

FREEDOM

29 MAY 2004

50P ANARCHIST NEWS AND VIEWS

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WHY WASTE TIME VOTING?

Whether you believe in voting or not it's always nice to know a bit about who's going to be attempting to look important in Brussels this year. Freedom has put together a quick guide to the seven most high profile parties in next month's European elections.

Labour

Believe, um ... well, whatever Tony said really, you know? About Britain being a bit in Europe and a bit in America?

- Party leader: As this goes to press it's the idiot Blair but who knows, soon it might be the idiot Brown instead.
- Favourite slogan: Okay we've failed in almost every respect to even do what we promised, let alone what's right but who else are you going to vote for?

Conservatives

Believe in carrying on Thatcher's proud tradition of irritating the foreigners, bad-mouthing everything the EU puts forward, cherry picking whatever will undermine worker's rights the most and hogging all the lobster at conferences.

- Party leader: The guy who introduced the Poll Tax. Never forget that.
- Favourite slogan: If you're going to have a right wing dictatorship you may as well have the best.

Liberal Democrats

Believe the EU is the last best hope for mankind - they're big fans. They've got eleven MEPs and help out in getting local police forces to co-operate, fighting to secure the right of football fans to buy from touts, campaigning for the rights of business and making fishing boats less safe (according to their manifesto).

- Party leader: Veteran Scotch drinker Charles Kennedy.

- Favourite slogan: No Charles Kennedy isn't a drunk, he just gets stomach complaints. And inner ear infections. And mood swings.

Green Party

Believe the EU is their last best hope of actually getting people elected to something slightly more glamorous than judging the 'biggest swede' competition in Diss. As such they're very much pro Europe. They like puppies, flowers and plan to reform the EU into a nice sunny place where everybody gets along. At some point they want to solve world hunger and create peace on earth, if they have time between dropping the kids off at school and work. Super.

- Party Leader: Caroline Lucas. It's suspected she's actually an escaped Elf from middle earth.
- Favourite slogan: Those poor starving African children, how I wish we could help them. More champagne anyone?

Respect Unity Coalition (or RUC)

Believe in getting as many votes as possible for Gorgeous George and his anti-war platform. What's the EU?

- Party Leader: George Galloway, he of the 'I love you Saddam' speech and dodgy business deals.
- Favourite slogan: It's all about Iraq! And as Trotsky always said ... what do you mean we're a front group?

United Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP)

Believe the EU to be a conspiracy designed to endanger the interests of good honest British people everywhere. Their main gripe is the fear of losing our dear old British pound, lack of freedom for business (seriously) and the even greater



evil of political correctness. Nice to see they've got their priorities straight. They want out of the EU entirely and see the British government assume greater powers so they can guarantee our 'liberty'. They haven't given any concrete ways in which we could do this without bankrupting the country.

- Party Leader: Roger Knapman, an ex-Tory who quit because they aren't right wing enough.

British National Party (BNP)

Believe the EU to be a conspiracy designed to endanger the interests of Aryan British people everywhere. They get very shouty about the unelected German bureaucrats running their country. Instead they want to exit the

EU and try and rebuild the Commonwealth empire for the good of the people.

- Party leader: The infamous Nick Griffin, highly educated and with a criminal record as long as your arm.
- Favourite slogan: We aren't hateful people, we just don't like foreigners. Or homos. Or liberals. Or Lefties... and Islam... and those F****ing Jews Sieg Heil! I mean... ahh, sod.

IRVING DONE

On Saturday 15th May anti-fascists prevented holocaust denier David Irving from holding a meeting in the quiet Sussex town of Arundel. The original venue was occupied before Irving arrived in the town and the hotel manager cancelled the booking of the room, Irving then moved to a back up venue just down the road where he was caught setting up. A large number of his hard back books and videos were destroyed whilst he watched cowering in the corner being spat upon. This prompted the pub landlord to cancel the meeting and call the police. Two anti-fascists were arrested for assault and have been bailed, but it doesn't look like there is a case against them. Whilst all this was happening Irving's hire car had its tyres slashed and the

paint work vandalised, all in all it was a costly day for Britain's most famous fascist historian.

To get involved in taking direct action against fascism get in touch with the new national anti-fascist network Antifa, see www.antifa.org.uk



FIREFIGHTERS OUT

Wednesday 19th of May saw fire stations across the country being hit by a series of wildcat strikes. The strikes were a solidarity action after nineteen firefighters were suspended in Salford. The unofficial industrial action spread rapidly, with many stations taking only 999 calls. Areas affected included parts of the West Midlands and Strathclyde, West Yorkshire, Wiltshire, Gloucestershire, Somerset, Avon and Cornwall.

According to the bosses, the Salford firefighters were suspended without pay after refusing to use new anti-terrorist equipment. The Fire Brigade Union responded by saying the strike arose after crew were asked to sign contracts they were unhappy with before the finali-

sation of a pay dispute. An FBU spokesman insisted the action was unofficial. Official strike action is also on going. Firefighters in Norfolk and Kent have refused to answer anything but emergency calls after the breakdown of pay talks last week. Salford firefighters are also not responding to calls where the special incident response units were needed due to a breakdown in pay talks between the union and management. An FBU spokesman stated that "official action being taken since last week at local level is that we have withdrawn from all negotiations to do with the agreement reached last June." This was due to the failure of the bosses to pay the outstanding 3.5% FBU members have been owed since November.

Anarchists fully support the wildcat strikes. Such autonomous direct action and solidarity is what anarchism is all about. It also highlights problems with trade unionism. Trade unions, as currently organised, take power away from the rank and file. It is up to the union membership whether an action is official or not, not bureaucrats. We need workplace organisation from the bottom up otherwise such strike action faces the danger of being isolated. To this end anarchism argues that we need to federate strike assemblies by means of elected, mandated and recallable delegates. Only in this way, by building on the spirit of the wildcat, can a union respond to the needs and actions of its members.

Home and away

FREEDOM

Volume 65 Number 11

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.

Correction

I made an error with my last piece, Gee'd up, (emailed Friday 7th May) concerning Iain McKay's comment on the 1st May (page 6). I misunderstood which piece Iain was commenting on. I now realise he was referring to my piece on the 17th April and not the 1st May. I made a silly mistake and would like to withdraw my comment. I assume you would have actually realised my mistake but may have been wondering what I was talking about. I was hurrying which was a silly thing to do. My apologies.

Dr Peter H. Gibson

Bookfairs

In June there are two anarchist/radical bookfairs being held outside London.

The first ever Norwich Anarchist Bookfair is taking place on Saturday 12th June.

The Manchester Radical Bookfair has been re-arranged, and will now take place on Saturday 19th June. It will cover anarchism, peace, direct action and social change, with books, stalls, ideas, discussions and workshops. For more details of these bookfairs, see listings.

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Next issue

Contributions are wanted for future Freedoms. The next issue will be dated 12th June 2004 and the last day for getting copy to us will be Thursday 3rd June. See contact details above for where to send your letters/articles.

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

Justice for Kebba Jobe

Whilst sitting by Camden Lock on Saturday 15th May, Kebba 'Dobo' Jobe, a 42 year old father of seven from North London was violently attacked by a plainclothes police officer who pinned Kebba face-down onto the concrete floor by putting his knee in Kebba's back. People thought that his spine had snapped because of the position the cop had him in. Kebba passed out and was eventually taken to hospital where he was pronounced dead over an hour after the attack, although witnesses at the scene say he was already dead when

he was taken into the ambulance.

The coroner's inquest held two days later claimed the cause of death was asphyxiation, and then adjourned until January 11th 2005, meaning the truth about Kebba's death will not be known until next year. On Saturday 22nd May a moving demonstration was held demanding truth and justice for Kebba's family and friends which was attended by London anarchists (see picture, right).

For more information on the Justice for Kebba Dobo Jobe Campaign call 07951 596048 or 07949 158898



LISTINGS

Bristol

11th June Primitive house and techno soundsystem fundraiser 10pm till 5am at The Black Swan, Stapleton Road, £4 info@tattoorecords.co.uk

Cambridge

5th June Strawberry Fair, Midsummer Common, admission free, with the usual strawberries and cream and lager. See <http://www.strawberry-fair.org.uk/>

Cumbria

5th June Picket of Barrow-In-Furness Wilkinson's in protest at the continued exploitation of slave labour in British prisons, commencing at 12.30pm, and campaigners will be armed with the new CAPS leaflet.

East Anglia

12th June Norwich's first annual anarchist bookfair - call 07941 657485 norwichanarchists@hotmail.com <http://twotins.tripod.com/>

Faslane

7th to 13th June Faslane Peace Camp Birthday Week. Faslane has been resisting the UK's nuclear WMD for 22 years! During the week there will be workshops and actions, and on Saturday we're having a birthday party with sound systems and punk bands. Faslane Peace Camp, Shandon, Helensburgh, Scotland. 01436 820 901 faslanepeacecamp@hotmail.com www.faslanepeacecamp.org.uk

Ireland

25th to 26th June Just when you thought it was safe to go somewhere hot for your summer holiday, George Bush comes to Ireland: Domoland Castle, Co Clare (very close to Shannon Warport, oh yes). Details of the protests planned at www.ambush2004.org/

London

29th May Benefit gig for North and East London sabs and Haringey Solidarity Group, at Chats Palace, 49 Brooksbys Walk, Homerton, E9, tickets £5, www.londonpunks.co.uk/
29th May Haringey Critical Mass Bike Ride 2004 for clean air and safe streets. From 11am at the Manor House Tube, finishing at Chestnuts Park Festival at 12.30. Supported by Haringey Solidarity Group 0208 374 5027. www.criticalmasslondon.org.uk/
29th May Benefit gig for North and East London sabs and Haringey

Solidarity Group, at Chats Palace, 49 Brooksbys Walk, Homerton, E9, tickets £5, see www.londonpunks.co.uk/

4th June Break/Beat the Wall, fundraising party against the Apartheid Wall in Palestine, with DJ and MC sets from 8pm till 3am at Sahara Nights, Kings Cross, Pentonville Road, N1, £5 (solidarity entrance fee £8) 0207 700 6192 www.stophewall.org

5th June Re-arranged Cannabis March and Festival, carnival style march from Kennington Park (assemble 12 noon) with floats, banners, costumes and samba beats leading to an all day free festival in Brockwell Park, Brixton www.thecannabisfestival.co.uk/
12th June secondhand books for sale, or drop in for tea, chat and sometimes cakes, from 12 noon to 3.30pm at Use Your Loaf, 227 Deptford High Street, SE8.

15th to 21st June An Exhibition of Resistance to BP and Big Oil, for info contact 07969 786770, London Rising Tide, c/o 62 Fieldgate Street, London E1 1ES, or see www.risingtide.org.uk/ www.londonrisingtide.org.uk/ or www.burningplanet.net/
8th July South London Radical History Group meeting: 'Deptford Infidels', talk with Terry Liddle at 8pm, Use Your Loaf, 227 Deptford High Street, SE8, admission is free/donation.
Every Wednesday the LARC Library from 1pm at 62 Fieldgate Street, E1.
Every Friday vegan café at Use Your Loaf, 227 Deptford High Street, SE8

Manchester

19th June Manchester Radical Bookfair 11am until 5pm at Bridge 5 Mill, 22A Beswick Street, Ancoats, Manchester. Note that the fair aims to promote and celebrate grassroots, non hierarchical, DIY activism and is not a platform for party politics! info@radicalbookfair.org.uk www.radicalbookfair.org.uk/

Scotland

1st to 4th July Green Anarchy in the UK, Gathering of the tribes. We have called this gathering to give green anarchists in the UK and elsewhere a great opportunity to get together and share thoughts and ideas about how to fight the megamachine, that is civilization, and learn primitive skills. Bilston Glen Anti-Bypass Protest Site, near Edinburgh. Contact 07747606558 info@bilstonglen-abs.org.uk or see www.bilstonglen-abs.org.uk/

23rd to 24th July The Wickerman Festival, between Dundrennan and Auchencairn. Spiritualized, Levellers Acoustic, dance tents, children's area. www.thewickermanfestival.co.uk/

Sheffield

5th June Remembering the Miners Strike 20th Anniversary, speeches and music, tickets £ 15, from 5pm to 11pm. Hallam FM Arena, for info call 01142 565656.

Surrey

31st May Kingston Green Fair, Canbury Garden, Kingston upon Thames 11am to 8pm, a day of ecological awareness with music, workshops, dance and more, entirely powered by people/sun/wind. See <http://kingstongreenfair.org.uk/>
16th to 18th July Guilfest. Contact 01483 536270 info@guilfest-live.co.uk or see www.guilfest.co.uk/

International

1st to 6th June Environmental Film Festival in Catalonia, Spain. See <http://www.ficma.com/>
8th to 10th June The G8 Summit will be staged on Sea Island, 80 miles south of Savannah in the United States, specially chosen by the G8 because it is impossible for protestors to access and therefore US groups have put out a call for decentralised actions. See www.dissent.org.uk/ <http://freesavannah.com/g8/>
9th to 11th June Fifth International Conference on Walking in the 21st Century, Copenhagen. See www.citiesforpeople.dk/
12th June World Naked Bike Ride will be happening in cities across the world: Seattle, Vancouver, London, Berlin and more. See www.worldnakedride.org/
26th to 28th June Anti-Repression Gathering around the Aubonne Court case, Geneva, to support two climbers whose rope was cut by police during a blockade against the G8 summit in Evian last summer. For more info see www.aubonnebridge.net/
1st to 9th July Annual Ecotopia Biketour will ride from Vienna to The Netherlands with a stop-over at the Towards Carfree Cities IV conference in Berlin. See www.thebiketour.net/

Nationwide groups

Anarchist Federation
Box 2, 84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1 7QX
www.afed.org.uk

Antifa

Box 36, 84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1 7QX
www.antifa.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
www.freedompress.org.uk

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

159 Fortess Road, London NW5

www.wombles.org.uk

Printworks Social Centre

58 Albion Street, Glasgow

www.glasgow-autonomy.org

The Rampart

7a Rampart Street, London E1

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

Tesco are sickening

As Euro 2004 approaches Tesco announces it will not be awarding sick pay to workers who take less than three days off ...

Tesco has announced that it is looking to cut levels of unplanned absence and is introducing the measures in about twenty stores. It is aiming to cut sick days. One scheme only gives sick pay if people are off for more than three days and provide a doctor's note. This means that no sick pay for the first three days.

The company also announced record annual pre-tax profits of £1.6bn, a rise of 17.6% on the previous year. Needless to say, while whittling away the working conditions of the people who make these profits, senior management is busy giving themselves perks. Tesco's board will get a £11m bonus while its chief executive gets short and long-term share awards totalling £1.98m. His total annual salary and benefits package rose by just under 5% to £2.98m. Meanwhile, according to the GMB, his wage slaves have to work 79 hours a week to achieve the national average wage.

Clearly making profits of £1.6bn is not enough and more is required by refusing to pay its workers when they are off sick. Unsurprisingly, Tesco confirmed there was no plan to end sick pay at its head office, in Cheshunt, Hertfordshire. A new variation on the old Thatcherite mantra that "to get the poor to work more, you pay them less; to get the rich to work more, you pay them more."

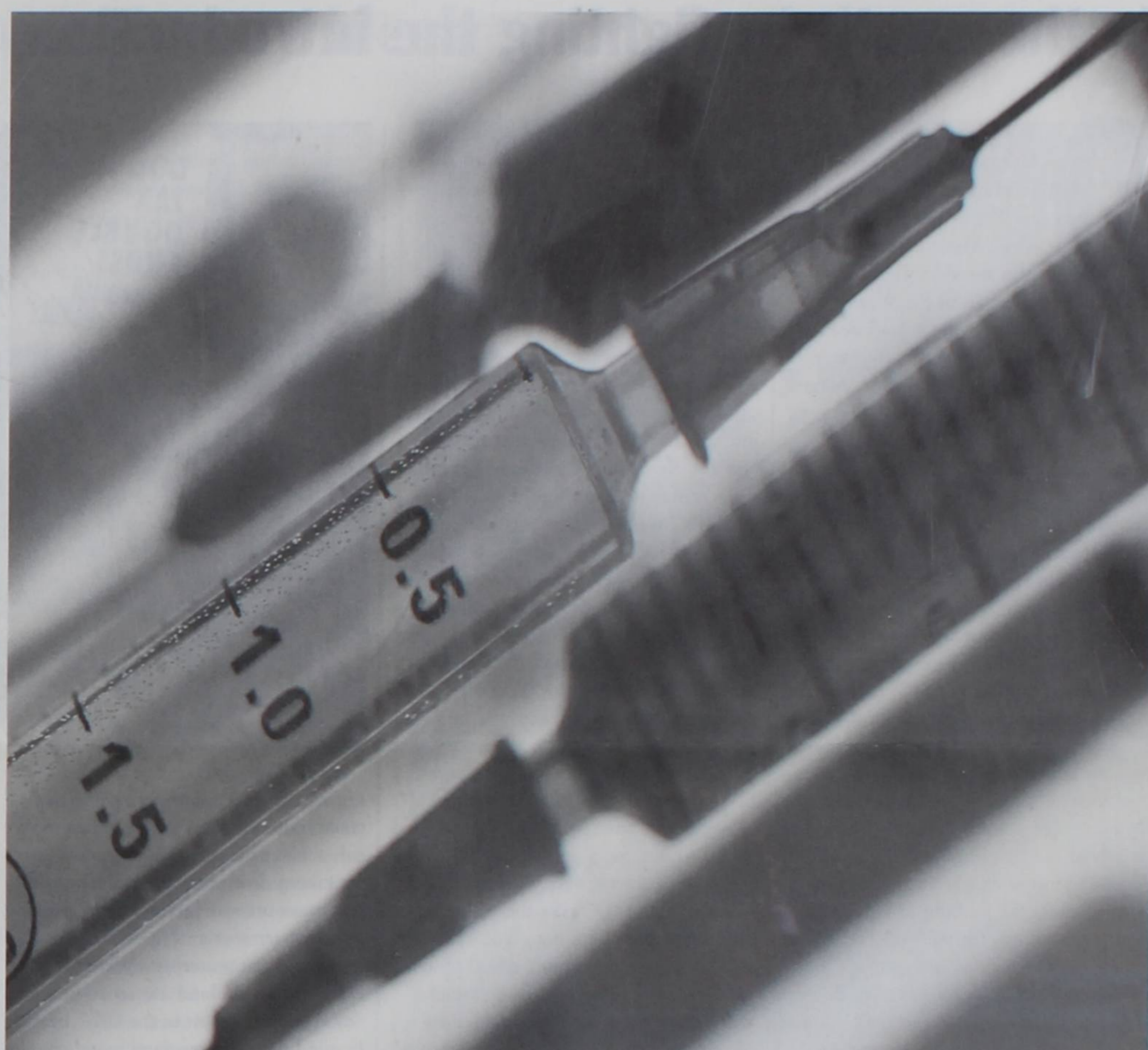
Obviously this will backfire as workers who are genuinely sick will haul themselves into work, spreading germs. This will bring down the overall productivity of the company as well as putting stress on people to attend work when they are ill. And are consumers really going to shop somewhere were sick employees are handling their food? What are the public health implications of this decision?

However, more is needed than just moral outrage. Collective action is required. The first place to look would be the trade unions. Any sensible union would be opposing this attack on their

members' interests but USDAW has given a wary welcome to Tesco's pilot scheme. USDAW spokesman Kevin Hegarty said that the union had no objection to the pilot scheme, but added that this "was not the same as fully supporting it." He showed his short-sightedness by arguing that the trial was being run on a purely voluntary basis and would not affect any staff who already had contracts with Tesco. Nice to see union bureaucrats helping bosses divide and rule the workforce! Other unions said they were astonished at the USDAW cooperation.

So it is, as usual, up to workers to fight back themselves. One possible action is to take collective sickies at the affected stores. This would, in effect, be a form of unofficial strike action and would give a strong message to management. A mass 'sneeze in' may be effective. Perhaps unofficial action could also pressurise the union bureaucrats to be less of a door mat. This is also a great opportunity to make links with consumers. Who wants their food with added germs? So a boycott of Tesco would make sense, particularly as it is likely Tesco's policy will spread across all industries if it is not stopped now.

Ultimately, this is more than just about sick pay. It is about the kind of society we want. Do we want one where work dominates our lives or one geared to human needs? With the defeats of the 1980s, collective action in industry has taken a blow. However, more individualised resistance continues. British workers are happy to 'throw a sickie', to reclaim some of the time we have to sell to the bosses to survive under capitalism. It has become a staple of modern life, as we use it to find time for ourselves in overworked, underpaid rip-off Britain. Many wage slaves are not encouraged to take time off even when they are unwell. A recent survey by employee benefits firm Gissings found that more than 90% of



employees said their organisation doesn't encourage staff to stay at home when they are ill.

Capitalism is about extending work, turning more of our time into time we sell to the bosses. Recent research (and common sense) contradicts employers' claims that people work long hours out of choice. Such claims forget the factor of power, the relative strength between labour and capital. While we officially have the lowest unemployment for

decades, this is not reflected in our working lives. The reality we face exposes the statistics for the nonsense they are. We feel under pressure as long hours and less job security take their toll. The work which often contributes to our illnesses is now making it harder for us to recover from them by attacking the sickie.

Sickies are one way of putting the odds in our favour when collective action seems, unfortunately, unlikely to

happen. Yet the attack on the sickie exposes the weakness of isolated, individual, action. Without collective action and solidarity, the bosses (whether economic or political) will act to restrict our freedoms whenever they feel they can get away with it. Anarchists can and should play an important role in raising the awareness of the direct action and solidarity required to defeat these schemes and other attacks like them.

In brief

Mirror, mirror

The editor of the Mirror has been sacked due to unknowingly publishing fake pictures of British soldiers abusing Iraqi prisoners. The question now arises why newspaper editors should be subject to more stringent rules of 'truthfulness' than politicians? Blair went to war on the back of 'dodgy dossiers'. No one, from the PM downwards, has resigned as a result of the failure to find WMDs. Why? What of the MPs who told their constituents Iraq had long-range missiles and WMD? None of them have admitted that these facts were wrong. Moreover, Blair's lies were faithfully

reported by the pro-war media. Will we now see the resignation of the editors whose headlines read "45 minutes from doom"? It is doubtful. What of those newspapers which during the war reported (in some detail) events which, the next day, were admitted not to have happened? Why have the editors of those papers which reported, say, the uprising in Basra not been sacked?

Clearly some mistakes are worse than others. But, it will be argued, Morgan's actions were irresponsible and have 'put our lads in Iraq at serious risk'. Strange logic as it was Blair's lies which have placed 'our lads' in danger.

Moreover, 'our lads' have, according to Amnesty International and the Red Cross, been abusing prisoners.

Sadly this has been obscured by the furore over the authenticity of the Mirror's pictures. One thing is sure, if the media had investigated the government's assertions about Iraqi WMD it is doubtful we would be in Iraq now.

Sainsbury

Sainsbury's have cut staff bonuses, while simultaneously giving the two top executives at the company bonuses worth £3 million – equivalent to £300

for each and every member of staff at the company.

Chairman Sir Peter Davis was awarded £2.4 million in share options, with chief exec Justin King getting over £500,000, while 100,000 staff have lost their £100 Christmas bonuses.

The cancelling of Christmas, along with an additional earnings related bonus scheme, was blamed on the company's weak performance in recent months.

Instead, in a wonderful show of sensitivity, 5% will be added to the staff discount over the holiday period, allowing staff to recoup their bonuses – as long as they spend £1,500 in-store first.

Sir Davis has presided over Sainsbury's worst performance of recent times, with profits down by 8.5 per cent last year, while King has been in the job for a mere eight weeks. Sainsbury's staff have by contrast been winning awards for their conduct over the same time period.

In terms of pure performance, the general staff have more than earned their way, being so highly spoken of that 60% of cases they've been classified as 'worth a bonus' by shoppers.

Sir Davis meanwhile has frittered tens of millions of pounds on revamps and upgrades of existing stores, which are failing to bring in customers.

International

Water wars

Northern Irish anarchists try and emulate the success of comrades in the south by fighting the introduction of water charges

On Wednesday 21st April Organise! held a public meeting in Belfast, 'Fighting to Win - Beating the Water Tax'. The meeting was addressed by Dermot Sreenan of the Workers Solidarity Movement, who had been involved in the two and a half year campaign which defeated water charges in the south in December 1996. Direct action, obstruction of attempted disconnects, 'illegal' reconnection of water supplies to those who had been cut off, households contributing to a legal defence fund and mass non-payment made this tax a nightmare for the Irish state to enforce. This resulted in a clear victory for working class self organisation. The same can be done in the north.

The Federation of Dublin Anti-Water Charges Campaigns, of which Dermot was an active member, was based on resistance - street by street, community by community. Each and every person involved in this campaign was crucial.

The lessons are clear and time is short. Government are looking to implement Water Charges in April 2006. Anti-Water Charges groups must be built in working class communities over the coming months. Central to the building of the campaign must be non-payment of any water charges. Many cannot afford to pay but some may be able to meet the cost by tightening their belts. The point is that working class people should not be the ones expected to

tighten their belts. Industry which is at present metered uses over 50% of water yet ordinary people will be expected to cover around 70% of the projected costs.

Water Charges are an unjust double tax, despite what government tells us water has always been paid for in our rates. With around 37% of our rates bills paying for water. Only mass non-payment, in solidarity with those who cannot afford to have their water turned into a commodity, will defeat water charges. By making them unenforceable.

Government claim that due to years of under investment, by them, that the water service must be self-financing. They claim privatisation is not on the agenda but all the options to induce private investment will see demands for a 'return' - a profit from the supply of a basic human necessity. Yet they have money aplenty to invest in war and the arms trade. £300 million has been spent on not finding any weapons of mass destruction in Iraq. What's going on? Government have plenty of money to spend to help pursue the interests of the rich and powerful - they don't want to keep spending the taxes they take off workers on the working class. This is a struggle which we cannot afford to lose. If we do we can be sure more attacks will follow, whether implemented by Westminster or our local 'representatives' at Stormont. However, when we do win we will set them and their neo-liberal agenda of attacks on working people back years. Such a victory will inspire confidence in the working class and



knowledge that together, despite our trade union 'leaders' and politicians, we can achieve great things.

Government plans for water reform will mean massive job losses, the running down of services and the introduction of charges for water use. Water charges for Northern Ireland are set to be amongst the highest in the UK - bearing in mind that sewerage and water charges in Scotland are up to £1,300 per year - a bill of between £400 and £600 appears the most likely annual charge at this stage. The charging regime is likely to be based on property value and

there will be no exemptions. A 25% discount, which has been suggested for people claiming certain 'passport' benefits, is not aimed at assisting the poorest and most vulnerable in our society. This is a cynical manipulation, an attempt to secure greater public and political acceptance. This is, according to internal Government recommendations, to be a temporary measure paid for by the hiking up of water charges across the board to subsidise this 'assistance'.

Meanwhile the new Water Services boss is on a salary of £150,000 plus bonuses to ensure they push this through.

The Water Service aim to cut 350 jobs initially and centralise work. The total number of jobs lost could be up to 900. Job losses and centralisation of services will further erode services in outlying and rural districts.

While Minister John Spellar has stated that privatisation is not an option *all* the options being looked at are privatisation by different means.

This article originally appeared in 'Working Class Resistance' the official bulletin of Organise! (Ireland).

For more info see www.organiseireland.org

No pipeline

A UK parliamentary committee has attacked the powerful Export Credit Guarantees Department (ECGD) for not checking thoroughly the environmental and social implications of BP's new Baku-Ceyhan pipeline. The Trade and Industry Committee chair Martin O'Neill castigated the ECGD for not checking on BP's recent human rights and environmental record regarding the pipeline before issuing \$150 million in cover for the project.

Unfortunately, as the committee has very little actual authority, the chances of anything actually changing are slim, so it seems likely the cover will continue to be honoured for the foreseeable future. The pipeline, which runs from Azerbaijan to Turkey, is intended to transport the Caspian region's oil reserve - thought to be worth \$4 trillion - to the West.

But cost cutting by BT, the oil giant

in charge, and a lack of accountability to the people whose lands it is building on, has led to severe criticism in recent months. In Azerbaijan for example, it is hoped the line will lead to enormous revenues for the poverty stricken country. It looks likely however that these revenues will never see the light of day, as the number of people actually employed in Oil will be minimal.

The government are talking about using any revenues gained to help the state oil company, SOCAR, establish a major presence in world Oil production rather than ploughing it back into national growth in the country's main employer, agriculture. As a result, when privatisation follows, the Azerbaijani people will see none of the oil money promised, which will all go to wealthy elites both in the country and outside it.

For more information on the campaign against the pipeline see www.risingtide.org.uk

You vote, they rule

Anarchists argue that in a capitalist democracy the government is always (to quote Malatesta) the bourgeoisie's gendarme. If it were not, if it was to act in ways opposed to the interests of the ruling class, it would quickly be brought back under control. The recent electoral events in India are a striking confirmation of anarchist theory.

In modern 'democracies' capital gets a bigger vote than the electorate. In developing countries this is most obviously the case. For example, during the last election in Brazil there was a major campaign to warn Brazilians that the markets would crash if Lula was elected. The prospect of a capital strike ensured that Lula pledged not to rock the boat. Since being elected to 'power' he has kept his pledge to capital and, like any government, betrayed its promises to the people.

Similar developments have occurred

In India. The Congress Party can only form the government with the support of the Left parties, none of which are particularly radical or socialist. Faced with a left of centre party, the Indian stock markets crashed. The primary index initially fell by about 6%. It fell again by another 11% after it became known that the Left parties would not join the ruling coalition, seeking to get greater leverage by supporting the Congress Party from the floor of Parliament.

Needless to say, this puts a real damper on the policies of any government. In India, the head of the Congress Party, Sonia Gandhi, has refused to become Prime Minister. The stock markets, which had fallen so dramatically at the surprise electoral defeat of the pro-market BJP party, rallied strongly when this became known. Gandhi has suggested that Manmohan Singh for the post.

Needless to say, it is doubtful that she would implement different policies than Singh but what counts is that throughout India Manmohan Singh is the person most closely associated with 'neoliberalism'. Proving this, he quickly announced that as far as economic policy is concerned nothing would be altered. This in spite of the obvious fact that his party benefited from a vote against the last six years of economic 'reform'.

So India's new prime minister has been determined by the actions of the financial markets. The politicians are selecting a government which will keep the markets happy rather than what the people voted for. What a striking example of the role of stock markets as a way for the very rich as a class to own the productive capital stock of an economy as a whole and, consequently, to bring a potentially rebel government to heel. Isn't democracy grand?

Feature

Bakunin's ideas

As we approach the anniversary of Mikhail Bakunin's birth, Iain McKay takes look at his revolutionary ideas

On 30th May it will be the 190th anniversary of the birth of Mikhail Bakunin. Undoubtedly, Bakunin is one of the key anarchist thinkers and activists of the nineteenth century. Yet Bakunin's ideas are less well known than they should be outside the anarchist movement. This is due to the fact that Marxists hate him while liberals cannot understand him. Their combined distortions of his ideas have ensured that many radicals have failed to read him and see for themselves the power of his theories. So why should we be interested in what a dead Russian had to say?

Bakunin's revolutionary ideas were rooted in materialism. For him, "facts are before ideas" and the ideal was "but a flower, whose root lies in the material conditions of existence." Rejecting the abstract individualism of liberalism theories, he saw that real freedom was possible only when economic and social equality existed: "No man can achieve his own emancipation without at the same time working for the emancipation of all men around him. My freedom is the freedom of all since I am not truly free in thought and in fact, except when my freedom and my rights are confirmed and approved in the freedom and rights of all men who are my equals."

For Bakunin, "man in isolation can have no awareness of his liberty ... Liberty is therefore a feature not of isolation but of interaction, not of exclusion but rather of connection." As capitalism glorifies the abstract individual, it "proclaims free will, and on the ruins of every liberty founds authority." Anarchism, however, "rejects the principle of authority" which was the "eminently theological, metaphysical and political idea that the masses, always incapable of governing themselves, must submit at all times to the benevolent yoke of a wisdom and a justice, which in one way or another, is imposed from above."

Given his love of freedom and hostility to hierarchy, Bakunin also rejected the state, capitalism and religion. In essay 'God and the State' Bakunin argued the necessity of atheism, for "if God is, man is a slave; now, man can and must be free, then, God does not exist" for the "idea of God implies the abdication of human reason and justice; it is the most decisive negation of human liberty, and necessarily ends in the enslavement of mankind, both in theory and in practice."

As well as opposing divine authority, he rejected more concrete ones as well. The state, he argued, is an instrument of class rule. It "is the organised authority, domination and power of the possessing classes over the masses" and

"denotes force, authority, predominance; it presupposes inequality in fact." This inequality in power is required to maintain class society and so the state has evolved a hierarchical and centralised structure: "Every state power, every government, by its nature places itself outside and over the people and inevitably subordinates them to an organisation and to aims which are foreign to and opposed to the real needs and aspirations of the people."

Bakunin argued that under capitalism "the worker sells his person and his liberty for a given time." Property meant for the capitalist "the power and the right, guaranteed by the State, to live ... by exploiting the work of someone else." For Bakunin, the consistent libertarian must also be a socialist, as "only associated labour, that is, labour organised upon the principles of reciprocity and co-operation, is adequate to the task of maintaining ... civilised society."

His opposition to oppression was not limited to just the economy. He opposed sexism and supported the equality and liberty of women. His opposition to imperialism is well known, for Bakunin "every people, like every person, ... has a right to be itself."

Bakunin was no passive critic of the existing system. He took part in the First International and saw collective class struggle and organisation as the means of both fighting for improvements today and as the means of creating a free society. "Organise the city proletariat in the name of revolutionary Socialism," he argued, "and in doing this unite it into one preparatory organisation together with the peasantry." Prefiguring anarcho-syndicalism, he stressed that anarchists should take an active part in the labour movement for "to create a people's force capable of crushing the military and civil force of the State, it is necessary to organise the proletariat." He stressed the importance of the strike and saw the general strike as a means to revolution.

His activity in the First International brought him into conflict with Marxism. He rejected Marx's ideas for numerous reasons. He opposed the participation of radicals in bourgeois elections, correctly predicting that when "the workers ... send common workers ... to Legislative Assemblies ... The worker-deputies, transplanted into a bourgeois environment ... will in fact cease to be workers and, becoming Statesmen, they will become bourgeois." Instead of political action, he argued for "the social (and therefore anti-political) organisation and power of the working masses of the cities and villages."

As for Marx's "dictatorship of the proletariat," Bakunin rejected it for two

reasons. Firstly, as Marx himself admitted, the peasantry and artisans made up the majority of the working masses in every European country bar the UK. This meant Marx's vision of "revolution" excluded the majority of working people. Secondly, he doubted whether the whole proletariat would actually govern in the new state. Rather "by popular government" the Marxists "mean government of the people by a small number of representatives elected by the people ... universal suffrage ... is a lie behind which lies the despotism of a ruling minority is concealed." Lenin's regime proved him right.

Bakunin's opposition to the "workers' state" had nothing to do with organising or defending a revolution, as Marxists claim. Bakunin was clear that "in order to defend the revolution ... volunteers will ... form a communal militia." These would "federate ... for common defence." His opposition to Marxism rested on the question of power. If working class emancipation was to be genuine, the state had to be destroyed. For if "the whole proletariat ... [are] members of the government ... there will be no government, no state, but, if there is to be a state there will be those who are ruled and those who are slaves." Thus anarchists do "not accept, even in the process of revolutionary transition, either constituent assemblies, provisional governments or so-called revolutionary dictatorships; because we are convinced that revolution is only sincere, honest and real in the hands of the masses, and that when it is concentrated in those of a few ruling individuals it inevitably and immediately becomes reaction."

Instead of a 'revolutionary' government ruling the masses from above in a centralised state, an anarchist revolution would be based on a federation of communes and workers' councils. The "federative Alliance of all working men's associations ... [would] constitute the Commune" and so the "future social organisation must be made solely from the bottom upwards, by the free association or federation of workers, firstly in their unions, then in the communes, regions, nations and finally in a great federation, international and universal." The councils from bottom to top would be composed of "delegates ... vested with plenary but accountable and removable mandates."

The basic structure created by the revolution would be based on the working classes own combat organisations, created in their struggles within, but against, capitalism. And these, not a ruling party, would make the decisions: "Since revolution everywhere must be created by the people and supreme control must always belong to the people organised



in a free federation of agricultural and industrial associations ... organised from the bottom upwards by means of revolutionary delegation." The revolutionary group "influences the people exclusively through the natural, personal influence of its members, who have not the slightest power."

Bakunin's vision of revolution was also directed against capitalism. One of its first acts was the workers making "a clean sweep of all the instruments of labour, every kind of capital and building." For "no revolution could succeed ... unless it was simultaneously a political and a social revolution."

The new, free, society would be organised "from the bottom-up," as a "truly popular organisation begins from below, from the association, from the commune. Thus starting out with the organisation of the lowest nucleus and proceeding upward, federalism becomes a political institution of socialism, the free and spontaneous organisation of popular life." Economically, wage slavery would be replaced by co-operative production, which would "flourish and reach its full potential only in a society where the land, the instruments of production, and hereditary property will be owned and operated by the workers themselves: by their freely organised federations of industrial and agricultural workers."

In this way, "every human being should have the material and moral means to develop his humanity." Bakunin's anarchism was about changing society and abolishing all forms of authoritarian social relationship, putting life before the spirit-destroying nature of the state and capitalism. For the anarchist "takes his stand on his positive right to life and all its pleasures, both intellectual, moral and physical. He loves life, and intends to enjoy it to the full."

The Anarchist Federation's pamphlet *Basic Bakunin* is a good, cheap and short introduction to the ideas of Bakunin. Those looking for a more substantial account of his life and ideas then Bakunin: *The Philosophy of Freedom* by Brian Morris is highly recommended. However, reading Bakunin's writings first hand is always the best. *Freedom Press' Marxism, Freedom and the State* is a good, short, collection of texts. Bakunin on Anarchism is a comprehensive collection of his works while *The Basic Bakunin* contains some key essays. Bakunin's classic essay *God and the State* is still available and is highly recommended while his only book *Statism and Anarchy* has recently been reprinted. Volume one of the anthology *No Gods, No Masters* contains his key works.

Editorial

On 10th June we're being asked to go and vote for politicians in some cases and political parties in others to 'represent' us in local and international levels of government. Both the far-left (RESPECT) and the far-right (the BNP) have thrown themselves onto the electoral bandwagon, both sides thinking that they're on the verge of a breakthrough, RESPECT because they've watered down their socialist politics to appeal to people who took part in the anti-war movement, and Britain's Muslim community, and the BNP because they've watered down their neo-Nazi politics and no appeal to the disenfranchised white working class.

Both RESPECT and the BNP have high-profile leaders with very dodgy politics and personal connections, George Galloway and Nick Griffin respectively. One went to Iraq to visit Saddam Hussein, the other went to Libya to meet Colonel Gaddafi. From reading either parties propaganda you would think that they were about to take power but the reality is far from it, it is unlikely that RESPECT will get many if any seats across the country, and whilst the BNP will without doubt fare better than the SWP's latest front group. They've been struggling to keep hold of the few seats they have already won.

Some anarchists have tried to encourage tactical voting against the BNP, but really what is the point? Will encouraging people to take to the polling booths and vote for those who are making the fascists strong solve any long term problems? It is a poorly thought out strategy with very short term results. The reason that people turn to parties like the BNP is because they are disillusioned with the main stream parties, and feel alienated. If the New Labour government and the corporate media were not whipping up hysteria about asylum seekers the BNP would not have grown as fast as they have recently, coupled with the lack of investment in working class communities and other social factors we can see why people turn to parties like the BNP.

As anarchists we should be trying to tackle issues like housing, poor public transport, lack of investment in education and the health service, low benefits. Unless we can address issues like these with a real relevance to peoples everyday lives we will struggle to build a mass working class anarchist movement, and are likely to stay small and ignored. The BNP have tried to go down this road, but are floundering now people have discovered that they cannot deliver what they have been promising.

We should leave the electioneering to those who think there is still a future in it, and become more active in our communities and workplaces, trying to build a movement which can abolish capitalism and the state, and create anarchy.

Quiz answers

1. Francisco Ponzan, a Spanish anarchist who organised escape networks in occupied Europe for anarchists and even allied airmen.
2. 'The Miners' Next Step: Being a Suggested Scheme for the Reorganisation of the Federation'. Basically, a syndicalist pamphlet that marks one of the high points of that phase of workers resistance and organisation in this country.
3. The German left communist Otto Ruehle. Not an anarchist, though many anarchists have amplified his argument.
4. They had refused to work on an order destined for apartheid South Africa.

Commentary

More GM ...

Further to Donald Room (Freedom, 1st May), it is incompatible with anarchism to support state laws that ban activities (for example the use of drugs or driving a motor bike without a crash helmet) even if they are known to be harmful or dangerous.

The only method of banning anything that is consistent with anarchism is to persuade people not to do it. So if you want to get rid of GM food persuade enough people to boycott the stuff and the wicked capitalists (who are only interested in profit) will abandon the project, if enough people give up smoking the cost of supplying the remaining demand will make the cost of smoking prohibitive.

The idea put around even by some so called anarchists that we should support a stronger state in the face of the multinationals is misguided at best and disingenuous at worst. States and multinationals have a symbiotic relationship, the state provides the multinationals with 'protection' (sending the police or army in to crush strikes etc) and finance (export credit guarantee for example) for projects for which there is no 'market demand'.

If for example the state takes more tax from multinationals, this would simply give them an even bigger interest in the commercial success of the company, the point is to destroy the Nestlé's of this world not regulate, reform, or worst still nationalise them, and that can be achieved by a consumer boycott.

One more thing, as a result of taxation in this country at least the state makes more money out of tobacco and alcohol than any of the capitalists involved.

Edmund McArthur

I suppose Richard Alexander is right when he says anarchism, "strictly defined," is incompatible with demanding anything of a government. But strict definition is not what I am advocating. I embrace a wishy-washy libertarian socialism, which is incompatible with demanding a ban on a food plant not known to be harmful, but sees nothing wrong with shouting "Ban the Bomb".

Iain McKay evidently believes the field tests of fodder maize are invalid "simply because (the non-GM plots) used a pesticide which is soon to be banned," i.e. that the only non-GM maize investigated was laced with atrazine. This mistaken belief may have been taken from the politician Michael Meacher, who said it in a television interview. No doubt an honest error, but if Mr Meacher issued a correction, I have not seen it broadcast or published anywhere.

In fact, four different non-GM maize farming regimes, and one GM regime, were compared for their effects on wildlife (see Nature, 18th March 2004, pages 313-316). The GM method was shown to be marginally less harmful or to be not just marginally worse, but disastrous. Banning it must be counted a healthy outcome of anti-GM propaganda, because without such propaganda, it would never have been tested.

I agree with Richard that nothing in anarchism, is either for or against GM technology as such, but I have encountered comrades who have been persuaded to see GM as an unmitigable evil. This correspondence may have encouraged a few to think.

Donald Room

Brought up

Roy Emery asks if I have ever talked to anarchist parents. Of course I have. But even if I hadn't, doesn't the question remain the same? What would it mean to say you are an anarchist if you don't try to live by your principles? Are you a 'philosophical' anarchist? And is that any kind of anarchist at all?

It is surely a matter of course that we try to behave according to our principles. Roy asks on what evidence this is based. It is based on the premise that if our principles really are our principles, then we ought to be able to show that they are. And perhaps also show that they work. What better place to start to show this than in the family? After all, anarchy begins at home.

Steve McKee

About two years ago, this guy came to live in our house. His presence there has had its moments, but life has changed for the other people in the house. You see, this guy doesn't contribute to the finances of the household; he has smashed other people's property; he makes so much noise at night that it's impossible to sleep; he's used violence against at least one member of the household with no apparent regret. I've tried reasoning with him. There are times when I come home knackered from work and he starts shouting at me. "Hold on!" I say, "Daddy's tired, give me a minute to sit down." But to no avail. I'm sure that many parents reading this will be able to sympathise.

So, I was a bit narked to read Steve McKee's article about Libertarian Parenthood. If I want prescriptive articles about how to raise my children, I'll buy the Daily Mail. Steve asks "what does it mean to say that you're an anarchist" if you raise your child in any way other than a libertarian way? I would imagine that this extends to those so-called anarchists who contribute to the upkeep of the state through taxes, even funding the police force through their monthly council tax payments. "It is about living by your principles," Steve informs his readers. But if anarchists really lived by their principles, they'd be in hiding, in jail or in the grave. In the current situation, being an anarchist (for me) means trying to extend my political and philosophical ideals to as many areas of my life as possible. That includes the way I raise my children (and I apologise to those people who object to my referring to them as 'my children'). There is no 'libertarian way'. There are a multitude of libertarian ways.

The problem with approaching child-care as if children are the same as any other kind of human being is that it overlooks one small fact - they're not. Their brains are developing; they are experiencing a huge amount of experiences for the very first time; they are living in a society that is as far removed from the natural state of things as it is possible to be and they have no idea of how to interact with it in a way that is safe and beneficial to all. In this, they need guiding.

Whilst my children are not suicidal, my youngest loves climbing and opening things. He has now worked out how to climb onto a windowsill and has started to explore the complexities of the window catch. I am lucky to have a very loving relationship with my children, yet my 'advice' that he not climb onto window ledges is habitually ignored. I use my superior strength to remove him; when he tries to assert himself, I raise my voice and directly prohibit him from doing it; if he

ignores me, I have even been known to give him a smack.

Which brings us on to smacking. Loathe as I am to address the same issues as the Daily Mail, I would like to respond to Steve's arguments. I strongly believe that violence is always to be avoided as much as possible. Consequently, I am resolutely against smacking. Yet I have smacked my children. On each and every occasion, this has been an act of frustration or a lack of control on my behalf. And that is what I don't like about these prescriptive guides to childrearing: they very often preach the ideal to people whose lives are far from ideal. You are a bad parent if you shout at your child; if you fail to engage in meaningful debate, you are ruining the relationship between your child and yourself. But the fact of the matter is that sometimes you are exhausted, frightened, preoccupied and your reaction to the demands of your child is not what you would like it to be. Ask any mother who is locked up in a house all day with two screaming kids. The last thing you need to hear at that moment is that you're a bad parent because of your reaction. Rather than condemn or praise the parent who has smacked their child, we need to consider how we can offer support and help to both parents and children who need it.

Steve writes that "children are an oppressed group." It is equally true to say that they are also an oppressive group. Ask any parent how many sacrifices they have been forced to make because of their kids and sit down as the long list begins. "But you chose to have kids," is not an argument that washes with me. It reminds me too much of the arguments that the bosses use for turning down pay rises: "You signed up for this job in full knowledge of pay and conditions." People may have chosen to have kids, but how many parents find that raising a child is just how they'd imagined it would be?

Steve's article ended with a list of instructions for how to be a better parent. I would like to end my reply in a similar vein: anarchist parents should ... not tell other people how to raise their children; not feel qualified to comment upon the failings of other people; not be fooled into thinking that what works for them will work for everyone else.

Now to go and see who's making that bloody racket ...

Diego Garcia

Upset

What a dismal, banal read the 15th May 2004 issue of Freedom provided. The articles on torture were more superficial than the coverage in the broadsheet press. There was no attempt - at a time when the British government was seeking to escape responsibility by crying 'fake' - to examine either earlier allegations of torture in Iraq by UK squaddies, or look at Britain's history of torture in Kenya, Malaysia, the Six Counties.

Worst of the lot though was Steve McKee's Crime and Punishment piece. He spent most of the article putting forward a routine critique of the criminal justice system - it discriminates, it "is there to protect the wealthy from the working class" et al, and correctly identifying the root of crime in the collapse of human solidarity. He then offered as a solution, a load of clap trap about restorative justice!

Anarchists don't seem able to come up with a critique of restorative justice schemes, which says something about

the poor state of anarchist theory. It shouldn't though be such an uphill task. The system of bourgeois law upon which the criminal justice system is based offers us a formal 'equality before the law' which is undermined by substantial inequality in everyday life. Bourgeois law is based on the notion of 'inalienable', 'self-evident' rights - but in practice, as the satirist Anatole France once put it, this amounts to no more than the 'right' of rich and poor to sleep under bridges - while one party has the choice (and property) not to need to do so. It follows therefore that any community - based scheme set up under the auspices of bourgeois law will embody the same contradictions, as is indeed the case with restorative justice schemes.

Restorative justice is about conflict resolution. I don't believe conflict resolution is something anarchists should necessarily seek. How do you resolve the conflict between tenant and landlord, debtor and bailiff, parent and drug dealer? The modern state needs as little in the way of active civil society as possible in order to function effectively. Recent years have seen some working class communities begin to take issues of anti-working class crime into their own hands. The predictable accusations of 'vigilantism' have been accompanied by the establishment of a restorative justice industry peopled with academics, offering a state-sponsored version of community accountability. In 1997 New Labour hailed restorative justice as a model for "restoration, reintegration and responsibility." That pretty much gives the game away.

Proponents of restorative justice such as Martin Wright and Adam Crawford have described the 'referral orders' used in relation to first time young offenders as a success, even though the youth offending teams they refer to are really the local probation service and a few do-gooding hangers-on. Referral orders are orders of the court - hence part of the criminal justice mechanism, not independent of it. Should anarchists really be embracing this shite?

Anti-working class crime can be solved only through the self-organisation and politicisation of working class communities. As for the rest, if the choice is posed as between retribution and restoration-then the choice is a false one. Isn't it time as anarchists we called instead for redistribution?

John Shute

Voting

My advocacy of a 'limited and tactical anarchist electoralism' clearly upset Paul Petard. I've hurled plenty of demagogic abuse in my time, Paul, and very intoxicating it is too. Now, as a recovering 'hate-aholic', I realise that indulging that side of myself only isolated me further and made me unhappier.

Afflicted by an All-or-Nothing fundamentalist mindset, I was turning anarchism into a cult for separating from others (fools, enemies and traitors everywhere I looked!), instead of developing it as a fruitful way to connect with a rich variety of folk (flawed like me) in a shades-of-grey world involving complexity, ambiguity, uncertainty, and the honest recognition of cross-cutting patterns of virtues and failings in different social groups and traditions.

Roy Emery claims that we anarchists are too few to swing elections: Yet over the years our non-voting propaganda has helped to make voting 'uncool' among much wider circles, thus

REVIEW

Xena Young reviews *The Cookie Project* at the London Lesbian and Gay Film Festival on tour throughout the UK until September

This year, the eighteenth LGFF, showpieces one of the still remaining controversial areas of gender identity and sexuality, transsexualism. Black American lesbian film maker Stephanie Wynne's documentary style film, *The Cookie Project*, takes up the challenge in a very sensitive, but down to earth way.

Derwin Fields is a black man who has served in the US army and is now a cop in the Los Angeles Police Department. He is married, with two children and is the model of conformity. Three years later he has 'changed sex' and is an out lesbian. Derwin is now Cookie, the nickname was acquired due to her passion for biscuits. She met up with Stephanie Wynne after placing a personal advert in GBF (Gay Black Female) magazine, which Wynne also edits. She thought it would be a good subject for a film.

Derwin's internal struggle is not unusual as many male to female transwomen try to prove to themselves that they are really men, by being extremely macho. The idea that people 'change sex' due to a sudden whim fails to understand the internal emotional struggle that trans people go through to survive and come out the other side in one piece. We still live in a very straight world and not to conform is not the easy option. Gay people can be invisible, but for transpeople it is not so easy.

This sixty-minute film concentrates on the journey from male to female and

the place in between. Cookie is a real transwoman, not an actor, who makes a potentially challenging subject accessible due to her good humour and honesty. A transwoman friend of mine could not understand why a male to female transgender person was a lesbian, why bother 'changing sex'? Although *The Cookie Project* did not explicitly deal with this issue in any depth, Cookie identified with the female gender (gender identity), but was attracted to other women (sexuality), which is not uncommon for transwomen. It is the separation of identity and sexuality that people can find difficult to understand.

If you're looking for an overtly political documentary about transgender this is not the film, as it is completely non-judgemental. Cookie explains her situation as 'god's will' and is a member of the Unity Church, established by a gay pastor. She travels to Thailand for the gender reassignment operation, as it is cheaper than in the US.

However, the redeeming feature of *The Cookie Project* is the section that concentrates on the 'sex change', the transformation of the penis into a neo-vagina. This is not for the squeamish. I kept my eyes pretty firmly shut, as the 150-minute operation is condensed into twenty minutes, with the occasional peek. Cookie, who was attending the festival, left at this stage as even she could not face watching all the gore close-up on the big screen!

Biologically you cannot change your

sex, as your chromosomes fix sex, but you can change your gender. Fortunately, for male to female transwomen the creation of the neo-vagina is now a very successful procedure, as long as you have access to a good surgeon, but for female to males the situation is currently not so good when it comes to creating a neo-penis.

Changing gender is not in itself a revolutionary act, but the demand for a society that allows people to determine their own gender and then gives them not only emotional support and help, but also provides free access to medical procedures, if desired, would be. With the health service under attack by the Labour government, trans people are not a priority where it really matters, giving them the full emotional and medical support they require. While the government is introducing a gender recognition bill to allow birth certificates to be changed, to show a person's new gender, this will not be of much practical use if you still look like your previous gender. Under capitalism, if you have the money, you can buy what you want, but that means most of us, working class lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender or straight, have to live a lottery when it comes to health care.

LGFF tour info www.lgff.org.uk

Copies of the film are available from gbfmagazine.com

National transgender support groups: FTM Network, BM Network, London WC1N 3XX. The Gender Trust helpline 07000 790347



READING

The Economics of Freedom: an anarcho-syndicalist alternative to capitalism
SolFed Booklets, 2003
£2.50

This is an excellent, if flawed, little pamphlet. Written by a group of people in the Solidarity Federation, the UK section of the International Workers Association, it is an attempt to explain how a libertarian communist society could work. The aim of such a society is "to guarantee liberty and equality" for all and, unsurprisingly, these principles are at the heart of both their model and their criticism of capitalism.

The pamphlet itself is split into three parts. They present a good, if condensed, critique of capitalism, contrasting the 'free market' economic ideology used to justify capitalism with its reality. As they note, the modern economy is far from the idyllic picture painted in the economic textbooks or politicians speeches: inequalities of wealth and power, concentration of capital, state intervention on behalf of the boss class, slumps, etc. all ensure that. The casual reader may, however, get confused by the pamphlet's use of the term 'free market' to describe both capitalism and the economic model. They also provide a good (if extremely summarised) account of the limitations of markets in such areas

as the environment and quality of life.

The second part is a description of libertarian communism, stressing how different it is from what was labelled 'communism' in the Stalinist states. It is about creating a social environment which would promote individuality and individual liberty, not "suppressing free speech, freedom of thought or positive aspect of individuality." They stress such a society can only be created when "people support it and are involved in running it." Solidarity is the key and the pamphlet counters claims that community and individuality are at odds: "individual freedom and welfare can only be promoted in an environment where we all work together and respect, not dominate, each other." This is pretty much common sense, although sadly ignored by capitalist dogma which equates picking masters with liberty.

The pamphlet argues (correctly) that human nature is not fixed and depends on social structures. They argue that "our consciousness would change if our society and economy were to change." This exposes one weakness of the pamphlet, namely the fact that for libertarian communism to be created consciousness must change first and this can only be done by social struggle and direct action. This is implied in the section on democratising the future, but it would have been nice if it had been

made explicit. Without stressing that the class struggle is the school of anarchy, that the framework of a libertarian society is created through struggle and that this changes the ideas and hopes of those involved, it makes it harder for many to envision how we can replace capitalism.

The last section is on Democracy and Planning. It discusses direct democracy, usefully explaining the difference between delegates (elected, mandated and recallable) with representatives (elected to decide for us). The pamphlet, correctly, places the federation of community and workplace assemblies at the heart of libertarian communism. Sadly, the actual plan for how such a society would work is flawed. It correctly stresses the need to factor in non-economic issues in resource allocation decisions and the need to prioritise certain projects above others, but seems to consider it sufficient to create a computer model to aid the planning process. This is doubtful for three reasons.

Firstly, such a programme would be extremely difficult (if not impossible) to develop. Secondly, it would be impossible to programme in sufficient local knowledge and changing circumstances to make it work. Thirdly, libertarian communism cannot be dependent on computers. This is because the computers may fail, most of the world does not

have them and, most importantly, we will need to work and eat while any programme is being created. And boiling down complex economic and social decisions into a programme will result in a similar hiding of real social costs as the market does. This is not to say that computers are not to be utilised, they are important aids but nothing more. The authors are aware of this, noting that workers "do not need precise directions from the computer," but I feel they are too dependent on computer technology as a means of countering objections. So while authors are right on the need for "calculating the cost" of economic activity, their proposed solution is flawed. I also have to object to the suggestion of recording my consumption on a card!

Of course the authors are aware that a libertarian communist society would be created from below, by the participation of all, and are sensible enough to stress this is just one vision. They also recognise that "there is clearly no one true 'blueprint' for a libertarian communist economy - local communities and federations of communities will have autonomy as to what economic system they use, subject to the basic anarcho-syndicalist principles." Hopefully this pamphlet will get people thinking about what kind of society we want and how to get there as well as the problems it

could face.

Our task today is to spread anarchist ideas and bring that day of social experimentation closer. As the authors say, "breaking free and going for direct democracy is the only way to secure the future for ourselves and our children." If the authors gave more space to the process of creating libertarian communism and revised the suggestions on planning to be more dynamic and less computer orientated, it would improve any second edition of this pamphlet immensely. At it stands, SolFed can be congratulated in getting a necessary discussion started even if the actual details of the pamphlet's vision are lacking in key areas.

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Commentary

page 6

contributing to the situation Richard Griffin portrays. Of course turn-out is falling, especially among the young, but so are outdoors exercise and inter-generational contact, does that make such trends pointers to a way forward rather than signs of demoralisation?

However comforting it is for us to count non-voters as proto-anarchists, the sad truth is that the majority are confused and in pain, susceptible to manipulation through fear or their desires for other people to blame and instant solutions. At one point Richard begins to point this way ("Declining support for liberalism coupled with the collapse of Marxism should create opportunities for anarchism. One though does not follow the other.") only to conclude by asserting the opposite: A decline in liberalism "can only be good news for anarchism."

Richard doesn't discuss evidence marshalled by the Electoral Reform Society and Make Votes Count which highlights how seat-specific are people's calculations of whether it will be worth their bother to vote; nor how the specific kind of voting system used increasingly affects the logic by which people vote and should thus nuance our assessment of the problems and (limited) potentials of representative democracy.

I agree that consensus and participatory democracy are of more everyday relevance to us, but even there the precise methods used can make a big difference - e.g. Lenin's manipulation (through their class hatred) of macho anarchist 'ice-breakers' to dissolve the 'bourgeois' Duma in the name of a 'superior and direct' democracy which basically boiled down to a much worse form of Fratriarchy - rule by unaccountable male gangs.)

Like all traditions, 'liberalism' is deeply flawed. It isn't just one thing, much less a static thing incapable of further evolution and progressive symbiosis with people power movements. It is certainly not just a reactionary ideology privileging 'the economic' and the 'private' (so-called 'neo-liberalism'). Rudolf Rocker's 'Nationalism and Culture' pays a much more generous tribute to political liberalism as the matrix out of which anarchism evolved.

I feel that my first paragraph must have been psychologically invisible to Iain McKay. To repeat: "Of course our main concern should be organising for resistance and alternatives from the bottom up. But depending on how elections go this everyday organising can be made harder or less hard." And I might have added: 'Are Spanish comrades really saying that the recent change of government makes no difference to the possibility of anti-war and grassroots developments in Spain?'

At any rate Iain replied against a straw position I do not hold: as if I was arguing for heavy focus on elections and involvement in parties on their own terms and with the expectation that

they can "create anarchy for us."

Why is it 'ignoring our ideas' or a 'diversion' to use elections as an opportunity to reach out to people and parties on an independent footing?, e.g. advocating tactical voting on a pragmatic seat-by-seat basis as www.dumpblair.co.uk does, rather than joining in the chorus of those who encourage voters only to vote for our One True Brand (whether Red, Green, Nationalist or Lib Dem)?

Why can't we criticise the 'Superman/woman Will Do It For You' stance of most candidates but also acknowledge that some parties and individuals are more or less sincere in wanting to help further the work and aims of grassroots community groups and campaigns, and without trying to extract a 'political surplus' for their party?

It is much too simple to equate elected representatives with 'the State' as 'an instrument of class oppression': I go rather with Ward and Landauer: 'we destroy [the State] by contracting other relationships, by behaving differently'. Of course being sucked in to compromise after compromise is one danger, but purist rejectionism mesmerised by simplistic, unexamined metaphors (like 'instrument', 'machine', 'smash', etc.) holds equal and opposite dangers. Staying in dialogue with the constructive elements in the mainstream and meeting them half-way where honestly possible may be a more skillful strategy for helping things evolve in new creative living and working arrangements and in more responsible, equal and caring relationships than the maximalist fundamentalism my critics re-affirm.

Les Ismore

Anarchism

Judging from some pieces in Freedom, the authors haven't a clue as to the meaning of anarchism. Some are all for putting up candidates for election to parliament. At least Creaming Lord Such appeared to see the funny side. Being an anarchist is a different matter. Declare yourself to be one is enough.

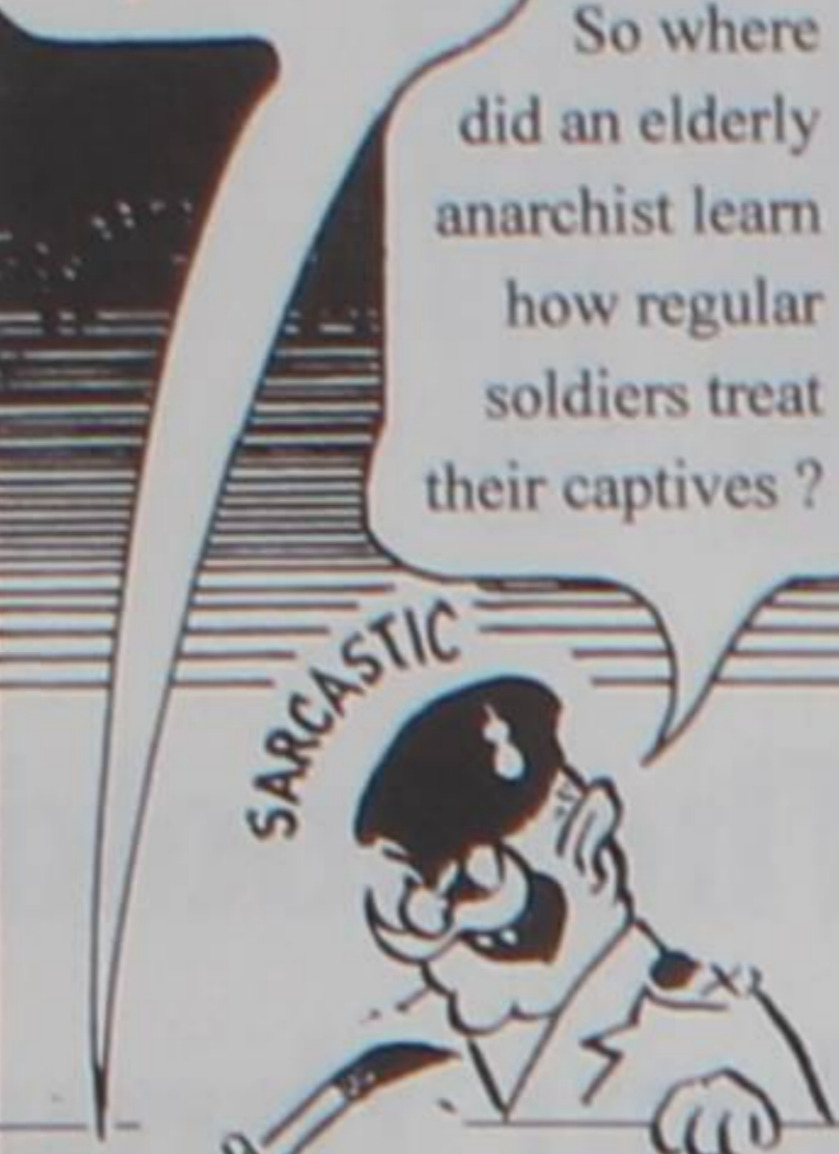
Many anarchists see anarchism as presenting a stateless society. I feel this is rather a contradiction but then those anarchists have known no other definition. They see society as separate from the state when of course it is not. I have been over this ground and it is a mystery to many, most of whom belong to the shovel brigade. Someone has to shift the shit. Get out there and sell Freedom, but don't think. Let someone else make your mind up. This works well enough for the rest of the world so why be different just because you're an anarchist?

Anarchism can be defined in terms of how people behave. 'This is how world operates. How we achieve anarchism is to become stateless' or whatever. Skip the details since there are more serious problems to resolve which are invisible to most anarchists. The problem lies with asking the question 'How?' What anarchists should ask is 'Why?' 'How?'

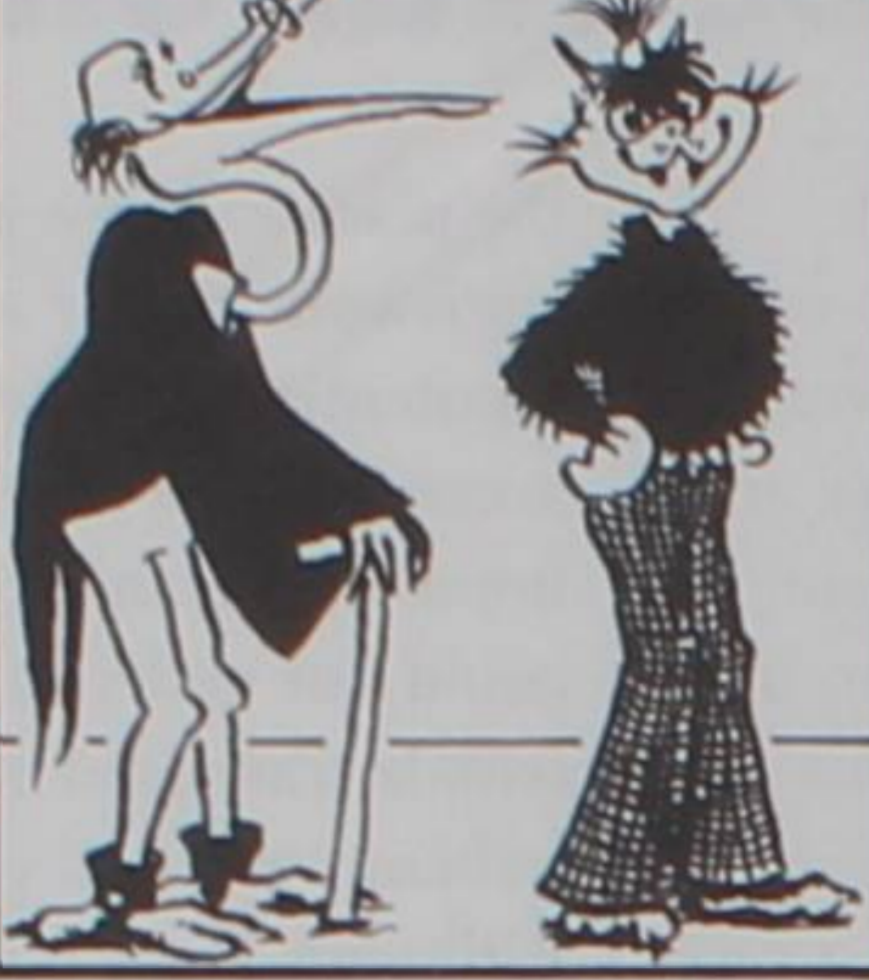
MILDCAT
The Mirror photos are fakes, which proves that British soldiers have never abused anybody ... blah blah blah ... ready to lay down their lives for Queen and Country ... waffle waffle, blah blah, blah ... blah blah, blah blah ... and the British regular army tradition of always treating captives well.



Oh, come off it!! There's nothing in regular army tradition about treating captives well.



I was a conscript.



Er ... The Mirror photos are fakes, which proves that British soldiers have never abused anybody ... blah blah blah ... ready to lay down their lives for Queen and Country ... waffle waffle, blah blah, blah ... blah blah, blah blah ... and the British regular army tradition of always treating captives well.



hasn't got anarchists anywhere. Asking how is relevant to astronomers or mathematician. 'How does one find the square root of minus one?' for example, is sensible question and one can come up with an answer. To ask 'Why the earth revolves around the sun?' is a meaningless question. (If you're having difficulty with this read something else.)

Defining anarchism in terms of 'How does the state operate?' is largely a nonsense question. The question presumes the answer. It is self-fulfilling. 'How do you eat a sandwich?' implies, quite rightly, there is a mechanism involved. If you ask, 'How do you write a brick?' the question implies there is some method in doing this when there isn't. (Try to forget for a moment Freedom's pundits who will tell you this is all gobble gook, as they will.) You need to think along certain lines or in a certain way to argue the 'How?' question. Discussing how politics operate, for example, doesn't get one anywhere. We need to ask why people behave the way they do. (I'm not going over the ground that I have covered already in Freedom. If you're having problems with the argument leave it. Others follow the reasoning although most are not anarchists.)

My guess is that in time anarchists who read Freedom, for example, will be sidelined because their theories on anarchism won't have changed. Non-anarchist will come up with a method for achieving the 'stateless society'. They are likely to reframe the problem to remove the stumbling blocks so it is soluble. (To save yourself aggro you need to appreciate that these ideas aren't coming directly from me. I am simply passing them on, like the editors of Freedom, because I think they have bearing on the problem of achieving anarchism. They aren't clever, they aren't stupid, they are just different.)

Peter Gibson

A sideways look

As I write this, two US courts martial have just finished. In the first, Specialist Jeremy Sivits, a mechanic from Pennsylvania, was found guilty of mistreating Iraqi prisoners and given the maximum sentence possible - a year's detention and a bad conduct discharge. More low-ranking soldiers will face similar charges, while Abu Ghraib prison has retained its grisly reputation as a place of torture and death.

What has come out of Sivits' trial is that these weren't just isolated 'bad apples' - this was institutionalised abuse designed to humiliate Iraqis and make interrogation easier. Defence Secretary Donald Rumsfeld personally authorised harsher measures in interrogating prisoners. The Evil Empire believes itself to be above any standards, however imperfect, like the Geneva Convention. White House lawyer Alberto Gonzales recommended that Bush drop the Geneva Convention to "reduce the threat of domestic criminal prosecution under the War Crimes Act." Could he see into the future, or was it already going on?

Iraqi prisoners have died in both US and British custody and the photos that have shocked the world show some extent of the abuse. Less well-reported have been the rapes committed on female detainees by US soldiers, some of whom have 'disappeared' after release - not unexpected in a country where 'honour killings' reinforce patriarchy.

The second trial was of Staff Sergeant Camilo Mejia, for desertion. Mejia had served six months in Iraq, where he had seen civilians massacred, children killed and prisoners mistreated. He talked of how a sniper had shot dead a ten year old carrying a gun and the constant attacks the infantry faced. The Iraqis were dehumanised and called 'hajjis' in a grim echo of the Vietnam pejorative 'gook'. After he came home on leave, Mejia tried to get out of the army, saying his conscience didn't support what was going on there. He didn't return to his unit and was tried for desertion. He was found guilty and faces the same maximum sentence as Sivits.

It is in the nature of the military to break soldiers from their human instincts. If they see the other side as fellow human beings they are far less likely to kill them. Basic training routinely includes bullying and abuse designed to 'toughen up' the soldiers so that they don't show signs of weakness, like compassion. When the logical result of that brutalisation comes to light we remember why we are anti-militarists. Armies the world over operate against humanity - both on the large scale of warfare - and in the individual tragedies of places like Abu Ghraib.

It will come as little surprise to learn that people from Sivits' home town have rallied round him and say that he is a 'gentle giant' who doesn't do this sort of thing. I suspect Mejia will have a harder time of it from a gung-ho public that expects its soldiers to simply do or die - but never wonder why. Mejia's actions at least give us cause for hope - he had been a career soldier yet finally rejected the conditioning of militarism. Let's hope that many more do, and soon.

Svartfrosk

Freesheets



Gagged!
issue no 2
Spring 2004

This newsletter of the Gwent Anarchists contains a report from the struggle to save St David's Wood in Blackwood from destruction to make way for a bypass for a weapons factory as well as articles about Coca-Cola's human rights abuses and upcoming elections. To get in touch write to: Gwent Anarchists, PO Box 70, Newport, NP20 5XX or email gwentanarchists@yahoo.co.uk



Resistance
issue no 61
May 2004

The Anarchist Federations ever popular 'resistance' is now onto its sixty-first issue, the main article argues against capitalism, and the inside is packed with reports of strikes, conferences, and news of upcoming actions. Available free from: Anarchist Federation, Box 2, 84b Whitechapel High Street, London, E1 7QX

The quiz

1. Who was the 'anarchist pimpnel'?
2. Which historic working class document was published in Tonypandy in 1912?
3. Who coined the phrase "The struggle against fascism begins with the struggle against Bolshevism"?
4. In 1986, two Leicester trade unionists, Gary Sherriff and Ross Galbraith, were sacked. Why?

Answers on page 6

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