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THE REAL PARASITES

As if we needed any more reminders that politicians are the enemies of the working class, this week they were positively crawling over each other to illustrate it. On a recent trip to India, Jack Straw was asked to comment on the 'outsourcing' of British jobs. He remarked that "If British companies benefit from working with Indian service providers in Bangalore and elsewhere, then Britain as a whole benefits," predictably substituting the interests of owners for those of workers.

Tory Oliver Letwin, on the other hand, chose this week to try and help business put yet another boot in: this time in the guise of tax structure. Companies doing business in the UK already contribute less than in any other country in Europe, but this wasn't enough for Mr Letwin, who believes those much-maligned do-gooders the rich are being "squeezed for every penny" by being forced to pay VAT. He described the Government tax laws as "effectively providing a subsidy of 17.5% to people who want to go offshore." Quite unsurprisingly, his desire is to reduce the 'tax burden' on businesses operating here!

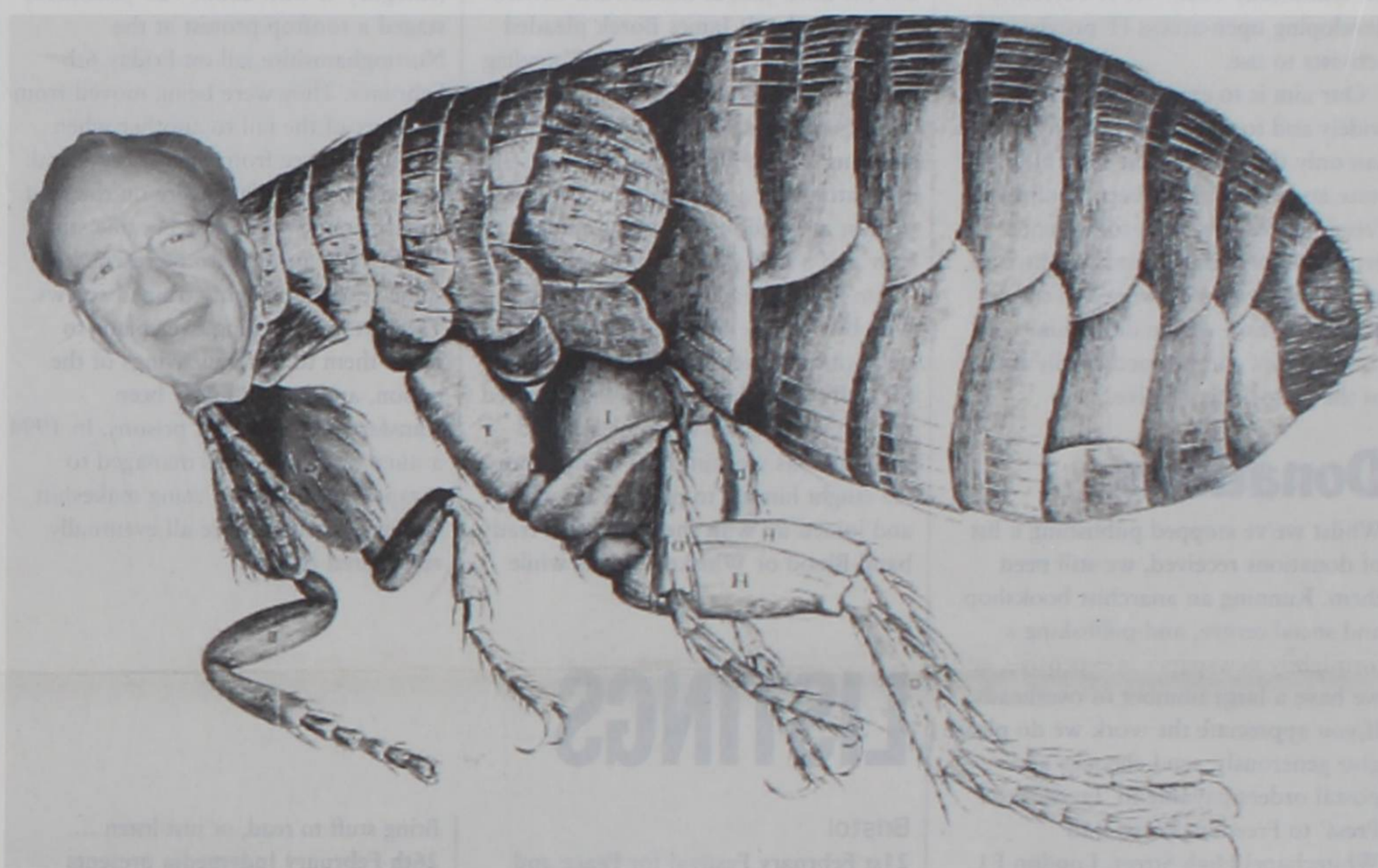
A Tory solution, but like so many others, implemented with vigour by a Labour Party eager to please its corporate masters. Capitalist control has already managed to reduce the average level of corporate tax in the thirty richest countries from 37.5% to 30.8% in just seven years. A report on this change by accountancy firm KPMG argued that the "competitive advantage in attracting inward investment was at risk" if the government didn't further slash tax rates.

Along with politicians eager to do the work of capital, these threats help the capitalist class displace cost from its

own shoulders and onto ours. Professor Prem Sikka, a leading accountancy specialist, estimates that up to £85 billion is lost to the treasury each year just through the use of offshore tax havens. The Economist reported that in the four years to June 2003, Rupert Murdoch's News Corporation paid £128 million in corporate taxes worldwide. That translates as just 6% of the pre-tax profits for the same period, despite no country in which it operated having a tax rate of less than 30%. During the nineties, he paid a grand total of no tax whatsoever in the UK. For some reason, his mouthpieces the Times, the Sun and Sky seem to be much more interested in putting the spotlight on working class 'dole scum' and 'sponging' asylum seekers than on their masters.

In addition to all the corporate lawyers and accountants marketing legal tax avoidance schemes to the boss class, business regularly pursues illegal routes to reduce tax payments. Whilst our communities are plastered with scare-tactic advertisements warning us that the benefits agency 'are onto us', the state seems remarkably less interested in pursuing tax cheating by the rich. Whilst the Benefit Fraud Inspectorate releases figures estimating that the unemployed manage to get up to £2 billion pounds a year fraudulently, Inland Revenue statistics reveal that the top thousand businesses alone cheated by at least that amount last year.

But it is not just blame that gets targeted at us. The avoidance shifts the tax burden onto the working class, whose council and income taxes go up to compensate for the shortfall. Taxes extracted from workers increased by over



Bloodsucking Murdoch, head of News International, not a great dinner guest

120% between 1989-90 and 2002-03, whereas corporate tax collection increased by just 36%, despite a massive rise in corporate profits. As property widow Leona Helmsley once said, "We don't pay taxes. Only little people pay taxes."

The anarchist case that parliamentary democracy is simply a method of managing society in the interests of capitalists is cast into sharp relief when the minutes of meetings between the Inland Revenue and top corporations reveal promises "not to examine in any detail" fraudulent tax payments. Companies have also been invited to

rewrite the rulebook on how the Inland Revenue should investigate them.

Unsurprisingly, the blind eyes shown to this behaviour are put down to the threat by capitalists to call a strike on investment (or 'capital flight' as it is euphemistically known). Insiders say the revenue has come under pressure from the government to attract multinational investment. As one said, "It may be very important to get business here, and tax may be part of that."

In inter-revolutionary historical periods like the one we are currently living through, the low intensity of class conflict means that the class war is

rarely promulgated using guns and gallows. Class warfare today uses what Marx called a "refined and civilised method of exploitation", using weapons like taxes, productivity deals and 'outsourcing' to grind us down.

But the 'little people' also have weapons, like our non-payment of the Tories' Poll Tax and the intensity of our resistance to the ongoing attack is cyclical. It is all too easy to forget that inter-revolutionary periods inevitably give way to periods of revolutionary activity. Us little people will not put up with losing the class war forever.

Mark Devine

SIMON BACK HOME

On February 13th, almost eight months after their initial imprisonment, 13 of the 29 people arrested during protests at the EU summit in Thessaloniki have had all charges dropped.

Eight of the remaining cases are still under review by the Greek Judiciary whilst six have had their charges dropped to misdemeanours. It is an enormous victory in the campaign against state repression waged by the Greek State – although it must be remembered that the battle is not over yet.

Simon, a graphic designer from Essex who was among those exonerated, said: "This is great news for some of us, but of the 29 originally imprisoned there

remain many under charges. Actions and benefits must continue with the objective of allowing our Spanish brothers – Carlos and Fernando – to return home before the state-orchestrated 'trial'. My freedom means nothing without the freedom of my brothers and sisters."

Seven people were held on remand following the demonstrations on charges of rioting, possession of explosives and resisting authorities. All of them denied these charges and, in the case of Simon Chapman, there was substantial video and photographic evidence to confirm he was framed.

To protest their innocence, Souleiman 'Kastro' Dakduk of Syria, Simon Chapman from the UK, Fernando Perez

Gorraiz and Carlos Martin Martinez of Spain and Spyros Tsitsas from Greece went on hunger strike last autumn.

Michalis Traikapis and Dimitris Friouras – who were incarcerated in a juvenile prison – joined in a week long symbolic strike. Overall the five fasted for between 49 and 66 days, which finally culminated in their release on bail – but only after the medical team were threatened with manslaughter charges if they did not force feed the prisoners. To their credit, the doctors did not cooperate. Following their release the prisoners were forced to stay in Greece, though they appear not to have suffered serious consequences to their health.

USELESS NUS

On Wednesday 25th February the National Union of Students (NUS) has called a national day of action to shutdown higher education, this coincides with the Association of University Teachers' (AUT) national strike for a better pay deal. This is in response to the government winning the vote (but not the argument) on top-up fees. It is a fig-leaf to cover up the previous indifference the student leadership has shown over lecturers' low pay.

The NUS shutdown is part of a so-called 'Week of Action', which was doubtless called as the NUS Conference is next month and the National Executive need to be seen to be doing something to get re-elected. Even so,

students and lecturers working together to fight the introduction of top-up fees, and supporting each other in struggle, is something we must encourage. On the ground it seems that many students, whilst opposed to top-up fees are not interested in actively becoming involved in the campaign, and the AUT going on strike, is – at best – disruptive.

Throughout the last fifteen years, the interests of the NUS's membership have come a poor second to the careerist interests of the NUS leadership. Former presidents Stephen Twigg, Jim Murphy and Lorna Fitzsimons now grace the Labour benches in the Commons, and Charles Clarke and Jack Straw hold

Home and away

FREEDOM

Volume 65 Number 04

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.

Donations

Whilst we've stopped publishing a list of donations received, we still need them. Running an anarchist bookshop and social centre, and publishing a fortnightly newspaper is expensive, and we have a large number of overheads. If you appreciate the work we do please give generously, send cheques and postal orders payable to 'Freedom Press' to Freedom Press, 84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1 7QX or get in touch if you'd like to setup a standing order.

Contributions

A big thank you to all the people who have sent in contributions to the paper recently. Regrettably we cannot personally acknowledge everything we receive but would like to encourage people to continue helping us produce this paper.

Hacklab

We are a few weeks away from opening our computer lab. If you can donate either time or computer equipment, please join the email list via the Freedom website at www.freedompress.org.uk

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 6th March 2004 and the last day for getting copy to us will be Thursday 26th February. 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

DSEi evidence

Moss & Co solicitors have recently had disclosed to them by the CPS video footage of DSEi shot from the police helicopter. This shows a number of arrests. Anyone represented by a solicitor should get their solicitor to contact Andrew Katzen (020 8986 8336); anyone representing themselves should ring Andrew to check if it will help their case.

Legal Defence & Monitoring Group

American sent down for J18

On the 23rd Jan, at Southwark Crown Court (England) James Borek pleaded guilty to a Section 20 Unlawful Wounding (GBH) charge and two violent disorder charges plus an additional charge of skipping bail in 2000. Jim was arrested after attacking a policeman at the J18 protest in London. He was sentenced to four and a half years.

Jim is a 22 year old American lad, who by the time he is released in 2007 will not have seen his home or family for eight years. Jim, an anarchist, moved to Dublin (Ireland) when he skipped bail and was working in a record shop. He taught himself to play the tin whistle and joined up with the punk/Irish trad band Blood or Whiskey. It was while

on tour with the band in Belgium that the Law caught up with him.

Jim feels he can now start looking to the future and would appreciate and needs our support.

Please write to him at: James Borek LL6803, B4-14, HMP Wandsworth, PO Box 757, Heathfield Road, London SW18 3HS
More info contact Anarchist Prisoner Support anarprisonersupp@hotmail.com
www.anarchistsps.org

Rooftop protesters stuck

Three inmates of HMP Ranby Prison (category C with about 725 prisoners) staged a rooftop protest at the Nottinghamshire jail on Friday 6th February. They were being moved from one part of the jail to another when they broke free from their escorts and scaled the roof. They were on the roof for six hours when they became stuck on the roof and had to be rescued by some specialist, highly trained screws. They were protesting over plans to move them to different wings of the prison, and have all now been transferred to different prisons. In 1994 a number of prisoners managed to escape over the fence using makeshift ladders, but they were all eventually recaptured (sadly).

Self-harm in prisons

At a number of British prisons self-harm is now a bizarre death cult, and it is spreading. At HMP New Hall women have burnt, strangled and stabbed themselves. On his first night as a screw, Andy Marsden had to cut down six women after they had tried to hang themselves in their cell. Since then he has seen hundreds of women trying to take their own lives at the 400-bed prison outside Wakefield, West Yorkshire. All screws have to carry a specially designed blade encased in plastic to cut the women free. It seems that women's prisons are filled with mutilation and despair. One screw told the corporate media of a prisoner who



bit into her own arm when told she couldn't get a transfer. Sadly these stories are endless, one woman cutting open her own stomach and hiding pens and batteries in the wound, another who ate bits of her own skin.

Apparently a large number of these problems are drugs related, of the 295 new prisoners sent to New Hall in January, 212 were put straight into detox and 188 were smack addicts. Another screw said there was a simple solution: "Kill the dealers or legalise drugs. There's no other way." Over the past year at New Hall there have been more than 1,500 self-harm incidents, a 200% rise. Last month a woman of 37 set herself on fire and is still in a serious condition after being rescued. Most women don't take such extreme measures and just try to hang themselves.

The latest official figures show that there are now more than 4,400 female prisoners in jail, more than double the figure a decade ago. But the rise in the suicide rate is not simply a consequence of soaring prison numbers. In the five years between 1996 and 2001, the female prison population increased by 67%, but suicides in women's jails went up by 200%.

LISTINGS

Bristol

21st February Festival for Peace and Justice - day of debates, workshops and stalls from 10am to 6 pm, Southville Centre, Beaulieu Road. Contact 0117 971 7784 for info

Buckinghamshire

27th to 29th February Living in Communities course at LILI, Redfield Community, Buckingham Road, Winslow. This course is offered by Redfield in association with Diggers and Dreamers. See www.lowimpact.org or contact lili@lowimpact.org or call 01296 714184

5th to 7th March How to make biodeisel - produce your own cheap, carbon-neutral diesel with no need for alternation to your engine. For more info see www.lowimpact.org or contact lili@lowimpact.org or call 01296 714184

19th to 21st March Self-build Geodesic Domes - build your own low-impact dwelling/storage/spare room/retreat ... from cheap, sustainable materials. For more info see www.lowimpact.org or contact lili@lowimpact.org or call 01296 714184

Glasgow

11th March Freedom readers' group monthly meeting, for more details contact glasgowfr@hotpop.com

London

21st February An African afternoon in memory of Malcolm X from 2pm to 8pm at Unity centre, 2-4 Ravenstone Street, Balham. For more info contact nkexplo@yahoo.com or Eki on 020 8347 7605

25th February Authors' reading night at Use Your Loaf Social Centre, 227 Deptford High Street, SE8, from 7.30pm.

Bring stuff to read, or just listen ...

26th February Indymedia presents Kilometer 0, a film about the time the WTO barricaded itself inside Cancun, Mexico's luxury hotel strip, and tens of thousands of people from around the world came to rip down their fences and stop the meetings. Showing at The Other Cinema, 11 Rupert Street, W1, tel 020 7437 0757, entry £7/£5.

26th February What is fascism, and how do we combat it?, joint Freedom/London AF public discussion, 7pm at the Autonomy Club, 84b Whitechapel High Street, E1

27th February Critical Mass Bike Ride, meet at 6pm under Waterloo Bridge by the NFT

28th February EU Dublin Mayday meeting from 12 noon onwards at the Occupied Social Centre, 93 Fortress Road, Kentish Town. For more details see www.wombles.org.uk

1st March Libertarian parent and kid drop-in to be held every Monday from 4.30 to 6.30pm at the Autonomy Club, Freedom, 84b Whitechapel High Street, E1. Come along and meet like-minded parents and kids. Get in touch at libertarianparents@yahoo.co.uk

Every Wednesday the LARC Library from 1pm at 62 Fieldgate Street, E1.
Every Saturday Vigil for the release of Mordechai Vanunu from 12 noon to 2pm at Kensington High Street near the Israeli Embassy. For more info see www.vanunu.freeserve.co.uk or call 020 7378 9324

Manchester

27th February Benefit for Greater Manchester and District CND at the Star and Garter with Manchester Hooker, Politburo, Icons of Poundland, from 9pm to 1am. Call 0161 273 8283 or see www.gmdcnd.org.uk for info

Oxfordshire

28th February Demo at Campsfield Refugee Detention Centre between 12 noon and 2pm. For info call 01865 558145

Yorkshire

5th March Anti-fascist benefit with Random Hand at the 1in12 Club, 21-23 Albion Street, Bradford. Call 01274 734160 or see www.1in12.com

Animal rights

All across the country hunt saboteurs are working directly in the field to protect wildlife from the huntsmen contact: Hunt Saboteurs Association, PO Box 5254, Northampton NN1 3ZA www.huntsabs.org.uk

World

1st March Veggie Month. See www.animalaid.org.uk/veggie/month/contents.html or call 01732 364546, ext 29

5th March Women's Environmental Network Fifteenth Anniversary. See www.wen.org.uk

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

Nationwide 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.classwaruk.org
Earth First!
www.earthfirst.org.uk
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.londonlarc.org

Occupied Social Centre

93 Fortress Road, Kentish Town, London NW5 (temporary)

www.wombles.org.uk

SUMAC Centre

245 Gladstone Street, Nottingham
NG7 6HX

www.veggies.org.uk/rainbow/

Use Your Loaf

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

useyourloaf.html

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

Do unions want respect?

A big cheer went up at 12 noon when the Rail, Maritime and Transport union (RMT) was expelled from the Labour Party under rule 2a. This rule was interpreted to mean that the party's manifesto was sacrosanct and the RMT had broken it when several branches affiliated to the Scottish Socialist Party. Bob Crowe, the RMT's General Secretary, was at the rostrum at this historic moment as one of the founding unions of the Labour Party was kicked out for upholding the union's AGM decision that their political fund should be democratised to allow branches to support other political parties.

For the organisers of the Convention the timely expulsion of the RMT fitted their agenda. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss political representation, the trade unions, and the political fund. With the SWP's latest project – RESPECT, needing £1million to campaign in the European elections, any money diverted by the unions from Labour would help. However, as many of the misnamed 'awkward squad' of General Secretaries are wedded to Labour they will do what they can to block any attempts to divert funding away from them. Last year's FBU conference was cancelled, as angry firefighters from various regions wanted to disaffiliate from New Labour.

The Convention also saw an anarchist presence with members of the Anarchist Federation and Anarchist Workers Network leafleting the event. Our position was laid out that we don't need another party to represent us, but workers own self-organisation within the workplace and in our communities; where we have power at the point of production whereas sending representatives to parliament surrenders our actual power to politicians. I hope this event marks an increase in anarchist activity in the labour movement. It is worth remembering the words of French anarchist Emile Pouget, who in 1897 came to the conclusion that political assassinations had become counter productive and saw great potential in the organised labour movement, "if there is one place where anarchists must get themselves into, it is clearly the trade union movement."

Emma Collins

➔ from page 1

high Cabinet positions. Their current successors at the NUS wish to follow in their footsteps. It is no great surprise, therefore, to see what a weak and ineffectual campaign the NUS has fought against the imposition of fees. Though mouthing supportive slogans and showing spurious support, the NUS has never shown any genuine solidarity with workers in higher education. It's exceedingly doubtful whether anything will come of this exercise, designed more to bolster the position of the NUS executive than to further the interests of the underpaid AUT members.

Although Mandy Telford, outgoing NUS President, insists that the fight against fees can still be won, it is unlikely that NUS influence will have much to do with it. Reports reach us that she will be imposed on a safe Labour seat. We wish the AUT members good luck with their pay claim.

Goldsmiths Anarchist Society
goldsmiths@anarchistyouth.net

Goin' underground

Tube workers vote for action on passenger safety but union leaders just want to talk

The anarcho-syndicalist group Solidarity Federation (SolFed) have criticised the union RMT, calling on London Tube workers to take direct action for better health and safety, rather than rely on negotiation. They said: "Workers can be more effective if they now take things into their own hands – union bosses are in danger of snatching defeat from the jaws of victory."

Four months ago members of RMT working for London Underground Limited (LUL) voted to take action against privatisation, cutbacks and safety standard changes being made without prior union agreement. They also demanded the reinstatement of 24-hour health and safety patrols on tracks.

Over half voted in favour of strike action, while 80% agreed to the use of non strike measures such as 'go-slows', where trains would be driven at 15mph, which is permitted under the 'rule book'. This work-to-rule would effectively shut down the network without any workers breaching contracts or losing pay.

But instead of commencing the action, the RMT leadership have entered negotiations with Tube bosses in a move which has left many union members feeling betrayed, SolFed claim. "RMT



The cost of privatisation – the Paddington rail crash

leaders have agreed to a half-baked 'review' of patrols on tracks. This is a blatant betrayal of tube workers"

"This concession is completely impractical and will result in patrols on tracks being undermined."

There is increasing alarm at the mounting number of accidents on the

Underground as spending on essential safety checks is reduced and staff are ditched, following the sell-off of Tube infrastructure in April last year.

In the thirteen months to October 2003 there were five derailments, and this is set to get worse as the rest of the tube – the stations and trains – are

now being run down in preparation for privatisation.

See editorial on page 6

Excerpts taken from Solidarity, freesheet of the North-East London Solidarity Federation. For a copy, contact: NELSF, PO Box 1681, London N8 7LE. Contact them at nelsolfed@fsmail.net or see www.solfed.org.uk

Modern day slave drivers

According to the UK Hardware store Wilkinson's, their use of compulsory prison labour is, "helping to rehabilitate prisoners and increase their employability." This is, of course, a thin smokescreen for ruthless opportunism since it's hard to imagine how packing small items for Wilko's is going to rehabilitate prisoners who, prior to the intervention of these greedy private companies, had far greater access to education and were able to learn proper trade skills.

Companies like Wilkinson's merely see

this slave workforce as something to exploit in order to increase their profits, and all subsidised by the taxpayer.

A new campaign has been started to name and shame the boss of retail giant Wilkinson's. Tony Wilkinson, the director, is doing very nicely out of compulsory prison labour.

Prisoners get paid an absolute maximum of £1.20 per day working for Wilko's while, according to the The Sunday Times Rich List, Tony Whiplash is sitting on nearly £300 million!

In the year ending January 2002,

Wilkinson's saw profits rise sharply to a record £36.5 million on sales of £817 million, hardly surprising considering the low wages they pay their in-store employees, the pittance they pay their prison slaves, and the heavy subsidies they receive from the tax-payer to allow them to exploit prisoners. The Campaign Against Prison Slavery (CAPS) have also discovered that the English Wilkinson family were notorious slave-owners in the States. In North Carolina in 1858, one of them owned no fewer than nine.

CAPS are taking the new approach as part of their drive to improve working conditions for British prisoners. They were recently informed that the head of the Ohio Prisons Department is called Reginald Wilkinson, so the name Wilkinson is synonymous with prison repression and abuses! If you know any other infamous Wilkinsons please let CAPS know.

UK Home Secretary David Blunkett is now moving to get prisoners to pay for their own incarceration by introducing so-called part-time prisons, so no doubt they're going to also be required to do part-time jobs. As prisoners already do work for Wilkinson's CAPS thought the firm might be interested in employing a part-time prisoner in one of their stores. Suitably dressed, insecurity guard Mark Barnsley and part-time prisoner Wolfie went to Hull Wilko's to find out.

Entering the store handcuffed together the pair first tested just how little £1.20 will buy you in Wilkinson's. A pack of

toilet rolls, the sort of item prisoners are increasingly having to pay for themselves, proved too dear, but Guard Barnsley was very interested by the bags of 'mixed screws' at two for £1.20.

Just the type of thing prisoners are forced to pack for Wilko's. Our convict was less impressed as of course he's none too fond of screws. Moving on, they decided it was time to try and see what Wilko's attitude to employing part-time prisoners would be, none too forthcoming of course, with nothing actually available.

We strongly suspect they'd be no keener to employ the ex-prisoners who've previously slaved for them inside, not least since unlike in prison they'd have to pay them minimum wage. The Hull store did present one opportunity though, in the form of a photo booth, which Guard Barnsley thought might be a good place to take Wolfie's new ID photo.

To Wilko's evident lack of amusement the pair's visit was in any event discreetly filmed and recorded, not discreetly enough it seems because Wilkinson's own Security started pulling their hair out and triggered an alert, which brought security guards running from all corners of the precinct in which their Hull store is located. They only arrived in time however to see prisoner Wolfie being liberated, and departing with his former guard, chuckling all the way to the pub.

Campaign Against Prison Slavery
www.againstprisonslavery.org



International

The Italian job-stoppages

Wildcat action and self-organisation on the rise in Italy as hundreds of thousands down tools and walk out, reports Alex Allison

Workers have been standing their ground against attacks by bosses and the government in Italy as strikes, blockades and demonstrations sweep the country. Regional general strikes have been held, and a national general strike has been called for the 20th March by the rank-and-file 'base' union CUB and the anarcho-syndicalist USI. Much of the discontent has been caused by assaults on pensions, wages, welfare and the casualisation of employment. What distinguished the current wave of action is that much of it has been organised by workers themselves, with the assistance of the small base unions, away from the bureaucracy and legalism of the hierarchical trade unions – something we in the UK could learn a lot from. Below are short summaries of selected action by sector

Transport

A management-union stitch-up over pay in Milan was met with a two-day wildcat of transport employees. Assisted by militants of the rank-and-file 'base' union COBAS, workers held a 100% solid strike, during which not a single tram, bus or underground train ran in the city. Bus drivers from Brescia who had been out only a few days previously, joined the strike in solidarity.

Thousands of airport staff who have been struggling over changing work practices organised an impromptu demonstration and assembly in the Rome

Fiumicino airport cafeteria on the 14th February. Two days later baggage handlers wildcatted while other staff stopped work to support them, together blockading aircraft and confronting police. This intimidation did not put them off, as a follow-up strike was called on the 19th, stopping 364 flights. A national transport workers strike was organised to coincide with a Telecoms workers walk-out on the 30th January.

Alitalia pilots have been striking alongside Venice baggage handlers, and as we go to print they are set to join Railway and ferry employees in a strike on the 20th March. More flights will be disrupted by members of the Enav trade union at other airports, with many more stoppages planned for March.

Health

Health sector employees struck throughout Italy on the 9th February. Over 155,000 workers were involved in the action, which will still see medical emergencies dealt with. Unions apologised for causing inconvenience to the public, but felt that the action, as well as two more organised for March, is necessary to prevent the national health service being broken up and stop the cutbacks. Following the strike, bosses have agreed to enter into negotiations with the workers.

Manufacturing

In Terni, hundreds of school and university students joined the striking workers of the Ast steelworks in protesting against a proposed 900 job



cuts on the 6th February. The two groups met at the factory gates before marching together across the town. In

Genoa, Ilva factory workers fought police at the town hall in protest against job losses.

For more information see the websites of COBAS at www.cobas.it, CUB at www.cub.it and the USI at www.ecn.org/usi-ait

Organise!

The Anarcho-Syndicalist Federation, Anarchist Federation, Anarchist Prisoner Support and a number of previously unaffiliated anarchists have come together in Ireland to found a more effective and better-resourced class struggle anarchist organisation across Ireland. Together we have created a new organisation Organise! – Working Class Resistance, which has local groups and individual members across the Ireland.

The ASF and AF in Ireland had already collaborated on two previous publications, called Wildcat, which presented agreed positions on the trade unions and the North. The impetus for the creation of this organisation goes back to a proposal made last year asking anarchists to look seriously at building a more effective organisation across Ireland.

The response to this proposal was mixed, but discussion on moving things forwards took place between those who

were most interested in pursuing it and who felt they had most in common. Our attitude to those class struggle anarchists outside the group is amicable and co-operative. Though we recognise there are differences, we seek to work to overcome these where possible, and to build stronger links – and more effective ways of working together as part of building a broad libertarian movement throughout Ireland. We will not, however, shy away from debate and discussion of differences but will try to deal with these in an open and friendly fashion.

Most importantly, we seek through our activity and propaganda, through discussion and practical solidarity with our fellow workers, to show the relevance of anarchist organising and ultimately the benefits of a future libertarian communist revolution for workers everywhere.

For more information see their website at www.organiseireland.org

Looking a right tit

Who can deny that the Bush Government did not leap into action. The instant people complained, a federal enquiry was launched to discover what happened, why and to make sure it does not happen again. Shame it was only Janet Jackson's breast that got that treatment.

Ah, the strange morality of the US. You can invade another country and kill thousands on extremely dodgy evidence and arguments of the government and this does not merit an enquiry. Show a little bit too much flesh on prime-time television and the world is coming to an end. But, wait, the US has finally announced that an 'independent' enquiry in pre-war intelligence is to be arranged. By strange coincidence, Tony Blair announces he, too, will hold a similarly 'independent' enquiry after months of saying he won't. Not that he is a poodle, or anything.

Both of the new 'independent' enquiries have a lot in common. Both

are made up of appointees of the government under investigation. Both have a narrow remit, looking purely at the intelligence and not the use of it by the government's in question. So Bush and Blair's new enquiries are dead-ends, sideshows to divert attention from the real issues. And to delay things until after the US election.

After all, according to the Observer, American officials knew in May of last year that Iraq possessed no weapons of mass destruction. And David Albright, a former UN nuclear inspector with close contacts in both the world of weapons inspection and intelligence, stated that "it was known in May that no one was going to find large stockpiles of chemical and biological weapons. The only people who did not know that fact was the public."

We can take it for granted that this inquiry, as well as being staffed by the Bush's men, will not touch on this fact. And what it means for the enquiry.

Unlike previous US wars in Mexico, Cuba, the Philippines, Vietnam and many more, Bush's assertions on the reasons for it have been subject to much scrutiny. Not enough before the invasion, however, when it could have made a difference (proving, incidentally, the role of the media as purveyors of the opinions of the powerful rather than actual news). And they have been proven utterly false. Bush has been caught red-headed lying about war. And yet there are no calls for impeachment as there were for Bill Clinton following the Monica Lewinsky 'scandal'.

Clearly, for the 'Christian' right, lying about sex is much worse than lying about the reasons for war (a case of make war not love?). As Janet Jackson would probably agree, the morality of the US elite seems a tad strange. Even stranger than her brother. And that is saying something.

Iain McKay

Green and Black Bulletin

Rise of the barbarians

May the barbarians break loose, may they sharpen their swords and may they brandish their battleaxes. Hmmm ...

If we examine much of the current debate in anarchist circles surrounding civilisation, technology, progress, green anarchy versus red anarchy and so on, we are left with the impression that criticism of civilisation has only recently arisen within anarchist and revolutionary thinking. But this impression is false, and harmful for those of us with a revolutionary anti-civilisation perspective.

In fact, a revolutionary questioning of civilisation, of technology and of progress can be found throughout the history of modern revolutionary thinking. Charles Fourier posed his utopian socialist 'Harmony' against the disharmony of 'Civilisation'. A number of the most radical of the Romantics (Blake, Byron and Shelley among others) were distinctly distrustful of industrialism and its utilitarian reason.

But we can bring things closer to home by looking at anarchists of the nineteenth century. Certainly Bakunin had no problem with industrial technology. Though he didn't share Marx's almost mystical faith in the capacity of industrial development to create the technical basis for global communism, he also did not see anything inherently dominating in the structure of industrial systems. In fact, his concept of workers taking over the organisation of society through their own economic and industrial organisations was to eventually become the basis of anarcho-syndicalism. (This development, however, is based on a misunderstanding, since Bakunin quite clearly stated that this organisation was not something that could be developed on an ideological basis outside of the direct struggle of the workers, but rather that it was something that the workers would develop for themselves in the course of their struggles. He therefore did not suggest any specific form for it.) Nonetheless, Bakunin's appeals to the "unleashing of the wicked passions" of the oppressed and exploited were seen by many of the more reasonable revolutionaries of the time as a barbaric call for the destruction of civilisation. And Bakunin himself did call for "the annihilation of bourgeois civilisation" along with "the destruction of all States" and the "free and spontaneous organisation from below upward, by means of free associations." But Bakunin's French contemporary, Ernest Coeurderoy, was less conditional in his rejection of civilisation. He says simply: "In civilisation, I vegetate; I am neither happy, nor free; why then should I desire this homicidal order to be conserved? There is no longer anything to conserve of that which the earth suffers." And he, along with Dejacque and other anarchist revolutionaries of that time, appeals to the barbaric spirit of destruction to bring an end to the civilisation of domination.

Of course, the majority of anarchists at that time, as in our own, did not question civilisation, technology or progress. Kropotkin's vision of communised Factories, Fields and Workshops or Josiah Warren's True Civilisation inevitably have more appeal to those who are not prepared to face the unknown than the anarchist critiques of industrialism and civilisation that often offer no clear vision of what will be after the revolutionary destruction of the civilisation that they hate.

The early twentieth century, and particularly the great massacre known as the First World War, brought a major overturning of values. Faith in the bourgeois ideal of progress was thoroughly eroded and the questioning of civilisation itself was a significant aspect of a number of radical movements including dadaism, Russian anarcho-futurism and early surrealism. If most of the better known anarchists (such as Malatesta, Emma Goldman, Mahkno and so on) continued to see the possibility of a liberated industrial civilisation, other lesser-known anarchists saw a different vision.

Now, I want to be clear. I am not bringing all of this up in order to prove that the present-day anti-civilisation current has a legitimate anarchist heritage. If its critique of the reality we face is accurate, why should we care whether it fits into some framework of anarchist orthodoxy? But Bakunin and Coeurderoy, Malatesta and Filippi, all of the anarchists of the past who lived in struggle against domination, as they understood it were not trying to create any ideological orthodoxy. They were participating in the process of creating a revolutionary anarchist theory and practice that would be an ongoing process. This process has included critiques of civilisation, critiques of progress and critiques of technology (and often in the past these critiques were not connected, so that, for example, Bakunin could call for "the annihilation of bourgeois civilisation" and still embrace its technological outgrowth, industrialism, and Marcus Graham could call for the destruction of 'the machine' in favour of an unmechanised civilisation). We are living in different times. The words of Bakunin or Coeurderoy, of Malatesta or Renzo Novatore, or of any of the anarchist writers of the past cannot be taken as a program or a doctrine to be followed. Rather they form an arsenal to be looted. And among the weapons in that arsenal are barbaric battering rams that can be used against the walls of civilisation, of the myth of progress, of the long-since disproven myth that technology can save us from our woes.

We are living in a world in which technology has certainly gone out of control. As catastrophe follows catastrophe, so-called 'human' landscapes

become increasingly controlled and mechanised, and human beings increasingly conformed to their roles as cogs in the social machine. Historically the thread that has gone through all that is best in the anarchist movement has not been a faith in civilisation or technology or progress, but rather the desire for every individual to be free to create her or his life as he or she sees fit in free association others, in other words, the desire for the individual and collective reappropriation of life. And this desire is still what motivates anarchist struggle. At this point it is clear to me that the technological system is an integral part of the network of domination. It has been developed to serve the interests of the rulers of this world. One of the primary purposes of large-scale technological systems is the maintenance and expansion of social control, and this requires a technological system that is largely self-maintaining, needing only minimal human intervention. Thus, a juggernaut is created. The recognition that progress had no inherent connection to human liberation was already recognised by many revolutionaries by the end of the First World War. Certainly the history of the twentieth century should have reinforced this understanding. We look out now on a physically, socially and psychically devastated world, the result of all that has been called progress. The exploited and dispossessed of this world can no longer seriously desire to get a piece of this putrefying pie, nor to take it over and 'self-manage' it. The reappropriation of life must have a different meaning in the present world. In light of the social transformations of the past few decades, it seems to me that any serious revolutionary anarchist movement would have to call industrialism and civilisation itself into question precisely because anything less may not provide us with the necessary tools for taking back our lives as our own.

But my anti-civilisation perspective is not a primitivist perspective. While it may indeed be inspiring to look at the apparently anarchic and communistic aspects of some 'primitive' cultures, I do not base my critique on a comparison between these cultures and the current reality, but rather on the way in which all of the various institutions that comprise civilisation act together to take my life from me and turn it into a tool for social reproduction, and how they transform social life into a productive process serving only to maintain the rulers and their social order. Thus, it is essentially a revolutionary perspective, and this is why I will always make use of anything in that arsenal which is the history of revolutionary theory and practice that can enhance my struggle. 'Primitive' people have often lived in anarchic and communistic



His time is at hand: Conan, California State Governor (Republican)

ways, but they do not have a history of revolutionary struggle from which we can loot weapons for our current struggle. Having said this, however, I do recognise those anarcho-primitivists who continue to recognise the necessity of revolution and class struggle as my comrades and potential accomplices.

Revolutionary struggle against the civilisation of control and profit that surrounds us will not be the reasonable attempt to take over means of production. The dispossessed of this world seem to understand that this is no longer an option for liberation (if it ever was). If most are not clear about precisely who or what is the enemy, most do understand that they have nothing to say to those in power, because they no longer share a common language. We who have been dispossessed by this world now know that we can expect nothing from it. If we dream of another world, we cannot express that dream, because this world does not provide the words for it. And most likely many no longer dream. They just feel rage at the continuing degradation of their existence. So this revolution will, indeed, be the release of the 'wicked passions' of which Bakunin spoke, the destructive passions that are the only door to a free existence. It will be the coming of the barbarians predicted by Dejacque and Coeurderoy. But it is

precisely when people know that they no longer have anything to say to their rulers, that they may learn how to talk with each other. It is precisely when people know that the possibilities of this world can offer them nothing that they may learn how to dream the impossible. This network of institutions that dominate our life, this civilisation, has turned our world into a toxic prison. There is so much to be destroyed so that a free existence may be created. The time of the barbarians is at hand.

May the barbarians break loose. May they sharpen their swords, may they brandish their battleaxes, may they strike their enemies without pity. May hatred take the place of tolerance, may fury take the place of resignation, may outrage take the place of respect. May the barbarian hordes go to the assault, autonomously, in the way that they determine. And may no parliament, no credit institution, no supermarket, no barracks, no factory ever grow again after their passage. In the face of the concrete that rises to strike the sky and the pollution that fouls it, one can well say with Dejacque that "It is not the darkness that the Barbarians will bring to the world this time, it is the light."

Crisso/Odoteo

First published in Venomous Butterfly

Editorial

So, large sections of the tube have been privatised, and more are set to be in the near future – so what options are now open to the Tube workers? Well, firstly, the fact that union bosses have sold out and ignored their members' wishes makes things a lot more straightforward. After all, workers don't need union bosses to give them permission to take action which affects so many people's welfare and lives. The fact is that the very action that the ballot has sanctioned could be taken at any time to great effect and carried on as and when workers feel it is necessary to achieve their demands.

Taking action on the job, as opposed to walking out on strike, is an under-used but highly-effective way of forcing management to concede to your demands. Go-slows, work-to-rules and sit-ins or occupations are often all far more sensible and effective ways of taking action. Firstly, you don't lose any pay. Also, you don't have to worry about picket lines, and any scabbing that takes place has little or no effect in undermining the action. Often with a conventional 'walk-out' strike the union officials have all the say as to when, where and how the action takes place. And they can choose to sell out when they want. In contrast, taking direct action at work makes the job of union officials completely redundant and puts the control of any dispute precisely where it should be – with those of us actually taking the action.

Looking at the past, we can see that direct action on the job has been a tried and tested method of winning disputes for the past hundred years at least. There have been many creative forms of action taken by workers which are now rarely used. It is worth taking a look at these and the advantages they offer workers as opposed to strike action.

There is the 'good work' strike. Transport workers have often taken action against their bosses by carrying on working, but letting the public travel free. Obviously this is always a popular action with passengers, and management hate it because it affects their profits far more than walk-outs. Working to rule has also been used to great effect by railway workers, especially in the early 1970s – when the newly-formed National Industrial Relations Court ruled that it was an 'unfair industrial practice'! – and during the wave of militancy which swept Europe up to 1914. Railway-man E.J. Passom claimed at a union meeting in 1913: "How foolish it is to go on strike, thus placing ourselves in the power of the companies, who can starve us into subjection, when, by a little intelligent use of sabotage, etc., on the job, we could obtain our ends."

If tube workers can organise together across London and take it upon ourselves to run the tube safely until management agree to our demands, this could be one of the most powerful and effective actions on the tube for many years.

Quiz answers

1. The Druse of Lebanon and Syria.
2. He raced motorbikes and rally cars competitively.
3. The real Carlistas, or Carlists, were reactionary Spanish monarchists from the north of the country, so called because they had backed King Carlos in a battle over succession.
4. If they're female they must be over 50. This is to stop gold-diggers seducing wealthy elderly Sammarinese men. So none of them are gay, then?

Commentary

Tired mantra

I'm sure many readers are now getting bored of Peter Gibson's incessant rhetoric in favour of genetic determinism and his rather dismissive attitude towards both anthropology and anarchism, dubbed 'tired and old' (Commentary, 7th February). In fact he hardly loses an opportunity to promote and parade his own narrow, scientific outlook. As for having an 'inflexible mind', please – I'm hardly a match for dear Peter. Let me make four brief points.

1. The opposition that Peter sets up between nature and nurture, socio(biology) and anthropology is redundant and outdated, for both social scientists and biologists have long recognised that everything people do is intrinsically and always both biological and social, involving both nature and nurture.
2. Sociologists themselves, even Ed Wilson to some extent, have long repudiated the crude and simplistic genetic determinism that Peter continues to espouse, seemingly quite oblivious to such topics as complexity, autopoiesis, contingency, emergence and symbiosis that are of such importance to contemporary biologists. The social determinism of postmodernism is equally one-sided and untenable.
3. As Peter almost has apoplexy at the very mention of anthropology, may I suggest he read the likes of Gregory Bateson, Steven Rose, Ernst Mayr, Brian Goodwin, Stephen Jay Gould, Lynn Margulis, Richard Lewontin and Fritjof Capra – biologists and scientists who will perhaps give him a more nuanced account of what makes us humans tick, and even lead him to realise that many factors are involved in understanding the complexity of human life.
4. What concerns me isn't so much Peter's narrow and prejudiced conception of biology and his continual misrepresentation of both anthropology and anarchism, but rather the political inferences he seems to draw from this blinkered approach, namely, the fact that Peter appears to advocate as something new and innovative ... guess what? Free market capitalism and a rather antiquated Hobbesian perspective.

Peter's constant and rather tired mantra of genetic determinism sounds like an old-fashioned gramophone when the needle got stuck.

Brian Morris

Both Brian Morris and Peter Gibson, despite all their controversy, agree that "humans are animals and the state consists of humans." Yet both call themselves anarchists. This is strange, because animals aren't in the least anarchistic. They're not revolutionaries, they're hidebound traditionalists.

Surely humans are partly animals. But it's their other part, their specifically human intelligence, that can question their genetic and social conditioning and thereby go beyond it and reach a totally different level of consciousness, in which there's no sense of insecurity, and hence no craving for power which is the root cause of the state.

Animals are violent, greedy, acquisitive and competitive. They live in groups with authoritarian social structures, hierarchies. They have pecking orders. They have top dogs. Chimpanzees even have politicians who build power bases in the group, currying favour by kissing babies. The same psychological factors – insecurity and craving for power – that drive humans to create states drive animals. Animals can't have insight into those factors, but humans can and that

very insight liberates them.

Harold Barclay's little book, *The State*, which sparked the whole controversy is a mine of valuable information about states but says little about their psychological origin. What it does say isn't encouraging: "we must acknowledge that entrenched in the human psyche is a potentiality for a will to power". That seems to imply that the 'potentiality' is as ineradicable in humans as it is in animals, in which we're stuck with the state for ever.

Francis Ellingham

Rights alright

Paul Maguire says that I haven't answered his question about the BNP's 'rights for whites' slogan (Commentary, 24th January), even though I spent two paragraphs of my last letter doing so. To recapitulate: my reply is that rights shouldn't depend on any category. They should be for everyone, not just for whites. We should fight for our freedom by rejecting fixed categories and not by demanding 'rights' for the categories, which aren't rights for us as real people who exceed and escape the categories. Now I'd like to ask Paul a few questions.

1. Why does he keep assuming that someone can only give or receive solidarity in relation to common or homogenous interests or desires? Why does he assume that difference must necessarily lead to conflict and division? Is this, perhaps, an unconscious remnant of the 'bourgeois individualism' he claims to have rejected, expressed through the assumption that everyone only ever pursues individual self-interest?
2. Why does he call a politics of difference 'bourgeois', when the inherent logic of capitalism is to homogenise the world in line with capitalist monoculture?
3. If class identity is objective and not at all a discursive construct, what is to stop someone setting up a hierarchical organisation in order to represent the vital interests of this category? Isn't such a statist evolution a necessary development, since the class would have to enforce the primacy of this particular label, and hold down the 'bourgeois individualists' whose demands for the right to be different bring them into conflict with the 'interests' of the 'class'?
4. Class as a social relation built into the production process exists only when both ruling and working class exist. Therefore, a revolution against the production process abolishes not only the ruling class but also the working class. Since the ruling class is abolished, the working class loses the relational basis for its self-definition. How, then, are working class people to become ready to create a world where they are free from class, and where they abolish themselves as a class, by means of a political strategy which emphasises their class identity as fundamental?

I've no wish to deny the existence of oppressive relations structured around class, but Paul is wrong to establish such a strong binary between class oppressions and those constructed around other categories. Class oppression can't "simply be brought to an end by thinking differently" – but which oppression can simply be 'thought' out of existence?

Is an individual's rejection of racism going to smash the racist state? Is an individual's rejection of psychiatric oppression going to tear down the mental hospitals? Oppressive discourse isn't simply a matter of language and thought, but is also constructed through the territorial arrangement of physical environments and through practices of

physical violence. To escape the ideological boxes, we need to resist the cages and chains through which they're built, not only the labels they bear.

In the case of every deep-rooted oppressive relation, thinking beyond the oppressor's categories is insufficient to end oppression – although it's also necessary to make possible its overcoming. Just as an anti-racist or anti-sexist politics which ignores class will fail to overcome capitalist oppression, so a class politics which insists on the primacy of class over other forms of oppression is insufficient to achieve a truly free society in which all relations of oppression are overcome.

A.R.

Does Paul Maguire still consider himself working class? According to his previous letters, the mere discussion of "anti-messianic messianism" (his term) would mark him out as a middle class buffoon of the type that clogs up the milieu. Does he discuss the 'abyssal' with his workmates on their tea break? I guess he doesn't talk of such things. It would be inappropriate, and that's precisely my point when I talk of what it is to be an anarchist – what it is to find yourself belonging to a milieu that others don't even know exists.

When we become pro-revs, we're suddenly bestowed with consciousness. Everything matters and has significance. We see congealed labour and alienation in every object around us. But we also find that we can't communicate with our friends, family and workmates as we used to, no matter how much we pretend (and we do pretend) to be still one of the boys. When you become a pro-revolutionary, you separate yourself.

There's something important here, more than important. Paul has given me plenty of unedited abuse over the last few months. He didn't like it because I tried to work out concepts for myself. I questioned assumptions and moral platitudes. He thought it got in the way, but really I was only doing what he does himself and what we are all meant to be doing as anarchists – searching for a means to grasp the world.

But there's a difference between us. I haven't read most of the writers he talks about. I didn't read academics until after I'd worked it all out for myself, and even then I found them wanting. He says I've arrived somewhere near to what Derrida says. Well, blow me, and unpaid as well. So how did I do it? I engaged with the milieu, I read its news sheets and journals and pamphlets. I treated their writers with respect, took them at face value and held them accountable for what they wrote.

They hated it when I poo-pooed their hand-me-down leftist shit. I did the activist thing. I saw how it didn't connect, but I didn't burn out or withdraw. I rethought it out again. I wrote more letters, made more contacts, asked more questions. I tried to read the academics, tried to formalise it, but I found they didn't really get it – their position in society means they can never get to the dead heart of present existence, the Monday dread, the Friday exhilaration.

So I gave up on the idea of university. I didn't measure up and I was finding fragments of truth in the milieu any way. I also found that nobody had unified these fragments – it was almost as if they were too scared to put it all together.

Soon I discovered that the reduced political language of the left could never touch what the working class was feeling. I could see that the struggle we

engage in every day isn't about organisation or ideas, it's more a matter of bodies, soft little bodies and squeezed little brains, people hurting. I could see that revolution isn't about opinions, but forces impacting on people's bodies and that our quack remedies made no objective difference one way or the other.

It's difficult to write on these things without the proper training. The more formally educated you are, the more you are able to write in 'language ordinary people can understand', but something is lost in simplification and the clarity thing is a subtle way of sidelining the stutterers and stumblers, the doubters and individualists. I hate all that politics. It's dogma. There's no witnessing in it. It says nothing to me about what I see or feel, it does nothing for the people I see about me.

We need something more than 'clear language' because the solution to the scene isn't to be found within the scene. Nobody I know is interested in 'self-management', nobody is interested in the 'struggle'. They've got struggle enough already. To politicise it would be a burden, not a liberation. People like Paul Maguire talk of the factory and the housing estate – I say bulldoze the lot of it, we want palaces, we want champagne, we want Magritte and Ernst on the walls. We have no wish to fetishise our present existence – we want to abolish it.

We'll never get over what we've been through. Life is too short, but to savour the rich flavour of what it might be to be a whole human being, that's what it's all about. That, not political-economics is the centre of revolution. You'd forgotten that, hadn't you? Your politics made you forget that. I'd forgotten it too a while back, but now I've got it clear before me. Revolution is a visitation of the angel of destruction first, then it's a mass migration, a happy exodus.

And what do I get from the politicos when we're talking of the most sacred aspect of our wandering? What do I get from Paul Maguire who, above all other writers for Freedom, should get it? Well, I think his response is illustrative. He 'understands' me through the tepid scholasticism of bourgeois writers. He categorises and dismisses me with the frigid theories of the academy. No, it isn't good enough. There's no need to read Derrida when you can read Monsieur Dupont, because Derrida, Spivak, Badiou (something to do with Frank Skinner?) and the rest are only the ghosts of what we're doing here.

Rather than reading academics I recommend that the milieu generally should read with absolute seriousness the ideas of the milieu. It should know itself. It should also listen to the pips squeaking, in the shops, at school, at work. The use of alcohol and cannabis in Britain is at crazy levels – that's the squeaking of people who exist beneath 20,000 leagues of pressure. The milieu should understand why people are so out of it that they can't even read its propaganda, let alone act on it.

Monsieur Dupont

• On a slightly different matter, I'd just like to thank all the people who responded to the recent MD advert in Freedom. I'm genuinely touched. It seems some sort of vindication. I've now sent off 38 books as a result, and plenty of pamphlets. It's funny how far I've come, creating stuff that didn't exist before (the petit-bourgeois ideal, I know), but nobody could have predicted it. It's pretty good I think, for a factory hand's lazy son, pretty good for a useless, inarticulate loser.

REVIEW

In their book *No Retreat*, Steve Tilzey and Dave Hann try to tell the story of one of Britain's most successful direct action groups

Subtitled *The secret war between Britain's anti-fascists and the far right*, *No Retreat* describes how Anti-Fascist Action was formed in the mid 1980s. Its function was to combat fascism physically, on the streets. AFA was started by members of two groups. The first was Red Action, which started life as a split from the Socialist Workers Party (the original Red Action members were expelled for what the SWP leadership called 'squaddism'). The second was the anarcho-syndicalist Direct Action Movement.

The new organisation developed into two major, quasi-autonomous, groupings. London AFA was controlled and dominated by Red Action. The Northern Network, based in the north of England, was virtually all anarchist. (The exception was Manchester AFA, again run by Red Action).

No Retreat concentrates on the story of the Network and Manchester AFA, told through the eyes of two prominent members. Unsurprisingly it sometimes slips into the "I'm not being macho but we followed him into the alley and kicked his head in" approach to describing how the fash were trounced and bounced off the pavements of the north and London, but that doesn't tell the whole story.

Both the authors were forced out of AFA by their Red Action 'comrades', one for unspecified reasons, the other – unmentioned, but hinted at – for being part of the (supposedly) anti-fascist magazine, *Searchlight*. Why it took so long for a direct action group to get rid of someone in a high position who also

had links to a grouping with proven ties to the police and secret services is anyone's guess. That the book is published by Milo, who recently published a *Searchlight* book on *Combat 18* (now to be found in the fantasy section of your local bookshop) is another dodgy link.

Simply listing the times when the fash got a kicking, never mind the times (how long?) we spent in the boozers, doesn't tell the entire AFA story. Everything that Anti-Fascist Action achieved as a largely working class coalition of reds and anarchists was, in the end, ruined by the internal wrangling (surprise number one) as Red Action constantly tried to upstage or sideline the anarchists (surprise number two). It meant that AFA lost a lot of support from people who couldn't stand the atmosphere of mistrust and intimidation.

I spotted at least two factual errors which, funnily enough, make the role the anarchists played seem much smaller and that of Red Action larger (surprise number three). This just about sums up the book. It could be seen as an attempt by *Searchlight* to claim credit (cash in?) for the defeat of fascism in the 1980s and 1990s, but am I really that cynical? (Actually yes I am).

Saying all that, what AFA achieved in its relatively short existence can only be realised when we compare Britain with countries like Germany and France, where the far right were left largely unchallenged until their street presence was equal to, or larger than, that of their anti-fascist opponents.

That the far right here is still pretty much insignificant isn't down to the likes of *Searchlight*/MI5 or the band-



wagon jumpers of the Anti-Nazi League/SWP. It's down to the few hundred members and supporters of Anti-Fascist Action who, over the years, stopped the fascists by 'any means

necessary'. Respect to them, and if you were ever part of that, then this book will surely interest you. But a true and impartial history is yet to be written.

Donny

No Retreat by Dave Hann and Steve Tilzey, published by Milo Books, costs £7.99 and is available from Freedom, 84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1 7QX (plus 80p towards p&p in the UK, £1.20 elsewhere).

BOOKS

Tell me lies
edited by David Miller
Pluto Press, £12.99

Everyone knows that the invasion of Iraq was built on lies. The politicians and their creatures in the mainstream media, both here and in the United States, couldn't otherwise have justified their aggression. The most notable (and now notorious) claim was that Saddam Hussein had 'Weapons of Mass Destruction'. He could deploy them, Blair said, within 45 minutes.

Anybody who wants to know more about the breadth and depth of the deception, should start by reading this book. *Tell Me Lies* fires a series of broadsides through what the subtitle calls the 'propaganda and media distortion in the attack on Iraq'.

The first section comprises a set of articles written by Pilger in the run-up to the invasion. It chronicles the sorry way in which previously independent voices, such as the *Observer* newspaper, allowed themselves to be rolled over and get their tummies tickled.

The next two sections look at the wider picture. "From a marketing point of view, you don't introduce new

products in August," White House Chief of Staff Andrew Card told the *New York Times* in September 2002. This is quoted by Laura Miller, John Stauber and Sheldon Rampton in the opening of their chapter, 'War is sell'.

The point, as the *Times* went on to say, was that what was needed was a "meticulously planned strategy to persuade the public, the Congress and the allies of the need to confront the threat from Saddam Hussein." And so it turned out.

Inevitably with a large number of contributors and a relatively short production schedule, there's some repetition. But not too much, and certainly not enough to detract from the value of the book. The fourth section, 'Alternatives', keeps up the good work, though the present writer would have preferred a little more about the part played by the internet in filling gaps left by the mainstream. Sorry, but three mentions of Indymedia in the entire book isn't really enough. Nevertheless, this is a useful primer which deserves wide circulation.

Johnny M.

Available from Freedom for £12.99 (add £1.30 postage in the UK, £2.60 elsewhere)

My disillusionment in Russia
by Emma Goldman
Dover, £12.95

Anarchists should be grateful to the American immigration officials who, in 1919, stripped Emma Goldman of her US citizenship and deported her to Russia. It allowed her to experience the Russian Revolution at first hand. From this emerged *My Disillusionment in Russia* (1923) and *My Further Disillusionment in Russia* (1924), now both reissued by Dover under the 1923 title.

One of the anarchist classics, her account ranks alongside Berkman's *The Bolshevik Myth* as a key text of anarchist opposition to Marxism, at least as practised in the USSR. It's also an important document of our disagreement with Trotskyists, since the horrors it describes come from a time when Trotsky was still part of the ruling junta. *My Disillusionment in Russia* is simultaneously a personal chronicle. We see Emma move from hope to despair as she sees the 1917 Revolution betrayed.

"It is," she writes, "at once the great failure and the great tragedy of the Russian Revolution that it attempted (in the leadership of the ruling political

party) to change only institutions and conditions while ignoring entirely the human and social values involved ... Worse yet, in its mad passion for power, the Communist State even sought to strengthen and deepen the very ideas and conceptions which the Revolution had come to destroy."

Johnny M.

Available from Freedom for £12.95 (add £1.30 postage in the UK, £2.60 elsewhere)

Against all tyranny!
by Edgar Rodrigues et al
Kate Sharpley Library, £2

Brazil was one of the 'New Worlds', the dream of which captivated European workers in the nineteenth century. Some of those who went were anarchist activists from countries as diverse as Spain, Italy, Germany and Russia. Of course most of those who did follow the dream by emigrating, anarchist or not, soon found out how empty that dream was.

This new KSL pamphlet contains a number of essays, by three hands. These cover the general history of the Brazilian anarchist movement and its chronology, an analysis of Russian expectations of

the new El Dorado, and biographies of several anarchist notables. There's also a review of the well-known Rua Frei Caneca Incident, when anarchist shoemaker Antonino Dominguez was assassinated by Marxists.

All ways round, *Against All Tyranny!* is a testament to yet another substantial and impressive national movement, the existence of which is barely known to many English-speaking anarchists. This handy pamphlet should help to address the situation.

Toby Crowe

Available from Freedom for £2 (add 20p postage in the UK, 40p elsewhere)

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I know from the encouraging things they've said that there are a lot of people who aren't connected with the political concerns of many Freedom writers. What gets published isn't human enough for them. I just hope that a different mode of operating can be started up, that we can find some way of beginning from where we are, from our bodies, from our torn and ragged flesh.

But for the moment we must ask ourselves why so few speak and why so many remain silent, as our collectivity requires that this is reversed. And if it turns out that the silent are silent because they're unable to speak 'clearly' in 'political' language, then that barrier should be abandoned as elitist.

M.D.

Dying embers

I want to reply to the last Green and Black Bulletin (Red zones, 24th January). I was struck by the author's concern that animal predators are disappearing, while at the same time making a lot of fuss over capitalist predators preying on their co-humans. Is there a reasonable basis for such discrimination? Is it because humans have souls and animals don't?

Another observation is that I can't see what problems capital could have with unlimited influxes of immigrants. Don't they help to keep wages down? In my country, The Netherlands, it was employers who sought workers abroad when there weren't enough people for the work in hand (before the 1973 oil crisis people could be selective about looking for a job).

A further remark concerns the implication – as I understand the author's meaning – that public transport should be free. But public transport costs. If it can't be paid for out of savings made through the fact that it's free, taxes have to be increased. One may say: let the rich pay. But we know how the rich are: if a country becomes too expensive they move and the average taxpayer gets a higher tax bill. Free transport is a nice idea as long as you have a low or no income, but are you sure you'll always want to live that way? Or should everyone live on a low income (which might be good for the environment)? But then how could public transport be free?

Bas Moreel

I'm amazed at Frankie Dee and his response to the Wildfire discussion (Commentary, 24th January). I can only assume he's been reading a different 'dialogue' to me. First, there's the calling of non-primitivists 'anti-Green', so ignoring their pro-ecological comments. Then there's the claim that we 'evince righteousness'. I'm not sure what this means. Does a worry about the deaths of millions amount to 'righteousness'? Not to mention the

comment that "few anarchists are comfortable being told ... how they must live their lives." Quite right. I don't like being told that only primitivism is 'real' anarchism.

So to suggest that it's the communist-anarchists who aren't being 'broad' in our 'vision' seems incredible. In reality, it's the primitivists who have consistently argued for one way of life, namely their 'primitivist' vision. In contrast, I (for one) have stressed that the level of technology must be chosen by each community to suit its needs and wants.

As for 'co-operation', well, how can you co-operate with someone who refuses to answer simple questions and instead accuses you of seeking to become a 'politician' for advocating basic anarchist organisational ideas? So much for "respect, understanding and convergence".

Finally Frankie wonders what "all the disdain" is about. It's quite simple. If you label basic anarchist ideas as 'governance' and 'workers' self-exploitation', dismiss other anarchists as 'left anarchists' and 'reformists' and talk about the collapse of 'civilisation', then people are right to ask questions. To dismiss out of hand the practical solutions offered by anarchism to the pressing problems a revolution would face without suggesting alternatives is crying out for disdain.

Iain McKay

We can know that Primitivism is finally dead as a political philosophy now that it receives favourable coverage in Freedom.

Steve Booth

Facts lacking

While appreciating many of the points about death rates for the elderly being lower in colder climates, your article on 'The killing season' makes no reference to Winter Fuel Payments (Freedom, 10th January). It refers to the death of two pensioners who had their gas disconnected. In fact they'd automatically have received the Payment of £200 or £300 last December. They died of ignorance and the likely incompetence of their gas supplier. They should have gone on Fuel Direct or a payment scheme.

In addition, due to the pressures of Christmas consumer spending many pensioners don't use the winter fuel payment towards alleviating their own bills. It goes on grandweans' presents. Also the introduction of Pension Credit in October 2003 means that a lot of pensioners who have some savings or who were reluctant to claim Income Support, have benefited, even if they have savings of £15,000 or so.

Revolutionary sketchwriters are great at scoring political points but does it have to be through a lack of facts about what provision there is for the elderly? The welfare aspect of the state can be criticised by appreciation of the facts. Furthermore, how many family members and friends, in the atomised



society the writer describes, take the social responsibility for ensuring that their elderly relatives and neighbours have warm homes and benefit entitlement?

Jim McFarlane

Old comrade

Tom Carlile died at the end of last month. I'm wondering if there are any readers of Freedom left who remember him. I met him through Marie-Louise Berneri in 1944. He'd been in prison as a conscientious objector and was then working in the Somerset coal mines. He was active in the trade union movement all his working life and remained a supporter of Freedom to the end.

Amorey Gethin

All recollections of Tom will be very welcome. Please email them to FreedomCopy@aol.com or send them to us at Freedom, 84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1 7QX

Prisoner appeal

The 6th Circuit US Court of Appeals has refused Harold Thompson's challenge to a District Court's recent dismissal of his First Amendment law suit.

Now it goes straight up to the Supreme Court for a ruling which will be both decisive and binding. This procedure – a series of local rejections – is the route all cases must take to reach the highest judicial body in the land.

Harold isn't dispirited. He believes the case is eminently winnable and is pursuing it to the end. It needs another \$300 to get it there in pure presentational form. Help for this final hurdle will be greatly appreciated.

Frankie Dee

For more information visit freespace.virgin.net/simon.russell/index.htm or you can write to Friends of Harold Thompson, PO Box 375, Knaphill, Woking, Surrey GU21 2XL. Donations can also be sent to this address.

A sideways look

The poor of China's Fujian province pay up to £20,000 each to be smuggled into Britain. Once here, they need to pay off the gangs who've brought them here and start to earn money to send home. It's little wonder that they find themselves used and abused by ruthless capitalists who want an arms-length, on-demand workforce for seasonal work.

As we now know, Morecambe Bay can be a dangerous place. Even the locals treat with it with respect. Concerns had been raised before about Chinese workers there, and some have already had to be rescued in the last couple of months. The death of the nineteen cockle-pickers is horrific and exposes the dark underbelly of British capitalism.

The work is hard, cold, wet and dangerous – and paid at piece-rates. In all the clamour since the tragedy, the voice of racists complaining about 'our jobs being taken' has been conspicuously absent. There are some jobs that only the truly desperate will do.

When Simon Jones was killed by the negligence of his employers at Shoreham Docks, it took a long and spirited campaign by his family and friends to even get the authorities to prosecute the company involved. All along, the police seemed more interested in arresting and charging campaigners protesting about Simon's death than in addressing the flagrant law-breaking done by corporations.

Within a few days of the tragedy in Morecambe Bay, police had begun making arrests in Liverpool. What on earth could have prompted them to move so quickly? A late but welcome recognition of the need to curb the worst excesses of capitalism? Or the fact that some of the gang-masters involved are probably foreign and a lot easier to scapegoat than a respectable company director from the Home Counties?

The reality is that Britain runs on undocumented, clandestine labour. We buy cheap fruit and vegetables from supermarkets that are picked by workers earning as little as £1.50 an hour. We have cut flowers picked for us. Fish are packed. Offices are cleaned and takeaways delivered.

A French comrade who came to work in London to learn English after a decade of unemployment at home told me that nobody in the kitchens he got jobs in could speak any more English than him. There was, however, a geographic hierarchy.

We're often derided for our calls for borders to be as open for labour as they are for capital. Even as the tragedy of the cocklers unfolded, the gutter press were calling for the government to stop East Europeans in general, and Roma in particular, from coming here to work

(as they'll be entitled to do when the EU expands). If there's one thing we can learn from this, it's that people will come any way, even for wages no one fortunate enough to have been born in the west would consider.

In a rare progressive move, even David Blunkett has said that Britain needs immigration. He obviously likes his pizzas delivered and his vegetables cheap. Perhaps he should be a bit more daring and take a leaf out of the book written by another radical – George W. Bush – and offer an amnesty to those who are already here. Stranger things have happened. But not much.

Svartfrosk

Words we use

TERRORISM
We're allegedly part of a 'War on Terror'. And how is it to be carried on? Obviously by the systematic deployment of (military) terror, which wouldn't be a bad definition of 'terrorism' itself.

Strangely, the most strident rhetoric against terrorism comes from the people who are more responsible for it than anyone else – the US elite and their various lackeys. By their actions they inspire it throughout the Middle East (what's al Qaeda but an act of resistance against US occupation?) and by their orders it's committed. The American military is the biggest terrorist organisation the world has ever known.

Anarchists support resistance, which itself can take many forms. Anti-fascism may sometimes try to inspire terror in the fascist. To this degree, activists too are (or could be) terrorists. The questions to be asked, as always, are: what's the aim behind the terror and whose side is it deployed to support?

Johnny M.

The quiz

1. Mad Caliph Al Hakim of eleventh century Egypt made it illegal to work during the day and to sleep at night. He banned the manufacture of women's shoes to enforce his 24-hour curfew on them. One night he rode off on his mule and disappeared. He left a group of disciples who believed he was a divine incarnation. Who are they now?
2. Dutch engineer Maurice Gatsonides invented the speed camera. What was his other occupation?
3. Spanish anarchists used to joke that Marxists were Carlitas, followers of Carlos Marx. Why was this a calculated insult?
4. What odd law does the tiny Republic of San Marino have about domestic servants?

Answers on page 6

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