

# FREEDOM

6 DECEMBER 2003

50P ANARCHIST NEWS AND VIEWS

## PROTEST AND POWER

In the run up to the expected Bush protests in London, he was asked what he thought of them. His answers were pretty much as expected: smug, self-serving, cynical and deeply flawed. He opined that he thought "Freedom is a beautiful thing" and that we were "lucky to be in a country that encourages people to speak their mind." He stated that he valued "going to a country where people are free to say anything they want to say." There is much more to freedom than speaking your mind, such as having a meaningful say in the decisions that affect your life, your community and your world. Unsurprising, therefore, that the unelected head of a state would concentrate on freedom of speech rather than expose his ignorance of what real freedom is.

This can be seen when Bush, when asked by reporters about the prospect of tens of thousands of demonstrators filling the streets of London against him, replied by saying "Frankly, I don't pay much attention to what you just described." In other words, protest all you like, we will just ignore you.

Bush's comments do express a certain authoritarian mindset. After all, in democratic theory 'countries' (i.e. states) do not 'allow' people to protest or 'express their opinions'. Rather, this is considered a right. In practice, of course, states do not, and cannot, operate in line with democratic theory. No, actual states exist to disempower the many and keep class society going. Such rights as we do have were never 'allowed' by the powers that be. Rather, they were won by long, hard struggle by the mass of the people themselves. If we had waited until the state 'allowed' us to protest, we would still be waiting.

Incredibly, Bush stated that he did not 'like war'. But in a sense, he was right. He did not 'like' to go to Vietnam and so did not. He defended his country from the 'Vietnamese threat' in Texas (when he was not AWOL, of course). Perhaps

it was in the bars of Texas he came to "understand the consequences of war," seeing the relatives of those whose fathers were not wealthy or powerful enough to get them posted to such dangerous combat zones? Or perhaps he meant by 'consequences' higher approval ratings and more votes (if war goes well), not to mention lucrative contracts and more profits for his corporate buddies?

Bush also commented that he could "also see the consequences of not acting, of hoping for the best in the face of tyrannical killers." That is true, in a way. His father and Reagan before him did 'hope for the best' and backed Saddam.

Blair got into the farce, arguing that we can protest. However he asked us to "have the integrity to realise that without [the war], those Iraqis now tasting freedom would still be under the lash of Saddam." Has Blair the 'integrity' to acknowledge that Iraq is an occupied country? And that Iraqis have been gunned down 'tasting' the freedom to protest? Has he the 'integrity' to ponder why, if Iraqis are so important, the occupying powers cannot be bothered to count the numbers they kill? Or ponder the 'integrity' of arguing that when Saddam orders the killing of civilians it is wrong, but when he and the Bush Junta does so it is 'moral'?

Then, of course, there are the fruits of the freedom Blair said he invaded Iraq to sow. Does he have the 'integrity' to remember his words back in February, when we saw two of the largest marches in British/Scottish history? Blair took the opportunity remind us that in Iraq such protests would not be allowed. Yet his position was built on sand as he was simply arguing that we were invading Iraq in order to give them the 'freedom' to protest and then be ignored (but we should be glad that we are being ignored rather than shot by our 'liberators').

Not, as Downing Street was quick to stress, that the aim of the war was



'regime change'. That would be illegal. Isn't 'integrity' grand? Now, with no WMD found, Blair is urging us "not to argue about what has been, but to make what is happening now work, and work for the very Iraqis we all say we want to help." In other words, do not hold us accountable for our actions or lies but rather help us occupy Iraq and transform it into what the US/UK government, not the Iraqi people, considers best. Ah, to have the 'integrity' to be able to talk about freedom and justify occupation in the same speech!

Of course Blair is at pains to stress that we have a 'right' to protest, within the law (of course). The trouble is, it is up to the state what counts as 'lawful'. Thus a march to where Bush cannot ignore us would be 'unlawful' while a march to a police (and so Blair/Bush) preferred location would be 'lawful'.

Freedom of speech only in state permitted areas is no freedom at all. Perhaps the US should be trying to bring real democracy and free speech to itself, rather than impose its flawed system of rule by the rich onto Iraq?

Anarchists should not be surprised. Bush and Blair simply expose the hypocrisy of democracy, where the 'sovereign' people are said to be free while being ruled by a handful of people. Even if Blair and Bush were elected by a majority, the fact remains that the people have alienated their power and are no longer free. Rather than govern themselves, they pick masters. This can be seen from the fact that while saying they wanted freedom and democracy in Iraq, Bush and Blair systematically ignored both here.

Protest marches, while important, are rarely enough. They exist to remind authority that we can think and act for

ourselves. They exist to show our fellow rebels that they are not alone and that we have the power to change things.

They exist to show that when the state defies majority opinion or acts in a way harmful to the fundamental equality which should be at the heart of a free society, the governed will resist. Yet unless that resistance expresses itself in direct action and solidarity in our communities and workplaces, protest marches can be and will be ignored.

That is our task, to build a social movement that no government can ignore, one rooted in the social power of the working class. Ultimately, protest is not part of statist democracy. Rather it is part of a movement for real freedom and real people power. It is an expression of the system which will replace statism and capitalism, libertarian socialism. That is why governments hate it.

## SPONTANEITY

It was like something out of an award-winning short arthouse film from Eastern Europe. We were walking down The Mall away from the palace, having managed to wave our 'Bush Go Home' banner a few feet from George and Laura's bulletproof limo as they sped past. There in the middle of the road stood a couple of fellow protestors, holding aloft a rather nice model of Cowboy Dubya for the benefit of a gaggle of photographers. Behind them were the rows of alternating giant UK and US flags, converging on Buckingham Palace in the background. As we looked on, the

protestors nodded to us to join in the photocall, if we wanted. So we wandered over and spread the banner out along the bottom of the shot. More photographers joined the pack. There was a television camera of some sort as well. We kept kneeling, feeling like right media tarts. Now a small group of middle-aged peace women in fancy dress passed up The Mall. We invited them into the picture and they took up their places, as the shutters continued to click. After a while, I looked behind me and saw a skateboarding punk had joined the line-up, his message to Bush proudly spelled out on the bottom of

his board. This was becoming quite an event, filling up more and more of the road. The police had noticed and came over to tell us to move onto the pavement. We explained we were only there for the photos and that this was happening in the road. They seemed to take the point.

Our knees were starting to hurt and we were thinking of moving on when there was the sound of whistling up

The Mall towards the palace and a convoy of Critical Mass cyclists materialised at our side. More whistles. A few chants. And suddenly this was no longer a photocall, but a spontaneous demo. The cyclists headed back the way they had come, up The Mall, slow enough for us to keep with them, banner, effigy, and skateboard held aloft. On we went attracting cheers and stares of disbelief from the

pavements. And nobody stopped us, all the way up to the roundabout and the final police defences. So much for the security exclusion zone. So much for all the scaremongering and intimidation beamed out through the media in the lead-up to the visit. We were there. Unauthorised, unplanned – unlikely, perhaps – we were holding our own march on Buckingham Palace.

Peter K.

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# Britain

## Capitalism by design

Modern city planning serves the interests of the rich and powerful, not us, says Richard Griffin

Capitalism touches almost every aspect of our lives. Very little is unscathed even the space we live in. Architecture, design, building techniques, property use and access are all mediated by the social, cultural and economic forces generated by capitalism. The recently redeveloped Paternoster Square, immediately to the north of St Paul's cathedral in London is a good example of this.

In 1960 William Holford created in the words of architectural historian David Watkins "a desolate landscape of grim office blocks" around Wren's cathedral. These temples of post war modernism and concrete brutalism were pulled down three years ago. This month the redeveloped square designed by a team of British architects was opened to the public.

Although a public space, it is clear as soon as you enter that the public are not free to use it as they might wish. Freedom is controlled and contained here. At all the entrances are posters sternly warning 'no skating, no boarding'. It cannot be long until private security guards appear to ensure only a certain type of public appear under the shadow of St Paul's - those willing to buy Starbucks coffee at £2.40 a cup or an overpriced sandwich from a corporate chain like Eat or Prets and then sit quietly to worship capitalism. The cathedral itself is now little more than a tourist attraction not a place a belief or meaning. The heart of society is much better symbolised by the shops and offices that will fill the buildings around the square. In the centre of the square is a Sir William Whitfield designed neo-

classical monument dedicated, currently, to nothing. Perhaps they should dedicate it to McDonalds or the stock exchange.

The Financial Times observed of Paternoster Row "this was traditionally one of London's most vibrant quarters, inhabited consecutively by mercers, butchers, booksellers and publishers." Not any more. This is bland, chain store, 'could be anywhere' territory. Under-whelming and unchallenging. Safe and compliant, just like we are meant to be.

The area the square fills like so much of central London has been redeveloped and recreated time and time again in response to fire (three have destroyed this part of London) or commercial need. From the Great Fire to the Blitz the area was famous for publishing. Bookshops used to crowd right up to the gates of the cathedral. Robinson Crusoe, the first English novel was published here in 1719. During December 1940 German bombing levelled the area. An estimated four million books were destroyed. This is also an area where the power of the state has long been visible. To the west of the square Newgate prison once stood. Public executions took place here. Now the Old Bailey fills the space. The cathedral itself, which still dominates the landscape is of course another symbol of power, albeit a waning one.

Commerce whether in the form of book selling or butchers' shops has been a permanent feature of the area. Some 600 sheep a day used to be slaughtered to feed the city in cellars beneath butcher's shops. Today money is symbolised by investment bankers



Merril Lynch whose clever minimalist building straddles the north of the square.

Paternoster Square bordered on three sides by a cathedral, a court and a finance company sits at the heart of a trinity to power. Appropriately the final side is where you exit St Paul's tube station. Currently publicly owned but in the throws of privatisation.

The design of the square itself is highly influenced by classicism. But Paternoster

is a limited form of classicism. Capitalism has robbed working people of their skills. Paternoster Square exemplifies this. Watkins again. "Because of the growth of industrialised practices from the nineteenth century ... we now have a largely unskilled workforce, mostly trained to assemble buildings on site, not to construct them properly." The buildings around the square do look like they have been constructed with

massive Lego bricks. Clean blocks lacking intimacy or interest and as the Financial Times observed "with the faintest echoes of Italian fascist architecture".

As anarchists we need to be aware that we need to struggle against capitalism wherever it manifests itself in our lives. The design of buildings and the use of space is just as important as what happens on the factory floor.

## Racial injustice

The ethnic population in the UK is around 3%, in questions to parliament the ethnic population of each prison (138 of them) not one single prison's ethnic population is less than 3%.

In total, nearly a quarter of prisoners are from an ethnic minority, this does not even include imprisoned people seeking refuge, or the figure would obviously be higher. The prisons with the highest ethnic population are female prisons. HMP Send has a 60% population of ethnic minorities, Cookham Wood 55%, Morton Hall has 59%, Downview has 56%, Holloway 40%, Highpoint 38%, Bullwood Hall with 32%, and East Sutton Park with 45%.

There are also other jails with a whopping proportion of black and asian prisoners. HMYOI Aylesbury has 44% ethnic boys under 21 years old, Feltham has 57%, Huntercombe has 47%, Rochester has 42%. All these mentioned here are women and under 21's imprisoned. There is no statistic

saying what percentage of women prisoners, the figure would be a lot higher than the 23% of all the prison population.

The highest, Morton Hall, has a 4% ethnic minority of staff. This compares to 4.3% of all prison officers who come from an ethnic minority background. There's plenty of other prisons with a massive black and asian population - the ones mentioned are just women and young offenders. There is too many to mention but this shows the clear racism in the judicial system, especially in certain areas with women. It is 'the American way' in which there is more blacks in jail than in education, and with a very small percentage of staff from an ethnic background, they are not immune from racism in prison. The vast majority of prison officers, are no different from the police and the armed forces, Sun and Daily Mail reading nationalists, brutal. The POA (Prison Officers Association) is a notorious right-wing union, and once demanded to

hold a referendum on whether the death penalty be brought back.

It'd be useful to point out that since 1990, six prisoners have been killed at the hands of the screws. Just one of the prisoners was white and, predictably, none of the screws faced charges - just lengthy suspensions on full pay! The judicial system obviously looks after its own.

Robbie Stewart (HMP Woodhill)



## Beating the bailiffs

Having debt problems? Here's a guide to help deal with this. Firstly, contact the Citizens Advice Bureau, who are busy, but very helpful. Bailiffs firms and the police break the law if they think they can get away with it. Know your rights and ensure that the Council and Bailiffs follow legal procedures.

- Your possessions can't be seized unless you've been sent a written notice by the Authority at least fourteen days before any visit. This must have details of any fees they have added on.

- The police have no power to force entry on behalf of the bailiffs or local authority, unless there is a breach of the peace

- Lock all windows and doors. Bailiffs have no powers to force entry by breaking open an outer door, which is locked or bolted.

- If the bailiffs do get in, offer what you can afford to pay, not what they want you to pay. Ask them to drop the costs they have added

- Bailiffs can only take things that belong to you the debtor. If you have a receipt proving that an item belongs to someone else, they cannot take it.

- Bailiffs cannot have you put in prison. If they never get in and you do not pay they will return your case to the court. The magistrate will then look at what you can afford to pay.

If you're still stuck and would like some help with taking on the bailiffs by whatever means are necessary contact Walthamstow Anarchist Group who will help in any way they can. They also have more advice about your rights against the bailiffs.

If you are struggling with debt, both the Consumer Credit Counselling Service (0800 138 1111) and National Debtline (0808 808 4000) offer free information and advice.

This article taken from the always-excellent Underdog, the regular freesheet of the Walthamstow Anarchist Group. For more info see [www.walthamstowanarchy.org.uk](http://www.walthamstowanarchy.org.uk)

## International

# Miami vice

**Demonstrations against the FTAA were hit with some of the most severe police repression in recent years, writes Alex Allison**

**M**edia and state demonisation began many months ago, with officials claiming that tens of thousands of neo-terrorists would lay waste to the city. Despite what George Bush said about loving countries which allowed people the 'freedom' to demonstrate, freedom of speech was suspended, congregations of more than seven people outside were banned and all coconuts were removed from palm trees to stop them being used as weapons.

Thousands of police armed with tear gas, rubber and bean bag bullets, electrified shields, tanks, water cannons, automatic and semi-automatic weapons and tazers attacked people, blocked legal trade union coaches, stole independent media equipment and handcuffed people at will.

They paid 'special attention' to the Anarchist People of Colour bloc, called for at the APOC conference reported in Freedom on 25th October. Many of them were heavily beaten and a disproportionate number were arrested. Several of them were beaten in custody and one African-American anarchist was given a brain haemorrhage.

Hopefully after the terrible consequences this repression has had on a number of

people, large numbers of indignant liberals will cease to claim that police violence is merely a reaction to violence of demonstrators, and that if we are peaceful they'll leave us alone. This is yet another glaring example of how this is not the case. When it comes down to it the media and the bureaucrats work together to demonise us, and the police try to crush us in the instance we start to fight back against the State's destructive policies. They will use violence against us the second we become a threat to profits or power – we must be prepared to defend ourselves: in the offices, in the prisons and in the streets.

The FTAA is basically an extension of the North American Free Trade Agreement between Mexico, Canada and the US to cover all of Latin America (except Cuba) too. NAFTA, like so many 'free trade' agreements has revealed itself as yet another legal way for multinational corporations to ride roughshod over the already-meagre workers' and environmental rights laws of nations governments. It has cost hundreds of thousands of US jobs as production has shifted to sweatshops in Mexico. However now growing workers' militancy and organisation in Mexico means that capitalists need easier ways to shift their production to yet more repressive regimes, with even weaker



ecological protection laws. For more in-depth analysis of the FTAA, or

more information about the demonstrations, check out [www.ftaaimc.org](http://www.ftaaimc.org) and [zmag.org](http://zmag.org)

APOC have set up a solidarity fund which you can donate to via [www.illegalvoices.org/apoc](http://www.illegalvoices.org/apoc)

## Solidarity with Serbian anarchists

**T**his letter is written with the intention of informing you about the current situation of the anarchist movement in Serbia as well as to request help from you or your group/organisation which would benefit our movement.

After several arrests that followed our syndicate's actions, Anarcho-Syndicalist Initiative (ASI) got positive media coverage from mainstream media in Serbia and thus was able to present its position publicly. A few of our press releases have been published, one by the largest Serbian weekly NIN as our response to permanent attacks on our syndicate by the Government and union bureaucrats. That event marked the entrance of anarchism and anarcho-syndicalism into the Serbian mainstream political battlefield. The enlargement of our syndicate is a threat that union bureaucrats are using to intimidate government; several ministers of the Serbian government – including the minister of police – have publicly attacked us and, all together, anarchism and anarcho-syndicalism are being talked about in Serbia.

Our syndicate is making many new connections with different sections of

mainstream unions who are showing great interest in joining us. Also we talk with many individual workers interested in joining our syndicate and subscribing to our magazine Direct Action – the only anarchist/anarcho-syndicalist magazine which covers the ex-Yugoslav region.

After steady development our syndicate has reached the point at which, we feel, there are some difficulties that we can not resolve ourselves, and this is why we are turning to you and other groups in search of solidarity. One of the biggest problems (or to be frank, the biggest problem) our syndicate is facing now is the problem of space: we don't have a space that could be used for the syndicate's work. We hold our meetings in some of our members' flats, and when we meet interested workers we do so in some of Serbian taverns. We don't have a space to stock our library, archive of our newspapers, our flags and other propaganda material – all of that is scattered around our members' apartments.

There are no alternative social spaces in Serbia. Years of war and nationalism, as well as brutal 'transition' didn't allow any such movements to develop. For some time our syndicate was

thinking about squatting some space for these purposes, but we were faced with two main problems: Firstly that the majority of empty buildings that could easily have been transformed into some useable space are already occupied by refugees from different war zones (Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo) and most of the others were so badly damaged by NATO bombing in 1999 that the money needed for their reconstruction would surpass our wildest dreams!

The only option we have left is renting a space. Buying a space is completely out of the question unless we could rob a bank or two! After some calculations we concluded that ... we cannot do it. Our membership fees and donations hardly cover the cost of publishing our newspaper and other propaganda material. Still, if our syndicate is not able to find a space for itself it will be harder to persuade people to start working with us. To explain what problems we are facing here's an example of a typical contact we make:

A person gets in touch with us at a union demonstration, usually after seeing one of our leaflets or banners. We then give them a mobile phone

number to at which they can contact us at. However this is very expensive in Serbia and for lots of workers this is the first problem they face contacting us again. Having a space would solve this problem since we would be able to give them a landline number at which they could reach us – we could not do this with our home numbers due to the danger of Nazi or Police repression.

In the end we take the person's address and we separate. If after some time of receiving our paper and leaflets they broadly agree with our ideas the same question always follows: where is your office? When we propose a meeting in some tavern or open space a lot of people become suspicious of continuing co-operation with us.

Even with this problem we were able to make great contacts and establish really important ties to the Serbian working class. However we do feel that having a permanent syndicate space would ensure us even greater success.

Apart from our syndicate's meeting and archive potential, we would use the space as a radical library with libertarian books and magazines, as well as a public meetings and presentation space.

Rent for such a place would cost us, approximately, around 500 euros a month. As we said before, we are not able to pay for that. This is the reason for this appeal. We hope that you can see the potential of such a space, and think that your financial aid could help us realise this. We are asking people to make regular donations if they can, and we are requesting collectives and groups to raise 25 euros a month for us. We hope that this amount of money is not too much for you, comrades in the 'West'.

A problem with this is banks taking large commissions from money transfers, so it would perhaps be more convenient to send six-monthly donations. We'd gladly send reminders so that you'd not have to worry about remembering! Finer details can be arranged later by email.

Miloš Rančić

International Secretary of Anarcho-Syndicalist Initiative (email [is@inicijativa.org](mailto:is@inicijativa.org))

Abolishing Borders from Below is a bi-monthly magazine written by East European anarchists, covering news of events, the anarchist movement and the general political situation all across Eastern Europe, from Poland to Siberia. It is available from Freedom for £2 (add 50p postage in the UK, £1 elsewhere).

## Kingdom of Micomicon

# It's in the genes

Is the 'selfish gene' merely excuse for Thatcherite individualism, asks Richard Frost, and is mutual aid the true human nature?

It is curious that Maggie Thatcher announced that there was no such thing as society just as evolutionary theory was becoming dominated by the most extreme form of individualism; this was in the 1980s, as the centenary of Darwin's death was being much celebrated.

Darwin had shown a receptive capitalist audience with *The Origin of Species* (1859) that life was a struggle; the contestants were individuals and the result was the survival of the fittest. Not every scientist was convinced. Kropotkin famously rebelled with his great work, *Mutual Aid*, which showed the extent to which individuals of the same and different species depended on one another in the harsh environment of Siberia. He was never accepted by the main stream of scientists and it was not until the 1960's that Darwinian individualism was forced to consider the significance of co-operative, i.e., group, evolution.

V.C. Wynne-Edwards then published a heavy work on animal dispersal which seemed to demonstrate the universal operation of altruism in the evolutionary process: individuals, he said, would subordinate their self-interest to the well-being of their group, to the point of self-sacrifice. It followed that groups were a key element in evolution and in life itself.

Darwinism treats such ideas as heresy. Darwin's evolutionary machine is driven by competition between self-interested individuals. Groups are Thatcherite agglomerations of no importance. It was not long before Darwin's followers evolved a response.

The difficulty they had had to face was that individuals do sometimes jump into fast-flowing rivers to rescue virgins in clinging white dresses and their mothers; soldiers do throw themselves over live grenades; a hen will face up to a dog to defend her chicks.

The solution was re-definition: the

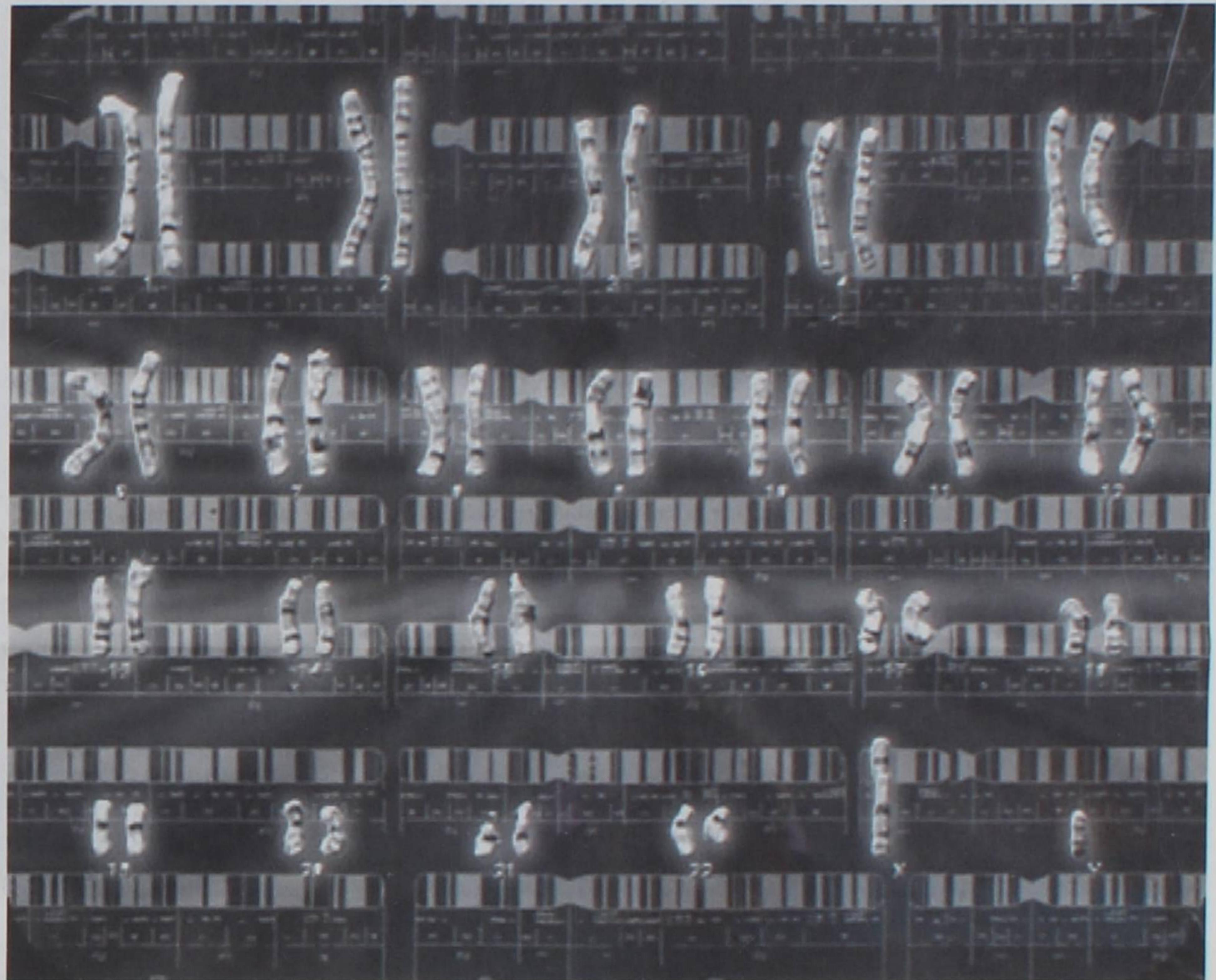
unit of evolution was reduced to the gene, while the individual organism – you and me, for instance – was conceptualised as its robotic carrier. This became the 'selfish gene' theory of evolution and it has proved its fitness; it so permeates academic and popular thought that it is seldom appears in need of explanation. Listen to David Attenborough or almost any wildlife commentator on television and not many minutes will pass before some action is described as – quite obviously – serving the individual's genes.

It is a face that the gene is in a way the basic unit of life, since it survives from generation to generation – though it is not eternal – while we individuals, having toted that bale, keep on dying.

But it is a remarkably boring bit of life, a complex of instructions written by a computer nerd; while we, along with whales, meerkats, spiders et al, are interesting: we do things; we struggle, we co-operate, we survive. If human people aren't the point of human life, then nothing is.

Leaving that aside ... the pendulum has swung away from genetic individualism, and not because of me. I attacked the theory in a widely unread book, *The Social Gene*, in 1999, and, following Kropotkin, found co-operation throughout the living world – more than enough to ground anarchism in nature. I argued that co-operation had played the major part in evolution from the beginning of life until the present. It followed, I said, that altruism, unselfishness and co-operative living were fundamental and that such behaviour was genetically programmed in social species – which includes us.

I continue to seek evidence to support my ideas and am amused to see how much mainstream thinking was already ahead of me: some of the research had been published; some has come out over the last few years. Co-operation by unrelated males in a species of newt was reported in a recent *New Scientist*.



(My conclusion – that anarchism is right and true and essential – isn't yet respectable).

I have just read Darwin's *Cathedral* by D.S. Wilson, which is concerned with understanding religions as adaptive social groups. Leaving aside religions, it contains some points I wish to steal. It quotes a lump of Darwin I should have known, and shows the complexity of his ideas. Darwin says in *The Ascent of Man* (I quote from Wilson) page 266: "...advancement in the standard of morality (of a tribe) will certainly give an immense advantage of one tribe over another. There can be no doubt that a tribe including many members who, from possessing a high degree the spirit of patriotism, fidelity, obedience, courage and sympathy, were always ready to aid one another, and to sacrifice themselves for the common good, would be victorious over most other tribes and this would be natural selection."

That appears to be group selection, but strict Darwinists, while accepting Darwin's conclusion, define the behaviours he lists as the outcome of the self-interested struggle of individual genes. I see them as aspects of our universal social behaviour.

Wilson is with me there; he says such behaviour is widespread and is the basis for the cohering of individuals into adaptive groups, which have a survival advantage over less groupie competitors. He goes on: "in general 'right' coincides

with group welfare and 'wrong' with serving acts at the expense of others in the group."

I came to exactly that conclusion in *The Social Gene*. My conviction is that we, and all social species, are genetically programmed to behave in ways which will help sustain our group. That is, we are co-operative, altruistic to the point of death, conformist, tolerant, conservative, rule making and rule keeping, etc. Hence I follow Rousseau in saying that people are naturally good.

With Wilson, and against entrenched philosophical objection, I conclude that this is a universal ethic: the basis of human morality is the well being of the group to which we belong and from which our own well being arises.

However, Wilson says not that we are naturally co-operative groupies, but that 'special conditions' are required for group behaviour (i.e. altruism, co-operation, solidarity) to evolve. He says that hunter-gatherers are co-operative and egalitarian, not because they lack selfish impulses but because selfish impulses are effectively controlled by other members of the group. Similarly the altruistic behaviour of a blackbird in warning of a predator and in the process of calling attention to itself, has to be reinforced by avian group pressure (I did not really understand how).

I am more utopian. I believe that altruism and group behaviour are very ancient adaptations, long pre-dating the

arrival of primates, mammals, trilobites or whatever. Wilson notes that the formation of the eukaryotic cell, without which no live of any complexity would exist, is an example of co-operation.

That happened a good 800 million years ago. I noted recently that we share a third of our genes with bacteria.

I conclude that the genetic ABC of social behaviour was being written in the DNA of simple organisms long, long ago. Any social species which subsequently evolved inevitably carried genes for the aspects of social behaviour which it needed. No single example, whether brave blackbirds sounding a warning call or a brave human smothering a grenade, needs to be explained in itself and nor can it be: it is a manifestation of an ancient virtue, deeply entrenched, curiously grown.

I should make it clear that I am not preaching genetic determinism. We are genetically programmed to behave socially but the ways in which the social virtues manifest themselves are enormously varied. They depend on – and probably define – cultures, which are human constructs, and they are uniquely tweaked by each individual: when we are free to live the life of free people, we do what we must for the good of our community but each in our own way. In the meantime, the social virtues are used and abused in the interests of power and oppression, with often dreadful results.

**FREEDOM PARTY**  
 on Saturday 20th December  
 from 2pm until late  
 © 84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1  
 (Aldgate East tube or buses 25, 205 Or 254)



# REVIEW

## Postmodernists and liberals are trying to smother anarchism in obscurantism. Brian Morris welcomes a timely injection of sense

**H**ave you heard the good news? The state doesn't exist. It's simply a figment of the social imagination. At least, that's what some postmodernists tell us, while of course continuing to pay their taxes. Some anarchists seem to accept uncritically this idealist and rather obscurantist metaphysic.

But have you heard the bad news? The modern state exists but its powers and relevance have been completely undermined by transnational corporations, the IMF and the World Bank, and by the machinations of global capitalism. The state is fast disappearing, so some liberals and Marxists tell us.

Either way you can forget about the state, although some media radicals like George Monbiot are now advocating the formation of a world government. Heaven forbid!

Harold Barclay's excellent new book, entitled *The State*, and published by Freedom Press (publishers of this newspaper), completely repudiates both these myths. He identifies the reality of the state as a socio-historical institution and also the way corporate interests rely on the power and intervention of the modern state. Witness what's still going on in Iraq.

There's always been an elective affinity between anarchism and anthropology. See, for example, the writings of Kropotkin, Bougle and Elisé Reclus. Harold Barclay's book draws insightfully and usefully on modern anthropological studies.

Having taught anthropology at the University of Alberta for over two decades, as well as conducting ethnographic research in the Sudan, he's well-equipped to pen such a work. *The State* provides a good introduction to both anarchism and to pre-state societies.

The book is divided into four parts. Chapter One addresses the question, what is a state? It emphasises that the state is a social institution, a territorial

association with coercive powers to enforce its laws and conduct its wars. Barclay also offers reflections on the nature of social sanctions, power and authority.

But the state isn't a monolithic institution. It's a historical phenomenon. For this reason, Barclay outlines in Chapter Two the variety of states that have existed in history. These range from the Sumerian city-states and African theocratic kingdoms to the 'world' empires, such as that of Rome, China and the Islamic caliphates.

In Chapter Three, Barclay explores an issue that has long fascinated Marxists, anarchists and anthropologists, namely the 'origin' of the state. He adopts a 'synthetic' approach and briefly discusses the many factors – the 'significant elements' – that may have been important in the rise and development of state institutions: population growth, sedentarism and the emergence of the city, the development of intensive agriculture and 'hydraulic' civilisations, such as Egypt, China and India, redistributive systems, military conquest, trade and the emergence of a class system – a 'hierarchical social order' – and, finally, religious ideologies.

There has, of course, always been a symbiotic relationship between the state and both the ruling class (whether slave-owners, landed aristocrats or capitalists) and religious institutions.

Barclay has little discussion of 'class', but he does emphasise that almost all ideologies are founded on religious beliefs "if they are not completely religious systems themselves."

Concluding the chapter with reflections on how the modern state penetrates into all aspects of social life and into "everyone's mind", Barclay surprisingly makes no mention at all of Kropotkin – who wrote a classic essay on the modern state – or Foucault.

The final chapter, just eight pages long, offers some reflections on the modern



state and its future. Barclay notes that capitalist corporations need the state to ensure the protection of property, to provide subsidies and to exact military interventions when and where necessary, and that institutions like the European Union and the United Nations, besides promoting and upholding capitalism, secure also the interests of the "most

predatory states".

The United Nations is, of course, a complete misnomer. It's not a voluntary association of 'nations' but of 'states', dominated and controlled by the most powerful.

Written in a lucid style and free of academic jargon, Barclay's little book is a very useful primer. It will be especially

useful to those who think the modern state either doesn't 'exist' or is fast 'disappearing' under the impact of so-called 'globalisation' (an expanding capitalism).

*The State* by Harold Barclay is available from Freedom for £5.50 (post free in the UK, add £1 elsewhere)

## BOOKS

### You Back the Attack! We'll Bomb who we Want!

by Micah Ian Wright  
Seven Stories, £10.99

I'm sure many people will have seen at least one of Micah's glorious, full colour anti-war posters on the web or in a magazine somewhere. Well, here's a chance to get a copy of 47 of them, gathered together all in one place, albeit reduced in size (9ins x 6ins) but at a bargain price.

For those unfamiliar with his work, Micah takes real war posters from a variety of sources, mainly American but also Russian, Spanish, German, British and from elsewhere too. He keeps the main graphic and then, using a very similar typeface to the original, writes new slogans on them which often parody or use part of the original to produce a startling new image which itself can be used in opposing the current 'war on

terror' and its accompanying attack on civil liberties.

Most people will have their own favourites. One of mine is the 'big brother is watching you' one, which uses (oh the irony) a Spanish Communist Party poster from the time of the Spanish Civil War. There are also other ones about freedom of information, which I'm sure those who work in libraries and bookshops will appreciate. Many others bring the relation between oil consumption (especially SUVs) and the invasion of Iraq into the forefront.

For those who are hard of thinking, several authors associated with the Center for Constitutional Rights provide commentary in case the reader didn't get the point and, more importantly, at the end of the book are smaller colour reproductions of the originals.

It looks like the publisher and the artist didn't quite get their act together on copyright, as the usual publisher's

admonition not to copy anything in the book without written permission is flatly contradicted by the author's preface. This says, "I hereby order you to break the spine of this book and photocopy these posters on to larger-sized pieces of paper" for use as propaganda (and not decorating bedroom walls, which is what so many political posters end up doing.)

Lest anyone get the wrong impression about the artist, he thoughtfully provides a short biographical sketch featuring himself as a former Ranger in the 75th Ranger Regiment. This shows that military service can be educational, especially when the reality on the ground is so much at variance with official government proclamations. I suspect this won't be the last book Micah – he's already done over 150 – so we could easily be seeing another couple of these volumes in the near future.

Wonderful stuff, perhaps too US-orientated to be of much use on the

opposite of the Atlantic, but hopefully he'll provide plenty of inspiration for other artists to produce more localised versions of these posters. Highly recommended.

Richard Alexander

Available from Freedom for £10.99 (add £2 postage in the UK, £4 elsewhere)

### footnote

by Boff Whalley  
Pomona, £8.99

Boff Whalley is, of course, a member of anarcho-rockers/tired old sell-outs (delete according to taste), Chumbawamba. This is his autobiography, the story of his progress from 1970s Burnley, through 1980s Armley, to 1990s semi-fame with songs such as Tubthumping.

Though much of it seems familiar – bright working class lad finds his way through the world – the book is

engagingly written and Beatle-loving, Sinatra-singing, Juvenal-quoting Boff has interesting things to say about the state of popular music and, in particular, its political irrelevance.

Johnny M.

Available from Freedom for £8.99 (add £1 postage in the UK, £2 elsewhere)

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