

FREEDOM

80P ANARCHIST NEWS AND VIEWS

www.freedompress.org.uk

23 JULY 2005

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SAY NO TO ID CARDS!

The end of June saw the Blair government's flagship ID Cards Bill get through its parliamentary stages with its majority cut from 67 to 31.

Only twenty Labour rebels lined up with Tory and Liberal Democrat MPs to vote against the bill's second reading.

The government is at pains to paint opposition purely in terms of cost, arguing that it will not be as expensive as critics claim and that the technology is viable and accurate. As we all know how well government IT schemes work and how they consistently come in well under budget, we have some cause for concern! In its defence, the government says that this is a manifesto commitment and they must proceed. Strange that this did not stop them introducing top-up tuition fees when the 2001 manifesto said the opposite.

As far as the civil liberties issue does, this is the key (although many people may sadly be more worried about the cost in price rather than the cost in freedom). The information commissioner, appointed by the government to report to Parliament on privacy issues, described the scheme as part of Britain's growing 'surveillance society'. He stressed that the information about individuals went far beyond the needs set out in the ID card legislation itself. "There can be little justification for retention of all such details in a central national identity register," he said. "The extensive personal information retained on the proposed national identity register and the requirement on individuals to keep notifying changes is excessive and disproportionate."

He argued that the government was planning to create an unnecessary data trail of when a card is checked against

the national identity register. This would show who checked it and when, so building up a picture of an individual's card use and a detailed picture from this of how they live their lives. He stressed that the "creation of this detailed data trail of individuals' activities is particularly worrying and cannot be viewed in isolation of other initiatives which serve to build a detailed picture of people's lives, such as CCTV surveillance (with automatic facial recognition), use of automatic number plate recognition recording vehicle movements for law enforcement and congestion charging, and the proposals to introduce satellite tracking of vehicles for road use charging."

Not only do they impinge on the liberties of the individual. They would not solve the problems they purport to (e.g., terrorism, ID cards did not stop the Madrid bomb). They would introduce whole new types of fraud. They would be costly to introduce and maintain. The claims that the system will be foolproof are utter nonsense. Errors will creep in. Given how annoying it is when there is an error in (say) your credit rating, imagine what will happen if your ID data is wrong or corrupted and you are stopped by the police. Who will they believe? Your insistence that the data is wrong, or the database? The creation of a national identity database makes us accountable to the state rather than the other way around as claimed in democratic and liberal theory.

The assumption behind support for ID cards seems to be that "If you are innocent you have nothing to fear." That has been applied to most forms of surveillance schemes, particularly CCTV



A motion passed by just three votes has given Basildon council officials the go-ahead to bulldoze homes at Dale Farm in Essex. The £3m tax-funded plan to expel the thousand-strong community is due to go ahead. The eviction deadline was midnight on 31st July, but eviction may have been temporarily delayed. It is thought the local school will close if the community is made to leave. No provision has been made for re-homing. Richard Sheridan, from the resident's committee, said: "For the first time, our children are in school, more than 200 of them, and our sick folk are getting the medical treatment they need. But this will all end and we will be living at the side of the road again." Dale Farm is looking for legal observers and volunteers to man a 'human shield' at the site. To help, call 01206 523528 or email ustiben.2@ntlworld.com

cameras. The logic of this slogan is deeply flawed and, unsurprisingly, always used by authoritarian governments when they introduce legislation to reduce our freedoms. It is easy to see why. Few, at the current moment, would use this

argument to justify turning your TV screens into CCTV cameras. Why not, if the innocent have nothing to fear? Hence the intuitive flaw in the logic.

This intuitive flaw points to the real issue, namely that it is the state which

determines which is unlawful and what is not. By giving the state more and more information, it presents it with more and more power to track and analyse its subjects. Any information

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PENSION SHORTFALL

Companies could be liable for a pension bill of £1 trillion, leading to costs well over the government's original estimates of £300m a year in contributions to keep its 'pensions lifeboat' afloat.

The Pension Protection Fund (PPF), which released the figures as part of its latest calculations on 12th July, said that the government's previous figures, based on estimates from December 2003, were outdated.

Under the current schemes, if a company goes bust, the government steps in to pay out workers' pensions via the PPF, which is funded by what amounts to insurance payments, from companies threatened by enormous holes in their pension schemes.

A trillion pounds represents the estimated maximum liability that the government would face if every British company with a final salary pension scheme collapsed at once – regarded as the benchmark for potential risk and thus for necessary company contributions.

In effect, the new figures mean that companies will be asked to pay substantially more to the PPF to guarantee their company pension funds are protected against collapse. BT for example would be forced to pay £21m a year.

The admission has led to condemnation

from the Confederation of Business Interests (CBI), who have demanded the payments be kept low, despite the weakness of the existing scheme, while other means to provide the money are found.

The PPF however is designed to counter the massive pensions deficit, which grew largely out of corporate and governmental raids on the funds around the turn of the century.

Companies were allowed to take pensions 'holidays' which led to severe underpayment, while Gordon Brown stung the sector for £5bn in taxes to tide over weak governmental finances.

This took place while the already acknowledged 'baby boomer' situation – that the UK's population is rapidly becoming unable to sustain itself as declining birthrates meet a mass retirement

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TERROR LAWS BEGIN

Proposals severely curtailing freedom of speech and civil liberties, as well as freedom of movement, are already being sketched out by the government.

An 'accelerated' process using the interparliamentary consensus on terrorism could see measures becoming law as early as December.

The proposals:

- A new offence of committing acts 'preparatory to terrorism' has been proposed, along with measures against those who 'condone the act of terror'.
- Anyone banned from the United States or EU countries would automatically be denied entry to the UK.
- Deportation of suspected terrorists to dangerous countries would be made legal.
- The police would have powers to arrest and detain anyone on suspicion of being a terrorist for up to three months.

But the effectiveness of 'arrest on suspicion' has been called into doubt, even if its effects on civil liberties haven't.

Authorities said that there was no official evidence to suggest the bombers had visited terrorist camps during their stay in Pakistan. As such the 7/7 bombers would not have been detained under the new laws.

Meanwhile the automatic banning of people marked by the USA has been thrown into sharp relief by the 'outing' of Tariq Ramadan as a terrorist sympathiser.

The press called for Ramadan to be banned, on the grounds he had been banned from the USA and France. In an interview he clarified that he condemned the bombers as anti-muslim, and he not only wasn't banned from France, he had an office there. The USA had banned him for saying he could understand why suicide bombers did it.

ISSN 0016-0504



Vol 66
No 14

Home and away

FREEDOM

Volume 66 Number 14

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

Angel Alley had to close temporarily as a result of the London bombings, but thankfully no-one was injured from the shop despite our proximity (the nearest tube station to here is Aldgate East, and we are a ten minute walk from London Liverpool Street). Thanks for bearing with us if you were unable to get into the building – we are now up and running again.

We are also, for the first time in a while, possibly going to be able to bring our next issue out within a fortnight of when it was supposed to be – no promises mind! This issue has been very much a catch-up one, but we've picked up on some interesting stories, not least finally getting our teeth into the treatment of the Manchester electricians' problems thanks to a summary by Brian Bamford.

Around the building not a lot has been going on, but the KFC (much to everyone's dismay) have put up their 'new and improved' damn great sign over the alley – despite objections to the Tower Hamlets planning department. And the papers complain about travellers...

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Next issue

Contributions are wanted for future Freedoms. The next issue will be dated 6th August and the last day to get your copy to us will be Friday 29th July (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!

Arrests roundup at G8

The G8 Legal Support Group report that hundreds have been arrested, amid fears that some were being mistreated. During the protests over 700 people were detained or arrested by the police, often overnight, and around 366 people have been arrested and charged. The courts have imposed draconian bail conditions, which not only prevented those arrested from continuing their protests against the G8 summit, but forced those not resident in Scotland to leave at an impossible speed, making the conditions impossible to comply with.

As a direct result of this tactic, some people were re-arrested for breach of bail. People unable to give an address in the UK have been remanded in prison, even though in all the cases we are aware of, none faces serious enough charges to result in a prison sentence



even if convicted. Amongst those remanded in custody was one person aged 16 and a woman with a child.

We have also received worrying reports of people being held for over four hours in Reliance security vans against regulations, and not being given sufficient food or water while in custody. For example one person reported that they were held in Sterling police station for ten hours and that they were verbally abused, the lights were switched on and off and no calls were made to solicitors or friends on his behalf. He was subsequently released without arrest or charge.

The police made widespread use and abuse of powers under Section 60 of the Criminal Justice & Public Order Act 1994. This section is supposed to be used to search for weapons. However it has been used as a blanket authority to stop and search in a manner designed simply to intimidate protesters. For example, everyone attending the protest at Dungavel Detention Centre was subject to a bag search. At the Hori-zone ecovillage in Stirling, the police at times searched everyone who came and went. At least two people have been charged with failing to submit to a search.

The police routinely demanded people's

names and addresses, without a clear legal right to such information and in a manner that seemed calculated to deter people from protesting. At times they also demanded to see identification despite the fact that there is no requirement to carry or produce identification in the UK. At least one person was arrested and faces trial for simply not giving their name and address.

Huge numbers of people were photographed and/or filmed just for participating in protests or because they were staying at a campsite, again a form of policing designed to intimidate.

The police also often placed protesters in cordons, the legality of which is still uncertain, detaining people for many hours. At the Hori-zone ecovillage in Stirling for long periods of time the police refused to let anyone leave. Legal Observers from the G8 Legal Support Group were also detained, preventing us from monitoring some of the protests. No legal justification was provided for this abuse of power.

The police also banned protests. They cancelled the G8 Alternatives demo at Gleneagles 'for reasons of public safety' and this led to coaches of protesters being held on a roundabout eleven miles



away from Auchterarder for an hour. Eventually the protest was allowed to go ahead.

On this and other days many protesters were arrested whilst travelling to protests and held for alleged conspiracy. At Waverley train station in Edinburgh people were prevented from holding a spontaneous protest against the ongoing 'war on terror'.

A number of protesters were injured by the police hitting out with batons. Most suffered head injuries. Many of the police on duty routinely covered up their identification numbers, making it impossible to identify them.

The public were prevented from attending some sheriff's courts, meaning that people had to face the court without support from friends. Apparently the reason was that there may be protests at Court, although there had been no

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LISTINGS

Every Sunday the Kebele Kafe from 6.30pm, 14 Robertson Road, Easton, Bristol. For info call 0117 9399469.
until 21st August Rebel Flowers, a photographic exhibition by Jess Hurd charting the rising resistance to neo-liberalism and war across the world, at The Foundry, 84-86 Great Eastern Street, London, EC2, free, for info call 07713151765 or see www.jesshurd.com
until 28th August Art Not Oil exhibition – art, music, film, sound, talk and more at Oxford House, Derbyshire Street, London E2, see www.artnotoil.org.uk
5th to 7th August Two-day round-the-clock fast and vigil to remember the victims of Iraq and to demand justice, held at Whitehall, opp. Downing Street, London, organised by Voices in the Wilderness, for info call 0845 458 2564 or see www.voicesuk.org
6th August London Anarchist Forum meeting, topic Ideologies and Typologies, a discussion led by Justin Hooper Jackson at the Autonomy Club, Freedom Press, 84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1, from 3pm-5pm, see www.eventsandissues.bravehost.com
7th August London Rising Tide film night and post-G8 action debrief, come along at 3pm to share your experiences of the G8 mobilisations, including the 8th July climate change day of action in Scotland and worldwide, then some food at 5pm before the film 'I Heart Huckabees' at 6pm, all welcome (whether or not you were in Scotland), free, at LARC, 62 Fieldgate Street, London E1, call 07708 794665 or see www.londonrisingtide.org.uk
7th to 8th August Remember and Resist, blockade AWE Aldermaston To remember the 60th anniversary of Hiroshima and Nagasaki and protest against building of next generation of nuclear weapons, for info call 07788 50 3761, see www.aldermaston.net or

www.blockthebuilders.org.uk
17th to 21st August Earth First! Summer Gathering in the Peak District, see www.earthfirstgathering.org.uk
1st to 10th September Vegan and vegetarian dolphin camp in Wales (not a place where vegan dolphins stay, but a chance to see dolphins!) contact cetaceadefenceuk@yahoo.co.uk
2nd to 4th September Off The Tracks Festival, Castle Donnington, call 01332 384518 or see www.offthetracks.co.uk
13th to 16th September Disarm DSEi arms fair at ExCeL Centre, London Docklands, contact 07817 652029, disarm@dsei.org or see www.dsei.org
22nd September World car-free day, see www.carbusters.org/wcfd
25th September Demonstration at Lakenheath, for info contact 01508 550446 or info@lakenheathaction.org
1st October Star Wars: an international activists conference, organised by Yorkshire CND, for more info see www.cndyorks.gn.apc.org
16th October International day of action against McDonald's, to mark World Food Day, call 020 7713 1269 or see www.mcsportlight.org
22nd October The 24th London Anarchist Bookfair moves to a bigger venue, where you can get the latest books, pamphlets, magazines, etc., plus meetings and discussions on all aspects of anarchist activity, which are open to all, as well as a professionally-run creche and hot food. The venue is the Resource Centre, 356 Holloway Road, London N7, from 10am to 6pm, see freespace.virgin.net/anarchist.bookfair/
23rd October Freedom to Protest conference in central London from 11am to 5pm, for more info see www.freedomtoprotest.org.uk
26th and 27th November BeyondTV International Festival, Swansea, see www.undercurrents.org/beyondtv

International
1st to 14th August Ekotopia alternative technologies festival in Moldova, for info see www.eyfa.org
18th to 21st July Towards Carfree Cities conference in Budapest, Hungary, see www.worldcarfree.net/conference
1st to 14th August Ekotopia alternative technologies festival in Moldova, more info at www.eyfa.org
2nd to 4th September Anarchist cultural event in Florence, for info email marcella.schmidr@unimib.it
27th September to 2nd October Peoples' Global Action conference in Haridwar, Uttaranchal, North India, see www.agp.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

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 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

News

BBC boss guilt

The director general of the BBC, Mark Thompson, has waived his £135,000 bonus for this year as it "wouldn't have seemed right." The rest of the board have declined to do so, and are taking bonuses of between £50,000 to £100,000 each.

Thompson won't be going hungry however. The director general earns £500,000 a year (his predecessor could only have managed £499,000 even with bonuses). The NUJ have urged his fellow directors to follow suit.

Rapid union decline

Membership has slumped heavily in the last year as Amicus, T&G and the GMB prepare to merge into a 2.3 million member 'superunion'. 177,000 people have rejected unionism, only in part due to extensive job losses in the traditionally unionised industrial sector, and changes to the way membership figures are calculated.

The fall, 2.3% of the total, has been particularly noticeable at Amicus, who have dropped below the one million mark to 930,000 members.

Unions are considering scrapping the annual TUC conference to free up funds for campaigning.

'Til death do us part

American soldiers based in Britain were banned from visiting London in the wake of the 7/7 bombings, in a truly magnificent display of US solidarity with the UK in the War Against Terror. A spokesperson said: "The security of our people is our top concern."

Soldiers have subsequently been allowed to visit the capital after complaints from Downing Street.

Inflated economy

Pressure on the Bank of England to lower interest rates have been dealt a blow this month as inflation climbs to its highest point in seven years.

High interest rates impact heavily on consumer spending due to massive levels of personal debt in the UK, keeping interest rates low. However, the depressive effect on spending slows down the economy as buying falters.

Rates have been rising for the past year to try and keep inflation low and levels of private debt from spiralling even further out of control. But as reported in the last issue of Freedom, indicators have shown a growing risk of recession as people stay away from the shops. Retailers and industry have repeatedly asked that interest rates be cut to stimulate spending. But with high inflation already a problem, the risk of an inflation crisis could be substantially increased by cutting rates.

BAT closure

The last British America Tobacco factory in Britain is to close in Southampton. 530 jobs will be lost as production is moved to Eastern Europe and the Far East, where operating costs are 50% cheaper. 450 research and supply roles will remain unaffected by the move.

BAT were the largest supplier in Southampton, and produced fifty million cigarettes a year at maximum capacity.

BNP 'sick'

A labour activist who led 1,000 people to safety on 7/7 was threatened by the BNP as he canvassed for the Becontree by-election. Jeff Porter was grabbed and asked if he 'wanted a slap'. His attackers were carrying leaflets with a picture of one of the tube bombings entitled 'Maybe now it's time to start listening to the BNP' and 'stop immigration'

Blacklist blackout

Manchester construction company accused of secret lockouts and blacklisting reports Brian Bamford

When reluctant witness, Daf director Michael Fahey, went into the witness box, he confirmed that Alan Swift, Carillion / Crown House project manager, had told him at a meeting on 9th May 2003 that "nobody from my site would be allowed onto the Crown Square Magistrates' Court site." Under oath in the witness box at the Manchester Employment Tribunal on 7th April, Mike Fahey declared: "Alan [Swift, the boss of Carillion's sub-company Crown House] told us ... that the claimants [the 11 electricians] were well known in the Manchester area as militants who had caused massive problems on other sites."

David Andrew Fahey, managing director of Daf Electrical Contractors, had confirmed this statement in the witness box earlier; he had been present when Alan Swift made his blackballing declaration against the Manchester electricians. Liz Keates of Carillion's Hiring Department was also at this meeting.

Of the same 9th May meeting, Dave Fahey said under oath: "Michael, John Fahey and me were called into a meeting at Crown Square Magistrates' Court site (CMMC) with Alan Swift (project manager Crown House executive) and Liz Keates (hire manager Carillion) and were told by them that under no circumstances would anybody who had protested outside the Piccadilly Gardens site be allowed onto the CMMC site." He also said Roger Furmudge of Amicus was present to "advise Carillion of how to get rid of the electricians."

Dave Fahey added that: "This directive had come from the Carillion project manager James Tiffany, who said the company could not afford any adverse



Finished, but Manchester Magistrates' Court stirred up a legal fight of its own

publicity or disruption to a tight building programme. At this point, they also refused to allow us to transfer labour from Piccadilly to CMMC."

Though the Employment Tribunal doesn't comment on this evidence – possibly because it was outside its remit – the case that Carillion was operating a blacklist against some Manchester electricians seems strong based on the statements of the Daf employers in the witness box.

No Smoking Gun?

It is almost impossible to produce a smoking gun in the hands of the bosses, when it comes to proving a blacklist exists on the building sites. And yet the case of Manchester electricians vs Daf

Electrical Contractors Ltd comes close, leaving us with a strong distinct smell of cordite.

Both Michael Fahey and David Andrew Fahey, directors of Daf Electrical, pointed their fingers at Carillion. Project manager James Tiffany of Carillion and Alan Swift of Crown House (a Carillion subsidiary company) both stand accused from the witness box of an English legal tribunal by employers acting under oath. Both Fahey brothers declared before god: "I promise to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth."

David Fahey said he told the Crown House Electrical (a sub-branch of Carillion) project manager Alan Swift, that "if we [Daf] were unable to transfer labour between sites this may cause us

financial difficulty due to redundancy costs and ... we would incur higher labour costs due to expenses, etc."

He was told the "position is not negotiable and, if necessary, Crown House would take the contract off us."

Dave Fahey said: "I have recently asked Alan Swift to confirm this in writing, but he has refused, as has Liz Keates of Carillion."

No smoking gun maybe! But nods and winks, and threats to take away contracts in this the wild-west world of Manchester's construction boom. All this, in this our 'world class city'.

Brian Bamford is editor of magazine Northern Voices, who have extensively covered the two-year dispute.

Hatfield execs 'not guilty'

Five executives alleged to be responsible for corporate manslaughter in the Hatfield train crash of 2000 have been found not guilty. The company itself, regarded as a person for the purposes of the law, was also found not guilty.

Four people died and 102 were injured in the crash, which occurred due to an unrepaired line maintained by troubled maintenance company Balfour Beattie. Despite evidence (reported in Freedom, 19th February) from workers that the executives had been warned nearly two years before about the faulty section of track, Justice Mackay instructed jurors "It is not open to you to convict any of the six defendants on charges of manslaughter."

During a track review in 1998 it was suggested by engineers that the line should have a 20mph limit imposed on it while urgent repairs were made. The suggested timescale was 36 hours.

Mackay declined to explain why he had come to the decision, which means the five executives will be tried only on charges of health and safety. He said: "I am not permitted to give reasons for

the decision. I must ask you to accept my ruling."

The five rail executives facing Health and Safety Act charges are Balfour Beattie Rail Maintenance Ltd's regional director Anthony Walker, 48, and their civil engineer Nicholas Jeffries, 50, Railtrack London North East zone managers Alistair Cook, 52, and Sean Fugill, 52, and Railtrack LNE track engineer Keith Lea, 55.

Prosecutors claimed that more than 200 defects had been found on the 43 miles of line from Kings Cross, but the line had been kept open despite the high risks.

- Balfour Beattie have admitted the charges of health and safety violations, but have denied several parts of the prosecution case.

Justice Mackay told jurors "You should not be influenced either way by this change of plea."

Richard Lissack QC, prosecuting, told the court: "We continue to maintain that in the totality of the indictment this company is guilty."

ID-clare war

The network Defy-ID has produced a guide of companies who stand to gain from the introduction of ID cards. Their list covers all the major corporations currently engaged in development or production of biometric testing systems, as well as household names such as BT, Siemens and Sun Microsystems.

The guide is only currently available online at website, but there are plans to publish a hardcopy in future.

A representative of Defy-ID said: "We've put together a list of companies who are likely to bid for the contract, with office locations. We did want to get funding to publish this on paper before the festival season, but ran out of time."

"Also, in discussion with potential funders, we realised it might be better to wait till the bidding process was underway, which may still be some time away."

Defy-ID is a network of local groups formed on a non-hierarchical basis, with what seems to be mainly anarchist backing. The spokesperson said: "From my experience of people I've met, I'd say there are a large number of people who

lean towards more anarchist/autonomous ways of doing things."

Associated actions have included have ranged from street theatre to disrupting the card's trial launch in Glasgow.

The group have been largely dormant over G8, but hope to organise another gathering in the autumn or winter to kick start more activities and actions.

The spokesperson praised No2ID's pledge launch, saying: "Just now, No2ID are doing a fine job with their pledge, and we support that process. We're in contact with No2ID and see the two organisations as being complementary – we hope we can continue to see a good working relationship between the two groups as I think we fulfil different roles."

- No2ID's pledge has reached the 10,000 person mark, though no money will be requested until the bill becomes law. The next milestone, according to Phil Booth, is to begin a campaign for one million in backing from people who aren't going to personally refuse the card (for more information on this, see www.pledgebank.com/resist)

News

Back the bid: Nuclear dump 2012

Plans by the Russian Duma to build international nuclear waste dumps have struck fear into environmentalists, reports Rob Ray

Russia could become a worldwide dumping ground for other countries' waste, if plans from the Kremlin are approved by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA).

The proposals made to the IAEA's nuclear summit in Moscow on 17th July include the establishment of a single facility for nuclear waste, to avoid the possibility of terrorist attacks on individual facilities.

Aleksandr Rumyantsev, head of the Russian Federal Nuclear Power Agency, said: "It is a good idea to have the facility in Russia, partly because of our space, and partly because we are the only country whose laws allow it to import [high grade] nuclear waste."

But environmentalist group Greenpeace have condemned the proposals, citing the Russian state's inability to properly deal with existing problems. Vladimir Chouprov, coordinator of Greenpeace Russia energy unit, said: "In Russia there are already tens of thousands of tons of radioactive waste from domestic nuclear power plants, military reactors and naval bases. All this waste is literally 'leaking' without proper control and physical security. We already have a burial ground nearby – the Chernobyl nuclear power plant. Tons of radioactive scrap metal, let alone polluted agricultural products, are sent to our country."

More than 200 nuclear experts, regulators and international organisations from 18 countries attended the summit, amid calls to beef up security in the wake of the London bombings, to hear Rumantsev's plan.

His presentation was heavily undermined however by revelations in May that Yevgeny Adamov, Russia's former

Atomic Energy minister, had been arrested in Switzerland and charged with diverting around \$9m from Russia's nuclear security funds.

Adamov has been one of the state's strongest advocates for the import of international nuclear waste to Russia since the early '90s. Notes from the Anti-Corruption Commission of the state Duma said: "The personnel policy of Mr Adamov as the Russian Atomic Energy Minister and structural changes he initiated ... are aimed at commercialisation of the Ministry and abuse of its structural divisions ... he also demonstrated a tendency to monopolistic management in his own interests."

The report, originally published in 2002, pointed to widespread corruption at the highest levels of Minatom, the state body responsible for the nuclear import project which Adamov also headed.

Vladimir said: "Greenpeace find the arrest not surprising. Another scandal with Adamov's participation reflects the state of the Russian nuclear complex."

The Russian dumping plan is a follow-up from an international scheme to site nine major waste facilities across the world – two in the USA, two in Europe, and five in Russia and the far east. The two most likely sites in Russia to receive the facilities are Zelengorsk, near Krasnoyarsk in southern Siberia, and Chelyabinsk, on the border of Kazakhstan, which is thought to be the most radioactive place on earth after a nuclear disaster there in 1956.

Greenpeace are demanding that the plans be scrapped and that safer alternatives be considered. Russians demonstrated outside throughout the



Nuke fluke – Chernobyl gave the lie to Adamov (inset)

summit. There has been massive support for the No campaign in Russia, which

filed a three million signature petition of protest with the Kremlin when it

passed the original law allowing waste imports.

Zapatistas out of hiding

Communique from the EZLN have announced the conclusion of their brief retreat into the mountains, as reported last issue. The Zapatista EZLN disappeared without warning last month, much to the surprise of the international community. It emerged later that the group were in discussions with their members and supporters over the way forward for the rebels.

The communique, published on the 13th July, stresses that the group will continue to pursue a peaceful course, but hints at a new plan to expand their circle of close alliances within Mexico, as well as outside it. A shake-up in the group's structure has produced a 'Sixth Committee', which will be solely dedicated to outreach projects, particularly concentrating over the next few months on co-ordinating with leftist, indigenous, and social organisations in Mexico working towards an agreed

public statement for 16th September.

Sub-commandante Marcos said in the communique: "What we want in the world is to tell all of those who are resisting and fighting in their own ways and in their own countries, that you are not alone, that we, the Zapatistas, even though we are very small, are supporting you, and we are going to look at how to help you in your struggles and to speak to you in order to learn, because what we have, in fact, learned is to learn."

Among the more eye-catching international initiatives announced was a move to send aid out to other South American and Western socialist and activist groups. They hope to send a truckload of maize and some petrol to Cuba, in response to sanctions placed by the US. They also want to send coffee to European activists, to help them earn some money for their struggles.

Marcos said: "In order to begin, we

are going to ask the Good Government Junta of La Realidad to loan their truck, which is called 'Chompiras', and which appears to hold eight tons, and we are going to fill it with maize and perhaps two 200 litre cans with oil or petrol, as they prefer, and we are going to deliver it to the Cuban Embassy in Mexico for them to send to the Cuban people as aid from the Zapatistas for their resistance against the North American blockade."

The Zapatistas originally came to public attention in 1993-94, when on New Year's Eve a force whose stated aims included the recognition of indigenous rights, and the confrontation of neo-liberal reform, invaded several local centres. Despite the government deploying the full army, the group has evaded retribution, and forced a withdrawal from the region of Mexican troops.

Rob Ray

President bombed Rainbow

The ex-head of the French foreign intelligence service has admitted that the Greenpeace ship Rainbow Warrior was bombed on the orders of president Mitterrand.

Admiral Pierre Lacoste asked the President to ratify an order from Defence Minister Charles Hernu to carry out the bombing. He wrote: "I asked if he was authorising me to execute the project of neutralisation. He gave me his agreement, stressing the importance that he attached to the nuclear tests. The authorisation was sufficiently explicit."

When the news broke that the bombing may have been a bungled French operation, he was barred from testifying in court.

The bombing, which took place on 10th July 1985, was designed to stop an intervention by the group at French nuclear tests in the Pacific. It comes on the twentieth anniversary of the

bombing, which killed Fernando Pereira, a freelance photographer, and crippled the ship.

£300,000 was assigned to the project, which involved high-ranking members of the French intelligence agency DGSE. Greenpeace received £8m in compensation, while the only two agents caught, Captain Prieur and Major Mafart, each served barely two years for the killing.

Greenpeace said: "Today, many of the events surrounding L'Affaire Greenpeace, the bombing of the Rainbow Warrior and 'Operation Satanic', remain unclear. So far no proper public inquiry into the bombing and the murder of Fernando Pereira has been held in France. New Zealand's police have been denied the opportunity to interview most of the DGSE agents responsible. The guilty have not been punished and justice has not been served."

Feature

A can of worms

Rob Ray reports on the devastation and horror surrounding Del Monte, America's biggest fruit giant

January 2006 will be a big month for a smiling guy in a white suit. The plucky fellow has every reason to say Yes to trade legislation he himself has helped organise which will finally break his great enemy. The man with the big grin is San Francisco based Richard G. Wolford, CEO of Del Monte since April 1997, and currently paid \$2.5m a year. His great enemy is the independent banana growers, protected by the EU so they can sell enough fruit to survive.

The trade legislation is a new enforcement of international law forcing Britain, along with other countries in the EU, to repeal a quota system which currently guarantees some independent growers a market for their goods – one of the few pieces of socially responsible legislation left on its books.

Instead, these will be replaced with temporarily cheaper bananas grown on massive plantations in Ecuador, Brazil and Guatemala. I say temporarily, because with no competition, Del Monte, along with fellow transnational food giants Chiquita and Dole,* will now have a near-total monopoly on production. Historically, this sort of control has led to price hikes every time.

Having destroyed these self-sufficient communities, deliberately consigning thousands of people to poverty, Wolford plans to replace them with Del Monte's own particular brand of production. It's not good news.

It's corporate policy mate

The company has a global turnover of \$3bn, of which \$592.9m is profit. They employ a grand total of 17,600 workers, of whom 9,800 are seasonal – paid only at picking time. They control over 15% of the global banana-growing market. To put that in perspective, the Australian Banana Growers' council has over two thousand members, and produces less than 1% of world output.

So Del Monte are not good for employment levels. This is because they run a few massive farms which remain understaffed. Rather than employ enough workers to manually keep crops healthy, they spray vast quantities of chemicals on their produce – known as 'dollar crops' in the trade.

The results of this policy, continued since the 1940s, are beginning to come to light in the communities where they started. Del Monte are currently being sued by various human rights groups and individuals for massive pollution of land, and for not protecting workers using highly dangerous pesticides.

In 1995 for example, they attempted to sell off land to the US government that they had rendered unusable through excessive pesticide use. The groundwater at Del Monte's pineapple plantation on O'ahu, Hawaii was found to be heavily

contaminated with dibromochloropropane (a carcinogen) and ethylene dibromide (a deadly poison used on rats). If successful, the sale would have meant the Hawaiian government was liable for the cost of the cleanup.

Heptachlor, a pesticide banned by the US in 1978 as one of the most hazardous chemicals to human health ever devised, was also routinely used, not just at O'ahu, but in Kenya, where in 1993 they imported 10,000 litres of the toxic compound as an insecticide for their pineapple fields. The company claim that they had no legal duty to stop using it before that time, and that their records of health and safety for the period were adequate, though they had no comprehensive training records for their employees.

Hundreds of their workers marched over the issue in 2000, over their working conditions, safety standards and sexual harassment from senior management, as highly dangerous chemicals were still being used. But it's not just contamination of land and the food we eat that is a problem. The few workers they do employ have been subjected to unsafe, poorly paid and inhuman conditions.

Workers' rites

In Costa Rica, health and safety is poor enough that babies are being born without feet, or hands. Infertility, skin diseases and illness is common amongst large sections of the population. Their stock of fish has crumbled, disease is spreading among the monoculture crops and wages have dropped since the multinationals took over to below minimum wage. Non-union workers are sometimes not even provided with face masks for crop-spraying, according to one source. Nicaraguan workers have successfully sued over the same conditions, so these are not isolated occurrences, they seem to be matter-of-fact policy.

The situation is set to get worse as the race to find ever-cheaper workforces continues, more unfettered than ever before. With a continued need to improve profit margins and a stagnant market for their goods, Del Monte, Dole and Chiquita are already outsourcing from unionised areas such as Guatemala to ultra-poor countries like – in the case of Del Monte – Northeast Brazil, which has no intention of letting unions improve living standards and operate at rates a third cheaper than countries like Ecuador, Guatemala or Colombia.

This has left governments of countries where unionisation has taken place desperately trying to lower their own citizens' living standards to compensate. In Nicaragua, unions have been kicked out of the plantations, and workers are being paid less than \$1.20 a day. In

Colombia, legislation has been passed making it illegal to pay banana workers more than double the minimum wage, after paramilitary death squads failed to break the unions or prevent them from raising living standards.

In Guatemala, the government have directly assaulted their own citizenry. In March 1998, Fresh Del Monte, who had been spun off from the parent company in 1994, illegally sacked workers trying to organise a union at two of their banana plantations. They then locked out the entire workforce from the sites, accused them of conducting an illegal strike and demanded the 'ringleaders' be arrested.

In May the government decided to support Fresh Del Monte. A judge ordered that workers be evicted, and by October of 1999, the union leaders had been allegedly forced to resign at gunpoint by up to 200 paramilitary terrorists, including the head of security for Fresh Del Monte's Guatemalan subsidiary. Nine hundred workers had been fired and the plantations had been rented out to independent producers.

It was only after an international solidarity campaign that the union was reinstated and the workers returned. In the meantime wages had dropped from \$300 per month plus benefits to \$180 a month without. Ecuador is the largest exporter of bananas in the world, 4.5 million tonnes representing more than twice the amount of their nearest rival. Del Monte take 13% of their total produce from the South American nation. Ecuador is notorious for the poor quality of its wages and human rights. Human Rights Watch have found evidence of widespread child labour on banana plantations and anti-union measures from the government. This has been enthusiastically supported by the international community and major supermarket chains such as ASDA, who continue to stock ever cheaper fruit in their stores, paid for by these attacks on living standards. In November 2002, the US awarded preferential trade agreements to Ecuador. In the two years since, child labour has continued, and in December last year, President Gutiérrez replaced the entire top judiciary with his own supporters.

Del Monte have said nothing. They are however looking at the possibility of moving to countries such as Cameroon with even worse human rights records, as it's cheaper.

But the US is safe ... surely

Del Monte state in their official US filings on pensions: "We sponsor non-contributory defined benefit pension plan, defined contribution plans, multi-employer plans and certain other unfunded retirement benefit plans. Retirees may also be eligible for



Dangerous – these banana growers have been working without any safety equipment

medical, dental and life insurance benefits if they meet certain age and service requirements at retirement."

Apparently, this largesse is limited. At home, the company is in trouble with the US government on several issues.

- They are currently in court for their failure to warn consumers about the presence of methylmercury, a compound that causes brain damage, in the company's canned tuna produce.
- They are being prosecuted for flouting clean air regulations at their Pittsburgh power station site.
- They are being sued for stock misrepresentation in their acquisition of the Heinz corporation in 2002.
- They are being sued for poor health and safety standards leading to workplace injury.

Del Monte are just one of three or four massive conglomerates operating in similar ways. All of the above examples have been copied, sometimes to the letter, by Dole (the majority holder of

Ecuador's banana plantations) and Chiquita.

Chiquita in particular deserve mention here because they were sued by their own stockholders in 1996 for, among other things: Bribing Colombian officials, routinely spraying toxic chemicals on unprotected workers in the field, employing paramilitaries to raze plantation villages to the ground, illegal rotation of workers around worksites to prevent unionisation and helping friendly companies to avoid tax.

This is an ongoing, worsening process, and the logical conclusion of giving limitless power to giant corporations with nothing to temper their profiteering. It is the 'bottom line' that profit comes before people, because without profit, there is no company, whereas people are ten a penny.

* All three companies joined forces to push the legislation through, and have close ties. For example, until 1997 Richard Wolford was a senior executive on the board of Dole.

Editorial

Anarchists know a lot of people who might be caught out by the forthcoming legislation on police powers and anti-terror measures. The terminology, which equates 'state' with 'people', is not new, and neither are the powers, though they are to be extended.

Because it's not like the police have weak powers now. They already have the right to search a house or baggage or personal luggage under the Terrorism Act. They also have the ability to remand someone without trial for short periods if they think they will be a threat. They have some of the most sophisticated tracking technology at the world at their disposal and an entire secret service whose main purpose is supposedly to support them with intelligence leading to proof-led arrests.

And these powers have already been misused. A BNP activist was caught handing on police information, peaceful protesters on everything from the arms trade to pensions have had their bags searched, cars ransacked, etc., innocent Muslims have been imprisoned and released later without a word of apology. The secret service have been tracking interesting phone calls and emails unofficially for years (they've even caught people by doing so).

The protests themselves are being curtailed, at least within spitting distance of Parliament, with a new exclusion zone denying spontaneous demonstration due to come into force on the 2nd August. There is due to be a protest about this starting the day before, for those of you with a spare Monday.

Despite the draconian measures already in place – which failed to increase our safety but noticeably curtailed our civil rights – we are going ahead and increasing them so that detention can become indefinite, and policemen who last month saw seven of their number suspended, sacked or imprisoned within a week on newsworthy grounds alone are getting those powers. Has nobody ever watched *The Shield*?

These new laws being touted won't make us safer, as they introduce no way of tracking down bombers, only of stopping them when caught. But if they are that close to finding these people anyway, with all the resources at their disposal, why the extra powers?

But the argument isn't to do with need, it's to do with perception. Inevitably, this will lead to the division of opinion into black and white 'either you're for national security and freedom or you aren't' terminology, with no possibility being open that the two are mutually exclusive despite centuries of evidence, both brown-shirted and red-coated, to the contrary.

The truth however, is that in any situation where a government feels it must give its muscle carte blanche to do whatever it takes to defend them (as opposed to the peoples' way of life), freedom is a commodity of the masses that will not survive.

We are seeing this already. The guns have come out, the flak jackets are on, the streets are patrolled by jumpy plain-clothes officers with the apparent right to kill anyone with a big coat and a foreign face. Those who condemn this random killing are condemned for being naive and against freedom.

Given the startling number of bus and tube shots reaching the media, and an increasing authoritarianism named freedom, it seems the great Orwellian spying machine, with its attendant new-speak is not just in gear, it is rushing headlong into factory production.

Commentary

Where's the crowd?

To the recent correspondence in Freedom about fan owned football clubs like AFC Wimbledon and Margate it is worth adding that this is not just happening in soccer. Rugby League Division Three team Bramley Community Club supported by Leeds City Credit Union and the Co-op is also owned by its fans. The club is active in their community and support political campaigns like Make Poverty History. They are also top of their league. Fans who donate to the club all have one vote regardless of how much money they invest.

Back to football last month nearly 4,000 fans, around a thousand from Manchester, saw AFC Wimbledon beat FC United of Manchester 1-0 in a pre-season friendly match. FCUM are, of course, the team set up by Man Utd fans disgruntled by the club's take over by Micheal Glazier.

If Colin Ward were ever to update his classic book *Anarchy in Action* he could easily include a chapter on how sports fans, angry with the way commercial interests are wrecking their game, are coming together and reclaiming their clubs, often with considerable success. Oh and good news about Margate – they have been given permission to build their ground!

Richard Griffin

Complaint

I have been an anarchist for almost forty years and a regular reader and contributor to Freedom for much of that time. Since leaving London I have subscribed, but won't be renewing in future.

Freedom has a historic responsibility to the movement to offer a forum for a range of libertarian views. Over the last few years Freedom has neglected and now abandoned that role.

Freedom let down Martin Gilbert and co. after commissioning a volume on anarchists in social work from him. Martin then went ahead and paid for publication himself and asked me to review the volume. I duly sent you a copy of the review at Christmas – it never appeared.

Freedom has descended into a metropolitan, pseudo-workerist, clique. The collective represents decreasing numbers of anarchists and, although clearly on the verge of collapse, is unwilling and unable to work with the wider movement. The paper is increasingly strident and decreasingly reflective.

I believe Freedom needs to devolve its editorial role to regional editors to reach out to the wider movement, but I

have no faith that you will do so.

Sadly I feel you consider yourself a revolutionary vanguard – despite Donald's cartoon there are anarchists in 'Cleckcheckmondsedge' and even Wales – perhaps it is time you looked beyond your clique for ideas and found out what we are up to in the real world of ordinary people.

Christopher Draper

Note from the editors:

Martin Gilbert's manuscript was originally intended for an issue of *The Raven* on social work, but sadly that publication folded before it could be used.

Having had a word with Chris Draper over the phone, we have had the missing review re-sent and it will appear in our next issue.

Labour shortages over the past few months have militated against punctuality and the kind of contact building/maintaining that would allow us to be a 'forum'. We are in the process of sorting this out, and have been joined by some new editorial staff who will begin work as of issue 6616.

We always welcome 'reflective' comment on our dedicated comment page, in features and reviews.

Live8 dislike

The conspiracy of the G8 is to dominate the world markets and rake in the profits irrespective of the suffering of the world's masses. Live 8 simply reinforces the consumerism that feeds the capitalist system.

A comrade, Scotland

Water tax

A private company providing a utility service can be regarded as a tax authority as long as the private company remains in a position of being a monopoly provider.

Until we have a position of free market competition and a position of two different companies providing alternative choice of provider the private water company will remain a tax authority.

CA

G8 prisoners

Two of the prisoners currently on remand after the G8 events would really appreciate your support, letters, information, etc. Please contact them at the addresses below:

- David Boudon 92018
HM Prison Barlinnie
Glasgow G33 2QX
- John Mackie 18769
HM Prison Edinburgh
33 Stenhouse Road
Edinburgh EH11 3LN

Pensions

page 1

from the 1940s-50s baby boom generation – was beginning to become a problem. Stockmarket fluctuations also accounted for substantial lost revenue.

As a result, a pensions 'black hole' has opened, in both corporate and governmental finances, threatening the pension prospects of hundreds of thousands of people. It is thought the current shortfall amounts to £57bn a year in real terms.

The PPF is one of two major efforts being made to make companies undo some of the damage done by those actions. The other is increasing their obligatory pension contributions – proceeds of which have doubled from £32bn to £64bn.

It is hoped though that the majority of the remaining shortfall will be made up for by increasing the retirement age for public sector workers and changing the law to encourage companies to take on pensioners – in short, by penalising workers who had nothing to do with creating the problem.

A new pensions bill will also come into force in April 2006, which is supposedly designed to directly benefit pensioners by streamlining tax and pension methods. But new research from Databank has suggested that while the bill will save up to £2bn for wealthy landowners, the impoverished will receive little.

ID cards

page 1

held by the state places boundaries on the future actions of people. If you wish to protest against a future law or state policy, the fact that the state has your details on file may make some afraid of protesting. If a proposed law makes some previous legal act illegal, the ID card can be used to track down and arrest those who previously had 'nothing to fear'. Giving the state this power is like giving matches to an arsonist and making him promise to be a good little boy.

The rationales for ID cards have been plentiful – fighting terrorism, benefit fraud, identity theft, illegal immigration, whatever. A bit like the invasion of Iraq, then, when excuse after excuse was used to justify the war. This suggests that their introduction is favoured by important sections of the ruling elite. The need is felt and the facts are being fixed (to coin a phrase) appropriately.

Some may accuse New Labour of being opportunistic and inconsistent. They are wrong. There is a pattern to New Labour – they support and introduce in government that which they opposed when out of it. The last time ID cards were seriously debated in parliament, Labour MPs opposed them. Blair himself opposed ID cards when the Tories proposed them in the early 1990s, writing that "Instead of wasting hundreds of millions of pounds on compulsory ID cards as the Tory right demand, let that money provide thousands more police officers on the beat" (*New Britain: My vision of a young country*, page 68). How things have changed – and on so many other issues too.

The obvious thing to note is that most of the flip-flopping has resulted in New Labour implementing the same kind of programmes as the Tories did. It cannot be a coincidence that a different set of politicians presiding over the same state bureaucracy and corporate structure have implemented similar programmes (admittedly, the rhetoric has changed – slightly). As predicted by anarchist theory, the government may be in office but it is not in power. Real power lies in big business and the upper reaches of

the state machine, not in parliament, and, consequently, New Labour has adjusted to the realities of the situation. What is significant is how much the party apparatchiks have embraced the perspective of the real masters and their current neo-liberal position.

As always, we cannot rely on politicians to act for us. For example, after the vote, the leftwing Campaign group of Labour MPs said it would work with ministers to produce "a scheme which is acceptable to all." In order to stop ID cards we must rely on ourselves and our own power. We need to organise a mass protest movement which convinces our rulers that the costs of introducing them will outweigh the benefits. That means direct action, not just symbolic protests and marches. It means direct action, the organising a mass refusal to provide information or pay for the cards. If this can be done, then ID cards could really be Blair's poll tax.

We suggest that readers take a look at www.defy-id.org.uk

G8 arrests

page 2

actual protests, just groups of concerned friends. This flies in the face of the long established legal right to an open hearing in court.

Finally we note that this was the largest policing operation ever seen in the UK. The state was clearly prepared to devote unlimited resources to the policing operation, all with the sole aim of preventing the leaders of the G8 of being aware of the popular discontent with their policies and the effect of those policies on the vast majority of the world's population.

The cumulative effect of these police measures was an unprecedented erosion of civil and human rights and a further attack on the right of people to publicly demonstrate. The police appeared to police the protests against the G8 on the basis that they were not at all times bound to comply with the law of the land and sought to prevent challenge to their actions by seeking to conceal their identity by coving up ID and failing (even when asked specifically) to give legitimate reasons and legal powers to justify their actions.

For these reasons we unreservedly condemn the policing of the protests at the G8 summit in Scotland in July 2005.

G8 Legal Support Group

Updates will continue to appear on the G8 Legal Support Group website at www.g8legalsupport.info Email g8legalsupport@riseup.net if you have any information which could be valuable, the G8 Legal Support Group urgently needs to hear from witnesses to arrests.

Quiz answers

1. Sony, who as one of the biggest record companies in the world are going after American teenagers and their parents for internet file sharing. In the '80s, Sony were sued because they manufactured video recorders. They got off.
2. Helen Keller, who was once a member of the IWW.
3. Audrey Hepburn. Her father was an Anglo-Irish member of the BUF who abandoned his family in the '30s. Her mother was Dutch and soon lost her fascist sympathies once the Nazis invaded.
4. It is recycled bath or shower water and laundry rinsing water and using it for other functions would be very useful in drought-ridden areas of Britain. Mind you, it would require some investment and might eat into water companies profits, so expect more hosepipe bans and exhortations to share a bath.

ZAPATA OF MEXICO

by PETER E. NEWELL

Zapata was the leading figure of the Mexican Revolution of 1910. He fought for the rights of local communities against greedy landlords, treacherous politicians and foreign-owned companies. Under the slogan 'Land and Liberty!' he became the purest embodiment of the Mexican Revolution. Zapata's memory, like his ghost, rides on in Mexico.

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REVIEW

The Gerbil's Guide to the Galaxy by Sally Madge – it's both art and the ultimate in recycling, finds Tom Jennings

Who thinks post modern art is so much smug pretentious vacuous wank? Not always. Here, in *The Gerbil's Guide to the Galaxy*,¹ a pet gerbil enthusiastically munched its way through *The New Illustrated Universal Reference Book* – recycling via its physical labour the arrogant presumption that collections of information can encompass history and teach anything worth knowing.

Who controls what goes in; what's left out; how it's presented and used? This rodent representative of the teeming masses followed its own universal agenda to keep warm, comfortable and secure – with no respect for the supposed wisdom and disciplining power dispensed by elites.

Rodent's Eye View

Unfortunately far too many exponents of contemporary artistic practice prefer to pose in the safety of their self-important cliques, venturing out only occasionally to lick the recuperative arses of art's institutional markets.

However, its unique capacity to condense, explore and encapsulate ideas and feelings means that art can critique the intersections of life, culture and

politics in such a way as to intrigue and affect us – rather than bludgeoning us with the preachy self-satisfied ideological bullying that politicians are occasionally (!) guilty of.

In this case the deployment of ironic reflexivity also illustrates an understanding that aesthetic manipulation (as in other kinds) always entails a rhetoric of power. So, as a 'pet', the gerbil has no ultimate control over the contours of its lifeworld. Instead these are provided by an apparently omnipotent superior agency claiming to be well-meaning but serving its own interest ... remind you of anything?

Footnoting the artist's marvellous *Underdog*,² this exemplary and humble bookwork straddles and references conceptual art and popular culture with more biting political pertinence than Douglas Adams' middle class dressing-gowned slacker tourist Arthur Dent ever dreamt. Beautiful. Go gerbil!

1. The gerbil gets a second bite at the cherry throughout July when the exhibit resumes at the Waygood Gallery, High Bridge Street, Newcastle.

2. A 1999 video installation remake, with Sam Hooper soundtrack, of Luis Bunuel and Salvador Dali's classic surrealist film *Un Chien Andalou*



GENES AND JAZZ

Gene genes

A fascinating presentation and debate around genetic modification was held on 2nd April at the CCA, Glasgow in the midst of the collectively self-controlled chaos of the RISK art exhibition. Present was Carey Coombs from the Soil Association lambasting the patently despicable multinational copyrighting of genetic material (thus outlawing farming mutual aid such as seed sharing).

Susan Bardocz and Arpad Pusztai – sacked in 1998 from the Rowett Institute, Aberdeen, for speaking publicly about findings of damaged growth and immune systems in rats fed GM food – on the political restrictions imposed on researchers featured as well.

Also detailed was the arrest and prosecution of CAE's (Critical Art Ensemble) Steven Kurtz for possession of harmless common bacteria and an

over-the-counter device altered to detect the presence of GMified cells.

His emergency phone call (after his wife had just died) – was answered by a SWAT team who confiscated his gear (and her body). The Fed retreated from their trumped-up bioterrorism charges to mail and wire fraud (maximum twenty-year stretch). You couldn't make it up ... At least the CAE support campaign has heightened awareness of anti-terrorism laws used to harass artists and restrict public discourse.¹

The CCA debate – with CAE's Free Range Grain banners in the background – started from the best ultra-scientific guesses (little meaningful research having been commissioned) on likely effects of GM.

These included growth promoters accelerating cancer progression; antibiotic resistance and allergies mushrooming; interrupting the sequence of gene functioning causing multiple and catastrophic organ and developmental failure, among others.

This is all bewilderingly complex as science, let alone common sense; but genetic control basically operates by switching key chemical processes on and off – which are usually implicated in many bodily processes simultaneously, not just the one you're modifying (a far cry from the triumphalist one-gene one-cure balderdash peddled by education, the media, and corporate interests).

A heartening variety of tactics for contestation and levels of attack were then illustrated, including those mobilising the artistic and cultural – rather than

merely the traditional agitational – imagination. We need these things in our (political) lives.

In general the RISK programme has offered immense free-range food for thought – not least on artistic activity itself away from the usual snooty careerist middle class networks. Likewise, government definitions of the role of arts in 'social inclusion' never engage with the real politics of power.

This project manages to do that, and more, in the realms of direct action, protest and political change – with some success in terms of genuine participation.

Regrettably though, when it comes to science, the development of fully-rounded grass-roots mobilisation is often hamstrung by entire schools of red herrings (e.g. rationalism vs. mysticism or primitivism, as in recent debate in Freedom).

And, fair enough, some folks are partial to herrings. But if rationality can only solve problems when its limits are acknowledged,² then letting elites decide what those limits are will be suicidal politically (maybe even literally). And if creativity and passion are just as important as brains, credit goes to RISK for getting to grips with all such good stuff. Some wisdom just can't be put back in the bottle.

Tom Jennings

1. Also a convenient excuse for blind sweeps on poor inner city neighbourhoods, deporting tens of thousands of immigrants and refugees (terrorists found = 0), see, e.g. Alisa Solomon, *The War on Immigrants*, Mute 29, pp. 8-9, 2005.

2. See Mike Michael's excellent *The Power-Persuasion-Identity Nexus: Anarchism and Actor Networks*, *Anarchist Studies*, Vol. 2, No. 1, pp.25-42, 1994.

High class music in low class places

There are places, where in the small hours guitars play eccentric chords, cymbals crash, strings are plucked and the shining horns come out of their cases.

Such a place is Uncle Sam's. Jazz is the most accessible of the arts. That's why a dump in the Kingsland road selling rotten beer hosts the London jam session on a Sunday night.

And to its doors a diverse crew have beaten a path including some of the world's best musicians.

Coleman Hawkins summed up this tradition very well when he said "When I'm in town I look for the best musicians." He might have added he found them too. The Hawk would have been at home in Uncle Sam's, the music and the venue come from a long tradition.

Uncle Sam's is also an unofficial Academy of Jazz. Most young musicians in London know Uncle Sam's and many have played here. Students anxiously finger their horns waiting for that moment of truth.

More in the audience shout and scream encouragement to the band, clapping and stamping their feet. Some in the audience move in strange dance routines, all kinds of bizarre behaviour is on view in a cacophony of sweat noise and adrenaline.

Even by Dalston standards, the audience is international. A Martian

with two heads and six arms could walk in here at two in the morning and no-one would bat an eyelid, although you might think 'fuck' buying him a drink. All are here for the music and the sounds are always good and sometimes unforgettable.

In keeping with its low class status in the East End, this place is cheap – £3 buys you three beers and a Jazz concert. For anyone who does not like Jazz to be here must be torture. But if you do dig the groove then Uncle Sam's is on the agenda: Only stick to the bottles and don't go early... Round midnight... Uncle Sam's is on the corner of Kingsland Road and Richmond Road. Jazz is on Sunday night.

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www.safetycat.org/56a/

ARISE?

Freedom readers who felt that the whole RESPECT Coalition fiasco was just an unfortunate but thankfully unique occurrence might be in for a distressing (but slightly comical) surprise in the coming months, as Britain's Trotskyists get into the swing of founding disparate coalitions under the banner of increasingly ridiculous acronyms.

According to scurrilous online rumour mill the UK Left Network, the fall-out from the dying Socialist Alliance just keeps on coming. First there was the determination from non-Swappie activists in the SA not to let it go just because Britain's most popular Leninists had another project/individual's ego to get involved with and the founding of the Socialist Alliance Democracy Platform (SADP - still in the sane acronym ball park we feel).

When that was wound up and the SADP had got bored with claiming it still existed they founded a new organisation - the Provisional Socialist Alliance or the SA(P) - complete with brackets (careful now) and slight allusion to physical force Irish Republicanism. The latest (according to the ever reliable folk on Britain's bitchiest left list) step is yet to come.

As yet an unconfirmed rumour, the SA(P) has threatened to change it's name to; ARISE, the Alliance for Republicanism, Internationalism, Socialism and Environmentalism - a whole new league of contrived acronymism.

Freedom presumes this will have the subheading 'The Party for Starvelings and Prisoners of Want' and hopes that the habit of Trotskyists falling out over international policy doesn't make the third letter impossible to maintain... [eds: Thank you to all and sundry for the 'arse' - joke, I couldn't have done it without you].

In other acronym news, Freedom would like to welcome a new organisation to the Libertarian Communist family - the Colchester Solidarity Group-(For Libertarian Socialism), sporting the frankly death-defying anacronym CSG-(FLS!). Colchester will never be the same again...

[The weird and wacky world of leftist/anarchist acronyms. Is this era the first where they've been used so, er, creatively? Was there a WOMBLES of the '60s, a CIRCA of the '70s, or is this genuinely a new dawn of people using any old excuse to name themselves via capital letters? We'd love to hear from you - editors]

1,800,000

The number of Muslims in the UK.

3

The number of living suicide bombers in the UK.

269

The number of racist incidents in the last month (seven times last year's total).

Imagine If...

PC Huggle pulled his visor in front of his face, and tried to look mean. It was hard. He'd never expected when he'd joined Oxdown police force that he'd be called up to do anything violent.

He'd been quite happy driving around his beat, watching his gently expanding waistline to see if it could touch the steering wheel before the last of his comb-over fell out.

Yet now he was going to be up against the terrifying 'Black Bloc' (he'd watched training videos of them, and of police charges muscally overlaid with Wagner's 'Ride of the Valkeries', and it looked horrible).

He'd be with the Met - the root'nest, too'tnest coppers in the west - attempting to stop the 'black-clad eruption of hate' (his CO's words) from trashing any McDonalds. There were also rumours of an even more mysterious and deadly foe, the Clandestine Insurgent Rebel Clown Army.

Huggle shivered. He'd always thought clowns were out to get him as a child, and he'd had to look up what Circa meant.

"I'm gonna bag me a hippy!" One of them said as the van pulled up at their destination. Huggle struggled with this, he'd always thought the rule of law was supposed to be about defending the people rather than a competition to see how many they could beat senseless.

With him, there would have been a tactic of non-violent control and restraint, but perhaps that was why he was normally a rural cop, as opposed to a Met veteran.

The doors were flung open onto a scene of chaos, with bins flying and clowns (argh) everywhere. One of his fellows shouted "It's just like the beaches of Normandy lads!"

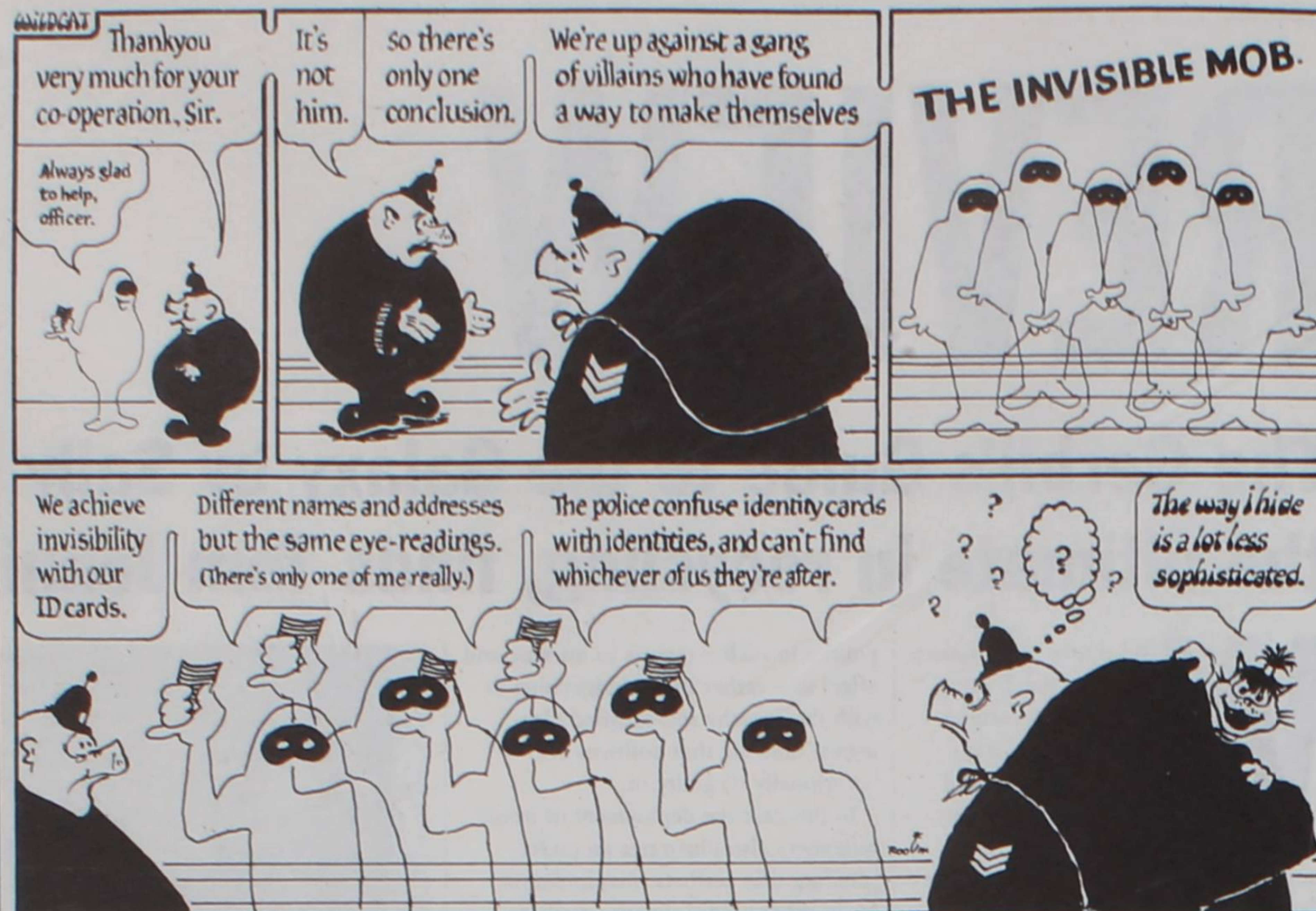
Truncheons were drawn, lines quickly formed, and Huggle stared into the wild eyes of his anti-capitalist foe. One of them, with a big green smile planted a kiss on his neighbour's shield and he could feel the righteous anger rise up. How dare they!



The quiz

1. Which company who are now suing for internet piracy was once sued for piracy itself?
2. Which American deaf-blind woman has had several films made of her life, but none of which cover her political and social activism?
3. Which Hollywood star had a father who was a Mosleyite fascist and ran messages for the resistance as a schoolgirl in occupied Holland?
4. What is grey water?

Answers on page 6



A Sideways Look

Anyone who passed through Lewisham on a train in May or June will have seen an estate start to be demolished. Three four-storey maisonette blocks and a handful of houses on the Sundermead estate are, as I write, piles of rubble. If you're close enough to read the signs, you'll see Lewisham Council and the Housing Corporation announce that they are building over two hundred new homes that 'people want to live in'. The implication is clear - people didn't want to live in the homes that are now rubble and they must have had something wrong with them.

Some of the new homes have been built already and people are living in them. Some were even a form of self-build, as the tenants learned skills and helped build them. They are in the current fashion, of houses laid out with small blocks at either end of the development, with the single pitched metal roofs that are so modish these days. Of course, they aren't council properties, so the rent will be higher. And presumably the tenancy agreements will contain all sorts of draconian penalties for playing music too loud or being visited by youths wearing hooded tops. But they are new homes and that in itself is fairly desirable.

However, what none of the roadside PR next to the doomed estate tells us is that nearly two hundred homes will be demolished. This was such an unpopular estate that any flat that was vacated never stayed empty for long and more than half the homes in the maisonette blocks had been sold under the right to buy. Many had passed through several owners, before the council bought them back at market rates. (To work that one out - assume 75 sold at £150,000 each and there's

not a lot of change from £12 million - just to buy the places back!) The ground floor maisonettes had gardens and because they were built in the late '60s the size of the rooms was pretty spacious. However, the estate was also next door to Lewisham shopping centre and the station, which was to be its downfall.

Once the Docklands Light Railway came to Lewisham, the value of the land next to the station shot up. It could be used for so much more. Other estates in greater need were passed over, I'm told, because the government was only willing to spend the money near the town centre. Now if I was sitting in an unimproved flat wondering why repairs took so long, I might be a little miffed to find that a perfectly good estate had been demolished while mine rotted around me. Still, it hits the government's targets of reducing council housing. If you can't get tenants to agree to privatisation, you can always tell them there's something wrong and their homes must go.

When more of the estate is cleared, it's due to be the site of Lewisham's new swimming pool, to replace the one that's only recently re-opened after refurbishment and the council want to demolish to build a new school. But that's another, crazier story I've been through before.

And the developers are laughing all the way to the bank.

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Blast from the Past

Earth is our spaceship - big events don't equal great ones, from Freedom 26th July 1969:

Although the arrival of men on the surface of the moon is a great scientific achievement, the insistence of the press and other organs of publicity upon its greatness only makes one want to belittle it.

Certainly the history of exploration since 1500, mostly carried out by Europeans, has been a grisly record of cruelty, greed and intolerance. So one is not inspired with joy to learn that the Americans have been able to put men on the Earth's satellite.

The enthusiasm of the mass media is intended to distract your attention from the problems around you on your own planet. It is rather like the investiture of Prince Charles - a 'squares' demonstration.

In fact this is a pity, because, whatever the motives behind it, it is a remarkable achievement. Exploration itself is not an authoritarian activity. The baby begins by exploring his immediate environment, and as he grows older he explores his range. It is usually authority which tries to restrict exploration and research.

Authority only encourages it when it feels there is an immediate and substantial gain to be made. In the case of space exploration there can be no doubt that the search for minerals and the desire for military bases are the main motives.

Added to these is the desire for prestige. And of course the contractors and manufacturers are making fortunes.

An anarchist society would explore space for reasons of scientific curiosity. No doubt there would also be the need for minerals, but not as part of competitive capitalism.

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FREEDOM fortnightly ISSN 0016 0504