands doing good things for the poor unfortunates, this is us taking control over our own lives and communities. It's time for the self organising revolution.

Find out more at thefutureofnewcross.wordpress.com

Industrial Workers of the World

The IWW is a different type of union

The Industrial Workers of the World are unlike any other Union in the UK. We are a direct action, syndicalist (or 'organising') Union that is structured along the lines of a minimal hierarchy that is subject to the principles of direct democracy from local General Members Branches and Industrial Unions. These latter bodies are representative of specific employment sectors – Health, Education, Retail, Construction, Unemployed Workers and so on – nationwide. It is our belief that this type of organisation gives a greater power to workers in times of dispute than the more commonplace idea whereby Unions are obliged to negotiate within an individual workplace, with a single employer or at the level of a specific pay grade.

The IWW prides itself that it is wholly worker-focused. While individual members may belong to a political party (or indeed another Union with political affiliations) the IWW has no party line. As we are outside the TUC we have a minimal bureaucracy; there are no paid positions in the IWW. We are run solely by activist members on a voluntary basis, and many of the administrative positions have a given time limit for any individual post holder. We are a fighting Union, and the majority of the membership dues are spent on campaigning and casework. As might be imagined this is an attractive proposition for many activists who have been frustrated by the seeming inactivity or slow top-heavy bureaucracies in many of the UK's larger Unions. Unsurprisingly, we have recently had major increases in membership for exactly these reasons, including our IU640 'Cleaners' Branch which disaffiliated itself from a major TUC Union to join the IWW en masse after the UBS 'Justice for Cleaners' campaign in 2010.



London IWW and IU640 at the Mayday Parade in 2010.

This growth in membership has allowed the IWW to pursue legal certification, and in the next two months we will be in receipt of the Certificate of Independence which will allow us to negotiate collectively with employers. Increased numbers have also made it possible for the Union to decentralise its financial and training structures. Each branch, and some Industrial Unions, now command their own finances with the briefest of references to the National administration. Each of the regions, and many of the larger branches such as Tyne and Wear, West Midlands, London and Reading, have their own trainers who hold regular sessions across the country teaching representation and organising skills. Due to our close ties with the Latin American Workers Association (LAWAs) some of these sessions are now given in both English and Spanish. The IWW also provided an advice session on employment rights for an outreach project funded by the Ecuadorian Embassy. Our Healthworkers (IU610) and Education Sector (IU620) both produce regular newsletters with national distribution.

The international aspect of the IWW has been very prominent over the last year too; the British and Ireland Regional Administration has gained its autonomy from the historical base of the IWW in the USA. We are now 'equals' and later this year the BIRA will be joined by IWW members in Germany, Austria and Switzerland to form a European Administration.

We also retain good relations with sympathetic groups throughout Europe: last month the BIRA received a delegation from Courant Syndicaliste Revolutionnaire (CSR – Revolutionary Syndicalist Current, France); at the 2010 London Anarchist Bookfair the IWW held a debate with Sveriges Arbetares Centralorganisation (SAC – Central Organisation of Swedish Workers) and the Polish group Workers' Initiative (IP – Inicjatywa Pracownica). This year members of the IWW from Germany will be making a presentation

on the Free University movement in conjunction with the Frei ArbeiterInnen-Union (FAU – Free Workers Union of Germany).

The IWW has also held a number of solidarity demonstrations for both the IP and SAC. Workers' Initiative called us out to protest against the state closure of a metal-work foundry, a closure that was due to go ahead despite the workers' offer to run it as a collective. The day after we picketed the Polish Embassy we received news that the Polish government was reconsidering its position. The IWW called a series of demonstrations outside 55 Baker Street, the offices of London and Regional who had inflicted a series of illegal working practises on the workforce at one of their Swedish subsidiary companies.

Of course the majority of the campaigns we are involved in are on a more local level. The Reading, Bristol and Nottingham GMBs are heavily involved with the 'Save Our Services' anti-cuts campaign. West Midlands IWW joined forces with members of Unison and Unite and successfully lobbied to have a staff canteen opened at the new premises inhabited by the Birmingham NHS Blood and Transplant Centre. IU610 hosted the IWW's first UK women's conference last July; in the same month the Tyne and Wear branch participated in the Durham Miners Gala. This year marks the Scottish IWW Assembly hosted by the Edinburgh, Clydeside and Dumfries branches. Members of the London branch and IU640 successfully fought a removal order (for deportation) after one of the cleaners' branch workers was picked up in a raid by the UK Border Agency – and in an example of solidarity in action donations for this campaign came from across the UK, from the German IWW and from Workers' Initiative.

Many of our UK branch members will be marching alongside you today, so please feel free to introduce yourself if you are interested in our work. Otherwise please contact us at the addresses given in our advert.

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REVIEWS

WHAT'S ON

MARCH

■ **27th** David Rovics and Robb Johnson at The Grosvenor, Sidney Road, Stockwell, London SW9 0TP, an Acoustic Insurgency production from 8pm until 11pm, no support acts so arrive early, £5/£4.

■ **28th** *Sharkwater*, a 2007 Canadian film written and directed by Rob Stewart, who seeks to deflate current attitudes about sharks, and exposes how the voracious shark-hunting industry is driving them to extinction, from 7.30pm at Pogo Café, 76a Clarence Road, London E5 8HB, call 020 8533 1214 or see www.pogocafe.co.uk for details.

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 or e-mail anarhisticki.sajam.knjiga@gmail.com

■ **4th** First-time director Bahman Ghobadi's Cannes Camera d'Or winner, *A Time for Drunken Horses*, a film about five Kurdish children's struggle to survive while their father is away smuggling over the Iran/Iraq border, only to be returned home dead from the landmines which pepper the landscape, from 7.30pm at Pogo Café, 76a Clarence Road, London E5 8HB, call 020 8533 1214 or see www.pogocafe.co.uk for details.

■ **9th** Guerrilla Gardening with speaker Richard Reynolds (the founder of 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.

■ **11th** *Emma Goldman, An American Experience*, for over three decades, she taunted mainstream America with her outspoken attacks on government, big business and war, feared as a sponsor of anarchy and revolution, she was vilified in the press as 'Red Emma', 'Queen of the Anarchists' and 'the most dangerous woman in America', from 7.30pm at Pogo Café, 76a Clarence Road, London E5 8HB, call 020 8533 1214 or see www.pogocafe.co.uk for details.

■ **17th** A Past Tense radical history walk around Spitalfields/Brick Lane, meet outside The Rag Factory, 16-18 Heneage Street, London E1 5LJ at 3pm to learn about this area's long and rebellious past ... and much more, email pasttense@alphabettthreat.co.uk for further details.

■ **18th** *In The Land of the Free*, Herman Wallace, Albert Woodfox and Robert King spent almost a century between them in solitary confinement in Angola, the Louisiana State penitentiary. Known as the Angola 3, two of them are still in solitary confinement after 37 years. This documentary feature narrated by Samuel L. Jackson looks at the story of these extraordinary men, from 7.30pm at Pogo Café, 76a Clarence Road, London E5 8HB, call 020 8533 1214 or see www.pogocafe.co.uk for details.

TELEVISION

The Promise

by Peter Kosminsky, Channel 4

This four-part February mini-series cements writer-director Peter Kosminsky's abandonment of pseudo-docudrama for purportedly realistic fictions of recent events – beginning with homegrown jihadists in *Britz* (reviewed in *Freedom*, 2nd February 2008). This equally woefully clunky but rather more ambitious attempt to capture the tones and tenors of individual and institutional pathology afflicting the world parachutes into Palestine at a crucial stage in its history, attempting a very rare mainstream Western media account of the continuing catastrophe of the Middle East. *The Promise* combines a double bill of whistlestop tours set in the 1940s and now, ticking as many appropriate documentary boxes as possible about the conflictual occurrences and patterns in both periods which have rendered the political prognosis so intractably tangled and compromised throughout Israel's history. And, despite wildly unlikely coincidences and connections driving the plots forward, Kosminsky at least manages remotely accurate snapshots of and insights into the injuries and indignities suffered by the region's inhabitants over six decades.

Broken Promised Land

The whole farrago is watchable thanks to its 1940s backstory following one British soldier's postwar progression from liberating Nazi death camps to a Palestine posting in the British 'Mandate' occupation between 1923–48, which ended in disarray after organised Jewish settler guerillas evicted or killed many thousands of Arabs to facilitate Israel's establishment. Len's initial deep charitable sympathy for Holocaust victims is steadily eroded by the Irgun's dual military campaign against British administration and ruthless ethnic cleansing. Finally relinquishing affiliation with the supposedly neutral 'peacekeeping' role propogandised by top brass and governments, he deserts to help people he has befriended escape. Having read his journals, his granddaughter Erin strives to symbolically complete that unfinished quest, protected by an utterly unbelievable relationship with an elite Israeli family whose ambivalent soft liberalism both stands for Jewish progressivism in general and somehow tolerates her sullen presence.

Neither narrative thread mentions the underlying geopolitical, diplomatic and economic agendas which have dominated the situation



developing along its trajectory and to which all participants have been constrained to adapt.* Instead the focus rests entirely on the visiting protagonists' ethical quandaries and their attempts to square what they see and can(not) understand or do. Interestingly, here, Len's character is sympathetic, whereas Erin's clueless middle-class adolescent behaves on whim careless of resulting risk for everyone, including herself. The gratuitous vulnerable pathos of her being epileptic, however, represents more than a forlorn appeal to viewers to care. Doubtless unintended by Kosminsky, and naturally unnoticed by critics, her blundering around sundry hotspots ignoring the interests or opinions of locals in favour of private desires – dotted with periodic fits of humanitarian impulse and seizures of moral outrage – uncannily mirrors the structure of single issue hobbyism and 'struggle tourism' as well as official news coverage and its respectable reception. So, despairing at horrors endured by distant others, comfortable Western handwringers move onto newly fashionable concerns – never taking seriously, sustaining, or prioritising above self-satisfaction the grass-roots perspectives and efforts which have meaningful potential either at home or overseas.

www.tomjennings.pwp.blueyonder.co.uk
<http://libcom.org/blog/4271>

* For the modern history see, for example, Noam Chomsky's meticulous *The Fateful Triangle* (1983) and his subsequent updates in various publications.

The Promise is out now on DVD.

QUIZ ANSWERS

1. As an insult by Royalists against their roundhead opponents during the English Civil War.
2. In Paris in the early 1880s. After the suppression of the Paris Commune, Louise Michel said the "red flag was no longer appropriate; [we] should raise the black flag of misery."
3. Czechoslovakia: the Czech-Slovak Anarchist Federation unites anarchists across both states and has done so since 1995.
4. Liverpool. It began with seamen and spread to dockers and railway workers, bringing the entire city to a halt in August 1911, when the authorities used troops to try and break it and two strikers were shot dead.

In defence of the city

Joe Maguire looks at this recent collection of essays that considers the costs and benefits of life in cities

Matt Hern, author of newly released *Common Ground in a Liquid City*, lives in Vancouver, Canada. Vancouver has major endorsements like Expo 86, the Commonwealth games and, as recently as 2010, the Winter Olympics and Paralympics under its belt, but on top of that, with Melbourne, a business review recently granted the city as being a top example of a 'livable city'. The darkside, however, is that Vancouver has the lowest minimum wage, the highest rate of child poverty, chronic homelessness, the highest rents and housing costs in Canada (207) and, like every other city, it's the flux of capital which influences its development rather than its inhabitants.

Matt's book isn't really about Vancouver, though. Well it is and it isn't. Matt is looking at the city he lives in and is drawing out parallels to other places he's visited. By contrasting two different places in the world he is creating a lynchpin to look at and isolate themes one by one that affect us all where we live. And for the most part this works quite well.

But before he does that, he sets his stall out and thereby the tone of the book. Firstly, he is resoundingly in favour of city dwelling, "the only chance the world has for an ecological future is for the vast bulk of us to live in the city" (9). Secondly, he argues, "cities need to be full of solid, distinct and comprehensible places" (9) and, thirdly, he calls for a rejection of global capitalism and neo-liberalism.

There are, he argues, possibilities of living densely, shortening unnecessary transport journeys, reducing our collective carbon footprint, and sharing energy and resources (16). These are all ecologically sound, and are preferable to humans encroaching on what little is left of the natural world. So humans, for the most part, can and should stay where they are. The task for city dwellers, and a key premise of the book, is to find what adjustments we can make to the city to challenge the excess and power that prevail alongside the poverty and despair, but also to avert any challenges that may come our way.

The book is based on nine essays, each covering a different city and a comparative insight. Six are in North America (I will include Hawaii); the remaining are in Greece, Turkey and Kurdistan. Laced with the essays are some pretty nice location shots to guide you. I wanted to gloss over some of the essays and prise out some of the bits I thought



had significance for expansion. Some I didn't take much from for a number of reasons, such as discussions on culture and vibrancy à la Montreal, or water stress in Moloka'i, Hawaii. Others I thought raised quite important issues, be it gentrification and social stratification in Istanbul, law and order in New York, social capital and immigration in Fort Good Hope (an homogeneous native settlement in Canada) and the general mess that is Las Vegas. The essay on Thessaloniki was nothing short of blinding, covering the use of common and public space and how it can be used to inform us about history, particularly colonialism.

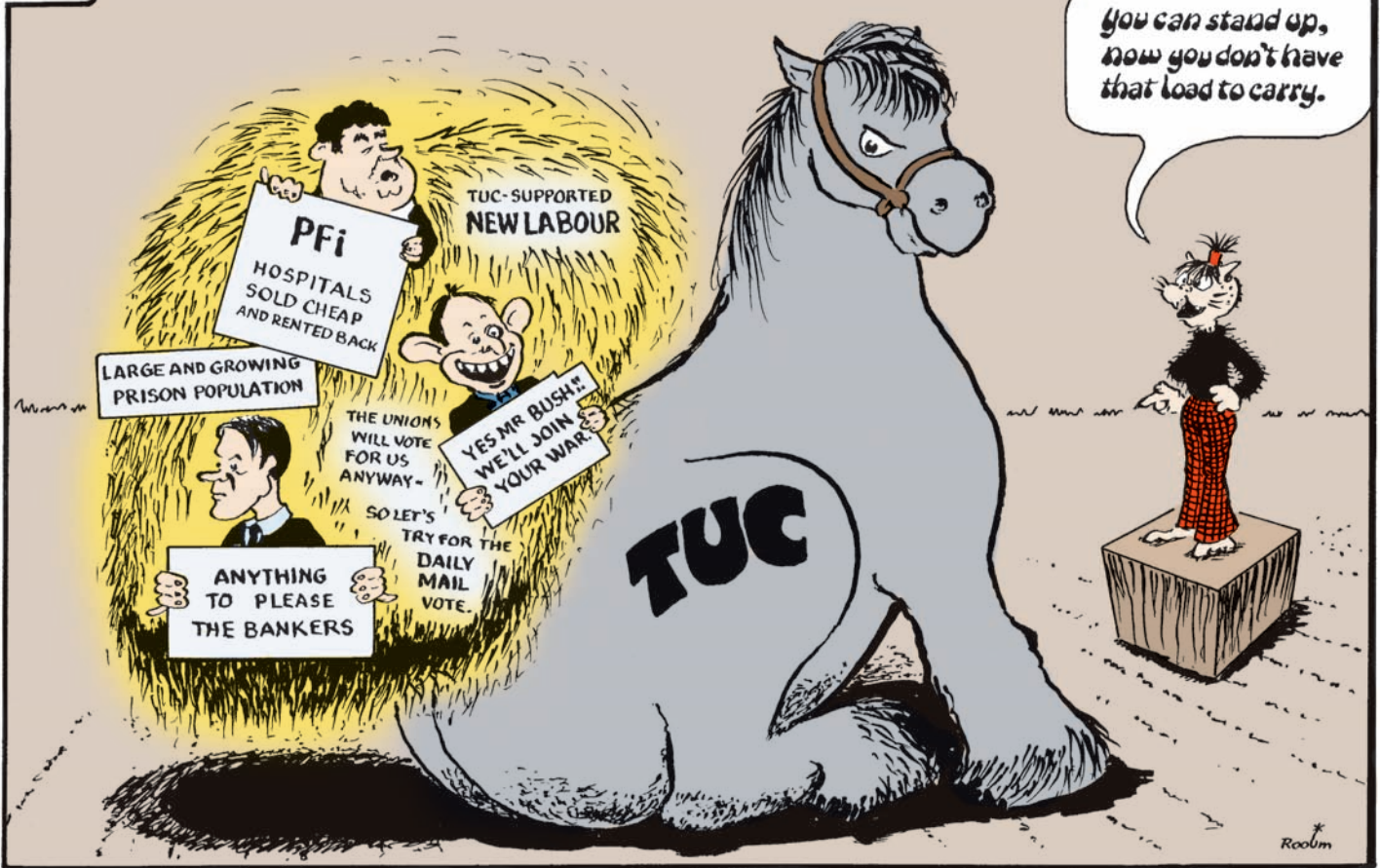
I could not give the book any real scope by delving into all these things in such a short space. So I wanted to start by picking out a piece on housing in Portland, Oregon and another on responses to globalisation in Diyarbakir, Kurdistan.

Portland is home to two million inhabitants. It's highly regarded for its city planning which incorporates a very environmental ethos – so there are a mass of bike lanes and

good public transport links (126). But the knock-on effect is people at the economic high-end want a piece of the imagery and this puts stress on the demand for resources, especially among key workers who need to live close to the city (130–1). This will be a familiar story to many of gentrification.

The problem with this scenario is that grass-roots responses to this do not come easy, but Hern puts forward a few suggestions. We should be challenging market orthodoxy: firstly, "the top end of the market has to be restrained aggressively and the bottom end has to be generously supported" (132) and, secondly, we need to push third-tier housing, like co-ops and Community Land Trusts (139–40).

I am slightly uneasy with the first because, without being purist, it could lend itself to the worse kind of reformist demands. The option of Community Land Trusts sounds promising. Hern states that CLT is a movement gaining momentum in the States that tries to subsidise housing through owning the



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properties' land, which sounds like a practical derivative of co-operative housing.

The subject of the next essay, Diyarbakir, was once a major area for several empires from the Byzantine to the Ottoman, but now it finds itself at the other end of the globalised economy. Hern, assessing the options of the very destitute city, wades his way through the offer of neo-liberalism's 'help'. Clearly by competing with other cities, and if the right incentives are there (i.e. profit), then investors will come. But there is a cost. Hern is explicit that markets are not the answer, despite what short term wins can be gained:

"If we are going to talk about genuinely sustainable change in cities all over the world,

we have to talk about genuine local democracy empowered to make real choices, not bound by market-driven imperatives and debt-fettered discussion of privatisation and private-public partnership" (177).

The genuine responses Hern calls for are grass-roots organising on the level of food security (such as permaculture) and looking for a collective response to all kinds of shortages – or the effects of 'Economic Contraction' as he calls it. Clearly this is on the terrain of moving beyond capitalism (with a few frugal hints to aid us along the way) which he echoes in his conclusion, "I welcome capital flight with open arms" – as we all should, but be prepared for the bumpy ride.

Common Ground in a Liquid City by Matt Hern, published by AK Press, £14.

THE QUIZ

1. In what context was the word 'anarchist' first used in English?
2. Where was the black flag first used as an explicitly anarchist symbol?
3. Which defunct European country lives on in an anarchist federation?
4. Which British city had a general transport strike 100 years ago?

Answers on page 14

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

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