

FREEDOM

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FIRE FIGHT ON THE MERSEY

Firefighters in Manchester have stopped their strike over major cuts to the workforce, having brought out almost the entire force for the longest FBU strike in 30 years.

Negotiators with the Fire Brigades Union (FBU) have called a halt to industrial action after claiming they have won concessions over plans to cut hundreds of jobs.

It brings to an end the strike proper, which is the longest seen since 1977, where 1,000 people come out solidly for 27 days, but negotiations are continuing.

The dispute began following the imposition of government-stipulated cuts to the fire service. This, coming at the same time as continuing payments for a major PFI building project, has meant the Merseyside Fire and Rescue Authority has said it needs to make savings of £3.5m.

It announced in its draft plan earlier this year for the 2006-08 financial period, saying that 147 positions would have to go from the force, as it tries to reach its allotted savings target.

Most are expected to go via retirement and positions not being refilled.

Manchester is trying to find 3% of the total sum of £105m in savings recommended in the Gershon review and enforced by New Labour, who told the national fire authority to find the money.

The four major sticking points for the cuts, which have otherwise been allowed through, have been a new

system introducing a 96-hour continuous duty roster, reduced night cover for four stations, reduced staffing in the control centre, and attacks on staff overtime payments occurring alongside the main tranche of job losses.

Negotiators have got separate accommodation for people working the longer shifts, have stopped night cover reductions at two stations, with the other two shelved for later review, saved 11 of 15 jobs in the emergency control centre, and retained premium overtime rates.

The strike has been unique in the service as it comes at a time when the army, who usually operate Green Goddess fire trucks to undermine strikes, are too stretched to replace the workforce.

According to Kevin Brown, secretary for Merseyside FBU, of around 200 people who have been manning the stations instead, many are office staff who have been completely untrained for the job, putting at risk both the general public and the staff themselves.

A Merseyside Fire Authority solicitor was pictured in a firefighter's uniform early on in the dispute, and expressed surprise that fighting fires was so difficult. Apparently, he thought it was just a matter of point and shoot, and "didn't realise there was so much to it".

Scabs were also paid a 50% premium wage to do the work.

He said: "They prepared but not very well. We have had tremendous support,



Manchester's anti-war march on 23rd September – see page 3 for full report.

there was a rally with thousands marching, from all the Trade Unions and other FBU branches around the country. Some of the Authority's actions have been quite bizarre, with one quote saying that people in Liverpool were better off during the dispute than they had been before!"

"Agreement is sufficient to call off action but the dispute is still live, and over the next two to three weeks we will be dotting the Is and crossing the Ts," he added.

The FBU in Merseyside has had difficult relations with the Fire Authority over the long term. The FBU

has accused the fire service of overlooking its members for promotion. In return, during the strike the fire service has alleged that striking firefighters attempted to sabotage fire engines and made intimidating phone calls to scabs.

Rob Ray

CIA: IRAQ WAS A MISTAKE

The end of last month saw a major blow to the Bush government's overarching media argument to stay in Iraq, when a National Intelligence Estimate was leaked to the Press.

The NIE noted that the Iraq war has resulted in a massive rise in terrorism. The report by 16 different security services, including the CIA has destroyed Republican claims that the war in Iraq America and the world safer. Bush used a news conference announce that some of its key conclusions were to be declassified.

The partial declassification has angered many commentators, who have said that such a report should be fully declassified.

The NIE argues that the Bush/Blair

invasion and occupation of Iraq is the main generator of terrorism today. The admission has largely vindicated what the anti-war movement predicted before the war. It concludes that the US-led attack on and occupation of a Muslim country has resulted in anger throughout the Muslim world.

Defenders of the Bush administration note that the while the NIE shows that Iraq has produced more terrorism, not less, it also does not urge an immediate withdrawal. In fact, it suggests that defeating the terrorists in Iraq may discourage it worldwide.

However, a close reading shows that US tactics are not doing this. Even the Pentagon's polling has revealed that between 2003 and this summer, the number of Iraqi Sunni Arabs who support attacks on US forces has gone up from 14% to 70%. Moreover, the Jihadists are not the main part of the insurgency.

The insurgency is, in the main, Iraqis fighting against a brutal occupying imperialist force. Remove the occupation

and terrorism would end. And most Iraqis do want the US to leave, according to two recent polls ('Most Iraqis Favor Immediate US Pullout, Polls Show', *Washington Post*, 27th September). Not that they hold much hope of this, as a large majority in one poll are convinced that even if the Iraqi government asked America to leave, it would not.

To defend his record, Bush has said that the US was not in Iraq in when the US embassies in Africa and the USS Cole were hit by al-Qaeda in the 1990s or in 2001 when al-Qaeda hit the World Trade Center and the Pentagon. This however ignores the fact that al-Qaeda had other grievances then, such as the US military presence in Saudi Arabia and the Israeli occupation of Jerusalem and its mistreatment of Palestinians.

US intervention in the Middle East has existed for decades. The US presence in Saudi Arabia itself was to fly surveillance and bombing raids on Iraq and that it had convinced the UN to impose sanctions on that country which led to the estimated death of 500,000 Iraqi children.

I'M ON STRIKE

Hi, my name is Rob Ray (for the purposes of *Freedom* anyway). For the last two years I've written a large percentage of *Freedom's* content. I've edited, allocated, and generally performed the editorial duties.

Like, apparently, just about every editor for the last couple of decades at *Freedom*, I've been letting things get on top of me. The paper is a huge amount of work on top of various other projects, relationships, and a full-time job, which occupy my life.

As such, although the paper has been moving along okay, it hasn't been growing and I haven't been doing the quality of journalism I want.

Although people have come forward to help, a lot of the time I simply haven't had the chance to organise things, and the *Freedom* collective, numbering a bare half-dozen, can't do it for me. We

don't have the regulars to keep this up. As such, I am going on strike, and my only demand is that you scab.

I will continue to edit and run the paper on one out of every two deadlines, starting from this issue. On the other, I will not write a single word, and I will not edit what is sent in. If there is enough text for the paper, it will presumably come out, if there isn't it probably won't.

I am prepared, should co-editor(s) come forward, to meet them, explain the process from start to finish, give any tips necessary and even train people up if desired. But I am not prepared to put my health and sanity at risk for this paper.

This is not *Freedom* going monthly. We do at present have the financial resources to remain fortnightly. However, if the paper is not done by someone on the 'other' week, a monthly it will be.

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TO GIVE YOURSELF OR A FRIEND A YEAR OF FREEDOM FOR LESS THAN THE PRICE OF A GOOD NIGHT OUT, FILL IN THE SUBSCRIPTION FORM ON THE BACK OF THIS PAPER.

Home and away

Smarties shown door

The Rowntree factory in York is to close after 70 years of production in York. Built by the radical Joseph Rowntree, the company was sold to Nestlé in 1988, who have now announced its intention to outsource production to elsewhere in Europe.

Nestlé had already axed 234 jobs in the UK in March, and said it would be part of a wider restructuring for its European confectionary business.

Smarties, which have been made at the factory in York since 1937, will now be produced in a Nestlé factory in Hamburg. The company is also shifting to Spain the production of the chocolates Dairy Box, and moving the Black Magic line to the Czech Republic.

Age crackdown

It has been alleged that September has seen the mass layoff of older employees in the run-up to an age-discrimination law. Age Concern has found there to have been a number of complaints from staff who have been sacked recently, saying that the number of calls they have received has risen by 200%.

Under the new legislation, it will be illegal to force workers to retire before the age of 65.

"We have seen a rapid and sharp increase in the number of calls from older employees who are very, very concerned, many of whom are angry," said Michelle Mitchell from Age Concern. "They strongly feel that they are being forced out of the workplace because of their age before new age discrimination laws come into place."

BBC News cut 108

Cuts are to hit the BBC news service as part of a drive by Director Mark Thompson to save £11m. Over the next six months 108 jobs are to go, some compulsorily, and 420 will be lost in total. The move is part of the BBC's 'Value for Money' cost saving initiative, which began last year.

The NUJ, Bectu and Amicus unions have condemned the move, and have warned that they could ballot for strike action if the losses are forced through.

These losses are part of a 15% across-the-board 'Value for money' cut to programme budgets for all BBC departments ordered by Mr Thompson.

Rail stat tat

Analysis of the latest statistics on public transport have shown that despite a rise in the use of public transport and a rise in investment for rail of nearly 25% from the government, private companies have paid less into maintenance. Whilst government investment in the rail industry has increased from £3.79bn in 2004/5 to £4.59bn in 2005/6, private sector investment dropped significantly from £5.5bn in 2004/5 to £3.7 billion in 2005/6.

The news comes on the back of reports that companies such as SeaContainers are trying to renegotiate their GNER franchise so that they are required to pay the Government less money.

Council tax pain

A new report has found that more than two million households in England are finding it difficult to pay Council Tax. The levels are disproportionately against the poor. One in four households in the lowest band for property (A) have received a summons for non-payment, and one in seven in band B.



Around the world



BUDAPEST: Hungary has seen the greatest political chaos since the change of system in 1989. The general reason is the failure of representative democracy, while the particular reason is the leak of a tape.

The context is that during the last few terms the party-in-power (Hungarian Socialist Party) was forging reports on the economic status of the country in hopes of being re-elected. The strategy was successful: the HSP was the first party to be re-elected since the beginning of the multi-party democracy.

Observers noted that all parties were caught in a 'torrent of lies', where every side tried to promise a better and even better world to their voters. Also, there was not much choice for the people: since 1989 they have tried every single possible party to be government party, and banished all the parties after a single term because they did not live up to their expectations.

Hours after the leak people took the streets by the thousands (pictured above) in anger and without any clear demands beyond the resignation of the Prime Minister. Masses gathered before the Parliament building. Some far-right persons took a petition to the national television to be read. When the petition was not accepted for reading at the reception, they called for reinforcements from Parliament square. Eventually the mostly nationalist radicals besieged and took the television building. There was no wide-scale destruction and after the people got bored the police peacefully escorted the remaining people out of the building.

CZECH REPUBLIC: An authorised demonstration of the nationalist Patriotic Front was followed by skirmishes between anarchists and followers of the extreme right in Kladno.

Some 150 followers of the far right came to Kladno to celebrate the Czech national holiday. Despite constant police supervision, anarchists and nationalists provoked each other, which eventually led to a number of smaller and bigger skirmishes, the spokeswoman said.

The police detained three skinheads and charged them with breach of the peace.

A group of about 15 anarchists clashed with 20 nationalists on the local pedestrian zone. The police stopped the brawl, but remained alert.

DENMARK: Over 260 were arrested in Copenhagen, during a solidarity demonstration for Ungdomshuset, an autonomous cultural centre. Around 800 people took part in the event, which started out as a 'Reclaim the Streets' party in support of the squatted space, which is threatened with eviction.

From the beginning of the RTS party there was a massive police presence which followed the group from both sides, eventually blocking the demo. The group then turned in another direction, after which the still cheerful

and peaceful protesters were blocked in and attacked. It was at this point that masked activists built up barricades and threw stones and bottles at the police (pictured below). During the confrontation police behaved very aggressively, driving people in alleyways where they were beaten, and driving their vehicles at high speeds into barricades.

SPAIN: Harassment of striking CNT workers at Mercadona is continuing. The latest has seen a disciplinary file the company has opened on two workers of the strike committee, and has accused them of various improprieties. These at the time of writing it looks likely that they are going to be dismissed and at the moment they are suspended.

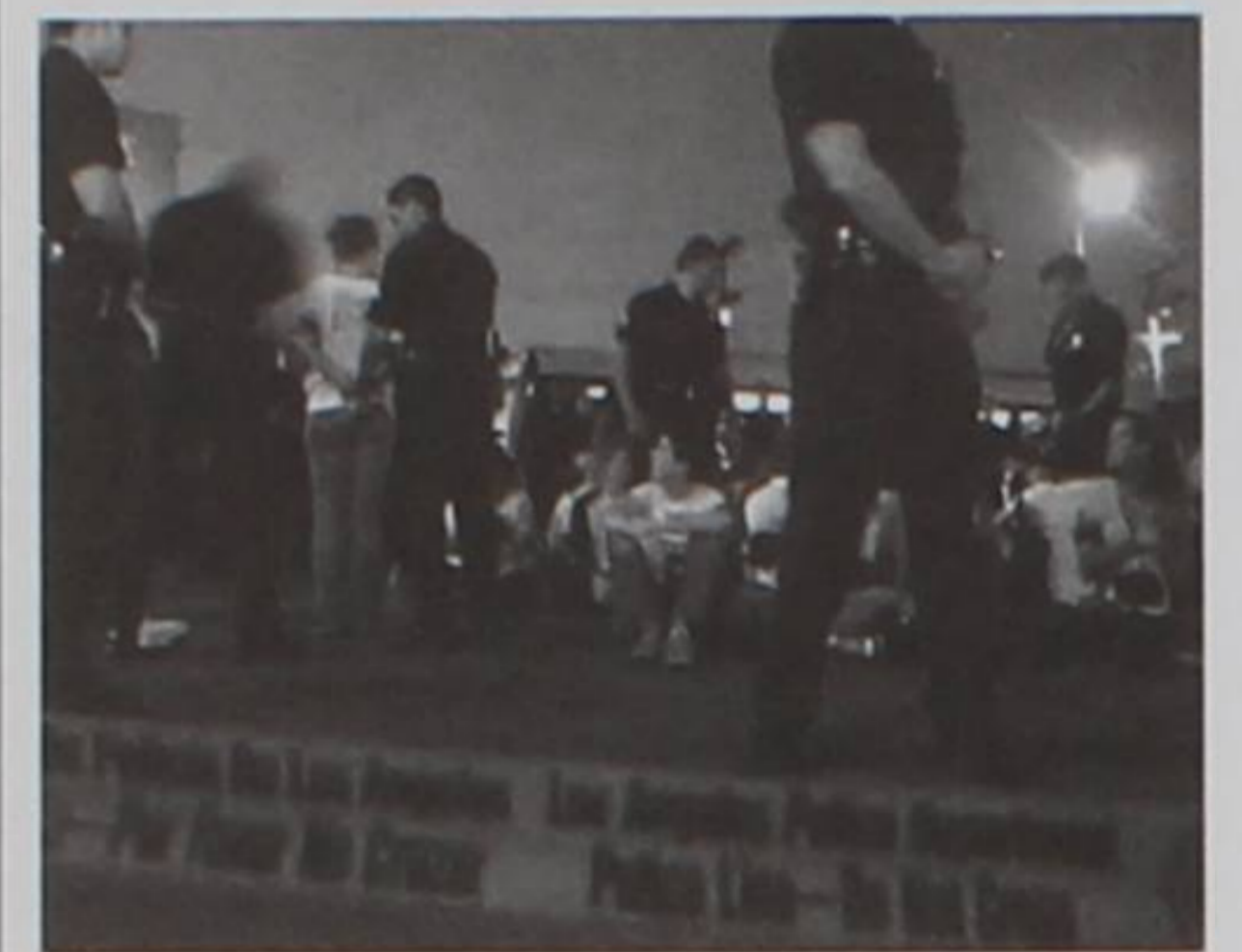
Since the 18th September the indefinite strike has changed to become a series of shorter 24-hour strikes every week. This new strike has seen an increase in the number of strikers, but has led to more threats from the company, along with the dismissal attempts.

Physical violence has also dogged the strikers. At midnight on the 28th September, a striker left the bar 'Latin Emotion' in the Severe street Ochoa de Hospitalet de Llobregat, and were approached by five individuals who attacked him saying "You are a striker of Mercadona". He tried to run, but



caught and beaten unconscious in the street. He was taken to a Red Cross hospital where he was found to have head trauma and cuts to his face, and had to have stitches. In spite of severe blood loss, he is already recovering at home.

USA: On the 28th September in Los Angeles a coalition of immigrant rights movements (the We Are America Coalition, along with UNITE HERE, were the chief organisers) held the largest act of civil disobedience on record in the history of the city as part of a wider campaign for a living wage and decent health benefits.



In a vibrant and spirited action demonstrators effectively disabled the Century Corridor near to the airport (pictured above). This is the largest tourist accommodation sector in Los Angeles with over a dozen hotels.

Thousands of immigrant workers, many of whom do not earn a living wage and have no access to affordable health care, took part in the act of civil disobedience in the evening rush hour.

More than 350 people signed up for 'planned arrest', which the Los Angeles Police Department duly carried out. Observers estimated that over 1,000 supporters turned up to add weight to the action - in a non-residential location.

This carried an extra risk: the protest took place on the same day as the federal government passed the latest in its repressive and racist legislation potentially to define as 'enemy combatant' anyone who now expresses dissension from the state's policies; as a possible consequence they could face indefinite imprisonment.

Prison news

John Bowden moved to open nick
After more than 25 years in high security jails, prison resister John Bowden has finally been moved to an open nick.

John began his life sentence for murder as a young man in 1978, taking the governor of Parkhurst prison hostage a few years later, and then spending years on the high security 'ghost-train', being shunted from segregation unit to segregation unit.

Despite years of isolation and brutality, John never surrendered, becoming an accomplished prison organiser, a champion of prisoners' rights, and a highly articulate writer.

A daring escape allowed John to savour two years of relative freedom before his re-capture saw a return to dispersal (maximum security) conditions. Since being moved into the Scottish prison system two years ago, John has seen slightly more humanity than in the brutal English system, where he was both hated and feared by the authorities.

Way past his tariff, John has now finally been moved to an open nick, and it is to be hoped that his release will come before too long. You can write to John at:

• John Bowden, 6729, HM Prison Castle Huntly, Longforgan, Dundee, DD2 5HL.

Please enclose a few stamps. If you also wish to send a postal order or cheque, they should be made payable to 'The Governor'.

Pentonville Prison subject to another damning report

According to a recently published inspection report, London's Pentonville prison is "a dirty, vermin-infested institution where 40% of inmates have been assaulted or insulted by staff".

The report claims that the overcrowded Victorian jail, where 14 staff were last month suspended on corruption allegations, is so poorly run that new prisoners were told on arrival

not to expect to be given a pillow or a toothbrush. One evening during the inspection there was not enough food to go round at the only cooked meal of the day.

New British animal rights prisoners
Joe Harris and Madeline Buckler were recently sentenced to three years and two years respectively for animal rights activities. Please send letters of support to:

• Madeline Buckler, HMP Peterborough, Saville Road, Westwood, Peterborough, PE3 7PD.

• Joseph Harris, TN5728, HMP Woodhill, Tattenhoe Street, Milton Keynes, Bucks. MK4 4DA.

Bart De Geeter transferred

One of the Aachen prisoners, Bart De Geeter, has been transferred to another prison. Bart, a member of Gent Anarchist Black Cross, is serving time for showing concrete solidarity with

escaped prisoners, Gabriel Pombo Da Silva and Jose Fernandez Delgado. Please send letters of support to Bart at his new address:

• Bart de Geeter, Masurenstraße 28, 42899 Remscheid, Germany.

British postage stamps are of no use to Bart, but you can send 'International Reply Coupons', which can be obtained from the Post Office.

Polish antifascist prisoner transferred

Igor Kisielewicz, the Polish antifascist prisoner whose plight was highlighted last issue, has been transferred to another prison. Security at his new prison is slightly more relaxed and conditions slightly better. Igor welcomes letters and postcards to relieve the boredom of prison life.

• Igor Kisielewicz, syn Aleksandra, Zakład Karny, Grady Woniecko 34,18-312 Rutki Kossaki, Poland.

compiled by Mark Barnsley

News

Have gun, will travel

Freedom 'defence' correspondent Robert Walsh reports on the reinvention of history's most notorious job description

A new report from the Centro Militare di Studi Strategici, an Italian think tank, has found increasing evidence that Private Military Companies (PMCs) are poised to become the official providers of armed force for western countries, something they have likened to the 'privatisation' of violence.

The report, *Eroding State Authority? Private Military Companies and the Legitimate Use of Force*, has found that private companies have begun to develop their own interests which have led to direct conflicts with their supposed employers and left new warlords groups in combat zones.

PMCs today have taken a much greater role in global realpolitik than their predecessors. During Gulf War I, there were approximately 100 service personnel per private contractor. In Gulf War II, there were about ten service personnel per private contractor. Private contractors form the second largest contribution to the occupying forces in Iraq at this moment.

PMCs have been active in many of the major trouble spots. Sandline International, now Aegis Ltd, was heavily involved in Sierra Leone, including breaching the UN arms embargo. This was a major dent in New Labour's 'ethical foreign policy' as the Foreign Office was implicated.

Another British firm, Global Risk International, is a principal player in Iraq, it provided security for Paul Bremer.

Dyncorp Inc., an American firm, is currently training the new Iraqi police. MPRI, another American firm, was active in the former Yugoslavia, and supplied arms to one of the warring factions during the civil war.

Columbia has also hosted PMCs. American firms provide pilots to defoliate coca fields and helicopter gunship escorts. Other firms protect US diplomats in Israel, bodyguard Hamid Karzai in Afghanistan and provide bodyguard teams in a number of other countries. They also have their contacts in Britain, with Kellogg, Brown and Root being responsible for the refit of Britain's Trident submarines at Devonport Dockyard in Plymouth.

This deal is already months behind schedule and massively over budget.

So why are PMCs so popular, especially with the British and American governments? There are a number of reasons. Mercenary forces can be easier to engage, and quicker than UN peacekeepers, whose focus is always open to change in the political climate.

There is also the issue of the quality differential between units of professional soldiers and UN troops, many of whom come from the armies of poorer nations.

Faced with a choice between hardened, experienced veterans on the one hand, and UN troops, who may well be of dubious quality and could be withdrawn by their governments, it's an easy choice to make.

There is also a political angle to the use of PMCs. The sight of American boys being brought home in bodybags has undoubtedly been a severe restriction on the activities of the US military in particular, at least until 9/11. If the bodybags are filled with mercenaries, then the attitude of many people is likely to be indifferent at best.

PMCs can also evade much political and legal oversight over their operations. Many armies are subject to highly



HIRED GUN: Mercenaries have updated for the new millennium

complex and explicit rules of engagement, military law and international laws like the Geneva Conventions.

PMCs, on the other hand, aren't subject to much regulation, if any. No tiresome legal complexities tie their hands.

Being private companies, the worst that can happen is that their operatives may be indicted under the national laws of the countries they operate in. As yet, few indictments have been forthcoming, although a few conventional soldiers

have been indicted to appease public opinion. And as many of these companies operate in what are known as 'failed States', in which national law is at best somewhat notional and corruption omnipresent, this is unlikely to change soon.

Logistics strike

Workers at logistic centres operating under the NHS walked out twice last month on strike. Employees are angry because although no business case has been provided, the government has sold NHS Logistics, a non-profit organisation to the parcel delivery company, to parcel giant DHL.

It is the biggest strike action the health service has seen in almost twenty years. The second of the 24-hour stoppages was scheduled to coincide with a debate on the health service at the Labour Party conference.

Five centres across the country supply hospitals, GP surgeries and clinics with health equipment.

More than 200 Runcorn-based NHS workers walked out, as part of

Warehouse workers and drivers at the Cheshire NHS Logistics centre staged two 24-hour strikes in protest at work being transferred to German-owned delivery giant DHL.

It sources and delivers goods from bedpans to food to all health centres in the North West.

Frank Hont, North West regional secretary of health service union Unison, said: "Our members in Runcorn are angry, upset and disappointed. These are people who have never taken industrial action in their lives and who don't take industrial action lightly.

"Many have worked for the NHS all their lives and see themselves as a part of the NHS.

"The only way we can continue to maintain the health service is by continuing to work together and we have no idea what changes DHL would introduce.

"It is a very efficient and effective service which is partly why it is so incomprehensible that this has happened."

Chris Kowalczyk, Unison branch secretary in Normanton, said about 98% of members had supported the action.

He added: "Our members are totally disgusted about what has happened. We are sending a message to DHL to

say 'we know what sort of company you are, don't come to us three weeks down the line threatening our terms and conditions, because we will stand up and fight'."

Maidstone saw only a few non-union members going through but was otherwise regarded as solid.

Support for the strike was good at all the depots, At Bury St Edmunds, for example, the 40 UNISON pickets were joined by Suffolk firefighters, and members of the local TUC branch.

Up to 70 staff – around half of the total at the Bury depot, came out.

There were reputedly large turnouts at Alfreton. Support was present from the UNISON local government branch, together with PCS and Amicus. At one of the strikes there were 20 night shift workers on the picket line with about 20 people who had finished their shift.

Workers voted to take industrial action after the Government confirmed the transfer of their jobs to DHL in a 10-year contract which Unison said was worth £3.7bn.

Manchester march

At least a hundred anarchists were present at the anti-war demonstration in Manchester on 23rd September. Members of the Solidarity Federation, the Anarchist Federation and other anarchists formed a block, which stood out for several reasons.

Around twenty anarchist flags were made specifically for the demo. Home-made placards were also held, which made a change from the sea of SWP placards that come with almost every protest held. People from the anarchist block came from as far as Leeds, London, Preston and Sheffield.

The demo happened a week before the Labour Party Conference, which was held at the G-MEX Centre. It was notable because it was meant to be Tony Blair's last conference as Prime Minister.

Chants coming from our block included 'We all live in a terrorist regime' and 'Organise, agitate. Smash the system and the state'. It made a change from the sloganeering coming

from the liberals and the left, who only really called for Blair to leave.

Before the march started, the police had taken photos of us, and continued to do so until the rally held at 2pm. Perhaps they did so because they thought of us as potential 'terrorist' suspects, even though their tactics of violence towards ordinary working people are more evocative of terrorism than what we did.

The day of action started with a picket of Starbucks by members of Industrial Workers of the World (IWW). This follows on from action in Bradford when one IWW member was sacked from their job at the coffee behemoth.

Overall, it was a good day for the red 'n' black block. A lot of literature was given out, and some expressed interest in joining several bodies. The success of the block was largely down to co-operation between the AF and SolFed, and could prove to be a sign of things to come regarding future demos and campaigns.

News

Uncivil Servants

The South Korean government has begun an unprecedented campaign of repression against union activists reports Jack Ray

The government of South Korea has closed more than one hundred union offices across the country, in a crackdown on the 140,000 member Korean Government Employees Union (KGEU), which it considers illegal.

The Ministry of Government Administration and Home Affairs (MOGAHA) decreed earlier in the year that organisations that refused to sign-up to the government's new trade union registration regime would be considered illegal and would be forcibly wound up. The KGEU has refused to register under the scheme because the new arrangements curtail their right to strike and recruit members.

As a result, from 22nd September the government began shutting down union offices. According to a report received by labourstart.org, the attacks on KGEU offices were brutal: "Riot police and thugs armed with fire extinguishers, fire-fighting dust, hammers, claw hammers, hammer drills and power saws broke through the windows or even by making an opening in the wall to storm into union offices." In the following four days 111 offices were closed, whilst activists were subject to violent attacks and arrests by the security services. Offices were then sealed off with iron plates and bars. In one attack, members of the Gyeonggi Gwacheon Chapter were beaten up by riot police, who made 18 arrests, and seriously injured four activists.

The KGEU issued a statement condemning the attacks, stating that: "KGEU members struggle all around the country against inhumane and barbaric raids by local governments

and riot police", describing the conflict as "war between a democratic and independent trade union and an authoritarian and barbaric government ... a war between those who believe in freedom of association for all workers and those who believe that trade union rights could be subject to government rulings."

The union has also described several instances of conflict and resistance surrounding the government's attacks. At Bucheon City in Gyeonggi-do province, union members chained themselves to the premises to resist riot police attempts to evict them. At Jinju, hundreds of activists successfully resisted eviction, barricading the building and fighting off police. This precipitated a siege by the security services with the workers severely confined, and demonstrators gathering outside to show solidarity. In some areas, local governments have refused to carry out the crackdown on behalf of the central government, and have subsequently been threatened with administrative sanctions, including cutbacks on some shared taxes. Meanwhile, across the country, civil servants are engaged in various strikes, sit-ins and demonstrations, in opposition to the attacks on their union.

The KGEU had previously held a protest rally against the repression, with 7,000 demonstrating on 9th September in Changwon, Gyeongnam-do province, against a handful of office closures in late August. Police harassment of the march was extensive, with buses prevented from bringing delegates to



The Korean police have been particularly brutal

Changwon, and riot cops deployed to stop buses setting off from Gwangju. Those able to attend adopted the following resolutions:

1. 140,000 members of the KGEU resolve to launch an all-out struggle against anti-human rights and anti-labour repression on the union;

2. In the name of 140,000 members of the union, we resolve to protest and fight back the Governor of Gyeongnam-do, who broke agreements with the union
3. We resolve to launch a struggle to pressure the minister of the MOGAHA to be stepped down, who is responsible

for the violent and anti-human rights repression on the union. The government's actions have been condemned by Korean legal experts and international labour organisations. The KGEU has called for messages of protest to be sent to their government. For details see <http://inter.kgeu.org/>

Joaquin Navarro: 1907-2006

Joaquin Perez Navarro, the last living member of 'Friends of Durruti', has died aged 99.

He was a member of a movement which was part of the CNT union formed during the Spanish Civil War. Friends of Durruti was a group formed by anarchists to fight the Franco dictatorship, a war of the capitalists and clergy on the poor of Spain.

He showed the colours that would he would stay true to all his life when, at the age of 12, he joined the CNT, an anarcho-syndicalist union which was prominent during the civil war. Being in the CNT radicalised him and he joined Durruti's column during the war against the fascists under Franco.

Navarro took part in the uprising in Barcelona during 1936. Along with millions of other workers, he helped to destroy the fascists in a wave of resistance that centred on Barcelona.

The fascists were thrown out without any help from the popular front govern-

ment, who refused to arm the people. This was to be repeated throughout the course of the civil war.

In 1937, he started to work with the Friends of Durruti, an affinity group made up exclusively of anarcho-syndicalists which fought both the fascists and any hint of concessions to the government from the CNT.

He later fought against the Guardia Civil when it, backed by the Stalinist Communist Party, turned on the Cenetistas. He spent much of the civil war fighting against these betrayals.

As the war drew to a close, Navarro, fighting for the anarchist Iron Column, was captured by Franco's forces, and imprisoned.

He was tortured and, in 1938, the Franco regime sentenced him to death and locked him up in Montjuic Prison. He later managed to escape to France, only to be imprisoned in camps. Two years later he escaped again, this time to London.

Navarro spent the rest of his life in the city, working in the building and catering industries.

He wrote three Spanish-language books, the most famous being *Relato Poetico* in 1995, which was based on the injustices of the civil war. He was also one of the CNT's chief liaison officers in the outlawed resistance movement during the 1970s.

He both worked and lived in South Kensington until his death.

Navarro is but one example, in a history richer than any other, of heroes giving their all for the movement they believed – and we should believe – will free us from the relentless exploitation of our labour and our minds.

But with him dies one of the proudest moments of anarchism, when the movement fought the world for the principles of freedom and equality. On the 70th anniversary of the Civil War, he and his comrades are remembered.

No pasaran.

State manoeuvres

Following the end of the Mexican elections, Federal troops have been called into Oaxaca city amid fears that a crackdown is about to begin.

Although the Popular Assembly of the Peoples of Oaxaca (APPO) has fortified much of its position in the town and has massive support among the population, the Mexican government's thought to be positioning itself for a strike.

Talks with APPO over the demand that hated Oaxaca governor Ulisses Ruiz Ortiz should be removed from office have been taking place at the same time as troops have moved into and around the city.

However groups on the ground have remained confident that an attack would be unlikely due to huge popular support for the movement, with up to two million sympathisers estimated by some.

Fears remain however, as new Mexican president Fox's government could deem it necessary to keep Ortiz in power. If

they let him fall, that would be taken as a sign that the PAN won't support any of the other state officials whose heads would roll if a popular movement swept the country.

Oaxacans are waiting on word from Mexico City where movement leaders have traveled to initiate formal talks with the federal government to resolve the crisis. If the conflict isn't resolved soon, it will continue until December when Ruiz Ortiz will have fulfilled two years in office and his allies in Oaxaca's state legislature can choose a successor instead of having to call statewide elections.

At present, the negotiations have halted, with the delegates have reiterated that nothing will change until Ortiz is gone.

An APPO foot march – Oaxaca to Mexico City – has also been organised. The marchers have been fed and brought water and fruit along the way, both by local people and by vans the APPO sends.

Feature

The FAQs of life

This book is going to be a massive contribution to the ideology ... quite literally. Rob Ray interviews editor Iain Mackay

Rob Ray: What is the FAQ?

Iain Mackay: It is a long, but comprehensive, webpage of 'Frequently Asked Questions' about anarchism on the internet (www.anarchistfaq.org) and soon to be a book by AK Press. It covers most of the obvious questions you would expect, plus some more obscure ones. It attempts to present anarchism as a serious political theory and movement to those interested in finding out about it, as well as being a resource for anarchists.

How many people have contributed to the FAQ and is there a driving collective behind it?

Lots of people have contributed to it, most of them probably unknowingly as cut and paste has been applied to good arguments and points made by anarchists all the time. There is a collective, although numbers fluctuate as people take breaks and volunteer. I have been there from the start and am the main contributor and editor as well as doing the revisions for publication.

How was much of the research and writing done?

Initially, we had a list of what we thought an anarchist FAQ should contain. People volunteered to do different sections and did the necessary research and writing. Once the initial framework was there, additions have been made as they were deemed required. Usually when a new anarchist book comes out and it contains a good quote, argument or fact but also when we notice new arguments against anarchism or it looks like comrades need help with certain subjects. For specific areas (for example, economics and history) we use the net and libraries to find qualified sources to bolster our arguments. But as far as anarchism goes, we consider anarchists to be the relevant experts and base ourselves on the movement and what its members say and do.

What sort of people of what backgrounds have been involved?

Just your typical anarchists, working class people who believe strongly in anarchism and seek to convince others of our ideas. We are not academics – we have real jobs! The collective has seen many nationalities and we have got contributions from anarchists across the globe.

How long is it due to be (one rumour has been upwards of two volumes of 1,000 pages each!) and how comprehensive do you think it is?

Well, I'll give some figures. Section A ('What is Anarchism?') is slightly over 104,000 words. In total, excluding appendices, it is over 890,000 words. And most of that has not been revised! The length indicates its comprehensiveness, I would say. It is long because we want to make it a valuable resource for the anarchist movement and to convince sympathetic people that our ideas are worth considering. Also, we have to spend a lot of time refuting frequently asserted nonsense about anarchism. It always takes up more space to refute a falsehood than to make it. If Leninists could bother to read a book about anarchism before spouting off about it, the FAQ would be a lot shorter...

What was the impetus to begin the project and are there any spin-off ideas etc that are being considered?

It all dates back to the early 1990s when many anarchists first became aware of the internet. We logged on to anarchist newsgroups and webpages and came across self-proclaimed capitalist 'anarchists' (unsurprisingly, Americans). After numerous arguments with these people on how 'anarcho'-capitalism is an obvious oxymoron, a group of us decided that it would make more sense to produce a FAQ which indicated why anarchism is, by definition, anti-capitalist (socialist) and just refer to that.

At the suggestion of Mike Huben (maintainer of the 'Critiques of [right-wing] Libertarianism' webpage), we turned it into an Anarchist FAQ. Since then, the FAQ has expanded and developed. While it still shows its genesis somewhat, it has become much, much more (if it were to be started anew 'anarcho'-capitalism would be totally consigned to an appendix).

As for spin-offs, well the AK book will only include the appendix on 'The Symbols of Anarchy'. The appendices on Marxism and the Russian Revolution could make good pamphlets and books (the account of the Kronstadt rebellion is definitive, I would say).

How successful has the website been and was its growth a prod to produce the book?

The webpage is pretty successful. Most anarchist webpages link to it. It is mirrored in numerous places (including leading anarchist sites like infoshop.org,



Photo by Rob Ray

anarchism.ws and libcom.org). It has been translated. There has been a steady flow of praise. As for producing the book, its success alerted AK Press that it would be a good idea to print it. But when I was working on it initially, I thought that it would make a good book as it was summarising nineteenth and twentieth century anarchism and so laying a foundation for building the movement for the next century. However, I'm glad that it has been a decade before publishing it as it has improved considerably from the early versions. While most of it has stood the test of time (and just been expanded), a few sections needed considerable reworking.

The FAQ has been controversially cited in places such as Wikipedia (along with elements of the FAQ itself) as a potential 'official' source of information on the subject of anarchism. Would you say this is a vindication of the book's purpose, an accurate portrayal?

Totally. I'm lost count of the nonsense I've read about anarchism in academic and Marxist accounts. Basic errors, arguments that have been answered by anarchist thinkers, including 'anarcho'-capitalism as a form of anarchism, and so on. The list is endless. As for Wikipedia, it is not that controversial. Anarchists come along and reference it, 'anarcho'-capitalists say that it is 'self-published' and is not a valid source. Which is, of course, simply an excuse to bar it and a new one will surely be discovered once it is published.

Why do you think the FAQ is being viewed in this way?

The reason why anarchists want to cite it is because it does reflect what most anarchists think anarchism is. And that is the same reason why the 'anarcho'-capitalists there seek to exclude it as a valid reference! Given that the FAQ is the most obvious barrier to their attempts to redefine anarchism and rewrite our history, I can understand why they do so – they need to exclude anarchists from defining anarchism otherwise their pretensions would be exposed!

What have been your favourite parts of putting the book together? What have been the best bits of feedback on the website?

My favourite part is seeing how much of it has stood the test of time (the worse is seeing how badly put some of it is!). So I've enjoyed taking the time to make it better, to clarify issues and to apply what I've learned over the last decade. As for feedback, the best ones are from people writing to say that we presented what they think anarchism is. That makes it worthwhile. And people pointing out typos!

How long has it been in the making?

It was officially released on the 19th July 1996, so over ten years. It has taken so long simply because it is produced by people working on it in their spare time. Taking myself, I have to juggle family life, work and activism as well as revising the FAQ ready for publication. Plus, new

books come out all the time and anarchists say and get up to new things, and so update it to reflect new developments.

Another issue is that I got sidetracked somewhat on the section on Marxism. I have wanted to do a comprehensive anarchist critique of Marxism since I became an anarchist way back in the 1980s. Much of that work, on the Russian Revolution, is in an appendix now and, while important, it did delay getting the main sections finished!

Do you have backers and if so, who?

No backers. It is a labour of love. As I am a wage slave, I think it helps make the FAQ more grounded in reality than some academic produced works on anarchism. But, if any wealthy backers do wish to come forward I would not object...

Why do you think this is a good time to be bringing the FAQ out on paper?

Thanks to the 'anti-capitalist' protests a few years back, interest in anarchism has increased. Luckily the FAQ was already there. This meant that during the Genoa protests, when the BBC decided to inform its readers what anarchists wanted they linked to the FAQ. That was great, knowing that people would be getting an accurate account of anarchism. But the need to get it in a more accessible format was obvious (reading things online is not ideal and, of course, excludes those without an internet connection). Hopefully, people will think our effort is worth it.

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Commentary

FREEDOM

Volume 67 Number 19

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

This should, with a bit of luck, be the bookfair edition.

You may or may not have noticed the changes in *Freedom*, both in style and content, which have gone on over the last few years. It has had a complete redesign and, since the last bookfair, it has even gone colour.

More than that however, the themes and direction of the paper have changed dramatically over the last five years. Class has become more central and the front four pages have, tried, as far as possible, to strike a balance between bringing news on the political changes we have seen recently, being the journal of the anarchist movement, and investigating the obscure but important.

You can see the results in our roundup of six months of the paper (available at the bookfair) and also in our archives, where we have broken stories long before they made it into the mainstream press, questioned major unions (often for the first time) as anarchists, and supported initiatives across the country.

Sadly, this is the only fully anarchist newspaper left. It is the single oldest publication, the best funded and has the most potential. But we need help.

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Next issue

The next issue will be dated 21st October 2006 and the last day to get copy to us for that issue will be Thursday 12th October. You can send articles to us by email to copy@freedompress.org.uk or by post addressed to The Editors, Freedom, 84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1 7QX.

Kibbutz whitewash

I've just seen the 'New Thinking in the Kibbutz' piece in the 9th September 2006 *Freedom*. I'm still trying to figure out how a kibbutz movement able to practice its supposed "anarchist communitarian ethos" only on the basis of the forcible dispossession of the Palestinian people in the 1948 nakba deserves any coverage in *Freedom* at all. I note that, not surprisingly, neither James Horrox or the various kibbutzers interviewed, mentioned Palestine or the wider role of Israel in the Middle East.

Any form of 'socialist Zionism' is predicated on a commitment to equality within Israeli society, built on a foundation of massive inequality for those excluded from it. The state of Israel is, definitively, a state that defines itself by race – as such the kibbutz movement, a product of that state – is at best pissing in the corner while ignoring the elephant in the room; more likely it shares the presumptions of the wider society of which it is part.

Praising the "social democratic values" of the kibbutz, while ignoring the foundations of the society within which the kibbutz 'experiment' takes place is to sanction the dispossession of the Palestinians on the basis that the socialist-Zionist project is morally superior to the society of the Palestinian 'other' it displaced.

The Zionist left is an apologist for the Israeli state and its communal indulgencies have no place in a journal which purports to represent a militant anarchist tradition – particularly when the state which facilitates the pet projects of socialist-Zionism has just murdered 828 people in committing war crimes in Lebanon. There is a side to be taken here – and a kibbutzism that does not tackle the aggression of its own state has sided with that state.

John Shute

Editorial note: James has said that the focus of the piece, and its follow-up, was on the internal dynamics and ideologies of the new kibbutzim to see what could be drawn from them, not on their relations to regional tensions or historical basis, so he was not being misleading via omission.

A separate analysis of the kibbutz movement's current relationship to the conflict would be an important contribution, but it is not beyond the bounds of reason to separate what could be useful from what is potentially abhorrent – much as we would separate the theorist Bakunin's anarchism from his racism.

James is actually writing a piece on this subject to appear in a future issue of Freedom, in which he outlines a progressive attitude to the conflict which is coming from those kibbutzim.

20 years of AF

The Anarchist Federation is marking its 20th year with an article in *Organise!* magazine looking at the last decade and we'd like to enlist the help of groups and individuals in and around the anarchist movement to make this an interactive piece!

A lot has happened within the anarchist movement in Britain in the last ten years; the dissolving and re-emergence of Class War Federation, the end of Subversion and launch of IWW UK.

We changed our name from Anarchist Communist Federation, membership of the new AF has grown, and anarchism

in general has made a strong mark in the environmental and wider anti-capitalist movements.

Amongst the anarchist movement's publications, *Organise!*, *Direct Action* and *Black Flag* continue to come out in magazine format, whilst *Freedom* has been revamped back to a fortnightly.

The anarchist-influenced IWW is growing in numbers and offer a new magazine *Bread & Roses*. Anarchist publishers like AK Press, Freedom and KSL are producing excellent new written material.

In 1998 the AF launched its monthly agitational bulletin *Resistance*, and our groups and individuals produce several local bulletins. We maintain a website and provide all our publications online for free.

In Britain (and also Ireland), the AF continues its participation in both community and workplace struggles. We worked in Groundswell against the Job Seekers Allowance from 1996, and in 2006 continue to fight against repression within the Defy-ID network that is opposing 'identity cards and the database state'.

We have worked to oppose closures of community facilities like swimming pools and local post offices. Some members work within Antifa against fascist organising, whilst others continue to support anarchist prisoners at home and abroad. We were also instrumental in setting up the Anarchist Youth Network.

We struggle in our own workplaces as we extend solidarity to those in others. Amongst many workplace struggles we supported are the Liverpool Dockers and Gate Gourmet workers, and we are stepping up our organising with other comrades around the changes in schools and further/higher education.

The AF has continued to participate in the events of the anarchist and the wider anti-capitalist movement; from anarchist Maydays and bookfairs to film fairs; at RTS and Earth First! gatherings to those against the G8 (and earlier events like J18 and N30).

Some of us are involved with the growing number of Social Centres and have supported the Rosspoint Solidarity Camp. We demonstrated and organised against the hideous wars escalated or initiated by our politicians and armed forces.

The AF has built up its international presence through joining the International of Anarchist Federations (IFA-IAF) and in its current position as secretariat. Looking west we encouraged the formation of NEFAC in the USA. Looking east we have strengthened links with comrades in the former soviet bloc as they adjust to capitalist realities inside (and outside) the borders of the expanded European Union.

We'd like to do it much more, and better, in the future. If we missed you or your group out from the above, please note this short appeal was not intended to include everyone we'd like to hear from!

The three questions:
1. What are the best things the A(C)F has done and/or written (in *Organise!* or elsewhere) since 1996?
2. What else could we have done in the last decade that we didn't, or, did we do (or write) something we shouldn't have?
3. What should the AF prioritise in the next decade?

Additional comments are welcome. The address for written replies is: BM ANARFED, London, WC1N 3XX, England, UK, or email: organise@afed.org.uk. Back issues of *Organise!*

are online via afed.org.uk

The Anarchist Federation

New Labour? No Danger!

The CBI issued a warning to the government to resist demands raised by the unions at this year's TUC conference for improved workers' rights. They argued that they risked harming Britain's improved record on industrial relations.

Given the way New Labour have governed, it makes you wonder why they even bothered. They surely know that Labour poses no threat to the current serfdom of workers which the CBI euphemistically terms "the partnership approach" adopted by employers. Strange sort of partnership, where one side gives the orders and the other obeys and where the former see their pensions and wages rise and rise while the other sees them be cut and stagnate.

John Cridland, the CBI deputy director general, said that "our message is that the sort of labour market we have today is giving employees what they want". In that case, why opposed increased rights for workers? If workers are happy, then they would not seek to use them. But talk of rights can be dangerous, it may give the plebs ideas that they are individuals and should have a say in what happens to them – and we cannot have that!

On the specific rights raised, the unions are perfectly right to seek to include them in negotiations. They are part and parcel of many employee's terms and conditions and workers pay into them, representing deferred income. That they have faced huge cuts in recent years shows why the bosses do not wish to see their workers take action over them.

Cridland unsurprisingly criticised union demands for Britain to adopt EU rules giving the country's 700,000 temporary workers the same pay and conditions as permanent staff after six weeks in the same post as well as removing the working-time opt-out which allows staff to work more than 48 hours a week. He argued that the latter was "a valued cornerstone of the UK's flexible labour market" and was a matter for individual choice – sure, the individual choice of the boss who knows that his workers' fear of unemployment will ensure they 'consent'. That the UK economy is so dependent on long wages shows that its 'profitability' is simply the result of sweating an un-organised, insecure workforce.

And what of the Blair's speech to the TUC conference? Needless to say, he was defiant and angry. Strange how he is only defiant with the people he claims to represent. With the bosses he is always compliant, making the 'difficult decisions' to do what they ask (they cannot be that difficult, given they are always some combination of private investment, markets, authoritarianism and bombs). At least some of the delegates made a protest, either walking out or heckling (sadly, Brown was applauded in spite of pursuing the same Thatcherite/Blairite agenda and repeatedly saying that was, and would remain, the case). Blair warned the unions to shut-up or see Labour back in opposition – which assumes that New Labour is that different from the Tories.

Ironically, Blair demanded that the hecklers listen "for once". Why should they do what Blair does not? Equally ironically, he stated that "for years and

years we had our debates and passed our resolutions and it never made the blindest bit of difference because we could not do anything about it. I want to see the Labour Party continue in government ... government is a hard, tough business, but it is a darn sight better than wasting our time in opposition. That is the brutal truth."

The real brutal truth is that Blair is more than happy to ignore any resolutions which he disagrees with, so the key difference seems to be that any passed resolutions will be ignored by Labour politicians rather than Conservative ones. As such, raising the bogeyman of 18 years of Conservative rule seems beside the point, given the Thatcherite policies of New Labour and the clear message that both Blair and Brown will ignore the unions they are meant to represent.

On the positive side, a CBI poll showed that one in five private firms and one in four public-sector organisations expected relations with unions to be 'adversarial' in the next year. Let's hope that is under-estimate!

One question, though. Where have these union bureaucrats been for the last nine years? Asking Blair's neo-liberal government to grant workers some rights shows a staggering lack of awareness. It also shows that the CBI's beloved slave mentality infects the union leadership. Even the most basic understanding of labour history shows that rights are not granted, they are won – usually by means of hard struggle. If workers assert themselves in their workplaces directly then legislation will follow, not before. And if they do, then such legislation will hardly matter. And if they do not, then it will remain a dead letter.

The need for anarchists to take an organised role in the labour movement is as pressing as ever.



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Quiz answers

1. Trotsky. He planned to use poison gas against the Kronstadt rebels demanding soviet democracy in 1921 if conventional warfare failed (Paul Avrich, *Kronstadt 1921*).
2. That carrots help you to see in the dark. The RAF were keen that the Germans did not discover that they had Airborne Intercept radar, so spread rumours that their night-fighter pilots ate a lot of carrots to explain the increasing number of Luftwaffe bombers they shot down.
3. Robert Redford. His aunt was a follower of Emma Goldman and Redford recalls being the only blond kid in the Spanish side of Santa Monica in the '40s.
4. God, acting through the medium of Hurricane Katrina. Presumably God also got the police to turn away survivors and God, or at least his representative in the White House, cut the funds for flood defence.

REVIEW

Küba's multitude of screens give a fascinating but flawed portrayal of community, finds Tom Jennings

Küba, by Kutlug Ataman, simultaneously telling the stories of forty residents of Istanbul's most notorious shantytown, showed at the Waygood Gallery/Robert Stephenson Centre, Newcastle, in July-August 2006. Backed by blockbuster commissioners Artangel, the installation has toured galleries and alternative spaces in America, Australia, Europe and the UK, and is due to visit Liverpool and Southampton before returning to Turkey in 2007. The London-based artist was born in Istanbul but left after imprisonment for filming outlawed left-wing militants in the 1980s, since experimenting with cinema (most famous for *Lola and Billy the Kid*, 1999) and video art portraits of the socially and politically excluded. Access to the 'closed' world of Küba, crammed between high-rise blocks near the airport, was gained via a respected former resident, and the trust to allow interviewing developed over two years – a rare level of involvement mirrored in the commitment required of viewers to do justice to so many hours of minimally-edited footage.

The subjects are a cross-section of the population willing to testify, of varying degrees of lucidity, and from children to elders. Asked what Küba means to them, some are humble, shy or reflective in talking to camera, others self-serving or effusive, even apparently obsessed; all matter-of-factly confiding the mundane routines of bare existence punctuated by extremes of abuse, suffering and tragedy; or, far less frequently, triumph. There is however an overriding sense of protectiveness of their own (such as it is) in the face of unremitting external hostility and an obstinate pride in collective survival when the converse seems perpetually imminent. On circulating around successive screens, the effect is a strange blend of heightened feeling: moved and then bored; involved and detached. The shabby furniture and battered second-hand television sets hiding the DVD gear help you feel at home, and the flickering images and soundtracks bleed into peripheral perception as in a real social gathering. But of course there's no interaction, and a mere juxtaposition of individualised accounts loses the intense flesh-and-blood co-presence producing the interpersonal cement of this community –

though more suitable, perhaps, for the atomised existences and simulated relationships of Western media-addicts.

Ghetto Fabulous

If the installation's innovative strategies conceal unresolvable contradictions under rhetorics of empowerment, bearing witness and transcending documentary limitations, the waffle of critics and curators goes further. Framed to befit the special status of art, Küba is characterised as uniquely distinct from any other place, diverting attention from parallels with lower-class neighbourhoods across the world and throughout history and favouring fetishistic fascination with personal pathologies, perversions of consciousness and ethnic abjection. Litanies of the exotic grotesque – “drug addicts, criminals, transvestites, prostitutes and the mentally ill, Kurds, former left-wing militants, Islamic fundamentalists and nationalists” – strive to increase distance between marginal lives and some assumed and unquestioned ‘normal’ mainstream, downplaying the shared burden of the impoverished recounted vividly on the DVDs. So, despite geographical and historical specificity and their relative diversity, embattled matriarchs, unrepentant adolescents and dignified losers make sense of their struggles via biographical narratives mobilising wish-fulfilment and fury, wit and pathos, poignant nobility and bluff and bluster – emotive rationales resonating in anyone with the relevant experience and empathy.

Having pre-empted class recognition with fragmentary identities, the exhibition blurb claims that the settlement is also “quite different from traditional anarchist squats” (whatever they are) “in the sense that entire families reside in Küba and not just young intellectuals, students or bohemians”. Undoubtedly true for some, this does no justice to many such social experiments whose achievements under harsh pressures of necessity cannot be dismissed so cavalierly as ‘lifestylism’ – especially when feelings of collective sanctuary from state control and bureaucratic conformity are so prominent, and hard-won in being reproduced across generations. Even more specious is the argument that “Küba cannot be compared to the favelas of Latin America because rather than being an easily recognised zone of the city reserved for the poor, Küba is first and foremost a state of



mind”. No, the favelas illegally occupy substandard real estate outside of government control – certainly not granted by benevolent authorities – tolerated as reserve armies of labour and the ramifications and practical expense of eviction.

The Kübans' anti-state sentiments, nurtured by extreme levels of arbitrary police harassment and detention persisting since the 1980s military dictatorship, are also hardly exceptional – often evolving further. So in El Alto, La Paz, Bolivia, the shanty neighbourhood associations are among the most radical of new political groupings in a country already renowned for insurrectionary tradition. Or, in the Rio favelas – usually dismissed as sunk in the mire of criminal gangsterism – the Afro-Reggae movement hints at inspirational cultural-politics incubating there. A more meaningful contrast is scale, with millions rather than

hundreds of people – so that bottom-up organisation would represent a convergence of many thousands of Kübas at once; a quantum-leap in terms of possibilities for resistance. Finally, the megaghettoes of the global south can be seen as a most enduring product of IMF/World Bank structural adjustment programmes, rather than historical anachronisms. This puts into context the insistence that the future of Küba be interpreted as a measure of how ‘modern’ (even ‘humane’) the state of Turkey – and, by implication, the broader fortress EC that country aspires to join – will be.

Ataman's motivations included to respect and air his subjects' reality – rather than any ‘truth’ – in their own words. That their unity seems based on a “generationally-transmitted instinct to defy the forces of law and power rather than through any more observable markers of identity” then contradicts

the differentiating presumption in touring the installation around the world of “alien narratives coming into an alien city and mixing with it”. Ultimately, then, this complex and ambiguous artwork raises many intriguing questions which it cannot answer. The mantra of a ‘state of mind’, holding together an otherwise unlikely local society, has no more explanatory power than the ‘imagined community’ of nationhood or the self as a performative personal mythology – though conveniently reinforcing the art consumer's superior detachment from dirty realities of social and material intensity and threat. A measure of Küba's success might be how hard the accompanying public discourse has to work in simultaneously hyping up, narrowing down, and generally mystifying its relevance to make it palatable to those more comfortably off in the New World Order.

www.tomjennings.pwp.blueyonder.co.uk

THEATRE

Failed States

Baron's Court Theatre, London W14

The clue is in the title: a piece called *Failed States* is unlikely to offer a cosy evening of small-scale domestic drama on the fringe.

Quite the reverse: this new piece by Andrew Taylor and Desmond O'Connor poses some weighty questions about the origin and effects of the UK's recent

anti-terrorism laws.

So far, so worthy. But what makes this entertaining and thought-provoking evening is that *Failed States* is a bleakly comic musical – and a war-on-terror era update of Franz Kafka's *The Trial*, to boot.

In this security-crazed nightmare, American air-conditioning salesman Joseph (James Durrant) disappears into Belmarsh on his arrival back in Britain from a Middle Eastern business trip.

The problem is that CIA operative William (William El-Gardi) and Brit counterpart Frank (Gavan Purdie) have convinced themselves his clients are financing terrorism (and in their Pentagon looking-glass world, that means he must be too).

But this is no individual tragedy. Joseph's detention blights the lives of all around him, including pregnant fiancée Anya (Kosha Engler) and prospective father-in-law (and Iranian refugee)

Massoud (Hemi Yeroham).

Even the support of a musical defence campaign and a top-notch lawyer only manage to secure him a bitterly attenuated liberty in the end, leaving the audience to ponder whether it's not the UK that merits the tag ‘failed state’.

With the support of a largely convincing cast, O'Connor's idiomatic music and witty lyrics combine with Taylor's transparent script and fast direction to shine a necessary light into the murky

world of special advocates, control orders and a judicial system no longer bound by the principle of habeas corpus. And (hallelujah!) show there's so much more to musicals than *Mamma Mia* and *Boney M*.

Martin Moriarty

Failed States will return for a three-week run at The Pleasance, Islington, from 24th October. For more details go see 1215productions.co.uk/ and myspace.com/failedstatesmusical.

A Sideways Look

As I write this I am in the limbo between one employer and another, under the decidedly mixed blessings of a TUPE transfer. TUPE is, as you may know, the regulations concerning protection of employment when the work you do is transferred from one employer to another. TUPE happens not to be the protection that it seems but it's still the unions' only defence.

I was first subject to this five years ago. My then employer (a public sector body) decided to 'outsource' its IT functions and awarded the contract to the sole bidder, a large IT services company. The arguments for privatisation were about bringing in 'expertise'. Then, last year, a re-tendering exercise was all about cutting costs. The significant savings promised under the new contract can only come from two places - staff or profits. While I think both are likely to be squeezed, the new company won't make as much as the old, there are no prizes for guessing where the majority of the savings are going to come from.

Unless you are transferring from the public sector, you are not covered by the new TUPE regulations that protect pensions. This offers a great get out to any employers to further sub-contract the work to wriggle out of their pension obligations. In every other instance pensions are exempted from TUPE, so they're an obvious easy target.

Pensions were the first target of the new outfit. Most of us had final salary pensions. They're going. The smarmy human resources rep told us that "no one in IT has these any more". Well, we did until you lot took us over! The customer insisted that the new contractor offer 'comparable pensions' to the existing, but they haven't. They have offered a defined contribution scheme. They tried to sell it, saying how final salary schemes depend on whether the company running them keeps going and if it crashed you wouldn't get anything. Instead, they offer us a 'pot' of money in a scheme on the stock market. What we get as a pension depends entirely on how well the pension fund managers perform, though they tried not to emphasise that point. When asked directly if it could theoretically go down to nothing, the human resources rep blustered that it wouldn't happen. The actuary, a pensions expert, said that he thought it unlikely, but not impossible.

Of the people working in my department, more than half have found jobs elsewhere prior to the transfer. We've had so little communication from the new company we don't know if they will be replaced. Ominously, in the final one-to-one meetings with the new employer's Human Resources, the first thing they said was that there may be redundancies. Some only found out a month before the transfer that they were being transferred directly to sub-contractors, at least one of whom was not expecting to get transferring workers and ignored large chunks of employment

law in their dealings with the workers affected.

I wish I was able to say that people have been resisting this slippage in terms and conditions and trying to get a better deal. The union has made noises, but is obsessed with following the legal processes through. They have at least stopped one disabled guy from being stitched up totally. I've said to my colleagues that we ought to stand together and take action. Most didn't think we could, and now the transfer has happened, we have the further hurdle that action would be across more than one employer. What happened to solidarity? It's against the law in this country. While I've no qualms about advocating breaking such a law, it's one further hurdle in convincing people worried about their jobs that there is a way forward.

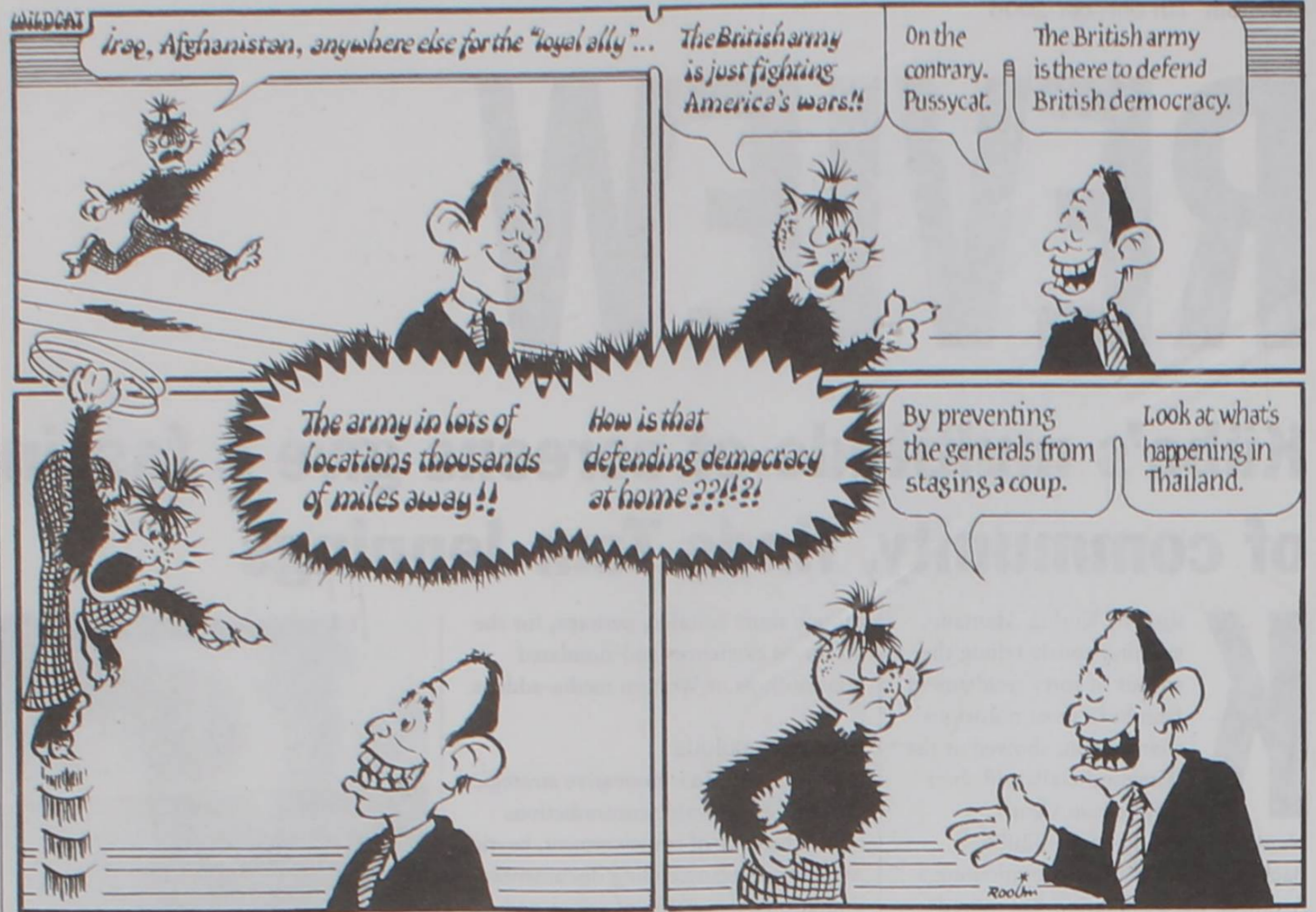
Svartfrosk

Blast from the Past

Taken from Freedom of 7th October 1972, entitled This Week in Ireland:

The miners of Ballingarry, who had their mine closed by the Government, followed the example of the furniture manufacturers near Cavan and refused to be closed, and are going down the pit and working and say they have enough orders to keep them going for a long time. The Government decided the mine was not viable. Can it be we are beginning to wake up at last and realise that for too long all 32 countries have been an unemployment pool for Great Britain, working for brief times on imported materials while exporting our mineral wealth, etc., to enrich other countries? Now some of us at least are saying, 'We will not be declared redundant. We will not emigrate'. It is this exploitation of the Irish working class far more than religion that has led to us being 'the most distressful country that iver yet was seen'. If we wake up there is hope yet.

Last weekend saw riots and petrol bombings from Dundalk to Castlebellingham, and the Irish Army using CS gas and garda stations being petrol-bombed in the little villages of Co. Louth. This was not the work of the Provos. Since it was the ordinary uninvolved members of the villages who bore the brunt, a lot of us think it was the work of British agents provocateurs. O'Malley, our minister for justice, is dying to clamp down on all of what he calls 'subversives', and since no member of our Government dares blow their nose without permission from Westminster, and lick their overmasters boots... who knows? It may, on the other hand, have been the Unionist extremists, as it was timed to coincide with the Darlington non-conference, which, in spite of the 200 journalists there, was a non-event. Faulkner was as obdurate as ever with his 'full security powers must be vested in Stormont', but the two other parties who attended, the Alliance and the NILP, are only very slightly dilated Unionists.



All that has come out of this conference is that a green paper will in due course be issued, I doubt if the colour is significant.

It is quite extraordinary that no member of the British media has been present at Strasbourg this week when Ireland brought her accusation of the Violation of Human Rights and torture against the British. Irish Radio-Television gave a lot of time to it. The BBC only briefly mentioned it.

Imagine if...

Tommy Sheridan couldn't help but feel he was getting to be the butt of one too many jokes.

Every time he walked down the street it seemed like people were ripping the piss. "Look it's the most trustworthy man in Scotland!" "Where's yer trousers gone?" "Swing low, sweet chariot..."

But he'd shown them. He'd won his court case and was feeling on top of the *News of the World*. Now if only he could get Solidarity, the party of the little guy (never mind what people had been saying about his swinger) off the ground the future looked orange.

"TOMMY!" One of his loyal supporters ran into his room and threw down a paper on the table. It had a worrying look to it, his face beside a headline, 'The Biggest Liar in Politics'. He felt queasy as he started reading a script that could spell the end of his ambitions and even worse, expose Solidarity as nothing more than a vehicle for his vanity.

"Bugger." He said. And then, after some thought and a suspicious look at his aide, "When I say that, I mean I have never been buggered in my life, and certainly not at any swingers clubs."

His aide looked at him askance, but said nothing.

Nevertheless, he could feel the cold hand of Cupid on his shoulder.

Listings

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

9th and 10th October Blockade Faslane nuclear submarine base as part of 'Faslane 365', a year of continual peaceful protest at the gates of this nuclear submarine base in western Scotland, see faslane365.org for info

9th October Sack Parliament demo, 1pm at the Houses of Parliament, London, see sackparliament.org.uk

11th October South London SolFed and Red & Black Club present *An Injury to One*, a film about the IWW, at Cafe Crema, 306 New Cross Road, London SE14, £4 includes veggie meal, doors open 7.30, film starts 8pm.

16th October Campaign Against Arms Trade (CAAT) peaceful protest campaigning to close down the Defence Export Services Organisation (DESO) from 12.30pm at 2-12 Bloomsbury Way, London WC1, contact 020 7281 0297 or enquiries@caat.org.uk or see caat.org.uk/events/DESOactionday.php

17th October Preston SolFed public meeting, 'Walking the Talk', from 7.30pm at DISC, 103 Church Street, Preston, for info call 07707256682 or see solfed.org.uk/

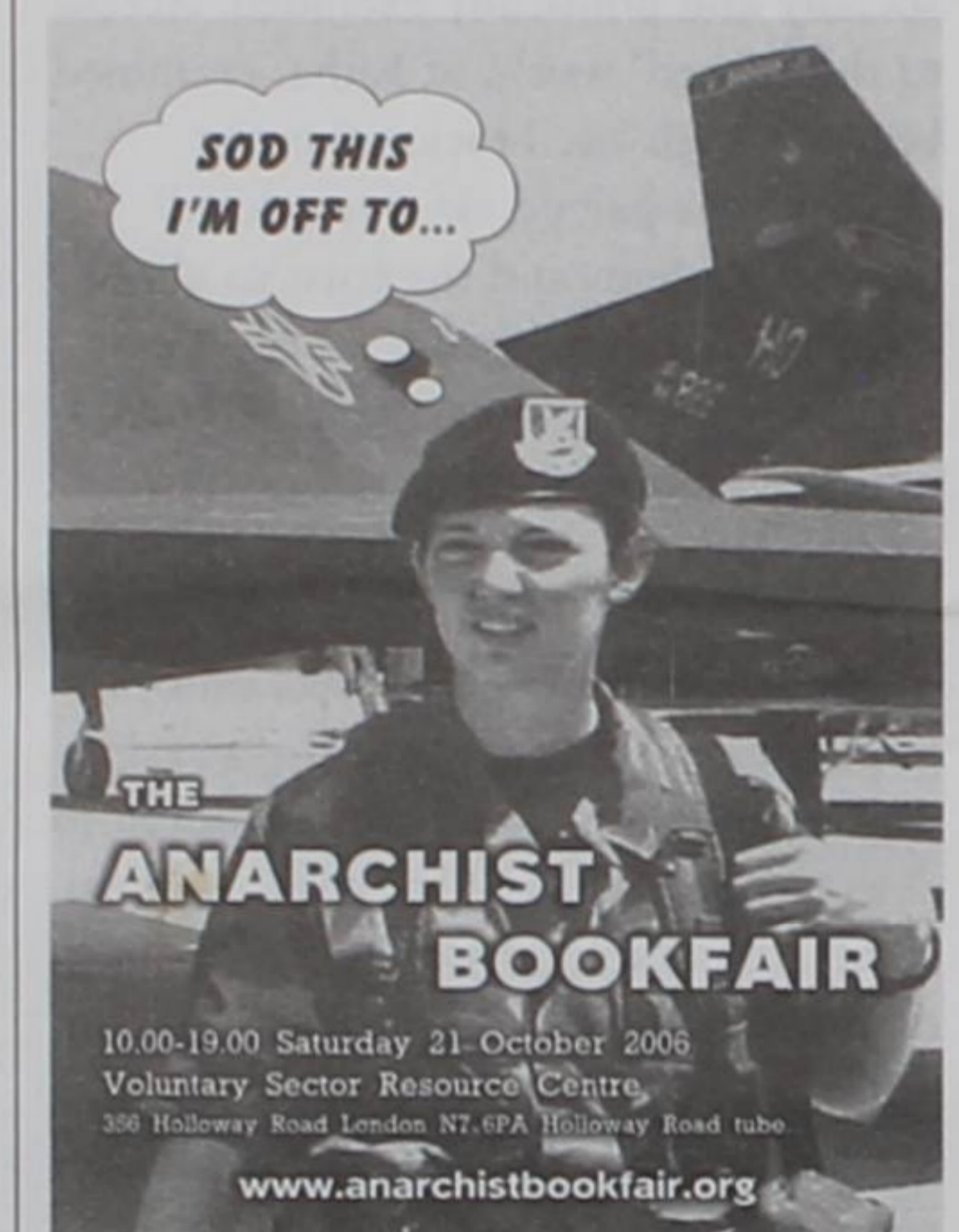
19th October Meeting against the G8, at the Model Inn, Quay Street, Cardiff, from 7.30pm, with reports from G8 protest in Russia, plans to attend the 2007 protest in Germany, film of previous G8 protests, music and vegan buffet, all organised by Cardiff Anarchist Network <http://cardiff.revolt.org>

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

21st November Preston SolFed public meeting, 'Why does the scum always rise to the top?', from 7.30pm at DISC, 103 Church Street, Preston, for info call 07707256682 or see solfed.org.uk



The quiz

- Churchill famously wanted to gas Kurdish rebels in Iraq in the 1920s. Which equally famous politician wanted to do the same to rebel workers in Russia around the same time?
- Which vegetable-related folklore was popularised by the authorities during World War Two and why?
- Which actor, director and producer talks of being influenced by the values of his father's anarchist aunt?
- According to Republican congressman Richard Baker, who cleaned up public housing in New Orleans?

Answers on page 6

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