

FREEDOM

80P ANARCHIST NEWS AND VIEWS

www.freedompress.org.uk

15 OCTOBER 2005

INSIDE ►►

Beware blue shirts
page 3

Iraq pic
page 5

Wolfgang's war
page 6

Guerrilla!
page 7

STOP AND SEARCH

Three months after the July London tube bombings, stop and search tactics specifically targeting minority groups have led to continual harassment.

Following the raising of the British Transport Police's alert status in July, racial profiling has continued to be used to identify suspects for stop and search.

Increases in funding for the transport police – which received a boost of £2.6m this year, a provisional £12.4m hike for 2006, and could see further rises of £9.9m and £7.4m in the following two years – have led to a larger and more aggressive police presence.

Over the last few months over 100 new police have been patrolling stations around the country, as part of the transport police's new official policy of "visible front line policing".

Robert Allen, a long-time Irish activist who commutes regularly in Britain, has been observing the behaviour of transport police on his route. He said: "It was the railway clerk who explained, 'If you're wondering what is happening,' she said, 'it's the Immigration Service.'"

The station concourse was occupied with various smartly suited people engaged in one-on-one conversations with various non-whites, that was obvious."

Ticket checkers blocked the way in and out of the platforms and anyone who fitted the profile was being stopped. There were at least three British Transport Police hanging around in support."

It was disturbing because it was all acted out as if this was part of everyday life, and my first reaction was that it was a breach of human rights. The men from UK Immigration were tall and strong types and those who were being stopped looked in need of a meal. All that was missing from the whole scene was the jackboots, guns and SS emblems."

The transport police's official policy states: "Police supervisors must ensure that officers make maximum use of Section 44 of the Terrorism Act 2000 search powers in a targeted approach against individuals who match the target profile which is males, aged between 18-30 years, who may be of any racial background. "It should be noted however, that recent suspects have included individuals of Asian, West Indian and East African origin, some of whom have British Nationality."

All stop and searches are now entered into a national database as part of Operation Thames, an intelligence-led initiative designed to curb not just terror but which also affects direct action.

Operation Thames has already been linked to the case of Sarah Gisbourne, an animal rights activist jailed in March this year for five counts of criminal damage in Surrey, Cambridgeshire and Hampshire.

The transport police were also criticised over their role in the G8 and DSEi protests in recent months, where stop and search, as well as detention, were widely used against protesters.



At Kings Cross, up to 400 G8 travellers were placed under close observation, with the effect, in one reporter's eyes, of 'criminalising' the entire process.

At DSEi, last month, hundreds of people were searched during the four-day event under anti-terrorism legislation.

Even more recently, it was found that police profiling means anyone who wears a rucksack or looks nervous while wearing

out of season clothing was also a target.

Even more recently, David Mey, who was stopped at Southwark tube station for wearing an 'unseasonal' coat with a rucksack, had his home searched and his computers confiscated, despite police finding nothing in his bag when they searched it.

Mey who had been sitting quietly on the underground, was arrested for

causing a public nuisance, cuffed, and held for nine hours. His girlfriend was in the flat when it was raided at 1.30 in the morning, without warning.

Despite repeated requests, no-one from the British Transport Police was available for comment on their actions regarding profiling and continued use of frontline personnel to stop and search potential suspects.

CONVICTED OF PROTEST

A judge has found six people in Lancaster guilty of trespass. The six students at the university, attended a 'corporate venturing' conference in the George Fox building on campus last year to attack the privatisation and commercialisation of university research. They were quickly evicted from the hall where the meeting was taking place after protesting over military and GM companies' involvement in the process.

Although told by police that there would be no further charges, senior officials at the university hired a team of specialist lawyers to prosecute. Officials at the university said they would not tolerate "criminal" or "intimidating" behaviour.

The trial, which ran from 26th to 30th September, was originally brought on the grounds that the protesters intimidated the meeting – a charge that could have carried a prison sentence.

The charge was subsequently thrown out by District Judge Peter Ward, who said they were no more than a "nuisance". However the charge that they disrupted the meeting and were committing trespass was upheld.

The students, who were shown in video footage to be attempting to address the conference and hand out leaflets before being bundled out of the room, were fined £300 each. They intend to appeal.

The trial has outraged the international academic community, leading to complaints from over 600 academics calling on university vice-chancellor Paul Wellings to drop the charges.

Wellings said in a letter to staff: "I felt that the actions of the protesters went beyond what would normally be accepted as peaceful protest on campus and referred the matter to the police. Historically we have a strong commitment to peaceful

protest and we continue to permit such protests including others by these protesters themselves in Alexandra Square."

The protesters disagree. One said: "I came to Lancaster University because of its reputation for free thinking. It has a duty to allow and even facilitate the expression of views opposing unethical companies and the university's involvement with them. It is wrong, and in the long term counterproductive, for an academic institution to ignore such concerns, let alone to prosecute those who raise them."

In a statement after the trial, the group said: "We remain proud of what we did and we still believe that the moral victory is ours."

Larry, who is helping to organise a series of debates and protests planned to follow up the trial, said: "Nothing is set yet but we're hoping to get a debate going with academics all over the world over the impact of the corporate attitude to universities as the new hub of industry."

The most recent event saw students protesting at the George Fox building on 15th October.

ROSSPORT FIVE FREE

Micheál Ó Seighin, Willie Corduff, Brendan Philbin, and brothers Vincent and Philip McGrath – the RosSPORT Five – arrived home in Mayo in the early hours of Sunday, 2nd October, and then returned to Dublin to deliver another defiant message to Shell.

The five men spent 94 days in Cloverhill Jail for refusing to allow Shell onto their land after being told to by the courts.

Following three months of continuous protest, on 30th September, Shell applied to have the injunction lifted, and the High Court agreed. At 2pm the men appeared before Justice Joseph Finnegan, and by three the news had spread that the men were free.

Their immediate response was to tell Shell that they would continue to fight.

"We remind Shell and their Irish government partner that imprisonments have historically and will always fail as a method to secure the agreement of Irish people.

"We the RosSPORT Five would like to thank our neighbours, friends and fellow Irish citizens for the loving support we

and our families have received during these 94 traumatic days.

"We now call on our supporters to intensify the campaign for the safety of our community and families. The campaign has now begun in earnest."

On the 1st October outside the Dail (Irish parliament buildings) and, cheered on by hundreds of supporters, the five men said the fight against Shell was still on.

Ó Seighin told the crowd: "Without the backing and support of so many people we would still be in Cloverhill jail. I was going to say languishing but obviously from the appearance of us we weren't doing too much languishing. Today I am proud, I am very proud to be Irish, it is great to get pride back again.

The men will return at the end of October to the High Court, which will rule on whether they need to be punished for contempt of court, and for ignoring an injunction not to interfere with Shell's construction work.

On 2nd October the men returned to Dublin for a benefit concert, where the message to defy Shell was heard again.

ISSN 0016-0504



Vol 66
No 20

Home and away

Rail cuts step up

Government plans to cut subsidies to the railways by £1.5 billion annually have seen the first closures among an estimated 300 stations destined for removal.

A long-term plan to destroy much of the rural line network across Britain, reported in Freedom earlier this year, has begun with the closure of Etruria Station in Stoke-on-Trent.

It is due to continue with the loss of some long-distance services next year, including the London to Cardiff line, before a dramatic increase in closures takes effect from 2009.

At present, privatised companies receive three times the money that was spent on maintaining British Rail, taking inflation into account. Nevertheless, punctuality and safety levels continue to lag behind British Rail standards, and ticket prices have soared.

Classless myth

A new study by the Office for National Statistics has concluded that social mobility has been declining since the 1950s.

Over 500,000 records were checked in the comprehensive study, which found that background was the single most important factor in lifetime achievement.

Children with wealthy parents tended to stay wealthy with only very rare exceptions, the report concluded, while working-class kids are likely to remain poor their entire lives.

We're all doomed

British Nuclear Fuels (BNFL) have opted to sell the British Nuclear Group (BNG), which has jurisdiction over the clean-up of nuclear sites.

Freedom reported in April that privatisation of the service was in progress, and exclusively revealed that of the five major bidders for the company, three had been punished for lack of care with dangerous materials, one had a work backlog worth \$4 billion (£2.3 billion) and had been in administration, and one had no experience of nuclear work.

The sale will be approved within weeks, with 15,000 staff affected by the move, just days after renewed calls from Tony Blair to reopen the issue of building new nuclear plants.

The privatisation plan was questioned by Prospect, who represent 4,000 workers at BNG, and who raised concerns over the safety measures to be imposed.

At present, the bidding companies, mostly from America, would have no liabilities in the event of an accident and will receive no penalties for late work.

Take cover

The chief of the Metropolitan police ordered a cover-up within hours of the shooting of Jean Charles de Menezes.

Sir Ian Blair personally ordered the police to deny access to the crime scene by the Independent Police Complaints Commission, on "operational grounds".

Blair wrote a letter to Home Office secretary John Gieve requesting retrospective permission for the move, saying the situation was "fast-moving" and that his own force should be given powers to do the investigation.

Those powers can be granted under a Section 17 order, though it was denied in this case by Gieve.

The letter, exposed by a request under the Freedom of Information act, has continued to pile more pressure on Blair following heavy criticism of his "police judge" proposals last month, which would give senior police the ability to impose ASBOs and impound vehicles.

Around the world



• **ARGENTINA:** SIMECA, an independent horizontally organised union of motorcycle couriers, has clashed with police over the issue of recognition. In a report to A-infos, they said: "At around 8pm [on 29th September] we mobilised for a demonstration outside the Ministry of Labour to demand recognition of our union, which government authorities continually deny for political reasons. "Following our demonstration we began to disperse towards Avenida de Mayo and the intersection with Calle Florida. However, we were attacked by police, who arrested our comrades Carlos Make, César Besone and Franco Armando. "We denounce the ongoing policy of the government of rejecting the legitimacy of our organisation as a labour organisation, and the political repression of our entirely legitimate demands."

• **BULGARIA:** Just a few months after brutal state repression against the people of Suhodol – a village near the capital, where a major landfill is situated) – Sofia



is facing a new trash-crisis, because of the incompetence of the authorities.

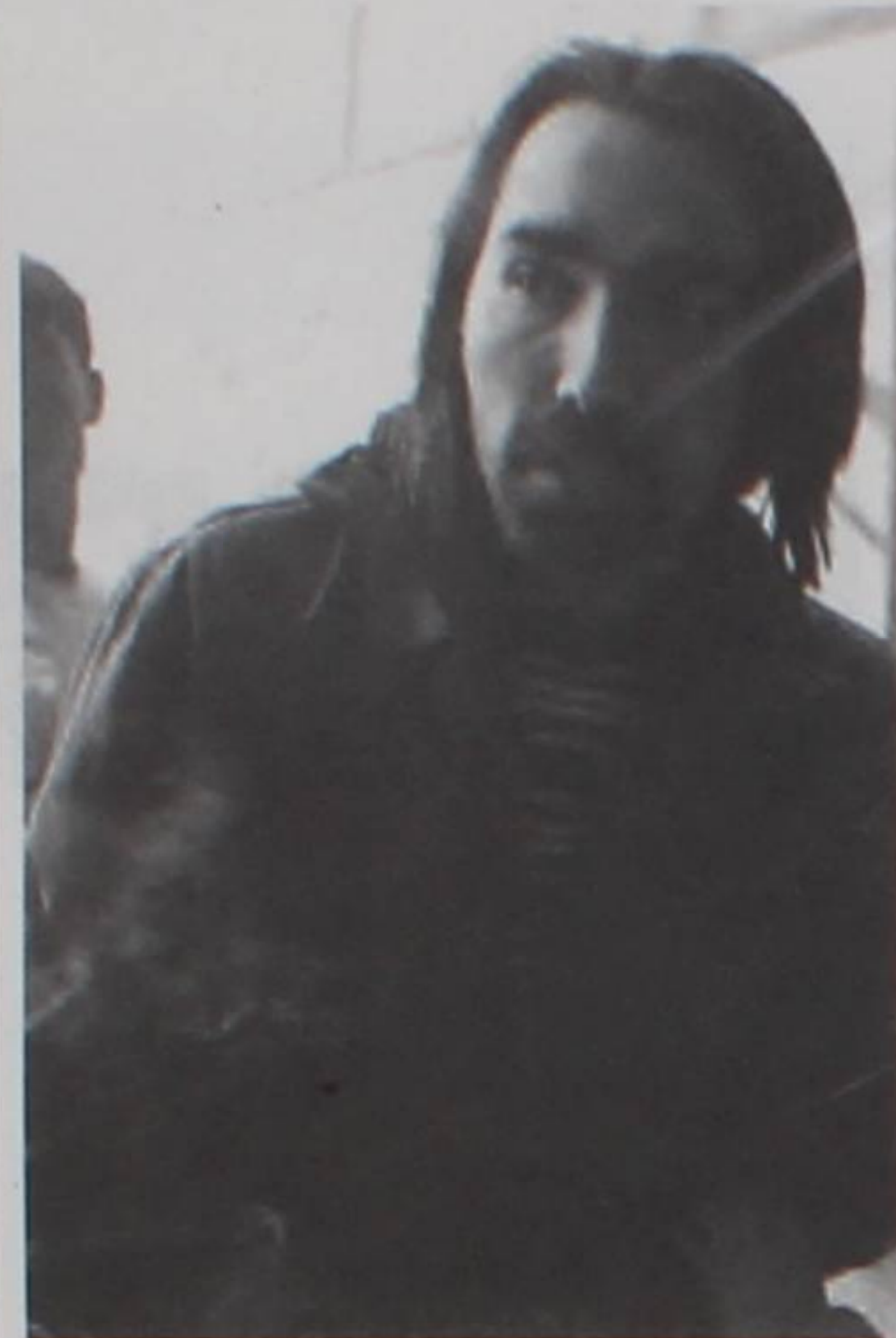
The license of the landfill – which was extended against the people's will and with the brutal help of the police – is ending in October, but the municipality and the ecological ministry have not presented an alternative yet. At the same time protests against the illegal temporary landfills near the quarters Trebich, Mramor and Miroviane are continuing.

• **PHILIPPINES:** President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo has long been facing calls for her resignation or removal from Malacaang because of her government's imposition of anti-national and anti-people policies. More recently, renewed and well-substantiated allegations that she cheated her way to victory in the 2004 election have increased the pressure. The



outbreak of large anti-Arroyo protests commenced with a big rally in Quezon City on 23rd June, followed by mobilisations in Makati City and Manila through the first three weeks of July. The tempo of public outrage would lead to calls for Arroyo's resignation even from a number of her former allies, including the so-called Hyatt 10, the Liberal Party, and former President Corazon Aquino. These would also bring about the filing of three impeachment complaints against the President.

• **TURKEY:** Mehmet Tarhan, a conscientious objector to Turkish military service jailed for an unprecedented four years,



has gone on hunger strike for the second time this year.

Tarhan (pictured above) was sentenced in August after a lengthy legal battle and has allegedly been beaten by prison guards as they forcibly give him a haircut every two weeks.

He has also been the frequent victim of measures such as solitary confinement, revocation of visitor privileges and confiscation of reading and writing material.

Memet said: "After the 'haircut' torture, there is pain on my face, in my left and right hands, pain in my left arm as they have mounted on it, pain in my left foot, injuries and bruises on my arm and legs. I cannot turn my neck around because of pain on my face and neck."

His hunger strike will be indefinite, unless the authorities agree to an independent medical examination and begin prosecution proceedings against the officers concerned. The authorities have responded by transferring him to a military hospital where he was pronounced uninjured.

Ward mate Ali, who attempted to support him during his 'haircuts' and was also allegedly tortured, has also refused food.

Faxes of support are requested and can be sent to the Sivas Military Prison Fax: + 90 346 225 3915

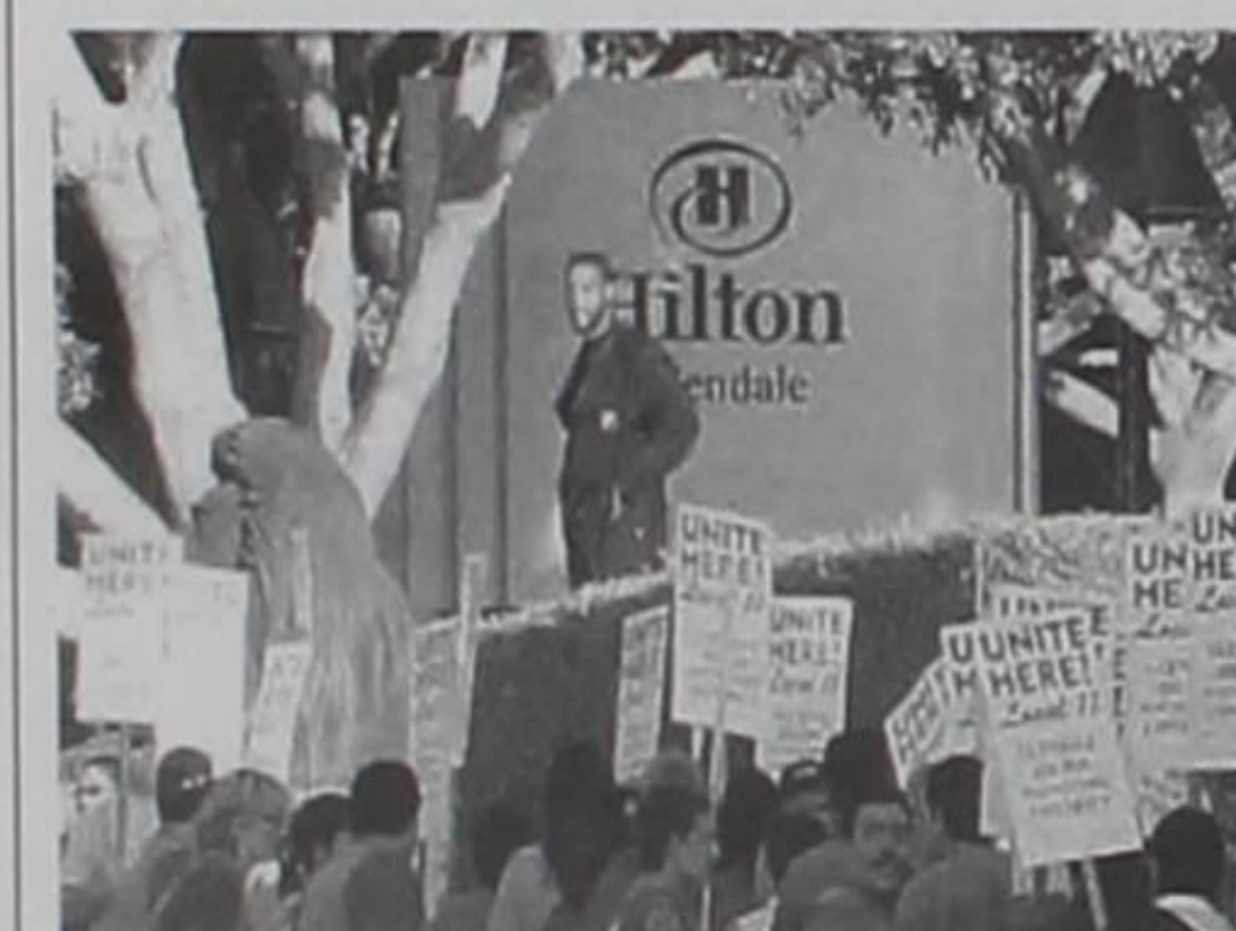
• **USA:** A group of hotel workers in Glendale, California, have insisted on their right to form a union with pickets and a series of management confrontations despite a series of refusals and stonewalling tactics.

Workers presented a petition for a Card Check Neutrality Agreement signed by 70% of the 178 workers in the hotel who are eligible for union representation. Such an agreement between the company and the union would guarantee that hotel management do not interfere with the workers' right to form a union. The delegation insisted that Hilton Assistant General Manager Gary Lemma sign the agreement.

But when presented with the petition, Lemma refused to sign it and said that although hotel management would remain neutral on the matter, they do reserve the right to hold meetings with employees. According to workers, he was referring to meetings that management had already begun to hold with employees several months ago. Workers also reported that in the meetings they were discouraged from joining the union.

A demonstration with 250 people (see picture below) including workers from the company, members of the local community and supporters from other unions was also held.

Edited from A-infos and Indymedia reports



Yarl's Wood

G8 arrest

Following the large arrest of protesters at the G8 protests in July, a further 59 have had the cases against them dropped.

The news follows the abandoning of nine prosecutions in Perth last month, after the cases had incurred large costs to the taxpayer.

There are still 240 people with cases outstanding, mostly in Edinburgh, but the proceedings have come under increasing criticism.

Figures as diverse as anarchists, Scottish MPs, civil rights groups and even lawyers have called into question both the police tactics, and the wasting of thousands of pounds on continued prosecutions.

A Crown Office spokeswoman said:



"As with all reports to the procurator fiscal, every G8-related case is considered on its own facts and circumstances."

In each case, the circumstances were such as to merit an initial appearance from custody in court, and the imposition of bail conditions to prevent any possible re-offending during the summit period."

Last month police seized video material from the BBC and Scottish television in an attempt to find more evidence.

Rehabilitation?

An inquiry into the killing of Zahid Mubarek (pictured left) by Robert Stewart in 2000 has heard that prisons have effectively turned into asylums, with nine out of ten prisoners having a recognisable mental disorder.

The Zito Trust, which campaigns for better care for mentally ill patients, reported the statistic during a hearing at the inquiry, which went on to suggest that prison may be a contributing factor.

Trust director Michael Howlett said: "We are now trying to rectify this by implementing NHS-style strategies in institutions which are not only over-



crowded, but also culturally not necessarily sympathetic or receptive."

Howlett blamed the shrinking number of psychiatric beds in the NHS, leaving treatment for people with mental problems or disorders to be attempted in prisons.

Yarl's Wood

We have been unable to contact our usual source to find out what is happening to the hunger strikers, but will keep trying. There will be an update (hopefully) next issue.

Barnsley's back

For the past few weeks Mark has been away on a speaking tour, talking about his time in prison, his experiences as an anarchist and the continuing resistance to dehumanising practices in our jails.

In Derry Mark met with former members of the Justice for Mark Barnsley Campaign (Ireland) who helped set up the afternoon talk in Sandinos Cafe-Bar. Mark had a brief tour of the city. As well as taking time out to see the murals, Mark visited the Bloody Sunday monument where the families and relatives of those murdered by British State Forces back in January 1972 still await justice.

The talk and discussion that followed was welcomed by his friends and supporters as Mark gave a clear and direct insight into the history and nature of prison struggle in England, Scotland and Wales. Mark met afterwards with former republican and republican socialist political prisoners as well as a number of political activists locally who attended.

He is now back in the UK, and working through a pile of paperwork, but with a bit of luck, will be back next issue.

News

Secure in the knowledge

If you go down to the festival today... In an exclusive report, our reporter enters the murky world of festival security

You're sure to notice the large numbers of security guards in their various brightly coloured polo shirts and high-visibility jackets. Many festivals – including Glastonbury, Reading, and the London anti-racist one-day free festival (Rise) – employ the Glasgow based Specialised Security.

If you look a bit closer you'll notice the different types of personnel offered by Specialised, starting with the normally friendly, mostly young working class men and women in the yellow shirts

DON'T LOOK UP

This year saw the introduction of powerful surveillance technologies at major festivals such as V and Glastonbury. CCTV with facial recognition capabilities was implemented at the two sites, linked to a police database. It has been claimed that the technology is primarily designed to pick up 'troublemakers'. The cameras however are unable to provide coverage for major trouble spots, in the darkened massed tents, and primarily overlook commercial hubs. They will continue to be unable to identify anyone wearing a hoody.

The V festival in Staffordshire implemented the new system on top of existing CCTV systems, undercover police and a policy of number-plate checks. Cameras were placed next to the main entrance, and used automatic recognition software to check for known licenses. These flag up any kind of activity which police have been involved in, including people at anti-fascist rallies or protests. Glastonbury spent £1.5m on increased security for 2005, after complaints from local residents over festival-goers' behaviour off-site.

who are of average build.

Then you get the supervisors, resplendent in their red shirts. They are a mix. Many are recruited from among the yellow-shirts and are fairly similar. Others though are recruited from the blue-shirts – these are the big men you see at the front of the main stage enthusiastically pushing people away, or pulling them over the barriers and dragging them round the back; they're the ones who speed around Glastonbury looking for fence jumpers and blaggers, forcibly ejecting them. There have been horror stories from festival goers about the enthusiasm for physical force among some of the security.

Specialised guards work under woeful conditions and for pay lower than the minimum wage. The yellow-shirts are casual workers who are paid around £40 per day for twelve to fourteen hours. On festival days they can be made to work from 6am to the finish, which, if they are forgotten about by their supervisor, can mean a shift of 24 hours or more.

Out of that £40 the guards have to pay for their accommodation (in stifling and cramped portable cabins) and food. In their compound they are provided with a bar which sells beer and tobacco – owned by the company, it allows Specialised to take profits back.

A lot of guards had stories about colleagues who had fallen asleep on night shift or been found drinking on duty.

One guard said: "It's like in the army, you get two choices, either get put on report or get given a beating from the Dream Team – these are the blue-shirted guards who are mostly recruited



from among Rangers football hooligans, and loyalist thugs."

Another guard said: "If you are

discovered committing a worse transgression or falling asleep one too many times then you get beaten and driven

off site and dumped in the middle of nowhere with no money and no hope of getting back on to the site."

Mail to be private?

Fears that Royal Mail is being prepared for privatisation are emerging, ahead of a government report that is likely to suggest one fifth of the company should be given to employees. This follows condemnation of plans to remove the public service's monopoly, as more jobs losses and rural office closures are being announced.

A three-month Royal Commission led by Sir George Bain is due to report on 21st October with recommendations for the future of the postal service.

The 20% plan, which gives workers no effective control over the business and little prospect in the future of extra money unless they later sell their shares, is being touted as a 'morale booster' as more shop floor job losses are announced in the cash-handling section of the business.

The government will also be pressured to take on the service's pension liabilities, which are considered a major stumbling block in any prospective sale.

It is suspected that the report, rushed

through by the government, is designed to further weaken the case for continued public ownership.

The news backs previous evidence, which includes the planned withdrawal of monopoly status from the most profitable part of Royal Mail's operations in January 2006.

Alan Leighton, chairman of the Post Office, has led a series of restructuring moves which are backed by the commission in the last few years, including massive layoffs and changes to working practice designed to slim down the company's margins and prepare it for competition with private companies being admitted from overseas.

The loss would see bulk contracts with business post up for competition while forcing the company to keep running its unprofitable universal service.

The company has fallen behind its potential competitors on the continent due to under-investment in front line spending and senior sources have admitted that the company is less

efficient. It is estimated that £2.26 billion would have to be invested to bring the service up to scratch. But due to increasingly strict service controls and changes to profit calculations, along with new competition practice, the company is soon to lose most of its hard-won profitability, making investment unlikely.

Postal union the CWU, who clashed with New Labour at the party conference last month, said: "Postcomm is rigging the market against Royal Mail. Though the regulator may not be campaigning for privatisation, Postcomm clearly has no affinity to the needs of a state-owned postal industry. They are also imposing no quality of service standards on competitors. Yet they have imposed big fines upon Royal Mail for breach of such standards."

Alan has already vocally supported privatisation and believes that Labour's manifesto pledge not to do so could be overturned.

War march surprise

Two marches by Stop The War saw over 80,000 in London and 2,000 in Edinburgh. The high numbers of people at the marches shocked many attendees, who assumed both would be washouts.

Gemma, who was at the London demo on 24th September, said: "Everyone was quite stunned that other people were actually there. It started at Parliament Square and it was cordoned off by police. We got out of the tube and looked down the street and it was full of people and trade union banners. All the major trade unions, some red and blacks were there.

"We went up to the Trafalgar Square with the music, and plodded until we got to Hyde park, where everyone flooded through the gates where it had become like a delta for activists, it was lovely to see people dispersing into this formal royal space and there were all these scruffy activists there with their banners."

At the Edinburgh demo on 4th October one activist said: "Considering that most if not nearly all of those gathered in

Edinburgh had spent the day at meetings this was a reasonable turnout. The march was led by Heidi Guiliani [mother of Carlo, murdered by police in Genoa] and Rose Gentle whose son Gordon was murdered [by proxy] by Bush & Blair and their illegal war."

The campaign, which has struggled to find its feet since the major demonstrations of 2003 failed to sway government policy, declared the peaceful demo a "great success" as the estimated death toll in Iraq approaches the 30,000 mark.

The London march was led by Military Families against the War, including Sue Smith whose son died in July, who delivered a letter and petition to Downing Street.



News

Sham elections in Haiti

Haiti's first elections since the coup d'état in 2004 have been rigged to omit popular candidates and exclude the poor, reports Jack Ray

Heralded by US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice as a "precious step along the road to democracy", elections in Haiti scheduled for 20th November will be of questionable legitimacy. More than a thousand political prisoners held by Prime Minister Gerard Latortue's Interim Government will be excluded from ballot papers, with suspected human rights abusers free to stand.

Thirty-two candidates will run for President, but Father Gerard Jean-Juste will not be among them. Widely regarded as the most popular candidate to take the pro-Aristide ticket in the poll, his continuing detention makes him unable to register his intention to stand. Jean-Juste was arrested in July, and has subsequently been charged with "incitement to violence" and "public denunciation" – accusations which human rights activists argue are groundless and designed primarily to keep the priest out of the way until after the elections.

Brian Concannon Jr., of the Institute for Justice and Democracy in Haiti, said: "Haiti is in the midst of a comprehensive programme of electoral cleansing. Its ballots are being cleansed of political dissidents, its voting rolls cleansed of the urban and rural poor."

"The streets are being cleansed of anti-government political activity. This cleansing violates the fundamental human rights guaranteed by the charters and other instruments of the OAS and the UN. It also violates the electoral

standards that are applied in other countries, and that were applied to elections run by Haiti's constitutional governments.

"The persecution and disenfranchisement of political opponents is being conducted openly, notoriously, and under the eyes of the international community."

Meanwhile, politicians and paramilitary leaders involved in the wave of repression that followed Haiti's last coup d'état in 1991 have been registered to stand for President. Ballot papers will feature Marc Bazin, installed as prime minister by a military junta in 1992 after losing the 1990 election to Aristide; Guy Philippe, a former police chief trained by US special forces in Ecuador and accused of human rights abuses; and Dany Toussaint, suspected of murdering Jean Dominique, a pro-Lavalas journalist.

Opponents of the interim Government and the occupation have complained at the inadequate preparations for next month's elections, with limitations on resources being used to disenfranchise the poorest sections of society. The government has provided just 424 registration centres for voters, compared to the 10,000 that existed during previous elections, with resources concentrated in rich areas. The wealthy suburb of Petionville had three stations, compared to just one each for the sprawling slums of Cite Soleil and Bel-Air. Problems were more drastic in rural areas, with some communities unable to register. So far over a quarter of Haitian citizens have



failed to register, despite being dependent on doing so for government services.

Violence targeted at popular organisations of the poor continues, making demonstrations and political campaigning virtually impossible. Free reporting of political persecution and the farcical

electoral process has become increasingly difficult with western journalists coming under threat. Kevin Pina, reporting for the Haiti Information Project was held for three days last month, after angering a Government judge when filming the illegal raid of Father Gerard Jean-Juste's

residence. Guyler Devla, working for Reuters News Agency, was also beaten by a member of President Boniface Alexandre's entourage. The bodyguard was supplied by the US state department and was an American mercenary working for security firm DynCorp.

Ethnic cleansing New Orleans

New Orleans is being turned into a 'club med' for corporations to the exclusion of its former residents – the black urban poor. More than four-fifths of the \$1.5 billion dollars of federal aid already allotted for reconstruction has been awarded in no-bid contracts and anti-globalisation writer Naomi Klein warns that, "The buzzwords to listen for in terms of the reconstruction of New Orleans are 'smaller' and 'safer'. The overall vision is massive land grabs, radical gentrification with [a] privatised military force."

Mercenaries have moved into the city with the task of "securing neighbourhoods" and "confronting criminals". When Jeremy Scahill, of The Nation, asked some of the men, who were part of the Blackwater USA group, what authority they were operating under, one said: "We're on contract with the Department of Homeland Security." Scahill was told that one man had been "deputised" by the governor of the state of Louisiana. "We can make arrests and use lethal force if we deem it necessary," the mercenary said.

According to Scahill, "They all carried automatic assault weapons and had guns strapped to their legs. Their flak jackets were covered with pouches for extra ammunition."

The mercenaries are from DynCorp, Intercon, American Security Group, Blackhawk, Wackenhut and an Israeli company called Instinctive Shooting International (ISI), who are all angling for a piece of the action. Some, like Blackwater, are under federal contract. Others have been hired by the rich: F. Patrick Quinn III brought in private security forces to guard his \$3 million estate and luxury hotels.

One month after the hurricane devastated communities in Louisiana and Mississippi, returning families need temporary overnight accommodation but are unable to secure it in local hotels because their rooms are being held for those involved in the profiteering.

But Naomi Klein's work also reveals there are 12,000 empty apartments and houses in areas like the Garden and Central Business Districts while the (largely white) French Quarter has a 37% vacancy rate.

Local grassroots organisations, such as Community Labor United, have demanded the immediate appropriation of this accommodation. Local legislators say it would be simple for the city of New Orleans to pass an ordinance; federal money could then be used to pay rent. But rather than subsidise rents, the 'reconstructors' in Louisiana are touting the Urban Homesteading Act, which allows the auctioning of federal land for the rich to build homes on.

Two documents already outline destructive plans for the area. One by the Republican Study Committee, a caucus of Republican lawmakers in Congress, called Pro Free Market Ideas for Responding to Hurricane Katrina and High Gas Prices demands the suspension of Davis-Beacon, the statute that secures wages in federal construction programmes, something Bush has already decreed – that the entire affected area is designated a "flat tax-free enterprise zone". Similarly, money for the education of evacuated children is being poured into vouchers, rather than being used to rebuild and refund schools.

French workers' strike

One million French workers struck and demonstrated on 4th October against planned labour reforms by the Jacques Chirac government. Widespread disruption was caused across public and private sectors, in the trains, in aviation, the postal service, education and power.

Workers took to the streets in nationwide protests in 150 cities, with 150,000 marchers reported in Paris, and 100,000 in Marseilles. In Paris, events took on a carnival atmosphere as determined strikers and sympathisers paraded to the Bastille with banners and balloons.

The action reflected widespread antipathy across large sectors of French society toward the reform plans of new Prime Minister Dominique de Villepin. Unemployment, wage stagnation, diminishing job security and rising prices have all contributed to a combative mood among French society; strikers enjoyed the support of 72% of the French public.

Plans to amend the labour code to allow arbitrary sackings by small firms within the first two years of employment has drawn the fire of workers already troubled

by rising insecurity of employment. The march in Grenoble was led by representatives of workers for computer firm Hewlett Packard, which laid off 1,200 people last month despite the firm's bumper profits.

Philippe du Pire, a transport worker marching in Paris said, "We're protesting over the insecurity of our jobs, over our salaries and because we're generally fed up."

Others protested the government's commitment to the rich. "We have big social problems, and the choices made by this government favour the upper and middle classes not the poor," said one teacher at an inner city school. Union leaders have promised more actions should the government fail to come to an agreement.

Elsewhere, the direct action of workers for state ferry company SNCM forced the government to back away from plans to privatise the service. The dramatic ferry hijack by 36 Corsican sailors on 27th September caught international attention. Protesters clashed with police

Feature

Nipped in the bud

Iraq's revised intellectual property laws have stifled any chance of escaping US control, reports Rob Ray

The trademark and patent offices in Baghdad reopened on 19th September. They will be working primarily with Iraq's original pre-invasion system, but with some major changes introduced as part of the occupation's time as the Coalition Provisional Authority.

The changes are part of a more radical overhaul of Iraq Intellectual Property (IP) law by Abu Ghazaleh Intellectual Property (AGIP), the largest IP company in every one of the 22 Arab states and commissioned by the CPA.

General orders, such as an amendment to article 7.5 of Iraq's IP law, bind Iraq to international agreements, effectively barring Iraqis from using inventions discovered previously in any country covered by WTO or Paris Convention agreements.

This affects all new technologies, from improvements to fuel and refining technologies, through to drugs and medical equipment. It's not good news.

One likely outcome of the measure for example will be to further curtail the dependence of Iraq's oil sector on western controllers, as new pumping and refining equipment, leased from and maintained by big oil, becomes an integral part of Iraq's economic survival during the construction phases.

The amendments reintroduce the concept of employer rights, currently well established in Western countries, where anything invented in the course of a person's employment belongs to the company.

This means any improvement to the refining process by someone hired to take care of the refinery systems by the company that built the plant will be automatically held and controlled by the company.

Section 50 has been added to give foreigners equal rights to take out a patent as Iraqis, thus making the process of patenting new inventions substantially easier for multinationals.

More famously Order 81 (section 52-79 on the original 2004 order by Paul

Bremner), which has been introduced onto the statute books and is now being weighted alongside the stipulations of Iraq's original 1970 laws, prohibits the use of new seeds in the previously unregulated Iraqi agricultural sector (see inset).

Whilst allowing the use of traditional seed stock, the order effectively prohibits the production of next-generation seed unless it is bought from a multinational. Ownership of biological patents was barred under the Saddam Hussein regime.

AGIP, the company which drew up the new laws on behalf of the CPA, is based in Jordan and is headed by founder and chief executive, Talal Abu Ghazaleh.

Abu Ghazaleh is one of the most influential Middle-eastern faces at the UN, having held several high-profile positions in the past dealing with IP law in general and the expansion of the field into online technologies in particular over the past 30 years. He said: "We received a written request to draft the IP laws for [the US administration]. We draft laws for the country so whoever is authorised to give those laws, I work with."

"Of the companies of the Fortune 500 [a business list of America's most powerful transnationals] we work with 400. We now work with 30,000 clients globally. We set up a data bank of all business and produced the only IP dictionary in the region. What gives us an edge is we are the biggest law firm in the region and we protect our clients' rights."

Asked about the possible conflict of interest regarding his company's heavy involvement with major world conglomerates and that same company's involvement with drafting Iraq's IP law, he said: "These laws are what the international community wants."

"The interests of all our clients are as one. They want protection for their companies and litigation, which works. We have a conflict of interest clause to prevent it [corruption]."



"We work with international organisations, and have an agreement with the EU trademarks office. I am currently trying to make a similar agreement with Washington."

"I am a great believer that the international IP organisation is not intended to serve as a protectionist regime. It is not intended solely for the owners of these rights and their monopoly of the product, it is for better economic development. It is a stimulant for a wealth of technology. I have a great belief in the inventiveness of the Arab mind."

Sixteen Arab countries have had their IP laws drafted by AGIP, including the United Arab Emirates and Oman. But there have been heavy criticisms of the group's handling of Iraq's IP law.

Focus on the Global South, a campaigning group against the actions of the CPA, said: "Iraq is a special case in that the adoption of the patent law was not part of negotiations between sovereign countries. Nor did a sovereign law-making body enact it as reflecting the will of the Iraqi people."

"In Iraq, the patent law is just one more component in the comprehensive

and radical transformation of the occupied country's economy along neo-liberal lines by the occupying powers. This transformation would entail not

just the adoption of favoured laws but also the establishment of institutions that are most conducive to a free market regime."

Order 81 states, "Farmers shall be prohibited from reusing seeds of protected varieties." In amongst the other comprehensive measures curtailing Iraq's right to its own production sources, Order 81 gives companies the right to own any seed that is not of traditional stock.

This should not be a problem in the short term. Farmers would still be able to farm as they had done in the past, though increasingly they would fall behind the production techniques of agribusiness, should it choose to product-dump in the country. It would only be in the long term that sustainability problems would rise, in theory, due to the US-imposed rules.

Although they would eventually only be able to keep up by buying terminator seeds from companies such as Novartis and Monsanto, the transition would be a more gradual one overall.

But thanks mostly to the occupation, the problem is actually a great more immediate. Iraq's stores of seed and grain were destroyed in the fighting. The UN are currently concerned that the seed stocks are so low that there won't be enough to supply more than four per cent of requirements for the coming year.

The Food and Agriculture Organisation warned that \$5.4bn would be needed to replace the seed stock or face a possible humanitarian disaster.

This two years after it was reported that Iraq, against all the odds, had a "stable and functioning" seed system in 2003 and with outlawed seed ownership.

And the original location for the seed banks, before it was bombed, cleared and reused? A location regarded as so important it has wheat strains named after it? Abu Ghraib.



Commentary

FREEDOM

Volume 66 Number 20

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

This column may as well be a summation of this year from our point of view, as you will probably already have guessed that most of the last couple of weeks has been building around feverish preparation for the bookfair.

So how have we done so far? In terms of time keeping, lousy. We've been late pretty much every issue, we've had staffing problems of all kinds, even getting it folded has gone catastrophically wrong.

But things have been slowly improving. Despite pretty much zero marketing, and awful timekeeping, subs are up. We've got new faces in who have helped improve Freedom, and we've broken some outstanding exclusives.

Among our best have been on the Bolivian water revolution, the privatisation of UK nuclear waste disposal, insider accounts of Unison's pensions debacle, various pieces on Haiti, Morocco, Del Monte and, last issue, the managerial fuck-ups which have helped lead to job losses at ChildLine. However, you have made it very clear we aren't getting everything right. Having listened to your various suggestions and complaints, we are discussing where to go now beyond improving reliability, connecting with the overall movement more and improving our comment content (the most common complaints).

As such, if you are at the bookfair, do come along to the Freedom meeting.

Contact details

Freedom Press, 84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1 7QX
Tel/fax: 020 7247 9249
www.freedompress.org.uk
Enquiries: info@freedompress.org.uk
Copy/Letters: copy@freedompress.org.uk
Subscriptions: subs@freedompress.org.uk
Bookshop: shop@freedompress.org.uk
Freedom Press Distribution:
distro@freedompress.org.uk

Next issue

The next issue will be dated 29th October and the last day to get your copy to us will be Friday 21st September.

Solidarity with the Survivalists

I just wish to offer my support and solidarity with the survivalists dubbed looters by the American authorities in the city of New Orleans.

When the hurricane hit that city at the end of August it left a post-nuclear crisis, and humanity quickly found out the truth that property is theft. Survival should always come first before any social considerations.

The situation described by the media was really a failure of government and an attempt to scapegoat anarchism for that failure. The people left behind when New Orleans was evacuated were the poor welfare people who did not own cars yet it was cars, through the creation of global warming, which caused the increase in temperature which increased the size of the hurricane – force five and one of the largest in history.

CA

Why bother?

At the New Labour conference in Brighton the trade unions inflicted a defeat on the government's plans to expand the role of the private sector in the NHS. The health secretary said the government will not moderate their policies. So why bother having a conference at all?

Doubtless the other defeats for the Blair hierarchy, over the right to take secondary strike action and keeping the pension age at 60 for public sector workers, will likewise be ignored. As for Iraq, that too was ignored. A promised debate at the conference was cancelled by the leadership.

One thing of note did happen. An 82-year-old delegate was manhandled out of the Conference.

Rather than reply to the heckle, New Labour barred him and so admitted that the party leadership was talking indefensible rubbish. It shows that a guilty government fears even the tamest of dissent.

The Labour hierarchy, seeing a PR nightmare evolve, quickly u-turned and apologised to him.

Significantly, when Mr Wolfgang tried to re-enter the hall after being ejected he was refused permission under Section 44 of the Prevention of Terrorism Act.

Section 44 covers the "power to stop and search" and, according to the act, an authorisation "may be given only if the person giving it considers it expedient for the prevention of acts of terrorism". Section 45 indicates that

the police may detain a person "for such time as is reasonably required to permit the search to be carried out".

It is hard to see how this was remotely applicable here.

Is disagreeing with the government now deemed an act of terrorism? Plainly, the 'anti-terrorism' laws are being used for the political aim of stopping dissent, and quash freedom of speech. Were we not assured by the politicians that these anti-terrorism laws would not be used against protesters? We knew that was nonsense at the time and argued that they would be used by the state to stop protest and dissent.

The application of these laws against a lone heckler is just the latest abuse of many. It shows how the Terrorism Act can be seriously abused to attack anyone who criticises the government. You want to demonstrate in the street? Then be prepared to get arrested for 'terrorism'. Abuse? That would be the wrong word, as the state wanted these powers precisely to use them in this way.

What is surprising is not that Mr Wolfgang was silenced – such silencing of dissent and protest is what we have come to expect from Blair's regime. What is surprising is that Mr Wolfgang was the only heckler.

But it does raise one key question. Why are people in a party whose leadership ignores conference decisions and election manifesto promises when it suits them? A party whose contempt for them is as great as that of the population they claim to represent. Have they no shame?

Given the regularity the Labour Party leadership ignores both its membership and general public, can anyone wonder why anarchists reject representative democracy as undemocratic? As can be seen, democracy is premised on the alienation of power rather than its exercise. That is why anarchists reject it in favour of self-management and decision making from the bottom up.

Iain Mackay

Gate Gourmet: 'not over yet'

A public meeting was organised by South Asia Solidarity Group on 6th October in London, which brought together representatives of strikers from the picket line at Gate Gourmet – the majority middle aged Asian women – as well as members of various support groups. Sacked workers are still on the picket line outside Gate Gourmet after the Transport and General Workers Union struck a deal with the management on 27th September. According to the deal, 144 strikers were forcibly made redundant and seven were to remain sacked with no compensation. Nobody except the management knows yet who those sacked strikers exactly are, which further accentuates the need for continued solidarity. At the same time three baggage handlers at Heathrow Airport who had taken part in the magnificent thousand-strong one-day sympathy strike are still suspended. According to the Gate Gourmet workers, "it is not over yet!"

The meeting has revealed a shameful if unsurprising disregard for the strikers on the part of the rich T&G which offers strikers (who are already financially struggling) a meagre £50 per week from the hardship funds. Previously little-known details were disclosed:

- how Gate Gourmet – which has been making profits of £1 billion and has assets of £15 billion – brought in 130 agency employees;

- how they dictatorially refused to answer workers' questions;
- how they subsequently announced on a megaphone that the workers were all sacked;
- how they locked them in the canteen without any food and water or access to toilets for almost eight hours (there were pregnant women among the workers) and;
- how private security firms and riot police were on the premises within minutes.

The shop steward was later thrown out of the building, and several women, one of them pregnant, were dragged out of the building – with two private security guards on one side and two policemen on the other. The possibility of a late prosecution is only now being considered, on the initiative of some support members rather than the union.

A striking impression from the meeting and previous developments is that the workers, far from being genuinely empowered by the strike, remained utterly dependent on the T&G – cut off from playing any real role in the negotiations that have taken place, given almost no information, scared, humiliated, bullied and demoralised.

With the 'revolutionary' organisations largely taking a spectatorial attitude, the workers were essentially left on their own after the initial euphoria. If only they were the 'militant troublemakers', an accusation which T&G representatives felt a need to promptly deny.

But the issue of secondary strikes is really crucial here. Experienced or inexperienced, it is hopeless to defy the Goliaths of concentrated capital alone. The Texas Pacific group, owner of Gate Gourmet and famous for its union busting policies, also controls many other companies such as Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer Inc, United Artists, Continental Airlines and Burger King (there's a great opportunity for putting pressure on the Texas Pacific group – sackedbygategourmet.org.uk/support.htm), whose new Chief Financial Advisor, Cedric Burgher, is the former Vice President of Enron and former Treasurer of Halliburton. (It is also interesting to note that David Bonderman, founding partner of Texas Pacific and also Chairman of Ryanair airline, "made the news recently when it was discovered that he had spent \$10 million on his 60th birthday party in Las Vegas. Bonderman splashed out for his 500 or so guests by hiring Robin Williams, the comedian, as warm up entertainment, followed by the Rolling Stones, all this, while his workers at Gate Gourmet were living on £6 an hour.")

A temporary alternative to secondary strikes, smaller and less potent, but always attractive for its confidence-boosting and libertarian potential, are 'flying squads' (see for example Jeff Schantz, Developing Workers Autonomy: An Anarchist Look At Flying Squads – <http://nefac.net/node/915>). The frustrating inefficiency of the Gate Gourmet support network, in a dispute which began so vibrantly, reaffirms the need for establishing flying squads/pickets in London and other centres, big and small.

In the course of the Gate Gourmet meeting, a letter of support from a major left-wing Indian trade union was read, also reporting on the substantial on-going Indian struggles against privatisation; 3,000 workers injured in a police attack; security workers in Delhi fighting the sackings by a British company; and strike action which closed Indian airports. On

a yet higher level, the most powerful response to the globalisation of capital would be globalisation of integrated workers' resistance, something which the Left, still caught up in social-democratic nostalgia or just statist approaches, has so far dangerously neglected. This includes libertarians organised on a narrow-minded national model. A future offensive strategy will also necessitate finding the main arteries connecting the struggles and striking at those critical points of the transnational capitalist system.

Dan Jakopovich

<http://sackedbygategourmet.org.uk>

South Asia Solidarity Group, email: sasg@southasiasolidarity.org; tel: 020 7267 0923

Donations to support the strikers can be sent to: Gate Gourmet Hardship Fund, c/o Mr E. McDermott, Regional Secretary, TGWU, 218 Green Lanes, London N4 2HB (please make cheques payable to TGWU with Gate Gourmet written on reverse).

FREEDOM ANARCHIST BOOKSHOP

84b Whitechapel High Street

London E1 7QX

tel/fax 020 7247 9249

OPENING HOURS

Monday to Saturday

from 12 noon to 6pm

Sundays 12 noon to 5pm

You can also use our mail order service or order books online via our website www.freedompress.org.uk

French strike

page 4

on 28th September and again on 1st October; an angry demonstration ended when police fired tear gas at marchers descending on government buildings in Bastia, ferryworkers and local youth replying with stones and flares. Hours earlier, police evicted trade unionists who had blockaded the port for three days. The dispute represents the first time that national unions have taken unified action with the Corsican nationalist federation in 15 years. The government has now shelved plans for outright privatisation, and is negotiating from a position of shared public and private ownership.

Quiz answers

1. The novelist Michael Crichton, whose latest novel is a thriller about climate change being a big conspiracy. No climate scientists could be found to support the neo-cons position, so they went instead to a man most famous for writing about dinosaurs being re-constructed from the DNA in the blood of mosquitoes in amber.
2. It came from 'The Joy of Cooking', a straightforward recipe book.
3. Wooden staves, which are being used by screws at Dover and Haslar Detention Centres, effectively prisons for people who have not been convicted of anything.
4. Southport falls under Sefton Council and relies a lot on conference trade from the unions. Unison and the FBU have already told the council that Southport is off their list of venues until the dispute is resolved. Oh, and the council lost the sell-off vote!



REVIEW

This film avoids the media hype and rightly focuses on government use of 'terrorism' to erode civil liberties, says Tom Jennings

Screened on BBC2 on the 12th September, *Guerrilla: the Taking of Patty Hearst* is a feature from veteran liberal documentarist Robert Stone tracing the career of the Symbionese Liberation Army – a mainly middle class white student militia engaged in armed struggle in early 1970s California “on behalf of” Black and working class Americans. Clandestine interviews with surviving SLA founders Russ Little and Mike Bortin, along with the views of prominent journalists covering the story, an FBI case officer and hostage negotiator, are expertly woven together with found footage of the most dramatic events and other material in a vivid, snappy narrative that captures the imagination while emphasising the wider context and drawing interesting parallels with the present.

The very first modern media circus followed the SLA kidnap of Patty Hearst – heir of the huge media conglomerate built by grandad William ‘Citizen Kane’ Randolph – and, in regularly ending her communiqués with: “Death to the fascist insect that preys upon the lives of the people”, her apparent ‘conversion’ to the anti-government cause. This was preceded and followed by generally botched SLA actions – assassinations, bank robberies, minor shoplifting – and when the initial ransom demanding exchange for imprisoned comrades also failed, the Hearst family agreed to distribute \$4m dollars-worth of ‘food

aid’ to the Bay Area poor. Even this ended in riots since the authorities were equally inept, and a vastly excessive SWAT shoot-out in South Central LA left most of the cadre dead.

Bortin stresses the frustration of educated youth after the optimism of the 1960s – what with poverty and racism at home, the arms race, and especially Vietnam: “We grew up being told we saved the world from Hitler ... but we’re now being Hitler.”

Little concludes, “The country was being run by criminals ... I feel sad that I felt forced to extremes by Nixon and his thugs.” And while those from less sheltered backgrounds probably found the corruption of power less surprising, many others who turned to armed rebellion at that time managed without quite so much arrogance, pompousness and politically clueless sub-Maoist posturing as the SLA (not that the Black Panthers, MOVE organisation or Weather Underground, etc, ultimately fared much better). However, the SLA’s narcissistic fascination with media responses rather than organic links with struggle had more in common with later, equally futile, urban guerrilla groups such as those in Europe – condemning them as grist to the Spectacular mill while also supplying their propaganda coup courtesy of the American princess.

Nevertheless *Guerrilla*’s subtitle is for marketing purposes only, and the tedious celebrity autopsy of whether Hearst (who endorses this film) really was the brainwashed Stockholm Syndrome stooge she claimed is rightly



avoided. The motivations for making the film included the 9/11 experience, the government use of ‘terrorism’ to erode civil liberties and the central role of the media in setting and pursuing agendas in this morass – and the coverage of the SLA’s exploits coincided with major technological and political developments in that industry (plus

retrospective prosecutions have jailed several members since the film was made – including Bortin). As for the group itself, Stone thinks that their mistake was not taking “the moral high ground, like Gandhi”. But moral certainty and self-righteousness was precisely the fundamental flaw, as within all grandiose vanguards

bolstering each other’s inflated self-importance. Whereas humility, integrity and ethical transparency measured collectively at, by and for the grassroots can avoid both the delusions of bourgeois radicalism flirting with power and the fatal distraction with the vicissitudes of news worthiness.

www.tomjennings.pwp.blueyonder.co.uk

BOOKS

Free Women of Spain: Anarchism and the Struggle for the Emancipation of Women

by Martha A. Ackelsberg
AK Press, \$20.00

The core of this book is a history of the *Mujeres Libres* group of anarchist women who, in mid 1930s Spain, set up an explicitly libertarian journal and, subsequently, organisation, which was directed at women and which addressed the three-fold oppression in women in being kept in ignorance, enslavement as a woman and enslavement as a worker.

They were social revolutionaries, but revolutionaries who saw that existing revolutionary organisations, for all their rhetoric, were failing to properly represent women’s aspirations and were even, in some cases reproducing attitudes towards women (even fellow militants) that were at best patronising and worst abusive. However, because of their political orientation, they were not interested in what they described as middle class ‘feminism’ which they saw as merely advocating women’s right to take their place in the hierarchies of an unequal society, which, in itself, would do nothing to liberate the majority of women (or men).

The groundwork for the organisation was set up for a small team of activists who started with a journal ‘*Mujeres Libres*’ which was written by women, for women, from a libertarian perspective (but which assiduously avoided the ‘a’ word for fear of putting-off non-political women. But they did not become a formally constituted organisation until after the start of the civil war in 1936, and even then were never considered to have equal status with the other three main constituent parts of the libertarian movement. They threw themselves into the struggle, even, in some cases taking up arms and fighting at the front, but mainly they devoted their energies to other activities. This activity can be summarised as being a dual strategy.

The first part can be seen as preparation of women for revolutionary engagement, by a combination of what was later to be called ‘consciousness raising’ and empowerment. In practice this encompassed activities such as tackling illiteracy (still at ridiculously high levels due to the malign influence of the Catholic church); to prepare for entry into the workforce using training and apprenticeship schemes; to educate women regarding child raising practices and contraception and so forth with an aim of enabling them to (in Ackelsberg’s words “experience them-

selves as competent historical actors.”

This gave rise to numerous educational initiatives and publications.

The second related to bringing women into the libertarian movement, both to strengthen the position of women within the movement, but also prevent the incorporation of the more financially endowed socialist and communist parties from recruiting them. This point needs emphasising. Not only was there a social revolution going on, with workers and peasants taking control of the means of production, with the expropriation of former landlords and factory owners and, at the same time, a long drawn-out and bloody civil war against the forces of reaction; but also there was an internal counter-revolution being waged against the gains that the anarchists had made at the start of the struggle, primarily by the Stalinist Communist Party, which was effectively bank-rolling the republican government, at the price of destroying the very thing that made the struggle worthwhile, the social revolution.

There were calls for their activity to wait until the war was won, and there is no doubt that in certain areas the *Mujeres Libres* did tone down their activities, but overall they stuck to the tasks that they had set themselves.

There is even an argument that can be put forward that the education, training and empowerment that the *Mujeres Libres* were involved in were worthwhile activities in their right irrespective of the situation.

Many of the participants in the *Mujeres Libres* were still around and willing to speak about it in the 1980s to Martha Ackelsberg. They are testimony to the long-term effect being in a social revolution had on their lives. The book however is not a simple exercise in the recovery of a lost history. The author is as equally concerned with the relevance, if any, of the work that the *Mujeres Libres* undertook to the post-1968 generations of women and especially those calling themselves feminists. This is both threaded through the historical chapters as well as having a whole section devoted to itself, the conclusion entitled ‘Community and the Empowerment of Women’. Here Ackelsberg, amongst many other points, devotes some space distinguishing notions of difference from those of diversity. For her difference has implications of hierarchy, all axes of difference imply that one end is dominant / preferred / assumed whatever.

This book is pretty much required reading for anyone interested in Spain

1936-39 and for anyone with any interest in sexual, workplace and community politics. The specific situation the women of *Mujeres Libres* found themselves will not necessarily be replicated in other countries and other times but there is enough commonality in their experiences and enough relevance in Ackelsberg’s commentary to make this a worthwhile read. The tone may occasionally be a tad too academic for some but it rarely intrudes for long. Ackelsberg takes great care to situate the story within the story of Spanish history and within developments in anarchist theory and practice. The description of the woman’s activities in the fields, factories, workshops and schools is quite fascinating. For what was a small group compared to the main CNT union, they achieved quite a lot in the short time they were active. The paper and the organisation seem to have died with the defeat of the libertarian movement. Yet the women remained libertarian activists (or least committed to the cause long after that defeat, in some cases 50 or 60 years.) Can one assume that their experiences in *Mujeres Libres* were in part responsible for that? I’d like to think so.

Richard Alexander

A Sideways Look

It must have seemed a great idea. Mindful of the pensions crisis, the government have changed the rules on what can be included in a Self Invested Personal Plan (SIPP), such as works of art, fine wines, rare stamps and coins and property. All up to a maximum of £215,000 a year. Tax-free.

Of course, these latest changes are designed to help the rich, not anybody else. It will only be of benefit to people earning enough to pay tax at 40% and even then only amongst those with some cash to spare so don't expect hordes of senior nurses or teachers to be rushing off to their financial advisers. Nor will it do anything at all to help those whose pensions have been plundered by the very people who stand to gain from SIPPs.

Leaving aside the obvious thing of ensuring that the very rich pay the least proportion of tax in this country, it is telling that Labour have included property in this. The property element covers buy-to-let and holiday homes. There is a crisis of housing in most of Britain and the government is using tax policy to make it worse! In tourist areas local people are already priced out by second-home owners, to the extent that second homes are now banned in some National Parks, any housing for sale is reserved for local need. At the risk of sounding like someone advocating terrorism, I can see from a class perspective why the Welsh burnt down holiday homes.

Buy-to-let is a method by which the already wealthy push up property prices while dreaming of making millions. Many buy-to-lets are in ex-council blocks, where people who bought under the right to buy find it hard to sell. The buy-to-let owner, though, usually finds no problem in letting the property. And often they rent it to the local council who sold it for peanuts in the first place. But the rent they raise isn't peanuts - I know of several one-bed properties in high rise blocks being rented at £300 a week by one London council to ease its homeless crisis. The council's not too bothered - it's covered by Housing Benefit - and the owner is laughing all the way to the bank, the more so from next year when they can even reduce the tax on their income.

Financial advisers are warning the government that there could be a £5 billion boom in tax-free spending on properties. As well as the clear societal impact, this means lost revenue of up to £4 billion for the Treasury. You don't need to be an economist to see that leading to a stark choice - cuts or tax rises for the rest of us.

The government claims to act on behalf of the poorer and more vulnerable. But any efforts made towards the poor - like the farcically low minimum wage - are always offset by greater efforts to help the rich. Anyone who has been around politics for a few years will remember the battle cry of every Trotskyist sect slavishly campaigning for Labour in elections: "It's the mass party of the working class,

comrade!" At least now some recognise the damage done, though they seem eager to repeat the same mistakes. However, from where I sit, there are three groups whose interests Labour can claim honestly to represent - management consultants, lawyers and property speculators. Most senior Labour figures fall into at least one of those categories. Doesn't have quite the same ring to it, though, does it?

Svartfrosk

Blast from the Past

Taken from Freedom 16th October 1971, John Lawrence wrote:

Watching the televised Common Market debate at the Labour Party conference I was reminded of a famous plea for tolerance written in the English revolution of 1642 which declared that compulsion doesn't make converts - it makes hypocrites.

For about 15 years, Messrs Wilson, Callaghan, Castle, Healey and Wedgwood-Benn have been enthusiastic supporters of Britain entering the Common Market. When in office they opened negotiations with the Six [members] to this end.

But now they are out and the Tories are in and suddenly Wilson and his friends have discovered all sorts of reasons why they should oppose entry.

It should never be forgotten that these people are professionals who have 'gone into' politics like other men go into banking or insurance and for the same reasons - to make a 'good career'.

Their whole lives are spent in either seeking power or wielding it and right now they are seeking ... But there is a snag in the form of some 100 or-so MPs who can't quite eat their words in the manner of their leader. Now if a fair proportion of these pro-marketters vote with the Tories on 28th October in Parliament it rather spoils the case for a general election.

So now another, and more familiar, kind of compulsion comes in - the Party whips. And who are these chief Whippers? Why none other than those well known 'democrats' - Michael Foot, Ian Mikardo, and their motley crew of 'lefts'!

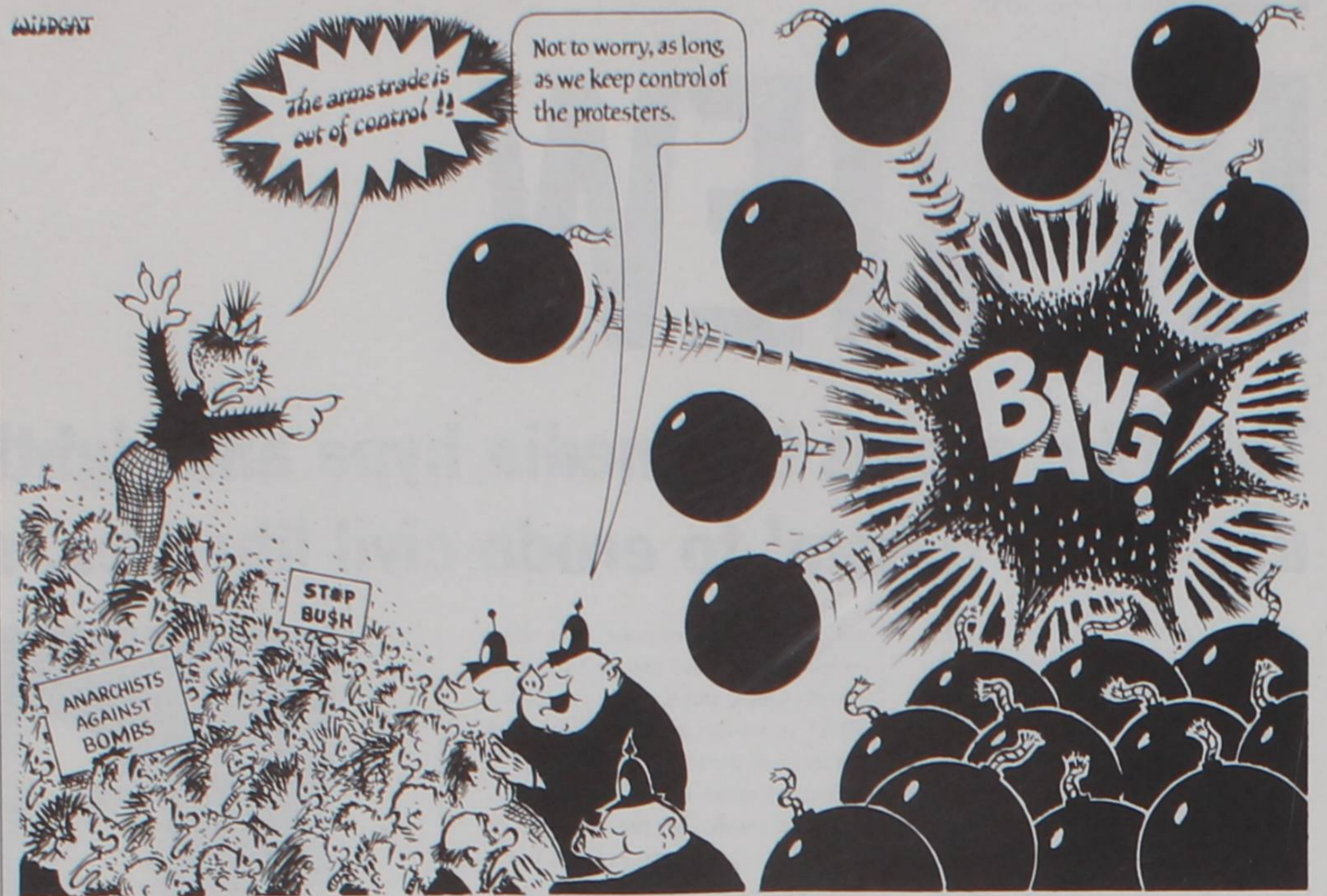
They won't be converted, they'll just become hypocrites.

The quiz

1. Who was the lead expert sceptical witness before a US Senate committee on global warming?
2. What inspired the title of Alex Comfort's 'The Joy of Sex'?
3. What are used by guards at Asylum Detention Centres but banned in low-security prisons?
4. Sefton Borough Council in Merseyside suspended two Unison members in May after a demo against a housing sell-off. What unexpected consequence has this had for hoteliers in Southport?

Answers on page 6

WILD CAT



Imagine If...

George Bush slammed the report down on the table, causing his ten-gallon hat to wobble dangerously, and stamped his Stetson on the floor.

"How dare they!" he shouted at the aide who had brought him the papers.

The young Washington slicker, who looked anything but in the rodeo outfit he'd been made to wear, trembled before the mighty onslaught of the tough hombre's anger.

"Sir?" He whispered.

"It's these nerds again." Bush shook his head in anger.

"First they try and tell me that I should be worried about global warming." He spat into the spittoon he'd had specially installed. "Then they tell me that there's no bombs in Iraq and I shouldn't blow those commie bastards to hell. As if they know anything about fighting a war!"

His aide winced. "Do you mean scientists sir?"

"Yeah. Nerds. And now this."

The aide tried to read upside-down. The report was from the Journal of Religion and Society and said: "In general, higher rates of belief in and worship of a creator correlate with higher rates of homicide, juvenile and early adult mortality, teen pregnancy and abortion in the prosperous democracies." America was cited as a prime case.

Bush began to rant. "It's because they're all weak, and unpatriotic, and won't fight for their country, that's what it is."

The door to the Oval office opened suddenly, and an Asian man in a military uniform walked in. In a flash, Bush leapt behind his desk and began to cower. "I never fought in Vietnam, I was hiding in Texas, please don't kill me sir!"

The two aides glanced at each other.

Listings

15th October Miscarriage of Justice Day with workshops from 10.30am, meeting starts 2pm, at Friend's Meeting House, Mount Street, Manchester, see unitedagainstjustice.org.uk

16th October International day of action against McDonald's, to mark World Food Day, call 020 7713 1269 or see mcsplight.org

16th October Opposing ID Cards, talk at Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London at 11am, see www.ethicalsoc.org.uk/events.htm

17th October Indymedia film night at Inn on the Green, 3 Thorpe Close, London W10, an evening of films from the 2005 G8 protests from 7pm to 11pm

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/

22nd to 24th October Put the brakes on Rolls Royce Raynesway, Trident Ploughshares are organising a weekend of action against Rolls Royce in Derby (the driving force behind Trident, this plant in Derby produces reactor fuel for Trident submarines - essential for Britain's nuclear WMD), for more info see tridentploughshares.org

23rd October Freedom to Protest conference at The Resource Centre, 356 Holloway Road, London N7, from 11am to 5pm, for more info see freedomtoprotest.org.uk

29th October 'Whose London? Shaping Alternative Futures for our City' London Social Forum conference, see londonsocialforum.org.uk

29th October Vegan food fair from 12.30 to 3.30pm at Methodist Church Hall in Percy Road, Hampton, for info contact Lesley@vegan4life.org.uk or 020 8941 8075

3rd November Ken Campbell Impro Show from 8pm at The Inn on the Green, 3 Thorpe Close, London W10, see newagenda.demon.co.uk/perclub.html

5th November IWW Centenary Festival with films during the day and a Robb Johnson gig starting at 8pm, Rampart Social Centre, 15-17 Rampart Street, London E1 (off Commercial Road), organised by London Wobblies.

10th November The tenth anniversary of the execution of Ken Saro-Wiwa, see www.remembersarowiwa.com

26th and 27th November BeyondTV International Festival, Swansea, see www.undercurrents.org/beyondtv

3rd December International Day of Climate Protest, see campaigncc.org

Introducing...

The SUMAC Centre

Community/activist resource centre SUMAC is recovering strongly after a lean summer. A volunteer at the centre said: "There was a definite ebb of enthusiasm, especially when people went up to the G8. Money was starting to become a problem, but things have started picking up markedly recently."

SUMAC host various local groups, including Nottinghamshire Indymedia, an antifascist group, Zapatista support network and a kids' group.

It is made up of a community café, social club, a radical/social library, and hosts an art exhibition space. The café is open from 11am to 3pm from Friday to Saturday.

245 Gladstone Street, Nottingham
Contact: 0845 458 9595 or sumac@veggies.org.uk
Website: veggies.org.uk/sumac

SUBSCRIPTION FORM

Send to Freedom Press, 84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1 7QX

- Please start a NEW subscription to Freedom for issues
- Please RENEW my subscription to Freedom for issues
- I enclose a donation
- I'd like to pay by Standing Order and have completed the form (see right)

I enclose £ payment (cheques payable to Freedom Press please)

Name

Address

Postcode

STANDING ORDER FORM

Please return to Freedom, 84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1 7QX

To the manager (your bank)

Bank name

Bank address

Postcode

£ each month/quarter/year (delete as appropriate) starting on (date)

Name(s) of account holder(s)

Account number Sort code

Signature

For bank use only

Please pay this sum to Freedom Press, account number 82946905, sort code 72-00-05, Alliance & Leicester Commercial Bank plc, Bridle Road, Bootle, Merseyside GIR 0AA

SUBSCRIPTION RATES

	inland	Europe	outside Europe (surface)	outside Europe (airmail)
--	--------	--------	--------------------------	--------------------------

Freedom (24 Issues) half price for 12 Issues				
Claimants	16.00	-	-	-
Regular	20.00	29.00	29.00	41.00
Institutions	28.00	36.00	36.00	46.00
Supporter	48.00	60.00	60.00	72.00

Get in touch with us for details of bundle rates.

Note that we have a new 'supporter' sub rate.

You can also use the Standing Order form to ensure that your subscription always gets paid on time, or if you want to make a regular donation to Freedom.

All prices are in £ sterling.

You can now subscribe online at www.freedompress.org.uk

FREEDOM fortnightly ISSN 0016 0504