

FREEDOM

80P ANARCHIST NEWS AND VIEWS

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INSIDE ►►

Outsourcing on the rise again page 3

Nepal goes to the democrats page 4

Blair strokes his stockpile page 5

We are (finally) At The Café! page 7

HUNGER STRIKERS

Throughout April detainees in detention centres throughout the UK have been on hunger-strike in protest at their continued imprisonment. Linda (currently detained at Colnbrook) says: "We wanted the hunger-strike at Colnbrook to go ahead until we are dead because to deport us to our countries is like killing us. So we decided to die."

Other detainees protested by packing their bags and demanding to be released at reception. At Haslar Removal Centre, two dozen detainees refused to go back inside until riot officers were brought in to disperse the protest and remove the men back to their dormitories. Detainees have been on hunger-strike before but hungerstrikes have been centred on individual needs. This time the struggle is collective, against the use of detention as immigration control.

The protests began when detainees were not allowed to go outside during a demonstration at Colnbrook and Harmondsworth detention centres. John Turkson, also in detention at Colnbrook said: "Even though we were not allowed to go out for fresh air, we could at least hear your voices, we could feel your presence around."

As detainees were kept away from the windows, unrest inside the detention centre grew. 120 detainees began refusing food, quickly followed in solidarity by detainees at Haslar near Portsmouth and finally Long Lartin in Worcester. Initially the Home Office

denied the scale of unrest saying that incidents were isolated and well contained but as unrest spread from centre to centre, the administration became increasingly more paranoid.

Emma Ginn from the National coalition of anti-deportation campaigns says, "For the first time, all visitors were asked if they were press. Almost all visits were refused. Two of the protesters were in isolation, including the Pastor who had spoken via mobile phone to the demonstration."

"A visitor, concerned about the use of isolation as punishment, managed to enter the detention centre but halfway through the visit was made to leave on suspicion of being press. The situation inside Colnbrook is depressing. One guy says he just wants to die there. He won't let us try to get him admitted into hospital."

Despite the official denial that protests at Colnbrook and Haslar were connected, detainees communicated by phone. Following a further mass refusal of food the next day, the Home Office finally started talking to the inmates. Behind the scenes, protesting detainees were shifted to other removal centres to try and contain the uprising.

On Friday 21st April, a delegation of detainees met again with a home office official who promised to consider all their cases, particularly those of people who have been detained for a long time. The Home Office continued to see the problem as that of individuals



No Borders demo on 13th April outside the Home Office building in London in support of the hunger strikers. Inset, Colnbrook detention centre

rather than the collective issue of the use of detention. On the promise of the Home Office to meet again to consider the wider issue of the use of detention, people ended their hunger strike. As of

Sunday 23rd April the official statement is that the hunger strike is over.

This uprising of detainees was sparked by a demonstration outside

Colnbrook detention centre as part of international protest against the use of detention. Solidarity actions have taken place in Leeds, Liverpool, Manchester

► page 6, column 5

MENTAL HEALTH

Following reports that the mentally ill are being abandoned (Freedom, 8th April), Robert Allen interviewed Jim, a worker in the mental health system.

RA: *The Healthcare commission are saying that mental health for over 65s virtually does not exist. Are you aware of this concern?*

Jim: I used to work in a unit that worked exclusively with people over retirement age with mental health problems. I'm certainly not going to say it was a gold star service but "virtually does not exist" seems a little strong.

I suspect that many older people with mental health problems are simply

farmed into mainstream old people's homes where there is no specialist knowledge.

It's certainly true that these homes see a lot of mental health issues but this is often seen as dottyness or people 'playing up' without properly trained staff. I'd say the services are failing older people.

RA: *Is the report accurate in your experience, that psychiatric services to the over 65s is poor?*

Jim: These services are poor for everyone certainly. They tend towards the extremes either they give little to no support or they lock you up - which I think is due to cost - and in particular with the current NHS crisis the mental health services such as they are will be particularly badly hit.

RA: *Are the mentally ill being left to fend for themselves and how bad is it for the over 65s?*

Jim: I'd say the over 65s at the moment have a choice - be taken into specialist

care or cope on your own. This is clearly a very unfortunately position to be in.

But addressing some of the problems that lead to mental health deterioration are as important as dealing with these problems when they arise - housing and poverty are real problems - it's great that more and more older people are becoming more active than they were, say, twenty years ago, because when people feel they have been thrown on the scrap heap and are simply waiting to die it leads to depression and physical deterioration.

RA: *If the health authorities are cutting back on their psychiatric services, what does this mean for older people?*

Jim: My impression is that day services are going to be hit particularly hard because the extent of the cuts means that things have to close and units where people are resident are more difficult and problematic to close than an 'extra' service.

► page 6, column 5

POISONED PERM

Ecological protesters broke into the meeting hall of the local parliament of Perm, in Russia, to publicise ongoing poisoning of the local population from illegal decommissioning work in the area. On 20th April Anarcho-Ecological Resistance militants wearing gas masks entered the meeting hall, blasting a siren and shouting into a megaphone: "Warning, a chemical attack is in progress!"

The anarchists' chief grievance was the parliament's sixth rescheduling of hearings on the problem of solid-propellant rocket (or missile) disposal in Perm, pushing it back to June. The work on decommissioning, which involves burning the solid fuels in the missiles and releases large amounts of toxic hydrogen chloride, dioxin and other poisons, is illegal in the area. Last year, a mystery explosion in the facility on the edge of the city of Perm was rumoured to have wrecked much of the site, but decommissioning of the nuclear missiles has continued.

There's a long history of environmental damage and missile testing in Perm, having

been a major Soviet-era base. In the early '70s a project called 'Grifon' at Osi, near Perm, was intended to increase the extraction from oil wells in older and less productive fields. The project involved detonating a small nuclear device underground.

Immediately after the explosion, the level of radioactivity seemed normal, but since 1976 the number of wells that produce radioactively contaminated fuel has increased. No experts have been able to explain the reasons for an unexpected and unpredictable distribution of radioactive contamination in the oil fields.

The activists dropped 400 pamphlets, entitled 'Chemical Hazard!', that explained the organisation's position on the matter at hand. After the distribution of the anti-missile pamphlets that called on representatives to cease postponing the meeting, and the anarchists shouted: "Burn the missiles in your own offices!" and left the Legislative Assembly's meeting hall. None of the participants were detained.

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Home and away

Clarke's miscarriage

In an attempt to save £5m, home secretary Charles Clarke has placed a cap on miscarriage of justice claims. Payments under statutory law can no longer exceed £500,000, and savings are to be used for supporting victims of crime. Under the original discretionary scheme which is to be scrapped, average final awards have increased from about £170,000 in 2003-4 to around £250,000, half of the cap. Payments were unlimited and the most ever paid out is £2.1m.

The scheme's abolition means there will be no payments to people who have been arrested but subsequently not tried or those whose cases have been quashed while going through the normal appeal process. They will be able to sue through the civil courts. The move complements another recent plan to ask victims of the justice system to pay for their 'room and board' in prison. In total, about £8m is paid out every year for wrongful convictions compared with around £200m for victims of crime.

AA bit of a mess

The GMB union have condemned plans by venture capital group CVC to sell a department store chain for £1.5bn more than they paid for it, after perpetrating an asset strip worth £1.3bn.

CVC bought Debenhams three years ago for £1.7bn, and have since embarked on an audacious lending spree, taking on £1.2bn of debt. They are now trying to sell the enterprise for £2bn, with the debt on top. Meanwhile at the AA group, which has seen vicious union-busting, the same group has taken on yet more debt – the equivalent of nearly £280,000 per employee. The interest payment on this amount of debt would amount to more than £11,000 per employee per annum if the venture capitalists are able to borrow at 4%.

The AA has fired over a third of its staff since being taken over by CVC, which specifically targeted leading GMB unionists in a campaign to install a yellow union at the breakdown and insurance group. There have been reports that there will be a special dividend of £500 million to the venture capitalist owners.

White paper

A report published by the Commission for Racial Equality has found that print media has only a 5% minority population – despite the fact that most print media companies are based in London which has a 38% minority working population. The industry is accused of being a closed shop, though not on specifically racist grounds. Trevor Phillips, chair of the CRE, said: "The media is old-fashioned when it comes to career progression. People are often recruited through informal networks which doesn't help those who aren't on the editor's radar in the first place."

Editors responded that they did not receive many applications from minority groups, but a MORI survey found that minority groups showed nearly twice as much interest in pursuing a career in print than in the general population. A quarter of all respondents to the poll thought there was too little diversity in the media, and 21% believe there is a problem with racism in the profession and that more needs to be done to show how the industry is tackling it. The report not only revealed that most black and Asian faces were found cleaning the offices; but that they also experienced low-level racism through comments like 'get Mrs Tikka Masala on the phone'.

Around the world



GREECE: Around noon on Thursday 13th April, a member of the fascist organisation 'golden dawn' was spotted inside the grounds of Panteion University suspected of attacks against the anti-authoritarian commune in the university. As it was later revealed, he's the son of a high-ranking police officer. When students attempted to approach him at point blank he pulled out a gun and aimed at them, but before he was able to use it he was disarmed.

He was then taken to the dean where a second gun was found amongst his belongings. The dean's intention was to hand Gerasimos Papagiannis (pictured above) over to the police so that he could be charged, but for ideological reasons late that afternoon he was set free by the same students that disarmed him.

Outside the university a sound system was informing the passers-by of what exactly happened and an anti-fascist demo was called for 5pm that evening.

Just before the demo was due to start, a group of fascists suddenly appeared armed with knives, sticks and flares and in absolute co-operation with the riot police attacked those who had gathered, resulting to the stabbing of three students.

According to many witnesses the knife attacks were led by D. Zafeiropoulos – the only one not covering his face under a helmet – the nationalist candidate for the coming mayoral elections for the City of Athens with the Greek nationalist party 'patriotic allegiance'.

LUXEMBOURG: Just over two years after losing a court case which found

software giant Microsoft had been operating a monopoly and unfairly excluded competition, another appeal to the European Court of First Instance, based in Luxembourg has begun.

The company, which produces nine out of ten desktop publishing systems and has successfully kept out all non-Microsoft software through the use of bundling (integrating functions with windows to put off the buying/downloading of rivals) is arguing that they should be allowed to bundle more products and not pay the hefty fine imposed in 2004.

The move comes ahead of the launch of the company's new operating system, Vista, which ignores the ruling and introduces a version of Adobe PDF reader software to undermine its main rival in the field. The new system will also feature a search engine on the desktop, in an attempt to topple Google's 70% monopoly of the sector.

The company, which has almost unlimited money to fight through the courts, has not yet paid its fine and has not introduced any of the anti-monopoly demands levied.

MEXICO: Two workers have been killed by police as the state attempted to break a three-week old country-wide strike by at steel giant Villacero SA.

Workers have burned offices, guard posts and vehicles, while clashes have seen 72 people injured and 13 arrested after repeated unsuccessful governmental use of police to try and get the strikers out.

The company has been forced to buy in steel from other producers to meet contracts as members of the 250,000-strong union took over steelworks in the Southern state of Michoacan to fight moves to replace union leader Napoleon Gomez.

On 17th February the government on recognised Elias Morales as leader of the union in place of Napoleon.

Workers have also been on strike at Grupo Mexico copper and zinc mines since 24th March.

Mexico is Latin America's second-biggest steel producer. The government ordered police to break the picket line at Villacero after the Federal Arbitration Board declared the strike illegal.

POLAND: In Warsaw an anti-clerical march was organised by political party Racja and became a podium for left politicians. Anarchist students who had made it to some anti-clerical actions previously did not feel like joining and instead pelted nazis with eggs and kefir. In other cities anarchist students and others also marched against religious indoctrination in school. There were large demonstrations in Krakow and in Zabrze. In Krakow the demonstration took the form of interesting street happenings.

The students' initiative was started some months ago by some members of the Anarchist Federation, but now includes many young people from outside it as well. Some of their websites: <http://iu.bzzz.net/> or <http://iu.er.pl>



RUSSIA: A 19-year-old anti-fascist, Aleksandr 'Shtopor' Ryukhin, was murdered near the nightclub Planeta Lda, where the German hardcore punk band Tackleberry were about to play.

Aleksandr was approaching the club with a friend when they were jumped by between six and eight nazis. There was no fighting, but Aleksandr was immediately stabbed in the heart and died before paramedics arrived 30 minutes later. His friend sustained a less serious head wound in the attack.

The neo-nazis wore special gloves and were clearly prepared to kill. However, unlike the murder of Timur Kacharava in November 2005, the fascists were not targeting any particular person. Despite his anti-fascist sympathies and the fact that police found anti-fascist stickers in his pockets, it is likely that he was targeted simply for attending a punk and hardcore concert. He was not a political activist.

This tactic of indiscriminate terror is also being used against immigrant groups and foreign students. Just three days before Ryukhin's murder, there was a major fascist pogrom in city of Volzhk, in the Volgograd region, which is known for its active anti-fascist movement.

Around 20-30 people attacked the local Roma community, killing two and wounding at least two others. On 7th April neo-nazis in St Petersburg made the headlines again when they murdered Lanza Samba, a 28-year-old Senegalese student. He was shot dead at 6am on his way home with friends from the Apollo nightclub. A shotgun inscribed with a swastika was found at the scene.

On 19th April Aleksandr was buried in his hometown on the outskirts of Moscow. He was a third year student at the Moscow Institute of Electronics and Mathematics. Currently there are no arrested suspects – that same evening police arrested some people unrelated to the murder, who were released on Tuesday.

Prison news

Rob Thaxton release due

After seven long years in prison for throwing a rock at a cop during a 'Reclaim The Streets' celebration, American anarchist Rob Thaxton is finally due for release on 29th June. He will still be under a lot of restrictions though, and both his freedom of movement and his ability to communicate are being severely curtailed by the authorities. If you would like to send cards to Rob, to be given to him on his release from jail, please address it to Rob Thaxton / 'Secret Project', PO Box 9038, Seattle, WA 98109, USA.

Repression continues against Irish POWs

Since the signing of the Belfast agreement, which specifically 'criminalised' those Irish political prisoners who were not members of organisations who were party to the agreement, there has been worsening repression in British prisons in the North of Ireland. At Easter, in Maghaberry prison, all family visits were

stopped after Republican prisoners refused to remove their Easter lilies. One prisoner from Belfast, Terry McAfferty, was singled out for harsh treatment and thrown into one of the jail's windowless punishment cells. He immediately went on hunger and thirst strike. Both Terry and another prisoner, Paddy O'Mahoney, had been forced to go without food for the two days prior to this, because they were not able to collect meals wearing their lilies. Fortunately, the intervention of supporters managed to get Terry returned to the main wing several days later, the hunger and thirst strike was ended, and he is currently pursuing a Judicial Review, concerning his treatment, as is Paddy O'Mahoney. Letters and cards can be sent to Terry at: Terry McCafferty, Maghaberry Jail, Upper Ballinderry Road, Lisburn, County Antrim, BT 28 2PT.

Donald Currie

Donald Currie is on remand accused of an attempted arson attack on a director

of a company which supplies Huntingdon Life Science. His full address is Donald Currie, TN4593, HMP Woodhill, Tattenhoe Street, Milton Keynes, Bucks. MK4 4DA.

Miscarriage of Justice compensation capped

The Home Secretary, Charles Clarke, has announced that he plans to save £5m a year by cutting payments to miscarriage of justice victims who subsequently get their convictions overturned. Those who win their appeals at the first attempt will get no compensation, while others who have spent years in prison will see any payouts capped. Individual awards will be limited to £500,000 to bring them in line with the maximum amount paid to victims of crime. Campaigners say the cuts ignore the impact of wrongful convictions. The move follows previous attempts by the Government to charge miscarriage of justice victims for 'room and board' during their time in prison.

Warrior Wind

This American publication covers prisoner solidarity and all aspects of the prison state. As they say: "As repression increases, we believe that it has become more, not less, important for radicals to raise their voices. The Warrior Wind newsletter is one small gesture towards broader efforts of resistance, solidarity, and refusal against a shoddy world system."

The second issue contains articles on the January arrests in Auburn, California; a statement from Sacramento Prisoner Support concerning Ryan Lewis; an update on the US Northwest 'eco-crimes' prosecution; reports on Rod Coronado and Peter Young; an analysis of the SHAC 7 conviction; eco-prisoner Jeff Luers' call for a weekend of resistance against the so-called 'green scare'; plus information about the project itself. The Warrior Wind is available to download as a PDF file at: socialwar.net/main/subversion/warriorwind2.pdf or impassionedinsurrection.info/pamphlets/warriorwind2.pdf

News

Not exploited enough

A new round of large scale job losses has put outsourcing of industry back in the public eye

Three major employers have announced plans to move jobs out of their current homes, for unspecified new destinations.

Following the culling of 900 jobs last February, Peugeot are closing their factory in Coventry altogether with 2,700 people to go. In Birmingham, 200 more jobs will be dropped as the TVR car maker closes its specialist workshop. In Belfast and London, the Prudential has announced the closing of its head office, affecting 500 people and seeing the loss of at least 200.

None of the sites are unprofitable. Unions have drawn up an alternative proposal to reduce shifts at Peugeot's Ryton plant until production of a new model came on production in 2009-10, and have demanded that the books be opened to confirm the viability of the plan.

But a joint effort between Peugeot and Toyota has already seen them invest £1bn in new facilities in the Czech republic providing faster production for far lower wages, effectively undermining any case for continued production in the UK in the long term.

A trade and industry spokesman said: "Our belief in dynamic markets does not mean an inactive or *laissez-faire* approach to industry." He ruled out any major intervention in the fortunes of the Peugeot manufacturer beyond an attempted government bribe of £14m for production of the Peugeot 207 at the plant ahead of the council elections. Peugeot already have a plant in Slovakia for the 207 capable of producing 450,000 vehicles a year at full output.

Other vehicles are already produced in the former Eastern bloc, paying wages

at a fraction of the Western European average. All of the major European car manufacturers are moving production out, with Peugeot another example of an ongoing trend towards massive de-industrialisation in the West.

TVR, a luxury car manufacturer specialising in hand-made cars, have announced that a further 260 jobs are to go as they close their plant in Blackpool. The announcement follows 90 job losses last year and will have a significant impact on local business. The company, which sells heavily on its nationalist image as a 'British-built' racing car, has said it 'hopes' to stay in the UK.

TVR states that it is planning to move some manufacturing operations to "a more suitable facility, the exact details of which cannot yet be released."

Meanwhile three sites are seeing cuts from the Pru, with 700 jobs being transferred around the UK and to India. The plan is part of a cost-savings initiative announced at the end of last year and aims to save £40m per annum. The major blow will be to the company's Belfast operation, which will be closed with the loss of 500 jobs, while Holborn Bars in London will lose 120 jobs and Bristol will lose 40. Unions and staff are currently in a 90-day consultation process over the cuts.

Around 200 of these jobs will go to India, and this will undermine union representation, according to Amicus. They said in a statement: "The proposals would close Prudential's office in Belfast where union density is strongest."

Amicus said that in 2002, the union signed an agreement with Prudential stipulating no lay-offs were to result



The Peugeot plant Ryton

from outsourcing. The agreement ran out in February 2006, and Amicus said it believes the Prudential has waited until the agreement expired to attack well-organised centres.

Although these lay-offs are among the

most publicised, outsourcing has been an ongoing problem for workforces all over the world, as companies look for cheaper labour.

Companies have been accused of playing a game of 'how low can you go'

by both local and international unions, as old staples of outsourcing are shunned for ever cheaper countries – recently some companies have been abandoning India as living standards rise and unionisation becomes more potent.

Persistent poverty increase

The Joseph Rowntree foundation has recently produced a study report that shows that persistent poverty (poverty is defined as a family income below 60% of the median income) in Britain is on the increase.

There are approximately 3.5 million children living in poverty in Britain today. That's more than a quarter of the total child population.

Apart from the obvious effects of deprivation for those children, this poverty has every chance of persisting throughout their lives, and later being passed on to their own children. Childhood poverty experience leads to adult poverty, which in turn can affect future generations.

The study looked at two groups of teenagers, one from the 1970s, and one from the 1980s. The purpose was to research the link between childhood and adult poverty, and whether this link is getting weaker or stronger. Its findings relegate the notion of social mobility in Britain to the waste bin.

Almost 20% of 1970s teenagers from

poor families were found to have grown up to be poor in later life, whilst only 10% of the non-poor teenagers had this outcome. Poor teenagers from that decade had twice the chance of staying poor throughout their life than teenagers from non-poor families. This effect has been ascribed to general background disadvantages such as parental unemployment and poor education, rather than being directly attributable to poverty itself.

The results for the 1980s poor teenagers were significantly worse. This group were found to be four times as likely to remain in poverty throughout their lives. A doubling of the persistence of poverty link from the previous decade. The increasing risk has been attributed to the direct effect of poverty for 1980s teenagers. Their own adult unemployment rather than the more general family factors of the 1970s group.

There is considerable difficulty in identifying specifically the cause of persistent poverty from the numerous

factors involved, but income poverty is clearly tied up with deprivation in its many guises. However, unemployment, for self and/or partner, and having a poor work history seem to be the strongest factors, and it is their direct effect that caused the massive increase in the chance of persistent poverty for the 1980s teenagers.

Although not specifically mentioned in the report, the results clearly indicate the effects of the Thatcher years in increasing persistent poverty. The 1980s teenagers first employment opportunities were blighted by unemployment which was at its highest since the Second World War, peaking in 1984 to more than three million. During this decade the richest 10% of the population more than doubled their disposable income, whilst the poorest saw little or no increase in theirs.

The concise conclusion of the report is that there is a clear link between childhood poverty and poverty in later life, and this link is becoming increasingly stronger.

Ice, ice, maybe

A new development in East Anglia which could potentially use the entire solar output of Britain has been given the go-ahead by council planners. SnOasis, a proposed indoor ski resort in Suffolk, was approved following an outline planning application by the group after a four year fight by local residents.

The tourist resort, which plans to make 'real snow' on the 80-ft high slope, would use six megawatts of power to operate every year – the equivalent of a mid-sized town – drawn almost exclusively from the national grid. It would also be a massive user of fresh water, as hosepipe bans are due to come into force during the summer for East Anglia.

The controversial application saw objections from several organisations, including The Parish Group of 15 parishes in the local area, which lodged a complaint regarding a lack of consultation regarding the project, and continued fears over its potential traffic impact.

Onslow, the company behind SnOasis, hope that between 1.5 and 2 million people will visit every year.

Brian Annis then spoke on behalf of nearby Needham Market Town Council. He stated that they supported all the points made by the Parish Group but wanted to emphasise and add some of their own. He was amazed that "in these days, when concern about climate change and fears about our ability to generate electricity are all over the news, such a project is even being considered."

A range of supporters argued that the SnOasis project would be a net benefit for the region. Godfrey Spanner from Onslow, the company proposing the development, had stated that "sustainability is key for us all" and that the project "hit all the targets" in Best Practice guidance.

On hearing the news that SnOasis had been approved, Spanner commented that the feat of gaining approval was not unlike "conquering Everest".

News

Stripped of his power

King Gyanendra of Nepal is having power taken from him by a coalition of the bourgeois and the Maoists

Massive demonstrations and riots in defiance of a heavy-handed police crackdown have put political parties back into control in Nepal. Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala has been sworn in following a postponement of the oath-taking ceremony due to his ill health. At 84 years old, the new Prime Minister will head an equally elderly cabinet. Seven political groups have formed a coalition with the support of Maoists to unanimously elect Koirala to the post.

The change in leadership comes after weeks of escalating tension between the crown and the public, with at least 150,000 protesters filling the streets of Kathmandu on 22nd April despite an order to police to shoot curfew violators. An indefinite general strike called by opposition leaders had paralysed the country, escalating the confrontation. Around fourteen people have been confirmed killed by the security forces during the protest.

Large swathes of rural Nepal are already under rebel – mainly Maoist – control, with the Maoist ‘New Democracy’ movement holding several vital strategic points around the regions.

New Democracy theory aims to build economic power through capitalism before constructing socialism, as part of a two stage theory for development towards an equal society. The group formed a loose coalition with opposition groups in Nepal to bring the challenge to Gyanendra’s reign. They agreed to a

three-month ceasefire as the new government settled in. Eleven soldiers were captured, with eight subsequently released by the insurgents. It is thought that communications across the country are so poor that the group would have been unaware that a ceasefire was on. The soldiers were taken captive from Ramdittha village, about 500 km east of Katmandu.

Lawmakers have now proposed a truce with the Maoists, who have an enormous independent power base around the country.

The king admitted defeat a year and two months after he seized control from the government and declared himself to be ruler by divine right, using their continued inability to defeat the Maoist insurgency as justification. On taking power, the king declared that the “days of monarchy being seen but not heard ... are over”. All human rights were cancelled and thousands have been jailed without trial.

People of all classes, castes, ages and races have been imprisoned or attacked during Gyanendra’s campaign of terror. Over a hundred journalists were jailed and independent newspapers forced to close.

In the recent troubles batons, tear gas, rubber and live bullets have all been used indiscriminately. Armed police routinely fired at the faces and heads of demonstrators. Many protesters have ‘disappeared’ or been tortured.

This month Gyanendra said on public



radio that he had an “unflinching commitment toward constitutional monarchy and multi-party democracy”.

Since taking control, Nepalese legislators have demanded that Gyanendra give up his power to command the country’s 90,000-strong standing army, which he had used to arrest journalists and dissenters and maintain control of major services.

As the protests swelled and became increasingly uncontrollable, political leaders welcomed the decision, which it is hoped will head off any moves towards a more radical set of demands being raised by the population.

The Maoists have grown hugely over the last few years, following massive corruption in the parliament prior to Gyanendra’s takeover. The major political

parties have in recent years been unable to maintain order or strength against the monarchy. But it is thought that the sheer size of the popular movement will force them to push for far larger concessions.

It is thought that the Maoists are intending to enter the parliamentary arena, as their ten-year war to gain military control of the country has reached a stalemate.

Japan’s prisons of torture

A Japanese town council has decided to introduce new rules allowing the jailing for up to a year of householders who don’t paint their homes a chosen colour. The threat is a strong one for people who don’t like the preferred shade of green – those incarcerated in Japan’s prison system life is systematised daily torture.

One American who was transferred to serve the second part of his prison sentence in the US proclaimed after the move: “I felt like I had died and gone to Disneyland. The difference in the two prison systems is incredible.”

Prisoners in Japan’s prisons suffer as do prisoners all over the world with regular beatings and solitary confinement which is a matter of course for those who transgress the rules. However what makes Japan’s system of abuses against prisoners worse is the authoritarian extenuation of Japan’s functional and hierarchical modes of daily life into prison life. Bow, sit, lie on you bed, eat your food, wipe your face; indeed, any normal and habitual activity of the body done incorrectly and you will be punished.

Sit in the middle of you cell, roll your bed up properly, do not talk unless you are given permission. Failure to meet these so called ‘rules’ results in absurd punishments such as having to sit in the same position for 10-hour stretches, for weeks at a time.

Or the prisoner may find himself in ‘protection cells’ having to wear trousers with a slit under the anus to defecate through. His hands are permanently handcuffed behind his back and he eats from bowls left on the floor. Rations are regularly cut in half as further punishment. It was – as one prisoner says – “like a boot camp for the nazis” and “we were being systematically turned into automatons”.

It is a system where the state attempts to control every function of a person’s body where even a prisoner’s exercise of his ultimate power – suicide – is covered up. For the authorities cannot be seen to be powerless in any circumstances.

The prisons are also a serious health hazard. Most of them do not have any heating and prisoners regularly suffer frostbite in Japan’s harsh winters, and

conversely heat stroke and exhaustion in the summer. Nick Baker (pictured below) is an English prisoner in Japan who has suffered frostbite to his hands over several winters. Over the years he has lost several stone in weight. Getting ill is something to be avoided at all costs. Forms have to be completed to see a doctor and then it will be several days before the consultation actually takes place. Tuberculosis is widespread and many prisoners suffer from numerous skin complaints because of the poor sanitation.

More information concerning Nick Baker can be found at justiceformickbaker.org



Supermarket strike

As of the time of writing, workers at Mercadona, the largest supermarket chain in Spain, have entered their second month of an indefinite strike against the company.

Almost 700 workers walked out on 24th March demanding the readmission of three CNT-AIT union delegates, greater job security for employees and the halting of oppressive measures within the company.

Mercadona has been accused of several violations of employment law over the last two years, including the illegal monitoring of losses, ineligible dismissal procedures against the three unionists for whistleblowing poor working conditions, and false accusations of robbery.

Private security has been hired to guard the building against the workforce, and Mercadona has allegedly threatened to blacklist anyone found with links to the strikers, or even with pamphlets.

Abel Ortiz, writing on the CNT’s Spanish language Mercadona forum (cnt.es/cordoba/foros/index.php), said:

“There has been a month of flux already. It has, as always, hired blacklegs in some positions. It can pay. Mercadona took over 10bn last year. Even so they are allowed to cuss and harass their workers. It seems impossible. We will see, higher towers have fallen.”

As a gesture of solidarity, the international section of the CNT, the International Workers’ Association (IWA), have sent 2,500 to help the strike fund, but more help is needed, according to British section SolFed. The group’s international secretary said: “The CNT is asking for donations to alleviate the hardships of its members. Every day for the last three weeks or more there have been demonstrations in Barcelona to press for the above demands. A National Plenary of the CNT on 22nd April agreed to organise demonstrations throughout the whole of Spain.”

Donations to the strikers can be sent to bank account: IBAN: ES08 2100 (La Caixa)-1183-35-0100505773. Messages of solidarity can be sent to sov@barcelona.cnt.es.

Feature

New Nukes, Old Attitudes

As the issue of nuclear defence arises once more, Robert Walsh investigates the arguments and alternatives

Nuclear weapons have existed for decades in Britain, and wherever they have been deployed controversy and protest have never been far behind. From the early days of CND, the Committee of 100 and the Spies For Peace to the activities of the Greenham Common protesters and Trident Ploughshares, people have been openly expressing their opposition to nuclear weapons and the terrifying possibility of their ever being used again.

CND has traditionally adopted a conventional (and, some would say, conservative) approach to anti-nuclear protest. Marches, letter-writing, lobbying of MPs and government, public meetings and petitions have been employed by CND to further the anti-nuclear cause. Latterly many anti-nuclear protesters, such as the Greenham Common protesters, Block The Builders and Trident Ploughshares, have taken a harder line and adopted non-violent direct action like blockades and infiltrating military bases such as Faslane, Devonport Dockyard in Plymouth and the Atomic Weapons Establishment at Aldermaston with the intention of sabotaging nuclear hardware. The various forms of protest have met with varying degrees of success.

CND continues to be the organisation of choice for those who prefer a more 'respectable' form of protest, while other groups have been taking the fight directly to the Ministry of Defence (MoD) and the Navy. Though some may choose to criticise the adoption of explicitly non-violent direct action, the fact remains that various nuclear sites have become 'Designated Sites' under the Serious Organised Crime and Policing Act (SOCPA).

Where the offence of trespass was previously a civil matter, and protesters could only be escorted off-site or handed over to civilian police, trespassers at 'Designated Sites' can now be fined up to £5,000, sentenced to up to 51 weeks in prison or a combination of the two.

While this change in the law is merely one of many attacks on civil liberties made under the guise of improving our security, the fact that the authorities have seen fit to enact laws catering specifically for protesters suggests that these groups have become a real irritant to the MoD and the Navy.

There has been speculation regarding the replacement of the UK's Trident missile system. Will Tony Blair upgrade Trident? Will Blair adopt a different form of nuclear 'deterrent'? Will Blair bother replacing it, abide by the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (which the UK has signed) and simply drop nuclear weapons altogether?

This debate is, to many anti-nuclear activists, simply a smokescreen. The British government will replace Trident

with a new nuclear weapons system. The only real question is what form those weapons will take.

Some of the UK's hunter-killer submarines are being refitted with the capability to launch cruise missiles which can be tipped with nuclear warheads from Britain. There is currently large-scale recruitment at Aldermaston (where the British bombs are designed and built) and builders are engaging in a major upgrade with a nine-figure sum being spent on new buildings and facilities.

The Government is unlikely to earmark that much money for something it isn't already fully committed to. All three of the major parties have committed themselves to the retention of nuclear weapons, while the Prime Minister himself has been quoted as saying he believes in the UK having nuclear weapons. And, as a rule, what Tony wants, Tony gets.

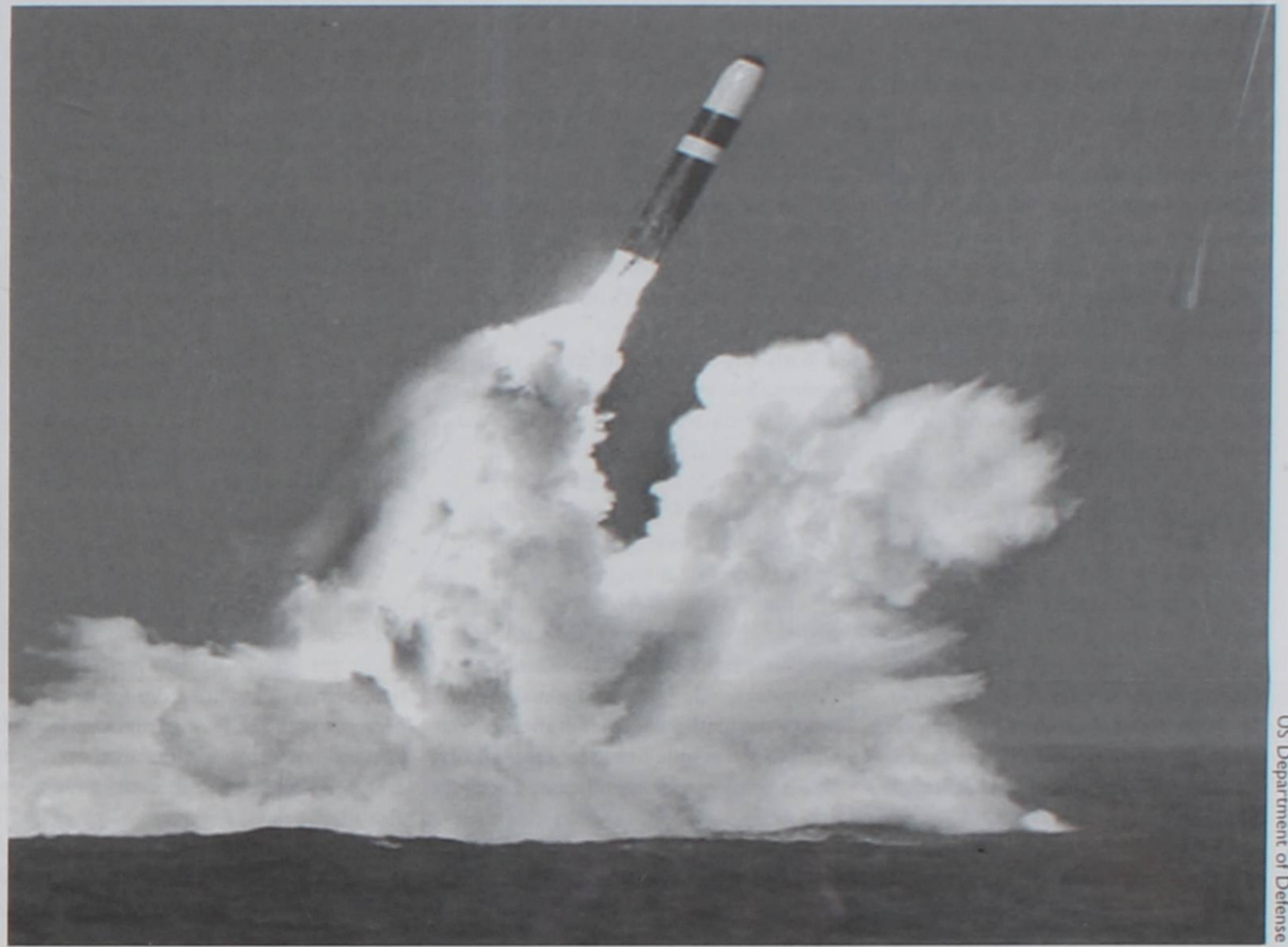
So, having accepted that the UK will be replacing the Trident missile system, what form will the supposedly independent nuclear deterrent take? There are a number of options. The UK could invest in old-fashioned 'free-fall' bombs like the B61 and B83. This is by far the most unlikely as 'free-fall' bombs must be delivered direct to the target by aircraft. Aircraft could easily be shot down while in the air or destroyed while still on the ground.

Ship-launched missiles are only a slightly more credible possibility. The ships would have to be within range of their target, which is the principal problem with ship-launched weapons. Going within range of the target, given that ship-launched missiles usually have a shorter range than ICBM's, would expose the ships to torpedo attack from submarines and missile attack from land-based and air-launched anti-ship missiles.

Fixed silos for intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs) are not a realistic choice either. Fixed silos can be pinpointed and attacked by a first strike of missiles, bombers or even Special Forces teams if necessary.

Submarine-launched missiles are the most likely option from the options available. Submarines can travel virtually anywhere within the world's oceans. Even during the days of Polaris, British submarine-launched missiles had sufficient range to hit any land target in the world from the open sea. The stealth and mobility of submarines also limits the possibility of submarines falling prey to either a first strike or retaliatory strikes. If the opposition can't find the subs, then they can't kill them.

The deployment of conventional forces by land, air or sea would not be realistic. During the Warsaw Rising of 1944, the German forces took heavy casualties and took weeks to destroy the city. The Rising lasted two months, saw 200,000 die and expenditure of resources (which



US Department of Defense

admittedly left over 90% of Warsaw in ruins) was enormous. And this was with a city surrounded on all sides and supplied largely with improvised weapons and what defenders could capture from the German troops.

Carpet bombing can also be largely ruled out. Again, the production of enough bombers and the training of the crews would take far too long and be far too expensive without even considering the cost of replacement crews, aircraft and supplies. The ongoing political repercussion, such as the negative publicity from high civilian casualties and the heavy military casualties that would doubtless ensue make this option unfeasible.

Nuclear weapons also have a political role to play. Their possession has enabled successive British governments to pursue the fiction that the UK is still a major power. Given that the British Empire collapsed after World War Two and that the UK is still entangled in the so-called 'special relationship' the myth of the UK having some major role in dictating world affairs needs to be bolstered by the UK being a member of the nuclear 'club'.

The three main political parties in Britain have all committed themselves to retaining nuclear weapons. The Labour Party have made it a manifesto commitment. For the Conservatives, Shadow Defence Secretary Liam Fox recently confirmed the Tory intention to retain nuclear weapons and replace Trident. The Liberal Democrats are, as usual, on the fence. Their manifesto contains a pledge to work towards the abolition of

nuclear weapons while simultaneously (and in clear contradiction) also pledging to retain nuclear weapons until they are globally decommissioned.

Military strategy also dictates the retention of a nuclear weapons system. In the event of a 'first strike' being delivered, it must be done as swiftly and with as much devastation as possible. The quicker and more destructive the strike, the less time and force the victim can muster in retaliation. A good example of this is the 'depressed trajectory shot', a Cold War scenario in which a Russian submarine would sneak up the East Coast of the USA and deliver a first strike against Washington with nuclear missiles. The US would have only six or seven minutes between detecting the launch and the missile striking Washington DC.

Attempting a conventional military attack, with troops being deployed by land, sea or air is also not an option. The time taken to mass troops and deliver them to the target, which could take days or even weeks, and is easily detected.

Money is also an issue. The figure currently suggested for replacement of Trident is £10-28 billion. This is an enormous amount of money at first glance, but isn't when compared with what nuclear weapons can deliver. A single nuclear missile can completely destroy a whole city. To do the same with conventional weapons would be almost impossible.

To do so would require the raising, equipping, training and supplying of enough troops to do the job. Then

those troops would have to be delivered to the target without being wiped out by enemy defences. There would also have to be replacement troops, vehicles, weapons and supplies that would have to be delivered to the target without unacceptable casualties.

Nuclear-capable submarines are a fraction of the price of equivalent conventional forces and could be built and refitted in British dockyards, which could be sold to the British public on the basis that it guarantees British jobs for years to come. Should nuclear-capable cruise missiles be adopted, then hunter-killer submarines can be refitted to fire them.

British hunter-killer submarines are currently being refitted with the Tomahawk Land Attack Missile system. This would save an immense amount of money as the current 'Vanguard' class Trident submarines could be mothballed. Furthermore, the UK currently leases its Trident missiles (while making our own warheads) from the US Navy – a UK design would eliminate the rent costs.

I contacted the Ministry of Defence Press Office for a comment on the issue of Trident replacement. Their response was as expected. A spokesman said: "A decision will be required before the end of the Parliament, but nothing has been confirmed."

Given the mounting evidence to the contrary, the best that can be said for this statement is that it remains to be seen. The available evidence, however, strongly suggests otherwise.

Commentary

FREEDOM

Volume 67 Number 9

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

It has been another quiet week at the press, as various members of the collective became involved with Mayday events or had various other things on, but specifically press related was a stall at the Manchester Anarchist Bookfair. The fourth bookfair saw us doing a fairly brisk business in sales, and Jack Ray was there selling books.

He said: "It was a good day in the end, lots of people were there. Turnout was slightly down on last time, but it was okay and it didn't cost the Basement anything extra. Four in a year was possibly a bit much, though they had them for different reasons each time."

Freedom will also be selling bits and bobs at the Norwich Anarchist Bookfair on 10th June, with the event taking place in the much more prestigious, central (and expensive) location of Blackfriars Hall. Hope to see you there!

In terms of a working collective, we are doing better than we have been in recent months, with various people coming forward to write, organise, etc., which has helped enormously with putting the last couple of papers out on time. This one is possibly slightly late, but at least this week we have the excuse that doing a paper at the same time as Mayday preparations is a bit of a stretch...

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Next issue

The next issue will be dated 20th May 2006 and the last day to get copy to us (see contact details above) will be Thursday 11th May.

To squat or not

Perhaps we ought not squat. Indeed; it might be better to declare the era of squatting as over, for a new world deserves a better word. How about, 'decadent artists occupying dilapidated architecture' or, 'earthly organisms inhabiting liberated structures of free expression'?

Truth is, any definition we choose to articulate beyond 'squatting' shall paint a better picture for the public mind who may be oblivious to the fact that many of us 'squatters' actually do paint; among other artistic expression. The reason? For a reader who finds the minute hand a reminder of their bind with working a scheduled grind this concept may seem a bit outlandish; however, we will proceed in calling it 'free-time.'

Yes it's true and probably no surprise to you that there is little reason to work especially when nature is operating as a proper network. That is, work being defined in this context as "superfluous tasks serving no purpose save for securing the oligarchy's structure of slavery".

With suspension of judgment one notices, however, how squatters, despite having subtracted themselves from realms of redundancy, do remain in society, thanks to short-sighted spectrums of greed which have graciously supplied an over-abundance of basically everything except for diversity.

While playing the role of penniless poets or parasites who romantically procure perfectly edible food from dumpsters, belonging to business minds who would rather see landfills overflowing than to see people living for free, all of this is quite easy to see, that is, a society which slavishly labours solely for their convinced-to-be-necessary luxuries.

Less is indeed more, though in no literal way is this a plea for all homeowners to flee their sprawled hills in seeking the nearest abandoned warehouse. We all know we are all better off with just a dime and all the time to explore the sublime; though we also know destitution and poverty is not our preference.

We all want to be rich, this fact is our oldest news, and, it seems, is the foundation of nature's nurturing design. There are, after all, enough ones and zeros for everyone. So, is it a surprise that the answer to the question "Who are we waiting for?" is in fact us?

A natural response would wonder why us, especially if nature's default design is to naturally supply a network which nurtures all its components equally. Why would it be up to us to activate, or rather, re-activate such a system?

The amount of examples to prove this point litters and pollutes the mind like trash fluttering around industrial parking lots. Widespread inorganic interference is the cause for this imbalance brought forth by a mentality that has sold itself for short-term profit, that is, thanks to patriarchal planning, society functions today as a well-oiled profit network minus the net.

What remains is work, work without harmony. Without essence. Without purpose. Futile work which compensates with debt and boredom will never compete with the compensation which flowers from the organic gift of the present tense; to simply breathe, dance, sing, or be. And since the cost to be is absolutely free as we are inherently free, why not also live for free in society? For basic elements such as adequate living space, health, nutrition and education to not be widespread

and universally supplied is absurd, even beyond compassionate concern. How strange it seems to consider economics, a field where one would expect to find an optimisation of overall well being, to neglect an equilibrium of living standards.

Exploitation is inadequate not only for ethical reasons, but also because the entirety of an entity must see equilibrium of evolution. An interconnected economy cannot afford poverty, thus, why an existence of extortion? Isn't a structure only as strong as its weakest link?

With sinking pools of poverty and war it is clear how a collective consciousness cannot capitalise while certain sectors breathe with damaged life support. Let us forego the era of war and gore. The true network is here, albeit ironically birthed from the most unsharing ethics. We are now all interconnected with hyperlinks; thus, let us kink the casualties and deliberate disease and please, place our earth into an era of peaceful ease.

There seems little concern that existence will cease to be a life of expenditures. Besides, living for free does not necessarily imply a world without currency. Nor does wealth obligate paper money. With wealth being defined in imaginary implications, as it always has been, and if the world can simultaneously believe that paper denotes richness, can't our imagination also focus upon its unpolluted intent as to what it may truly invent?

With admittance of our greedy heritage we find little argument against being, for ourselves, rich. And why should this intent not carry over for everyone being rich, even if this stems from for our own personal greed, knowing that sharing is justified not because it makes more for everyone, but because more for everyone also means more for us?

As sharing becomes contagious, and as our richness desires more riches, will we not inevitably see that going about our lives as environmentally conscious ought also harvest more for everybody? Efficiency is key due to the fact that expending less energy develops further-more profitable commodity. Who would have thought that the archetypal antagonist known as greed could exhibit the fact that our most essential need is based upon sharing?

For so long definitions dealing with morality clouded our stages of perception. The struggle for equality solidarity and environmental responsibility now presents itself as a win-win situation for everyone. Those seeking wealth will be pleased to see ever more seas of green with employing environmentally efficient means, and consequently, environmentalists will also be pleased to see nature preserved as green. Why should we not be keen to realise this collective dream?

Because despite historical layers upon layers of tyranny and unfair oppression upon the innocent beautiful flowers nevertheless have spawned from oil spills and disastrous wills. The technology is here and thus the true network of abundance is at our disposition.

How society chooses to distribute its wealth of credibility, whether it be currency or any other form, is irrelevant. Absolute assurance of omnipresent insurance that all can comfortably live in ease and without fear that any of life's necessary amenities are unsupplied is the only requirement we need.

Once again, efficiency reveals that without wasting energy over worrying about whether or not one can afford to live, suddenly a sieve of energy may be redirected toward fueling our exponentially expanding creativity.

After all, if fate is to endlessly equate expression... if art is the inevitable everywhere... why not enrich and expand to one degree of separation?

As an entity interconnected through the internet, each of us may live as online artisans, afforded by our artistic economy which encompasses diverse anthropological artifacts for all. By harmoniously balancing between our new numerical home located in dematerialised digital dimensions and our analogue earth where our ancient artisan crafts may live on we shall see history enrich to artistic articulateness beyond what we imagined earth's potential could estimate. We are all inheritors of an exquisite environment known as earth, so why harbour anything other than the fruits of creativity?

Let us imagine ourselves as spiders collectively spinning the same web of contagious compassion capable of ecological perfection. Ideology and capital may seem a distant pair, though, doesn't an ecotopian organism flourish without barriers and boundaries? In closing, let these words of a squatter be the phonological paint for painting the picture of one flag flowing proudly in the wind for all; and on this flag, the earth.

Christopher Eichten

Hunger strikers

page 1 and other cities.

While mainstream press groups focused on Colnbrook, detainees at Long Lartin in Worcester believe they are the forgotten protest. A detainee said, "We have been locked up for as long as five years. We know that we face torture in our country of origin, but some of us have come to the decision that a quick death is preferable to the slow death we are enduring here."

"We have tried to tell the media but the phone box closed down so we could no longer phone the presenter of the programme. We know the population at large in this country, knows nothing of what has happened to us. Help us break the silence. We are all on hunger strike and have been so now for a week."

Mental health

page 1

These services are, in my view, a very important in ensuring that older people have the kind of human contact that can help combat the isolation and loneliness that will often trench mental health problems.

Further comment

Jim later added a few more thoughts on mental health for the over 65s:

I thought there was a contradiction there in that they were going out of their way to say how expensive old people were and then bemoaning the fact that there are not enough range of services. I think they've exaggerated the proportion of the NHS budget that goes into old people's services.

I also think they are identifying as age discrimination one aspect of a service that discriminates against everyone. Mental health services are failing their users across the board. Old people can be seen as particularly vulnerable so perhaps that failure has

deeper implications for older people – for instance they may well be more likely to die when let down by a particular service.

But the thing to do is to raise the bar for all the mental health (and associated) services, not simply in terms of secure funding but actually taking a far less institutional approach.

It's one thing to say to staff they should respect their charges (which they should of course) but the boundaries are limited by national policy – its like telling wardens to respect the prisoners. Yes respect them – but you can't let them out! There is very little meaningful choice and control over a person's life once they are put into institutional services I think

Also an obvious point – the private sector and charities are very poor and should, in my view, be nationalised. At least 90% of them should be.

One area where I do agree with the report is that the restructuring of the NHS has hampered the ability of these services to maintain consistent improvements.

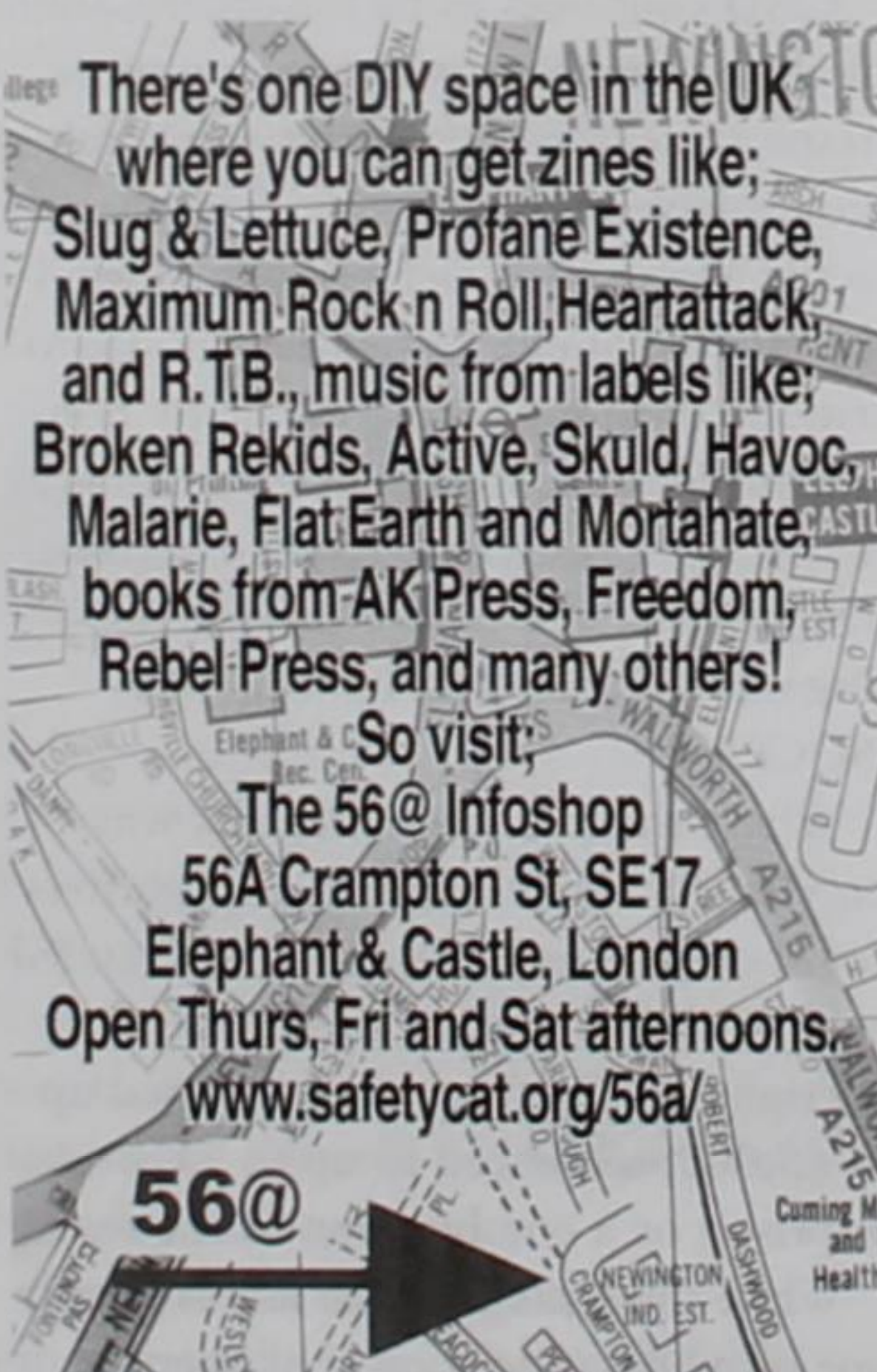
I think that the way these services are structured also needs to be looked at so you can be classified as a drug user, an older person, mental health problems, learning disabilities, etc., but you can't be classified as more than one of these things so people end up getting classified accord to whichever service puts up less of a fight to keep you out.

I remember one case in particular of a guy I worked with in the community where no service would touch him – the drug agencies said he was homeless, the homeless people said he had mental health problems, the mental health unit said he was an alcoholic – it was all true but was being used as an excuse not to deliver care to him.

When he was dying it was still clear no one wanted to touch him and I think this sort of experience is not uncommon.

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

So visit:
The 56@ Infoshop
56A Crampton St, SE17
Elephant & Castle, London
Open Thurs, Fri and Sat afternoons
www.safetycat.org/56a/



Quiz answers

1. Rudolph Rucker. The Whitechapel Library was closed in 2004 and the building sold to Whitechapel Art Gallery, who are retaining the portrait.
2. A humorous book by comedian and folk singer Mike Harding.
3. Miyazaki spent time in Wales after the 1984-5 miners' strike and was inspired both by the architecture and the spirit of the people.
4. The June Brides. It was a statement against album titles like 'Neither Washington Nor Moscow' by SWP band The Redskins. In the end they called it 'There are 8 Million Stories'.

REVIEW

Malatesta's café conversations remain persuasive and highly relevant in the world of today, finds Ted Stengers

In March 1897, Errico Malatesta was in hiding in Ancona in north-eastern Italy, and busy with the production of the journal *L'Agitazione*. Taking the precaution of shaving off his beard, he spent a lot of time in the very last place that the authorities would look for him – a café frequented by the cops.

According to Paul Nursey-Bray's useful introduction to this book, it was his conversations with a police officer and other café regulars that inspired Malatesta to start writing the dialogues that became this book. As a style of writing, the dialogue is as old as western political thought itself. But where in *The Republic*, Plato presents his vision of a society run by an elite of 'philosopher kings', Malatesta's *At the Café* describes vividly the plight of workers under the twin yokes of capital and the state, and sketches the outline of a radically new society.

Malatesta's spokesman at the café is the anarchist, Georgio, who presents himself not as a "teacher of anarchism ... but I can, when needed, defend my ideas." Other characters include a liberal magistrate, a shopkeeper, a worker and a crippled war veteran. It is in these others that one of the strengths of this book lies.

Malatesta is confident enough in his politics to allow his opponents to put their cases eloquently and well, and sensitive enough to the worries of his fellow workers about the perils of real freedom to allow them to express their concerns. Unusually for political dialogues, there is a real feeling of 'plot' to this book, as Georgio spars with Ambrogio, saying the magistrate must know a lot about anarchism already to prosecute so many of Georgio's comrades.

On the evidence of this book, anarchists in nineteenth century Italy were being asked the same kinds of questions as in twenty-first century Britain – who cleans the drains, and what about murderers running amok in the streets? Whether this is heartening

or depressing is another matter. What is more certain, however, is that Malatesta provides clear and convincing answers to these very real concerns.

Where some may find the near-relentless optimism of a Kropotkin a bit jarring, Malatesta is the first to admit that anarchy will not and cannot be transformed humanity overnight, adding wryly that this is "one more reason for not giving anyone the power to command and to dispose of the liberty of others." Neither does he think that a free society is inevitable. With a turn of phrase so good it should be on a T-shirt, he tells us, "As far as the 'laws of history', they are formulated after history is made. Let us first of all make history."

In addition to showing the injustices of capital and dealing with questions about how a free society would operate, this book is devoted to the question of how we get there from here. It is this aspect of *At the Café* that I found both highly interesting and problematic. For Malatesta, the working class is in a Catch 22 situation. On the one hand: "the great majority [of workers] are not conscious or committed; they live in conditions that do not admit of the possibility of emancipating themselves morally unless there is firstly an improvement in their material condition."

And on the other, "if you want to improve the capitalist system ... certain amounts of collaboration may be acceptable; but if you truly want to overthrow the system, then you must clearly place yourself outside and against the system itself."

This is why, for Malatesta at least, what is needed is a "conscious minority that must break the ice and violently change the exterior circumstances" and "pull along" what he calls "the backward masses." Putting it a little harshly, it looks as if, for the masses, "making history" is not an option.

Instead of dismissing Malatesta's views it may be more useful to see this aspect of the book as posing a question



Errico Malatesta
in 1891

that was answered, fittingly enough, by the direct action of the working class. It was the rise of organisations like the CNT in Spain that showed that fighting for decent jobs and conditions and fighting for revolutionary change are not mutually exclusive.

Winning even the smallest concession from the bosses can increase the confidence of working people, and can be a step towards "building a new society in the shell of the old." As Malatesta himself notes, "After a revolution things do not return to as they were before because the people have enjoyed a period of liberty and have tested their own strength." You could say the same about what happens after taking action against the bosses either at work or where you live.

This is not to dismiss Malatesta's book. As a short introduction to

anarchism in theory and practice I would recommend it wholeheartedly, not least because it preserves the dual aspect of anarchist struggle – against capitalism and against the state. Writing before the Russian revolution of 1917 and the horrors of Bolshevism, Malatesta is clear that communism plus the state "would be the most suffocating tyranny to which human society has ever been subjected."

Likewise, he is clear and convincing in addressing the common misunderstanding that a society without a state is a free-for-all. His careful distinction between the police as a distinct group within society, and the police function which is shared by all is a valuable one, and one that is worthy of further exploration in the light of more recent studies of the nature of power.

Early on in *At the Café* the liberal magistrate Ambrogio admits to jailing Georgio for a subversive manifesto, even though "the law couldn't touch it, but what can you do? ... Society must be defended!" This slogan is used to justify all kinds of repressive (and frankly annoying) activity by the state, from ID cards to anti-terror laws.

Malatesta tells us that the only way truly to defend society is to make sure that this is the work of all, that "the first effect of the police is to make the citizens wash their hands of social defence." In this age of ASBOs and community coppers, his ideas are more relevant than ever.

At the Café: Conversations on Anarchism by Errico Malatesta, published by Freedom Press, £7.50 (post free from Freedom Press, 84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1 7QX).

BOOKS

Power Without Responsibility: the press and broadcasting in Britain

by James Curran and Jean Seaton
Routledge, £16.99

Curran and Seaton are clearly fans of the radical left press. They begin their journey through the past, present and future of the media today with a look at the repeal of Stamp Duty and the laws surrounding it.

The liberal consensus, that the abolition of Stamp Duty made for the beginning of a truly free press, is demolished through some painstaking research by the two professors.

They explain that, far from being a liberal victory against the restrictions of a reactionary law, the repeal itself was an attempt to bring radical publications

such as *The Poor Man's Guardian*, *Northern Star* and *Reynolds News* under the cosh.

Radical newspapers, operating outside the law, routinely managed to evade the authorities and in a market hugely restricted by tax, were able to have a free run at the working classes. They achieved massive readerships running at several dozen times the size of the right wing official press, and provided a strong backing for radical actions.

The repeal of duties allowed the right wing to bring its superior economic muscle to bear, literally outspending the radical press and forcing it to move to the right, if it survived at all, to pick up advertising.

The book is full of such iconoclastic writing, with strong research eviscerating long-held liberal beliefs in the nature of

the press then, and now. It falls down slightly on its views of the future, as it was written before the digital revolution, but most of the principles it espouses, and the analysis it provides, is extremely powerful. Well worth a read.

Rob Ray

Evil Beyond Belief

by Wensley Clarkson
Blake Publishing, £6.99

The Harold Shipman case is a horrifying example of the potential for abuse of the power that the rest of the medical profession has over us. Other examples are the Thalidomide disaster, hospital superbugs, the half-million people in Britain addicted to benzodrapine tranquillisers prescribed by doctors.

Over a 25 year period Harold Shipman murdered several hundred of his patients, nearly all of them elderly women, by injecting them with morphine. These were not assisted suicides, or even mercy killings of people in dreadful pain, just plain murder.

The case raises a lot of questions. Why did Shipman do it? How many people did he kill? How did he get away with it for so long? Just what sort of health service do we have in this country?

Evil Beyond Belief answers none of these questions, instead filling over 300 pages with largely irrelevant detail. The essential facts are there; Shipman's arrest, conviction of a specimen number of charges and suicide in prison, but most of the book is a waste of time. If anyone knows of a good book on the

Shipman case, could they let *Freedom* know the details?

Mo Mosely

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A Sideways Look

A government report published in April admitted that child obesity had almost doubled since 1996. The study looked at 2,000 11-15 year olds, and found that the proportion who were obese had risen from 14% to 24% for boys and from 15% to 26% for girls. Younger children had less spectacular rises, but still show an upward trend.

The thing is, why it's happening is hardly rocket science. If you eat more food than you burn up in exercise, you will put on weight. While there are a few people for whom there are other medical explanations, for the vast majority it really is that simple. Kids who are driven to school and eat crisps, have fizzy drinks and then get driven home again are going to put on weight. There will be consequences for some of them, like diabetes, that will be very unpleasant, though not everyone reacts in the same way to the same food.

Needless to say there was much hand wringing from the government, with lots of talk about 'five portions of fruit or veg', exercise and healthy living. But Labour have been in power for nearly 10 years - what have they done? It's fair to say that the activities of a couple of anarchists from North London and a couple of American writers and film-makers have done more against fast food enthusiasm than the government.

Anyone seriously concerned about the effects on children's health would curtail the activities of the junk food industry. Even strictly utilitarian arguments around the cost to the NHS ought to mean some sort of restriction on the junk food peddlers' access to kids. It turns out that Ofcom, which regulates advertising, has met the junk food industry 29 times while only meeting health campaigners four times. The campaigners were mainly pressing for a 9pm watershed on adverts for junk food. At present, it looks like they've lost, because it would cost broadcasters too much in terms of potential advertising revenue. So, the next time you are pestered by your child, or see a child pestering a parent for a Big Mac or some other junk, reflect on this: junk food is bolstered by massive marketing budgets and targeting children works. I'm not surprised that the advertising revenues of commercial television come before children's health.

And it's not just about the food. My daughter's class starts the day with a warm-up session, because so few of the children have had any exercise on the way to school. Many schools no longer have playing fields and despite a pledge by Labour to halt sell-offs, they continue. Council-run leisure facilities are closed down or privatised with a hike in prices that takes them out of a lot of people's reach. Her school has a chess club, and swimming lessons (though where these will go when the council demolishes the pool to build a school is anyone's guess). If the kids want any other team sports they have to join a private club, which may be voluntarily run but isn't cheap either.

None of these things happen in isolation. All are motivated by profit, whether it be the profits to be made from burgers and chips or housing developments on playing fields. Few of those who support the system would justify it by referring to the noble sacrifice of so many of the younger generation, condemning themselves to future diabetes or heart disease. It is, however, the logic of their position. Still, to look on the bright side, I hope we'll see fewer whinges from pension fund managers about the effects of longevity.

Svartfrosk

Blast from the Past

Taken from Freedom, 6th May 2000 (which went to press just before the Mayday events of that year):

Ken Livingstone came out last week against anti-capitalists and radical libertarians who propose to protest on 1st May. He declared that "as Mayor of London I would never back political violence". He makes it clear that he opposes the Mayday actions because "these were planned by the groups previously involved in last year's violent 'stop the city' protests".

Mr Livingstone urged us to support legitimate protests and demonstrations on 1st May. He reminded us that "the Trades Union Congress has taken over the Dome for the day for a Millennial May Day festival". "Protests like that" he added, "and dozens of trade union May Day activities in London and elsewhere in the country are an entirely justified way in which those with little influence in the mainstream media can make their voices heard."

It is an entirely legitimate way in which those in office, like Mr Livingstone, can let the little people let off steam and wear themselves out banging their heads against a wall.



media hacklab

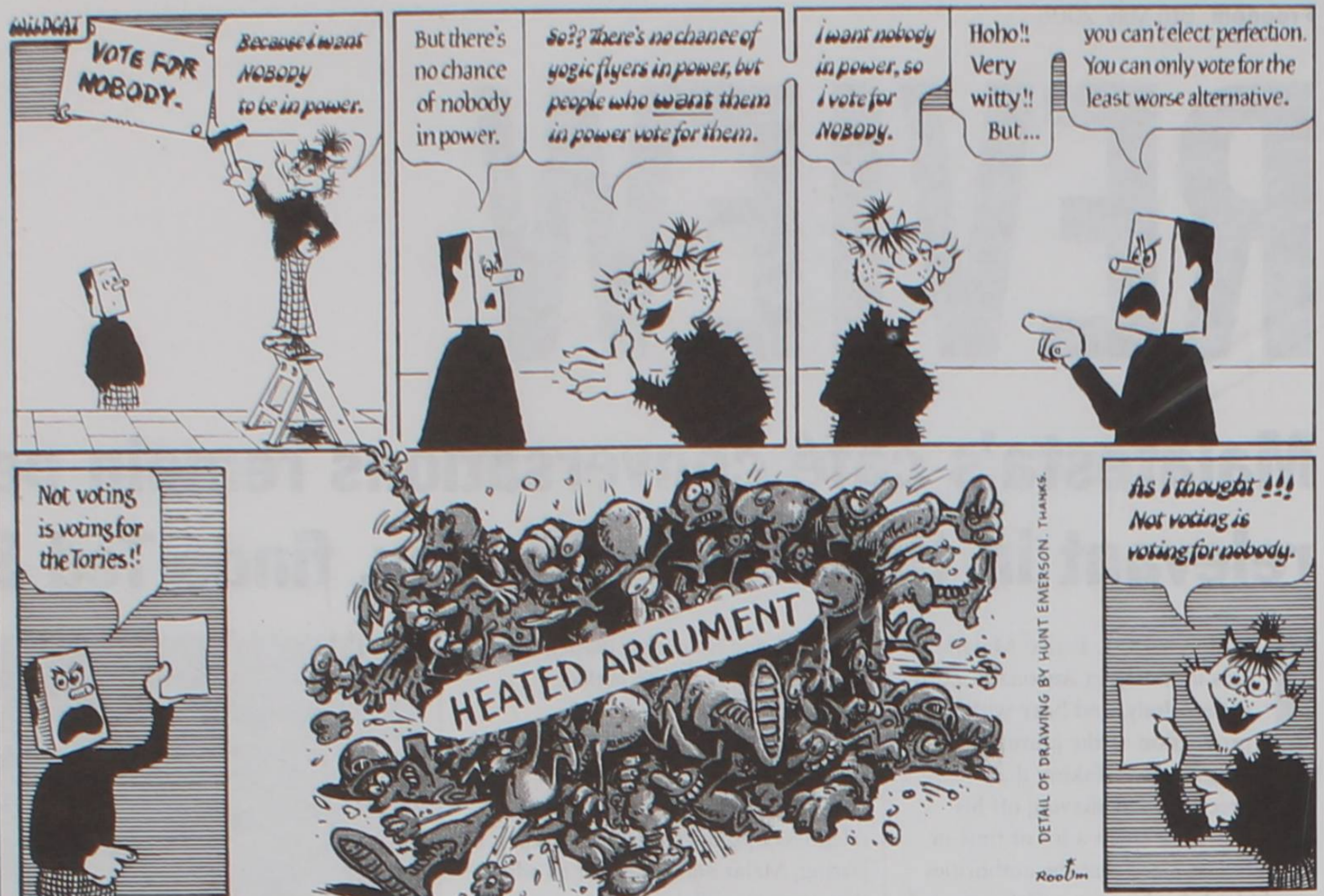
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The quiz

1. Which anarchist's portrait used to hang in Whitechapel Library? Where is it now?
2. What was the Armchair Anarchist's Almanac?
3. In Hayao Miyazaki's film 'Castles in the Sky', what inspired his industrial landscapes and the people who lived in them?
4. Which indie band considered calling their album 'Overthrow Capitalism with...'? And why?

Answers on page 6



Imagine if...

Patricia Hewitt looked out over her garden. A great deal of money had been spent on it. Trees had been uprooted, contractors sent in to destroy outhouses and rebuild them, the place was a mess. But she still thought, as she had said of the NHS, that it was "enjoying the best year ever".

Okay the birds and the bees had flocked, or were threatening to flock, elsewhere, much like the NHS nurses.

Okay she'd lumbered herself with a huge 30-year debt to build some shoddy sheds thanks to her deal with building contractors far more savvy than herself, who had taken none of the risk but would receive all of the money.

Okay she'd overspent, and demanded too much even for that outlay, and now the whole ecosystem was creaking with the strain, seemingly likely to suffer a complete collapse.

Alright, she might have to admit that in the garden she had wasted an awful lot of cash on consultants and overpriced lawn managers, which wouldn't help when the garden had to be cleaned up at great expense by someone else.

But, she told herself, at least the begonias were doing well, and she hoped when the judges came round they would overlook the gaping holes studding her efforts like moon craters and look at the single bed of unwatered roses hanging dangerously over a crack in the earth.

Yes, she thought, those roses showed it was the best year ever.

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Listings

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

8th and 10th May 'Simon Jones Was Someone!', a play performed by The Dingle Community Theatre, 8pm at the Casa Club, Hope Street, Liverpool, call 0771 684 8894. Find out more about Simon Jones at simonjones.org.uk

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

20th May demonstration at Nestlé UK head office in Croydon from 11am to 12 noon. If you can't make it there, you may wish to protest at your nearest Body Shop store now that they've been taken over by Nestlé/L'Oreal

20th May Small Press and Comics Fair at the Cowley Club, 12 London Road, Brighton, from 11am to 5pm, for more info see cowleyclub.org.uk

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

10th June The Art Not Oil 2006 exhibition opens in London, see artnotoil.org.uk, londonrisingtide.org.uk or email london@risingtide.org.uk

10th June DIY Punk Record Fair at The Square, 22 Russell Square, London WC1 from 2pm to 6pm, free, bring your collections to trade, sell or swap, vegan food, and bands later on. For a stall email marta@activedistribution.org

10th June Road Block national conference for anti-roads campaigners, in central Birmingham, for more info and to download booking forms see roadblock.org.uk

10th June Anarchist Bookfair at Blackfriar's Hall, St Andrews Plain, Norwich, from 10am to 6pm, see norwichanarchists.org

15th to 29th July Earth Activist Training in Gloucestershire, for details email eat2006@riseup.net (closing date for applications is 31st May)

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

30th September Tenth European Hazards Conference in Jurmula, Latvia, over this weekend, for details see hazardscampaign.org.uk/docs/riga.htm

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