

FREEDOM

11 OCTOBER 2003

50P ANARCHIST NEWS AND VIEWS

ID CARDS: THE BATTLE BEGINS

The last two weeks have seen the government advance a few more steps towards the introduction of identity cards, says Anton Pawluk. David Blunkett has admitted for the first time that he wants the scheme to be compulsory.

Those without cards won't be permitted to work and will be refused access to healthcare, education and other public services. "My own view," the Home Secretary said, "is that the minimum is that you can't actually work or draw on services, register for services unless you have that card."

In the last week, the cabinet has secretly given its assent to a national population computer database, essential if identity cards are to work. It's also been announced that Scottish secondary school pupils are to be issued with voluntary ID cards entitling them to school meals and access to leisure centres. Critics accuse the government of 'softening up' a new generation to the idea of ID cards before the introduction of a national scheme. This follows news in August that a trial scheme for a national identity card was to be conducted in 'small market town'.

Unsurprisingly, there's strong support for the idea among those in power and those aspiring to it. None of the cabinet object to ID cards in principle, though some have raised doubts about the scheme's practical application at a time when distrust of government is running

high - forty million Britons will have to visit kiosks in order for their biometric information to be recorded, and each of them will be expected to pay £40 for the card. The Tories broadly support the scheme, and the Police Federation is recommending that the cards be introduced on a voluntary basis, to be made compulsory once public support increases.

The government has advanced a shifting and varied panoply of reasons for introducing the cards. These range from illegal immigration to health tourism to terrorism. This has led numerous commentators to call the scheme "a solution in search of a problem". On top of this, critics claim there's little evidence the cards will have any of the desired effects and will neither reduce fraud nor heighten security.

ID cards, they say, will in fact create new crimes and new criminals. Experts in the study of fraud expect cards to be incredibly attractive to organised crime. If a criminal can successfully obtain or generate a smart card with stolen or bogus data, the potential for fraud is limitless. Central databases, like the one given cabinet approval, are also extremely vulnerable to attack. Recent figures show a 30% annual increase in fraud, indicating that technology has done little to eliminate this type of crime.

David Lyons, an expert in surveillance, has cautioned that the cards will do little to prevent terrorism. He points out that, "to put it simply,



suicide bombers do not strike twice. It is unlikely that the kind of terrorist to whom the ID cards are an answer will ever find their way on to suspect lists."

The cards will, however, erode hard-won civil liberties. The much used argument that "if you've nothing to hide, you've nothing to fear" has been given the lie by mounting evidence to

the contrary. "Categorical suspicion has consequences for anyone ... caught in its gaze," says Lyons. "It is already clear that Arab and Muslim minorities are disproportionately and unfairly targeted" by measures introduced since September 11.

Identity cards introduced in Britain during the Second World War were

revoked in 1953 after a ruling by the Lord Chief Justice of the time. He warned that giving police the power to demand an ID card from all and sundry made people resentful, which "inclines them to obstruct the police instead of to assist them." Campaigners hope the introduction of smart cards will be greeted with similar obstruction now.

JUSTICE AT LAST

The inquest jury in the case of Roger Sylvester returned a verdict of unlawful killing on 3rd October. Roger was in good health when he died in early 1999. Although he'd been mentally ill in the past, his family say that by this time he was well and thinking of the future.

But on 11th January that year he was detained outside his home under section 136 of the Mental Health Act. Eight cops restrained him, allegedly 'for his own safety'. According to them, he went limp after twenty minutes. He later died in hospital.

The cops used the controversial 'prone' position to restrain him. Amongst screws in Britain's prisons, this is now prohibited for longer than five minutes at a time. In some mental health hospitals it isn't used for longer than thirty seconds.

The inquest jury found that Roger's death was caused by the use of greater force that was "reasonably necessary" during this period of restraint.

Under cross examination, the arresting cops admitted that they knew excessive restraint was dangerous, but

insisted that they'd do the same thing again.

Deborah Coles of Inquest, the group which campaigns against deaths in custody, said "the same thing could happen tomorrow on the streets of London because the Metropolitan Police have failed to learn the lessons from previous deaths and incorporate good practice from other agencies. Roger's tragic death reveals the systemic failure of the state to learn the lessons from deaths that have occurred across different custodial settings."

During the course of the four-week inquest, Roger's family heard a concerted attack on the dead man's character from lawyers acting for the Metropolitan Police. This included repeated references to his supposed 'violence' and 'exceptional strength'.

But they offered no evidence that Roger displayed either of these alleged characteristics on the night he was killed. None of the eight cops who played a part in his death sustained any injury during the episode. Roger's family said that they were pleased with the verdict.

LIVERPOOL ALERT

An area of Liverpool stretching from Hanover Street to The Strand will be policed by a private force known as 'Quartermasters', a public enquiry into the city's biggest ever redevelopment heard on 1st October. Local resident M.P. reports.

Liverpool City Council was defending the privatisation of 35 public rights of way as it tried to get compulsory purchase orders (CPOs) to allow the £750 million redevelopment of the Paradise Street area to go ahead.

Day nine of the enquiry saw fierce criticism of the scheme from the Open Spaces Society, which campaigns for more public space. Their local correspondent, Donald Lee, said, "we oppose the wholesale extinguishing of public rights of way on foot, to be replaced by a series of so-called 'public realm' routes that are nothing more than permitted ways under the control of private management.

"When I queried with city council officials as to why the new routes could not be dedicated as public rights of

way, thus allowing the Society to withdraw its objection, it was explained to me that the developers and the council needed to be in a position 'to control and exclude the riff-raff element'."

But Peter Mynors, consultant for the Symonds Group, who are working with the council, said he'd learned from trips to the United States what people wanted from cities. "In North America there's been a drift towards the managed environments of shopping malls," he said. "The city centres have died. What we want to do is create a managed environment in the city centre so that we don't get that drift."

When Donald Lee asked Mynors who'd be responsible for policing the streets, he replied "it would be similar to what happens in a conventional shopping centre, with people called Quartermasters."

This sort of privatisation has real implications for campaigners. When the streets are privatised we won't be able to hand out flyers if the management don't want us there. If there were a

shop selling sweatshop goods or involved in environmental destruction, the simple act of trying to inform the public would become an act of trespass. If we refused to leave the area then security guards could remove us or call the police.

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10AM-7PM
ULU
MALET STREET
LONDON WC1
www.anarchistbookfair.org

Britain

FREEDOM

Volume 64 Number 19

Anarchism

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

Freedom Press is an independent anarchist publisher. Besides this newspaper, which comes out every two weeks, we produce books on all aspects of anarchist theory and practice.

In our building in Whitechapel we run Britain's biggest anarchist bookshop and host a social centre and meeting space, the Autonomy Club. We're currently developing open-access IT provision for activists to use.

Our aim is to explain anarchism more widely and to show that human freedom can only thrive when the institutions of state and capital have been abolished.

The Bookfair

This will be held on 25th October in the University of London Union on Malet Street, WC1. There's a full programme of talks and discussions, as well as social events and, of course, books. Here's a small selection of the various meetings:

- Capitalism, Animals and Anarchism (1pm, Room 2D): How do we break open the cages?
- Thessaloniki 8 Prisoner Solidarity Campaign (1pm, Room 3A): Eight activists, including London anarchist Simon Chapman, were beaten and fitted up during the EU summit in Thessaloniki.
- MayDay 2004 (2pm, Room 3A): A meeting to reflect and learn from Mayday 2003 and to consider the possibilities for next year.
- Zapatista communities in resistance (3pm, Room 2C): What can we learn from this struggle? Introduced by Edinburgh-Chiapas Solidarity Group and the Zapatista solidarity group in London.
- Workers versus Bosses (4pm, Room 2C): Organising at work and anarcho-syndicalism in the modern workplace. Convened by North & East London Solidarity Federation.
- Concerning Stirner (5pm, Room 3C): This meeting is for people who have read 'Saint Max' or would like to know more about this controversial figure. For more details on these and other meetings, visit www.anarchistbookfair.org

Freedom meet

Once again there'll be a Freedom users' meeting at the Bookfair. This is your chance to discuss the newspaper, as well as our book publishing arm and Freedom Bookshop. There'll also be time to discuss our social centre, the Autonomy Club, and Angel Alley's newly opened Media Hack Lab. The meeting's in Room 3C at 4pm.

Next issue

The next issue will be dated 25th October and the last day for copy will be Thursday 16th October. You can send articles to us by snail mail or at FreedomCopy@aol.com

New network launched

A new national federation, the Anarchist Workers Network (AWN), is due to be launched at the Anarchist Bookfair in London on 25th October. Here some of the activists involved explain what the new group is all about.

The workplace is an arena where we have the chance to change society. Bakunin called trade unions "the natural organisations of the masses". Trade unions ought to be a radical force for social change. For all their weaknesses, over seven million British workers belong to reformist unions like Unison, the RMT, GMB and T&G.

Industrial action is at its highest level since the miners' strike. Industrial militancy is on the rise. Workers are angry and wildcat strikes are back. Bosses steal our pensions. They make us sweat while they award each other

massive fat cat salaries.

We're exploited for their profits. Unions, even those led by so-called left wing general secretaries, have failed to build on this mood of anger. They demand marginal reforms that change nothing. They hand over millions of pounds each year to New Labour even though the party is the bosses' friend.

Anarchists know the importance of industrial organisation. But while anarchism and anarchists have been at the heart of the anti-capitalist movement, we haven't spread the anti-capitalist message to working people. We need to link up and support each other, in our unions and our workplaces.

We need to push for unions to disaffiliate from New Labour. We need to make the case for anarchist methods of running industry and society. We need to organise solidarity for workers in struggle.

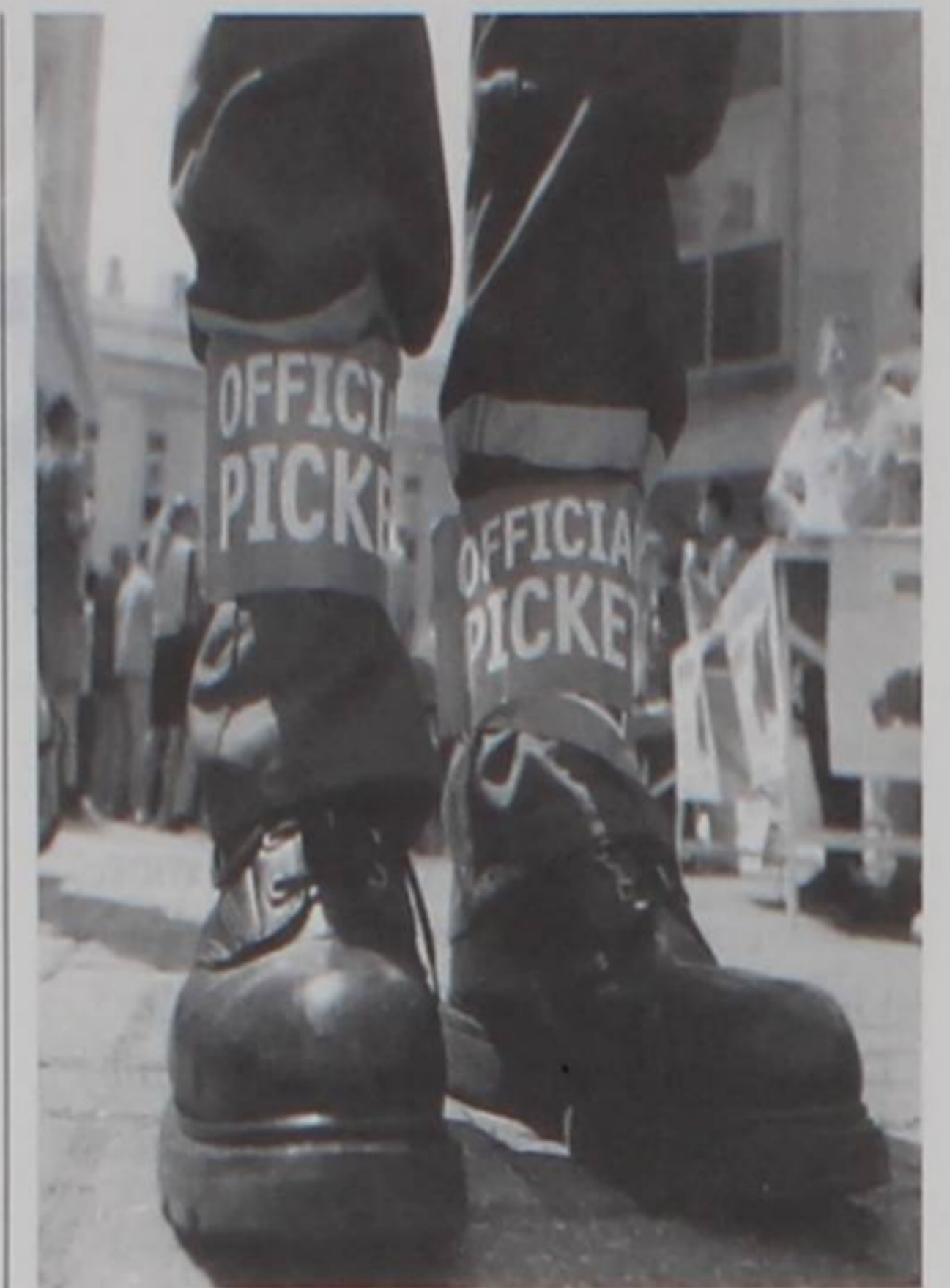
As anarchists we recognise the many weaknesses of the official union movement, but we can't ignore the fact that

millions of working class people belong to the trade unions. This is why the Anarchist Workers Network (AWN) is being launched. It's being set up with a number of aims.

We want it to provide a means for anarchists in individual unions or industries to link up and support each other (including the unemployed and retired workers). We want to be able to coordinate campaigns like the one for disaffiliation from New Labour. We need to raise awareness of anarchist methods of organising society and industry and to circulate and share news, advice and information. We think we'll benefit from having another forum for supporting workers in struggle.

The AWN will be a network, not an organisation. It will work alongside and with the anarchist national federations.

If you're interested in joining, come to the launch meeting at the Anarchist Bookfair, 2pm in Meeting Room 3C. Alternately, send your



details to the Anarchist Workers Network (AWN), Box 11, Freedom, 84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1 7QX or visit www.awn.org.uk Subs per year are £5 (£2 low wage, free for unemployed members). Cheques payable to AWN please.

LISTINGS

Bristol

11th October Peace vigil in the city centre from 3pm to 4pm, for those who can't make it to London for the national demo on that day.

Cambridge

11th October National demo against proposed new primate unit at Girton. Assemble 12 noon at Parker's Piece.

Durham

11th October Street theatre and direct action as part of a nationwide day of action against the main corporate and political supporters of Zionist brutality and occupation of Palestine. Assemble 12 noon in front of Marks & Spencer, Silver Street. Contact 0781 3073846 or frfi_ne@yahoo.com

18th October Picket Marks & Spencer, Silver Street from 11.30am to 2.30pm. Contact frfi_ne@yahoo.com or 0781 3073846

Edinburgh

9th to 25th October The Jasmine Road, a play about the relationship between a Palestinian refugee (played by Nabil Shaban) and a young ISM activist (played by Marnie Baxter). Theatre Workshop, 34 Hamilton Place, box office 0131 226 5425 (£8/£4).

13th October CAAT campaign against arms trade. Protest at BAe Systems, South Gyle Crescent, 2pm to 3pm. Protest at BAe Systems, Crewe Toll, Ferry Road, 4.30pm to 6pm. Public meeting, 7.30pm at Friends Meeting House, 7 Victoria Terrace.

Exeter

10th-16th October Festival of Comedy at Phoenix Arts Centre. See <http://www.offthewallcomedyfestival.co.uk>

Glasgow

14th October CAAT campaign against arms trade. Protest at BAe Systems site in Scotstoun, 11am to 12.30pm. Protest at BAe Systems, Govan Road, 3pm to 4.30pm. Public meeting from 7.30pm at Renfield St Stephens.

London

11th October End the occupation of Iraq, assemble 12 noon in central London. See www.stopwar.org.uk

11th October Anarchist Workers Network organising meeting at the Autonomy Club, 84b Whitechapel High Street, E1 (Aldgate East tube) at 7pm.

11th October Oil War and Climate Change 'Gatherance', one-day event by Rising Tide with talks, workshops, inspiration, from 10.30am to 6pm. See www.risingtide.org.uk or call 01865 241097.

14th October Causes of War: role of the media, discussion meeting with Robert Fox. Contact Pugwash Office, 63a Great Russell Street, WC1B 3BJ, 0207 405 6661 or pugwash@mac.com

14th October Performance Club North, downstairs at the King's Head, Crouch End Broadway, N8. Doors open 8.15pm, show 9pm, bar until midnight. Featuring Bob 'Diamond Geezer' Boyton. Adm £6/£5.

18th October London Anarchist Forum talk on William Morris: socialism and anarchism, by Terry Liddle, followed by open discussion. From 2.30pm at Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, Holborn.

25th October Anarchist Bookfair 2003 from 10am to 7pm, ULU, Malet Street, WC1. See www.anarchistbookfair.org

25th October National demo against deaths in police custody. Assemble Trafalgar Square at 1pm for march to Downing Street. Please wear black.

25th October Mumia's Lawyer Speaks, showing of this 80-min video plus discussion from 3pm to 5pm at the Anarchist Bookfair, Room 3b, ULU, Malet Street, WC1.

5th November to 24th December Leo Baxendale exhibition at The Cartoon Art Trust Museum, 7-13 The Brunswick Centre, Bernard Street WC1, and on 11th November at 6.30pm Leo Baxendale with give a talk. For details call 020 7278 7172.

10th November to 24th December Billy Childish exhibition Wa Are All Phonies at The Aquarium, 10 Woburn Walk,

WC1. See www.aquariumgallery.co.uk or call 020 2387 8417.

Every Wednesday the LARC Library will be open from 1pm at 62 Fieldgate Street, E1

Manchester

8th November Immigration Laws: They Disable Us! conference at Le Meridien, Victoria & Albert Hotel, Water Street, Castlefield, organised by Greater Manchester Coalition of Disabled People (GMCDP). Details from mike.higging_gmcdp@blueyonder.co.uk or 0161 273 5155 or 07968 56060

Newcastle

20th October Defend Asylum! public meeting at 7pm, St Johns Church Hall (corner of Grainger Street and Westgate Road).

22nd - 26th October Jeremy Hardy versus the Israeli Army showing at the Side Cinema (near the Crown Posada pub on Dean Street on the quayside). See www.sidecinema.com

28th October Mad Film Night at the Side Cinema (near the Crown Posada pub on Dean Street on the quayside). Films on mental health from 7.30pm. See www.sidecinema.com

5th November The Animals Film, with much covert footage inside labs and factory farms, showing at the Side Cinema (near the Crown Posada pub on Dean Street on the quayside), 7.30pm. See www.sidecinema.com

19th November Manufacturing Consent: Noam Chomsky and the media, showing at the Side Cinema (near the Crown Posada pub on Dean Street on the quayside), 7pm. See www.sidecinema.com

North Yorkshire

11th October Don't Take the Peace out of Space! demo at Menwith Hill, come dressed as a 'celestial body' (star, comet, planet, galaxy, etc.), 12 noon to 4pm. See www.takethepeace.com or www.yorkshirecnd.org.uk or www.caab.org.uk

Oxfordshire

25th October Close Campsfield refugee detention centre demo at main gates, Langford Lane, Langford Lane, Kidlington, 12 noon to 2pm. See www.closecampsfield.org.uk

29th November Tenth anniversary of demo at Campsfield refugee detention centre, Langford lane, Kidlington, with guest speakers and music. Contact 01865 558145 or 01993 703394. See www.closecampsfield.org.uk

Worthing

25th October Animal Aid Autumn Fair, from 10am to 12.30pm at Heene Community Centre, 122 Heene Road.

HipHop for Palestine UK tour

DAM are the first Palestinian rap crew, who combine the modern urban sound of western rap music with traditional sounds culled from the Arab world, employing powerful political lyrics. All money raised will go to building an educational centre at Rafah refugee camp. See www.enlighten-palestine.org/

12th October Birmingham: The Drum, with DAM, FunMental, Mighty Zulu Nation. Call 0121 333 2444 or see www.the-drum.org.uk

14th October Liverpool: Bluecoat Arts Centre, with DAM plus local Bhangra DJs (£5/£3). Call 01517 092148

15th October Brighton: The Brighton Gloucester, Rhymes of Resistance, with DAM, GMBabyz, Funkatech, 9pm to 2am (£4 before 11pm, £5 after).

16th October York: The Fibbers Club, with DAM, The Unpeople, DJs.

17th October London: Sahara Nights Club, details to be confirmed, contact damtour@eml.cc

18th October Burnley: mechanics Theatre, with DAM, FunMental, Mighty Zulu Nation (£7/£5). Call 01282 664400 or see <http://www.burnleymechanics.co.uk/october.html>

Sabs please note

1st November The fox hunting season begins. Contact Hunt Sab Association on 01273 622827 for more info.

Britain

The war that never ends

The international drugs trade brings misery to the streets of Bristol and other cities, writes Anarchist 606

Drugs have been part of human society since time immemorial and yet we're fighting them and, by all accounts, losing. Some claim it's a war of moral values for the soul of our society. Some even claim it's a winnable war. But fifty years and over £1 trillion pounds have passed since it began and drugs are cheaper, easier to get and more widespread than ever.

Bristol is in the frontline of this war on drugs. Our streets are battlelines, our parks are bunkers and our poverty is ammunition. I'm sick and tired of walking past junkies and dealers, day after day. Thanks to the actions of local residents, our local park is now mainly used by kids to play in rather than by junkies to fix in.

But thanks to the council the park is still a battleground. The notorious 'frontline' of St Pauls, the renowned centre for crack-dealing in the South West, has now got CCTV cameras. All this has done is move the drugs from one area to another. I'm still tired of walking past junkies and dealers – it's just that I see them in different areas now.

Here's a war the state can't win. The very fundamentals of our system – supply and demand – mean it can't be won. If the police 'close down' an area, the trade simply re-appears elsewhere because stopping supply doesn't change demand. Successful police seizures reduce the available supply, boost the demand and force up both the prices and the profits of the most cunning and ruthless criminal gangs.

Of course on the other side is the vast paramilitary police state that comes crashing down on the not-so-organised crime; a kid with a reefer, a student avoiding loans with a bit of dealing on the side or the stoners with a few plants

in the window box – easy to find and good for crime figures.

Now cast your minds back to October 2001, when the 51st State Governor Tony Blair declared that one of the reasons we should bomb Afghanistan was drugs. "The biggest drugs hoard in the world is in Afghanistan, controlled by the Taliban. Ninety per cent of the heroin on British streets originates in Afghanistan" he said.

Does anyone want to explain that, since the Taliban were removed, we've had armed police on the streets, armed drug gangs taking shots at each other (and anyone unlucky enough to be in the way) and that the amount of heroin coming from Afghanistan has rocketed? They've lost the war on drugs but they don't want to admit it because it works well for them. How did it come to this?

Bristol has a huge drugs problem. It's a transit point for groups into South Wales as well as a distribution point to cities further north. Drugs are probably Bristol's biggest export. Drugs mean money. Supply and demand. And still they pursue the same policy of war. Ever wondered why?

In recent years, numerous news services have reported that Chairman Grasso of the New York Stock Exchange flew to Colombia to meet the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Columbia (FARC), the country's largest leftist rebel group. The purpose of the trip was to bring a 'message of cooperation' from the American financial services industry and to discuss foreign investment and the future role of American businesses in Colombia.

The liquidity of the New York Stock Exchange is obviously sufficiently dependent on high margin cocaine profits for the Chairman to allow



Associated Press to acknowledge that he's making 'cold calls' in rebel-controlled Colombian villages.

Unfortunately for Grasso the FARC told him to farc off and a few months later the US and European Union (yup, we're helping to pay for it) started 'Plan Colombia' to wipe the FARC from the face of the earth, even though they don't control the larger share of Colombia's drugs trade.

Where's Bristol in all this? On our

streets you can buy heroin from Afghanistan and crack from Colombia. Drugs are the best example yet that we live in a globalised world. It's time to 'think global and act local', as the lefties say. We must start to realise that the cops and the usual political suspects can't or won't solve the drugs problem. It's time for us to act for ourselves.

I don't have the answers, but I do know that the war on drugs is a sham and a farce that costs in lives, families

and money. Worst of all it doesn't work. The war on drugs only benefits the state. I don't want to navigate my way past junkies when I leave the house and I don't want some Colombian villager murdered in my name. I don't want drug problems shifted from one poor area into another. I don't want two-faced financial institutions who benefit from the money generated both by the drugs trade and by fighting it. We need new answers.

Britain's latest slave trade

An outlet of Wilkinsons in Worthing's Guildbourne Centre was picketed on 4th October, in protest at the company's use of prison labour. This followed other recent actions outside the Wilkinsons store in Stratford, East London. The Campaign Against Prison Slavery (CAPS) explains its beef with the firm.

Wilkinsons claim to be a company with a 'caring' outlook, a company 'working in partnership with local communities', a company with an 'ethical' view. But in contrast to their publicity material, the reality is that, rather than offer jobs to the community, Wilkinsons prefers to use the slave labour of a captive, non-unionised workforce in order to keep their costs low and their profits high.

Slavery hasn't been abolished in Britain. Behind high walls and locked doors it still flourishes. Working class

people are being forced to toil in poor conditions, beyond the reach of health and safety inspectors, denied even the most basic employment and trade union rights and severely punished if they refuse to work.

In British prisons, there have been savage cuts in education budgets over the past half-decade. Any pretence of rehabilitating prisoners and empowering them with trade skills has been abandoned. They're now seen as a readily exploitable labour force, a Third World colony in Britain's own backyard. They're cheap, non-unionised, available and literally compelled to work. If they refuse, or aren't considered to be working hard enough, they're punished – placed in solitary confinement, brutalised, denied visits, have days added to their sentences.

Private companies are making enormous profits from prison labour. It was £52.9

million in 1999, and this figure is growing rapidly. They use it because it's cheap (prisoners may be paid less than £5 for a week's work), and for prisoners there are no sickies, no holidays, no union meetings, no transport problems and, if there's no work, they can simply be locked back in their cells. Prisoners are treated as the bosses would like to treat all of us.

Wilkinsons are one of many companies profiting from the slave labour of prisoners. In HMP Swansea, for example, where prisoners are forced to do packing work for the firm, they're paid little more than £1 per day. This greedy company would rather use slave labour than give more work to their own workers or employ new ones.

The issue of prison slavery is an issue for all working class people, not least because it undermines workers' pay and conditions generally. This isn't because

prisoners are somehow 'stealing' jobs – they have absolutely no choice in the matter – but because companies can drive down the wages of their own employees by using prison labour.

• Britain's cops aren't so busy with fighting the war on drugs and terror that they can't find time for a good old-fashioned bit of political intimidation. Activists from the Campaign Against Prison Slavery have recently been subjected to more harassment than usual.

Organiser Mark Barnsley said, "prior to our last conference, when it was agreed to move the CAPS postal address to Brighton, our address was at the Cardigan Centre in Leeds, where Leeds Prisoners Solidarity Group [LPSG] also have a box. Because the Leeds address has been widely advertised, we renewed the box a few months ago.

"Recently, however, it's become appar-

ent that the state is intercepting and withholding both CAPS and LPSG mail, and the police have visited the Cardigan Centre to 'make enquiries', with my name being mentioned specifically. Clearly they're worried about CAPS, an entirely legitimate campaign, which is shaping up into an effective one, and I think we can expect more of this low-level police harassment."

The Campaign Against Prison Slavery exists to challenge and bring about an end to forced prison labour, and to expose companies, such as Wilkinsons, that exploit it. We at Freedom think it's high time that slavery in all its forms was ended once and for all. For more information visit the CAPS website at www.againstprisonslavery.org. There's also a CAPS meeting at the Anarchist Bookfair on 25th October, under the title Fighting Forced Labour. This will be at 12 noon in Meeting Room 3C.

International

Sale of the century

Iraq was put up for sale last month, says Iain McKay, when a sweeping overhaul of the economy was announced

Under new rules announced by the US-appointed Iraqi finance minister, foreign firms will have the right to wholly own Iraqi companies except those in oil (whose revenues the US government already plans to use to pay for the invasion and the rebuilding of what it destroyed). There will be no restrictions on the profits that can be taken out of the country or on using local products. Corporate tax will be set at 15%. And the new regime is clear: the privatisation of Iraq's 192 public sector companies isn't up for debate. The reforms won the backing of the US Treasury Secretary, unsurprisingly, while Iraqi capitalists said they faced disaster (they'll now be unable to compete with foreign companies in privatisation tenders).

Of course the Americans are at pains to stress that the decision to 'reform' the Iraqi economy was made by the Iraqi Governing Council (IGC). Yet even Iraqi stoolpigeon Ahmad Chalabi has been pressing for increased independence of the IGC. Significantly, he demanded last month that this body be given at least partial control of the finance and security ministries – yes, that same finance ministry which just decreed the new economic regime. So it looks like the IGC doesn't even have 'partial control' over the ministry that which just transformed the economy!

Clearly the proposal wasn't the sole brainchild of the Iraqi Finance Minister, particularly as the imposition of free-market reforms on Iraq has long been a goal of the Bush Junta. Surprisingly, Iraqi and American officials admitted that the plan was the result of months of work by the IGC as well as the US occupation power, the Coalition Provisional Authority. The laws enacting reforms

were signed by Viceroy Paul Bremer who, let's not forget, can veto any decision the IGC makes.

A 'senior US official' said, "having done this today, as opposed to three months ago before there was a governing council, fundamentally makes it have deeper roots." In other words, the US government has determined the fate of the Iraq economy, as planned, though it did wait until the IGC was in place to rubber stamp it. Truly Iraqis are now free. But only of the tyranny of having a say in their own economic future.

Operation Iraqi Free-market

Iraq is now free for transnationals to cherry-pick the industries they want. What's been achieved by the International Monetary Fund elsewhere has been done by force of arms in Iraq. The process has already begun. The most valuable contracts on offer have gone to US corporate giants. A subsidiary of Halliburton (once run by the American vice-president) won a contract worth up to \$7 billion to repair Iraq's oil infrastructure. Bechtel won the \$680m chief contract to start rebuilding other essentials, such as roads and schools.

As an example of the future awaiting Iraq, we can look at what happened to the technicians at the Baghdad South power plant when they needed spare parts. They first submitted a written request to Bechtel Corp, the engineering firm given more than \$1 billion in US government contracts to fix Iraq's decrepit infrastructure. Then they went to the junkyard to look for items to jerry-rig their geriatric plant.

Why? Because their repeated appeals to Bechtel and the U.S. military didn't yield anything significant. Incredibly, US officials said the requests for new parts were beyond the scope of Bechtel's



contract! So, just to clarify, Bechtel gets a billion dollars to fix the Iraqi power system but to actually do this is beyond the scope of their contract. Halliburton and Bechtel, both appointed behind closed doors, are making billions yet they haven't been able to turn on the electricity or the water supply. Who says private enterprise can't deliver?

Having it both ways

Last month Bush gave a speech to the United Nations. Unlike a year previously, he was cap-in-hand, asking for help from

the institution he so recently decried as irrelevant. The French government, in reply, called for an immediate transfer of sovereignty to the IGC. In view of the fact that the invasion was billed as 'Operation Iraqi Freedom', this seems reasonable. But no. Echoing the Bush Junta line, the Washington Post in its editorial on 24th September described Chirac's position as an "irresponsible demand", pointing out that the council was "unelected".

Yet at the same time, this "unelected" and "not representative" body seems to be legitimate and responsible enough to decide the future economics of Iraq and to send representatives to both the UN and OPEC. You can't have it both ways. You can't pretend that the IGC is legitimate enough to pass wide-ranging economic decrees that benefit the USA, but not legitimate enough to be involved in a quick transition in political power. Nor should we forget that earlier this year, US hawk Paul Wolfowitz insisted that "decisions regarding the long-term development of Iraq's oil resources and its economy will be the responsibility of a stable Iraqi government." Yet another lie exposed.

Talking of lies, Bush previously explained that he'd ignored the United Nations and invaded Iraq defend the credibility of that body. Yet he still refuses to allow it to assume responsibility for the civilian nation-building process in Iraq. How strange. Then again, UN intervention would set a dangerous precedent, allowing US imperialism to invade anywhere it liked and then asking the UN

to clean up the mess (so legitimising the attack as well as freeing the US for more adventures elsewhere). So perhaps we shouldn't be too bothered by Bush's lack of tact or logic. Any way, we can't expect much from the UN, dominated by the imperialist powers and representing the ruling classes of the world. Looking for peace there is like looking for virginity in a brothel.

Free to eat GM

So the IGC legitimacy is, like dead Iraqis, useful only when it can be used as a front for US plans, such as the privatisation of the economy. Or when promoting US agribusiness and its products. The UN Food and Agriculture Organization and the World Food Program have reported that millions of Iraqis suffer from malnutrition, particularly in the central and southern areas. But don't fear, the new Agriculture Minister has a solution. He hopes to encourage the private sector and foreign investment. "Our conditions are that they have to use the modern science means [sic]", he said.

"We will focus on forming big agricultural projects which create agricultural and industrial projects to use modern means of irrigation." In all probability this means an open door to GM crops and large-scale industrial farming (funded, of necessity, by big agribusiness). Clearly American influence on the Agriculture Ministry is large. It simply reflects US policies. But why expect it to be any different to the rest of the US-occupied 'free' Iraq. Who is he trying to kid?

Ireland's better example

Dublin's anti-occupation demo on 27th September was a small but good one, reports Alan, a member of the Workers Solidarity Movement in Ireland. Rather than wait round for the speeches, activists decided to take the initiative themselves.

We marched in a bloc during the main march, attracting a lot of attention from cameras and also a couple of Socialist Party newspaper sellers who told us we were morons giving the 'movement' a bad name.

We went down to Top Oil, which refuels planes at Shannon Airport, a key component in the Irish state's war machine. There were already a fair few cops waiting for us. We weren't really

sure how much they were going to let us get away with, so when it became obvious they were keeping us off the forecourt, we linked arms and formed a human chain across the entrance.

Then followed a bit of pushing and shoving on the part of the Garda to get us out of the way. We managed to hang on for a bit, but they started to shove us more and there was a fair bit of confusion. People were lying on the ground and the police tried to get them up, but they stayed put and the cops just gave up.

They kept pushing us back behind their imaginary line, which was constantly changing of course. But over all they weren't heavy-handed and the atmosphere was relaxed. When the pushing and

shoving began, I was sure things were going to escalate into arrests, but people were joking and laughing as it was happening (hardly class war!). One of us started bawling his head off, baby-style, which had everyone (including the Garda) in laughter. We stayed at Top Oil about an hour and then dispersed.

It was good to see people doing a direct action in Dublin that was related to Shannon. Even marching towards the location was great, clogging up traffic and walking the wrong way down streets. Next time we'll have bigger numbers (the action this time was organised at the last minute), and hopefully autonomous actions like this will multiply. Marching around in circles achieves fuck all. It's got to change.

Kingdom of Micomicon

More potent than ever

Is there still room for radical art in a world where both space and expression are increasingly controlled? S.D. thinks there is

There are many questions surrounding art, and 'radical art' has always held an important place in the history of developing aesthetics. The question which is now being asked is whether we have room for radical art in an increasingly controlled world and whether it can really remain radical. Proudhon, thinking that the task of art was "to improve us, help us and save us," called for a realistic style that reflected social ills like a mirror. This point, reasonably valid for the period, failed to perceive capitalism's skill at commercialising these forms and subsuming their radical nature. We can observe this historical development now and are aware that society mystifies our art through its language and perception.

"In the end, the art of the past is being mystified because a privileged minority is striving to invent a history which can retrospectively justify the role of the ruling classes, and such a justification can no longer make sense in modern terms. And so, inevitably, it mystifies," says John Berger in *Ways of Seeing*.

As anarchists, we must acknowledge the fact that mystification, historicisation and intellectualisation of art only allow it to be filtered through the hands of 'experts'. For art to be radical, we must free it from its boundaries and stop treating it as just 'pictures'. We must perceive it within a wider scale of actions, skills and even perception of life.

Anarchist philosophy has acknowledged this, understanding the need for art in a free society – from Kropotkin's artistic craftsmen to Debord's spectacular society, in which the performative encompasses social life. Herbert Read spoke of culture as a social construct, believing that culture was inseparable from life. Art was "deeply involved in the actual process of perception, thought and bodily action. It is not so much a governing principle to be applied to life, as a governing mechanism which can only be ignored at our peril" (*Education Through Art*).

Here radical art becomes an educational, the training of perception creating well-rounded human beings aware of themselves and their surroundings. Unfortunately, this cannot occur without a revolution of educational methods.

Radical art forms have developed throughout history, but soon after their formation are subsumed into society. As advertising and the spectacle increasingly commercialise the alternative, radical art has to become a force that can overcome institutionalisation. A more prominent, radical art is developing that remains difficult for society to emulate. Its strength lies in its application of dissent into the realm of art, its rejection of capitalist notions of art and its performance of self-expression against a

restrictive society. This is direct action as art – the reclaiming of public space through graffiti, billboard doctoring and protest.

Grffiti has long been seen as an art form – through neighbourhood graffiti schemes and its use in fashion and advertising – but its sublimation has not completely detracted from its radical value because of its illegal nature and its aesthetic perception as 'ugly'. There are many forms of graffiti – tags, stylised lettering and murals – and these forms generally require practice and a creation of style and form, more complex murals often containing overt political and social commentary. At the very least, this is a source of free expression and an assertion of individuality on a controlled social space.

This space is becoming an artistic one, but only in the sense of commercialised art and its use in advertising – a form permeating all our lives.

"You can switch off/smash/shoot/hack or in other ways avoid Television, Computers and Radio. You are not compelled to buy magazines or subscribe to newspapers. You can set your rottweiler on door to door salesmen. Of all the types of media used to disseminate the Ad, there is only one which is entirely inescapable ... We speak, of course, of the Billboard. Along with its lesser cousins, advertising posters and 'bullet' outdoor graphics, the Billboard is ubiquitous and inescapable," according to the Billboard Liberation Front.

Billboard doctoring or, more appropriately, Liberation, is another way of reclaiming our public space and subverting these adverts, which in turn exposes and reverses their power. Advertisers have tried to use this form for their own purposes, but it continues to be most powerful in its original form. The Billboard Liberation Front believes it is our inalienable right to reclaim these spaces and to use them for our own expression. We must reject the commercially supported messages that surround us, and free ourselves from this form of control.

The subversion of the spectacle can be achieved on a much larger scale though. In this era of mass media, protest, if engineered correctly, is able to reach a much larger audience with its message of dissent. Protest has always utilised common signs and symbols to communicate its message to onlookers. These deep-rooted social signs remain difficult to manipulate, and communicate far more deeply and efficiently than words. Recently, protest has also taken on more traditionally 'artistic' forms, such as puppets, dancing, music and costume, to create a festive atmosphere enabling communication of a 'playful', 'sensible' and 'non-threatening' presence to tackle the media and government misinformation. These images and symbols are



thoughtfully conceived and directed towards an 'audience'. Even though the many events are spontaneous, the whole is organised and structured. The difference, and power, in protest and all the aspects of radical art I have mentioned, is that they function outside the law and therefore communicate more potently than their 'legal' equivalents. Our society now depends almost solely on the spectacle to keep order and this in turn can become the strength of radical art.

"In such a culture," says Baz Kershaw in *The Radical as Performance*, "disruption of the seductive sweep of the spectacle, in any particular context, can ... present a reflexive critique of the machinations of authority."

We have to ask whether an artistic movement based on illegality can be overcome. History may show, as it has with much art incorporating violent tendencies, that these forms will be subsumed. But it seems that rejecting

the notion of art as a product and placing it within an anti-capitalist lifestyle will create problems for commercialised culture. We can already see that governments, unable to subsume these forms or even recognise them as art, are becoming more restrictive against radical, political or illegal expression. This will just outlaw the forms more, making them more potent and harder to commercialise. Herein lies the power of a radical art which may remain radical.

Companions in hope

Anarchists since Proudhon have rejected capitalism and statism. In their place they've generally advocated an ideal, free society. Typical features of the anarchist movement since the 1840s have been opposition, in varying and shifting degrees, to authority, property, industry, war, parliament, tyranny, conformity and religion. At the same time, anarchist goals have ranged through freedom and independence, mutual aid, solidarity and harmonious relationships between human beings, non-human animals and the natural environment.

By the end of the nineteenth century, there was a solid movement and a strong body of theory behind it, drawing on the work of people like Bakunin and Kropotkin as well as Proudhon. The downside of much of this development was that it was firmly

wedded to the realm of ideas. In their aspirations and their propaganda, anarchists moved away from the real. Instead of Proudhon's practical proposals for change, they set out on a quest for utopia.

It's unsurprising that it was in this period, when anarchists were most bothered about the free society to come, that links between anarchism and art were at their closest. It's hard, for example, to draw up a list of prominent symbolists without finding that it's become a list of anarchists as well.

The anarchists and the artists were engaged in the same endeavour. They all wanted to delineate something very different from the day-to-day life of reality. It was inevitable that the siren voices of art and of anarchism would combine in an attempt to uplift the soul

of a suffering humanity.

Peter Kropotkin believed that the support of artists was crucial if social consciousness was to be changed. In fact he urged artists to behave as if the revolution had already happened. Although he himself was an idealist and classical in taste, his ideas also lent themselves to the rediscovery of primitivism, which has fed in turn into a different strain in anarchism from the classical school.

For many people, the appeal of our politics has always been that it's actually a form of anti-politics. It's easy to find in anarchism a badge of individualism, rather than a pledge of allegiance. Much as it's been a programme for revolutionary politics, it's also been a good companion for revolutionary art.

Editorial

One of the defining traits of parliamentary democracy is the maintenance of stability through the presentation of policy options as political choices. In reality the electorate is offered only different ways of managing capitalism. In Britain this manifests itself as tripartite support for the idea that there's no alternative to 'the way we live now'.

The only choices to be made, we're reassured, are whether the state intervenes more or less in the running of the business of capital, whether to buy off or batter the workers. Three parties all say the same thing and this is passed off as political choice.

This reached absurd levels at the Labour Party conference in Bournemouth. The 'battle' between Gordon Brown and Tony Blair for leadership of the Labour Party seemed to be launched in earnest.

The logic, for Brown, must have seemed simple. If too many had seen through Blair, wheel on Brown himself as the 'real' face of Labour. No matter how often Brown talks of Labour's soul, no matter how many times he makes totemic reference to 'Labour', nobody should believe that a change of face would be anything other than business as usual.

It's business and not the working class that New Labour represents. At the conference, the biggest exhibitors were the Confederation of British Industry (the bosses' union), BAe Systems (death merchants) and Tesco's. These companies lined up to thank Blair and Brown for the minimum wage (statutory support for low pay), the lowest level of corporation tax in Europe and the money flowing into BAe coffers from the bloodshed of Iraq.

As Chancellor Brown has been the loudest voice behind both the Private Finance Initiative and the move to foundation hospitals. These are the privatisation of the NHS by another name. It was Brown who maintained Tory spending limits in Labour's first term and Brown who decided what public services should be slashed to bankroll the war in Iraq. At the Labour Party Conference, two heads speaking with one voice were passed off as a 'choice of leadership', a contest for a party's soul.

William Burroughs said that "Richard Nixon will go down in history as a true folk hero, who struck a vital blow to the whole diseased concept of the revered presidential image and gave the American virtues of irreverence and scepticism back to the people." Blair and Brown could play the same role for parliamentary democracy here.

Quiz answers

- Both fought heroically in wars against fascist enemies (Franco in Spain and Imperial Japan in Korea).
- In *The Cassini Division*, the third in his series of novels, Earth and the Solar System operate as an anarcho-syndicalist society. They receive contact from the colonists of New Mars, whose society is 'libertarian' capitalist, along the lines proposed by the so-called Libertarian Party in the United States.
- It takes its name from the chequered tablecloth over whose columns and squares counters could be moved to calculate the government's accounts.
- Barbados, which was used as a penal colony at the time. Many political prisoners from the English Civil War, such as ranter Joseph Salmon, were sent there.

Commentary

Contradictions

I was so unnerved by the David Osler interview that I had to go and lie down ('Beyond the watershed', 13th September). Multi-pronged approaches indeed! Like the terms 'state justice' or 'military intelligence', Libertarian Marxism is an alarming contradiction in terms.

I woke from my bed intending to write a stout rebuttal, but realised that the deadline for the last issue was the same day the previous one got delivered. Such a deadline is tighter than the wallets of Freedom's supporters. Here's a crisp five pound note for you.

Doreen Frampton

Thanks, much appreciated.

I'm still not sure what the 'important issues' are that David Osler raises – with one exception. He's not alone in noticing the insular and unfriendly manner too many anarchists adopt. Many's the meeting I've been to where I've strongly felt I was intruding on a private conversation, although the event was described as 'public'. It's a question of seriousness: do we really want to expand or are our politics just an excuse for getting together with a few mates?

Not all meetings and groups are like this of course, but until the lifestyleists and other hangers-on relax their grip on the movement, I'm afraid that too many people's first experience of anarchists and anarchism will remain negative.

G. Manieri

Big questions

A sign of a mature and feasible political philosophy is the fact that it's able to address the big and difficult questions. A big question for anarchism must be how, in a world of six billion people, we'd coordinate solutions to global problems like climate warming. Another difficult question might be how we'd deal with anti-social behaviour. The biggest question of all, and one that's also very difficult to answer, is how we can convince people to 'believe in' anarchism itself?

Most people, if they ever bother to think about anarchism at all, probably dismiss it on the grounds that we don't have convincing answers to these questions. Guardian journalist George Monbiot is a good case in point. In his new book, *The Age of Consent*, he reveals that in his younger days he regarded himself as an anarchist. He also says he still finds anarchism appealing in theory, but in the space of ten pages dismisses it as impractical. He can see no way in which anarchist principles can address the big questions posed by globalisation.

Of course Monbiot makes the old mistake of assuming that, because anarchists oppose the state and other forms of power structure, we're also somehow against organisation. It's also necessary for Monbiot to dismiss anarchism (and Marxism) in order for him to put forward his own project, a world government. But that isn't the point. The important thing to address is the fact that anarchists don't ask enough big and difficult questions. This is partly because action takes front seat in anarchism, way ahead of theory. This in itself is no bad thing, as long as there's still space for theory. There's also a rather unhealthy stream in anarchism which is anti-intellectual.

So, what do anarchists need to do? Here's what I think.

- We agree on a lot more than we disagree on.
- We need to be better organised: locally, nationally, in workplaces and communities.
- We need to be more accessible to people interested in anarchism.
- We need more time and space for theory.

Richard Griffin

Endless circles

The future isn't approached softly, by means of a graded progression. Transformation of social relations is the unpredictable result of tumult and rupture, and change itself can't be engineered unless significant and current elements are clean removed from the scene.

What we know and do in our pre-revolutionary paroxysms is a seemingly endless circling round the same old problems. What we need is the sudden, objective transformation of the terms of our existence. It's as if the future arrives like an angel from outside – it comes from nowhere by no special causal route. It erupts into our everyday lives and changes everything.

We can't say for certain that our efforts will cause the looked-for results or that our good intentions are sufficient. If our desire is weak then working like a dog won't get us what we want. The work-hard-to-succeed myth is just that, a myth.

The anarchist movement's two steps to heaven seem to be: step one, we won't get anywhere unless we've got a 'movement'; step two, we won't get a movement unless we perform prescribed actions to persuade others of our rightness.

Why the masochistic deferral of getting down and dirty with things that have yet to come across the horizon? The argument always seems to be that we must do something before we get to the stage where we can 'challenge' the state. There's rarely an explicit connection made between the 'struggle' we're engaged in now and the 'revolution' to come.

The few examples we have from history of vaguely revolutionary situations have nothing to do with building movements. In fact all the structures built up prior to the events acted as a brake on them. The anarchist federations, the unions, the 'revolutionary' parties were all caught unawares. They hated the revolution because it wasn't theirs.

The future transformation of human social relations can't be anticipated by leftist agitation, which really only ever considers the condition of the movement in any given present moment. The movement is viewed by its patriots (unconsciously, perhaps, but inevitably) as an end in itself. They lose sight of the revolution altogether.

They say they want to be rid of play-actors and dilettantes like myself – behold their Christian-like denunciations – but where does their buttoned-down puritanism end when they've jettisoned 'theoretical waffle' such as mine? Recent contributions to this newspaper have variously advocated third worldist nationalism, council estatism and electoral politics, all wrapped up in the Protestant work ethic.

Yes, we must struggle to defend ourselves, to live our lives under present conditions. I gladly add my contribution to the class struggle. Nevertheless, there's no predictable relation between that struggle and the fabulous multiplicities

of free communism. Or, if there is, it's the old scenario where the working class by defending its share of the metaphorical cake, brings on a cost-to-production-ratio crisis in capitalism.

Yet various anarchist gradgrinds fetishise struggle itself and judge us as individuals for what we do. They don't seem to care who we are. Isn't this where religion shades into utilitarianism? But I don't say throw them into the belly of Leviathan as they would do to me, though their instructions to the anarchist milieu out-absurd anything I could come up with.

They believe what they do can change the world, but only after they've organised other people into a movement, overthrown capitalism and, finally, established a new society. For two hundred years radicals have been saying the same thing and now nobody believes them because it hasn't happened. The revolutionary 'movement' has never left the street where it lives because it's forever having to return home to check if it locked the door.

Instead I'd like the milieu (please, no more movements) to act as such. What, I ask myself, can this bunch of losers, loonies and dreamers, this pro-revolutionary minority, be. Well, for a start, we don't need to worry about sugar-coating our values or talking in a language 'ordinary people' can understand. We don't have to sacrifice our actual, expressed purpose (being revolutionary) for short-term recruiting targets.

Most importantly, we can ditch that ugly, hierarchical and mutually-degrading relationship called propaganda, this seedy porno-manipulation of the so-called public whereby the clever revolutionary pretends to be an 'ordinary person' and talks about the everyday issues that 'matter' to ordinary people and then, later, over a we're-all-normal-and-love-football pint suckers them with a 'bigger picture' that explains everything. On the contrary we should speak about what's on our minds and, if the mood takes us, we should be obscure or dangerously direct.

How fantastic Class War was when it blazed on to the scene. It saw its role as attacking CND, the trots, the greens, the lefty whingers, the whole sterile bunch, because it knew that, by attacking such manipulators, it was in reality hacking at the so-called alternatives conjured up by capitalism. The first manifestations of Class War were great because it made itself distinct from everybody else.

It was an example to the dull trudgers and must-work-harders of the left. I go so far as to say that Class War was an example of a milieu. It was close to something pro-revolutionary because it set an agenda which cut through all the intermediary stages set up by the politicos. "Never mind all that", it demanded. "What about right here, right now?" We're twenty years on and, despite what the gradualists and progressivists seem to think, we're twenty years behind where we were then.

Since the J18 Stop the City carnival – a relative high, though of a flawed and counter-cultural character (perhaps one London Mayday also counts) – everything has been downhill. Defeat has been followed by defeat. Radical product has been rubbish and its talk has been puerile. Everybody still seems to feel duty-bound to deny this decline.

I was the only one who said the SWP would destroy the specialness, the future-orientated nature of the peace movement. After the event, the anarchist media were awash with 'weren't the trots beastly' denunciations. Well, the

sell-out was predictable. It could, and should, have been organised against. Even now, months after that movement's spectacular degeneration, when literally millions of people became alienated by the political bullshit, publications like Freedom are still willing to give space to anti-imperialist apologists.

I say, never mind Amerika. We can all spot it. The real dangers come from the leftists because they sell a line of apparent opposition and a seeming way out, but in fact their strategies can only lead to deadends and non-change. If they get into power, as the Labour Party has, they lead back to an oppressive, pro-capitalist statism.

Right now, a creeping and untheorised leftism is everywhere undoing our milieu, sapping it with mind-numbing issues and politicised mundanities. I've heard anarchists describe the war on Iraq as 'illegal', I've heard them say that a Palestinian state would be 'democratic'. What are they going on about?

We have no self-identity and we're all over the place. We want to be a movement, so we fill our publications with the non-story, the anti-theory line of pseudo-movement patriotism. Who finds this attractive?

Things could be otherwise. As a minority, we could stick to the truth. We could call a lie a lie, we could say that Palestine as a national liberation project is bollocks, we could say that Iraqi resistance is being carried out by capitalist gangsters. Basically, we could expose the people who exploit the radical impulses of others, who promote barely understood foreign struggles and channel this ignorance for their own benefit.

Wrong ideas aren't just mistakes. They're owned by organisations which deploy them strategically in order to shut out alternatives to themselves. It comes down to this: if we march with the left, we're agreeing with them because they think they're leading us.

As a minority, a closed milieu can block these groups, disrupt them so that, when the future arrives without warning, they can't use the chaos for their energy. In this purely negative act, the milieu allows an insurgent populace free rein.

There's a much more important role for pro-revolutionaries than to fall in behind political issues or continuing to fail in building a 'serious' movement. This role is for the milieu to be thoroughly itself, to be ready for the revolution because revolution is all that matters. I'm proposing a direct relation with what may be possible, a position not muddled by meditations and intermediate stages.

I don't say the milieu will trigger or lead the revolution, which would be impossible, but it can serve as an enthusiastic welcoming committee. The point is that the milieu is a milieu, not a movement. What it can do is bestow something, call it a vision or a practice, which an insurgent population may find useful. By preserving itself as a minority, the milieu ensures that it won't be tempted to hold back the revolution as all previous revolutionary 'movements' have.

When and if the future does plop out, amidst the present's blood and piss and shit, and not because of it, the choice will be a stark one. It's either a pro-human communist spontaneity or some variant of Leninist return to capitalism. After the experience of imposters such as Globalise Resistance, the trouble will be telling them apart. Get in lane now.

Monsieur Dupont

REVIEW

Alfredo Bonanno still has important and original things to say, finds Richard Griffin. But do we want to listen?

Alfredo Bonanno has a simple argument to make. In recent years, he says in his pamphlet *Let's Destroy Work*, through advances in technology, the economy and, consequently, society have changed from industrial to post industrial. Class politics are now outmoded because they're based on the old models of industrial organisation. As he puts it, "revolutionary structures, including anarchist ones, are modelled along the idea of a rigid economic reality. Now at a time when profound technological changes have put production in a state approaching 'chaos', we are asking ourselves if these revolutionary theories are still valid. I do not think that we can say that they are."

The path Bonanno treads is well-worn. While he uses Daniel Bell's term 'post industrial', others have described these changes as 'post Fordist' or 'post modernism', 'late capitalism' or, most recently, 'liquid modernity'. The different terms amount to the same thing. Capitalism and modernity have changed.

Fifty years ago, in the north Kent town where I now live, the vast majority of the male population worked for a paper mill, on a brick-making site or in a cement factory. They made things. They belonged to trade unions. Many had crafts. They shopped in the co-op (which dominated the high street). They all took their holidays at exactly the same time when the mills closed down for two weeks. They went to the same places: Clacton, Margate or Southend.

Fifty years on the paper mill alone survives. Thanks to technology it

employs hundreds not thousands. Most people work in low paid McJobs, providing services rather than making things. Few belong to unions. About a third of families can't afford holidays. Those who can afford them go abroad. Women's participation in the labour market is now greater than men's. What Bonanno asks is, given these changes and their implications, how valid are politics based on notions of an industrial working class?

The seventeen essays and articles skillfully translated from the original Italian and collected in *Let's Destroy Work* cover a lot of intellectual ground. I'm not sure how easily someone unfamiliar with the post-modernist debate would follow all the points Bonanno makes.

This difficulty is compounded by the fact that he doesn't acknowledge or explain ideas when he engages with them. He dismisses Bob Black's *Abolition of Work*, for example, without referencing Black or summarising his ideas. I doubt many will be familiar with the idea of the Flexible Firm, which Bonanno also discusses without explaining. It's expecting quite a lot of your reader that they'll spot the clues and work out what you're on about.

There are also contradictions in what Bonanno writes. At one point he claims that workers no longer have a single identity (as working class). In the past, identity for men was forged through paid work and everything that was associated with it. In this age of flexibility, core and peripheral workers and frequent job changes, he says, "capital no longer gives the worker a

specific identity."

But later on he claims, as sociologist Zygmunt Bauman recently has, that we're given an identity under capitalism by our role as consumers rather than as producers. "Today", he says, "it is codification that makes the man [sic]: the way one dresses, uses the same objectives, looks for the same labels." We're no longer united as workers, but as shoppers! We find our true identity in the shopping mall.

It's easy to dismiss this as intellectual claptrap and it's true that Bonanno swallows the postmodernist argument lock, stock and barrel, without any critical assessment of the claims made. To take just one example: he says that capitalism is global but doesn't consider the fact that the majority of capitalist transactions still occur within the borders of nation states or that the greatest period of globalisation (for which read imperialism) was at the turn of the last century not this.

But to dismiss Bonanno would be a mistake. The points he makes are important and deserve consideration. He challenges anarchists to rethink anarchism so it reflects changes in society. He warns that if we try to create a New World based on a present that no longer exists we're doomed to failure.

Controversially, he claims that many of the demands of early anarchists have been delivered by capitalism – cleaner workplaces, labour-saving devices, shorter working weeks and less physically tiring work. While this is a utopian view of the world of work today, if you read Kropotkin's *The Conquest of Bread* you'll see that there's a germ of



truth in what Bonanno says.

Kropotkin's vision of work under anarchism was a cleaned up (decentralised) version of capitalist working processes. Bonanno says this isn't good enough. If we base our anarchism on an acceptance of capitalist/industrial forms of working, we're being about as radical as people who think investing in ethical banks under capitalism will make any difference to exploitation (an issue Bonanno also discusses). That's why he calls for work to be destroyed. A new mentality is needed. Whether you accept this or not, what Alfredo Bonanno has to say should at least get you thinking. Are your ideas based on the world as it was in 1903 rather than 2003?

The big problem is that no real alternative is presented. Mostly he dodges the issue of what should replace current thinking about work, class and politics. When he presents any answers, he seems to fall back on Stirnerist individual free association. We'll replace work with whatever we freely agree to

do. "I think the refusal of work can be seen in the first place as a desire to do what one enjoys most, that is to say of transforming obligatory doing into free action," he suggests. After such a build-up this is a real let-down. What about the work that nobody enjoys doing? Who will do it? How will we make sure there's food to eat or healthcare or fuel?

This is a stimulating if sometimes frustrating pamphlet. It's crammed full of ideas. Bonanno also makes a number of astute observations, noting for example that the changes he discusses mean that liberal democracy is now unfit to meet the needs of capitalism in the same way feudalism was in the seventeenth century. Elephant Editions should be congratulated for publishing *Let's Destroy Work*. It'll probably piss you off, but you should read it, comrade.

Let's Destroy Work by Alfredo M. Bonanno, Elephant Editions, £2.50. Available from Freedom (postage free in the UK, add £1 elsewhere).

BOOKS

Marx 2000

by Robert Kurz
The Boomerang Series 9
Chronos Publications, £1.50

This Chronos pamphlet is an important starting point for re-evaluating the old ideas and basic principles which underpin all radical ideas and philosophies, including anarchism. Perhaps the most central of these principles is the notion of class struggle as the prime mover of change or revolution and the creation of a non-capitalist society. The basic idea, that the clash between the working class and the ruling class will lead to revolution, is questioned and debated here. *Marx 2000* seeks to update Marxist notions about the basic instability of the capitalist mode of production. This, Robert Kurz argues, has now to be understood in modern terms, not in out-of-date Marxist or socialist dogma.

The main thrust of Kurz's argument is that the labour power and surplus value extracted through labour's exploitation was, in the nineteenth century, the source of capitalist wealth creation. This in turn led to revolutionary class conflict. But modern capitalist development has meant that this historic

breakdown, which Marx and other radicals, including anarchists such as Malatesta, thought would occur hasn't in fact happened.

"The opportunity was destroyed together with its counter-system," he says. The proletarian revolution and communism itself has now been superseded and absorbed into a new kind of global capitalism, based on the so-called free market. This dominates all economic and social production.

But this new capitalism still sows the seeds of its own crisis. The modern commodity producing system is still, as Marx pointed out, based on profit rather than on human need but now it leads to 'structural mass unemployment' and other phenomena, such as decreasing wages, increased demand for social welfare, homelessness, increasingly genocidal world wars, displacement of people and all the other forms of destitution such as famine which characterise the modern world.

What's changed is that money has replaced labour as the source of wealth. In order to get money people still have to work, of course, but money has been transformed into credit or debt which has in turn become the creation of what Kurz calls 'fictitious capital'.

For workers in developed countries the economic system means a 'life on tick' within the ongoing era of 'casino capitalism'. We live in a virtual economy, where money and value have become some kind of 'hallucination', fuelled by speculation in stocks, shares and futures markets. Real money and real value don't exist in this system but have become a 'grotesque illusion'.

This means that the so-called working class is locked into the system. Everyone who works, as well as the state itself, lives on credit and has to keep working to keep everything going – the mortgage, credit cards, bank loans and financing of personal and national debts. In this modern world the working class, blue or white collar, has become the instrument of capital development. It's no longer an instrument of change, as Marx thought it would be.

Kurz sees the task of the future as being the "liberation of the production of wealth from the restrictions of the modern commodity-producing system," not the seizing of the means of production as traditional Marxist theory would have it. This new revolutionary task takes account of the 'Third Industrial Revolution' which has made possible the creation of virtual 'market hallucina-

tions' and 'casino capitalism' through both credit and dealing room speculation, facilitated by computerisation and technical scientific development.

Marx 2000 therefore concludes that, without taking into account the effects of modern capitalist development and the changed nature of the revolutionary struggle, any radical projects based on the old Marxist dogma of the historic role of the proletariat are doomed to failure. This is because, economically speaking, the goalposts have moved. This new situation means the left must open itself up to new ideas and not remain stuck in defunct ideology of the past.

Sheila Trapovska

Marx 2000 is available from Freedom for £1.50 (add 50p postage in the UK, £1 elsewhere)

Violent London

by Clive Bloom
Sidgwick & Jackson, £18.99

This subtitle, '2,000 Years of Riots, Rebels And Revolts', doesn't lie – it's all here. But *Violent London* is a strange book. In his preface, author Clive Bloom draws attention to the fact that it's arranged round a number of themes and

that the 'chronology' hops about, which it certainly does. For people who already know the events Bloom describes, this can provide a thread or it can be irritating. Suit yourself, but whatever you do, hang on to dates when you find them or you'll be lost.

To illustrate my point: Boudicca gets a chapter to herself, while the next 1,300 years get five pages, leading up to the Peasants' Revolt. Then at the end

page 8

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Reviews

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Boudicca comes back with another chapter about her providing an epilogue.

Still, at nearly 600 pages, there's plenty of room for expansion on Bloom's four 'themes'. These are racism, religious bigotry, republicanism and parliamentary reform. He gives them all fair coverage (in his words, again from the preface, he covers "every kind of Leveller, ancient and modern, all sorts and shapes of radicals, republicans, revolutionaries and regicides and every hue of religious, racial and authoritarian bigot").

This is the history of London street politics in all its messiness. Other towns will have their own versions. What Bloom writes is quite up to date, with extensive coverage of 1990s-style 'anarchism'. This is meant in the broadest sense, covering things such as road protests and anti-poll tax riots. Several pages are devoted to the 'Angry Brigade', but there's no mention of the later anarchist conspiracy out of a hat, the case of the 'persons unknown'.

The book does tend to use the term 'anarchy' in a loose sense, often quoted straight from historical sources (where it was often used as a catch-all term for political radicals). To be fair, the book does try to pick and choose between the various troublemaking groups. For example, it doesn't make the common mistake of labelling the Sydney Street gang as 'anarchist'. In general, it's a good read, though perhaps a little too long. Six hundred pages can be wearing.

David Peers

Available from Freedom, £18.99 (add £1.90 postage in the UK, £3.80 elsewhere)

The Anarchism of Jean Grave

by Louis Patsouras
Black Rose Books, £17.99

This is a very disappointing book. Jean Grave was a leading member of the French anarchist movement before 1914, editor of such papers as *Le Révolté*, *La Révolte* and *Les Temps Nouveaux* and producer of anarchist books, novels and plays. Today, very little is known about him and his works. This is undoubtedly due to the fact that he, like his friend Kropotkin, supported the Allies during the First World War. He died in 1939, after seeing the mainstream French anarchist movement reject his anti-organisational prejudices.

I'd hoped this book would, as the title suggests, be an in-depth account and analysis of Grave's ideas. Sadly the title misleads. It should be called 'The Life and Influence of Jean Grave'. Instead of allowing Grave to speak for himself, we get summaries of his major works. Rather than spending time on discussing his ideas, we get chapters on what the author thinks are related subjects.

Some of these, like Camus and May '68, are relevant to anarchism. Others, like Sartre, are not (the author even tries to suggest, unconvincingly, that

Jean-Paul was himself an anarchist). Yet this has little to do with the anarchism of Jean Grave, the ostensible purpose of the book and why people may want to buy it.

There are factual errors too. It's claimed, for example, that 'Bakuninists' wanted "immediate revolutionary action by small and clandestine groups". This ignores the stress Bakunin himself put on revolutionary unionism. We're also told that Bakunin saw revolution as the product of "a small, secret and highly disciplined organisation to create the necessary conditions through propaganda by deed - terroristic acts, like bombings and assassinations." But nothing could be further from the truth.

Little wonder at the error, though, as the author references Aileen Kelly's infamously biased book on Bakunin. Similarly, we're told the Baader-Meinhof gang were 'anarchists' in spite of their self-proclaimed Marxist-Leninism.

The editors at Black Rose should have picked up on these and other mistakes. They should also have noticed the confused nature of the '2002 Postscript', which talks about the 'New Left' of the 1960s as if it exists and is relevant today. There's also the total lack of clarity in the suggestions for social change. Is the author really suggesting that anarchists should support socialist parties as a means of creating a free society? I'm still not entirely sure, as the whole argument is so opaque.

One thing's for definite though. Much though it plainly intends otherwise, *The Anarchism of Jean Grave* shows up the limitations of Grave's anti-organisationalist principles and his lack of relevance in 2003.

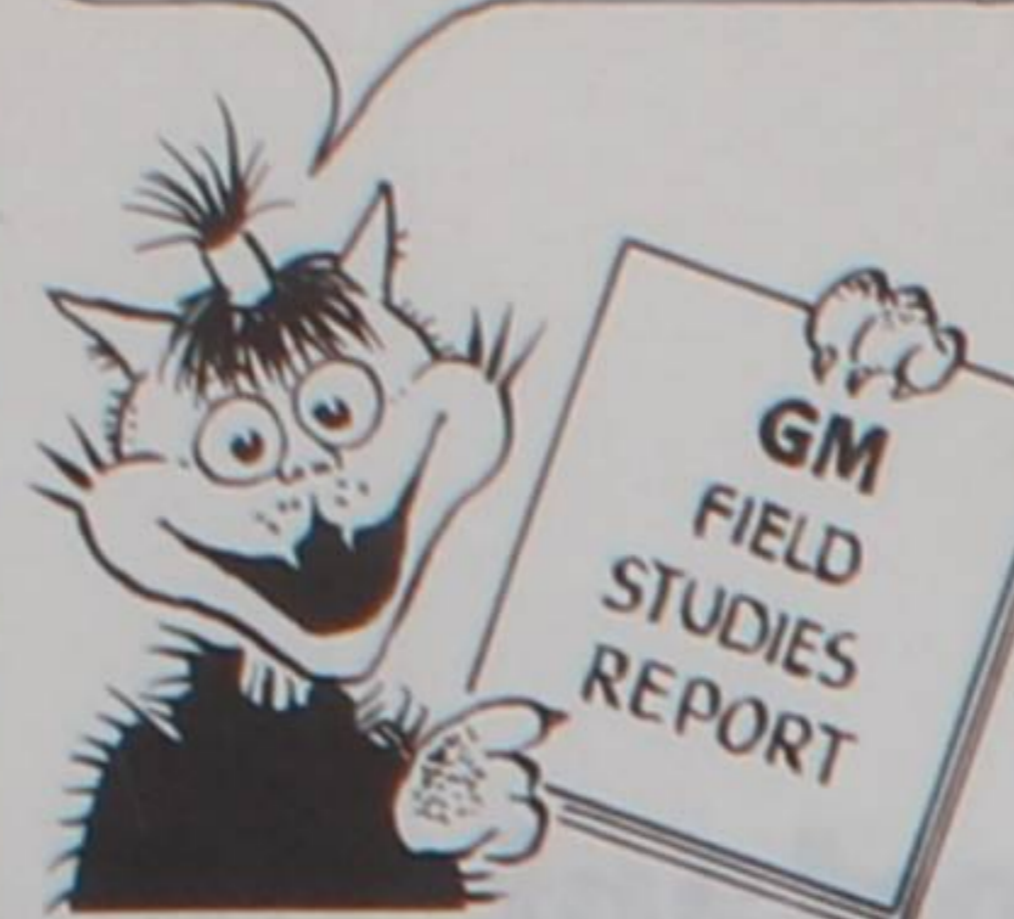
During his lifetime he consistently opposed organisation, which limited his work, more or less, to providing commentary on other people's struggles. His political position condemned his activity in the class struggle itself (a concept he believed in) to irrelevance.

In the face of this, he became sympathetic to syndicalism and, just before the First World War, actually joined a newly-created national communist-anarchist federation. After the war, the organisational strand in French anarchism strengthened considerably and Grave was left on the margins of the movement.

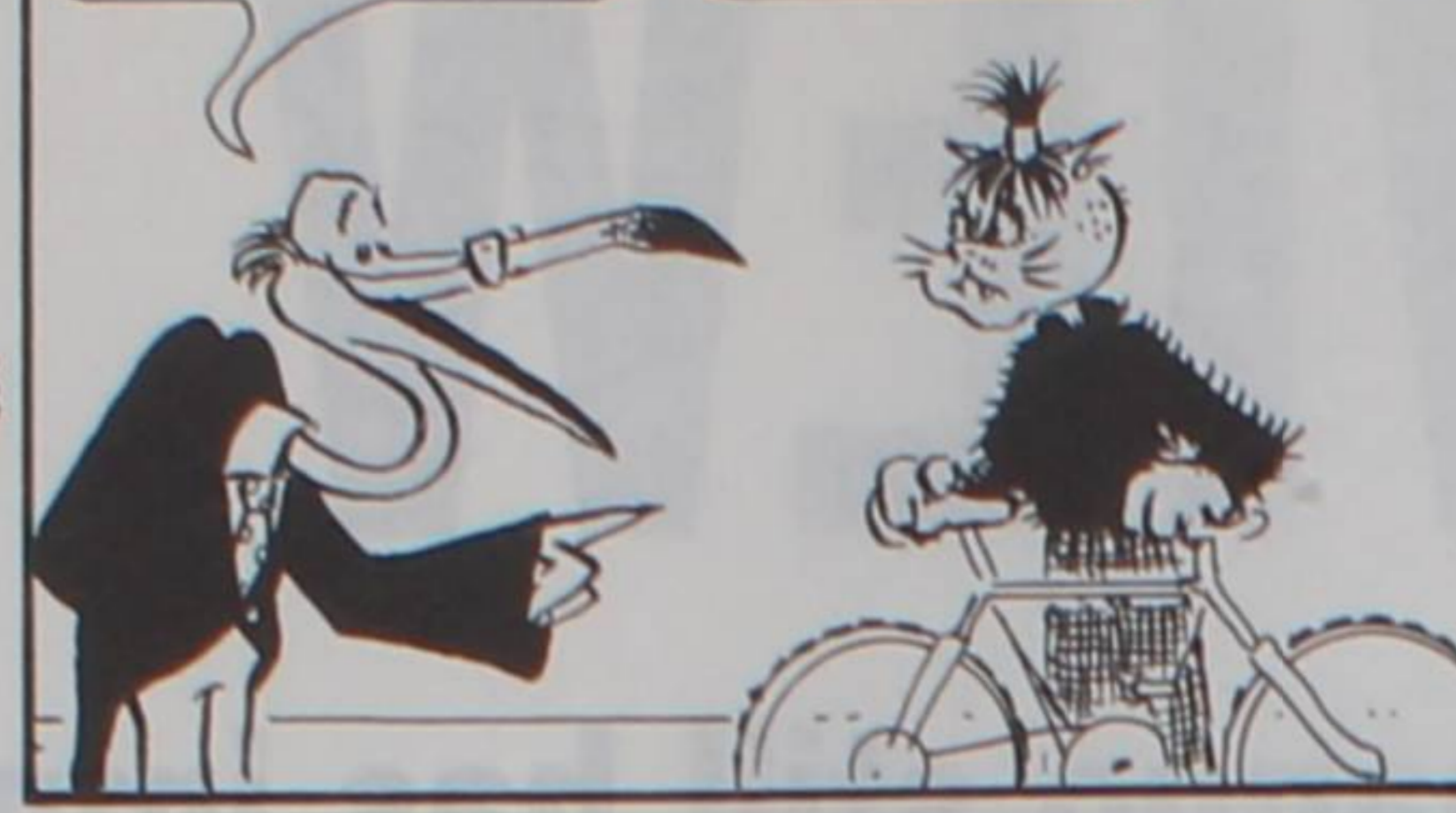
Patsouras fails to address this development, instead asserting that "anarchism in France was finished as a viable movement after the advent of the Bolshevik revolution." As David Berry's *History of the French Anarchist Movement* shows, this wasn't at all the case. The increased emphasis on organisation reaped rewards in the general strikes of 1936 when anarchism became, once again, a key part of the French labour and anti-fascist movements.

Is this book worth buying? No, unless you want a very basic introduction to the life of Jean Grave and are willing to put up with less than relevant chapters on such things as 'examples of the anarchist temperament'. The quality

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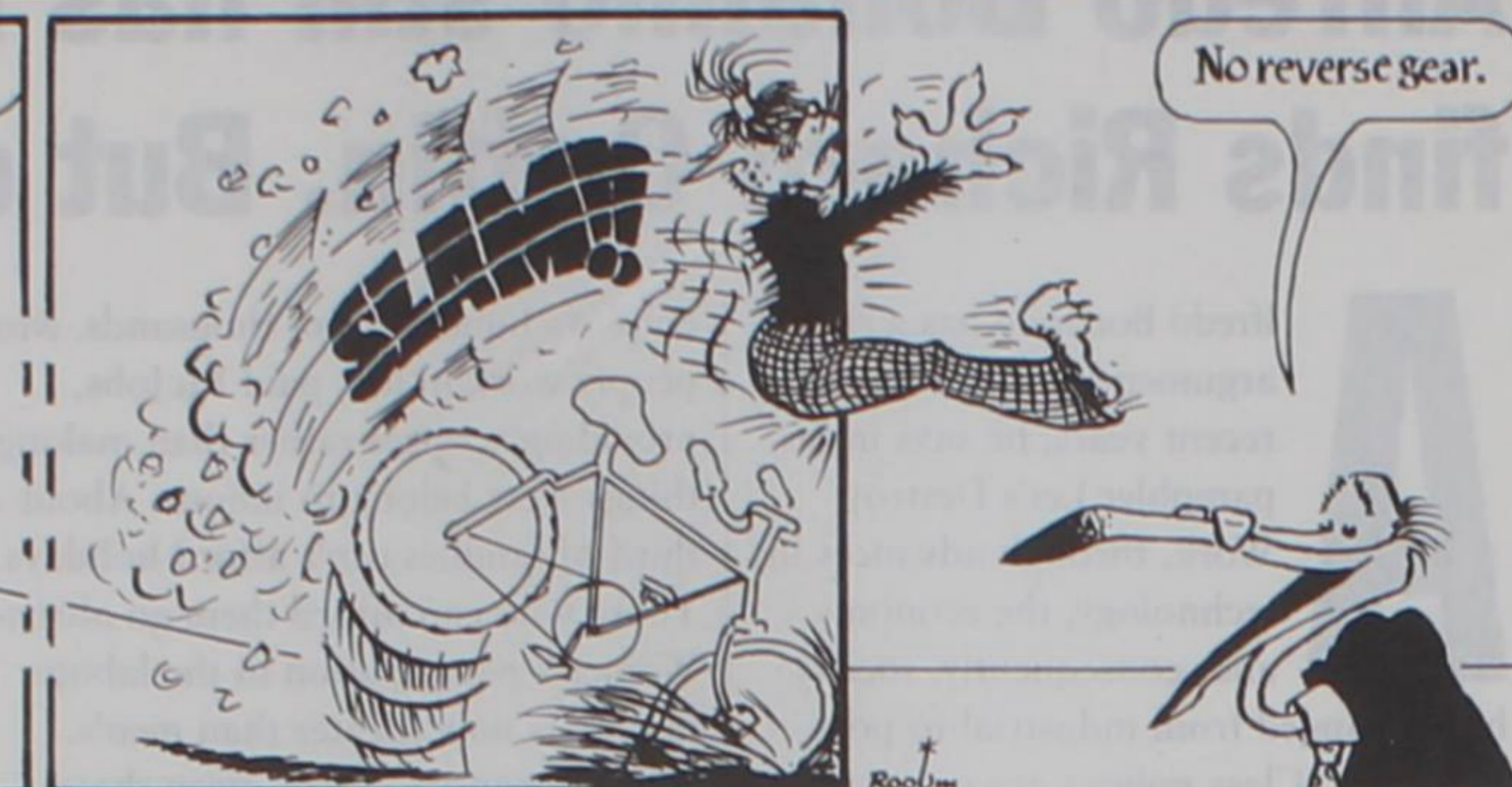
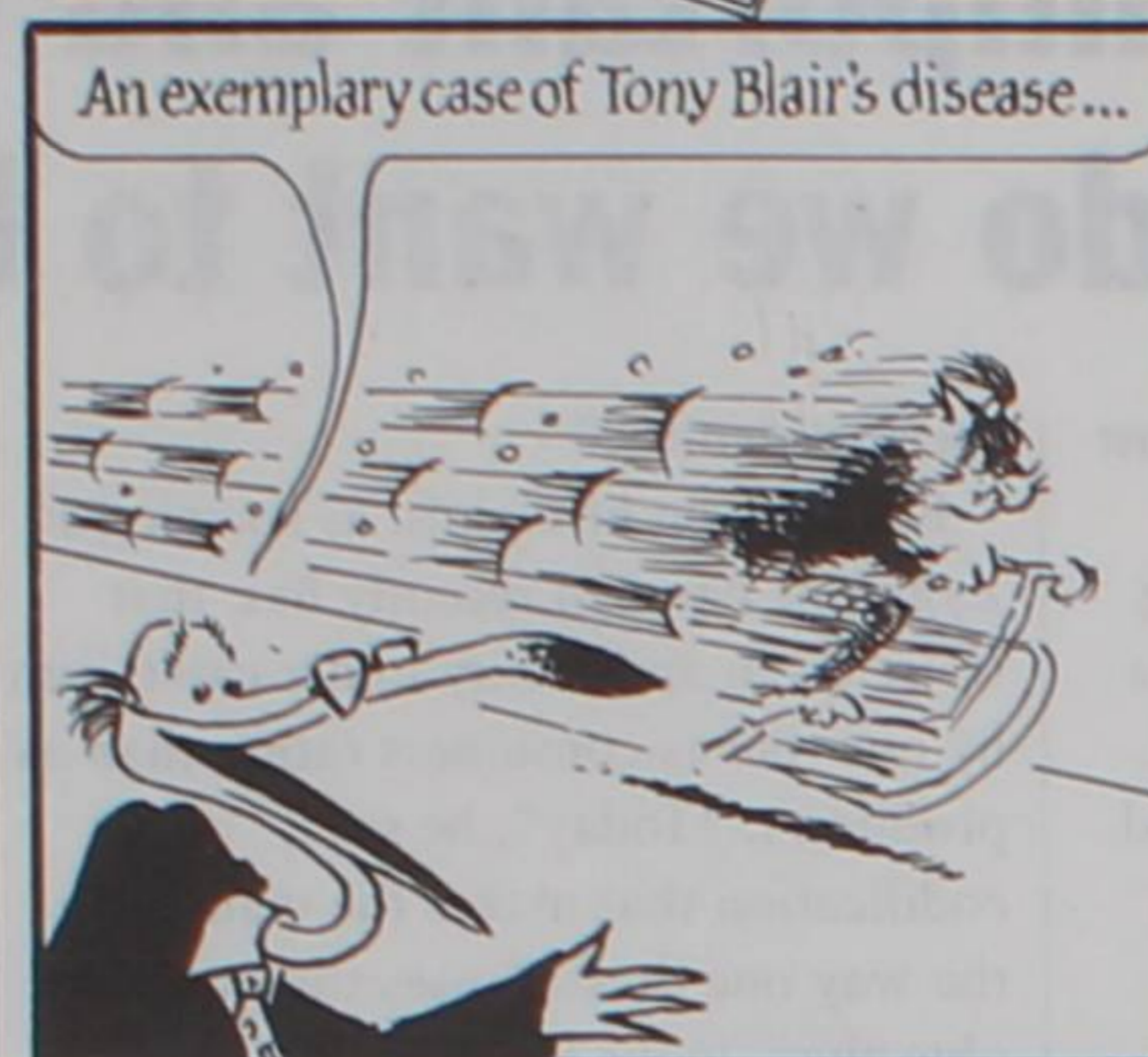


With a scientific experiment which you tried to prevent,



which you'd have declared invalid if it had come to a different result.

I affirm my inalienable right to disbelieve proven facts which do not confirm my prejudices!



control department at Black Rose seems to have taken a nose-dive of late. Hopefully, it will get its act together and start producing books anarchists not only want to read, but can actually gain something from reading.

Iain McKay

Available from Freedom for £17.99 (add £1.80 postage in the UK, £3.60 elsewhere).

Lucky dip

Picture the scene. A group of comrades from Norwich Class War and Norwich Anarchists take a stall to Freshers' Day at the university. Around them are the army and the conservatives, both trying desperately to recruit people to their movements. But what's this? One, two, then ... ten people come to the stall and ask to join. "We aren't that sort of organisation," someone replies. Then eleven, then sixteen ...

"Ah, bollox, let's have a vote on setting up a Norwich Anarchists Student Group" ... Passed. By the end of the day, Norwich Anarchist Students 27, Conservatives 3. Our next target? The Socialist Workers Student Society (SWSS). Although we think we've won, as there can't be more than six of them. It looks like fun and games on the horizon ...

R.

A Yorkshire judge was fined £800 on 29th September after Scarborough magistrates found him guilty of swearing at cops while drunk. David Messenger admitted calling police 'arseholes', but said they'd 'disorientated' him when they removed him from a kebab shop in the town last May.

He became abusive after interfering in an argument between the shop owner and three other customers. Beaks heard that Messenger tried to intimidate arresting cops into letting him go free.

A sideways look

It's almost a given these days that cynicism is on the rise. Commentators point to low turnout in elections as well as to the collapse of trust in politicians, political parties and business, all covered in the last issue of Freedom. More people claim to trust 'experts' like doctors, teachers and scientists, but ask any teacher if they're trusted or respected and their answer will be equivocal.

The trust in these experts, as well as in authoritarian structures like the police, army and judiciary, is still way down on its level in the past and, more importantly, these statistics aren't broken down by class, age or region. There may be a massive variation from one class or region to another. I can't imagine trust for the police or army being big in West Belfast, for example.

How did this lack of trust come about? Anarchists clearly have an interest in encouraging critical thought about what politicians, experts and all powerful institutions have to say. Is it just that we've been lied to so often we don't expect any better?

This was brought home to me at work recently. My employers have proposed moving my workplace ten miles away to a location which, to put it mildly, has poor public transport. They won't deal with the union, presumably because they haven't read any council communist arguments recently. Or perhaps it's because we're a lot easier to pick off isolated, one by one.

In trying to rally even a few of my fellow workers to oppose them, I've been met with an overwhelming sense of powerlessness. There's nothing we can do about it so we won't even try, seems to be the idea. It's the flipside of cynicism - they're going to screw us over, so we might as well just put up with it.

When I was personally insulted - sorry, I mean consulted - my boss protested that I couldn't complain about breaches in terms and conditions because they hadn't happened. Yet I had to work hard to stop laughing when he said that the decision hadn't already been made. Consultation is meaningless. The company has a works council where such things go on, but I've never heard anything about it except that it exists.

It's a fig leaf so they can claim they're decent employers. They've got all the acronyms - Investors in People, ISO 90000 and so on. They claim to promote a decent work-life balance. But when it comes down to it, they pay lip-service to consultation. They actively discriminate on grounds of age and they're currently trying to derecognise the union at the one site where it has a recognition agreement. Still, I bet New Labour regard them as a good employer.

None of my colleagues, not even the naive ones, believe a word they're told. I don't blame them. But if we're ever going to do anything about it, we need to go beyond cynicism and complacency. That's proving a very uphill struggle.

Svartfrosk

Words we use

VIOLENCE

All anarchists are anti-militarist because we oppose the state's war-machine. This is one reason why we take part in anti-war demonstrations and actions (though of course many of us do so for humanitarian reasons too). There was an anti-authoritarian bloc in London on 27th September, for example.

A few anarchists are pacifists. This means they reject the use of all violence outright. But most of us don't, because we think there's a difference between the violence wielded against us by police and private thugs and the violence we're forced to engage in when we resist them.

We think that ruling out a robust defence of ourselves is to give away a tactical advantage to the other side which, as all experience shows, they're sure to exploit. I myself also find the self-righteousness exhibited by some pacifists just a little too smug for my taste. But maybe that's just part of my dispute with moralism generally.

Whatever, we all agree that the main acts of violence are everywhere inflicted by governments. The terrorists of September 11th killed three thousand people, but the terrorists taking orders from the White House have killed many times that number since. To me, the Iraqi civilian resisting the occupation is less culpable than the US or British soldier who tries to enforce it. Truly, the Berkman of the world are worth more than the Fricks.

Johnny M.

The quiz

1. There are some striking similarities between the Spanish and Korean anarchist movements. But what are they?
2. Science fiction writer Ken McLeod has written about a meeting between two different types of libertarian society (using the word libertarian loosely). What were they?
3. Why has the finance ministry in the United Kingdom always been known as the Exchequer?
4. What island was described, in 1655, as a "dunhill whereon England doth cast forth its rubbish?"

Answers on page 6

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