

# FREEDOM

80P ANARCHIST NEWS AND VIEWS

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## STIRRINGS IN THE DEEP

The 8th January saw the RMT rail union take strike action designed to provide better staffing and protect fire safety levels for the London underground. Following unanswered pleas from the RMT to tube chiefs to accept a compromise deal earlier this month, the strike – the second in two weeks – closed 31 London stations.

In a surprise development, a second wildcat strike from drivers for the Aslef transport union has also developed on the Northern line. Workers on the line are protesting the firing of a driver for allegedly sleeping on duty.

An agreement last year between the RMT and London Underground forged a new type of deal which reduced workers' hours to 35, but allowed them to take 'quality' time off instead of short daily reductions.

The effect was to allow ten days' extra holiday per employee, though these were to be 'self-financed' by the workers. Since the deal was struck however, London Underground has attempted to reduce the number of workers on the line, something which the RMT say will make stations unsafe.

One tube worker, interviewed for libertarian website Libcom, said: "It has been the implementation of the new rosters that has caused the current dispute. There is an acceptance by the RMT that the demographics within stations are changing: the success of the Oyster card has meant that fewer passengers are queuing at station windows, especially in central London stations in the morning peak.

"For this reason it was agreed that 200 'multi-functional' staff could be

displaced to other positions. There was, however, a tacit acceptance that if 4,500 station staff are getting 10 days extra leave (45,000 work days) rosters would need to be re-visited with the likelihood of more staff being required.

"LUL resisted this and, even in the aftermath of the terrorist outrages in July, denied the need for more staff. Meanwhile the Government, with the support of LUL, is trying to do away with the fire regulations (section 12 stations) introduced in the wake of the Kings Cross fire. This will result in the wholesale reduction of station staff in safety critical roles."

The strike was condemned by 'Red' Ken Livingstone, who said its only effect would be to inconvenience commuters. He also said in a letter to RMT chief Bob Crow that the unions claims were "factually false".

"To postpone implementation further at this stage would create chaos in the negotiations and compromise staff holiday arrangements," he said.

Workers were encouraged to scab by LU, while managers and supervisors from the TSSA union were encouraged to work 16-hour shifts and head office staff were put to work with only a few hours' training (usual training takes 12 weeks)

The white collar Transport Salaried Staffs' Association (TSSA) did not come out in support, after union chiefs told members to avoid confrontations. Train drivers in the Associated Society of Locomotive Engineers and Firemen (ASLEF) union continued to work other than on the Northern line.

However, all drivers and signal workers



are now being balloted for action short of a strike to allow them to refuse to work on safety grounds on strike days. While individual TSSA workers are already joining the RMT and refusing to work strike days, Aslef have put out

a leaflet urging their drivers to leave the RMT and undermine the strike.

Libcom's source said: "LUL's plans mean that those Edgware Road, King's Cross and Liverpool Street will lose 30%, 75% and 70% respectively of their

front line staff. After the attacks on 7/7 Bob Crow predicted that the people the *Evening Standard* described as heroes would be villains again as soon as we asked for more money or shorter hours. How right he was."

## LIGHTS ON BROADWAY

Calogero Tony Platia, who ran Francesca's Café on Broadway Market in Hackney for 31 years, was evicted by 50 police officers in July 2005 after two unsuccessful attempts and a firebombing. Since the end of November, local residents from Hackney have been occupying the café to prevent its demolition by property developer Dr Roger Wratten.

The café was sold to Wratten by Hackney Council, after which he promptly raised the rent 1,200%. In a story which mirrors the sales of much of its

commercial properties in the street and elsewhere in the borough, Tony attempted to buy the café from the council, but was passed over when their estate agents sold them to developers Wratten (c/o a £2m house in rural Kent).

The occupation has now been going for six weeks – minus four days where the café was evicted, only to be re-occupied on Boxing Day and partially rebuilt (including a new roof and back wall) by New Year's Eve.

It has seen remarkable local support, with hundreds of supporters passing through the doors and extensive media coverage which has extended from British newspapers and television to Germany, Italy and Australia.

Broadway Market is currently at the sharp-end of rapid gentrification in Hackney as assets which were previously state-owned are handed over at an ever increasing rate to serve city workers and

city companies. Increasingly we see the physical removal of working class people from the area via a land grab fuelled by the state and capital working in concert through regeneration schemes and 'creative industries' development. Rents are rising about as fast as luxury flats go up.

The occupation on Broadway Market provides a glimpse of the potential for resistance against the encroachment of capital and commodity society on our public space and free time.

Although a handful of experienced political activists are involved, the overwhelming majority of people drinking tea each day in Francesca's "haven't done anything like this before" (letter to *Hackney Gazette*, Thursday 9th December).

Although highly localised and borne out of the daily experience of life for

## CHINA'S DEATH MINES

In December, somewhere between 100-150 Chinese coal miners died after an explosion in the private Liuguantun mine and flooding at Dongfeng mine.

These are the latest in a series of major accidents in the mines of China where there has been a great loss of life. Since October 2004 there have been four major mining disasters where over 100 miners have been killed. The largest occurred in February this year when 214 miners were killed in an explosion at the Sunjiawan mine.

In 2005 at least 6,000 miners were killed in mining accidents, almost the same as in 1995. Labour rights groups have placed the figures as high as 20,000.

China's economy is growing at 8% per annum and needs huge amounts of energy to sustain this growth. 70% of its energy needs are met by coal. China is the largest producer of coal in the world producing 1.7 billion tons in 2003, up from 1 billion tons in 2000.

Some economists predict that China's production of coal will continue to grow until 2030, with China alone consuming two thirds of global output. This would be disastrous according to environmental campaigners, as China has not signed any agreements concerning reductions in CO<sub>2</sub> emissions, with seven of the world's most polluted cities being Chinese.

Observers have reported miners having to work with inadequate clothing and footwear, little or no training in the use of equipment and where safety rules are ignored; working 10 hours a day for seven days a week for remuneration of between \$50 and \$120 per month.

In one recent accident relatives claimed that the management knew that gas levels were high. One relative said: "I heard around the 20th (November) the gas was already high above safe levels and the alarm was going off but no one did anything about it."

Ellen Kemp

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# Home and away

## Police powerup

From 1st January 2006 a police officer has the power to arrest anyone;

1. Who is about to commit an offence
2. Who is in the act of committing an offence
3. Whom he has reasonable grounds for suspecting to be about to commit an offence
4. Whom he has reasonable grounds for suspecting to be committing an offence.

All offences are now arrestable. The triviality of the offence is inconsequential, and the final arbiter for the necessity of arrest is the arresting police officer.

Once arrested, not charged, you can be drug tested. This became law on 1st December 2005.

Additionally the new powers introduce covert evidence gathering, including DNA, fingerprints, shoeprints and digital photographs.

A new stop and search power specifically for the under 18 year olds has been introduced, to search for fireworks.

Police may now apply for 'multi-premises' and 'all-premises' warrants which allows multiple access to premises owned or occupied by a suspect. These changes enable the police to apply for repeated entry warrants and extend the lifetime of warrants from one month to three months.

## Education education

A vote to decide whether education unions the AUT and NATFHE should merge was passed last month with a huge majority. The merger was supported by 79.2% of AUT and 95.7% of NATFHE members who voted.

The new union, the University and College Union (UCU), will represent further and higher education lecturers, managers, researchers and many academic-related staff such as librarians, and administrators. The two unions will amalgamate on 1st June.

Ahead of the merger, both unions have issued a statement asking all universities to put pressure on the University and Colleges Employers' association to honour commitments to spend at least one third of the extra fees from top up fees on improving staff pay. The measure was promised in April 2004 by the then minister for higher education Alan Johnson.

As Freedom goes to press a meeting is imminent on the subject, which will decide whether the unions intend to ballot for action at the start of March.

## Watchdog 'barks'

The chairman of a public spending watchdog has agreed with campaigners that privatising the NHS would not improve efficiency as he steps down from his role. James Strachan, who was Chairman of the Audit Commission, said that reorganising the NHS to introduce more private firms would have an impact on services. He also said it was nonsense to say the public sector cannot be as cost effective as private firms.

Unionists welcomed the comments, but expressed anger that Strachan had been unable to make them in his role in a supposed major public 'watchdog' service until he was due to leave.

# Around the world



**ANTARCTICA:** In the Southern Ocean Whale Sanctuary around Antarctica, anti-whaling activists in three ships – the Esperanza and Arctic Sunrise from Greenpeace, and the Farley Mowat from the Sea Shepherd Conservation Society – are shadowing a five-ship Japanese whaling fleet in an attempt to stop illegal whaling activities. On the 21st and 22nd December Greenpeace activists clashed with the Japanese whaling fleet.

While the Australian Government has refused to take action against Japanese whaling, storms and high seas have hampered whale hunting over Christmas. Further clashes are forecast, with Captain Paul Watson of the Farley Mowat threatening a showdown with the Japanese fleet to "do everything we can with the resources at our disposal to shut down their illegal slaughter of these gentle and intelligent creatures", including sustaining damages to their ship if necessary.

**BRAZIL:** Landless members of the MST land movement in Brazil who have taken possession of the Chico Mendes lot in Taboão da Serra initiated a hunger strike late last month after repossession attempts.

Activists from the Roofless Workers' Movement occupied the headquarters of the CDHE on Saturday 16th December, and initiated a hunger strike two days later in front of the home of President Lula in São Bernardo do Campo.

Over the the course of two and a half months, the Chico Mendes occupation used every form of resistance as it sought to fulfil the social function of the property. It demanded the right to housing from public authorities, using mobilisations, symbolic actions, cultural activities, communications responding to attacks levelled by the mass media, vigils in front of the mayor's office, and every possible legal resource.

After the repossession, the lot will return to being an abandoned lot at the mercy of real estate speculation.

**PALESTINE:** The Israeli army has dismantled a peace 'outpost' constructed on lands recently cut off from West Bank villagers by the construction of a 'separation barrier' (see picture below).

A group of Bil'in villagers, supported by Israeli and International activists, established the outpost, which had been permitted by Bil'in's council and slated to serve as a peace centre.

It was located only 100 metres from Matityahu East neighbourhood of the illegal Israeli settlement Upper Modi'in.

Less than 48 hours later, however, Israeli army personnel dismantled the peace outpost, contradicting its accommodation of Israeli settlements and sparking a national discussion about apartheid. Seven activists arrested during the dismantling were later released after waiting for hours due to their refusal to sign



orders preventing them from entering Bil'in for the next 15 days.

For the past 10 months Bil'in has struggled in the face of effective land confiscations due to the path of Israel's 'security barrier', demonstrating every Friday along with Israeli and International activists.

Several Bil'in youths are currently incarcerated in Israeli jails, and several Israeli activists are facing charges following the demonstrations. The village continues ongoing activities: meetings, tours of the wall, direct actions, and the peace centre. Today, despite Israeli army's tear gas, a few youth from Bil'in reportedly made their way to the centre carrying cement hoping to keep working on the structure.

**MEXICO:** On 4th January the Zapatistas began the first of a series of town-hall-like meetings that will comprise the bulk of a six-month nationwide caravan dubbed as the Other Campaign. The campaign will touch every state in Mexico and aspires to form a wide-ranging non-electoral and anti-capitalist alliance that can be a powerful enough of a force to implement a new constitution for Mexico.

The means on how to accomplish this will be decided upon after consultation with allies of the Zapatistas during the campaign. Subcommandante Marcos (pictured right), now redesignated as a civilian known as Delegate Zero, stated the campaign will "keep the microphone open with someone taking you into account, something that you will never find in any political party or in any structure of the government."

The first public meeting of the Other Campaign was held at an indigenous university named the University of the Earth. The Zapatistas say that the new constitution they hope to implement would fundamentally oppose neo-



liberalism and finally put into practice the San Andrés accords that were agreed upon in 1996.

The accords, which would grant the Zapatistas significant autonomy and land rights, were never put into practice.

**WASHINGTON:** In a shock admission, top US lobbyist Jack Abramoff has pleaded guilty in a corruption probe, and has promised to co-operate in other investigations.

Abramoff, who has been the conduit for major corporate contributions to both the Republicans and Democrats, has caused waves of consternation among Congressmen by agreeing to talk about alleged corruption.

It is thought members of Congress may have taken campaign contributions and gifts in exchange for favourable treatment of Abramoff's clients.

Abramoff has also pleaded guilty to wire-fraud charges for allegedly falsifying a loan in the purchase of a Florida casino cruise line. Prosecutors have said that Abramoff's willingness to testify could give them the means to prove intent on the part of the politicians.

# Prison news

**Daniel McGowan arrested:** On 7th December 2005, Daniel (an activist associated with the Friends of Jeffrey 'Free' Luers Support Network and various other projects) was arrested and his New York apartment raided.

Federal prosecutors are alleging that Daniel, indicted on 16 different counts, was involved in two separate fires in Oregon during 2001 which were claimed by the Earth Liberation Front.

The prosecution is pushing for mandatory minimum sentences of 30 years each on the two major charges.

Additional arrests and raids happened across the US.

It's likely that Daniel will shortly be transferred to Oregon, where the charges against him originate, but for now letters of support can be sent to him at: Daniel McGowan, #1407167, Lane County Jail, 101 West 5th Avenue, Eugene, OR 97401, USA.

Daniel's family has asked everyone to remember the following points:

- Don't use nicknames.
- Don't discuss Daniel's pending case.
- Even if you are a lawyer, don't discuss legal information or offer legal advice.

- Don't discuss any illegal activity.
- Be smart – remember *all* mail is read by prison officials.

For further info see [spiritoffreedom.org.uk](http://spiritoffreedom.org.uk)

**Bill Rodgers:** We are very sad to have to announce that William 'Bill' Rodgers, another of those who were arrested on the 7th December (see above) and who was being held on remand, has ended his own life.

Bill's many friends and supporters have issued the following statement (see [catalystinfoshop.org](http://catalystinfoshop.org)): "We mourn the passing of our dear friend and community member, Bill Rodgers, who worked tirelessly for the causes of social justice and environmental sustainability. We ask that he be remembered as the gentle, kind and compassionate person we all knew and loved here in Prescott. We remain committed to continuing the work of community building and ecological awareness, through the Catalyst Infoshop, as part of the legacy Bill helped to create. We wish our friend the peace and serenity that he strived so hard to create in this world. This is a

great loss for our community. We love you, Bill."

**Jose Delgado transferred:** Supporters of Aachen prisoner Jose Delgado arrived to visit him at Koeln prison in Germany only to find that he had been transferred some days earlier to Bochum prison. Jose is still being held in very oppressive conditions and is confined to his cell 24 hours a day.

Please write urgently (in Spanish if possible) to: Jose Fernandez Delgado, AZ 62 KS 22-04, Landgericht Aachen, Postfach, D-52034 Aachen, Germany.

**Irish prisoners in Britain:** According to the Irish Commission for Prisoners Overseas, there are currently over 900 Irish nationals being held in British prisons, and imprisonment is now a first rather than last resort to deal with minor offenders.

**Working for Saint Patrick:** Anti-prison labour activists were recently surprised to learn that life-sentence prisoners in Kingston prison are being employed folding Rosary Guides for the Saint

Patrick's Missionary Society. If they are to be believed, the missionaries were surprised too, as they apparently didn't know anything about it. However, now that they do, they still don't plan to do anything about it.

**More bad news for Sam:** It is with regret that we report the death of Sue Cole, tireless campaigner for her son Sam, and a member of Merseyside Against Injustice. Sam, who is fighting a murder conviction widely believed to be a miscarriage of justice, was not allowed to attend the funeral. Messages of support can be sent to: Sam Cole, HM3009, HMP Longlartin, Evesham, Worcs. WR11 5TZ. More info at [mojuk.org.uk/eddie/samuelcole](http://mojuk.org.uk/eddie/samuelcole)

**Exhibit @:** The London-based prisoner support group Exhibit @ now have a new email address. Contact them at [prisonisacrime@hushmail.com](mailto:prisonisacrime@hushmail.com)

**Prison statistics:** In British prisons during 2005 there were 77,800 prisoners and 78 suicides.

compiled by Mark Barnsley

  
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# News

## Home sweet home

### Edinburgh tenants have won a major victory against council house Stock Transfers after one of the bitterest campaigns of 2005

Tenants of one of Britain's largest council housing groups voted late last month not to transfer stock over to a housing association in a shock vote. The decisive blow to the council's privatisation plans was celebrated by tenants as "a victory for people power" and was quickly followed by a demand that the Council commit to direct investment in Edinburgh's housing stock.

The result of the ballot, on a 60.5% turnout, was 53% 'no' with 47% voting 'yes' to the transfer. The 'no' vote means that the transfer of 23,000 homes from City of Edinburgh Council (CEC) to City of Edinburgh Housing Association Limited (CEHA Limited) will not go through. Campaigners had argued that a 'yes' vote would have entailed a fundamental shift from public to private ownership.

The consultation and campaigning process was one of the toughest so far in the ongoing nationwide rollout of the transfers, with Edinburgh council allegedly spending over £5million on a campaign for the 'yes' vote.

Meanwhile, a core group of around 15-20 people, supporting small groups of tenants on the estates, managed a shoe-string campaign which succeeded in persuading 7,300 tenants to vote 'no'.

Housing chiefs have been wrong-footed by the decision, which ends plan to transfer housing over to an Arms Length Management Organisation (ALMO), which had been pushed by a national government offering to wipe out the council's £350m debt and supply billions more in upgrade money in exchange.

One activist for the campaign said: "The Council attempted to harass, bully and persuade tenants into a 'yes' vote, meanwhile portraying the spectre of an imagined landscape of decaying housing

beset with damp, crumbling walls, and endemic anti-social behaviour should tenants vote 'no'.

"No-one can deny there is a serious problem with 'social housing' as it stands. What we can argue about is what type of solutions we seek to these problems. The City of Edinburgh Council effectively short-cutted this debate by presenting a ballot with only one option on it."

Campaigners focussed on two main issues: privatisation and rent costs.

The City Council said transfer would 'unlock' £2 billion pounds of investment for City housing over the next 30 years. £1.3 billion of this investment would come from private finance and be raised through borrowing.

In this way, the council argued, they would be able to invest massively in housing stock without having to increase tenants rents. EAST argued that this money, from the Scottish Executive accounts, should be made available for direct investment through the City Council, without the need for transfer. This is a substantial figure that would do much to create better living conditions throughout Edinburgh.

They also argued that despite City of Edinburgh Housing Association Limited (CEHA limited) being a 'not-for-profit' company, would have to obtain its funding from private companies and banks, therefore shifting ownership from public to private and constituting a privatisation process.

The City of Edinburgh Housing Association Limited (CEHA Ltd) had argued that they could guarantee average weekly rents would be no more than £58.49 for the first five years should transfer go ahead.

They contrasted this with rents should tenants stay with the Council. The



Hot topic: One of two incinerators currently operating in Nottingham belches smoke over the nearby community. The operator, Waste Recycling Groups (WRG), plans to build a third incinerator in the city and have been buoyed by a warm response from the Environmental Agency, despite a poor pollution record. WRG have been given a new licence to continue running their existing incinerator and have in principle been given the go-ahead to expand it. They have had 29 pollution breaches in the last four years, but the group has not been prosecuted for any of them. WRG are proposing to build an 'open grate' design incinerator, of the same design as the current two. These were designed in the 1960s and built in 1972, albeit with a few 'bolt on' extras. Campaigners are planning to fight their next battle over planning, as WRG are yet to site the project.

average weekly rent would then be £67.57. However, the Defend Council Housing campaign group has sourced evidence which shows considerable rent increases in England after large-scale

transfer to housing associations. Average rents had increased from between 24.40% to 43.01% between 1997 and 2004 in council areas which had chosen transfer. Council chiefs have said that rents

will have to rise to take account of the need to raise housing standards to the 'Decent Homes Standard' – a standard suggested by the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister.

## Pensions relapse

Two FTSE 100 companies have followed the example of Rentokil in closing their final salary pension schemes, with another likely to follow as Freedom goes to press.

Chiefs at the Co-operative group have expressed surprise as unions have threatened strike action after they announced the closure of their scheme.

The retail and banking group has said it will change the basis for payments on its pension scheme from 5th April to an average salary system rather than linking it to final-year pay.

The company does not currently have a deficit in its scheme but has said the measure is being taken to prevent a hole developing.

Arcadia chief Phillip Green has meanwhile fallen foul of the pensions regulator after the company failed to consult the governmental watchdog before changing its own scheme at the beginning of the year to force staff to pay more and work for five years longer before retirement.

In the middle of negotiations over the company pension pot in October 2004 Green paid himself £1.3bn, while the pension fund was £11.6m in arrears. The money he paid himself was more than five times Arcadia's total profits that year and was raised through borrowing against the business.

The closures look likely to be the tip of the iceberg. A survey by the National Association of Pension Funds found that a quarter of all pension schemes expect to close their final salary schemes.

They follow the closure of Rentokil's pension scheme, which was designed to save the group millions when it made the announcement to current employees in late December.

Rentokil's decision will affect 3,000 people who will have their pensions frozen at current levels. The company already had plans which would see their pension deficit settled by 2012, but said it wanted to make sure there would be no more deficits in future.

The changes have been echoed in the US, where electronics giant IBM have closed their final salary pension scheme and made it clear that the 20,000 UK workers currently covered would be likely to suffer the same fate.

The company, which has a £4.2bn pension deficit, said it would stop contributing entirely to the scheme for its US members and move employees to poorer-paying 'money purchase' schemes, which bases retirement fund payouts solely on market performance rather than service time and pay.

Some companies have stated they will not reduce their pension schemes, such as Advertising group WPP, online directory Yell.com, gas exploration firm BG Group and caterer Compass, who all had similar shortfalls to Rentokil.

Compass in particular is £532m in debt on its pensions, but has paid £1m bonuses into the pension funds of its Chairman Sir Francis Mackay and Chief Executive Michael J. Bailey.

## NHS armies

Several NHS marches have taken place over the last month, as groups form to fight proposed cutbacks around the country.

• 7th January saw the largest march so far with over 4,000 people from around Shropshire gathering in the grounds of Bridgnorth Castle before marching through the town in a protest against plans to close hospitals. A petition with thousands more signatures was also handed in to local MPs.

• Shortly before Christmas, another major march took place when over 2,000 took to the streets of Penrith in Cumbria. The NHS trust in these areas has proposed cutting 118 beds to save £2.4 million.

Other protests took place across the region, including in Keswick on 26th December. North Cumbria's PCT have, as a result, postponed a consultation on the cuts until next month.

• On 28th December over 100 people turned out to attack cuts which would

see £49 million worth of services cut from out of Welwyn Garden City's QEII hospital.

• A march in Cambridge saw 300 people walking through the town centre last month to register their views on the subject, chanting 'Stop the cuts, defend the NHS'.

Martin Booth, from Unison, said: "We think that the government needs to put in more money. This is a national problem, we are going to be lobbying parliament to demand that they not go private."

• Over 1,000 people protested on a two-hour walk from Huddersfield Royal Infirmary to the town centre on 12th December in a bid to save hospital services. The march was supported by a petition signed by 20,000 people asking PCT chiefs not to move services to Halifax.

Other marches have taken place from earlier in the year, and a national campaign 'Keep the NHS public' has recently been launched by the public sector union Unison.

## News

# Off the buses

Trade union resistance in Iran has spectacularly erupted with a massive government repression, reports Rob Ray

The first independent Iranian union in over 20 years has had its leading activists imprisoned, its funds frozen and has been told it must dissolve, after a strike was called in late December.

The Tehran Public Bus Transportation Company Trade Union is fighting for its survival after a major crackdown by Iranian secret services saw eight leading union activists arrested for organising workers in a 'no fares' action in the capital.

The arrested unionists are being held in Tehran's Evin prison, notorious for its political prisoners wing, on the grounds they had attempted to 'disturb public order' by calling for the strike.

A second reason for the imprisonments is the emergence of the union itself. The government has officially recognised only 'Islamic Labour Councils', organisations that operate on the basis of ideology and religious affiliation, as legal representatives of the country's workers.

The strike, called in response to the arrests, paralysed the city despite intimidation and threats of violence by the authorities. Transport workers have now threatened to call an indefinite strike action if their leadership is not released.

Mining and automobile workers' unions have pledged to join the drivers. The Tehran workers have received messages of support from, among others, workers of the oil and petrochemical industry of Khuzestan, the Shaho textile company, the Kermanshah Metal & Mechanical Workers' Association, the Iran Khodro car plant, and the Kurdistan Textile company.

Non-violent protests have been growing in number in Iran over the last year despite repressive measures from the Iranian government. Medical professionals, teachers and other workers have gone on strike while 6,000 women protested during last year's elections over government policy towards women.

Sa'id Torabian, from the union, said to Radio Farda: "Striking is a labourer's natural right. For months, we have been trying to explain our problems to the authorities. We have talked to most of them, including one of the President's advisors, but never got any answer to our demands."

Bus drivers in Iran are notoriously badly paid, with many forced to work two jobs to pay bills. Drivers currently have a starting monthly salary of 2,000,000 rials (\$250) with the average pay of an experienced driver at about 3,000,000 rials (\$375).

Ebrahim Madadi, one of the activists of the union, said that according to various economic institutes "compared to 1979 workers [real] wages have fallen by 45%" and what they are asking for are "basic demands".

Iran, which has a population of over 70 million, is struggling with more than 20% unemployment and high inflation. Official figures put inflation annually at 16% but some experts say it could be nearly double that.

Judge Sa'id Mortazavi, the Prosecutor for Tehran and Islamic Revolution Tribunals, ordered the arrests, which saw leading unionists beaten up by plain-



Tehran's notorious Evin prison

clothes members of the Ansar Hezbollah at a strike meeting before being arrested in dawn raids on 22nd December.

Mr Mortazavi is better known by the Iranian public as 'The Butcher of the Press', for having successfully shut

down more than 120 independent and pro-reform publications between 1999 and 2000.

Internationally all trade unionists, socialists and other activists are asked to support these workers.

Please send your emails of protest to the President of the Islamic Republic of Iran at [dr-ahmadinejad@president.ir](mailto:dr-ahmadinejad@president.ir)

Letters of protest can be addressed to the UK Iranian Embassy, 16 Prince's Gate London SW7 1PT, email [info@iran-embassy.org.uk](mailto:info@iran-embassy.org.uk)

## Irish Ferries dispute

SIPTU, the Irish trade union, has capitulated in its dispute with Irish Ferries, with ominous consequences for industrial relations.

Irish Ferries have been allowed to re-register its ships in Cyprus, replace over 500 Irish staff workers, who will accept redundancy, with contracted migrant workers, who will be paid the Irish minimum wage of €7.65 (£5.23) per hour.

The dispute started in September after Irish Ferries workers occupied the Isle of Inishmore to protest the company's plans to reflag its ships. This would have allowed Irish Ferries to replace 543 crew with agency workers from Eastern Europe on wages of €3.50 an hour. This outsourcing of labour was seen as an attempt to weaken Irish union conditions and labour legislation.

The outcome has disappointed workers and many feel that the next stage will be a general strike. Dermot Meagher, an officer with the Isle of Inishmore, told the [Irish] Socialist

Worker there "is no way this type of industrial relations is acceptable". If necessary, he said, "we need to bring this country to a halt and we know that the support is there for this battle. This is about jobs for the future and the future of all jobs in this country."

SIPTU Vice President, Brendan Hayes, saw it differently. "The Union has been successful in ensuring that the threshold of decency has been defended and that vulnerable migrant maritime workers have the protection of Irish law," he said. "One of our key objectives was the payment of the Irish minimum wage and this has now been achieved."

A general strike would pitch vulnerable workers against the unions, as well as employers and government. But there is also a real fear that Irish unionised labour will clash with contracted migrant labour.

Kieran Allen, a labour specialist, said the Irish Ferries dispute was a touchpaper for industrial relations.

"Already the construction and meat industries are employing large numbers of workers on a self-employed or agency basis and have used this system to undercut hard won trade union conditions. If Irish Ferries succeed, it will spread like wildfire throughout the Irish economy."

The company has been thwarted over lower wages, but its plans to replace Irish unionised labour working under union conditions and protected by labour law has succeeded. The contracted workers are expected to work longer hours with no union protection.

The fear that wages will be driven down and conditions weakened concerned the thousands of workers who joined a Day of Action on 9th December in solidarity with the Irish Ferries workers. There were protests in Dublin, Cork, Limerick, Galway, Waterford, Sligo, Athlone, Tralee and Rosslaire, involving up to 100,000 people, a foretaste, many workers promise, of things to come.

## WTO's gone on

As Freedom goes to press, 14 people involved in the WTO protests in Hong Kong last month are still being held by police for being in 'illegal street demonstrations'.

Over 900 people were arrested on 17th December and later released during the most dramatic clashes of the talks.

Led by a hugely militant South Korean farmer presence, mass protests outside the WTO talks in Hong Kong have been declared a huge success by organisers as combatants came within feet of storming the hosting conference centre.

In a crowd of around 5,000 people, 1,500 peasants seasoned by extensive clashes with South Korean police over the last few years formed the backbone of the confrontations.

Hong Kong police, who were forced on several occasions to indiscriminately use tear gas on the crowds, said in a statement they had used 'minimum force' to keep control on the ground.

However, despite the apparently strong challenge, the WTO negotiations came

up, according to observation group Focus on the Global South, with a free-trade agreement.

Focus said that the agreement "will corral many developing countries into sectoral negotiations designed to blast open key services."

"What the South got in return was mainly a date for the final phase-out of export subsidies in agriculture that nevertheless left the structure of subsidisation of agricultural subsidisation in the European Union and the United States largely intact. Even with the phase out of formally defined export subsidies, other forms of export support will allow the EU, for instance, to continue to subsidise exports to the tune of €55 billion after 2013.

"In sum, this was an agreement with teeth, but the bite will be felt principally by the developing countries"

The collapse of the 'G20' bloc of developing countries came after leaders Brazil and India cut deals with the West for their own benefit.

# Feature

# Roll on new year

## Going back through the archives, Freedom looks back at the highs and lows during a year of catastrophes and fighting

### January

- This time last year Freedom was decrying the poor response to the Boxing Day tsunami in Southern Asia, and predicting that funds would not get to where they were needed most. This has proven prophetic. Although some reconstruction has taken place, vast sums of money have been wasted, not paid by those that pledged them, or diverted away from rebellious areas by governments eager to take advantage.
- The TUC responded to a survey saying UK bosses received around £23bn a year in unpaid overtime by suggesting a 'work your hours' day. For January 2006, they have suggested a 'work your hours day' in response to a report saying workers average eight hours unpaid overtime a week. They are keen to stress workers don't mind putting in overtime.

### February

- Over ten thousand people protested in Washington at the inauguration of President Bush. Police used batons, water cannon and mass arrests to keep order.
- Freedom exclusively revealed that, having been sold off by the government just nine years earlier for £5m, rail haulage group Freightliner had been sold on for £96m. The loss-making firm was hailed as a privatisation success story, making a £14m profit for 2004 having been a loss-maker under nationalisation. The team who made it profitable and pocketed most of the windfall? The same team as had been running it under nationalisation.
- Anarchists set up rail bunker's unions in Sweden under the slogan 'Free ride now!', offering an insurance system where people pay a token amount to a central fund, then free ride until they are caught, then the fund pays the fine.

### March

- A report from the US revealed that aging nuclear bombs were still being kept underground in a nuclear bunker in Lakenheath, Suffolk. A document signed by Clinton in 2000 acknowledged the existence of 101 bombs, according to files released under the Freedom of Information act by the National Resources Defence Council.
- The McLibel case ended in victory for Helen Steel and Dave Morris, after a European court declared the case was in breach of the right to a fair trial and against freedom of expression.
- Bolivia witnessed huge mass protests and open revolt against the government from leftists groups demanding the ending of water contracts to French corporation Suez and the renegotiation of energy contracts. Freedom is the only UK publication that we know of to have carried the story at that time.

### April

- Freedom exclusively revealed that not only was the government about to

privatise the nuclear waste industry, but that the front-runners were not suitable for the job. Of the five front-runner companies, one had only just emerged from bankruptcy with a two-year backlog of work, one had no previous history of running a nuclear enterprise and three had been fined within the last year for safety and environmental violations.

- Rover went under after the Phoenix Group ran off, perfectly legally, with £40m of the company's research money and tried to sell the remains of a largely gutted company to the Chinese for technology parts. Over 6,000 jobs were lost with the media and government shrugging shoulders about the inevitability of industrial decline.

### May

- The government rolled out its latest plan to solve the housing problem with its 'Pathfinder' scheme – a plan to demolish 400,000 homes across the north of England. The thinking behind the idea was to demolish the cheap housing and build "attractive, good quality new homes, and upgrade existing homes to push up their market value."

- Ahead of the G8 meeting in Scotland, research into claims from the world's richest nations that the agenda would include 'making poverty history' showed that actually, the proposals would exacerbate poverty and increase Western hegemony over some of the world's poorest countries.

### June

- The Zapatistas, a resistance group based in the Chiapas region of Mexico, went into hiding unexpectedly, sparking rumours that they had gotten wind of an imminent Mexican government attack. A statement said it was a precautionary measure while an internal consultation took place. Later on in the month, they emerged with a new plan of action, to begin wider consultation and alliance building with leftist currents across the country. For January 2005, they have begun a tour of Mexico (see page 4).

- The GMB union found itself beginning an ongoing battle with breakdown recovery group the AA after the company attempted to establish a scab union to break the GMB's influence. The company, it was thought, was looking for a means to more easily sack 1,300 workers.

### July

- The G8 saw thousands of anti-capitalists take to the streets in Scotland, accompanied by a baying pack of reporters and police and swamped by hundreds of thousands of people supporting the 'make poverty history' campaign. Post-negotiations, anarchist groups noted that the results of the talks had gone exactly as predicted in



Aftermath of the Boxing Day tsunami

May, and that the best result of the month was that "at least they haven't gone backwards" on climate change. Well done to all at the Make Poverty History camp, evidently we were wrong and, like with Stop The War, peaceful mass demos and festivals actually do make all the difference in the world to capitalist policy.

- The London bombings shook Britain, and began a process of internal repression and Big Brother legislation which is continuing now. Following accusations in two major newspapers that it might have been anti-capitalists or 'islamo-anarchists' (new one on us) anarchist groups across the country signed a declaration condemning the use of such violence against ordinary people.

### August

- BA baggage handlers, in the most impressive display of solidarity of 2005, walked out on a wildcat strike in support of workers at Gate Gourmet who had been sacked after a union-busting and wage undercutting campaign by the catering company's bosses. The action, which catapulted the Gate Gourmet dispute into the public eye, saw BA partially implicated for driving down prices and gave the T&G union a major boost in negotiations, which was later squandered as they abandoned a dozen people classed as 'troublemakers' by Gate Gourmet's management.

- Freedom exclusively reported on the plight of the jailed Imini miners in Morocco, and the burning of Libertarian newspaper *Ici et Maintenant* as it fought

for their freedom against the royal family's best efforts.

### September

- Hurricane Katrina flooded New Orleans. In response, the US government condemned people who broke into shops to get food as 'looters'. Amongst stories of selfless bravery and self-sacrifice from ordinary members of the public, came reports that rescuers were being kept out of the city, followed by the hiring of mercenaries by the government to protect private property.

- A massive crisis in the NHS came to light, driven by UK government orders to stretched hospitals to make massive cost savings whilst simultaneously improving services. As hospital managers turned around and begin announcing cuts to areas such as mental health and youth programmes, Labour announced the solution should be privatisation.

- ID cards passed with a slim majority through the House of Commons, but were delayed in the Lords after taking severe criticism over their role, workability and cost.

### October

- Despite major disruption from new police tactics, protesters across the country demonstrated and fought against the DSEi arms fair. Hundreds of people turned out against the event.
- A cash crisis emerged at Childline, the major children's charity. The charity had not planned to speak of the job losses until late November, but was forced by the end of the month to announce new plans to merge with the NSPCC.

- The TUC backed down over pensions after a deal was cut to exclude current workers from attack.

### November

- Major riots began in the banlieus of Paris, before spreading throughout France. Over the course of 20 nights of rioting, 3,000 were arrested and 9,000 vehicles torched. The riots, which began as a response to police brutality and racism in the slums, saw right wing leader Nicolas Sarkozy threaten massive violence, but ended with pledges from all parties to reallocate resources to help give an economic lift to the affected areas.

- A white paper from the government advocated an effective part-privatisation of education at the same time as a leaked pension report said private sector workers would have to work an extra two years before retirement.

### December

Well, we took a break over most of the month so there's not much in the way of archives, but in the final early December edition (which some of you may have received late, our apologies for that)...

- It emerged that workplace cancer cases were likely to be four times as numerous as the government had previously estimated based on their inaccurate, 20-year-old US data.

- And of course it was alleged that Bush wanted to bomb Al Jazeera, while a major US lobbyist was brought to the stand accused of massive corruption in the senate.

# Commentary

## FREEDOM

Volume 67 Number 1

### 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

Welcome to the New Year everyone! Now that we've filled our stomachs and had our break, we're back for another year of thrills, spills and murderous capitalists doing what they do best while we try and do the opposite.

The spirit in which we mean to go on, following our harrowing year of skeleton staffing, we'd like to renew our call-out for help.

The Freedom building is an amazing potentiality, open for meetings and generally having a sit-down and a chat after work in the autonomy club, browsing for books, using our online facility in the hacklab and as a general focal point for anarchist organising.

But the building is not as full as it should be and is a hugely under-used resource in a movement which has very little to call its own. We are looking for people, not just to work a day in the shop, or do the building up, or help market the place, or send in articles, or help with editing, but to build a community, somewhere people want to come and hang around for the sake of it.

We want you. Without a community around it, Freedom will continue to struggle indefinitely until eventually, it will simply die. Given how much effort is put into opening up new social centres every year, that would be a waste, and a great shame.

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### Next issue

The next issue will be dated 28th January 2006 and the last day to get copy to us (see contact details above) will be Friday 20th January.

## Defending council housing

Privatisation has been sweeping the UK and attacking the working class and the downtrodden for years. Housing, transport, hospitals, gas, schools and water are just part of an ever growing list of services and resources which have been sold off by the state to marauding capitalist groups.

'Defend Council Housing' has been working for years to stop people's homes becoming the property of capitalist investors. The working class are facing a housing system where there are dire shortages, poor accommodation and they do not need this to be continued by private investors and then added to by increases in rent which all private housing associations have done country-wide.

These assaults on the working class must be stopped with all the strength of anarchists, trade unionists, anti-capitalists and all workers nationwide. If not now then when? If not us, then who?

West Midlands Anarchists calls for all anarchists and all workers, to join the rally called by 'Defend Council Housing' on the 8th February at Central Hall in Westminster at 12pm, and then to march on parliament demanding an end to privatisation and for communities to have control over their own housing stocks, not bureaucrats in local government or parasite capitalist thieves but working class people themselves.

And this needs to be more than a one-day affair, anarchists nationally need to get involved with the day to day local battles for better housing for working class people.

West Midlands Anarchists  
[www.wmanarchists.org](http://www.wmanarchists.org)

## Corporate spending of public finance

It appears that the psychopathy of the corporate profit drive knows no bounds. The free market economy that the CBI espouses is in fact nothing of the sort. In reality they want their economic opportunities fully subsidised from the public purse. Companies already benefit from low taxation, and little regulatory control, but this is not enough. They seek to maximise their profit potential by, seemingly, any means possible.

The sources of public subsidy to private profitability are many and diverse.

In the UK large payouts from the much criticised common agricultural policy are not actually going to farmers, but to companies such as Tate & Lyle, Nestlé, Cadbury and Kraft who produce refined products. Tate & Lyle, for example, received £227 million in 2003/4.

Other suppliers to the processed food industry who benefited from these handouts include Gate Gourmet and Premier Foods. Pharmaceutical companies such as GlaxoSmithKline, Boots, Reckitt and ACS Dobfar were also beneficiaries. A similar story exists throughout Europe, large multinationals not farmers are the primary recipients of these subsidies.

The Curry Commission was supposedly initiated to aid farmers' recovery from the effects of the foot and mouth epidemic. The commission stated that the "key objective of public policy should be to reconnect our food and farming industry; to reconnect farming

with its market and the rest of the food chain; to reconnect the food chain and the countryside; and to reconnect consumers with what they eat and how it is produced." £500 million was allocated to ensure that this was the case. Of course it was diverted for other uses.

Since the first report in 2002, Curry's proposals have done little to fulfill its self-proclaimed prime objective, but instead have encouraged neo-liberalism in the food industry. International competition and subservience to super-markets and other large multinational food businesses predominates.

The Food Chain Centre, run by the Institute of Grocery Distribution has been funded to the tune of £2.3m. Tesco, Sainsbury, Asda, Compass, Nestlé, Heinz, Procter & Gamble, Bernard Matthews, Kraft and Unilever, companies that are the root cause of the 'disconnection' between food producer and consumer, are the Institute's board members.

The Food Centre's job is to increase company profits by reducing costs, and the bill is picked up by us, the public. Other public funding of companies' groups also exist, for example the Cereals Industry Forum and the Red Meat Industry Forum which have also received millions.

And still the CBI want more. In fact it detailed an elaborate list in its CBI Recommendations For the Autumn 2005 Pre-Budget Report.

Further business tax cuts are demanded (both general business tax and corporation tax), a specific appeal is made to avoid 'new burdens' such as compulsory pension contributions, and further deregulation is required.

They also demand enhanced business advisory and networking services, and free research from higher education establishments. Road taxes for business should be eased, but transportation systems, roads and airports, should be improved.

These business improvements are to be paid for by restricting spending on health, social security and local council services.

In summary, don't waste public finance on the people, spend it on business. And oh, we don't want to contribute to anything other than our profits.

Dave E.

## Iraq: same old Bush bollocks

As the Iraq quagmire deepens, Bush is trying to bolster his support at home. One such attempt saw him make a speech in which he stated that "our strategy in Iraq is clear ... I will settle for nothing less than complete victory." Those paying attention will know that he declared victory in May, 2003. Since then, the costs in human lives and resources have increased, unlike Bush's approval ratings.

Not one to let reality get in the way of his rhetoric, Bush proclaimed that America was on course for "complete victory" and he ruled out any firm timetable for the withdrawal of US troops from Iraq. Yet the war was launched, so Bush claimed, to disarm Iraq of its WMD. As such, 'complete victory' was achieved before a single shot was fired. This would have been proven by the UN weapons inspectors, which was why Bush launched his invasion when he did. A few more weeks and the world would have proof that the Bush Junta had been lying about Saddam's threat to America in order to

justify a long desired imperialist war. So when Bush asserts that "pulling our troops out before they achieve their purpose is not a plan for victory" the America people should ask what purpose is that, given that the rationale for war has been exposed as a series of lies and spin.

Even the location of Bush's speech showed his isolation. Standing before a gold and blue banner proclaiming 'Plan For Victory', Bush spoke, as he usually does these days, before a military audience. The obvious benefit is that the military will be under orders not to heckle their Commander in Chief. It also saves his cronies having to vet crowds to so-called 'public' appearances in remove non-believers.

Which is just as well, given that the Bush Junta has no Iraq policy beyond a mantra-like repetition of 'stay the course'. While Bush likes to portray Iraq as "the central front" in the war on terror, the fact is it is his own imperialist adventure that has made it so. Yet the White House has acknowledged reality to some degree, dropping its insistence that foreign fighters are its main foe in Iraq. It now concedes that terrorists linked to al-Qaida are the smallest component of the insurgency.

This means that Bush's rationale for wasting yet more lives and resources in Iraq is as phoney as his rationale for the initial invasion. He claims US troops remain to fight the 'terrorism' his invasion has created. Yet the bulk of the insurgency is fighting against foreign occupation and, consequently, it will continue until those forces leave. Yet Bush refuses to set a timetable for withdraw, which shows the insurgents that the US plans to stay. Which, of course, explains the lack of an exit plan – the US had no plans to exit and planned from the start to have an imperial presence at the heart of the Middle East.

Ironically, Bush himself showed that the insurgents are right to consider Iraq occupied. He stated that as "the political process advances" the US would be able to decrease troop levels. He stressed that decisions about troop levels would be dictated by conditions on the ground in Iraq and the judgement of US commanders, "not by artificial timetables set by politicians in Washington." Which shows that Bush's talk of the Iraqi "political process" and "sovereignty" is so much hot air. This is because Bush is not only ignoring the wishes of the majority of his own nation, he is ignoring the persistent calls for a timetable from Iraqis themselves. A recent poll that found "over 80% of Iraqis are strongly opposed to the presence of coalition troops, and about 45% of the Iraqi population believe attacks against American troops are justified." Factoring out the generally pro-American Kurds, those figures must be even higher with the Arab areas of Iraq. And it should be noted that a special conference of the leaders of Iraq's sharply divided Shia Muslims, Kurds and Sunni Muslims called for

such a timetable (they also said Iraqi's had a "legitimate right" of resistance).

So, clearly, the US calls the shots in 'liberated' Iraq, as acknowledged by the Iraqi President himself before the UN: "I categorically refuse the use of Iraqi soil to launch a military strike against Syria or any other Arab country ... But at the end of the day my ability to confront the US military is limited and I cannot impose on them my will." So much for the claim that Iraq is free.

Finally, who is this 'we' Bush yaps on about? As a good capitalist he should know that society does not exist. He must also be painfully aware that over 60% of his subjects reject his war. He must also be aware that he and his rich corporate backers do not have to fight his war. It seems unfair that those who reject Bush's war of choice should pay for it. Perhaps we can offer a suggestion which fits well into Republican ideology: privatise the war. Let those who support the war fight it. If they are not fit enough to fight, let them pay the \$6bn a month required to sustain the American military presence in Iraq. Let Halliburton and the other corporations dip into their own coffers to rebuild the country their lackey has destroyed.

If the war were privatised, it would quickly end and Bush's backers would be at the forefront in demanding an immediate withdrawal. But this will never happen. Capitalism is based on using the state to ensure and enhance the power and profits of the few. While profits are privatised, costs are socialised. The Iraq debacle is a classic example of this, where the imperial interests of the US capitalist elite are being furthered by the blood and money of the many. Until such time the American people turn their vocal opposition to action, the US occupation will stumble on – until the costs to the elite finally outweigh any possible long term gain. Anti-war action on the home front can increase those costs and so hurry a withdrawal, talk will not. The same, needless to say, applies here in Britain.

Iain McKay

## Broadway's café

➔ page 1

people in and around Broadway Market, the occupation has quickly made links with wider issues of capital accumulation in Hackney and elsewhere, attracting international attention.

As of writing, a writ has been served on the occupiers allowing for a second eviction, but as yet there's been no sign of the bailiffs. Although the fate of Francesca's is far from decided, the relationships and experiences that are developing through this occupation could lead to a political climate in Hackney which can continue to resist the process of gentrification and social exclusion which is likely to accelerate as 2012 approaches.

Catch

The occupation has a website you can visit at [34broadwaymarket.omweb.org](http://34broadwaymarket.omweb.org).

## Quiz answers

1. The African National Congress in South Africa.
2. Oystercatchers, ostensibly because they were competing for shellfish. After 10,000 birds were killed, the cockle stocks collapsed. Cause and effect, hmmm.
3. The raven, whose range spans the northern hemisphere, from the tropics to the Arctic.
4. The house sparrow.

## SUBSCRIPTIONS

Many of your subscriptions are due for renewal at this time of year, and it would save a lot of extra work if you could renew early. To find out if this means you, this issue is volume 67, number 1, so if the address label has the number 6701 above your name it means your sub runs out with this issue and is due for renewal. Many thanks in anticipation.

# REVIEW

## Brian Morris takes a long hard look at anti-capitalism through the lens of a new 'beginner's guide'

In the five years since Seattle there have been several large demonstrations and gatherings of anti-capitalists – in Prague, Québec City, Genoa and, in January 2001, that first World Social Forum was held in Porto Alegre, Brazil. This Forum has now emerged as an intrinsic part of the global anticapitalist movement.

During these five years numerous books have been written on the anticapitalist movement, by the academics, activists and party hacks, critiquing the corporate domination of the world's economy, and emphasising that 'another world is possible' – as the slogan of the recent European Social Forum has it.

The writings of Naomi Klein, Noam Chomsky and Arundhati Roy are of particular interest in this regard – all clear and refreshingly free of academic pretensions.

But if you want a short, useful and thoughtful guide to the anticapitalist movement you can do no better than buy Simon Tormey's *Anti-capitalism: A Beginner's Guide*. For it provides a very readable and helpful discussing on the anticapitalist movement in all its diversity.

Having taught a politics course on anticapitalism at the University of Nottingham for some two decades, and having a mother who is, he tells us, who is the "original anarcho-situationist beatnik", the book is critical, historically-informed, and above all, engaging. The book however is less one of advocacy than a guide to the many issues that are relevant to any understanding of the anticapitalist movement.

The book consists of five chapters. The opening chapter describes the nature of capitalism as an economic system. Although making a distinction between the market and capitalism, Tormey tends to overemphasise the importance of the free market and competition, and thus to downplay the fact that corporate monopolies, cartels and production rackets, and state support are intrinsic to capitalism.

Tormey gives a very interesting account of the arguments that are used to justify capitalism, namely, that capitalism promotes political liberty and that its dynamism has increased the well-being of the majority of people. Both these ideological justifications are of course suspect, if not vacuous.

In the second chapter Tormey discusses the background and the various factors involved in the emergence of the anti-capitalist movement. These include the

following:

- The emergence of global capitalism and decline of nation-states creates a crisis for liberal democracy (though Tormey stresses that the nation-state is not about to disappear);
- There has been growing disillusionment with the Soviet Union and its form of state capitalism (long critiqued, of course, by anarchists);
- The emergence of various new social movements since the 1960s (relating to the Vietnam war, feminism, civil rights, environmentalism, nuclear disarmament);
- The importance of computer technology, especially the internet, which not only give visibility to marginal groups, but also facilitates the co-ordination of radical activities and protests;
- The emergence in the 1960s of the politics of detournement. Subversive activities, especially associated with the Situationists, involving guerrilla advertising and an emphasis on the aesthetic dimensions of protest.

All this has given rise, Tormey suggests, to a different kind of politics – radical, diverse, extra-parliamentary, subversive, non-hierarchical. Hardly novel to generations of anarchists! Anyone who is acquainted with the history of the French revolution and the socialist movement (which was of course a global movement and anti-capitalist) will be aware that the politics of detournement did not begin with the Situationists.

When Tormey comes to discuss the nature of the anticapitalist movement it comes as no surprise that the majority of the protesters against globalisation do not in fact envisage an end to capitalism and are not strictly speaking anticapitalists.

They are essentially reformists or social democrats. They thus seek to humanise capitalism and make it more benign, and imagine that one can have 'globalisation with a human face'.

Chapter Three is focused on this reformist tendency within the anti-capitalist movement and it is significant that Tormey devotes some 34 pages to the reformist anticapitalists and only seven pages later to the anarchists. Reformism takes many different forms, from the Brazilian Workers' Party who simply want to bolster the state's power against the transnationals, to Susan George's plan to tax financial transactions for the third world, to those such as George Monbiot who advocate 'social democracy', a global state to control capital.

Tormey suggests that the global social democrats are akin to the Jacobins of the French Revolution and that their vision is essentially utopian.

In Chapter Four, Tormey discusses the radical wing of the anti-capitalist movement. It consists of five broad political tendencies, as outlined by Tormey. These are:

- Marxists, with their emphasis on the primacy of productive relations, and the necessity of a party organisation for defeating capitalism (the Socialist Workers' Party is prototypical of this tendency);
- Autonomists, those Marxists who stress the primacy of political struggles and have abandoned the idea of a



Anti-globalisation protest in Québec, April 2001

vanguard party in favour of workers' councils

- Anarchists, who Tormey describes as consisting of a "staggeringly diverse range of political currents and groups";
- Radical Greens under whose rubric Tormey mentions Bookchin and Zerzan;
- The Zapatistas, the army of national liberation who took over the Chiapas region of Mexico in 1994.

Tormey suggests that the Zapatista movement is an entirely novel phenomenon, and like the radical Greens, is 'beyond' ideology. Peasant movements and peasant resistance to an encroaching capitalism are hardly new phenomena, and the notion that some movement or organisation is non-ideological is itself profoundly so.

The ideology of the Zapatistas is clearly evident in the writings of Subcomandante Marcos, who seems to have become the sole spokesperson for the indigenous peasant communities of the Chiapas.

His letters and declarations to the Mexican people and the world emphasise the rights of the indigenous people of Mexico to land and liberty, articulates as central demands democracy and social justice, and emphasises the need to restore the national sovereignty of the Mexican state.

Unfortunately with regard to anarchism, Tormey evinces some rather quaint ideas, and two are noteworthy: first, that Karl Marx was a true anarchist, unlike Proudhon and Bakunin whom Marx, we are told, constantly berated for their political limitations; secondly, that many anarchists are supporters of capitalism.

But as many people have argued, the aims of Marx and Bakunin were quite dissimilar. The state, for Marx and Engels, would 'administer' society. As they put it in their address to the central committee of the Communist League: "The workers must strive to create a German Republic, and within this republic strive 'for the most decisive centralisation of power in the hands of the state authority.'" Marx was certainly no anarchist in his politics, whatever his vision of a future communist society.

Tormey mentions individualist anarchists such as Tucker Spooner and Warren and anarcho-capitalists like Rand and Friedman as capitalist anarchists.

Although the nineteenth century individualists advocated private property, commodity production and market economy, it is questionable, given their emphasis on liberty, whether they would have supported today's global capitalism.

As for Ayn Rand being an anarchist, the suggestion is quite bizarre. Rand was an advocate of the 'minimal' but highly repressive state, necessary to support property rights. Friedman simply replaced the state with private security firms, and can hardly be described as anarchist as the term is normally understood.

In the final chapter Tormey offers some interesting reflections on the future of the global anti-capitalist movement. He seems to have a strong predilection to the idea of novelty, although of course all social phenomena exhibit both continuity and change.

He writes as though social networks never existed until the computer was

invented or was theorised by fashionable academic icons like Deleuze.

But he seems to acknowledge that demonstrations against the Vietnam war or the large demonstrations focused around environmental issues were not simply an expression of 'identity politics' but were in essence both global and anti-capitalist, bringing together people of diverse political persuasions.

Drawing a stark contrast between democratic, official, party politics with its emphasis on the 'capturing' of power, Tormey seems to bypass entirely the strategy that has long been that of anarchists, namely, the creation and support of voluntary organisations.

The very term 'social' implies enduring social relationships, and without some form of social life – village communities, local assemblies, workers' councils, producers' co-operatives, housing/ neighbourhood associations, affinity groups, anarchist federations – one could not even obtain daily bread, let alone decide how to co-operatively produce it.

The Zapatistas certainly do not live in a world of computers and disembodied spontaneous networks.

But overall Tormey's book is an excellent guide to the global anti-capitalist movement, and has a useful glossary and a chronology of the events and initiatives relating to the movement since 1998.

*Anti-capitalism: A Beginners Guide* by Simon Tormey, Oneworld Publications, £9.99 (if ordering from Freedom Press please add £1 towards postage and packing inland, £2 overseas).

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## A Sideways Look

One of the features of the Christmas period – or the ‘holidays’ as Americans quaintly know them, perhaps understandably as they only get two weeks off a year – is the opportunity to meet relatives you only ever see once a year, even if it’s just for 15 minutes.

My brother is a builder, and our conversation was going fine until he complained that there were too many Polish builders in this country. Naturally I couldn’t let this go – as he knew. I pointed out that they were here in much the same way as British builders went to Germany in the ‘80s. He countered that it was different, but couldn’t explain why. He also supplied a tale that some Polish builders in North Finchley had been working on a house for over two years, as if this proved anything. His source for this was a local estate agent – enough said.

His strongest argument, that he had lost work to Polish workers undercutting him, was somewhat undermined by his earlier complaint that he had so much work he’d been working seven days a week throughout December. If anything, it suggests there aren’t enough skilled building workers in this country.

One of the reasons my brother is careful what he says around me is that he knows a lot of what he says is crap and I’ll challenge it. It’s not just my brother who takes this attitude – work colleagues with bigoted attitudes have learnt that I’ve thought about things a little more deeply than the pages of the average tabloid and bite their tongues. And as your friends often tend to reflect similar attitudes and experiences – I find this is a common experience amongst them, too.

It’s not necessarily ideal, but it’s far better that people know they will be challenged if they just parrot prejudices. However, there are two things to guard against. Firstly, that people don’t dare say anything in case they get challenged. While suppressing the racist ramblings of someone is a plus, it’s actually far better for them to understand why they are wrong. And secondly, there are a great number of people who never encounter an alternative view.

If you think of the spectrum of the mainstream media in this country there are very few truly dissenting voices. Those painted as such are usually right-wing populists with a licence to offend, whose every utterance is peppered with a Victor Meldrew-like cry of ‘political correctness gone mad’. It should be no surprise for us to find that the media, controlled as it is by billionaires or the government, should limit those opinions that get aired. In parts of this country, however, there are millions of people who are never likely to talk to someone with a different view.

In these times of rampant, one-sided class warfare, international terror and unfettered capitalism, it’s common for anarchists and others who oppose such things (or at least want the class war to be a bit more two-sided) to feel powerless

and disengaged. Often, there doesn’t seem to be much meaningful action\* around (in the old Solidarity definition). However, if we are at least talking to people – and trying to do so to people outside our own immediate social circle – and challenging the received wisdom, we are achieving something.

Svartfrosk

\*Meaningful action, for revolutionaries, is whatever increases the confidence, the autonomy, the initiative, the participation, the solidarity, the equalitarian tendencies and the self-activity of the masses and whatever assists in their demystification. From ‘As We See It’ by Solidarity, see [libcom.org/library/as-we-see-it-solidarity-group](http://libcom.org/library/as-we-see-it-solidarity-group)

## Blast from the Past

Taken from Freedom 13th January 2001, entitled Tory wins award:

Conservative ex-Chancellor Norman Lamont was last month celebrating after being awarded the Star of Honour and Merit by the Augusto Pinochet Foundation in Chile.

He is the first foreigner to receive the award, which was given to him for his “extraordinary and valiant attitude in defending Senator Pinochet” during Pinochet’s enforced stay in a Surrey mansion last year.

Attending the televised award ceremony in Santiago in person, Lamont was unfortunately referred to throughout as Lord Lament by his Chilean hosts, who included Pinochet’s son and senior military colleagues.

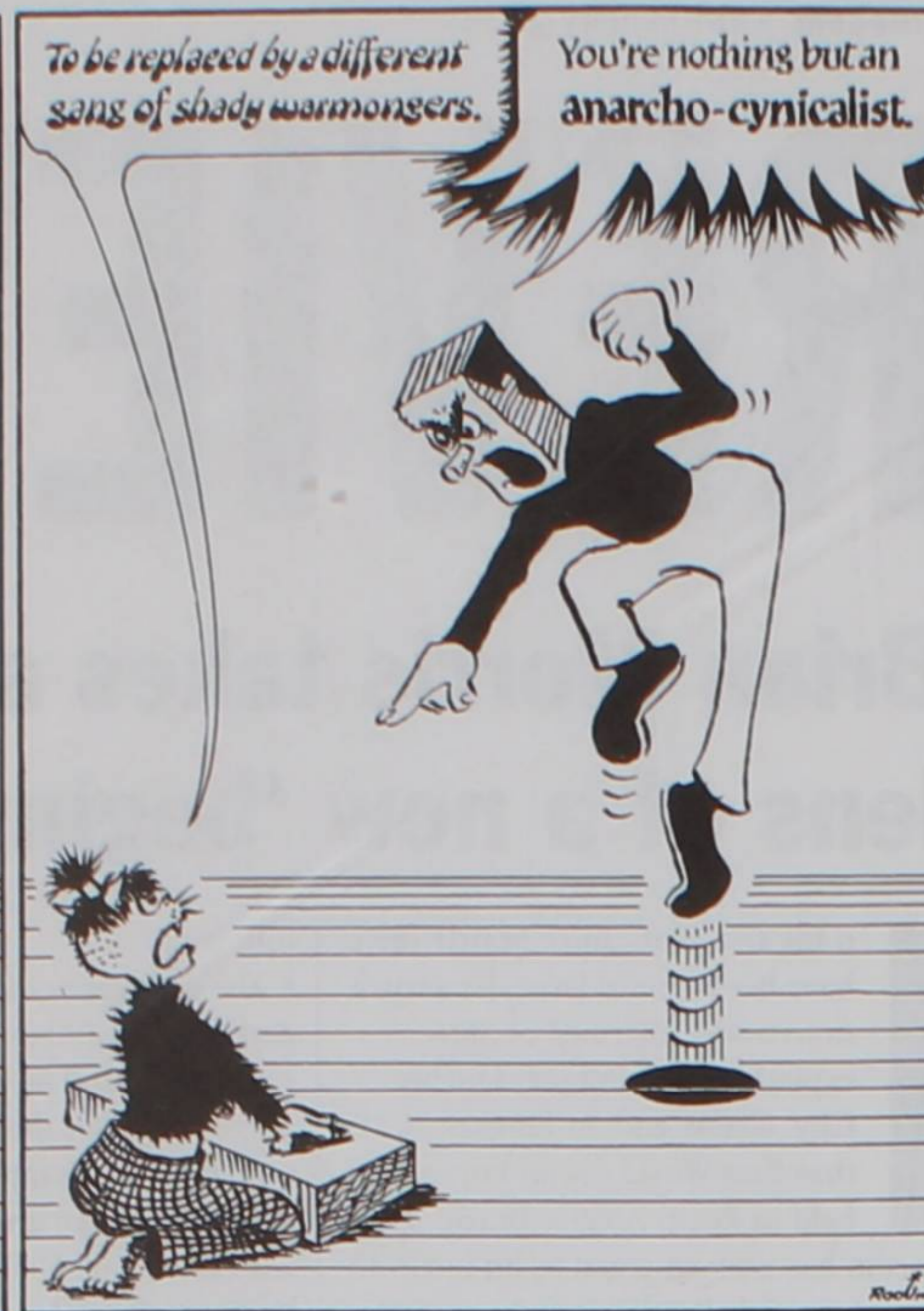
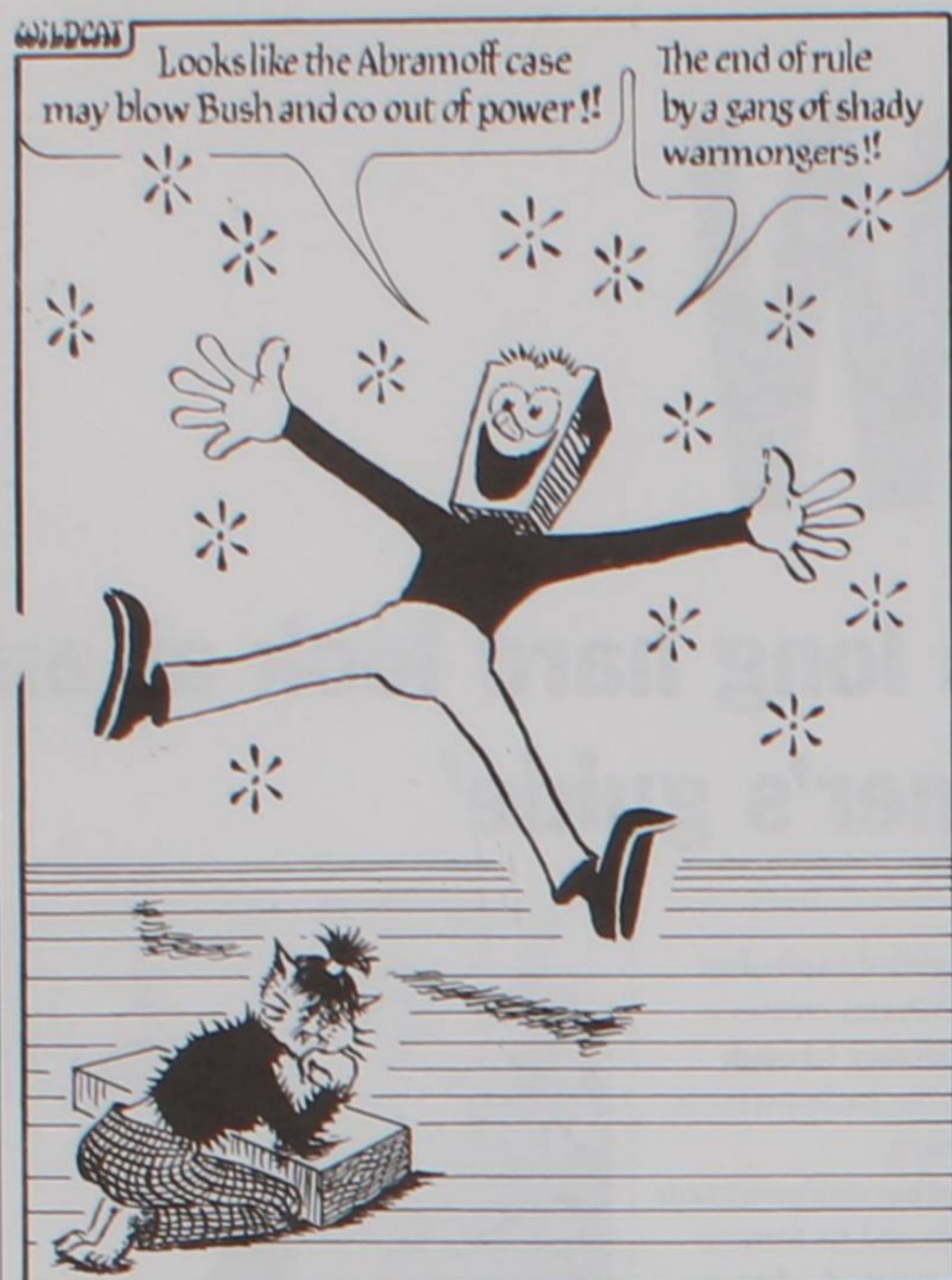
Pinochet himself was unable to attend however, because he is now under house arrest following his indictment for crimes committed during his seventeen-year military dictatorship. These include mass murder, kidnapping and also torture.



## The quiz

1. According to a 1998 Pentagon report, which current governing party was one of the “more notorious terrorist groups”?
2. Which birds were culled in the ‘70s at the behest of cockle gatherers on the Burry Inlet, near Llanelli? What was the result?
3. Of which anarchist-associated bird was it said that it is “so wide ranging that concept of habitat is hardly applicable”?
4. Cats, magpies, unleaded petrol, garden pesticides and mobile phones have all been blamed for the decline of what?

Answers on page 6



## Gorgeous George in BB Listings

An estimated 7.6 million people tuned in to Channel 4 to see the first night of the new Celebrity Big Brother, and many were shocked to see ‘gorgeous’ George Galloway enter from the back of a black limousine as one of the housemates.

Galloway has been under fire since his arrival in the house, most vocally from Labour members in his constituency Bethnal Green and Bow in London’s East End, from whom he took this firm Labour seat in the general elections in May last year.

However, it seems that it is not only the staunch Labour supporters who are unsure about the Respect leader’s foray into reality TV. One resident in Bethnal Green told Freedom “he hasn’t done badly here, but it is hard to see where his sympathies lie sometimes. Perhaps he needs to spend his time in the [Big Brother] house to rethink how he acts towards the people he represents.”

Others are also unsure about his decision due to his inability to “see beyond himself”, as one Respect member said. She noted that “Respect is a coalition firstly – he just arrived at the right time.”

It seems that Galloway’s single-issue personality style of politics isn’t hitting the same notes as during election time. Particularly for his constituents, more often than not they are sceptical about his record so far, and, as one constituent admits, are “pretty embarrassed” to see their MP joining C-list celebrities in Big Brother

Tony F.

This column is usually reserved for Imagine if... but the writer of this regular feature just couldn’t think of anything to make George Galloway’s Big Brother appearance sound any more ridiculous.

until 16th January Art Not Oil exhibition at The Bongo Club, 37 Holyrood Road, Edinburgh ([thebongoclub.co.uk](http://thebongoclub.co.uk) or 0131 558 7604) see [artnotoil.org.uk](http://artnotoil.org.uk) or [nationalpetroleumgallery.org.uk](http://nationalpetroleumgallery.org.uk)

until 27th February Past Tense presents an exhibition of radical maps at the vegan Pogo Café, 76 Clarence Road, London E5

14th January Public meeting to help organise the Climate Camp which will be in the north of England in late summer, 11am to 6pm at Bridge 5 Mill, 22a Beswick Street, Manchester, email [climatecamp@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:climatecamp@yahoo.co.uk) or see [bridge-5.org/map.htm](http://bridge-5.org/map.htm)

18th to 30th January Exhibition of photographs about detention by Isabel Merminod at Spitz Gallery, 105 Old Spitalfields Market, Commercial Street, London E1 from 12 noon to 5pm daily

21st January Open meeting to discuss the crisis in working class representation, from 12 noon to 3pm at Friends House, Euston Road, London

24th January Discussion meeting on The Paris Riots: what they were and what we can learn from them? at 7pm, the Autonomy Club, upstairs at Freedom, 84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1, see [wombles.org.uk/files](http://wombles.org.uk/files)

28th January Punk rock record fair at the Grovesnor Pub, Sydney Street (between Brixton and Stockwell underground stations) with stalls from a variety of punk genres from 2pm to 6pm, followed by a gig, for info see [jonactive.free-online.co.uk/activeads.html](http://jonactive.free-online.co.uk/activeads.html)

28th January Prison Abolition Seminar on resisting prison construction, radical alternatives to prison and abolitionist theory past and present, at Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London, from 2pm to 5pm, for more details see [alternatives2prison.uk.com](http://alternatives2prison.uk.com)

28th January South West Peace Conference: An End To Nuclear Fission?

help to highlight the nuclear industry and its damaging effects, at Upper Guildhall in Plymouth from 9am to 7pm, for info contact 07904934142 or [mark@scantlebury8205.freereserve.co.uk](mailto:mark@scantlebury8205.freereserve.co.uk)

29th January Day of film, discussion and great food at The Common Place social centre, 23-25 Wharf Street, Leeds, see [thecommonplace.org.uk](http://thecommonplace.org.uk)

31st January Discussion meeting on Anti-Social Behaviour Orders at 7pm, the Autonomy Club, upstairs at Freedom, 84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1, see [wombles.org.uk/files](http://wombles.org.uk/files)

8th February Save council housing, mass lobby and rally from 12 noon at Central Hall, Westminster, call 020 7987 9989 or see [defendcouncilhousing.org.uk](http://defendcouncilhousing.org.uk)

11th to 12th February Camp for Climate Action planning meeting at the Sumac Centre, 245 Gladstone Street, Nottingham, see [climatecamp.org.uk/meetings.htm](http://climatecamp.org.uk/meetings.htm)

12th February ZineFest, a festival of zines, anti-corporate artwork, and diy publications at Basement Bookshop, 24 Lever Street, Manchester, for info email [manchestertzines@riseup.net](mailto:manchestertzines@riseup.net)

23rd February The Radical History of Cycling, at 56a Infoshop, 56 Crampton Street, London SE17, for more info email [mudlark@macunlimited.net](mailto:mudlark@macunlimited.net)

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

So visit:  
The 56@ Infoshop  
56A Crampton St, SE17  
Elephant & Castle, London  
Open Thurs, Fri and Sat afternoons.  
[www.safecat.org/56a](http://www.safecat.org/56a)

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