

the Black Apple Press



Shafted & Abused

It is estimated that between 4,000 - 6,000 migrant workers, mainly from east Europe, come to Herefordshire every year to work for S&A Produce, at their sites in Marden and Brierley. Many of these workers are university students in their home countries and come to the UK for the summer months to help with the harvest of strawberries that supply 1/3 of shops in the UK, including Tesco and Sainsburys.

S&A's strawberries were recently chosen for the Queen's 80th birthday celebrations at Buckingham Palace. And just as the Monarchy has been responsible for the violence and exploitation against many foreign peoples throughout the British Empire, so S&A are responsible for the abuse and sickening conditions of its European workers.

This year the Transport and General Workers Union (T&G) has collected evidence from the workers themselves of the conditions they face, including:

- Workers employed for shifts of up to 14 hours a day, with less than 30 minutes break per day;

- Charges for accessing basic health services, for example, a £50 fee for 'hospital administration';
- Charge of £300, paid by each worker, to work at Brook Farm;
- Frequent breaches of their contracts, for example, normal work is 6 or 7 days a week, even though their contracts say they should normally work 5 days;
- 6 to 10 people sharing caravans with poor standards of safety and hygiene, with problems of electricity and water supplies;
- Serious mistreatment of workers including examples of workers needing urgent medical care yet being denied it or told they will be charged a fee.

But this is nothing new. During mid-August 2005, more than 400 east European strawberry pickers went on unofficial strike and blocked roads at the Brierley farm in protest over their conditions. They had told the *Hereford Times* that S&A Produce were unwilling to listen to their concerns or take them seriously. Lilja*, a 20-year-old Russian worker, told the paper that colleagues were working 12-hour days, seven days a week.

She said the average weekly wage was £100 and that S&A Produce deducted more than £30 from this wage packet to pay for renting a caravan, which was shared with five other workers.

Another striker, Mikolej*, aged 20 from Belarus, summed up the pickers' thoughts: "What we are told in our home countries is very different from the reality here."

Back in 2004, *InSITE* e-magazine, interviewed Volodja*, a 21-year old Ukrainian who came to the UK to work at S&A Produce farms in Kent and Herefordshire. Like Lilja and Mikolej, he described how he worked an average twelve-hour day, six days a week, picking strawberries inside the polythene covered tunnels during the summer heat. Volodja did not receive over-time pay or sick pay and only received wages based on how many boxes he filled - not like the hourly wage workers usually receive in the UK. There were times, he said, that fruit pickers were only earning around £25 a week.

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For working class self-organisation and social revolution

The **Anarchist Federation** is an organisation of **class struggle** anarchists aiming to abolish capitalism and all oppression to create a free and equal society. This is **Anarchist Communism**. We see today's society as being divided into two main opposing classes: the **ruling class** which controls all the power and wealth, and the **working class** which the rulers exploit to maintain this. By racism, sexism and other forms of oppression, as well as war and environmental destruction the rulers weaken and divide us. Only the **direct action** of working class people can defeat these attacks and ultimately overthrow capitalism. As the capitalist system rules the whole world, its destruction must be complete and world wide. We reject attempts to reform it, such as working through parliament and national liberation movements, as they fail to challenge capitalism itself. Unions also work as a part of the capitalist system, so although workers struggle within them they will be unable to bring about capitalism's destruction unless they go beyond these limits. **Organisation** is vital if we're to beat the bosses, so we work for a united anarchist movement and are affiliated to the International of Anarchist Federations.

The Anarchist Federation has members across Britain and Ireland fighting for the kind of world outlined above.

If you're interesting in joining contact us at:
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Also visit: www.afed.org.uk
and www.iaf-ifa.org

Against ID cards

The Anarchist Federation is involved in the fight against ID cards and the National Identity Register. The case against ID cards can be read in our newly revised pamphlet 'Defending Anonymity'. Copies are available free from the address above or from our website.

Six hundred new jobs? Woopydoo!

"Hereford is being transformed into a top class haven for shoppers... and almost 600 new jobs being created in the process," shouted the Hereford Journal, at the end of July. Woopydoo! Six hundred new jobs working in shops, what did we do to deserve this pleasure?!

The traditional manufacturing industries are dying out in Britain, and replacing them are public service jobs in places like shops and superstores, call centres and office buildings. Once the principal trading centre in this great agricultural county, Hereford has now been transformed in to yet another 'clone town', where all the shops are the same as the next city, all selling the same things. And in every shop are the same have-a-nice-day workers with their mile-wide grins, always making sure the customer is happy. In this society, the customer is King. But if there was ever an industry to send your GCSEs and A-Levels down the drain and put you in a permanent state of boredom to boot, well, it's the service industry.

But stop there! Whilst the jobs in the service industry may be some of the dullest and most unsatisfying there are, we are certainly in no position to defend the manufacturing industries as enjoyable and rewarding work. Workers in this in-



dustry are still exploited, and frequently have much more dangerous conditions than those of the shop or office. It is, however, socially useful work: the jobs of the farmer and the founder (etc.) are needed and actually serve a purpose for society. The jobs of the checkout and call centre workers do not. So when Cynthia Spaul, Hereford City Manager says that "Asda will create a lot of part-time jobs and that is exactly what this city needs," we have to disagree.

In fact, part-time work is exactly not what this city, or any other, needs. Because unless you're doing it for a bit of pocket money, the part-time worker will have to have a minimum of two jobs just to keep their heads above water. For the unemployed people desperately looking for work, a part-time job may give some relief and provide a steady income, but 20 hours a week isn't enough. What unemployed people need are full-time jobs.

But full-time work isn't what we're calling for either. All work in our present day capitalist society is based on the exploitation of the workers for the benefit of the bosses. And when we say all work, we mean it: full-time or part-time, permanent or temporary, service or manufacturing industry, day or night work. Businesses are run to make money for the owners and shareholders, not to throw some poor, penniless workers a lifeline. And the way to make money is to keep the costs low and by squeezing the most from the resources. So in everyday terms that means keeping wages low and making the staff work as hard as you can make them. Instead of all of this, anarchists would like to see a world where the need to work (because of the constant threat of poverty) is ended. And we'd like to see money abolished too. Instead we would put our labour to better use, only working on things that were important and socially useful, and living by the motto 'from each according to his ability, to each according to his needs'.

Demonstrators' persecution at the hands of West Mercia Police

Thirteen animal rights activists have been arrested for allegedly being part of a campaign against Sequani, an animal testing laboratory in Ledbury. The activists were arrested under the Serious Organised Crime and Police Act (SOCPA) for shouting slogans, holding banners and handing out leaflets, part of a decades-old campaign against animal testing; hardly a threat to society. The only violent incident occurred, however, when male security guards threw female protestors into oncoming traffic.

The peaceful protestors, none of whom had committed a crime, had their doors kicked in by police who took books, computers, miscellaneous household items, phones, bank statements and more. They were arrested, questioned on their political views and accused of 'conspiracy'. In addition, the National Extremism Tactical Coordination Unit (NETCU) publicly accused protestors of being 'extremists'.

Despite the extreme police action not one person has been charged - astonishing as legally the police need "evidence" in order to persuade a

magistrate to give them warrants. It would appear that the police arrested people under very dubious circumstances and may well have behaved illegally.

West Mercia police have continually tried to crack down on all animal rights protests in the area, whilst virtually ignoring crimes against animals and protesters. They have failed miserably to enforce the Hunting Act 2004. Crimes concerning the gross abuse of dogs go unsolved and Herefordshire's badger baiters can enjoy their perverted activities unchallenged. This hypocritical policy of West Mercia police to crush dissent must be resisted every step of the way.

In the past, countless people have died, faced torture and imprisonment so that we could have the legal right to protest. All these supposed 'animal rights extremists' want is to exercise this right and to stand with banners by the side of the road, demonstrating against the horrors of vivisection without the threat of prosecution.

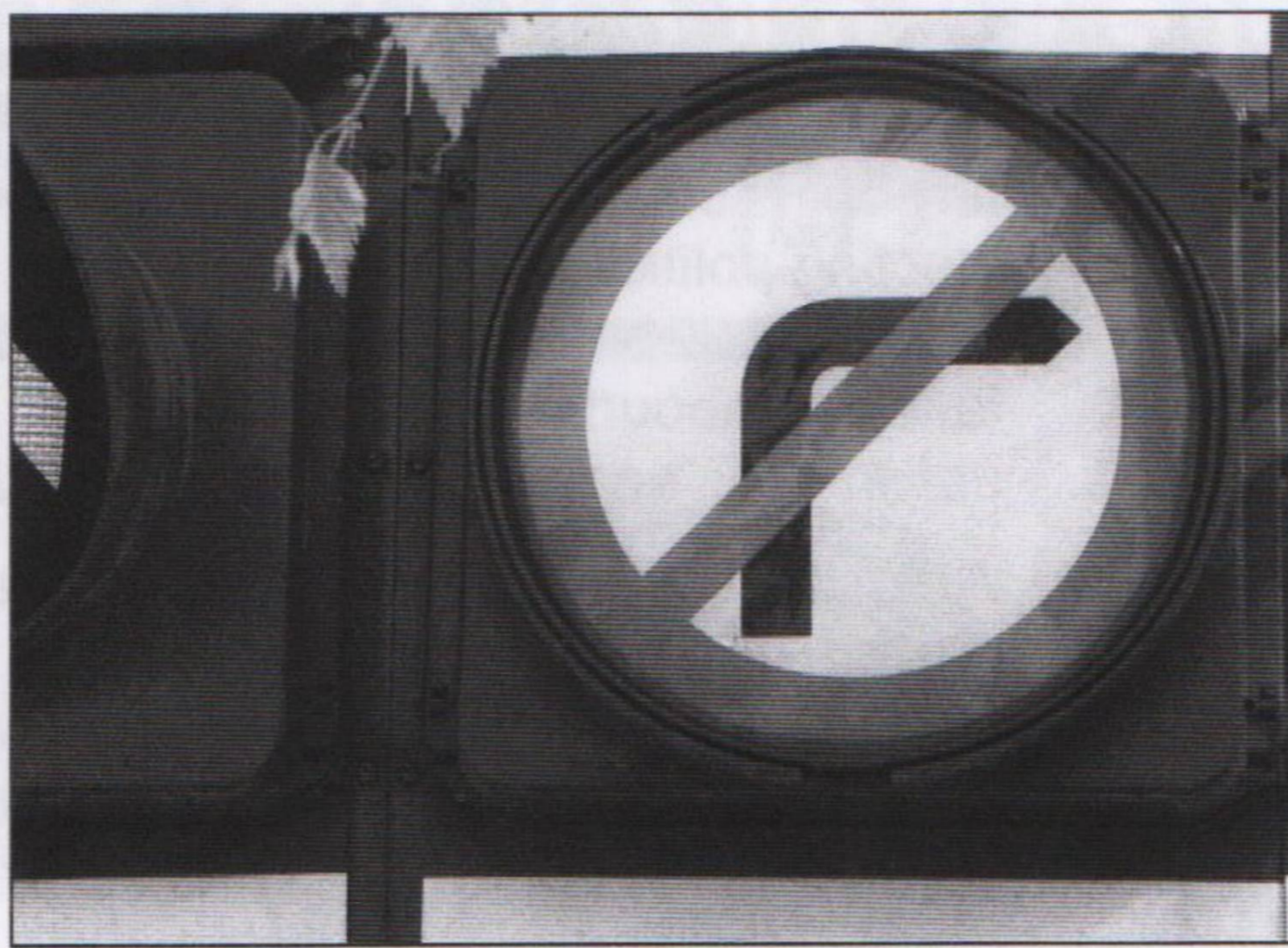
See www.vivisection.info/netcu_watch for more information.

Past the chain stores, then turn right towards the Wrong Solution

Herefordshire Council will try to build a Rotherwas Access Road under its own steam after spiralling costs lead central government to refuse funding for a third time. It is questionable why the council is so determined to continue with a scheme of doubtful benefit to local people. The local Chamber of Commerce has claimed that the road will "benefit the local economy as it would allow businesses to expand and attract businesses to the estate". This is of course exactly what we want - more big business moving in and turning Hereford into yet another clone town!

Hereford is already faced with the prospect of local cafés closing due to competition from Starbucks and Costa and a Caffé Nero on its way. Waterstones has a virtual monopoly of book sales, not to mention the almost complete Asda store, complementing the city's seven other supermarkets. Is this really a trend we want to encourage? Of course, as anyone in Herefordshire can tell you, traffic is a problem. But is a new road really a solution? If it does encourage new industry the roads will quickly fill up with delivery trucks and we will be back to square one! Rather than bumbling around with quick fix schemes, wouldn't it be better to try to strengthen local public transport? A bus can carry around 30 people in the space to two cars, and uses a lot less fuel. But at the moment we don't have nearly enough bus services, and many of the existing ones are unreliable and overpriced - unsurprising considering the bus companies are run to make money.

The city needs better bus services, combined with real cycle routes, as opposed to the pathetic bit of paint they sometimes put on the sides of roads, offering no protection whatsoever! This would be a sensible way of reducing traffic, especially considering the increasing threat of global warming. And of course, there is the question of how the council will pay for new road. Perhaps they will sell off more public buildings on the sly, as is fast



becoming their habit whenever they are strapped for cash. Not that they will bother to ask us whether we want our public property sold off.

We can moan about the antics of politicians as much as we like, but the fact is these problems will continue as long as the council controls all decision making. We don't need better leaders, we need no leaders at all! After all, it's a poor man's democracy when we give power away to a handful of councillors rather than making our own decisions as a community.

The solution is to get together in our communities and start neighbourhood assemblies - public, face-to-face meetings in every neighbourhood, town and village. Then ordinary people could make their own decisions without politicians or representatives - direct democracy!

The great thing about this idea is that we can start doing it right now! There are already community associations in many areas all over the county. These could act as embryonic forms of direct democracy. Why not send word to your neighbours, and hold an open meeting in your neighbourhood tomorrow? If we are tired of complaining about the council, we can organise to make them irrelevant, get rid of them altogether and take matters into our own hands.

I've seen that somewhere before

We publish an abridged article from Rebel Bull (November 2002). Rebel Bull was the bulletin of the Herefordshire Anarchist Group, now defunct, providing bold comment on local issues.

"A two mile access road from the A49 (southbound) to the Rotherwas industrial estate has been proposed, costing up to a ridiculous £20million; certainly enough to drastically improve public transport facilities in the county. And will it ease the traffic in and around Hereford? No. The plans for the road suggest that the only thing to flow more easily will be Capitalism: "An industrial estate should have a decent road and we do have to allow industry to thrive," says Phil Collins, whose company recently took over Thorn Lighting.

"The new road will also bring hundreds of new homes with it, meaning lots of extra vehicles through the city. But what the council have also failed to recognise is that most vehicles on our roads travel at rush hours when people are going to and from work and school, within the city. These problems need addressing desperately and providing a new 'access road' for a business park won't do much to change that."

S&A continued

This is exploitation of the highest order, and despite all the evidence, the farm's directors claim it is all lies. S&A Produce are now better known for their abuse and mistreatment of their workers than they are for their strawberries. The appalling conditions that they work under must end and S&A's profits must be hit hard.

Nothing is ever achieved by the submission of the workers and this is a case in point. If we are to see any meaningful improvement in this situation it will only come about by the self-organisation of the workers themselves. Only with their collective action and by our solidarity will anything be achieved.

Whilst the T&G are busy

negotiating with Tesco and Sainsburys to find a way out, the workers must take their own action. British natives will need no reminding that at the decisive moment the unions will sell-out the workers; a case of one step forward, two steps back.

Tesco and Sainsburys are both fully aware of the conditions of these workers, but continue to buy their strawberries from S&A Produce. Because of this we are calling for a boycott of these supermarkets. Where possible, buy other locally grown strawberries from on farms not owned by S&A. Better still, visit a 'pick your own'.

*Names have been changed.

ID scheme on the rocks

Senior Whitehall officials have said the multi-billion pound scheme for compulsory ID cards and the National Identity Register (NIR) could take years to introduce and is likely to end in failure. Officials responsible for ID in the Home Office are preparing for the project to be 'canned completely'.

We can rejoice that a damning verdict from those closest to the plan should help undermine Labour's attempts to win support for ID cards. But let's not get complacent, as even if the national register was scrapped completely, other developments in passports are carrying on regardless. The UK 'Identity and Passport service' will still be gathering more invasive biometrics in the near future. They are

already taking facial dimensions info from photos, and passports are likely to be made compulsory by the EU.

A cut-down NIR obtained from passport or driving licence applications would still give the State a considerable increase in power that will enable them to stop and check our details and track people across borders. For migrant workers, the need to carry a passport would allow for further check-ups and other harassment within the UK.

We need to keep up the pressure and refuse identity cards and database developments of any kind. Whatever happens to the scheme, we need to continue to build up our anti-ID campaigning and make sure the State realises the level of hatred for ID!

Anarchism aims to create a society without hierarchical authority. That means no divisions between rulers and ruled, workers and bosses, leaders and followers, order givers and order takers. It means decisions are made directly by those affected by them, not by authorities.

Anarchists seek freedom for all. Everyone should be free to determine their own destinies, limited only by the equal freedom of others. This freedom should be a real, actual possibility, not an abstract right.

Anarchists are opposed to patriarchy and to racism. A free society will not exist while women face fear, discrimination and dependence on men. Neither will it exist where people are judged because of the colour of their skin. Discrimination treats people as representatives of a stereotyped group, rather than free, unique individuals.

Anarchists are not opposed to organisation. Anarchy is about organisation. It is about voluntary co-operation between equals. We are opposed, however, to organisations based on authority and hierarchy.

Anarchists believe in the necessity of 'direct democracy'. Rather than taking the management of their own affairs away from people and putting it in the hands of others, anarchists favour organisations

which minimise authority, keeping power in the hands of those who are affected by any decisions reached. Instead of electing politicians to rule us, we can make our own decisions through face-to-face neighbourhood and workplace assemblies and voluntary confederations.

Anarchists seek the destruction of the State. The State centralises decision making power into the hands of a few, giving them the power to use violence to enforce their will. It separates society into rulers and ruled, and robs us of the freedom to control over their own lives. We will not be free while the State exists.

Anarchists seek an end to private property and state property. Of course, we recognise everyone has a right to personal possessions - we don't want to make our toothbrushes common property! Private property means the monopoly of wealth, the right to prevent others using it, whether you are using it or not. Property creates an authoritarian relationship between those who own the means of life, and those who use them but do not own them. We think that land should be managed by those who occupy or cultivate it. Houses should be managed by those who live in them, without having to grovel to landlords or local governments. Workplaces should be managed by those who work there, under the guidance of the wider community. In

short, "property" should be controlled by those who use it or are affected by its use. No one should "own" (i.e. control) land, housing and productive tools that they are not personally using - whether they are "private individuals" or government officials.

Anarchists are socialists. But we are **libertarian socialists**. For us, socialism means management of production by the workers themselves, not owners, bosses or government bureaucrats. Workplaces should not be controlled by private owners or by the state, but by those who do the work and by those people that are effected by the work. We should manage our workplaces without bosses, through workers councils - face-to-face meetings of the whole workforce in every factory, office or farm. These would collectively make all "management" decisions on a basis of one-worker-one-vote.

Anarchists take action in the here and now. We don't vote; we organise! We have as much freedom as we are willing to take. Only by taking direct action to change the world can a libertarian society be achieved. Anarchists are busy organising in their workplaces and communities, spreading our ideas and leading by example. We work to create the facts of the future, today, planting libertarian institutions like seeds within our authoritarian society.

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The Anarchist Federation (AF) is "an organisation of class struggle anarchists aiming to abolish capitalism and all oppression to create a free and equal society. This is anarchist communism." They push for the self-organisation of the working class and social revolution as "only the direct action of the working class people can defeat and ultimately overthrow capitalism." To achieve this, organisation is vital. The AF is the leading anarchist communist organisation in these isles and is a member of the International of Anarchist Federations (IAF).

IWW

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The Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) is an international revolutionary DIY union. From the preamble to their constitution: "The working class and employing class have nothing in common. There can be no peace so long as hunger and want are found among millions of the working people and the few, who make up the employing class, have all the good things in life. Between these two classes a struggle must go on until the workers of the world organise as a class, take production of the means of production, abolish the wage system and live in harmony with the earth."

Libcom

www.libcom.org

Libcom.org is a libertarian communist website promoting anarchist ideas in the British Isles. They provide an excellent source of information and make the ideal starting place for those web-inclined people wanting to find out more. Libcom also provide an up-to-date directory of anarchist and libertarian groups across the British Isles. For discussions on the ideas of anarchism, visit their lively forum pages.

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