

WHAT AFRICA REALLY WANTS

African Liberation Day will be celebrated in Britain this year on 24th and 25th May. ALD, as it's known, developed from Africa Freedom Day, launched by Kwame Nkrumah in 1957. When the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) was set up in 1963, the old name was changed to African Liberation Day and so it has remained.

The need for ALD remains as pressing as ever. The people of Africa are far from free.

Many of them lead lives scarred by hunger, poverty, violence and civil war. In April, the International Rescue Committee said that at least 3.3 million have been killed in the Congo since 1998, making the deadliest conflict since the Second World War. AIDS has ravaged countless families, and could yet prove a bigger killer still. Despite the enormous wealth of the continent – in minerals, climate and people – the economies of many countries have seen minimal, if any, growth.

It wasn't supposed to be like this. Nkrumah was an inspiration behind much of 'post-colonial' Africa, a proud Pan-Africanist and the man who led the Gold Coast (under its new name, Ghana) to independence from Britain in 1957. Another leader who established the OAU with Nkrumah, Julius Nyerere announced that Africa was "setting out along the road to its great destiny".

But the course of Nkrumah's rule, until he was overthrown by a CIA-backed coup in 1966, says much about what's still wrong in Africa today. In 1964 he declared himself president for life and banned opposition parties, insisting that "even a system based on a democratic constitution may need backing up in the period following independence by emergency measures of a totalitarian kind."

Africa in 2003 isn't lacking respectable leaders. South Africa's President Mbeki and Nigeria's President Obasanjo are behind an initiative called the New Partnership for African Development (NEPAD), which aims to win Africa massive first world investment in return for promises over democracy and good government. But most people think the current good intentions will go the same way as the old.

It's nearly fifty years since Nkrumah led Ghana to independence, nearly 25 since Mugabe (another old radical gone bad) did the same in Zimbabwe. Plainly removing the scourge of colonialism and starting again with native African masters isn't the solution to African ills. The kind of unity espoused by the OAU isn't enough.

Of course Africa needs unity, just as much as it did in 1957, but unity of a different sort. The enemy then was western colonialism,

and this is still the enemy now. It's just that colonialism has been reborn as neo-colonialism, and the men carrying its programmes forward are African.

Instead of European bureaucrats doing the bidding of politicians in London and Paris, the once revolutionary and nationalist leaders of Africa are doing the bidding of the World Bank and the IMF. The reason Mugabe has been so demonised in the west is because he still refuses to toe this line.

Given a choice between the unity promised by Pan-Africanists and the ethnic strife which has marred so many African states (themselves the results of random colonial division), Pan-Africanism certainly appeals. Strong African societies can only be built on the back of a strong commitment to pluralism.

But the Pan-Africanists haven't achieved this. Mugabe is a member of the OAU, which remains the best-known Pan-Africanist organisation, yet his regime ethnically cleansed the Ndebele in the 1980s because they represented an alternative power-base to his own. Even by their own lights the Pan-Africanists have failed.

The reason for this failure is that they try to find a unity in nationality, the wider nationality of being African, rather than through being just Ndebele, say, Ashanti or Zulu. In Africa, as elsewhere, the only

meaningful unity is a unity of class.

Despite his commendable activity against Ian Smith's hated Rhodesian regime, Robert Mugabe in office has increasingly used the rhetoric of nationalism purely to mask his own pursuit of power.

The unity that Africans need is the unity of exploited against their bosses. Mugabe and men like Obasanjo and Mbeki kowtow to western imperialism because this makes their own power and wealth safer. Below them are a native African ruling class, who have also grown rich on serving western capital.

Colonialism is still the enemy, but supporting new African bosses as a means of combating it won't help. The vision of African unity professed by Nkrumah and others all those years ago can only be recaptured by the conscious political action of the African people. Liberating African Liberation Day itself from the grip of the Pan-Africanists would be a good start.

V. Adeleke

Anarchist Federation formed in South Africa, see page 4

Saturday 24th May at 11.30am: Rally for African Liberation Day outside the World Bank, New Zealand House, 80 Haymarket, London SW1.

Saturday 24th and Sunday 25th May: ALD in Glasgow. Ring 07940 937241 for more info.

BAD TRIPS FROM RIP-OFF DRUGS

On Sunday 27th April, Channel 4 showed Brian Woods's documentary on the pharmaceutical trade, *Dying for Drugs*. The film was well-made, and simultaneously moving and infuriating. The programme covered four stories. In the first, drug giants Pfizer used a meningitis outbreak in Nigeria as an opportunity to test a new drug, obtaining 'oral' consent from the illiterate parents. In the second, a Canadian drug company tried to destroy the career of a prominent researcher after she expressed doubts about their product. In the third, we saw Korean leukaemia victims facing off with riot cops and private security guards as they tried to get Novartis to supply a vital drug called Glivec at a price they could afford, and in the last story a 12 year old boy in Honduras slowly dies of AIDS.

This last story is open to criticism for manipulating the viewers' emotions. Many people I know couldn't watch and switched

off. Certainly that's one of the defences used by the big drug companies and their apologists against this programme. The boy, Jairo, whose family's poverty means he cannot get the drugs or medical attention he needs, contracts thrush in his throat, and is unable to eat.

Pfizer produce a drug which can cure this, but it costs more for a daily dose than the family earns in a week. The television crew buy them for him, and an AIDS activist smuggles some from neighbouring Guatemala, but it is in vain. Pfizer's response to this is that there is no patent on the drug fluconazole in Honduras, and that they are not responsible for the poverty that ultimately killed him. But the fact is that they are responsible, along with every other capitalist, for a system based on profit.

The logic of capitalism says that people like Jairo have to die, because they don't have enough money. Even if they suddenly

started giving some of their drugs away, it's still capitalism that kills by maintaining poverty. At present the only check on the pricing of drugs is in countries that have their own 'generic' drug manufacturers who can replicate the active ingredients of a drug much more cheaply.

Both Brazil and India have big generic drugs industries, so the big companies price their drugs lower. Of course, this situation is hitting the already obscene profits of the big pharmaceutical companies, so they lobby their governments to make sure that GATT and the WTO restrict these practices. In 1992, the US forced Thailand to stop producing generic drugs or face the threat of trade sanctions.

When South Korea considered licensing Glivec for generic production, the health minister was sacked and the US wrote to the South Korean government with thinly veiled threats of retaliation. If I was dying of

leukaemia and a drug company put its profits before me, I think I'd want to take some of the bastards with me, but the Korean victims struggle on.

The pharmaceutical companies have got what they wanted anyway, as the WTO has passed the Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS) document, binding on developing countries, which forces them to 'respect' the patents of the drug companies, no matter what the human cost. TRIPS was actually drafted by the industry and forced on the developing world by the US and EU.

The logic of this actually reminds me why I became an anarchist. I want to see a better world, but it is not achievable with the institutions and society we have today. Reformism cannot work for the vast majority of people in the world because of the disproportionate power of the few.

Martin H.

Asylum: Labour's latest export trade

New Labour's asylum policy is all about putting up fences, 'out there' as well as 'in our heads'. Border controls, forced removal, detention, taking away the right to work, accommodation centres, a language that plays fast and loose with racist xenophobia are all about stopping people moving and meeting freely. New Labour's attack on asylum is not about stopping migration *per se*, but about reasserting state control over migration and defending the 'integrity' of national, and increasingly supranational, borders. New Labour wants immigration, but only of the right, market determined and strictly regulated, kind.

New UK government proposals to set up a network of asylum and refugee camps outside European Union borders, which were presented to the EU at the end of March, involve fence building in both the physical and ideological senses. The aim is to end the spontaneous arrival of refugees and other irregular migrants in the EU, by paying governments in countries outside to accept 'Transit Processing Centres' on 'their' territory, and by establishing so-called 'Refugee Protection Zones' in areas of conflict.

Croatia, Romania, the Ukraine and Albania have all been mooted as sites for transit centres. All asylum seekers arriving spontaneously at EU borders would be removed to these centres where their asylum claims would be processed. Those given refugee status would be offered resettlement in the EU. Protection zones would be set up in places such as

Morocco, Turkey and Iran, and provide UN 'protection' for six months.

Human rights and refugee groups have condemned these plans, pointing out that managing (and being seen to manage) numbers – and not giving protection – is what motivates the government. They argue that, if introduced, the plans will lead to the unravelling of already inadequate international agreements on refugee protection, particularly when poor countries see wealthy ones 'exporting' their international obligations. More than this, the burden of 'care' will be put in the hands of an under-resourced UNHCR, which lacks the capacity to guarantee humanitarian protection, as the massacres in UNHCR protected areas in Bosnia and Rwanda demonstrate. Women isolated in camps, campaigners argue, will be particularly vulnerable.

Refugee groups point out that the 'refugee burden' already falls overwhelmingly and disproportionately on poor countries; that many of those countries being suggested as sites for transit centres have extremely poor human rights records; and that the already inadequate legal protections given to asylum seekers would be further eroded by these measures. This would lead to the forced removal of so-called 'failed asylum seekers' back to the countries from which they have fled, as well as an increase in the number of permanently displaced people.

Finally, there is concern about the way the proposals link migration controls explicitly

to development aid and see 'refugee crises' as a way of legitimating future 'humanitarian' military intervention.

Global management

The wider context for these new measures is, of course, the problem of 'globalisation management'. Like all capitalist governments, New Labour wants it both ways: the free movement of money, the controlled movement of people. The question is how do they open up global territory for capital, whilst keeping out those who want a share in the economic pie or those escaping the upheaval, conflict and repression that are part and parcel of the globalisation process? What these new proposals exemplify is the gradual integration of those tools of global management, including migration control, military intervention and economic regulation, which differentiate monetary and migratory movement.

Out of sight, out of mind

In this context, the new proposals build on Blunkett's fear that letting asylum seekers integrate into the community poses a risk to asylum control. As Blunkett recognises, if no-one knows they're there, no-one notices when they've gone, but when people do notice, removal becomes politically and legally more difficult. Community anti-deportation campaigns have been able to stop deportations, and shown that, whatever the tabloids say, asylum seekers can be made welcome. They

have shared their sense of outrage at the sheer negligent cruelty of the Home Office – of operatives and ministers alike. The result is that at least some local people get to realise that asylum seekers are people too.

Blunkett's answer to this problem is crude but effective: stop refugees and local people from meeting in any meaningful way. In this sense, transit centres simply extend the segregatory logic of existing asylum policy. Anti-deportation campaigns get behind people facing deportation and, along with other grassroots initiatives, cut through the fences the government is busily erecting.

Bill Morris of the Transport and General Workers' Union has argued that "dumping refugees on other countries, especially ones that are poorer, often less politically stable and in many instances close to conflict zones, is straight out of the moral Dark Ages."

In the current asylum climate, even simple acts of friendship are political acts and necessary if the attack on asylum is to be challenged with any effect. More formal EU discussions are planned for June, but opposition to this act of fence building needs organising, and urgently.

Rob Peutrell

Read more:

Statewatch *Asylum in the EU: the beginning of the end?* www.statewatch.org
 Amnesty International *Fortress Europe in Times of War* amnesty-eu@aieu.be
 Asylum Aid *Women's Asylum Newsletter* February 2003 www.asylumaid.org.uk

Channel's arrival leaves alternative clear

Walking along the M32 I noticed an interesting change in the billboards that clutter the road into Bristol. Normally I check out the adverts, admiring the work of the subverters. But this time there was something new that caught my eye – the Adshel logo under each board had been replaced by the name of the new owner, Clear Channel. The arrival of this company means there's a storm coming.

Most people in the UK won't know the name, but in the United States Clear Channel is well known, with 1,225 radio stations, 37 television stations and 776,000 billboards. They're a major player in the music business, where their stations can promote a band and their ticket agencies can sell you tickets to see the band play in venues the company controls.

There's nothing new about a media empire? But remember the Bond film *Tomorrow never dies*, where media mogul Elliot Carver decides the best way to get ratings is to make the news rather than simply report it. Now

the Department of Life-imitates-art can report that Clear Channel are doing a similar thing.

In America, the corporation has been using its 1225 radio stations to promote pro-war rallies by a group called "Rally for America™". Notice the trade mark? This protest group is owned by Clear Channel – yup, Clear Channel was making the news it was then reporting. Why? Well, it's pretty clear (pun): the corporation is about as big as it can get in the US without changes to the rules. Who makes the decision on the rules? Secretary of State Colin Powell's son, Michael Powell, who's head of the Federal Communications Commission, that's who – and being pro-war ain't gonna harm their case, is it?

What's this got to do with the UK? Clear Channel have been busy shopping and came home with lots of goodies, including advertising firms Adshel, More and Taxi Media, the billboard arm of Scottish Radio Holdings. Its entertainment division, SFX, also manages live event arenas such as the

Edinburgh Playhouse, and also promotes footballers Alan Shearer, Michael Owen and David Beckham. And that's not all. The government plans to allow overseas companies to own UK media firms. The Clear Channel boss, a man called Mays, has remarked that "nothing would give me more pleasure than to be able to bring one of the leading UK radio groups into the Clear Channel family ..."

Remember the furore over comments by the Dixie Chicks, and the backlash against their right to free speech? Well, Clear Channel was the cheerleader of that particular hate campaign (which hasn't stopped the band from selling out their shows, but has led to allegations of censorship). Remember accusations of bias in reporting the war? In leaked memo on war coverage, the company listed pundits it could interview and at the bottom of its list of the 33 suggestions are "anti-war types".

Yup, if you were against the war then your views rank well below those of terrorism experts, chemical and biological warfare

experts, high-ranking local military or ex-military officials, professors of military history, former G-Men, veterans of Operation Desert Storm or the recent Afghanistan conflict, local families with loved ones serving in the Middle East and so on. So get ready for the next war, 'cause when the War on Terror™ Axis of Evil™ round two occurs, the streets might be full of protesters from "Rally for Britain™" calling for the bombing of Iran, organised by your local radio stations in your name.

But there is an alternative. What local indy media have you got? Do you subscribe to or support radical newspapers and magazines? In Bristol we have a burgeoning indy media scene and it's fast becoming the only bastion of grassroots democracy. But it needs support, because the only people who benefit from a free and objective media are us. The best way to ensure this happens is to create our own.

Anarchist 606

Visit <http://anarchist606.blogspot.com>

It's back to the future with Tommy and co.

The elections to the Scottish assembly on 2nd May saw smaller radical parties do well. The Greens gained six seats, pushing their total number of MSPs up from one to seven, the Scottish Socialist Party (SSP) gained five, taking their total to

six, while the SNP share of the vote fell by over 10%. It should be noted that neither the Greens nor the SSP won any seats directly – such are the joys of proportional representation. Yet both parties are considering the results a breakthrough.

While the left unsurprisingly praised the result, anarchists should be more critical. After all, we've been here before. A hundred years ago, the social democrats did the same thing across the world. It didn't take long for them to descend into reformism. Three decades ago, a similar fate awaited the German Greens. Today Brazil has got a former leftist leading an amazingly orthodox

government which aims to make capitalism work better. So anarchists have to raise a critical voice.

The history of radicals who use elections has been a sorry one. We should renew our arguments for direct action and anti-parliamentarianism, so that we become a pole of attraction for people sickened by the compromises of electioneering and the rising reformism of political parties. We won't have long to wait.

The politics of the SSP are a mishmash of populism, Scottish nationalism and social democracy. This means there'll be a significant left-reformist voice in the

Scottish Parliament, but nothing more. The SSP is sowing illusions in reformism while proclaiming itself 'revolutionary'. Throughout the electoral campaign, they put forward a Scandinavian-style social democracy as a model for Scotland.

Tommy Sheridan, the party leader, even went so far as to say he was in favour of a 'mixed economy'. He didn't call for the nationalisation of key companies, such as Tescos (anyone familiar with his book *Imagine* won't be surprised at this). The long history of elections deradicalising the people who use them is being repeated.

Iain McKay

MANCHESTER RADICAL BOOKFAIR
 Saturday 17th May from 11am to 5pm
 Bridge 5 Mill, 22a Beswick Street
 Ancoats, Manchester
 see <http://www.radicalbookfair.org.uk>

Nice weather, shame about the demo



I went to the 'official' Mayday march in London, organised by the London Trades Council. It was an interesting day, but for all the wrong reasons. The march was largish (police said three thousand, but that's too low). I was amazed by the range of leftist groups, sects and fronts. Globalise Resistance was basically a handful of SWP paper-sellers with a few orange flags (does GR use that colour in Northern Ireland or the west of Scotland?). There were a few trade union banners, and a few Stalinist and Maoist groupings were carrying banners with the faces of all our favourite mass-murdering Marxist dictators.

I was amazed by the lack of irony amongst some of these. I saw the Workers Power front, Revo, chanting "Whose streets? Our streets" as they walked where police told them to go. They also had somebody on a megaphone, shouting "this is what democracy sounds like" while the rest of the group chanted it back. Not my idea of what democracy sounds like at all. As a participant I was appalled by some of what I saw, but I know that socialism isn't restricted to the authoritarian left. I can only wonder what other people watching this

procession made of it – the unions hadn't bothered to produce a leaflet explaining the march and telling people why they should join a union themselves.

Needless to say it was pretty quiet. Marching from A to B, with only a few minutes of GR milling about and shouting outside the Shell offices to worry police as we turned into the Strand. We also got some shouting as we passed McDonalds and the Army Recruitment office. When we got to Trafalgar Square, we were subjected to various speeches – needless to say, the one by a Colombian trade unionist recounting the repression and murder of his comrades was at odds with the rest. Here in the UK, the trade unions are quite happy working in such a way that they're little or no threat to the status quo – an unfortunate side effect is that many workers see them as irrelevant.

Listening to the trade union speakers, it was clear they thought the future of unions was dependent on getting the state to support them with favourable laws. This is understandable, given the favourable laws the state enacts to support capital and property owners, but it shows that the current



Photographs by Guy Smallman

labour movement doesn't understand its own history and traditions. It doesn't recognise that workers' power lies in our ability to create, produce and work. It doesn't lie in politicians or the capitalist state. Our economic power is what the trade unions squander with their bureaucracy and sectionalism, with their uninspiring vision of getting a few more crumbs rather than the whole bakery. This is the message anarchists should get across.

So, was it worth going? Yes. Mayday is our day, born of direct action, solidarity and self-organisation – exactly the ideas to reinvigorate the labour movement and to make it a force which could improve our lives under capitalism while giving us vision and power to go beyond it to real freedom. It's significant that groups like the Socialist Workers Party and Workers Power have to form 'anti-capitalist' and other fronts to get people interested in them. The left has really got its head up its arse, as Mayday shows. They really have to present themselves in false, libertarian colours to look relevant.

We should take that as a compliment, just as we should the fact that they consistently fail to mention the anarchist roots of Mayday

in 1880s America. The *Weekly Worker* noted that the Chicago Eight were "tried solely for their political beliefs" in 1887, without ever mentioning what those political beliefs were. Marxists use the appeal of our ideas to flog their own authoritarian dead-end ones. And we let them get away with it!

Where next for Mayday? It certainly needs a rethink. Next year, 1st May falls on a Saturday. Instead of organising protests against specific institutions of capitalism, perhaps we could focus on a conference that presents the positive side of libertarian ideas. We could encourage people to participate in the 'official' trade union march and use the opportunity to get our ideas across to trade unionists and to passersby. We could produce a basic leaflet to explain the origins of Mayday and giving anarchist ideas on what we can do next (at its most basic, organise industrially!). We've got a year to discuss this. What do people think?

Iain McKay

See the next issue of *Freedom* for a different perspective: activists involved in London Mayday ask the question, where next?

Freewheeling protest

London Mayday's Critical Mass proved once again to be a bright and lively protest, making the links between pollution, environmental destruction, oil, car-culture capitalism and war. Over 200 riders met up at 11am on the South Bank, along with several mobile sound-systems, one wheelchair user, some skateboarders and a few walkers, as well as a strong media presence and large numbers of cops, including elements from the Met's Forward Intelligence Team.

After the last of the morning showers, we moved off in bright sunshine, accompanied by cops on foot, bikes, motorbikes and vans. Attempts by cops to get their hands on a rumoured route map for the ride were rebuffed, and they were reduced to traffic control and standing around nervously every time we stopped. As far as we know there were no arrests.

The ride proceeded first east, north over Blackfriars Bridge, west, then south into St James's Park, passing by twelve targets listed on the Mayday Action Guide, and stopping at will outside many of them, including ExxonMobil, Lockheed Martin, and assorted state agencies. Some riders handed out the Action Guide, as well as an explanatory Mayday Greetings leaflet, and info on forthcoming events like the Disarm DSEi

protests. As we went we picked up more riders, as well as protesters on foot. Response from passers by was mixed, the inevitable "get a job you wankers", mixed in with genuine interest and some support.

At St James's Park we stopped, surprise, surprise, for the well-advertised picnic and a well earned rest. Moving off we formed up in Petty France outside the Home Office at 2pm, the area saturated with cops and suspicious looking civilians. In the absence of other protesters, and not wanting to be penned in, we set off pronto towards Trafalgar Square, stopping briefly to greet the TU demo, before moving east along Shaftesbury Avenue. Amid rumours that protesters were being held at High Holborn, the tension mounted and the ride felt like the cavalry riding to the rescue. Fortunately this was not the case and we met up with those protesters near Cambridge Circus amid chaotic scenes and more worried looking cops. At this point the ride split, some remaining with the main protest, while others continued to freewheel around central London before converging on the Strand. All in all another good day for Critical Mass, reclaiming the streets, and celebrating an alternative to car-culture capitalism.

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Class Warfare at Wilko's

London Class War organised a picket of the Wilkinson store in Stratford on Mayday. Whilst many companies in the UK are now turning to prisoners as a method of cheap, forced labour (wages of a tenner for a thirty-hour week being common) Wilko's have the brassneck to combine this exploitation with a load of guff about being a community friendly organisation and an 'Investor in People'. We intend to expose this hypocrisy.

About thirty people distributed some 700 leaflets (we should have done more) to shoppers and passers-by. Our leafletting session was advertised by the presence of at least twenty police and half a dozen of the Met's new Community Service Officers. The Met succeeded in doing little more than blocking the traffic and prompting questions of how they can find such resources when dealing with political activists, but are seemingly unable to resource effective action against muggers, burglars and other anti-social elements. One curious response came from the Wilko's manager with a rather nice digital camera. Don't worry, we got a picture of him too.

After an hours hard work we then retired to a nearby hostelry for refreshments, before heading into the West End to take part in the

rest of the Mayday celebrations. Just to ensure we did not get lost, half a dozen of the Met's finest, plus two plain clothes officers, were good enough to follow us all the way to Holborn. Amusingly one of the plain clothes men even pretended to film trains at Stratford station before subtly turning his camcorder onto us. Whilst undercover work clearly requires sacrifices, pretending to be a train spotter is surely service beyond the call of duty. The campaign against Wilko's will continue for as long as they choose to exploit prisoners. When they stop doing so, we will stop picketing their stores.

Paul Marsh

London Class War

For more information on the Campaign Against Prison Slavery contact CAPS, c/o The Cardigan Centre, Cardigan Road, Leeds LS6 1LJ or visit www.londonclasswar.org

There were about 30 arrests at this year's Mayday, although not all have been charged. The Legal Defence and Monitoring Group (LDMG) are seeking witnesses. If you saw an arrest or if you have photos or video footage, please contact LDMG at ldmgmail@yahoo.co.uk or at LDMG, c/o BM Haven, London WC1N 3XX. Thanks for your help.

New federation for Southern Africa

Revolutionary anarchists in South Africa have announced the establishment of a regional anarchist federation, uniting the Bikisha Media Collective, Zabalaza Books and the Zabalaza Action Group – all members of the International Libertarian Solidarity anarchist network (ILS) – as well as the Anarchist Black Cross and a range of individual militants.

The Zabalaza Anarchist Communist Federation (ZACF) was launched in Johannesburg on Mayday. It has an operational presence in the cities and townships of Johannesburg, Durban and Cape Town and an active involvement in the 200,000-strong United Social Movements there. The word *zabalaza* means 'struggle' in Zulu and Xhosa.

Activists say the ZACF has been influenced by other ILS members, Rebel (Auca) of

Argentina and the Gaucha Anarchist Federation (FAG) of Brazil, as well as Ireland's Workers' Solidarity Movement (WSM).

They say they'll elect an international secretary and a regional secretary, as well as a working group to draw up a draft constitution. Until this happens, they've agreed to follow a set of general principles, of which the following are an edited version.

The ZACF is founded on revolutionary anarchist-communist principles. This means: a) internally – direct democracy; recallable, mandated and rotatable delegates; equality among members; horizontal federalism among all structures

b) externally – a commitment to workers' self-management and direct action, and to

libertarian anti-capitalism, anti-fascism, anti-authoritarianism, anti-sexism and anti-statism. c) globally – the ZACF bases itself on the proud fighting tradition of some 155 years of mass anarchist militancy, starting with the Pan-European Revolt of 1848 and stretching across Africa, Latin America, Asia, Australasia, North America and Europe. The Federation stands on the internationalist libertarian federal tradition of the First International, on the autonomist councilism of the Parisian and Macedonian Communes and of the Russian, Ukrainian and German Soviets, on the mass-based anarcho-syndicalist tradition of the International Workers' Association, and on the armed anarchist insurrectionary tradition of the Mexican, Russian, Ukrainian, Manchurian, Spanish and Cuban Revolutions. These traditions

continue today in the International Libertarian Solidarity network and in global anti-capitalist struggles.

d) regionally – the Federation recalls the revolutionary syndicalist tradition of the Industrial Workers of the World. It stands proudly in the fighting tradition of rank-and-file workers' networks, street committees, progressive popular fronts and community defence groups.

e) operationally – the ZACF is based on federalism, individual and collective responsibility, and on tactical and theoretical unity. These are the core principles of the *Organisational Platform of the Anarchist Communists*, drawn up in 1927 by Nestor Makhno and other anarchist guerrillas of the Revolutionary Insurgent Army of the Ukraine. Visit <http://www.zabalaza.net>

Martial law only deepens dissent

In the days following the murder of Serbian prime minister Zoran Djindjic by his fellow gangsters, anarchists in the country came under intense state pressure – as they'd predicted they would (*Freedom*, 22nd March). Here, the Anarcho-Sindikalisticka Inicijativa report on what happened next ...

For 42 days martial law was officially imposed in Serbia. In order to face up to its criminals, the state banned the right to strike and other syndicalist activities, public gatherings and any discussion of the decision to impose martial law. It used the methods of fascist regimes, methods which perpetuate repression.

Two days after the statement of the Anarcho-Syndicalist Initiative was delivered to the media ('Death of a mobster', 22nd March), police searched the flat where it was written and confiscated the computer equipment and the mobile of an ASI member. He himself was arrested.

The police were following an order issued by minister of labour Dragan Milovanovic, who was continuing his programme of betraying workers' interests in the face of furious resistance from those he betrayed.

After the arrest, our comrade was questioned for more than six hours about the group's political activities, membership and methods

of organisation. During this time he wasn't told which law had been broken in publishing the statement – which none of the mainstream media had published – but he was given a police document which said he'd been detained on the basis of a legitimate suspicion that his freedom could jeopardise security of the citizens and of the Republic itself.

He was kept in custody for three days. During this time he saw other prisoners being systematically beaten up by the police, sometimes using baseball bats all over their bodies, but especially on their knees. These prisoners were forced to sign blank statements and were threatened with torture and assassination.

After three days he was released, with no further explanation of why he'd been arrested in the first place. He was ordered not to speak about the things he saw or heard in the cells.

It's clear the state and its strike force, the police, consider that the safety of citizens is much more threatened by anarchists who publicly present their politics than by bosses who lay off thousands of workers, make their living off the stolen surplus those workers produce, train young men to kill and run over pedestrians (last month the Serbian minister of agriculture ran over a young woman in Belgrade while he was speeding in the city centre).

The repression against the ASI didn't stop with the detention of this one activist. Another member of the group, who works in ballet and is employed by the National Theatre in Belgrade, was subjected to intimidation and threats by her superiors. The Ministry of Internal Affairs, which runs the police, sent a message to the Ministry of Culture which, in turn, spoke to the theatre's management to ask that this member's "possibly problematic" behaviour and activities should be kept under surveillance.

When she spoke to the theatre's director, she found that she'd been watched for some time. Among other potentially criminal acts she was faced with were suspicions that she was propagating free love in her rented apartment, painting graffiti against privatisation, organising an agitation group in the theatre, participating in the distribution of leaflets in front of the Ministry of Culture – which is preposterous – and distributing the ASI paper, *Direct Action* to other employees.

We repeat that only the fascist regimes in the Balkans of the near past acted in this way against workers who have organised syndically. If this intimidation continues, the Anarcho-Syndicalist Initiative won't hesitate to use any means necessary to protect our members' rights.

The end of April saw the nineteenth anniversary of the brutal murder of syndicalist Radomir Radovic. He was one of the rare activists who publicly supported the idea of unions independent from the state. On 20th April 1984, he was imprisoned along with 27 other participants in a meeting of the 'open university', the name given to a number of discussions, held secretly in private apartments all over Belgrade during the bleak years of the 1980s when the communists ruled. These provided an opportunity for dissidents to exchange ideas.

The day after his imprisonment Radomir was released, but the very next day he was taken back into custody by two employees of State Security. He was released again the same day. On 23rd April, he left his girlfriend around 7pm and wasn't seen alive again.

On 30th April 1984, Radomir Radovic was found dead in his aunt's cottage in the village of Orasac. Despite an official enquiry which described the death as suicide, many facts in the case suggest that Radomir was another victim of state repression. The Anarcho-Syndicalist Initiative supports the demand of his friends and family that the files of State Security which cover the death should be released. The state and capitalism keep killing, but we never forget.

Contact info@inicijativa.org

— OBITUARY —

Phil McPhee

Phil McPhee, Castlemilk community activist and anarchist, died in April in his 50s. He was prominent in the 1980s when, after leaving Militant, he became involved with John Cooper and others in community resistance in Castlemilk, one of Glasgow's biggest housing schemes. The Claimants' Union, housing and Labour mafia corruption were his main areas of activity.

He was involved in the Clydeside Anarchists of the 1980s, during the years of the miners' strike and the News International dispute. After a couple of years of Glasgow Anarchist Group politics, when the internal dynamics of the GAG became uppermost he became involved for six years or so in the anti-poll tax struggle.

He was involved in countless occupations of Sheriffs' offices, leading even Tommy Sheridan to praise the contribution of

Castlemilk and other working class anarchists in his book. Phil had suffered a downturn in his health in the last eight years or so, but continued to be involved in the welfare of his son, supporting Glasgow Celtic and occasional causes.

Jim McFarlane

— OBITUARY —

Bernard Miles

Our comrade and dear friend Bernard Miles died on 8th May, following a heart attack. He was 67 years old. The last time we saw him at Freedom was in April, when he came to collect a bundle of copies of *Freedom* for sale to demonstrators against the war on Iraq.

Always a modest and unassuming man, Bernard was nevertheless a keen activist, well-known as such in anarchist and anti-militarist circles. He was one of the founders

of the Committee of 100, set up in 1960 to oppose nuclear weapons by means of civil disobedience.

The organisers persuaded various well-known sympathisers to let their names be included among the hundred members of the original 'committee'. A charge of conspiracy to incite, or words to that effect, was brought against these celebrities, plus Bernard, but no other members. It was conjectured that the police had gone for names and confused our Bernard with Bernard Miles the actor.

In the 1970s he became chronically ill, and moved to a care home in south Croydon. He was no longer an organiser, but remained very active as an individual, persuading bookshops to sell *Freedom* and libraries to keep it on show.

The Anti-Apartheid Movement kept a permanent demonstration on the pavement outside South Africa House, Trafalgar Square, until apartheid ended. When Bernard went to evening meetings in London, as he often did, he would go on to Trafalgar Square and stay all night among the demonstrators.

He was a delightful companion on walks and picnics, a keen-eyed naturalist, careful not to bore people with his knowledge of trees, wild flowers and insects but eager to answer questions. I learned a lot from him. We shall all miss him.

Donald Room

Bernard was something of an enigma to us. Despite his quiet, even shy, demeanour, he proved himself time and again a demon seller of *Freedom* on all the many demonstrations and protests he attended. I've often seen him on the anti-war marches of the last two years, down to his last copies, moving round the edge of the crowd. Not for Bernard the raucous shouting so beloved of many politicians. He was as unassuming as ever, but it clearly didn't affect his technique – he'd still be back at Freedom the following week with the money he'd raised and looking forward to next time. And he did always look forward to next time. Perhaps this quiet enthusiasm was how he got results.

Toby Crowe

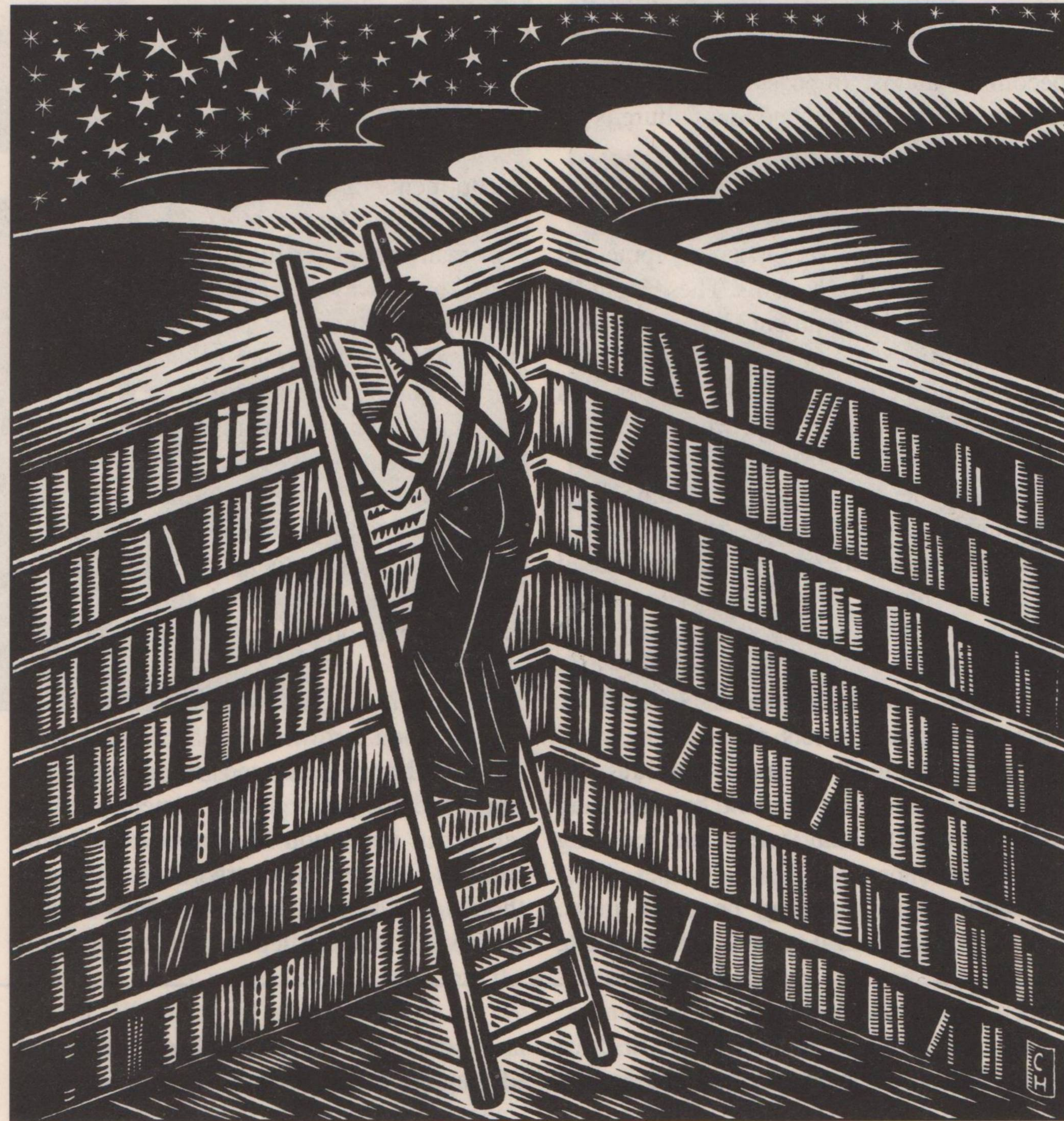
Clifford Harper – anarchist artisan

Ten minutes into my interview with Clifford Harper, an article I'd read recently popped into my mind. It was by historian Eric Hobsbawm, talking about nineteenth century shoemakers who were renowned for their radicalism. They were actively involved in the German revolution of 1848, the English 'swing' riots and the Paris Commune. One contemporary wrote, "is there a riot? Does an orator emerge from the crowd? It is without doubt a cobbler who has come to make a speech to the people". Hobsbawm drew a direct link between the nature of these skilled artisans' work and their revolutionary, anarchist politics.

This artisan tradition has played a significant role in the anarchist movement. Clifford Harper is part of it, something he acknowledges. "In the past the anarchist movement contained skilled men and women who knew about building the world. I'm one of them" He's a craftsman who produces illustrations and pictures with care and precision. He is also a thoughtful revolutionary working class anarchist who is driven in his art and politics by a desire to connect with ordinary people, something he fears both art and anarchism are increasingly failing to do.

He rightly accuses artists like Tracey Emin and Damian Hirst of "having cut art off from the people. An unmade bed will put them off art." But Clifford also extends this to anarchism. "If we're trying to change the world and all we show is rioting, that will also put people off". He tells of the time he walked back from the J18 'riots' in the City of London to Soho. "First I passed loads of workers pissed off because they couldn't get public transport home. When I got to Soho it was heaving with people drinking, none of whom had any idea what had happened. It was an extraordinary situation: we'd rioted, taken over the city, beaten back the cops and it hadn't touched any of these people. It meant nothing to them".

Born in a working class area of west London, Clifford has been an anarchist since he was 14, when he was expelled from school. In the 1960s he was part of the counter culture, living in communes, dropping out, refusing to work, taking drugs. His first work



was a poster in 1968 defending a Vietnam draft dodger. "What was written about the 1960s later was from a middle class perspective. My experience of the 1960s was a working class one." It wasn't just students who dropped out, working class people did as well. Popular revolts like Paris in 1968 were as much driven by workers as students, but that is not the perception prevalent today. "A problem with radical movements is that the middle class takes over."

In all his interviews Clifford avoids pinning his idea of anarchism down too much. Today's no exception. "I'm into most forms of anarchism. I don't see any point in defining yourself too narrowly. I'm not an exclusive anarchist thinker". One of the appeals of anarchism to him is its breadth. He fears that currently the movement is

becoming too narrow. "Many anarchists want to be part of a cult and resist bringing people in from outside – they fear losing control. Anarchism is infected with a Maoist practice, where people are afraid to stand up and say anything because they'll be attacked and criticised. I've remained an anarchist since I was 14 and I've seen many bright people leave the milieu because they come across the 'anarchists'. Of all political movements, anarchists shouldn't be doing this". Anyone who has strayed into anarchist discussion groups on the web will know exactly what he means.

It's clear that Clifford cares deeply about the ideas he has believed in for decades. His critique of the movement he's been part of since the 1960s is based on a wish to see anarchism 'break down the fence' and

become accessible. "We should be building the movement," he says with conviction.

He'd like to see more discussion and critique about what we're doing and why. "We need to concentrate more on process" he tells me towards the end of the interview. Earlier he'd pointed out the importance of "boring hard work". To illustrate his point our interview was often interrupted by people who came into the Freedom Bookshop to buy books, papers and pamphlets. Selling anarchist publications is hardly glamorous but it's vital if the movement is to grow. He praises the work being done by Freedom.

Clifford wants to contribute to anarchism in other ways too. "I'm trying to artify the anarchist movement. It's remarkable that so many anarchists today don't know that Picasso was an anarchist." He goes on to say "there's very little skill in the anarchist movement. One of the things that anarchists do on a daily basis is propaganda, but very little of what's produced is professional or good looking." What matters is to present a vision of anarchism that's appealing in its message and design. This is what influences Clifford's drawings.

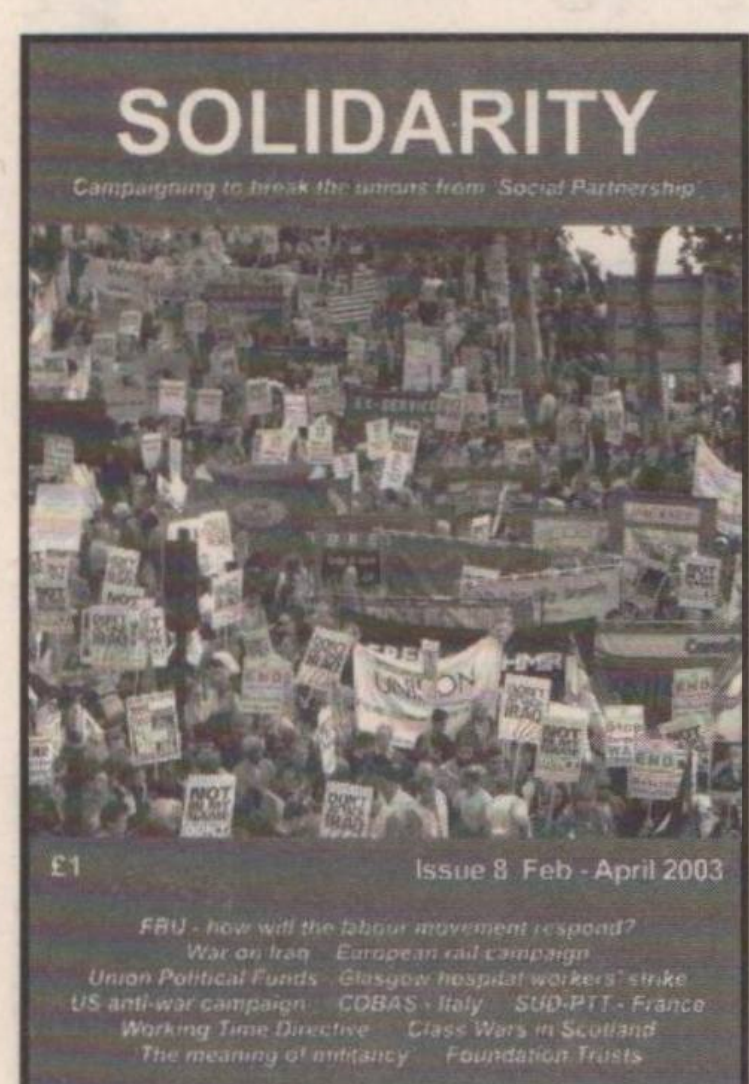
"I describe myself as an anarchist artisan, not as an artist." This is partly a political move to maintain that thread of skilled craftspeople, seen vividly in anarchism in Hobsbawm's militant anarchist shoemakers or the anarchist artists Pissarro, Vallotton and Masereel. It's also a reaction to Britart. When Tracey Emin said those who criticised her weren't artists, Clifford was happy to call himself an artisan instead.

Pissarro wrote, "is there anarchist art? What? When it is beautiful and good all the arts are anarchist!" A visit to the Newsroom Gallery in London or the Agraphia web site or the pages of *Freedom* or the *Guardian* should leave no one in any doubt that Clifford produces 'beautiful and good' art.

At the end of the interview I was left in no doubt that Clifford Harper is an anarchist to his core, and also that he thinks deeply about the movement and ideas he's committed too. In doing so, he raises important questions about tactics that we'd do well to take note of.

Richard Griffin

See www.agraphia.uk.com for more on Clifford Harper



Solidarity
Issue no 8
February-April 2003
£1

First, a warning. Unless you're interested in or have some knowledge of the labour movement, you won't like this – its distinct purpose is to break the unions from social partnership. However, if you're involved, you'll find some of this issue of *Solidarity* quite stimulating. It's put out by various trade unionists, some of whom are Trots or from a Trot background, and some of whom are even anarchists.

Its basic principles should be uncontroversial to most of us. This issue looks at the government's talk of banning strikes in the fire service, the political fund, the war and the experiences of independent unions in France and Italy, as well as reports and analysis from disputes. The Italian union federation COBAS produced a leaflet for

English speakers explaining where they come from, saying the "decision to create a self-organised independent union originated in a refusal of the [big unions'] policies of collaboration with neo-liberalism." The interview with SUD-PTT in France talks of how workers in the telecommunications sector found they had more power than they'd imagined, once they started to use it.

In a separate article, Martin Wicks asks if the unions should make a leap in the dark by breaking the political funds from Labour. The phrasing of this question illustrates his problem – he believes that "the working class will have to build a new political force of its own to fight for its material interests." But until there's such a force (the SSP may be able to claim that it's this force in Scotland now), where would the substantial amounts of money currently given to Labour go? The Socialist Party? The SWP? Both would love to get their hands on the money, but neither has enough credibility to manage it.

In 1900, various unions and socialist parties formed the Labour Representation Committee to secure representation for the working man in Parliament after a series of anti-union laws and judgements, thus restricting unions to a purely 'economic' role. Has the

left learned nothing since then? The political fund should be used to fund working class campaigns against the destruction of public services, council housing sell-offs and so on, and damn the artificial distinction between 'politics' and 'economics'.

To be fair to Wicks, he does go through the nuances of the various arguments about political funds, and points out the importance of unions being independent of political parties.

Martin H.

Available from Freedom at £1 (add 50p towards p&p in the UK, £1 elsewhere).



Direct Action
no. 26, Spring 2003
£2

The magazine of the Solidarity Federation springs forth with another issue. Once past the colourful, if somewhat confusing, front cover there are 34 pages of A4 text and

graphics. There's plenty to get your teeth into, with feature articles on the 'free' market; the meaning of words such as 'democracy' and 'freedom'; Iraq, its oil and history; the war and the economic impetus behind it; recent events in Venezuela from an anarchist viewpoint (not supporting either the Chavez government or the reactionary forces trying to overthrow him, obviously); the Patriot II legislation in the United States, moving the country ever further towards being a police state; shorter pieces on T. Blair, his promises and politics; racism and general anti-war activism; asylum-seekers and refugees.

There are also lots more shorter articles, letters, prison notes, contacts and a reviews section that covers not only the printed word but spoken-word CDs and music too. All in all, an excellent package. My own grumble would be that they sometimes use too small a print size for sub-headings, which are difficult to read if your eyesight isn't 100%. Whatever, it's a snip at £2.

Richard A.

Available from Freedom at £2 (add 50p towards p&p in the UK, £1 elsewhere). Send cheques payable to Freedom Press to 84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1 7QX.

Food for thought from urban allotments

Food is central to our lives. It's a source of enjoyment as well as nourishment.

But food is also at the core of many problems in society. Nearly 800 million people in the southern hemisphere are chronically malnourished while, in the industrialised world, many die from the effects of it, in the form of strokes, coronary heart disease and over-consumption.

In the UK, many poor urban neighbourhoods have become food-retailing deserts, where access to good food shops and markets is rare. Parts of the countryside are becoming desertified too, both economically (with farming employing only 2.2% of the population) and environmentally (as chemical residues contaminate waterways and destroy wildlife, and processing and distribution by road and air also generate pollution and packaging waste).

As a nation of town and city dwellers, we've lost contact with the land and with the way food is produced. Although cookery books and television chefs have never been more popular, for many people cooking has become a spectator sport. Reliance on processed convenience food has never been greater. Furthermore, our shops may be filled

with transcontinental luxury produce, but finding local and regional British food is becoming almost impossible. One way of reconnecting with the land and culture is by growing food.

Where to from here?

Urban agriculture can, in a very practical way, yield a range of benefits. These include:

- **Community development:** by reaffirming community identity, promoting active citizenship, combating age, gender and ethnic discrimination, preventing crime and rehabilitating offenders.
- **Economic development:** by providing skills training, creating local goods and services and building an alternative economy, based on local resources and management. In other words, the money stays in the local loop and isn't exported to fat cats elsewhere. With this kind of control over the community's assets, plans can be made to strengthen local economic activities.
- **Environmental improvement:** by increasing biodiversity, tackling waste and reducing transport.
- **Health:** by improving people's diets, encouraging physical activity and promoting

mental health.

- **Leisure:** by stimulating voluntary action, generating sustainable tourism and developing arts and crafts.

- **Sustainable neighbourhoods:** by reviving allotments and parks, and regenerating housing developments.

For many people an allotment is perhaps the best-known way of growing food in an urban setting. Allotments are, of course, designed precisely for that purpose and yet, even though interest in food growing is high and arguably rising, allotment provision and take-up vary dramatically from place to place. In some local authorities allotments are well-maintained and popular, with waiting lists for their use. In others, they're neglected, apparently unwanted and threatened with conversion to other, non-food growing, uses.

Why now?

Urban food growing has a long history. People have cultivated their cities for thousands of years. The allotment has been an urban institution for centuries, allowing people to keep their traditions of smallholdings and animal husbandry. Now we need to review existing legislation to encourage

more smallholdings within the urban settlement and to make it easier for people to sell their produce close to where it's grown.

Sustainable environments with sustainable employment are certainly a distinct possibility alongside the revival of food-growing culture which allotments symbolise. The 'dig for victory' campaign was crucial to this country's survival during the Second World War and proved that as a country we can become far more self-sufficient in fruit and vegetables. As a consequence we would become far healthier too.

With current technological knowledge about the benefits of solar and passive solar energy, we can comprehensively integrate urban food growing in many, previously undreamed of, places. For example, many glass-fronted buildings could quite easily have grapevines decorating the foyers and public lobbies. Waste heat from industrial production could directly feed aquariums raising urban fish and fruit. If symbiotic relationships were uppermost in the minds of local authorities, the potential for the configurations of food-growing within the urban settlement would be enormous.

Mike Hamilton

One of the basic ideas of anarchism is that of people taking back control over their own lives. So real-life examples of local, community and individual control of housing, food production and other essentials of life provide much needed evidence of the practicality of the anarchist ideal.

A good example of anarchy in action, carried out by non-anarchists, is the allotment site at Tarporley, Cheshire. The site differs from many, if not most, municipal sites insofar as the ground of the site, donated for the benefit of the local populace in past years by a benevolent landowner, is owned on behalf of the local community by the local British Legion Club and the allotments themselves are self-managed by the Clubs Allotment Holders Committee.

The land is approximately three to three and a half acres in extent, and has around twenty good sized allotments. Unlike most municipal allotment sites there are no vacant plots and less of a problem with vandalism or theft from the site than is the case with inner-city ones. The soil is light and sandy, well drained and slopes to the south-west making the most of the mild Cheshire climate.

The full range of garden produce is grown, everything from potatoes to leeks, cabbages, peas, beans, artichokes, apples, pears, tomatoes, courgettes, marrows, sweetcorn, soft fruits – the list of produce gets longer each year. Walking around the site last autumn gave ample support to Kropotkin's vision of a largely self-sufficient and economically autarchic anarchist society.

There were racks of onions and shallots drying in the sun, runnerbean plants still laden with beans. On those allotments with fruit trees, there were apples and pears ripening. In the greenhouses tomatoes were red on the plants. A variety of the fruit was to be seen, including cherry tomatoes, plum tomatoes and salad tomatoes. On another allotment there were onions the size of melons. Main crop potatoes were being harvested as needed. The quality and freshness of food grown on such allotments far surpasses that available in supermarkets.

Many of the allotment holders have shown great improvisation in recycling materials to build sheds and greenhouses. One greenhouse was built out of old double glazing panels salvaged by a worker from a double glazing

firm. Most sheds have gutters and barrels to collect and save rainwater. Most have good sized compost heaps. The allotment holders co-operate annually to buy in manure and seeds at a discount price. Seeds and produce are also swapped and given away. Neighbours' allotments are weeded and watered if someone is ill or away on holiday.

There are now vast tracts of derelict land in urban and inner city Britain. There are even larger areas of 'set-aside' in the factory-farmed countryside. It would be a real step towards practical anarchy if anarchists were to campaign strongly for the right to access this land, to obtain the right to live on it in a low-impact and sustainable way – indeed, to obtain the right to make a living from such smallholdings.

Jonathan Simcock

Two steps forward (but one step back – sorry)

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Good news part 1

As well as the name of this newspaper, Freedom is the name of our building in London's east end. From next week, it will also be the name of a new social centre, based above our bookshop in Angel Alley.

We're turning a large room, previously used as a paper store, into a space for anarchists and anti-capitalists to meet, discuss, read, plan and socialise. It also has a small kitchen area for people to use.

We see it as a complementary space to the London Action Resource Centre down the road in Whitechapel, to the 56a Infoshop in the Elephant and Castle and to other London centres.

It will be open to anyone who wants to use it from Monday 19th May, subject to certain bits of small print we haven't thought about yet – so drop in and choose a time.

Volunteers are very welcome to come and move stuff around, slap on some paint, make tea, etc., on Sunday 18th May. Pass by from 12 noon onwards, if you think you're tough enough.

Good news part 2

Readers of sharp eye and sharper brain will remember that, in our issue of 25th January, we promised a new design for *Freedom*. We

said this would appear in April, which obviously didn't happen – apologies. Now we promise, hands on hearts, that what you see will be replaced on 13th September by a completely new look.

Among other alterations, the colour on the masthead will change to red and the number of columns across each page will increase. We'll also introduce a more targeted use of illustration. (Format, frequency and price will stay unchanged). As well as being better presented, our intention is that every issue of *Freedom* will contain more information and more ideas.

In the next three months, we're going to make slight alterations both to the contents and – as you may already have noticed – to the paper's appearance. We hope you'll like the results. In the meantime, we'd like to hear what you think.

To join the discussion over the future of *Freedom*, send an empty email to FreedomAnarchistFortnightly-subscribe@yahoo.com


And a bit of bad news

We've had several visits recently from various life forms a few steps down the food chain. As a result we're having to step up our security in Angel Alley.

From now on, we're going to have to keep the entrance to Freedom locked at times, even when the bookshop and social centre are open.

Visitors are still welcome of course, but they might have to use the bell. Sorry for the inconvenience, but if you see some of the reptiles who infest the area then you'll understand.

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CONFLICT 

INNER TERRESTRIALS

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>>> Visuals >>> Anarchist InfoStalls >>>

WEDNESDAY, June 11th, 2003
@ THE MEAN FIDDLER
157 Charing Cross Road

Tickets: £6 from Freedom Bookshop
(sorry, not available from us by mail order)

What we say ...

According to George Walker Bush, "America pledged to rid Iraq of an oppressive regime and we kept our word. America now pledges to help Iraqis build a prosperous and peaceful nation and we'll keep our word again". The facts, of course, suggest otherwise, at least in so far as the usual meanings of 'prosperous' and 'peaceful' apply.

Since the collapse of the Ba'athist regime in Baghdad, the 'coalition' has been busy recruiting former members of Saddam's security forces to re-establish a police presence on the streets. Meanwhile Toni Christansen-Wagner, so-called 'mission director' at the United States Agency for International Development, has admitted that, as a result of a 'behind-closed-doors competition' between American companies, \$585 million worth of contracts have so far been awarded.

The "prosperous and peaceful" Iraq Bush talks about will be prosperous for American capitalists, with Iraqis at their disposal as dirt-cheap labour. It will be 'peaceful' only because of the combined efforts of American troops and people who used to be Ba'athist thugs.

Now they've disposed of Saddam Hussein, Bush and his cronies can turn their attention to Syria. Under President Bashar al-Assad, this country has begun to introduce rights of political opposition and organisation, albeit slowly. If anybody took seriously the rhetoric about democracy from Bush, Rumsfeld and Blair (especially Blair), our leaders' attitude towards Damascus ought to set them straight. Rather than supporting Assad, they seem determined to undermine him.

The American Congress is planning to restore the Syria Accountability Bill, which outlaws exports to Syria and deprives businesses trading with that country of US government assistance. This is on the grounds that Syria supports "international terrorist groups" such as Hamas, Hizbullah and the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine. Apparently, Damascus also has an "ongoing chemical weapons research programme".

The fact that the United Nations tolerates Syrian efforts at weapons development is irrelevant, apparently, as is the fact that Syria could well claim (with some justification) that its weapons research is based on the need to counter Israel's massive nuclear and chemical arsenal. Naturally Israel's own refusal to sign up for international treaties banning chemical weapons hasn't brought the ire of America's Congress down upon its head.

George Bush's 'coalition' made much of its commitment to 'democracy' in Iraq and the Middle East. But moves to determine the nature of a new government have started at conferences in Baghdad from which 'the people' have been excluded. They've happened in a mile-wide exclusion zone, its borders patrolled by American soldiers.

There have been huge demonstrations at which the most common slogan has been 'no to America, no to Saddam, yes to Islam'. Shi'ite Muslims, who have begun to link up with both the secular and the Sunni opponents of the US occupation, make up 60% of the population. If they were ever allowed a 'free vote', it would most likely result in an Islamic-oriented government rather than an endorsement of Jay Garner's puppet regime. This 'democracy' in Iraq will be whatever Bush and Rumsfeld decide.

Those who oppose the imposition of imperialist interests on the country have had a foretaste of Bush's commitment to a "prosperous and peaceful nation" in the rash of killings across Iraq, carried out against protesting Iraqis by American forces. The only 'freedom' at issue is the freedom to submit to colonial rule. Iraqis, hail your new bosses. You'll get no say in choosing them.

Readers' letters

Wisdom needed

Dear *Freedom*,

Can you help me find the answer to this mystery? How can two British Muslims – one from a wealthy family, private education, western lifestyle, who has everything; the other a 21 year old with everything to live for – travel to Tel Aviv to blow themselves up for the sake of their faith, their anger and desperation?

I think British Muslims continually show their love for their country by not carrying such attacks here. All roads go to fight for freedom and to liberate homelands from their occupiers, like Chechnya and elsewhere. Such roads are more and more closed. Palestine is the only road available now. But what will happen if tomorrow this road too is closed? What is the next target and where will it be? Very good questions – I think everyone knows the answer.

In my opinion, Britain should open a serious channel of communication with the Muslim community. Do not forget the innocent people who were wrongly arrested, wrongly charged and who are still in Belmarsh Prison. The new laws – the Terrorism Act 2000 and the Anti-Terrorism, Crime and Security Act 2001 are not the final solution. Please, we need more wisdom.

Amar Makhulif

Amar is currently in HMP Belmarsh, pending deportation to the United States.

Volunteers please

Dear *Freedom*,

The London Detainee Support Group (LDSG) is a charitable organisation that recruits and supervises volunteers who support immigration

detainees in Harmondsworth Removal Centre. We do casework on behalf of detainees and provide clothes, toys and toiletries for them. We also liaise with the authorities to try and improve conditions there.

We're now recruiting office volunteers who speak an additional language and who could put in a few hours every week for a period of at least six months. We need people with an interest in detention and asylum issues, and who can work effectively under pressure. If there are any readers who are interested in volunteering, they should contact us to arrange an interview.

Amanda and Matt

London Detainee Support Group

LDSG, 77 Holloway Road, London N7 8JZ
tel 020 7700 0606 or email ldsg@lineone.net

We need a plan

Dear *Freedom*,

What more proof do we need to remind us that the existing, divisive and authoritarian model for organising human affairs, now manifesting itself as global capitalism, doesn't work than the scenes of violence and chaos recently played out in Iraq? This wasn't history being made, as some commentators would have it. It was history being repeated. We, the peoples of the world, keep making the same mistake. We keep giving our power away to leaders or let them take it from us, looking on in despair when things go 'wrong'.

How do we propose that the current crisis should be resolved? With the imposition of more authority, of course! We ask and expect 'the authorities' to put things 'right'. But this is the very same divisive and unhealthy approach which caused the problem to arise in the first place. So, in the absence of a long-

term, imaginative and unifying plan, off we go again until the next invasion, rebellion, collapse or breakdown occurs, wherever that may be.

Can't we do better than this? Surely it's time to introduce a different, more appropriate model for organising human affairs? If you would like to discuss this further, please get in touch.

Colin Millen

flame.heart@virgin.net

Orwell and good

Dear *Freedom*,

Any readers interested in George Orwell might like to know that a five-day summer school is being held at the Workers' Educational Association college in Staffordshire in June. The course is residential, although anyone living locally could just attend the sessions that interest them. The co-ordinator is Robert Fyson and tutors include Bernard Crick, Peter Davison and Colin Ward, who is speaking on Orwell and the anarchists. The bad news is that the fee for the course is between £138 and £165, but this does include accommodation and food. The non-residential fee is £118.

Harry Sculthorpe

The Orwell summer school, 23rd to 27th June 2003 at Wedgwood Memorial College, Barlaston (Telephone 01782 372105).

We've still got some copies of *George Orwell at home*, Vernon Richards's photographic record of Orwell (original price £6.95). Take advantage of our special offer for Orwell's centenary and order your copy now for £5 from Freedom at 84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1 7QX (post free in the UK, add £1 elsewhere). Hurry while stocks last.

DONATIONS

28th April to 10th May 2003

Faversham, RM, £6; Hailsham, KM, £1.75;
Stevenage, KW, £43; Wolverhampton, JL, £7.

Total = £57.75

Total for 2003 = £381.75

All donations are very welcome, and provide an important part of our income. We no longer divide them into different funds, because we found this created extra work for us without bringing clear benefits. But that's just an accounting matter – we still need donations to our general funds, and promise to spend them responsibly. Anything we get is carefully accounted for, and our books are open to inspection on request.

If you've made a donation and it's missed off this list, please get in touch.

NET DISTRIBUTION

There's a new distribution service on the net, selling anarchist books from several anarchist publishers (including Freedom Press, publishers of this newspaper).

Put together by some of the comrades who ran A-Distribution in the 1980s and 1990s, Abooks stocks titles from Elephant Editions, Phoenix Press and Rebel Press, as well as from Freedom.

All its books are supplied post free in the United Kingdom, and can be ordered online at www.abooks.org

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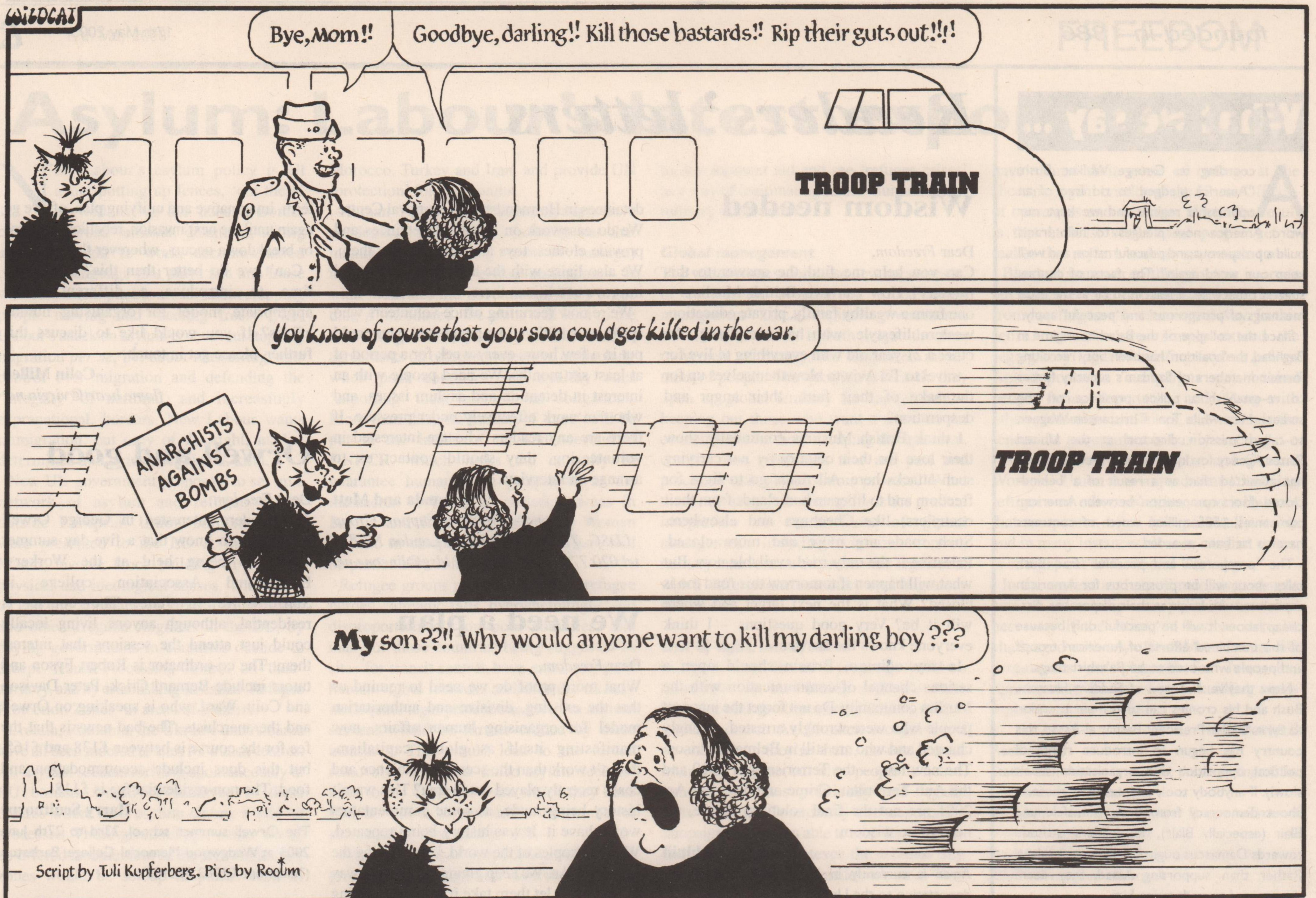
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GRAPHIC ANARCHY
 from Monday 14th April to Friday 30th May
 AN EXHIBITION OF THE WORK OF CLIFFORD HARPER
 at the Newsroom Gallery
 60 Farringdon Road, Clerkenwell, London EC1 (tel 020 7886 9804)

NATIONAL RALLY FOR PALESTINE
 Saturday 17th May at 12 noon
 at Trafalgar Square, London, with speakers from ISM, Jewish peace groups and Palestinian organisations.
 info@palestinecampaign.org or 020 7700 6192

MANCHESTER RADICAL BOOKFAIR
 Saturday 17th May from 11am to 5pm
 at Bridge 5 Mill, 22a Beswick Street, Ancoats, Manchester
 see <http://www.radicalbookfair.org.uk>

ISM TRAINING DAY
 Sunday 18th May from 11am to 5pm
 Preparation day with International Solidarity Movement for those wishing to go to Palestine at Kingsley Hall, Powis Road, London E3
 rachel@ism-london.org or 020 7263 3040

MANCHESTER DISCUSSION GROUP
 Tuesday 20th May at 8pm
 meet at Hare & Hounds, Shude Hill, near the Arndale Centre

MANCHESTER SOCIAL FORUM
 Wednesday 21st May at 7.30pm
 All welcome every Wednesday at 272 Dickinson Road, Rushholme
 contact: xxx@hushmail.com

ATTITUDE WORKSHOP
 Thursday 22nd May
 Stand-up comedy and performance workshop led by Tony Allen
 for info call 020 7727 4988 (early evening)

PALESTINE SOLIDARITY BENEFIT
 Thursday 22nd May from 6pm to 11pm
 BLINK drum n bass, reggae, hip hop at The Underground Bar, LSE
 Student Union, Houghton Street, London WC1

LONDON ANARCHIST FORUM
 Friday 23rd May from 8pm to 10pm
 Talk and discussion at Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, Holborn
 see www.trak.to/LAF

ANTI-TRIDENT DEMO
 Saturday 24th May • assemble at 12 noon
 Assemble in Devonport Park for anti-Trident nuclear weapons demo and weapons inspection at Devonport Dockyard in Plymouth

WORTHING ANTI-WAR PROTEST
 Saturday 24th May at 2pm
 at Montague Place, Worthing town centre – bring cans painted yellow to look like cluster bombs deployed in Iraq

REDBRIDGE GREEN FAIR
 Sunday 25th May from 11.30am to 7pm
 at Melbourne Field, Valentines Park, Ilford, Essex
 greenfair@hotmail.com or 020 8554 5439

THE PERFORMANCE CLUB N8
 Tuesday 27th May from 8.30pm
 Downstairs at the Kings Head, Crouch End Broadway, London N8
 details at <http://www.newagenda.org.uk/perfclub.htm>

BP & ESSO AT IMPERIAL COLLEGE
 Tuesday 27th and Wednesday 28th May
 The usual tyrants at Imperial College, London, for their £75,000 recruitment drive, so register your disdain (dates may change)
 tel 020 7802 2410 • email info@risingtide.org.uk

DEPLETED URANIUM DEMO
 Thursday 29th May from 4.30pm to 7.30pm
 at Dundrennon, by Kirkudbright, Galloway, South West Scotland
 see www.cadu.org.uk

JUSTICE FOR RAY GILBERT
 Thursday 29th May from 7pm to 9pm
 Public meeting to support prisoner Ray Gilbert
 at The Friends Meeting House, Paradise Street, Liverpool

EDINBURGH RADICAL BOOK FAIR
 Thursday 29th May to Sunday 1st June
 at The Assembly Rooms, George Street, Edinburgh
 see www.word-power.co.uk • tel 0131 6629112

BENEFIT GIG
 Friday 30th May from 8pm till late
 Rising Tide, Queeruption and Active present benefit gig with JUHA, Seize the Day and Naked Fusion at Chats palace, 42-44 Brooksby's Walk, Homerton, London E9 (020 8533 0227)

ANIMAL RIGHTS ACTIVIST GATHERING
 Saturday 31st May to Sunday 1st June
 Book your free place at the gathering near Tonbridge in Kent
 tel 0845 4560284 • see www.farmedanimalaction.co.uk

HARINGEY CRITICAL MASS
 Saturday 31st May • assemble 11am
 All welcome to assemble at Manor House tube for journey to Chestnuts Park Festival for 12.30pm
 Haringey Solidarity Group tel 020 8374 5027

SPRING FESTIVAL
 Saturday 31st May from 12 noon to 6pm
 Free Spring Festival at Chestnuts Park, St Anns Road, London N15

CLOSE CAMPSFIELD
 Saturday 31st May from 12 noon to 2pm
 see www.closecampsfield.org.uk

AGAINST PRISON SLAVERY
 Sunday 1st June
 Campaign Against Prison Slavery Conference in Leeds to highlight slave work prisoners do, which also affects workers outside prison whose pay and conditions are undermined
 contact markbarnsley@aol.com or 07944 522001

LEICESTER ANARCHIST FEDERATION
 Tuesday 3rd June at 8pm
 Meeting upstairs at Ale Wagon pub, Charles Street, Leicester LE1
http://www.geocities.com/leicester_af/org.html

USE YOUR LOAF SOCIAL CENTRE
 ring the hotline or call in to find out more ...
 Use Your Loaf, 227 Deptford High Street, London SE8
 Hotline: 07984 588807

LARC SOCIAL CENTRE
 many events - check website for details
 The London Action Resource Centre, 62 Fieldgate Street, London E1 IES (Whitechapel or Aldgate East tube)
 for more info tel 020 7377 9088 or email fieldgate@gn.apc.org
 see www.londonarc.org

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