

RETURN TO SENDER

Today we have hit at the apparatus of control that is repressive and leading the democratic show that is the new European order, said the press release which was despatched by the Informal Anarchist Federation (FAI) upon the bombing near the home of European Commission President, Romano Prodi.

Within the course of a few days, letter bombs exploded in his office, as well at the offices of British MEP Gary Titley and the governor of the European Central Bank, Jean-Claude Trichet. Five more bombs were also sent in attacks on "Europe's masters, their war, their peace, their repression [and] their control". Police forces and Interpol are panicking in the face of this onslaught of a new Anarchist Terror ... Or are they?

Italian police claim that the organisation responsible has around 350 members in Italy. An allegedly pan-European anarchist group called 'Euro-Opposition' has been implicated, which also has hundreds of members. The Sunday Mirror claimed that the anarchist were 'right-wing fanatics' and 'fascists'. The UK Independence Party of all people even claimed that the attacks would increase unless the EU listened!

This being in Italy, all the information deserves another look. Firstly at the group supposedly responsible - the Informal Anarchist Federation. Apart from its obviously ridiculous name, it has been concocted to have the same acronym as a real Italian group, the Italian Anarchist Federation (FAI), part of the International of Anarchist Federations. The real FAI and its British sister-group the AF have denounced the use of their name attempting to implicate them in the attacks, and the FAI believe that that smacks of police or state provocation. This previously unknown

group has appeared from nowhere, and yet already has hundreds of members, and the Italian police have already managed to find out the names of 250 of them!

Secondly, Euro-opposition appears to be a bizarre group, based solely in Italy which was founded a few months ago with a strange mixture of anarchist and Leninist (!) politics which some Italians suspect only has a tiny number of members. Indeed their awful website might support this suspicion.

Thirdly, the communiqué, which sounds like something out of a rejected Hollywood script, sounds pretty fishy too.

Fourthly the targets are strange With workers everywhere under attack with attacks on job security, wages and pensions, war and imperialism in the Middle East, destruction of civil liberties throughout the West and the continual rise of the far-right, one would think that anarchists would have bigger fish to fry than some low-ranking EU bureaucrats. Especially someone like Titley, himself an outspoken critic of the right-wing Berlusconi government. They seem like far more attractive targets to elements of the extreme right.

Fifthly the method of delivery is suspect. Anarchism always stresses respect for human life and dignity, but letter bombs can kill and maim indiscriminately, and most often harm secretarial or postal workers. In addition, the bomb sent to Prodi was concealed inside a book written by Gabriele D'Annunzio, an Italian fascist, and never a great friend of libertarians.

Finally the biggest cause for scepticism in this case is the history of the Italian State itself. In the 1970s and '80s support for revolutionary ideas was high, and a powerful workers' movement was threatening the continuation of

capitalism. Elements of the security services, often after infiltrating fascist cells, carried out terrorist attacks and then blamed either anarchists or the Left. This had the double-bonus for them of justifying further repression and also discrediting revolutionaries. Dario Fo's play *Accidental Death of an Anarchist* made famous the example of the bombing of a bank in Milan which killed thirteen was followed by widespread arrests of radicals, including the anarchist railwayman and secretary of the ABC Giuseppe Pinelli who was thrown out of the police station window and killed. Years later three fascists were convicted of the original attack. The worst atrocity of this Strategy of Tension, as it was called, was Italy's worst terrorist attack in Bologna railway station, which killed 85 and wounded hundreds. Carried out by fascists, high-ranking Secret Service officials were also implicated, although their convictions were overturned later in court.

Although the Strategy of Tension is over, state provocation and repression in Italy has continued. In 1997 letter bombs in Milan were used as an excuse to raid social centres and squats and make sweeping arrests. Other phoney bombs were used to justify extreme police brutality during the demonstrations against the G8 Summit in Genoa, 2001.

Since Genoa the Italian State has unleashed a new wave of repression on dissent, from banning criticism on Berlusconi on State media to rounding up large numbers of anarchists. Since these letter bombs police forces from across the EU have begun to set up a Europe-wide anti-anarchist task force. Plans to do this could easily be a reason for orchestrating attacks.

Despite all this it is of course a possibility that these attacks were



Italian state repression at the G8 summit in Genoa, 2001

carried out by genuine anarchists, albeit ones divorced from the mainstream movement who thought nothing of implicating another group for their actions. But still it always pays to maintain a healthy scepticism of the mainstream media, especially where anarchists are involved.

Notes

1. Sunday Mirror, 11th January 2004
2. New Scotsman, 6th January 2004
3. <http://www.euroopposizione.org>
4. Anarchist Black Cross
5. For highly detailed info on the Strategy of Tension, check out http://flag.blackened.net/revolt/freearth/fe3_italy.html

KILROY-SILK: MUPPET

Kilroy-Silk's article on Arabs was racist for the simple reason he talked about 'Arabs' as a people rather than the states they are subjects of or a handful of members of that people who practice horrible beliefs.

You simply have to have even a basic grasp of history to know that Arabs have contributed far more to 'civilisation' than the nothing he claims they did. For example, there is civilisation itself. Not to mention important contributions to science, astronomy, mathematics, medicine, architecture, and other branches of science for close to a millennium. Then there are the contributions to prose, poetry, and philosophy. Or visit Andalusia and see some of the most beautiful architecture in Europe (not to mention the irrigation system).

The very fact he refused to stand by his article and apologised for it shows he knew it was nonsense. If he meant to say that Arab states are despotic, treat women abominably and so on, then why did he not say so to begin with? These are facts and have nothing to do with 'Arabs' as a people. But he did not mean to say that, as is obvious from his racist article.

However, the calls to fire him are wrong. You do not fight bigotry by sweeping it under the carpet. Far better to expose it to the withering light of informed debate and discussion. The best solution to Kilroy-Silk would be for him to defend his nonsense in front of an audience full of experts on Arab culture, history and life. Faced with that, he may prefer to resign than be publicly humiliated.

Similarly, those papers who accuse Kilroy-Silk of racism should simply show why he is so obviously full of shit. Ridicule is far more effect than authoritarian measures, particularly as the latter will always backfire on those who propose it. Giving employers the right to fire someone who makes political remarks is hardly clever. After all, what would stop them using that power against, say, revolutionary workers? The history of giving the police extra powers to combat the threat of fascism has always seen those laws used against anti-fascists.

Does that mean libertarians say we must tolerate racism? No, far from it. We say we must combat it with direct action. People who work with racists should expose their ideas to ridicule. They should shun them wherever possible, preferably collectively. Workers in Kilroy-Silk's show could refuse to work with him, for example.

Ultimately, the only way to effectively combat racism is to combat ignorance and that can only be done from the bottom-up. While this may take longer than state action, it will be far more effective as it will get to the root of the

problem. State action will just sweep it under the carpet to fester and grow. It will create the appearance that idiots like Kilroy-Silk are a persecuted minority, so allowing real persecuted minorities to be ignored. It will also give the state and bosses even more power to determine what can and cannot be said.

Finally, it does seem hypocritical for the British state to say it's bad to insult Arabs when it's more than happy to bomb and invade their countries. Obviously killing Arabs is much more acceptable than ignorantly slandering them.

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Home and away

FREEDOM

Volume 65 Number 02

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. Freedom's editors wish to present a broad range of anarchist thought, and as such the views expressed in the paper are those of the individual contributors and not necessarily those of the editorial collective.

Corrections

In 10th January issue, we forgot to update the 'next issue' information on page 2.

On page 3 the strike report headlined 'On the picket line' conflated St Helena School in Colchester, where 300 students walked out of lessons in December, and the island of St Helena in the Atlantic, where there are probably fewer than 300 students of any age.

On page 4 the article entitled 'Tropical Blairism' was wrong to say that four dissidents had been expelled from the Brazilian Congress. They remain active in it and are discussing the possibility of launching a new political party there. They were thrown out of something, however - Lula's own Workers' Party.

Freedom Online

As some of you may have noticed, the Freedom website is up and running at www.freedompress.org.uk. It is constantly being upgraded, and now has links to selected Freedom stories from each issue which are then archived. We would particularly like to set up an online store in the near future. If you think you would be able to help out email us at web@freedompress.org.uk.

Freedom web team

Circulation

We would like to increase the readership of Freedom, and an important part of this is getting better circulation. If you would like to help by selling Freedom or asking bookshops, libraries or newsagents to stock it please write to us or email circ@freedompress.org.uk

Next issue

Contributions are wanted for future Freedoms. The next issue will be dated 7th February 2004 and the last day for getting copy to us will be Thursday 29th January. You can send articles/ letters to us at FreedomCopy@aol.com or by snail mail to 84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1 7QX.

If you are interested in writing regularly for Freedom we want to hear from you!

News from inside

Leave those kids alone

'Disruptive' children who won't bow down to the screws' authority in youth prisons are put in solitary confinement - thrown naked (because apparently clothing "threatens the child's safety") into illegal 'strip cells' with no light, ventilation, furniture or sanitation, where they are forced to use the floor as a toilet. Over the last year more than a hundred children were sent to these cells for periods of up to five days each. The Howard League for Penal Reform is investigating an allegation that two young offenders were kept in solitary confinement for more than a year.

Prison reformers said that "you have to treat children with decency if you want them to change their behaviour. This barbaric practice must stop" and expressed horror that it was so widespread. New figures released by the Home Office show that the cells have been used systematically over the last year, despite bureaucratic lies that they were used in just one institution. 'Special cells' were (officially) used 153 times at youth prisons across the country. Top of the list is Huntercombe in Oxfordshire, where they were used 46 times, followed by Feltham in west London (32) and Lancaster Farms (27).

Judges and politicians spouted platitudes on the matter - it's lawful to separate children for short periods but they should be treated humanely, the cells are used only in extreme circumstances and not as punishments - but in practice prison governors and officers will do whatever they want, whenever they can get away with it,

which is most of the time. And solitary cells provide a convenient method of frightening, punishing and degrading inmates to make them easier to control.

Breaking free

More than eighty prisoners went on the run from Leyhill prison in Gloucestershire last year, the jail from which Roddy McLean escaped. The open prison near Bristol houses about 480 inmates, all of whom should be Category D - low-risk offenders.

New figures show that 82 inmates absconded from the low security prison in one year. Of these, nineteen are still on the run. While prison escapes can be dramatic - last summer Clifford Hobbs, 43, a violent professional criminal, escaped from a prison van which was ambushed by two armed men - most inmates simply walk out of jail. 2002 was a record year for prison escapes - good luck to all the fugitives! 864 escaped, of which 203 were from young offenders' establishments and fourteen from women's prisons. Sadly the number of women escaping has been dramatically reduced in recent years.

Prisoner Support: what you can do

Adopt a prisoner: If you're active in a group or campaign why not choose one or two prisoners to consistently support. Pass cards round meetings, send useful stuff, knock up a flyer and get their case some publicity if they could use it, get in touch with the prisoner's support group if there is one. Of course you can take this on as an individual, too.

Writing to prisoners / sending things:

Prison is isolation, so contact with the outside world, letting a prisoner know s/he is not forgotten, helps break this down. Sometimes just a friendly card can boost their morale. Writing for the first time to a complete stranger can be awkward. A card with some well wishes, a bit about who you are and asking what you can do to help is often enough. Don't expect prisoners to write back. Sometimes, the number of letters they can receive/write is restricted, or they just might not be very good at writing back. To help, include a couple of stamps or, if writing abroad, International Reply Coupons (IRC's) that you can get from any post office. Write on clean paper and don't re-use envelopes. Remember a return address, also on the envelope. Ask what the prisoner can have sent to them, as this varies from prison to prison. Books and pamphlets usually have to be sent from a recognised distributor/bookshop/publisher (ask at a friendly bookshop). Tapes, videos, writing pads, zines, toiletries and postal orders are some of the things you might be able to send. Food just gets eaten by screws.

Remember that all letters are opened and looked through so don't write stuff that could endanger anyone - this doesn't mean you should be over paranoid and write one meaningless comment on the weather after the other. Be prepared to share a bit of your life to brighten up someone's on the inside. For example, we received a letter from Herman Wallace, after sending him a card from the group.



He says: "It is quite essential that I take out a moment to express my gratitude to all the wonderful folk who sent me so much love & support in this one card ... Thank you. Right now, in spite of my repressive condition you guys have made me feel great!"

Protest letters: Petitioning Tony Blair asking him to stop being a capitalist bastard might well be futile. But writing letters to relevant places requesting something realistic such as an appeal, transfer, vegan food etc on behalf of a prisoner can help improve their chances. Prisoners who seem to be 'in the public eye' do tend to be treated better.

Other support: There is so much more than can be done, up to you and your imagination and your contact with a prisoner, such as: publicity for the case, visits, financial support, pickets of prisons ...

For more information contact the Brighton Anarchist Black Cross www.brightonabc.org.uk

LISTINGS

Bradford

6th February Benefit for the 1in12 Library. It's an eclectic bibliotek discotek with cocktails, raffle, pasties, and cake, disco, punk, funk, northern soul, whatever you fancy... £3/£4 on the door, 9pm at the 1in12 Club, 21-23 Albion Street

Bristol

26th January Bristol Indymedia Film Night, with short films from Easton Community Association, Deathsucker Records and a selection of other Indymedia short films. The main feature is The Fourth World War, powerful stuff and the first screening in Bristol. The Cube Cinema, 7.30pm, £3/£2

Glasgow

26th January Glasgow Autonomous Project to set up a social centre at 7.30pm in Mono, 12 Kings Court, King Street in the city centre, just across from the 13th Note Cafe

London

22nd January Discussion meeting on workplace struggles, organised by London AF and other anarchists. From 7pm at the Autonomy Club, 84b Whitechapel High Street, E1
26th January London Earth First! Meeting, 7.30pm in the Autonomy Club at Freedom, 84b Whitechapel High Street, E1

27th January Residents groups:

revolutionary or reactionary?, organised by Haringey Solidarity Group, from 7pm to 9pm at the Phoenix Millenium Centre, West Green Road (entrance in Vincent Road)

27th January Indie Spin present The High Priests of Hell plus guests at The Rhythm Factory, 16-18 Whitechapel Road, E1, from 8pm til late.

30th January An evening to report back from the World Summit of Information Society in Geneva and the We Seize media democracy initiative, and to discuss further activities in the field of communication rights. Limehouse Town Hall, 646 Commercial Road, 7pm

31st January Indymedia London Convergence. London-based media workers, artists, techies, DIY'ers, producers, writers, culture jammers and mischief-makers meet for a chat about the concept of an Indymedia London project. For location info contact imc-uk-contact@lists.indymedia.org
Every Wednesday the LARC Library from 1pm at 62 Fieldgate Street, E1.

Manchester

24th January Northern Anarchist Network Conference at Bridge 5 Mill from 10am to 5pm. Contact 01422 842558 for more info

Powys

14th February Challenging Militarism

in Wales, a day organised by Cynefin y Werin / Common Ground, so groups and activists across Wales can meet to share ideas, co-ordinate actions and develop campaigns. From 10.30am to 4.30pm at the Methodist Church Hall, Back Lane, Newtown

South Yorkshire

31st January No Borders Noise Demo at the Lindholme Refugee Detention Centre. Meet at 12 noon, Tyrham Hall Hotel on the A614 south of Hatfield Woodhouse

World

March 8th International Womens' Day event - a special information and discussion website has been set up at www.enrager.net/m8

Groups

Anarchist Federation
c/o 84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1 7QX
www.afed.org.uk

Class War Federation
PO Box 467, London E8 3QX
www.classwar.org

Industrial Workers of the World
PO Box 74, Brighton, BN1 4ZQ
www.iww.org.uk

Solidarity Federation
PO Box 469, Preston PR1 8FX
www.solfed.org.uk

For details of smaller and local groups see www.enrager.net/britain

Social Centres

Autonomous Centre of Edinburgh (ACE)

17 West Montgomery Place, Edinburgh
www.autonomous.org.uk

The Cowley Club

12 London Road, Brighton BN1 4JA
www.cowleyclub.org.uk

Freedom

84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1 Kebele

14 Robertson Road, Easton, Bristol BS5 6JY

www.kebele.org

Lancaster Resource Centre (LaRC)

The Basement, 78a Penny Street, Lancaster

www.eco-action.org/lancaster

London Action Resource Centre (LARC)

62 Fieldgate Street, London E1

www.londonarc.org

SUMAC Centre

245 Gladstone Street, Nottingham NG7 6HX

www.veggies.org.uk/rainbow/

Use Your Loaf

227 Deptford High Street, London SE8
www.squat.freemove.co.uk/

1in12 Club

21-23 Albion Street, Bradford, West Yorkshire, BD1 2LY

www.1in12.com

56a Infoshop

56 Crampton Street, London SE17

www.safetycat.org/56a/

Britain

Nuff respect?

Is the SWP's latest attempt to 'get down with the kids' making history or just repeating it, asks our Left correspondent

The Socialist Worker Party's latest adventure in front groups and electoral politics since the demise of the SA is the re-creation of the RUC (sic!) in an unholy alliance with such types as Georges Monbiot and Galloway (see Power Mad, Freedom 20th December). We at Freedom don't think they'll be effective enough to crush Catholic communities in the six counties, but they'd probably end up doing it if they got into power (as well as working people everywhere). Why the SWP has an obsession with naming its electoral cartels after various fascist/right-wing organisations we don't know, but we do know they haven't learned the lessons of the past ...

Karl Marx once wrote that history repeated itself, first time as tragedy, second time as farce. The left in Britain seem intent on proving him right. How else can we explain the attempts to create yet another new party to challenge New Labour at the polls?

It is like 1997 has been decreed as year zero for Marxists. The history of the labour movement is happily ignored while the SWP and assorted other sects repeat the tactics which worked so unsuccessfully in the past. Blair did not appear from nowhere. He is just the latest in a long line of Labour politicians who, upon gaining office in the capitalist state, promoted capitalist policies.

This is not surprising. The state is the instrument by which minority classes use to maintain their power and privileges. It can never be used to destroy them. What is surprising is that Marxists seem to forget this, urging us to vote for radicals at election time and get outraged when they defend the interests of the few rather than the many.

0 Marx out of 10

This is, of course, not the first time Marxists have urged us to the polls. Marx himself argued working class to take part in bourgeois elections and institutions. The net effect was simply to prove his anarchist opponents right. The 'revolutionary' Social Democratic Parties across the world quickly became bureaucratic, top-down and opportunist. Revolutionary rhetoric simply disguised a deeply reformist practice. When the First World War broke out, the bourgeois chickens came home to roost in the 'socialist' parties – across the globe, the 'socialists' supported their ruling class in the conflict.

One hundred years later, the German Greens followed the same path. They too argued for electioneering combined with direct action. Unsurprisingly, they arrived in the same destination. They became split between a small group who argued for principles and a majority who adjusted to the realities of power. The same sad story of opportunism, bureaucracy and betrayal – exactly the same fate that has befallen Lula in Brazil and radicals elsewhere who thought that their ideas made them immune to the

realities of the tactics of parliamentarianism.

Anarchists were not surprised by this. We accurately predicted this outcome of socialist tactics. What we did not predict was the stubborn persistence of 'scientific' socialists in ignoring the evidence of history. You would think that over a hundred years of using a tactic which does not work would make them think twice about it but no. They want to prove Marx right, even it is only by providing the 'farce'.

An alternative

Today, just over a hundred years since the formation of the Labour Party, we have a choice. Do we repeat the mistakes of the past or do we learn the lessons of history? Is there an alternative?

Yes – direct action, solidarity and self-management. We think that only working class control of their own struggles can create working class control of society. This means pursuing a policy of extra-parliamentarian struggle. It means waging the class war using federations of community and workplace assemblies.

Anarchists look to the basic mass meeting of workers at their place of work and people in their neighbourhoods as the foundation of organisation and the source of labour's power. These meetings are co-ordinated by means of federations of elected, mandated and recallable delegates. Unlike the parliamentarian, the delegate must carry out the wishes of their electors otherwise they are kicked out and replaced by someone who will obey the people. This is organisation from the bottom upwards.

Through direct action, people create, conduct, organise and manage their own struggle. We do not hand over to others our task of self-liberation. We become used to managing our own affairs, creating alternative, libertarian, forms of social organisation which can become a force to resist the state and the bosses and win reforms. It creates organs of self-activity which, to use Bakunin's words, are "creating not only the ideas but also the facts of the future itself." Workers' control of struggle is the only way that workers' control of their own lives and society becomes a possibility. And it builds the organisations that can achieve it – popular assemblies, workers' councils, factory committees, and so on.

Unlike Marxist calls for a new electoral activity. The idea that socialists standing for elections somehow prepares for revolution is simply wrong – it only prepares people for following leaders. It does not encourage the self-activity, self-organisation, direct action and mass struggle required for a social revolution. There is nothing more isolated, atomised and individualistic than voting. It is the act of one person in a closet by themselves. Voting creates no alternative organs of working class power. And Marxists slander anarchists as being 'individualists'!



Respect Unity Coalition canvassing team in action

What of the right? Will anti-parliamentarianism let them in? As Blair shows, electing the lesser evil does not work. We need to organise in our communities and workplaces. That is where our power lies, that is where we can create a real alternative. Unlike politicians, the mass of the population cannot be bought off and if they are willing and able to resist then they can become a power second to none. By creating a network of self-managed community and workplace organisations we can impose by direct action that which politicians can never give us from Parliament. And only such a movement can stop the attacks upon us by whoever gets into office. A government (left or right) which faces a mass movement based upon direct action and solidarity will always think twice before making unjust decisions.

Anarchists see the framework of an anarchist society coming from the class struggle and the process of revolution itself. Anarchy is not a jump into the dark but rather a natural development of the struggle for freedom under capitalism. It will be created from below up by as working class people start to resist oppression and exploitation. The class struggle transforms those involved as well as society and creates the organisational structure and people required for a libertarian society.

With that in mind, our alternatives are rooting in building the real organs of working class power in the here and now. That means encouraging a rank and file movement based on the spirit of the wildcat. It means promoting the idea of strikers' assemblies as the decision-making bodies in industrial disputes rather than relying on 'left-wing' leaders

to act for us. It means creating a network of militants who put the needs of the struggle above the recruiting needs of their party or vote gathering. It means investing the resources, time and energy wasted in supporting political parties in building a labour movement run by and for its members. Rather than voting a someone to misrepresent us every four years, we should be creating community organisations which allow people to put real pressure on the state all the time. The anti-poll tax unions of the early '90s and the assemblies in Argentina and of the Zapatistas today show what is possible.

Building the new world while fighting this one will be much harder than electioneering and letting a few leaders act for us. But it is worth it. Do we really want to look back in a few decades time wondering why the 'new' party of labour has become as bad as the old one?

Fighting back

Street fighting man

Working class hero Steve Bellingham was arrested this week for attacking his local MP. Sir Teddy Taylor, Tory Member of Parliament for Southend, was shopping in the town centre for a kilt. Steve recognised him and while punching him in the mouth yelled "It's all your fault. You've ruined this town." Sadly some passers-by pulled him off. Freedom would like to applaud his brave deed, and hopes that he beats the case against him for ABH.

Dublin airport chaos

Flights out of Dublin Airport could face disruption within two weeks after trade unions voted for industrial action. Around 250 members of SIPTU, the country's largest union, mandated their leaders to prepare a campaign of strike action to disrupt Ireland's presidency of the EU. The threatened industrial action is the latest move in a campaign of resistance to government plans to break up the state-owned operator of Ireland's three main airports, Aer Rianta.

Bus drivers' strike vote in Cumbria

Bus drivers in Cumbria are to be balloted about strike action in a dispute over pay. It comes after talks between bus company Stagecoach and the TGWU broke down. The 500 drivers will now be balloted over industrial action and if they decide to go ahead it could hit services across the county. There is anger that drivers in Carlisle have been offered a bigger pay rise than their colleagues elsewhere in Cumbria because of a shortage of staff in the city.

Obituary

A lifetime of struggle

Former Freedom industrial editor loses his battle with asbestosis – Pete Turner, 1st May 1935 to 24th December 2003

Pete Turner was, like Arthur Moyses who died last year, a rare working class anarchist. A South Londoner, who served an apprenticeship as a carpenter, toiled in the building industry for the whole of his working life and died from asbestosis during his retirement. He was a truly sweet man and it was typical, and fitting, that he should have attended Arthur's cremation even though he was wheelchair-bound and breathing via an oxygen cylinder. When I visited him (for the last time as it's turned out) at his home in Hammersmith at the end of June he could no longer walk and I feared, and he knew, that he was on the way out. It could be six months I thought.

Pete's unflagging political drive centred on trade union activism and, again like Arthur, he was far more tolerant of the leftism of his fellow activists than his more arty middle-class anarchist comrades would have been. His sweetness, as exemplified by his ready smile and genuine interest in other people, made him irresistible to men and women and he was able to avoid, by and large, the notorious feuds and fall-outs, which bedevil parts of the anarchist movement.

His own anarchism, however, was rock steady. His tolerance didn't extend to him shifting his own ground and he rigorously applied his beliefs to his own life.

He lived humbly but expansively, loved jazz and film, was widely read and somehow travelled widely. He was married once, no children of his own but loving father to step-children, and had many close women friends for whom he was a marvellously gifted self-appointed grandfather to their children. When he stayed with us a couple of years ago our two boys took to him at once. However, when we all went out cycling together, Pete, to his own shame and chagrin, had to give up after a couple of hundred yards because he couldn't breathe. He'd always been a cyclist and missed it terribly. He'd showed me an album full of his cycling photographs and there was 15 year old Pete, neat and petite, competing on his hand-built racing cycle with his ready smile already working its magic.

I first encountered him in the '60s when he was Freedom's 'industrial editor'. In those days Freedom had a masthead on its back page as well as its front, so that it could be sold at factory gates with the back page displayed. This page featured disputes, strikes, lock-

outs, work-ins and continually made the case for worker's control. It was Pete who put the back page together and his integrity and absolute reliability shone from it.

I forget how we first met but our shared interest in, among other things, cycling, jazz, and the writings of William Morris, made friendship easy. Mostly we met on demos, and always on May Days. He was active on the Hammersmith Trades Council and in the Pensioners Movement until the last and there was an inextinguishable spark of optimism in his nature which, whether you shared it or not, was part of his sweet appeal.

His women friends helped and supported him to the end and his dear friend Pam, who lived nearby, was a tower of strength. Their friendship was typical of all his friendships: they crossed political, social and cultural divides, were a source of endless delight and were unshakeable.

Actually, that will do as a memorial for Pete: he was unshakeable. I'm shaken, though. He was a dear friend, a genuinely good bloke, and a credit to his anarchist beliefs. He'll be keenly missed by me and many.

Jeff Cloves



Photo: Gwen Cook

Pete Turner digging for coal outside the Millennium Dome on 9th May 1999, as part of a demonstration to draw attention to the stupidity of the dome and the colossal waste of money involved, as well as drawing attention to the campaign against opencast mines

He will be missed by many

Pete was a loyal contributor to Anarchy in the 1960s and, as I used to put in biographical notes, I can tell you that "Peter Turner, born 1935 at Battersea, is a carpenter, an Almagamated Society of Woodworkers (ASW) steward, and a member of the Committee of 100."

He was always a supportive friend to me at meetings – at the 'off-centre' meetings of Freedom Press supporters at their homes in London in the 1960s, when he would always show up at mine in Fulham, and I remember how at the three-day celebration of William Morris at the V&A Museum in June 1996, he turned up to support my arguments against the academics. And when Freedom Press moved hastily from Holborn to Fulham in 1960 he was very tolerant of my improvised carpentry.

Every meeting with him was an excuse for jokes and merriment. I can also remember how, in the dying days of the Greater London Council, I had some unfinished business at County Hall on the South Bank, which was like an empty mausoleum, when I met Pete, striding down a corridor after securing a better deal for his fellow union members who had worked for the GLC.

Colin Ward

tions against local, national, and international injustices. He must have taken in part in most of the peace marches and the many CND and other demonstrations against wars and nuclear weapons. He was very involved in the successful fight to get the TUC to celebrate Mayday on Mayday.

Even as recently as last summer he was seen on marches, in a wheelchair, sustained by a brace of oxygen cylinders, being pushed by one of his many willing friends and colleagues. In better times he was often seen carrying on pole of



Pete Turner (left) at the Free Vanunu vigil held at the Israeli Embassy on 22nd December 2001

the William Morris banner.

I knew him well over many years and visited him quite often in his last months; indeed we had a gathering in his flat the night before died. He never complained; he never riled against his illness or his fate, despite what must have been difficult time for him over the last weeks and months. He retained his marvellous and sweet disposition to the very end.

Pete was always a pleasure to work with. He was indeed a special person and it was a privilege to have known him as a true friend and an enduring colleague and campaigner.

He had been once married. He had no children. He has one sister that is still alive.

Ernest Rodker

Pete Turner died on Christmas Eve 2003, after a long fight against asbestosis. Several of us had been with him, having a seasonal get together, throughout the evening of 23rd December and the last few left shortly before midnight. Pete had seemed in very good spirits towards the end of the evening. It is possible that he died early on Christmas Eve not long after the last few left his flat.

Pete had several interests throughout his lifetime; his main commitment was to the trade union movement and to

workers in struggle. He truly understood the meaning of solidarity. He has been a strong campaigner over the years for workers' health and safety, including the long struggle against asbestos. His first priority while he was secretary of the Trades Council was always the trades council. While he was steward and convenor he was fully committed to his members. Pete always put his trade union interests first. He was a strong adherent of William Morris' socialist principles and the intertwining of art and work. In his work as a



Pete Turner at the demo organised by No Opencast at the Millennium Dome on 9th May 1999

carpenter he was an artist himself. He admired many sorts of art and had looked forward to being able to visit galleries after his retirement. He never really retired. From the time he began to draw his pension at the age of 65 he was still committed to working selflessly for the trade union movement. It is recalled that for some time after he finished his paid work he devoted much time and effort as a lay representative for members of his union, the GMB, who had no steward in their workplace. This would often mean him getting along to very early morning meetings while the rest of us were still in bed or just starting to get ready for work. In the past eighteen months he has increasingly suffered from asbestosis, an industrial disease he contracted many years ago in the building industry. Up until his death he continued as secretary of the Trades Council, although deteriorating health prevented him from attending recent meetings.

I know there is much more to be said about Pete and there are many who knew him better than I did and from a different perspective. He was a man of many parts but with genuine commitment to others. We shall miss him very much.

Gwen Cook

Hammersmith Trades Council, Fulham

During the 1980s and '90s Pete took part in many small and large demonstra-

Green and Black Bulletin

Red zones

The Wildfire Collective gives a green and black perspective on upcoming No Border actions

Corporations cross borders in search of profit every hour of every day. This process has become known as globalisation (or neo-liberalism). The multitude (the victims of global capital) are constantly reminded that we cannot, and must not, cross borders in search of better lives. Instead we are forced to stay and deal with the social, environmental and economic consequences the corporations leave behind, when they inevitably pack up shop in search of other States with cheaper labour, laxer environmental legislation or sweeter tax breaks.

Often there is nothing left for future generations to build upon once these pirates have left. Local resources lay plundered, the forests levelled, the rivers polluted and fished to extinction levels, fields poisoned with agrichemicals; a barren and deadened landscape. Cultures are stripped; diversity replaced with the monotone grey of capitalist culture. The fools gold of Hollywood and the myths of the reality-industry replacing the vibrant colourful traditions of before. The psychic landscape mirrors the depleted physical wasteland; suicide, alcohol and drug dependency, and abusive relationships permeate the shantytowns and cities around the old industrial sites.

Those who do attempt to escape find themselves criminalised, risking injury and death in their desire to live. They place their lives in the hands of competitive capitalist gangs only to choke in the back of lorries or rot in detention centres.

However, borders are not just lines marked on maps, protected for the wealthy and crossed by the desperate. Borders exist everywhere inside the enclosure of capital. For those of us in the 'advanced west' borders are not always visible, but they affect us on an hourly basis. If you cannot afford your train fair, a border exists to your travel. If you cannot afford heating, a border exists to your comfort. For those who attempt to ignore these borders, yet more borders (prisons) exist to contain them. But all is not yet lost. Globally people wishing to dismantle the death culture are acting to return the world to a commons, not just for our species, but for all life. People are smuggled through borders, land is retaken, and food is produced and shared.

Unfortunately, the people acting are few in number although many may dream the same vision. If we are to survive we must break out of the border culture. Industrialisation and capital is finally pushing our planet to its breaking point. The best estimates suggest that climatic change will wipe out over one

million species within the next fifty years. This isn't just a blow to the species concerned and a handful of 'nature lovers'. The cost for humanity is far more horrifying than simply being denied a glimpse of an endangered species, external to the confines of a zoo. Animals removed from their habitats will no longer prey on other species; diseases kept in check for millennia by this natural interplay will rise unchecked through animal and human populations alike. Plagues, erratic weather, famines and swarms of biblical proportion will further compound the human misery of those at the forefront of the ecological collapse, refugees.

For example, by 2040 rivers such as the Indus, Ganges and Bramaputra which irrigate the farms of the 'Indian Bread Basket' will cease to flow, the glaciers that feed them will have disappeared. The rivers will only run if and when the rains come (if they come at all). What will happen to the one billion people the rivers feed? One billion refugees, the potential for recuperation by competitive nationalist rackets could plunge us all into a resource war of unprecedented level. Or at best a nice fat IMF loan?

Borders also exist to our rage. The revolutions of the past have always been



postponed; the left has always asked us to shelve our anger and wait until the material or organisational conditions are right or to wait for our class to spontaneously arise. 'Come the glorious day, come the glorious day' is all many of us inside the radical milieu have ever heard. Ideological formulas will not save us. An ecological perspective allows anarchists a timeframe in which we must act. Failure to do so is too horrible a cost to bear.

We are anarchists fighting at the most important juncture in human history;

we may not have another chance. We must take action now, against industrialisation, capital and the state. Borders are their obvious physical manifestation. On the 31st of January a global day of action has been called against borders and in support of free movement. For a comprehensive list of actions and groups participating see www.noborder.org or www.wombles.org.uk or better yet gather a few mates and organise your own action. For information regarding climate change and actions you can take to combat it contact www.risingtide.org.uk or your local Earth Firsters!

News from the frontline

Underground direct action totals for 2003

There were 75 illegal direct actions taken in North America in 2003, an increase of 8% over claimed illegal direct actions taken in 2002. Animal liberation actions comprised just under 50%, or 37 actions, while 38 actions were committed for a combination of ecological, anti-GMO, anti-SUV, anti-development, anti-war and other reasons.

The Animal Liberation Front in the US took action on eighteen occasions, the same number as in 2002. The Earth Liberation Front (ELF) took action on thirteen occasions, mirroring the number of actions of 2002. Other groups claiming actions included the Revolutionary Cells - Animal Liberation Brigade, Direct Action Front, The Frogs, and the Vegan Dumpster Militia. Several actions were additionally claimed by anonymous groups.

What did increase dramatically in 2003 were overall damage totals as a result of direct action. The ELF alone caused upwards of \$55 million dollars in damages in a series of anti-development and SUV dealership attacks that captured headlines across North America. It is

likely that damage totals in 2003 were close to \$60 million, though the exact figure is difficult to determine.

The following is a list of some of the more spectacular animal and earth related actions carried out in 2003.

1st January - Erie, Pennsylvania (ELF)
ELF torches Bob Ferrando Ford Lincoln Mercury Dealership causing \$90,000 in damages. Specifically targeted were SUVs in the lot.

25th March 2003 - Petaluma, California (Anonymous)
Rancho Veal Slaughterhouse set ablaze causing \$10,000 in damages. Graffiti left behind read 'stop the killing'.

3rd and 4th May - Gainesville, Florida (Anonymous)
Thirty SUVs and several luxury cars damaged with glass etching fluid.

4th June - Macomb County, Michigan (ELF)
ELF sets fire to two luxury homes in a Macomb County housing development in an action against urban sprawl. Damages estimated at \$700,000.

1st August - San Diego, California (ELF)

In the largest act of environmental sabotage in US history, the ELF claims responsibility for a \$50 million fire in San Diego, California, that destroyed an unfinished five-story condominium complex.

22nd August - West Covina, California (ELF)

Four SUV dealerships attacked causing an estimated \$2.5 Million in damages. In West Covina, California fire ripped through an auto dealership, destroying and damaging several SUVs including several Hummer H2s. A warehouse on the site was also destroyed by fire.

24th August - Sultan, Washington (Animal Liberation Front)

10,000 mink were liberated from a fur farm on the night of August 24th. Damage estimated at \$500,000.

28th August - Emeryville, California (Animal Liberation Brigade - HLS-related)

Two pipe bombs exploded at the offices of Chiron Corporation, one of the

largest international biotech firms located in the United States. According to the communique, this action was aimed at Chiron's ties to Huntingdon Life Sciences.

19th September - San Diego, California (ELF)

Action against urban sprawl in the upscale Carmel Valley neighbourhood of San Diego, torching four houses and causing an estimated \$1 million in damages.

25th September - Louisiana (Animal Liberation Front)

An Animal Liberation Front Action at the Louisiana State University Inhalation Toxicology Research Facility did a total of \$300,000 in damages. Equipment used in experiments was destroyed and red paint was splashed on the floors and walls in a direct action against animal testing and vivisection experiments being carried out by university laboratories.

GM news

UK government Advisory Committee on Release to the Environment (ACRE) have given a tentative go-ahead for the

commercial growing of GM maize. Bayer CropScience's Chardon LL maize now just needs to be added to the UK national seed list and a change made to UK pesticide law before it can be grown commercially. ACRE has however advised against the commercialisation of GM beet and oil seed rape.

For more information on Bayer actions see <http://www.stopbayergm.org>

Asylum seekers welcome in Leeds!

On 8th January 2004 Waterside Court, the Immigration Office which processes asylum claims, was blockaded. Banners were displayed in front of the building with slogans of 'No to Destitution, Asylum to all those who seek it' and 'No Borders, Freedom of Movement'. The protest lasted two hours and ended peacefully. The protest was to raise awareness and draw attention to the effects of Section 55 of the Government's Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002 which came into force one year ago. Over the past year this legislation has made 7,500 Asylum Seekers destitute, many of whom then became homeless.

Editorial

The British economy is a debt economy. Household debt is rising by a staggering £1.7 billion a month. Every family on this island has unsecured debts averaging £4,426 (the 1998 average was £2,231). Mortgages aside, over half this borrowing has been done on credit cards. But even on these figures, personal debt is nothing compared to the amount chancellor Gordon Brown plans to borrow. Lower than expected tax receipts, plus the small matter of the £2.5 billion cost of an on-going war, means the government is going to have to borrow £10 billion more this year than ministers had planned.

Government and consumers alike are borrowing more and more. A fifth of people who borrow do so to get out of existing financial difficulties. For others, though, low interest rates, low unemployment and house price inflation have encouraged a spending spree which can only be storing up serious problems for the future. Even a slight increase in interest rates could make debt repayments unsustainable for a lot of us.

Inevitably, clouds are gathering. The rapid rise in house prices is slackening and retail sales over Christmas fell compared to last year. In his November pre-Budget report Brown reduced his estimates for economic growth in 2004. If harder times are on the way, the government will have to raise taxes or cut back expenditure on things like the NHS. No wonder Blair and Brown are worried.

The chancellor has written to the Pay Review Bodies, telling them to peg pay rises for public service workers to just 2%. In fact, an assault on worker's wages has already begun. Many government departments have offered below-inflation increases, leading the PCS trade union to ballot its 114,000 civil service members.

Britain's future economic prospects are likely to be determined by exchange markets, currency dealers and money traders. The problem is that exchange rate volatility could force the Bank of England to raise interest rates. That would make all the debt much more expensive.

The government would cut back spending, so reducing demand, as well as sitting on public servants' pay, thereby reducing the amount they have to spend. Consumers struggling to make interest rate payments also cut back on their own expenditure. Recession is the predictable result. Capitalism is characterised by periods of boom and bust. It's a crazy way to organise things. If capitalism didn't exist, nobody would invent it. The economy has been relatively quiet in recent years. Expect a change some time soon.

Quiz answers

1. It's the practice of absenting oneself from work on Mondays. An 1864 report on the Birmingham metal trades complained about the custom: "An enormous amount of time is lost, not only by want of punctuality in coming to work in the morning and beginning again after meals, but still more by the general observance of 'Saint Monday', which is shown in the late attendance or entire absence of large numbers on that day."
2. Mark Twain.
3. The durian – a large spiky tropical fruit that has an all-pervading and unpleasant smell.
4. In 1938 Switzerland imposed border controls on those fleeing Germany. By 1942 it had closed its borders entirely to those fleeing 'for racial reasons only'. Helping Jews into the country was a criminal offence. But don't worry – people who did this were, finally, pardoned. But not until 1st January this year.

Commentary

More Wildfire

The letters from two members of the Wildfire Collective (Commentary, 20th December) just reinforce the poverty of primitivism. Rather than address the issues I raise, they prefer personal attacks and distortion. Aside from the insults, inventions, evasions and self-contradictions, their letters actually have little to say. Most of them are simply gross distortions of what I said.

The first letter, signed Wildfire I, complains that, by "assert[ing] these two [of five!] positions to us, in inverted commas (as if lifted from the text)" I'm being "dishonest and misrepresentative." Yet the context of my letter makes it clear that I wasn't quoting from the text.

Looking at the assertion that "organisation equals government," I can't see what Wildfire I is complaining about. The second Green and Black Bulletin (Mass Society, 12th November) obviously assumed this and it's more than confirmed by the writer's own suggestion that all my hopes rest "in becoming one of [my] illusionary 'recallable' politicians of the future". And here is the person who takes offence to my 'assertion' that he equates organisation with government! How ironic.

Then there is the other letter, signed Wildfire II, which calls "recallable delegates ... another form of governance," even dismissing collective decision-making as the individual being "crushed under the weight of 'workers' democracy'." Whether in the workplace or in a 'small-scale' community, organisation requires that decisions be reached and these will rarely make everyone happy. This suggests a somewhat autocratic approach to cooperation, where the expectation is that everyone must do exactly what they want or they're oppressed. So my 'assertion', rather than being 'dishonest', was correct.

Wildfire I says that I intend to impose "an 'imperialist' proletarian revolution on the majority world." I said no such thing. The 'quote' provided to justify this was my repeating of Wildfire's own straw man argument against 'traditional' anarchism, and the context again makes this clear. That's why Wildfire I doctors the quotation, removing the quotation marks where I indicated the second Bulletin's words. This looks like dishonesty.

Regarding other puerile comments from this writer, I fully support the "Zapatistas who don't want dams" and others who reject the demands of capitalist progress. As I made clear, 'progress' under capitalism is shaped by inequalities of power and wealth. I don't worship it, but I don't reject all progress as inherently bad either.

And I think it's ironic that someone who wants the whole world to be 'primitivist' has the cheek to call me an 'imperialist' and 'authoritarian', particularly given that I said, "as for the level of technology and industry they [in the 'Global South'] would like, well, I think true anarchists should let them decide that themselves rather than seeking to impose primitivist fantasies on to them." This, of course, is the same position I hold for the 'Global North'.

It's funny that Wildfire I thinks I want to "organise strikes against those who refuse the 'progress of the west'." I assume this is in response to my suggestions on his question of how "those in the Global North [can] communicate, let alone convince, a community in the Global South" not to "harness nuclear energy". Which is a distortion of my argument, as well as being deeply ironic: I was

explaining how we could convince people not to follow our mistakes and Wildfire I turns it on its head.

His comrade gets annoyed by this as well, complaining that direct action would be used against a "group of workers [that] doesn't want to play" in order to "force people to do what the majority want." This is ironic. Is he suggesting now that we should let people "harness nuclear energy" after all? It would be oppressive to try and convince them not to.

This second writer ends this paragraph with the assertion that "when the boycotts fail" I'd be out shooting all the 'anti-work' types my 'Spanish civil war heroes' did. But he provides no evidence that this ever happened in Spain. I checked the most obvious source for such an accusation, Seidmen's Workers against Work, and found nothing. Perhaps he'd provide a reference?

Back to Wildfire I. He distorts my view on how we should handle ecologically-destructive technology, again producing a context-free quotation to launch into a tirade on how I think "the future is an either-or scenario. Either we embrace ecological destruction or face ecological destruction." Perhaps I should stress that, by 'ecological destruction', I assumed the Wildfire Collective meant the use of natural resources by human beings. Yes, producing any product, even in a 'primitivist' society, will result in resource use, pollution and so on. My starting point is to ask how we interact with the environment to minimise our impact while maintaining a decent standard of living. I made this clear in my original letter.

Wildfire reject my solution. I can see why they distort my position, as it allows them to ignore my point, which was that "the breakdown of civilisation" they desire will face the "legacies of industrial society which (like the ruling class) will not just disappear." Presumably Wildfire I rejects this and thinks that nuclear power stations should just be allowed to melt down and the toxic wastes of decaying industrial society just seep into the water table and soil? But no, he argues that "we can safely deactivate and secure 'toxic' processes during a revolutionary situation, without having to continue the production post-revolution." Now, why didn't I think of that? Oh, wait, I did!

I wrote that, "we will need to handle such problems while transforming society" as well as "evaluating the costs and benefits of specific concrete forms of technology and production, seeking ways of improving and changing them and, perhaps, getting rid of some of them totally." Wildfire I simply repeats my own point against me. How dishonest can you get? Strangely, Wildfire I doesn't explain how this deactivation would occur. As he dismisses workers' control, I can't see how it could be done.

The issue is simple. If the Wildfire Collective think 'primitivist' society will exist immediately, then they must acknowledge that millions of people will die of starvation so that a 'lucky' few who survive can raise chickens free from tyrannies such as hospitals, books and electricity. If, however, they think it will be created over time, with the sensible deactivation of industry and the voluntary dismantling of cities like London, then let them explain how this will be done without workers' control, international links and the self-organisation of the population – which is what they attacked me for advocating. And if the transition is slow, then why can't we judge which technology to keep, modify and reject, rather than

dumping it all?

Of course, this isn't an option for Wildfire, who condemn me for suggesting it. They make it clear that it's a case of when "civilisation collapses," rather than progressive change over time. Given this, they must explain why such a sudden breakdown won't lead to death and ecological destruction on a massive scale. If they claim after all that they don't want such an abrupt change, then why do they suggest that they do?

Generally logic doesn't seem to be their strong point. Wildfire II says the Green and Black Bulletin doesn't provide a "blue print for the future," yet he argues for "small-scale land-based culture." He says that primitivism rejects the idea "that models of social interaction be imposed on anyone," yet fails to say how else we could get to his utopia. He wants to get rid of the city but he makes no attempt to explain how.

Neither writer says how the UK will support 58 million people using his preferred culture, so I wonder why Wildfire I complains that it's false to say he ever proposed mass starvation as a solution. Let me remind him of the first Bulletin's comments on the collapse of civilisation. What conclusion does he want us to draw? Until the Collective answers questions such as these, nobody will take them seriously. And what can we make of the fact that they've yet to take the opportunity to do so?

Finally, Wildfire I says that my "long-standing battle with 'primitivism' has been well documented," that "past issues of Black Flag and Green Anarchist are littered with 'calls and responses' similar to these". I've never written a letter to Green Anarchist, nor a word in Black Flag about primitivism. But why let truth get in the way? It hasn't so far.

Iain McKay

Do the authors of the Green and Black Bulletin dwell in a rural, self-sufficient enclave, without using any 'commodity goods', relying on the manual skills that beguile them so? These are a few of the things we ought to know about them, particularly when they assert that "one of the most revolutionary acts we in the north can engage in (in the immediate) is to reconnect to the land in our local communities". If it exists "in the immediate," where is this example of the new utopia located? How is it structured? How are decisions taken? Or are we to take it that their prescription is for the rest of us, at some unspecified future date?

In fact I didn't accuse them of being state apparatchiks (Commentary, 6th December) but merely illustrated the point that the provenance of the so-called Bulletin was hidden from the wider 'movement' and might emanate from anywhere. It remains so. It's silly for a supposed collective to claim anonymity and it suggests a lack of commitment. As for the term 'mud-slinging' – note the description of Iain's letter as "lies, vitriol and half-truths". Presumably this is intended as an attempt at comradely criticism.

My political identity is quite robust. Like others I've read an awful lot of crap over the years and I'm weary of it continuing into the future under the guise of being an alleged 'critical current' and so having a connection with credence. Those who produce the Bulletin appear to be fully-fledged ideologues. Their contempt for any form of self-managed procedure is clear. Yet they claim to have no interest in 'taking sides'. I draw the conclusion that primitivists aren't part of the revolutionary anarchist movement but naïve eco-

fantasists who'd direct us into the maw of a new fascist barbarism when dictatorships arise from the chaos fashioned by the proposed "destruction of civilisation".

Freedom is doing the rest of us a disservice. Why these asinine opinions are allowed so much space in the only fortnightly anarchist paper (which itself is a sad reflection of our limitations) is a mystery. Anyone would think they had something new and relevant to say, or that the editors supported such notions as those expressed. My concern isn't that the values in the Bulletin are disseminated but (to repeat) that this should be done as a separate entity at the non-anarchist producers' expense, with contact addresses given, and for the space regained in Freedom to be given over to news and rational comment that furthers the anarchist cause. There's a struggle to be won.

Roy Emery

Would the primitivists please explain how the current worldwide population of six billion people can be spread out instantly into what remains of the world's rural areas without this creating a social and ecological disaster? Can they also explain how six billion people can be fed with a balanced diet, using small-scale subsistence farming alone, in whatever immediate location in the world they happen to be, in whatever climate? Or is it that they want to see the majority of the human population – that's you and me, folks – conveniently disappear?

Paul

I've been very interested in the debate on anarcho-primitivism. It seems to me that what anarcho-primitivists overlook is the need for a fulcrum and lever for overthrowing capitalism and the state which, distasteful as it may sound to some, can only be the working class. What happens after the overthrow of capitalism and the state is an open question, but what isn't is the fact that capitalism is only really vulnerable at the point of production. How anarchists orientate themselves in relation to this is crucial.

They can stand apart and wash their hands of it because it doesn't accord with their analysis of the wrongs of the world, or they can take sides in what will be a struggle between classes and put their own ideas on hold for a while. There'll be plenty of time to persuade people to return to simpler ways of life – which I'm in total agreement with – once capitalism and the state are out of the way. Until then, we have no choice but to work with the working class and to try to influence the course of events from inside their struggle once it arises.

Richard Livermore

The debate prompted by your inclusion of the Green and Black perspective is turning out to be fascinating. Perhaps this was the intention all along – dialogue. One clear trait, above all, is emerging: the righteousness evinced by virtually all the anti-Greens. Few anarchists are comfortable being told what they should think or how they must live their lives. The objectives of the Wildfire Collective appear to be most strongly opposed by proponents of anarchist communism. That's fine – I advocate the same philosophy myself. But it surely has to be an anarchism broad in its vision and tolerant in practice, otherwise endless post-revolutionary schisms are bound to occur. This will result in the failure of the entire concept.

REVIEW

Are we being lied to? Much of the evidence seems to suggest that we are, at least if the essays in one recent book are to be believed

You are Being Lied To, edited by Russ Kick, is a big book which, since its publication, has stirred some controversy. This has included a heated exchange in Lobster magazine. That said, I feel it would be an excellent starting point, albeit an American-flavoured one, for an investigation into just how little we can trust the mass media.

There are several names here which will be familiar to Freedom readers, including those of Noam Chomsky, Chas Bufe, Brian Martin and Robin Ramsay. People who know the US alternative press will also be pleased to see Kenn Thomas, Robert Sterling, Jim Martin and Alex Constantine represented.

Many of the articles are published for the first time, at least in the form they take here. Kick has tried to get a broad spectrum of views, including those from rightwing writers, but overwhelmingly this collection is from elsewhere. One should note that it's overwhelmingly a male compendium.

With so many writers it's inevitable that the writing is of variable quality, and some subjects are more interesting than others. It's also quite possible that some items could be flatly contradicted by another article. Russ hasn't attempted to flatten out the differences, and if the book has one main message it's for readers to approach all texts, including those included here, in a critical spirit.

Topics covered include the old favourites of the conspiracy press – JFK and other assassinations, the Oklahoma City bombing, high school massacres, UFOs, voting scams and so forth. Then there's

material on school text books and the distortions and omissions in them (American ones in particular), analyses of religion, including the Jesus myth story and so on. Not to mention sex and drugs and the fallacies, misrepresentations and horrors of contemporary science. And loads more, in over sixty essays.

The whole thing is headed up by some more general articles, and finished off with some further reading. Many of the articles are well-sourced and footnoted. As an adjunct to You are Being Lied To there's also the disinfo.com website, which has been going since 1996 and where some of these authors have posted material.

Like any anthology, it's as good as its parts and, generally speaking, there are more items in this collection which people will find interesting than objectionable. And I expect that everyone who reads it will find something new and something else they really object to. Anyone who agrees with all of it hasn't got their critical apparatus working and hasn't understood what the book is all about.

With such a wide range of topics and writers covered, it's difficult to isolate any one or two items for special mention. But I did find Barry Chamish's chapter on the 1995 assassination of Israeli prime minister Yitzak Rabin fascinating and it showed that sometimes the 'conspiracy theorists' do have worthwhile things to say.

As for the material on the Columbine High School massacre – well, read it and see what you make of it. Like much in here, if it's true then we really have been lied to, big time. Sadly the collection



A conspiracy theorist's delight – JFK, still the original and the best

was put together before September 11th, and there's several book loads of theories and strange 'facts' that could be assembled about that.

Overall, You are Being Lied To is recommended if you're in any way suspicious of what you've been told

over the years, but best avoided if you firmly believe in consensus reality, as told you by the mainstream media and other experts. Now, who's going to put together a similar volume from British writers and covering British subjects?

Richard Alexander

You are Being Lied to: The Disinformation Guide to Media Distortion, Historical Whitewashes and Cultural Myths, edited by Russ Kick, published by Disinformation, is available from Freedom for £17.99 (add £2 postage in the UK, £4 elsewhere). For more of the same visit www.disinfo.com

BOOKS

God Save the Queen

by Johann Hari
Icon Books, £5.99

You don't need to be an anarchist to resent the British establishment. The newspapers have recently been swilling (again) with stories about corruption in the 'honours system' (personally I'd take one, simply to be embarrassing. But it's unlikely I'll be offered the chance). Royalty is the peak of the establishment. The whole myth reinforces the idea of 'special' people, who somehow are qualified to have power. This in itself reinforces power relationships.

The history of the profession speaks for itself – a continual story of power freaks, half-wits and people who disgrace the description 'lunatics'. The sad part of it all is the continuing involvement of ordinary people. Media stars, film, television and sound-recording all compete for gongs. Somehow royalty still has its appeal. An old quotation is apt: "when the last king is strangled with the guts of the last priest."

It wasn't always like this. Right into the Middle Ages, kings were little more than military leaders. Then they started to develop pretensions and assumptions of 'divine right'. God was on their side.

The English had the sense to perform a literal hatchet job in 1649 and then, incredibly, within twenty years they brought back the family business. The Godfather has nothing on this.

Johann Hari's book is a hatchet job on the current royal family, a sorry bunch of people, emotionally crippled and redundant for everything except newspaper stories (in fact, there's even a revival in stories about the long-dead Diana, Princess of Wales). I myself have no interest in whether the queen's firstborn eventually becomes a 'king' or not. God Save the Queen gives plenty of reasons why he should quietly go away and mind his own business – I'm sure he'll have enough money stashed somewhere.

"He did not keep his promises, having little regard for the keys of the church and for the tenor of his Great Charter, so many times paid for. Also, he exalted his uterine brothers in a most intolerable manner, contrary to the law of the kingdom." And this was written about Henry III in 1240. How much progress have we made in the centuries since?

David Peers

Available from Freedom for £5.99 (add 60p postage in the UK, £1.20 elsewhere)

Mi Revalueshanary Fren: Selected Poems

by Linton Kwesi Johnson
Penguin, £7.99

Any record of Linton Kwesi Johnson's work that's confined to poems on a page can only succeed to a limited extent; but within this constraint Mi Revalueshanary Fren gives a valuable overview of LKJ's range and sympathies, dating back to his emergence on the dub scene of 1970s Brixton.

It's hard not to be impressed by the breadth of his literary sensitivity. His cultural referents include figures as diverse as Christopher Okigbo, Derek Walcott, Lorna Goodison and T.S. Eliot. In this, he seems to be as much the descendant, poetically-speaking, of Okigbo and the Caribbean as he is of the Last Poets, with whom he is often compared.

It's not just literary references that highlight the depth of Johnson's work. He's always been an explicitly political figure. In Mi Revalueshanary Fren he checks out struggles in Mozambique, Lebanon, Cuba, Eastern Europe, Biafra, Trinidad, Palestine, Guyana and Rwanda.

Important as his international concerns are, however, it's as an artist with more

local matters in mind that LKJ is best known. What's going on in Brixton, New Cross, Southall and Bradford is just as important to him. In his most famous poem, Inqlan is a Bitch, he describes the emptiness of the working class (particularly the black working class) existence: "Inqlan is a bitch / dere's no escaping it / Inqlan is a bitch fi true / a noh lie mi a tell, a true".

Johnson's overriding and continuing political concern is to expose racism and injustice in society. His approach has always been deeply serious, and it's this earnestness which perhaps accounts for the nature of his appeal: somewhat more exclusive, for example, than that of others to whom he is superficially similar.

The anger his listeners first heard in 1975 remains to this day, burning as strongly as ever. The most public abuses of police power, documented in Yout Scene, may be more hidden (just) in 2004 than they were thirty years ago; but all that's happened is that the worst episodes have been moved out of sight and, often, behind bars. "Yu tink a jus hem-high-five an James Ban / an polece an solja owevah nawt highalan wan / wen it come to black people Winstan / some polece inna Inqlan got liesense fi kill" (Liesense fi kill)

Some of the political content of his poems is clearly informed by his roots in the Black Panthers; much of it would win sympathy from many anarchists. But he's more than just a political writer, which is why his work remains so powerful, thirty years on and still smoking with anger.

Johnny M.

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Commentary

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So what's all the disdain about? Where's it going to take us? Capitalists are capitalists, from Lenin to Ayn Rand. Conversely, anarchists need to be anarchists. Slugging one another off interminably is going to get nobody anywhere. Let's try some cooperation for a change. Mutual aid, as Kropotkin would have it. For anarchism to succeed in the 21st Century, respect, understanding and convergence are essential and vital. The Green and Black Bulletin is the best thing Freedom has done in years.

Frankie Dee

PM vs AR

In his response to me, AR says the various academic prophets of multiculturalism "don't take difference far enough" (Commentary, 10th January). Apparently we should "stop thinking of ourselves as instances of closed categories and ... escape these stultifying ideological boxes". Class, according to this logic, is a "fixed essence" we should simply abandon.

But class isn't a product we choose from the 'ideological supermarket'. It is - and this ought to be so obvious as not to need restatement - a relationship between those who own the means of production and those who labour for them. It's a relationship of exploitation, not a category error, and it can't therefore be simply brought to an end by thinking differently.

It's not possible to create a progressive politics of 'difference'. If we follow AR's logic - that the ideas of difference haven't been taken far enough - where do we end up if not with a politics that says, "the causes of your poverty and oppression are entirely separate to mine and, were I to enter into an alliance with you on any such basis, I'd be subordinating myself to an 'essence' of common experience". A politics of difference isn't a politics at all. It's the logic of each against all when it comes from the right; or bourgeois individualism from the left.

The factor which separates issues of class and exploitation from issues of, for want of a better term, 'oppression', is that the various oppressions are potentially resolved through 'recognition' - by the demands for equality being accepted by the 'excluding' society - whereas for class exploitation to be brought to an end, society would have to be thoroughly restructured through the expropriation of the ruling and owning class.

AR bemoans the division of the world into categories of 'us and them', but the forging of alliances on this basis is the reality of political activity. One of the tasks of a revolutionary movement is to fight for clarity regarding the basis for alliances like these, namely class solidarity rather than racial solidarity. Simply to champion difference and hybridity is to wish oppressions away rather than actively fight to end them.

AR still hasn't answered my question about how a politics of difference would challenge the 'rights for whites' arguments of the BNP. According to the multiculturalists the BNP have a right to their 'cultural' space. According to AR, the answer to a politics of racial solidarity is to abandon essences entirely. So instead of arguing for class against race we abandon any attempt at building anti-fascist politics on a class basis and simply recognise each other's right to disagree. Bollocks is all I can say to that.

Paul Maguire

Peter's farrago

Peter Gibson's response to my short review of Harold Barclay's little book, *The State*, is a farrago of nonsense and misunderstandings (Review, 6th December). His arrogant and dismissive attitude towards anthropology and towards other anarchists, and his suggestion that a critique of the state is old hat to him and so 'irrelevant', simply reflects his own sociobiological prejudices. He is of the same ilk as Margaret Thatcher, who famously declared that there was no such thing as society, only individuals who are seen as inherently nasty, aggressive, selfish and competitive. Peter's wilful misinterpretation, both of past anarchists and of anthropology, equating them with Rousseau, only indicates his own sociological naivety and his ignorance of the history of both anarchism and the social sciences.

To write that the state is only a "myth" and doesn't work "in practice" suggests that Peter is living in cloud cuckoo land, and completely oblivious to the intrinsic links between the state, particularly that of the United States, and global capitalism. Presumably, given his bizarre logic, we should stop using the concept of 'capitalism', as that is also 'irrelevant' to his own scientific ultra-radicalism. So what great insights has Peter himself to offer? He tells us that humans are animals and that the state consists of humans and their relationships. Hardly news to generations of anarchists and anthropologists!

Brian Morris

Local strategy

I was rather amused by John Shute's assertion that the Anarchist Federation has a problem regarding "the lack of real working class presence in their ranks" and that we don't "connect with working class communities." I'm a member of the AF. I'm also a support worker living on a housing estate in South Wales. My parents' occupations were production line worker and painter and decorator. I therefore think I'm a member of the working class so, logically, John's first claim is nonsense (unless he has some kind of 'working class right-on' test I must pass to qualify). Other AF members who I've met are, I think, also working class.

As for not connecting with 'working class communities', here in Torfaen we



regularly hand out copies of Resistance, the AF's monthly freesheet, and get a good response to it. We're involved in combating all the shit the council are throwing at us, like destruction of the green belt, the imposition of a faith-based super-school and so on, not to mention all the usual work, such as campaigning against the war. Perhaps John Shute could tell me what we're doing wrong? Rest assured that we're trying to spread the anarchist communist message on a daily basis. Isn't this the right strategy, John?

Arthur Crowan
Anarchist Federation

Dogma denied

Martin Gilbert's reply to my comments simply ignores my arguments (Commentary, 20th December). He suggests that I think it "more important for Freedom to take the 'right line' politically than to consider ways of limiting the damage to the lives of people living in Iraq."

Does he think that protestors being shot by the occupying powers doesn't 'damage' people living in Iraq? What about the privatisation of the economy? The continued use of Saddam's anti-union laws? The repression of unemployed workers' organisations. The re-employment of Saddam's thugs by the 'liberators'? The creation of a client regime whose function is to create an Iraq shaped in US, not Iraqi, interests?

The best thing for people living in Iraq would be to end the occupation and let them create what they think a good society should be. That isn't 'dogmatic', unless basic anarchist principles are dogma.

To achieve this would mean the building of self-managed class organisations in the country. If Martin genuinely wants the best for the Iraqi people then he should oppose the occupation.

Iain McKay

A sideways look

The hereditary principle is something totally at odds with anarchism. Merely because some archaic rules enshrine that so-and-so's ancestor was a bigger bully than mine or yours we have a monarchy. Not that I'm a big fan of presidents, but that's a different story. It's the principle, you know.

Anarchists' hostility to monarchs and monarchism in the nineteenth century often led to assassination attempts on various kings, empresses and archdukes. Even here, the then-deeply unpopular Queen Victoria was said to have feared attacks by anarchists.

My first exposure to the term 'anarchist' came during a Victorian television drama, as someone of whom royalty was afraid. (Sadly, apart from explaining that they were people who didn't believe in the royal family my mum was unable to elaborate further on what an anarchist might be.)

So I settled down to watch 'The Real Royal Family' on January 3rd with some interest. Historian Michael Jones has unearthed the fact that King Edward IV was a bastard, in the literal, rather than merely pejorative, sense. By the convoluted rules of royal succession being born without a legally-recognised father tends to mean you don't get a chance to wear the crown.

The reason it matters that this particular king was illegitimate is the historical background of the time - the Wars of the Roses. Edward's legitimate brother, Clarence, was executed by him, and his younger brother became Richard III when Edward died. Henry Tudor who defeated Richard in battle claimed legitimacy by marrying Edward's daughter.

But if Edward wasn't truly a king (you have to enter into the faintly absurd spirit of these musings), Henry couldn't claim the throne through her. Clarence was the next in line, making his children heirs to Richard III.

If this is beginning to sound like an alternative history novel, bear with me. What it means is that we might have missed out on the colourful Henry VIII and the stunningly exciting Church of England. We'd have missed out on chopping off Charles I's head, the Levellers and Diggers and Ranters and everything else that went with the English revolutionary civil war.

Forget the dreary Hanoverians, Victoria and the merry Saxe-Coburg-Gothas. Who would have bored us in double history instead? What would Henry IX have been like, or Ferdinando?

King Theophilus I and II would have come and gone, making way for Edith I, Charles I, Edith II and Queen Barbara.

Of course, none of this was likely. History doesn't work like that, and it's sadly idle fantasy that the current

incumbents of Buck House will realise what we've all got to gain by them clearing off. One person does, though, and he's the 'real' king of England (the Scottish monarchy was only unified with the English with the arrival of the Stuarts, so it would have escaped, or worse, been lumbered with the dysfunctional incumbents).

Michael Hastings was interviewed by the programme in his home in outback New South Wales. He works as an agronomist, has a large (happy) family and is content in his life. He arrived in Australia as a "titled public schoolboy out to do some jackarooing" and stayed. Better still, he's a republican.

Those of us opposed to the monarchy and the hereditary principle are often portrayed as being merely jealous, or of missing the point in that they don't really have any power. The truth is that, while some might want retribution on these hangers-on, the lives of the royal family are far from enviable. They live in a goldfish bowl, constrained by stupid rules that dictate who you can love and what you can do. They may have all the trappings, but they aren't as free as the man in the outback.

Svartfrosk

Words we use

PROPAGANDA: My dictionary defines this as "an organised programme of ... selected information used to propagate a doctrine". It's not surprising that many now find the term unacceptable.

Time hasn't been kind to the old-fashioned view, that we have all the answers and that, with them, our task is to proselytise the non-anarchist public (like a stodgy Christmas pudding which has to be consumed whole).

In its place comes the understanding that, while we who call ourselves anarchist have some useful answers to some demanding questions, it would be presumptuous to suppose that we've got them all and have nothing left to learn.

We should leave these certainties to Marxists and utopians. Otherwise we've no meaningful reply when we're told that anarchists are a just bunch of kids who need to grow up.

Johnny M.

The quiz

1. Who or what is Saint Monday?
2. Who said, "there are laws to protect the freedom of the press's speech, but none that are worth anything to protect the people from the press"?
3. What fruit is banned from the Singapore public transport system?
4. What was the attitude of Switzerland to people who helped Jews into the country during the Second World War?

Answers on page 6

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