

# FREEDOM

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## SELLING THE FAMILY SILVER

New Labour, whose received trade union donations since election in 1997 recently topped the £100m mark, have tried for the second time in two weeks to sell off control of the NHS to private US contractors.

Adverts have been placed in the *Journal of the European Union* for companies with a "proven track record of supporting commissioning" for populations of over 90,000 to bid for contracts which would give them effective control over PCT policies.

Primary Care Trusts (PCTs) have control of their own budgets and administrate local areas for regional Strategic Health Authorities. Most major budget decisions for individual hospitals are currently made through the PCTs.

The government tacitly acknowledged their motivations when they backed down in the face of pressure from unions and interest from media groups last month, when an advert with only slightly different phraseology was published.

The first advert specified interested parties should have "experience of managing a healthcare commissioning budget" of at least £300m.

Health minister Patricia Hewitt, in an unprecedented show of concern over the move, said in a special letter to major newspapers following publication of the first advert: "Primary Care Trusts are and will remain public, statutory bodies responsible for using their growing budgets to commission the best possible services for local people.

"They can never outsource this responsibility, or ask others to make these decisions for them. Some PCTs have indicated that, to support them in their task, they would like to consider the possibility of buying in some management and support services."

However, unions have decried the plan, saying that it amounts to privatisation by the back door.

"We had a fundamental disagreement with the previous one and there's little change in this one," commented UNISON head of health Karen Jennings. "Its starting point is that PCTs will be commissioners rather than providers." This, and the Secretary of State's latest direction on a commissioning framework, is an extremely slippery path to the fragmentation of the NHS.

NHS campaigning groups meanwhile have gone further than disagreement, saying that the government has been caught deliberately trying to obscure a major plank of an ongoing privatisation process. Geoff Martin, Head of Campaigns for the Health Emergency group, said: "The Government were caught out bang to rights over the *European Journal* advert and their claims that they are not privatising health care will come back to haunt them. Those words will be slung back in their faces as they try to smuggle through their privatisation plans by stealth away from the glare of publicity."

The new advert still provides for outsourcing of NHS commissioning,



FREE AND CLEAR: Congratulations to the Kebele Social Centre as it clears its mortgage! Freedom gets the full story from a volunteer at the Bristol building, see page 3.

potentially placing the huge budget for PCTs in the hands of private companies.

The framework also lays out incentives to bring in new providers to the NHS.

These could include additional payments over and above the tariff, or offering contractual guarantees on income, activity or extended contract length.

Another incentive would be to reduce capital investment required from the provider by considering a "variety of

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## BEGINNING OF THE END?

Southport and Ormskirk NHS trust, in the North West of Britain, is shedding 80 jobs as a government approved Bupa-run treatment centre opens inside the hospital. Most of the job losses will be compulsory. The privately run centre, which will mainly undertake minor day surgery, is taking over a 1,000 operations a year away from the trust which is already £14 million in the red.

Unison health boss Karen Jennings said "it is particularly galling for staff when they see Bupa, like a cuckoo in the nest, setting up right in the heart of their hospital."

Labour claimed that Independent Sector Treatment Centres (ISTCs) would

only be used as additional capacity – taking pressure off of the NHS in order to reduce waiting lists. They were in are now directly taking over NHS work.

Unlike NHS hospitals they have guaranteed incomes. One in Gillingham, Kent, according a recent Health Emergency report, is "picking up guaranteed payments despite falling around 40% short of its target (and therefore collecting full funding for 2,500 operations it has not performed) while the local Medway NHS Trust makes cuts to balance the books."

Elsewhere in Kent, where the NHS is £100 million in the red, Health Emergency reports "another ISTC is to be built in the grounds of Maidstone Hospital, resulting in a loss of £11m income to the Trust, while NHS staff will be seconded to work in the new unit, delivering profit to shareholders."

Unlike NHS trusts ISTCs do not need to pay national terms and conditions. Unions fear that they will be used to undermine the recent increases in pay gained under Agenda for Change.

A recent Health Committee report has raised serious doubts over whether private-public partnerships to upgrade 78 GP surgeries and health centres represents good value for money. MPs have voiced concerns about the cost of these projects and the fact that they may be diverting resources from other primary care needs.

The British Association for Emergency Medicine has warned that cuts are now affecting Accident and Emergency services with a number of departments closed or downgraded to minor injury units. Its president, Martin Shalley, said: "As well as leaving some patients miles from essential services, these plans are putting too much strain on nearby hospitals. The motive is to save money and that is not right."

One NHS manager told the BBC "there is a slash and burn policy going on... It is not in the best interest of patients or the health service."

It is clear where the finger should be pointed – the private sector. While

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## RICH vs POOR

A new in-depth report by a major economics think-tank has found that despite massive growth in GDP no benefits have been seen by the poor and nothing has been done to tackle climate change.

The Worldwatch Institute have published a 160-page study that showed record increases in production, consumption and economic growth, but with no improvements at all trickling down to the bottom half of the population.

Project director Erik Assadourian said: "Nearly one billion people still live without the barest essentials, 1.1 billion live without access to an improved water supply while 2.6 billion live without improved sanitation facilities, including even a simple pit latrine."

Yet the study showed conspicuous signs of massive growth in the wealthiest parts of the world, with one billion now online, 800 million cell phones connected and 64 million new cars on the road on just one year.

Food production has again hit record highs, with two billion tonnes of grain representing the most in world history, and a there has been a massive increase in aquaculture usage as wild fish stocks begin to dry up.

These numbers are despite well-publicised droughts across much of Africa and massive starvation. Obesity now affects upwards of 300 million people, mostly in western nations.

The study also found that major environmental damage was taking place as a direct result of the jump in production levels, as up to 80% came on the back of oil and coal burning, despite soaring energy prices.

As of late 2005, an estimated 20% of the world's coral reefs had been 'effectively destroyed', while 50% are threatened in the short or long term. Massive deforestation has continued and the average atmospheric carbon dioxide concentration reached 379.6 parts per million by volume, an increase of 0.6 percent over the record high in 2004.

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# Home and away

## Hughes afraid

BNP stalwart Kevin Hughes, who was recently sent down for a 30 month prison sentence for racially aggravated assault, has, after inmates took exception to his presence, been placed on 'Rule 43' – designed to protect paedophiles and inmates avoiding in-house vendettas – and is under 24-hour watch.

The situation in the prison escalated after it was found out why Hughes was in the prison, having attacked an Iraqi asylum seeker, and following a visit from BNP chief Nick Griffin, who along with various other elements in the party seems to regard Hughes as a political prisoner.

Hughes was attacked following Griffin's visit.

## Drivers out

Ambulance drivers have walked out in a dispute with Merseyside's service after their employers backed out of a pay review they had agreed to abide by.

When the review gave them the 'wrong' answer, drivers say the employers used a range of spoiling tactics in an attempt to enforce lower rates for ambulance technicians. The Ambulance Service Union called the walk-out after a ballot of its 200 members. It means employers will again have to rely on help from managers and paramedic trainers, along with volunteers from St John's Ambulance and staff from elsewhere in the North West, to maintain ambulance services to the public.

The ASU fears technicians will be placed in Band 4, on a salary of £19,000 each, a cut for some as they currently earn anywhere between £19,000 and £21,070. The union wants to see them placed at the bottom of Band 5, on £21,118, with a full 25% un-social hours bonus.

It is the first time ambulance staff have been on strike in Merseyside for more than twenty years.

## Rail keeps running

The RMT executive have called off a weekend strike after an improved pay offer was put in by Network Rail. The company, which had said it was 'bending over backwards' and that a small group of militants had been causing trouble, agreed to a higher first year rise and the introduction of the 35-hour week, which the company had been ducking for months. Network Rail had earlier agreed to give 15,000 workers a one-year deal but had denied signallers the same improvement. It forced a climbdown from the executive of Aslef, who had also balloted, on the grounds the ballot's legality was being challenged.

The offer is a 3.2% increase on base salaries while from April 2007 there will be an increase of RPI plus 0.7%. If the current RPI figure of 3.3% remains constant then signallers will receive a 4.05% increase over the following nine months. A ballot on the new offer is pending as *Freedom* goes to press.

## PFI primaries

Edinburgh looks set to become the latest schooling provider to be turned over to PFI company control, after a contract to build and maintain eight new schools using the system was signed on 13th July.

Construction work, being undertaken by Skanska, has begun on four of the sites including Eastfield Farm Road, Penicuik, which will host the Consortium's operational centre. The capital cost of construction is around £41m, while the total cost to the council will be £172million over the 30-year period of the contract.

# Around the world

**ALGERIA:** Torture and ill-treatment of detainees suspected of terrorist activities in Algeria are being committed in the wake of more than a decade of violence, and exported to other countries, according to a new Amnesty report on the country.

The DRS, the force most associated with torture and other ill-treatment, played a key role in the escalation of violence against civilians during the 1990s. Impunity for past violations has been further entrenched with amnesty laws introduced in 2006 with the stated intention of bringing closure to the years of violence.

Notably, since the attacks in the USA on 11th September 2001, Algeria has become an important ally of several foreign governments in the 'war on terror'. Some have set up programmes of financial assistance and capacity-building to support efforts to counter terrorism in Algeria and other countries in the region. The US government has strengthened counter-terrorism cooperation with Algeria, particularly in the context of the Trans-Sahara Counter Terrorism Initiative (TSCTI), a US government programme designed to strengthen Algerian secret state groups.

**IRAQ:** The cost of the war in Iraq is slowly becoming clear. Not the cost in Iraqi lives – the US government has made it clear that they do not count (both literally and figuratively). No, the cost in dollars. As a new report by the Congressional Research Service makes clear this amount is staggering, as is the real timeframe suggested for a US presence in 'liberated' Iraq.

According to the report, the overall cost of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan

as well as other global 'anti-terror' operations since 9-11 will reach \$500 billion next year. This includes \$437 billion on overseas military and foreign aid funding as well as \$1.5 billion in fiscal 2007 Foreign Operations funds for Iraq and Afghanistan, \$50 billion in Pentagon 'bridge' funds for the first half of fiscal 2007, plus as-yet-undetermined supplemental funds for the remainder of the next fiscal year.

The report assumes an eventual reduction of troop numbers to 74,000 by 2010, which, in turn, implies war costs between 2007 and 2016 could total another \$371 billion. Adding that to the \$437 billion appropriated through the end of this fiscal year and total costs would reach \$808 billion by fiscal 2016.

**PHILIPPINES:** The Philippine National Oil Company (PNOC) has withdrawn plans for an integrated coal mining and mine-mouth power plant project in Isabela after massive opposition from Isabela communities and NGOs.

The move came less than two weeks after Isabela community leaders and Greenpeace activists protested in front of the PNOC compound on 29th June 2006 to express their complete rejection of the project and to deliver a petition signed by 15,000 concerned Isabela citizens against the project.

"The people of Isabela have defeated a coal plant today," said Isabela Anti-Coal Mine Mouth Alliance representative Fr Tony Ancieta. "This victory is a tribute to the communities in the province who have been ceaselessly working against this coal project ever since it was proposed, as well as to other communities in the country who are also working against coal."

**RUSSIA:** Mass arrests and a heavy clampdown by police have largely kept protesters against this year's G8 summit at bay, as a round of talks have seen a general dropping of 2006's 'poverty agenda'.

Highlights of the protests saw a hotel where delegates were staying temporarily blockaded, and some marches and demonstrations. The government had however banned political protest, which saw hundreds swept of the streets over the weekend of the meetings.

G8 protest support groups are asking for solidarity for people picked up by the Russian police. All of the British and Welsh activists who were arrested in St Petersburg have now been freed. Some of the other protesters still in police custody are also being released, particularly those who took part in Sunday's blockade, but some still remain in police cells.

There are reports coming out of people having been left without food or water for days whilst in detention, and at least



one case of a young woman threatened with rape inside the police station.

The main apparent decision this year has seen G8 leaders make a surprise united announcement condemning everyone except Israel for a massive assault by the state which has left over 400 people dead in Lebanon.

**SOUTH KOREA:** Police have stormed a corporate headquarters occupied by thousands of workers demanding a more reasonable wage.

Up to 7,500 police, supported by fire engines and a helicopter, rushed the POSCO steel company building which has been occupied by between 1,000 and 2,000 people since 13th July.

Using fork-lift trucks, the police lifted barricades at the entrance of the building and forced their way in with batons as the largely peaceful workers threw plastic bottles at them and retreated to higher levels of the 12-storey building. Police said they were unwilling to move further into the facility for fear of injuries. *Freedom* was unable to confirm the current situation.

The company have estimated that they are losing \$10 million for every day the dispute goes on, as the occupation is part of a wider strike by unionists from 70 owned and linked companies operating in the sector that has been in effect since 30th June.

The strikers have called for a 15% pay rise and better working conditions from the company.

POSCO, Korea's biggest steelmaker, posted a net profit of \$710 billion won for the second quarter, down 44% from the year-earlier period, as iron ore costs climbed and competition from China pushed down metal prices.

# Prison news

## Barcelona hunger-strike continues

As *Freedom* goes to press there is still no end to the hunger protest begun by the prisoners arrested in Barcelona on 4th February. The protest was started by Juan, Rodrigo, and Alex on 19th June, and Rodrigo's mother is also on hunger-strike in solidarity with them. Since their arrest, the three have been brutally treated and denied bail. More about the case at [karcelona.revolt.org](http://karcelona.revolt.org). Both Rodrigo Andres Lanza Huidibro and Juan Pinto Garido are detained at: C.P. Jovenes, C/Padre Manjon 2, 08033 Barcelona, Spain. Contact Alex Ruben Cisternas Amestica at Apartado de Correos 20, C.P. La Modelo, 08080 Barcelona, Spain.

## Mass hunger-strike in Venezuelan jails

A mass hunger-strike is underway in Venezuelan prisons, with prisoners taking part in the protest in 13 jails, and the likelihood of it spreading further.

In the prisons currently affected, over 8,000 prisoners are demanding improvements in conditions and an end to the long remand periods which affect more than half of Venezuela's 19,000 prisoners.

According to catholic priest Pedro Moreno, chaplain general of prisons,

who says he supports the prisoners stand, "All these demands have been made for years, they have been repeatedly claimed for a long time. What is new is that the prisoners are uniting to present their demands collectively, and without resorting to mutinies or violent acts."

Last year, inmates and their relatives attempted another form of struggle, consisting of the mass 'self-abduction' of dozens, sometimes hundreds, of prisoners' relatives, including children, for several days following the weekly visiting day. Prisoners have also resorted to so-called 'blood-strikes' where they deliberately cut themselves.

## Leeds ABC launch new prison pamphlet

On Sunday 6th August Leeds ABC launch their new pamphlet *Down With The Prison Walls!*, the transcript of a talk given by former Basque anarchist prisoner, Laudelino Iglesias Martinez at Bradford's 1 in 12 Club last year.

The launch event will be at The Common Place in Leeds, starting at 3pm, and there will be a vegan barbecue, beer, a quiz, and a raffle, as well as showings of two films, one about the situation of prisoners in Spain, and the other, *V For Vendetta*.

The star guest of the evening will be Laudelino himself, who spent more than 23 years in Spanish prisons.

As well as talk by Laudelino, the 16-page pamphlet includes a transcript of a talk given at the same time by a representative of the Basque prisoner support group Salhaketa, plus the texts of letters written by Laudelino from prison and on his release. Laudelino's talk details the struggle by prisoners, first against fascist repression under Franco, and then against the no less brutal repression which followed the death of the dictator. It details the activities of the prisoner resistance groups APRE and COPEL, and the struggle against the Spanish FIES isolation regime.

*Down With The Prison Walls!* will be on sale at the launch event on 6th August, or copies may be obtained by mail order from Leeds ABC, PO Box 53, Leeds, LS8 4WP. The pamphlet costs £1 per copy plus 50p postage (POs or well-disguised cash please). Contact Leeds ABC at [leedsabc@riseup.net](mailto:leedsabc@riseup.net) for bulk orders and trade enquiries.

## New locks for Feltham

Feltham Prison were forced to spend £250,000 on changing every one of its 11,000 locks and 3,200 keys after a

television news crew filmed a prison key during a media visit to the jail. At the same time another English prison were also forced to replace all its locks, at a similar cost, after a bunch of keys were left lying on a table in the canteen.

Commenting on the Feltham 're-lock', governor Andrew Cross was quoted as saying, "There was no risk to the young people being held there." Bearing in mind that this incident happened only days before a damning report into the murder of Asian prisoner Zahid Mubarek at the jail was released, Cross is perhaps the only person left who could come out with that line. The company that makes the prison locks, Chubb Custodial, said that copying a key from the images broadcast would not be easy.

However, after the embarrassment caused when three lifers walked out of Parkhurst prison in 1995 after copying a key, one can understand the Prison Service being cautious. It came out after the escape that the prisoners were able to copy the key because one of the governors at the jail had the unpleasant habit of using his key to point at prisoners with.

compiled by Mark Barnsley



# News

## A criminal attitude to crime

Dave E looks into the government's solution to crime in the 21st century, and finds attitudes from 2000BC at work

The Prime Minister has stated that the criminal justice system is "utterly useless for getting on top of 21st century crime." In response, the Home Secretary John Reid announced a 24-point criminal justice package designed to increase punishments and prison populations. In the face of record prison populations, 78,000 and rising, these provisions introduce a further 8,000 prison places and longer sentences. A Labour endorsement of Michael Howard's 'prison works' policy.

The key question is, will these proposals reduce crime? The Crime and Society Foundation (CSF) Report *Right for the Wrong Reasons: making sense of criminal justice failure* takes the view that it won't.

Its main conclusions are that the reform of the criminal justice system and the reduction of crime are separate

- Currently the police make some two million arrests each year.
- In 2003-04 almost one million stop and searches were carried out.
- In England and Wales in 2004 around a quarter of a million police cautions, and nearly 64,000 penalty notices for disorder were issued.

There were more than two million prosecutions, with one and a half million convictions – usually for petty and trivial offences. The rate for television licence evasion conviction was 20 times that for sexual offences, and convictions for minor motoring offences were 18 times greater than for violence against the person. 100,000 prison sentences, 200,000 community sentences and one million fines were imposed.

issues. Reform of criminal justice should not be confused with reducing crime.

The report goes on to point out that the majority of the most serious and violent offences never end in successful conviction, and suggests that instead of attempting to increase the conviction rates, the social and economic causes of crime should be addressed. The real crime reduction challenge, it argues, does not lie within the criminal justice system, but social and economic change.

Richard Garside, the report's author, said: "Our levels of crime and victimisation reflect the way that we organise our society, not the relative toughness of our criminal justice system. The way to a safer and lower crime society lies in policies to reduce poverty, challenge sexism, and tackle concentrations of power. The criminal justice system is one of the least effective means of reducing and controlling crime."

Other reports echo Garside's concerns. A previous CSF study revealed that the top 10% richest Britons are now 4% less likely to be murdered than in the early 1980s, but the poorest 10% are 39% more likely to end up as murder victims.

It pointed to a link between rising murder rates and young men leaving school in the early 1980s, a time of mass unemployment. Stephen Dorling, the report author, said, "The poorer the place you live in the more likely you are to be murdered. The rate of murder in Britain can be seen as a marker of social harm."

The Institute for Public Policy Research reported that the residents of the most



deprived areas are 2.5 times more likely to be mugged, and burgled than those living in the least deprived neighbourhoods. 59% of children of crime in 'On Track' areas were victims of crime in 2004, with more than 25% of boys and 10% of girls from deprived areas having been physically attacked.

The latest Home Office crime figures reinforce the link between deprivation and crime. In South Yorkshire there was a 35% rise in violent crime from

2004/5 to 2005/6 which contributed to a 16% increase in all crime (11 of Doncaster's 23 council wards are amongst the 10% most deprived wards in the country).

The criminal justice system is geared to the construction and maintenance of social order – a government view confirmed by Jack Straw, who said that the purpose of the Home Office was to deal with "dysfunctional individuals – criminals, asylum seekers, people who

do not wish to be subject to social control." Little wonder then that politicians look to criminal control and it is unsurprising that they fail.

As the Crime and Society Foundation report makes clear, "if criminal justice tends to regulate rather than resolve social problems, it is likely to entrench rather than address the wider inequalities and imbalances that give rise to such problems."

## It's all ours now

Eleven years ago a bunch of punky-squatter activists occupied an empty building in Easton, Bristol.

Surprisingly, as eviction time neared, both the squatters and the capitalist owners agreed to cut a deal – the squatters fundraised five grand, got a mortgage with Triodos, and bought the place.

The building was named Kebele, meaning 'community place' in Ahmaric. The Kebele Kulture Projekt was born, better known now as Kebele Social Centre. The Kebele Housing Co-op was formed to provide rent-paying residents, to cover the mortgage. The Kebele Kafe, along with regular benefit gigs and parties, skipping and nosing around, paid for everything else.

In Bristol was just right for Kebele. Bristol's history of radical working class resistance was being augmented by new activists from the anti-capitalist and anti-roads movements, along with many other confrontational groups and individuals.

Kebele became a focal point for many activities – a variety of speakers, film

nights, reclaim the streets, prisoner support, solidarity groups, alternative publications and a free library, as well as environmental projects, bike workshops and much more.

Eleven years later, many activists, and Kebele founders have passed through, by and on, but Kebele remains. It is perhaps ironic that during this relatively quiet period of resistance to capitalism and the state on the home front (and in Bristol), that Kebele has now paid off its mortgage, and is in many ways more secure than ever.

Writing recently in *Bristle* magazine, Kebele's small group of 'core members' have articulated their desire to move their project on by reconstituting themselves as a community co-op. Their aim is to attract wider involvement and interest locally in both the political ideas behind Kebele, and in use of the centre – hopefully going beyond the activist scene towards the true meaning of 'kebele'.

Today Kebele runs a weekly vegan café and bike workshop. There is a

radical library, internet access, and info/book stall. There are film nights, exhibition and meeting space – all for hire by donation. The Projekt is run by volunteers, according to anarchist principles. So far this year, activities have included banner-making workshops, café and film nights hosted by Queer Mutiny, a Beltane Gathering, 'Art Not Oil' exhibition by local artist David Thomas, campaign meetings, and catering for Packers Meeting May Day event and a climate change camp planning meeting.

The current proposal is for the housing co-op to transfer its assets to the new Community Co-op. Whilst the new co-op would takeover the tenancies of Kebele's existing residents, it would also consider the possibility of winding down the housing as existing tenants leave, and then using the whole building as a social and resource centre.

mh

You can contact Kebele at kebelesocialcentre@riseup.net  
Contact Bristle at bristle.org.uk

## All about class, innit

Social mobility has declined in Britain to where it was in the 1950s as wealth inequality has grown. The class you are born into is likely to be the class that you die in.

Class certainly matters when it comes to health. Infant mortality amongst the poor is double that in higher social classes.

An influential study published last month on ageing published by University College Hospital in London found that the poorest fifth of the population are ten times more likely to die in their 50s than the richest fifth. They are also five times more likely to die between the ages of 60 and 74.

The author of the study, Sir Michael Marmot, a professor of epidemiology and public health, said "the relationship between health and wealth is affected by childhood conditions, education, what happens to you in employment and whether you feel secure and in control of your life." This is quite a long-winded way to say

that if you are born into a working class family you are basically fucked for life and your life is going to be shorter than middle and upper class people.

Particularly interesting is Sir Michael's finding that hierarchical societies have more health inequalities than non hierarchical ones. This is because even if people at the bottom of the pile have the material needs met they still "suffer psychological stress".

There are those who try to claim that class does not matter. That talking in terms of 'working class' is outdated. The study shows otherwise. In 21st century Britain it is not your ability to determine whether you will die at school, it is your social class.

Clearly if you want a society of physically and psychologically healthy individuals the answer is to get rid of the class system. What this finding also illustrates is that class does matter.

Richard Griffin



# News

## Back to work in the mountains

### Ellen Kemp looks into the partial breaking of resistance to company dominance deep in the copper mines of Mexico

**A**round 2,000 miners at the La Caridad mine who had been on strike since March have been sacked by the mine's owners La Grupa Mexico. In March there were numerous of wild cat strikes across Mexico in the mining and metal industries, in support of the deposed miners union leader Napoleon Gomez Urrita (see *Freedom* 25th March 2006).

At the Cananea mine – owned by the same company – the miners who were also on strike in support of Gomez returned to work last week after threats by the company that the mine would be closed down.

Both strikes had been declared illegal at the outset and the company received the permission of the ministry of labour to sack the miners. The timing of the dismissals is significant with the government of President Fox wishing to move against the Mexican labour movement after his protégé Calderon narrowly won the 2nd July elections.

The left's candidate Lopez, who is challenging the results, has organised massive demonstrations calling for a recount of all the votes. Mexico's ruling class will not allow this to happen. Significantly Lopez supports the rights of union members to elect their own leadership and end state interference in the selection of union leaders as has happened in the case of Napoleon Gomez.

Gomez was stopped from assuming the position of General Secretary of the Miners' Union by the Minister of

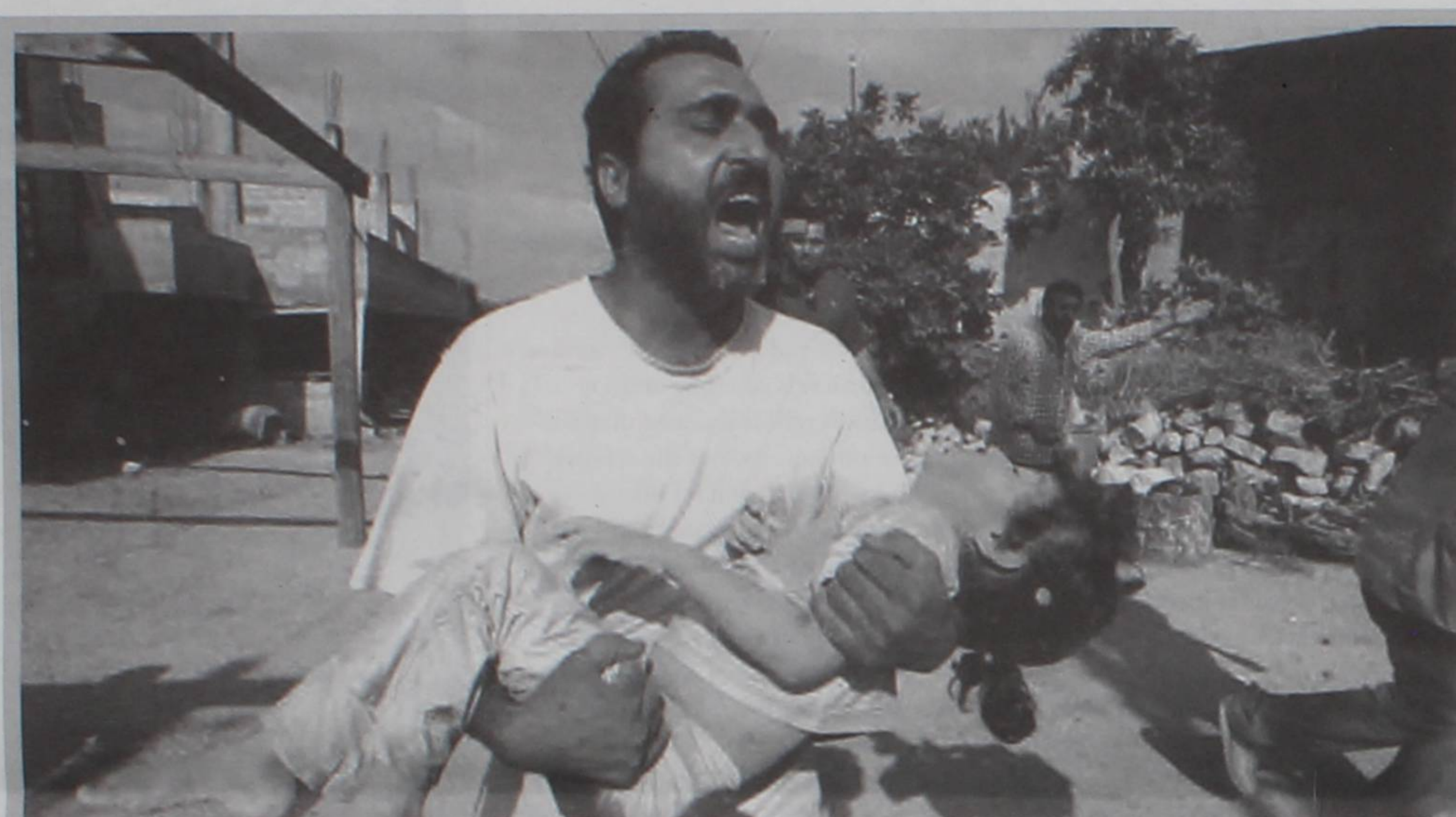
Labour. The government appointed Elias Morales Hernandez who was supported by the mine's owners La Grupa for the position. Gomez supported the workers rather than being a company man, as was case with the leadership of most unions in Mexico in the past.

Since becoming leader of the union in 2001 he helped win increases in wages for copper miners of 6–8% against the government's wage restrictions. He also helped win improved housing conditions. Gomez is still fighting to remain leader of the union but had to flee to Canada because of threats to his life.

The position of the miners may not be all lost. La Caridad mine is situated in high up in the Sonora mountains and the miners live in locally built colonies. The owners intend to get rid of the workers and re-open the mine with a new workforce.

However, to take back the mine the authorities will have to attack the miners. Recent attacks against strikers in Mexico make this very much a possibility (see *Freedom* 6th May and 1st July 2006). But Mexican labour law is complicated and the owners may have several court battles to fight before being able to legally evict the miners.

La Caridad is the largest copper mine in Mexico producing 122, 000 tonnes per annum. The strikes at both copper mines have seen La Grupa lose production in the region of 50,000



**ATROCITY:** A writer from Lebanon wrote a harrowing account of the Israeli bombing which has devastated the region and left hundreds dead. Hala said: "We increasingly feel trapped. Israel is claiming to fight Hezbollah for the two soldiers they have kidnapped. For that purpose it has done the following: Wiped out the south of Lebanon (hundreds of villages) and the southern suburb of Beirut, it has bombed the airports, roads, ports, hospitals, emergency and relief units, food and medicine storages and infrastructure across Lebanon, killed hundreds of civilians and thousands wounded and made thousands into refugees. The silence of the international and Arab leaders and governments against this barbarian bloodbath is a crime in itself and the silence of people around the world is unacceptable. Help us exert pressure on your governments so that the international community could be pressurised and in return would pressurise Israel."

tonnes. Significantly the price of copper has shot up this year increasing by 30% since June, and some of this increase is due to industrial disputes in mines right across the world.

There were more disputes in the first four months of this year than for the whole of 2005. There are threats of strikes in both Peru and Chile.

As we go to press the threat of a

strike hitting the largest copper mine in the world looms. Talks between unions and owners (shared by Rio Tinto and BHP Billiton) of the Escondida mine in Chile have broken down.

## Recuperation in Serbia

**F**ollowing reports that a major victory has been won in Serbia with the reclamation of a major company from private ownership, a Freedom correspondent has told us the real story.

Jugoremedia, a pharmaceutical company that had been state owned, was privatised in 2000 with 58% of shares given to the workers. The state sold 42% of the company to smuggling tycoon Jovica Stefanovic, who illegally pushed his holdings up to 68% by 2004.

As all the other buyers in Serbian privatisation, Stefanovic was not investigated in money laundering, because the Serbian Government's position at that time was, and still is, that it's better to have dirty money in privatisation than to let workers manage the company, because that will 'bring us back to the dark days of self-management'.

Workers occupied the factory, and demanded that control be handed back to them, forcing a showdown

between state police, Stefanovic's hired mercenaries and the workforce.

Strike leaders were arrested and the factory retaken, but the strike went on until May of this year, when a legal battle won them the right to the original 58-42% split last month.

But *Freedom's* contact, an anarcho-syndicalist from Belgrade, has had grave doubts over the commitment of the workforce to wider activities. He said: "For the time being I think it is important to cool down, and understand that Jugoremedia is now only under the control of small capitalists – ex-workers. There are many cases like this in Serbia, and there is nothing revolutionary about them."

But he was more upbeat about other similar moves being made in the region, adding: "There are other cases here, which are much more interesting, like a Beer factory in Jagodina which has been occupied by its workers for months now.

"They don't have shares or anything,

they just got the new owner physically out and started production. There were even small-scale wars between those workers and the security goons that were hired by the new owner [the old owner was the State]."

The first attack on Yugoslav self-management happened before the break up of socialist Yugoslavia. The first organized attempt to dismantle the system of self-management in Serbia dates back to the times of Slobodan Milosevic. But the real full-blown process of privatisation and curtailment of workers rights happen after Milosevic was sent to the Hague Tribunal.

In this context in transitional Serbia of the 21st century, with the transition to capitalism and parliamentary democracy, everything became allowed in the fight against what the new neoliberal government saw as the 'ideological monster of self management' – even if it means the government and the court break laws.

## Legalised race hate

**A** town in America has voted to legally force all non-whites to show their papers at all shops/restaurants and fine anyone who doesn't ask for them, and people of certain nationalities will be barred from working and run out of town.

Hazleton Pennsylvania is barely eighty miles from New York, a town of 31,000 people, whose white population voted four-to-one to deny access to hospitals, food and employment to immigrants. The (legally American) children of immigrants will be barred from schools.

Everyone will be required to speak English, and any individuals who try to help immigrant families with charity will be punished.

Fines of \$1,000 will be levied on those breaking the new rules.

City Mayor Louis Barletta sites crime and economic stressors as among the principal reasons for targeting the brown population of the city. But recent data shows that migrants have been an immense boon to the Hazleton

economy, creating sixty new businesses and markedly boosting the value of real estate. Only a year ago Barletta was bragging that the economy was going through an unprecedented boom, due to migration.

In the meantime total arrests are down and violent crimes of all descriptions are down since the influx of Dominicans, Puerto Ricans and Mexicans began.

The city has a history of extreme measures against immigrants. The forefathers of these voters were killed in one of the most notorious outrages of the US labour struggle at the turn of the nineteenth century – the Lattimer Massacre.

The massacre saw nineteen Eastern European immigrant miners, who had been part of a group of four hundred conducting a peaceful protest, gunned down by the sheriff and his posse. Forty more were wounded in the outrage, which had been designed to break the back of a state-wide strike.



## Feature

# Practical anarchism

**A massive, unsung, but very anarchistic educational network is spanning the UK. Martyn Everett investigates**

**A**sked to give examples of how anarchist ideas work in practice most anarchists would probably suggest the collectivisation of industry during the Spanish Revolution. If pressed to give more recent examples then some of the surviving small-scale worker co-operatives set up since the late 1960s, or free schools such as Summerhill might be suggested.

Yet there is one successful organisation that few people would think about, and that is the University of the Third Age (U3A) which was established as a way of providing further education to the over 45s.

Deliberately set up in the early 1980s as an independent community-based 'Mutual Aid Unity', and now has a network of 574 local groups covering most of the major towns and cities in the UK, and members in many small rural communities.

Although the numbers of elderly people studying in state-controlled further education has spiralled downwards, total membership of the U3A currently stands at over 153,000 (February 2006), and increases yearly.

The U3A adopted a healthy anti-authoritarian approach right from the outset, so that the formal role of the

tutor was challenged and usually abandoned altogether.

As Eric Midwinter wrote in an early account of the U3A: "Those who teach will be encouraged also to learn and those who learned shall also teach, or in other ways assist in the functioning of the institution – e.g. through counselling other members, offering tuition and help to the housebound, bedridden and hospitalised, by assisting in research projects, by helping to provide intellectual stimulus for the mass of the elderly in Britain."

The deliberate decision to abandon formal tutoring whenever possible was a social rather than an economic decision, based on the "assemblage of experience and skills which is the automatic gift of the third age".

By dint of living, working and travelling, enjoying hobbies and holidays, fighting wars, raising children "a veritable treasury of knowledge is spontaneously available and it is the task of the U3A to mobilise and channel the resource which otherwise would ... be pitifully wasted."

This is how one member of Ealing U3A describes their organisation: "U3A Describes Groups are the heart of the U3A movement. Groups meet mainly in each other's homes. Someone with



particular expertise and knowledge takes on the role of teacher, leading each session. Alternatively, a member acts as secretary and helper with group members taking it in turn to lead a meeting. Groups generally meet fortnightly or monthly and everyone pays 20 pence a meeting to cover tea and coffee.

"The movement is a self-help organisation. Most of the teaching and tuition comes from the ranks of its own members. It is a unique educational self-help co-operative. While each U3A is an autonomous unit responsible for organising its programme, the Third Age Trust – of which all local U3As are members – provides local U3As with administrative and educational resources and support to help in running their groups. It organises 'subject networks' of individuals who are willing to assist others in their particular field of study, e.g. languages, history, geology, etc.

"As leadership comes from the members themselves, a U3A member may be a student in one group one day and the leader or tutor the next. It is not always necessary to have an expert as a leader. In some subjects, members learn from each other and the role of the leader is to encourage everyone to take part.

"Interest groups are often quite small with meetings or classes taking place in members' homes. Not only does this save on accommodation costs, it makes for friendly contact among members."

In Norwich the U3A has over 700 groups and more than 40 active groups studying computing, science, environmental sciences, seven different languages, arts, crafts, literature, poetry, theatre, and nearly 20 leisure subjects, including music appreciation, bowls, philosophy and vegetarian cooking.

While state-sponsored adult education now only runs courses that result in certificated qualifications, the U3A does

not mark or grade educational activity, and the rigid boundaries between education and leisure have been dropped.

In the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, Peter Kropotkin defined anarchism as a society without government, explaining that social harmony, anarchy would not be achieved by "by obedience to any authority, but by free agreements concluded between the various groups, territorial and professional, freely constituted for the sake of production and consumption, as also for the satisfaction of the infinite variety of needs and aspirations of a civilised being."

**"They will be schools no longer; they will be popular academies, in which neither pupils nor masters will be known, where the people will come freely to get if they need it, free instructions, and in which, rich in their own experience, they will teach in their turn many things to the professors who shall bring them knowledge which they lack. This then will be a mutual instruction, an act of intellectual fraternity." – Bakunin, God and the State**

He went on to describe how this might be realised: "In a society developed on these lines, the voluntary associations which already now begin to cover all the fields of human activity would take a still greater extension so as to substitute themselves for the State in all its functions. They would represent an interwoven network, composed of an

infinite variety of groups and federations of all sizes and degrees, local, regional, national and international – temporary or more or less permanent – for all possible purposes: production, consumption and exchange, communications, sanitary arrangements, education, mutual protection, defence of the territory, and so on; and, on the other side, for the satisfaction of an ever increasing number of scientific, artistic, literary and sociable needs." (Peter Kropotkin, 'Anarchism', *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 11th edition, 1905.)

The U3A provides a living example of how people can organise effectively to bypass and replace the state, demonstrating a method that can be adapted to other forms of social activity. Of course there are limits to what has been achieved, and no doubt in some groups informal hierarchy may still exist.

But if member's personal experience of non-hierarchical organisation can be extended into other activities such as credit unions, housing co-ops, communal allotments, then the social basis for informal hierarchy will diminish.

The experience of the U3A demonstrates that in their daily lives people organise in ways which are both autonomous and anti-authoritarian because they provide effective solutions to social problems, even if as individuals they do not advocate anarchism as a political philosophy. Our role as anarchists is to argue that the central principles of anarchism – mutual aid, self-help and direct action – are important as forms of social organisation that provide a practical social basis for the reconstruction of society.

The members of the U3A have quietly established one of the largest movements for libertarian education in Europe, and in doing so have demonstrated that the state is redundant.

## HISTORY CORNER: BLACK MOUNTAIN COLLEGE

Founded in the remote mountains of North Carolina in 1933 against a background of global economic depression, Black Mountain College was a practical experiment in alternative education.

It pioneered an arts-centred approach that encouraged students to learn by experiment, rather than through formal teaching and it combined communal living with informality in the classroom.

During the subsequent 24 years the College attracted a remarkable roll-call of 'teachers' and students. It was there that Buckminster Fuller developed his geodesic dome as a solution to the global housing crisis, and the composer John Cage and the dancer Merce Cunningham created the first 'happening' and transformed modern music and dance.

Avant-garde poets (subsequently known as the Black Mountain Poets) were drawn to the school – nearly all of them linked to anarchism and anti-war activism, most notably Robert Duncan, Denise Levertov, and Robert Creeley.

The College also attracted artists and Europe including Josef and Anni Albers, Walter Gropius, and Lyonel Feiniger, as well as rebellious US artists such as Ben Shahn and Robert Motherwell.

Although the student body never reached more than 100 at any one time (and was often less than 50) nearly 1,200 students attended the College during its lifetime,

becoming involved in an exciting, high-pressure educational experience, that profoundly changed their lives.

There were few rules and regulations, no required courses, no set schedule of examinations, no formal grades.

Faculty members were relatively free to choose the courses they would teach, and at the beginning of each term, students could sit in on classes to decide which they wished to take.

The College work programme was a central element in the college experience and all students took part. Influenced by educator John Dewey's belief in "learning by doing" this was similar to the anarchist concept of 'integral' education which believed intellectual skills should be grounded in practical tasks.

The college strived to be as self-sufficient as possible so students contributed to its operation through a work-programme. Work was shared equally by male and female students – many did farm work, while others helped in the kitchen and dining room or with building maintenance.

In 1941-42 staff and students constructed a new Studies Building on the College's Lake Eden campus, requiring a massive amount of labour by College faculty and students, most of whom had never built anything!

With little funding available, their combined efforts were crucial to creating the intense feeling of community that characterised Black Mountain College until its closure in 1956.



# Commentary

## FREEDOM

Volume 67 Number 15

### 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 a quiet, but busy couple of weeks at the Press, with a new *ABC of Anarchism* now in the proofing stages (meaning a volunteer sits down and picks grammar holes and in the spelling ñ wish we had one of those, volunteers to the usual address). That should be going to print at any time now.

Also in progress is a new anarchist quiz book with illustrations by Paul Petard and even some questions from one of the big names of the last century – Albert Meltzer. In many ways, this book is a little piece of history in the making, as it marks (we hope) a full burying of the hatchet between what used to be a certain amount of bad blood between Vernon Richards at Freedom and Albert Meltzer at Black Flag.

Of course, this is only the latest of a series of small anti-hatchet actions over the last few years, regular readers might or might not also be aware that one of our regular writers is also an editor of Black Flag these days, while another of our regular contributors has on occasion been fondly referred to as 'Meltzer-boy'.

Apologies for the continuing lateness of our recent papers, we are having some diabolical problems with the mailout. Again. Plus, don't forget we have vacancies for pretty much every job at the paper, press and shop, so volunteers are very welcome.

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### Next issue

The next issue will be dated 26th August 2006 and the last day to get copy to us for that issue will be Thursday 18th August (see contact details above).

### Durham's big meeting

This took place in blazing sunshine, as has become the norm of recent years. The gala is back to its old pre-war size, estimates varied from 75,000 (my own) to the grudging BBC figure of 50,000. It was 'bliddy big' and nobody can argue with that.

There were 37 brass bands, two pipe bands and the illustrious miner's folk music collective around the Elliott family all led in the banners, from three different directions. By 10am the streets and main thoroughfare up to the Old Racecourse speakers field were thoroughly mobbed and virtually impassable. The cops had positioned themselves here and there to try and control proceedings and actually tried to tell bands when to stop and start, but nobody took the slightest bit notice of them and things proceeded more or less in their customary anarchic fashion.

The procession of banners and floods of former pit folks following them is however reaching crisis point. The first bands set away from the Durham Miners offices at 8.45am. Four hours later there were thousands upon thousands of folk with their bands and banners wilting in the sun who had not even set off yet.

For people with little kids and babies and the many old people who like to take part, this is becoming untenable and ambulances were kept busy all day picking up the collapsed and exhausted. Part of the problem is the traditional 'party piece' which all of the bands perform in turn under the balcony of the County. Of late, many bands have taken to doing two pieces and even the ones who stick to one tune are choosing more lengthy and elaborate pieces of music. It's a tradition and it's hard to know how you can get round it, without saying that they don't stop and play *en route* but just march straight past.

More and more of the old, tattered or long since deceased banners are being recommissioned, and with it comes a banner committee based upon the local community. The banner committee brings the community back together again organising events firstly to raise money to revive the banner and then to ensure it has a good following at the gala and events throughout the year.

Needless to say, the scenes and characters featured on these banners are the stuff of history, philosophy and politics of the class. The revival of the banner invariably brings with it a revival of interest in the events and philosophy of those so portrayed.

I am waiting with bated breath for the relaunch of the Follonsby Banner, of the 1930s. It was the banner of my dad and granddad and probably is the most

radical trade union banner in British history, containing as it does the faces of Hardy, Harvey, Lenin, Cook and James Connolly in the uniform of the Irish Citizen Army together with a slogan calling on all to engage in revolutionary struggle regardless of fear of death.

In case you don't get the message, it also carries the hammer and sickle and the red star. The banner records the intersection of the major working class perspectives of the period: anarcho-syndicalism, industrial unionism, Bolshevism and left social democracy.

I am hoping this explosive banner will see the light of day again for next year's gala, and I have written a little pamphlet in readiness to explain the politics and context of the people on the banner and their respective political roles and perspectives which, I am hopeful, will accompany the relaunch.

In among the local lodges and the folk of Tyne and Tees and Wear came the surviving miners from Yorkshire and Nottingham as well as the banner of South Wales with its remaining colliery. Mining communities from Poland were present with two children in traditional mining village costumes, (in many European countries miners wear ceremonial uniforms away from the actual mine). A big choir of Belgian miners in their pit gear formed a colourful contingent, as did the traditional Indian brass band with their dancers.

It was again heartening this year to see so many young people in the parade, some with their own banners celebrating their pride in their pit community heritage of struggle. The presence of a great many underage inebriated teenagers having a whale of a time put the fear of riot into the cops as they danced and fell about to the music (the kids not the cops, although there was a little dancing and photo posing among them too). This brought some 'tut tutting' among the older generation in the crowd but many others, including myself, reminded them that this was as traditional as the procession itself and was certainly something that we ourselves had engaged in during our pre-drinking age galas.

The field is awash with political groups and parties and themes selling their wares along with the mining memorabilia and local history tracts.

The fanfare gets bigger every year and is spreading along the riverbank as well as the main field; the rides get bigger and scarier every year.

The speakers this year were it must be said lacklustre, with the possible exception of Bob Crow giving New Labour some stick to the delight of the tens of thousands standing and listening. Davie Hopper the Durham Secretary laid into one of the local New Labour MPs for his attack upon the Durham Area NUM and the union solicitors Thompson's, amid cheers from the

crowds. Derek Simpson from Amicus was a guest speaker, something of a first for both guest and hosts and marks the turn if not to the left in that union at least away from the right.

This year, following the speeches, the adjoining platform was given over to Radio Newcastle DJs and local rock bands for a sort of 'concert in the park' – a new initiative to suit the younger members of the community who had dutifully marched and sat through the speeches. I am told there was a little fighting at this event, which is regrettable, but sadly that too is almost as old as the event itself.

Durham gets better and better each year. It is a major focus for working class political and trade union struggle, certainly the biggest Labour movement event in Europe and one which is thoroughly organised and supported by working people. Perhaps this is the reason why the left is such a frail, and at times non-existent presence at the event, which is a blessing I suppose in many ways, but shows how off-beam their focus is.

I am hoping the IWW stall we had this year will be upgraded to a supplementary political and radical platform next year, perhaps posing a sort of 'fringe rally' following the main event with speakers and singers. If we do it would certainly be my intention to invite comrades from the more serious and rooted elements of the political left to participate.

DD

### The real cost of the 'war on terror'

The cost of the Bush Junta's imperial war of choice in Iraq is slowly becoming clear. Not the cost in Iraqi lives, the Junta has made it clear that they do not count (both literally and figuratively). No, the cost in dollars. As a new report by the Congressional Research Service makes clear this amount is staggering, as is the real timeframe suggested for a US presence in 'liberated' Iraq.

According to the report, the overall cost of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan as well as other global 'anti-terror' operations since 9-11 will reach \$500 billion next year. This includes \$437 billion on overseas military and foreign aid funding as well as \$1.5 billion in fiscal 2007 Foreign Operations funds for Iraq and Afghanistan, \$50 billion in Pentagon 'bridge' funds for the first half of fiscal 2007, plus as-yet-undetermined supplemental funds for the remainder of the next fiscal year.

The report assumes an eventual reduction of troop numbers to 74,000 by 2010, which, in turn, implies war costs between 2007 and 2016 could total another \$371 billion. Adding that to the \$437 billion appropriated through the end of this fiscal year and total costs would reach \$808 billion by fiscal 2016.

While there may eventually be a token reduction in troops (depending on electoral needs, of course) it is clear that the US will be staying in Iraq for some time. The fact is that the American state is assuming that there will still be 74,000 troops in Iraq in 2010 and is projecting costs to 2016. Good job the US is busy building permanent bases in Iraq.

IM

### Yes, it's a real quote

More words of 'wisdom' from our glorious leader, Tony Blair: "Complaining about globalisation is as pointless as trying to turn back the tide. There are, I notice, no such debates in China."

Could that be because, perhaps, it is a Stalinist dictatorship? Just perhaps? Still, the level of debate in China is something Blair obviously aspires to...

### Family silver

page 1

different ownership and service delivery models". The document also floats plans for a "quality bonus scheme" to reward providers with the best performance.

Despite this most recent move, and dozens like it regarding the NHS, pensions, wars and privatisation of basic services, in the most recent round of votes on whether unions should pay money to the Labour party, every major union has continued to do so with the exceptions of the FBU and RMT.

On page 6, we reproduce a Political Fund Exemption Notice form telling your union to stop paying part of your membership fee to the party. £100m is more than enough.

Rob Ray

### NHS

page 1

companies like Bupa will make a good living from providing core NHS services like hip replacements, NHS workers are continuing to lose their jobs.

Richard Griffin

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### Quiz answers

1. *How to be a Bad Birdwatcher* by Simon Barnes.
2. Allegedly an enclave in Timor, it was a hoax state set up by New Zealand anarchists to satirise what real states did.
3. Eric Frank Russell (1905-1978)
4. Mind your own business. It's from his novel *The Great Explosion* where an imperial spaceship encounters the 'Gands' who favour Gandhi-style passive resistance and a money-free economic system. 'MYOB' is what the Gands reply to the crew of the spaceship's questions.

### POLITICAL FUND EXEMPTION NOTICE

I hereby give notice that I object to contributing to the Political Fund of the union and am in consequence exempt, in the manner described by Chapter 6 of the Trade Union and Labour Relations (Consolidation) Act 1992, from contributing to that fund.

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# REVIEW

## Vandana Shiva is wrong in her belief that the state can be reformed, but her critique of capital is worth a read, says Brian Morris

In a recent 'Beginner's Guide' to anarchism Ruth Kinna describes Ayn Rand as if she was an anarchist. An 'Aynarchist' if you please. Ayn Rand of course, as I long ago indicated in my *Ecology and Anarchism*, was by no stretch of the imagination and anarchist.

For Rand, the guru of Margaret Thatcher, was an outspoken and abrasive advocate of free-market capitalism, a staunch defender of private property, and an advocate of the so-called 'minimum state' – that is, a coercive society which lacks any welfare functions but upholds the free market and supports the rampages of corporate capitalism. Rand was also a technological freak, who waxed lyrical about skyscrapers, and lacked any ecological sensibility.

If anyone thinks capitalism is a good thing and warms to the likes of Ayn Rand and Murray Rothbard (as does Kinna), I suggest you read Vandana Shiva's recent book called *Earth Democracy*, for it offers a succinct, readable and highly engaging critique of both representative democracy and what she describes as corporate globalisation, otherwise known as capitalism.

A well-known eco-feminist and environmental activist Vandana Shiva interprets the current rampages of global capitalism as involving the continuing 'enclosure of the commons'. Whereas the first land enclosures involved the appropriation and privatisation of land and forests – she forgets the role of slavery in the development of capitalism – the expansion of capitalism since the Second World War has taken other forms.

These include the privatisation of water, the establishment of Intellectual Property Rights and patents by the World Trade Organisation – thus giving corporations exclusive control over seed and other forms of organic life – and the expansion of industrial agriculture

and agribusiness, thereby not only undermining subsistence farming and peasant livelihoods but leading to control by the corporations of all aspects of food production.

The main outcome of the expansion of global capitalism and these 'enclosures' have been – and these are lucidly described by Shiva – poverty and increasing social inequalities throughout the world, the degradation of the natural local communities and subsistence economies, cycles of violence, and, as a reaction to the global economy, an upsurge in religious fundamentalism, or what Shiva describes as 'negative identities'.

Under capitalism everything is being turned into a commodity, the whole biosphere privatised, and greed, plunder and profits have become the mainsprings of economic life under capitalism. Representative democracy has aided and abetted, Shiva argues, the machinations of global capitalism. She seems to think this is something of a new phenomena, whereas, as Kropotkin argued, there has always been a symbiotic relationship between the modern nation state and capitalism. Indeed, the expansion of the global economy is a political project.

The book *Earth Democracy* is focused mainly on the Indian subcontinent, and Gandhi's legacy, Shiva tells us, is humanity's best hope for the future. She therefore gives interesting accounts of how peasant communities and subsistence farmers throughout India have resisted and challenged the 'biopiracy' of the multinational corporations – emphasising especially the important role that women play as the guardians of what she describes as the 'living economies' of India. She also offers an important defence of organic farming – stressing the inefficiency, and the adverse social and ecological costs of industrial agriculture. The book is certainly no paean to eco-primitivism.

As an alternative to corporate globalisation, Vandana Shiva outlines a



project that owes much to Gandhi, and which she describes as *Earth Democracy*. It entails the following: an advocacy of decentralisation and local democracy; a concern for peace and social justice; the sustaining of ecosystems and eco-communities based on the principles of diversity, reciprocity and self-organisation; and the development of an ecological sensibility that respects the integrity and the intrinsic worth of all life-forms, human and non-human.

This is of course what anarchists have been advocating and struggling for ever since the philosophers Reclus and Kropotkin at the end of the nineteenth century. Yet apart from a brief note on Kropotkin with regard to mutual aid, Shiva makes no mention at

all of anarchism.

Her main inspiration is Gandhi, who of course, inspired by Tolstoy, always looked upon himself as a kind of anarchist. But Shiva still has a hankering for some benign kind of spiritualism, and is still under the illusion that we can 'reclaim' or 'reinvent' the nation-state.

She envisages a state that would serve only the interests of ordinary people, and would curb and regulate the maraudings of global capitalism. What an illusion. She also mentions Ayn Rand – but only as an advocate of 'cowboy-capitalism' which tends to reduce social life to individuals.

But overall *Earth Democracy* is a useful, informative and engaging book, much closer to the anarchist tradition

than the politics of Ayn Rand. But what I found rather strange, given the fact that Shiva had been acclaimed as one of India's leading nuclear physicists, is that she make no mention at all of nuclear weapons.

Yet Indian politics over the last decade or so has witnessed the emergence of a nuclear state that has supported with enthusiasm free market capitalism, as well as embracing a virulent Hindu nationalism along with mother goddess spirituality. On the Indian nuclear state Shiva is silent. Gandhi, or course, would be turning in his grave.

*Earth Democracy: Justice, Sustainability and Peace* by Vandana Shiva, published by Zed Books, £15.99

## FILM

**Manderlay**  
dir. Lars Von Trier  
Metrodome Distribution DVD,  
£19.99

This is the second of Von Trier's 'Land of Opportunity' provocations, parodying the patterns of American national mythology to expose the intimate interplay between elite liberal philosophy and practical brutality in shaping history. In *Dogville* (2004), an impoverished 1930s Rockies community cruelly abuse Grace – a stranger seeking sanctuary – as both the self-righteous superiority of her erstwhile advocate and the pious rectitude of the other townsfolk decompose into suppressed sadism.

Their ambivalence at her sweet-natured humility is trumped by hidden

resentment at her privileged background – she was escaping the dictatorship of her gangster father, but finally revels in his vengeful massacre of the miscreant populace.\*

The marauding gangsters next hit the Manderlay plantation in Alabama, where slavery persists six decades after abolition. Grace (now played by Bryce Dallas Howard) elects to stay and oversee the implementation of democracy and free trade – a regime change backed by some of her dad's henchmen.

But despite her moral repugnance at prior methods of classification and control of the Africans, her leadership makes error after blunder thanks to similarly overweening pride and arrogance, ignorance and bad judgement, and deeper levels of

unacknowledged prejudice, self-disgust and conflicted desire.

The freed slaves can't match her high-handed high standards, and eventually vote for the old system to be reinstated – with her at its head. Again she flees – this time from her own dictatorship.

*Manderlay's* minimalist staging and photography are again hypnotically effective, as is the final devastating Jacob Holdt photomontage showing the degradation of southern states black life after abolition – though John Hurt's cynically reactionary narration is superfluous since this story has no hidden twists or puzzles beyond the apparently unredeemable small-minded passivity of the oppressed.

Von Trier's method narrows down characterisation as well as cinematic

language, so that all we see are simplistic stereotypes rather than grandiose philosophy's pretensions to universal essences. And this is precisely the subject matter of the films – here, Grace's misrecognition of her own faulty perceptions, dubious motivations and fallible ethics as the objective reality of the external world, subsequently used as the basis for forcibly rearranging other people's lives. The absurdity of hierarchical power imagining itself as benevolent is thus comprehensively deconstructed.

What remains unexplored are the complex subjectivity and sociality and hence active potential – of the victims, beyond the manifold psychic contortions necessary for the Black characters to deal with their impossible situation.

Conversely, the white former owners work together well with their ex-subordinates – the only glimpse of optimism in the film thus being partly attributed to the penitence of oppressors after their humiliation by Grace for their sins (she exempts herself despite protestations that 'we' perpetrated the injustices of slavery).

*Manderlay* is certainly a withering critique of US racism, colonialism and exploitation everywhere, and the general delusions of statecraft – achieved through exemplifying and heightening the dehumanising strategies it derides. Ultimately, such exercises in bourgeois self-contempt may undermine authoritarian fantasies, but scarcely represent revelations for liberation.

\* Reviewed in *Freedom*, 3rd April 2004.



## A Sideways Look

I tried to write this particular column ten months ago. I wanted to say something about the prevalence of madness or mental illness in our society. I think it's taken me this long to finish it because they are so ubiquitous.

Of course, having close friends or family who have trouble with their 'nerves' is nothing new. A catch-all term, 'nerves' was always preferable to the things that went on at the 'loony bin'. Is it me, I thought, or are problems with mental illness getting more common?

When I was in my late teens, my dad had a nervous breakdown and was taken into a mental hospital. While I was unhappy about some of the things that happened there, he comes from an older strain of the working class that always defers to doctors. On the plus side, he made friends there that he still has. What I remember most upset him at the time was that he was unable to provide for his family.

Recently another family member revealed they'd been taking stuff for their 'nerves'. I am sure there must be working class families out there who are all well-adjusted and coping and not slowly slipping into despair (as regular readers may have guessed, I'm a 'glass half empty' kind of guy). I'm just not sure I know any. Nor is it restricted to working class people. I know plenty of middle class people with their own problems. Admittedly, they normally have proper diagnoses rather than just 'nerves', and a wider range of pills to take.

The pressures are there on almost anyone in this society – for example, some schools start testing kids at 5! There are also heightened expectations, fuelled by the consumer credit boom. The decline of traditional industries which at least had an end product has made our work more stressful and less fulfilling. We spend longer getting to and from it and less time with those we care about. We are in the world's fourth largest economy and there is an epidemic of depression and other mental illness. But rather than question the system, each individual is treated as if it only concerned them alone.

Against this background, the emergence of groups like Mad Pride is very welcome. They identify as 'survivors' of the mental health system in the UK. It's a basic anarchist principle that the people best placed to sort things out are those directly involved and it's certainly true with mental illness.

I remember talking to friends and comrades about what was happening to my Dad. I remember most what Leo Rosser said. He always made a point of asking about my Dad. His view was that it wasn't amazing that anyone got overwhelmed, it was that so many of us didn't. The craziness of capitalism conspired to force us into work while denying it to so many of us and making what was available so mind-numbing that we were ground down.

Against such alienation, the solidarity I've seen between people with mental illnesses is impressive.

Svartfrosk

## Blast from the Past

Taken from Freedom 22nd July 1950, entitled The International Congress 'Part 2: Anarchism and Marxism':

We conclude below the publication of translations of the resolutions of the International Anarchist Congress held in Paris at the end of last year...

The masses are not psychologically prepared for the rapid acceptance of anarchism.

They lack the habit of organising themselves on a large scale and in an autonomous way, and thus are denied the social background which encourages people to think for themselves. Anarchism often demands an effort which they are not capable of accomplishing. The defeat of the Commune and of the insurrectionary attempts by our Italian comrades at the time of the First International and immediately afterwards, proved this, as did the defeat of the Spanish provincial revolutions.

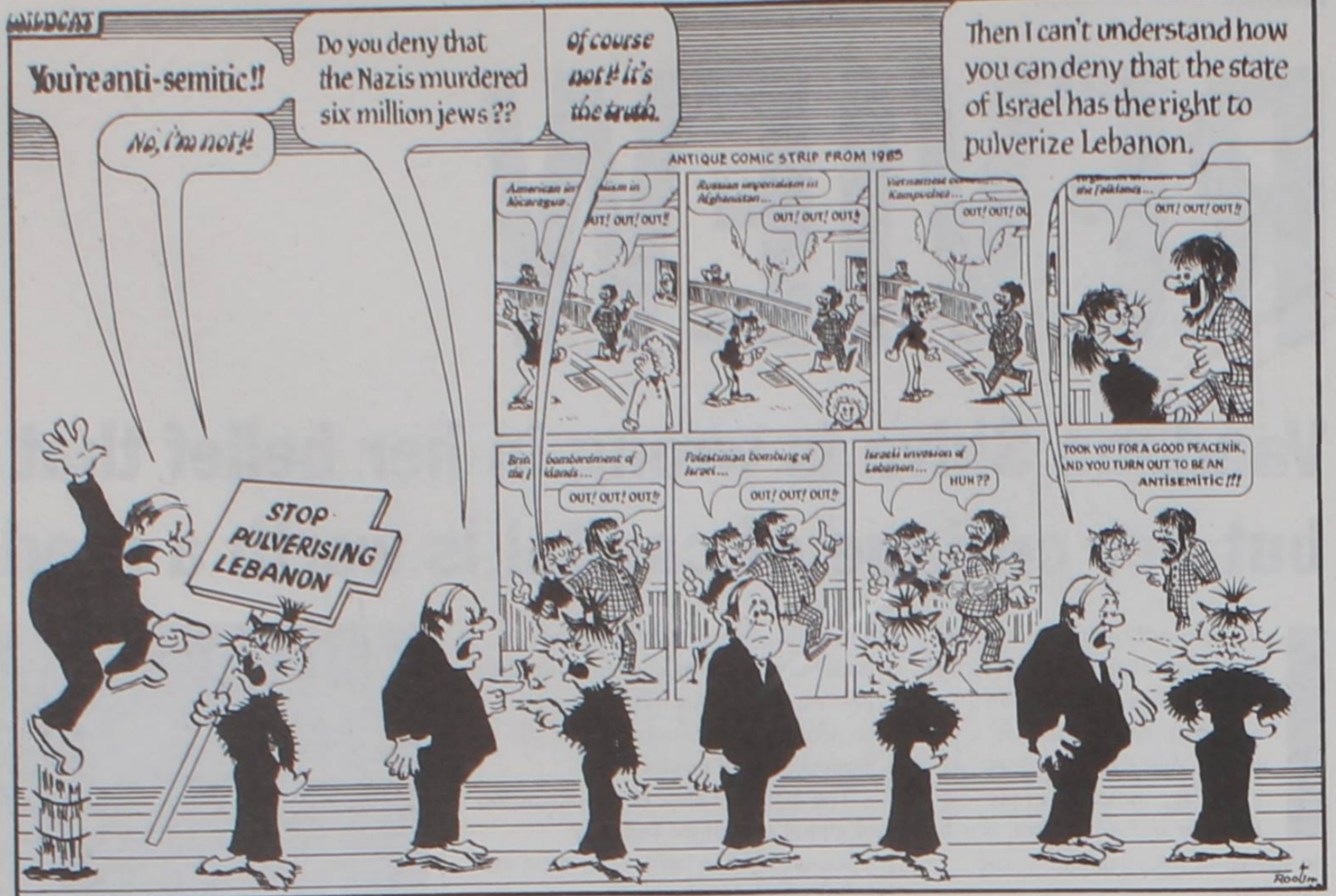
The repressions which it has suffered have weakened our movement and dispersed our forces. One has only to think of the legal impossibility of anarchist propaganda in many countries for many years, or of, for example, the massacre of the Commune where many anti-authoritarians (Varlin, Delécluze, etc.) fell, to understand the importance of this factor. This dispersal of forces has often led to the anarchists confining their activities within their own groups, limited to themselves. They have addressed themselves to the masses, but not organised them. Thus there has often prevailed a minority, intellectual or 'aristocratic' tendency, or else a multitude of activities – educational, individualist, vegetarian, Malthusian, etc. – not without value, but absolutely secondary.

Absence of organic work among the masses. We insist on the importance of this aspect of the question. Often the anarchists have 'gone to the people'. But only for fleeting contacts. Despite the admirable foresight of the anti-authoritarian core of the First International, they have not helped the masses to organise themselves. The only country where this work has been accomplished in a systematic fashion, in spite of all the repressions, was Spain. And we know the results.

## Imagine if...

Paul was on the run. It wasn't his real name of course, the state would be looking for that, but the old rebel had long since resigned himself to a lifetime of anonymity.

He ducked into an alleyway as he saw a police car driving past, taking care to shield his face from the CCTV camera



that sat high above, like a malevolent UFO, and took stock of his belongings.

One Labour party card, torn, a camera with 'terrorist' material on it, and his most prized possession, his forged ID.

It had all started so interestingly, the war on terror. Fundamentalists of all shapes and sizes had been taken down, carted off and never seen again after 7/7 when the secret services, so long scratching around for a threat to swell their budgets, had gone into overdrive and found all kinds of amazing threats to society hidden where only weeks earlier there had been just another bunch of cranks mouthing off.

Soon entire Muslim groups had been banned for 'glorification' of terror, and members both out and outed, had also disappeared – a threat to the state, or so MI5 had said.

It had quickly gotten weird. The bans, apparently intended to protect the populace, soon seemed to bend to control it. Animal Rights had been next, followed by other extremists like the 'black bloc' anarchists, and then more moderate fundamentalist left-wing religious groups like the SWP (this had been swiftly corrected by the leadership, who were quick to point out they hadn't got any really left-wing politics).

Finally the *Guardian* had been shut down for one too many jibes about free speech. Photos of that raid, with policemen beating the living daylights out of clearly terrified and above all middle-class English liberals, were held on his camera and were political dynamite. Even the Lab-Tory alliance would have trouble explaining that one when they had spent so long afterwards painting the paper as a front for fundamentalists.

But they knew his name, and he was on the list now. He had to hide.

"Charles Clarke! Sit!" The tone was fatal. Charles couldn't help it, his knees buckled to the authoritative voice of the policeman behind him.

## Listings

until 30th July DIY: Against the State, an activist and anarchist convention in Freiburg, Germany, with workshops, bands and more, plus a big Reclaim The Streets party on the Saturday, contact d.i.y.against@gmx.de

29th July Radical history walk of Greenwich and Deptford, meet at the Blackheath Gate of Greenwich Park at 3pm, for details call 020 8850 4187 or email tiddle@freeuk.com

29th July Protest march in Canning Town, East London against the return of the DSEi Arms Fair in 2007. Meet at Balaam Street entrance to Plaistow Park at 12 noon for the march through Canning Town to the west end of Victoria Dock for a rally at 2.30pm, for details call 07986 904748 or see www.dsei.org

29th July to 12th August Trident Ploughshares international disarmament camp for 15 days of direct action at Faslane and Coulport naval bases in Scotland, for further details see tridentploughshares.org/article983

6th August Mass cycle ride from Embankment Gardens to Greenwich as part of the send off for the intrepid Peace Cyclists who are embarking on a six week journey across Europe and the Middle East to Jerusalem to raise awareness about the occupation in Palestine, starts at 1pm with music, speakers and food, cyclists depart at 3pm, see www.thepeacecycle.org

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

19th to 21st September IMF/World Bank Monetary meeting in Singapore where global loan sharks backed by western governments and big business meet to rake in the money from the poor, see targetwto.revolt.org/node/307

22nd September Bicycle Ballet for Car Free Day in Brighton, choreographed

bike spectacular from 1pm to 6pm, Madeira Drive, Brighton, to get involved contact Karen on 01273 502965, email info@bicycleballet.co.uk or see bicycleballet.co.uk

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

8th October Lakenheath Airbase demo at main gate, for details call 01508 550446 or see lakenheathaction.org

21st October The 25th Anarchist Bookfair, from 10am to 7pm at the Voluntary Sector Resource Centre, 356 Holloway Road, London N7, see anarchistbookfair.org for more details.

4th November National Climate March as part of a day of international climate protest on the day before the Nairobi climate talks, demanding urgent action on climate all round the world, for more see globalclimatecampaign.org



## The quiz

1. Which unlikely 2004 bestseller mentions a youthful flirtation with revolutionary politics?
2. What action did the International Workers Association plenary take in June 1937 with regard to the situation in Spain?
3. Which writer, who served with the RAF during World War Two, went on to write individualistic, anti-authoritarian science fiction novels?
4. The same writer originated the abbreviation 'MYOB'. What does it mean?

Answers on page 6

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