

FREEDOM

80P ANARCHIST NEWS AND VIEWS

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G8 DEBT CANCELLATION 'MISLEADING'

Claims that G8 will 'end poverty' exposed as a sham by new report. The report has revealed that the proposed theme of debt relief at this year's G8 meeting has been watered down to the point of uselessness, months before talks were due to take place.

The 5th May paper from the World Development Movement (WDM) highlights 'untrue' claims from Gordon Brown and Tony Blair that the British government's Heavily Indebted Poor Country initiative will wipe out debt for the poorest countries.

Far from the hopes of 'Make Poverty History', the government backed, civilian branch of the campaign, that 41 of the world's poorest countries will see a 100% debt cancellation, the move will see only 23 countries affected.

The WDM report says: "Pending a concrete commitment beyond 2015, the UK government proposal currently amounts to an at best 30% debt cancellation initiative for a strictly limited group of countries."

The countries potentially eligible for this debt relief would, according to the government, have to work under a series of guidelines to qualify, including:

- maintaining international financial institution involvement;
- debt relief to be directed to countries

with 'appropriate policies and institutions in place'.

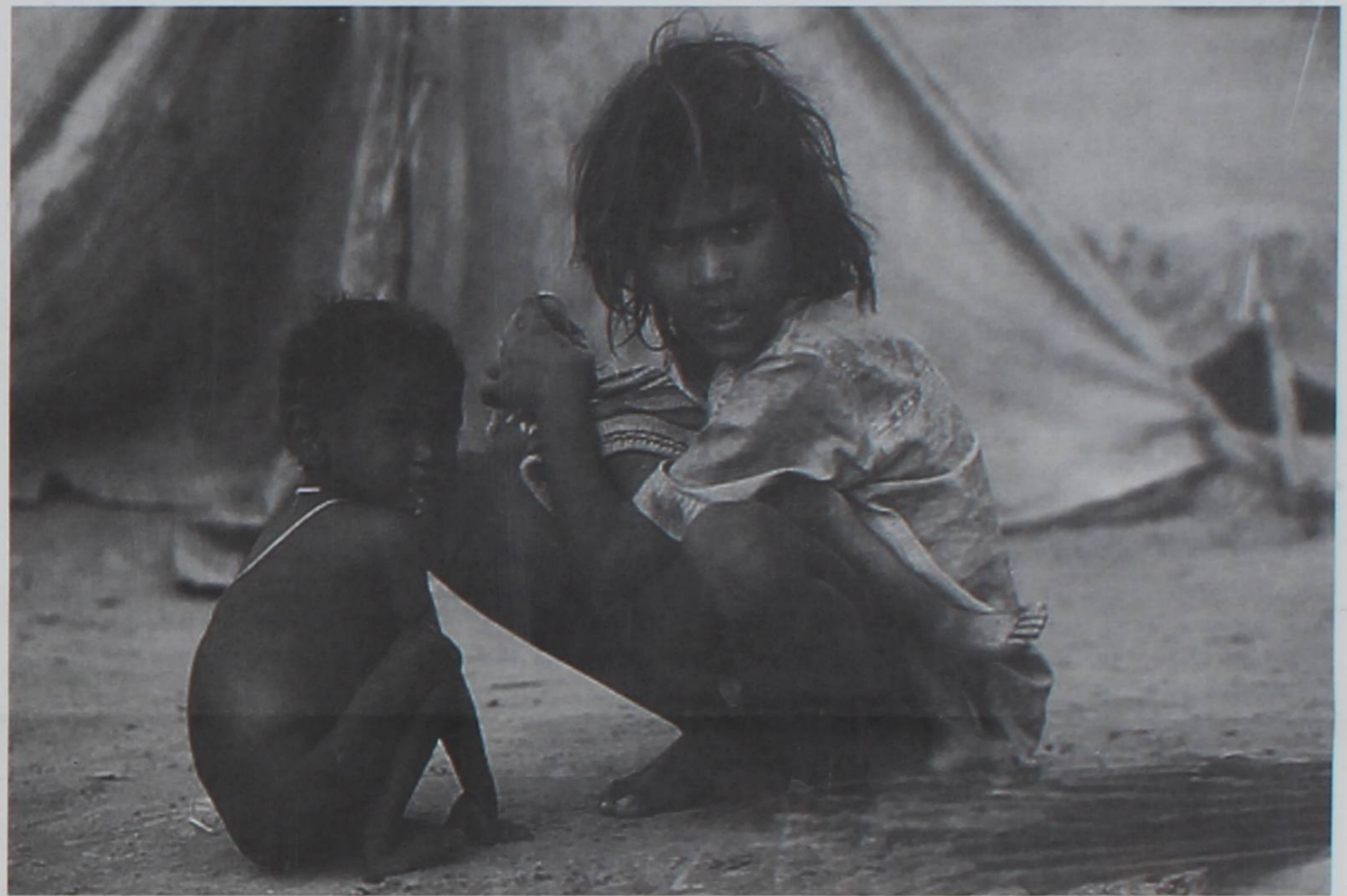
The report continues: "The UK government has consistently labeled its proposals as '100% debt cancellation for the poorest countries'. This is extremely misleading."

The system is likely to have similar strings attached to it to current World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF) policies, which includes the banning of protectionism, industry regulation and re-nationalising of utilities.

The UK has speculated that up to a total of 65 countries could be included if they all meet the requirements of 'post-completion point' countries - i.e. they have adhered to all IMF and World Bank demands to privatise services. Effectively this means countries which have not yet privatised services will be ineligible for the debt relief.

The WDM's solution, and one which was forwarded by the UK, is to sell off the gold reserves currently held by the IMF. Even for the vastly reduced debt servicing write-off this is regarded as a central means of raising the money to write off third world debt.

But the report comes shortly after senior US officials ruled out the use of the IMF gold reserves, saying that this would not be accepted at any stage.



Other defining factors will be the willingness of other major economies to pay substantially increased contributions to an aid fund for the project, something

which only Canada and the Netherlands have thus far agreed to.

The WDM are promoting a wristband campaign and attendance at a demonstra-

tion on 2nd July in Edinburgh to 'put pressure' on the G8 nations when they meet at Gleneagles, a measure which seems likely to be entirely ineffective.

A TALE OF TWO DEATHS

On the first of May in Bogota, the capital of Colombia, riot police (ESMAD) surrounded a 15 year old anarchist, Nicolas Neira, and beat him unconscious. His head wounds were so severe that doctors were unable to operate on him and, after lying in a coma for five days, Nicolas died on 6th May. Two days after Nicolas's death, a 19 year old policeman, Carlos Eduardo Monroy Gonzalez, on duty at one of Bogota's new Transmilenio tram stations was shot in the chest and killed by a robber attempting to steal around £25 from the ticket counter.

It is not often, especially in the light of the police murder of one of our own comrades, that anarchists might be asked to spare more than a moment's thought for the death of an on-duty police officer. Nevertheless one of the many prices that Colombia's conflict exacts from its civilian population is that of military service,

either in the army or the police.

'Bachilleres' (basically school-leavers with minimum education) are drafted into the state forces, providing a ready supply of cannon fodder. The widespread practice of 'buying' a military ID card from corrupt army officials (to prove to the state press gangs that regularly sweep the streets of Colombia's cities that you have already performed your military service) is clearly beyond the reach of ordinary working class families, and thus the poorest are left, once again, to pay the highest price. Carlos Monroy was one such teenager, and yet his duty was to guard a tram station in a transport structure that was only recently installed in Bogota. This public transport system was constructed along PFI lines, with huge amounts of public money, while only 5% of the revenue generated returns to the coffers of the Bogota administration. Thus the question that arises is why is Colombian public money and resources being spent on protecting private profit?

This was precisely the model of social structure that lead Nicolas onto the streets to protest on 1st May. Yet the riot police who bravely truncheoned a teenager unconscious were not conscripts. They were professional police, armed

and trained with US funding via the Plan Colombia. Clad in the latest robo-cop style, these cowards bore no identifying numbers, their faces hidden behind helmets and visors. Nicolas's father, Yuri, has been vocal in calling for those responsible to be charged with his son's murder. The response to this has been a series of telephoned death threats to the family home warning him to shut up, with the Bogota police (to add insult to injury) refusing to offer any protection to Nicolas's family. Yet while anarchists stand in solidarity and mourning across the world with Nicolas, who will remember Carlos? Whether the Colombian working class opposes the neo-liberal model or 'does its duty' defending it, they still pay the price in blood. In the UK we can support our Colombian comrades by insisting that the British government ceases to support the fascist regime of narco-paramilitary president Uribe Vélez, as well as spreading the knowledge that the profits of multinationals such as Coca Cola and BP are secured with the blood of the Colombian working class, murdered at the hands of paramilitaries.

Donal Anderson

For more information, see
<http://colombia.indymedia.org>

STANDING UP

Many of us are trying to improve local services, facilities and community spirit in our own towns and communities. It's not always easy, but we are doing our best to promote and campaign for working-class residents' interests - at the same time encouraging residents to speak up for themselves and to organise together and support each other.

Over the last few years there have been some increasing contacts between members of local groups around the country, but often there's not even links among activists within the same cities. People are taking up many issues important to local communities: e.g. defending and improving green spaces, campaigning over housing issues, for traffic calming, better local services and facilities, opposing destructive regeneration and development projects and so on. At the same time many local activists have been working to build up solidarity and community spirit amongst our neighbours and in our communities, encouraging people through leaflets, newsletters and open meetings, social centres, campaigns, social events, etc.

But are we having the effect we'd like? What is our relationship with local residents' groups and broad-based campaigns? Which issues should be our

main priorities? How do immediate practical concerns link to the need for fundamental social change?

The idea of the gathering, which was discussed and agreed at last year's Anarchist Bookfair, is to:

- share information, local experiences and views about some of the key issues affecting our communities;
- establish better links and communication channels among radical, community-orientated local groups and individuals;
- promote anti-authoritarian, anti-state, anti-capitalist and pro-working class politics, and collective, non-hierarchical forms of organisation.

Obviously, there's only so much that we can do at one event, but we'll be able to pass info around, support each other better, and work together on specific issues when we need to. That way we will be more effective and be able to make a real difference to our communities.

Haringey Solidarity Group and Hackney Independent

The Community Action Gathering is taking place on Saturday 18th June from 11.15am to 5.30pm at Oxford House, Derbyshire Street, Bethnal Green Road, London E2, nearest tube is Bethnal Green. See www.libcom.org/cag for more information.

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Home and away

FREEDOM

Volume 66 Number 10

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

Yet again, we've missed our deadlines with this issue. We've been experiencing serious problems with our copy email address and we temporarily lost a lot of copy for this issue, but we've managed to save enough of it to put together another quality paper.

We're still trying to enlarge our editorial team, so if you like what you read and would like see it continuing, please get in touch and get involved. You can email us at the copy address below (now it's all working again) or write to us at 84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1 7QX. If you need training we can provide it and we don't ask for an awful lot of your time.

Or if helping out in the bookshop is more your style, get in touch.

Correction

The feature on page 5 of our last issue (which was dated 7th May) on the General Election was written by Richard Griffin, who stepped in to write the piece at very short notice. Unfortunately it was mistakenly credited to Iain McKay. Our apologies to Richard for the error.

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Next issue

Contributions are wanted for future Freedoms. The next issue will be dated 11th June and the last day to get your copy to us will be Friday 2nd June (see contact details above for where to send your letters/articles). If you are interested in writing regularly for Freedom we want to hear from you!

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!

CAPS pickets of Lewes And Arney prisons

The Campaign Against Prison Slavery recently held pickets of Lewes prison in Sussex, and Arney in Leeds. Visitors to both prisons expressed support for the campaign and also surprise at the extent of private companies involvement in exploiting prison slave labour. At HMP Lewes it was discovered that prisoners there are packaging plastic spoons for Sainsbury's, while an ex-prisoner outside Arney prison told of prisoners at The Verne in Dorset building furniture for Ikea. Other companies recently named to CAPS include: Airsprung Beds, Alfred McAlpine, Aramark, Ard Electronics, Argos, Asda, Britannia Garden Products, British Textile Service, B&Q, Captive Recycling, Challenge Fencing, Chumgold

Industries, Debenhams, Dextra, Industrial Rubber, Gibbs Sandtech, Juicy Packaging, Lomax Mobility, Merit Garden Products, MIMS Potteries, Royal Mail, Thompsons Xmas Company, Trew Gates, Vinegar Packing, Virgin, Wickes, and of course the ubiquitous Wilkinson (Wilko). For more information see www.againstprisonslavery.org

Leeds ABC benefits

Leeds ABC recently held benefits for the Barcelona Six, five of whom are still locked up in prison, and imprisoned Russian Anarchist Aleksander 'Miller' Tomenkho. £150 was raised for the Barcelona Six, and so far nearly £100 has been raised for 'Miller' Tomenkho. If you would like to contribute to the Miller fund, contact leedsabc@mail.com For more information on both cases see www.brightonabc.org.uk

Soldier lifts lid on Camp Delta

An American soldier, formerly employed at the US torture facility, Camp Delta at Guantanamo Bay, recently revealed shocking new details of abuse and ill-treatment of prisoners there. Erik Saar worked as an interpreter during interrogation sessions, and his book *Inside The Wire*, is the first detailed account published by someone formerly working at the camp. Saar not only

details torture practices, and the use of mock interrogations to fool visitors to the camp, but also the existence of brutal 'snatch' squads, who remove uncooperative prisoners from their cells. In a training session for one of the squads, a US soldier posing as a prisoner was beaten so badly that he suffered brain damage. It is believed his attackers had not been told the 'detainee' was a soldier.

BNP smack dealer nicked

Embarrassingly for the British National Party, one of their Northern electoral candidates was nicked for dealing in heroin and crack cocaine just a few days before the election. Karl Hanson of Fieldhead Way, Heckmondwike, West Yorkshire is currently out on bail, but is expected to get a long prison sentence. Astonishingly, despite widespread local coverage of his arrest, more than a thousand racist idiots still voted for him. Though it is always possible that they were simply trying to get BNP policy on drug dealing implemented: "Individuals convicted of the importation and large-scale dealing of hard drugs will face the death penalty."

Assata Shakur

Former Black Panther and Black Liberation Army member Assata Shakur,

who escaped from a US prison in 1979, and who has been living in Cuba since the early 1980s, recently had the bounty for her recapture raised to \$1m by the US authorities. Assata, now a 57 year old grandmother, was a target of the US government's COINTELPRO programme, which led to the murder or imprisonment of many black activists during the 1960s and '70s. More info at www.assatahakur.org

Paul Blackburn appeal

By the time Freedom goes to press, it is to be hoped that Paul Blackburn, who spent 25 years in prison fighting a conviction for killing another child, will finally have had that conviction overturned at the Court of Appeal. The case is listed for the 24th and 25th May. Paul Blackburn writes about his experiences in *Judge For Yourself: How Many Are Innocent?* by L.A. Naylor (Roots Books, 2004). See www.writesite.org.uk

Technopolis

Technopolis is a three-day gathering focusing on technologies of control (CCTV, nanotechnology, prison, ID cards, etc.) and how to resist them. To be held in West Yorkshire from 9th to 12th June. More details: www.eco-action.org/technopolis

compiled by Mark Barnsley

LISTINGS

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

Every Friday The Loaf has arisen – Use Your Loaf café from 7pm to midnight at the Ragged School, Hales Street, Deptford, London SE8

7th June Battle of the Beanfield talk at The Pullens Centre, 184 Crampton Street, London SE17 at 7.30pm

8th June Open seminar series at the Institute for Autonomy, 76-78 Gower Street, London WC1, at 5.30pm, topic Anti-Civilisation and Class Struggle.

9th to 18th June Art Not Oil exhibition at the Institute for Autonomy, 76-78 Gower Street, London W1. For more info see www.artnotoil.org.uk

9th June Benefit gig for local anti-nuke groups, with Attila the Stockbroker, David Rovics and more from 8pm at Ferryboat Inn, King Street, Norwich, (£8/£5 concs)

11th June Norwich's second annual anarchist bookfair from 10am to 7pm, For info call 07941 657485, email norwichanarchists@hotmail.com or see www.norwichanarchists.org

11th June Wheel Thing cycle powered festival, part of Bath Fringe festival, see www.bathfringe.co.uk

11th June World Naked Bike Ride: UK, plenty of riders going nude but full nudity is not essential, just go as bare as you dare! Arrests for nudity are unlikely, and (amazingly) London police have agreed to both the Central London route, and the nudity! meet 3pm at Wellington Arch, Hyde Park Corner, London, for info contact 0781 458 7361 or uk@worldnakedride.org, or see www.worldnakedbikeride.org/uk

12th June Wandle Valley Festival, ecology and heritage activities for all

ages at numerous sites along the length of the Wandle through Wandsworth, Merton and Sutton, with guided cycle rides, walks and botanical walks along the river, contact 0870 714 0750 or see www.wandlevalleyfestival.org.uk

18th June Community Action Gathering, standing up for our communities and our interests: how best to organise and take action, at Oxford House, Bethnal Green Road, London E2 from 11.15am to 5.30pm, contact 0208 374 5027 or info@hackneyindependent.org

18th to 19th June Leamington Peace Festival, see www.peacefestival.org.uk

15th to 17th July Guilfest, for info see www.guilfest.co.uk

15th to 18th July International Animal Rights Gathering, four day event with workshops, speakers and training in all the skills you need to become an effective activist for the animals, info from AR2005, BM Box 2248, London WC1N 3XX

17th to 21st August Earth First! Summer Gathering in the Peak District, see www.earthfirstgathering.org.uk

13th to 16th September Disarm DSEi arms fair at ExCeL Centre, London Docklands, contact disarm@dsei.org or see www.dsei.org

International

11th June World Naked Bike Ride, protest against oil and clothes dependency. Go on, do it! For info see www.worldnakedbikeride.org

16th to 18th June European counter summit in Luxembourg, for info see www.eurotop.lu or <http://de.indymedia.org/2005/05/116724.shtml>

6th July Global day of action at the opening day of the G8 Summit. See

www.agp.org or www.dissent.org.uk
1st to 14th August Ekotopia alternative technologies festival in Moldova, more info at www.eyfa.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-sindicalist 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 Basement
24 Lever Street, Manchester (contact mustsocial@yahoo.co.uk or 0161 237

1832)
The Common Place
23 Wharf Street, Leeds LS2 7EQ
www.thecommonplace.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

Institute for Autonomy
76-78 Gower Street, London WC1
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 Ragged School
Hales Street, Deptford, London SE8

The RampART
15-17 Rampart Street, London E1 2LA
www.rampart.co.nr

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

See page 6 for our G8 listings special

News

Redundancy Watch

Minty fresh sackings

Toothpaste manufacturer Colgate-Palmolive is to shut its Salford factory at a cost of 400 jobs. John McGarry, Division Officer for USDAW (Union of Shop, Distributive and Allied Workers), said "This is terrible news for our members, many of whom are part of families who have worked there for generations." A Colgate press release notes that "the company assured its Salford employees that this announcement is not a reflection on their contributions or on the facility's overall performance." The company is planning to build a massive 'superfactory' in Eastern Europe.

Imerys miserys

Imerys, a china clay company, is to shed 117 jobs from its Cornish operations, 6% of its workforce in the county. Most of the sackings have been attributed to technological improvements and improved productivity. Representatives of the Transport and General Workers Union reacted with cynicism at 'the same old excuses' - the company shed 80 jobs just six months ago. Regional organiser Dave Springbett remarked, "we don't accept compulsory redundancies, but having said that, with the amount of redundancies there have been in recent years I can't imagine there are many volunteers left." T&G members balloted for strike action over attacks on pensions earlier this month and have pledged to fight the lay-offs. Imerys has an international reputation for union busting and recently warned workers against industrial action. Cornish shop stewards recently confronted Imerys CEO Gerard Buffiere at the company's AGM in Paris.

Aimec administration anguish

130 staff have been sacked at Aimec Mailing Services after the firm went into administration. Job losses were on the labour intensive hand-finishing department with receivers claiming that the minimum wage was too high. The company intends to increase mechanisation to maintain production levels.

Hoover cleans house

Hoover is set to axe 90 manufacturing staff at its South Lanarkshire plant, with rumours that it will shut the plant entirely at the cost of another 109 jobs. The factory, which has been running for half a century, already shed 150 jobs two years to secure the plant's future, with the Scottish Executive pumping a further £1.7m into maintaining production.

Graham White, chief executive, UK and Ireland, said: "The economics of UK production clearly don't add up as they used to. Each unit produced in the UK costs us 30% more than it does if we make it in China. We know that this isn't a reflection of the productivity of our Cambuslang workforce or our management - it's a harsh economic fact."

Soft touch Britain

British workers are the most vulnerable in Europe according to the general union Amicus. "In an increasingly global economy, multinational companies will always choose to make job cuts where it is cheaper, quicker and more politically expedient to sack," said Amicus general secretary Derek Simpson. In the last quarter of 2004 Britain suffered from more corporate restructuring and more redundancies than any other EU country. In France and Germany companies are forced to produce a social compensation plan if they sack more than 50 workers.

Security and respect?

After recent hysteria about 'hoodies' John Shute asks what New Labour means by security and respect

In the run-up to the Queen's Speech, Tony Blair and his Home Secretary-cum-lapdog Charles Clarke promised up to forty bills would be pushed through the new Parliament, with a core theme of 'security and respect'. At his first post-election press conference, Blair focused on "the loss of respect in the classroom, on the street corner" and went on to endorse the Bluewater shopping complex's ban on youths wearing 'hooded tops' - apparently symbolic of this loss of 'respect'. New Labour's third term, as previously, will be focused on the policing of everyday life, with the ID card bill re-introduced and new measures proposed to tackle 'anti-social behaviour'.

From the introduction of the Terrorism Act in its first term (which facilitated the redefinition of terrorism to encompass any and all effective protest) to the use of Anti-Social Behaviour Orders and the massive expansion of CCTV, New Labour's primary concern has been a restructuring of the everyday experience of working class people such that ordinary life is experienced as 'policed life' - life lived in the shadow of the state. With a prison population breaking records every day, law and order has been carrot and stick for New Labour - the carrot offered to the middle classes is the stick with which it beats the poor.

The question that ought to be asked is what is meant by 'security' in Blair's agenda, and who or what is the subject of 'respect'? Under Blair's successive governments, the redistribution of wealth from poor to rich, which began in the late 1970s, has increased. The poorest 10% in Britain now receive 3%

of the nation's income, while the richest 10% receive more than a quarter. Between 1990 and 2000 the percentage of wealth held by the richest 10% rose from 47% to 54%. Blair's Britain is founded on low pay, longer hours and short term contracts. It is founded on the creation of a culture of insecurity which allows for the increased exploitation of the poorest and the enrichment of the already filthy rich. All serious efforts to address issues like binge-drinking, drug-abuse, etc., need to focus on this fact. Insecurity and despair have become the defining experience for many of us, and nihilism and self-destruction become escape routes - if only for Friday night.

Increased exploitation requires a compliant working class. During the Thatcher years, organised labour was cowed by a combination of confrontational policing and anti-union legislation - a strategy of broken heads and sequestration. New Labour's agenda has been to ensure that the spectre of working class militancy doesn't rear its head again. Thus the 'respect' Blair talks about isn't respect for each other, but respect for the state and respect for capital. New Labour's Britain is a prison-house for the working class, both inside and outside jail, with the sole agenda one of 'good order and discipline' enforced through CCTV, ASBOs, more cops on the streets, etc. Anti-social crime - a product of despair, depoliticisation and the fragmentation and decline in solidarity of working class communities - is (all rhetoric aside) to be displaced to those communities, and cleared out of the Bluewater shopping utopias so as not to upset the middle classes. It's like



South east London Graffiti

dog training. The hope is that the 'policed life' of the working class will prevent the working class dog from biting the hand that beats it. Our best

response has to be to rebuild the working class resistance and militant solidarity which New Labour and its CBI friends most fear.

FBU fear worst

A plan to close fire service control rooms across England and Scotland will see job losses, higher council taxes and safety issues, according to the FBU. At an emergency conference, the FBU passed a resolution condemning the governments plan to close 46 control centres in England and Wales and replace them with nine regional centres. In Scotland there could be just

one for the entire country.

FBU General Secretary Matt Wrack said: "The Government's track record on large scale technology projects is very poor. Their record suggests this project will be very expensive and fraught with difficulty ... The project will lead to cuts in fire services and push up council tax to pay the £1 billion costs of these remote regional centres. It's expensive, risky, and won't save a single life."

It also seems possible that unrelated job losses could be brought in if a pilot scheme in East Anglia to replace more full-time firefighters with 'retained' (part-time volunteers) staff goes through. Steve Brinkley, Brigade Secretary of Suffolk FBU, said: "If there is no immediate disaster they will see no reason not to do it elsewhere, it could potentially be a total loss of 12% [of firefighters] across East Anglia."

Eventually, it will go wrong. It will have a devastating impact on training and crewing levels.

Rob Ray

'Freedom March' at Dale farm

Around a hundred people took part in a well-publicised 'Freedom March' in Basildon, Essex on 15th May to protest at their treatment by the council. Amid dozens of small children shouting 'Save our homes' and, rather less enthusiastically, waving banners stating 'I like school', a delegation spoke to Essex county council in a last-ditch attempt to deter an eviction order against the site.

One and a half million pounds has been set aside for the eviction, making a turnaround very unlikely. It is thought Constant and co., currently the subject of upcoming lawsuits over alleged abuses of human rights in previous company-run evictions, have been hired for the job.

They would be required to forcibly remove entire families from their homes, although no provision has been made by the council during the two-year-long case for alternative accommodation.

Forty families have made applications for legal aid for a judicial review, and

lawyers are standing by. There are not just potential evictees currently living on the plots however. Travellers who have been granted permission to live on their land would also be affected. Grattan Puxon, from the Roma Federation, said:

"There are a lot of people up there on legal plots and they have a right not to have a police-style raid at four in the morning, so they will be asking people to respect that."

The march followed a supporting protest in Ireland the previous day by Irish traveller groups. There are further supporting protests planned in the US, Brussels and Germany. Among the delegates to this event was Toma Nikolaieff, a newspaper editor based in the Balkans, who felt strongly enough on the subject to travel to the UK.

The council's decision is in the final stages of debate as Freedom goes to press, and a decision will have been made by the time you read this.

Rob Ray

(adapted from www.easf.org.uk)

enrager.net
libcom.org
libertarian community & organising resource for Britain

On may 1st 2005, enrager.net became libcom.org. After a year and a half, a lot of changes and massive increase in traffic we decided it was time for a change.

Libcom.org is a constantly growing resource for all people who wish to fight to improve their lives, their communities and their working conditions.

Check out the newswire, forums, listings, organise tips and much more at: <http://www.libcom.org>

We've evolved!

Our way or no way

Two recent events held by religious groups in the US show how bigotry and intolerance are pushing for State control of public life

The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary held 'Justice Sunday' at the end of April. In addition to the 3,000 people who attended in person, an estimated 60 million (over a fifth of the population) also saw it broadcast. Then the National Religious Broadcasters held a convention in Anaheim, Southern California.

At 'Justice Sunday' senate majority leader Bill Frist advocated a closer relationship between politics and christianity. Albert Mohler, the powerful president of the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, said, "As evangelical Christians, our main concern is the citizenship that is ours in Heaven that has been purchased by our Saviour. But we also understand that we have a responsibility ... to be active in the public sphere, not just to impose some kind of world-view or ideology, but to be salt and light."

In Anaheim the NRB, which exists to represent the Christian broadcasters' right to communicate the Gospel of Jesus Christ to a lost and dying world, was celebrating the fact that they have now effectively built a parallel information and entertainment service indoctrinating tens of millions of Americans with their frightening ideologies.

Why frightening? Essentially because the troops of the religious right are beginning to insist with increasing vehemence that it's not enough to advocate an extremely intolerant set of personal, elitist and inherently racist values. But that the 'Chosen' have a duty to impose their will, way of life, priorities and punitive agenda on more and more

organs of government, schools and public affairs.

Mohler again on the need seen by his constituency to influence the way the law works in America, "We want to communicate to all that we are not calling for persons merely to be moral. We want them to be believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, because we don't just need instruction, we need salvation. Now, because of that, something has to explain why we would take this time on a Sunday night to talk about something like the federal judiciary. I want to make clear why there is such a sense of urgency that we would do this. It's because so much that is precious to us, so much that is essential to this civilisation, this culture, this great democratic republic is in the hands of the courts. And we know that means that much is at risk. Because we have been watching. And we have been learning. For far too long, Christians have been concerned to elect the right people to office, and then go back home. We have learned the importance of the electoral process, and yet we're also discovering that that third branch of government, the judiciary, is so very, very important."

Takeover

It is well-documented that the religious right has worked since the 1970s to infiltrate, distort and gain effective control of school boards, local government and other points of conventional influence – especially in the south. This includes a takeover of the Southern Baptist Convention itself, which was slowly and

systematically purged of those who did not go along with the 'vision' of domination and a strictly literal interpretation of the Bible by christian fundamentalists; a recent Gallup poll recently found that a third of americans believe the Bible to be literally true! Specifically these groups want to reverse the disestablishment of the church from the State to impose a religious theocracy.

Theirs is clearly a minority view. But it's that of a growing minority and a powerful one.

It's also reflected in the media. Material (such as creationism, supremacism and anti-gay sentiment) originated by the most powerful religious broadcasters in the country relentlessly feeds indoctrination into millions of homes all over the country. And of the most pernicious kind on three counts: it both tells people what and how to think; the tenor of the message is negative, intolerant, divisive, inaccurate and racist; and most people are largely unaware they're being indoctrinated.

Their agenda is essentially political, although it goes under the guise of religion. Its mission includes efforts to 'transform the culture through the application of sound biblical teaching'. The NRB recently applauded Bush's appointment of Kevin Martin as the next chair of the monopolist Federal Communications Commission (FCC).

This trend is very different from the evangelism of the 1960s and '70s made notorious by Billy Graham, although his son – on record as denigrating Islam – was invited to the Whitehouse the Easter after the US started bombing Iraqis.

Dominion

The ideology driving the religious (broadcasters') movement is based on dominionism. At its centre are pronouncements by the likes of one of its founders, Rousas Rushdoony, that God gave man (sic) dominion over the land regardless of the widespread acceptance within the increasingly marginalised scientific and ecological community that the world will only survive through careful partnership with our environment.

Dominionists believe they have been told by God to create the Christian society through violence if necessary, denuding the US Constitution of any semblance of free-thinking and replacing both it and even minimal pretensions to democracy with a highly literal, patriarchal, theocratic (Calvinist) Dictatorship of the Saved based on the ten commandments with no place for dissent, liberalism of any kind, equality and other beliefs but the bigots' own. At its most extreme, prisons would be closed in favour of capital punishment and slavery with punishment for offenses such as Sabbath-breaking and blasphemy.

Rushdoony – a prime inspiration to the



group which met recently in Anaheim – wrote, "In the name of toleration, the believer is asked to associate on a common level of total acceptance with the atheist, the pervert, the criminal, and the adherents of other religions." He founded the Chalcedon Foundation, which believes "that the whole Word of God must be applied to all of life. It is not only our duty as individuals, families and churches to be Christian, but it is also the duty of the state, the school, the arts and sciences, law, economics, and every other sphere to be under Christ the King. Nothing is exempt from His dominion. We must live by His Word, not our own." There are well-documented links with the segregationist movements (including the Ku Klux Klan) of the South.

Yet the worst is still to come. One plank of the religious right is Rapture, the notion that these are the 'end times', the era of man (sic) during which the world will end and the Saved will go to heaven. In that context it matters less that races, continents and for that matter eco-systems are destroyed in the pursuit of American domination. Remember James Watt, Reagan's first secretary of the interior: he told congress that protecting natural resources was unimportant because Christ was about to return and provide for the earth? Similarly, a popular high school textbook, America's Providential History, states: "The secular socialist has a limited resource mentality and views the world as a pie ... that needs to be cut up so that everyone gets a piece ... The Christian knows that the potential in God is unlimited and that there is no shortages of resources on God's earth..."

Even worse, The Rapture (which is not recorded anywhere in the Bible) supposes that Christ will return. In the Middle East. In the area we know as Iraq. In the valley of Armageddon. There will be a final battle as Israel reasserts its 'right' over the arab lands. 'Believers' will be lifted up into heaven and non-

believers will suffer the torments of hell. The Israeli tourist industry had the largest stand at the NRB convention. There is evidence that the 'End Time' series of books by LaHaye, which have sold 60 million copies, also inspires both constituencies which met recently.

Numbers

A report released recently by The Barna Group suggests not only that more Americans listen to Christian media than go to church. But, even more significantly, that 46% of the population listens to a Christian radio broadcast in any one month and one in six listens daily! Similarly figures from Arbitron describe a trend of a disproportionate increase in religious radio stations (by 14%) when all types of radio outlet have only grown by 4% in the last five years. This growth of Christian stations is only exceeded by that of news/talk radios.

But it doesn't stop there: nearly half of all members of the US legislature (45 senators and 186 congresspersons) earned 80-100% approval ratings from three of the most influential christian right advocacy groups.

In good American fashion it is only to be expected that once their work is done in the US, the religious right will want to export their brand of intolerance and rigid domination to the rest of the world. It is planned that the National Religious Broadcasters' Global Day of Prayer in mid-May will include television feeds from planned television reports will originate from Suva, Fiji, Hong Kong, China; Jakarta, Indonesia; Chennai, India; Cape Town, South Africa; Cairo, Egypt, Switzerland, Ireland, Argentina Canada.

Louis Further

Sources
Arbitron: www.arbitron.com
Chalcedon Foundation: www.chalcedon.edu
The Barna Group: www.barna.org
Southern Baptist Theological Seminary: www.sbps.edu
National Religious Broadcasters: www.nrb.org

Bolivian protests

Bolivian workers and peasants have responded to a new Hydrocarbons bill with strikes, demonstrations and blockades. Protests are set to continue into next week, with unions and neighborhood associations in El Alto promising an indefinite general strike to force the nationalization of Bolivia's natural gas reserves.

Bolivia's social movements wish to see the countries natural resources being used to fund social spending; on education, health and improving the living standards of the poor. Whereas President Carlos Mesa is reluctant to raise taxes and royalties for fear of upsetting the international business community. Mesa refused to sign into law a new hydrocarbons bill which promises to raise a 32% tax on top of the existing 18% royalty charges on foreign companies exploiting the natural gas. With the law subsequently being signed by the President of the Bolivian congress, two multinationals immediately announced the possibility

of suing the Bolivian government over the new law, which forces them to renegotiate their existing contracts.

Mesa's refusal to sign the law sparked tens of thousands of protesters to take to the streets of La Paz on 16th May demanding the nationalisation of the hydrocarbon industry without compensation for the multinational investors. Police dispersed the demonstration with tear gas and water cannon. Protests continued throughout the week and across the country. On May 18th riot police were again called upon to disperse marching miners and Cochabamba saw a day of street actions. FEJUVE, the El Alto residents association whose blockades and hunger strikes against water disconnections and price hikes sparked March's unrest, held a series of public meetings and have begun preparations for a indefinite general strike to start 23rd May. A 48 hour general strike is also promised in the southern city of Potosi, with road blockades across the Altiplano.

Feature

A hollow victory?

Comrades! We are, quite literally, in danger of returning to the Dark Ages, says Bob Potter

The impressive vote achieved by the Respect-Unity Coalition in Bethnal Green & Bow is something to celebrate with caution – if at all! It was a pleasure to see pro-Iraq war, staunch “Blairite android” (Galloway’s characterisation of her), Oona King, cast out by her constituents; but it would be silly to imagine Galloway guarantees something better. The Respect political amalgam is ‘populist’ at best, its policies often determined by ‘top of the head’ remarks from Gorgeous George, who declares he has no intention of standing for a second term. Contrary to the secular stance of ‘traditional’ left, Galloway proclaims his own version of ‘Catholic politics’, leading logically to his expressed hope for a Muslim successor!

Following the European elections in June 2004, where Respect achieved 4.8% of the votes cast in Tower Hamlets, George Galloway announced his candidature for Bethnal Green & Bow at the next General Election. Although registered as a political party with individual membership, a directly elected executive, an annual conference, a detailed constitution and what passes for a programme, attempts to present Respect to the voting public as a routine alternative ‘party’ rather than an ad hoc ‘front’ (controlled by the SWP) did not always prove convincing. Galloway announced his candidacy in the diaries page of the Evening Standard at the end of June, but Respect members had received no advance notice of his intention, no ‘branch meeting’ had endorsed him as candidate. It was not until the October 2004 conference that it was ‘agreed’ George Galloway would be the Respect candidate for Bethnal Green & Bow!

A good introduction to Galloway the man is his book *I’m Not the Only One* (Penguin 2004). Best described as a social-democratic career politician, strongly influenced by the Stalinist version of Marxism (he boasts friendship with Fidel Castro, the last of the ‘old school’). He points convincingly to his own role as an active opponent of Saddam Hussein’s regime right from the very beginning. His account of demonstrators against Saddam, himself among them, being denounced by Tory Douglas Hurd as ‘communist troublemakers’ for getting in the way while the Tory Government was parleying with Saddam’s regime in the 1980s, is certainly something in his favour. His equally enthusiastic support for Milosevic while he was busily raping and murdering Muslims and the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan do not go down so well with those whose votes he seeks. In his book he points to the gross manipulations of facts by the government on the gassing of the Kurdish village of Halabja in 1988. At the time, the West tried to blame Iran for this atrocity; it was only after it had decided to make

Iraq the next target that the story was changed and history re-written – the culprit was indeed the Iraqi regime, but so long as Saddam was a US ally the totally false story was told.

Since the advent of Galloway, Respect policies have often originated with him; they are never ‘theory based’ – as he himself says, “What you want, baby, we got it”! For example, in the *Morning Star* (12th February 2005) he insists “nobody serious” calls for the ending of immigration controls. Each ‘state’ has the ‘right’ to deny entry to unwanted immigrants! Although these views are contrary to the agreed Respect policy document, they evoked no ‘critical response’ from the Unity Coalition. Another dimension is the difficulty of determining the extent to which ‘official’ policy is aimed primarily at the MAB; which, when it participates, is clearly the ‘right wing’ of the Coalition – described by many as the ‘phantom wing’, as observers are hard pressed to identify a single MAB member at most Respect meetings.

Appreciating the crucial importance of the Bengali vote, Galloway made a two-week trip to Bangladesh last February. At a press conference in Dhaka to launch his tour, George described his purpose as “visiting Bangladesh to re-familiarise myself with the country and to meet and discuss with the leaders of Bangladesh, to listen to their concerns and learn from them how best I can help the great country of Bangladesh and its people.” He added he was “particularly looking forward to visiting the Sylhet area, with which I and the people of Tower Hamlets have such a close connection.” He planned to meet the mayor of Dhaka, politicians and businessmen to build links and “get a better deal for Bangladesh in the world.” He added the majority of Indian restaurants in the UK are owned by Bengalis, particularly immigrants from Sylhet “...and I want to represent them and champion their interests in the UK.” Clearly George made a great impression in the many villages in the Sylhet area, for since then voters in Bethnal Green received phone calls from relatives ‘back home’, telling them to vote for Galloway.

There is a sinister dimension to this tale. Amnesty International has published numerous reports of abuses by both the State and Islamic groups in the areas visited by Galloway, and has called for action against Islamists who are targeting the minority Ahmadiyya community with physical attacks. According to Amnesty, these groups “are believed to be attempting to force the government to yield to their political demand for the introduction of more stringent Islamic law in Bangladesh.” The State itself is condemned in their reports for the politically motivated detention of democracy activists, many



who are undergoing torture, often resulting in death. The British government is criticised in the same reports for adding Bangladesh to the ‘white list’ of countries deemed safe for the return of refugees and asylum-seekers.

The press there published a report by the US state department during Galloway’s visit: “Police corruption remains a problem. Nearly all abuses went unpunished and the climate of impunity, reinforced by 2003 legislation, shielding security forces from legal challenge of their actions, remained a serious obstacle to ending abuse and killings ... violence, often resulting in deaths, was a pervasive element in the country’s politics ... police searched homes without warrants and the government forcibly relocated illegal squatter settlements.”

George refuses to answer questions on these questions – could it be, as Private Eye suggests (14th April), Galloway has compromised himself in his ambition to get elected, being aware that “most Bangladeshis in London, whose votes Respect is seeking, support either the Awami League or the Bangladeshi National Party, the two groups back home most closely implicated in such abuses”?

Back home, in Bethnal Green, George Galloway is unperturbed by the MAB’s extremely reactionary views, whose chief spokesman, Dr AzAm Tamimi insists Arab women ‘ask for’ wife-beating and argues thieves should be punished by hand amputation. Long before his recent visit to Bangladesh, Galloway realised Muslim backing was essential to his campaign. In an apparent attempt to discredit him in the run up to election, The Sunday Times ran a front page attack

upon his impending divorce from his Palestinian wife. The brutal truth is that George Galloway himself dragged his personal life into the political arena. His leaflet for the European elections referred to his “being recognised by the Muslim world for his 30-year struggle for the people of Palestine, Iraq and Pakistan. Married to a Palestinian doctor, he has deep religious principles and is teetotal.” This was direct play for the ‘Muslim vote’ – or rather for the support of particular political trends within the Muslim community. This appeal is essentially conservative, backward prejudices in any target audience is not only politically reprehensible: it is fraught with danger for the individual politician who tries to pull it off. (The implication that all Muslims would by definition recognise someone who is teetotal, has ‘deep religious’ convictions and is married as ‘one of us’ is frankly nonsense: what about Muslims who enjoy a drink, attend the mosque only occasionally and are happily divorced?)

In an interview with the Independent on Sunday (5th April 2004), he volunteered his own position on ‘abortion’ in the middle of last year’s European election campaign: “I’m strongly against abortion. I believe life begins at conception and therefore unborn babies have rights. I think abortion is immoral ... I believe in god. I have to believe that the collection of cells has a soul.” The consequence was immediate MAB backing for Respect on 23rd April 2004.

One of the spin offs from current obsessions to halt ‘discrimination’ in its many forms has been a plethora of

legislation demanding that people’s religious views are ‘personal’ and must not be open to criticism. The idea of ‘freedom of conscience’ is that individuals should not be penalised by the state or by other citizens provided their practices keep them within the general law. An issue today illustrating the problems many have with this area, is whether religious bodies should be exempted from laws prohibiting discrimination against lesbians and gays.

This was clearly a factor in the impressive vote Galloway achieved in Bethnal Green & Bow, but is *not* an issue to be explored here. What must be a matter of concern is that the undeclared ‘spiritual alliance’ between Galloway’s Catholicism and the MAB’s conservative Islam; a determining factor manifested so critically in the 2005 General Election.

The parallel with the disturbing influence of the religious right in the USA needs to be recognised and addressed by libertarian socialists. Whereas in America the so-called ‘battle’ is between the forces of Jesus (Bush and his ilk) and Satan (the Muslim world); in Bethnal Green the ‘united front’ between the fake-radical Catholic George and elements of the equally reactionary Muslim hierarchy, both here, in the UK and in Bangladesh.

Islam and Christianity both claim to follow the same creator god, who made the world and everything in it. Both claim they are acting according to the instructions given them by their books of revelation that lay down the rules by which people ought to live. Those same rules’ determine the believers voting behaviour.

Editorial

Leninists have this annoying habit of writing anarchists and other libertarian socialists out of history. The SWP are masters of this and have recently struck again, this time with Tom Mann. Originally a socialist, he embraced syndicalism and became its most famous and influential advocate in Britain. As such, while it may seem incredulous that someone could discuss him and fail to mention his syndicalist period, this is precisely what the SWP did (Keith Flett, 'An attempt to win the majority of workers', Socialist Worker 1952, 21st May 2005).

Discussing Mann in the context of his being president of the Communist Party's 'National Minority Movement' (NMM) from 1924 to 1929, they present a summary of his life. While noting his membership of "Britain's first Marxist party, the Social Democratic Federation (SDF)" and well as the being general secretary of the Independent Labour Party, they fail to mention how his experiences as a trade union activist and member of these parties turned him into a syndicalist.

The paper does mention that "he spent the years from 1901-10 organising in New Zealand and Australia. Returning to Britain he took a leading role in the huge wave of industrial agitation that swept Britain in the period 1910-14." Yes, but as part of an influential and growing syndicalist movement! And as a direct result of those experiences, Mann turned away from political parties and electioneering in favour of direct action based syndicalism. A year later, he declared that "political action is of no use whatsoever." So it can be safely suggested that Mann would have been even less impressed with 'Respect' and its stress on the need to win electoral battles.

Ironically, following the First World War, the ruling class quite rightly saw electioneering as a means of solving the threat of direct action (Lloyd George knew the score, stating that the parliamentary socialists were "the best policemen for the Syndicalists"). At the very least, if syndicalist ideas had remained influential after the war the 1926 General Strike would have taken on a more radical flavour. Instead we had the CP calling for "all power to the General Council"! As the syndicalists knew from bitter experience, the problem with the trade unions was that the bureaucrats already held far too much power over the union membership rather than not enough.

In Britain the negative impact of Bolshevism destroyed the syndicalist revolt and the potential of creating a lasting libertarian influence in the labour movement. Looking at the Russian Revolution through rose-tinted glasses, they rushed head long to embrace a left which had won. The ideas that produced that militancy go unmentioned, written out of history. Rather than build upon their own experiences, these leaders rejected them and instead followed blindly Lenin's experiences of working in a near-feudal, backward, absolutist regime.

The question is, whether today's radicals will do the same. How many times will the same path be trodden before people realise it takes them away from their destination (socialism) rather than towards it? Sadly, from the looks of it, some time to come.

Commentary

The Internet

The internet has revolutionised life for many people, particularly political radicals. The mass anti-capitalist movements and demonstrations of Seattle, Quebec and Genoa that so shook the world's elites prior to 9/11 would not have been possible were it not for global online networking. The internet has provided an invaluable tool of communication and information for political dissidents through online communities like Indymedia and libcom.org, free spaces for radicals who are otherwise denied a place in the mainstream media. All the research for this article was done online – hell, I'd never even heard about anarchism till I looked it up on the internet! But the freedom of the web we currently enjoy must not be taken for granted.

Cyberspace is not some separate domain, it is now an essential component of our legal, political, economic and social lives. 'The internet' is not a single entity, it is a giant collection of computer networks held together by cable, telephone and other connections. Born in a research project by the US Department of Defence, it was designed by the Rand Corporation to be a decentralised communications system that could withstand nuclear attack.

The decentralised nature of the internet has led to more horizontal and essentially anarchistic communication, but it is not necessarily the great liberator and source of freedom as previously presumed.

The nature of censorship on the internet has taken some surprising turns over the years. No communications and information medium in history has endured such a varied and continued assault on its functioning and infrastructure, particularly since 11th September 2001. A study by Freedom House, Freedom of the press 2005, revealed the overall level of press freedom worldwide is worsening, notable setbacks took place in Pakistan, Kenya, Mexico, Venezuela, and in the world's most powerful 'democracy', the United States.

The US National Strategy to Secure Cyberspace, an excruciatingly boring read, contains ominously vague plans for controlling the internet as a part of their National Strategy for Homeland Security, as "the healthy functioning of cyberspace is essential to the US economy and national security ... We are facing increasing threats from hostile adversaries in the realm of cyberspace." It claims organised cyber attack may endanger the Nations security, possibly even causing loss of life, though they neglect to explain exactly how.

It is arguable that at the beginning of the 21st century corporations will rival (and possibly collude with) governments in threatening internet freedoms. Some US cable companies – AOL for instance – seek to control the internet in the same way as television and radio, and are putting in place the necessary technological changes to do this.

Censorship of the internet is commonplace in most regions. In countries such as Burma and China, the level of control is such that the internet has little value as a medium of free speech. In fact, such use often results in personal dangers to activists. Burma has come closest to trying to block the entire internet – out of the entire web it 'whitelists' about 900 sites in all. China, with the second largest population of internet users behind the United States, uses the vague term of 'subversive' speech as the object of censorship, limiting discussion about Falun Gong, the Dalai Lama and Tiananmen Square. Incidentally, China's

'Golden Shield' blocking device is sustained by Western developed software. In Tunisia plainclothes 'cyber-police' monitor cybercafes for subversive activity, regularly collecting details of internet activity, blocking 'subversive' websites and arresting 'over-active' internet users – cyber-dissidents. Morocco bans criticism of Islam, or the monarch, or 'offensive reporting' by journalists. Cuba has made internet usage illegal without a permit. Iranian authorities have arrested twenty online journalists during a recent crackdown and Arash Sigarchi, an Iranian weblogger, was jailed for fourteen years on charges of spying and aiding counter-revolutionaries.

Though in the UK we enjoy greater freedom, it would be foolish to think the internet here is free. In October last year, two servers hosting Indymedia's websites were turned over to the FBI by Rackspace hosting – without notifying Indymedia – affecting over twenty Indymedia sites worldwide. In a statement regarding the incident, Rackspace claimed to be "acting in compliance with a court order pursuant to a Mutual Legal Assistance Treaty (MLAT), which establishes procedures for countries to assist each other in investigations such as international terrorism, kidnapping and money laundering ... Rackspace is acting as a good corporate citizen and is cooperating with international law enforcement authorities, the court prohibits Rackspace from commenting further on this issue."

The UK has proposed data retention rules under its Anti-Terrorism, crime and Security Act 2001, where this will lead remains to be seen.

British Telecom are working with the Internet Watch Foundation (IWF) to prevent users from accessing child porn sites, the technology, called BT Cleanfeed, blocks access to 'blacklisted sites'. But BT admits that the Cleanfeed system will not be effective against the determined paedophile, and will only stop surfers stumbling accidentally on such material. With Cleanfeed, BT has become the first Internet Service Provider in the Western world to voluntarily censor its customer's access in this way, and now offers the most censored web access in the West.

The IWF was created in 1996 to provide a hotline for the public to report any material that is 'potentially illegal'. It caused some concern in 2002 by proposing to create a list of banned newsgroups that should not be carried at all by British ISPs. For the last eight years the ISP industry has been removing material at the request of the IWF without any hesitation or warning. The list of banned sites is secret and left to the judgement of a private organisation based in Cambridgeshire and run by an ex-police officer. This all makes the IWF the most powerful and effective censor in British media history. It is completely unelected and unaccountable to the general public, so there are worries concerning the power the IWF yields. Removing child porn may be a legitimate aim, but will it end there?

In the West, technologies have so far sustained the ability of dissident groups to speak freely and access content privately. So far software writers can work much faster than politicians, but the battle is on. Governments have already criminalised the meaning of the word 'hacker' into something akin to terrorism. The regulation of Investigatory Powers says that police can request data about what sites a web user visits – and ISPs must collect this information – this is only the beginning.

In cyberspace, code is law, and we must understand how code regulates, if we are to maintain the libertarian ideals of the net. If the code of cyberspace is owned, it can be controlled. The lack of ownership, the presence of a commons, is key to limiting, or checking government or corporate control. Technological expertise and participation are essential to ensure that systems of freedom and minimal regimes of invasion are maintained.

Only 17% of the world's population live in countries that enjoy a relatively free press, of which we are one. It is critically important that these countries remain vigilant in upholding this freedom at home and actively encouraging it abroad.

Staving off the internet power shift will be a difficult task, made even harder by the apathy on the part of a public who won't know what they've got until it's gone. Cyberspace, left to itself, will not fulfil the promise of freedom. Without our participation, it could become the perfect tool of control.

Julian Gibson

Anti-G8 listings

12th to 17th June Cre8 Summit, community projects and workshops in Glasgow, see www.dissent.org.uk/content/blogsection/20/

10th to 11th June G8 Finance Ministers meeting in London

16th to 17th June G8 Justice and Interior Ministers in Sheffield, with protests and events on 10th 11th, 15th and 16th June, see <http://dissent.org.uk/content/view/192/107/> or www.sheffield.dissent.org.uk/ or www.sheffieldagainstarwar.org.uk

18th June Bike Caravan to Gleneagles begins in Brighton, for info see www.g8cyclecaravan.org or www.g8bikeride.org.uk

20th June Jubilee Rickshaw Freedom Riders depart from Westminster to Edinburgh, see www.wfinger.demon.co.uk/rickshaw/

1st July Cycle caravans arrive and Critical Mass Bicycle protest in Edinburgh

2nd July The Make Poverty History coalition are planning a high profile celebrity backed campaign with a demo/rally for Edinburgh, starts 11am, with staggered starts at 12pm, 1pm and 2pm, finishing with speakers, stall and entertainments in The Meadows, see www.makepovertyhistory.org, for route map pdf see www.wdmscotland.org.uk/media/campaigns/g8/mp_hedinburgh_2_july_map.pdf

3rd July Glasgow, Cre8 Summit Street Carnival

3rd July Glasgow, Make Borders History, see www.makebordershistory.org

3rd July Edinburgh, Stop The War Coalition demonstration ending in 6pm rally (tbc), see www.stopwar.org.uk

3rd July Edinburgh, G8 Corporate Dreams ... Global Nightmare counter conference from 11am till 6pm with World Development Movement, War on Want, People and Planet, Friends of the Earth, speakers include George Monbiot, Trevor Ngwane, Meena Raman, Walden Bello, Caroline Lucas, Joel Bakan (The Corporation) and The Yes Men, see www.corporateg8.org or www.wdmscotland.org.uk/campaigns/g8/

3rd July Edinburgh, anti-war march (tbc)

3rd July Edinburgh, G8 Alternatives counter conference, multiple venues and events from 10am till 9pm, see www.g8alternatives.org.uk

3rd to 8th July People and Planet Summer Festival, for more info see www.peopleandplanet.org/g8/

4th July Faslane G8 Blockade, a 'really really big blockade' type direct action by Trident Ploughshares (TP) and CND is planned for Faslane nuclear submarine base. TP will set up a convergence space in Glasgow. Coaches will be provided from Glasgow and Edinburgh, see www.faslaneg8.com

4th July Carnival for Full Enjoyment in Edinburgh

5th July Demonstration at Dungavel detention centre called by Glasgow Campaign to Welcome Refugees.

Coaches from Glasgow and Edinburgh

5th July Global Warming 8 Conference in Edinburgh from 9.30am to 12pm, organised by Working Group on Development and Climate Change, eight participants, primarily from developing countries, have been invited to speak on climate change and development, see pdf at www.foe-scotland.org.uk/events/GW8_flyer.pdf

6th July The Peoples' Global Action Conference 2004 in Europe called for a global day of action on the opening day of the G8 Summit. This is a call for people to converge in Scotland to disrupt the conference, and for action to be taken simultaneously in villages, towns and cities worldwide

6th July Blockades against the Summit

6th July Gleneagles, G8 Alternatives 'Another World is Possible' demonstration, assemble at 12 noon at Gleneagles train station, see www.g8alternatives.org.uk/admin/test/g8Mambo/content/view/109/77/

7th July continuing blockades, actions, prisoner support demonstrations, and the Peoples' Open Golfing Tournament, see www.tao.ca/%7Eewrench/dist/g8/pga.html

7th July Climate Alarm Action: FOE 'climate alarm', at a set time FOE will set off an alarm outside the summit which should reach the delegates inside Gleneagles, and everyone else is encouraged to join in wherever they are

8th July (last day of the summit) will see actions themed around Climate Change in Scotland and decentralised locations, see <http://cca.movingpages.org/>

To get more current listings see www.indymedia.org.uk/en/2005/05/311594.html

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Quiz answers

1. The unconstitutional.
2. Harassment by the US Federal authorities and the Furlong detective agency.
3. A group called the Axe, described by Sam Mbah and I.E. Igarwey as a "leftist coalition with anarchist tendencies."
4. The Communist party ordered them to lay down their arms and welcomed the British army who had come to restore colonial rule.

There's one DIY space in the UK where you can get zines like: Slugs & Larders, Profane Existence, Maximum Rock n Roll, Heartattack, and R.T.B., music from labels like Broken Records, Active, Skuld, Havoc, Malaria, Flat Earth and Mordant, books from AK Press, Freedom, Rebel Press, and many others! So visit: The 56 @ Infoshop, 56A Crampton St, SE17, Elephant & Castle, London. Open Thurs, Fri and Sat afternoons. www.safetynet.org/56/

REVIEW

Hyped as a Brit Boyz n the Hood, Saul Dibb's *Bullet Boy* hits more ambitious bullseyes, according to Tom Jennings

Curtis (12) meets adored brother Ricky (20) at the end of his stretch for aggravated assault, driven by best mate Wisdom (Leon Black). Ricky is determined to go straight and keeps the peace in a stand-off with their old gang enemy Godfrey (Clark Lawson). Curtis returns alone to mum Beverley's welcoming party as Ricky hooks up at a ragga club with faithful girlfriend Shea (Sharea-Mounira Samuels). Later Wisdom kills Godfrey's pitbull before gifting the pistol to Ricky. Agreeing with Shea to leave town, he again fails to placate Godfrey, who trashes Wisdom's car. Curtis and friend Rio (Rio Tison) bunk school to smoke dope on Hackney marshes, and Ricky misses another family get-together – this time with Beverley's close friend, lay preacher Neville (Sylvester Williams). Instead he stands point when Wisdom busts into Godfrey's crib and shoots up the place. Armed police raid Beverley's flat and arrest Ricky, while Rio and Curtis play with the gun he's hidden – but Rio is accidentally shot in the arm. Trying to protect Curtis, Beverley throws Ricky out. Shea also breaks with him and then he discovers Wisdom dead. Having given Curtis a man-to-man pep-talk on his return from making up with Rio, Ricky is shot dead by Godfrey's gang as he awaits the last train out. After the funeral Beverley falls into Neville's sexual and pastoral arms. Curtis retrieves the gun and throws it in the canal.

The film's restrained picturing of north-east London's towerblocks, terraces, playing fields and waterways showcases the troubled biographies, conflictual spaces and questionable futures of its characters. The uniformly assured performances are further testament to a first-time feature director of documentaries and a screenplay of accurately youthful Cockney vernacular. So as Ricky, Ashley Walters' conveys a fully convincing self-fashioned code of adult integrity whose intelligence is fatally undermined by the ambivalent egoism of macho brotherhood that Wisdom can't see beyond. As Ricky's mother, Clare Perkins, perfectly captures the contradictory nobility of

working class single parents, whose strength in surviving thus far has demanded singlemindedness – but also an inflexibility which prevents her from helping Ricky with his very different difficulties. However, in beautifully distilling the nuances of pre-teen bewilderment and sagacity, Luke Fraser decisively makes this Curtis's story.

Bullet Boy's generally heroic struggle partakes in – but is not imprisoned by – the hoary old generic conventions of the coming of age crime melodrama. Against the usual odds, Curtis seems to emerge with a chance of neither succumbing to anti-social criminality (in striving to thrive in unpromising environs) nor decisively severing ties with his background (in class aspiration elsewhere). This is an achievement that the recent US cycle of ghetto-centric cinema has so far largely forsaken, despite the purportedly political intentions of its exponents.² Nevertheless, the more modest traditions of UK social realism allow the fine-grained attention to relationships and their vicissitudes to not be drowned out by neo-blaxploitation thrills or the more vintage baggage of hysterically overblown liberal issues and spectacularly reactionary menaces to society.³

Hackney(ed) crossroads

Saul Dibb and Catherine R. Johnson's subtle script shows dawning adolescent masculinity in a context where peer pressure reserves mutual respect and consideration for those in closest proximity to the public self. The wider (middle class) social ethics spouted in educational and other local institutions – when not ignored as irrelevant – may be despised as hypocritical duplicity; yet the realm of private kinship suffocates desire and constrains growth within the childish purview of the mother's embrace and overwhelming needs. Curtis clearly appreciates her position but understands why his brother rejected its ministrations. Meanwhile, merely reproducing the arbitrary authority of patriarchs is recognised to deliver none of its promises beyond recuperation into one of the useless status quos – including the upped ante of 'gun crime' at



increasingly hazardous lower class UK street levels.⁴

At this point it would be easy to 'blame the parents' – as in the currently fashionable reality TV treatment of 'problem children' or all the other class- and race-prejudiced nanny-state discourses. This is another mistake *Bullet Boy* avoids, along with its honourable disavowal of the nonsense that media glorification and youth culture 'cause' violence. So, destined for disappointment and pain, the mother's lioness love for her seeds and her yearning for hope and meaning in life are eventually displaced into religious ecstasy – which offers communal experience, valuation of the self and an anticipated transcendence of suffering. This makes sense in the absence of neighbourhood cohesion or mutual solidarity or any dynamic or shared ideology (whether or not enforced with guns or father-figures), since the nuclear family womb can never fulfil the hopelessly excessive demands placed

upon it as haven in a heartless world.

Finally, important ingredients missing from *Bullet Boy* include, firstly, the lure of the cult of consumerism, where a pseudo-spiritual fervour to fend off insecurity by hoarding cash and trivial secular commodities meshes perfectly with both globalising gangsterism and government wars on crime.⁵ Secondly, 'in reifying isolated individuals as representative of entire societies or historical epochs, European cinematic naturalist realism unfortunately forecloses on portraying the larger-scale reverberations of personal stories in the potential collective synergy of social action. And while one film could hardly cover all these bases, is it really too much to imagine several levels of analysis at once – for example, a *Bullet Boy* who could Do The Right Thing in these Strange Days?

www.tomjennings.pwp.blueyonder.co.uk

1. aka Asher D (of UK Garage supremos So Solid Crew) – himself recently released from jail for possession of a firearm.

2. For example Spike Lee, John Singleton, or Ice Cube. Paradoxically, the absence of moral agendas seems to enable postmodern nihilists such as Albert & Allen Hughes (*Menace II Society*, *Dead Presidents*) or even blockbuster stylists like Kathryn Bigelow (*Strange Days*) to drop more hints of the possibility of collectively creative solutions.

3. See also the French 'cinema du banlieue' inaugurated by La Haine (Mathieu Kassovitz, 1995), which likewise references Hollywood without pandering to it.

4. So, before ultimately ditching the weapon, Curtis tells Rio "I'd rather be a mummy's boy than a crack-head." And, despite her prior soulmate loyalty, Shea also refuses to accept Ricky's repetition compulsion; thus *Bullet Boy* grounds optimism in both younger genders.

5. rendering New Labour's fascination with faith and fundamental morality more intelligible – as desperate rearguard defences against the damage to sociability done by the feeding frenzies of spending which, ironically, represent their only vision of economic 'health'.

BOOKS

Humanism (4th edition)

by Barbara Smoker
South Place Ethical Society, £6.50

First to declare an interest: a few of the many illustrations in this book are by me. I am not getting royalties, but my reputation can only be enhanced by the honour of being involved.

Personally I prefer to call myself an atheist, but this book is intended for use in schools, where the term humanism might be more acceptable. The first edition was published in 1973 by Ward Lock Educational, as part of a set of RE texts. RI (Religious Instruction) was being replaced by RE (Religious Educa-

tion) as a compulsory school subject, and some schools took this to mean the description and comparison of religious beliefs, without indoctrination. Atheism may be considered either a religion or the absence of religion, but whichever, to exclude atheist ideas from such a study would have been ridiculous. Barbara Smoker, a prominent militant atheist since the 1950s, was given the commission.

(There are those who say humanism is different from atheism; that Stalin, for instance, was an atheist but not a humanist, an insult for which Stalin would have had you shot. Some say Hitler was an atheist, though he had Gottgliebende – God-believing – on his

Nazi party card, and said that ridding Germany of Jews was a God-given mission.)

RE texts, written by religious pundits, represent every religion as wholly benevolent, and 'my little schoolbook' (as Barbara called *Humanism* at the recent launch party) is no exception. The humanist movement, it tells us, has fought consistently for women's liberation, prison reform, the abolition of capital punishment and corporal punishment, better treatment of the mentally ill, and the abolition of cruel sports, as well as more obviously anti-religious concerns like the repeal of laws against blasphemy and Sunday trading.

Anarchists will recognise these campaigns as compatible with anarchism.



The Bible says Moses carried the Ten Commandments down the mountain

We pick on the nastier aspects of prison, for instance, as part of our aim to be rid of prisons altogether. While not all anarchists are atheists, many begin as atheists, and move on from the rejection of divine bosses, to the rejection of all bosses.

This book is easy to read, informative about the history and philosophy of humanism, and, like its author, forthright, charming, and fun. I recommend it without reservation.

Donald Room

Barbara Smoker's *Humanism* is available for £6.50 (post-free in the UK, cheque/PO with order please) from Freedom Press, 84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1 7QX.

Interview

In the first of a series of interviews for Freedom, anarchists discuss the state of industrial relations in Britain and what relevance anarchism has to workers' struggle. This week Jacob from Sol Fed discusses the importance of anarcho-syndicalism. Jacob has been a member of the Solidarity Federation and its forerunner the Direct Action Movement since 1986. He is a local government worker who has been active in the campaign against housing privatisation.

Membership of British trade unions continues to fall with under three out of ten workers now belonging to a union. While workers still go on strike, levels of industrial action are far below their 1970s peak. How do you assess the state of industrial relations in Britain and what prospects do you see for an upturn in militancy?

Actually the number of trade unionists is about the same as ten years ago. However the number of those in employment has gone up, so the proportion of those in trade unions has declined. The big problem is that the manufacturing workforce has been wiped out and the rise in the public sector workforce has not gone up enough to make up for this. There was a slight upsurge in militancy a couple of years ago with strikes by workers on the underground, by fire fighters and unofficial strikes by postal workers. Nothing has happened in the past year because trade union leaders didn't want to embarrass the Labour Party ahead of an election.

The militancy of the 1970s could not be sustained. When confrontation reaches that level the workers either achieve a revolutionary consciousness and take over or the workers movement is crushed. People got fed up of industrial stalemate and the inevitable disruption it caused - this is why Thatcher got elected.

Militancy will only happen if people like us go into workplaces and make it happen.

The recent climb down by public sector unions in their fight with the government over pensions is yet another example of union bosses selling workers out. What can be done about this?

The trade union leaders did not want a strike ahead of the election for reasons I've already mentioned.

I don't want to be negative but I think the pensions strike is going to be a bit of a flop when it happens - in London at least. Young workers are more worried about their mortgages and kids than in their pensions.

Some older workers are protected from the pension changes. London UNISON officials were worried about whether the strike would be respected.

How relevant do you think anarcho-syndicalism is today given the current state of industrial relations in Britain? The real hope lies with the 'new working class' of recent immigrant workers. They have grievances revolving around the

way many of them are excluded from employment rights through casualisation. The only way casual workers can organise is through anarcho-syndicalist methods of ad hoc workers' assemblies and unofficial action. There is no way that cumbersome legalistic methods - ballots on union recognition, postal ballots on strikes and so on are going to work here. The SF is embarking on an anti-casualisation campaign but obviously such initiatives have to be wider than the SF.

SF members have been active in building examples of direct worker democracy and participation in a number of work places including on the underground. Can you describe some of this work and how effective it has been?

The Workmates Council was established among a workforce of track engineering workers on the underground. Council members are meant to act according to mandates given by the gangs that elect them. Workmates includes agency workers and permanent staff who are also union members.

Workmates was not 'set up' by the SF, it was the workers own initiative but obviously we do what we can to support it.

We have also organised among voluntary sector workers and porters. We agitate among local government workers. Now the SF has adopted its new industrial strategy it should be easier for us to propagate a coherent view of how we think people should organise at work.

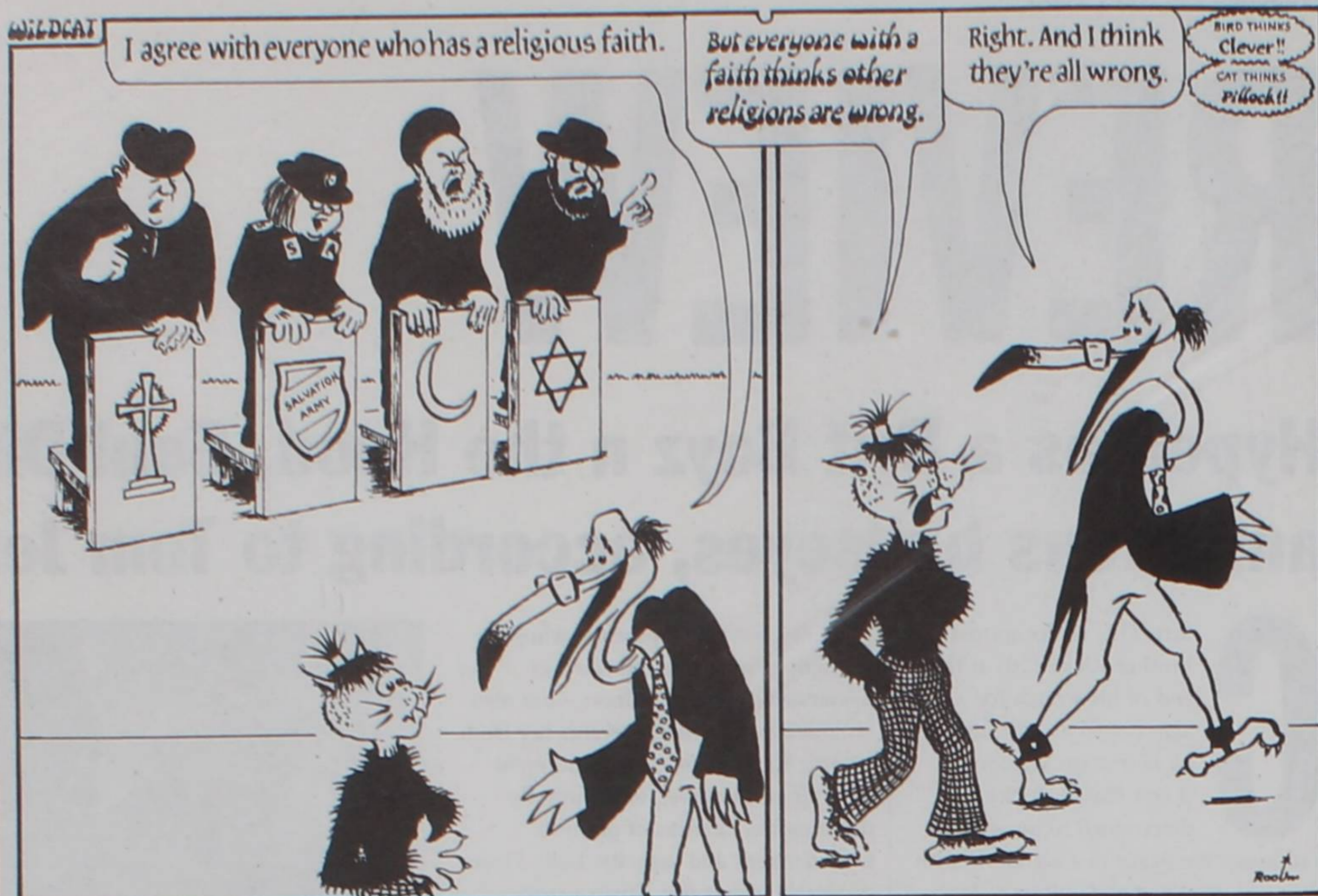
Some anarchists seem reluctant to devote time raising the profile of anarchism in the labour movement. Do you think this is right and if so why is this and what can be done about it?

Not everyone can do anything in their workplace. Not everyone does paid work. Anarcho-syndicalists aspire to create a social movement that takes in community struggles, unemployed struggles, childcare issues, issues to do with racism, sexuality, etc. It's not all about the workplace.

There is a bit of an ultra-left tendency in anarchism that rejects unions in favour of spontaneous workers' resistance. I'm sorry but if you want resistance at work people have to organise and this organisation is going to look very much like a union, even if you call it something else.

The best way to promote anarchism in the unions is to organise autonomously of their structures. We should not split the workforce by encouraging people to leave the unions in workplaces where they are recognised. However we don't want to get sucked into their way of doing things - standing slates of candidates for the National Executive Committees like the left do.

For info see www.solfed.org
To contact the Solidarity Federation you can call 07984 675281 (normal rates), email solfed@solfed.org.uk or write to them at PO Box 1681, London N8 7LE.



A Sideways Look

It's at least slightly reassuring that the Tories didn't increase their vote in the last election. Their increase in seats was mainly brought about by people who would otherwise have voted Labour switching to someone else or staying at home. Watching some of the results does always remind me that while there's little difference in policies between the parties, there is something viscerally unpleasant about the Tories.

They imported an advisor from Australia, a country which has been shamed by refugees sewing up their lips, asylum prisons in the desert (even for children) and a not in my backyard attitude to those desperate enough to risk getting there by boat. Even now some languish among the phosphate mines of Nauru, whose government has been paid to keep the problem out of sight and mind. Lynton Crosby first advised Australian Prime Minister John Howard in 1998 when he beat a slick Labor machine. He did so by raising the spectre of Australia being swamped by asylum seekers. Some were so desperate they would even throw their children overboard. He played the race card. Most of these stories were lies, but racism tends to flourish best when the facts are kept out of any argument. It's what works for the BNP, whose 'facts' about asylum seekers are a mixture of urban myth and hearsay. Of course, no one asked if Crosby was denying a British spin doctor a job - it seems some skills are important enough to go abroad for (lying, perhaps?) while others aren't.

Suddenly, Australia, the land that can't take any more despite being the emptiest continent north of Antarctica, needs more immigrants. It's increasing the number it takes on its skills-based programme to nearly 100,000 a year. The Australian public are reportedly

divided, with 46% objecting to an increase, but business interests say it isn't enough. They are afraid that labour shortages will stoke inflation.

One migrant who certainly doesn't agree with restrictions happens to own a large chunk of the media in both Britain and Australia. Rupert Murdoch's papers may take a hard line on these issues, but he's a businessman, which is why The Sun rejected Michael Howard's plans. Murdoch himself has been able to move from one country to another quite easily and moves his money even easier, ensuring he pays virtually no tax in any of the countries he operates in.

The fact that Howard's racism - and let's not pretend he can't be racist just because some of his friends are from an ethnic minority - only had a limited resonance is good. Immigration is a class issue, it's not as if there were protests when Arabs started coming here in the '70s to spend their oil money in Knightsbridge. Cheap labour that undercuts those at the bottom of the heap here will be seen as a threat, even if they're doing shit jobs that the locals won't. Capital, and indeed capitalists, can move around the world freely. Labour can't. Truly, there is one rule for them and another for the rest of us.

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Blast from the Past

Taken from Freedom of 23rd May 1964, in an article discussing Tory claims that Britain was 'classless':

The myth being fostered in this affluent society of ours is that class distinctions have largely disappeared and the class struggle is a thing of the past which only old-fashioned socialists and anarchists still talk about.

In the Sunday Times (18th May) we are invited to an 'At Home with the Morrisons after Devizes' which opens with the following comment:

"The Tories say that Charles Morrison's victory at the Devizes by-election shows that their progressive, forward-looking party can halt the trend to Labour. The Socialists are trying to dismiss it as a triumph for a reactionary Tory squirearchy in a county where that sort of thing still matters.

"In fact, the Morrison victory is just another Morrison victory. For decades the family has been practically running Wiltshire, its tentacles of wealth, power, position and prestige spreading out like a very grand chain store throughout the country."

The quiz

- Henry Kissinger said "the illegal we do immediately." What took a little longer?
- What made the Mexican anarchist paper move from Texas to Missouri in 1905?
- What was the predecessor of the Awareness League in Nigeria?
- What happened in Saigon in August 1945 when people rose up against the colonial order?

Answers on page 6

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