

# FREEDOM

80P ANARCHIST NEWS AND VIEWS

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## MAKING THEIR MINDS UP?

For the third time in two years, the major unions have agreed to ballot for a general strike over public sector pensions. The news follows the splitting of the public sector pensions agenda into 'national' and 'local', with national-level workers getting a guarantee of immunity from pension changes for existing workers last years.

Local government workers were told they would have to negotiate their own terms separately, leading to the secondary confrontation.

The Local Government Association have announced proposals to cut pension rights, and have refused to agree protection for many existing scheme members.

Although the terms being offered are broadly similar to those accepted for national-level government workers, unions have attacked measure which split the agreements further and attack the weakest sectors of the workforce.

In particular, part time and support staff, such as teaching assistants, would lose pension rights while full-time staff have theirs retained, leading to accusations that the government are seeking to 'divide and conquer'.

The call to arms comes after fruitless talks on the issue between unions and local governments.

Unison, Amicus, TGWU, GMB, Ucat, CYWU, Napo, NUT and the FBU agreed the strategy and have begun proceedings to ballot 1.5 million members for action. Unison are leading the call for the strike as the largest group in the sector, pledging to ballot a million of its members unless progress is made in talks.

General secretary, Dave Prentis, said: "This dispute is the biggest issue Unison has faced for decades. It affects the rights of one million of our members who have paid 6% of their salaries into their pension scheme for decades to save for their retirement and are now being told that the deal is off.

"The local government employers, the LGA and the Government should be in no doubt of how serious we are. All we are asking is for members of the local government pension scheme to be treated fairly."

Unison's executive were heavily criticised last year both internally and by members of other unions for unilaterally withdrawing from the strike process during the election period, to allow New Labour a clear run.

Julian, a member of Unison who works in local government, has been following the fight over pensions. He, like many shop-floor members, has been frustrated by the union's attitude over the last year. He said: "We're just wasting time negotiating, we should go straight for industrial action. At the period of the election it was crass stupidity to take guarantees from Prescott when it was the perfect time to make them take notice. The only language Prescott understands is people being away from work.

"The constructive thing that will come out of it is that more people will become organised, as action is a great recruiter. However I have a feeling we will be fobbed off again as we have so many time before, with negotiators accepting poor terms and then just recommending we take them."

The proposals will remove the '85-year'



rule from 1st October. The rule allows members to retire at 60, if their age and years of service total 85 or more, on a full pension. In effect, this means that in future all scheme members will have a retirement age of 65.

In other pensions news, the Confederation of Business Interests (CBI), the main lobbying body for business in parliament, has announced a new campaign to allow small businesses to opt out of the government's proposed

national savings plan.

The scheme, which is designed to supplement the existing state pension, originally proposed all companies and staff be enrolled automatically.

Rob Ray

## LEGITIMISED TORTURE

The Human Rights Watch World Report 2006 has found the UK and US to have perpetrated several major violations of international human rights law.

The United Nations Convention Against Torture defines the term as "any act by which severe pain or suffering, whether physical or mental, is intentionally inflicted on a person." However, the US has defined torture as an act that caused serious physical injury so severe that death, organ failure, or permanent damage

resulted in a loss of significant body function.

The US have also defended classic torture measures such as 'water-boarding' (a technique where the victim believes they will drown) and mock executions.

This stance is highlighted by Bush's avoidance of the prohibition of cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment. This is further exacerbated by Attorney General Alberto Gonzales' claim that it is permissible to use such treatment for non-Americans held outside the United States.

Dick Cheney is also on record as imploring Congress to apply exemptions to the CIA from legislation to ban cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment. Lt. Gen. Michael V. Hayden, the deputy director of national intelligence, stated that US interrogators have a duty to use all available authority to fight terrorism.

Whilst the US is the only western

democracy to approve the abuse of detainees, Britain has adopted policies that make it complicit. Tony Blair has proposed the deportation of terrorist suspects to countries with well documented torture histories for such people, a full adoption of the US 'extraordinary rendition' policy (which it currently aids).

The Convention Against Torture prohibits sending people to a country where there is reason to believe that they would be tortured. However, the UK government has suggested sending their terrorist suspects to Algeria, Jordan, Libya, Morocco and Tunisia. Each of these countries are guilty of torturing radical Islamists.

Blair and his government have proposed 'memoranda of understanding', where the recipient countries promise not to mistreat the suspect, and periodical

## FAST-TRACK TO JAIL

The Workers' Party of Belgium (PTB) have put out a call for international solidarity for 13 dockers jailed during protests in Strasbourg in January. The dockers, who were rounded up during confrontations with police surrounding the European Parliament, were part of a crowd of over 10,000 protesting the European Directive 'Port Package II'.

The 13 dockers were convicted of 'violence against the authorities during an armed demonstration', as had thrown stones at police using teargas.

In a statement, the PTB said: "Not one of them came close to the European Parliament. And it's clear – they were arrested at random and convicted arbitrarily in what is called an 'accelerated procedure'. Their lawyer was only able to see the files for a few hours. How could they defend someone properly?"

The demonstration was the culmination of a campaign to stop a directive which would have seen seafarers and dockside

shipping personnel carrying out loading and unloading of goods. The move would have undermined dockers' rights and impacted heavily on safety standards.

The bill, which was the second to have been introduced, was heavily defeated just two days after the demonstration.

Protests called by the European Federation of Transport Workers were backed by strike action that brought ports across Europe to a standstill. Ports closed in France, Spain, Portugal, Greece, Germany and Sweden. In Belgium 2,000 workers struck in Antwerp. In the Netherlands, Rotterdam and Amsterdam were on strike.

PTB have asked for support and have already seen an action of community solidarity launched by three unions.

Money collected will contribute to the solidarity action initiated by FGTB, CSC and CGSLB. You can pay directly to the bank account 132-5049503-15 of the joint union front. When paying, mention 'Solidarité Strasbourg'.

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# Home and away

## Job cuts deep

Fears that a series of major job losses could hit workers at Royal Mail and Rentokil come alongside recent walkouts over proposed cuts in the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP).

The Communications Workers' Union (CWU) have estimated that up to 40,000 more jobs could go from Royal Mail, following massive cuts which have already taken place over the last few years.

The move comes as Royal Mail tries to cut its total costs to £370m before April, as the service opens to private competition. Proposals have included a doubling of the part-time workforce to 40% of the total, and automating more functions within the service.

The CWU, who have been running a campaign to up pay for mail workers 25%, in line with national averages, said the cuts were 'panic management'.

Rentokil have announced the closure of its linen and workwear business, which had been up for sale, threatening 1,700 jobs.

The business had been put up for sale in 2004 due to a £5m operating loss, but is now to be closed at a cost of around £50m.

The Public service union PCS has warned that the government may be planning to outsource some of the workforce in the DWP, after security plans were discovered for when work moves to cheaper countries.

The DWP deny outsourcing was being considered, saying it not there for any 'specific' reason.

So far 15,000 jobs have been culled from the DWP, with 15,000 more to go the PCS are reporting a service provision breakdown at many sites.

## Diving in at Bristol

A three-day occupation of Bristol North Pool ended on Monday 23rd January with bailiffs forcing their way in through a window to evict protesters.

The action, in response to the continued closing of public amenities by Bristol Council, was designed to provoke a discussion over both the pool and wider civic society.

One of the occupiers said: "We are a group of individuals concerned about the disappearance of public space and the privatisation of public services in Bristol. This year we have witnessed the closure of Speedwell and Filwood pools, the Robin Cousins sports centre as well as Bristol North. We've also seen recent cuts in library services glossed as 'restructuring', a process which also threatens our hospitals."

The protesters, who are now holding weekly meetings to see what is to be done next, thanked the public for showing a high level of support for the occupation.

## BNP 'union' announced

Senior figures in the BNP have announced the forming of a union founded by members of the fascist Third-Way and senior BNP organisers.

'Solidarity', whose primary membership consists so far of people thrown out of other unions for their far-right activities, will cost several thousand pounds to set up, and aims to "improve the relations between employers and employees throughout all industries served by the union."

The front-group, led by former National Front member Patrick Harrington, hopes to draw in up to 500 founding members if it is cleared for a certificate of independence.

# Around the world

**CHINA:** The 'Great Firewall of China', a massive system of censorship controlling access to the internet across the nation, is to be bolstered after an agreement was reached with online search giant Google.

The company, which is attempting to claw back market share in the state, has agreed to remove all reference to Tiannamen Square, Tibet, Taiwan, as well as to anything which might attack the ruling party's dominance or promote dissenting groups. Google follows Microsoft and Yahoo! in accepting a deal, which it hopes will put it back on an equal footing with Chinese rival Baidu.

Baidu, which operates with a pre-programmed censorship system, currently works faster than Google as it is not run through the Chinese government's filtering system.

**CROATIA:** The Second Anarchist Bookfair in Zagreb will take place from 31st March to 2nd April 2006. The Zagreb Anarchist Bookfair (ASK - Anarhisticki sajam knjiga) aims to become a long-term, developing project. The first bookfair (in March 2005) went well, and organisers hope to bring in more and more people every year as participants, publishers, groups, projects - whoever is interested in what the bookfair has to offer.

ASK will take place in Zagreb every spring, as a local resource for anarchist and libertarian books and other publications. The organisers also aim to open discussions on subjects of importance to the anarchist movement, or for their local community.

Email ask-zagreb@net.hr for more information.

**ITALY:** Silvio Berlusconi has restricted imports of abortion pills in the run-up to the election in a sop to Catholic fundamentalists. The move, designed to cement his far-right coalition's 'family values' agenda, comes alongside a vow by the Prime Minister never to sanction gay unions.

Mifepristone is used across Europe, and blocks the hormone progesterone, which is vital for continued pregnancy.

Berlusconi, who runs a near-monopoly on the media in Italy, has been accused by left-wing opponents of abusing this control to appear almost nightly on national television. On one appearance, he vowed he would remain celibate throughout the election campaign to honour the Catholic ideal of chastity.

**JAPAN:** The Osaka Municipal Government has been removing homeless communities from two of its parks in preparation for the World Rose Convention. Around a third of Japan's 25,000



homeless are based in Osaka, and these evictions are meeting mass resistance.

About 100 people - some 17 homeless people and their supporters - shouted as the city government started dismantling the tents in Utsubo Park at around 8am. Two people from the homeless side sustained injuries in a struggle with the officials at Utsubo Park, where tents were quickly removed. More than 750 city employees and 350 police have been drafted in to remove the tents.

Many homeless people in Japan live in stable tent communities in the parks of its larger cities (see picture). In Tokyo, tent villages in Ueno park have an agreement with the authorities that they will temporarily pack up and 'hide' for major events. However, Japan has increasingly been attempting to remove its homeless park communities from view permanently.

**SWITZERLAND:** The World Economic Forum (WEF), a foundation consisting of chief executives of the world's richest corporations, national political leaders, and selected intellectuals and journalists, met last week in the Swiss mountain resort of Davos.

The neo-liberal institution has been a focal point of the extra-parliamentary anti-capitalist movement in Switzerland for the last few years. A decentralised Day of Action on 21st January saw anti-WEF events in a dozen towns with hundreds of people participating in creative and militant actions.

Activities ranged from 'Reclaim the Streets' to street theatre, demonstrations and public meetings. Militant activists

threw paint bombs at banks and attacked several buildings with fireworks. 2,500 people took the streets in Basel against the WEF, imperialist wars, repression and capitalism on 28th January.

After facing intimidation in recent years from the Swiss army 6,500 soldiers protected the WEF, activists decided to focus on a decentralised Day of Action. Street-theatre, demonstrations, Reclaim the Streets parties and paint bomb attacks took place in a dozen towns.

**USA:** George Bush Jnr has turned against his former right-hand man and top fundraiser Jack Abramoff, saying the US Senate needed to find a way to deal with lobbyists 'taking advantage of the system'.

Abramoff, who has pleaded guilty on charges of corrupt practice during his time as a lobbyist on Capitol Hill, was one of Bush's top fundraisers during the 2004 presidential election campaign.

Abramoff pleaded guilty last month to federal charges regarding schemes to bribe public officials and defraud Indian tribes who were his lobbying clients.

He has promised to co-operate in investigations into his relationship with various top-level senators, prompting proposals for strong measures to stop it happening again from all sides of the house.

In a taster of the radical changes to come, on a 379-50 vote, the Republican-led house changed its rules to ban access by former members-turned-registered lobbyists to its chamber and gym.

# Prison news

**T**he Federal Bureau of Investigation issued a 65-count indictment on 20th January, alleging that 12 people were involved in Earth Liberation Front (ELF) and Animal Liberation Front (ALF) activities in the United States spanning five years from 1996 to 2001.

As a result of the Grand Jury investigation in Eugene, Oregon, the suspects have been charged in 17 arson and sabotage attacks on federal and private facilities in five states. No one was harmed in any of the incidents. Ongoing grand juries in San Diego and San Francisco are also targeting environmentalists and animal rights defenders.

The nation-wide sweep of arrests, dubbed 'Operation Backfire', has been declared by the FBI as a major hit to environmentalists and animal rights activists who engage in destruction of property as a means to defend wilderness and lives of animals. Operation Backfire was announced as the Bush Administration currently attempts to defend its domestic spying program, which many from both sides of the political spectrum have alleged is unconstitutional.

Many cases involved in the indictment came just before the statute of limitations was due to expire. Attorney General Alberto R. Gonzales, FBI Director Robert Mueller and ATF Director Carl Truscott claim that 'eco-terrorism' is the number one domestic terrorism threat in the US. 'Terrorism' is defined in the US Code of

Federal Regulations (28 CFR Section 0.85) as "unlawful use of force and violence against persons or property to intimidate or coerce a government, the civilian population, or any segment thereof, in furtherance of political or social objectives."

Gonzales, at a recent news conference, said "Investigating and preventing animal rights and environmental extremism is one of the FBI's highest domestic priorities." According to Carl Truscott, director of the Federal Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives, there are 188 open investigations of crimes claimed by the ELF and ALF, dating to 1987.

Around 25 to 30 of those cases, Truscott added, are being actively being pursued - about half of them in the Pacific Northwest, California and Utah. The only evidence declared in the 83-page indictment comes from the testimony of five 'confidential sources'.

Two individuals have been publicly identified as FBI informants, Jacob Ferguson and Stanislas 'Jack' Meyerhoff, the latter who has been indicted. FBI's indictments are taking some of the heat off the Bureau after the FBI's failure to apprehend anyone in ELF and ALF actions was recently exposed.

Of the individuals in custody, almost all have publicly proclaimed innocence. Some have openly stated that they have no affiliation with the ELF or any like

organisation. Those facing charges include the following.

- **Daniel McGowan:** environmental and social justice activist from New York. He has been an active member of the community, working on diverse projects such as the demonstrations against the Republican National Convention, Really Really Free Markets, and supporting political prisoners such as Jeff 'Free' Luers and others. Daniel was a graduate student earning a Master's degree in acupuncture and working at Women's Law, a nonprofit group that helps women in domestic abuse situations navigate the legal system. See supportdaniel.org.
- **Chelsea Dan Gerlach:** peaceful environmentalist who has lived almost her entire her life in Oregon. At the time of her arrest she worked as a talented DJ in demand in the Portland area. As Chelsea's sister states, "the person we know and love is incapable of such acts and we have absolutely no reason to believe in her criminal involvement in these cases." See supportchelsea.org
- **Darren Todd Thurston:** well-known Canadian activist who is deeply concerned about his ability to receive fair treatment as a Canadian being held on US soil. See freedarren.org.
- **Jonathan Paul:** firefighter and long-time environmental and animal rights activist who helped co-found America's Whale Alliance and Ocean Defense International.

- **Suzanne Savoie:** environmental activist who has been helping to organise campaigns to stop the Bald Lick timber sale and protect the Couderoy Mountain roadless area on Oregon's Black Mountain. Her support group can be reached via friendsofsuzannesavoie@yahoo.com
- **Kevin Tubbs:** described as a uniquely gentle, loving person who is uncommonly generous to friends and strangers alike. See supportkevintubbs.org.
- **Joseph Dibee, Josephine Overaker and Rebecca Rubin:** are not currently in custody.
- **Sarah Kendall Harvey:** from Arizona, she is currently out on bail. She has requested that she receive no prisoner support.
- **Stanislas Meyerhoff:** according to the Associated Press he is now cooperating with the authorities as a snitch.
- **Bill Rodgers:** remains an un-indicted co-conspirator after dying in custody through an apparent suicide on the Winter Solstice. Bill was a well known Arizona community activist who ran the Catalyst info-shop out of his home.

In a separate investigation in Sacramento, California, three individuals were arrested on 16th January 2006, on charges of conspiring to damage or destroy certain property by explosive or fire. The government reported that a paid confidential source (thought to be a woman in her late 20s) also had a role in the arrests.



# News

## At the centre of it all

### As another new social centre opens in London, a gathering is being planned for the fast-growing network

As the New Year started, a new occupation began at the former School of Slavonic and Eastern European Studies (SSEES) located at 21-22 Russell Square, London.

The building, which had been vacated some months previously, was occupied by students and non-students aiming to create free accommodation.

The group say they have been unable to gain property in any other way due to speculative property prices, and are refusing to fall into a "debt trap exacerbated by the creeping privatisation of education".

The building includes a café (Tuesdays to Thursdays from 12 noon to 3pm), bar/gig space (look out for regular benefit events), hacklab, infoshop, and meeting rooms. Groups using the space include: Bolivia Solidarity Campaign, Campaign Against the Arms Trade, Clandestine Insurgent Rebel Clown Army, Feminist Film/Discussion/Action group, No Borders, Solar Roofs Project, Solidarity Collective, Urban Design Collective, and the Wombles. Additionally the centre will be open for events ranging from regular film screenings to sustainability workshops, and circus skills to radical theory reading groups.

The aim is to actively involve everyone who seeks and is willing to participate in a reformation of space, contesting that space for the development of collective social and political needs.

Tim, from the Campaign against the Arms Trade, said: "We see the social centre as a unique tool for education, activism and the promotion of peace and look forward to working with everyone using it in the future."

The occupation follows on from and is inspired by previous occupations for use as social centres in London and further

afield, say the collective. Social Centre Collective meetings are on Mondays at 21 Russell Square starting at 7pm, and everyone is welcome to get involved.

The opening of the new social centre coincides with a preliminary meeting of social centre groups which took place in The Common Place in Leeds on the 29th January.

The turnout for the gathering, which took the Common Place collective by surprise, took in activists from past centres like ex-Grand Banks, Institute for Autonomy, PAD, current spaces like Kebele, LARC, Matilda, Basement, Sumac, Chalkboard, Common Place, Hanover Squares, 1-in-12 and groups interested in future initiatives for Preston, Liverpool and Newcastle.

One attendee said: "No one was expecting many people to come, especially as it was a Sunday and the trains are so shit! Some 60 people watched a montage of clips about social centres and other autonomous spaces from across Europe in the Common Place cinema. It was interesting to see how each centre shares similar objectives in fighting capitalist logic but does so in unique ways."

At a packed meeting, a member of the Commonplace began by explaining why they had put a call out to other social centres. They said: "We were putting on these films with the aim of educating ourselves about what we are doing but realised that there have been a few attempts to create a network and we thought this would be a useful contribution to that end."

Members of each social centre present then gave brief presentations about the background to and history of their particular space. This was followed by a wide-ranging discussion about what everyone was trying to achieve, some of



The old SSEES building at 21-22 Russell Square; inset, art by Arofish displayed at the launch event.

the problems and shortfalls involved and in what ways existing centres can work together. The meeting proposed a series of new initiatives, including the setting up of a full two-day gathering of social centres for May/June (details to be

decided), a central website to incorporate aspects of the existing social centre internet programmes, and the upgrade of an old email list to become a working inter-centre contact point.

• UPDATE: There was a launch event

on Saturday 4th February, which was very successful and absolutely packed. Delights on offer included art from Arofish, a mixture of live bands and DJs ... and no reported fatalities.

Ronald Thin/Commoner/Rob Ray

## Benefits? What benefits?

A demonstration organised by Sheffield Welfare Action Network (SWAN) saw two to three dozen people show up outside the town hall to protest about proposed changes to the benefits system on 4th February.

Placards were waved saying 'Where's the jobs Tony' and 'No cuts, no sanctions' as protesters, a non-party grouping, engaged with passers-by on the issue.

The protest was the first major attempt to bring the issue into the public eye by SWAN, a political welfare rights group combining disabled and non-disabled activists.

Colin Revell of the Disabled People's Action Network (DAN) has Aspergers and is furious with the government. He said: "How can disabled people be forced to work? They haven't chosen to be incapacitated. How can you overcome disablist attitudes by employers? It'll be all menial jobs, so where's the choice?"

Chris, from Bridlington, East Yorks attacked the government for treating

incapacity as a bastion for the workshy. He continued: "We want to work, what we need is support networks when we need to work. We're an easy target to pay for an unjust war. I've been continually victimised and harrassed for my whistle blowing".

It is hoped that around a million people will be retrained and sent out to work under scheme. The government has pledged just £35m to getting people on incapacity benefits back to work.

During a statement made at the protest, a breakdown of these figures was given. It was pointed out that this has to pay for solving any overarching problems, retraining, giving financial incentives to companies who don't want to employ the disabled, implementing any upgrades to company equipment which might be necessary for the incapacitated to work, and dealing with issues such as transport, long term health problems, etc.

One protester commented bitterly "That would be the deal of the century

if they could do all that on £35 per head."

The figure currently cited for people on incapacity benefits is around 2.7 million, though this figure has been called into question by the campaign group Disability Alliance, who say the numbers are skewed by counting only the number of claimants and not accepted claims.

Approximately one million of these are thought to be due to mental health related problems, which it is thought the 'back to work' ethos would significantly impact on and cause far greater long-term problems.

Currently, the average amount paid for incapacity benefits is £85 per week, which has fallen in real terms over the last decade from 17.4% of average earnings to 15.2% in 2003.

The government hope to save £7bn from the proposed reforms, which would see Incapacity Benefit abolished by 2008, replaced by the 'Employment and Support Allowance'.

## Uxbridge 7 acquitted

In a remarkable judgement, a District judge has ruled that seven anti-apartheid protesters who had blockaded the Israeli agricultural export company, Agrexco UK, had no case to answer and the case was dismissed.

The charges of Aggravated Trespass and Failure to Leave Land were dismissed after District Judge Barnes, sitting in Uxbridge Magistrates Court, found that the evidence against the defendants was "too tenuous" to justify continuing.

On 11th November 2004 the seven protesters succeeded in shutting down the UK distribution centre of Israel's biggest state-owned agricultural export company for over eight hours, blocking both the entrance and exit to the Agrexco UK distribution centre, near Swallowfield Way, Hayes, Middlesex.

The company reportedly lost £100,000 in profit, which would have been channelled back into the Israeli economy. Amos Orr, General Manager of Agrexco UK, said in court that Agrexco exports

from Israel, and the occupied territories amount to some \$700 million a year out of a total of \$880 million – the annual total of all Israeli agricultural exports.

He admitted Agrexco imports between 60-70% of all produce that is grown on illegal settlements in the occupied territories.

The protest was carried out to draw attention to the complicity of Agrexco, in the system of Apartheid that is enshrined in Israeli law. The defendants acted in support of the growing campaign for an international economic boycott of Israeli goods.

At a packed public meeting at the University of London Union, British/Israeli academic Dr Uri Davis spoke in support of the blockade action and a boycott of Israeli goods. He described Israel as an apartheid state.

The campaign to Boycott Agrexco continues. A website that will gather information disclosed through Uxbridge case will be launched soon.



# Struggles in Tehran

## Bus drivers in the Iranian capital are fighting for survival against a total state clampdown, reports Rob Ray

Between 500 and 700 striking workers have been arrested in Tehran during a strike on 28th January over working conditions, and the earlier imprisonment of leading unionists who called for strikes in December.

Mansoor Ossanolou, head of the Union of Workers of Tehran and Suburbs United Bus Company, was arrested on 22nd December for "attempting to disturb public order" (See Freedom 14th January).

Following repressive measures taken against the fledgling bus union in December, a strike was called which saw around 8,000 drivers come out.

But on the Saturday of the strike, workers found themselves being rounded up *en masse* as they arrived at the picket lines. Many were beaten up, abused and forcibly set to work, while others were taken away in police vans.

Three districts saw the police use violence to keep order against mass dissent and support for the strikers.

In the 1st and 6th districts, tear gas was used to disperse a crowd of supporters, and arrests were made. In the 4th district, there was a mass arrest of workers and tear gas was again used.

The night before, raids had seen the wives and children of some of the strikers had been dragged to prison. In an interview with 'Avaye Ashena' (familiar voice), Mahdiye, 12, the daughter of a wanted striker, said:

"As soon as my mum opened the door, they poured into our home. I was asleep along with Mrs Zia's daughter." They pulled the blankets from our

bodies and started to hit us with their "feet and hands" and told us to get into the van.

"They even kicked my mum's chest with their boots. She still has some wounds on her body. They hit her with a baton and didn't listen to my mother's appeals. They even wanted to spray something in my [2-year-old] sister's mouth.

"They wanted to know where my dad was. We didn't know that. We didn't have any news of my dad's whereabouts."

Mahdiye's mother has not yet been released, and may be moved to Evin prison.

In a statement, the union said: "What was the strike for? It was for the release of Mr Ossanolou and the other leaders of the Syndicate, thrown into jail for no reason at all. It was for the introduction of collective bargaining, for the recognition of the union, for a pay increase, and so on. Can you believe it that for such demands they would launch such a brutal and massive war?"

"We hereby thank all those trade unions and organisations who have supported our struggles. We have a hard and long battle ahead of us and urge you to continue your support."

Iranian Labour law recognises the right to strike. Article 142 states "in the stoppage of work while workers are present in the workplace or in deliberate reduction of production by the workers, a mediation board shall investigate the dispute." Iran is also a signatory to international laws



guaranteeing the right to form a union.

The Union of Workers of the Tehran and Suburbs Bus Company was founded in 1969, inactive since 1979, but was reformed in 2004. In real terms wages have slumped by 45% since

1979 in the Islamic state.

The Iranian Embassy declined to comment.

Internationally trade unionists, socialists and other activists are asked to support these workers. Emails of protest can be sent to the

President of 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 at 16 Prince's Gate, London SW7 1PT, or email [info@iran-embassy.org.uk](mailto:info@iran-embassy.org.uk), or telephone on 02072253000.

## Water tabled

A new report by two major NGOs has found that the EU's flagship programme for delivering on worldwide sanitation and drinking water targets has spent four years in "endless rounds of meetings in Brussels".

Worldwide, there are 1.1 billion people without safe drinking water and 2.6 billion are without sanitation.

In 2002 the European Union launched its Water Initiative (EUWI) to combat this situation. It is supposed to ensure that the €1.4 billion annual water aid budget is used to its fullest effect. In order to facilitate this objective, it has five main aims. These are to:

- Reinforce political commitment to action;
- Raise the profile of water and sanitation issues;
- Encourage regional cooperation;
- Improve water governance;
- Gain additional funding.

However since its inception not one single extra person has received safe water or

sanitation through the initiative, according to the report. The EUWI initially stalled as it took more than two years to adopt its 19-page organisational structure, and then spent its time promoting private finance initiatives despite the fact that public finance outstrips private finance by nine times in developing country water sectors.

The report, by reformist NGOs Water Aid and Tearfund, said: "Established to make better use of the EU's existing €1.4bn annual aid for water, the EUWI has actually operated on the basis that the priority is to attract new private finance.

"The EUWF has actually had a negative effect by distracting hard-pressed officials. They have focused on submitting proposals – the vast majority of which will be unsuccessful since the EUWF was 15 times over-subscribed rather than, for example, on lobbying their own governments to prioritise the water and sanitation sector more in the allocation of debt relief monies or aid increases.

Donors often now provide more of their aid as General Budget Support [GBS]. These funds go direct to the recipient country's Finance Ministry rather than to individual projects."

Even using PFI as their primary means of trying to gain money from EU member states, the project has failed to bring water provision up the agenda. The only member state which has offered to pledge more money has been France, in the form of 30% grant, 70% loan ratio.

The EUWI has also met setbacks in that private companies have refused to enter into PFI agreements, judging the market infrastructure as "too weak" for them to be sure of reaping long-term profits.

Currently the main priority of the organisation is to begin talks with 11 'country dialogues' with African governments, to devise political and financial strategies for spending the aid money.

The EU launched its Water Initiative in September 2002 as its "main contribution to the achievement of the MDG for drinking water and sanitation."

## Iran: double standards

### COMMENT

It seems ironic governments which ignored UN and world opinion by invading Iraq should now turn round and cite "defiance of the international community" from Iran as a crime worthy of sanctions, air strikes or even war.

Even assuming that there was strong, independently verified, evidence of a desire to build nuclear weapons the fact is that Iran is no position to build any for at least a decade.

The double standards are staggering. America leads the world in developing WMD, including nukes. In the UK, Iran's desire to develop nuclear power for civilian use is dismissed as little more than a front (as the fourth largest oil exporter it has no need). It is ironic this argument is raised as Blair defends UK expansion of nuclear power by arguing that oil is finite.

So what happens next? We can expect the process of scaring the people to begin again. Iran will replace Iraq. Opinion

pieces in the newspapers will provoke worried editorials. Iraq will be forgotten, bar the occasional letter or opinion.

And after that? Perhaps Iran will be quietly dropped as the US is in no position to wage another war. Objectively, it looks impossible for them to attack Iran. The army is bogged down in Iraq.

Yet Bush's handling of everything, particularly the Middle East, is inept. Opportunistic rhetoric about the 'axis of evil' helped bury whatever reformist movement there was in Iran by making it easy for hardliners to paint it as 'objectively pro-American'. Logic and reality have never stopped Bush before.

One factor which could stop them is a vigorous peace movement which, unlike the one in the run up to Iraq, can turn words into (direct) action. Sadly no such movement exists and given what does, and the weakness of the anarchist movement, it seems unlikely one will develop – unless we try to build it.

Iain Mackay



## Feature

# Crime and community

John Shute looks at leftist political group IWCA's relationship to crime in the communities they serve

Any serious critique of the Independent Working Class Association ought to accept that the fundamental premise of the IWCA is correct. The left has, as they state, abandoned the working class, and any effective resistance to capital can only be established on the basis of rebuilding a militant current within the working class.

Any other strategy will commence from the position of isolation established by the left, and repeat its mistakes. What is necessary is the re-forging of a current of working class resistance, which takes as its starting point – given the weakness of the organised working class in the workplace – a community-based politics of, as the IWCA put it, working class rule in working class areas.

In putting this into practice the IWCA have established themselves as credible organisers of resistance to council house sell-offs, disrepair and council corruption. In the case of north London organiser Gary O'Shea, this has been at considerable personal cost – he was evicted from his home as a result. Though when it comes to addressing the issue of working class crime and anti-social behaviour, the good practice of the IWCA appears to come undone.

A focus upon crime and anti-social behaviour – if it is to lead to a rebuilding of working class militancy and self-identity – has to take into account a number of factors. As the IWCA acknowledge, any campaign based around such issues has to distance itself from what they call a “cultural witch-hunt of working class youth.” Equally though, it has to recognise within what context that witch-hunt is taking place. One of the hallmarks of the New Labour years has been its re-arming/repositioning of the state in relation to public life – such that the everyday life of the working class is more and more a policed life, with CCTV cameras covering every street, a massive increase in stop and search and personal data collection by the police, the increase of the visible presence of police and Community Support Officers within working class communities, increased criminalisation of personal behaviour, summary justice, etc.

This has been combined with attacks on the right to dissent and to effective political organisation, through the various Terrorism Acts and their utilisation in relation to public order. The end result is that the space for resistance is closed down, and the working class comes to have a relationship with the state which moves from the soft policing of the welfare state of old to a sense of working class space as being in every sense ‘policed’ space.

If the Thatcher years were based on a strategy of breaking the organised working

class which had mounted so effective a challenge to capital in the 1960s and '70s, then New Labour represents stage two of that strategy: the disciplining of a disorganised, fragmented working class.

None of this figures anywhere in the IWCA analysis of working class crime. Neither is there any effective analysis of the root cause of crime within working class communities. Anti-social behaviour is a direct product of the decline of traditions of solidarity and resistance within working class communities.

It is the consequence of atomisation and fragmentation within our communities and as such it can only really be addressed through the re-politicisation of those communities. Organising community resistance to crime cannot be an end in itself. For it to work it has to be a means to the re-forging of community self-organisation, around a recognition of working class interests in the widest sense.

There is no point in the self-organisation of working class communities to address issues of anti-social behaviour unless in the process what is also addressed is:

- the need for working class political independence;
- the political necessity of active solidarity within working class communities – as a means of survival for those communities in the face of attacks on rights to benefits, social housing, working hours, wages, health and education, etc.

Equally, what has to be posed is the question of what working class independence actually means. To provide an example, the campaigns within nationalist communities in the Six Counties over such issues as drugs, anti-social behaviour, touting, benefits snooters, etc., have focused both on direct action as a solution to working class problems, and the illegitimacy of the state as a policing force within working class communities.

This second element is crucial, otherwise community groups become not counter-forces in opposition to the state but a supplementary volunteer force for the state. In relation to crime in working class communities, the state couldn't give a toss. The strategy of the state in relation to crime is to confine it to working class communities: a) so as not to threaten the voters and shopkeepers of Middle England; and b) to increase the process of atomisation within working class communities.

The New Labour strategy in relation to crime might best be identified as ‘Let the Working Class Eat Itself’. The reason the police are so little concerned about drug dealing and anti-social behaviour is because their policing of working class areas isn't intended to be in the interests of the working class. Aside from the fact that many cops are happy to profit from their own involvement in



Blackbird Leys, where the IWCA has enjoyed its most visible successes

the local drug trade, the low level war of all against all within our communities is what is supposed to result from Blair's concerns about anti-social behaviour. Meanwhile the media sells us chav stereotypes to convince us of our own impotence.

In relation to its focus on crime, the IWCA has pursued occasionally very effective community anti-drugs initiatives, such as pickets of dealer's houses, pickets of areas with a high number of muggings and doorstepping those most involved in street crime. In Blackbird Leys, where the IWCA has enjoyed its most visible successes, it has made serious efforts through direct action campaigns to organise the local community to confront heroin and crack dealers and close down local crackhouses.

What's been missing though has been any over-arching political analysis to seek to draw any conclusions from such activity that will foster working class independence. In some cases the IWCA have appeared to act as a pressure group on the Thames Valley police instead of a working class alternative to it. In relation to the Blackbird Leys community centre bar, the IWCA have called for the licensees to be stripped of their licence on the basis of rumours of ‘Yardie’ activity there, despite themselves conceding they have “no evidence of illegal activity on the premises.”

In relation to the closure of a crackhouse at 25 Birchfield Close, they have stated that the police have seen the crackhouse as a chance to grab the media spotlight with one big raid, then

later conceded that there have been regular police raids on the property. Far from being based on an analysis of the role of the police in relation to the working class, and a strategy for re-forging community solidarity in its own interests against both crime and the state, the IWCA approach turns direct action into a means of pressing the local state to act – a reformist dead-end that has nothing at all to do with the realisation of “working class rule in working class areas.”

As the IWCA councillor Stuart Craft puts it in their November 2005 bulletin: “One of the purposes of the Blackbird Leys community patrol was to force the police to be accountable and to deal with the problem [drugs and anti-social behaviour].”

In a community meeting with Thames Valley police, Craft states that “where there is a problem as serious as this, resources should be made available. There should be no excuse from the authorities for not taking the necessary action” (August 2005 bulletin). So, not only are the police now part of the solution (rather than a means of containing and disciplining the working class) they should be given more resources!

All talk of working class independence has been forgotten in favour of a call for the police to do their job properly and for the local state – which you might think would be what the IWCA was committed to organising against – to ‘take action’. Thus, the IWCA in Blackbird Leys are reduced to hailing as a victory for working class self-organisation the involvement of the

police in funding a local drugs project (Community Action and Development). How the securing of police funding squares with working class rule in working class areas is never fully explained.

If crime is a problem for working class communities, it doesn't follow that increased policing is the solution. The whole point of working class self-organisation is to address our problems ourselves and to challenge the legitimacy of the state as it acts upon our daily lives. Community resistance has to be posed as an alternative to the state, not a complement to it. The end-goal has to be the re-politicisation of our class around its own interests. Craft – and presumably the IWCA as a whole – would have it otherwise.

Way back in March 2004, Craft wrote that the solution to anti-social behaviour is “increased professional support, improvement in social funding, and a mechanism for dictating what type of behaviour is acceptable and unacceptable ... put in place as part of local authorities' Anti-Social Behaviour Strategy.”

Aside from the invitation to the white-collar cops to follow on from the boys in blue in policing the working class, the point has to be made that the problem with spending time as a local councillor is that you come to see the local state as part of the solution, not as the problem. Perhaps its time for Stuart Craft to take a rest, before working class rule in working class areas gets reduced to a local authority strategy document, and the IWCA turns into Labour Briefing.



# Commentary

## FREEDOM

Volume 67 Number 3

### 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

Back again, and sadly, more apologies to make about newspapers not coming out on time. Having had a brief spurt of energy towards the end of last year, we are now back down to a skeleton staff and as the new year is our busiest time for renewals, the workload has got on top of us.

Pre-spring cleaning in the Autonomy Club is ongoing and vast amounts of paperwork, odd bits of wood, etc., have been chucked out. But, as mentioned in previous issues, the situation in terms of people being involved is dire. Whilst we welcome the latest member to London's social centre flock, Freedom is trying to run its bookshop, press and newspaper with barely a half-dozen hardy souls (none whom live nearby).

We desperately need reliable people to help out with the place. As the last month has demonstrated, we don't currently have anywhere near enough even for admin and distro, so please, get in touch – and proactively so, as none of us have time to chase people up these days.

On a more optimistic note, it's probably time to announce another Freedom readers' meeting. How does 5th March grab you? Again, there will be an opportunity to speak to an editor, get involved, complain, or just slather the paper with praise – your choice.

### 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  
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### Next issue

The next issue will be dated 25th February 2006 and the last day to get copy to us (see contact details above) will be Friday 17th February.

### Objective journalism at its best

The organisation Media Lens (located at [medialens.org](http://medialens.org)) is dedicated to analysing the media and showing how it defends power. Basing itself on Chomsky's 'Propaganda Model' of how (and for whom) the media works, its analysis is essential reading for all radicals.

To get a taste of it, we present this exchange between the organisation and the BBC. Objecting that its reporters were simply repeating US and UK government claims of their motives as objective fact, Media Lens emailed the company. They pointed out that one reporter stated that "US intervention in the region ... is pushing its democracy agenda, has created a political space that dissenters can occupy." However, "All this does not mean that the dreams that the Bush administration has for the region are coming true."

As Media Lens note, this "is the key propaganda sentence: the United States and Britain are driven by fundamentally benign motives in the Middle East – by 'dreams' of democracy, no less. Our governments invade countries illegally, wage vast propaganda campaigns to deceive their own populations, and kill and injure countless thousands of innocent civilians. But somehow, at heart, they are striving to spread liberty, democracy and the rights of man."

This is a standard position for the BBC. A Newsnight reporter, for example, talked of "Bush's grand design of toppling a dictator and forcing a democracy into the heart of the Middle East." When Media Lens challenged Newsnight editor to justify this as objective reporting, he replied: "I don't think it's right to challenge the assumption that [Bush] wants democracy in Iraq!" It gets worse. The BBC's News at Ten reported that British and American forces "came to Iraq in the first place to bring democracy and human rights." Asked whether she stood by this factually untrue statement, the BBC's director of news replied that the "analysis of the underlying motivation of the coalition is borne out by many speeches and remarks made by both Mr Bush and Mr Blair." So if our rulers say something, the BBC considers it as true. Journalism at its finest!

Needless to say, Media Lens pointed out the obvious facts of the matter,

namely that it was "flatly false". US and UK troops invaded Iraq to disarm an "alleged 'serious and current threat' to the West from Iraq's weapons of mass destruction. Only when this claim was revealed as an indefensible fraud, did Blair and, later, Bush begin emphasising 'democracy and human rights'." This the BBC simply presented "as truth arguments made in 'many speeches and remarks made by both Mr Bush and Mr Blair'. Is it the job of objective, neutral BBC journalists to take it as read that our leaders are telling the truth? Isn't that the task of propagandists?"

That this war was not about regime change has been placed in the Memory Hole. It is a good job that Media Lens is there to remind us of the facts, particularly as the same nonsense is now being peddled by the government to justify an attack on Iran and the media is going along with it.

Iain Mackay

### NHS mess

As a Suffolk lad, I've been handily placed to witness what's going on in one of the worst affected NHS crisis counties.

Hundreds of beds are closing, along with two entire hospitals and their staff. Mental health centres are shutting down, and care services for both the young and infirm are facing drastic cuts.

In their stead, a raft of 'care in the community' ideas, and a 'refocusing of resources that will transform health care for decades to come'. What they seem to mean, in amongst the glossy drivel of their Big Book of Plans, is that the PCTs are massively in debt so they're palming off as many sick people as they get away with on an unwary general public.

Some of the more interesting scams include changing focus to 'prevention being better than cure'. In this scenario more health professionals are sacked or moved over to being teachers of personal health provision to the county.

In theory, a more healthy county is one which the NHS can deal with far more easily. Usefully of course, the impact of this switch-over will be almost impossible to measure. It could be said in five years' time, as the number of operations goes down in line with a lack of surgeons, that the whole thing has been a great success – as less

operations are being done.

And by the time the numbers are found out, hopefully the whole thing will have been moved over to the private sector anyway, and it will become just another bogeyman story to tell about how inefficient the national health was.

Care in the community is a catch-all for several more of these scams. Mental health care in particular is going to be sent back out so that you and I can have the pleasure, just like the good old days but sans the networks of community support which used to help deal with it.

We can hope that the poorer families from which the mentally unhealthy are inevitably mostly drawn are given professional support instead, but as one-to-one care is vastly more expensive than institutional care, that seems an unlikely scenario.

This also seems to apply to the very elderly and the severely disabled, the mentally handicapped and the soon-to-die, if recent indicators are anything to go by.

But never fear, this damage will heal itself apparently, thanks to the wonder of the market. New Labour are pushing, and have been for most of the past decade, for a spangley new idea – privatisation of services.

Funny that, less than two elections ago, Gordon Brown was announcing a massive injection of cash into a system 'chronically let down' by the Tories. Now as it turns out, the real money that went in was less than a third of what he originally announced in the commons, but the expensive reforms and upgrades he wanted have been carried out anyway, all but bankrupting many of our health groups. Now he's refusing to bail them out, and is calling for privatisation to 'fix' the problem.

Does anyone get the impression that bad luck doesn't just run in PCTs?

Rob Ray

### State terrorism in action

While the US bemoans the potential terror threat of Iran, it kills 18 people (including women and children) in a (state) terrorist attack on Pakistan. It justified this attack by saying it was aimed al Qaeda's second in command, Ayman al-Zawahiri (it initially, wrongly, claimed to have killed him). If Iran had done something similar we can be sure of what the US response would have been but because America had done it, the murders are reported matter-of-factly and not as the crime it most surely was.

The US military tells us that most of its victims were terrorists. How it knows that is a mystery. What is true is that someone has taken a decision to attack a civilian area, knowing that innocent lives will be lost and that these people were expendable in the name of a greater goal. Is that not why terrorism is denounced by our rulers? Are not the people of Pakistan terrorised just like people in London after 7th July? Which suggests that the state does not object, in principle, to the mentality or morality that produces acts of terrorism, but simply to having a rival.

Why state terrorism is not denounced in the same manner as non-state terrorism is obvious – any act becomes good

when 'reasons of state' require it. That is why legal and moral considerations are cast aside in cases like these – such considerations only have utility when they can be used to further elite interests.

IM

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### Torture

page 1

monitoring, to validate this promise.

The memoranda are useless, each of the aforementioned countries have ratified the Convention Against Torture but ignored it. This form of monitoring is also problematic. Periodic monitoring will not deny torturers opportunity, and isolated detainees have little chance of exposing their mistreatment without suffering consequent retaliation.

This course of action is incompatible with international law. As a result, the UK and US have tried to defeat a UN resolution stating that diplomatic assurances were not sufficient to absolve governments of their duty not to send suspects to countries where they are likely to be tortured. In the European Court of Human Rights, the UK stated that this duty should be balanced against security considerations and urged other European governments to follow their lead.



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### Quiz answers

1. The Okanagan Valley area of British Columbia, Canada. Can't find out where it got its name, sadly.
2. Cesar Milstein, aka El Pulpo, was a Jewish Argentinian molecular biologist. He attended an IWA congress in Paris and was on the board of La Protesta in the '50s. He was awarded the Nobel Prize in 1984.
3. From sailors' practice of 'striking' or lowering their sails thus preventing the ships from going to sea.
4. Burnbank Gardens, Glasgow. It was the HQ of Guy Aldred's Anti-Parliamentary Communist Federation.

## HISTORY OF THE MAKHNOVIST MOVEMENT

1918-1921

by  
PETER ARSHINOV

The Russian Revolution was the time when the old order was totally swept away. Nestor Makhno stood for freedom, and his struggle to destroy both the old and the new oppressors is as powerful today as it was then. It was in prison in 1911 that Peter Arshinov established a close personal and political friendship with Makhno, which continued after their release, and Arshinov's history of the Makhnovists is undoubtedly the most important source work available.

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# REVIEW

## For a book designed as primarily about anarcho-syndicalism, Rudolf Rocker spends rather a lot of time on a basic history...

**T**his primer on anarcho-syndicalism was published when the anarcho-syndicalists in Spain were at their most powerful, in early 1938. This gave Rocker, who was well acquainted with the theoretical side of anarcho-syndicalism, as well as the international aspects the chance to show how anarcho-syndicalism could be successfully put into practice.

The timing seemed perfect, but within eighteen months the movement in Spain had been destroyed, all its achievements overturned by the victorious

Francoist forces and Europe stood on the brink of the disastrous world war.

Yet the basic theory of anarcho-syndicalism survived both these and provided the inspiration after the war to new generations of industrial and other militants to the extent that the movement, despite various ups and downs, remains a force to be reckoned with in many countries, albeit at only a fraction of its former glory days.

The text is presented as part of AK Press's 'Working Classics' series which indicates that, whereas the basic ideas discussed are still valid, it shouldn't be seen as a contemporary propaganda tool, which is not to say that it is worthless either!

The introduction by Nicolas Walter is from the Pluto Press edition of 1989 and gives the background to the writing of the text together with some guidance as to more recent works on the subject and the epilogue is the one used by the Modern Publishers Edition of Indore, dated 1947.

The principal differences with the 1987 Phoenix Press edition is that it lacks the introduction by Martyn Everett and the first chapter from Rocker's *The London Years*.

For a book designed as primarily about anarcho-syndicalism, Rocker spends rather a lot of time on a basic history, firstly of anarchist ideas and then on the workers movement in England, France and the rest of Europe.

His brief history of the working class organisation and resistance to capitalism in the nineteenth century is well done and highly informative, but it does tend to unbalance the book as a whole as it

leaves only about 50 pages to deal with the objectives, methods and evolution of anarcho-syndicalism (the last being global in its coverage).

Consequently the coverage of how the social revolution in Spain was implemented is very schematic and lacks the sort of detail that would make for a more convincing argument for the anarcho-syndicalist approach. Now partly this is because the book was put together during the conflict itself, but Rocker obviously had some detailed knowledge of the collectives and how they were organised.

I suspect, for example, that Rocker was familiar with the CNT-FAI volume: *Collectivisations: l'oeuvre constructive de la Revolution espagnole*, the first edition of which came out in 1937 and there may also be more information in Rocker's own volume *The Tragedy of Spain* published in the same year, but I haven't seen a copy of that. Diego Abad de Santillan's *After the Revolution* was also published in 1937 and apparently contains a very detailed description of how he thought an anarcho-syndicalist society could be organised. (Again a title I haven't seen, making it another title due for a reprint!) It is also true that he perhaps was aware that the conditions were different in every country and that what may have worked in Spain may not have worked elsewhere so kept the detail to a minimum. Or perhaps he didn't want people to too closely identify anarcho-syndicalism with the Spanish experience, especially if, as it turned out, they ended up on the losing 'side'.

The book is very clear, however, on the tactics that the workers' movement should adopt and what it should avoid. Rocker is coruscating in his denunciation of the purely political struggles of the Socialists which claims had not advanced the working class one iota in their struggle for socialism. Instead he advocates such forms of struggle as the strike, and in particular the general strike (and not just for purely economic gains but also as a weapon in social struggles), sabotage, sit-down strikes, go-slows and so forth. And at all times such struggles must remain under the control of the workers themselves and not be taken over by



Rudolf Rocker

political parties for their particular advantage.

The epilogue, written ten years later in 1947, shows just how much damage the end of the Spanish Civil war and the world war had done to the libertarian labour movement, yet despite that Rocker remained upbeat as he realised that whatever the immediate situation was, as long as the capitalist class controlled the economy, then the working class would, of necessity, have to struggle to maintain, let alone improve, its standard living, its working conditions and the quality of life of the whole community.

And even amongst the ruins of a devastated Europe there were the germs of a resurgent libertarian movement, albeit one which had suffered grievous losses.

Anarcho-syndicalism awaits its historian. There have been many partial histories dealing with particular countries over certain periods but there hasn't been a single volume history of the whole movement at a global level. Especially one that is both sympathetic to the subject but also prepared to be critical where needs be.

At the same time there need to be contemporary agitational materials, and

here at least the many active anarcho-syndicalist groups have been busy in many countries, including Britain, where the Solidarity Federation publishes the excellent 'zine *Direct Action*, the free-sheet *Catalyst* and several excellent pamphlets and leaflets.

Yet for all that anarcho-syndicalism remains very much a minority movement in most countries, struggling either to get a foothold in a situation dominated by reformist trade unions or forced underground by repressive forces of the state.

In the former case most workers seem content to let their trade union leaders negotiate whatever benefits they can from the boss class whilst they live a life of relative complacency and comfort, only stirring themselves when faced with redundancy or enforced wage cuts.

In such situations anarcho-syndicalist demands that the working class engage in class warfare with the aim of taking over control of the entire economy and society fall mainly on deaf ears, although the anarcho-syndicalist tactics mentioned above still prove extremely effective in some situations.

On the other hand in countries where even reformist trade unions struggle to survive, anarcho-syndicalist organisational

methods and forms of struggle are often the only ones open to workers, yet the repression makes open propagandising a hazardous occupation and renders any form of sustained organisational presence problematic.

Anyway, is it worth getting this edition of Rocker's book? If you already have the Pluto Press edition then probably not, unless you want to give it to somebody else. There's possibly enough variation between the AK Press and the Phoenix Press edition to make it worthwhile if you have money to spare. For first time buyers this is probably the best one-volume introduction to anarcho-syndicalism on the market, but it is far from the last word.

At the very least a revised edition with additional chapters bringing the story into the 21st century together with an updated reading list / bibliography would seem desirable. However, we should thank AK Press for making this title available again in a very presentable edition.

*Anarcho-Syndicalism: Theory and Practice* by Rudolf Rocker (preface by Noam Chomsky, introduction by Nicolas Walter), AK Press, £9.00. Readers might also be interested in the Freedom Press title *Anarchism and Anarcho-Syndicalism* by Rudolf Rocker, £3.00 (post free).

## BOOKS

**Class, Self, Culture**  
by Beverley Skeggs  
Routledge, £21.99

This thought-provoking book examines the historical development of representations of the working-class, and the contemporary variations on age-old themes that currently beset us. Although dense and theory-based for sociology and cultural studies audiences, it crystallises many concepts of considerable interest to anarchists while decisively arguing for the central organising roles of the middle- and working-classes in Western societies – despite the great and the good (as well as many radicals)

somehow believing that class has become irrelevant while poverty and destitution spiral.

Crucially, identity politics and the privileging of oppressions are thoroughly trashed by an author demonstrating throughout how prejudicial characterisations and definitions of the working-classes have always overlapped and traded those based on race, gender and sexuality – though without (spurious) biological essence lurking behind the difference.

And, rather than focusing as marxists would on the 'objective' struggle between 'capital' and 'labour', attention is shifted to how the fields of language and ideas

shape lives and determine history. But this is no bourgeois idealism, because these fields are simultaneously produced by and make possible both the deployment of money and material resources, and the government of bodies.

The latter is achieved via what modern social theory variously terms the 'symbolic economy' or 'order of discourse'. So systems of naming, classification and evaluation are physically made material in sets of 'facts' and prescriptions based on their truth and legitimacy, translated into disciplines guiding action in the world and institutions exerting power. The state, as well as what counts as the 'economic', co-determine and co-constitute

each other's effects – and to critique one and excuse the other would be fatal.

However, for several centuries the effort to persuade people to govern themselves rather than using force has trickled down the social hierarchy. Neoliberal globalisation recasts definitions of who counts as a valuable citizen – in brief a separate individual who 'rationally' calculates and exploits personal characteristics and abilities in an objectively neutral and increasingly informational market.

And those failing to so define themselves and act accordingly are conceived of as moral, social and political problems to be devalued, punished, and

kept regimented in place with more precarious lives.

Working class people, of course, are especially likely to be unwilling and/or unable to be as obligingly mobile and flexible as employers and governments demand, given our different cultural values and social dispositions – not to mention the small matter of being systematically denied the resources and opportunity to cultivate the requisite social, aesthetic and knowledge distinctions so jealously guarded by the middle-classes. And we're supposed to 'respect' them? I think not – and neither, in this respect, does Skeggs.

[www.tomjennings.pwp.blueyonder.co.uk](http://www.tomjennings.pwp.blueyonder.co.uk)



## A Sideways Look

My daughter has recently started primary school. It's proving to be quite a change, as we try to juggle her new week with dismal things like having to work for a living. She's enjoying it at the moment, though given how much she proclaims that things are "boring" this may be a honeymoon period.

One thing she has complained about is having to walk there. It's about fifteen minutes walk if you have the legs of a four year old. Her complaints were put in context the first time I took her. We passed parents and children getting the bus, to go one stop. Unless a bus actually arrives within five minutes of getting to the bus stop, it takes longer. Her class teacher told us that they have to start the day with a fifteen minute warm-up of exercises, as so many of the children have been driven.

This brings me to another problem. Cars – loads of them! Parked everywhere, driving full-pelt at the lollipop man, ignoring the sign which flashes '30 mph SLOW – CHILDREN' at them. And loads of 4x4s – it's like Jeremy Clarkson's wet dream, all it needs is a dead cyclist and he'd be happy.

Both the school and parents have written to the council about the traffic and the behaviour of specific drivers. So far, the response from the council has been crap – I hope to report on how that might change. The head teacher has pointed out that the two nearby secondary schools have had road calming – presumably on the grounds of teenagers being so much worse around traffic than infants? Or perhaps the council just assumes that everyone drives their younger kids to school anyway, so why bother?

If children can't even walk fifteen minutes to school, then it's little wonder that so many are obese. Hang on, though, that sounds like a get out for the junk food industry. I heard someone from Walkers on the radio the other week, defending their over-salted, fat-ridden products as being "healthy", because they were less full of fat than a chocolate biscuit. When kids eat them everyday, munching through improbable flavours in gaudy packets full of additives they are getting too much salt. Fortunately, our kid doesn't like sugary drinks, needed by loads of kids to process the excess salt.

One primary school in Deptford made the news after the head teacher banned crisps. Loads of parents were up in arms about it, after all, it's a bit much when education staff try to avoid the consequences of poor diet on behaviour, isn't it? While I harbour no illusions about the quality of school dinners, my daughter seems to like them and her requests for packed lunch are motivated as much by novelty and the thought that she might get crisps every day than dislike of the dinners.

It is regularly trotted out in propaganda from the likes of McDonalds' that diet is only part of a healthy lifestyle. The subtext is clear – food companies blame

lack of exercise, car apologists blame poor diet. You know what I blame? Capitalism.

Svartfrosk

## Blast from the Past

Taken from Freedom 13th February 1981, entitled Letter from America 2: Visions of the 'New Poor':

In 1948 a 12 year-old girl was raped by her step-father in a small village near the town of Lynchburg, Virginia.

Nine months later she had a child. Suffering from mental collapse and physical side effects from the whole experience she was admitted to the Lynchburg Training School and Hospital for 'treatment'. Unknown to her she was sterilised.

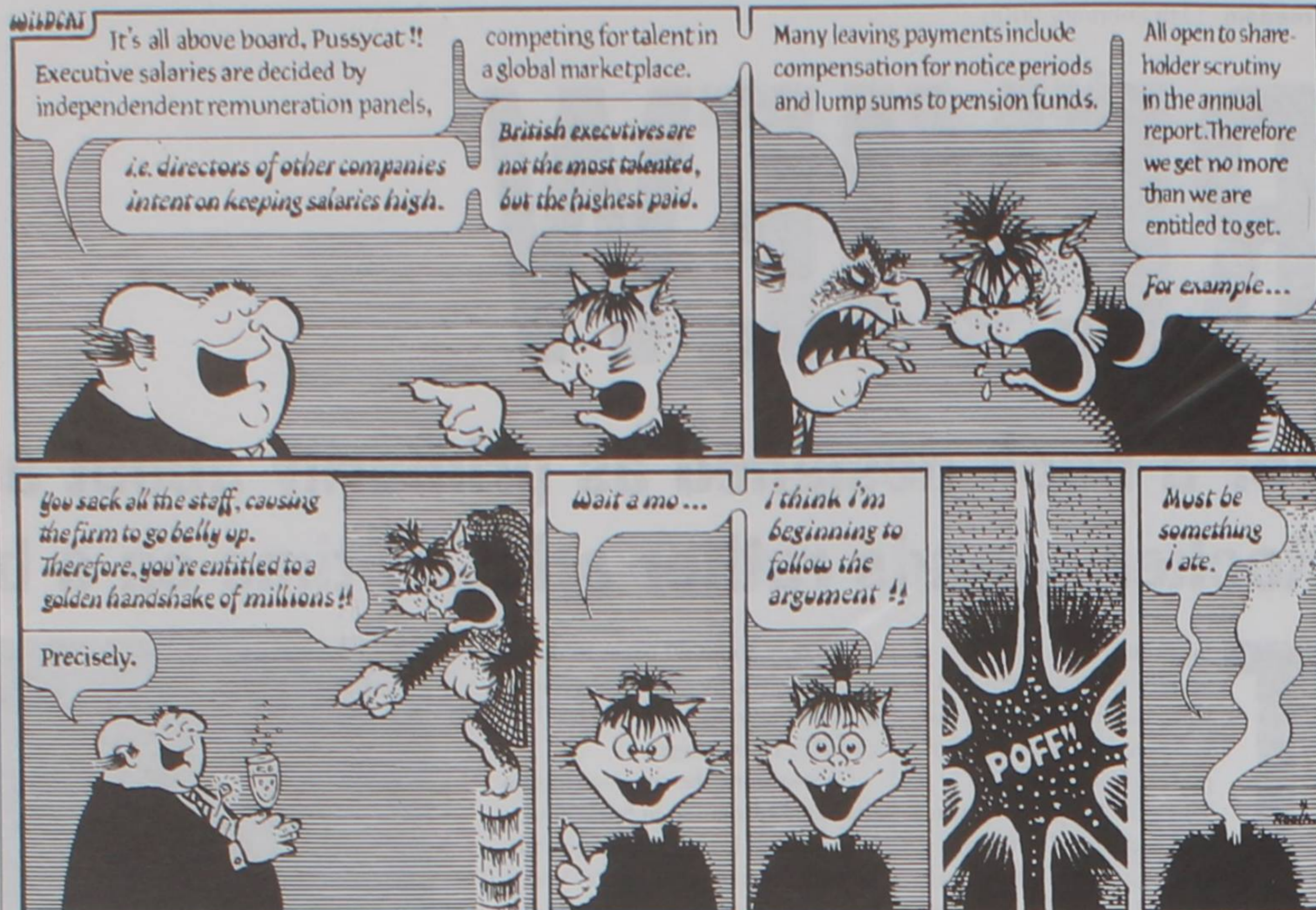
Today she stands with others on a Washington DC street in silent protest against a system at work in the heartland of Ronald Reagan's power – the 'new south' – which allows people taken into public institutions to be sterilised against their wishes.

The Virginia Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) says there may be as many as 65,000 people in the USA who have been sterilised when in psychiatric care – and they do not know it. The ACLU uncovered a massive sterilisation scheme in that state only last spring, and it has been in operation since the 1940s. Both men and women have been the victims of the state sanctioned mutilation process, based on what one Virginia official said was an attempt to "weed out misfits, loose women or incorrigibles".

These revelations come at a time when the American people are crowing their 'freedom' for all the world to hear as their precious 'hostages' are coming home. But this dark side of the US public health system also points to a continuing endemic disregard for the rights and needs of women and children at time when the whole welfare system itself is about to come under attack...

At the same time as the Reagan administration is preparing a cut of public spending amounting to £107m, two recently issued reports describe a worsening condition of life for women trying to care for their children on their own. The 1980 report of the National Advisory Council on Economic Opportunity indicates that 49% of the families living in extreme poverty are now headed by women, up from 29% in 1960. In fact, the report predicts that if the current rate of increase continues, female headed families will comprise 100% of the poverty population by about the year 2000.

The reason, says the council, is that female-headed families are caught between a rising divorce rate, an increased labour market and rapid deterioration of social services.



## Imagine if...

Sergeant Pepper was doing the rounds, but all seemed quiet. Outside the massive HQ of the ruling BNP party, a small group of hardened protesters were being dragged away and having a relocation order placed on them for their anti-social behaviour, but that was par for the course.

One of them, who he knew vaguely as Marty, shouted "It all started with the defeat of the religious hate bill!"

Sergeant Pepper found his curiosity piqued, and dragged the wild-eyed, miscreant out of the crowd. Marty was still screaming hysterically. "They should never have strengthened the hand of the BNP so much! Look where we are now! It was a direct link to fascist dictatorship!"

Pepper asked kindly, how's that Marty? Marty got louder: "Islamophobia! It's everywhere! If they'd just passed that bill and banned all abusive or insulting behaviour towards religion this would never have happened!"

"It gave the BNP free hand to be mean about religion! People all over the world suddenly became racist overnight because comedians..." (Marty barked as though he had Tourette's Syndrome 'ISLAMOPHOBIC BASTARDS') "...were taking the piss!"

Pepper couldn't help but ask. "But Marty, surely banning all 'abusive or insulting behaviour' towards any religion would have outlawed basically everything, from eating pork in public to homosexuality or wearing a rubber? Surely such an attack on free speech..."

Marty went nuts, "Abh! you're one of them! An Islamophobe!" and tried to attack, forgetting that both his ankles were cuffed, so he fell over his own feet.

Pepper could see he wasn't getting anywhere and put Marty in the back of the van with everyone else. A particularly old detective, who was organising the raid, commented as the doors slammed shut: "Didn't he used to run a website once?"

## Listings

until 18th February No Sweat/Zanon speaker tour with actions, discussions, film shows, alternative fashion events and speakers including Jose Julian Pununari from the occupied Zanon factory in Argentina, for more details see nosweat.org.uk

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

10th to 12th February Projectile festival of anarchist film and culture in Newcastle, see www.projectile.org

11th to 12th February Camp for Climate Action planning meeting at the Sumac Centre, 245 Gladstone Street, Nottingham, see 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 manchesterzines@riseup.net

16th February Johnny Fluffpunk, Sir Gideon Vein, with MC Den Levett, from 8pm at The Inn on the Green, 3 Thorpe Close, London W10, see newagenda.demon.co.uk/perclub.html

18th February London anti-war action forum from 2pm to 5pm at LARC, 62 Fieldgate Street, London E1, contact voices@voicesuk.org or call 0845 458 2564

22nd February to 20th March To mark the tenth anniversary of the No M66 Campaign, there will be an exhibition at the Basement Social Center, Lever Street, Manchester.

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

23rd February Greenpeace benefit night at The Edge Nightclub, Compton Walk, Southampton, from 8pm, for more info see nicktw.com/ticketsnew.htm or call 01425 489628.

25th February Demo against monkey laboratory, meet 12 noon at Carfax Tower on the corner of Cornmarket Street / Queen Street in Oxford. Contact 0845 330 7985, 07986 559012 or see www.speakcampaigns.org.uk

4th March Seedy Saturday community seed swap at Edmund Kell Hall in Southampton, from 10am to 2pm, first event (possibly) of its kind in the area. Contact 02380 643813 or email seedyaturday@yahoo.co.uk

12th March The miners' remembered, mark their heroic struggle with a day of events and films at the Common Place, 23-25 Wharf Street, Leeds, contact maryrosecook@gmail.com for info.

18th and 19th March International demonstrations to end occupation in Iraq, details to be confirmed.

2nd April 'Unauthorised' demo against the occupation of Iraq to mark second anniversary of the April 2004 siege of Fallujah, meet 12 noon in Parliament Square, London. A non-violent direct action workshop and legal briefing will take place in London on 1st April, see www.j-n-v.org

4th May AGM of leading war profiteer BAe Systems, and Campaign Against Arms Trade (CAAT) have plans, for more info ring 020 7281 0297 or see www.caat.org.uk

26th August to 4th September Camp for Climate Action in north of England, see www.climatecamp.org.uk

## The quiz

1. Where is Anarchist Mountain?
2. Which anarchist was awarded a Nobel Prize?
3. Where does the word 'strike' come from?
4. Where in Britain was 'Bakunin House'?

Answers on page 6

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