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WHY THE GENOCIDE IN SUDAN?

"In Khartoum, once a hangout for Osama bin Laden and other al-Qaeda members in the 1990s, the best sign of a new Sudan is seen at the mall. The prices range from US\$35 for a pink shirt to US\$125 for a rose dress.

Inside Afra Shopping Centre, which opened four months ago, shoppers slip inside from 110-degree heat and enter air-conditioned splendour. They can browse for footwear at the Payless shoe store, sip an Arabic coffee from Gloria Jean's, or roam the aisles of the cavernous, 27-checkout Hypermarket superstore.

One sign of the hopes for peace is that landlords in some of Khartoum's priciest neighbourhoods have begun to double rents in the past year, believing that an influx of foreigners will pay top rates for the limited supply of housing. Foreigners – namely, aid workers – are arriving in droves, not to settle in Khartoum but to set up base in Darfur." – John Donnelly, New York Times News Service, 6th June 2004

Over the last twenty years civil wars in Sudan have led to the deaths of up to two million people. In the next twelve months up to a million more could die because of the conflict in the Darfur region of Sudan.

The current violence in Darfur began to flare up towards the end of 2002. As peace in the south of the country between the SPLA (Sudan People's Liberation Army) and the Government became a possibility, war in other parts of Sudan escalated. Fighting between Government forces and the NDF (National Democratic Front) intensified in the East of Sudan near the Eritrean border. This seemed highly convenient for elements of the regime.

However, perhaps because of the lack of military capabilities of the NDF, fighting in the East remained low key. Tension remains high though. The Sudanese accuse the Eritrean Government of aiding the NDF (to the extent of lending them tanks and heavy artillery); in return the Eritrean government alleges that the Sudanese regime is behind a series of recent bomb attacks in Western Eritrea.

The current Sudanese Government came to power in a military coup in 1989. Being forced to the negotiating table by the SPLA after losing briefly losing the garrison town of Torit in the autumn of 2002 was a serious loss of

face for the military. The government was also under pressure from increasing dissent in the government controlled North of the country. During late 2002 students at several Sudanese colleges rioted. There were disturbances when the state controlled bread prices rose and I even witnessed clashes in the Souk in downtown Khartoum between very jumpy paramilitary riot police and people shopping in the market.

Outside the capital opposition was also making itself heard. The University at Shendi in the North of the country had been surrounded and carved up with razor wire fences in a bid to prevent further disturbances. In the town of Wad Medani school pupils took to the streets to demand peace in the South, whilst people talked jokingly about joining the South if the SPLA won independence.

The resistance continues. In June this year three people were killed, including two students, and twelve others wounded, when police fired at student demonstrators who earlier torched government offices in Babanousa, in central Sudan's West Kordofan state.

Towards the end of 2002 I began to hear rumours from people that 'American sailors' (i.e. Marines or Special Forces) had been seen in hills of Darfur. Around the same time there were reports of what the Sudanese media described as 'tribal violence' coupled with mass executions of 'bandits'. Eighteen months later we have what has been described as the worst humanitarian crisis in world today.

The 'Janjaweed' militia has received much publicity in the West recently, yet collaboration between the Sudanese military and the militias has been commonplace in Sudan's wars. The Sudanese Army's rail supply route to garrisons in the South has become known as the 'Slave Train' because of the activities of the militia that are employed to guard it. These militia (in return for escorting the train through SPLA controlled territory to Government enclaves) are permitted to rape, loot and pillage villages en route, taking slaves to sell in slave markets in the North.

Away from Darfur in the Shilluk region, supposedly covered by the ceasefire with the SPLA, militia attacks have currently displaced around 75,000 people.

These connections extend to the oil companies working in Sudan. A Christian Aid report (www.christian-aid.org.uk/indepth/0103suda/sudanoil.htm) details how companies such as the Chinese National Petroleum Company (CNPC), Sweden's Lundin Oil and Austria's OMV employ local militias and Sudanese military forces to both protect their installations and also to clear the surrounding land. A practice condemned as a 'scorched earth' policy. More recently



Refugees – some of the millions who have fled the civil war

I heard accounts that the CNPC were using prisoners brought from China to clear and destroy villages. In return, these prisoners were promised their freedom upon return to China.

The oil companies have also been allowing the Sudanese military to use their infrastructure in their 'jihad' in the

South. Airstrips, roads and trucks belonging to the oil companies were used to launch attacks against villages in the South.

Although no British companies are directly involved in oil extraction in Sudan, they are heavily implicated in Sudan's oil industry. The Christian Aid

report names Rolls Royce and Weir Pumps of Glasgow as providing essential services to the industry.

Regarding Weir the report states: "Weir's contract to provide the pumping stations for the first pipeline to the Red Sea is worth £20 million. It is currently

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IRAQ IN CONTEXT

With the joke that was the transfer of 'sovereignty' from the Coalition forces into the hands of its puppet regime, it seems to me more important than ever to really examine the conflict in regards the wider global situation, and as a result, place it in context with the development of world capital.

The war in Iraq, the 'War on Terror' – these things were not the knee jerk, militaristic responses of startled Western regimes provoked by terroristic acts. These events are part of much wider recent trend in capitalist development, which has seen it sweeping back the social democratic dregs that had held it in stagnation for decades.

War is the health of the State; and imperialism is robbery. The dominant world powers remain so by exploiting and robbing those below them. The

lucrative contracts going to US and UK firms to rebuild the country, are guaranteed cash cows for those lucky companies for a good few years, with plenty of cheap labour sitting around with nothing to do. And although the war has not brought the US defence sector the large profits they experienced post-Afghanistan and Kosovo, there is still expectation of long term investment by the Bush administration, with the White House estimating that spending in this area will reach \$480 billion by 2009.

On a global level, we have seen the bombing of Serbia, the invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq, as well as smaller conflicts taking place in places like Sierra Leone, and the ongoing debacle that is Russia's involvement in Chechnya. On a domestic level, the State has been cutting back on social welfare and re-imposing work on a

reticent working class. Ever since the fall of the USSR, the ruling class has seen a front open up, an opportunity to push the remainder of the world into the bourgeois democratic model and free market capitalism. At home, this has meant making labour relations more 'flexible' (i.e. cheap).

Internationally it has meant, the expansion of the EU into former Eastern Bloc countries, and also inevitably, war, to consolidate power, influence and profits. They are the twin economic tactics being employed: the re-imposition of work at home, is the same as the bombing of Iraq – the ends are the same.

Iraq was not, on the whole, about oil; just as Afghanistan wasn't about opium. On the whole, taken in their totality, these events represent the natural expansion of capital.

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THE ANARCHIST BOOKFAIR 2004

SATURDAY 27 NOVEMBER 2004, 10AM-7PM
ULU, MALET STREET, LONDON WC1
www.anarchistbookfair.org

Home and away

FREEDOM

Volume 65 Number 15

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.

Our future

To secure our existence and to improve, we're going to have to make a few changes.

We're going to have our first price rise in almost twenty years and we want to fill the paper with what you – the readers – want.

See page 8 for details about our financial situation, future expansion plans and a breakdown of the reader questionnaire responses.

Judo Club

It would be a good thing if more anarchists increased their level of fitness and improved their confidence in physical situations. Judo is a tough sport based on close combat. Most of the training is aimed towards beating other judo fighters, within the rules, but in the process you can get very fit and learn some self defence. I have been doing judo since I was a teenager, and coaching in East London for the last three years. I would like to start a club, once a week, primarily for anarchists in the London area. If you're interested, get in touch with Adrian c/o 84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1 7QX or at copy@freedompress.org.uk

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Next issue

Contributions are wanted for future Freedoms. The next issue will be dated 21st August 2004 and the last day to get your copy to us will be Thursday 12th August (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!

News from the inside

Freedom for prisoners

As many of you may know, Freedom provides free subscriptions to anyone in prison. If you have friends or family in prison, or regularly write to a prisoner, if they are interested we will be happy to send them a free sample issue or sub. If you are a prisoner yourself we can provide subs to any of your fellow inmates if they so desire. Please also feel free to write to us with any news about your imprisonment, developments in your case, requests for penpals or anything else!

Made in Jail

German fashion boss Stephen Bohle is in talks with UK prison officials to extend his range of 'Made in Jail', convict-clothing to our shores. When he thought of selling the sick bastard said "I realised at once there was great marketing potential in prison wear, but even I had no idea what a success story it would be. Prison authorities wanted to sell their shirts but did not want to advertise where they were made – and that was their problem. But this weakness has

now become the great strength of our clothing – all of which is modelled on the items the prisoners are allowed to wear in the jail themselves."

Mr Bohle claims British prisoners would be paid around £10.50 per day, but seeing as other corporations which use (sometimes forced) prison labour such as Wilkinsons pay only £1.20 that seems highly unlikely. The Campaign Against Prison Slavery 'Part-Time Prisoner' video – of an action described previously in Freedom – is now available to download online (Quicktime, 17mb) at www.mydadsstripclub.com/wilkoprisoner.htm

He's our friend ...

... or so say the lyrics to the popular song about the legendary cop-killer Harry Roberts.

Roberts, aged 68, has now been imprisoned for 37 years – a full seven years longer than his original tariff – and now the Court of Appeal has ruled that he can stay locked up until he dies. He can be detained on the basis of secret evidence which will never be disclosed to him or his legal team.

This legal clause has until now only ever been used with the express consent of Parliament in exceptional circumstances to protect national security. The procedure envisages the appointment of a special advocate to consider the 'secret' evidence which will not be disclosed to either Harry Roberts or his legal team. Without the benefit of consultation or instructions from them, the special advocate will be required to make representations concerning the 'secret' evidence at a hearing which will itself be conducted in secret. The Court justified its finding on the basis of the risk of 'inadvertent disclosure' of the secret material to Mr Roberts if it was made available to his legal team.

The finding of the Court of Appeal effectively means that any court or tribunal can adopt such a procedure in the future.

The implications for Harry Roberts are devastating. As Terry Waite and others wrote in a letter to the Times published last week (27th July 2004) expressing their concern that we could be witnessing another episode in this

country's history of miscarriages of justice, the ruling may mean Harry Roberts will now die in prison without ever knowing why he is being denied release.

Simon Creighton, Roberts' solicitor said: "It defies common sense that a civilised and democratic society can endorse a procedure which allows people to be imprisoned without ever being told of the reasons for their imprisonment ... [Mr Roberts] has spent the last three years fighting for the right to know what those allegations might be so he can try and defend himself." Messages of support and solidarity can be sent to: Harry Roberts, 231191, HMP Channings Wood, Denbury, Newton Abbot, Devon, TQ12 6DW



LISTINGS

Bristol

Every Sunday the Kebele Kafe from 6.30pm, cheap vegan nosh, chats and vibes at Kebele, 14 Robertson Road, Easton

Brighton

7th August Pride Parade and Festival – the biggest gay festival in the UK, and it's free. For info call 01273 775939 or see www.brightonpride.org/

Cardiff

21st August Reclaim the Streets, meet outside the Virgin Megastore in Queen Street at 2pm, and from there we will move off to a secret location. Wear a smile and your best dancing shoes. Contact 07931 451707 or cardiffdanceaction@yahoo.co.uk

London

6th to 14th August 'In Arms Reach' workshops, gigs, discussion and films in a squatted London (Zone 1) location. Email info@inarmsreach.org.uk for info, or see www.inarmsreach.org.uk/

7th August German punk gig with Sleim and Forced Entry at Chats Palace, 42-44 Brooksby's Walk, Homerton, E9
 12th August A Summer in the Park launch with Tony Allen, upstairs at The Red Lion, Great Windmill Street, W1
 13th August A Summer in the Park launch with Tony Allen at Freedom Bookshop, 84b Whitechapel High Street, E1. For more info see www.freedompress.org.uk

15th August A Summer in the Park launch with Tony Allen at The Masons Arms, corner of Upper Berkeley Street and Seymour Place, W1

28th August The Counter Culture Bookfair at Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, Holborn. For more info see www.blackcatpress.co.uk

2nd September Where now for the anti-advertising campaign? Open discussion organised by Haringey Solidarity Group, 7.30pm at 42 Falmer Road,

N15. For info call 020 8374 5027 or email hsg@globalinternet.co.uk

17th September London Anarchist Forum meeting with talk and bookstall from 8pm at Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, Holborn

27th November Anarchist Bookfair at ULU, Malet Street, WC1 from 10am to 7pm. See www.anarchistbookfair.org

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
 Every Saturday Anarchist chess club at the Autonomy Club, 84b Whitechapel High Street, E1 from 2pm. Bring a chess set along.

Norwich

11th August Swap Shop – bring what you don't want to swop for what you do. From 10am to 4pm, Haymarket, Gentlemans Walk. For info contact norwichanarchiststudents@yahoo.co.uk
 29th August Teddy Bears' Anti-GM Picnic in Earlham Park. Contact teddiesagainstgm@yahoo.co.uk

Scotland

18th August to 1st September Coulport International Disarmament Camp, sited in Peaton Wood, on the shores of Loch Long just half a mile from the Trident warhead depot, and a few miles from Faslane naval base, home to Britain's Trident nuclear weapon submarines. www.tridentploughshares.org/coulport
 23rd August Carry On Up The Clyde, The Big Blockade at 7.30am – by blocking all the entrances to the base denounce what happens at Faslane, home to four Trident submarines that carry nuclear weapons. For info call 08454588361 or check out www.tridentploughshares.org/coulport/index.php

Wales

12th August Gwent Anarchists free gig – punk, hardcore and much more at Le

Pub, Caxton Place, Newport. Contact gwentanarchists@yahoo.co.uk

Nationwide

21st August National Tesco Day of Action. Local protests will be held outside Tesco stores throughout the UK. To organise a protest or find out what is taking place near you, call 0117 944 1000 email info@viva.org.uk or see www.viva.org.uk/

International

31st July to 7th August A-Camp on the Kesselberg near Erkner, 25km east from Alexanderplatz, Berlin. The Kesselberg is a self-managed place in the woods. Contact by mail at A-camp, c/o A-Laden, Rathenower Str 22, D-10559 Berlin. For info see www.acamp.tk or www.kesselberg.info

20th to 29th August No Border Camp at Rivesaltes, France – a temporary autonomous zone against borders. See www.rivesaltes2004.org/articles/6
 22nd to 28th August International Seminar on Renewable Energies and Social Change, Asturias, Spain. For info see www.escanda.org/

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 7QX
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.freereserve.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

Wanker of mass destruction

As expected, the Butler Report has cleared Blair and Co – but what did we really think was going to happen, asks Iain McKay

Unsurprisingly, yet another appointed establishment figure has found Blair innocent. If only other criminals could specify the remit of the enquiry they face, allowing them to narrow it down to a safe area of investigation. But only successful war criminals have that privilege.

According to Lord Butler's report, no one, least of all the head warmonger Blair, is to blame. This in spite of the Butler report stating that the March 2002 intelligence available was "insufficiently robust" to prove Iraq was in breach of the UN resolutions or to convince the UN. In spite of the fact some of the human intelligence about Iraq's WMD was "seriously flawed" and "open to doubt." In spite of the fact that the "45 minute" claim in the September dossier did not state what exactly it referred to. In spite of noting that the language of the dossier may have left readers with the impression that there was "fuller and firmer" intelligence behind its judgments than was the case. In spite of Blair's statement to MPs on the day the dossier was published reinforcing this impression. In spite of acknowledging that the dossier went to the "outer limits" of intelligence available at the time.

Butler concluded that when Blair suddenly started focusing on Iraq in early 2002 the shift was not based on a change in intelligence. This did stop Blair constantly referring to the material crossing his desk. In fact, the intelligence services had received almost no new intelligence from within Iraq about WMD since 1998. This did not stop Blair claiming that "beyond doubt" Saddam

had "continued to produce" WMD. In fact, the report says, "there was no recent intelligence that would itself have given rise to a conclusion that Iraq was of more immediate concern than the activities of some other countries." This did not stop Blair stating the threat posed was "imminent and serious."

All this and Blair did not mislead the country or Parliament! By omitting all those caveats from the dossier and speeches and by stating that the dossier was "extensive, detailed and authoritative," Blair (as Butler admitted) could have reinforced an impression among lay readers that "there was fuller and firmer intelligence behind the judgments than was the case." Blair never sought to correct this impression or the lurid "45 minutes" headlines which accompanied the dossier. The facts were deliberately distorted, so distorted they were a deception. He hyped and spun what was included, in an obvious attempt mislead parliament and the public. Regime change required at home.

Yet, in a way, the Butler report is right. The British state did not go to war due to the whims and eccentricities of the PM. The state bureaucracy is rarely browbeaten by politicians. The secret state hardly kow-tows to our elected 'representatives'. Big Business always acts to ensure its will is done. The long history of previous Labour governments should disabuse anyone who thinks that. Imperialism is a product of the capitalist system, not the fancies of individuals. Blair did mislead the public but in so doing he was representing the interests of the ruling



Blair – wanker

elite. As such, the state bureaucracy and secret state were simply doing their job. What is different is that a split in that ruling elite has exposed how badly they do it and to what depths they will go to justify their actions to the public.

And, we should not forget, the country did not fall for it – millions marched against the war. So when the warmongers say "we were all duped" the facts are different. The public were not duped, their so-called representatives were.

And now all those public justifications for war in Iraq are gone. They have been exposed as lies. The justifications for war have been continually revised as required. Now the only one left is the one Blair explicitly rejected before the war, namely regime change (and that violates international war). All we are left with is Blair, a wanker of mass destruction.

He has waged numerous wars. Since September 11th, his wars have killed

over four times the numbers of civilians killed in the Twin Towers. He dragged us into invading Iraq and he remains in office, shrugging off protest marches and election protests as irrelevances. What a damning indictment of capitalist representative democracy. Little wonder Blair said he accepted full responsibility. It means nothing in this system. And that is why this system needs to be destroyed and replaced by another, more humane, one.

In Brief

RESPECT: the folly will continue

With opportunistic politics the chances are you will shoot yourself in the foot sooner rather than later. And the SWP has done just that. Faced with the prospect of a damning joint by-election defeat in two safe Labour strongholds, Blair was saved by the very people who claimed that they would turn elections into a referendum on him and his war. Yes, in Birmingham Respect ensured that the anti-war vote was split, allowing Blair to garner some comfort from the results. The 1,282 votes SWP leader John Rees got ensured that Labour retained one seat and weakened pressure on Blair.

Unsurprisingly, the Liberal Democrats were the main beneficiaries of anti-war feelings, not Respect. At least they stood a chance of winning and giving Blair a bloody nose. Given that Respect, thanks to the SWP, explicitly eschewed any socialist principles a vote for it did not represent any victory for radical politics. As such, it cannot be claimed that at least it bolstered

independent working class politics. A vote for Respect meant as much (or as little) as one for the Liberal-Democrats.

In spite of the (predictable) failure of Respect to capitalise on the backlash to the Iraq invasion it is doubtful that the SWP leadership will rethink its lurch to the right. As in some places during the Euro elections, they got sufficiently okay results to justify their opportunism. They came fourth in both Birmingham and Leicester, with 1,282 votes (6.27%) and 3,724 votes (12.66%) respectively. As it stands, the SWP leadership seem blissfully unaware that Iraq will not be a political issue indefinitely and, consequently, Respect's long term future is as bleak as its overall European election results.

We can expect the SWP to continue with its Respect front for the time being (probably as long as the money remains). Hopefully, in the process it will make any principled socialists who remain within it reconsider their position and the benefits of electioneering for advancing socialist ideas. If the Respect

fiasco does produce a backlash against electioneering and a corresponding interest in anti-parliamentarianism then the chances of constructive socialist activity in the workplace and community may increase. If so, then we anarchists may see a corresponding interest in our ideas, particularly if we start now to present a positive alternative where we work and live.

Respect can draw one consolation from the by-elections. For a change the prize for the most delusional post-election comments does not go to them. In spite of strong competition from Respect ("quite extraordinary results by any standards ... without precedent ... the boost Respect needed to begin to establish itself as a serious challenger"), the prize goes to the successful Birmingham Labour candidate who, facing the ninth worst swing from Labour in history and a slashing of its majority from 11,618 to 460 explained it was "excellent for Labour." While the result was "truly awful for Mr Howard" it really cannot be said that it

"showed that Labour still governs in favour of the many, and not the few." With hyper-nonsense like that, he has a great future awaiting him in Respect if he ever decides to change party.

A modest proposal: the railways for the rail workers

The government, finally, has acted to try and sort out the railways. It is planning to scrap the Strategic Rail Authority it set up four years ago and have given most of its powers to the Transport Secretary Alistair Darling.

Unsurprisingly, given that most people and the rail unions want it, the changes stop short of re-nationalisation. Instead we get tighter government control, with Network Rail assuming responsibility for the network.

Equally unsurprisingly, the Tory transport spokesman said "shifting responsibilities around Whitehall, replacing one set of bureaucrats with another" would not make the trains more reliable. Quite right, but over ten years of privatisation prove his cure is worse than

the disease.

So may we anarchists make a modest proposal. Instead of the false choice of private versus state capitalism, we suggest socialisation. Turn the running of the railways to those who know it best: the railway workers. Neither state bureaucrats nor bosses can do the job. Only workers' self-management combined with effective passenger action groups can provide a decent service. But such an outcome will only happen if the rank and file of the rail unions review their union's commitment to nationalisation as the solution to their problems.

Those interested in anarchist ideas of workers' self-management, may we suggest the Freedom Press book, *Neither Nationalisation nor Privatisation*,* as a good starting place on what we want and how it can be achieved.

* *Neither Nationalisation nor privatisation* is available at £1.95 (post free in the UK, add £1 overseas) from Freedom, 84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1 7QX. You can also order online at www.freedompress.org.uk

International

Tear down the wall!

Israeli anarchists campaign against the eight metre high apartheid wall that runs through the West Bank

The International Court of Justice at The Hague branded Israel's concrete and steel barrier through the West Bank a de facto land grab (it is also, unmentioned, a water rights grab). It was, they correctly argued, a political not a security measure. Israel was told to tear it down and compensate the victims, arguing that signatories to the Geneva convention (which include the UK and the USA) were obliged to ensure Israel upholds the ruling.

That the wall has little to do with 'self-defence' and, in fact, is designed to impede Palestinian self-determination, annex land (almost 17% of the West Bank) and entrench illegally built Jewish settlements in the West Bank can be seen from its route. If the eight-metre high wall (with barbed wire, trenches and electronic motion detectors) was simply to stop suicide bombings then it would have been built on Israeli territory along the 1967 border. The World Court agreed. The only really surprising thing is that ICJ took five months to acknowledge this.

The ICJ also called on the UN to consider measures against Israel, who rejected the decision as politicised and one-sided, saying that it failed to address "the very reason for building the fence – Palestinian terror." Israeli state terrorism is, of course, not an issue. The decision is non-binding but the Palestinian leadership said it would use the ruling to seek UN action against Israel. Sanctions appear unlikely in the face of the US veto. Equally unlikely will be the sight of Blair railing against "unreasonable" vetoes and urging a

"coalition of the willing" to enforce the will of the UN and the "international community."

While the Palestinians hailed the ruling as a landmark judgment that could mobilise international opinion, the sad fact is that with US backing public opinion counts for little. Israel's reaction was predictable, complaining that international bodies were biased against it (apartheid-era South Africa thought likewise). And who is an unbiased body? Why, the US (provider of some \$3bn of military aid a year to Israel). What a coincidence.

Israel wants to prevent the Palestinians from exploiting UN and other international bodies. It does not consider Palestinian resistance in any form as legitimate. For not only should they not resort to armed resistance or terrorism, they should also refuse to seek justice through international arbitration – unless brokered by an appropriately 'neutral' body like the USA. This is a strategy designed to increase terrorism, as the Palestinians cannot be expected to just tolerate Israel annexation and repression. By rejecting the ICJ decision, Israel is, yet again, closing the door on peaceful struggle based on international law. The only option left would be violent acts of desperation Israel claims to be acting to stop. Which will, in turn, be used to justify further acts of expansion and state terrorism.

As anti-imperialists, anarchists must call for the dismantling of the wall and the right of self-determination for the Palestinians. Yet Palestine, like any nation, is class ridden and hierarchical. A Palestinian state would, inevitably,



defend the interests of the Palestinian ruling class against the oppressed majority. As such, any 'two state' solution, while feasible, would not be sufficient to guarantee genuine self-determination for the people of Palestine or Israel. Only a 'no state' solution can ensure that.

Sadly, such a possibility is not on the cards just now, nor any time soon. It will only be so if the Palestine struggle

for national liberation is turned into a struggle for human liberation. That is the task of any libertarians in the struggle. For those outside it, all we can do is support the rights of oppressed people to live as they see fit. In addition, we must support any attempts at solidarity across national divides.

There has been direct action against the wall and its building, including demonstrations which involved local

Palestinians and Israeli radicals. Some of these have been called by 'Anarchists Against The Wall'. Such joint actions show the way forward. If they could be generalised into joint Israeli and Palestinian mass direct action and solidarity, the prospects for freedom in the Middle East would increase.

Badges available from Freedom, priced at 50p each (plus 50p p&p).

Bolivia – anarchy in action

As with other Latin American countries Bolivia is strongly influenced by the USA, and the ruling class has opened the doors to transnational companies which seek to pillage the natural resources of the country. Bolivians have been fighting back against oppression and here are some examples.

In the year 2000 there was an uprising of native peoples centred in the Altiplano region (in western Bolivia), where they used road blockades to demand the government loan them money to buy tractors. The state responded with repression and there was a series of deaths during the conflict – the majority of these deaths were naturally those of farmers.

This confrontation was followed by the collective action of indigenous people which led to the burning of

many state institutions – police, sub-prefectures, town councils ... and which represented a true demonstration of a rejection of the Bolivian State.

Another example from early 2004 was when people from the Altiplano region lynched a mayor and then burnt his body.

To all this must be added that there are a total of ten municipalities that have expelled the state authorities and got rid of institutions like the police and army, to put into practice, once and for all, the communitarian model that the Aymará people call 'ayllu'.

This 'ayllu', in agreement with the Aymará view of things, is a system where direct democracy is put into practice – the main decisions are made on the basis of open assemblies of the whole population, and where mutual aid and solidarity form part of daily life

for these people, who are looking to build a better society through means of these valuable tools. And without doubt they will obtain it, as long as they, together with the inhabitants of the cities, can free themselves from the claws of the State.

The libertarians of the world must salute with raised fists these initiatives by the indigenous communities that inhabit Bolivia, who, without parties or vanguards, support each other in natural organisations and seek by themselves to construct a future of freedom, equality and solidarity.

Salud y hasta la Victoria final! Hasta la Anarquía!

Vladimir Mendoza

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Genocide in Sudan

page 1

building stations with which Khartoum hopes to boost its production from 185,000 to 200,000 barrels per day to 400,000 – doubling at a stroke the revenue available from oil."

Rolls Royce meanwhile has been providing engines, maintenance and support to the Sudanese Oil industry.

BP also has its greedy fingers in the oil pie, with millions of dollars invested in the CNPC and a heavy presence amongst the British diplomatic and expat scene (to the extent that the British Embassy's drinking club is sponsored by the oil company). Without the oil industry the Sudanese government would never have been financially able to prolong its war in the South. Indeed, there would not be as much incentive to attack and destroy villages in the oil fields.

However, it is neither easy nor cheap to develop oil fields in the midst of a war zone. The SPLA has repeatedly

attacked the oil industry and declared it a 'legitimate target'. The US, who are eager to grab a share of the action, has heavily pushed the current peace deal.

Yet, Sudan and its undeniably oppressive fundamentalist regime remains part of their 'axis of evil', the American Embassy has been an uninhabited fortress decorated by a 'wanted' poster of Bin Laden. Indeed the Sudanese people remain in fear of further American bombings such as the one that destroyed an aspirin factory (there are, however, arms factories in Sudan – such as the one developed by the Chinese at Giad, and disguised as a car factory, which is an open secret in Sudan).

The conflict in Darfur is both far away from the oilfields and a stick to beat the Sudanese dictatorship with. A million people could die for this convenience.

Stuart Bracewell

Feature

Breaking from the left?

The IWCA has inspired anarchists with its community activism, but where is this leading?

Created by some members of Anti Fascist Action in the late '90s, the Independent Working Class Association (IWCA) sees a threat in the combination of the Labour Party no longer concerning itself with the interests of working class people and the then-new strategy of the BNP to enter in to community politics. The IWCA intends to fill the political void left by Labour in Britain's working class areas in order to prevent the BNP from gaining a political power base. In doing so they hope to instigate "working class rule in working class areas".

The IWCA's tactics of concerning themselves with the immediate interests of working class people, of direct intervention at street level and committed, long term community organising has appealed to many anarchists. Of additional appeal are their prominent claims of being openly hostile to Labour and of having made a clean break with the British left. The aim of this article is to examine the ideas behind the IWCA, particularly the claim that they constitute a "break with the left". (Note that unless stated otherwise all quotes are from the IWCA's Programme, Mayoral Manifesto, or the FAQ section on their website.)

So lets start at the beginning, with the IWCA's founding statement: "The Independent Working Class Association has been established to promote and celebrate the political independence of the working class, and to pursue the political and economic interests of that class with no consideration for, and regardless of, the consequences to the existing political and economic structures."

As stated, the IWCA see the working class as abandoned by the left. From this, "It follows ... that if the decline of working class participation in political affairs is to be arrested the only sensible way forward is for the working class to have an organisation free from all establishment parties and institutions."

This organisation is the IWCA, which "must reach out to become a focal point and political centre for authentic working class struggles ..."

However, they do not view themselves "merely as an 'electoral' party. First and foremost the IWCA sees itself as a campaigning party, fighting on those issues which are of most concern to working class people."

The motivation for attempting to take office is that "our political task is to make the existing system conform to the wishes of the people it is constitutionally accountable to. Where, over time, a system of administration has proved itself hostile to the interests of the local population, then the community will have to face up to the challenge of replacing it with the type

of administration that adequately reflects its interests."

This realisation leads them to advocate "total social change" and the "means to bring it about is the self-conscious independent movement of the immense majority in the interests of the immense majority."

On the face of it, this may seem agreeable. Our task though is to probe a little deeper.

First off, the IWCA isn't just an association. It's a registered political party. What's more, it is a political party that intends to replace the Labour Party as the mass organisation of the working class. IWCA ideologues have created the ideas, structure and political programme, and the working class are expected to obligingly fit into it. This isn't a break with leftism. It is a form of vanguardism and so is in fact the essence of it. It is in stark contradiction to the anarchist idea that the working class will create its own theoretical and practical means of organising in order to overthrow capitalism.

Next up is the IWCA's electoralism. Instead of using the standard (and perfectly correct) anarchist arguments against voting as our starting point, lets engage directly with the IWCA's ideas on the matter. Their Programme states: "With many simply believing their vote does not count, the first past the post system of elections is forcing down working class participation." This is followed by a list of measures to boost working class participation in elections, including weekend voting, creating smaller wards, introducing proportional representation and lowering the voting age to 16. This is a curious strategy, as the IWCA in fact agree that voting ultimately doesn't count. They accept that the institutions to which they seek election will ultimately fail to deliver for the working class and that there will eventually be a "need for any form of representative government at all at the local level being called into question." So while people know voting is pointless, the IWCA are attempting to convince them to vote, just so they can turn round at a later date and reveal the futility of voting when it achieves sod all. These sorts of manoeuvres do not herald a break with the methods of the left.

The Socialist Workers Party, for example, did it a few years ago - telling people to vote Labour in the full knowledge Blair wouldn't deliver. The idea is that when they decide this big letdown has occurred they then turn round to the ignorant proletarians they have dragged with them and, in mock horror, declare that "we didn't vote for this". Our role is then to follow them to the next level of militancy.

This method clearly assumes the correctness of a political minority with a heightened awareness over and above

that of the currently unenlightened masses. There is no way this behaviour can be interpreted as anything other than a form of vanguardism.

The IWCA should consider the possibility that the vast majority of working class people broke with the left many years before they did and that the point at which the "system of administration has proved itself hostile to the interests of the local population" is a long time past. This possibility would go some way to explaining why only 30% or so vote in local elections.

A duplicitous mentality is also apparent in their post-Mayoral Election statement as to why they put a candidate up: "the primary reason for standing in the Mayoral election was to increase the IWCA profile." Now this was not made at all clear before the election. I doubt very much that all the people who contributed to the £20,000 raised to put up a mayoral candidate, who collected signatures, leafleted and canvassed for the IWCA or voted for them were aware they were contributing to a Party building exercise. No mention of the main aim of the IWCA for this election was made in their candidates Mayoral Manifesto that gave the impression that the IWCA candidate actually wanted to get voted in to implement the policies outlined in the manifesto. But of course to suggest that they put such truths in electoral propaganda is absurd. The problem is that they chose to enter the electoral circus, and once in the ring, what can anyone do but behave as a clown?

Needless to say, all of this is contrary to "pursue[ing] the political and economic interests of the [working] class with no consideration for, and regardless of, the consequences to the existing political and economic structures". The only way that it can be seen as such is if the interests of the class and Party are assimilated (not to mention the Mayoral office seen as something other than an existing political structure).

Keeping the Party's deeper intentions hidden away seems to run through many IWCA activities, electoral or not. If someone takes the time to read their documents they will eventually discover that the IWCA intends to be a revolutionary Party. IWCA activists are not just community organisers, despite presenting themselves as such on the ground. Their radicalism is buried, as if it is feared that its revelation will put people off. For an organisation to keep its political aims hidden from the people it works with is fundamentally dishonest. It also denies the very same working class people the opportunity to critique and improve these ideas. Maybe the ideas in question are seen as beyond improvement by the analysis of the wider working class.



Moving on, the IWCA seem aware that an electoral strategy increases the chance of some people in the organisation engaging in "corruption, double-dealing and being two-faced". They see this fate as having befallen the mainstream Parties due to them consisting of middle class people while the electorate is mainly working class.

As the IWCA intends to consist of working class people who directly pursue working class interests this won't happen they argue. This is wrong. Apart from this process appearing to be already underway in the IWCA, the history of working class struggle is littered with examples of us being sold out by 'our own'. The British Trade union movement is a classic example. Totally working class, but ultimately a vehicle for some of the more fiendish members of our class to enter in to and accept the values of establishment power structures. I doubt the founders of the Unions intended this - good will based on class origin is not enough.

To their credit, the IWCA do recognise that having a stated aim of pursuing the interests of the working class may not be "sufficient deterrent to those individuals who might be motivated only by furthering their own careers or lining their own pockets". Though somewhat downplayed, it is encouraging to see them recognise anarchist arguments for the importance of the internal structure of their organisation in this regard. This structure is made up of local groups feeding delegates in to regional committees that in turn feed in to a National Co-ordinating Committee

(NCC). The role of the NCC is to implement the policy objectives of the organisation, as agreed by the AGM, which all members can attend and participate in. The NCC is fully accountable to, and recallable by, the membership. The only objection an anarchist might have to the internal structure of the IWCA is that there is no limit on the amount of times an individual member may be elected as either a delegate to a wider meeting or as a National Officer. Also, as yet the IWCA have no internal bulletin, something which anarchists prioritise as a way of maintaining open and equal discussion in an organisation.

Other criticisms of the IWCA will have to be left for another time. Enough has been said here to show them to have a considerable amount of work to do in order to truly "break with the left". The IWCA's failure to move on from the ideas and methods of the left are revealed most clearly by their electoralism. It is here that, lurking just below the surface, we find the same leftist mentality and accompanying assumptions that see the working class as something to be used by a political vanguard. Added to this, the electoral strategy isn't working for them. They did disastrously in the London Mayoral election and still can't make a national breakthrough comparable to that of the BNP. Hopefully the IWCA will continue to take from anarchist ideas and rid themselves of some of the more deep-seated remnants of leftist ideology. Their otherwise decent work at the community level warrants it.

Pepe Cormano

Editorial

As soon the new, hi-tech, pictures of twelve week old fetuses were published, it was obvious that we would soon be hearing from the anti-abortionists. And such fears were right. The so-called 'pro-lifers' are now calling for the abortion limit to be set at 12 weeks. David Steel suggested another cut in his own 1967 abortion law time limit to 22 weeks. Originally 28 weeks, it was reduced to 24 weeks in 1990. Blair, the Christian that he is, made positive comments about a review in the law. We can expect an MP to put in a private member's bill sometime soon.

Combined with anti-abortion reports in the right-wing papers, the scene is being set for yet more restrictions on women's rights. It is the right of the mother which is the key. Every child should be wanted and loved. The state forcing a woman to have a child it does not want is hardly the best thing for either mother or child. It is an attack on the autonomy of women, designed to ensure they play the social role assigned them by a patriarchal system. Anarchists should be at the forefront of resisting any such attack.

The pay gap between sexes is still wide, a sure sign that sexual equality is still far away. Women make up the great majority of the poor. The need for a new women's movement is clear. Yet feminism is not enough. As anarchist women like Emma Goldman and Louise Michel have argued, mainstream feminism is blind to class. Feminism needs to be more than an equal chance to be a boss or being equally treated when a wage slave. It needs to be aware that sexism is a subset of a whole series of hierarchical social relationships and that all are interrelated. That class oppression, for example, is just as important to working class women as patriarchy. As long as feminism is simply a means by which middle-class women can get a decent job, it will fail to inspire the kind of movement required to combat the forthcoming attacks on women's rights.

One of the ironies of the right-wing backlash against Michael Moore is all the supposed 'fact-checking' which is being done. If only people (particularly in the media) had been so concerned to fact-check what the politicians were spouting in the run-up to war. For all the flaws of Moore and his new film, its success exposes the media's failure to do the job it claims to do.

As it is, the 'fact-checking' seems a tad superficial. One anti-Moore book I saw made a big thing about how he attacks the rich while being rich himself. Oh, the hypocrisy. Except, of course, if he was poor and attacking the rich then he would be accused of envy. So neither the rich nor poor can attack the rich or the system that made them so. In other words, it is unacceptable to attack the rich. Isn't free speech grand!

Quiz answers

1. According to a leaked memo on 28th April, he said "Let's refer to the US marines in the foreground [of footage from Falluja] as 'sharpshooters'," he instructs, "not snipers ..."
2. George Bush's VP Dan Quayle.
3. Not wishing to alienate Jewish voters, Koch claims a piece of sauteed watercress caused the problem.
4. The smugglers union.

(Source: dailybleed at www.eskimo.com/~recall/bleed/0731.htm)

Commentary

Happy shopper

I got my sample copy of Freedom yesterday and must say I'm really impressed with how the paper has come on, even in the short space of time since I last saw it – fantastic job, nice work all round!

I get paid on Friday so my new sub cheque will be in the post soon.

Keep up the great work! Solidarity
Kenny Mooney

Anti-anti-fascist

The editors of Freedom justify the harassment of the Holocaust-denier David Irving on the grounds that anarchists should 'crush' fascist movements now in order to prevent their triumph later.

What does 'crush' mean? It could be said, I think, that the communists tried to 'crush' the Nazis in the streets of Germany before the latter came to power. William L. Shirer wrote in *The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich* (page 147): "No election, national, provincial or municipal, took place without savage battles in the gutters ... one of these encounters ... provided National Socialism with its greatest martyr ... Horst Wessel ... Many anti-Nazis always held that the youth earned his living as a pimp ... He was murdered by some Communists in February 1930 ... he left behind ... the Horst Wessel song, which soon became the official song of the Nazi party and later the second official anthem of the Third Reich. Horst Wessel himself, thanks to Dr Goebbels' skillful propaganda, became one of the great hero legends of the movement, hailed as a pure idealist who had given his life for the cause."

Violence to suppress opinion is very unlikely either to deter fascists or recommend anarchists; it totally contradicts anarchist principle, and it is wrong, as Johnny Gann says (*Freedom*, 10th July), to deprive a human being of their dignity, whatever you may think of them.

Secondly, Noam Chomsky and I have our differences, but in matters of this kind he has set a fine example. When Robert Faurisson was convicted by a French court of the crime of Holocaust denial, Chomsky wrote in defence of Faurisson's right to free speech and went to Paris to protest. He was abused and heckled both by the French press and in person. But, as Chomsky pointed out, there are only two positions you can take on free speech. You are either for it or you are against it.

The account of the harassment of the Holocaust-denying historian David Irving in the *Freedom* of 29th May reminded me of the Nazi thugs who in the days before Hitler came to power used to break up the meetings of their opponents. May the ghost of Voltaire preserve us if these 'anti-fascists' ever achieve their revolution and decide that the opinions we express are not to their liking.

Amorey Gethin

We think Amorey Gethin's example of Nazi Germany actually proves our point very nicely. Adolf Hitler stated "Only one thing could have stopped our movement. If our adversaries had understood its principle, and from the first day had smashed with the utmost brutality the nucleus of our new movement."

The failure of German workers to do this permitted the slaughter of millions and then it took a world war to get rid of Hitler's regime.

So what does Amorey think is preferable? Stopping the fascists organising when they are one-man-and-his-dog outfits that couldn't terrorise a hamster, or wait until they have

seized control of the state machine and its police and armed forces? Or even then would he still advocate doing nothing?

And if this passivity and inaction in the face of oppression is in line with Amorey's 'anarchist principles', then we are happy to say that yes, we do contradict them! – Freedom editors

Drugs

First off, I would like to thank Alex Allison for ramming home one of the points that I made in my reply to Marie J's article on drugs. Indeed, 70% of all crime is not committed by people addicted to pro-biotic yoghurt.

So how can anarchists advocate the prohibition of GM, relatively harmless, and the decriminalisation of drugs, which cause untold harm and misery to individuals, families and society in general?

The answer, the main point I was making with my letter, is that they can't. It is both illogical, and incompatible with anarchy. Why did both respondents absolutely fail to address this issue?

I would also like to say the following to Marie J. "Childish?" I suppose I was taking the piss a bit. "Muddled?" I grant that my prose can be a bit clunky at times. But "showing lack of respect for free speech?" I don't recall stating that she wasn't entitled to her opinion, merely that it contradicted her anarchist stance. She, on the other hand, slagged off the Editors of this paper for printing a letter that dared to step outside the usual spectrum of anarchist thought.

Can I also point out that she didn't know whether I was agreeing or disagreeing for the simple reason that I made a point of not making a stance. I merely "examined some of the contradictions which muddied the waters" of her argument. My own personal views were irrelevant. She claimed to not have all the answers, yet was happy to put forward decriminalisation as exactly that.

And as for the comparing of the 'war on drugs' with the 'war on terrorism', this idea is so irrelevant as to be laughable and certainly not worthy of comment.

Personally, I think that whilst, yes, criminalisation has failed spectacularly, legalisation will do nothing to remedy the situation. I shall leave it there, except to say I hope this letter wasn't too childish. Perhaps Marie J. would consent to me taking her out to dinner, in order that I may show what a kind, caring and sensitive gentleman I really am?

Stevy R.

GM debate

Rob Ray (*Fighting Sainsbury's GM food scandal*, 10th July) is mistaken in supposing Britain has an anti-GM feed policy – the over-long exchange of letters between Iain McKay and me started after the British government granted a licence to grow GM fodder-maize. What Britain has is a policy against injecting cows with a GM hormone to make them produce more milk, a cruel practice permitted in America. The demonstrations against imported milk are about animal welfare, not about GM crops. (In case anyone doubts it, I support the demonstrations.)

Pirate Ray (*Commentary*, 10th July) mentions Arpad Pusztai's experiments feeding rats with GM potatoes. The same study is cited by Michael Meacher in *The Guardian* (25th June). Unusually for a scientific study, Pusztai's results were released to the popular media before being offered to a scientific journal, and hailed as "the first example of [a GMO] being found harmful to health" (note the word 'first').

Pirate Ray reminds us that Pusztai's research paper was peer-reviewed. But neither he nor Michael Meacher recalls what the peer reviewers reported (*Review of data on possible toxicity of GM potatoes*, Royal Society June 1999): "We found no convincing evidence of adverse effects from GM potatoes. Where the data seemed to show slight differences between rats fed predominantly on GM and on non-GM potatoes, the differences were uninterpretable because of technical limitations of the experiments and the incorrect use of statistical tests".

The data submitted seemed to show only "slight differences" – microscopic differences in the gut walls – but the popular media had reported startling results like stunted growth and shrunken brains, which appear to be totally fictitious. Anti-GM campaigners, cock-a-hoop about Pusztai in 1998, fell suddenly silent about him in 1999. Now, after an interval long enough for people to forget, Meacher again cites Pusztai's discredited paper as 'evidence'. So does Pirate Ray, but I suspect Pirate of relying on Meacher as his source.

Anarchists should be wary of the anti-GM crowd. There are good reasons against some applications of GM technology, but fear of GM as such is a superstitious fear, and superstitious people sometimes distort facts to justify their beliefs.

Iain McKay misunderstands my point about "we can't be sure", which is merely the commonplace that absolute certainty is unattainable. The nearest we can get to sure is: sure enough for practical purposes. In cases of suspected risk, if we have done our best to confirm the risk, and the risk is not confirmed, we assume for practical purposes that the risk does not exist. This is not just about GM. It is true in general that "we can't be sure" is useless as a practical guide to action. We have discussed all this before. We have also discussed dubious arguments agreeing with Michael Meacher (Iain, on 17th April, repeated Meacher's falsehood that the only non-GM maize field-tested against GM maize was sprayed with atrazine), and Arpad Pusztai's invalid experiments (3rd April). The exchange has become repetitive, so I will make no further contribution.

Donald Room

Too much

When I was growing up in the 1970s watching television did not involve many choices. Just three in fact – BBC1, BBC2 or ITV. At certain times of the day there was no choice at all. At midnight all the channels shut down. End of the story. It's different now. If you can afford cable or satellite TV (and 53% of households can) you have literally hundreds to choose from. We live in a society where we have more and more choice.

Go to buy a pair of jeans. A few years ago all you needed to do was make sure you knew what size you were. Not any more. What do you fancy? Slim fit? Relaxed fit? Boot fit? Fly? Button? Stone-washed? Faded? Colour? The choice is almost overwhelming. Buying a pair of jeans used to take a few minutes. It can now be a day long operation.

Choice is also the buzz word in politics at the moment. All the parties are falling over each other to offer us choice. The Tory's health policy published last month was called 'A Right to Choose', although in their case they meant the right to choose to go private if you can afford it. Labour's latest

health plan, though, also highlights choice.

Where once there were collective decisions there are now individual ones. We are now no longer public service users but customers. We have individual rights but also individual responsibilities. Choose the wrong pension scheme and that's your fault and your problem.

There is no doubt there is a lot of information being thrown at us to help our decision making. The average American sees some 3,000 advertisements a day! Television programmes on commercial channels are now three minutes shorter than a decade ago to accommodate the extra adverts. In his recent book about coffee, 'Coffee – a dark history' Antony Wild points out how much research into the effect of coffee on our health is sponsored by coffee suppliers. Given that global coffee sales are worth \$55 billion a year (just 13% of which goes to the farmer) you may wonder next time you are choosing between a latte, mocha, americano or cappuccino (skinny, decaf, extra shot, tall, medium or large?) whether that report you read about the health properties of coffee is really trustworthy.

Capitalism is delivering people in the West more material abundance, prosperity and choice. This should be making us happier. It isn't. "The growth of material affluence has not bought with it an increase in subjective well-being" writes Barry Schwartz in 'The Paradox of Choice'. Levels of general happiness are in decline and according to Schwartz "we are experiencing depression in epidemic numbers". It seems that simpler societies with less choice and more social cohesion are happier. Why is this? In some areas people do not want to exercise choice. Health is a good example. Few people want to make potentially life-threatening choices. When given choice over treatment just 12% of cancer patients exercised any choice.

Psychologically it seems that too much choice is stressful. We worry whether we have made the right choices. We worry about the time and effort it takes to make choice. We are confused by conflicting information. We feel we need to have the best of everything for ourselves and our children and we fret that we have failed. Also as animals it seems "we are biologically unprepared for the number of choices we face in the world" (Schwartz).

In the 'Hitch Hikers Guide to the Galaxy' Douglas Adams concluded as far as happiness was concerned it was a bit of a mistake coming down from the trees!

For anarchists the debate about choice is an important one. As an anarchist it worries me that only one in ten cancer patients wanted to have a say in their treatment. One problem with the NHS is the power professionals like consultants have. This creates an uneven relationship between patient and clinician, between empowered and unempowered. Anarchists want to see hierarchical institutions like the NHS dismantled.

Capitalism particularly in its neo-liberal form has made us all passive individuals. The consumer may be king (or queen) but at the end of the day if the only choice over your life you really have is what to buy then that life is pretty hollow. If you then worry that you have made the wrong choice, life is pretty depressing. Too much choice isn't such a good thing it seems.

Richard Griffin

REVIEW

Summer blockbuster Fahrenheit 9/11 heavily criticises the Bush administration ... but is it any good, asks Tom Jennings

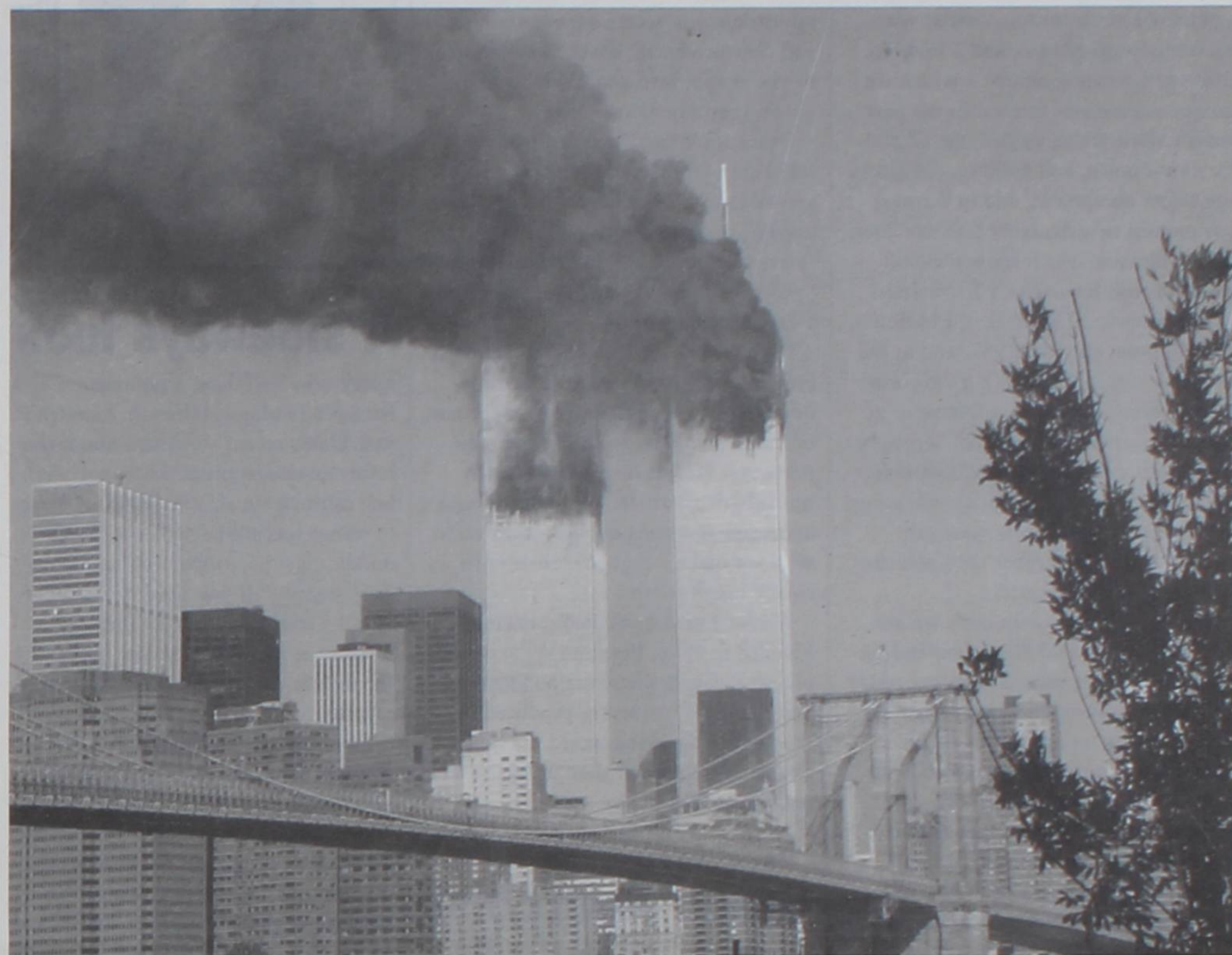
Michael Moore's Fahrenheit 9/11 has catapulted into the mainstream US media an overwhelming shiteheap of crucial and revealing information about contemporary American politics which has otherwise been largely falsified, trivialised, buried in 'quality' programming, or ignored altogether. The film is also exemplary in the energy and passion with which the contrasting effects of the Bush government's foreign and domestic policies on their corporate US and Saudi friends, and on ordinary US and Iraqi people, are catalogued and decried. Best of all, several pivotal examples are given of the way political institutions (Supreme Court, Senate and Congress – both Democrats and Republicans) instinctively protect themselves rather than admit failure – however tragic or (literally) earth-shattering the outcome. These are no negligible achievements given that, for example, millions of us watching the film possibly had not found the time to read Chomsky, may not previously have contemplated taking any radical or alternative propaganda seriously, nor even got round to questioning the precepts of patriotism, democracy and 'freedom'. We may now.

F9/11 covers the period from the Florida vote rigging which allowed Dubya into office through the administration's dodgy business practices and political slackness up to September 11th, and then into Afghanistan, the Orwellian domestic fear tactics, and the latter-day Vietnam of Iraq. Via a jumble of meticulously stitched together found footage, out-takes, soundbites and mischievous associations, the film mercilessly lampoons the lies, evasions, contradictions, vested interests and all-round general farce of government

conduct. Around the fulcrum of the fall of the twin towers (signalled by an audio-recording from Ground Zero and a blank screen), the focus inexorably shifts from the complacency and duplicity of the victimisers to the grief and desperation of the victimised – in a brilliant paralleling of the wastelands and wasted souls left in urban America and Iraq by the corporate-military onslaughts.

Breaking cinema box office records even in traditional mid-West and armed forces towns, F9/11 succeeds partly because it mobilises so effectively a range of popular cultural traditions – from music hall comedy to Hollywood melodrama, for example – to engage and involve its audiences. Over here, too, many multiplexes have shown it in several packed auditoria at once to those who often turn out for action thrillers and other blockbusters, and whose emotional responses have been similarly intense. The key device used by Moore in all his work in television, books and films has been to solicit identification with his persona of the little man up against big finance and corrupt government. A staple of populist political traditions, this strategy has similar drawbacks and dangers – such as facilitating the careers of charismatic charlatans. Indeed, now a multimillionaire with formidable PR back-up, Moore could be said to fit that profile. But then he's only an entertainer, right?

However, poking fun at incompetent, greedy and self-serving leaders as a prelude to outrage at the liberties they take is only a first step. Unfortunately, the force of polemic is not matched by rational analysis – either of the history and nature of the US political system or of the iniquitous role of the media and intellectuals in legitimising it. So, having dredged up the reserves of depression, apathy and reactionary defensiveness of middle America, and



fashioned them into anguished hilarity and furious indignation aimed squarely at the status quo, F9/11 squanders its rhetorical power on a feeble reiteration of the inherent decency of the people, who are urged to choose better leaders next time. Such a false and miserable climax left many viewers stumbling out of the cinema in confusion.

In a sense this dissonance of thought and sentiment may mirror Moore's own. After all, our gut-level understanding of the significance of the rich and powerful in the world and in our lives often is impeccable – even if it receives very little confirmation from official discourse. But it doesn't

translate directly into intellectual understanding, especially when it comes to working out what to do next. Being humble, we don't expect it to – that takes collective work and struggle. Whereas Moore inflates his narcissistic ego in order to play the carnival huckster delighting us in his performance – where admitting ignorance and error would ruin the illusion. But political activism is rather more permanent than the temporary subversions of carnival, in which case a puffed-up ego easily succumbs to the hubris and paranoia of demagoguery. Come to think of it, film directors have been known to be megalomaniacs too.

And F9/11 is only a film. On one level an effort of memory and suggestive interpretation, the scope is too short term to convince. In the end it retreats to a recuperation – complete with commercial pitch as controversial electoral revelation – into the same old political game that it has already mortally undermined. The really useful insight it offers is in presenting so much compelling material in a way that resonates emotionally with so many of us and our desired audiences at once – predisposing them to engage with the ideas. This is a method we would do well to study.

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I would imagine that most people when confronted by the possibility of reading a contemporary anarcho-syndicalist magazine, even one with such a colourful cover as Direct Action has, might well pass it over thinking it would be of little relevance to today's political, social and economic climate. All that stuff died out in 1939 didn't it?

However, if they would take the time to actually read what Direct Action has to offer I think they would be pleasantly surprised at the coverage, style and tone

of the magazine. For one thing, the tone is often quite humorous (and in some cases down-right quirky).

Their coverage of working class struggles is global in scope – alongside the five pages of news from around the world there's a double page spread on the current situation in Argentina in the wake of the economic melt-down of a couple of years back and the self-managed struggle by working class communities to keep themselves and their workplaces going.

Not that home-grown activism is ignored as there is, amongst other items, a two page article devoted to the militancy that has spread amongst London tube workers, which crucially brings together both permanent and temporary staff in informal circles called 'workmates' and which has scored some considerable achievements in the struggle to maintain and even

improve working conditions, in the face of increased privatisation and official union inactivity. A fine example, which other workers would do well to read and, if their situation needs, act on.

The main article is tucked away at the rear end of the magazine, a four-page analysis of work and its current intensification, with resultant worsening of working conditions with more workers taking fewer holidays and working longer hours. Inevitably whilst this is good for company profits, it's bad for workers' health.

Direct Action has a good reviews section, with two pages devoted to music that you probably won't see reviewed elsewhere, alongside the more traditional textual items. Direct Action is the official mag of the Solidarity Federation and so it is perhaps inevitable that a soupçon of sectarianism creeps in, with a single page item pulling apart the Anarchist

Federation of Britain's presentation to the IFA Congress this year in France. But it's all done in the best possible taste in comradely fashion. ;o)

There's a full page of contacts for those who want to get more involved with SolFed and other groups and a few other items [although a certain anarchist fortnightly is omitted! – Eds] including the obligatory letters page, all wrapped up in a colourful (some might even say garish) cover.

Even if you'd blanch at calling yourself an anarcho-syndicalist, I'd recommend this mag for a critical look at the world today. It's a salutary reminder that capitalism is still the dominant economic system and that means there is still a working class that's being exploited – and fighting back!

Richard Alexander

Direct Action is published by the Solidarity Federation, PO Box 29, South West PDO, Manchester M15 5HW.

See www.direct-action.org.uk for details of their sub rates. You can also order single copies for £2 (plus 50p p&p in the UK, £1 overseas) from Freedom, 84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1 7QX.

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The future

As mentioned previously in Freedom, we are looking at ways of improving the paper and ensuring its long-term survival as a resource for the anarchist and libertarian movement. The future is promising, but we need your help!

We have received lots of constructive and encouraging feedback from readers and contributors in letters and questionnaires over the last few weeks, and the amount of copy being sent in keeps rising. We have also been taking a close look at our finances.

Cash-money

Being anarchists, we haven't been so great with money, and Freedom is currently making a significant loss – what with rocketing postage rates and a building constantly needing repairs – which we cannot sustain any further. In the past month alone we've shelled out £2,500 for a new boiler, and £400 on obligatory fire safety equipment, and in the next few months new disability discrimination laws will come into force which will mean we will have to pay for changes to the premises. The price of Freedom has not gone up since 1987, and at the moment 50p is not covering the costs of producing it, so this will have to go up to 80p by the beginning of September if we're to maintain fortnightly publication. The price of a sub price will go up to £20, but if you renew your sub before the 1st September then you can still get it at the old rate!

Due to the increase in copy we are receiving, we would like to expand the paper in the very near future, but again this will cost more money. As such we are launching an appeal for regular donors to raise £5,000 per year. This will enable us to stem our losses, expand the size of the paper and its distribution, and subsidise free and reduced subscriptions rates for prisoners, pensioners and claimants.

Five grand may sound like a lot but in reality just over 200 people giving £2 a month by standing order will cover this. A regular gift of £2 per month (or whatever you can afford) will enable us to plan ahead so we can keep sending Freedom out every two weeks to readers across the world, and use advertising to get libertarian ideas out to a wide audience – outside of the anarchist 'ghetto'. We will be reporting on the progress of this appeal in coming weeks! One-off donations are of course always still appreciated. See the forms below.

Questionnaire

We've tallied up the results of our readers' questionnaire, and below we present its findings:

- In general, readers wanted fewer long British and International news stories and more shorts, with some suggesting that we shouldn't separate national and world news;
- People wanting overwhelmingly more in-depth feature articles, community struggle news pieces, anarchist

movement news, satire, interviews;

- Most readers want slightly fewer letters – or else more shorter letters;
- Most people wanted the amount of reviews, games, history and strikes and prison news to stay roughly the same;
- A slight majority of readers wanted to increase the number of corporate- and government-watch and theory-based articles.

So overall most respondents wanted more of ... almost everything really, and a huge majority want Freedom to stay fortnightly, with most favouring newspaper format. Freedom readers said that they thought it should, amongst other things, be outward-looking, informing, non-sectarian, entertaining and down-to-earth, cover news ignored by the media, help anarchists keep in touch, keep 'the flame' alive.

Other comments included many suggesting more environmental articles, several asking us to continue our "no poetry" policy, one asking for less "class war bollocks" and others for less "primmie bollocks" and one requesting a caption competition.

Here we run on the general anarchist principle of – if you want something done, do it yourself! So if you were one of the people who wanted more on a particular subject or topic area, why not submit an article on it? And if you appreciate it coming out every two weeks, why not make a regular donation to ensure it can continue?

As many of you will know, having been founded in 1886, Freedom is the world's oldest surviving anarchist publication, and the most frequently-produced in the English-speaking world. Its future can be even brighter than its past – let's make sure that it is!

Green Anarchist

In November 1997, three of the editors of our then contemporary Green Anarchist were sentenced to three years in prison for Conspiracy to Incite Criminal Damage. Four and a half months later they were set free by an Appeal Court judge, who said that even if the Appeal Court upheld the guilty verdict, the sentences would be deemed excessive. (Later, the Appeal Court quashed the verdict.)

The Judge who handed down the excessive sentences was His Honour Judge Major General David Selwood, resident judge at Portsmouth crown court and the only civilian judge with a military rank in his official title.

On Tuesday 13th July 2004, Judge Selwood was sentenced to a twelve-month Community Rehabilitation Order and had his name placed on the Sex Offenders Register, having pleaded guilty to purchasing 75 indecent images of boys aged eight to fourteen, from an illegal American website. Nothing to do with the Green Anarchist trial, of course, but we can't help giggling.

Donald Room



A sideways look

Every now and then, a politician will let slip a fundamental truth. I contend that Blair's recent statement about the future of education in this country is one of those times. The thrust of it was to set up specialist schools to "stop middle class parents opting out of the state system." If you need it any more bluntly, education, like all public services, is there to serve the needs of the middle classes and they will take priority.

Education Minister Charles Clarke claimed that the new policy was not selection, it was 'anti-selection'. But of course, these new specialist schools are allowed to select a proportion of pupils on 'aptitude', which is a weasel word for saying 'ability', whether intellectual or the ability to fit in. This of course is a particular issue for middle class parents in London, where house prices rise or fall depending on proximity to schools that are 'good'. A recent programme about a primary school in Bromley found parents lying and renting properties within catchment areas to get in to that school. Friends tell me of catchment areas that stop half-way up a tower block. And of course, several outer London boroughs, Kent and Essex have never abolished selection at all.

Clarke and Blair claim they are not returning to the days of selection. One might wonder why selection was bad in the first place. Aside from the trauma of telling children at age 10 or 11 that they had failed (as if modern education wasn't traumatic enough), selection basically allows the elite schools to cream off the resources. It's not just obvious things like better buildings and sites, but better teachers, who are more motivated, because the kids are, and so on. This has actually been happening on the quiet for some time in many

parts of London and has cost Labour at least one council seat in my local area (of which, more another time, as it's a good story that's ongoing). If I look at the local secondary schools (and thankfully I am some years off having to) there are fourteen in the borough. Of these, eight are nominally comprehensive, three are religious, two are voluntary aided and one is a City Technology College of the sort advocated by Labour. They are all nominally comprehensive, but nearly 50% select by one thing or another. The borough operates a policy of banding all children on the basis of year 5 SAT tests and schools are meant to take an equal proportion of each band. Of the alleged comprehensives, only four get a balance across these bands. The schools which don't, and tend to have a lot of kids from lower bands, are the ones with the poor results – and at least one is in a middle class area. And this is the rub – the middle class are prepared to see their kids educated with proles so long as they are getting what they regard as a decent education. Once they feel they're not, they vote with their feet or their wallets.

This is what Blair wants to address. It's also why Labour-run education authorities in London have such poor results – all the Quentins and Jocastas (who tend to be good at tests) are going private or travelling miles to get to a proper selective school. Pity the poor sods left behind. Selection, whether it's the crazy world of Michael Howard or the crafty meritocratic version peddled by Blair, demands one thing: that some fail. School is where my hard-learned lessons about class started and I'm sure I'm not the only one. Rather than move to a system that valued children, even if only a bit, all the political establishment can offer is more of the same.

Svartfrosk

Iraq in context

page 1

The first thing the Coalition forces did in Iraq was to start to train the police and security forces. Why? To bring the people under control. Now that control is in the hands of the Provisional Government, the next step will surely be to get them all to work, since the unemployment levels in the country are running somewhere in the region of 70%. This is the consolidation of the Iraqi Nation State, and of a bourgeois class hierarchy. Forget weapons of mass destruction, Saddam Hussein or whether Blair and Bush conned us into war – these things are superficial. The political mood has swung away from negotiating with the working class, to a much more blatantly hostile approach, in order to bring through the structural changes to the world economy that the neo-liberal gospel writers demand, and no matter how many inquiries, reports or resignations of high level spooks there are, it will not change until we do something to change it.

Kenny Mooney

The quiz

1. How did Fox News (proprietor R. Murdoch) chief John Moody require staff to talk about the US military in Iraq?
2. Who thought it was time for the human race to enter the Solar System?
3. In 1981, NY mayor Ed Koch nearly chokes to death in Chinatown's Sun Lok Yee restaurant, where waiters say he was talking non-stop while stuffing pork in his face. What did he claim caused him to choke and why?
4. What union went on strike in the French border town of Hendaye in 1947?

Answers on page 6

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