

Freedom

anarchist fortnightly

Vol. 63 No. 2

26th January 2002

50p

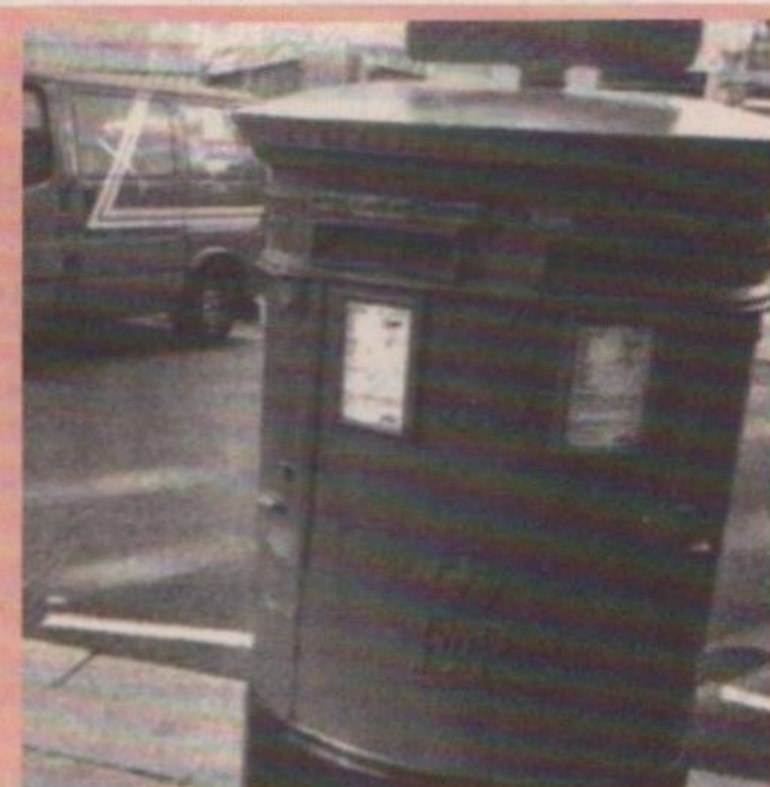
**NIGERIA
ON STRIKE**

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IN TURMOIL**

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**SEVEN
DECADES**

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Terror camps condemned

Alarm at the treatment of Afghan prisoners continued to grow at the start of this week, as US forces stepped up their programme of transferring alleged 'al-Qaeda suspects' to Guantánamo military base in Cuba. Human rights group Amnesty International has responded with horror to news that prisoners are drugged, hooded and shackled during the 20-hour flight from Afghanistan.

Under international conventions, including the Geneva Convention on the treatment of prisoners of war, shackles may only be used as a precaution against escape, damage or injury. Sedation of prisoners for non-medical purposes is also banned.

Amnesty has also expressed concern at the way prisoners are treated in the camp itself. Detainees are housed outdoors in small metal cages, lit at night by halogen lamps. "Housing detainees in small chain-link 'cages' at least partially open to the elements would fall below minimum standards for humane treatment", the organisation said a fortnight ago. To meet international standards, shelter must be provided against the elements.

But the American soldier in charge of security at the base defended the prisoners' treatment. "They will be able to get bagels and cream cheese, granola bars and Froot Loops", Brigadier General Michael Lehnert told reporters. "Each detainee has an Isomat to lie on. It is the same thing issued every day to our soldiers and marines in the field. I myself have spent a good portion of my Marine Corps career on one of these mats".

British state officials have insisted that prisoners must be treated in accordance with the Geneva Convention. One senior minister has been reported as saying that the US treatment of detainees was "monstrous". But at the start of this week, it emerged that seven British 'al-Qaeda suspects' held in Belmarsh jail, south east London, are also being kept in conditions which fall short even of usual prison standards. The seven, who are being held without charge under the government's internment measures, have allegedly been denied access to lawyers. They are held in windowless cells and take exercise indoors, so they see no daylight. They are prevented from speaking to their families in Arabic, unless an approved translator is present.

Human rights groups have complained to the Home Office, but say they have received no reply. But Home Office bureaucrats have defended their record. "All detainees enjoy the same rights as any other category A prisoner", a PR officer told the *Observer* newspaper on 20th January.

Scrap the prison system



Anarchists and other activists hope that a conference in London today (26th January) will kickstart a powerful movement for the abolition of jails. *Prison abolition or more prisons?* starts at 10.30am, Conway Hall, Holborn. For more on prisons, see pages 4, 5 and 7.

And they call this justice?

Five activists from the Simon Jones Memorial Campaign were due to face a court in Brighton this week, after a peaceful protest at Shoreham dockyard late last year. Around thirty people blockaded the docks on 3rd December, to protest at the acquittal of operators Euromin on charges of manslaughter. The company had been charged after the death of casual employee and *Schnews* contributor Simon Jones. Simon was killed in an industrial accident two hours after starting work at the yard in May 1998. Euromin was later found guilty of breaching health and safety regulations, and fined £50,000.

On 15th January, the five activists were charged with 'besetting', an offence under the 1992 Trade Union and Labour Relations Act. They were due to appear at Worthing magistrates' court on 23rd January.

One of the five, Carly North, a friend of

Simon's, said, "my friend died and the company that killed him gets off with a fine. I sit in their office for a couple of hours and get charged as if I'm the criminal. It was when I was getting fingerprinted and DNA-tested that I thought, 'no, this isn't right'."

She went on, "I just wish the police and the powers that be would put more effort and resources into arresting managers who risk their employees' lives".

In another case, an Essex teenager was last month crushed to death while working illegally on a quarry conveyor belt. Dean Butler was killed at the Rainbow Shaw Quarry in Linford near Grays on 5th December, a week short of his sixteenth birthday. He had been working at the site, operated by Clearserve Ltd, for just three days. EU employment law makes it illegal for people under the age of 16 to work in what are called 'dangerous occupations'.

In 2000, the last year for which full figures are available, 442 people in Britain died in work-related incidents.

• Activists from the Simon Jones Memorial Campaign were due to hold a rally in Brighton this Monday (21st January), under the title 'Life before Profit - Stopping the Corporate Killers'. The five Shoreham defendants were expected to join other activists and families of people killed at work, to highlight how little is done to prevent workplace deaths. A member of the campaign said, "people are being killed all the time by profit-hungry capitalists who know the government, its agencies and its courts will let them get away with murder when it comes to cutting safety. We've had enough". See www.simonjones.org.uk

Editorial on page 7

Freedom

anarchist fortnightly

*“Prison a social protection?
What monstrous mind ever
conceived such an idea?
Just as well say that health
can be promoted by
widespread contagion.”*

Emma Goldman, anarchist, 1869-1940

Anarchists work towards a society of mutual aid and voluntary co-operation. We reject all government and economic repression.

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IMF fuels discontent

Nigeria

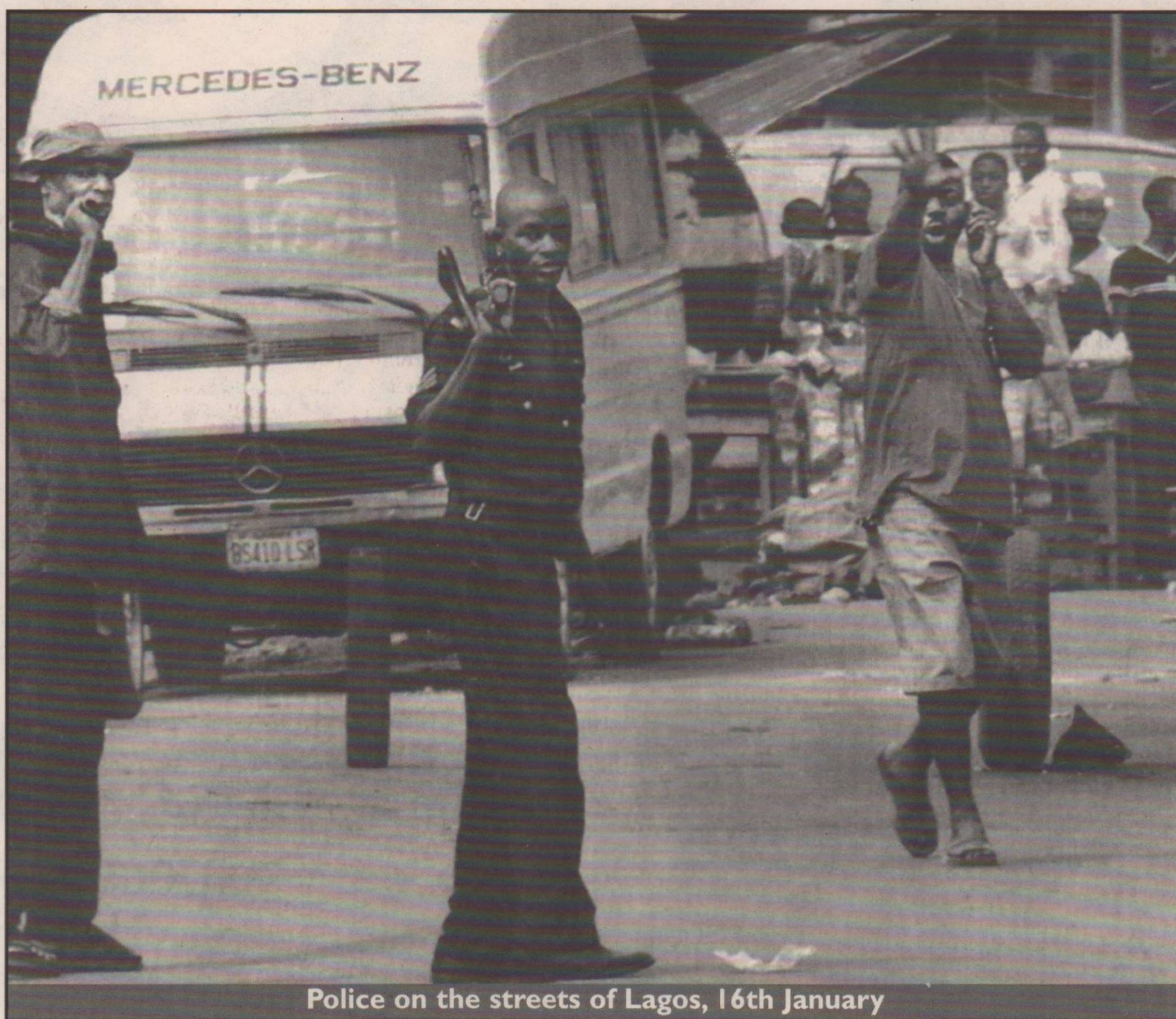
Offices and banks were shut down last week by a general strike that paralysed cities across the country. The strike was called in protest at a steep rise in the price of fuel.

In recent months, petrol and diesel prices have leapt up by 18%, while the price of paraffin has increased by 40%. The rises follow attempts by the government of President Olusegun Obasanjo to meet the demands from international creditors, including the International Monetary Fund (IMF).

On 16th January a rally in the capital, Abuja, saw clashes between strikers and police as cops moved to arrest trade union officials. These included Adams Oshiomhole, president of the Nigeria Labour Congress (NLC), which called the strike. The arrests sparked disturbances in other parts of the country too. Cops attacked picket lines in Lagos, and there were clashes in Ibadan, Kano, Kaduna, Makurdi and Port Harcourt.

But strikers vowed to continue their protest until the government reversed its energy policies. "The strike continues" insisted Oshiomhole after his arrest. "Nigerian workers are still angry. We will not be deterred".

The government declared the strike illegal on 15th January, the day it began. Ministers said it violated labour laws and would be "absolutely detrimental" to the interests of ordinary people. But the NLC insisted that only the courts had the power to take such a step. "The government cannot declare the strike illegal, because it is an executive body



Police on the streets of Lagos, 16th January

and not a judicial body", said NLC assistant secretary-general Owei Lakemfa. "It should go to court to declare the strike illegal".

President Obasanjo argues that price rises are necessary to stabilise fuel supplies, which are frequently disrupted even though the country is the world's sixth largest oil exporter. He also says they are part of his plan to deregulate the oil sector. Subsidies worth £1.5bn a year are currently being withdrawn.

But the NLC argues that Obasanjo has succumbed to pressure from the IMF. Bankers from the fund have demanded an end to the subsidies before granting relief on Nigeria's foreign debt of £20bn. An earlier attempt by Obasanjo to increase the price of fuel led to a similar strike in June 2000, in which scores of people died.

Editorial on page 7

Round the world

• **New York and Munich** Anarchists and other anti-capitalists are planning simultaneous demonstrations on two continents next week. American activists will attempt to disrupt the annual meeting of the World Economic Forum (WEF), which opens in New York on 31st January. In Germany, massive protests are expected against a conference of senior NATO staff, which opens in Munich on 1st February.

This is the first year in the history of the WEF that its summit has been held outside the Swiss ski resort of Davos. Security in the isolated mountain town cost the Swiss government over £3m in 2001. In New York, keeping protests at bay will be the responsibility of mayor Michael Bloomberg. As a WEF member himself, he will also be able to join 3,000 other politicians and business people inside Manhattan's Waldorf-Astoria hotel, to discuss topics which include the so-called 'campaign against terror'.

Thousands of activists are expected to attempt a blockade of the meeting. Many of them say that the decision to switch venues came about because of a successful blockade last year. One New Yorker, Beatrice Moran, says "the WEF is moving here because they were effectively chased out of Switzerland."

But she insists that they will not be welcome in New York either. "We're calling for a joyous, creative resistance to the stifling grey culture of corporate conformity. We're calling for a world in which states and their wars will finally be banished from this earth. Nothing is impossible if we refuse to live in fear".

Meanwhile, anti-militarists in Germany are planning a massive protest to mark the two-day NATO Security Conference. Held in Munich every year, the conference allows civilian officials to share information with senior killers in uniform.

• **Argentina** There were fresh clashes last week, as thousands again took to the streets in protest at government economic policies. At least ten people were wounded on 18th January, when cops fired rubber bullets at workers in the northern city of Santiago del Estero. Earlier in the week, riot cops held back a march of the unemployed in Buenos Aires, to prevent the marchers from reaching the presidential palace, the Casa Rosada.

On the same day, 15th January, thousands of jobless people blocked major roads around the country, while protesters in Santa Fe and Jujuy provinces attacked banks. The banks have been a target for many protesters, because of six-week old restrictions on withdrawing savings. Foreign-owned banks in particular, which have controlled the banking system since large-scale privatisations in the 1990s, have been subjected to a sustained campaign of vandalism.



Argentines have had enough

• **Croatia** After discussions between anarchists, as well as some public events, it was obvious that the anarchist movement needed regular events in Zagreb. *Subverzije* (subversions) now happen every Monday evening, covering different issues each time. They provide a space for anarchists and everyone else who is interested in anarchism to talk and find out more about anarchist projects, media and views. The main idea was to create open evenings with a loose programme and lots of space for open discussion.

For the first time in the city, there is an anarchist event that is of interest not only to anarchists, but to everyone else as well. Getting out of the closed circle was a very important step. Now between 50 and 150 people show up to every evening. We will continue with the programme for the next two months – for the next eight weeks, our subject is 'anarchism and the arts', with one form of art being considered every week. For more information, get in touch.

Markos
markos@zamir.net

• **Kenya** Six out of every ten people shot dead in the country in the last five years were killed by police, a study revealed last week. In 2001, cops killed ten times as many people as so-called 'criminals' – 232 compared to 23. The details of the confidential report by medical and legal experts were revealed by the *Daily Nation* newspaper on 14th January.

"It could be argued that the increase in police shootings was in response to the increase in fire-armed criminals that they confronted", the study said. "But some might see it as an increase in unjustified lethal shootings by the police". Relatives of the dead accuse cops of being keen to draw their guns, but police representatives deny this.

Turmoil at the Royal Mail

The Post Office Board must be thanking the ongoing crisis on the rail network, as it means their own self-inflicted problems are overshadowed by criticism of Stephen Byers, Secretary of State for Transport, and his inept handling of the railways.

Consignia (a name the public shows no sign of associating with the postal service) has announced that 12,000 management jobs are to go in the near future. These concern mostly low-grade managers, who imagined they had gained a foothold on the promotion ladder.

They are used as a blunt instrument by higher management, to bully and cajole the rank and file into working harder for fewer rewards. Most industrial disputes in the postal service are a reaction against the way these people treat workers.

Now the Communication Workers Union (CWU) is due to ballot for industrial action in relation to a 5% pay claim. They also hope to have workers on a 35-hour week within the next few years. Average take-home pay for postal workers is around £150-180 per week, and 65% of staff still work Monday to Saturday. The union is pushing for a massive vote in favour of industrial action. But officials fail to take into account resentment among members against the union leadership, and the vote could be a close-run thing. This would result in embarrassment for CWU bosses Billy Hayes and John Keggie, whatever the outcome.

The Royal Mail currently has a delivery standard which means all mail on first delivery



must be delivered by 9.30am. A delivery should officially take 2½ hours to complete. This standard has been officially waived by managers knowing it is impossible to achieve. Complaints from customers receiving mail anything up to early afternoon have soared.

To combat this the Royal Mail, with union approval, is expected to announce a four-hour delivery specification within the next few weeks. Despite jointly agreed initiatives from the CWU and Royal Mail in recent years, such as 'The Luton Specification' and 'The Interim Delivery Agreement' (which considers walking around in bad weather for

2½ hours an acceptable limit for staff to cope with), senior management now think four hours will be fine.

No doubt it will be fine for union bosses and managers. They're in warm, furnished offices, never far from a toilet and never far from a kettle. The toilet requirements of postmen, and particularly of postwomen, do not concern these individuals. Catering facilities in medium to small delivery offices are non-existent. Staff going home to use the toilet or make a cup of tea are routinely disciplined by managers who sit at desks sipping hot coffee. Staff at Watford were

informed they must ask a manager before they were allowed to get a drink of water.

Royal Mail bosses are set to announce the removal of second class letter post. This was introduced in 1968 with the intention of prioritising mail and allowing for greater efficiency in delivering time-critical letters. The move will increase revenue as people will be forced to buy stamps at the higher tariff.

Phasing out second deliveries is expected to be made official at the same time as the new delivery specification is announced. In many parts of the country, second deliveries are cancelled by local managers, who find staff refusing to work overtime to clear overloaded first deliveries and use second delivery time to get this mail out.

Greater commercial freedom, introduced by the government two years ago, has resulted in higher management squandering hundreds of millions of pounds on purchasing loss-making concerns in Europe. The Royal Mail is now going to headhunt business brains from outside the industry, to get things on what they think will be the right track. Every employee has received a letter asking them to be more flexible. One such 'brain', recruited to the Post Office Board from Avon cosmetics, appeared on the BBC programme *Watchdog* and made a laughing stock of herself by telling viewers that the Royal Mail had never had a policy of second deliveries. She won't be looking for a bush to piss behind on a cold morning delivery. Pity.

Liverpool Postie

News in Brief

• **Young anarchists** Around fifteen people met in Holborn on 12th January to form a young anarchists' group. News of the meeting had earlier appeared on the National Front website. Just before midday, a couple of rightwing extremists turned up, but they were police (the fash were all in Bromley for the day).

The cops filmed us from the other side of the street, and when everyone was there they came over, asking for names and addresses and what we were doing (they didn't get any info). Then they followed us round most of London. It was only when we tried to lose them in the National Gallery that they got a bit uppity. We split up, but they carried on following me and another bloke. When we tried to lose them in the revolving doors, they grabbed us both and started telling us we looked like terrorists. They also said we'd lost our right to privacy because we were in a 'public order situation'. Maybe I'll look that one up, though.

JIM

• **Swansea** Members of the IWW did some recruiting last week, as representatives of the GAP used a city Job Centre and nearby hotel to interview staff for a new store.

Activists met outside the Job Centre on 14th and 15th January to distribute leaflets to prospective GAP employees as they left their interviews. Passersby also took copies.

One activist said, "only two refused to take a copy, and most were definitely pro-union. Hopefully some of them will take up IWW activity in Swansea".

Tea breaks were offered at the newly opened Community Resource Centre on the High Street.

• **Bristol** The first public meeting of the Black Cat Collective was held in Easton on 17th January. Organisers of the group said it

had been set up to spread anarchist ideas and organise actions. "We want to motivate people's imagination, to bring about the destruction of capitalism and the overthrow of the state", they said. "The group is entirely open to anyone who is sick of this society and wants to fight back".

You can get in touch with them by email at Black_Cat_Collective@yahoo.co.uk. Their address is Box 22, Greenleaf Bookshop, Colston Street, Bristol BS1 5BB, telephone 07905-720 575.

Remembering Jimmy

East Sussex

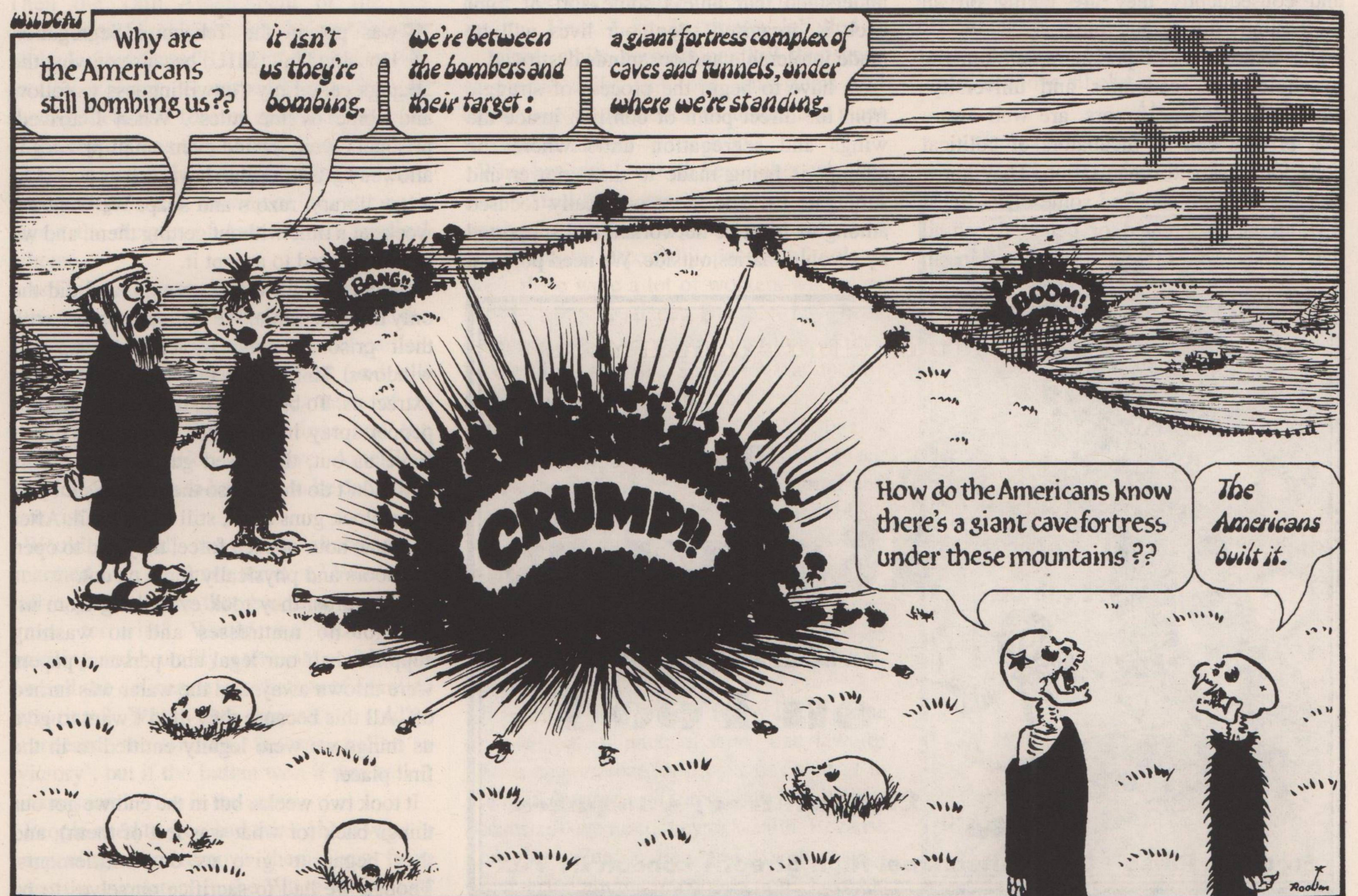
The sister of a man shot dead by Sussex cops laid a wreath outside police headquarters last week, to mark the fourth anniversary of his death. Pauline Ashley has vowed to return to the offices in Lewes every year until a public enquiry into her brother's death is held.

Jimmy Ashley was shot dead during a raid on his flat in St Leonards on 15th January 1998. He was naked, unarmed and lying in bed at the time. The cop who killed him, PC

Chris Sherwood, was cleared of murder and manslaughter in February last year, on the directions of an Old Bailey judge.

Home Secretary David Blunkett has so far ignored demands to order an official enquiry, though he did force the early retirement of Sussex chief constable Paul Whitehouse.

Pauline turned down an offer to meet senior cops to discuss the case. "I don't trust them as far as I can throw them", she told *Freedom*. "We want a full, open and public enquiry, we want the officers involved to be questioned about the parts they played in that raid".



British and US prisoners report on resistance behind bars ...

Prisoners fighting back

Turkish political prisoners are still dying in a mass hunger strike against increased state repression. Their situation reflects a wider struggle, which is currently being fought in prison systems throughout Europe and north America as the state tries to eradicate all resistance among prisoners and to impose absolute control.

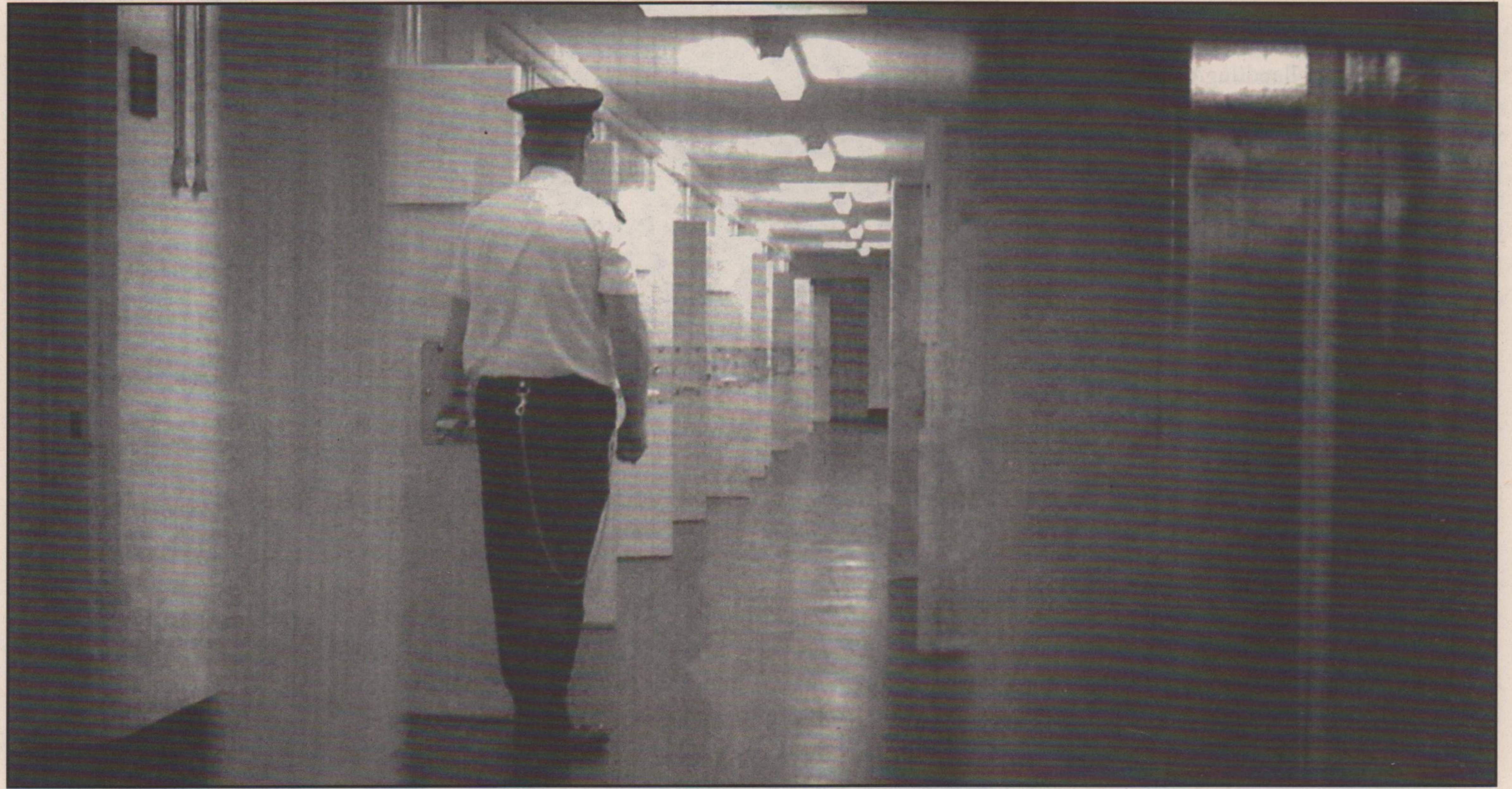
In line with a worldwide strategy of defeating opposition and destroying working class organisation, prison regimes have been given a greater emphasis as instruments of political and psychological violence. In response to the economic and social interests of globalisation and imperialism, prisons are being integrated into a wider network of political control and repression than ever before.

In Britain, the transformation of regimes (especially for long-term prisoners) has been radical and relentless. In less than seven years, dispersal prisons have been reshaped into control units. The creation of so-called 'incentives and earned privileges' (IEP) schemes, and the heavy involvement of psychologists in intensive 'course work', has exerted a degree of control and manipulation over prisoners that is almost total.

Regimes which had previously recognised the need of long-term prisoners for a reasonable degree of psychological space and the right to complain collectively have been irreversibly transformed into clinical instruments of psychological and political control, and there exists now a definite uniformity of such prison regimes around the world.

The attempt by the Turkish state to move its political prisoners into cellular accommodation, much like Northern Ireland's H-blocks, has essentially been an attempt to individualise, depoliticise and disorganise them. It represents a pattern of control prevalent in prison systems everywhere. Now, more than ever, national governments have become puppets of international capitalism and all currently pursue a singular agenda: the eradication of political and social protest and dissent, both inside and outside prison. The reality is that prisons are being made laboratories of social and political control, and consequently they are taking on an increasingly murderous role.

The technicians of prison repression, the psychologists, academics and university-educated prison governors, are well aware that prisons can be incubators of political consciousness and organisation. They know that the struggle can find some of its finest revolutionaries created or detained behind bars. They are, therefore, engaged in an



unremitting and daily war to seize control of the prisoners' minds and root out any sign of collective strength or solidarity.

The struggle of prisoners in Turkey to resist such depoliticisation and dehumanisation is a struggle that should be shared by prisoners everywhere. The collective strength of prisoners, when realised and expressed, is potentially such that we need only withdraw our cooperation from regimes to render them unworkable and obsolete. Even the most passive expression of that strength, a refusal to recognise or cooperate with prison psychologists and their behaviour modification programmes (for example) would throw prison-administrations into a panic and force them to rethink their strategy.

We have the strength to change prisons irrevocably should we start to recognise our common interest and basic unity. Absolutely nothing about the way prisons are currently run and operated is immutable or resistant to the pressure we could potentially put on it. It is critically important that, as prisoners, we understand that unless some sort of fight back is organised soon, our lives will be made intolerable and our minds destroyed.

We have to begin the process of struggle from the direct point of conflict, inside the wings and segregation units where the attempt is being made to disempower and subjugate us. The more politically focused among us must be networked and supported by revolutionaries outside. We need political

support on the outside to highlight our struggle, and prevent the system from isolating and destroying our best activists.

It isn't going to be easy organising an effective fightback in prison. A lot of ground has been seized by the system over the last few years, and it will resist with all its might any attempt by prisoners to alter the current balance of power. But it is also important to recognise that the system's power is maintained, not just by the goon squad and punishment unit, but that it depends – critically – on our cooperation. Nothing about prison regimes exists unless we recognise it; nothing they try can succeed unless we allow it. We can make the final difference when it comes to how we're treated, and in a system and society that now seeks to engineer our destruction, it's critical that we realise this. What do other prisoners think?

John Bowden

B41173, HMP Bristol,
Cambridge Road, Bristol BS7 8PS

I was put in the Tehachipi Segregation Housing Unit (SHU) because of what the pigs called my "unwillingness to follow and abide by the rules". When I arrived, prisoners were denied even small privileges allowed by Californian law, such as access to a law library, razors and soap. We went for weeks at a time without getting them, and we were expected to accept it.

We decided we'd had enough, and did the only thing possible. We decided to mess with their prisoner count by covering up our windows. This meant that they had to cell-extract us. To begin with, they let off cans of pepper spray in the cells. When that didn't force us out, they used gas canisters. This still didn't do the job, so they began shooting their block guns at us, still to no avail. After about an hour of such force, they had to open the doors and physically force us out.

Afterwards, they took everything from us. We got no mattresses and no washing supplies, half our legal and personal papers were thrown away, and the water was turned off. All this because they didn't want to give us things we were legally entitled to in the first place.

It took two weeks, but in the end we got our things back (or what was left of them), and they began to give us our entitlements. Though we had to sacrifice ourselves to be

heard, it worked. We not only bettered our own living conditions, but those of everyone in the block. But treatment of this sort (and worse) is happening throughout Californian prisons and in other US prisons as well. The pigs are always trying to get one over on us, and the only way to fight such injustices is to work together in harmony. What they don't like is when we all work together – it makes them feel threatened. They'd rather see us kill each other.

It's bad enough being in a regular prison, but the SHU is torture. I've been bounced from place to place because I won't cease the struggle against the tyrants who keep me down. The tactics they've used since I came into the system have not and will not work. I just laugh in their faces as their anger grows. I will always oppose them and applaud all those (inside and outside) who work to abolish the current system. The way we live now only benefits the rich, but we the people have a voice and the choice to do something about it.

I will continue to try and unite those who will listen, to work together against an administration which oppresses us and uses any methods, legal or illegal, to keep us down. The support of *Freedom* readers only strengthens those of us who are active inside.

Millions of us fighting the same cause, and this keeps me going. I can look adversity in the face because I am not alone in struggle. When we unite, we can and will succeed. Que signa la lucha mis companeros y companeras!

Armando Lopez

K21565, California Correctional Institute,
PO Box 1906-4B7B 108,
Tehachipi, CA 93581, USA

Since the attacks of 11th September, many of us (myself included) have found ourselves being scrutinised, interrogated, threatened and harassed because we are known within the prison systems of Amerikkka and are not broken in spirit. We haven't given up our voices or our dissent against the policies of the state.

What I have found since the attacks is that people I once thought of as comrades and friends have turned their backs on me, shunned me, distanced themselves from me and – in some cases – declared me their enemy. This saddens me. I expect it from the

(continued on page 5)

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... while activists on the outside meet to discuss prison abolition

Manacles of the past



Detail from *Prisoners Round* (after Doré) by Van Gogh

In October the Lord Chief Justice urged magistrates and judges to reduce short term prison sentences by as much as half, to ensure that the state only sends people to prison "if it is really necessary". In the *Law Gazette* the same month, solicitor Daniel Machover said "prisoners are demonised in the public mind as being all murderers and rapists, whereas the reality is that only a tiny percentage of prisoners are *bad*".

A look at Home Office statistics reveals that most crime recorded is property-related. This includes possession of drugs, which shouldn't be a criminal offence. For people

addicted to crack and heroin, their addiction should be treated as a health problem. Many of the addicts behind petty crimes such as shoplifting, or who are involved in prostitution, could be helped if we stopped stigmatising and criminalising their addiction. The only people I've known who have been addicted to hard drugs have at the same time held down full or part-time employment. This challenges the stereotypes of the addict as crusty punk, who hassles everyone who uses a cashpoint machine. A look at the medical and marketing professions would reveal many middle class addicts, whose problem will

probably be treated as a health one.

Plea bargaining has been encouraged to help the criminal justice system become more effective, and to be seen as winning 'the war on crime'. The Criminal Justice and Public Order Act encourages defendants to admit guilt by offering in return a reduction in their sentence. Miscarriages of justice are escalating, and no wonder when defendants are offered a shorter sentence for admitting guilt. Most people are aware (as the case of Stephen Downing proves) that if you maintain and protest your innocence you are likely to do the full sentence, if not even longer.

As an anarchist, I am in favour of using restorative justice as a way of avoiding the courts, and to reach a compromise which best suits the defendant and the victim. Building more and more prisons is a backward way of dealing with crime, as jails are by their very nature counter-productive. Their abolition is an essential move towards progressive social change, where the obsession towards punishment and retribution becomes a thing of the past.

Lee H.

Editorial on page 7

(continued from page 4)

government and even the administrators and guards who keep me in captivity. But to see it happening from these people has given me pause to analyse things.

It reminds me of the 1960s and early 1970s, when there were a lot of people claiming to be for the Black struggle, for civil rights and all that, only to blend later into the status quo. They have become mainstream, cashing in on the yuppie thing. They have become kapitalist. This is what I'm seeing now.

Many young whites who used to voice their distaste for Amerikkka are now waving the US flag wildly and voicing their bloodlust for war. Many people are willing to give up all their rights on the pretext of better security. So I see the beginning of the complete erosion of the façade called democracy. It's been creeping along for some time, but now there's no need to creep. The powers that be are openly letting people know that this is what they can expect.

There's talk in the US Congress about forcing all Americans to have nationality cards. This is something I cannot accept because my nationality isn't Amerikan, nor will I ever accept such a thing being imposed on me. My people were called property and stripped of all human rights (Amerikan slaves were considered three-fifths human).

Then the 14th Amendment of the US constitution forced them into being "citizens of the United States", so that the state could get away from its responsibility for enslaving them and forever deny any prospect of the reparations they'd been promised.

This is what I see with the so-called Nationality Card. It's a way of forcing one to accept the dictates of Amerikkka's political scheme.

As I sit inside one of Amerikkka's prisons, I'm astounded how nobody calls the government 'terrorist', when it has participated in, condoned and practised (and still practises) terrorism against segments of its own citizenry - Blacks, Latinos and the various first nations (Native Amerikan people). What has to be done to be deemed a terrorist?

Would we call the police shooting an unarmed man 41 times terrorist? Would we call a police force that has shot a girl 21 times terrorist? Would we call racial profiling and brutality a terrorist act? Would we call the deliberate destruction of families terrorism? When the Amerikan soldier murdered the Indian, it was called a 'victory', but if the Indian won it was called a 'massacre'. This is the same.

People need to stop and think about what is happening, and remove themselves from what the murderers in the White House and

their corporate-bought news media are saying. Here I sit in prison labelled a criminal, while corporations kill thousands of people daily, ruin our ecosystems and cause massive extinction of animal and plant life that can never be replaced.

What happened on 11th September, whether one wishes to accept the fact or not, is a result of Amerikkka's global indifference to other people, especially people of colour. Sure, there were a lot of workers who were killed during the attacks. But there have been hundreds of thousands, even millions, killed by the aggression of US policies that nobody rushed to denounce. Why not?

Because it didn't happen in the US, or if it did (the lynching of thousands of black necks, the burning of homes, the brutal and open white hatred that flurried against black schoolchildren over bussing), who said anything except for the victims themselves? I'm not waving no goddamned red, white and blue flag because to me that flag is worse than the Confederate flag. The US flag is a terrorist flag.

I'm denied the right to live my life because of a system of unequal laws, one law for whites and another for people of colour. I'm living in a prison and forced into humiliation because I have no money or wealth. Because I have no influence, nor can I pay off corrupt officials to gain my freedom. I don't have the

right voice for them. But I have the voice of dissent and of revolution, and for as long as I have that voice, I will speak out against this injustice above all else.

Ali Khalid Abdullah

s/n #148130, 3225 John Conley Drive, Lapeer, MI 48446, USA

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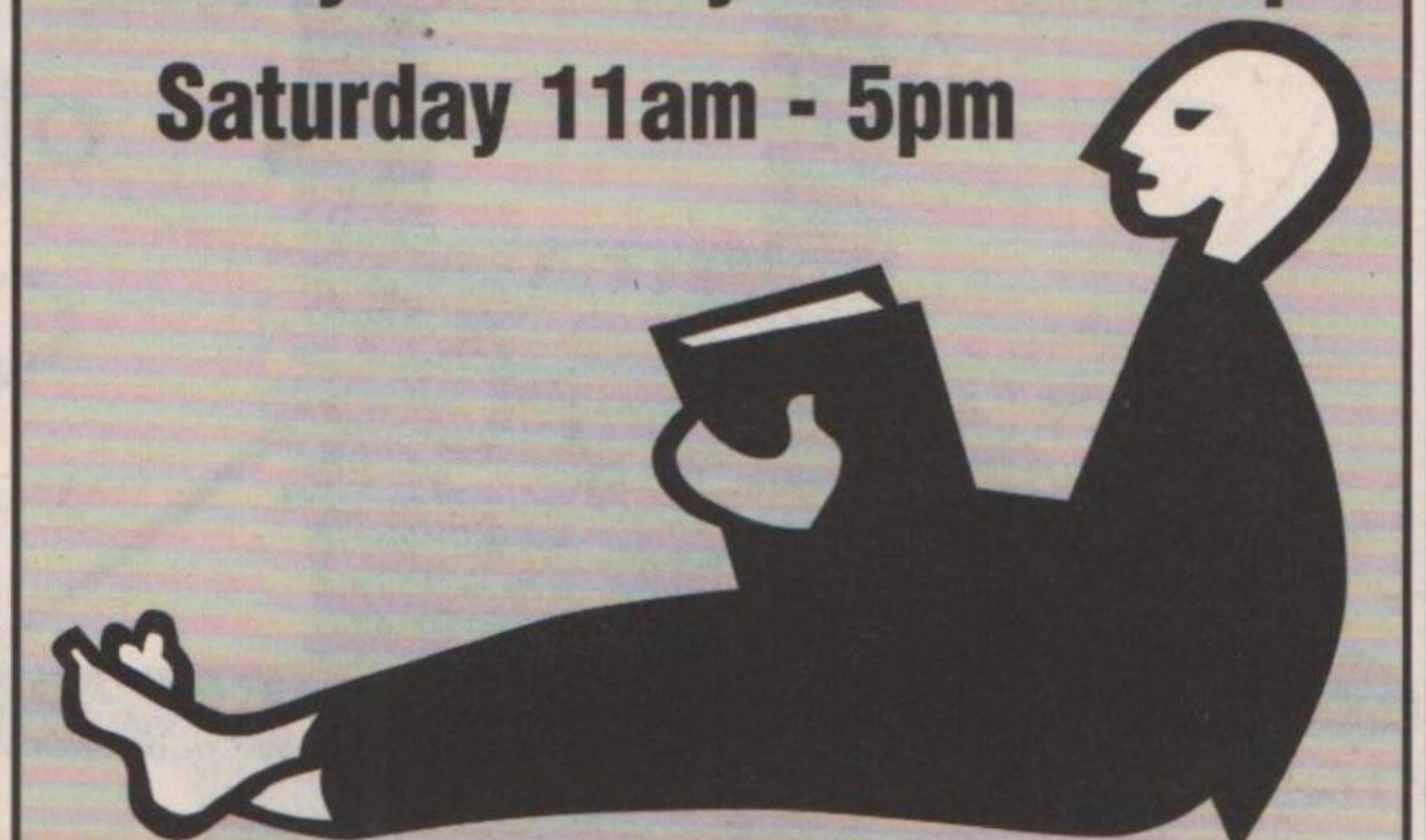
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Books can be ordered from the above address.
A booklist is available on request.

Seven decades of Vernon Richards

An influential figure in British anarchism as well as an early force behind Freedom Press (publishers of this newspaper), Vernon Richards died on 10th December. Besides being a key personality on the London anarchist scene from the 1930s almost to the end of the twentieth century, he was for many anarchists a controversial figure.

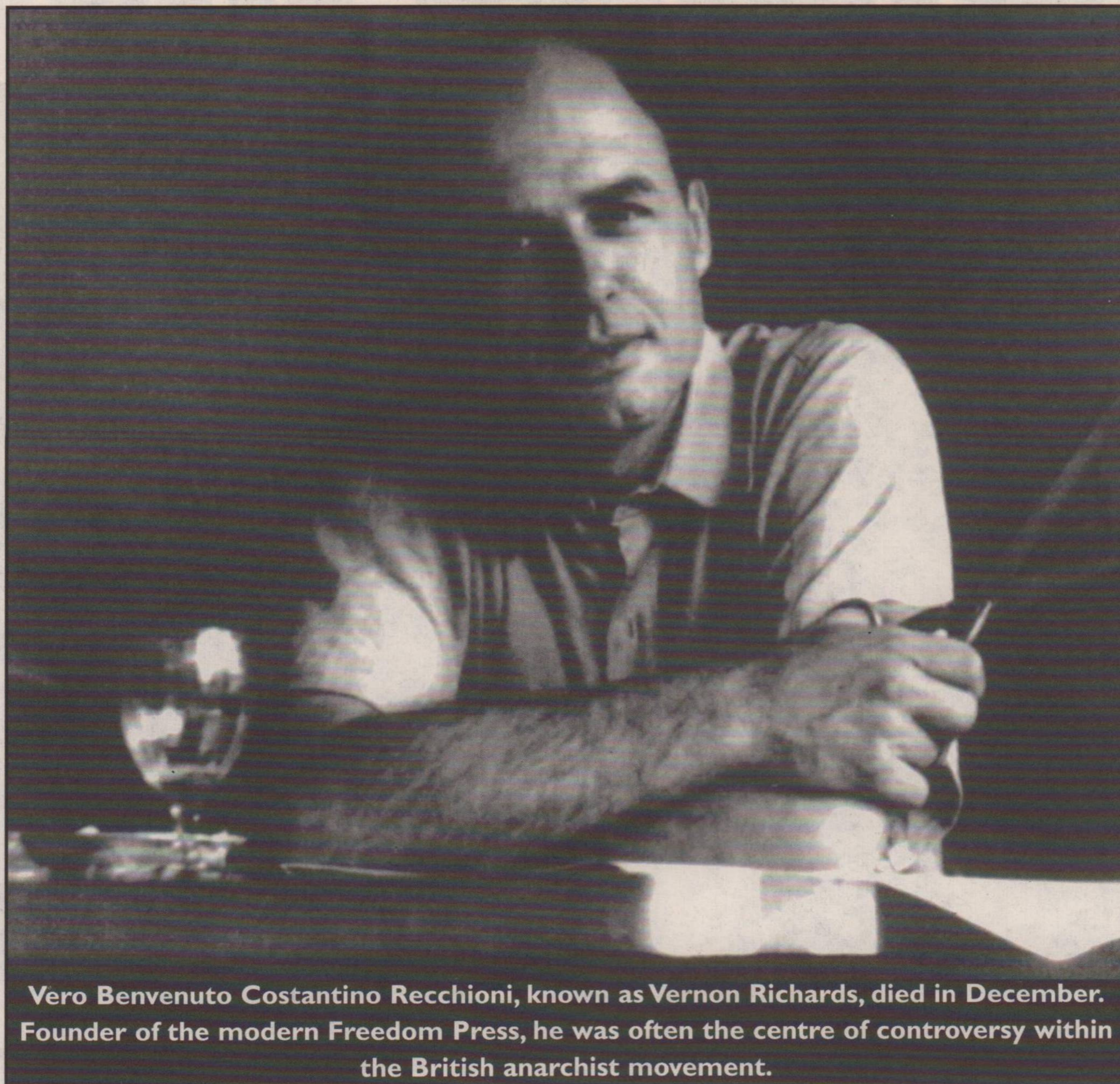
He was born Vero Benvenuto Costantino Recchioni, and he was always known as Vero at Freedom Press. His father, Emidio, had been a *compañero* of the Italian anarchist Errico Malatesta. Richards described himself as an anarcho-communist in the Malatesta mould, and in 1965 Freedom Press published his book *Malatesta: his life and ideas*. I encountered *Freedom* first on a CND march about 1959, and I was excited by Vero's editorials at that time.

It was a time of political ferment on the British left, with developments in the anti-apartheid and peace movements. There had been a boycott of South African goods and direct actions by peace activists. In its editorials, *Freedom* thundered on about what ought to be done by these activists and even tackled environmental matters such as the place of the car or air-travel in our society.

Vero joined a demonstration of the Committee of 100 at Weatherfield in the December of 1961, initially intending to participate as an observer, but ultimately joining in out of "a feeling of solidarity" inspired by "regard for close friends deeply committed to the demonstration". In a later editorial comment on this experience entitled 'Inquest on the sit-down', he wrote "this is not the way to carry on the struggle against the forces of authority".

Richards had, with others, set up the paper *Spain and the World*, to cover events during the Spanish Civil War. What made this such a vital publication was the way it covered the war through first-hand accounts. It was replaced, first by *Revolt!* and then – at the onset of the Second World War – by *War Commentary*, a paper with a similar vitality that tackled issues from within. Compared to these, the *Freedom* I knew in the 1960s (which Vero still edited) often seemed an aloof chronicle, full of critical carping from the sidelines.

The growing anarchist movement after 1963 began to react against this seemingly detached analysis. Young people who came to anarchism from the peace movement joined with more seasoned critics of *Freedom* to speak on behalf of the anarchist movement as a whole. In 1965, Richards resigned as editor,



Vero Benvenuto Costantino Recchioni, known as Vernon Richards, died in December. Founder of the modern Freedom Press, he was often the centre of controversy within the British anarchist movement.

to be "put out to grass" as he later claimed. An editorial collective, which included some anarcho-syndicalists, was set up to replace him. Vero had long been critical of the anarcho-syndicalist tendency in anarchism, and expressed this view in his book *Lessons of the Spanish Revolution* (1953), when he criticised the Spanish CNT and their role in the Spanish Civil War.

In an expanded version, published in Italian and Spanish, he turned for support to José Peirats's *Los Anarchistas en la Crisis Política Espanola* as well as to an essay by J. Romero Maura, entitled 'The Spanish Case'. He quotes Peirats as saying the CNT leaders in Spain "surrendered the revolution", although he also argued that 'the CNT "success story", compared to the rest of Europe, is that it was more deeply influenced by anarchist rather than Marxist or reformist influences'. He quoted Maura to show that 'insurrection' had more anarchist integrity than the 'General Strike'. He neglected to mention that one of Peirats's criticisms of the Spanish anarchists in his book *La CNT en la Revolución Espanola* was that the movement was 'too urban' and 'too insurrectionary' in its conduct of the revolution, surrendering the countryside and villages once the big towns and cities were lost. Vero could never pass up a chance to promote the

ideas of Malatesta, who was hostile to the idea of a General Strike.

The conflict between Richards and the anarcho-syndicalists began in the 1940s, when there were disputes between the Spanish anarchist exiles in London and what later became known as the Freedom Press Group. The Spaniards, together with some sections of the old Anarchist Federation, wanted *Freedom* brought under democratic control. Vero and a number of others took a different view, and as a consequence the British anarchist movement split.

Commenting on the Communist Party in Britain, the historian A.J.P. Taylor said its members were not so much communists as Palm-Duttists – they reflected the attitudes of their leader, Palm-Dutt. Was *Freedom* Press at any time 'Richardsist' in the same way? Vero was always very influential at *Freedom* Press. A recent writer, commenting on developments after the Second World War, has suggested that the position of *Freedom* changed from something like that of the politically acerbic Goldstein in Orwell's *1984* to that of the sexually-obsessed Julia in the same novel. Indeed, one commentator in *Freedom* recently suggested that Julia was a better representation of the anarchist point of view than Winston Smith himself.

I never got too close to Vero, for much the same reason Orwell never went to literary cocktail parties – I didn't want to get too cosy with someone I might have to criticise in reviews or articles. With me too, I think, it was instinctive to my northern working class upbringing, it being unseemly to buy drinks for the foreman or the boss.

Under Richards's control from the 1940s to the 1960s, *Freedom* became less concerned with class and social struggle and everyday events, and more concerned with civil liberties and the sexual ideas of Wilhelm Reich. In a sense, Goldstein and the experiences of the Spanish Civil War were out, Julia and sexual liberation were in. Nevertheless, he gave the anarchist movement a sense of continuity and, over decades in which other publications came and went, we could always be sure that *Freedom* or *Anarchy* or *The Raven* would be dropping through the letter box.

Brian Bamford

There was a full obituary of Vero in the previous issue of *Freedom*.

— OBITUARY —

Mika Talvilahti

4th March 1974 - 28th December 2001

It is with great sadness that I write of the passing of London-based anarchist Mika Talvilahti, at the tragically young age of 27. He was born in the town of Saarijärvi, in the rural Jyväskylä region of Finland. Like many young Finns, he was radicalised by the state's presumption that he was its property, and that as such he should serve in its army.

Mika rebelled against the call to military service, throwing his lot in with the 'objectors'. His life would never be the same.

The Finnish state has taken advantage of the country's close proximity to the old USSR to generate a culture of contempt for those young men who refuse to 'do their duty' and defend 'their country'.

When you refuse military service in Finland, you are not just defying the state, but also public opinion.

Mika fought both, his brave and defiant spirit moving him to involve himself more deeply in radical politics, adding anti-fascist work to his activities. At the age of 22, with work in short supply (particularly so for objectors), he packed up and made his way from Saarijärvi to London.

A deep thinker, on his arrival he spent a long time mulling over his political experiences to date. Despite the social censure he had experienced in Finland, he hadn't lost his faith in the revolutionary potential of working

class people. In his usual unassuming and unaffected manner, he figured that if a self-educated man like himself could become an anarchist, anyone could!

He decided he should move beyond activities emphasising a particular single issue, and work instead to spread revolutionary anarchist ideas and action in general.

He involved himself in the activities of the London group of the Anarchist Federation, and helped set up the Walthamstow Anarchist Group, into which he put a tremendous amount of time and energy.

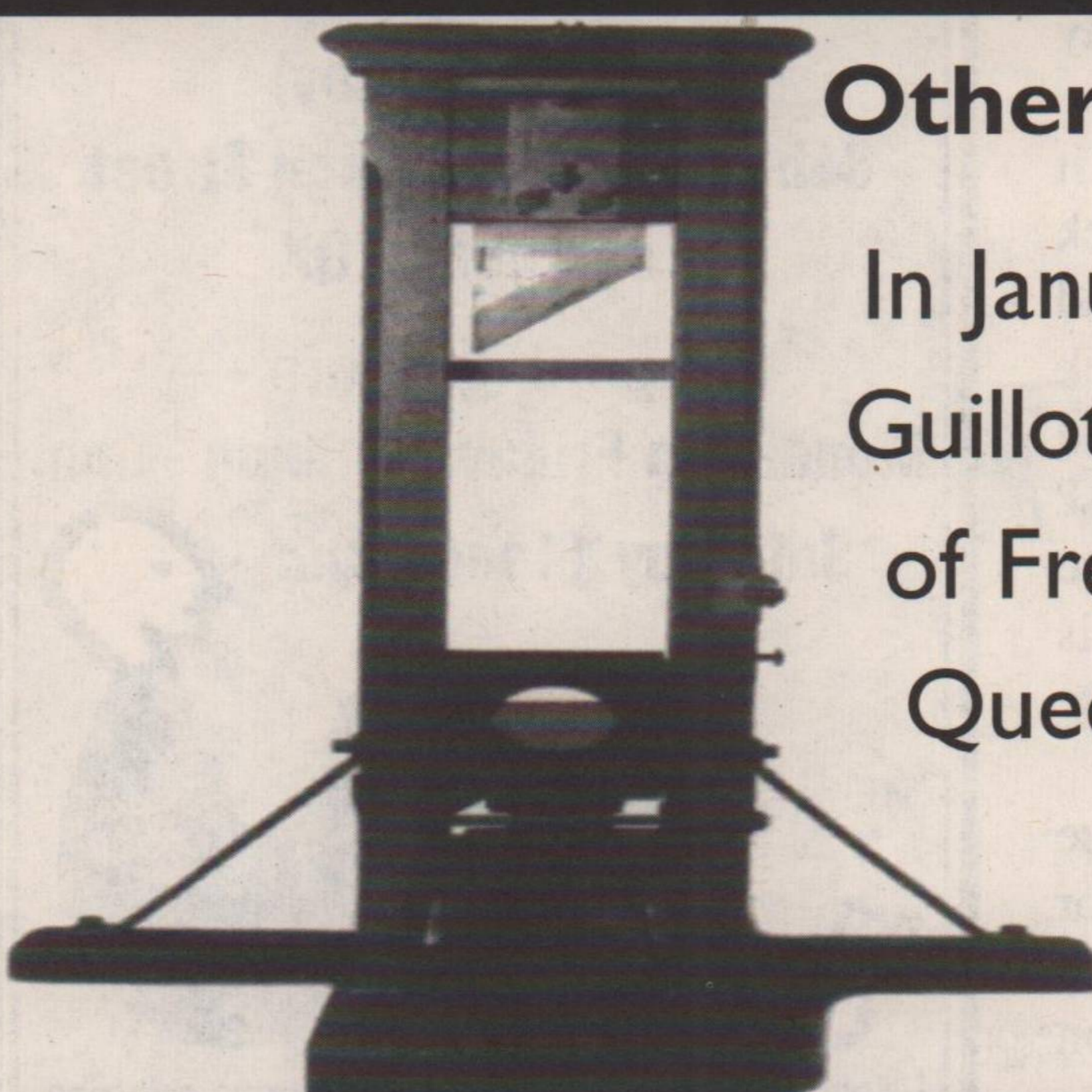
Though he died young, Mika filled his life with more meaning than many who live to 90, but who never question what they are taught, never challenge the status quo, never strive for freedom. He confronted the authority of the state head on, and came out the other side still fighting.

It is this kind of life, a life full of love for liberty and strength of will, that gives so much hope for the future.

Giuseppe L. Cormano

• On Saturday 9th February, two events will be held for Mika. In the afternoon, some of his comrades will plant a tree dedicated to him in Walthamstow. From 8pm, there will be a memorial gathering at Conway Hall in Holborn. All are welcome to both. Call 07810-288 889 for more information.

2002: Happy Jubilee Ma'am



Other Royal anniversaries

In January 1793 Madame la Guillotine removed the head of French King Louis XVI. Queen Marie-Antoinette was to follow ten months later.

The 2002 Class War Anti-Jubilee Calendar is available from the Freedom Press Bookshop for £6.60 (if ordering by post please include 10% inland, 20% overseas for p&p)

What we say ...

It's no justice at all

This is capitalist justice. "My friend died and the company that killed him gets off with a fine. I sit in their office for a couple of hours and get charged as if I'm the criminal. It was when I was getting fingerprinted and DNA-tested that I thought, 'no, this isn't right'."

Capitalist justice is no justice at all. It's a 'justice' stacked against the majority of people, who are forced to sell their working power to employers in order to live. What protection courts and laws, when they're owned by people whose interests are opposed to ours?

We reject capitalist law, because it can't ever be made to work in our interests. No law will protect us as long as the few hold power over us. The criminals will always be us, because we are the powerless. This is capitalist 'justice'.

Because we want power – the power to rule over ourselves – we are anarchists. Capitalism can't provide it, so we oppose capitalism. But if we had this power, we'd have no need of law to guard us. This is why we reject, not just capitalist law, but the idea of law as well.

The general strike

Strikers in Nigeria have taken on a formidable enemy, more formidable even than their wily president. They've taken on the country's western creditors, in particular the hawkish economists of the IMF. Although President Obasanjo claims otherwise, it's their insistence that lies behind his efforts to remove subsidies on fuel.

Here lies the limit of what the strikers can do. The general strike is a powerful weapon which anarchists have used themselves before, and no doubt will again. But it's only a powerful weapon if it's aimed at the right target. Obasanjo is the wrong one.

There's nothing he can do, he has no wriggle room. As politicians in Argentina have found, the only response once they've agreed to play the IMF game is to ask how high to jump. The financiers of New York and Zurich have no interest in Nigeria, except that it owes them money. They don't care about Obasanjo's difficulties, let alone those of ordinary people. They won't be beaten at their own game.

Lesson from the devil

The devil decided to teach the priest a lesson. He took him to McDonalds, where he saw the McWorkers running to and fro, toiling in the scorching heat. Very soon, the thick, heavy air and the heat were too much for him. With tears in his eyes, the priest pleaded with the devil. 'Let me go! Let me leave this hell!'

'Oh, my dear friend, I must show you many more places'. The devil got a hold of him and dragged him to a call centre. There he saw people hoarse from their labour, their lives run by a button that said 'next work'.

The devil grinned. 'Is this enough?', he asked. The pious servant of God could hardly bear it. With uplifted hands he begged, 'let me go away from here. This is hell on earth!'

'And yet', taunted the devil, 'you still promise them another hell. You talk of hell, let me show you hell – the very worst'. He took him to a prison, its occupants robbed of all health and energy, lying on their bunks, the pin-ups a reminder of what they left behind.

'Take off your comfortable clothes', said the devil to the priest, 'put on a prison uniform such as these poor unfortunates wear. Give away your freedom. Not until then can you speak of hell'.

(with help from Dostoyevsky)

Readers' letters

Not so hot now

Dear *Freedom*,

Your editorial on Argentina (12th January) was fine, and I would subscribe to the views it expressed. I would say, however, that there is a problem with the way Argentina has been dealt with by the media – it became such a hot story last month because Argentina's middle class interests were affected, whereas the working class has been suffering for years with no attention paid. Now that the story isn't 'hot' any more, it has moved back into the business sections of the broadsheets, so that scumbag investors can find out whether it's worth risking their money there.

In short, I think we should try to avoid following the news agenda promoted by the capitalist media, and also look for the forgotten or buried stories. This doesn't mean we should ignore things just because the media spotlight is put on them. But we should carry our own spotlights too.

Salud y anarquía!

Leslie Ray

Spit and polish

Dear *Freedom*,

Bruce Semen ('Bullshit: an introduction', 12th January) seems to be mistaken. Spit and polish is a peacetime army activity, for which there was little opportunity in the filthy trenches of the First World War. My father told me that 'bullmuck' was used in the trenches to mean falsehood, especially falsehood of official or semi-official origin. For example, 'they're supposed to be sending us to rest camp, but I expect it's all bullmuck'.

During peacetime conscription after the Second World War, 'bullshitting' was used to

mean spit and polish in the air force, not the army. In the army, it just meant lying.

Donald Room

Dear *Freedom*,

Bruce Semen's piece is intriguing. How is it that someone so interested in language (and who makes interesting points about it) manages to use it so badly? For example, he exhorts us to be "particularly suspect". This doesn't make sense. We can suspect, we can be suspects. What he means, of course, is that we should be particularly suspicious. I could go through the article sentence by sentence, picking up misuse of language, but I suspect I may be regarded as enough of a pedant already.

The main points Bruce makes are valid, but he seems to want to make a better impression by clothing them in elaborate, and often inappropriate, language. There's a word for that, isn't there? Perhaps he's been studying bullshit a little too closely – it can be sticky stuff.

Arabella Melville

Against capitalism

Dear *Freedom*,

Dave Cunliffe asks whether "a numerically substantial body of anarcho-capitalists" figures in the anarchist movement *Freedom* aims to reflect (letters, 12th January). In the first place, there isn't a numerically substantial body of anarcho-capitalists. In the second, anarcho-capitalists are not (and wouldn't even consider themselves to be) part of our movement.

Anarchism has always been anti-capitalist as well as anti-statist. To abolish the state without abolishing capitalism would make things worse rather than better.

Anarchists want an end to all coercive

relationships in society, not just the one between state and individual. Anarcho-capitalists have no objection to coercive relationships – they oppose the state because they see the free market as more efficient, that's all.

Private armies, police, courts, prisons; wars between rival groups of gangsters in 1920s Chicago – if I really thought that was anything to do with anarchy, I'd settle for democratic socialism, or even liberal democracy.

Ed McArthur

Francis answers

Dear *Freedom*,

Colin Johnson asks me to define 'personhood' (letters, 12th January). It means the thought or feeling that 'I am a separate individual'. He asks about 'god'. I wouldn't use the word, though others may use it for something that is really beyond words. He says anarchists go against the flow, but (in the sense I was using it in my original letter), he is in the flow. He asks if I've heard of *Hindu Weekly*. I haven't.

Francis Ellingham

Thanks, Aldgate

Dear *Freedom*,

The new colour cover on *Freedom* is refreshing and original. A big thank you to all involved, particularly Aldgate Press, who do an excellent job of printing the paper.

Bill Runacre

Correspondents are asked to keep their letters short. Letters may be cut for reasons of space.

Donations

5th to 18th January 2002

Freedom Fortnightly Fighting Fund

London E9, WM, £5; Newton Abbot, GH, £3; St Leonards, CP, £8; Swansea, HM, £6; Oslo, RM, £8; Dover, MF, £3; Basildon, AJ, £3; London NW10, TB, £6; London SE24, JJ, £9; London SE5, JL, £7; Godmanchester, TKS, £6.

Total to 18th January = £64.00

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London E9, WM, £3; Newton Abbot, GH, £3; St Leonards, CP, £8; Oslo, RM, £7; Basildon, AJ, £3; Keighley, DG, £16; Manchester, MV, £5; London SE24, JJ, £9; Manchester, MV, £5; Norwich, JR, £5.

Total to 18th January = £64.00

Raven Deficit Fund

London E9, WM, £3; St Leonards, CP, £8; Oslo, RM, £7; London SE24, JJ, £8.

Total to 18th January = £26.00

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Contributions can be sent to us at FreedomCopy@aol.com

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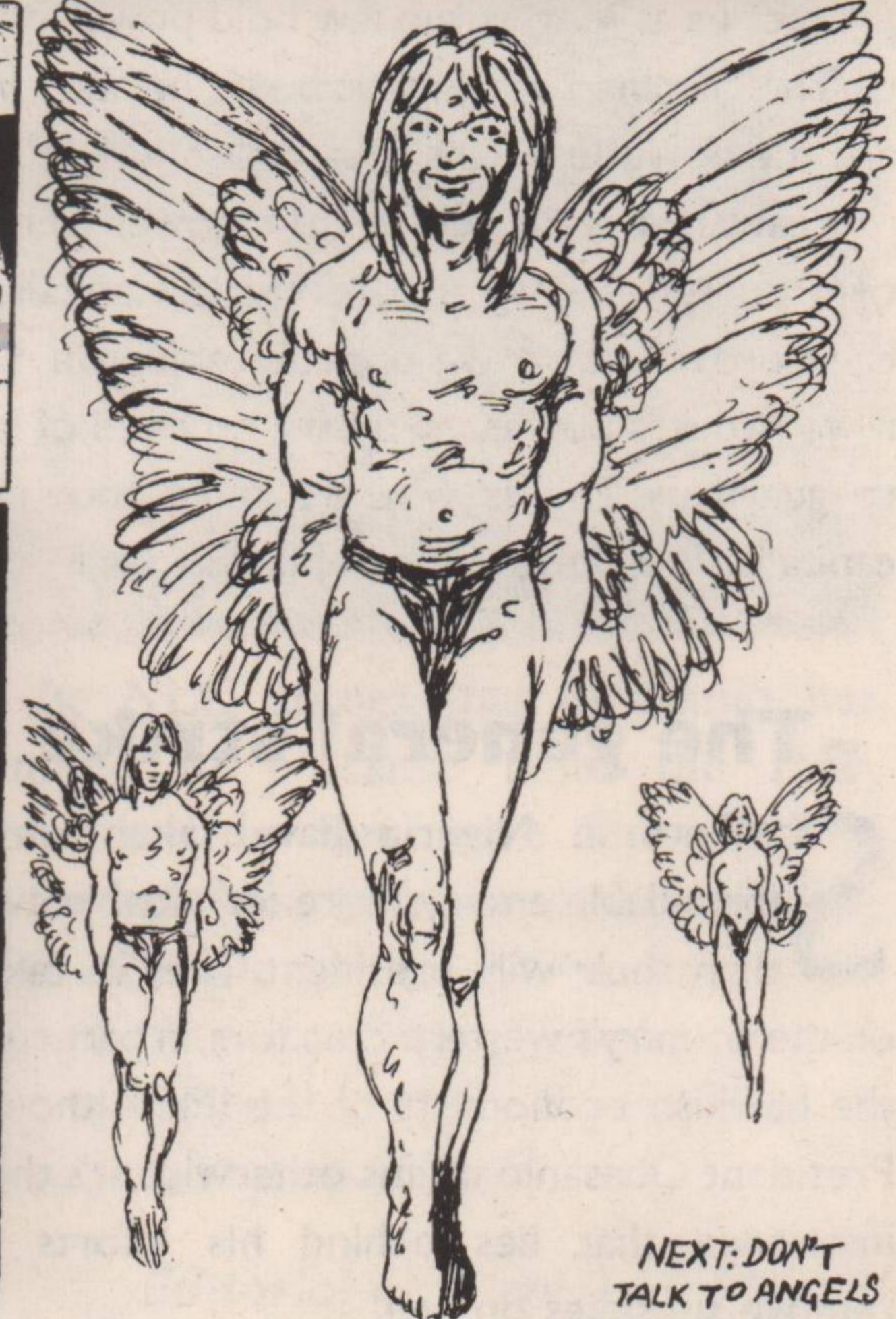
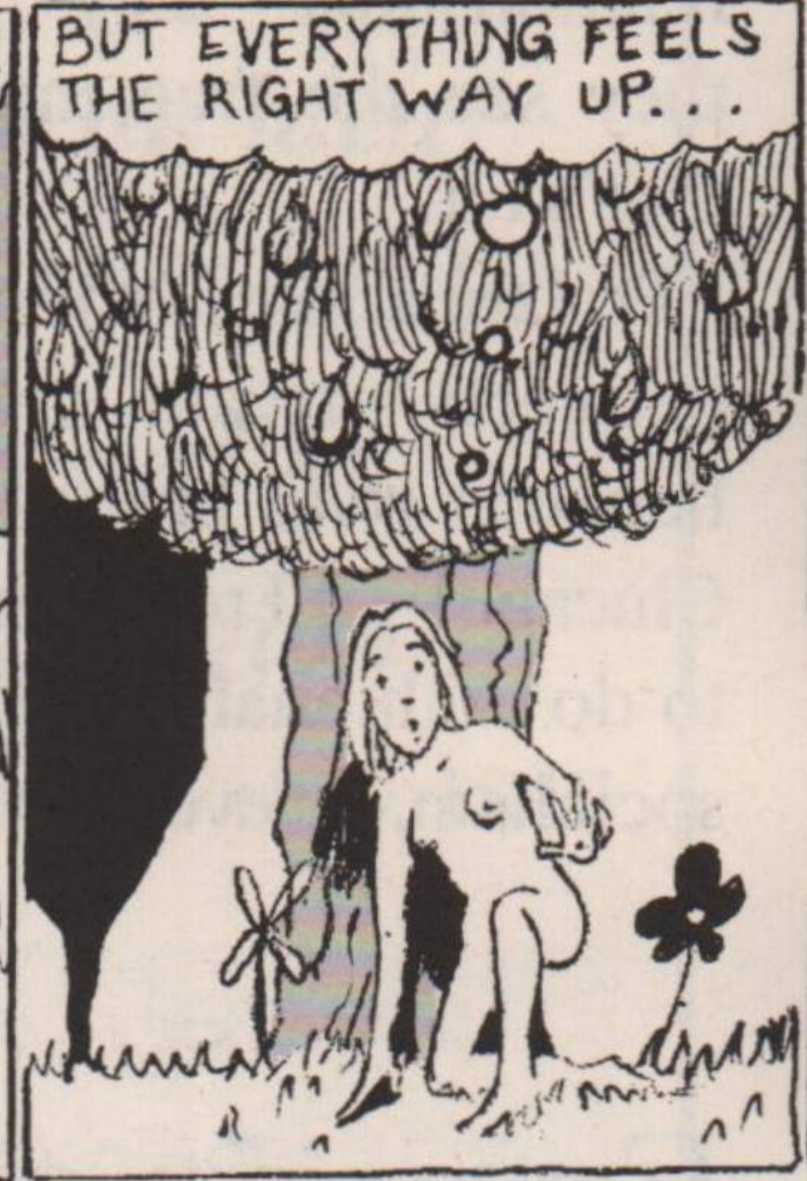
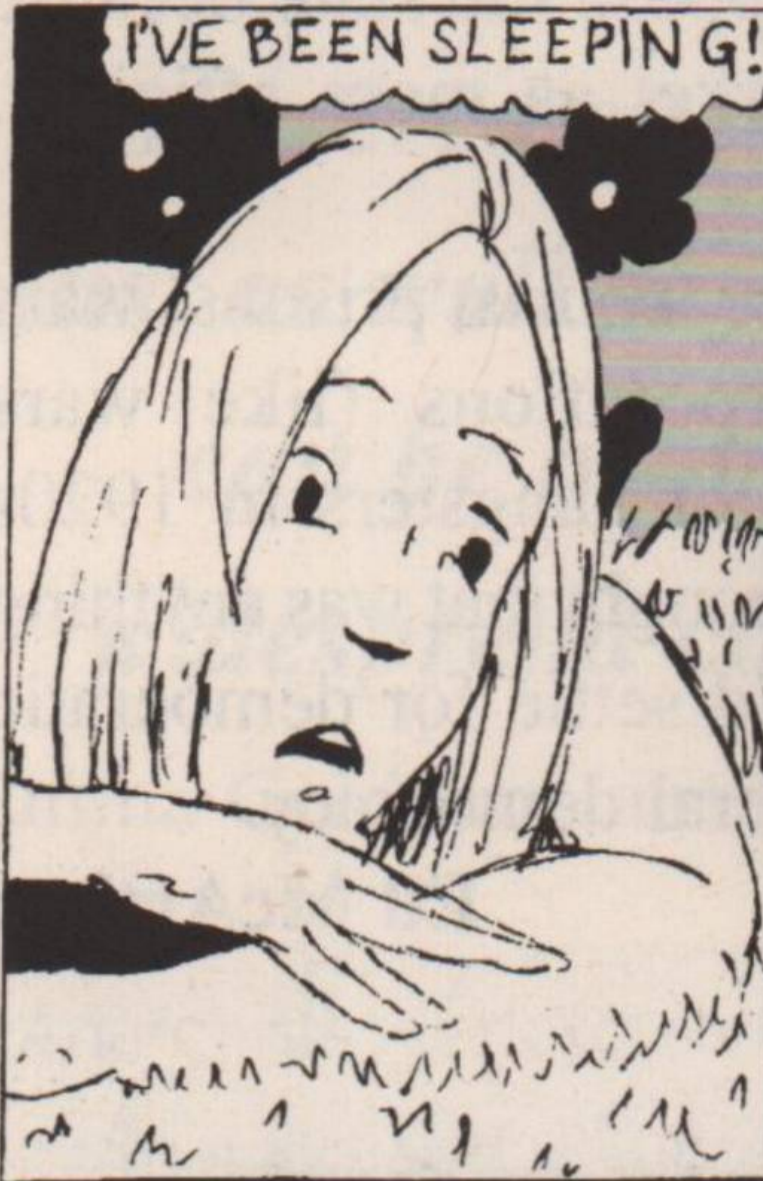
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**COY
AND THE
POIN**
A FABLE FOR
ANARCHISTS
BY MARK
KAVANAGH
EPISODE 2

ONE DAY A SCHOOLGIRL
INEXPLICABLY VANISHED
FROM A LONDON STREET,
EVERYWHERE
WHERE
ARE
YOU?
AND FOUND HERSELF
SOMEWHERE STRANGE.



© Mark Kavanagh

NEXT: DON'T
TALK TO ANGELS

PRISON ABOLITION CONFERENCE

Saturday 26th January from 10.30am to 5pm
Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London WC1
This conference is being organised to put prison abolition back
on the agenda. Some speakers have been arranged, but
emphasis on the day will be on discussion.
contact: Prison Abolition Conference, c/o BM Hurricane,
London WC1N 3XX
email prisonabolition@hotmail.com

CLOSE CAMPSFIELD ACTION

26th January • 12 noon to 2pm
An action against the Campsfield detention centre for refugees
at Kidlington in Oxfordshire
see www.closecampsfield.org.uk
contact: 01865 558145 or 01865 557282 or 01865 726804

NETWORK FOR SUCCESS!

26th January at 2pm • Friends Meeting House,
6 Mount Street, Manchester M2 5NS
The Networking Newsletter Project is holding a major
networking event funded by the Acorn Trust to bring together
groups and individuals in every area of social justice.
http://www.networkingnewsletter.org.uk

IWW LONDON MEETING

Monday 28th January at 7.30pm • Conway Hall
All welcome to the London branch meeting of the Industrial
Workers of the World at the Conway Hall, Red Lion Square in
London (nearest tube Holborn)
see www.iww.org.uk

WOMBLES SOCIAL/MEETING

Wednesday 30th January at 7.30pm
The Exchange, Sebbon Street, Islington
We will drink strong alcohol, eat nice vegan food and argue
about political stuff. The Exchange is behind Islington Town Hall
and the nearest tube is Highbury and Islington.

IWW NORTHERN AREA MEETING

Saturday 2nd February from 11am
Cellar Bar, Oscars Pub, Market Place, Doncaster
All members and sympathisers are welcome to this meeting
contact: IWW, PO Box 4414, Poole, Dorset BH15 5YL
see www.iww.org.uk

LONDON UNDERGROUND NETWORKING MEETING

Sunday 3rd February at 2pm
London Action Resource Centre, corner of
Fieldgate/Parfett Street, London E2
Some of us would like to try and revive the idea of some sort of
London-wide networking meeting in the style of the old London
Underground. This meeting will consist of networking/feedback
from various groups and what they're up to, maybe followed by a
film or social. Nearest tube: Whitechapel or Aldgate East.

PROTEST AGAINST TRIDENT

Monday 4th February • Plymouth Dockyard
The first Trident submarines are scheduled to berth at Plymouth
on Monday 4th February. There will be a protest march and
sit-down blockades across all five gates of the Dockyard.
contact: tstaunton@aol.com or tel 07803 620390

PRACTICAL TACTICS WORKSHOP

Wednesday 6th February at 7.30pm
The Exchange, Sebbon Street, Islington
This is a monthly tactics workshop which will include various
forms of direct action and self-defence. The Exchange is behind
Islington Town Hall (nearest tube is Highbury and Islington).

LONDON ANARCHIST FORUM

Meets at 8pm at the Conway Hall, Red Lion Square,
London WC1 (nearest tube Holborn). Admission free.
• Thursday 7th February: General discussion (bring some food and drink)
• Friday 22nd February: Do we need more immigration or less? (speaker
Peter Neville)

NCADC MEETING

Saturday 9th February • 12 noon to 5pm
Methodist Central Hall, Oldham Street, Manchester
To bring together families and individuals who are campaigning/
fighting against deportation to enable them to exchange
experiences and plan future strategies. There will be a coach
leaving from London (booking: John Stewart on 020 7701 5197)

LONDON TO FASLANE BLOCKADE

The Big Blockade at Faslane Naval Base lasts for three days.
We are planning to have a coach going up from London to
Faslane, via Oxford. The cost will be about £10 to £30.
For more details contact:
e-mail faslanecoach@hotmail.com or tel 07833 393325

FASLANE: THE BIG BLOCKADE

11th to 13th February at Faslane Peace Camp
Join us for three days of protest and nonviolent action at the
Trident base on the Clyde, just thirty miles north of Glasgow.
On Monday 11th February we will begin with a mass blockade
of the base from 7am. On Tuesday 12th, join the jericho rumpus
with din and mayhem from 10am. Bring drums, whistles, etc.
On Wednesday 13th the invitation to a valentine's ball at noon
goes to all those who love this planet and are willing to dress
up to prove it. Plus nonviolent direct action every day. Come to
all or any of the times during the three-day period.
There will be overnight accommodation close to Faslane from
Saturday 9th to Thursday 14th February.
action line: 0845 4588361 • big_blockade@hotmail.com

**NORTHERN ANARCHIST
NETWORK**

Spring Conference in Liverpool
Saturday 9th March from 10.30am
for details contact Martin on 0161 707 9652

**INTERNATIONAL ALTERNATIVE
BOOKFAIR IN BELGIUM**

Saturday 9th March • 10am to 8pm
Intercultureel Centrum 'De Centrale'
Kraankinderstraat 2, 9000 Gent, Belgium
After the enthusiastic reactions of both stallholders and visitors
to our first bookfair, we're pleased to announce our second
International Alternative Bookfair in Belgium, which will be
followed by a gig from 9pm onwards
contact: aboekenbeurs@yahoo.com
website: http://www.Xs4all.be/~verdan/aboek

RED RAMBLES 2002

Red Rambles is a group who meet in Derbyshire and the Peak
District. Anyone from a left libertarian background is welcome.
Sunday 7th April at 11am
Meet outside the Hurt Arms Public House, Ambergate,
Derbyshire, for a five mile circular walk through Shining Cliff
Woods in springtime. Walk leader Mike.
for more info call 07775 977136 or email ain@ziplip.com

FREEDOM fortnightly ISSN 0016 0504

Published by Freedom Press, 84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1 7QX
Printed in Great Britain by Aldgate Press, London E1 7RQ printed on recycled paper