

# FREEDOM

80P ANARCHIST NEWS AND VIEWS

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## NSPCC SYSTEM 'DANGER' TO KIDS

### EXCLUSIVE

A national IT database set up to handle the confidential details of vulnerable children has been described as 'dangerous' and 'unworkable' by its users.

Internal email correspondence has been handed to *Freedom* containing dozens of complaints about the Children's Recording Information System (CRIS), which was rolled out across the NSPCC this year.

The system was part of the NSPCC's response to the Victoria Climbié inquiry, which severely reprimanded the service for failures in communication and a lack of joined up information in the months leading to her death.

Yet administrators and data input workers at the children's charity have struggled to work with the new system, citing a range of complaints in the last two months including:

- Huge wastage of time due to slow service: Some users complaining of entire mornings waiting to load simple files.
- Lost recordings: Staff needing to keep backups on paper, effectively running two systems for one job.
- Increased workload: Search system erratic and crucially, can give wrong results.
- Search missing some cases entirely – e.g. one of two brothers disappearing.
- Inability to properly attribute case notes of volunteers (they are not registered).

• Hard drive shutdowns preventing saving of work.

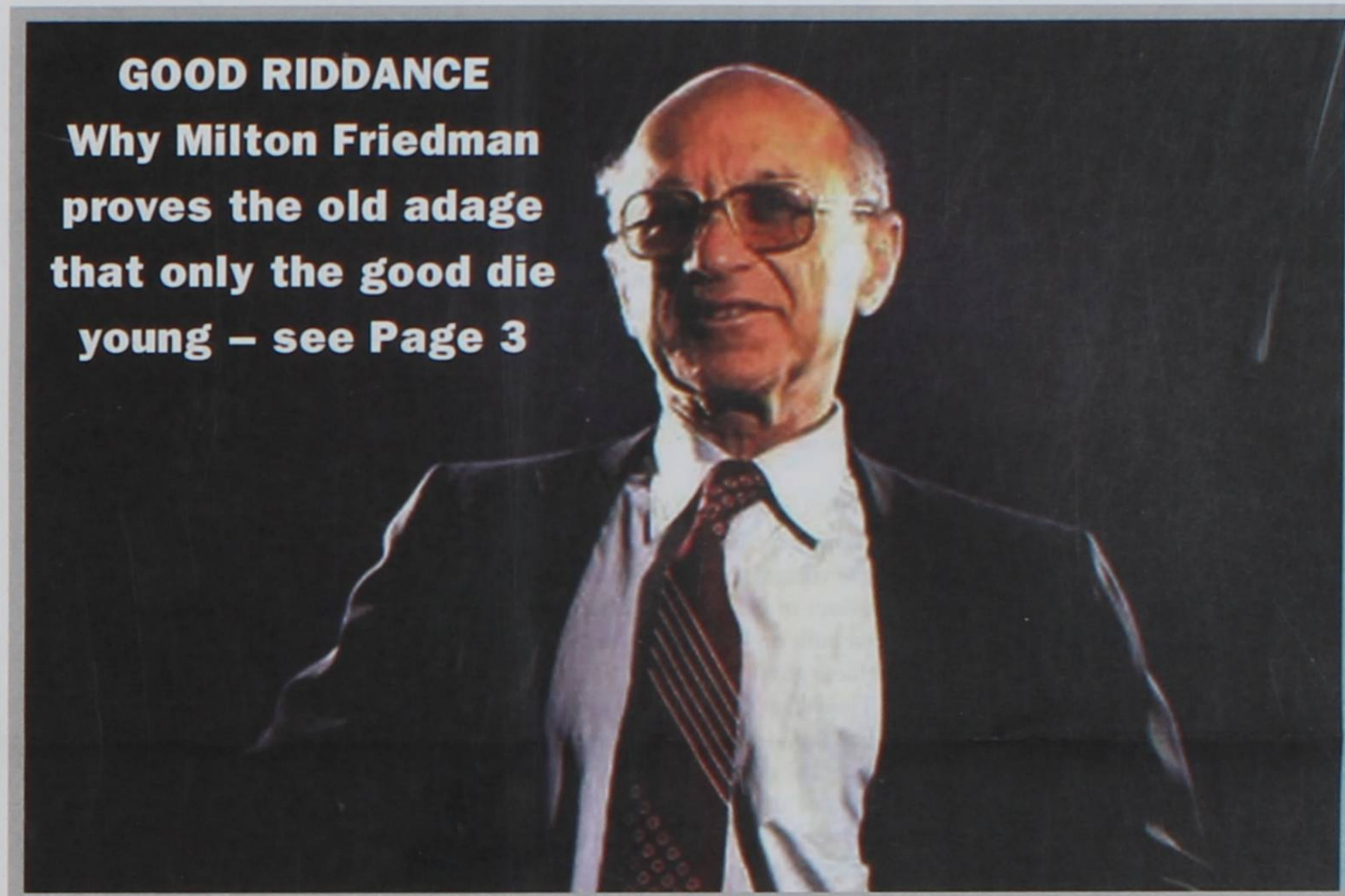
Director of Services for Children and Young People, Wes Cuell, said in an email to staff on 16th October: "I am aware that there are still serious problems about monitoring, getting all the case records onto the system and providing performance management information. I would like to remind you that I take personal responsibility for any difficulties that are related to CRIS technical issues.

"We expect that the benefits of CRIS will include improved child protection, standardised easily accessible recording, better information about services, improved security records and considerable flexibility."

However complaints are still coming through thick and fast several weeks after his assurances. This month inputters complained that cases are still 'stuck' in the system. One commenter said: "The bottom line for me is that, apart from the functionality issues, CRIS is clearly not fit for purpose as a casework recording and management tool."

Most damning of all, the latest emails given to *Freedom* question the entire basis of the system. One said: "I recognise that people are doing their utmost to sort out the bugs. However, I think it is important to distinguish between concerns brought about by 'bugs' and concerns brought about by shortcomings in the design of the system.

"It is very difficult to access important information, the bread and butter of what we do, i.e. notes from children's



### GOOD RIDDANCE

Why Milton Friedman proves the old adage that only the good die young – see Page 3

sessions, meetings, visits and letters, etc., are difficult for practitioners to access and read. In the context of a child protection service this is highly unsatisfactory."

Another said: "The issue is not that CRIS has a number of bugs that need to be sorted out, but that the fundamental design of the system means that it is not fit for purpose as a casework recording

system. CRIS is not only confusing and time-consuming, it is dangerous."

A third remarked: "I would concur with what others have said – there are some serious flaws in the fragmented design of this system that the bugs alone cannot account for."

CRIS is intended to hold all information collected by the Services for Children and Young People section of the

NSPCC (this is the section which actually deals directly with the NSPCC's core remit) on one database.

The system was designed by a firm specialising in financial services, called BancTec and was brought on line after a short testing period as a 'big bang' rollout, with the entirety of the NSPCC going online with it at the same time.

Rob Ray

## MENTAL HEALTH SHAKEDOWN

The Queen's Speech announced the introduction of a Bill to provide a better framework for treating people with mental disorders. The government are intent on reviving the previously axed and heavily criticised Mental Health Bill.

The current Mental Health Act (1983) enables specified professionals to treat people without their consent. The Government now wants to make changes to extend and simplify this process.

One ex-client of the mental health service interviewed by *Freedom* noted: "The Bill seems to be motivated and promoted by a prejudice that connects mental illness with violence and the

need to protect the public. In fact 95% of all killings have no connection to people with mental illnesses. They are mostly the result of drugs and alcohol, but plans have not been proposed to affect the liberty of Friday night boozers."

Currently compulsory treatment can only occur in hospital. The government wants to extend this into the community. So called 'psychiatric ASBOs' will be enforced, the conditions of which may include residency, appointments, medication and 'conduct'. These conditions would not be subject to independent review.

This proposal to restrict the movement and activities of patients in the community has been condemned by mental health workers. Rethink's campaign manager, Jane Harris, said that curfews and banning visits to pubs were completely unworkable. Tony Zigmund, of the Royal College of Psychiatrists, saw the enforcement or monitoring of the conditions being the main problem. He said, "It's a monitor-

ing exercise that doctors and nurses should not be doing."

But the main problem is the lack of independent review.

The 1983 Act states that compulsory treatment must help a patient's condition, or prevent it getting worse, this is the treatability clause. The Government wishes to change this to allow treatment that is 'appropriate' and 'available', i.e. remove treatability as a criterion. The judgement of what is 'appropriate' is a subjective one rather than objective, and could include measures to control rather than cure. People with untreatable personality disorders could therefore be compulsorily detained whether they've committed a criminal act or not.

Tony Calland, chairman of the British Medical Association's medical ethics committee said, "Mental health legislation cannot be used to detain people whom the authorities simply want locked away."

At the moment, two doctors and a social worker are required to make the

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## END OF BLACK FLAG?

Observant attendees of this year's anarchist bookfair may have noticed that *Black Flag* did not have a stall nor was a new issue out.

Some speculation has been made on the libcom.org forums that it is no more. The truth is, perhaps. It depends on what happens next and whether people get involved.

Currently, *Black Flag* is (effectively) on a year's sabbatical. Two meetings were called earlier this year, which no one beyond myself attended. One member of the collective has dropped out, due to time constraints (which is fair enough). I am busy trying to get *An Anarchist FAQ* revised for publication as well as doing lots of other things. Other members have also been busy. So there was little point in trying to produce a new issue.

Part of the 'problem' is the improvement in *Freedom*. Most of the people involved in *Black Flag* are now involved with writing for it (something I never

would have predicted ten years ago). While this is a positive development, it does mean less time for *Black Flag* and a question mark over its role.

There is no need for a newspaper-type *Black Flag* and a yearly magazine does seem, well, a little infrequent. Also, there are other magazines so is there really any point in another one?

There is, I think, a need for an anarchist publication which allows longer, more in-depth articles to be published and which is independent. Such a publication would be a natural compliment to *Freedom* which cannot, by its nature, include longer articles.

The question now becomes, is this viable? Would people contribute to it? I await feedback, either to *Black Flag's* email address ([Black\\_Flag@lycos.co.uk](mailto:Black_Flag@lycos.co.uk)) or by snail mail (*Black Flag*, BM Hurricane, London, WC1N 3XX).

Will *Black Flag* see another 35 years? That lies in your hands.

Iain Mckay

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# Home and away

## Gas shutdown

Protesters against a pipeline at Tyn y Pant Farm in the Swansea Valley have occupied a construction site and stopped work.

Landowner Ira Wynne Jones has supported the action, she was tricked into giving it permission, as she was told it would be a small operation. In fact the £700m pipe leaves a swathe of destruction the width of a motorway.

Protesters argue that the money should be spent on renewables and increasing energy efficiency.

## Criminal intentions

The Criminal Defence Service Act has come into force. The legislation aims to reduce the amount of people claiming legal aid via means testing and an 'interests of justice' rule.

People earning over £20,740 must now pay for their own defence while people earning less than £11,590 will automatically qualify. Those earning in between must have less than £3,156 annual disposable income.

People are also expected to justify their claim, failing if they fill out the form incorrectly.

## Defy-ID gathering

A national gather of the group was held on 25th November in Nottingham, to discuss opposition to ID cards and the National ID register.

Designed for existing activists, the meeting aimed to work on ways to fight the introduction of ID cards and share resources, as well as being an opportunity for groups to contact each other from around the UK.

## A union of Jaguars

Officials from the TGWU, Amicus and the GMB are backing the Jaguar car company rather than their own members in a pay dispute

Workers in Merseyside, Birmingham and Coventry have been offered a 4% pay rise, balanced against changes in working practices and 'flexibility'.

This deal was rejected by 2,101 votes (53%) to 1,878 (47%) on Friday, but trade union officials refused to accept the verdict.

They have pledged to talk to shop stewards before taking any other actions.

## PPP, no no no

Concerns have been raised over plans to hand over the East London Line to private contractors, endorsed by 'Red' Ken Livingstone's office.

Transport for London intends the extended East London Line to be operated by one of four private-sector bidders, despite years of increasing fares, closing lines and late services since the railways were privatised.

It would be the first tube line to go private, which rail unions are worried could open the door to other sell-offs.

## Union in Walmart

After bitter campaigning against anti-union measures, Asda Wal-Mart workers in Chepstow distribution depot have voted by 90% to 10% for recognition of GMB in a secret ballot conducted by Electoral Reform Services (ERS).

The turnout was high at 76% of the employed workforce. The Asda Wal-Mart workers in Erith distribution depot have voted by 85% to 15% for GMB recognition in a separate ERS secret ballot. The turnout in this ballot was 78%.

# Around the world

**CANADA:** A letter carrier in Canada who refused to deliver a homophobic pamphlet for Canada Post in late October is facing disciplinary action, as colleagues took a short wildcat strike in protest.

The conflict within Canada Post began on 26th October when the letter carrier refused to process a pamphlet, published by a Baptist Mission in Ontario, entitled, *The Prophetic Word: The Plague of this 21st Century - The Consequences of the sin of Homosexuality (AIDS)*.

The 200 pamphlets were slated for delivery in only one area of Vancouver, the Commercial Drive district - a well-known queer community. The letter carrier stated that it violated the collective agreement between the postal union and Canada Post regarding discrimination. In a matter of days was suspended for delay of mail.

Because walking off the job would be considered a wildcat strike, workers decided to take a 15-minute 'coffee-break' to protest the letter carrier's treatment.

**CHINA:** Up to ten thousand Chinese villagers have blocked a warehouse in the village of Sanzhou in the southern province of Guangdong, claiming it had been built on land seized illegally by the Chinese government.

The villagers barricaded around 300 officials and foreign businessmen in the warehouse during its official opening, and were attacked by up to 1,000 riot police using batons, attack dogs and tear gas, holding the building overnight until they were dispersed in the morning.

Villagers stated that of around 9,000 total acres in the village, around half had been sold off by officials without any compensation. There have been protests throughout this year against the land grabs, part of an increasing level of social unrest across China.

**FRANCE:** On 10th November four militants, Jean-Pascal, Reda, Valentin and Pierre-Louis were sentenced by the court in Aix-en-Provence. All four were accused of 'rebellion' and 'violence towards members of the police force in the performance of their duties' during the anti-CPE demonstrations.

Only Jean-Pascal faced both charges, the three others being found guilty 'only' of rebellion but the verdict pronounced at the end of the trial was very heavy: four months' prison for Jean-Pascal (with suspension). Reda, Valentin and Pierre-Louis got two months each (with suspension).

To that is added fines of 5,800 Euros for damages. The judge has also requested an assessment for a compensation claim by a police officer, who was off work for a month. If the assessment finds in favour of the policeman, then the four could face having to pay him those wages. The three other officers may also submit for assessment. The total amount could be 12,000 Euros.

**IRAN:** Mansur Osanlu was arrested in Tehran on 19th November by plainclothes security agents. Osanlu, who is the president of the Syndicate of Workers of the Tehran Bus Company, was recently released from prison on bail.

Osanlu was detained by security agents and reportedly taken back to Evin Prison, where he had been jailed for more than seven months.

Ebrahim Madadi, the deputy director of the Syndicate Workers of the Tehran Bus Company, was with Osanlu at the time of his arrest.

"Mr. Osanlu, Mr. Mansur Hayat Gheybi - a senior member of the syndicate - and I were going to the labour office to follow up on the case of syndicate workers who have been fired from their jobs," Madadi said.

"On the way Mr Osanlu got out of the car to buy some newspapers, and while crossing the street he was arrested by agents from the Intelligence Ministry."

**NEW ZEALAND:** On 17th November Members of the Wildcat Anarchist Collective based in Wellington, Aotearoa/New Zealand took part in an international day of protest in support of falsely imprisoned and tortured activists in the Philippines.

The Filipino activists are now known as the Sagada 11, after they were arrested in February without a warrant while hiking in the popular wilderness area of Sagada.

They were accused of involvement in a guerrilla attack that had taken place a few days before the arrest. All denied involvement in the attack and the Maoist group responsible also said the Sagada 11 had not participated in any way. They were subsequently tortured while in jail and have endured harsh conditions while in prison. Despite a judge admitting that the arrests were warrantless, they remain incarcerated because police have re-filed charges against them. At present no new investigation has been undertaken or trial date set.

**POLAND:** A company in Zielona Gora has fired three activists of Workers' Initiative after they spoke out in court about illegal anti-union activity by the company.

At the beginning of this year workers at the Impel-Tom Company in Kostrzyn (which employs about 700 workers in Lubuskie voevodship) began their fight for better wages.

But when in spite of earlier promises, they still didn't receive higher payment in February, they decided to found their own labour union - the first one in



Impel-Tom. In March union members wanted to have a founding' meeting of Workers' Initiative in the factory.

Some people weren't let in and two initiators of the union, including Jacek Rosolowski (pictured above), were made redundant. Rosolowski accused Impel-Tom of discrimination because of union membership and of illegal activity against Workers' Initiative. After a trial, on 31st October the court ordered the company to pay damages to him.

**USA:** Anarchist students of the Purdue Alliance of Libertarian Socialists, in solidarity with the Purdue Organization of Labor Equality and the oppressed workers of the world, are at the time of writing engaged in a hunger strike and camp-in, the purpose of which is to pressure Purdue University to stop having its apparel manufactured in sweatshops.

The hunger strike, which began on Friday 17th November, will continue until Purdue unequivocally accepts the Designated Suppliers Program and other anti-sweatshop measures. Students have also been occupying various campus buildings 24 hours a day despite intense police harassment. The occupation will continue throughout the Thanksgiving holiday.

# Prison news

## Wormwood Scrubs: a 'regime of torture'

According to a 'secret' Prison Service report, more than 160 members of staff at London's Wormwood Scrubs prison were involved in inflicting and covering up a regime of torture which saw savage beatings, death threats and sexual assaults inflicted on prisoners.

The report, which covers a nine-year period at the jail, says that some managers colluded in the reign of terror, turning a blind eye to abuse. The terror inflicted on prisoners is branded as "the worst case of prisoner abuse in modern history".

The report only came to light because its author, Peter Quinn, a prison governor with 30 years experience, turned 'whistle-blower' in the face of the Prison Service's continued refusal to act. He felt that there was a real possibility of prisoners continuing to be abused by staff at the jail.

Mr Quinn's report, which was prepared in 2004, found more than 100 screws who had been involved in or turned a blind eye to the assaults still working in the Prison Service, with more than 50 still at Wormwood Scrubs. He said: "Because they have not been disciplined

and because there's been no inquiry, those still remaining in the Prison Service may well feel they've got away with it and can assault prisoners again. Because there were no consequences they may feel invulnerable."

The documents and Mr Quinn's statements show knowledge of the abuse went much higher and involvement was more widespread than officially admitted. The report described the assaults as "a prolonged period of staff brutality ... Often this approximated to torture, and was of greater gravity than in any British prison, at least over the past 40 years ... There has never before been such a concentration of sustained malpractice as illustrated in this review."

Blatantly falsified records were signed off by managers. Paperwork on the day of one assault shows the names of the staff on duty being recorded as officers "Nobody", "Officer Invisible, Non-existent and Absent". Mr Quinn's review concluded an inquiry should be held. But that decision was overturned by the then home secretary, David Blunkett, a position his successors have stuck to.

Last week the current home secretary, John Reid, used Wormwood Scrubs as

a backdrop for a speech announcing so-called 'reforms' in the probation service. Other English jails also remain dogged by allegations of abuse. A report by the official prisons inspector, Anne Owers, in October found that one in eight inmates at Wandsworth jail claimed to have been assaulted or kicked by staff.

## Bending the Bars

John Barker's excellent prison autobiography has just been re-published in a new 'user-friendly' format - the first edition was produced in a large A4 size, as opposed to the new standard paperback size. John was sent down in 1971 for his part in the Angry Brigade, and *Bending the Bars* is his account of the seven long years he spent inside. As well as the new format, the second edition features a new introduction by John, and a 'user-friendly' price of £7. *Bending The Bars* is published by Christie Books (tvhastingschristiebook.com).

## Greece

Repression continues against anarchists in Greece. The following prisoners have recently been transferred, their new addresses being:

- Giannis Dimitrakis, dikastikes filakes neapolis kritis, 72400, Neapoli Kritis, Greece.
- Giorgos Kalaitzidis, dikastikes filakes Ioanninon, 45500, giannena, Greece.
- Nikos Kountardas, dikastikes filakes Naupliou, 21100, Nauplio, Greece.

## Joe Harris moved

Joseph Harris, the first medical researcher to be convicted under new SOCPA laws, has been moved. His new address is: Joseph Harris, (TN5728), HMP Lewes, Brighton Road, Lewes, East Sussex, BN7 1EA. The cancer research scientist was nicked for campaigning against suppliers to Huntington Life Sciences. See myspace.com/supportdrjoe

## Escaped owl does bird

A barn owl ended up in prison after fleeing its owner. The owl, named Tetley, flew off while Gordon Medlam, of Armley, Leeds, was serving it dinner. Five days later the RSPCA called Mr Medlam and his wife to say that Tetley had been found in an empty cell in HMP Leeds. Mrs Medlam said: "We looked all round there but never thought he would be inside."

## News

# Pensions and the class divide

## Rob Ray analyses the future for the majority under new Labour's pension plans, and finds shocking results

Using what we know about current legislation, educational moves and pensions requirements, along with general knowledge about living standards and life expectancy, we put together the graph below to crudely chart a projected average lifecycle for working class, middle class and elite government,\* as envisaged by the government.\*

For the working class, A-levels are not expected, but short academy courses after leaving school to train for skilled labour jobs are being pushed for in future by the government. Further education (university) is not expected, thus extending working life. Because of lack of money, working class children will be expected to work their state pension age. But due to lower living standards, the average lifespan of a working class child is reduced – we have placed this at a generous 70 years (the figure is regularly far lower than this. In the Calder Estate in Glasgow for example, it's closer to 54).

Rich children on the other hand will be in full-time education until closer to 22, to train them for their roles as captains of industry – assuming they

don't do a Masters or PhD. They will then take jobs at the top of the tree, getting more wages and able to put in more to their pension pots. This will, generally, allow them to retire earlier when their job allows. They will then, on average, live well into their 80s.

This massive discrepancy in what can be expected by the classes has been exacerbated in this chart by the government's plans to raise state pensions to 68, which was announced earlier this month.

The Queen's speech outlined plans that by 2046 'increasing life expectancy' would force the raise in pension payouts. The government has defended the decision saying it will "ensure fairness between generations".

The proposed pensions bill would also bring in a fairness measure for women requiring fewer years to build up the National Insurance contributions needed to qualify for the pension, with men and women requiring only 30 years of work to qualify. Happily for the wealthy, this also fits in tidily with their projected workspan in our graph.

The Anarchist Federation has done some research into the pensions crisis.



One member of the group said: "What we're seeing is the result of years of under-funding of the pension fund by a

state that could see an increasingly ageing population coming. After all, they employ thousands of economists and carry out regular censuses to spot exactly these type of trends.

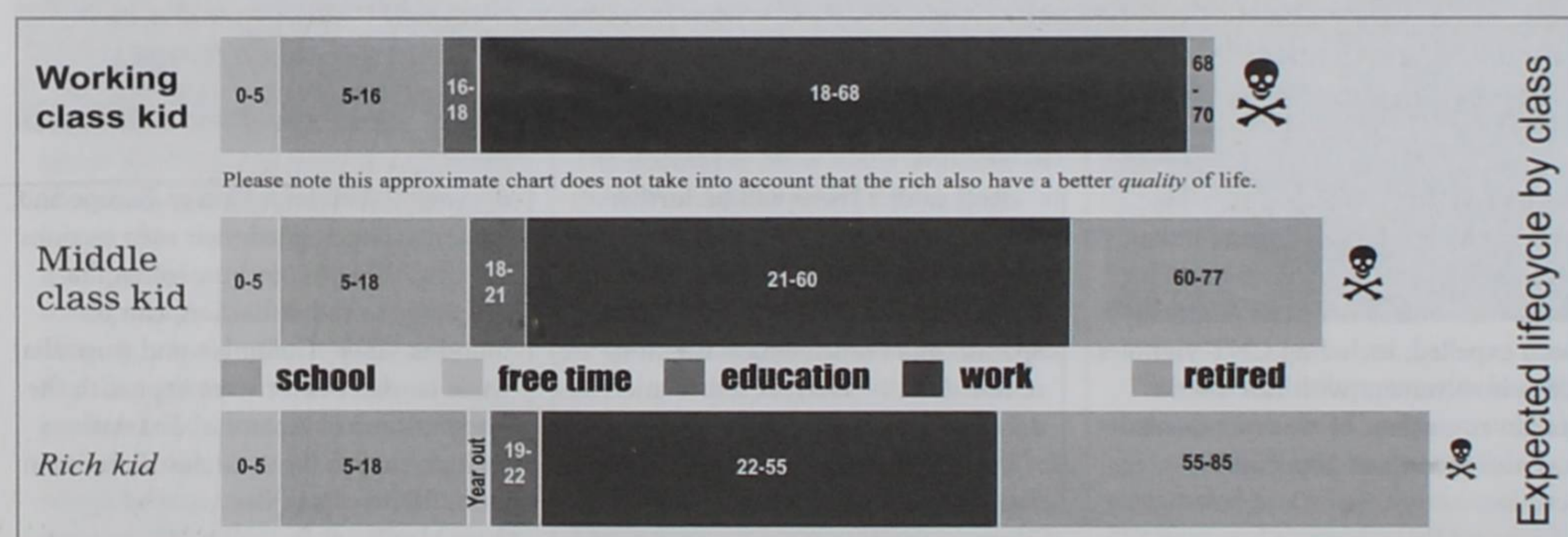
"That's coupled with private companies that failed to make contributions in earlier years, taking 'pensions holidays', which basically meant skimming off pension contributions in favour of profits. For us what is important is that the working class doesn't just sit back and take this. It's not our fault the state and the bosses got it wrong. We shouldn't have to pay for their mess."

In the latest moves over pensions, a mass lobby by public sector unions of parliament took place on 23rd November.

Around 1,000 people took part in the lobby.

In a speech, Unison secretary Dave Prentis said: "Life expectancy has not increased for manual workers in the north, it's not increasing for the low-paid in Birmingham – but it is for well-paid MPs who have just voted themselves the best pension in Europe."

\* It should be noted that the 'underclass' of long-term unemployed is not given its own representation. This is partly because less information is published from the poorest estates, and partly because the only established, and partly because the government has for this sector is to cut benefits or make them more difficult to.



## Right, and wrong

Milton Friedman, the economics guru who inspired Thatcherism has died at the age of 94. Needless to say, the praise for this supporter of capitalism was flowing. As would be expected – if your dogma favours the ruling class, being proven wrong is no hindrance.

Friedman produced more than his fair share of pain and suffering in the world. His ideas inspired the policies of Reagan as well as Thatcher. His personal invention in Chile ensured that Pinochet placed his ideological followers into leading economic positions where they imposed his ideas onto a terrorised Chilean people.

The Thatcher thing was, wherever his dogmas were applied the exact opposite occurred. For example, he asserted in *Capitalism and Freedom* that the more capitalist an economy, the more equal it was. When his policies were implemented, inequality has soared to record levels. His great claim was that "inflation is always and everywhere a monetary

phenomenon," caused by too much money chasing too few goods. Applying his economic dogmas proved beyond doubt that this was not the case.

The same applies to his grand dogma, *Monetarism*, which failed spectacularly when applied in the UK, US and Chile.

As an ideologue for capitalism, Friedman sought to show that it was a stable system and sought to exempt capitalism from any systemic responsibility for recessions. He attempted to show that the Great Depression was not a failure of capitalism, but rather of the state. He argued that the monetary authorities in the US and Europe reduced liquidity in the system, thus making a bad situation worse. Sadly, as his critics pointed out, even his own figures did not back this claim up.

The Thatcher and Reagan governments tried to implement his ideas of controlling the supply of money in order to stamp out inflation. And failed miserably. The first Thatcher government saw over 20% inflation and the

biggest slump since the 1930s. Reagan's record was as bad. The massive unemployment that generated did break the back of the labour movement, and so inflation, but never once was the money supply controlled.

Chile, of course, exposed the authoritarian core of his ideology. He proclaimed Chile an 'economic miracle' in spite of the soaring inequalities and poverty – just before its economy collapsed.

Ultimately, while the lobotomised Keynesianism of post-war economics survived its namesake for at least three decades, Monetarism predeceased Friedman by nearly two. His ideas caused untold pain and suffering for millions and reduced 'economy liberty' to little more than the freedom of choosing which master will exploit and oppress you. He helped create the worst recession since the 1930s, breaking the back of labour and ensuring the rich got richer. He will not be missed.

Iain McKay

## Dale Farm reprieve

Hopes have been raised that Dale Farm, the largest traveller site in the UK, will gain a reprieve from eviction in the New Year.

Two appeals in the area at nearby sites have led to one yard on Cranfield Road being given a five-year allowance for residential use and three other sites, on Gypsy Hill, have each won four years.

The victories have followed news that due to the restructuring of central government begun in May, which split off a 'Communities and Local Government' ministry from the Office of The Deputy Prime Minister, a planned judicial review on Dale Farm's future has been put off until spring next year.

Traveller campaigner Grattan Puxon received a letter from Basildon council saying that a new plan is being drawn up regarding planning over traveller sites, which could represent a major U-turn on the Tory council's controversial policy decision

to put aside £3 million for a legal and direct action campaign to enforce evictions.

He said: "I think it's likely they will give us more time and I'm very happy with that. If we get a four year extension it will make ten years at the place and the administration may have changed, they may give permission to stay."

"The council will put out a new development plan and lay out which will agree time scales for finding extra sites. Involved parties will get 21 days and two weeks will be made the results of the appeals will be mad known. It hopes to bring the whole process to a close within seven weeks."

Some sites are still not covered by the effective moratorium on evictions however, with protection orders at ten central plots at Dale Farm and another at Merryfield due to run out at Christmas.

The site has been called the 'last stand' for many Irish Travellers.

# Anarcho-syndicalism in the UK

## A worldwide conference of anarchist unions is coming to Manchester this month. Rob Ray investigates

The International Workers' Association (IWA) is coming to Manchester in December, as UK affiliate SolFed host the world conference.

The IWA is an anarcho-syndicalist international, advocating the use of directly democratic and autonomous organising in federations of 'Locals'. It is comprised of several national unions and groups, including the largest branches of CNT-E (Spain), CNT-AIT (France) and USI-AIT (Italy).

Freedom spoke to General Secretary Rolf Petter Larsen ahead of the conference about the union body. This next conference will see major votes go through on both external and internal politics, he said: "It has been two years since the last Congress in Granada and besides a lot of organisational matters the IWA will discuss campaigns against the war, temporary work and how to expand to new countries."

In the last year the international has seen some major conflicts engage its larger sections, including the Spanish Mercadona Strike, which saw solidarity from across Europe when employees of the supermarket launched a strike against the unfair abuse and sacking of workers.

Rolf said of the effort: "There have been a lot of urgent actions, not only the Mercadona strike, but it has been and is supported actively by all the Sections and Friends by spreading information, appealing for a boycott, demonstrations in front of Spanish Embassies and Consulates, and for example FORA in Argentina had an

action against the Mercadona boss Roig when he attended a Conference there.

"Financial aid is very important in strikes, and the Sections and Friends have collected money, while the Secretariat have sent 10,000 Euros from IWA's fund."

Both the solidarity shown to Mercadona and the IWA's expansion plans are positive steps for the international, which has hemorrhaged members over the last two decades after bitter splits in France, Spain and Italy saw the loss of tens of thousands of people from its ranks.

In France and Spain, what loomed largest in the splits (which saw the CNT split into the CNT-E vrs the CGT, and in France the CNT-AIT vs CNT-Vignoles) was the issue of participation in union elections for state-sanctioned works councils.

In both cases, the IWA chose to support the CNT branches which rejected such participation, calling it a move towards reformism. In the case of CNT-Vignoles, this move was seen as at least partially justified when the group renounced anarcho-syndicalism altogether, proclaiming itself simply a 'revolutionary union'.

Since these expulsions, the Spanish CGT and CNT-Vignoles have joined the European Federation of Alternative Syndicalism, which also houses the SAC, an ex-IWA Swedish union.

In the conference two moves on the future of current sections are also to be voted on, involving the FAU in Germany and USI-AIT, an Italian anarcho-syndicalist union.



STUDENT PROTESTS: According to a source in Serbia, huge student protests have hit after education unions and students confronted the local authorities. Several demonstrations, involving hundreds of people, have paralysed educational facilities, and occupations have been attempted. We hope to get a more detailed report in the next issue.

The FAU are looking at possible expulsion after largely cutting links with IWA branches while maintaining them with others which have already been expelled, including CNT-Vignoles. USI's involvement with RSUs – the Italian equivalent of works councils – has also seen them come under scrutiny.

Rolf said: "There will be further discussions about USI and RSUs about whether the RSU system is a strategic break with the IWA Principles (as the Spanish and French Union Elections are) or not. A lot of analyses, information and debates have been passed."

But despite such troubles the IWA has also seen signs of major new possible areas

of growth, with both Eastern Europe and Nigeria having added their own sections recently. 'Friends' groups, (often the precursor to full affiliation) can be found in Chile, Columbia and Australia while cordial contacts are kept with the International of Anarchist Federations (IAF), of which the Anarchist Federation in the UK is a member.

## Barricades up in Oaxaca

Following the breaking of a police assault on the last radio station remaining in the hands of the resistance movement, smaller assaults are being fought off daily at the site.

The Federal Preventative Police have sent paramilitaries, commandos and small hit squads against the 'Victory Barricade' but have at the time of writing been unable to break through.

The demands of the APPO have been stated as:

- That 'disappeared' people be brought back alive;
- Freedom for all political prisoners and prisoners of conscience in Oaxaca and in the country;
- Punishment of those responsible for crimes against humanity committed against the people of Mexico;
- URO and PFP out of Oaxaca;
- No to State Militarisation.

The situation for APPO, the body formed as an alternative to the hated state administration, has recently been strengthened by the support of nearby groups and a legal barrage launched

against alleged state violence.

Thousands of indigenous residents of Chiapas – civilian support bases of the Zapatista Army of National Liberation (EZLN) – have successfully blocked all major roads and highways in the state in defence of the people of neighbouring Oaxaca state.

Local journalist group Narco News has confirmed that the blockades, which began at 5 a.m. on 20th November, have stopped traffic along eight major inland routes and measures are also being taken against coastal roads.

Meanwhile representatives of over 40 communities and municipalities in the northernmost sector of the state, have formed a new regional grouping, declaring the formal installation of the Assembly of Zapoteco, Mixe and Chinanteco peoples.

The Assembly's principles are strongly linked to those of APPO, aiming to form a new political way while demanding the removal of unpopular governor Ulises Ruiz Ortiz, demanding the removal of state forces from both the capital city and surrounding areas and demanding

the turning over of local media to community hands.

Members of the Popular Assembly of the Peoples of Oaxaca (APPO) charged national leaders with genocide and disappearances at the Attorney General's Office on 17th November.

President Vicente Fox, government ministers Carlos Abascal, Eduardo Medina, Gerardo Clemente Vega and Oaxaca's governor Ulises Ruiz appear on the list of allegedly responsible parties for those crimes.

Illegal arrests, organised crime, torture, abuse of power, and denial of justice were other charges included. Felipe Canseco declared the lawsuit is linked to the deaths of over 30 people.

Reportedly APPO is supported by three cultural aspects: the *asamblea* (assembly) in which the people have the power and the 'leaders' are actually administrators who carry out the decisions of the community, the *guelaguetza*, a Zapotec word which means mutual aid and is the symbol of solidarity, and *tequio*, which is unpaid community work.

## US notes

The Justice Department affirmed in mid-November that immigrants can be held indefinitely without trial, preventing them from ever challenging their detention in civilian courts.

Thanks to the recently signed Military Commissions Act, such is the fate not only of those imprisoned in Guantanamo Bay but also of any foreign national detained in the United States on suspicion of terrorism.

The Justice Department also claimed on 13th November that hundreds of lawsuits by prisoners at Guantanamo should be thrown out because detainees no longer have the right to challenge their detentions in civilian courts.

Audio transcripts of some of the Guantanamo tribunals recently made public for the first time reveal their farcical nature, any pretence of advocacy, equity and the concept of evidence and refutation being almost totally absent.

In a parallel case the Animal Enterprise Terrorism Act (with theoretically open-ended punishments) passed at the same

time makes it a felony for animal rights activists to engage in non-violent protests which result in businesses losing money. For example a protester could be charged with terrorism for a peaceful sit-in that caused a business to lose profits.

Six members of the animal rights group, SHAC (Stop Huntingdon Animal Cruelty) were found guilty in September – and began their sentences in mid-November – of just such a crime.

Huntingdon is located in New Jersey and the United Kingdom; it kills 500 animals daily.

Jake Conroy, Darius Fulmer, Lauren Gazzola, Josh Harper, Kevin Kjonas and Andy Stepanian were given jail sentences of four years, one year, four years four months, three years, six years and three years respectively. In the cases of Conroy, Kjonas and Gazzola the charges were also of 'interstate stalking': they maintained a SHAC website (see shac7.com).

Letters of support can be sent to: Andrew Lloyd Stepanian #26399-050, MDC Brooklyn Metropolitan Detention Center, Brooklyn, NY 11232, USA.

## Feature

# Sex and splits at the SSP

## Trotwatch reports on the recent bitter feud in the Scottish Socialist Party which has torn the party in two

**T**he Scottish Socialist Party – the largest electoral grouping to the left of New Labour in Scotland – has become engulfed in a factional battle which has the tactical organisation in two, and left both sets of former allies reeling amidst a torrent of accusations and mutual recriminations.

Over the past few months the struggle within the SSP has moved from a largely subterranean conflict, waged internally at the highest level, into a luridly public one, fought out in the pages of the Scottish tabloid press and (under oath) in the context of a bruising libel trial in a Scottish court.

Scottish electors are now faced with the prospect of choosing between two small rival nationalist left-capitalist parties, whose political programmes are all-but indistinguishable (state-subsided improvements in the social wage secured through greater political and economic independence for Scotland), but whose leaders denounce each other for ‘betraying’ the SSP’s original ‘socialist’ aspirations.

The publication in November 2004 in the *News of the World* of allegations about SSP National Convenor Tommy Sheridan’s private life generated much heat within the party, but did not in itself precipitate the split. The scandal-sheet published a series of ‘revelations’ alleging, among other things, that Sheridan (pictured) had engaged in an extra-marital affair and frequented the swingers club ‘Cupids’ in Manchester where he indulged in consensual group sex acts. The *News of the World* made the most of the vicarious titillation that the story afforded, whilst simultaneously having the amoral effrontery to accuse Sheridan of ‘hypocrisy’: contrasting what it claimed as Sheridan’s public principled man-of-the-people persona with his ‘immoral’ personal peccadilloes. Although the story made some leading members of the SSP decidedly uncomfortable (either because of Sheridan’s ‘irresponsible’ off-duty behaviour or because Sheridan could think it acceptable to be a sex-industry ‘punter’) it was likely that he could have weathered the muck-storm that the paper was hoping to whip up.

What changed everything was the party’s Executive Committee meeting on 9th November 2004 where the *News of the World* ‘exposé’ was discussed. Sheridan’s opponents insist that he admitted that the main allegations made by the newspaper were true. According to the party’s minute-taker, Sheridan conceded that his “reckless behaviour ... had, with hindsight, been a mistake”. Sheridan had gone on to reassure them, it is claimed, that he was “confident there was no proof” of his wrongdoing. Sheridan then announced that he was going to launch a libel claim against the paper to demonstrate his ‘innocence’ and urged the leadership to back him,

and in so doing defend the good name of the SSP. As he had ‘confessed’ his guilt, the Committee majority declined to “participate in a cover-up” and insisted on him standing down. Sheridan angrily refused the suggestion that he made any such concession, condemning those who claim otherwise as ‘scabs’.

Agreeing to relinquish his post while fighting the court case, Sheridan went before the television cameras to announce that he was standing down because he wished to spend “more time with his family”. SSP national co-ordinator Alan McCombes rejected press speculation that “a back-stabbing cabal” had engineered “a coup d’etat” to oust Sheridan but, like the party’s official statement, hinted at other ‘personal’ issues that were also involved.

In the run-up to the trial, the *News of the World*’s solicitors demanded access to the minutes from the decisive Executive meeting – certain that a Sheridan confession would exonerate their journalists and win them the case. SSP leaders initially refused to hand over the document, with McCombes even jailed temporarily for contempt of court, until the papers were finally released. The document (now freely available on the SSP web site) presented the ‘facts’ as recorded by the anti-Sheridan majority: reporting that he had openly confessed to his ‘misdemeanours’.

In May 2006, Sheridan issued an Open Letter, denouncing his SSP opponents and claiming that their hostility to his court action was in fact a cover for their efforts to flee from ‘class-based’ politics. McCombes – a former Militant comrade of Tommy’s – retorted that Sheridan’s contention was a “grotesque distortion and [an] outright fabrication”.

In the summer of this year, Sheridan launched his £200,000 defamation action. The court case proved to be a new nadir for the SSP. Amidst acrimonious exchanges, the resentful leadership majority appeared one-by-one in the witness box to insist that their former comrade was a fraudster and a charlatan, while Sheridan (who quickly dismissed his legal team to represent himself) condemned them as jealous fantasists who were out to ruin him. The sense of humiliation on all sides was palpable, while the five-week trial effectively paralysed the operation of the party.

On 4th August, the jury returned their majority verdict, finding in favour of Sheridan by seven votes to four. Sheridan declared it a resounding ‘working class’ victory (delivered by the working class – in the guise of the panel of jurors; and for the working class – personified by Sheridan himself). Sheridan immediately went on the offensive and announced his intention to ‘destroy’ those who had opposed him; while McCombes dismissed Sheridan as a “walking, talking time-bomb”.



The SSP leadership majority had been all-but certain that Sheridan would lose the court case, and be politically marginalised as a consequence. New SSP National Convenor MSP Colin Fox had now to prepare to defeat the attempt by a vengeful Sheridan to reclaim his throne at the party’s rescheduled national conference in October.

Both the SSP’s leadership majority and Sheridan began a headcount of their allies. While the SSP’s leaders could count on the loyalty of four of the party’s MSPs (Member of the Scottish Parliament), Sheridan sought to rally support amongst the party branch network. As he did so, Sheridan knew that he could also count on the backing of the Socialist Workers Party. The SWP in Scotland has for some time acted as an official ‘platform’ within the SSP and – despite their criticisms of Sheridan – had decided that his star was still in the ascendant.

With the SWP leaders agreeing to support a split, Sheridan pre-empted any possibility of defeat at conference by launching the new Solidarity Party on 3rd September in a Glasgow hotel, the day after an SSP re-launch rally in the same venue. The first post-split issue of *Socialist Worker* saw it immediately swap affiliation to Solidarity and away from the SSP which it had campaigned for until the week before. The ex-Militant Committee for a Workers’ International (CWI) – another internal

SSP fraction – also backed their former boss and decamped with him. Since the SSP tore itself in two, both the original party and its new breakaway challenger have fought bitterly for control of money and members.

The conflict was reignited with the publication on 1st October by the *News of the World* of the transcript of what it claimed was a secretly-videotaped confession by Sheridan. The transcript was sold to the paper by SSP activist George McNeilage, who insisted that he only took the *News of the World*’s money in order to prove that the court’s finding was perverse. The SSP majority was triumphant and demanded that Sheridan and his solitary MSP supporter should now leave office. Sheridan meanwhile dismissed the recording as a forgery (unless he was now going to confess, there was little else that he could do). Sheridan still has good reason to be anxious at the prospect of the *News of the World*’s upcoming court appeal. While the secret tape led some Solidarity supporters to wobble, the SWP studiously ignored the question of whether the tape was genuine whilst bigging-up Sheridan’s campaigning credentials (having burnt their SSP bridges, they had little alternative).

Whatever happens next, it is inconceivable that Sheridan will go down without a fight, and conspiracy of those he insists are out to finish him.

Fox meanwhile projects a duller traditional leftist public image than his populist predecessor, whilst urging the party’s followers to learn the lessons of the ‘cult of personality’.

It is a truism of party politics that splits and schisms usually repel more members than they attract. Once the shakedown of the SSP as-was has ended, it’s likely that solidarity and (the relaunched) SSP will be weaker separately than they were together. The British left’s latest ‘last great hope’ for revival and reunification (though only for those north of the English-Scottish border) is likely to end in another cruel disappointment – just like the Socialist Alliance before it (wound up in acrimony to clear the political ground for Respect) and the Socialist Labour Party before that (which fell victim to Scargill’s unyielding Stalinist policies and practice).

The Scottish Socialist Party’s latest difficulties have been caused by an internal power struggle set in motion by the actions of the tabloid press and the courts. How much better would it have been if the SSP’s had been plunged into crisis by a rising tide of uncompromising militancy which had swept the party and its politics aside? Those really interested in the battle to ‘make capitalism history’ (as the SSP’s conference slogan shamelessly pretends the party is) need to do more than gloat at the Sheridan debacle.

# Commentary

## FREEDOM

Volume 67 Number 23

### 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

Freedom Press are currently putting together a marketing department to publicise the range of books available and, as of next year, not only will Freedom be sporting a slight redesign but we will be also taking on board a new regular columnist.

We are also going to begin a new fundraising drive, having largely left pleas for you to take out your wallets off the paper's pages for a while. Our 'Fold 'n' Frank fundraiser' will be looking to raise money to buy a folding machine and a franking machine for the mailout. More on this another time but don't let that stop you from sending in donations early!

We have a comprehensive jobs list (contact details below). We need:

- An organiser for prep work for the Freedom mailout to phone around and remind volunteers to show up;
- Mailout volunteers;
- A hacklab/bookshop regular so both the bookshop and hacklab can be covered at the same time;
- A volunteer to deal with Freedom's invoices;
- Fundraising gig person to er, put on gigs and such.

### Contact details

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### Next issue

The next issue will be dated 16th December 2006 and the last day to get copy to us for that issue will be Thursday 7th December. 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.

### The engaging Mrs Pritchard

A fantasy television series, written by Sally Wainwright (on Tuesday 3rd October 2006, BBC1) about a northern supermarket manageress, Mrs Pritchard, played by Jane Horrocks, who stops two politicians fighting during an election, and, announcing "Politics isn't rocket science!" ends up as Prime Minister, has got a lot of people talking.

Folk are fed up with all the spin, the lies and the corruption of mainstream politics. They know it isn't going anywhere, and sense that David Cameron is simply Tony Blair mark two, for all his weblogs and attempts to underplay his Old Etonian background. The television show has captured the popular imagination, because people sense that there is a lot that is wrong out there, and that a heavy dose of common sense is needed to put things right. What if a straight talking, northern supermarket manageress did capture the hearts and minds of the electorate? What if Mrs Pritchard really did manage to get herself elected to No 10?

There is a sense, of course, that the media and the establishment are out to get her. Protest politics stands quite outside the 'usual channels', and tries to change things. People have given up on the illusions of electoralism, or the idea of a Labour Party, for example, which will truly represent the people.

How can we change the system from inside? We remember Martin Bell, the man in a white suit standing against Neil Hamilton, or recall the Kidderminster doctor, but Tony Blair and his machine are still there, as powerful and as false as ever. Even supposing that a Mrs Pritchard could find her way to the levers of power, she would quickly find that those levers don't connect with anything. It is all very entertaining (in a sick-making way), this trivial soap opera of politics which we suffer daily, mistaking the surface froth of all the factions, parties, cliques and conspiracies in conflict, whereas all the real process goes on deep beneath, in the silent shifting of those invisible, invincible, tectonic plates.

There is a saying related to gambling, 'the house always wins'. Mrs Pritchard, just like Blair, and no doubt Brown and the others, will remain at the mercy of the process. It is conflict between aims, goals and the method.

Nice people are at a disadvantage when pitted against the nasties. There is long tradition of these kind of stories, sympathy for the underdog, the long-suffering public, going back to the Ealing Comedies and beyond, where plucky locals take

on the system (*Whisky Galore*, *The Titfield Thunderbolt* or *Passport to Pimlico*). Just before the 2005 G8 conference at Gleneagles, there was *The Girl in the Café*.

The reality is that it is harder and harder for ordinary people to engage with the political process. If the house always wins, then it is better to be the house, never to be a punter. Politicians shelter behind their concrete fences and their laws forbidding protest. The closest the ordinary public ever gets to them is during elections, for example when Diana Gould out-handbagged Margaret Thatcher during the 1983 election, or when the egg thrower came to feel John Prescott's fist, or for a few seconds when a real life Mrs Pritchard gets to harangue Tony Blair for the NHS cuts.

Stephen Booth

### Fellow workers

Please find below a message to trade unionist and members of the wider labour movement.

Members of the National Union of Journalists (NUJ) and the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW), employed through the Scottish Parliament as case-workers, researchers and parliamentary assistant's for the SSP group, are now involved in an industrial dispute with Tommy Sheridan MSP and Rosemary Byrne MSP.

After two months of negotiations the dispute has been officially sanctioned by the National Executive Council of the NUJ. It is also fully supported by the IWW.

The dispute has been caused because the two MSPs have ripped up a collective agreement with the workers and have unilaterally broken a contract agreed to in May 2005.

On the 18th November 2006 the National Executive Council of the Union gave full backing to the workers involved in the dispute. Workers in the NUJ Chapel will now be asking for support from the wider labour and trade union movement. This dispute needs to be settled quickly before the eleven workers involved face the prospect of being issued with redundancy notices.

In 2005 the SSP Group and SSP Parliamentary Workers signed a collective agreement where individual workers would no longer be employed by individual MSPs. Money was taken from each of the MSPs. Allowances were deposited in a collective pool to pay workers wages. From that date workers were employed under a joint contract of employment with all the MSPs.

Three months ago Tommy Sheridan MSP and Rosemary Byrne MSP resigned from the Scottish Socialist Party and the Parliamentary Group. They then withdrew £24,000, previously deposited into the pooled resources of the Group. This

was done with the connivance of the Scottish Parliament Corporate Body who had originally advised all parties in how to set up the contract in the first place. By withdrawing this money from the pool Tommy Sheridan and Rosemary Byrne have breached their contract of employment with the workers. The short-fall means that there will not be enough funds to pay workers their wages for March and April 2007. Effectively Sheridan and Byrne are forcing workers into redundancy. They have rejected offers to solve this dispute and come to an agreement that would mean the continued employment of all the workers involved. They have refused to replace the money from their allowances to pay workers they previously employed.

To comply with employment legislation the SSP Group may be forced to issue redundancy notices within the next month. This will make 11 workers unemployed in February 2007, two months before their contract would normally finish.

The contract was agreed after taking advice and direction from the Scottish Parliament Corporate Body (SPCB). Whilst the Chapel recognise the main dispute is with Sheridan and Byrne who have broken their contract of employment with the workers. The Chapel also believe that the Scottish Parliament must recognise and take responsibility for their role in the process which has led to the current situation.

Although the remaining SSP MSPs who make up the group may be put in the intolerable situation of issuing redundancy notices the NUJ members are in no doubt who has caused the situation. They are in no doubt who their dispute is with. They are in no doubt who can resolve the situation.

Rosemary Byrne and Tommy Sheridan must put aside petty political squabbles and honour their agreed contract with the workers. Workers are suffering as a consequence of their intransigence. It is ironic that the two MSP boast about their support for trade unions and workers in struggle when they are riding roughshod over the pay and conditions of trade union members.

The NUJ Chapel in the Parliament would like to make it clear that they this is not about the political differences the two MSPs have with the SSP. This is purely a trade dispute. It is about guaranteeing the pay and conditions of workers. It's about ensuring collective agreements are honoured.

This dispute needs the support of the wider movement. The NUJ Chapel have appealed to trade unionists and supporters.

Davy Landels

Send messages of support to nujspchapel@hotmail.co.uk

Sign the on-line petition at ipetitions.com/petition/nujspchapel

### No nukes are good nukes

Blair is seeking to win cabinet agreement on a replace for Trident, the UK's 'independent' nuclear deterrent (bought from the US). The cabinet will, undoubtedly, role over and agree – particularly as Brown is echoing (as usual) Blair. The problem is, who, exactly, will the new missile system deter? The old excuse, the Soviet Block, is gone. Few would consider Cuba or North Korea sufficient replacements. Hence the silly talk of the new nukes as insurance against unknown and unforeseen enemies.

The money is huge – an estimated at £20-£76bn over 30 years. This would

be better spent improving, say, the NHS rather than lining the pockets of US arms corporations. However, such a decision would hardly be in keeping with New Labour's priorities of bolstering the corporate sector. May we make a suggestion? Since they are so keen on privatisation, why not create a bank account into which people who want such 'deterrence' can fork-out the money to pay for it?

### Where Bush gets it from...

The former US president George Bush Snr was forced into a defence of his son when a visit to United Arab Emirates went wrong in November. An audience of young business leaders whooped and whistled in approval when a woman told him: "We do not respect your son. We do not respect what he's doing all over the world."

Showing his grasp of reality, Daddy Bush stated that: "My son is an honest man." before making the Orwellian comment that: "He is working hard for peace." So starting wars is working for peace? He then came out with this classic non sequitur: "How come everybody wants to come to the United States if the United States is so bad?" Obviously the lying liberal media and Hollywood types who fail to present the facts about a country with soaring inequality, stagnating wages and low (and falling) social mobility have a lot to answer for!

IM

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### Mental health

➡ page 1

decision to treat someone without their consent. The government's intention is to empower a wider range of healthcare professionals to take these decisions.

Treatment without consent can now only be given if a person has a 'mental disorder'. Again the government wants to expand the definition of mental disorder. This, if used widely, could conceivably include immoral conduct, promiscuity, anti-social or eccentric behaviour and different political or cultural beliefs.

Dave E

Sources of Information: rethink.org, Dept. of Health: dh.gov.uk

### Quiz answers

1. Sauerkraut – renamed during the First World War in the US because of anti-German sentiment.
2. David Graeber, who was not rehired by Yale University for his politics.
3. Manchester.
4. Freedom Press, publishers of this paper.

## The Anarchist Quiz Book

Who said "I shit on all the revolutionary vanguards of this planet"? Find out in the new Anarchist Quiz Book from Freedom Press, compiled by Martin Howard and illustrated by Paul Petard.

Some say that it should not be the highest priority of a revolutionary movement to ask itself obscure questions, but it's good fun and if it encourages an enquiring mind to find out more, than all the better. So agitate, educate and organise, all in this very handy question and answer format!

Get your copy now for £5 (post free) by mail order from Freedom Press, 84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1 7QX (cheque/PO made out to Freedom Press) or from www.freedompress.org.uk



# REVIEW

## To call *An Inconvenient Truth* 'the' movie about climate change would be a liberal interpretation, suggests Rob Ray

In theory, *An Inconvenient Truth* should be an excellent movie about the damage being done to the world by excessive pollution. It certainly has some substantial points in its favour. Host (and major subject of the film in his own right) Al Gore is an engaging and clearly serious advocate of the seriousness of global warming. He is aided by what seems to be a fairly hefty budget, some outstanding research and a wide range of flashy graphics.

More than this, Gore has possession of some absolutely stunning time-lapse photography, and satellite imagery which is truly shocking. Images from around the world of deep and consistent permafrost melting, the droughts of some and the floods of others, of wildlife decimation, and most terrifying of all a colossal animated damage report for the world's worst happen, are easily the stand-out moments of the film.

However Gore's mission, and the influence his film could conceivably have, is severely undermined throughout. Largely this is due to Gore.

Introducing himself as the man who "was the next president of the United States" (a phrase which instantly undermined his credibility in the US Senate, as Republicans scrambled to brand his film as an opportunist bid to retake the Democrat crown), Gore's presence throughout the film is hugely damaging.

Not least this is because of an ongoing hypocrisy and elitism showing sharply through his work. He flies first class to lectures, which he is then driven to in an SUV and shows up on a huge plasma screen using fuel-intensive stunts to make his points on the need for very personal sacrifices on the part of the general public.

Though he repeated makes the point that he has done "thousands of lectures around the world" on the subject, he never takes the bus himself.

Fundamentally, this is not something to be shocked by. The content of the movie is not aimed at a mass audience, but at the sorts of movers and shakers,

middle class consumers and politicians who he can meet easily on his level.

When he says "why don't you buy a hybrid car", he doesn't mean everyone should, just those who can afford it. Similarly, when he says "we can solve climate change together", every example he gives of how this can be done is centred around what's in it for the well-to-do.

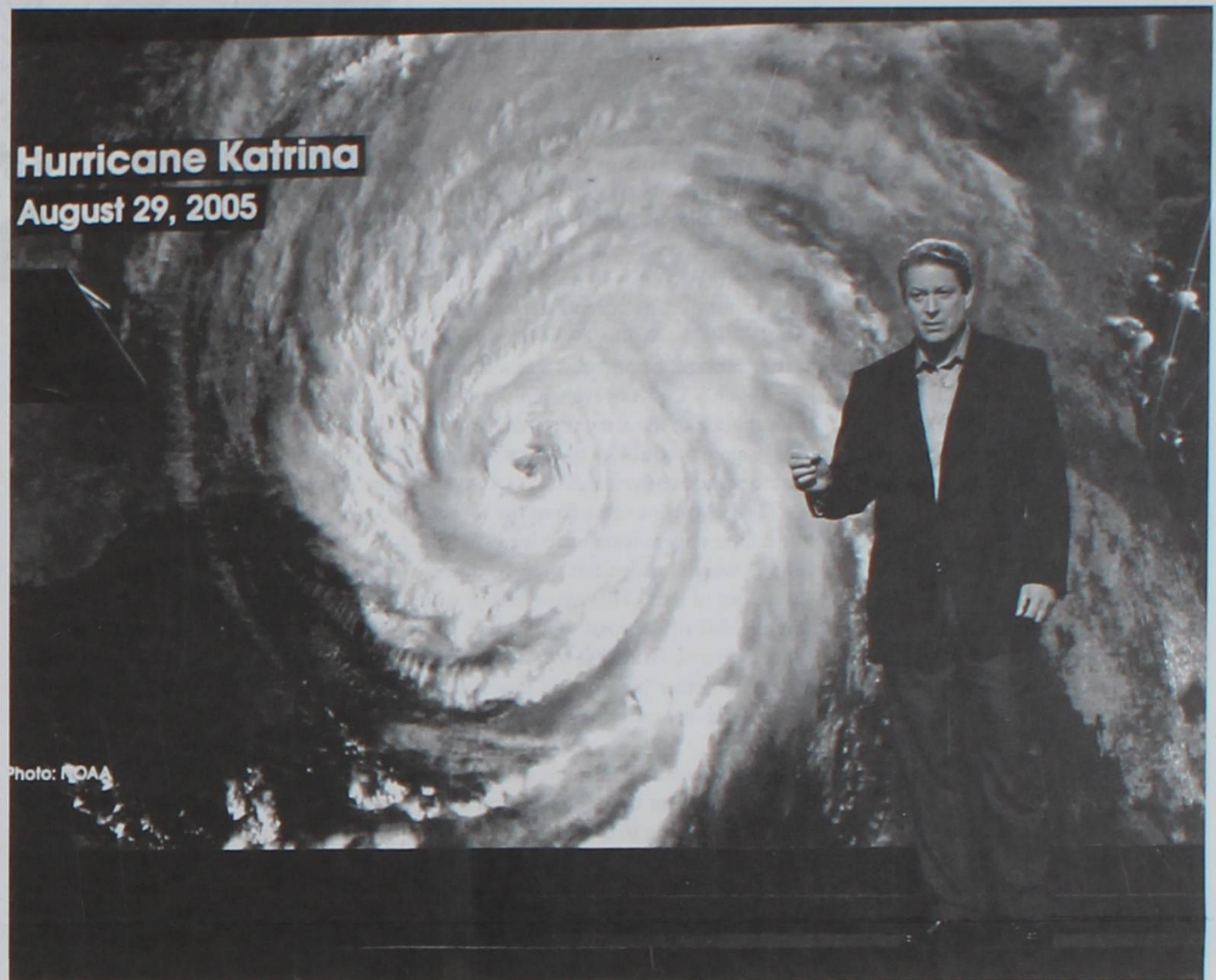
There isn't, necessarily, anything wrong with this as a strategy. Clearly the wealthy are the ones who consume too much – it is rare to see poor people running around in air-conditioned MPVs or flying across the globe on a day-to-day basis.

Some of his points will doubtless hit hard in the homes of the rich, and perhaps a larger percentage of them will spend their money in a more eco-friendly manner, but a means of solving the ecological crisis in an evenhanded manner they aren't.

He is not advocating that the wealthy stop living beyond their means, merely that what they do buy should be 'green'. Even with maximum take-up his plans only slow the process of change, they don't stop or reverse it. The hope he has is apparent – while continuing to allow the elites to live how they wish, the way in which the world provides their luxuries must change, and they must look magnanimous by buying the right kinds of ecologically 'ethical' brands, until technology catches up.

At its heart, his philosophy remains a hugely unequal one. He is not asking the rich to reform themselves and become advocates of a 'one for all, all for one' philosophy, he is asking that they buy for the planet, the same as they would buy for a starving African child – and the measure is about as effective in the long term.

What becomes clear, although he skirts the subject in comparison to headline terrors and pleas for personal enlightenment, is that economic reforms are the lodestone of Gore's Plan Earth. He waxes lyrical about the advantages a greener big business will bring, from greater energy-saving efficiencies, to



major PR triumphs and the revitalisation of flagging US sectors.

He is clearly in his element here, but it is a hollow exhortation to the teeming billions who would have to fuel this revolution in industrial might.

Belts would have to tighten for the switchover from fossils to green energy in China, massive funds would have to be found for reinvestment and the rebuilding of almost everything consumed in the production of involuntaries everywhere. Nowhere is he saying that having led us to this impasse, ignoring the evidence and the warnings, piling up ignominy, that the business leaders whose fault this is should be dipping into their own pockets. This is business as usual, and the working class will pay.

The talks themselves never seem destined to make it out of his comfort zone either. They are delivered to a rapturously appreciative audience, who seem to know only too well where he's coming from.

They wear chic clothes, they gasp at all the right moments and in all the clips shown seem to hero worship Gore for his brave stand.

Much of the film in the fact is given over to a biography of 'the great man', from his days as a farmer father, it follows through his university years and his days in the legislature (apparently the move was inspired by his green lecturers), to extensive and gratuitous shots of him looking pensive and poring over files related to climate change.

Throughout, the impression is given that the director wishes to imprint a false, universal chumminess with a politician who, through his time at the Whitehouse, his clear wealth and subsequent hypocrisy, there seems little reason to like.

His analysis of the problems that the excesses of the wealthy have caused is not something that can be doubted, but he is a politician, a member of the capitalist upper class, and a powerful potential influence, not on how our planet could be saved, but on how the wealthy can continue to make money while doing so. His film reflects his thinking, and while it is a useful source of information on the problem, it is as far from an acceptable solution to climate change as can be found.

## BOOKS

### **Oath Betrayed: Torture, Medical Complicity and the War on Terror**

by Steven Miles  
Random House, \$23.95

The subtitle sums it up. Doctors are usually thought to be more or less benign, if sometimes patronising, bossy and smug. However, they have historically been complicit in all sorts of dodgy behaviour, notoriously in Nazi Germany. They are, after high status and privileged. It is not surprising that they tend to be rather conservative, establishment figures.

This book is an updating, taking advantage of the American Freedom of Information laws. The tone is set by a quotation from Dostoevsky, questioning whether the greatest good for 'human

destiny' could justify the sacrifice of a single child.

Some teasers; the search revealed the existence of 35,000 pages of official documents. The CIA and FBI seem to be aware from their knowledge that torture tends to produce 'bad information', torturers get the answers they want, which of course is why they want it! How about an example of an individual, al Libi (Reg. No. 11No2001), caught by the US authorities and 'extremely renditioned' to Egypt, providing 'evidence' which was later used as proof of weapons of mass destruction and the involvement of al Qaeda.

A pentagon document of June 2006 makes a careful distinction of its pet doctors between 'healer' and 'non-healer'. The difference? The latter can supervise

interrogations and help devise plans to break down prisoners.

These may include threats using dogs, mock executions, sexual humiliation and threats.

The author concludes that all this makes torture a "predictable, if not preferred outcome".

All this will come as no surprise to anarchists but still a useful book.

David Peers

### **The Assassination Attempt on Franco from the Air: 1948**

by Antonio Tellez

Kate Sharpley Library, £5

This is the first KSL title to be issued in book format, and a very nice production job has been done on it, albeit with perfect binding. The relation of the

failed attempt on Franco's life is only part of this volume, as it is supplemented by background materials including the assassination of Spanish Premier, Eduardo Dato in 1927; a biography of the colourful life of ace counterfeiter Laureano Cerrada Santos together with the bust of his underground press and the discovery of an arms cache in France in 1949 and finally his murder in Paris in 1977; various details of the aircraft used in the attempt – including its discovery in 1951 and sale in 1955. The package is wrapped up with Stuart Christie's obituary of Antonio Tellez Sola.

The actual assassination attempt proved an exercise in futility due to inadequate preparation, and it seems it was only the fact the plane was still

sporting its original French civil aviation markings meant that it wasn't shot down when intercepted by Spanish planes over the sea near to where Franco was due to attend a regatta at San Sebastian. A follow-up attempt to bomb the Ayete Palace, also in San Sebastian, where Franco was staying, had to be abandoned due to bad weather at the airfield where the plane was stationed.

A fascinating episode in the story of anarchist resistance to the Franco regime, told with all the detail you'll ever want to know.



## A Sideways Look

The collapse of the Farepak Christmas hamper business is a scandal in so many ways. It typifies the sort of business that preys on the poor, selling overpriced Christmas hampers to people who are unable to save to buy what they need from cheaper places. An estimated 40,000 families have lost up to £40 million and may get as little as 4% back.

The biggest scandal is of course the profiteering scum who ran the company and the greedy bankers who bled it. The scheme collapsed in October after its parent company, European Home Retail (EHR), went bust. The firm's bankers, Halifax Bank of Scotland (HBOS), took money that they knew belonged to savers in the scheme to pay off EHR's debts. Both the bank and the firm's directors are blaming each other, but it all adds up to very little unless they put their hands in their pockets. HBOS have pledged £2 million towards the Relief Fund set up to help people who've lost their savings, but only did so after criticism. And it has to be said, for a bank who have projected profits of £5.2 billion this year, it's a drop in the ocean. EHR's bosses are hardly impoverished, either. Director Nick Gilodi-Johnson had an estimated share dividend from the parent company EHR of £445,000, on top of his pay! The Farepak chairman, Sir Clive Thompson, got £100,000 for this part-time job while earning shedloads elsewhere.

A lot of media attention has focused on what bad value Farepak was, and wondered why people might have used it. A study calculated that the same hamper bought in Tesco's would cost up to a third less. So why did people save with Farepak?

The first reason has to be that it is accessible to anyone who knows an agent, through whom the firm sold its goods. There are no accessible savings accounts for a lot of people any more. In a lot of working class areas banks and building societies have deserted and there is little option of banking at the Post Office any more. The current Post Office account won't even take pay cheques. And the agents are often relatives, which is another incentive for people to save with them. Those who are mobile can get to a bank easily enough, but, not long after the Farepak collapse, banking giant HSBC announced that its First Direct subsidiary would start to charge £10 a month for banking for poor people. Clearly, if you want to save small amounts and take it all out once a year you are not likely to be the sort of customer banks are falling over themselves to attract.

The other alternative to a scheme like Farepak is putting cash in a jar or under a mattress. One irony is that Farepak probably seemed safer to many people living in high crime areas or who didn't trust themselves not to dip into it.

Given that there are good reasons why people chose to use this method of saving for Christmas, I've been almost

as offended by the snobbishness displayed about them as by the greed of the bank and company.

Svartfrosk

## Blast from the Past

Taken from Freedom, 5th December 1953, entitled Colonialism on Trial:

The trial of Captain Griffiths in Nairobi last week comes hard upon a similar trial of a young officer in Tanganyika which was recently discussed in *Freedom*. One trial resulted in an acquittal, the other in a nominal sentence; but both really constitute an indictment of colonial military methods which make the guilt or otherwise of the individual accused a secondary and minor matter.

What are the facts conceded in the present case? Captain Griffiths in evidence said that he was on patrol duty in a restricted area, i.e. one in which Africans were not allowed, and he had told his company sergeant major that he could shoot any African who came out of the forest in this area "even if they were all PWD" (Public Works Department). This latter remark, he added, "was a figure of speech". It is however significant of the attitude of the army towards Africans, and amounts to advice to 'shoot first and ask questions afterwards'.

Three Africans came from the forest and their papers were examined. An old man's were in order, but the two others were out of date. They were told to wait by the side of the road, but instead (according to Griffiths) sought to run away. (Another witness said they walked away and were shot in the back as they did so.)

Here we come to a point which is more important than the question of guilt. According to a *Times* report from Nairobi dated 27th November: "In his summing-up the Judge-Advocate said that the accused would have been justified in killing the arrested suspects provided that they could not in any other way be prevented from escaping." This is the famous 'law of escape' which has permitted thousands of people in all countries to be killed by police or army without trial or any serious subsequent calling to account of the officers involved. The Judge-Advocate referred to the Africans as the 'arrested men' but in the newspaper reports there does not appear any account of arrest, but only of their papers being checked.

The 'law of escape' which provided Captain Griffiths with the 'justification' for firing, is something absolutely alien to all reasonable ideas of justice. Yet it is part and parcel of the ideas of colonialism, and in itself symbolises the attitude of a colonial power to the subject peoples.

This attitude emerged in the Tanganyika trial already referred to, and was even more thoroughly exposed in Griffiths' trial at Nairobi. Thus Captain Joy, who was with Griffiths, said he thought the area in which the operation took place was a prohibited area and therefore members of the armed forces had the



right to shoot any African there. When the President of the Court, Major-General T. Brodie, asked him if he had orders to that effect, Joy replied that he had got the impression from conversations in the officer's mess.

## Imagine if...

Heads Recruitment's managing director, Chris Gorton, put on padding and a huge helmet as he readied himself for the day. He was sweating.

Quite frankly, he was terrified. By inadvertently sending large numbers of agency staff into JJB during a strike, he had stirred up a hornet's nest. He just hoped it wasn't too late.

He had told a recruitment agency industry magazine: "We are getting dragged into [the GMB] campaign to cause industrial unrest. They are industrial terrorists." As the clock hit 8.30am, time to go, he checked below the van for bombs. Nothing so far.

He turned the key in the ignition slowly, worrying that at any minute Industrial Terrorism could strike. Still nothing.

As he maneuvered the van through the special security gates however he got a shock. GMB secretary Paul Kenny was glaring at him from just outside.

With trembling fingers Chris wound down the window. "Yes?"

Kenny put his hand in his pocket. Chris ducked. When it came out again it was holding a notepad. "Um, you don't mind awfully not calling us terrorists do you?" "FUCK YOU!" Chris screamed. "I don't give in to terrorism! I'll call the police!" "Alright then, sorry to disturb." Kenny ambled off.

Chris muttered to himself as he drove on. "And to think that these commie bastards haven't all been locked up yet..."

## Listings

3rd December 'Car Crawl' protest against planned Newhaven Incinerator – the world's first drive-thru protest? See [dove2000.org](http://dove2000.org) or [no-burn.org](http://no-burn.org)

8th December It's the Kebele social centre's eleventh anniversary, we now own the place outright, we're revamping everything and we're even fixing the roof, so in true Kebele style, we're having a party – and you are all invited from 10pm until late at The Black Swan, 438 Stapleton Road, Bristol, for more info see [kebelesocialcentre@riseup.net](http://kebelesocialcentre@riseup.net)

11th December Block the Builders at AWE Aldermaston, Newbury, West Berkshire, where Britain's Trident nuclear warheads are assembled – the action is in the morning so for free accommodation the night before call 02077002393, for more info see [blockthebuilders.org.uk](http://blockthebuilders.org.uk) [cnduk.org](http://cnduk.org) or email [btb@aldermaston.net](mailto:btb@aldermaston.net)

19th December Preston SolFed public meeting, 'Why Santa is a bastard', from 7.30pm at DISC, 103 Church Street, Preston, for info call 07707256682 or see [solfed.org.uk/](http://solfed.org.uk/)

29th December Manchester Critical

Mass, meet 6pm at Central Library, Manchester, for more info see <http://velorution.x21.org.uk>

12th January 'Road: Artists and the Stop the M11 Link Road Campaign', an exhibition of photography by the Photography and the Archive Research Centre, 10am to 4.30pm at the Podium Lecture Theatre, London College of Communication, free entry, for more info email [a.marchant@lcc.arts.ac.uk](mailto:a.marchant@lcc.arts.ac.uk)

26th January Manchester Critical Mass, meet 6pm at Central Library, Manchester, for more info see <http://velorution.x21.org.uk>

28th January Social Centres Gathering with discussion, practical workshops, sharing ideas, skills and experience followed by cabaret and cocktails at the 1in12 Club, Albion Street, off Fulton Street, Bradford, for info call 01274 734160 or see [1in12.com](http://1in12.com), accommodation available, contact 01274 745002 or [hive@riseup.net](mailto:hive@riseup.net)

10th March The Sixth International @ternative Bookfair in Gent at De Centrale, Kraankindersstraat 2, Gent, Belgium, from 10am-8pm – apart from books, etc., there will be a programme of conferences, workshops, video showings and performances, for info see [www.aboekenbeurs.be](http://www.aboekenbeurs.be) or contact [aboekenbeurs@yahoo.com](mailto:aboekenbeurs@yahoo.com)

## The quiz

1. What is liberty cabbage?
2. Who wrote *Fragments of an Anarchist Anthropology*?
3. Where is the XXIII congress of the International Workers Association due to be held in December 2006?
4. What was founded by Charlotte Wilson in 1886?

Answers on page 6

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