

FREEDOM

80P ANARCHIST NEWS AND VIEWS

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NO LONDON 2012

Today (19th February) an anti-Olympics demonstration in Stratford, London, has been organised to coincide with the four-day visit of the International Olympic Committee (IOC). They are coming to evaluate the capital's bid to host the Games in 2012. Whilst in London they will be escorted around the city by the Tory Lord Seb Coe, who's been leading the city's bid. They will be staying in a plush hotel in Canary Wharf and from there will travel around the capital to visit proposed Olympic sites, many of which are East London.

Last weekend a 'floating protest' (see picture) was held along the River Lea and Bow Back Rivers, waterways that the Olympic proposals intend to re-route and cover. Twenty traditional narrow boats, the largest boat protest in the UK for over 150 years, travelled the canals and gathered at the site of the proposed Olympic Stadium. It marked the beginning of a week of events against the bid, organised by No London 2012, a "network of environmental, open space and planning activists, residents of the Olympic boroughs, campaigners against racialised policing and immigration laws, squatting and sports activists, boat dwellers, and other libertarians."

The march today from Stratford station to Hackney Marshes is being held to show the IOC that there is opposition in London and that it is vocal and creative. The theme of the march is People's Games and organisers have asked participants to bring beach balls, frisbees, skipping rope, egg 'n spoon,

tracksuits, whistles, etc. for "fun and sporting frolics" on Hackney Marshes, part of which could be turned into a car park if the bid is successful!

Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, Tessa Jowell has said that attempts to sabotage the bid will "ruin the dreams" of the majority of Britons, what they will hopefully do is ruin the dreams of Blair, the Mayor, and all the others who will profit from the Games coming to London.

If the capital beats rivals Paris, New York, Madrid and Moscow it will be the public that has to pay: £550 million will initially come from London council taxpayers, £1.5 billion from the National Lottery, followed by a further £75 million from council tax, and £250 million from the London Development Agency. It is likely that the government will overspend; initially the London Olympic bid was £2 billion. This has already been revised twice, to £5.2 billion with public money making up £2.6 billion of this. How much will it be by 2012?

The initial cost of the Sydney Olympics was £1 billion. It ended up costing £6.6 billion. In Athens first estimates were £840 million but it cost over £4 billion.

For further info on the growing anti-Olympics campaign see www.nolondon2012.org

For up to date reports on some of the events and actions that have taken place against the bid see www.indymedia.org.uk

See editorial on page 6



DICTATOR RISES IN NEPAL

Kathmandu, the capital of Nepal in South Asia, has been paralysed by an indefinite pro-Maoist road blockade. The confrontation follows the seizure of power by Nepal's king Gyanendra on 1st February and his subsequent crackdown on journalists, unionists and social activists.

Army officers have been placed in all media outlets and all telecommunications have been blocked.

In the last political crisis in 2001 the form was very similar, and human rights groups noted an explosion of killings,

detentions and human rights violations throughout the period.

It is thought the Maoist Communist Party of Nepal are 300,000 strong and are increasingly dominating the political scene, outstripping the manpower of the Nepalese army by nearly four to one. Gyanendra, in a speech after the coup, attacked their inability to deal with the rebellion.

Preliminary reports have estimated that around a thousand political, unionist and Maoist opponents have been rounded up so far, as part of the king's drive to break the rebels.

Retired Indian army officer Major General Ashok Mehta, a defence analyst, believes the Royal Nepalese Army is unlikely to perform any better under the king's direct control. He said: "A lot more troops will have to be committed to the Kathmandu Valley to ward off popular protests against the king, so their operations against the Maoists will be stretched."

In a press release, the Maoists said that "for the last few years the Nepali people have been waging a struggle against the monarchy under the leadership of Maoists with the aim of establishing a new democratic society. Imperialists and reactionaries are fiercely opposing the revolutionary struggle of Nepal."

Although India has remained officially hostile to the move, they have also publicly stated that the Maoists represent a threat to both countries, as they have been fighting allegedly connected rebels in the north of the country.

• The Maoist insurgency began in 1996, and the resulting civil war has killed an estimated ten thousand people. The previous king of Nepal, Dipendra, went on a personal killing spree in which he massacred his family before committing suicide. After Dipendra's suicide Gyanendra then became king. Nearly half of the population of Nepal live below the poverty line.

CRASH PREDICTED

Workers for rail track repair company Balfour Beatty warned there could be a crash, amid recommendations to update the track, long before the disaster at Hatfield. In a letter, one worker wrote: "The general consensus is that this one could come back and bite us."

The letter was unearthed as part of a trial of five senior managers at the company implicated in a series of failures leading to a train jumping broken tracks at Hatfield in 2000. One hundred and two people were injured in the resulting crash, and four people were killed. It is alleged that they allowed the damaged piece of track to remain unattended for 21 months after it was first spotted.

A year before Hatfield, a similar track breakage just 30 miles up the same line had prompted a review of the area. Recommendations had included imposing a 20mph speed limit throughout the area and for all identified track damage to be replaced within 36 hours. Management however failed to act on these recommendations, despite the warning

from their workforce. The managers were desperate not to shut down the line due to financial pressures, according to the prosecution. Company accounts however show that profits for the year 2000 at the conglomerate were £62m, up £5m from the year before.

Freedom reported in October on the conviction of Balfour Beattie of manslaughter charges over the death of Michael Mungovan, a temp worker who was made to work on live lines with inadequate training and died on just his third day at the job. The company won £240m worth of contracts covering electricity and water utility repairs and upgrades in East Anglia, the East Midlands and Yorkshire this January.

The UK rail network now carries more people on it than it did in 1959, but is a third smaller. Freight usage is also up substantially. Despite this, and record profits for most of the major rail networks, workers and travellers have complained of slipping standards, and further closures of regional lines have been proposed.

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Home and away

FREEDOM

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Anarchism

Anarchists work towards a society of mutual aid and voluntary co-operation. We reject government, and all forms of exploitation and domination.

Freedom Press is an independent anarchist publisher, founded in 1886. Besides this newspaper, which comes out every two weeks, we produce books on all aspects of anarchist theory and practice – see our website for a full list.

In our building in East London we run Britain's biggest anarchist bookshop and host the Autonomy Club meeting room and the Freedom Hacklab open-access IT space.

Our aim is to explain anarchism more widely and to show that people can work together and use direct action to practically improve our lives and build a better world.

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

Greetings Freedom readers! Our boiler is finally fixed, making the office a bearable place to work once again, and none of the editorial team is on holiday so hopefully our bout of obscene lateness is now over. Thank you for bearing with us. We could still do with a hand with the fortnightly mail-out, so if you can help please contact the copy address, below.

This issue is the last chance for some of you to renew your subscriptions uninterrupted, so get sending in those forms, or alternatively you can now buy or renew subs direct on our website at www.freedompress.org.uk

If writing isn't what you're interested in doing then you could help us distribute the paper. We're aiming to be selling the paper at the anti-war demo in London on 19th March. If you're going and fancy giving us a hand then please get in touch! If you can't make it but are still interested in selling the paper then why not order a bundle of papers and sell them in your local area, get in touch with us for details.

And don't forget, you can now take out or renew your subscription online at www.freedompress.org.uk.

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Next issue

Contributions are wanted for future Freedoms. The next issue will be dated 5th March and the last day to get your copy to us will be Thursday 24th February (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 or anything else!

Clarke's plans to extend detention without trial

In the wake of the return to Britain of men held for the past three years in the most appalling conditions in the US torture camp at Guantanamo Bay, and the recent Law Lords' decision on the British use of detention without trial, New Labour home secretary Charles Clarke actually plans to lock up more people! In the latest proposals, which could be in force in just two months,

people could be subject to 'control orders' forbidding them from using mobile phones, the internet, associating with named individuals, and even placed under indefinite house arrest – all without trial, without any charges, and with no disclosure of the evidence against them. And presumably if they refuse to comply with these 'control orders', which blatantly breach human rights legislation, they'll be locked up in penal gulags like Belmarsh or Woodhill.

Prisoners sentenced for Lincoln uprising

Six prisoners have received nine year prison sentences for allegedly taking part in the uprising at Lincoln Prison in 2002. The uprising, during which £2.75 Million of damage was caused to the crumbling Victorian jail, was a reaction to deteriorating conditions.

The convicted men are Alan Brown from Nottingham, Gavin Collins from Mansfield, Michael Westwood from Birmingham, Benjamin Daws from

Nottingham, John Thomas Lambert from Sutton on Sea, and Lee McGrath from Louth.

Picket of Leeds, Headingley branch of Wilko

Leeds, Headingley branch of prison slave labour firm Wilkinson was again picketed by Campaign Against Slavery activists on Saturday 29th January. There was an excellent turn-out for the picket, with several new people in attendance, and comrades from Hull and Shipley travelling over to join the Leeds activists. As usual there was a good response to the picket from members of the public, and around 700 leaflets were distributed.

US eco-prisoners

Charles Jordan and Stephen Marshall are locked-up on charges of allegedly planning to blow-up machinery belonging to a quarry company which was polluting a river. They would be pleased to receive letters of support. When writing, please write your name and address clearly on

the outside of the envelope.

Charles Arthur Jordan IV, 676384, Multnomah County Detention Centre, 1020 South West 3rd, Portland, OR 97208, USA.

Stephen Marshall, #0415972, Washington County Jail, 215 SW Adams Avenue, MS 33, Hillsboro, OR 97123-3874, USA.

International Prison and Repression News

International Prison And Repression News is a regular e-mail bulletin sent to subscribers around the world. This is a free service and you can subscribe to it by sending an e-mail to

Peace campaigner arrested for flapping

Prolific peace campaigner Lindis Percy was arrested outside US spy base Menwith Hill for waving an upside down US flag with the words 'The shame of Iraq' written on it. According to a cop at the scene, "It was dangerous ... and she might flap it!"

compiled by Mark Barnsley

LISTINGS

Bristol

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

Glasgow

18th to 20th February G8: Direct Action Trainers' Workshops organised by Seeds for Change Collective. In the run up to the 2005 G8 Summit in Scotland, a series of weekend workshops for activists who want to share their direct action skills. For info call 0845 458 4776, email DATW@seedsforchange.org.uk or see <http://seedsforchange.org.uk/free/diary#oxlangla>

Ireland

16th to 28th February Images of Resistance: five years of anticapitalist and antiwar protests, photo exhibition by Michael Gallagher, Paula Geraghty, Paul Mattsson and Guy Smallman at Our Lady of Lourdes Church, Sean McDermott Street, Dublin 1

London

24th February London AF discussion evening, on political violence, from 7pm at Autonomy Club at Freedom,

84b Whitechapel High Street, E1

International

27th February to 6th March Olive Cooperative tour of Palestine, looking at the environmental effects of the Occupation. See www.olivecoop.com

26th March The Tenth Annual San Francisco Bay Area Bookfair, from 10am to 6pm at Golden Gate Park, Ninth Avenue and Lincoln Way

6th July Global day of action at the opening day of the G8 Summit. See www.agp.org or www.dissent.org.uk

18th to 20th March Zagreb Anarchist Bookfair. See www.ask-zagreb.org

21st March Destroy the arms trade, international day of direct action. See www.dsei.org

10th April Valencia Anarchist Bookfair. For info see www.valencialibertaria.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

See also 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

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

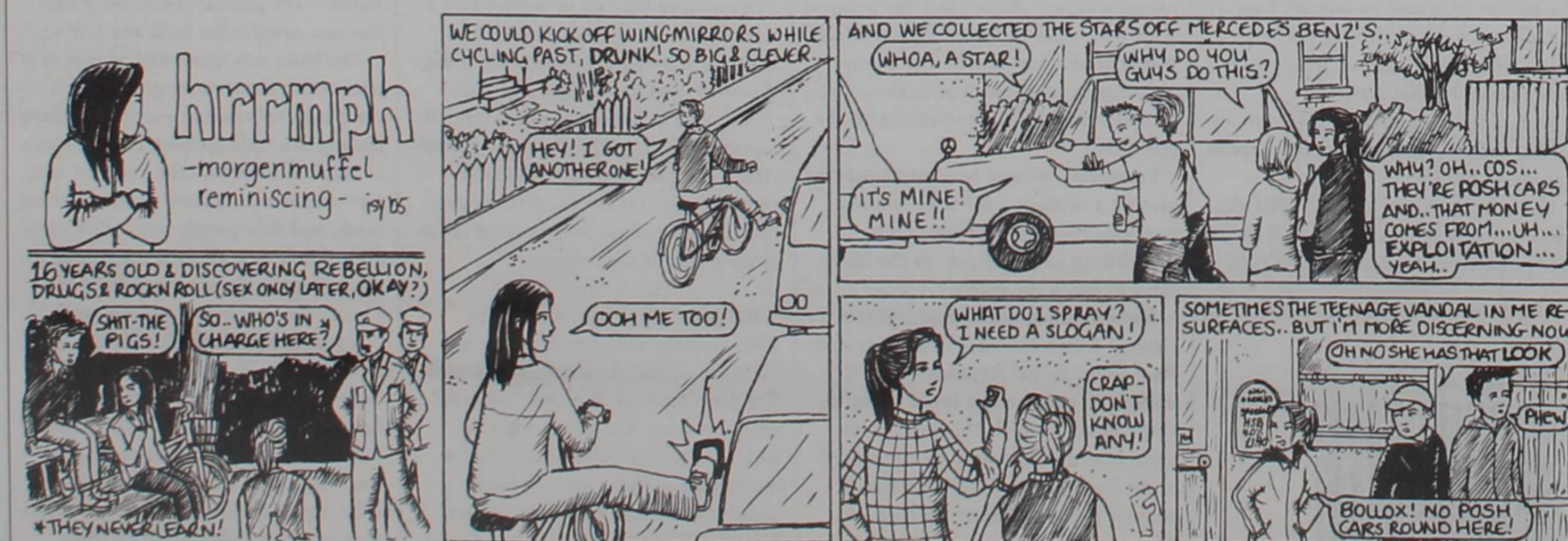
Yorkshire, BD1 2LY

www.1in12.com

56a Infoshop

56 Crampton Street, London SE17

www.safetycat.org/56a



Continuing this exclusive series of cartoons for Freedom

News

News in Brief

No more ID

A 'No to ID cards' day was called in Manchester and Liverpool this month, to highlight the bill's continuing progress despite strong objections from civil rights groups.

One protester wrote on Indymedia: "Scrutiny of the Bill reveals that a wide-ranging amount of data on people will be stored via the National Identity Register."

Separately, a parliamentary committee has raised concerns that ID cards would breach human rights laws on privacy and discrimination. The joint Lords and Commons group said keeping a person's previous residential status, and records of how often their record had been pulled, along with date of birth, physical characteristics, fingerprints, address and nationality, amounted to a 'significant intrusion into private life'.

NUJ exclusive

The National Union of Journalists (NUJ) have published a consultation paper which argues that journalists should be regulated in the same way as doctors and lawyers.

Based on the Italian system, in which all journalists have to be members of the Ordine dei Giornalisti to practice, the report argues that journalists would be better paid and better thought of as a result.

Condemned by the Chartered Institute of Journalists, the report has raised fears that independent publishers who rely on volunteers could lose their freedom of speech.

Joe, from independent news group Schnews, said: "It's ridiculous, it's just another right to take away. There are so many reasons why it shouldn't happen I suspect it will be difficult to get through."

Terror act legally challenged

A legal challenge will be mounted against police spot searches currently allowed under the Terrorism Act. The House of Lords have allowed an appeal against an earlier ruling – police were allowed to use stop and search last year after a failed appeal court challenge by PhD student Kevin Gillan and photographer Pennie Quinton.

Kevin, an organiser of Sheffield's social forum, and Penny were searched in London on 9th September during a protest at the Defence Systems and Equipment Exhibition.

They will claim their treatment amounts to false imprisonment and unlawful trespass. The next hearing is likely to take place next year although no date has been fixed.

New Yorkshire Antifa

A new militant anti-fascist group have formed in West Yorkshire. The 635 group, affiliated to Antifa as their northern section, have pledged to keep fascism off the streets.

In a press release, the group said: "We utilise a wide range of tactics and believe it is important to confront fascism on the streets as well as ideologically."

Although not an open group, with prospective members requiring the recommendation of an existing 635er, they are recruiting. They do not accept existing members of the ANL, Unite or Searchlight.

For more information, or to pass on news of fascist activity in your area, email them at the635Group@mail.com.

Immigration scandal

Jack Ray looks at the use of immigrant forced labour here in Britain, described in a recent TUC report

A combination of government immigration crackdowns, pressure from the retail sector and a culture of flexible employment contracts is fuelling exploitative practices such as forced labour according to the TUC's report into 'Forced Labour and Migration to the UK'.

In the construction industry this is enabled by the 'Labour only sub-contracting' (LOSC) market which created short-term contracts with agencies and gangmasters, rather than the long-term direct employment. Workers are often self-employed, a situation that "results in a loss of employment rights and also social rights, and has serious implications for health and safety in one of the country's most dangerous industries." Immigrants, unable to obtain a work permit to work in construction are able to enter the UK on Self-Employed person's visa and subsequently find work.

Faced with fluctuating demands for labour, employment agencies create 'sub-contracting chains' (a series of agencies contracting labour from each other) with increasingly informal employment arrangements and potential for exploitation. As a result,

the report found that labour suppliers illegally charged workers for finding them work. Some workers were even bestowing personal gifts upon their 'patron' in the hope they would be found work.

The report outlined how the government, police and business community all bore responsibility for the situation. "Ever more complex checks and balances to counter perceived public apprehension has led to an increase in reliance on agencies formal and informal, to enter the UK," prohibition has left more migrants beyond the law.

One incident documents a police raid on a factory: "the migrant workers, relieved to be free of the gang that had controlled them were terrified that, if they were deported from the UK, they would be subjected to punishment by gang members and be put into forced labour again. Although they gave detailed statements and supporting documentary evidence to the police and immigration authorities, no action has been taken against any gang member, and the workers are fighting removal from the UK."

In the agricultural sector pressure from the multinational supermarkets on



Gangs of cockle-pickers are amongst those forced into work

their suppliers was regarded as a key factor in exploitation, particularly the emergence of technology that generates orders based on check-outs sales – orders having to be filled at short notice with workers needed immediately.

The gangmasters system is able to

generate confusion where nobody accepts responsibility, creating "a grey area, where reputable employers and end-of-chain agents can throw up their hands at 'irresponsible elements' who 'fool them' into accepting workers whose status is irregular."

UK green gripe

The EU's Emissions Trading Scheme (ETS) could be delayed due to threatened legal action by Britain and other countries against the European commission.

They say the scheme, which manages carbon dioxide emissions, the world's first market-based plan for cutting greenhouse gases, could hurt the manufacturing industry.

Margaret Beckett, environment secretary, warned Stavros Dimas, the environment commissioner, that the UK will take Brussels to the European court of justice if he does not approve a new

plan that will be more generous to industry.

The threat of legal action, which could delay trading in the ETS for several months, is causing concern within Britain's manufacturing sector, due to fears that the European Union's scheme will add to increased energy costs a great deal this year.

The ETS, launched on 1st January, began with the first deal (on forward credits) between Shell and mining group BHP Billiton three days later in London, when 5,000 tonnes of CO2 were brokered by TFS at a price of £5.80 a tonne. It aims to help cut EU emissions to 8% below 1990 levels by 2012.

The EEF (the manufacturers' organisation) are concerned that industries' energy costs this year are expected to rise to £6bn, compared with £4.2bn in 2003 – the 30% rise is blamed on the ETS.

An EEF report argues that, because of Britain's liberalised market, British companies will end up paying more for energy than their EU rivals.

Brussels is especially perplexed as the UK's targets for cutting greenhouse gases under the Kyoto protocol are the toughest in the EU – 12.5% by 2012.

Environment Secretary's ministers denied that Ms Beckett had 'caved in' to industry but Mr Dimas, who demands justification for the changes, has told her the revisions are far larger than those demanded by other countries, including Germany – and no country can "under any circumstances" increase the total number of allowances.

Strikewatch

Labour is bracing itself for the biggest one day strike in decades with over a million public sector workers due to take action to defend their pensions. In a rare example of coordination civil service and local government unions including Unison, PCS and Amicus are balloting workers for a one day strike on 23rd March. Labour are trying to cut pension benefits and raise the retirement age for public servants at the same time as starting to axe over 100,000 jobs in the public sector. Further trouble for the government is expected later in the spring when Labour responds to a consultation on the NHS pension scheme. Unison has already threatened the possibility of balloting its health workers if employers' try to increase the NHS pension age to 65. Unions have accused the government of wanting to see workers 'working until they drop'. As pointed out in the latest edition of Resistance, the Anarchist Federations' free monthly, "the attack on pensions is an attack on the working class. We must stop Blair."

Friday 18th February is the TUC's Protect Public Sector Pension's campaign day. Rallies and other events are being organised across the country. For more information see the TUC's website at www.tuc.org.uk

Workers in museums in London, Bradford and York are set to stage a one day action in a dispute over pay to coincide with half term this month.

Around sixty fire fighters at Glasgow International airport, all members of the Transport and General Workers' union

have begun indefinite strike action over health and safety fears following management's attempts to cut services. BAA plan to replace airport based fire fighters with fire safety officers who would have to call in local fire services in an emergency. Rather than being able to attend any fire immediately the changes would lead to delays of around fifteen minutes. "We have made in plain to the employers" the T&G said "that cuts cost lives."

Elsewhere in Glasgow a four-hour wildcat strike on the city's underground followed worker's rejection of a two year pay deal. On the overground rail Aslef members working for Central trains have voted by a two thirds majority to take strike action following management bullying of two drivers in a disciplinary dispute. The strike will take place over three Saturdays from 12th February.

- Cleaners at the House of Commons, members of the T&G, staged a demonstration outside Parliament demanding a fair wage. While MPs earn more than £100,000 a year the cleaners get just £4.85 an hour, the minimum wage. They are demanding £6.70.

- 600,000 workers in France took to the streets at the start of February in protest at the right-wing French government's plans to loosen the 35-hour week bought in by the previous Socialist administration.

If you have any news on workers' struggle you would like included in Freedom please email to: Swaleagainstar@aol.com

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News

Church taking from the poorest

The Polish human rights group FiM sums up a year of Catholic money-raking in their 2004 report

Week 1

- Reverend Arkadiusz Ch. in Elblag tricks a bank for 250,000 zlotys and, oh miracle, is sentenced to 18 months imprisonment and told to refund the money, without interest.
- The renovation of the bathroom of Reverend Krynski of the Polonia Academy in Czestochowa costs 70,000 zlotys. The renovation of the academy itself costs 3m zlotys but this the reverend refuses to pay.

Week 3

- The city of Gdansk gives the local Caritas organisation 200,000 zlotys to fight sects and anti-Catholic movements.

Week 4

- Ryszard Tur, president (mayor) of Bialystok and Knight of the Holy (Jesus) Tomb in Jerusalem, gives 150 plots of land to the church for 15% of their value.

Week 14

- President (mayor) Rafal Dudkiewicz of Wroclaw gives local religious communities 4.5m zlotys in public money.

Week 15

- When the authorities of Myslowice want to buy a piece of land of 40 hectares the local church claims the land as compensation for property confiscated in the past. Subsequently, it sells the land to the town for 6m

zlotys, twice the estimated market value.

Week 16

- The city of Wroclaw gives 2m zlotys for the renovation of churches.

Week 17

- A provincial (wojewodski) Fund for the Protection of the Environment gives the church 9m zloty. A number of people have been arrested.

Week 22

- The head of the department of water supply of Lodz, Marek Pyta, gives the church 500,000 zlotys. City president Kropiwnicki denies all knowledge.

Week 23

- A company connected with Polish Telephone gives archbishop Zimun several millions zlotys for his help in a tender for an interesting contract. He receives a high percentage of the sum involved.
- It's discovered that The Fund for the Protection of the Environment has given the church in Silesia 16m zlotys for modernisation of heating systems in churches in the past two years alone. Most of this work has still not been done.

Week 24

- In Piotrkow Trybunalski the church lays its hands on an old building saying it had been church property 200 years ago.



- The city council of Siedlce bought a square and donated it to the church. It also gave 100,000 zloty for the erection of a cross.

Week 26

- It's revealed that the city of Warsaw gives priests a total of 5.5m zlotys to fight alcoholism annually. They don't have to account for the use of the money received.

Week 30

- Father Rydzik of Radio Maria is spotted in a three million zloty Maybach car, which is one of the

most expensive in the world.

- The Paulinian fathers in Czestochowa pays 2.5m zloty bail for Artur Kawalek, the boss of the petrol mafia.
- The State Fund for the Handicapped give the church in Raciborz 536,000 zlotys. Caritas was to contribute twice that sum but failed to do so. The matter is still at the desk or in the drawer of the public prosecutor.

Week 31

- The city of Lublin give almost 2m zloty for the renovation and the illumination of the cathedral.

- It is estimated that the Sunday collections in the Polish catholic churches yield every year a total of 4bn untaxed zlotys.

Week 46

- The Borromeus fathers in Bytom sell a building, un-homing the handicapped people living there, for 2m zloty to the city.

This and other newsletters about mainly human rights issues in a number of countries are circulated free of charge by Kolokol Publications, 30 rue Anoul, 1050 Brussels, Belgium. Kolokol_be@yahoo.co.uk

Water strikes

Water Service workers in Northern Ireland staged a one-day strike on 9th February over proposals to reform the service. More industrial action is on the cards and a work to rule is already in place as workers have withdrawn 'goodwill'.

Members of the four unions voted for industrial action against the reform package which will result in around 700 job losses, the water service becoming a government owned company and the imposition of what John Corey, general secretary of NIPSA, damned as: "the highest direct water charges in the whole of the UK."

Corey proclaimed during the strike action that a battle "must be fought" against water reform – and indeed it must. Water service workers are central to that battle. Industrial action against water reform must be linked to the building of a wider campaign based on mass non-payment of the water tax. If this is to be effective the pressure must be built and maintained by the water service workers themselves.

The action took place following a statement from the union leadership that negotiations had broken down – what was there to negotiate. Voluntary as opposed to compulsory redundancies? Better pay offs? This reform package, these charges cannot be negotiated on, they have to be opposed, fought and defeated.

It may have been some months ago but we remember John Corey's words at a Coalition Against the Water Tax seminar in Belfast City Hall that "this is not over until the first bill lands through the first letterbox." We should bear those words in mind and be wary of allies who are unwilling to see this fight through. The battle will not end but rather enter a more intense phase when the first bills arrive – we must be in a position to win with or in spite of Trade Union bureaucrats like Corey.

This article and more can be read in the latest issue of Working Class Resistance, the bi-monthly regular newsheet from Organise! See www.organiseireland.org

Will Chavez last?

In August last year Chavez survived a referendum to 'recall' (remove) him, marking the eighth time his mandate has apparently been confirmed by Venezuelans. At the end of last month, Chavez 'called for' capitalism to be transcended – in a speech closing the World Social Forum in Porto Alegre. Chavez has also threatened to cut off oil sales to the United States. Now Venezuela – not Saudi Arabia – is the largest supplier of oil to The United States. In December 2003 Chavez renewed his proposal for a Latin American Equivalent of OPEC called PetroSur, and to combine Venezuela's huge state-owned oil company with those of Ecuador, Brazil and Trinidad.

As a result, since 2001 the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) has funnelled about \$19 million to opposition organisations and parties in Venezuela; these groups have also received US 'aid' for 'democracy-training programs' under the auspices of the National Endowment for Democracy. CIA documents released in November

show that the US government knew about a military coup to overthrow Chavez in April 2002 and did nothing to stop it. On 6th April coup plans were available to the White House, whose spokesman, Ari Fleischer, said to the press on 12th April that "to the best of [their] knowledge, President Chavez Provoked the violence and had subsequently resigned because of it."

In November last year, a Venezuelan state prosecutor, Danilo Anderson, was assassinated before could bring charges against 400 people who attempted to overthrow Chavez in 2002. The Venezuelan government suspects that the bombing was probably carried out by Venezuelan exiles living in Florida. Indeed some exiles have openly discussed their intent to overthrow Chavez's government, a month earlier, one of them, Orlando Urdaneta, advocated Chavez's assassination on a Miami television station.

The American press have echoed this hostility, with the Washington Post and Wall Street Journals running editorials

advocating a more aggressive policy toward Venezuela. The Post refers to Chavez as a "disciple of Cuban President Fidel Castro" and claimed that Chavez's administration was strengthening relations with Iran, Libya, Russia and China.

The Washington Times reported that Bush was implementing a "tougher policy" towards Venezuela because Chavez had 'rejected' moves to improve bilateral relations between the two countries; Bush was now "targeting friendly countries to reassess their relations with Chavez and to speak up against his authoritarian and anti-democratic rule."

On 13th January senator Richard Lugar, head of the international relations committee, made public a letter sent in November 2004 to the US Government Accountability Office expressing "profound worry" about an eventual disruption in Venezuelan oil supply. Lugar confirmed that the Department of State no longer considers Venezuela a reliable supplier of oil, because of the 'political instability' that threatens oil production.

Feature

Where's the crowd?

As the Premiership Big Five consolidate their power over the sport, is there any hope for the fans, asks Richard Griffin

Empty seats are appearing at Premiership games. So far this season attendances are down by 6%. There are a variety of reasons for this – high ticket prices, boring, predictable games, a lack of competition and a feeling that clubs don't care about their fans. The decline follows over a decade of growth.

The top flight of English football is now dominated by just five clubs – Arsenal, Chelsea, Newcastle, Man Utd and Liverpool. They dominate financially: last season for example Arsenal received £32.8 million from television contracts. In contrast, Wolves got £13 million. There is, no doubt, a link between the money these clubs received and the fact that Arsenal won the Premiership and Wolves were relegated and are now struggling in the Championship.

These top five therefore also dominate in terms of success on the pitch. Each year the same handful of English clubs get into the lucrative European Champions League with its tens of millions of pounds of television and prize money. The Premiership is in danger of becoming like the Scottish Premier League where Celtic and Rangers take turns each season to win the league and Scottish Cup. There are also signs, as Newcastle struggle, that the big five could soon become just four or even three (Chelsea, Man Utd and Arsenal).

One of the few observations Karl Marx made about industry which turned out

“Supporters are increasingly feeling that their support does not really matter; that they are not valued by their club, worse that they are being exploited through high ticket prices, rip-off food and drink and merchandise. There is only so much even the most loyal fan will take.”

to be correct was that under capitalism the drive for money and profit leads to monopoly. This certainly seems to be being borne out in football! (see Marx's essay 'Over-accumulation, abstract surplus value and the rising tendency of Henri to score goals').

Particular clubs dominating a division

is nothing new of course but in the past there were far more opportunities for other teams to make a mark on the league. Between 1982 and 1984, for example, Liverpool won the then Division One title three years in a row, but Ipswich, Watford and Southampton came second in each of those years. The idea of, say Bolton or Portsmouth challenging the big five for a top spot and a place in the Champions League hardly seems realistic these days. Check the odds you'll get from bookies for any team outside the big five winning the Premiership.

Lack of competitiveness is only one reason why fans have begun to turn their back on live football though. Another is the price of tickets. Recently a Man City fan who had watched his team play home and away consecutively for over 340 games decided that the £45 Birmingham City were charging away fans was just too much even for him. High ticket prices have already driven the poor away from many grounds. While about a half of the crowd at games are skilled or unskilled manual workers, 39% come from social classes A and B. Only one in ten are from the lowest social classes. Football, once the preserve of the working classes, is rapidly becoming a middle class sport at least in the top division.

High ticket prices are partly needed to fuel the massive salaries of top footballers. This year the top five clubs alone will spend £40 million on wages. Since 1994 wages have risen by 550% – 150% more than revenue. No wonder then that so many clubs are in debt – Man City for example owe £62 million. The average wage of a Premiership player last year was £600,000. In League Three it was £42,000.

Research shows that many families no longer follow Premiership clubs because of the cost and availability of tickets. One of the things that binds a club to its community and creates a collective feeling at grounds is family support. Four generations of my family have and continue to follow our local team. If we supported Chelsea (god forbid), the nearest Premiership team to us, a season ticket would cost us £780 each, considerably more than the £360 we currently pay – not that that isn't a lot.

Many supporters while loving their club often to the point of stupidity are increasingly feeling that their support does not really matter; that they are not valued by their club, worse that they are being exploited through high ticket prices, rip-off food and drink and merchandise. There is only so much even the most loyal fan will take. A few years ago fans felt that they had to wear the latest club shirt. This is no longer the case. Rather than paying £50 a season for a new shirt, fans are happy



Dwindling crowds – disillusioned fans are voting with their feet

to turn up with older tops. In a small way this is an example of fans fighting back. There are signs that the problems the Premiership is experiencing are spreading to other divisions. My own team, Reading FC, play in what is now ridiculously called the Coca Cola Championship. Last season we were in plain old Nationwide Division One. While I am happy with Reading being elevated to the Championship from boring old Division One, which by the way before the Premiership was created was actually Division Two, as an anarchist I was much happier with sponsorship from a mutual building society than a multinational capitalist organisation whose adverts now flood the ground! If I want to buy a soft drink at the ground now I can only buy Coke owned ones.

At least in the Championship the financial benefits of sponsorship are spread evenly between clubs with Rotherham getting as much as West Ham. However economic reality means that the teams that are doing well, like Wigan and Ipswich, are the ones who have been able to invest most in players. As in the Premiership a gap is developing between the rich and poor of the Championship. Ticket prices have crept up in recent seasons, well ahead of inflation.

On Boxing Day, because Sky wanted to televise three matches during the bank holiday, Reading's game against

Watford kicked off at the unearthly time of 11am! Fans of both clubs were understandably pissed off by this: no one wants to get up early the day after Christmas. In fact when Reading scored their first of three goals their fans chanted "You should have stayed in bed!" at the Watford supporters. The kick off time wasn't for the convenience of the fans though but the television – and, of course, club who got £60,000 from Sky. The previous week our home tie against QPR kicked off at 12.45am because of Sky and on 3rd January at 5.30, again for Sky. Commercial interests take precedent over the interests of fans.

Over Christmas Plymouth signed Scott Taylor from Blackpool. The deal is only worthy of mention because it broke the club's previous record for a transfer. Taylor signed for £100,000. At the same time Newcastle bought Jean-Alain Boumsong from Rangers. The fee? £8,000,000. If the gap between the rich and poor within leagues is prominent then the gap between leagues is even greater.

It is too early to tell whether the decline in match attendances (which is also mirrored by a decline in people watching Match of the Day) in the Premiership is a temporary blip or the start of a longer trend. It is undeniable however that more people overall are watching live football now than at any time in the 1970s and 1980s.

Outside the Premiership gates are actually on the up. One female Orient fan last season said, "I think the Premiership is impersonal. When we go to Orient it's not us and them. We've got to know the people around us." The non league Conference has seen a massive increase in attendance – perhaps fans feel more connected with their club at this level.

One of the great success stories of recent seasons has been the rise of AFC Wimbledon. Sickened by the decision in 2002 of a group of businessmen to move Wimbledon out of London to Milton Keynes, Dons fans clubbed together and created in just six weeks their own team, reclaiming Wimbledon for its supporters. The club's motto is 'By the fans, for the fans'. The Dons New Year's Day home match this season saw over 3,000 people paying to watch the game. The non league team have been getting attendances to rival MK Dons (called Franchise FC by all other fans), the team created in Milton Keynes.

'The Game That Ate Itself' was the title of a recent piece in The Observer about the decline in Premier League gates. Football has become big business and like any capitalist venture it aims to make as much money out of its customers as it can. Football fans have been ripped off for years. There are signs that they have had enough and are beginning to vote with their feet.

Editorial

Commentary

So the government are trying to bring the Olympic Games to London. They claim that it will encourage people to take part in sporting activities, yet if the bid is successful parts of Hackney Marshes – a place where thousands of people play football – will be turned into a car park so that people have somewhere to leave their cars whilst paying extortionate ticket prices to watch the Games, and the majority of people won't be able to afford these prices and will have to watch the Games on television.

London 2012, the group behind the capital's bid, have more accurately claimed that "the Games will be great for UK businesses" ... especially those involved in sponsoring and organising the Games, large corporations.

The prime focus of the Olympics is profit, for the rich, but it is the rest of us who will have to pay for the Games to be bought to our city, whether we're paying increased council tax or having lottery money that would normally be spent on improving public sporting facilities put into the government's latest folly. Perhaps this explains why, in a recent survey of Londoners, more than half felt that there were higher priorities for public spending.

Bringing the Games to East London will increase the gentrification of the area and will force working class people out. Two hundred and eighty four businesses in the Lower Lea Valley have already received compulsory purchase letters, relocating an estimated 5,542 jobs. Eighteen thousand homes will be built, but these apartments will not be affordable housing, they will be sold off as luxury flats so more yuppies can move into the area.

There are many ways that we can sabotage the bid and stop Blair and his cronies further destroying London. The No London 2012 network is leading protests against it (see their excellent website at www.nolondon2012.org for more information about how to get involved in the anti-Olympic campaign, or alternately look at the Scrap London's Olympic Bid page on enrager.net).

Anti-Olympic activists in Amsterdam (1984-86) and Berlin (1997-2000) did more than lobbying. In Amsterdam a gift from the organisers of the bid to the IOC was followed with a bag of weed with a letter saying "after the South African diamonds we're sending you something with which you can clear your mind." Autonomists in Berlin concentrated on trying to damage the city's image by generating bad publicity, presenting Berlin as an "unreliable candidate in terms of security" by using direct action and resistance.

However we intend to disrupt the bid, it is important that we as anarchists put sectarian differences aside and do what we can for the anti-Olympic campaign. If the Games come to London it will be at a massive cost to ordinary people like us, so hopefully the IOC can be persuaded to give them to one of London's rivals.

The Olympics isn't good for any city. When they were held in Athens last year it is estimated that close to a hundred workers were killed in the preparations; in China for the 2008 Olympics, thousands of people have already been displaced for construction.

If the bid does come to London it will be too late to do anything but protest.

We have until the 6th July, when the IOC votes on which city will get the 2012 Games, to stop the bid.

Tom Carlile

Tom Carlile was born in 1920 in the east end of London and died in Bristol in 2004. His son David remembers his father as the embodiment of the three Ps: Peace, Protest and Politics.

Tom grew up in London during the depression, which consolidated his views on both social justice and nonviolence. During the Spanish Civil War he became convinced that war was an atrocity that solved nothing. A friend who had gone to fight for the Republicans came back a pacifist. "After that I became active in the anti-conscription movement."

Due to be called up for World War Two, he wrote a letter explaining why he refused to obey. He went to the West Country, moving from one address to another, working for a while on a small peace commune in Gloucester growing vegetables.

In the end Tom gave himself up and was sentenced to nine months hard labour. When he was released he was ordered to do land work. "Being an awkward sort I said that was what I'd been doing when they arrested me. I wasn't going to do it because I was told to." Tom was intensely conscious that friends, and his own brother, were risking injury or death through service in the armed forces, and this led him to volunteer as a Somerset coalminer. Interviewed for a BBC programme in 1995 he said he had not been afraid of being killed in a pit accident; what he was really afraid of was being responsible for killing someone else. "Certainly it was a time of great dilemmas. We had long been aware of the evil of fascism ... But I also believed that conscription was a denial of individual personality and an abrogation of the principle of the sanctity of human life. I would not kill at the behest of the state."

I first met Tom in 1944 when he and his wife Maisie and their two very small children were living not far from Bristol in the damp rear section of a Mendip stone farmhouse. In the months that followed I was often together with both Tom and Maisie, and we began the discussions that continued on and off practically till the end of Tom's life.

Tom soon became the men's representative on the Pensford pit committee. After two years back in London, Tom and his family went to the Somerset pits at Radstock. In 1951 Tom took up 'fresh air' work in an attempt to ease a peptic ulcer. He was a worrier and self-doubter, and suffered sometimes from a completely unjustified but crippling lack of self-confidence. Later in life he was also to be plagued by serious bouts of depression.

He worked as railway porter, postman, and Ministry of National Insurance clerk, but went back to the pits, at Midsomer Norton, in 1952. He became an NUM pit representative, and a member of the

union's Somerset Area Committee. In 1955-56 the union backed a council tenants' rent strike; Tom was the secretary of the Tenants' Defence Committee and the 'named' tenant to test the case at law. This was won at the County Court, and the council's appeal was dismissed at the Queen's Bench Division. During these years people would come to see Tom for advice on benefits or on workers' rights, for help in filling in a form, or just to talk through a problem.

As well as the anarchist movement, Tom Carlile was involved with organisations such as the Movement for Colonial Freedom, the Industrial Workers of the World, Amnesty International, and Greenpeace. In 1960 he started full-time work for the unions, first with the ETU, then with the National Union of Agricultural Workers, and the T&GWU. In later years he became Training Officer for the T&GWU in Bristol, and also the oldest undergraduate in the School of Peace Studies at Bradford University. For most of Tom's final years he and Maisie lived in the Bristol area and it was there that they joined the Society of Friends, which became the main focus of his emotional and intellectual engagement. Tom also became active in the Adult School movement. Even after retirement, though, he continued voluntary union work as NUAW branch secretary.

It was with some surprise that within his family I found this libertarian socialist to be something of a patriarchal though benevolent disciplinarian. Yet his five children, three sons and two daughters, all grew up to be richly independent and individual adults. (That, however, was in equal measure due to their mother Maisie, one of the three or four finest human beings I have known.)

Another apparent contradiction in Tom's character was that in argument, whatever the topic, or subject of dispute, he was stubborn and dogmatic. Yet he was unfailingly courteous. He did not express himself in emotional terms, and outwardly was perhaps the proverbial reserved Englishman; yet he made warm and devoted friends wherever he went.

Tom Carlile was a steadfast champion of the working class all his adult life; yet he was without a trace of class hatred. And he was what some might think a further contradiction: a passionate revolutionary who always showed consideration for others, whether friends or strangers, in public places as well as in private.

Amorey Gethin

Divide and rule?

Anyone wondering what purpose lies behind the pre-election war between Labour and the Tories as to who can jail the most and scapegoat the most, ought to consider what the propaganda is really designed to prevent. As far as the liberal left is concerned, the current outpouring of racist bile against refugees and migrants represents the political mainstream attempting to keep pace with the reactionary drift of the white working class. As a diagnosis, this entirely confuses cause and effect. Since New Labour came into office it has played the race card relentlessly, leaving the Tories trailing on territory once their own. The racist agenda has been set by government, and reinforced by the press. If, as *The Guardian* reports, three-quarters of us believe that immigrant numbers should be reduced and believe that the government is not tough enough on asylum seekers, that is because the successive Home Secretaries from Straw, through Blunkett, to Charles Clarke, have deliberately portrayed the asylum system

as being in crisis, even as asylum applications fall. As Roger Hallam of Enfield Racial Equality Council noted recently, "to every lie and innuendo about the number of asylum seekers overwhelming social services and housing departments, and the alleged privileges enjoyed, we have tried to respond with facts, about the low levels of social support, the realities of dispersal, the poor quality of housing, the health needs of those fleeing oppression and conflict, and more. We have repeatedly pointed out that Britain takes far less than its share of asylum seekers worldwide." The problem isn't that the facts support the panic, it's that the facts are never heard.

The Sutton Trust recently reported that British society is more class-ridden now than at any time since the 1950s. As regards education, housing, access to health care, distribution of wealth, the rich are getting richer at the direct expense of the poor. How better to fleece the poorest than by ramming down their throats the message that it's not the rich who're robbing you, it's the Somalis next door. The consequence can be seen in the level of debate around, for example, social housing. New Labour has farmed house-building out to private finance. Social housing is being privatised. The only argument in the press is over who gets the scraps that remain – the question is always posed as "who's jumping the queue" – never "why is there a queue at all"? Racism deliberately generated from the top down serves to obscure questions of class by turning them into questions of race. At a time when social spending will be curbed because of Labour's relentless pursuit of war in Iraq, the flag has to be waved relentlessly to stop awkward questions being asked. When capital seeks to roam the globe in search of profit, it requires a nationalist working class to be supine before it. An international capitalist class could wish for nothing more than a working class split along racial lines and wedded to its national soil.

Ask yourself this. When the race card is played, when fear of crime is whipped to hysteria, what is it designed to prevent? The answer is clear enough – capital fears most the reforging of militant solidarity between the poor in the West and the poor in the rest of the world. It fears a global resistance to its agenda. Better that we fear our neighbours, hate the immigrants, than see what we have in common, and look at the real causes of our lack of housing, poor schools, low wages.

As the hysteria grows, we have two tasks. One, obviously, is to defend migrants and refugees from attack – whether from deportation or petrol bomb. The other, as importantly, to remember that part of our duty as revolutionaries is to counter the propaganda of government in working class communities. If we produce newspapers and leaflets they should exist to challenge the common sense of capital amongst those around us, not to allow us to chatter and gossip to each other. The stakes are too high for that.

John Shute

Economics

I have not yet read the Carson book on Mutualist Political Economy that Larry Gambone reviews (22nd January), but with regards to the current talk about 'mutualism' and 'anarchist economics' it should be pointed out that there is already an abundance of space and basic resources to provide everybody with some housing, access to water and access to means of subsistence for free.

You don't need fancy complex anarchist economics accounting schemes that somebody has dreamt up to 'allocate' these things. They could just as easily be accessed universally for free. The 'scarcity' in these matters that most people face in daily life is, for the most part, not at all natural but is artificial and imposed.

If we take the mutualist alternative of housing co-ops, for example. Well, I have been in a housing co-op myself and as a daily life compromise in current circumstances it can be a bit better than paying rent to a private landlord. But if we put more effort into pushing back the state-bureaucratic, aristocratic and monopoly-capitalist imposed landlock then we could push rents towards zero and access housing for peppercorn maintenance costs and, ultimately, for free for the whole population. Today, for some who struggle and resist – like rent strikers, squatters, mass land occupiers, travellers – part of the time housing access is already free. So if we pushed more successfully in this direction there would end up being less need for housing co-ops.

I can see there isn't going to be an instant total revolution in five minutes, and romantic puritan postures are a dead end, so reluctantly I would half agree with Carson that there is a need for a gradual 'revolutionary-evolutionary' process involving forms of 'social counter-power'. But most of the suggested alternatives Larry Gambone lists, such as syndicalist unions, co-ops, tenants unions, mutualist societies, etc., are either particularly dependent on money or primarily concerned with the negotiation process within the current capitalist markets. Some of this may, at the moment be unavoidable, but could we not also put emphasis on alternatives such as voluntary free production groups, free distribution schemes, squatted social centres, etc., which do not depend on money relations or negotiation within the capitalist dominated markets.

Even in today's environment, millions of workers would be quite prepared to donate several hours a week of their productive activity for free if they knew it was all genuinely for the use and need of their community rather than it being in whole or in part for the benefit of the capitalist. You could think of this as 'prefigurative' libertarian communism.

Carson's criticisms of Marx and Engels sound sharp and to the point. Marxist refusal to admit the statist origins of capitalism and the reduction of problems of domination to merely expressions of economics has left a terrible legacy. Engels in particular saw the tendency towards state capital, not just as one tendency of capital among others, but as a generalising tendency which he believed was progressive. The sentimental notion that the more state bureaucracy, state monopoly and state power there is then the closer we get to socialism is still a popular prejudice among a large part of the left.

Paul

Quiz answers

1. Robert Oppenheimer, after the explosion of the first atomic bomb, 16th July 1945.
2. Prison. Eminently practicable advice there, I'm off to Belmarsh!
3. Golfer Tiger Woods, explaining why African-American wasn't an adequate description for his Afro-American, Caucasian, Native American, Thai and Chinese ancestry.
4. Themselves and explicitly not power over men.



REVIEW

Graffiti by Arofish often succeeds in transcending formula and cliché, according to Tom Jennings

Arofish is a London-based stencil graffiti artist whose output ranges from slogans and cartoons to more abstract and opaque designs and imagery. Diverse traditions of political art are referenced – from satire, surrealism and the modern tweaking of mainstream or commercial discourse and iconography (Adbusters, Banksy) – whereas more tentative, existential subject matter (akin to the Paris work of Blek le Rat) is reminiscent of the Situationist critique of everyday life. Throughout, the limits are tested of the political and visual subtlety which can be achieved using this artform, given the constraints on its clandestine, unofficial decoration of public space.

The London graffiti includes anti-war and Palestine solidarity graphics, plus 'Alien Contact' – masquerading as a cashpoint machine (i.e. of the Fortress Europe people-bank) with instructions to asylum seekers highlighting the intrusive surveillance spreading through our carceral society (the 'liberty zone'). 'Waves of Terror' retreats from literal clarity to evoke the menace of colonial adventure, and various other examples are even more indirect and suggestive. Impressionistic flashes of mournful figures appear in limbo, enduring the meaninglessness of life waiting to happen. Some of the website texts echo these themes, but far more angrily – denouncing the drudgery and misery visited on so many (insult seen as added to injury by, for example, crap television and pop music). Rage thus provides creative energy, but the painstaking stencil process and precarious realisation seem to drain the excess. Vaguely sinister, ghostly renderings remain, bleeding out of the solemn surfaces and rough edges of city landscapes. The specificity of place imbues each scene with a sense of the weight that has to be borne – both by the dead physical infrastructure of mass society, and by the living souls of those flattened into conformity with it. The ephemeral nature of the original brick and concrete canvases (more so than their reproductions in gallery shows or on the website) only intensifies the pathos.

The device of portraying single or small groups of figures in subdued intimate relationships with neighbourhoods proved especially fruitful in the winter of 2003/4 when the artist was involved in international solidarity activities in Palestine and Baghdad. The straightforward agitprop images mobilising elements of local customs (and their Western connotations) would work equally well as posters or cartoons, with punchlines stressing the venality of Israeli/US imperialism. So 'Ali Baba' (Iraqi slang for thief) deploys enjoyable irony in the Arabic caption, 'Hey American, take your oil!' (in the story the oil was used to kill the forty thieves and save Ali). All well and good. But there are much more moving pieces combining personal empathy (concerning the calculated horror and madness of military occupation) with a precision of location – each effectively conveying the predicament of that place, and the anguished experience of being in it.

Arofish starts from his own responses to particular sites and situations. If the images awaken their curiosity, passers-by may then connect with the more or less submerged concepts underpinning them – without experiencing this as posing, preaching or stating the obvious.* The evocative poignancy of the Middle East figurative work is especially powerful in this regard – manifesting creative engagement during the otherwise brutal routine of conflict, and prompting direct and immediate feedback from local viewers. Perhaps overwhelmingly obvious oppression provides a clearer backdrop for focusing on the human condition via the interaction between sympathetic outsiders and those bearing the brunt. I look forward to the artist developing further this dimension to his palette at home, where the postmodern apparatuses of power magnify the rootlessness of existence in our fragmented communities. Here, questions of agency, domination and creativity easily dissolve in hubris, hysteria, narcissism and psychosis; the positions of artists, viewers, producers and consumers being so difficult to disentangle. In this context, shunning the stifling seduction of institutions –



while spraying onto their external surfaces shared emotional contours of suffering, despair, hope and solidarity – seems a highly promising endeavour.

www.tomjennings.pwp.blueyonder.co.uk

* From an email conversation, January 2005.

Arofish has a new website, which you can find at www.arofish.org.uk



EATING OUT

Pogo Café
76 Clarence Road,
Hackney
London E5 8HB

A vegan worker's co-operative in the middle of Hackney, which is non-smoking, anticapitalist and fair trade? Well don't that just tick every box...

Ten minutes walk from Hackney tube, the Pogo café sits quietly on the corner of a run down street. From the outside, it looks like a dump, but walking through the door is like entering a different world. Warm yellow light greets you, and tasteful – slightly mismatched – furniture is laid out with

a good sense of space. Dominating the room is the counter – a huge chunky brick slab, solid enough to reassure you that this isn't just another squat set-up selling over-priced, badly made food to 'anti-consumerist' suckers.

Alongside all the little tip-offs that it's an alternative café (big sign over the door saying 'vegan alternative cafe', huge posters and framed T-shirts on every wall, etc.) are books and magazines for sale, and special offers of a Vegetarian London guide with every £10 spent.

Five of us trooped in at a slow time of day, so we were given a table right away and could wander to the bar at

our leisure, where a redhead with a blinding smile took our order in an amicable way and didn't thrust pamphlets at us as we returned to our seats. I was instantly smitten.

Apart from the wonderful redhead, all the staff were friendly, which is particularly impressive as they are working for free until the café starts to make a profit.

Prices are reasonable, with starters and dessert for around £3 each, and main courses for around £5. There is also a wide-ranging menu of smoothies and salads. The main course was good, though nothing spectacular, while the desserts are superb, particularly the

mango cake, which was well worth the two hour trip from my house in itself.

Although I'm not a vegan, some of the people I was with were and they raved about all the food, with Sam memorably saying of the cakes: "I never thought I'd eat food this rich again".

The Pogo café opens from lunchtime every day except Tuesdays, and they regularly feature live music and art installations. The co-operative also cater for parties and, if asked nicely, might allow you to bring your own drinks along.

Rob Ray

For more information see www.pogocafe.co.uk

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The Top Ten

Freedom brings you our Top Ten Class Struggle Simpsons Moments, along with the posters of enrager.net/forums.

- Homer gets elected as a union leader and with his fellow workers wins a strike at the power plant, while Lisa sang on the picket line "And we'll march day and night by the old cooling tower / They have the plant but we have the power."
- The Springfield kids go on holiday to Kamp Krusty, and discover it is a scam, with poor conditions, terrible food and prison-guard like bullies as staff. Lead non-hierarchically by Bart, the children take over, run around with black and pirate flags and turn the place into a short-lived commune, in a clear homage to the early twentieth century insurrection of the Makhnoschina in the Ukraine.
- Homer and Marge join celebrities in chaining themselves to a forest to prevent it being bulldozed, even when faced with the lackeys of the capitalist class – the Springfield PD, armed with Hippy Strength CS gas to be swabbed into their eyes.
- Everyone in Springfield Stadium boos the Communist Party official who opens the match, obviously because the Springfield proletariat still carries in its heart the bitterness at the betrayals of Kronstadt, Hungary '56, the Barcelona May Days, Prague Spring...
- Homer hunger strikes against the over-commercialisation of Baseball, defeats company goons and plots and wrests considerable power back into the hands of the fans. (See feature, page 5.)
- The High School is snowed in and Principal Skinner dons an army uniform and seizes dictatorial control of the establishment, backed up by his Scottish lackey Groundskeeper Willy. In this deliberate replay of the Francoist coup in July 1936, with his Moorish troops, the writers emphasise the importance of class solidarity between races and nationalities. The pupils – as the Spanish workers – rebel, take control and put Skinner in a basketball bag, causing Skinner to instruct a gerbil to "stop nibbling [his] ball sack."
- Maggie, though still an infant, in a beautiful manifestation of class rage and following in the footsteps of all the martyred Ravachols and the Czolgoshs, shoots the bourgeois Mr Burns for appropriating the surplus value of honest proletarians like her father.
- The spirit of Joe Hill lives on in Springfield, as bag boys at the local supermarket strike against the customers' rudeness. When class traitor Lennie tries to undermine the strike by carrying all his shopping without the bags, they knock him over with a big stick and shout "Scab!" at him from the supermarket roof. The brave bag boys also receive solidarity from

their fellow workers in other unions, like the Unattractive Waitresses.

- Lisa joins environmental direct action group Dirt First! to save an ancient tree from development. When the tree is finally cut down it carries out working class revenge against the bourgeoisie of Springfield, destroying corporate and hippy property.
- Homer's online investigative journalist Mr X exposes corruption and misappropriation of funds in City Hall, sticking a fat one to The Man.

Helping out

The more copy we receive for each issue of Freedom, the better the product. We still need more people to write for us, so here's what we're looking for. Our editorial focus is on three main areas, in this order:

- Examples of ordinary people taking direct action to improve their lives;
 - Class struggle anarchist analysis of the big issues of today;
 - News about destructive actions of governments and corporations.
- We generally like articles in the following formats:
- Big news pieces: 300-900 words;
 - News shorts: 50-250 words;
 - Feature – in depth analysis of a topic area: 1,400-1,700 words;
 - Reviews – of anything under the sun of interest to anarchists: 100-1,000 words;
 - Opinion – for editorials: 550 words;
 - Letters – about anything else: 50-500 words.

If you are interested in writing for us, please do get in touch via the copy details on page 2.

Editors

SCRAP THE BID

We'll all end up paying for London's billion-pound Olympic bid
Protest on 19th February 2005



Meet at 1pm outside Statford Station, Meridian Square, London E15
www.NoLondon2012.org

1,400,000

The number of extra jobs promised between June 2003 and December 2004 by George Bush as the result of his tax cuts.

O The actual number of jobs created.



A sideways look

A couple of weeks ago, I attended the funeral of a former work colleague. He was only 55 when he died of a heart attack brought on by emphysema. He was a marvel at pub quizzes and a witty conversationalist. And I, like most of my colleagues, believe his death was hastened by the way our employer treated him.

Ian was a larger than life man in so many ways and was someone whose enquiring mind never stopped enquiring. He thought about things, which is something I rarely encounter. He had had some education, so was not strictly an autodidact, but was someone whose conversation could range over so many subjects, from current affairs to the workings of ancient Greek to who was South London's best drag queen. The service was an Orthodox one, because he'd grown to love the Greek liturgy. All these words I didn't understand, but it didn't matter, because Ian would often use words you didn't understand, but never in a patronising way.

He wasn't an anarchist, but understood where I was coming from and how my conclusions had been reached. His card had stayed pinned on my fridge for over a year – I kept on promising myself that I would call him and we'd go and win a pub quiz at his local, or just share a conversation over a drink. I put it off, because I feared I would just end up talking about how shit work was, which would be salt in his wounds.

About six months after we were privatised, senior management decided to make redundancies. Most were voluntary, even if some of the volunteers were pushed. Ian was made compulsorily redundant. It also worked that the mean-spirited way the new company interpreted our existing

contracts meant that they paid only half the redundancy to people aged over 50, as previously, the balance would have come out of the pension fund. This was to recognise the difficulty of people over 50 finding a new job (and to think Brown and Blair want us to work even longer, so we've got even longer in that situation).

To sack him when he didn't want to go, merely to meet central targets for numbers made redundant, was bad enough. They justified it by claiming he didn't have the required skills – a barefaced lie made by a manager incapable of assessing those skills. The union made some protests, but for one reason or another, the case wasn't fought. The principle behind the age discrimination still needs to be fought, particularly as quite a few of my colleagues could be caught out by it when the next round of redundancies comes.

All too often, we overlook the psychological effects of what happens. Ian had managed his illness partly through his job. It motivated him, he enjoyed most of his colleagues' company and they were often a captive audience to his raconteur. He had pride in his work. And it fitted in with his beloved dogs, as it was close enough for him to go home at lunchtime and walk them. The manager responsible took no account of any of that. Her lack of human touch probably contributed to she herself being ousted some months later.

But that is no comfort.

Svartfrosk



Blast from the Past

From Freedom of 17th February 1968 on the introduction of closed-circuit television on the London Underground:

"Big Brother goes underground – he may not have forced his evil eyes into our homes yet but the signs are that Big Brother is well on the way. The roadside 'concrete policemen' that have stared at us in many of London's streets (one stands guard just outside the Beatles' boutique, Apple, in Baker Street) and the television cameras in Holborn tube station will soon be joined by 49 other government spies.

At a cost to us of £50,000, the new Victoria Line of the Underground will contain 49 strategically placed television cameras' which 'will be able to watch you wherever you are on any of the 24 platforms on the line's 12 stations' (Evening News, 6.2.68). And in case you feel like speaking while on any of these platforms, beware, each camera is equipped with a two-way loudspeaker system so they will be able to listen in to your conversations; and after stooping to letter-opening and phone-tapping they'll have no morals left to stop them from listening to the most personal conversation."

The quiz

- Who said "I remembered the line from the Hindu scripture, the Bhagavad Gita ... 'I am become death, the destroyer of worlds'."
- According to Thoreau, where should a just man be under a government which imprisons any unjustly?
- Who described his ethnic background as 'Cablinsian'?
- In Mary Wollstonecraft's Vindication of the Rights of Woman, who does she want women to have power over?

Answers on page 6

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