

FREEDOM

14 OCTOBER 2004

80P ANARCHIST NEWS AND VIEWS

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SPANISH STRUGGLE RE-IGNITES

Right up until the Spanish elections in March 2004 (and the train bomb attacks in Madrid), the shipyards of Spain were in open revolt against wage levels and lack of work for the 11,000 workers of the State-run IZAR shipyards (see Freedom, 6th March). Battles raged across the country, particularly on the streets of Cadiz (in the South) and Bilbao (in the North) and an aggressive programme of strike action was in place. In addition to the workers directly employed by IZAR, there are 60,000 in the auxiliary sector (often subcontractors) and 36,000 in adjacent industries. The Spanish anarcho-syndicalist union CNT were heavily involved in the auxiliary companies of the shipyards of Seville and Puerto Real, although recent job cuts seem to have reduced their influence.

When the New Labourish Spanish 'Socialist Workers' Party (the PSOE or PoliticS Of Excrement) won the election the main shipyard unions dramatically made a pact with the new Government to cancel the whole campaign of industrial action. Officially this was to give the Government 'a chance' to save the shipyards. Unofficially, the unions were losing control of the workers action and the unions also took cynical advantage of widespread revulsion against the train bombings to call a halt to the violent strike action.

So disgusted were the CNT with this dramatic and total union sell-out that they wrote off the shipyards at the time as having no future – even writing a requiem for the industry, which had already undergone three restructuring plans in the 1980s with the loss of 30,000 jobs. Back in March it looked like the yards had rolled over to the new Government and were finished.

As the summer progressed, it appeared that this prediction was coming true. The Government set up a Commission to look at the future of the shipyards, a move that was interpreted as trying to

find a new way to cut back the industry. In July it was revealed that the previous PP Government (People's Party – similar to Tories) had known that the European Union was demanding the return of 300 million euros of illegal subsidies given to IZAR, but had not bothered to mention this to the PSOE – so now the yards were in even more financial trouble.

Everything came to a head on 8th September when SEPI (the organisation which runs the shipyards for the State) announced that it was going to split the shipyards in two and privatise half of them. The State would convert half of the yards into profitable military ship production (and keep control of them) and the other half would become a commercial ship company and be sold off.

The following day the shipyard workers went out on the streets across Spain and the mainstream unions called four days of official strike action through September. For the rest of that week the workers of San Fernando (Cadiz), whose yard is threatened with closure, battled with the police and erected burning barricades across motorways and railway lines. The first official strike day on 14th September featured demonstrations at all ten Spanish yards, with street battles and barricades outside the Cadiz yards of San Fernando and Puerto Real. The next day, in a pattern to be successfully repeated throughout September, wildcat action by the workers of San Fernando took the police by surprise, erecting burning barricades to block major roads and on this occasion overturning a car on the motorway and setting it alight (see Freedom, 2nd October).

On 16th September the workers of the Sestao yards of Bilbao rioted, setting fire to a number of barricades and blocking roads and railway lines (at one point a forklift was used to pile up material to make a better road block!). The fighting was widespread and fierce,

with one worker losing an eye when the particularly nasty Basque 'Ertzaintza' riot police attacked the workers with CS gas and rubber balls (like bullets but round). Workers in Puerto Real also took to the streets using catapults to fire steel bolts at the police who blocked their way into Cadiz with armoured cars and a tank. The workers of San Fernando decided to take a day off as they had fought with the police and blocked roads for the past six days!

The next day (17th September) a large group of shipyard workers in Seville tried to block the huge Centennial V Bridge but were forced back towards the yards by a ferocious riot police attack that left at least 23 injured. They blocked another main road instead, with lamp-posts and furniture taken from a lorry.

Official strike days were called on 21st, 28th and 30th September and were generally marked by large peaceful demonstrations, although individual yards still rose up in more violent revolt. On 21st September it was Gijon's turn, with roads and railways blocked. On 23rd September workers in Sestao built barricades from burning cars and on 24th workers in Gijon rioted again, blocking roads with burning tyres. On 27th September workers from the San Fernando yards blocked the main railway line with for the second day running, but this time they also ripped up 100 metres of track! On the 28th there were demonstrations at every shipyard in Spain. Throughout this dispute the local communities that surround the shipyards have shown widespread support for the strikers, joining them in large numbers on their demonstrations.

This unity of action across the workers in Spain's shipyard industry has been a welcome change, as in the past different regional politicians and unions have been able to play the yards

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Rocket man – workers used an array of weaponry in battles with police

PRIVATE PARTS

LUnacy of tube payout

New Labour's privatisation-by-stealth plans were boosted this month by news that its public-private-partnership scheme for London's Underground was in fact functioning perfectly.

Tube Lines, set up as a bonanza cash give-away for corporate investors (and to run tube infrastructure for the next three decades) turned out a healthy profit of £41.6m last year, and even more promisingly was happy to hand out a £552k bonus to its under

performing boss Terry Morgan.

Investors are responding warmly to news that easy profits can be made in public transport, particularly with Tube Lines demonstrating that no actual improvement or indeed maintenance of services is necessary. London Underground failed to meet 27 out of 39 targets for the year.

With radical socialist mayor Ken Livingstone a prominent critic of PPP, it was a shock to see his office offering no public criticism.

Reports indicate Livingstone was seen wandering into Labour HQ early this year, where he seems to have had his spine surgically removed.

Opposition to this successful wealth redistribution scheme (giving £360 million of public tax to needy small business) was left to the Lib Dem London Assembly Chairwoman, who helpfully expressed surprise that removing £40 million of Underground investment to pay off shareholders was not yielding greater success.

You've got private mail

In a tumultuous week for Royal Mail, the prospect of a sell-off to company workers was raised by Chairman Alan Leighton, while his deputy resigned with a huge severance payoff.

Unions have condemned the proposal as a slow march to privatisation. By giving workers saleable shares in the company it is thought a partial buyout of stock by the markets will become inevitable.

Leighton plans to use an upcoming staff bonus of up to £1,000 per person

for making Royal Mail profitable to oil his proposal. He dismissed the Warwick agreement between unions and government – to keep Royal Mail Public – as 'not binding'.

A keen Morris dancer, Leighton plans to go directly to staff (hopefully without whipping out his wood and bells) and bypass union representatives entirely, echoing his tactics in pay disputes earlier this year.

Leighton's regime has been notorious

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Home and away

FREEDOM

Volume 65 Number 19

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.

Angel Alley

We're finally getting round to thinking about moving the bookshop downstairs into what is now the basement, things are only in the planning stage at the moment but if anyone would be able to help out with it, or has any skills that they think are useful, or anything they'd be able to donate please could they get in touch at copy@freedompress.org.uk

FBI take IMC

The FBI issued an order to US web-hosting company Rackspace to hand over Indymedia web servers, the company complied and handed over two servers from its London offices. This affected more than twenty Indymedia sites and some other unrelated projects.

For more up to date information see www.indymedia.org.uk

Donations

LH, £50; HM, £4; HD, £11.50; M, £2; PF, £5; JP, £10; BE, £10; CR, £5.

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Next issue

Contributions are wanted for future Freedoms. The next issue will be dated 30th October 2004 and the last day to get your copy to us will be Thursday 21st October (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 wish. Please also feel free to write to us with any news about your imprisonment, developments in your case, requests for penpals or anything else!

Scottish prisons 'unsafe'

Individual jails cutting costs is putting prisoners' safety at risk and that overcrowding in prisons was the single biggest obstacle in tackling reoffending. Dr Andrew McLellan also condemned the practice of slopping-out.

Overcrowding has gotten much worse in Scottish prisons in the last year and has had far-reaching implications for

the prison population. Dr McLellan pointed out that "The facilities which provide the services to the prison do not grow larger when the prison becomes overcrowded." Dr McLellan said that prison overcrowding meant that preventing reoffending was "almost impossible" and that the impact of even "the best strategies in the best prisons carried out by the best staff is hopelessly weakened by overcrowding."

He also slammed the practice of slopping-out which was decided to amount to degrading treatment under the European Convention of Human Rights earlier this year. Until slopping-out was ended in all Scottish prisons, Dr McLellan said "we cannot call our prisons decent." Citing the example of Polmont young offender's institution in Falkirk, Dr McLellan also criticised remand prisoners having to take part in slopping-out, criticising "the humiliation and squalor" involved in the practice.

Even by their own measuring stick, the ruling class' prisons are not meeting the standards required of them. And with overcrowding increasing and standards deteriorating with the growing prison industry we could be seeing an increase in struggle in Scottish prisons.

Teenagers intimidated by RUC

In 1976 Richard Hanna, 15, was arrested for killing north Belfast accountant Peter Johnston. Royal Ulster Constabulary members grilled Richard for three days without letting him see a solicitor or legal guardian. On the fourth day, he confessed. Richard and his 'accomplice' Robert Hines, 14, (who he barely knew) were convicted for nine years but a new investigation has found that the boys both signed confessions under oppressive circumstances.

This is just one case involving teenagers who were jailed largely on the basis of confessions obtained by the RUC at the

height of the Troubles in Northern Ireland. It's expected that dozens of convictions involving young people will be challenged. The RUC are accused of using 'psychological warfare' to get confessions from teens. This included holding them for days without access to solicitors, solitary confinement in underground cells with little light and sleeping in the same room they were questioned in. Richard claims to be beaten and having guns pointed at him.

Richard and Robert's case is expected to be overturned by the end of the month. Another conviction is up for review in a few months time. At least one other murder case involving a teenager is also being sent to the Criminal Cases Review Commission (CCRC), the organisation that considers alleged miscarriages of justice. Since the CCRC was set up in 1997, it has received 96 applications for suspected miscarriages of justice from Northern Ireland.

LISTINGS

Bristol

Every Sunday the Kebele Kafe from 6.30pm, 14 Robertson Road, Easton. For info call 0117 9399469

London

Until 7th November Grin and Blair It: ten years of political cartoons at the Mall Galleries, SW1. For more info see www.cartoontrust.org.uk

13th to 17th October Beyond ESF free direct action conference and celebration of self-organised cultures of resistance, with food, cinema and live music each evening at Middlesex University, Tottenham Campus, White Hart Lane, N17. See www.wombles.org.uk/auto
13th to 17th October Creative centre and info-point at RampART, 117 Rampart Street, Whitechapel E1
16th to 17th October Life Despite Capitalism discussions of alternatives to capitalism for today, rather than waiting for the 'revolution'. Old Theatre and Clement House at the LSE, Aldwych. See www.lifedespitecapitalism.org
27th November Anarchist Bookfair at ULU, Malet Street, WC1 from 10am to 7pm. See www.anarchistbookfair.org

Newcastle

10th to 12th December Projectile: a festival of anarchist film and culture, exploring the past, present, and future of anarchism. Also help needed with organising, at the Side Cinema. See www.projectile.org.uk

International

19th October Day of action against McDonald's, to mark World Food Day. For leaflets contact 0845 458 9595 or email mclibel@veggies.org.uk See www.mcspotlight.org

Nationwide groups

Anarchist Federation
Network of anarchist-communists
Box 2, 84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1 7QX
www.afed.org.uk
Antifa
Militant anti-fascist organisation
Box 36, 84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1 7QX
www.antifa.org.uk
Class War Federation
Class struggle anarchist group
PO Box 467, London E8 3QX

www.classwaruk.org

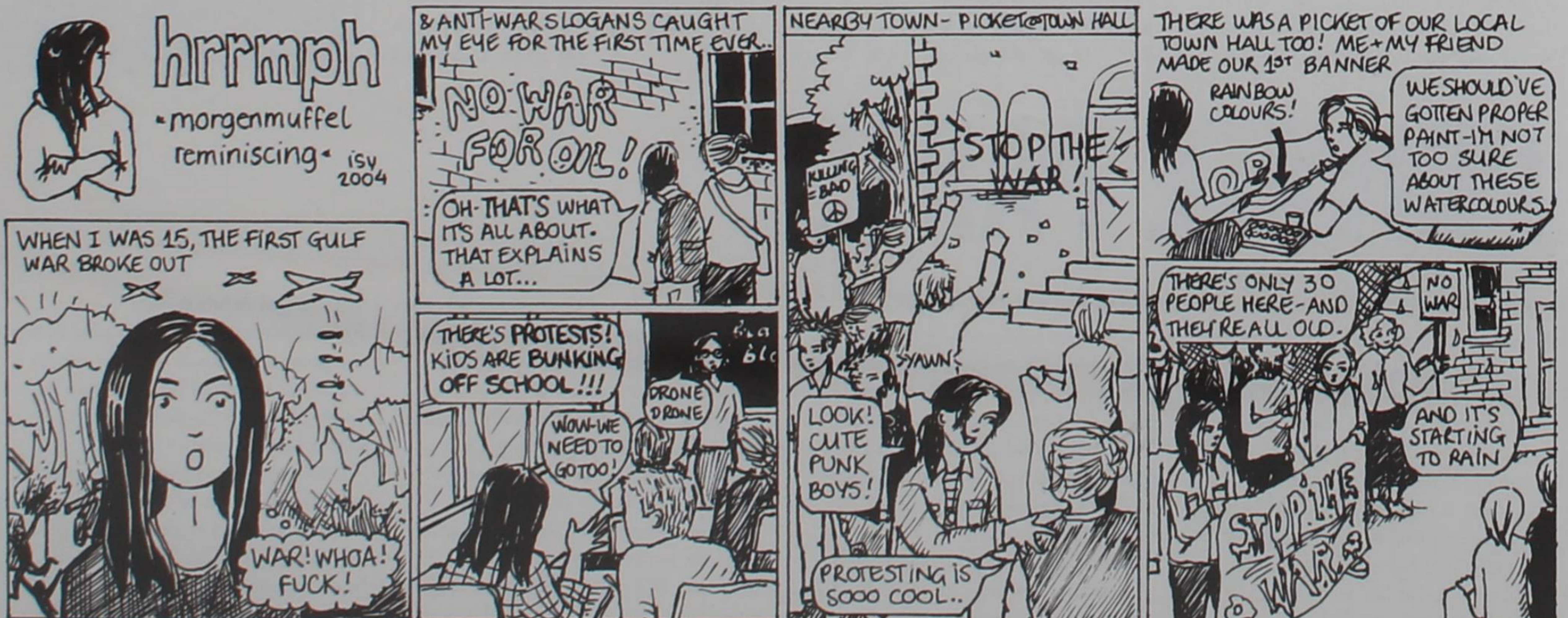
Dissent
A network of resistance against the G8
www.dissent.org.uk
Earth First!
Ecological direct action network
www.earthfirst.org.uk
Industrial Workers of the World
Revolutionary DIY union
PO Box 74, Brighton, BN1 4ZQ
www.iww.org.uk
Solidarity Federation
Anarcho-syndicalist organisation
PO Box 469, 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
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/
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



Continuing this exclusive series of cartoons for Freedom. You can get Isy's zine from www.actedistribution.org

News

Merseyside strikes

Neglected children pay the price of cuts, so public sector workers have been taking action

Unnoticed nationally, social workers in Liverpool have now been on strike for five weeks. And at the end of September, 3,000 public sector workers – cooks, cleaners, refuse collection and care workers – in Sefton on Merseyside are threatening a three-day strike to protest against the closure of twelve schools. What's going on?

The emergency duty team in Liverpool which protects children at risk have been in dispute since October 2003 over cuts, a bullying culture amongst managers and the replacement of specialist dedicated staff with generic social workers. The changes have been imposed with little or no consultation, resulting in fragmented services, low morale and long-time staff voting with their feet. Recently, for instance, twelve frontline social workers were replaced by seven managers and the dedicated social welfare services at the Women's and Alder Hey Children's hospitals have been disbanded. Children in extremely dangerous situations aren't getting the protection they deserve. Eventually one of them is going to die and we will pay the millions another public enquiry into the failure of a local

authority will cost. The eventual result – courageously – has been an all-out, indefinite strike by the team of over 150 workers, with five offices being picketed on a daily basis. The council refused to negotiate until ACAS got involved recently and there are prospects for a settlement. What a comment on the attitude of powerful bureaucratic institutions obsessed with image and cost-cutting to the care and welfare of children!

In Sefton, the proposed closure of schools, care homes and disability support centres has provoked widespread anger. As a Unison spokesman said, "this is more than just a trade dispute – they are attacking resources for our children." Naïvely, local people have begged Tony Blair, the Queen and even the Pope to intervene. What a recipe for doing nothing at all! The school bosses helped inflame an already tense situation – how often does this happen – by locking union officials out of their offices in council premises, cutting off phone and email access at the same time. Like that's going to stop a strike! Unison replied that "the council's



entrenched position made more strike action almost inevitable."

Such situations inevitably arise when the workers delivering frontline services have to bow their knees to bureaucrats, political managers and bean-counters in public services and the local state.

Children are not cost-centres and workers aren't just overhead. Until we break up local authorities and create service-delivery agencies under the control of local parents, carers and frontline workers, strikes, disputes and mismanaged services are going to

continue. Workers on Merseyside are fighting our fight but won't change anything until we start to question how services are delivered and the rotten-borough politics that control them. Over to us!

Merseyside AF

News in brief

M&S goes S&M

Good old Marks and Sparks. Those benevolent workplace paternalists have been showing us all exactly why capitalism doesn't have to be harsh for decades now.

This month, ever eager to keep their servants on their toes, they've got out the whips and chains for a quick madame whiplash session, bless 'em. Employees at Britain's best loved institution have reported to the T&G union that they're getting some saucy language about 'longer hours' and 'job cuts'.

Although M&S have denied any knowledge of such kinky behaviour, various members of their 55,000 staff have disclosed 'goings on' behind closed doors.

Contracts have allegedly been drawn up to change working hours to 9am to 6pm, with late-night shifts until 9.15pm in rural stores. Staff were pressured individually to conform, or face having their assets cut off, according to T&G.

This new twist in the longstanding relationship between employers and workers at the chain has been put down to new company Godfather Stuart 'Thorny' Rose, whose lascivious taste in employment strategy looks set to make a lasting impact.

Don't hold your breath

The Strategic Rail Authority have voiced fears that the next ten years will

see no improvements in Britain's railways.

As increased levels of freight begin to saturate rail timetables, it is expected to hit train time efficiency.

Lack of planning, and a tight government spending review expected for the next few years, will leave rail improvement companies such as Corus Rail and RMC struggling, prompting fears over the security of skilled jobs in the industry.

It has been suggested by David Quarmbly, the new chairman of the Strategic Rail Authority, that one alternative may be to raise fares to spend on enhancements.

US Army dissent

Al Lorentz, an US Army Reserve Staff Sergeant is under threat of twenty years imprisonment for 'disloyalty' after authoring an essay critical of the war in Iraq for a conservative website. Lorentz wrote that he had "come to the conclusion that we cannot win here for a number of reasons" before lamenting that actual serving soldiers allow politicians in Washington DC to give us pat and convenient reasons that are devoid of any semblance of reality." He faces charges under Title 18, Section 2388 of federal law and Article 134 of the Uniform Code of Military Justice. It seems that for the Bush administration, dissenting soldiers are just as unwelcome as dissenting liberal hippies.

Shell struck

Workers with Shell Nigeria launched a two day strike on 8th October in protest at planned job cuts. Shell are the largest oil producers in the country and oil union PENGASSAN has informed the company that the present action is a mere warning, unless Shell rethinks its 'reorganisation' plan, workers will shut down production completely. This mere warning has already sent international market prices for oil even higher. Nigeria may also be in the beginnings of a general strike, with workers protesting the rising fuel prices. Although a massive producer of oil, Nigeria exports the majority of that production and is forced to import refined fuel from elsewhere, with market speculation driving the price even higher.

US unionists nicked

Forty-four activists campaigning for UNITE HERE's attempt to introduce nationwide bargaining across hotels in New York, Chicago, Boston, Toronto, Monterey, Sacramento, Hawaii, Los Angeles and San Francisco have been arrested whilst blocking a highway. Employers are keen to bring the unions to their knees to avoid offering a two year collective contract; preferring to offer a five year deal avoiding LA and San Fran workers negotiating alongside their colleagues elsewhere in North America. The employers are happy to

attack workers in different places and at different times, whilst profits continue to flow at other hotels. Unionists have responded with a week long strike and a 1,200-strong demonstration in San Francisco.

Corporate manslaughter fines

Multinational construction company Balfour Beatty has been fined along with a casualisation firm for the manslaughter of 22 year old temporary worker Michael Mungovan. McGinley Recruitment Services consistently provided underqualified casual workers, who Balfour Beatty then dispatched to fix train lines without adequate training; Michael Mungovan was killed undertaking work on a live line (i.e. still in use) for the first time on just his third day in the job. The fines were just £150,000 for Balfour Beatty and £175,000 for McGinley Recruitment, which amounts just to 0.004% of the construction firm's annual turnover (the equivalent of fining a temp £48 for murdering a colleague).

Rail walkouts off

Over one thousand railworkers due to walk out over the second and third weekends in October have had their industrial action curtailed by a boss friendly High Court judge. Workers were due to stage two 48-hour walkouts followed by an overtime ban

in response to job cuts and attacks on conditions by freight business EWS but employers have been granted a temporary injunction until the 11th October because (in the words of Justice Gibbs) of the "substantial financial and other consequences" any action might cause the company. The complaint was later upheld in a subsequent hearing because the RMT failed to give adequate notice to parent company EWSI, instead only filing the proper papers with EWS. Always remember that it is necessary to file the proper paperwork before exercising the basic human rights to withdraw your labour.

Swansea strike boost

Swansea council IT workers received a boost in their ongoing strike in protest at the new Tory/Lib Dem council's privatisation plans; local union leaders are confident that their numbers will soon be swelled by an additional five thousand council workers. Over one hundred workers have been out for more than two months in response to the hiring of contractors to maintain a new £150 million computerised public queries system (service@swansea). Fellow council workers concerned about further outsourcing have voted overwhelmingly in favour of strike action. Local councillors are outraged, "You have to ask why Unison did not

News

Water tax: don't pay

An article opposing plans to increase water rates from Working Class Resistance, publication of the Irish anarchist group Organise!

Direct Rule Minister John Spellar has announced that we can expect to pay an average of £415 for our water by 2008. That's for a service that 37% of our rates already pays for! So will our rates go down as a result? Not likely. Water charging, the Reinvestment and Reform Initiative and the Review of rating will see rates double over the next few years. Why? To pay for government bureaucracy, to subsidise the private sector with PPP/PFI deals and to line the pockets of politicians, bureaucrats and quangocrats. As for the announcement of a 25% discount for people on low incomes, a government document has already been leaked revealing that everyone else's bill would be artificially boosted to cover the cost of these discounts. And remember, a 25% discount of an unfair double tax is no discount at all!

The main political parties have all issued statements attacking the new water bill. Yet these parties were all involved in the Assembly which set the ball rolling towards water charges and privatisation. Let's face it. There are not many of us left who actually trust politicians, regardless of the doorstep promises they make when they come round to our houses every four or five years. Anarchists too have little faith in the parties of the left, the politicians-in-waiting, who would also insinuate themselves into power given half the chance. It is clear that the agendas politicians (in power or not) pursue have very little in common with giving people a direct say over their own affairs. So it comes as no surprise to us at Working

Class Resistance that the subterfuge shared by current Secretary of State, Paul Murphy, and Paul Boateng, Chief Secretary of the Treasury, regarding the imposition of water charges in the north, highlights once again the divide between our interests and the interests of those with power over us.

A leaked ministerial letter from Murphy to Boateng, revealed plans that will artificially inflate present household rates so that people will get used to paying higher bills. The letter, published in the Belfast Telegraph, 20th August 2004, stated: "That is why we have drawn up proposals to make above trend increases in Regional Rates immediately before the introduction of water charging so that we can moderate the total increases in household bills (rates and water charges combined) during the following few years when we are introducing water charges."

So while we wait to pay for water twice over in 2006, we will be conned, in the meantime, into paying increased rates. Murphy, running scared of water-tax protests across the north, warns Boateng that a more subtle approach to the introduction of privatised services is needed. Murphy believes: "that if we adopt this strong approach to seeking private sector involvement from the outset, it will be seized upon by the many opponents of water reform as evidence that the government has a clear privatisation agenda for the water industry in Northern Ireland. The overt pursuit of private sector involvement will therefore strengthen the hand of those who are opposing the overall water reform package."

So the privatisation that previous issues of Working Class Resistance

warned about is on the cards after all.

This proves that Spellar announcement in October 2003 that privatisation had been ruled out was a bare faced lie. This is the same John Spellar who more recently announced that the Water Service would be run as a GoCo, a government-owned company.

Make no bones about it: a GoCo, with shares and shareholders, is more than a first step down the road to privatisation! The British Government has refused to comment on the leaked document but said that the rises will be 'fair and affordable'. Rubbish! Go to the doorsteps of old age pensioners across the north and tell them that! According to the charity organisation Help the Aged, OAPs will be among those the worst hit by the new charges. In a statement, the organisation said: "A quarter of all pensioners in Northern Ireland live in poverty. Any further tax on people who are already having managing is scandalous. It is completely unacceptable that we expect our older people to choose between bread and water."

So when the government expect us to pay up tell them where to shove their bill. Only the mass non-payment of water charges will beat this double tax. Set up a non-payment group in your area now and tell these leeches where to get off.

To get involved, contact: Organise! at: PO Box 505, Belfast BT12 6BQ Tel: 07732954843

Communities Against The Water Tax, 54 Manor Street, Belfast BT14 6EA Tel: 028 9074 9147 email cawt@btconnect.com www.cawt.co.uk

No To The Water Tax: c/o PO Box 523, Craigavon BT62 1YA, Tel: 07732954843



Spanish struggle re-ignites

➔ page 1

off against each other, and there has been a fear that some of the smaller yards would be left to fend for themselves. This unity took a bit of a knock on 30th September when the workers of Sestao discovered that a ship which was going to be built at



their yard was switching to Puerto Real. Their anger over this decision provoked one of most violent days in the City. Meanwhile, the workers of Manises blocked the runway at Valencia airport. The workers of Manises are particularly worried that the local Government want to sell off their yard to property developers because of the high value of the land. On 1st October there was a widespread general strike in San Fernando and Puerto Real in support of the shipyards, the first strike of its kind since 1991.

The latest day of action was on 6th October. In Seville, there was what was described as a 'pitched battle' with the police who stopped the shipyard workers from marching into the city. The workers fired home-made rockets at the police, burned cars and threw petrol bombs. In San Fernando, another fierce battle around the shipyard itself saw a 38 year old man lose an eye after

been shot by the police some 60 metres inside the factory. Workers in Puerto Real again fought the tanks and armoured cars of police who stopped them from entering Cadiz. The concerted and violent action of the shipyard workers has shaken the new President Zapatero, with some commentators referring to them as 'urban guerrillas'. On the union front, the pressure is increasing and splits are appearing between the mainstream unions. The two largest unions (CC.OO and UGT) have come out in support of privatisation in the last few days, much to the dismay of all the other unions.

Jim Bradley

For background info on the Puerto Real shipyard strike of 1987 see www.enrager.net/history/articles/puerto-real-strike-1987.

For more articles, interviews and a picture archive see www.red-star-research.org.uk/rpm (click on the Spain section)

US campaign funds

Revealing new figures on the source of campaign funds for both John Kerry and George W. Bush show that the two candidates actually share a series of prominent and generous donors in the financial sector. Away from the intense partisan political rivalry demonstrated over the course of the presidential debates it seems that both candidates are in effect dancing to the tune of the same piper-paymaster.

Although large political donations by corporations are barred by the McCain-Feingold Campaign Finance Law of 2002, companies are able to duck this legislation through the practice of 'bundling', where individual donations of up to \$2,000 are combined with other donors in the same company so that candidates are aware where their kickbacks are coming from without the need to inform the Federal Electoral Commission of who it is making the

'bundles'. Both Kerry and Bush have been in receipt of more than five hundred of this sort of donation, forming a large proportion of the \$208m already raised in this election cycle. Executives for investment bankers Goldman Sachs filled each of the first four places on the Democratic nominee's top donors.

Just as disturbing though are the large donations received more openly through the multinational corporations' political action committees (PACs). Although big business frequently plays a decisive role in American elections, it is particularly disturbing to see that many large financial houses have lodged six figure donations with both candidates. Citigroup managed to come in second on Kerry's list of donors with \$169,254 and gave \$246,645 to first preference George W. Bush; other

Feature

Struggles in Quebec

Canada's Groupe La Commune speak to a member of the Anarchist Federation during their European tour

Members of Groupe La Commune have recently been on a speaking tour of Ireland, Britain and France, hosted by the Anarchist Federation and other groups. Nicolas and Evelynne gave the following interview to a member of the AF during their visit to Liverpool and after...

So, who are Groupe La Commune and what prompted your tour?

Groupe La Commune is Montreal's local member group of the Northeastern Federation of Anarchist-Communists (NEFAC, www.nefac.net). At different times our membership can vary between ten and fifteen individuals, mostly young casual workers. Two of us had already planned to travel in Europe this past summer. We decided to include speaking engagements in our travels because the struggles in Quebec are rarely known outside of our province (possibly because of language, Quebec is a French-speaking area of Canada) and also because of the significance of recent struggles against the Liberal government and how they can orient class-struggle anarchist politics.

What's the protest situation like in Quebec at the moment?

Actually, rather quiet. Right now (July-August) is when most workers and students are on official summer holidays in Quebec. Things should pick-up in autumn, generally the most active time for social movements here. A few unions have general strike mandates agreed already. Various anarchist groups are beginning to campaign around casualised work, the student movement and public transportation costs. Throughout the past year however, the protest situation has been at boiling point, with the province of Quebec seeing its biggest protests in history, whether against the new right-wing Liberal government or the war in Iraq.

Could you give us a background to the current period of struggle?

Traditionally Quebec was always socially conservative, largely due to a reactionary Catholic Church and government institutions. This changed when the nationalist Parti Québécois came to power in the late 1970s, offering a social-democratic agenda on the back of quite powerful social movements ('The Quiet Revolution'). There was a strong mood for change amongst organised labour but also community campaigns and groups, self-organised groups and even armed struggle. But the PQ drifted rightwards while channelling dissent and a desire for change into piecemeal reforms. Its support gradually eroded and it lost an election in April 2003 to the even more right-wing Liberal Party, who promised

'modernisation'. It's their savage program of cuts and attacks on workers that we're resisting.

So what kind of thing is the Liberal Party doing?

It's a neo-liberal government, looking to 'roll-back' government and slash spending. It wants to lower average wages, tighten labour laws, create a consumer boom by cutting taxes to the rich and middle-classes and so on. For example, Quebec has 200,000 subsidised daycare places but the subsidy is being gradually withdrawn and daycare is becoming unaffordable to working people. But the attacks are across the board.

How did protests get going?

Organised labour called for demonstrations in November 2003 and up to 30,000 turned out in Quebec City - pretty good. That was followed by a National Day of Economic Disruption in December 2003 when there were 3,000 different actions: ports and highways were blocked, government offices blockaded and so on. When more repressive legislation was forced through parliament in late December, 40,000 people protested. The unions were becoming very radicalised and lots of local branches began calling for a general strike.

What happened more recently?

April 14th was the anniversary of the Liberal Party taking power. There were lots of self-organised actions: the Committee of the Unemployed mobilised 1,500 young people to march through Montreal's shopping malls and occupy a rich man's hotel, directly confronting the fat-cat diners. Although May Day is not a big tradition in North America, 100,000 demonstrated, probably the biggest demo since the general strike in 1972.

How are anarchists involved?

An anti-capitalist convergence of ten to twelve groups has developed, including Groupe La Commune and we've launched a regular agitational bulletin, Common Cause. We've backed the calls for general strike with huge banners in Montreal and organised ourselves under the slogan, 'Abolish Government, Build Self-Management', hoping to radicalise the approach of organised labour. We've also reached out successfully to excluded and disenfranchised people, occupying job centres and government offices and the like. We're supporting autonomous social movements and the development of our own politics.

How's that going?

Pretty good. Of course anarchists are still largely isolated and marginalised owing to our lack of presence in the unions - our calls for workplace action against the Iraq War, for instance, did



not find an echo amongst workers - and the common attitude amongst purist anarchists that resisting cuts is reformist. Slowly however, the situation has radicalised many working people and anarchism (or more generally, radical change) is gaining on social democracy as an alternative to the right-wing policies of the current government.

Has the Iraq war played a part?

Yes, for sure. There were at one time weekly mobilisations across Quebec against the war and a number of mass demos, one as big as 250,000, which is pretty good. We've also begun to build links with asylum seekers, legal and illegal immigrants through a 'No one is legal - solidarity across borders' campaign.

What's your assessment of the strength of anarchism in the NEFAC region?

Anarchism is definitely strong amongst young, rebellious, people. Since the anti-globalisation movement and the emergence of the Black Bloc, we have received a good amount of media attention (mostly for the worse than for the better). Most cities in the northeast of North America have anarchist/radical bookshops and may have multiple active anarchist collectives. Here in Montreal, for example, there are about ten collectives, active on many fronts, such as immigration, workers/class struggle, housing/tenants rights, ecology, education and etc. Some of us have decided to move beyond the limitations of being a single isolated local collective and have federated into NEFAC. With this our politics have also become more precise, moving from broad but vague anarchism to a more specific anarchist-communism, and with it an attempt to develop a

revolutionary program based on class struggle and a vision of a post-capitalist society. Similar initiatives have got going elsewhere, such as the Federation of Revolutionary Anarchist (FRAC) in the Great Lakes region and the Federation of Anarchist-Communists (FNAC) on the west coast.

How would you compare it with what you've seen on your tour so far?

Organisations such as the Anarchist Federation and the Workers Solidarity Movement are more established but somewhat less dynamic than NEFAC is. We are lucky (and unlucky) to be starting from scratch. There is no significant anarchist tradition in North America; this allows us to present ourselves as something novel and in some ways acts as a 'vacuum effect' in terms of attracting new membership. But, the lack of experience and tradition is also sometimes harmful. We have encountered many obstacles on our way when attempting to move anarchism from an influence in the protest-based anti-globalisation movement to have it become a pole in 'bread and butter' everyday struggles of the working class in workplaces and communities. In terms of the European movement, it is hard to assess anarchism's strength merely on the basis of a month-long visit.

Some events and initiatives do come to mind however, for example the successful May Day mobilisation in Dublin in response to the European Union meetings held there. Also, again in Ireland, the development of the 'Grassroots Groups' in different cities appears to be positive if only in their capacity to get large numbers of anti-authoritarian activists together to work on common mobilisations regardless of

their affiliation to this or that organisation. The Workers Solidarity Movement definitely deserves credit for initiating these 'Grassroots Gatherings' and 'Grassroots Groups'.

Meeting with the Organise! group in Northern Ireland was also a good experience, particularly discovering their positions on anarchist workplace agitation, which in many ways are close to NEFAC's: they have a commitment to activity in existing trade unions while simultaneously building alternative workers institutions outside of the unions.

The Anarchist Federation group in London seemed fairly healthy, mostly in terms of it having new(er) members that bring energy to the organisation. From what we understood the AF seems more committed to building autonomous anarchist collectives (not necessarily affiliated to the AF) in different cities across England and Scotland; it wasn't all that easy to assess their strength as a specific organisation. Something easier to assess is that their publications (Organise! and Resistance!) are amongst the best in the English-speaking anarchist world.

Of course, the French movement is as vibrant as ever, particularly revolutionary syndicalist CNT and the libertarian communist organisation Alternative Libertaire. The CNT and the alternative unions of SUD (Solidaires, Unitaires, Démocratiques) continue to gain ground on the more integrated unions, such as the CGT and the CFDT.

Have you enjoyed yourself on tour?

Of course! This is where we will take the opportunity to thank our anarchist hosts from across the Atlantic. You are always welcome to visit NEFAC territory! Cheers!

Editorial

The Duelfer report shows that Saddam had produced no WMD after 1991. The anti-war movement has, yet again, been vindicated. What of the architects of the war? How has the final report refuting their official rationale for war been spun? In America, the Bush Junta is punting the idea that 9/11 changed everything. Except, of course, the neo-cons who dominate the Junta had urged the removal of Saddam back in 1998 when the 'Project for the New American Century' wrote to Clinton urging exactly that. Saddam was in their sights from the moment they were not elected into office.

Meanwhile, Saddam's old mate Donald Rumsfeld veered starkly off message when asked about the alleged ties between al-Qaida and Saddam. Apparently there were none. What a surprise! The next day he back-peddled somewhat and got back on the spin machine. Yet the damage was done – some truth had exited from a Bush Junta member's mouth. But does it matter? After all 62% of Republicans think that Saddam Hussein was personally involved in the 9/11 attacks. How do these people dress themselves?

Blair argued that the 'international community' also thought Saddam had WMD. The same 'international community' which was not convinced by Colin Powell's (now utterly refuted) little presentation? The same 'international community' which had urged that the UN weapons inspectors be given more time? The same 'international community' which marched in its millions against the war?

Then there is the idea that the war as 'legal' because of Saddam's flouting of the UN. Obviously Israel's flouting does not warrant invasion and occupation. Nor does Bush and Blair's launching an illegal war in opposition to the UN itself. And how did Saddam flout the will of the UN? Apparently by saying that he had no WMD and, of course, he did not. So Saddam flouted the UN by doing what it said while Bush and Blair imposed its will by ignoring it!

But, apparently, Saddam was still interested in WMD and retained some intellectual capability. So while Blair shifted from Saddam having actual WMD to 'programmes' it transpires that the old dictator did not even have that. Rather he had 'intentions' to recreate programmes. Then there is the 'intellectual' capacities Saddam was meant to have. In other words, Iraqi scientists. Apparently Saddam should have expelled, shot or lobotomised any scientist with a basic knowledge of a field related to WMD.

And where does the logic of Blair's argument lead? Well, the expression 'thought crime' springs to mind. Also it means that any state can invade any other because they may, at some time in the future, be a threat. This is foreign policy by crystal ball.

So what have we learned from all this? That politicians are lying bastards who will say and do anything when required for reasons of state. Yet to think that Bush and Blair went to war because of their personal desires and personality faults is ridiculous. The war was conducted because a significant enough section of the ruling elite saw it was in their interests to do so. The costs have proven to be higher than expected and, consequently, calls are being heard to change from the current insane policies to ones less costly for US imperialism.

Ultimately, to end imperialism we need to end the system which generates it: capitalism. That will never be achieved via the ballot box. Only by direct action and solidarity in our workplaces and communities can we do that.

Commentary

God and punk

Having followed some of the correspondence on anarchist's attitudes to religion (Richard Griffin, Terry, *et al*), I wish some of the antipathy had been better thought through.

I consider that the main function of religion was originally – and for many still is – to help people manage their distress at the most difficult aspects of the human condition, from which none of us are exempt.

Even the most fortunate of us will suffer pain and infirmity, and the death of people close to us. Our own death is also certain. In this, we are in no more favoured a condition than our earliest ancestors.

There is very early evidence of the dead being systematically buried facing the direction of the rising sun. It is convincing evidence of a people reaching towards and idea of the continuity, or rebirth, of that which they could not bear to lose for all time. So, some sort of ritual symbolism has been with us for aeons.

Any critic who expects to be taken seriously on a significant aspect of human behaviour or belief needs to show some understanding of its function in the lives of those humans involved. It is difficult to take seriously anyone – professed anarchist or otherwise – who does not have a proper regard for the universal human condition, and the ways in which people have sought to cope with it. Professing anarchism being, perhaps, one of them.

If the idea of an egalitarian, non-hierarchical society is to spread wide enough to mean anything in the world, professed anarchists are going to have to make common cause with a wider circle of humanity that their own hole-in-corner coterie. In order to do so they will need to acquire sufficient philosophical depth to allow them to relate to the common humanity of other human beings as they find them.

If they cannot manage that, anarchists may increasingly be regarded (if they are considered at all) as the unthinking, unengaged bunch of misfits that their detractors are all too ready to dub them.

Alfred Todd

I have got no problems with people being 'spiritual' if you mean acting on the anarchist principles of mutual aid, solidarity, etc.

As for being 'sectarian' I hear there is a big posse of pissed off (shurley that's 'pissed up'? – Ed) [we didn't add this, Terry did. Maybe he thought it was funny – the real Editors] punks gunning for 'The Top Ten' contributors.

Perhaps readers could contribute on the ten best things about ex-public school, middle class liberals who pose as anarchists?

Llanver O Gariad.

Terry

Er, Terry we did that in Freedom 6518 and you seem to be complaining about it!! Ho ho. Well we'd be happy for that to be the subject of our next Top Ten list if we get enough contributions – so get sending them in to copy@freedompress.org.uk or our postal address on page 2 – Editors.

Revoltairing

I doubt that "all anarchists would have supported Voltaire" if he had made the silly comment attributed to him (Bob Potter, 2nd October). It is a piece of

liberal nonsense that makes impossible claims on the individual.

Is Bob prepared to die here in order that, say, fascists in the east of Europe might continue to mouth their garbage? This high-minded 'principle' is mere drawing-room militancy.

'Monsieur Dupont' despairs of us. He doesn't like the fact that anarchists are returning to the realities associated with changing things rather than scrutinising collective belly-buttons. That this entails analysis of current events is a given. Perhaps he would prefer the front page of Freedom to consider the poetry of Basho. As he has only ever been inspired by those outside the 'movement' it would seem the sooner he went the better. Could he take the like-minded with him and save the rest of us some grief?

Señor R.E.

Vero's Photos

The photographic exhibition Un Attimo di Verità: Vernon Richards fotografo (A moment of truth: Vernon Richards the photographer) will have its official inauguration in Reggio Emilia (Italy) at the Chiostrì di San Domenico, Via Dante Alighieri, 11, at 5.30pm on 30th October. The exhibition has been organised by the Berberi Family-Aurelio Chessa Archive in collaboration with the Municipality, the Municipal offices for Culture and Learning and the Panizzi Library, all in Reggio Emilia.

Curator of the exhibition is Professor Massimo Mussini lecturer in History of Modern Art at Parma University, assisted by Laura Gasparini from the Panizzi Library photographic archives and Fiamma Chessa in the Berneri Family-Aurelio Chessa Archive.

The exhibition can be viewed from 10am on the day of inauguration and will close on the 30th November.

Opening times are 9.30 to 12.30am, 4pm to 7pm (Closed on Monday).

The exhibition has been made possible because of the artist's donation of his photographic archives to Fiamma Chessa who is curator of the Berneri Family-Aurelio Chessa Archive.

Vero Recchioni (Vernon Richards), son of Emidio and companion of Maria Luisa Berneri was born in London and became both an important figure in the English Anarchist Movement and promoter of the Freedom group and the publishing house Freedom Press.

From 1936 to 1939 he directed Spain and the World, a bi-monthly English-language publication which, as George Orwell said, gave a voice to those who had none (the anarchists), and this publication was followed by Revolt and then by War Commentary.

In 1946 he re-established publication of Freedom which was a sequel to the periodical founded by P. Kropotkin.

Engineer, virtuoso violinist, gardener and freelance travel courier he devoted himself to organic cultivation in Suffolk for the last thirty years of his life after twenty years making his living as a photographer and creating splendid photographs of various well-known personalities such as George Orwell, Bertrand Russell, Herbert Read and Jankel Adler.

He died in 2001.

Fiamma Chessa

Fan mail

I have received a copy of your newspaper and I have to say it's incredible. It is so hard for me to believe that some

anarchist ideas can be successfully put into practice but you show me otherwise. Here in my country it is so difficult to be at the same level of libertarian attitude as you are, since most people disregard or do not pay attention to anarchist thought; and the few people who do, well ... we are a minority! I guess we'll always be; and I guess what this is all about.

So thank you very much, and keep up the good work!

Luigi C.
Argentina

News in brief

page 3

take strike action under Labour" whined Lib Dem Renee Kintzett.

British Library strike threat

Workers at the prestigious British Library in St Pancras are threatening strike action in protest at their 'lunatic' management, alleging massive wastage of public money and ten thousand items missing from the shelves. Predictably library bosses have been taking their own inefficiencies out on the workforce; with security guards manning the changing rooms and attacks on overtime procedures. After one whistle-blower took their complaints to the press, the library launched a major witch-hunt for the culprit. Interim finance director Robert Kirton is also planning job cuts in his upcoming financial review. Workers are said to be livid and will be out in droves during the 5th November civil service mass action.

Police fire at picket

Forty-seven South African platinum miners have been injured after police attacked a picket with rubber bullets and birdshot. Five hundred workers had gathered outside the Anglo Platinum mine near Johannesburg at around 4am on 5th October to secure the walkout of up to 30,000 members of the National Union of Mineworkers. When the mine was due to start work for the day, police charged and dispersed the picket to allow scabs and strike breakers to pass into the mine. Thirty-two picketers were also arrested. Workers are fighting to save jobs and to maintain the collective bargaining agreement signed last year which guaranteed them a pay rise 1.5% above inflation.

UN unions demand

The Federation of International Civil Servants Association (FICSA) and the Coordinating Committee of Independent Staff Unions and Associations of the UN System (CCISUA) trade unions representing 60,000 United Nations staff worldwide have demanded that all of the organisation's remaining personnel in Iraq be withdrawn.

Although the majority of workers have already been withdrawn in the wake of their Baghdad compound in August, thirty-five still remain inside the US fortified 'green zone' as a preparatory team for a larger group set to administer Iraqi elections in January.

In a joint letter to Kofi Annan, unions announced that "just one staff member is one staff member too many in Iraq," adding that "If the world's most heavily armed and equipped military cannot guarantee its own safety in such an environment, how can the safety of UN staff be even remotely ensured?"

Private parts

page 1

for closing post offices and 30,000 job cuts in under three years, without achieving even one of the fifteen service targets set for his tenure – which may explain why his second in command Elmar Tolme resigned last week.

Mr Tolme, who spent just eighteen months in his role as deputy chairman before being booted out, took away a £775,000 payoff for his role in failing every government target.

His boss has pledged that executive bonuses may be changed so up to 50% will rely on actually doing a good job.

Campaign funds

page 4

investment banks have similar arrangements with both candidates – Stanley Morgan Dean Witter, UBS and Goldman Sachs all appear in each contender's top ten.

The purported aim of private finance for presidential campaigns is that each nominee should find financial backers based upon support for their policies – that particularly committed supporters put their money where their mouth is. The practice of 'hedging their bets' by major business organisations should bring into question the whole practice of political finance in the United States. If the likes of Citibank want George Bush to win the 2004 election (and judging by the differing size of their donation, that is their preference) then the intention of the donation to Senator Kerry is highly dubious.

It seems obvious that the intention of this money cannot be to buy Bush some more airtime in his righteous fight to free the market and enslave the people, but amounts to little more than a bribe to both sides. Funding the political merry-go-round once every four years is merely buying influence at court. In reality large capital has only limited interest in the quadrennial US electoral stitch-up, preferring to focus on dealing with government over the course of the entirety of its four year term, preparing for this through high level campaign finance negotiations crucial to a continued relationship with the new administration – whomever that may be.

There's one DIY space in the UK where you can get zines like: Slug & Lettuce, Profane Existence, Maximum Rock n Roll, Heartattack and R.T.B., music from labels like: Broken Rekids, Active, Skuld, Havoc, Malarie, Flat Earth and Mortahate, books from AK Press, Freedom, Rebel Press, and many others!

So visit:
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Open Thurs, Fri and Sat afternoons.
www.safetycat.org/56a

Quiz answers

1. He advocated South American-style death squads to deal with crime.
2. Brian Clough refused to let the players talk to any non-union staff on the paper who were trying to bring it out during the strike. Would it happen now?
3. A self-proclaimed festival where participants buy nothing on the day. This year it is on 27th November. The idea is to make people think about the cost of consumerism.
4. The anarchist Carlo Tresca, murdered in mysterious circumstances in New York in 1943. There is a Piazzale Carlo Tresca in the town, complete with bust.

REVIEW

On yer bike, Che!* is Tom Jennings' response to *The Motorcycle Diaries*, the new film from Walter Salles

Remember those 1960s t-shirts favoured by trendy-lefties? (recently dredged up by French Connection – so perhaps my title should be worded more strongly). The iconic pop-art image of Ernesto 'Che' Guevara stood for the heroic struggle of the Cuban revolution, and Western middle class youth could affiliate (or pose) with the aspirations of the world's poor to transcend oppression. Now, the more comprehensive commodification of *The Motorcycle Diaries* also encompasses the road movie, tourism brochure, coming of age story, and even documentary realism. Box-office success at multiplexes and art cinemas suggests that the resulting melange works, thanks in particular to Brazilian director Walter Salles (*Central Station*, 1998; also a producer of Rio ghetto blockbuster *City of God*, 2002) and cinematographer Eric Gautier. A frisson of dangerous glamour doubtless helped – the script being loosely based on some of Che's memoirs (exceedingly turgid and self-important though those are), reinforced by heartthrob Gael García Bernal (*Y Tu Mama Tambien*, 2001; *Bad Education*, 2004) as leading man. But whether or not viewers know or care about the political history, this subtle film still has interesting things to say – if you can stomach the shallow smugness and picture postcard beautification.

Twenty-somethings Ernesto and Alberto (Rodrigo de la Serna) take a year off their studies in the early 1950s, and leave their upper-middle class Argentinean families for an awfully big lads adventure round South America on a knackered Norton. The overwhelming landscapes they pass through echo aspects of their experience and growing awareness: the Pampas are as empty as their idle bourgeois morality; crossing the Andes shows the arbitrary majesty of nature (i.e. history); fertile valleys are populated with evicted peasants; a copper mine in the Atacama desert reflects the impoverishment of industrial capitalism; and Incan traces (at Cusco and Machu Picchu) contrast

with the mess of Lima, giving poignancy to notions of 'civilised progress'. They randomly encounter and hear the stories of those who suffer and toil without their luxury of playful choice – recounted by local extras whose biographies are little different fifty years later – and whose dignity, passion and generosity belie their desperation, anger and pain.

The travelogue arrives at San Pablo leper colony in Amazonian Peru, where our heroes get their teeth into contributing to the lives of others for a change (not that big a change, but revolutions have to start somewhere). They still occupy immensely privileged positions, of course, but the trials and tribulations so far – repeatedly crashing the bike, temporarily running out of pocket money, Che's chronic asthma, the repercussions of adolescent scamming, drinking, womanising, and so on – begin to crystallise into something approaching adult maturity. Alberto gets a medical research job whereas Ernesto continues north in his search for a worthwhile life. The film ends with a sepia-toned montage of the 'ordinary people' in the film and a brief textual exposition of Che Guevara's central role in Cuba before his CIA-sponsored assassination. There's also footage of the real Alberto – now in his 80s, having been a pioneering health service mandarin in Cuba – musing on his formative years.

Some have lambasted *The Motorcycle Diaries* as facile soft-liberal populism – an insult to those it purports to sympathise with. The 'historical' barbarism the film mentions in passing is intensifying, right now, all over the world – especially in Latin America where widespread grass-roots resistance continues. The inspirational significance of today's struggles in Mexico and Argentina (among others) lies partly in their rejection of both neoliberal economics and authoritarian government. But here there is no political analysis, no exploration of vanguard elitism, Stalinist personality cults, or charisma and celebrity in general – all salient to both Che's and our situations. Because we may not



otherwise give a toss about the personable (but basically tedious and narcissistic) protagonists, the patronising pedagogy before the credits reminds us that they later devoted themselves to alleviating the misery caused by Latin America's ruling classes and their US backers. That they were disaffected members of those same classes, and ended up inflicting similar degrees of dictatorial damage (and, crucially, that those two facts might be connected) could have injected some welcome melodrama and irony – as well as overall depth – into the weak narrative.

But getting all that right would be a tall order – just to construct; never mind fund and distribute. Lacking the wit, conviction and industry clout required, the director's strategy is more humble in intertwining biography, geography and history. His previous hit, *Central Station*, offered a nuanced account of class and its conflicts (albeit at the individual level), but *The*

Motorcycle Diaries is less optimistic – documenting charitable sympathy rather than engaged empathy. The camera only reveals what the characters see – no violence, no police, no scenes of exploitation, not even any poor people until we're halfway up the continent. Even then, no exploration of context, and scarce evidence that the lads have a clue about anything much. Their personal tastes and sensibilities are increasingly offended, to be sure, and their friendship is transformed – but that's hardly a sound basis for a revolutionary programme. They even misunderstand their well-meaning efforts in the leper colony, where Che makes a first feeble soapbox speech and risks a dangerous swim to spend his birthday with the patients – whereas for the latter it was any old excuse for a party.

Salles effectively demonstrates (whether intentionally or not) the uncomprehending naiveté of romantic idealism among affluent youth. That's

his background too – with language, world views, social structure and culture evolving specifically to facilitate the performance of their functions in whatever systems of domination prevail. In this paradigm it's almost impossible to conceive of the way that economic necessity, bodily suffering, social prejudice and political oppression fundamentally shape the vast majority of human existence throughout history. Instead life's problems are perceived as exceptions to a benevolent rule, to be resolved in grand hysterical gestures and personal redemption (just like at the pictures). Little wonder that when the privileged few generalise their trivial ethics into political prescriptions for the multitude, breathtaking arrogance and presumption transpire along with baleful practical consequences. This filming of Che's journal infinitesimally punctures such fatal illusions.

www.tomjennings.pwp.blueyonder.co.uk

* 'Che' is Argentine slang for 'pal'.

PAMPHLETS

The Kate Sharpley Library (KSL) was created to research and restore the history of the anarchist movement and regularly publishes information on lost areas of anarchist history. It was named in honour of Kate Sharpley, a First World War anarchist and anti-war activist – one of the countless 'unknown' members of the movement so often ignored by 'official historians' of anarchism. These pamphlets are all available from Freedom.

Three Japanese Anarchists: Kotoku, Osugi and Yamaga

by Victor Garcia, £1.50
Victor Garcia (sometimes known as 'the Marco Polo of anarchism' for the length and breadth of his travels) recounts the

stories of three of the major figures of Japanese anarchism, each shedding light on the wider social context as well as the struggles of the Japanese anarchist movement.

No War But The Class War! Libertarian Anti-Militarism Then and Now

edited by Anna Key, £2.00

This pamphlet presents 110 years of anti-militarist propaganda, from Spain's the First World War right up to the 'War on Terror'. It includes Randolph Bourne's classic analysis of why war is the 'health of the state' and a recent dissection of the myths of Remembrance Day.

Libertarians have opposed the armed

forces as the ultimate prop of the state, a pool of scab labour and the place where the authority principle (orders, not logic) runs rampant. Anarchists have always argued that the alternative to dying for our leaders is fighting for a new world. There's a brief glimpse of how this looks in practice, from the Ukraine's Makhnovist insurgents to Spain's revolutionary militias.

Under the Yoke of the State: Selected Anarchist Responses to Prisons and Crime, 1886-1929

by The Dawn Collective, £3.00
This pamphlet offers personal reflections from anarchists about time spent behind

bars and critiques of the prison system from the Haymarket frame-up to the Sacco-Vanzetti trial. It gives direct testimony on the treatment of prisoners in numerous penitentiaries, World War One internment camps, and Bolshevik jails. It also presents many viewpoints on how capitalism's exploitation is society's greatest crime, and how anti-social acts would be treated in a truly free and just world.

Includes complete essays by Peter Kropotkin, Emma Goldman, and Alexander Berkman, plus material from anarchist fighters Ricardo Flores Magon, Errico Malatesta, Louise Michel, Albert Parsons, Rudolf Rocker, Mollie Steimer, and others.

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The Top Ten

Continuing our new series of reader-written lists, this issue we can divulge the second five (in no particular order) of our Top Ten Strangest Things You have Ever Seen At a Demonstration.

6. Flying dung
"In the late '70s I was on an anti-British Movement demo penned in next to some police horses one of which had a crap. My mate picked a lump up and lobbed it at Martin Webster who was speaking (sadly it missed). The copper on the horse looked down and shouted 'oi!' at my friend who thought he was gonna get nicked only to be told 'that's a waste of good manure sonny!'"

7. Hunt-sabbing cows
"I used to go sabbing and once in Oxfordshire the fox we were trying to save ran across a field with cows in, closely followed by the hunt scum. For some reason the cows took exception to the hunters and amazingly charged them, causing hounds, horses and huntsman to flee and scatter *en masse!* The first and probably only example of hunt-sabbing cows."

8. Provocateur phographeur
"During a riot at Wapping there was a photographer walking around with a half-brick asking various people to throw it for him, and he kept getting more and more annoyed because nobody would do it for him!"

9. Hello, nazi nurse!
"Probably the most surreal thing I've seen has to be the Bloody Sunday march that went up Edgware Road, sometime in the late '80s. The NF had decided to have a counter-protest. They must have had some ex-Maoists or something in their ranks, because their chosen form of protest was street theatre. They had placards about 'IRA butchery' and 'IRA murder' - along with a couple of 'patients' swathed in bloody bandages and 'doctors' with stethoscopes, etc. Unfortunately, they also decided to have a couple of 'nurses', complete with uniforms and (as the NF contingent was entirely male) wigs and fake boobs.

The particular contingent I was with had no particular PC hang-ups: Fuck off you bunch of trannies! ... When's the op? ... You fucking sex-cases! Oh, how we laughed."

10. Masochist fascists
"Before the BNP gave up their street presence back in '94, they would regularly attempt paper sales wherever they had a base. Some anti-fascists in Newcastle got wind they were planning a paper sale in town one Saturday afternoon. So we turned out in the area an hour or so beforehand to have a recce around the place. We waited and waited and eventually about fifteen or so nazis arrived together to take up their spot. On seeing that anti-fascists had already occupied it they took a

wide diversion around us and carried on walking sheepishly, disappearing up a side street where the AFA folks, feeling ignored, followed to have a word to the wise.

Her Majesty's loyal subjects carried on up the narrow street, their pace slightly quickened, then broke into a gallop. Quite unexpectedly they entered what seemed to be a closed building at the end of the street to take up sanctuary ... But it was not just any old building - it was a synagogue (no shitting)! Amid much amaze/amusement the anti-fascists waited outside checking with each other that this wasn't a mass hallucination.

After a few minutes they seemed to realise where they were and started to leave the synagogue, one by one, in single file. In what can only be likened to a fairground duck shoot game, they quite inexplicably seemed to lose their balance, each in turn meeting their reflections in the pavement. Or so I'm told ... Utterly bizarre!"

Blast from the Past

from Freedom of 14th October 1967, on Britain's complicity in the war in Vietnam:

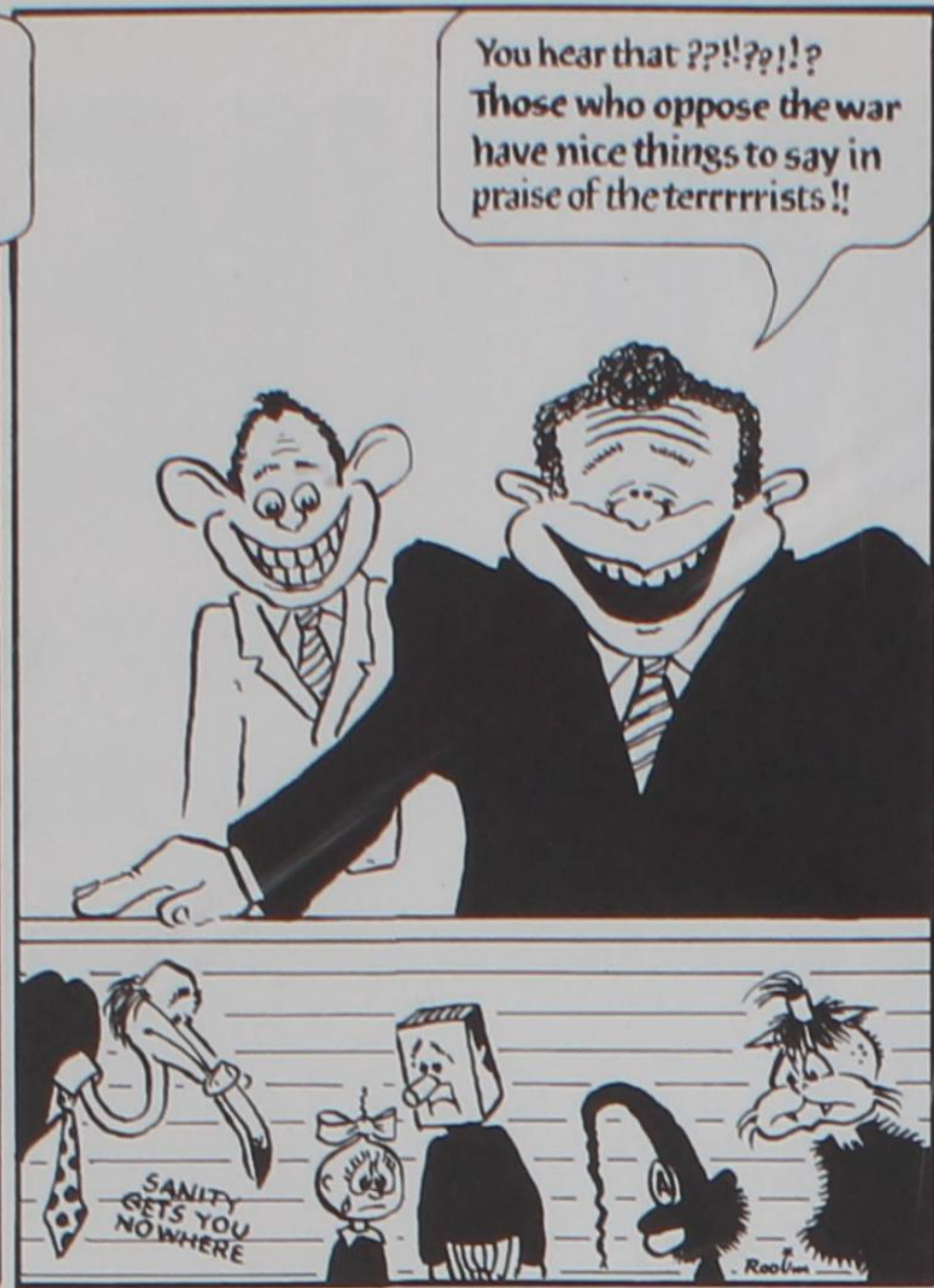
"The fact is that the British Government is not at all 'detached' from the US and the war in Vietnam. It was British troops that divided Vietnam into two in 1945. It was British troops that reinstalled French power in Vietnam in the same year. It was Sir Anthony Eden who thought up and promoted the seven point secret agreement of 1954 under which the US was to stay in what was called 'retained Vietnam' despite whatever was said in the Geneva Agreements just about to be signed. The text of this agreement was later published and is to be found on pages 132/3 of Eden's *Full Circle* (1960).

It was then Douglas-Home and later Wilson who subsequently confirmed Anglo-American mutual aid in SE Asia. The basic policy is simple: US support for Britain in Malaysia in return for British support for the US in Vietnam."

IMAGINATION UNLEASHED

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A sideways look

There are always plenty of anniversaries in political papers. Sometimes they are historically significant, but a lot are really just pegs to hang an article on. Judge for yourself ...

All too often, we are reactive. We focus on attacks and threats. For once, I would like to be positive (don't tell anyone) and celebrate two very different groups whose existence enriches anarchism as a whole and whose mere survival in the hostile world is an achievement.

In 1984, a few Irish anarchists got together in Dublin to form the Workers Solidarity Movement. Anarchism in Ireland has little history beyond individuals and small groups. They were quite a shock to other English-speaking anarchists, as, horror of horrors, they saw themselves as part of the left and within the tradition of Platformism. For those of you who are not aware of this tradition, I won't bore you here - check out their website (www.struggle.ws).

At the time, the Anarchist Communist Federation (now AF) was also looking at the Platform, but since the heady days of the unlamented Anarchist Workers Group (AWG), they have distanced themselves from it. Few would have given the new organisation much time, particularly after their Cork branch defected to the Socialist Workers, but they are still here. And for what is still basically a small organisation, they punch a long way above their weight.

Of course, I don't want to be uncritical - until recently they wanted Ireland to be a 32 country workers republic, not a very anarchistic demand. And their analysis of what went wrong with Britain's last Platformist organisation, the AWG, is wrong. A quick check of the website of the successor organisation to the RCP will find ex-AWG contributors, including the de-facto leader. But their

achievements include playing a major role in organising resistance to the bin tax (Ireland's poll tax), fighting racism, anti-war activities and bringing anarchism to the attention of their compatriots. They have been involved in setting up a grassroots network of libertarian activists, particularly around the war. Such was the success of this that one of their demos at Shannon airport was denounced in advance by Sinn Fein for being "potentially violent"! Yes, that Sinn Fein. Perhaps the biggest measure of the WSM's success, though, has been their work on the internet which has spread their flavour of anarchism far and wide. Quite why a relatively small, single-minded group, in a small country, has been able to achieve so much compared to some much larger groups in this country is a question that does spring to mind ...

And on to my second topical anniversary. Brighton-based weekly direct action newsletter Schnews is celebrating its tenth birthday this month, with a conference 'How Direct Action can Save the World' and a big party. What strikes me when reading about it is how up-beat they are. Week-in, week-out they report on corporate killings, crap arrests, capitalism destroying people, planet and so on. And they're still cheerful! In their own words, "Schnews was born out of the movement against Michael Howard's Criminal Justice Act of 1994, an act that sought to criminalise everyone from travellers to free partygoers to those doing direct action. It has become an internationally respected newsletter of the anti-capitalist movement providing information for action to activists across the world. It is free and is written entirely by volunteers, funded by donation."

People not involved in publishing or writing often don't appreciate the phenomenal effort involved in getting

things out and keeping them regular. And being involved in the things you write about as well as maybe having a life too.

When I was in the Direct Action Movement we ignored our tenth anniversary. We felt we had nothing to celebrate and were running out of steam as an organisation. Looking back, we were wrong - we had achieved a lot but lacked confidence in ourselves and became over self-critical. So, if you're involved in either of these groups, give yourself a pat on the back. You deserve it, as does anyone else who keeps on going through all the tough times associated with anything that lasts.

Svartfrosk

655

Number of inquests held into deaths in police custody since 1990.

9

Number that have resulted in a verdict of 'unlawful killing'.

The quiz

1. Private Eye described the editor of the Kent local paper News Shopper, Andrew Parkes, as the "angriest hack in Britain" in 2003. Why?
2. When workers at the Nottingham Evening Post went on strike, what was the reaction of the then Nottingham Forest manager?
3. What is Buy Nothing Day?
4. The Italian town of Sulmona's most famous son was the poet Ovid. Who was its next most famous?

Answers on page 6

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