

MERSEYSIDE

Local Bulletin of the Anarchist Federation



RESISTANCE!

New 'Axis of Evil' – Us!

Workers of all kinds are now Tony Blair's 'Axis of Evil' – wreckers, the dark forces of conservatism. It's an accusation Britain's leaders have often used to disguise their own shortcomings or lust for total power – remember Margaret Thatcher's infamous description of miners – The Enemy Within? The war on organised workers that Thatcher began, Tony Blair is intent on finishing. Any worker with any rights at all is firmly in his sights and the sights of large, often foreign-owned public service companies like G4, Onyx and Initial. Blair's just signed a deal with the corrupt businessman-cum-Italian president, Silvio Berlusconi, to spread liberalisation (low wages, long hours, no rights) across the EU. Workhouses, here we come!

What's going on? Why are workers, especially public sector workers, suddenly the target of so much hatred, so much scheming? Blair is, unfortunately, totally in love with Big Business. They tell him how great he is, they give the Labour Party money, he gets to lecture them at fancy dinners and write love-letters for shady businessmen. That's the world we have let the politicians make. What must be conceded in one generation because of the power, solidarity and militancy of the working class can easily be taken back in the next. It started to be taken back under Margaret Thatcher, it's being taken back today. The state is the means by which the private sector gets a trained and docile workforce, a workforce that can be exploited at work and taxed at home to provide the massive subsidies to industry, banking and commerce that keep capitalism profitable. What the private sector would have had to pay to keep its workforce healthy and efficient, trained to a reasonable standard (but not trained to think); we are now happy to pay for ourselves (though not if you're rich and not as much if you're middle class). Creating everything but owning nothing, what we could have as a right, a healthy and productive life on our own terms, we have sold for a pittance called the welfare state: rationed, conditional, paid for by us but owned by them. The whole institution of the state is corrupt, its politicians greedy non-entities, its servants and advisers hungry for power and status. Career success is measured now in how much of what was once bought with your taxes, paid for with the sweat of your brow can be sold off to the (sometimes) highest bidder. Big Business has finally bought up Great Britain plc!

Public sector workers are right to reconsider their links with Labour, but they are 80 years too late. They are right to be urging all-out industrial action in defence of services but no resolution at a union conference will bring it about. The union leaders will talk big but do nothing or else stand aside while Unison or the GMB heads into the killing fields, isolated, alone, defeatable. And privatisation will come in a rush, the idea of public service crushed by a failed strike.

Don't get us wrong. When anarchists accuse the unions of weakness, complacency and betrayal, we aren't talking about workers. We know the difference between cleaners, dockers, firemen, car workers or whoever fighting for their jobs and union officials protecting theirs! Working people of all kinds continue to display outstanding courage, determination, organisation and intelligence in resisting exploitation at work. But we need to get organised!



Workers need to be forming rank-and-file campaigns against the cuts and privatisation *outside* or *beneath* the union's structures and across sectors. We must plan to carry out wildcat and unofficial action across all workplaces. Campaigning groups must link with other public sector unions in their areas, in schools and colleges, local authorities, transport and health services, postal workers and job centre staff, *outside* of union control. We need to organise from the bottom up and try to link every public sector worker but not a single manager or union official, then broaden the campaign to include service users. Win the public over – they're workers too! Transport workers: go to work but charge no fares. Hospital workers: means-test your patients, let the rich go private. Council officers – open your files, let the public wander around your office and ask what's going on. That'll scare 'em!

Toxteth Man To Stay In Prison Forever?

Back in December '81, Ray Gilbert (a mixed-race Toxteth lad) was found guilty of murder and sentenced to 15 years in prison. *Twenty-one years later* he is still in prison. Why? Because he will not admit to a crime he did not commit. Without admitting his guilt he is not eligible for parole but under Home office rules if he said he did it he could walk free today, nothing simpler. For over two decades Ray Gilbert has maintained his innocence and refuses to add shame to the miscarriage of justice he suffered all those years ago. To those who say he should take the easy option, Ray says "Put yourself in my place. With all I've gone through to prove my innocence, what would you do?"

"I was interviewed without legal advice despite a severe speech impediment that got worse under duress. I was put through two nights of constant pressure, held incommunicado, I was frightened for my life."

While on remand he had the frighteners put on him by other prisoners, "put up to it by the real murderer", says Ray. It's not hard to see how Ray caved in to police pressure and threats, and said what they wanted him to say. The man convicted with him was later freed by the Court of Appeal, but not Ray. Stronger, wiser, self-educated in prison, Ray is determined it's high time the truth was known and is asking anyone who knows anything about the case to contact him. Bruce Kent, CND campaigner is a long-time supporter and even *The Echo* has interest (greggfray@liverpoolecho.co.uk). Particularly helpful would be people prepared to photocopy letters and case documents that he sends to people on the outside who he thinks might help, such as MPs. As Bruce Kent says, "A less determined man would have given up by now, admitted guilt, and taken the only road that looked like it might lead him to freedom." But not Ray. Ray can be contacted at: Ray Gilbert H10111, HMP Woodhill HU6A CSC, Tattenhoe Street, Milton Keynes MK4 4DA.

The guilty will soon be brought to justice, so why not help an innocent man walk free?

WE'RE BETTER THAN TALIBAN

says Afghan Judge

After more than 5000 people killed and billions spent on bombs and missiles, the fruits of victory are now being spread more widely among the Afghan people. The new Minister of Justice has just announced a new criminal code and proudly points to the differences between the new regime and the hated Taliban: "Under the Taliban, when people were hanged for crimes they were left on public display for days at a time. We are civilised, and we will cut them down after a few minutes!" said the former judge. Well fuck us! That's not exactly what Bush and Blair went to war for, we're sure! "Under the Taliban, women accused of adultery were tied up and stoned to death. We respect women and will not tie them up so they have a chance to run away - but only if they have confessed to adultery first". So you face either certain death now, tied up and brutally killed, or later at the hands of relatives and neighbours if you admit to something that offends them but most people in the West don't give a damn about. A rare choice for a woman raped, for instance (a very common occurrence in Muslim countries), to protest your innocence or be a pariah for the rest of your life. They may be able to play football once more in Kabul's only stadium, but behind the scenes the new regime is as bad as the old. Until the ordinary people fight their own war, without warlords, western allies or oil companies calling the shots, a war that sweeps away all governments and all injustice, the killing will go on. It just won't be televised.



BLOOD OVER THE FIELDS

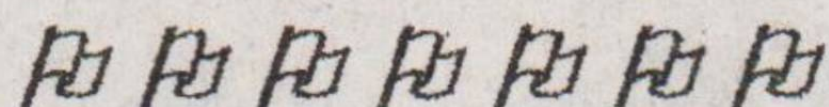
After being forced to abandon last year's Waterloo Cup in Altcar on Merseyside (yes Merseyside!) because of the foot and mouth epidemic, the bloodthirsty scum who get their kicks setting packs of dogs onto defenceless hares resumed their barbarous pursuits this February. Despite all the rhetoric, after **five years** of a Blair government, nothing has changed and hunting with dogs remains quite legal even though it is evil and offensive to most people. Does anyone still believe that trusting to politicians is the way to get anything done? A way forward for justice? We think not!

MERSEYSIDE FIRE CHIEF CAN'T STAND THE HEAT!

Merseyside's Fire Authority has been slammed in a damning HM Inspectorate report which branded the authority "the worst of it's kind in England and Wales". Among their findings the Inspectorate found the regional service was 88 fire fighters short of official recommendations. Despite the penny-pinching approach of the MFA in providing utterly inadequate fire cover for the area, they also managed to run up a £4.2m budget deficit which we will have to pay. There is simply no other way to describe such appalling mismanagement than as wholesale dereliction of duty. The man responsible for placing the lives of every man, woman and child on Merseyside at risk is Chief Fire Officer Malcolm Saunders, known as a bully to everyone who has had the misfortune to put up with his high-handed style of running such a vital service. Saunders' diktats provoked outrage among citizens and fire fighters-alike. Now he appears to have really gone insane - it is reported CFO Saunders wants to leave on the grounds of ill-health.

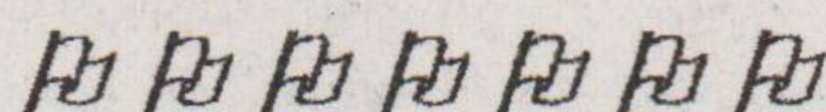
"To pay a pension on the grounds of ill-health is morally repugnant", said sick, soon-to-retire Fire Chief Saunders

Needless to say, this will ensure he exits with a substantial pay-off and a sizeable pension. This is rank hypocrisy from the man who tried to stop the pensions of fire-fighters who retired hurt or ill. Still, it's almost worth the cost to see the back of this bumbling, arrogant, totally incompetent oaf. Those on the regional Fire Authority who supported his confrontational tactics, tactics that killed people, should go too. Without a pay-off. And good riddance to the lot of them!



FIN-TASTIC!

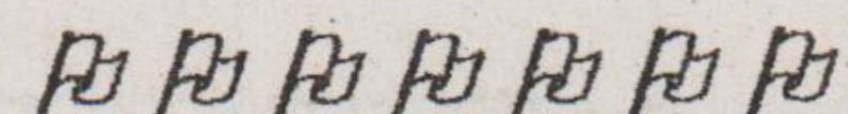
Those of us who eagerly await the publication of the next fabulously informative *Merseyfin* can look forward to a really fat, juicy, salivatingly bumper new issue in the coming weeks. These little 'zines are the pulse and heartbeat of every resisting community and individual, full of mind-blowingly interesting facts about the hidden world of capitalist atrocity and stupidity and ideas about fighting back. Those who produce it (who must remain anonymous due to its subversive content!) deserve our every support. Find *Merseyfin* in *News From Nowhere* Bookshop, Bold Street, Liverpool or direct with a donation from *Merseyfin*, PO Box 350, Liverpool L69 6EE



LOCAL EVENTS

Wed 24 April - A play to mark the anniversary of the death of Simon Jones.

Sun 28 April - Political Film night
Wed 1 May - March to reclaim May Day and @ the Casa, 7.30: A play about the Tolpuddle Martyrs.
Fri 3 May @ Toxteth Town Hall, 7.30: East Timor Benefit Night.
Look in *News From Nowhere* Bookshop for details,



OPPOSE (AMERICAN) INJUSTICE! CHALLENGE (AMERICAN) RACISM! FIGHT (AMERICAN) REPRESSION!

In case you get your ideas about the "Land Of The Free" from trips to Disneyland and Miami Vice, here's a tale to (hopefully) make you think again about the red, white and blue. And if sending African-American soldiers to kill Afghans proves American society is colour-blind, here's one "uppity nigger" who paid a very high price for standing tall.

Robert King Wilkerson was held in solitary confinement in the Angola maximum security prison in Louisiana, (good ole) USofA for 27 years - for crimes he did not commit. King was a 'political' prisoner, framed for organising prisoners as a member of the much-feared Black Panthers group, which fought for justice for African-Americans. Released in February 2001, he now dedicates his life to speaking tours around the world raising awareness of the brutality, racism, corruption and injustice ingrained in America's hated (so-called) justice system.

King's co-accused, Albert Woodfox and Herman Wallace, are still in prison, entering their 30th year of solitary confinement. King is an inspirational person who is devoting all his energies to fighting back at the repressive set-up that has robbed him and his activist comrades of almost 90 years of life and liberty because they dared to challenge the blatantly racist and class bias of capitalism in America. We are hoping to arrange for Robert King Wilkerson to do a speaking tour of Britain, including at least one date on Merseyside and to facilitate this funds are urgently needed to pay air fares to bring him over. Help make King's story part of our lives too this May. Further information and to find out how you could help from Catherine.kay@btinternet.com or telephone 0161-370-1113.

RESISTANCE!

a regular agitational from the AF with up-to date news and comment.

For a free copy, info about *Organise!* our in-depth magazine (also on sale in *News from Nowhere* Bookshop, Bold Street, Liverpool, other AF publications and more contact:

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