

# Solidarity

for anarcho-syndicalism

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Produced by the North & East London local group of the Solidarity Federation.

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## GATE GOURMET WORKERS: "IT'S NOT OVER YET!"

Sacked workers are still on the picket line outside Gate Gourmet after the Transport & General Workers Union struck a deal with the management on 27th September making 144 strikers redundant and leaving 7 strikers [known only to the management] sacked with no compensation. 3 baggage handlers at Heathrow Airport who had taken part in the 1000-strong one-day sympathy strike are also still suspended.

The dispute began when Gate Gourmet brought in 130 agency workers, refusing to answer workers' questions. They then announced by megaphone that the workers were all sacked and locked them in the canteen without any food and water or access to toilets for almost 8 hours. Private security firms and riot police were on the premises within minutes. The shop steward was later thrown out of the building, and several women, one of them pregnant, were dragged out of the building with two private security guards on one side and two policemen on the other.

Gate Gourmet has been making profits of £1.05bn and has assets of £15bn. The Texas Pacific group, owner of Gate Gourmet, is notorious for its union

busting policies. It also controls many other companies such as Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer Inc, United Artists, Continental Airlines and Burger King, whose new Chief Financial Advisor, Cedric Burgher, is the former Vice President of Enron and former Treasurer of Halliburton. To put pressure on the Texas Pacific group see <http://www.sackedbygategourmet.org.uk/support.htm>.

### Solidarity action

The workers, far from being genuinely empowered by the strike, remained utterly dependent on the T&G. Cut off from playing any real role in the negotiations, the workers were essentially left on their own after the initial euphoria. The deal done by the T&G shows how crucial the issue of solidarity strikes is. Experienced or inexperienced, it is hopeless for workers to defy the goliaths of concentrated capital alone.

A temporary alternative to solidarity strikes, smaller and less potent, but always attractive for its confidence-boosting and libertarian potential, is "flying squads" - rapid response networks of workers that can be mobilized for strike support, demonstrations, direct action and working class defense of

immigrants, poor people, and unemployed workers - ...a potentially significant development in revitalizing organized labor activism and rank-and-file militancy." (Jeff Schantz, *Developing Workers Autonomy: An Anarchist Look At Flying Squads* - <http://nefac.net/node/915>.) The frustrating inefficiency of the Gate Gourmet support network, in a dispute which began so vibrantly, reaffirms the need for establishing flying squads in London and elsewhere.

### Donations

Although rich the T&G only pays strikers (who are already financially struggling) a meagre £50 per week from the hardship funds. The union are rumoured to be sitting on a huge amount of money in donations for the strikers. Many people are only prepared to donate money direct to the strikers, but this can only be done in cash. Haringey TUC have organised such donations; contact Alan Woodward, Treasurer and Organiser of HTUC, on 020 8292 8862 for details.

**This is an edited version of an article in Freedom Vol. 66 No. 20.** Further info from [www.sackedbygategourmet.org.uk](http://www.sackedbygategourmet.org.uk), or, South Asia Solidarity Group, [sasg@southasiasolidarity.org](mailto:sasg@southasiasolidarity.org), Tel. 020 7267 0923.

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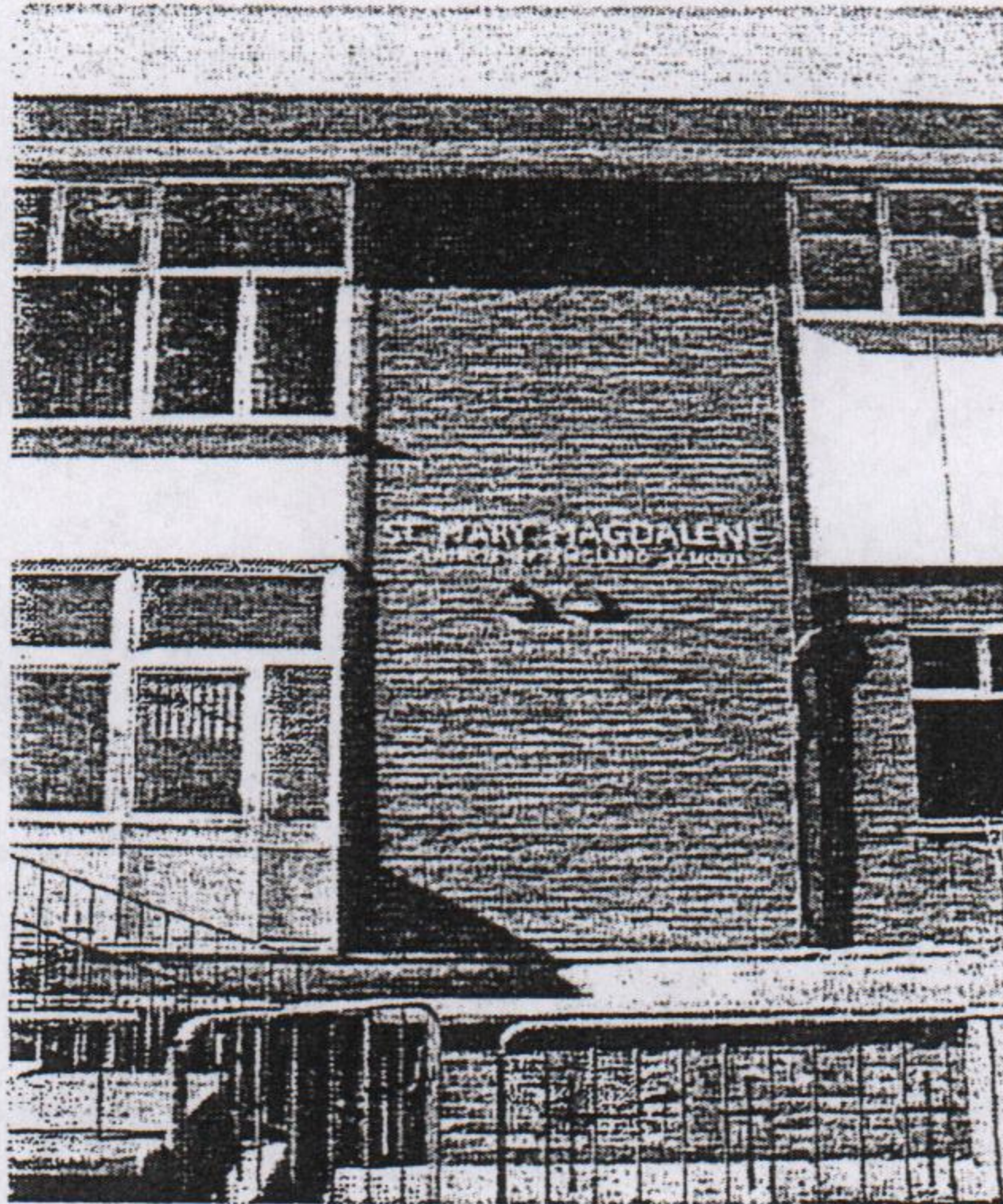
## The Academy is no remedy

Objectors to an Academy takeover of St Mary Magdalene Primary School in Holloway were furious at the planning committee members vote of 4 -1 in favour of the proposal that will see the 210 pupil primary school turned into a 1,400 capacity Academy at the cost of thirty million pounds. Screams of outrage and accusations of dishonesty were directed at Islington councillors. One hundred & fifty people turned up to a meeting in late September and the majority were opposed to the decision. A huge percentage of the thirty million pounds is from public funds. The City Academy is a publicly funded independent state school.

The Government say Academies should be introduced into disadvantaged areas with low educational standards and will replace schools that underachieve or fail to meet the demands for new places for children. But the fact that we still have disadvantaged areas is a sign of a failing and corrupted system. The Academy is not the remedy for the ailments of failing schools. The plan to have 200 Academies nationwide by 2010, with at least 60 to be built in London, has more to do with the Government's enthusiasm for privatising everything than it does with the education of our children.

The private sector only pays £2m in sponsorship to each Academy while the Government contributes on average £25m to each school. Sponsors are not required to have experience in education, but they are expected to have "innovative" approaches to management, governance, teaching and learning. The problem is the control the sponsor will have. Contractual agreements between the Government and sponsors are confidential, so, despite Academies being funded largely from the public purse, access

to information is denied to the very people who pay for the building of these schools.



Faith groups are being encouraged by the Government to be at the forefront of the Academy programme, so it will be more

on the myth of creationism and a bit less on the science of evolution. Education should be free from religious teaching, those wanting to follow the path of spiritual and religious enlightenment have their places of worship to go.

Business Academy in Bexley are rearranging the lessons for the school week to favour their specialist subjects. West London Academy in Ealing are introducing enterprise into all aspects of the curriculum. More than ever pupils will be conditioned and manipulated into becoming a good and obedient worker and citizen that the bosses and masters require.

If education was equal across the board and schools didn't have to compete against each other, if teachers were allowed to devote more time to their pupils, underachieving schools in disadvantaged communities would be greatly reduced. Free access to all schools, colleges and universities for all children, would end an unfair system that benefits the wealthier members of society. A decent education is a right and should not be a privilege and all children deserve that right. New subjects should be introduced into the curriculum, ones that benefit society more than the needs of corporate capitalists. Education has to be about children learning, not about exploiting them.

We seek to replace capitalism with a stateless society based on the principle of from each according to their ability, to each according to their needs. We support working class struggles towards these ends. We recognise that not all oppression is economic, but can be based on gender, race, sexuality, or anything our rulers find useful.

Our activities are based on Direct Action — action by workers ourselves not through intermediaries like politicians and union officials. Our decisions are made through participation of the membership. We welcome anyone who agrees with our aims and principles. We also welcome comments on this newsletter, and donations towards the cost of future issues (cheques payable to NELSF).