

FREEDOM

80P ANARCHIST NEWS AND VIEWS

www.freedompress.org.uk

22 APRIL 2006

INSIDE ►►

I'm afraid it's bad news, NHS page 3

The French have won the battle page 4

Happy birthday to the 1 in 12! page 5

Flare-ups from the '70s page 7

'ETHNIC CLEANSING' IN ESSEX

EXCLUSIVE

Travellers in Essex, who claim they are living in fear of an apartheid-style dawn eviction, say they will defend their homes using non-violent resistance and human shields

Dale Farm, near Basildon, is the largest travellers' community in Britain, the home of approximately 600 residents living in 86 homes. Virtually a village, with chalets, mobile-homes and brick-walled gardens, Dale Farm's residents have erected barbed-wire, scaffolding and multiple steel gates because they say they expect to wake up any day now to find themselves under siege.

Cliff Codona, chair of Britain's recently established Gypsy Forum, argues that Basildon District Council is ready to enforce the £3million eviction it voted for last year. "Basildon will do what ever they need to do when they want to," he says, unconvinced that recent moves by the government and decisions by the courts will stop the Tory-led council.

He says his own experience, when he was evicted from Woodside in Bedfordshire, leaves him sceptical but determined. "We'll keep this up for as long as it takes, we've no other choice."

"This is ethnic-cleansing," Dale Farm spokesman Richard Sheridan said, after Basildon's development committee decided in January by four votes to one, with one abstention, to bulldoze the homes of 1,000 travellers living within

their jurisdiction. "They want to get rid of us at all costs."

Despite a High Court ruling earlier this month that Basildon had acted unlawfully by bulldozing homes at Hovefields Avenue, a traveller colony not far from Dale Farm, Sheridan and Codona fear that in the long run Dale Farm residents will also lose their present homes.

Traveller groups insist that the Deputy Prime Minister John Prescott is determined to persuade families to abandon Dale Farm and move to government-provided land at Pitsea on the other side of Basildon.

Sheridan welcomes Prescott's proposal, but points out that millions in public money could be saved simply by leaving Dale Farm families where they are.

"I think the government needs to take a reality check," says Sheridan. "If Basildon evicts us they'll have the police drive the lot us into the next county before the proposed Pitsea site is even agreed on."

Justice Ouseley's ruling on Hovefields has not deterred the council. Malcolm Buckley, the leader of the council, believes he has the law on his side as well as the support of the council. Cllr Don Morris, who chairs the Housing and Community Safety Scrutiny Committee, says the council will act to the letter of the law. "We will take whatever action is necessary to deal with the legal developments."

Although Justice Ouseley said the



Homeless: Residents at nearby Green Meadows saw their own 'green belt' land dug up and earth banks illegally erected around the area, while their caravan was destroyed. Inset, supporters dig a path back through the embankment.

council had failed to take into account the possibility that property owners could be successful in obtaining planning permission on appeal, Morris backs

Buckley in his assertion that court actions and appeals by the travellers will have no effect on council policy. "I can't see the court order having

any effect," says Morris. "Our policy is to uphold the law without fear or favour. The fact is that they have come there

► page 6, column 5

NINE FOR THE DAYS OF THE GENERAL STRIKE

On 1st May 1926, over one million coal miners were 'locked out' of their jobs for refusing to work under the imposition by the coal owners of longer hours and reductions in wages.

The miners were a huge chunk of the British labour force, they had been through much in over a century of slaughter in the mines and social deprivation in their communities.

The year before had seen a concerted effort by the wealthy and aristocratic coal owners to reduce their poverty conditions even further. On this occasion the Government had saved the day by stepping in with a temporary subsidy.

It was a ploy. It bought the government and industry time to draw up emergency powers and plan for a sustained miners stoppage.

The British working class during this period was a highly politicised force, ideas of Communism, and anarcho-syndicalism, and Industrial Unionism were rife among the mass ranks of the industrial proletariat in general and the coal miners in particular.

Churchill in the Home Office considered the miners and their leaders the spearhead of a syndicalist force and the social force for over a century who had been most likely to spark a British workers' revolution. The lofty leaders of the TUC were no less fearful of those same forces, but felt obliged to try and control the process by appearing to take charge of it.

Days after the miners' lock-out began the TUC declared in favour of a supporting general strike. Despite Councils Of Action being established in every city to try and wrest control of the strike from the TUC leadership the

tactics were badly crippled by the disastrous slogan of the Communist Party of Great Britain: 'All Power The TUC General Council'. It vested all authority in their treacherous hands.

At first the TUC started to call out key strategic sections, slowly closing down the country, and rolling the strike on to greater levels of strangulation of the country and economy. Churchill and government mobilised the armed forces, sent tanks and armoured cars on the streets to seize the docks and food supplies, sent gunboats and armed marines up the major industrial cities.

There is no doubt many workers felt that the moment for a revolutionary seizure of power by the workers, through their unions was fast approaching. So did the Government, and they called in the General Council to meet the Cabinet. Asquith asked the TUC leadership if they had prepared their revolutionary government? They responded, with genuine shock, that this was a simple economic trade dispute with no political content.

Asquith assured them that this was a challenge to the constitution, the legal authority of the government and very political system they lived in. He must have been fairly confident that the General Council were not going to accept his resignation and ask him to vacate power. He was right of course, and the General Council went into secret negotiations with the owners to negotiate a deal behind the back of the miners, not consulting them until the deal had agreed a reduction in wages for the miners and an increase in hours.

They then called off the strike and announced a victory. The miners themselves rejected the settlement, and the rank and file of the Trade Unions reacted with fury when the news of the sell-out came through, indeed more workers joined the strike after it was called off than when it was officially on. In part too, this was due to the fact that the unconditional surrender by the General Council had meant hundreds of workers in other major industries were now being victimised and attacked

by their employers.

Battles raged on through the bitterly isolated mining districts and villages against police and soldiers, and near the end of the strike a blackleg organisation led by Spenser from Nottingham led a major break in the ranks of the miners and took the bulk of them back to work.

At length, and literally starving, the miners called off strike in the November of 1926. From days of hope, we descended into a decade of extreme poverty with the coal owners with a whip hand and the blacklist, and ruthless conditions in the mines themselves

1926 left an indelible scar on the collective memory of the miners and their communities; the TUC General Council was a name we grew up with and associated with loathing and betrayal, along with those of Churchill and Spenser.

Freedom readers are invited to a celebration of the General strike at the Woolpack in Doncaster (see page 8).

Dave Douglass

ISSN 0016-0504



Vol 67 No 08

9 770016 050009

Home and away

Building up debts

Approval has been given to a £1bn PFI scheme to redevelop NHS hospitals in Birmingham and St Helens. The move affects tens of thousands of people across the region, and is the single largest scheme outside London to get the go-ahead.

University Hospital Birmingham is the main teaching hospital in the Midlands, the second largest employer in Birmingham and a key player in many of the local regeneration programmes. The scheme will replace existing Selly Oak and Queen Elizabeth (QE) Hospitals, with a single-site modern 'state of the art' acute hospital.

Some workers will be displaced by the move, according to the trust: "A small number of employees, such as those who maintain hospital buildings, will transfer out of the NHS to work for the private company."

Under the Birmingham plan, £690m will provide 1,231 beds, as well as an A&E, specialist burns and transplant wards a decontamination suite and operating theatres. The £338m St Helens scheme will see the redevelopment of St Helens and Whiston hospitals.

Co-oped bank

An investigation by the Schnews news group has found that the 'ethical' Co-operative Bank has been investing in GlaxoSmithKline and Vodafone, both of which are notorious for their dirty business practices. According to Factory Watch, Glaxo's chemical plant in Ulverston, Cumbria, is one of the most carcinogenic polluters in the UK. Glaxo are also Huntingdon Life Science's single largest customer, according to animal rights campaigners. Glaxo was also one of thirty-nine major pharma companies which tried to prosecute the South African government for passing a law that allowed easy production and importation of 'generic' drugs for HIV. They didn't back down until 300,000 people from over 130 countries signed a petition against the action.

Vodafone's nice little earner in Kuwait also seems to have passed the ethical test. Bankers obviously haven't read the Kuwait section of Amnesty's website. A whole range of human rights abuses are cited there, from arbitrary detention through to institutionalised sexism and curbs on freedom of expression.

No borders fight

In protest at their inhumane treatment by security guards during a No Borders demonstration on 8th April over 150 detainees in Colnbrook detention centre went on hunger strike.

The hunger strikers have been subject to repression from Colnbrook's management, with one detainee, deemed to be the 'organiser' of the protest, having been locked in an isolation cell on Saturday night, then later removed to another detention centre. Many of those inside Colnbrook have been there for over six months, with some being detained for up to three years, with no automatic bail review process. Last January, a detainee at Harmondsworth Detention Centre took his own life out of despair. Fellow detainees responded with a one-day hunger strike and a written statement about their conditions and treatment in detention.

On 13th April, a solidarity protest took place outside the Home Office building in central London, called by London No Borders and The Square. A No Borders fundraiser also took place on Saturday 15th at The Square Social Centre in London.

Around the world

BULGARIA: The Federation of anarchists in Bulgaria organised what has become their traditional Saturday protest in Sofia against the increasing prices in the country on 10th April.

Shouting 'the prices are rising, we should rise as well', the anarchists marched down Vitosha Boulevard in downtown Sofia, protesting at the high jumps in electricity and heating prices and other commodities.

They invited passers-by to join the rally, which ended in front of the Ivan Vazov theatre. Despite worries that their march could have prompted a violent clash with the Roma community, celebrating its international holiday with a rally, the two groups did not come in contact and everything ended peacefully.

GREECE: An estimated one thousand anarchists and other anti-fascist protesters, wearing motorcycle helmets and armed with iron bars, clashed with police outside the offices of the right-wing fascist group Chryssi Avgi. The demonstration was organised by Anti-fascist Initiative to protest last week's stabbing of three teenage students by fascists, who are alleged to be members of Chryssi Avgi. The three are recovering from their injuries, which were not serious. Riot police used teargas against the protesters, but no one was reported to have been seriously injured during the demonstration.

HOLLAND: Mitsubishi workers took wildcat strike action on 5th April over worries that DaimlerChrysler would close their plant when Smart ForFour production ends. Forbes news reported that last week DaimlerChrysler had confirmed it would halt production of the model, which is manufactured in the Netherlands through a partnership arrangement with Mitsubishi.

Mitsubishi also manufactures its Colt vehicle at the plant, and workers are

currently in talks with management over their future. The employees want to convince the carmaker to produce an additional vehicle at the facility, which would ensure their future once Smart production ends.

RUSSIA: During a meeting against the state of welfare housing and bureaucratic injustice, six militants from the anarcho-syndicalist union SKT (Siberian Workers Confederation) were arrested on 8th April. According to an ex-KGB (FSB) cop, the meeting, in Tomsk, was illegal and therefore they detained organisers to register them for fines.

Meanwhile in an interview with a radio station before the meeting began, Vadim Tiumentsev, one of the meeting organisers, said that they had received all necessary permits and that the meeting was a legal one.

Some SKT comrades report that the arrests were performed in a brutal way. All the detained were placed under police custody. The policeman at the commissariat said that they would remain in the cell until next morning.

INDIA: Medha Patkar (pictured below), a leading campaigner to stop the Narmada Dam in India - who was eight days into a hunger strike - was arrested, on 5th April for 'attempting to commit suicide', and taken to hospital to be forcibly treated, without her consent. Police clashed with protesters,



stopping them from getting in, and arresting some on charges of rioting. Ms Patkar, who is the founder of the campaign against the building of the Narmada Dam in India, began the hunger strike in protest of the decision to further raise the height of the Sardar Sarovar Dam. The damming of the Narmada river involves over 3,000 separate dams, and will displace millions of people.

RUSSIA: Skinheads in St Petersburg shot dead an African student on Sunday 10th April, the latest incident in what is beginning to look like a highly organised campaign of white supremacist terror against foreigners in Russian cities.



Lamzar Samba, a 28-year-old Senegalese national, had just left a nightclub in the early hours of the morning when a lone gunman ambushed him and a group of friends with a pump-action shotgun.

Mr Samba, who was also a student activist and a campaigner against racism, was shot in the back and in the neck and died on the spot. Russian television broadcast images of his body covered in a blue tarpaulin.

Police, who have been criticised by President Vladimir Putin for their

ineptitude in dealing with racist crime, said the murder weapon found nearby suggested the crime was racially motivated. The shotgun had a swastika stencilled on it, the word 'skinheads' in English, and various derogatory slogans about non-whites scrawled on it.

The killing has drawn strong condemnation from politicians and cemented St Petersburg's reputation as one of Russia's most dangerous cities for non-whites, along with Moscow and the student town of Voronezh. Coming just three months before Russia is due to host a G8 summit of world leaders in St Petersburg, this is not the kind of publicity that the Kremlin is seeking.

SYRIA: A new wave of arrests has swept Syria in recent months as the government cracks down on dissent, according to Amnesty International.

Malcolm Smart, Director of Amnesty International's Middle East and North Africa programme, said: "We are particularly concerned that many of these people are being held in incommunicado detention, where they are at risk of torture."

Scores have been arrested from across the social and political spectrum in Syria in recent months - including Kurds, Islamists, human rights activists, writers, students and leftists - while others have been harshly sentenced after unfair trials. Several hundred political prisoners remain detained in Syria, many of whom are prisoners of conscience. Most were sentenced by the Supreme State Security Court (SSSC) or Military Court, both of which suffer from a gross lack of independence and impartiality. The political and social life in the country is strictly controlled by the Ba'ath Party, which has maintained a State of Emergency in Syria for 43 years.

Those held incommunicado are at high risk of torture and ill-treatment, which is common in Syrian interrogation and detention centres.

Prison news

Harmondsworth and Colnbrook

On 8th April, large demonstrations took place outside Harmondsworth and Colnbrook Detention Centres in solidarity with the asylum seekers imprisoned there. A heavy police presence outside, and heavy-handed repression inside, was aimed at preventing any direct communication, even visual, between refugees and demonstrators, with some of the former reportedly being beaten up when they protested the restrictions. In response to the extra repression, 150 of those imprisoned in Colnbrook went on hunger-strike immediately, and at the time of writing 100 are still refusing food. See Indymedia for regular updates on the situation and details of future solidarity demonstrations.

Barcelona Six trial

Anarchist prisoner Bart De Geeter, sentenced at Aachen last year, has made a call for international solidarity with the Barcelona Six when they come to trial in Madrid in September. The six,

originally arrested in September 2003, are facing a total of 117 years (as demanded by the Prosecution.) More information at www.presosalacalle.tk

Ignasi released on bail

Ignasi, one of the two anarchists arrested in Barcelona on 9th February, has been released on 3,000 euros bail. Ruben, however, who was arrested at the same time, remains in prison. Write to him at: Ruben Masmano Bernel, (Modulo 1 de C.P. Brians), C.P. Can Brians, Apartado 1000, 08760 Martorell, Barcelona, Spain.

Animal rights arrest

At the end of March, a British animal rights activist, Donald Currie, was arrested on charges of arson and possession of incendiary devices. At the time of writing no prison number was available for Donald, nor any more information about the charges. Donald Currie, (DOB 13.4.66), New Prisoner, HMP Woodhill, Tattenhoe Street, Milton Keynes, Bucks, MK4 4DA.

Zoorah Shah released on parole

Earlier this month, Zoorah Shah, was released from HMP Askham Grange after spending 14 years in prison. Her case has been at the forefront of debate about how courts should deal with abused women who kill. Her supporters argued that evidence of her decade long abuse at the hands of her husband Azam, who she finally poisoned, was never seriously considered during her trial at Leeds Crown Court in 1993. After campaigning for Zoorah's release, her supporters, in particular Southhall Black Sisters, won a partial victory when her tariff was reduced from 20 years to 12. Now having been released two years over that tariff, Zoorah Shah joins other miscarriage of justice prisoners, such as Sue May, released from prison, but still fighting to clear their names.

Cassidy Wheeler back in segregation

A broken razor he was using to mend a pair of jeans the jail wouldn't replace landed him with 180 days solitary and

a \$200 fine. Since this is about 20 times more than the specified punishment for such an 'offence', this is obviously yet another example of Cassidy being victimised for his role as prison organiser. He now finds himself short of funds, and would be grateful for extra correspondence. Write to him at Cassidy Wheeler, #14282456, OSP, 2605 State Street, Salem, OR 97310, USA.

He says, "I'm looking for artwork of riots, street parties, punks, tribal stuff, etc. Up to 10 pages of clippings, photocopies, or computer printouts are allowed. I'd really appreciate it!"

Crap arrest of the week

An anti-war protestor who staged a one-man die-in in front of an Army recruitment stall in Perth, Scotland, covering himself in tomato ketchup, was arrested for Breach of the Peace and Criminal Damage. Reporting on the incident, SchNEWS, said that police who nicked the saucy protestor acted 'with relish'.

News

NHS: the deepening crisis

Richard Griffin summarises some of the effects the NHS funding crisis is having around the country

John (an alias) works for a primary care trust in the north west of England. His partner is a nurse at a University Hospital NHS trust. John's trust is about to merge with four other primary care trusts. He has been told that his job is at risk. His wife's post could be one of the thousands of jobs that will be axed to balance the hospital's books.

"Morale is at rock bottom across the health service" he said. "It is crazy for the health minister to say that patients won't be hurt. Sacking hundreds of nurses, doctors and other frontline staff is bound to hit care. With the introduction of the market in health at the start of April things will get worse. Hospitals unable to attract enough patients will close regardless of local need" he predicted.

The list of trusts announcing redundancies grows day by day: 200 jobs at York Hospital, 720 at Worcestershire, 300 at the Royal Unit Bath, 100 at James Paget in Norfolk, 'hundreds' to be shed at NHS Direct, 400 at the Surrey and Sussex and 160 at Kent's Medway NHS Trust. According to health union Unison, nearly 7,000 NHS jobs are being cut in England, with more expected to come.

With job losses come service cuts. Some 30 community hospitals are under threat. In St Albans the local hospital is planning to close their mental health ward in a bid to save £1m. In London health bosses are trying to reduce the number of patients that are referred to hospitals by telling trusts that they have to cut GP referrals by 10% regardless of local needs.

Across the country wards are being shut.

In Walsall, for example, the local PCT has closed their 103-bed rehabilitation centre which includes a stroke unit, despite a petition signed by 16,000 local residents to keep it open. In Gloucester Tetbury Hospital has closed an 11-bed in-patient ward. In North Yorkshire patients coming for surgery are no longer being admitted the night before.

Local communities and unions representing health workers are though fighting back, angry that staff and patients are paying the price for poor management.

Ian Ducat, the regional secretary for Unison South West, representing members at cash strapped Royal Cornwall said "I shall expect the resignations of NHS Trust chairs and chief executives and dismissal of finance directors before a single nurse, technician, porter or secretary is sacked."

Ducat added that if the union was notified of a single compulsory redundancy, it would immediately ballot its members. "We will not stand idly by and allow our members to pay the penalty for incompetence or political expediency," he added, a view shared by campaigners in Stoke fighting the proposed cuts there.

Jim Cessford, spokesman for the North Staffs NHS Save Our Staff Campaign asked "why should staff pay for management problems and government targets? Staff say they are already working to full capacity. They are saying this reduction will tip them



over the edge, as well as putting lives at risk."

North Staffs NHS SOS are organising a national demonstration in Stoke against NHS job cuts on Saturday 29th April with the march starting at the University Hospital (more details from

01782 213157).

On a flying visit to Stoke, health secretary Patricia Hewitt claimed that the package of cuts being introduced would improve patient services! Try telling that to John and his partner who with more than a decade's service each

to the NHS face the prospect of losing their jobs. Or the patients who will have to wait longer for treatment as a result.

For up-to-date information of job cuts and the government's NHS privatisation programme, see www.keepournhspublic.com

Pensions undone

Led by Unison, the 11 unions involved in the proposed pensions strikes have called a halt until further notice. Negotiators claim that they have potentially achieved their objectives, saying that the minister for local government's statement that talks would be conducted "on a nothing rule in nothing ruled out basis" was sufficient to call back strike preparations.

The negotiating group, led by Unison general secretary Dave Prentis, have failed to meet his stated objectives that the abolition of the 'rule of 85', allowing public servants to retire if they are over 60 and their combined age and working time add up to over 85 years, should be taken off the table, and that all present workers be protected.

The new framework allows only for the redistribution of 'up to' 50% of savings gained from the rule's abolition to go towards the protection of current workers.

Prentis said: "The joint union/LGA statement is a positive step and that is why we have decided to suspend our planned strike action. It provides a

framework to enable negotiations to take."

The strike cut-off was not negotiated with workers, who had shown high morale following the first national public sector strike on 28th March, and will allow the government to put off further dissent until after the local council elections on 4th May.

The unions have been heavily criticised. The Anarchist Federation said: "There is a large potential for this to develop into a real challenge to the government but only if it can escape from the official unions control."

"Currently Unison, the TGWU and the GMB have the issue firmly under control and are damping down any enthusiasm, preferring instead to just vaguely threaten another stoppage in the run up to the May local elections - they don't want to embarrass their Labour Party co-workers on the 'other' side of the battle."

In private sector news, bosses at the Pension Protection Fund (PPF) have decided not to ask for higher pension

contributions from companies despite warnings that even one collapse from a major contributing company could collapse the entire scheme.

Academics told the governmental body, which effectively provides an insurance service for imperilled company pension schemes, that should a major corporation run into difficulties the amount needed for that year's bailout could multiply by as much as 25 times. They warned that it would likely happen at least once within the next decade.

Concerned that increased contributions would place too much of a burden on companies however, PPF chairman Lawrence Churchill has pledged instead to monitor companies which look like they might be in trouble, effectively trusting to chance that it won't be another Enron.



Activist 'murdered'

A peace activist who was shot by an Israeli soldier in Gaza while trying to rescue children from gunfire was found to have been intentionally killed. The family of Tom Hurdall, a 22-year-old photojournalist, welcomed the verdict but said the real targets should be the entire chain of command behind the murder.

Initially, Israel denied that there had been a shot from the army watch-tower, and have repeatedly attempted to stall or impede the investigation, they alleged.

They suggested the British government should investigate, and extradite the five Israeli officers they believe made up the a chain of command which led to his son's death if necessary. They promised a civil action if this wasn't done, and condemned Tony Blair in particular for never condemning the killing.

In delivering the verdict, the jury condemned the Israeli government's attitude, saying "the jury would like to express its dismay with the lack of cooperation from the Israeli

authorities."

Tom Hurdall, from London, had been acting as a human shield for a group of schoolchildren who had been caught out in the open during an Israeli incursion.

Despite being clearly visible as a peace activist, wearing an orange jacket to mark himself out, he was shot in the head, and went into a coma.

He died nine days later having never woken up.

Ex-sergeant Taysir Hayb was convicted at an Israeli military court of manslaughter and sentenced to eight years in prison last year, after a long campaign.

Hayb, an expert marksman, had claimed he was intending to fire a warning shot 10cm away. He is the first soldier to have been convicted for the killing of a foreign national during the recent fighting.

Regardless of the low-ranking soldier's conviction, the family said that the issue of the culture allowing Israeli soldiers to shoot civilians had not been addressed.

They fought the law

Papidan looks into the 'victory' of the successful EOA contract in the wake of the French students' resistance

As of Monday 10th April, unions have triumphantly declared that the CPE first employment contract is gone. But nothing has changed. The CPE has been replaced by the modification of another existing work contract, which is restricted to the 'poorest' young people. The other demands of several General Assemblies of universities and the National Coordination have been completely denied: abolition of the whole EOA it was tied to, more money for universities, more positions in the public sector.

The French government and its Prime Minister Villepin imposed the Equal Opportunities Act, EOA, in February. The main points in the bill included:

- The creation of a 'parental responsibility contract' (so if your children don't go to school you pay a fine and say goodbye to your family allowance).
- A lowering of the legal compulsory age of school to allow 14-year-olds to become apprentices.
- The allowance of night working for 15-year-old teenagers.
- The creation of several new working contracts. One of them was called the CPE (the First Employment Contract) and applied to those under 26 who find a new job. It gave the employer the right to terminate employment within two years without having to give any reason. Last year a similar law was put into effect that applied

only to companies with less than 20 paid employees (this was called the CNE).

The struggle started from the Rennes University (in Brittany), a very active and radical group of students.

University and, later, high-school students were in an everyday struggle. Some university students are, still, organised in a National Coordination which meets every one week or so in a different university. They consistently call for a joining of waged workers toward a General Strike, for occupation, general assemblies and everyday action to disturb the economy. They want the abrogation of the EOA and the CNE.

However, it should be mentioned that these co-ordinations can be a place of ipolitical games! between students organisations. For example struggle is controlled and regularly slowed down by the main students' organisation, UNEF, which very close to the Socialist Party (the equivalent to the British Labour party).

Occasionally, the five main trade unions called for a participation in the demonstrations. But their main activity was clearly to try and control negotiations with the government, and take over the legitimacy of the movement. And for once, all five were unified toward their goal.

During demonstrations, trade union stewards co-operated with the police to arrest the *casseurs* and everyone who



looks like a *casseur* to them (*casseur* translates to young people who dress 'street', particularly ethnic minorities), and beat a lot of young people up. The state repression itself was huge, people were arrested after almost every demonstration, there were incredible scenes of violence during train station blockades.

From 3rd to 9th April, 68 French universities out of 84 were blocked, on

strike, occupied or partially involved in struggle. On 28th of March and 4th of April, more than two million people were marching throughout France. And most importantly, every day was (and is still) a new day of spontaneous actions of young people...Why?

As of Friday 14th, around ten universities are still blocked, others are disturbed. At least some people are still fighting together, because they felt that

for a moment, they were breathing, they were communicating, they were doing something for themselves.

To follow, in English, what is happening in France, see the very up-to-date website libcom.org/blog/

For more information (in French) see stopcpe.net/cpe/coordination.no-ip.org/ paris.indymedia.org/

Call for US general strike

The organisers of one of the largest national demonstrations the US has ever seen have called for a Mayday general strike.

The Los Angeles-based No hr4437 network said: "We are calling No Work, No School, No Sales, and No Buying, and also to have rallies around symbols of economic trade in your areas (stock exchanges, anti-immigrant corporations, etc.) to protest the anti-immigrant movements across the country.

"We will settle for nothing less than full amnesty and dignity for the millions of undocumented workers presently in the US. We believe that increased enforcement is a step in the wrong direction and will only serve to facilitate more tragedies along the Mexican-US border in terms of deaths and family separation." They have been supported in the call by the syndicalist IWW.

The call follows a major success on 9th and 10th April, when nearly two million people across the US demonstrated in major cities in every state, including a massive 500,000 in Dallas alone.

Students all over the country ditched school to attend the rally, with some subsequently suspended.

Protesters say they seek real immigration reform that is comprehensive, respects civil rights, reunites families, protects workers, and offers a path to citizenship for the current undocumented and future immigrants to the US.

According to the New American Opportunity Campaign: "People trying to come here to work or join family find themselves caught in a hodge-podge of outdated immigration laws and a famously inept and unpredictable immigration bureaucracy."

The large demonstrations, which took organisers by surprise, follow the introduction of the hr4437 bill, a Republican-backed attempt to criminalise 'illegal' immigration into the country.

The bill would specifically hurt the 300,000 people who each year cross the border, primarily from Mexico, to find work. Latinos are the largest minority group in America, making up a third of the population, and have been the

driving force behind the protests.

The US Senate has continued to point fingers at each other over the issue of the hr4437 bill, while failing to agree to protesters' demands.

The ruling party, which forced through a bill making it a criminal offence to be on the US side of the border without permission, has attempted to blame the Democrats for allowing them to do so after hundreds of thousands of immigrant workers took to the streets in protest.

However the issue appears to have subsequently split the Republicans themselves, as Bush has distanced himself from the bill, proposing instead a 'guest worker' system designed to semi-legitimise immigrant workers.

However human-rights advocates have pointed out that such a measure would serve only to create an official underclass workforce with no rights, as opposed to the current unofficial one.

Aproximately 12 million people in the US are thought to be unregistered immigrants.

Christ compels them

Cases of repression against people involved in education who do not share 'Christian values' are increasing in Poland.

Two days ago a school psychologist who is the sister of an arrested activist in Warsaw was taken in and held without charges and was barred from contacting her family.

Her sister found out that she was being investigated because "She was lighting candles in school, so she is probably a Satanist, which is corroborated by the fact that she doesn't go to church." Allegations of sexual abuse of children have also been tendered, with no substance.

Another example has been allegations of distributing child pornography made against an ecological activist working with children in Lodz. Later on it was found out that the only nude child picture found on the computer was of his wife on a beach as a child.

This is part of a policy started by the Minister for Education to limit access to schools for pacifists, ecologists, anarchists and other organisations who

are not 'Christian-based' in their morals.

Several pupils' organisations have sprung up around the country, and have networked as 'Pupils Initiative' (the Krakow section is part of the Anarchist Federation).

Yesterday, an action was held at the Ministry of Education. The main gate was chained closed. This was a protest against the silence of the minister of education regarding protest letters sent earlier by the Pupils' Initiative against anti-free speech moves by the ministry.

From other news, a section of the North American Man-Boy Love Association has appeared in Poland, hosted on a site in Russia.

Gay and Lesbian organisations have reacted in panic and don't want to be associated with it.

For rightists and homophobes, the existence of this organisation is 'proof' that letting gay couples marry is a prelude to the legalisation of child abuse.

Feature

Bradford's radical hub

As the 1 in 12 club approaches its 25th birthday, Rob Ray looks at the roots of the legendary collective

The 1 in 12 today is one of the radical north's biggest treasures. In their earliest incarnation, the anarchist collective provoked a hailstorm of controversy as they exposed council corruption, brought out their own music labels, fought racism and raised funds for strike groups.

In 1981, a group formed around Bradford's Claimant Union, intending to generate a new social scene for both the employed and those out of work. They took their name from a report brought out at the time claiming that one in twelve claimants defrauded the state.

The group campaigned actively on a range of subjects, with one of their first causes involving the Bradford 12, a group of Asian lads who had been arrested for making petrol bombs to defend their community against a racist attack they had caught wind of. They were released on the grounds of self defence.

Further anti-racist work followed, along with records, literature and direct action. A magazine, *Knee Deep In Shit*, gained a solid muckraking reputation and exposed corruption in the council and the Freemasons.

The sheer energy and ambition of the founding group eventually manifested in the creation of its members-only club, the 1 in 12, in 1988 – a building bought with a council grant.

Pete Chapman is one of the group's longest-serving members. He remembers his first experiences of the club persuaded him to get involved in 1983: "It was running one night a week in a pub called Tickles then. I went down there and just started to get to know people. A lot of it was around the music.

"There was a gig on every week but politically it was fighting fascism, and supporting the unions. When I started it was *Hindles Gears*, which ran for a year – we did some fundraising for them – and then of course it was the Miners' Strike."

A plaque still hangs on the wall at the club to remind members of the long struggle – a thank you from the Nottingley Wives' Self Help Group, who they donated their collections to.

Their plans to take over a building, partly inspired by a piece by Albert Meltzer in the *Black Flag* magazine, were as much luck as judgment, according to Pete: "Somebody found out that this money was available, and it had to be used. Bradford council needed to get rid of it or lose it. This proposal came up, and they accepted it – although strings have been attached."

The move caused an uproar in the local press, with one journalist accusing the 1 in 12 of a plan to spend the money on bombs and guns. It took three years to open the building, with the police and authorities interfering all the way and lack of enthusiasm nearly killing the project entirely.

Pete remembers: "It was exciting but when it came down to the boring stuff like sanding down window frames there was only about three or four people working on it, and everyone else was asking 'is it done yet?'"

Matt, another long-serving member, signed up to help in 1985, just after the building had been bought. A libertarian (with a copy of *Freedom* already in his hand), he gravitated towards the energy of the place: "To stumble across it – a three-storey derelict warehouse – was very exciting.

"But just having the building ended up being a huge responsibility. We've never taken any other grants, we decided to stand it up on our own energies. It takes £56,000 a year to keep it open these days."

But the timing of the 1 in 12, in some ways, couldn't have been worse. It coincided with a downturn in political activity in the area. Matt explained: "We went from being a very politically active city when we started up in '86, and then suddenly post '88, apart from the Poll Tax, a lot of the energies that would have gone into political activities got sucked out and went into keeping the place open.

"It was a lot harder than anyone had thought it would be. It went quite quiet in the early '90s, Bradford has become depoliticised."

The club staved off the effects of such increasing disengagement by actively reaching out on a community level. Matt



The 1 in 12 Festival in 1998

says: "When we first started we entered a quiz league and it may sound miniscule but it meant we tied in with our local culture, we didn't lose touch with the city. Other examples were that we took on three allotment sites, started a football team, a lot of activity which allowed people with different interests to express themselves. It allowed me to get a handle on what I perceived to be my political aspirations."

The late '90s saw another downturn, but the collective continued to innovate. A trip to Barcelona for the 60th anniversary of the Spanish revolution, helped by Albert Meltzer's extensive contacts book, saw members join in a week of gigs, meetings and rallies. It sparked an idea. "When we came back it dawned on us that the Mayday tradition had died," Matt explained, "we organised a load of activities in the city when we got back. The local cinema had a series of libertarian films, there was a march through town and it felt good.

"The following year we did one with *Class War* as they began to close down the paper in '98, they held a conference of 300 people as a parting shot, and the club was packed every night.

"The next year Mayday became a hot potato again as it took off in London, so in a small way the 1 in 12 played a part, there is a chain. This year, we'll be holding another Mayday march along with Bradford TUC, and there will be lots of gigs."

At around the same time, two members of the group helped to establish contacts with radical groups in Kosovo and Serbia as the major conflict began

to escalate in 1996-98. During the war, the 1 in 12 was active in procuring, and then secretly transporting, much needed aid into Kosovo.

In the last five years there have been more campaigns, but the focus of recent times has again become anti-facism. The far-right's resurgence has surprised many in the area, Matt believes: "It's shocking, there has always been a culture of No Platform since 1976 and the Battle of Bradford. The NF got thousands of people out in the city then, and had planned to march into an immigrant district, but the TUC was strong in those days and over 10,000 people responded.

"There was a pitched battle and it was the first time the fascists had been confronted. They hadn't set foot in Bradford again, and had no success in organising, until now.

"In the last few years they did get four BNP councilors so there has been a lot of stuff organised by the TUC which we have supported. It's a different kind of fighting now, knocking on doors, I'd say it's harder because you have to use your brain a bit more."

The club helped with catering at the G8, and remains an integral support for the region. Today only two of the founder members remain, with another four whose commitment began before the social centre was founded. But the club continues to survive, and even grow, despite huge financial challenges. Membership currently tops 400, of whom around 50 are thought to be actively involved in 1 in 12-based projects.

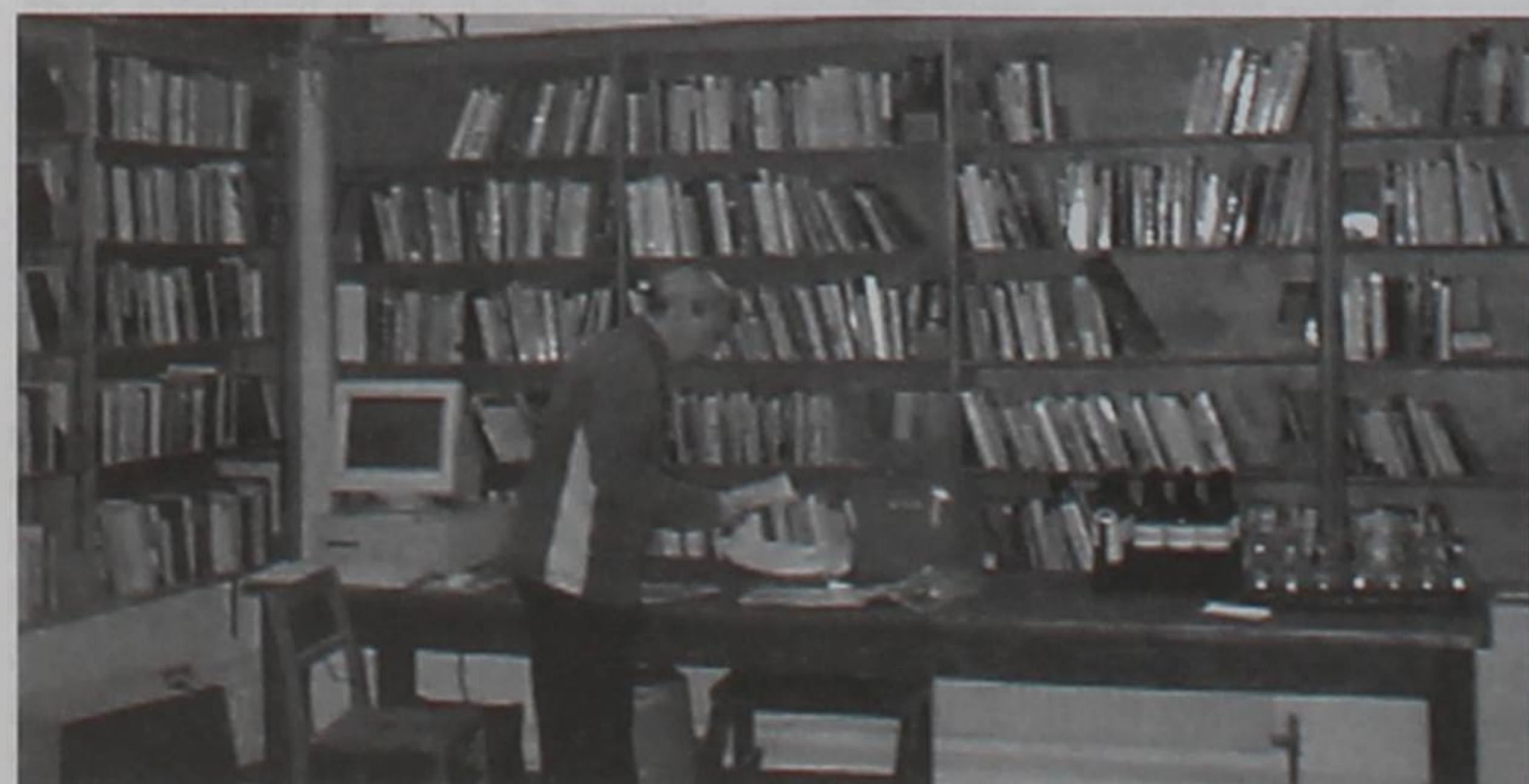
Pete seems optimistic for the future, despite a decline of working class

resistance and organisation that has continued over the last decade. The club is stable and active, and remains at the forefront of radical activity. He noted: "We host Radical Routes gatherings, music gigs, politics, and some more official sources like the Workers' Education Association, who come in to do classes. It's quite difficult because the closest residential area has an aging population [it was the first housing estate in the country] but we draw in members from all over Bradford and even the world. We have recently got an upsurge in younger people wanting to get involved, which is really encouraging because a lot of us are getting older ourselves."

Matt concurs: "We started with a very small collective, and have had only four or five people working on it at times. It has been a struggle sometimes and this year again we are going to struggle to break even – it has been quite demoralising. We have had three or four crises when we have considered closing the building.

"There is a price to pay for doing something so real. Campaigns bleed people dry and this is the same thing. But having said that the positive is the model we have created through the club. It has allowed people to express their leanings in ways that aren't classically political.

"Bradford is struggling as a community, particularly because of Leeds, and it has some really difficult ethnic conditions but in amongst that is a valuable core. The banners may have come down but the positives are that what replaced it is real for people and makes anarchism accessible."



The library at the 1 in 12

Commentary

FREEDOM

Volume 67 Number 8

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

So, a third of the way through the year already, how time flies eh? Mayday is fast approaching, with its historical roots in anarchist resistance (the Haymarket Martyrs, who inspired Mayday, being of libertarian character), along with bundle of rather less enticing events and causes.

The press has been surprisingly quiet in the last two weeks, bar a fairly vicious row taking place outside our front door between a bunch of local kids, and we're still waiting for more news on the Whitechapel library project, but one road over, one of the campaigns Freedom has criminally neglected has won outright!

People on Brick Lane, one road over from the office, have claimed victory in their campaigning against the 'Crossrail hole', a plan to drive a new train station through the heart of the area.

A bill was on its way through the commons to grant powers to dig three massive holes to allow new tunnel borers, something which dissenters claim is driven solely by developer greed. The £10bn scheme has now been moved out to a shaft near Canary Wharf.

Congratulations to all at campaigning group Khoodeelaar on their success, let's hope the library campaign is as successful.

Contact details

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

Next issue

The next issue will be dated 6th May 2006 and the last day to get copy to us (see contact details above) will be Thursday 27th April.

Room in our hearts

What a disappointing issue with no Wildcat! Do we get two next issue to make up?

Zed

As a reader of Freedom for many years, I recently noted with concern the absence of a contribution from Donald Room, whose work has enlivened the paper for so long. As far as I know Donald is in good health and as productive as ever, and I do hope that this was a minor blip, and that we shall see his drawings once more.

John Radford

Why was there no Wildcat this issue? I expect that Freedom cannot pay you as much as the other papers that you work for but you still have a commitment.

Why did you leave the editors to search around for something to put in Wildcat's place?

Why do you refuse to give them permission to reprint an old Wildcat? (I have been seeing Freedom for some time and there have been lots of Wildcat strips. One of the old ones would have been better than nothing.)

At the very least surely it would not be unreasonable to give the editors enough notice that they could find something better than a big advert to put in its place.

Jim Clerk

Note from the editors: We also got a get well card from one reader who was convinced that Donald could be nothing except ill, given his regularity over the years. We'd like to reassure readers that Donald is in excellent health, but that he was, for various reasons, unable to get the cartoon to us in time for that week's deadline. As can be seen, he is now back and drawing to his usual high standards. And a note to Jim, Donald does not get paid at all, so we're very lucky to have him!

Manchester events

I thought you'd like the items on 'Shelf Life', the Newsletter of the Working Class Movement Library in Salford, for Spring 2006. The libertarian element in the library has been increased recently.* The library also holds copies of Direct Action. A number of comrades have over the years used the library when

writing their MAs and PhDs.

The Basement in Manchester is also an important resource, and is providing a focus for growing libertarian activity.

Ron

P.S. I was interested in the article by Ellen Kemp, which mentioned the Kinder Mass trespass in the peak district. The North-west sound archive in Clitheroe have an interview with Barry Rothman (on two CDs) giving his reminiscences of the event. Also, the Bolton socialist club have published a pamphlet 'Will you go o Sunday morning', which records similar actions on Winder Hill in the 1890s! How about a libertarian history group?

*A run of Freedoms has been added, for those interested in visiting.

The waste of Asbos

Anti-social behaviour orders (Asbos) are scattered among the poor like confetti at a wedding. Figures show that since April 1999, a total of 5,557 Asbos have been issued, with just under half involving youths aged 10 to 18. In fact, 897 were issued in the first three months of 2005 alone – an increase of 85% on the same period last year.

Asbos are issued on the strength of evidence that would not be acceptable in a court of law. Hearsay evidence, often from unknown sources, is read out by a council officer, and in many cases the recipient is only aware of an order when it is being presented.

In other words, people are being tried and sentenced in their absence. The probation union Napo reported last year that 50% of those who are served with an Asbo end up in prison, many for an offence that would not have originally warranted a prison term in the first place.

All the areas with large numbers of Asbos have high levels of unemployment and poverty, whereas the largely middle-class counties of Lincolnshire and Wiltshire have only 21 each.

In one particular case, a woman who has repeatedly tried to take her own life received an Asbo banning her from rivers, railway bridges, etc., and will face jail if she breaches it (somehow I don't think she will be too bothered about breaching her Asbo if she is successful). In one other case, a boy was arrested for breaching his Asbo because he took part in a five-a-side

football match. His order forbade him from associating with more than three people.

Wakefield became the first council to use Asbos to attack five site which had been 'plagued' by Travellers. Anyone attempting to set down on one of these sites is to have an order served against them.

The Corby borough council, who hired henchmen from the north of England to remove worldly possessions from the poor and vulnerable, came off the Christmas card list too. It appears they jumped on the 'terror fits all' bandwagon by threatening Asbos on those who celebrated the festive season. Theoretically, anyone decorating the exterior of their property with multi-coloured flashing lights could have found themselves eating porridge instead of turkey.

Despite government denials, the press has detailed plans to introduce 'Baby Asbos' for under-10s as part of their new 'Respect bill'. This is to include: the loss of rented accommodation for parents of 'yobbish families', 'sin bins' and secure gated communities for 'problem families' that are patrolled by wardens and monitored by CCTV. Curfews and isolation with 'community penalties', including obligatory voluntary work for parents, and the naming and shaming of heavy drinkers are all on the agenda.

As if this demonisation of the poor was not enough, we have the spectacle of 'problem families' being evicted because their children have been subject to Asbos. Let us imagine for a moment that, in such a case, the child really has behaved badly: does anyone really believe that the answer lies in putting the family out on the streets? Clearly those responsible for Home Office policy do.

Meanwhile the children of the ruling class live in comfort in a society where the Prime Minister's son can throw up on the streets in a drunken stupor, to Jack Straw's lad procuring drugs and an heir to the throne taking them, along with dressing as a nazi and brawling outside nightclubs. Did anyone suggest slapping an Asbo on those, or evicting their families from their homes?

At the same time the attacks on hooded youths is the present manifestation in a long wave of assaults on youth culture. Young teenagers are to be tagged or subjected to curfews. Rowdy school-children are to be excluded from schools and sent to special units. Any kid with too much energy who doesn't fit in at school is diagnosed as having 'attention deficit disorder', and shunted off to some quack to have their behaviour modified.

Consequently all this has a strong medieval flavour. In the Middle Ages, communal disapproval was an important weapon of social control, in many ways more effective than the sparse official forces of law and order. And public humiliation, such as putting offenders in the stocks was an inexpensive method of punishment. To revert to such methods today is a remarkable retrogressive step.

Where there is good youth work for example, there is less crime and anti-social behaviour. Yet authorities are wasting millions on ineffective punishment regimes. It will cost £26,000 to put a young person in a young offenders' institution for six months, yet the average local authorities are only prepared to spend an average of

£80 a year on each young person through their youth service.

Britain stands nearly alone in maintaining to this day so sharp a division between the rich and poor. The numbers of the 'uppers' have grown hugely in the last century and through into the new millennium, the number of 'downers' are much depleted by social mobility, but the divide is still there.

"Young people today love luxury. The have bad manners, contempt for older and talk nonsense when they should work. Young people do not stand up any more when adults enter the room. They contradict their parents, talk too much in company, guzzle their food, lay their legs on the table and tyrannise their elders."

Was that said by war criminal Blair condemning young people who wear hoods, or David Cameron attacking jobs? No, it was said 2,500 years ago by Socrates, and since this time policy-makers have seen young people as demons. Indeed, with Blair's demand for a 'job czar' with a £100m budget, some would be forgiven for thinking that his policy is to demonise the young.

The present system entrenches a selfish and blinkered idealism in its determination to preserve an ambition that is both doomed and perverse. Amidst all the spin words and phrases trotted out, one line of sense stands. 'Respect cannot be punished into people. Respect cannot be learned, purchased or required ... it can only be earned.'

The Peoples' Resistance Brigade.

Dale Farm

page 1

and done what they have done without planning permission. They have to understand that what they have done is not legal. You simply can't go on land and build willy-nilly.

"All we are concerned about is that the law must be enforced. If we don't enforce on this we might as well just sack the planning department."

But Codona says Basildon and other councils are in the process of ethnic cleansing using a smoke-screen of planning regulations, in which councils have over-ridden human rights issues.

"We agreed in Strasbourg to stop such evictions," he says. "The Council of Europe endorsed our blueprint for reform and now we want the UK Government to accept these recommendations."

Grattan Puxon
(with additional reporting by
Rob Ray and Robert Allen)

Quiz answers

1. The first zero emissions housing estate in Britain, of 84 homes in Beddington, South London
2. The Governorator himself, Arnold Schwarzenegger. He's not against immigration, of course, how could he be? He added "We are a country of immigrants, yes. But we are also a nation of laws."
3. Exiled anarchists smuggled pamphlets into Germany with innocuous titles like 'Eat German Fruit and Stay Healthy'. This particular pamphlet became so popular among miners that they used to greet each other with: 'Have you eaten German fruit as well?'
4. English, Spanish and Esperanto

ZAPATA OF MEXICO
by **PETER E. NEWELL**

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

Now available at £9.50 (post free inland) from Freedom Press

REVIEW

Richard Cross enjoys the lack of bell bottoms in Dave Haslam's analysis of '70s counter-culture, despite its flawed conclusions

Not Abba is a breathless and fast-moving 'alternative account' of a period rapidly receding past the point where it can be called 'recent history'. It sets out to reinstate what it identifies as the hidden cultural history of the 1970s, challenging a pernicious mainstream consensus which has selectively rewritten the story of the decade and completely misrepresented its multiple, cumulative political and social repercussions.

Author Dave Haslam argues that an era which ought to be defined by social convulsion, political rupture and cultural innovation has instead been reinterpreted into a false narrative comprised of the rapid, the superficial and the bland. His whistle-stop tour through the years which separate the unravelling of 1960s counter-culture and the onset of Thatcherism tries to reinsert many of the vitally important developments lost sight of in what he describes as the 'Abbafication' of that time.

The result is an excellent and timely rejoinder to the empty-headed banality served up by cultural pundits, celebrity 'experts' and Sunday supplement columnists, whose mythical histories of 1970s Britain rely on a vacuous amnesic nostalgia, saturated with a soundtrack of soft rock nausea and Eurovision inanity. In a world of endless 'I love' retro-programming, anything which sets out to puncture the mass media's facile reinvention of the '70s is welcome.

The text pushes aside The Brotherhood of Man and the Queen's Silver Jubilee to reintroduce the cumulative pressures that were by this point threatening the 'post-war consensus' with collapse. It describes the advance of the women's movement; the development of black and anti-racist politics; and the re-emergence of European paramilitary and underground guerrilla groups (in the context of deepening industrial and political polarisation and cultural sclerosis) to present a satisfyingly unruly counter-history which reveals the extent to which the old order of things was coming apart at the seams and new

possibilities and fluid spaces were opening up.

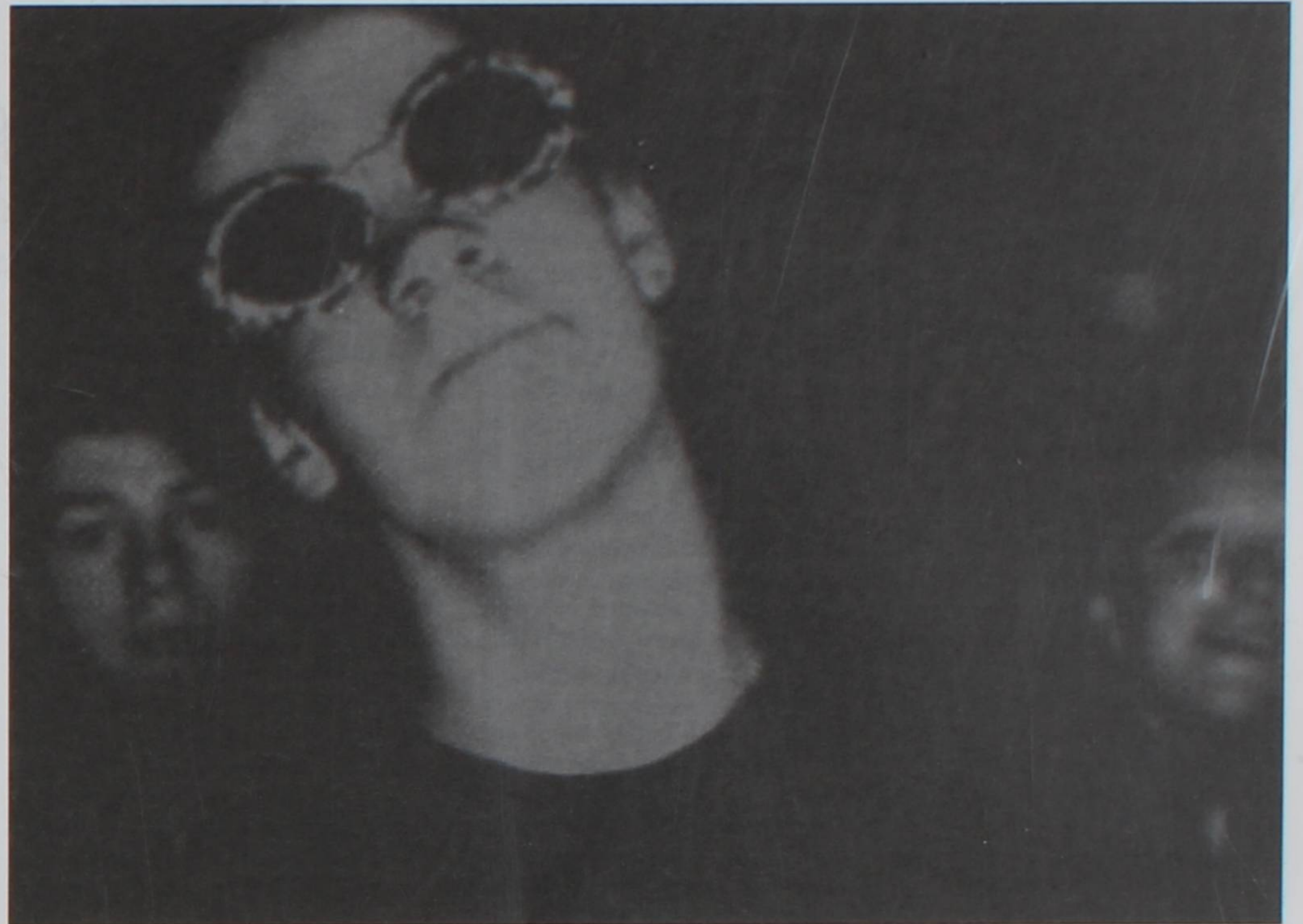
Haslam highlights the distinctions which separate superficially popular surface events from the infinitely more innovative (and frequently subversive) developments in the underground. As well as the connections he discovers between apparently disparate social phenomena, there is confirmation too of the fragmentation of alternative and dissident sub-cultures, which often confronted the powers-that-be from a position of isolation: sometimes the result of an assertion of autonomy; at other times the reflection of a failure to forge essential alliances.

Throughout Haslam's study, the prose remains frenetic and contentiously entertaining, as tales of punk rock jostle alongside northern soul and funk; and the birth of authentic disco fights for recognition alongside the rebirth of British ska. While such eclecticism is refreshing, the author's attention-span is always short and the criteria for inclusion and exclusion often seem arbitrary.

Such inconsistencies flag up a wider problem: the unclear political worldview which underscores this rummaging through the counter-cultural archives. While this attempt to recover the past from those who would distort it often insightful, Haslam ultimately remains tight-lipped about the causes of the historical revisionism that he so effectively criticises.

Choosing to forgo any kind of clear anti-capitalist framework, the author is left bereft of any convincing explanation as to why this exercise in cultural-political policing should be taking place; who might be engineering and controlling it, and for what ends. As a result, the conspirators responsible for history's 'Abbafication' remain indistinct and in the shadows.

The book also fails to acknowledge that the historical process it describes is a continual, cyclical one. There's little about the post-hoc fabrication of the 1970s that's unique to that decade. To make just one obvious comparison: great efforts had been made to ensure that the radical impulses of the 1960s had



been safely sanitised and recuperated by the time that the 1970s were mature. Capitalism does not simply attempt to reinvent the past; it also seeks to engender the 'truth' of the present. The façade-ripping events documented here have not simply been re-edited many years on, but were immediately subject to external manipulation and re-direction at the time.

Haslam is wrong too to imply that the constructors of capital's cultural front are forced to ignore rebellion and cracks in the social structure; to simply deny that they have taken place. Capitalists ransack, reuse and recuperate all social experience for profit. They may instead choose to sell back emptied images of that rebellion as fresh recuperated commodity. In other contexts, Che Guevara's image is just as commodified a logo as Coca-Cola's.

The 1970s was a watershed decade in the cultural, political and social history

of Britain. It is true (although far from surprising) that the cultural entertainment industry recycles all decades stripped of their radical content. But it is not only docile and non-threatening images of consumerism and contentment that are peddled through the reworking of the history of the 1970s.

Where the context requires it, the 'dark days' of the 1970s remain a continually rehearsed reference point – the 'unburied dead' of the Winter of Discontent; surging football hooliganism; IRA 'terror'; spiralling inflation; nihilistic inner-city riots: all of these are touted as manifestations of a past that must not be allowed to return, and function as images of corrosive social instability now apparently overcome. The truth is that numerous parallel histories of the 1970s have been concocted, and that these are evoked to justify whichever ends capital's agents require at the time.

For those sick to death of Space-Hopper

histories of the 1970s, or irritated by themed seventies disco pubs that permit no intrusions by The MC5, The Stooges or The Stranglers, this is a pertinent and satisfying counter-blast. Unfortunately, Haslam's contention – that a cultural conspiracy has rewritten the history of a decade to neutralise its true significance – ends without an attempt to identify the motives of the conspirators involved.

Yet for all its political myopia, Not Abba succeeds in capturing some sense of the excitement and uncertainty, and the chaos and instability, of a decade now as far away from the present as it itself was from the Second World War. The battle to control the history of the twenty-first century, as future historians will observe, is already well underway.

Not Abba: The Real Story of the 1970s, by Dave Haslam, published by Harper-Perennial, £12.99

FILM

The Road to Guantanamo dirs. Michael Winterbottom and Mat Whitecross

This dramatised documentary speaks for itself as the testimony of the 'Tipton Three' – a bunch of Brummie scallies who travelled to Pakistan in 2001 for Asif Iqbal's wedding.

After taking an ill-judged detour to Afghanistan, they lost one of their number (Monir Ali, presumed dead) as the war there intensified, and were hoovered up for three years of abuse, humiliation and torture as 'enemy combatants' by the US-funded Northern Alliance and subsequently in Camp Delta, Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, before release without charge in 2004.

Dubbed by Dubya as among 'the worst of the worst' of global terrorists, the three come over as completely apolitical, scarcely religious, even clueless fools (to start with), who emerged stronger and wiser thanks to steadfast friendship and the inspirational integrity of fellow Muslim prisoners.

As in other Michael Winterbottom films, the visual design, cinematography and editing mesh seamlessly in narrating the characters' point of view. The juxtaposition of contemporaneous news footage with to-camera commentary by the three and staged reconstructions of their experiences effectively demonstrates the arrogance, stupidity and dishonesty of the 'War on

Terror', as well as highlighting the media poodles' parroting of government propaganda.

So despite videotape 'evidence' purporting to show them training with Osama bin Laden in 2000, Shafiq Rasul was working at Currys in Birmingham all that year and Ruhel Ahmed also had a cast-iron alibi. Lawyers privy to the evidence against them confirm that the 'intelligence' agencies had nothing to dent their story – as with hundreds of other anonymous detainees eventually released from Guantanamo with no media attention. Meanwhile 500 remain there, many with equally strong evidence of innocence.

British nationality led Jack Straw to request our lucky heroes release.

Ironically, 'Britishness' may have contributed to their ordeal, in the form of that particular post-colonial complacency about blundering into other people's misery (whether for solidarity, charity and/or mundane tourism).

Family links with the subcontinent obviously occasioned this journey, but the narrative tone is equally suggestive of stereotypical Brits abroad – and once the intense anxiety in Karachi for the Afghan people aroused their sympathy, macho overconfidence prompted the pointless jaunt even further out of their depth into the war zone.

But in the present intensifying politicisation of space, the wrong body in the wrong place is presumed guilty.

At home or abroad, the new world order hysterically redefines the transgression of borders (more generally, failing to fit official requirements) as criminal – and making waves in media space is suspect too. Returning from the Berlin Film Festival (where Road to Guantanamo won an award for direction), Rasul and Ahmed, along with the actors playing them, were detained at Luton Airport and questioned about their politics. Like the ageing heckler at the New Labour Conference arrested under the same anti-terror legislation, you couldn't make it up...

First shown on Channel 4 on 9th March 2006, this film is now available on DVD at £15.99

A Sideways Look

When government projects are in trouble, they often change their name. So, recently the National Programme for IT (NPfIT) in the NHS became Connecting for Health (CfH). This particular programme is in trouble because of the way that the government go about things.

CfH is a huge IT investment programme, worth more than £6 billion. It covers connecting GPs to hospitals, the Choose and Book electronic appointment system, e-Prescriptions, medical records and lots more. There are presumably big economies of scale to be had in linking all these different systems, testing, deploying them and so on. What I want to look at is whether the underlying assumption of the NPfIT is right.

A couple of weeks ago, twenty IT experts wrote the Health Select Committee, calling for an independent audit of the NPfIT. Jonathan Michael, the head of Guys and St Thomas' Trust, recently criticised CfH's one-size-fits-all approach while welcoming other aspects of it. He added that the centralised approach contrasted with the decentralisation currently happening in the NHS. Meanwhile, doctors' groups have complained that the programme has not consulted staff in the health service itself.

While I personally doubt how much real power is being devolved in Labour's latest 'decentralisation' of the NHS, the NPfIT does lock the individual units of the NHS into these large contracts. The NHS isn't a monolithic organisation – it may present one face to the patient, but it is made up of different trusts for hospitals, primary care, mental health and so on. Each of these have different needs, but it's hard to see where there is any differentiation between them in the NPfIT.

One positive thing about CfH, though, is that it isn't a useless PFI, where companies are paid bucket-loads for a risk that they don't take just so that Gordon Brown can balance his books. This scheme is based on payment for results and already two of the main suppliers have posted profits warnings connected to the scheme.

Now, I've never used any NHS systems, but in other fields I can say that the best ones were always those that had grown organically, meeting users' immediate needs to start with. Why wasn't this considered for the Health Service? Those most interested could have tried things out and built them from the bottom up, rather than this top-down approach. Sure, it might have taken longer, or cost more, but then again, when has a large government IT project ever delivered on time and on budget? And some have never delivered at all (the Asylum System, Passport Office, Child Support Agency, CAF/CASS, etc).

Now, it's easy to see why such a huge project appealed to Labour, who just love these Soviet-style big projects. But part of the problem is political and organisational as well. Labour is so wedded to doing business with big companies, sharing board members and

senior advisers, etc., that they forget that innovation rarely comes from large, established players. They also don't understand that the best software comes from the Open Source community, where people are motivated by something other than money and power, and testing and bug fixes don't get held up by that old whitewash of 'commercial confidentiality'.

There are many more years to go before the CfH will be finished and it does at least have better portents than many other government systems. But will they ever stop this top-down, Stalinist approach to new projects?

Svartfrosk

Blast from the Past

Taken from Freedom of 26 April 1980:

While western governments flap around stirring up apocalyptic scares about the final outcome of events in Iran, the Tehran government continues its attempts to consolidate its power. Like the establishment of any Glorious Revolution it is taking full advantage of its control of the media, but the people at the sharp end aren't that gullible. There's little point in detailed analysis of international 'diplomacy', the various interests are obvious enough. The internal situation is more interesting.

The mood in Tehran, if such a generalisation has any meaning, is of tiredness and increasing irritation. The people made a revolution, by strikes, sabotage and massed protest in the face of one of the greatest concentrations of military power in the world. They had no clear idea of what they wanted, beyond vague ideas of freedom and equality. Because of their cultural traditions, for many these aspirations were expressed in Islamic terms. And they made the same tragic mistake that so many other people have made so many times before. They channelled their hopes through leaders. The symbol of it all became the severe, unbending image of the Khomeini. Now they have the full benefit of that severity and rigidity.

The economy is generally in a mess. There are widespread shortages of even essentials like bread. The government keeps saying that they are going to do something about it and regulate the price but it seems to make little difference. Consumer goods are in increasingly short supply and prices are rising fast. Unemployment is already high, and rising. People are afraid to take their holidays, in the case the job has disappeared when they get back. Many supplement their income by small scale trading, cigarettes, newspapers, posters, gadgets, anything small, and saleable, hawked from car to car at traffic lights or from makeshift stalls at the roadside. (The government is moving to ban these in response to pressure from 'legitimate' shopkeepers). The basis of economic activity is still oil, but production of this is down. Much of the extraction machinery is virtually unusable after its long idleness and the rest is only kept going by cannibalism.

WILDCAT
You anarchists should stand for election. There's nothing to gain by demonstrating.



Imagine if...

Berlusconi was having a bad day, but he wouldn't let it get to him. He monologued into the mirror as he prepared for yet another appearance on one of his many news outlets.*

"I am an optimist, a fighter. This is not a clear-cut win. I want to keep governing still. The electoral outcome proves that half of the country supports us: there's a huge electoral consent not to be wasted. We must carry on. We'll carry on, we'll resist. I am the Jesus Christ of politics. I am a patient victim, I put up with everyone, I sacrifice myself for everyone."

He admired his tan, and thought of some more excuses if it turned out he couldn't undo the outcome. "On the basis of the popular vote, there's no winner and no loser. They [the left] have an army of professionals who manage to make fools of the amateurs on our side, and put extra vote after vote into their count and fewer into ours."

He reached over and grabbed a grape, and considered his alternative speech, if accusing the left of fraud didn't work. "We should have a grand coalition limited in time and aimed at dealing with the country's institutional, economic and international commitments."

So although, "out of love for Italy, I felt I had to save it from the left", perhaps he could work in a coalition with them...

*All quotes are Berlusconi's

The quiz

1. Who or what is BedZED?
2. Who called George W. Bush's granting of an amnesty to illegal immigrants in the US 'anarchy'?
3. What subversive purpose might have been served by eating German fruit in the 1930s?
4. What are the official languages of the International Workers Association?

Answers on page 6

Listings

24th to 30th April Real nappy week with various events throughout London, for details see wen.org.uk/rnw or write to Women's Environmental Network, PO Box 30626, London E1 1TZ, or call 020 7481 9004

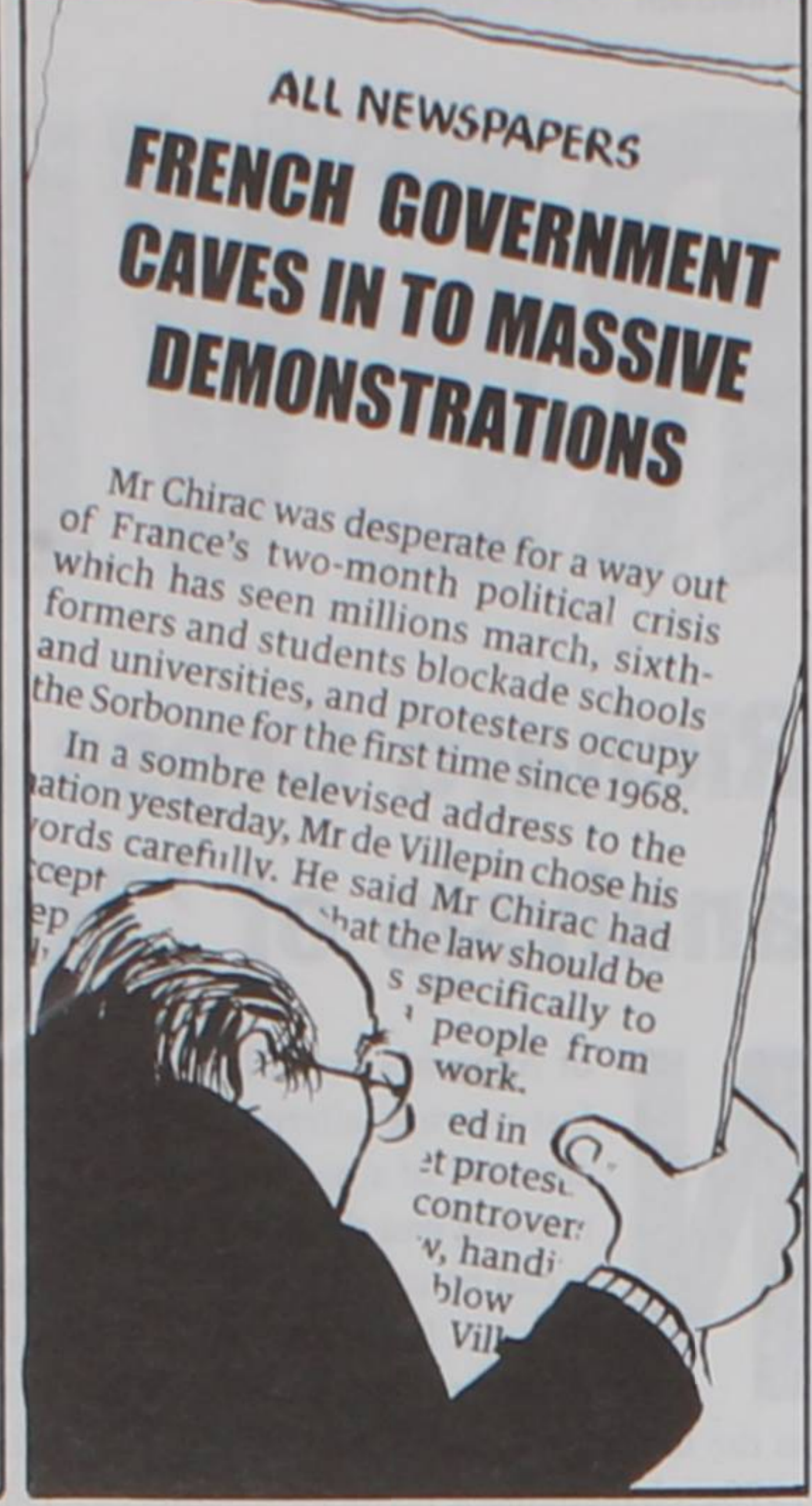
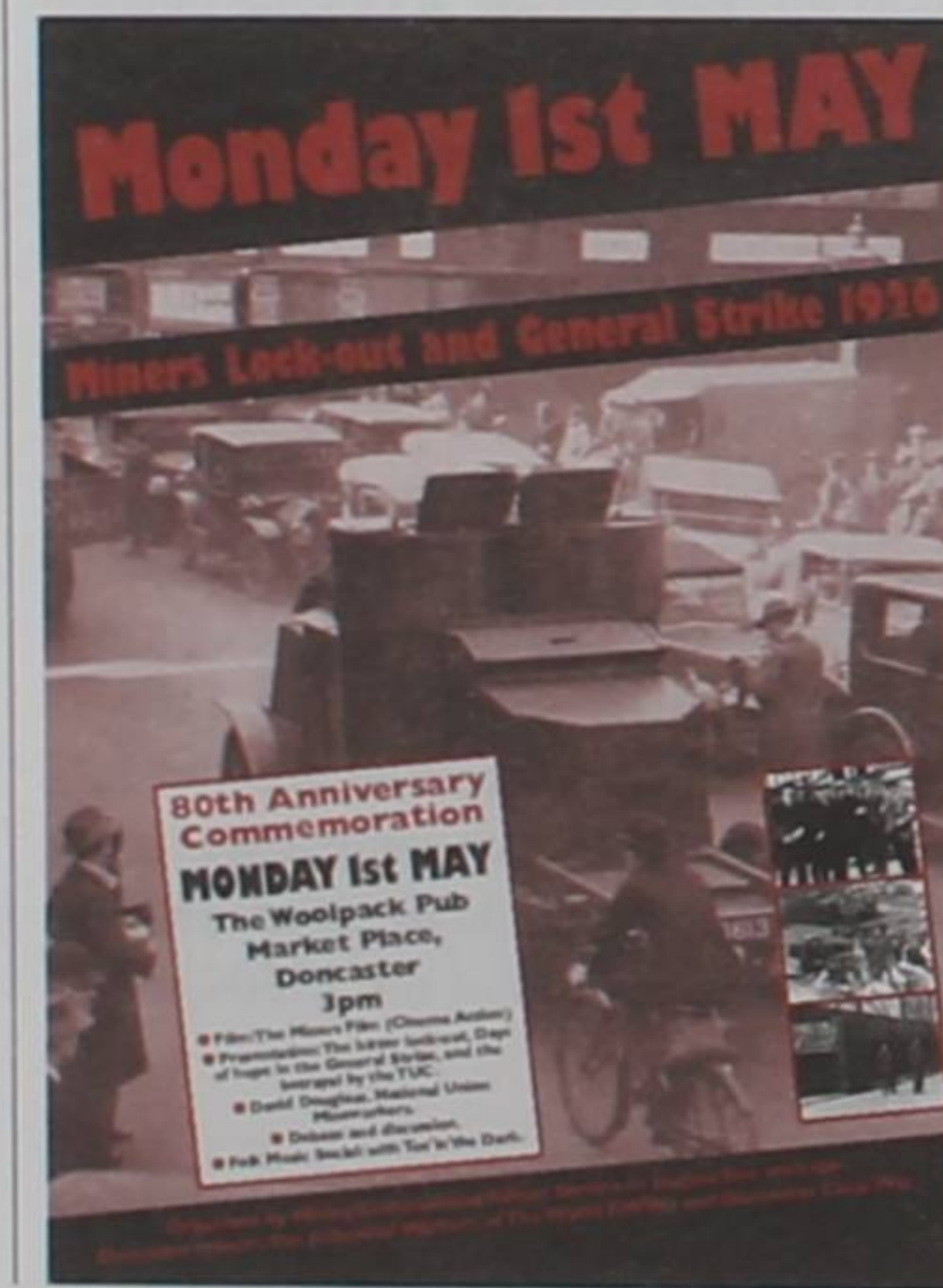
26th April Inaugural meeting of HAK Defeat ID, a new Anti-ID group affiliated to Defy ID, meet 7.30pm at Hammersmith and Fulham Irish Centre, Blacks Road, London W6

28th April 25th Anniversary Party of the 1 in 12 club with DJs, cocktails, snacks and maybe even a raffle, from 9pm at 21-23 Albion Street, Bradford

29th April Manchester Anarchist Bookfair at The Basement, 24 Lever Street, from 12 noon until 5pm, for more details see manchester@bookfair.org.uk

29th April Pre-Mayday event with the Industrial Workers of the World at The Square Occupied Social Centre, 21 Russell Square, London WC1, from 4pm onwards, see iww.org or iww.org.uk for details

30th April Mayday Cabaret for International Workers' Day, upstairs at the Adelphi, Preston, from 7.30pm, for



ALL NEWSPAPERS FRENCH GOVERNMENT CAVES IN TO MASSIVE DEMONSTRATIONS

Mr Chirac was desperate for a way out of France's two-month political crisis which has seen millions march, sixth-formers and students blockade schools and universities, and protesters occupy the Sorbonne for the first time since 1968.

In a sombre televised address to the nation yesterday, Mr de Villepin chose his words carefully. He said Mr Chirac had accepted that the law should be applied specifically to people from work. He said that the law should be applied in a way that would not cause controversy. He said that the law should be applied in a way that would not cause controversy. He said that the law should be applied in a way that would not cause controversy.

1st May Kent Anarchist Group meeting in Canterbury to bring together anarchists in Kent to discuss forming an anarchist group in the county, venue and time to be confirmed, for more info contact swaleagainstar@aol.com

1st May 80th anniversary of the miners lock-out and general strike, event at The Woolpack Pub, Market Place, Doncaster, from 3pm

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

6th May March and rally against live animal exports, meet 11am at Dover's seafront near the shelter on the approach road to the Eastern Docks, for info see viva.org.uk or call 0117 944 1000

20th May 'Bush in Wonderland' at the American Embassy, Grosvenor Square, London, a tea party with live music and street performers to highlight the Bush administration losing touch with reality, for details see campaigncc.org

20th May Global boycott of Procter & Gamble, see uncaged.co.uk/pg

29th May Kingston Green Fair with stalls of environmental interest, music, workshops, dance, etc., at Canbury Gardens, Lower Ham Road, Kingston, Surrey

1st to 4th June Earthwise Festival in Dorset, see earthwise-uk.com or email info@subgiant.co.uk

3rd June Strawberry Fair in Cambridge, see strawberry-fair.org.uk

3rd June Climate Conference in central London, see campaigncc.org for more

4th June Camden Green Fair, Regents Park, London, 12 noon to 7pm

SUBSCRIPTION FORM

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

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

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

Name

Address

Postcode

STANDING ORDER FORM

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

To the manager (your bank)

Bank name

Bank address

Postcode

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

Name(s) of account holder(s)

Account number Sort code

Signature

For bank use only

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

SUBSCRIPTION RATES

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

Freedom (24 Issues) half price for 12 issues

Claimants	16.00	-	-	-
Regular	20.00	29.00	29.00	41.00
Institutions	28.00	36.00	36.00	46.00
Supporter	48.00	60.00	60.00	72.00

Get in touch with us for details of bundle rates.

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

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

All prices are in £ sterling.

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

FREEDOM fortnightly ISSN 0016 0504