

# anarchist fortnightly Freedom

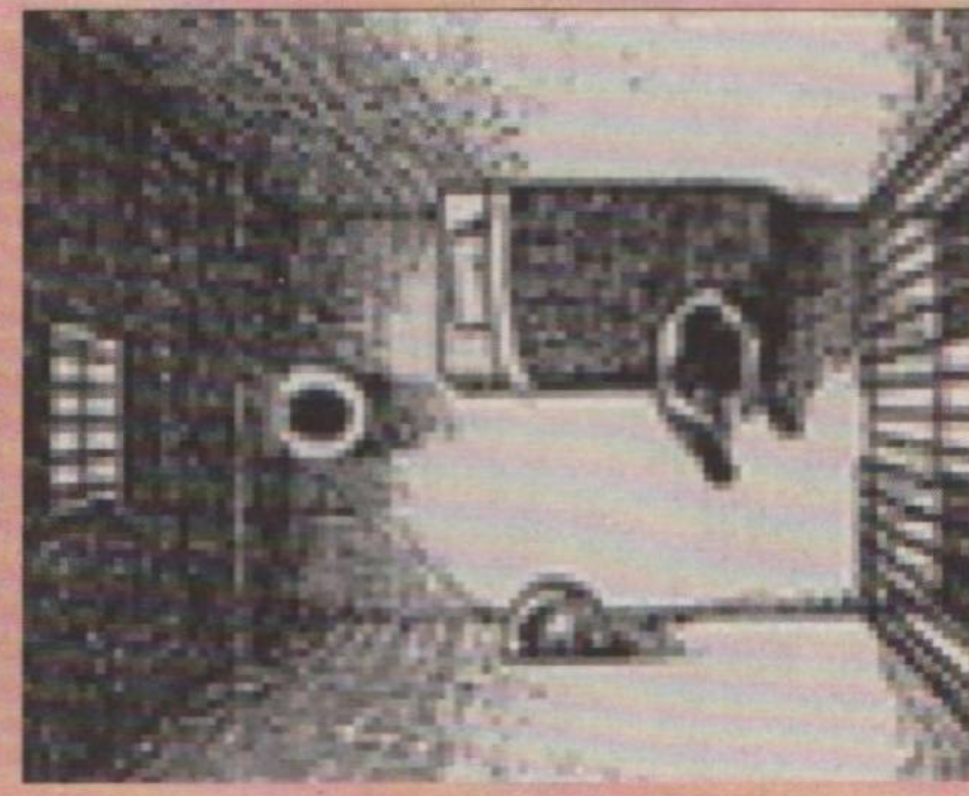
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## Another one bites the dust

Where does Britain stand now that the last bastion of its old empire has finally passed away? The death of the national granny has been used, as the ceremony of her funeral will be, to distract us from the dire state of England and its un-commonwealth, of Blair's government overriding democracy to aid Bush's battles, of corporate domination and welfare crisis, of the general apathy and greyness that is felt on British streets of a public Americanised to indifference and 'dumbed-down' words.

She was the last connection with the old ideal of royalty, when it was regarded with a sense of holiness and infallibility in much the same way as the Pope has been by Catholics. But media intrusion has since eroded all the wonder and we have been left with a mockery of family life and a pile of mediocrity upheld by vast public fortunes, and in whose name one-tenth of the land of this island is held.

Great Britain is what the old Empire has shrunk to and the sun does sink here upon the numerous races of former colonies who have roosted and are jostling for their own identities, on a bureaucracy that was built on trade winds and now tangles us up in Whitehall red-tape, and the law and order that once held natives in their workplace is directed inwards at its own people.

Under the media-manufactured optimism there is a boiling crisis, not just of the international situation but of an English people who are sitting on the north-south divide, of Scots and Welsh debating the extent of their independence, of a realisation that democracy is a whitewash and Blair plc has absolutely walked away from the public opinion, that Murdoch has tabloided any real debate on Europe or America, that you may as well say 'Moo' as vote.

All that will have been mourned in her passing – the old values, the Olde England of tiffin and neighbourliness, of discipline and dignity, has all thoroughly gone and what is in its place is an erratic and confused country. Some will have mourned her, some will celebrate, but we are still left with the future decisions to make – US or EU, royalty or republic, BNP, SWP or CND? The media will demonise us more this jubilee summer and those of us who are activists and anarchists will have to strengthen our roots and stand by our morals.

MK

• This is one in the eye for everyone who said the royals were completely useless work-shy slackers. They're not completely useless. We might get an extra holiday out of this.

Dippy



## Rail workers to strike

Rail workers in the north west are continuing to challenge the divisive bully-boy tactics of the train operating companies. In the latest action, train drivers employed by First North Western (FNW) were set to begin strike action on Tuesday (2nd April). This was due to be followed yesterday and on Monday by two further days of action (5th and 8th April). These will stop all the trains on FNW routes. This is a positive step for rail workers in the region, because the strikers' demands are moving beyond pay to encompass solidarity with their fellow workers.

The strikes are the result of the oppressive and vindictive culture which pervades management at FNW. Most recently, two train drivers were disciplined and downgraded. In one case, this was for 'showing anger' towards a manager after much provocation. The drivers' action follows a positive ballot of FNW station staff in which 166 members voted for strike action, with only seventeen against. Similarly, 169 members voted for action short of a strike, with only twelve against. Meanwhile, train

conductors at Arriva Northern are continuing their series of one-day strike actions.

While our goal as anarchists is to see workers taking control of the railways and running them for the good of all, these continuing actions should be seen as small positive steps for a group of workers

accustomed to an almost daily barrage of criticism from public and bosses alike. Despite the criticism, there's a newly rediscovered confidence amongst frontline workers, and with it a willingness to hit back at the bosses in an organised and determined way.

Jones the Steam

## Major scandal ignored

Thousands of children were due to start being deported from Hong Kong to mainland China at midnight on 1st April, unless their parents agreed to send them back of their own accord. This was in spite of the fact that the parents, who can't live in China themselves because of the state's one-child policy, had secured a victory in Hong Kong courts three years ago. The result was later overturned when the Hong Kong government appealed to the central government in Beijing.

By the start of this week, as final attempts were being made to secure a stay in the courts, some of the parents had already given in and

sent their children back. Others pledged to go on hunger strike

This is a major human rights scandal which has been ignored by the mainstream media. It was reported on one BBC website last week, but it's received very scant radio coverage (one short item on a BBC bulletin) and none on television. Even a search for 'Hong Kong children' on the Human Rights Watch website recently turned up a negative result.

Ed

• It may still be possible to support some of the families, even at this late stage. Demonstrate outside the Chinese Embassy, 49 Portland Place London W1, at 9am on Saturday 6th April.

## Freedom

anarchist fortnightly

*“Anarchy is the ideal of abolishing the violent and coercive authority of one person over another in every sphere, be it economic, religious or political.”*

Luigi Fabbri (1877-1935), Italian writer

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

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## Festival of alternatives ...

Cops have stepped up their campaign of intimidation against anybody involved in organising this year's Mayday 'Festival of Alternatives'. Last week it emerged that police have harassed at least three website hosts, after they offered server space to the Mayday site.

Organisers of the festival, due to be held from 26th April to 6th May, say it will attempt to provide answers to the question, 'what do you actually want?'. There will be numerous events throughout London, ranging from film showings to radical tours and from cafes to gigs.

On 1st May itself, activists will gather in London's Mayfair for a 'Mayday in Mayfair' street party. They say this will be a light-hearted day out in an area of the capital laced with embassies, banks and expensive shops. "Once upon a time, Mayday was all about the Mayfair", one member of the London Mayday Collective told *Freedom*. "This will be a way of reclaiming our space". Mayday will also see two Critical Mass bicycle rides, one in the north and one in the south. These will converge on central London during the morning.

But police have done their best to disrupt the planning of the festival. At least three different website hosts withdrew offers of server space after being harassed by plods.



Mayday 2001

The festival site was eventually moved to a server in Germany, and was moved again when the German host began to experience some unexplained problems in maintaining its service. Public meetings held to organise the festival have been the target of police harassment for weeks.

• A full programme for the 'Festival of Alternatives' will be published in the next issue of *Freedom*. Alternatively, you can visit [www.ourmayday.org.uk](http://www.ourmayday.org.uk) (ha! shove it copper!).

• Meeting to discuss actions, ideas, coordination, props, workshops and all things Mayday at London Action Resource Centre (LARC), Fieldgate and Parfett Street, E1, at 2pm on Sunday 7th April.

• Festival of Alternatives planning meetings are: Thursday 11th April at 8pm, The Union Tavern, Camberwell New Road, SE5; Thursday 18th April at 8pm, Sebbon Street Community Centre, Sebbon Street, Islington; Thursday 25th April at 8pm, The Union Tavern, Camberwell New Road, SE5.

## ... a time to celebrate

This Mayday, we are responding to the frequently asked questions, 'what are you for?' 'What do you actually want?'

We aim to demonstrate our goals of creating a society based on solidarity, autonomy and cooperation in practice. We want to show that there is a future beyond capitalism, wage labour and the state, that we can create our own alternatives and that our land, time, resources, entertainment and (ultimately) our lives, can be reclaimed from a system that has disempowered us from realising our individual and collective potential for centuries.

The Mayday Festival of Alternatives is inspired by a month of dissident art and cultural events held in France last year. It's also a model used worldwide to encourage political awareness and expression (for example, at the Festival Des Pueblos in Boston, also due to be held next month).

The festival will consist of around ten days

The London Mayday Collective explain what it's all about ...

of community-based events, aimed at celebration, subversion and DIY liberation. It will demonstrate the diversity of our movement, with the intention of building long-range, sustained alternatives and opposition. We hope that as many people as possible will organise events.

The actions and events will include film showings, gigs, raves, street parties, mass picnics and bicycle rides, workshops, art exhibitions and radical history tours. There will be a week-long reclaimed social centre, with an infoshop and café. Other events will explore radical history, theory and practice. All these things will take place throughout London, in both reclaimed and permanent spaces.

\* \* \*

Mayday has been a celebration of life, renewal and pleasure since ancient times. More recently, it was declared an international workers' day, to commemorate the execution of four anarchists in Chicago for their part in the struggle for an eight-hour working day. Both these aspects of Mayday became intertwined – a festival against work, want and denial, and a vision of freedom and plenty throughout the world.

Mayday also celebrates everyday acts of social disobedience. We all disobey orders every day – orders to give up our time and energy to (re)produce market-dictated objects and information, the capitalist system which orders us into accepting grinding landlord-enforced rents, multiple lay-offs and safety cuts, crap transport, government-coerced dole for slave labour and sterile consumption-saturated culture.

Every day, people defy what is demanded of them, from refusing to pay for bad transport, council cuts and privatisation of services, to creating their own grassroots culture, sharing skills and information for free. They 'subvertise' adverts and transform

derelect spaces into homes for themselves and the kind of autonomous culture they want to evolve.

This Mayday we're celebrating and commemorating our collective struggles and resistance (past and present) with a huge and vibrant carnivalesque action which will be in keeping with those happening worldwide. These will range from the Argentinian barrios creating a stateless future to posties, in this country striking for better lives, from Afghan refugees resisting in Woomera (Australia) and Yarl's Wood (UK) to Turkish prisoners surviving daily torture in solitary confinement, from peasant farmers resisting enclosures, patenting and dam-propelled land evictions in Spain, India, Mozambique and China, to those fighting against health cuts, privatisation, ever-increasing state repression and xenophobia.

In every town, city, nation, workplace, classroom and field, our struggle continues, as it has done for centuries. On Wednesday 1st May, we will accelerate our resistance, openly and defiantly, in ways small and large, quiet and loud, visible and invisible. Our goal is a new world.

### MISUSES OF THE WORD 'ANARCHY'

Number Five in an occasional series

The silliest item we've printed in this column (so far) is a departure from the norm. For once it's not the journalist who's doing the misusing.

"What passes for President George W. Bush's political philosophy has at last been revealed. He is an anarchist" wrote Gavin Esler in the *Scotsman* (8th March).

But Esler was only reporting the opinion of Dan Plesch, founder of something called the British American Security Information Council.

According to this bozo, Bush's disregard for international laws and conventions makes him an anarchist. Oh Dan, if only it were that simple! (Our thanks to the people who brought this one in)



# War ... what is it good for?

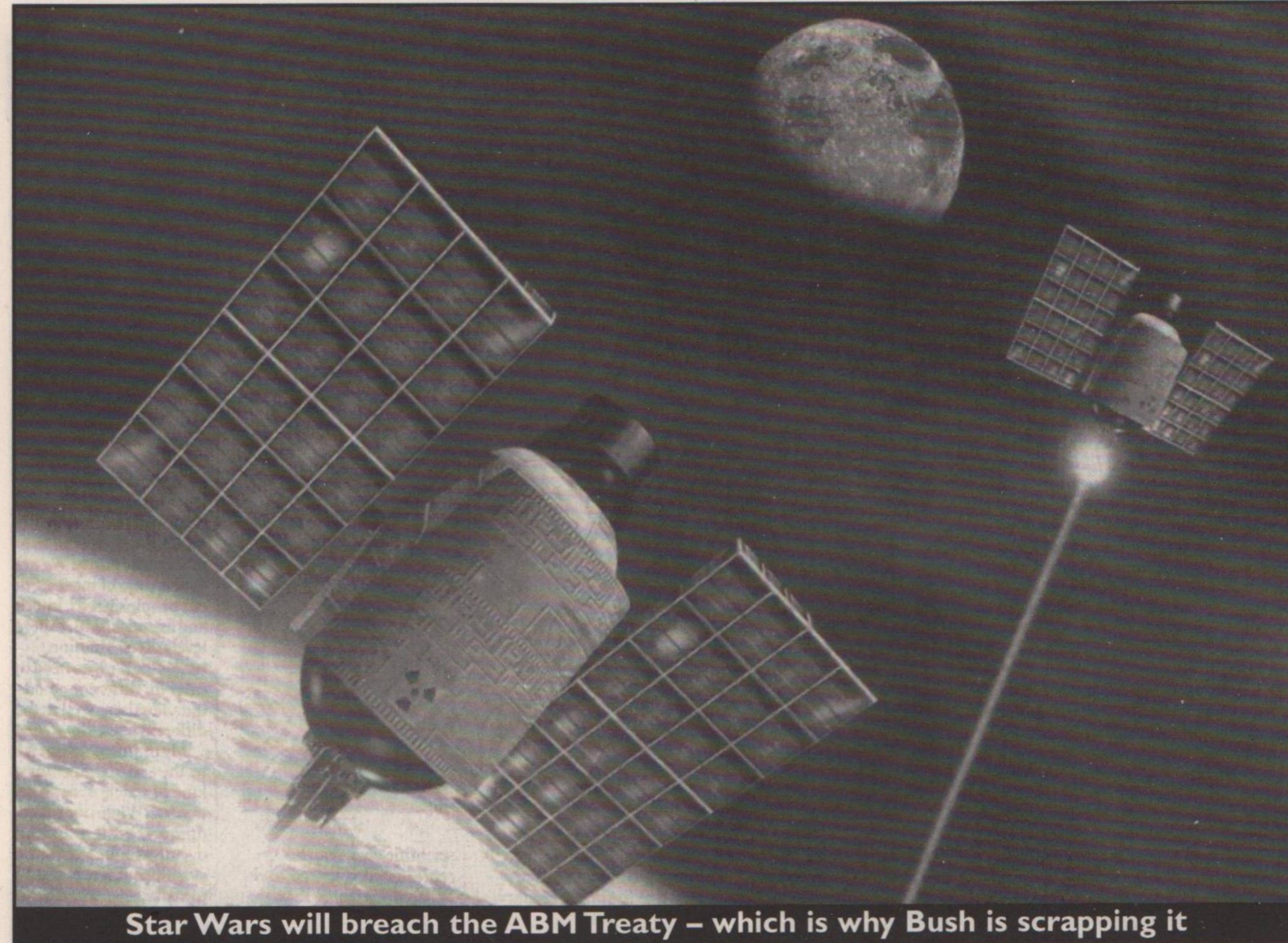
London

Up to 10,000 people marched through London last Saturday (30th March) to protest against the militarist actions of western states. After leaving Hyde Park, they walked along Piccadilly to Trafalgar Square, where reformist politicians gave speeches. Some activists expressed disappointment at the size of the crowds, which were generally agreed to be much smaller than the ones at other recent anti-war demos.

"I guess we all knew stopping the war wasn't at the top of people's agenda any more", said one. "This just goes to show why we can't be complacent. Frankly, the turnout was appalling". Others contrasted the thousands who marched in London with the millions who had taken to the streets of Rome a week before (see report on page 5).

Initial plans for the march had been laid last spring, when the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament decided to hold an Easter demonstration against the American government's 'Star Wars' missile defence system, and the British government's complicity in it. But anti-militarists also used the demo as the latest in a series of protests against the war in Afghanistan, and against US-British plans for war against the people of Iraq.

CND press officer Nigel Chamberlain said,



Star Wars will breach the ABM Treaty – which is why Bush is scrapping it

"we must continue to oppose all plans being laid for the next stage of the 'War on Terrorism', and follow statements emanating from Washington on a daily basis. But it's also important to place these developments in a wider context and dig a little deeper so we can plan our campaigns accordingly".

He said that September 11th had meant a

change in the focus of anti-militarist work. But he added, "it was felt important that we return to our major issues, not that they are unrelated to the 'War on Terrorism'."

Foreign Secretary Jack Straw said in February that "new thinking" was needed on what he called "international security". He condemned critics of US attempts to dump

the 1972 Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty, which President Bush announced he would scrap last year. The 'Star Wars' missile screen would be in breach of the treaty.

• On the same day as the CND march, a group of activists from new group Direct Action Against the War Now (DAAWN) tried to hold a 'Picnic for Peace' outside the US embassy in Mayfair's Grosvenor Square. But the square had been sealed off by cops in anticipation of the event so around thirty people, who had come equipped with flags and a banner, joined the main march instead.

They staged a sitdown at Piccadilly Circus, stopping cars for several minutes until police arrived. A further sitdown was staged outside Downing Street. There were no arrests.

• Four activists shut the main entrance to a military base on 28th March, when they staged a sitdown outside RAF Northwood, the joint military command headquarters in north London. The four, who were members of the D10 anti-militarist collective, carried a banner which said 'obstruction for peace'. They stayed there for thirty minutes, until enough cops had arrived to remove them. They then left of their own accord.

Editorial on page 7

## News in Brief

• **Bristol** Around 200 people brought traffic to a standstill in Easton on 25th March, in protest at what locals say are rising levels of street crime. "The city council and police have shown they've no interest in sorting out anti-social behaviour, or the crack and heroin dealing that generates it", said Easton resident Claudette Thompson. "Easton people have had enough. The community is reclaiming the spaces and the streets. We refuse to continue being scared".

Other protesters agreed that they too had had enough. One, Mike Talbot, said "communities all over Britain have been destroyed by the greed and hatred young people are told they need in order to get on in life. The schools, government, television, career structures – they all set individuals against one each other. It's no wonder people are alienated, and no longer feel part of the community. Maybe that's changing in Easton".

Demonstrators blocked the roundabout to junction 3 of the M62 motorway. This was chosen because its underpass (the main pedestrian link with neighbouring St Pauls) is known locally as 'muggers' paradise'.

Protesters said they were unimpressed with the state's 'initiatives' on crime. "As a community we need to decide what the alternative is if we don't want to be pushed around by crackheads or rent-a-cops", said Mike Talbot. "It's about taking on some responsibility. The authorities only care about the rich parts of town. Down here, it's up to us".

Editorial on page 7

• **Bedford** Despite protests going on in London (see above) and at Campsfield, the protest outside Yarl's Wood Detention Centre on 30th March was well attended. There were passionate speeches from the organisers and some ex-detainees, reminding us all that when they flee persecution in their own countries they face a load more here in the UK.

The Group 4 guards on the gate were very interested in what the ex-detainees had to

say about the treatment meted out to asylum-seekers. These included the 23-hour lock ups, the denial of access to religious materials and ceremonies, the fact that refugees get no money unless they can prove they're destitute, the fact that they are only entitled to a £2 phone card (when used to ring lawyers in London, this runs out in minutes), and the way men are kept separated from their families in segregated accommodation.

There's a whole lot more – a real litany of human rights abuses that would keep an army of lawyers in work for years. So much for human rights protection and the much vaunted Human Rights Act. There are only human rights if you can afford it.

There's only one answer. Tear down the fences, protect your rights and the rights of refugees through non-violent direct action.

**Black Cat collective**

PO Box 923, Luton LU2 0NG

blackcatmews@aol.com

• **London** One of the key ideas behind autonomous social centres is the anarchist belief in self-empowerment and the notion that we, the community, should control our lives as much as we possibly come. One way we can do this is through looking after both our own health and that of the wider community.

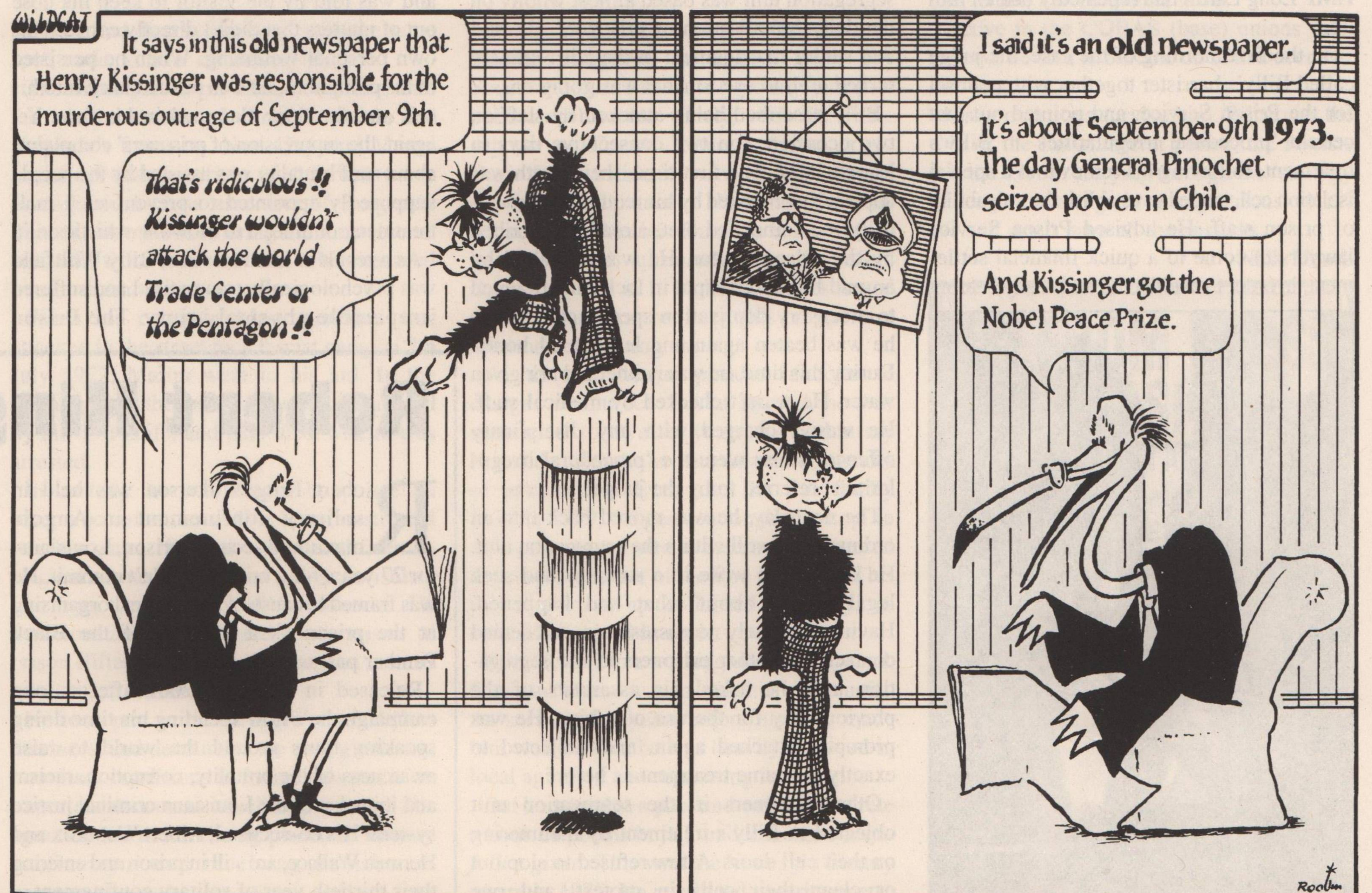
On Saturday 20th April, from 10am to 6pm, the Radical Dairy in Stoke Newington

is having an open alternative health and healing day, in order to learn more about how our bodies work, their relationship with the earth, and how we can help one another in the community to cut out the state (doctors) and capital (pharmaceuticals) as much as we can.

The day will feature classes in radical yoga, shiatsu, Swedish massage, aromatherapy, self-defence, trips to the local cemetery to pick medicinal herbs, food, information and discussion. It's open to all freedom-believing people. Events are free, though donations are welcome (in whatever form they take).

**Martin**

Radical Dairy, 47 Kynaston Road, N16



# An effective ABC network

On 9th March we printed an article by prisoner activist Mark Barnsley. Mark analysed the failures of the old Anarchist Black Cross (ABC) prisoner support network, and drew hard-hitting conclusions for the future. In this issue we publish two responses.

As an ex-member of London ABC, I'd like to put the slurs against the whole of the ABC network into context. Then, I hope, we can move on. But all the criticisms belittle what a lot of decent, committed individuals did for the ABC during the first half of the 1990s.

The problem with the ABC network was a lack of accountability. Are the Brighton and Bristol groups accountable even now? Does anyone who isn't involved with them know what they're doing?

What do they mean by prisoner support? An occasional letter to an imprisoned demonstrator? Do they do anything else? Which prisoners are they supporting, how much money do they have and how's it spent? I know I can't answer any of those questions.

The most significant problem the ABC network faced was a lack of communication between groups and – more importantly – the fact that a few anarchists weren't interested in prisoner support. National network meetings attracted few of the groups in the network, for example. This meant that many decent individuals rapidly became burnt out and pissed off with other groups' indifferent attitudes.

One national meeting, held in Bradford, attracted three people – one from Huddersfield ABC, one from London ABC and a third who lived in the area. And this was at a time



when there were supposed to be twelve active ABC groups in the UK.

The ABC Federation in the United States has been the most active and accountable network of anarchist prisoner support groups I've ever heard of. We're kidding ourselves if we think we'll get a similarly accountable network in this country. The first ever British conference on prison abolition was organised in Holborn in January by two ex-members of London ABC, using money from the old

London ABC reserves. It went ahead without any input or attendance from Brighton or Bristol ABC members.

Earth First! were asked if they wanted to get involved, but they decided it was better to organise their own annual conference on the very same day – apparently there wasn't any other Saturday in the year when it could be held. And of course, the people from SchNEWS and Brighton ABC had to go to the Earth First! gathering. Was prison

abolition or prisoner support on their agenda? Can we assume that the absence of these 'prisoner support' groups was a boycott of the London conference? The problem is that anyone can claim to be part of an ABC group, but do very little (though this isn't just restricted to prisoner support).

It would be great if the ABC network resurfaced again. But until people begin to take prisoner support seriously (and realise that the need for it doesn't stop even if they can't be arsed), it'll get nowhere. Only then will there be a credible anarchist prisoner support network in this country.

Lee H.

I'm new(ish), both to anarchism and to prisoner support work. I'm part of Bristol's new prisoner support/ABC group. The group has a good mixture of people – newbies like me, eco-activists, working class anarchists and some who've been in prison themselves. Our aim is practical support for those inside. We aim to be open, accountable and (most of all) practical.

My belief in the importance of groups like ours comes from my own personal experience of being questioned under the Terrorism Act after a non-violent action. This cemented my view that the system has no problem in circumnavigating its own rules when it feels challenged. We must support prisoners, because that's what solidarity demands. We must support prisoners because it's a practical expression of mutual aid. We must support prisoners because it's us who may be next.

Supporter T

Prisoner Support Group/Anarchist Black Cross, Box 12, 14 Robertson Road, Easton, Bristol BS5 6JY

[www.geocities.com/bristol\\_abc](http://www.geocities.com/bristol_abc)

## Prisoner sues for violence at Long Lartin

In November 2001, ex-prisoner Billy Whitfield brought a civil claim for damages against the Prison Service at Manchester County Court. He told the hearing that staff 'supervising' the segregation unit at HMP Long Lartin had repeatedly beaten him up.

On the first morning of the case, the judge called Billy's barrister together with counsel for the Prison Service, and pointed out that certain 'procedural irregularities' in Billy's treatment, following his removal to a special isolation cell, tended to establish the culpability of prison staff. He advised Prison Service lawyers to come to a quick financial settlement, in order to avoid a full and costly hearing

in open court. The Prison Service refused, and stuck to its position of outright denial.

Billy Whitfield claimed, not only that he had been victim of staff brutality at Long Lartin, but also that the regime in the jail's segregation unit was based almost wholly on the daily brutalisation of prisoners. He said that senior management in the jail routinely turned a blind eye to what was going on.

Billy described being attacked by staff on two occasions, on two consecutive days in March 1997. The first time, their wrath was apparently provoked by his request for a medically recommended diet, already prescribed by the prison doctor. He was assaulted by around five screws, put in locks and dragged to a sensory deprivation special cell, where he was beaten again and left for 24 hours. During this time, he was neither fed nor given water. He wasn't checked by medical staff. He wasn't charged with any disciplinary offence. These were the 'procedural irregularities' referred to by the judge.

The next day, he was moved back into an ordinary cell, still within the segregation unit. He decided to write to a solicitor and seek legal advice about what had happened. Having absolutely no possessions, and denied contact with other prisoners in the segregation unit, he asked his assailants of the previous day for the use of a biro. He was promptly attacked again, and subjected to exactly the same treatment as before.

Other prisoners in the segregation unit objected to Billy's treatment by hammering on their cell doors. A few refused to slop out or clean their cells in protest, and one

complained directly to a member of the Board of Visitors (BOV). In contravention of BOV rules, the member concerned accepted the screws' insistence that the prisoner should air his complaint in front of them. He did so, and was told by the Visitor to keep his nose out of matters that didn't directly concern his own personal wellbeing. When he persisted in his complaint, he was pushed back into his cell and the door slammed in his face. Yet again, the suppression of prisoners' complaints about staff brutality was assisted by the people supposedly appointed to prevent such maltreatment, or at least to blow the whistle on it.

As a result of his treatment, Billy Whitfield was psychologically traumatised and suffered irreparable physical injury. The Prison

Service's attempt to defend the screws was dismissed by the judge, who then awarded him £21,000 damages. All the screws involved continue to work at Long Lartin. None have been disciplined. The Prison Service has lodged an appeal against the decision to uphold Billy's complaint.

The prevalence of staff brutality in British prisons is assisted in no small degree by the deceit and implicit support, not only of governors, doctors and Boards of Visitors, but also by the determination of senior bureaucrats in the Home Office to defend, at considerable cost, the most thuggish elements of prison staff and their criminal behaviour.

John Bowden  
HMP Bristol



## Robert King Wilkerson

Robert King Wilkerson was held in solitary confinement in Angola maximum security prison, Louisiana, for 27 years for a crime he didn't commit. He was framed because of his political organising at the prison as a member of the Black Panther party.

Released in February 2001 after a long campaign, he's now spending his time doing speaking tours around the world to raise awareness of the brutality, corruption, racism and injustice of the Louisiana criminal justice system. His co-accused, Albert Woodfox and Herman Wallace, are still in prison and entering their thirtieth year of solitary confinement.

Robert King Wilkerson is an inspirational person, who is devoting his life to fighting against racism, repression and injustice in modern day Louisiana. People are arranging for him to do a speaking tour in Britain. Plans are well advanced, but we still need help to make his tour a reality. For further information, or to find out how to get involved, call 0161-370 1113 or email [catherine.kay@btinternet.com](mailto:catherine.kay@btinternet.com)

Updated version of an article first published in *Resistance*, monthly paper of the Anarchist Federation (available from AF, PO Box 375, Knaphill, Woking GU21 2XL).

We report on the bitter struggle being fought between capital and workers, while our obituary of one activist reminds us of earlier state attacks

# A country close to boiling point

Italy's radical and reformist trade unions have united in calling a general strike against the policies of Silvio Berlusconi's government. When it begins on Tuesday 16th April, it will be Italy's first real general strike for two decades. It follows a massive demonstration in Rome a fortnight ago, when two million people marched in protest against proposed changes to the labour laws.

Last month, in a sign of the tension now existing between state and large sections of the population, a senior government adviser was assassinated. Professor Marco Biagi was killed in Bologna on 19th March. Officials of Berlusconi's neo-fascist regime were quick to identify the killers as members of the Red Brigades, a network of Marxist cells which have been almost dead for years.

But many anarchists suspect that the state was involved in the killing. Several observers have drawn parallels with Italy's 'strategy of tension', the campaign waged by Italian governments in the 1970s. Under this, the state sponsored acts of terrorism which then provided a pretext for the persecution of anarchists and other leftwing activists.

In a move condemned by many people, leaders of the reformist trade unions decided to hold a memorial silence for Biagi during the Rome demonstration on 23rd March. The same had happened at an earlier protest, three days before. This was in spite of Biagi's key role in drawing up reforms to article 18 of the Workers' Statute. These reforms, warmly endorsed by Berlusconi, would severely limit workers' rights in the workplace. Biagi also contributed to a joint proposal on labour market reform, signed by Berlusconi and Tony Blair last month.

Referring to the killing of an anti-capitalist activist during the Genoa summit last summer, one anarchist said he was annoyed to see



demonstrators protesting at the killing of Biagi. "No such action followed the murder of Carlo Giuliani, nor even Berlusconi's rushing through of changes to the law of evidence to make evidence found in Switzerland of his involvement in bribery and corruption inadmissible in Italian courts. No, the official labour movement only acts to mourn the passing of its enemies".

Next week's general strike has been called by a coalition of three big reformist trade

unions and the radical 'base unions'. The base unions – the Confederazione Unione de Baso, Confederazione Cobas and Slai-Cobas – are collectively known as COBAS. A representative, Pino Giampietro, said last week that the strike should be part of a wider struggle. "Initiatives against the changes to article 18 aren't enough, unless at the same time we take a stand against all the anti-social policies of the government and against the war in Afghanistan, and unless we

abandon the policy of conciliation with the bosses which has been and still is the lifeblood of liberal policies".

Although they've united with the reformist CGIL, CISL and UIL in calling the strike, COBAS have also criticised reformist tactics generally. The mainstream unions risk failure unless they abandon the "hopeless policy of conciliation" with the state, Pino said.

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The late 1960s and the 1970s were strange and violent years in Italy. The Milan bombing, the police murder of the anarchist Pinelli, the framing of Valpreda, the beating to death of the young Pisan anarchist Serantini, the mysterious death of the leftwing publisher Feltrinelli – these were just a few of the many incidents that littered those years.

On 29th September 1971, five young Campanian anarchists were killed when a lorry braked violently in front of them. They met their deaths not far from the estate of the fascist leader, Borghese. Five years earlier,



Giovanni Marini at his trial in 1974

## — OBITUARY — Giovanni Marini

his wife had died in almost exactly the same spot, under similar circumstances.

The anarchists were already looking into the circumstances of Pinelli's death and Valpreda's frame-up. Now Giovanni Marini found out that the driver of the truck was a fascist, and a close associate of Borghese. This discovery was to bring him unwelcome attention from local fascists, who menaced him on a number of occasions.

When his comrade Mastrogiovanni was attacked in the street by a fascist gang on 7th July 1972, Marini went to his aid. In the ensuing fight, the fascist Falvella was injured by his own knife, and later died. Marini was arrested.

In custody, he was beaten by police on several occasions, as well as being mistreated in other ways. His trial was moved from its original venue to a remote village to isolate him from the solidarity of his comrades. He was constantly transferred from prison to prison (fifteen moves in the nineteen months he spent on remand).

He took part in the struggle of his fellow detainees, and denounced the unhygienic and insanitary conditions in Italian prisons, in an important document which he produced. His agitation led to him being placed in solitary confinement and receiving punishment beatings.

During his detention, Marini was supported by demonstrations throughout Italy. The Soccorso Rosso Militante (Red Militant Aid) publicised his case widely, with the active support of Franca Rame and playwright Dario Fo. A solidarity network was also set up, the Coordinamento Nazionale Comitati Anarchici G. Marini. This was behind many initiatives and, ultimately, his liberation. During the trial in 1974, his comrades issued a daily bulletin to keep his supporters informed of its progress.

At his trial, Marini pleaded innocent to charges of murder. But at its end, he was sentenced to twelve years for voluntary homicide, with the extenuating circumstances of provocation. Even after he was finally freed in 1979, the persecution didn't stop. In 1983, he was arrested at Salerno and accused of being a member of the Red Brigades. This pathetic frame-up collapsed instantly, as soon as it arrived in court.

Born in 1942 to a working class background, Giovanni Marini was an anarchist communist. As such, in the years before his case made him well known, he was heavily involved in local agitation and organising in Salerno.

But he was also a poet and writer. He wrote a book of poems in jail, under the title *E noi folli e giusti*. This won the Viareggio literary award in 1975. He continued to write poetry

and prose after he was freed – *Di sordomuti posti*, *Antonio per inerzia*, *Antologia poetica*, *La vipera pietoso amorosa*, *La serpe e la cetonia*, *Il bambino*, *Il bambino chiamato zio Ciccio* and *Lo scolaro e l'altro*.

Active in the COBAS (base) unions until the end, he died in Salerno on 29th December last year.

Many questions survive him. What was the role of the Italian secret police, the fascists and the CIA in carrying through the 'strategy of tension' during those mysterious years? We still don't have all the answers.

Nick Heath

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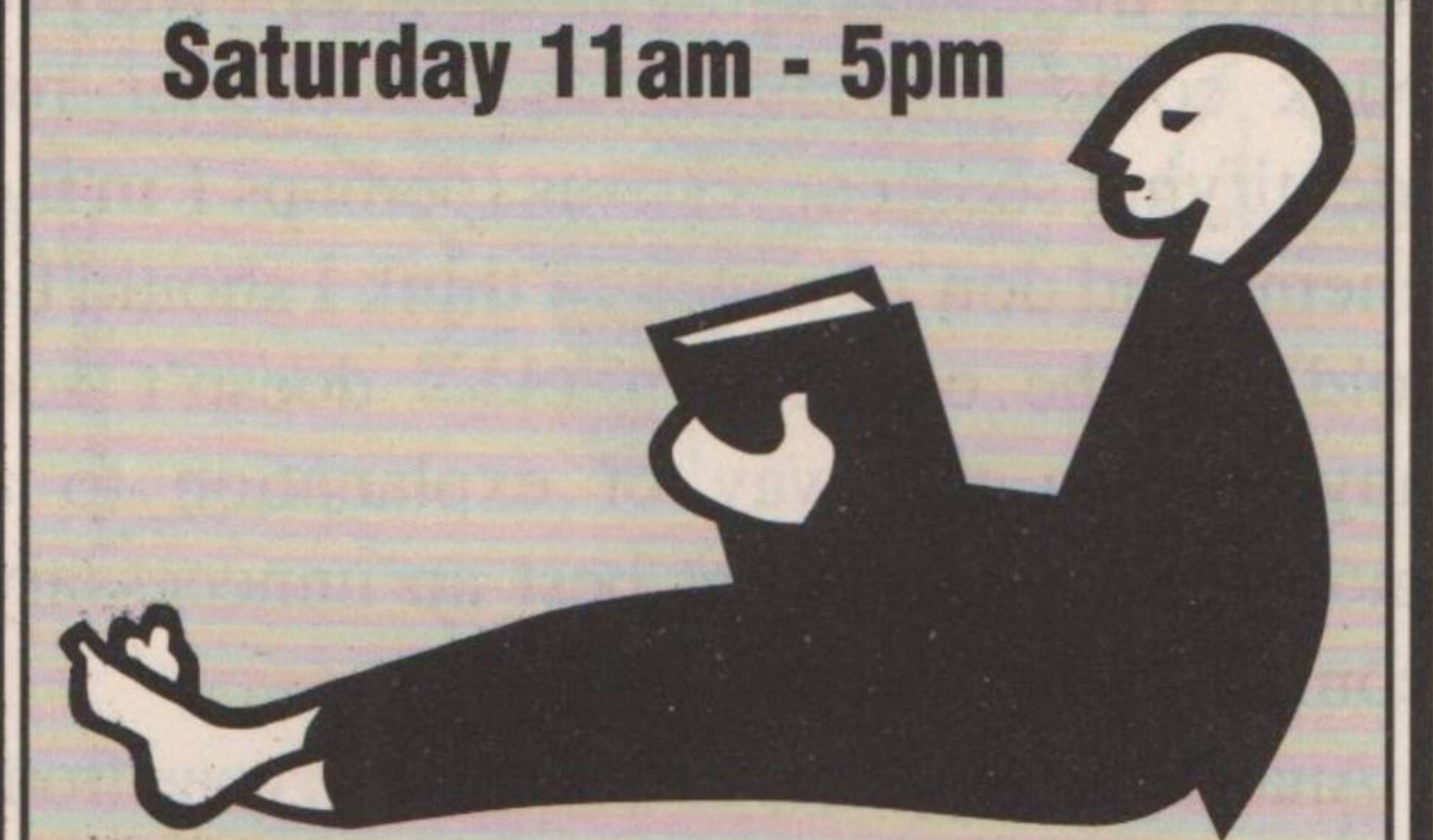
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# Police and thieves on the streets

It's a funny old world. So Solid Crew member Asher D has been sent down for eighteen months for possession of a Brocock ME38 air pistol, converted to fire live ammunition. Meanwhile, Brixton police commander Brian Paddick has become the latest poster boy of the left because he's an openly gay cop who turns a blind eye to cannabis.

The Asher D case is interesting because it puts to death a lie that the Metropolitan Police have been circulating for years. It's a lie that's been used to justify a covert increase in the number of mobile armed patrols in the capital (even though mobile armed patrols were seen on London's streets long before the drug-related 'Yardie' shootings began).

We're supposed to believe that gangs armed with hi-tech firearms are waging war against each other, and anyone else who finds themselves in the firing line. As a result, we need more cops on the streets and more cops with guns. The truth, as police from Operation Trident (the Met's 'black-on-black' crime unit) are well aware, is that most guns on the street are re-commissioned semi-automatics or converted air pistols, as in the Asher D case. Even when the semi-autos are available the ammunition often isn't, so most are loaded with home-made ammo – and the main risk is to the shooter's hand.

Why are young black kids shooting each other over local drugs pitches? We live in a society where the horizons and expectations of working class life are reduced to trying to do more than just survive on a minimum wage in a fast food shithole, to trying to keep pace with what the advertising industry tells us we want this week. One week it's Air Jordans, the next it's satellite phones, the next a Rolex watch.

Add in the additional exclusion of race, and you've got a generation of kids doing what they're supposed to do – pursuing the acquisition of commodities – but denied the resources to do it legitimately. Drugs are one way out of the dead end of trying to survive on £4.10 an hour, or £40 a week's dole. Drugs are one way out because the criminalisation of drug use makes the trade in them a lucrative business.

Do the police (especially well paid and



well bred ones like Paddick) give a shit about this? In your dreams. Drugs provide a nice touch for local cops, who can re-deal confiscated gear and take a cut from the trade they turn a blind eye to. This was commonplace at Stoke Newington nick, but it's not exactly a rarity anywhere else.

Drugs keep working class communities off their heads and self-divided, so they don't become sites for politicisation. They also provide a handy justification for the police to bid up their wages and resource funding, and an excuse to saturate working class areas in order to 'protect' the local community.

The question of crime is an ambiguous one. It can serve as a means for redistributing

wealth – a refusal of the contract of inequality which is fundamental to capitalism. Witness the recent furore over mobile phone thefts. I certainly don't recommend that anyone lose sleep over the carjacking of a few god-fearing, pleb-hating wannabe gentry in the stockbroker belt, when they lose their Lexus or their Rolex.

But crime is a problem for us too, because it primarily affects the working class. The dispossession which is the essence of capital is mirrored by the everyday dispossession which is property crime in working class communities.

The solution to crime in these communities is their politicisation, self-organisation and

self-policing. The law and order brigade's call for more police on the streets is designed to discourage such activity, not to deter crime.

Unlike Martin McGuinness, I don't think we should aim to take the gun out of politics. The Brian Paddicks of this world aren't concerned with black-on-black shootings, their only concern as far as guns go is to maintain their monopoly of force. So the issue for us isn't to pacify and disarm any section of the working class. It's to make sure the guns are pointed at their proper targets – to replace internecine violence with class force.

That might make the liberals squirm. But we live in a society that's obsessed over carjacking, while we forget about the billion pound crimes of Railtrack, Consignia and Enron. Crime within the working class is a problem for the working class, because it prevents the recreation of solidarity within working class communities. Solidarity, therefore, can only be achieved through confronting the issue which divides us.

As Lorenzo Kom'boa Ervin says in *Crimes Against the People*, "it is the community, through its own organisations of concern, which will have to deal with this problem ... rather than the military approach of calling in the cops we can empower the community, rather than the racist prison bureaucracy and the cops".

I wonder if the family of Derek Bennett think Paddick's a hero? This was the man gunned down by Brixton police last July.

The anti-capitalist movement – such as it is – is faced with the choice that Huey Newton and Bobby Seale faced, when they split with the cultural nationalists to found the Black Panther Party in the 1960s. As Seale put it, "do we stay on campus or organise the brothers on the block?"

The fact that so many rush to hail Paddick as a voice of progress suggests that a good many have already made their choice. Those of us who disagree ought at least to recognise the alternative available to us.

We can either get on with the task at hand or give up on our anger and our ambition completely.

Nick S.

## Is it class war or no war at all?

I'd like to take up some points Nick S. made in his article, 'Politics with an Enemy' (*Freedom*, 9th March). Nick says, "instead of looking for politics without enemies, we should try to prosecute more effectively the war between classes". Couldn't it be that those who would divide (into friends and foes) may be seeking to rule? We should start as we mean to finish. If we look for enemies that need replacing, who comes after the capitalists and the active collaborators? Passive sympathisers? Heretics?

Why is it a good thing if somebody thinks of themselves as being working class before think of themselves just as a person? Maybe Nick could provide a ready reckoner for identifying someone's status (perhaps I'm the enemy and don't know it? I think I should be told). If the concept of class doesn't add anything in the way of explanation to a model, perhaps it is at best an unnecessary complication?

Anarchy is supposed to liberate everyone from unhappy circumstances and false conscious-

ness, not just the workers. After all, capitalism can't really be said to exist for the benefit of anyone, can it? Capitalists aren't evil, but mistaken. The desire for infinite acquisition of wealth is a symptom of mental illness.

Capitalists and workers are supposedly defined by their relation to the means of production. But what about the children, unpaid carers, elderly, sick and unemployed? And anyway, there's a new paradigm – who 'owns' the wind, waves, tides and sunshine?

The path to anarchy can presumably start in any society. So why the emphasis on an apocalyptic showdown between 'working class' and 'capitalists'? Because it makes a good story?

There's no great sign of solidarity in unemployment disputes. On the contrary, many of them seem to happen in order to maintain a group of workers in their place in the social hierarchy. "We should try to prosecute more effectively the war between classes"? I just don't see it.

Tavis Reddick

## Viewpoints

### GAME OF DOMINOS

The recent announcement that Blair intends to send 1700 Royal Marines to Afghanistan confirms my analysis of the current situation, and indicates that we are all in very grave danger. The key point to grasp is the close drawing together of the various countries in Bush's alliance, and the overwhelming momentum of the whole 'Axis of Evil' agenda.

Very soon, Bush will start to attack Iraq, and the fact of other countries' involvement in his Crusade will make it harder for people within this alliance to question the push. After Iraq, he's going to make war on Iran.

We can understand why this is when we consider that world oil reserves in the year 2000 were put at 140,400 million tons. Annual world consumption now stands at 3,452.2 million tons. On current figures, in other words, we've got forty more years' supply.

When we put this urgency together with the fact that 20% of total oil reserves are held by the two pariah states, Iran and Iraq, we can well understand the drive of Texas oilman

George W. Bush to crush them both. It's like a series of stepping stones, or what (during the Cold War) was called 'the domino effect'. Afghanistan leads to Iraq, leads to Iran. We need to oppose this crusade.

Stephen Booth

### GAMBLING?

This may seem a little perverse, but one of the aspects of the 1984 scenario suggested after September 11th was that – alongside political repression, hate figures, endless wars in faraway places and the rest – there would be an emphasis on providing the proles with money-making distractions.

Lo and behold, the government proposes liberalising the laws on gambling. If more money is spent on gambling the idea presumably is that even more money ends up in the pockets of both government and capital (as if it ever ended up anywhere else). In exchange, the proles get the chance to play for prosperity for the lucky few. Who said this government wasn't cynical?

RA

## What we say ...

### Numbers down

Nobody was impressed at the turnout on a CND demo in London a week ago. "Appalling" was the description of one anti-militarist. The marchers will be back in strength, no doubt, when Bush and Blair attack Iraq later this year. But by then they'll almost certainly be too late to do anything about it. For a movement that prides itself on not following the politicians' agenda, the peace movement (broadly defined, anarchist and reformist alike) has been remarkably quick to follow ... the capitalist political agenda!

As soon as the (ongoing) bombing of Afghanistan was dropped from television schedules, the Afghan war was forgotten by many people who should've known better. This accounts for another element in declining numbers – a tactical decision by bosses of the Marxist left to play down their 'anti-war' front organisations in favour of the next big thing.

We haven't heard a lot from Globalise Resistance lately (it's like, sooo last summer), because the SWP's central committee decided to put their eggs into a Stop the War basket. Now Stop the War is falling into abeyance itself. What could possibly be next, we ask ourselves. Time for some righteous posturing over Palestine, maybe?

### Practical anarchy

Peter Kropotkin (who helped found an earlier incarnation of this newspaper) said that harmony in an anarchist society would be obtained "not by submission to law, or by obedience to any authority, but by free agreements concluded between the various groups" within it. In other words, it wouldn't be governed by law or state, but run by the self-organisation of its members.

Anarchy has never been a distant prospect of utopia. Anarchism's concern is with what we do now. That means the mucky reality of real people and real life.

Most of the people who reclaimed the streets of Easton on 25th March weren't anarchists. But it's not a contradiction to say their action was an example of anarchy in action.

They stopped asking the state to resolve their problems and acted for themselves instead. And the state's failure to live up to its own rhetoric (about protecting its citizens) has prompted some to ask searching questions about what the damn thing's for.

Whether they realised it or not, those fed-up Bristolians had the beginnings of a practical anarchy.

### No tears here

If anybody wants to know how Silvio Berlusconi's repulsive Forza Italia came to power in Italy, one answer was provided by the demonstrations in Rome last month. Called to protest at Berlusconi's savage assault on workers' rights, bosses of the reformist trade unions insisted on honouring the memory of Marco Biagi. He was the professor of economics whose proposals lay behind Berlusconi's moves.

There are many doubts over who killed Biagi. One thing is certain, though. This man was no friend of the average Italian. We're not in a position to condone or condemn the killing, because we don't know who did it and why. But we wouldn't shed any tears for him, whether he was shot by activists with a legitimate grievance or by agents following a sinister brief. That the official labour movement stooped to mourn his passing tells us all we need to know about reformist trade unions in Italy – and reformism everywhere.

## Readers' letters

### Neo-colonialist

Dear *Freedom*,

I agree with Larry Iles that there is, without doubt, a neo-colonialist agenda behind much of the reporting of what has been happening in Zimbabwe over the last six months (letters, 23rd March). Behind this, there may well be the beginnings of an attempt to install a more western-style, capitalist-friendly, regime in the country. This would be done on the back of President Robert Mugabe's ZANU-PF regime being seen as illegitimate, due to electoral fraud, intimidation, legal repression of opposition and the like. (One could even include in this demonisation of Mugabe the impression done of him on Rory Bremner's show by John Bird, in the style of Idi Amin).

But it's a big step from recognising this neo-colonialist propaganda to believing that Mugabe's desperate attempts to cling on to power (using all the repressive powers he's awarded himself and his government) is in any way related to socialism. Or anarchy, for that matter. It would be useful to have a debate in *Freedom* about the Zimbabwe regime. We shouldn't be afraid to criticise it for what it is, whilst at the same time opposing western attempts to install a puppet regime and also being generally supportive of grassroots socialism in the form of land redistribution. We can debate the best ways of doing that as well.

Richard Alexander

### Prison censorship

Dear *Freedom*,

There's a new twist in the struggle against censorship in the library of Comrade V.

Mozhenkov's prison (letters, 9th February). The warden is now censoring gay rights, anti-racist and other alternative newspapers, as well as *Freedom*. Readers can write in protest to David M. Rardin, director of the regional prison system, as well as to the warden, R.L. Morrison.

Mike V.

David M. Rardin, Director  
Northeast Regional Office, US Custom  
House - 7th Floor, Second & Chestnut  
Streets, Philadelphia, PA 19106

R.L. Morrison, Warden  
FCI Elkton, PO Box 89, Elkton, OH 44415

### Rights and duties

Dear *Freedom*,

Conventional wisdom declares that the state grants certain privileges and rights, in return for particular responsibilities and duties. But when the attempt is made to flesh out these abstract concepts, the enquirer finds that she needs a degree in state law to understand her noble birthright. When the smoke and mirrors of legalese becomes apparent, she realises that – having been born into a lunatic asylum, there's the future prospect of a further confinement if the appropriate state flunkey sees fit. So much for glorious citizenship.

Mark Fletcher

### Sign of progress?

Dear *Freedom*,

The fact that the winning of two top Oscars by black actors is hailed as a sign of progress shows just how far we have to go.

James Blake

### Sloppy thinking

Dear *Freedom*,

I have been reading your paper for some years along with a number of other left papers, including Trotskyist ones (please note I use the word 'Trotskyist' and not 'Trot', unlike you – if you want to discuss your political differences with other groups, it might help if you use their proper names if you want to be taken seriously). I am, however, wondering whether to continue, as your articles become increasingly sloppy, badly written, poorly thought out and impressionistic. Can't you do better than this?

Marie Critchley

No, sorry – Editors.

### Union network

Dear *Freedom*,

The Anarchist Trade Union Network was set up four years ago, to link up anarchists who are in reformist unions. Despite substantial support from individuals and groups in the UK, the group was effectively run by two people and then (from a couple of years ago) by just one person – me! This had never been our intention. Attempts to increase the number of people involved failed, and so – with some regret – the network has now been disbanded. I'd be grateful if groups and magazines could amend their records accordingly.

Richard Griffin

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

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### Freedom Fortnightly Fighting Fund

Nottingham, AN, £2.

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Total for 2002 = £210.00

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The Editors

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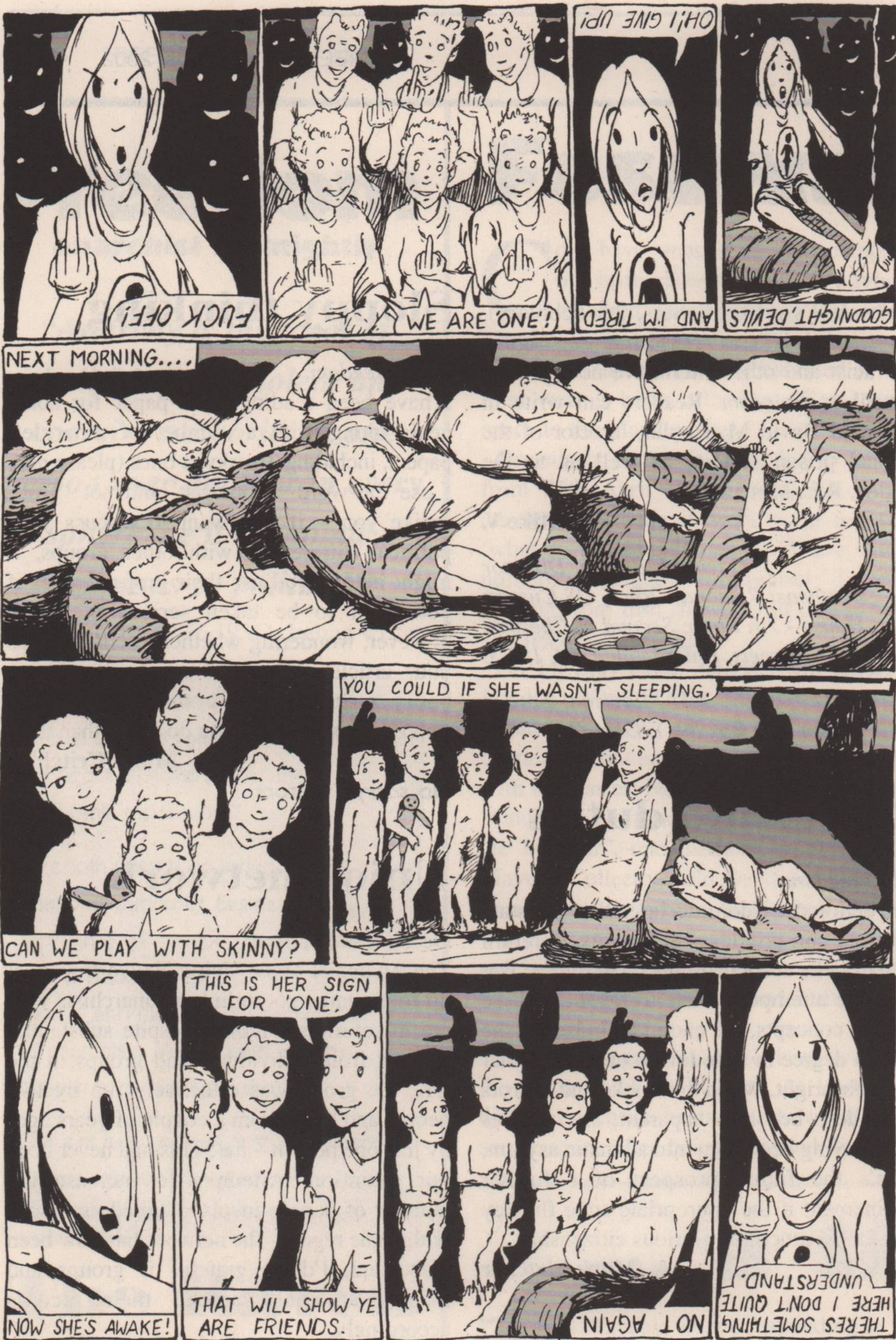
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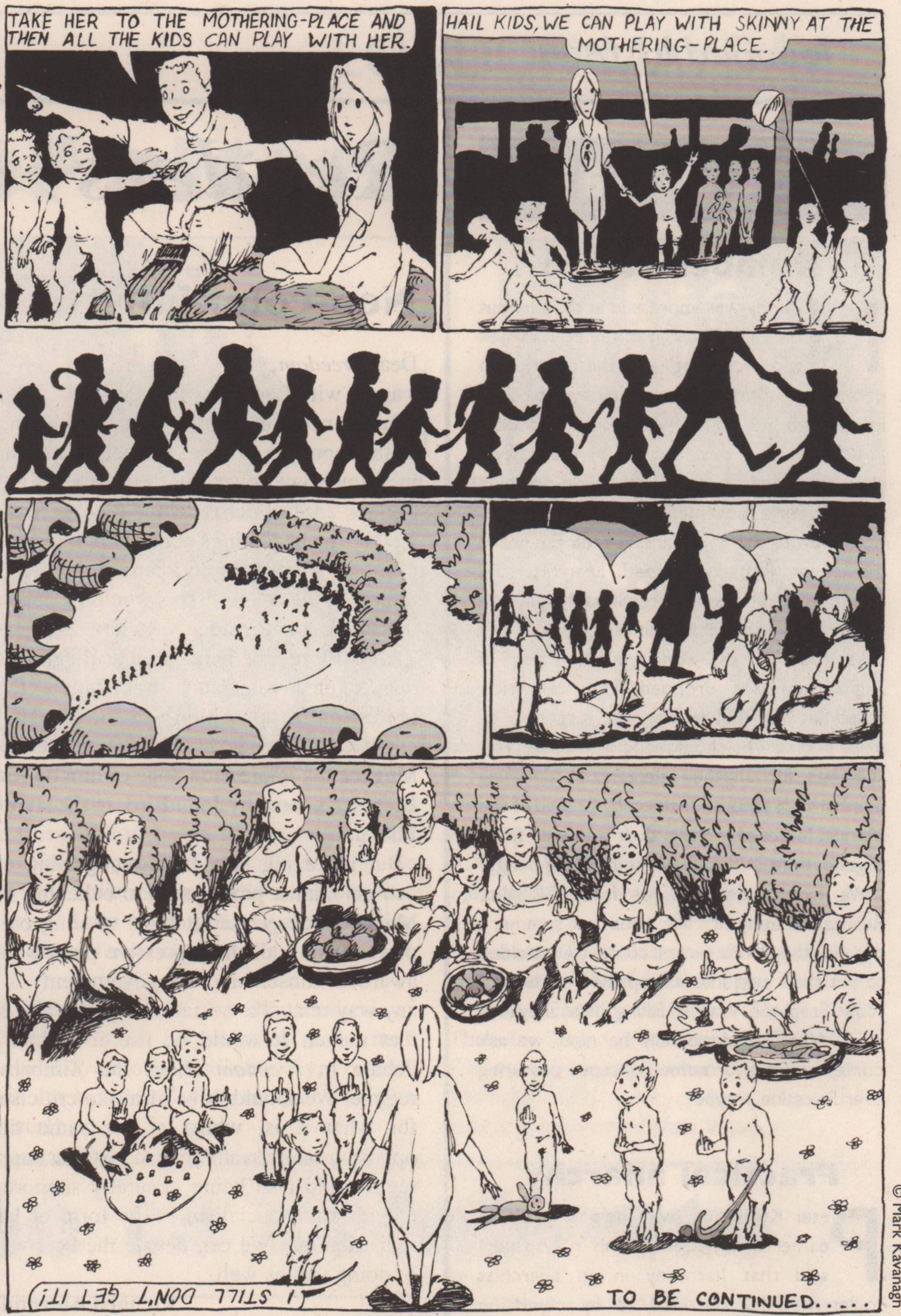
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contact: Heather on 020 8546 7795  
on-site mobile (during camp & week before) 07950 567 099  
info@youthstudentcnd.org.uk

**STOP THE DEPORTATIONS**  
Saturday 6th April at 9am  
Chinese Embassy, 49 Portland Place, London W1  
to protest against child deportations from Hong Kong to mainland China as part of the state's one-child policy  
email johnnymushroom@tiscali.co.uk

**MAYDAY • MAYDAY • MAYDAY**  
Meeting on Sunday 7th April at 2pm  
at the London Activist Resource Centre (LARC)  
corner of Fieldgate and Parfett Street, London E1  
to discuss all things Mayday related for the Mayday in Mayfair and Festival of Alternatives celebrations  
email festivalofalternatives@yahoo.com • tel 07786 716335  
see www.ourmayday.org.uk

**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

**PRACTICAL TACTICS WORKSHOP**  
Wednesday 10th April at 7.30pm  
The Exchange, Sebbon Street, Islington  
monthly tactics workshop which will include various forms of direct action and self-defence

**THE NOUGHT FOR CONDUCT FILM CLUB**  
Thursday 11th April at 7.30pm  
Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, Holborn  
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Film showing and a discussion on the Spanish anarchist women's organisation  
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convened by Anarchist Federation (London)  
AF, Box 2, 84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1 7QX

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Methodist Church, Back Lane, Newtown  
meeting to discuss peace actions and future of coalition  
contact: helena.earnshaw@oneworld.net

**BUILDING LIBERATION**  
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from 19th to 20th April in Nottingham  
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contact: 0781 350 5480 or endoftheroad@hushmail.com

**BP AGM PROTEST**  
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Royal Festival Hall, Belvedere Road, London SE1  
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contact: martin@caat.demon.co.uk  
grace@gracelivingstone.freeserve.co.uk

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Meets Fridays at 8pm at the Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London WC1 (nearest tube Holborn). Admission free.  
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• 26th April: LAF's contribution to Festival of Alternatives  
• 3rd May: Post Mayday debate  
• 17th May: Anarchy's Big Problem (speaker Steve Ash)  
LAF, Box 4, 84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1 7QX

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Saturday 20th April from 10am to 6pm  
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A gathering of radicals and greens in the heart of Derbyshire  
more info from ain@ziplip.com

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Saturday 20th April from 8pm  
Union Tavern, Camberwell New Road, London SE5  
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Legal Defence & Monitoring Group: ldmgmail@yahoo.co.uk

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Featuring classes in radical yoga, shiatsu, swedish massage, aromatherapy, self-defence, medicinal herbs, food, info, etc.  
contact: theradicaldairy@hotmail.com

**MANCHESTER RADICAL BOOKFAIR**  
Sunday 5th May from 1pm to 5pm  
at MERCi, Bridge 5 Mill, 22a Beswick Street, Ancoats, Manchester M4 7HR  
The day will be a celebration of grassroots cooperation, popular resistance and some really good books covering anarchism, feminism, ecology, peace, direct action, social change, etc.  
There will be workshops and veggie food available throughout the day at this wheelchair-accessible venue.  
contact: manchesterbookfair@hotmail.com  
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