

# FREEDOM

80P ANARCHIST NEWS AND VIEWS

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INSIDE ►► Special summer preview issue: We interview organisers for Earth First!, the Schnews Alternative Media Gathering, i07 and more...

## PREPARE YOURSELF

Activity around the country is shaping up to be some of the most organised seen in the UK for many years. Alongside longstanding protests such as the DSEI arms fair and the G8 (to be held this year in Germany) which will have seen months of preparation by the time they come around, there is social centre networking, media training, new organising in education and in community politics and a number of events such as the Projectile Film Festival and Anarchist Bookfair.

In this special issue we are looking into some of these events and initiatives to find out more about what we can expect, what the motivations of the organisers are and what it is expected to achieve.

### Social Centres

A meeting held in Leeds in January of the Social centre network has led to a rise in co-operation using online methods between different centres, with some exciting ideas such as touring speakers and meetings across the network being mooted. Although the network is still in its early stages, there is more communication happening between the various centres, old and new, around the country.

Individual centres, such as the Basements in Manchester and Liverpool, are among a new wave of both squatted and rented/owned premises providing support for anarchist activities, and it is hoped support from established

centres will help at least some of these to survive long-term.

### Media

With a slew of new regional news-sheets, websites and even video initiatives, anarchist media has progressed markedly recently, recovering strongly from the dead zone it had found itself in the run-up to 2000 with high-traffic websites such as Libcom and Indymedia, and improving standards and distribution volumes for the printed media as a whole. Schnews are proposing the first major media gathering for years to be held in May at the Cowley Club in Brighton. Full details are on page 3.

Both the London Anarchist Bookfair and the Projectile film festival continue to be centre points for anarchists to gather, and Projectile (see below) have outdone themselves with some outstanding work coming up. Anarchist publishing seems to be improving with new writing emerging, including the monumental Anarchist FAQ due later this year.

### Events

Although this issue is not focusing on the major spectacles of 2007, there are a number of camps and confrontations planned or ongoing this year, including against nuclear arms and war machines at Faslane 365 and Disarm DSEI in September, against climate destruction at this year's climate camp, planned for August,



MY BIG FAT GREEK RIOT COP: A policeman takes exception to photographers during solidarity marches in Greece against plans to legislate against public ownership of the university system. Marches took place across the country in early March, and aggressive police responses led to scores of arrests. Students have been injured and allegedly detainees have been denied access to lawyers. Tear gas and police charges have been used to break up peaceful demonstrations and riots spread in Thessaloniki city and Athens. Large protests against the plans, which come amidst moves to try and curb student radicalism in Greece by the government.

Earth First! in July, against the G8 in Germany in June and a wide range of other targets.

Participation in class-struggle issues also seems to be rising, including solidarity work in Manchester with

union struggles, NHS protest support across the country and increasingly

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## PROJECTILE: THE INTERVIEW

Freedom caught up with a member of the collective organising Projectile, the annual anarchist film festival in Newcastle.

**Freedom:** You've done two previous festivals, how do you think this one will compare?

**Projectile member:** We had tried to have less overlap between films and talks this year, but we ended up with so many items to fit in that we weren't as successful with that plan as we had hoped! There are fewer 'historical' films this year, I suppose that's one difference, although it wasn't intentional.

The cabaret night is definitely a bigger deal this time around-actual bands, more spoken word and poetry, and probably some weird art stuff going on as well. Maybe the only common factor is getting Dave Douglass to do a turn, but he doesn't need that much encouraging really.

**What would you recommend as potential highlights?**

The new documentary *Sacco and Vanzetti* is really excellent. For kicks, *The Anarchists* should keep you laughing in between fight sequences, it's ridiculous but I really liked it. We're all really looking forward to seeing *There Is No Authority But Yourself* too, as it's the one film we haven't previewed.

**What sort of background do the organisers have and how has that informed putting Projectile together?**

It's fair to say the one thing we all share is an interest in film, anarchism, and good nights out at the pub - as a

group of individuals, we represent a fair spread of different takes on anarchism as a political philosophy. When we put the first Projectile together three years ago, it was an effort to have a second 'national' event that, like the London Bookfair, would bring a lot of people together - but outside of London. There are other bookfairs about, so the idea of a cultural event with film at its core made sense.

**The Star and Shadow will be hosting, can you tell us a bit about that?**

The Star and Shadow Cinema is hands down one of the coolest community cultural projects ever. It's an all-volunteer cinema that began with the four collectives that programmed the Side Cinema, an older alternative venue in Newcastle.

What the Star and Shadow folks have done is rent about half of a large warehouse owned by the City of Newcastle and turn it into a great

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## DUBLIN BOOKFAIR

The 3rd March saw the second Dublin anarchist bookfair, held at the Teachers' Club. It was organised by the Workers Solidarity Movement and featured all the groups represented in Ireland as well as several from Britain.

There were stalls from anarchist groups and bookshop projects, such as the WSM, Just Books and Barracka Books of Cork, Organise, the Revolutionary Anarcho-Feminist Group, Revolt Video and Anarchist Prisoner Support. Also present were Class War, the AF and Libcom.org from Britain. Perhaps most interesting was a stall of Polish anarchists in Ireland, and had material in Polish both on anarchism and the rights of workers in Ireland.

That anarchism has enjoyed a healthy growth there was attested to by the variety and importance of the stalls and meetings led by campaign groups. These included Latin American Solidarity; the campaign against Shell building a gas pipeline at

Rosspoint; and the Justice for Terence Wheelock campaign. Terence Wheelock died in 2005 after being taken into police custody. His family have understandably asked questions about how this happened, but have been attacked by the Gardai for their pains.

The event started with a talk on 'What sort of Ireland we want', and there were also historical talks on Syndicalism in Ireland and William Thompson and a presentation of their work by Organise. The longest discussion was between the WSM, the Irish Socialist Network and eirigi (a community-oriented split from Sinn Fein) about what sort of Ireland they would like to see. In a break from the bookfair tradition in England that these two groups also had stalls.

From discussions with them, the organisers seemed happy with the numbers and atmosphere of the event and are likely to repeat it next year.

Martin H.

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# Home and away

## Another fine mess

A new report brought out by *Hazards* magazine has highlighted the ineffectual nature of levying fines on large corporations for malpractice, particularly relating to workplace injury.

To date, no executive of any major UK-based company has ever gone to prison for workplace safety offences. Although several firms have received seven-figure fines, such as BP – approx 1/8700th of their profit margin for last year – this has not led to significant changes in policy in most cases.

One example cited by *Hazards* was the Baker Panel Report, which traced systemic safety problems all the way back to the London-based global board and chief exec Lord Brown. Brown was personally blamed for the dangerous conditions his workforce laboured under, yet no pressure could be brought on him directly.

## Terminator view

The next generation of military communications has said 'Asta La Vista, Baby' to earth after it was launched from French Guiana on 10th March.

The system, apocalyptically named Skynet, is the latest successor to the UK's original 1969 scheme and has been done using the UK's very own self-created monster, PFI companies.

Communications services will be delivered by the owner and operator, Paradigm, part of Astrium Services, with the system, including the satellites, designed and built by Astrium Satellites.

## Usdaw make a stand

While almost every campaigning, social, union and NGO group has condemned the 17p rise in minimum wages imposed by the government this year, one brave union leadership has stood out from the crowd.

Udaw says a proposed 17p rise in the National Minimum Wage will be a key factor in driving up the living standards of Britain's three million retail staff.

The union, which has faced strong criticism for its tie-ins with Tesco, said the 17p rise would "help boost staff motivation".

## Amit&G

In the ballot to approve the creation of the as yet unnamed new union, the T&G gave the go-ahead by 86.4% for merger and Amicus members voted 70.1% for merger. Both unions achieved a 27% turnout.

The merger of the two unions will create a two million-strong membership. The merger has been subjected to sustained criticism from class struggle anarchist groups who believe the merger will act only to continue hiding systemic problems in the TUC union system which is seeing massive decline and low levels of militancy across the board.

## Trident arrests

Several people were arrested after blocking the roads around Parliament Square on Wednesday 14th March in protest over the government's plans to renew Britain's nuclear capability.

Nine people chained themselves together blocking the roads around Parliament Square just hours before MPs are to decide on the replacement of the Trident nuclear missile system.

One of the protesters, Mell Harrison, said "we were told that there would be a full and open debate but this has not happened. Even some people who are currently in favour of Trident are

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# Around the world

**CHINA:** A protest staged by thousands of rural workers in central China ended in violent clashes early this month, reports say. Several people were injured as up to 20,000 people clashed with 1,000 police in Hunan province on Friday, a local official told Reuters news agency.

The Boxun Chinese news website said the clash was sparked by rising public transport costs. Rural regions of China have seen mounting unrest in recent years.

Thousands of protests were held last year amid growing discontent over the widening gap between rich and poor and corruption among officials at local level and above.

The latest reported unrest came as the Chinese legislature, the National People's Congress, held its annual session in Beijing.

At least nine police cars were burnt during the clashes, the Boxun report said.

**DENMARK:** The eviction of the four storey Ungdomshuset (literally, Youth House) in Copenhagen sparked three days of rioting and forced the Danish



state to close its borders to foreigners coming to join the solidarity struggle.

Born out of the '80s squatter movement, Ungdomshuset was a rallying point for disaffected punk youth in Denmark and achieved a level of international fame through its massive gig space, a regular stop-off for bands on European tours. It also played host to a vegan kitchen, t-shirt printing, cinema, infoshop and was a place to meet and organise. To many who passed through its doors, it assumed a central role in their lives, and lived up to its name with the vast bulk of its scene made up of people under 25.

Solidarity marches have taken place across Europe, including a 3,000-strong march in Berlin (pictured left).

**IRAN:** About 10,000 teachers gathered in protest in front of the Parliament on Saturday 3rd March. The teachers demand the enactment of a Pay Parity bill, and a resolution to the problem of offering waivers for military service to teachers born after 1354 (1975-1976) who have completed their teaching obligations.

Like nurses, laborers and most hard-working peoples of society, the financial situation of teachers has become so dire that they, like many other groups, have had to take on second and third jobs and constantly face the spectre of not being able to provide for their families.

According to Mr. Hossein Raghfar, a consultant to the Minister of Welfare and Social Security, in the year 1383

(2003-2004) the poverty line for a family of five was 400,000 toomans, while the tens of thousands of adjunct teachers were getting by on a monthly salary of 35,000 to 45,000 toomans for teaching in the schools. Now, after the passage of two years, inflation has harnessed society and the poverty line is no less than 600,000 toomans per month. In the meantime, across the country, for example, an elementary school teacher with high levels of experience, and on the brink of retirement, makes an average monthly salary of 240,000 to 340,000 per month, and over 100,000 adjunct teachers receive only 140,000 to 160,000 toomans, and these adjuncts are not eligible for health insurance, and most social security benefits, and do not get paid for the three months of summer.

**KENYA:** Grassroots social movement Bunge La Mwananchi (The People's Parliament) have been organising in slum communities and over bread-and-butter issues for 15 years.

It is a non-hierarchical movement organising for alternatives to the current situation in Kenya. It is part of the constitutional reform process in Kenya and has run campaigns on land, water and employment rights as well as the price of fuel, sugar and Unga (maize flour) following massive price hikes three years ago. Bunge has around 7,000 'official' members (many more participants and supporters) and convenes in Nairobi, Kisumu, Mombassa, Eldoret and Kibwezi.

They've been meeting daily in the Jevangee Gardens Park, Nairobi. On 10th March, police declared their forum an 'unlawful assembly', arresting 56 participants and injured five.

According to Koigi wa Wamwere, a member of Parliament in Kenya who is in solidarity with the people's parliament, the government of Kenya has the intention of permanently closing down people's parliament owing to its allegiance to the Chama cha mwananchi, (poor people's party), a newly registered party.

**USA:** Activists in the US believe that FedUp! co-founder, Kevin 'Rashid' Johnson's life may be in danger. In the past week, he has allegedly been maced, thrown into a wall, death threats made on his life and he has repeatedly been denied meals.

Information received suggests he is no longer allowed to receive mail, make phone calls or have visitors. This leaves him in total isolation. Rashid has been filing grievances against abusive guards for years, and also an outspoken member of the Black Liberation Movement.

A new young correctional officer by the name of C. Dutton, is the guard reported to have been responsible for much of the abuse and death threats.

It is asked that supporters call the Warden of Red Onion State Prison and Gene Johnson's office, the head of the Virginia Department of Corrections to demand:

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# Prison news

## Deerbolt kicks off

At the end of February young prisoners at Deerbolt Youth Offenders Institute kicked off twice in the same week. In the first uprising an estimated 40 prisoners completely destroyed a wing at the jail. It took prison riot squads eight hours to put down the mutiny, and a number of screws were injured, including one left with a fractured skull. The Home Office has made no mention of injuries caused to prisoners. A few days later, Deerbolt kicked off again, with prisoners taking over one of the remaining wings and holding it until the following day.

## ABC offices raided in Copenhagen

In early March, Copenhagen Anarchist Black Cross were busy helping to organise support for the hundreds of people arrested resisting the Ungdomshuset eviction, and in the subsequent police raids, when their own offices were raided. Everyone present was arrested and taken away, preventing them from offering legal and prisoner support. More info at [www.blackcross.dk](http://www.blackcross.dk)

## Polish antifascist denied parole

Tomasz Wilkoszewski, a Polish antifascist, serving 15 years for killing a nazi skinhead during a street fight, has been denied parole again. Tomek has now spent 11 years in jail. His lawyers are preparing an appeal against this latest decision, but in the meantime Tomek is very much in need of support.

• Tomasz Wilkoszewski, ZK, Orzechowa 5, 98-200 Sieradz, Poland.

## John Bowden pamphlet

The latest pamphlet produced by Leeds ABC is *Tear Down The Walls!* by John Bowden. Apart from two years spent on the run after a spectacular escape, John has been in jail since 1980, and spent most of his childhood in various forms of state institutions prior to that. He has been at the forefront of the British prison struggle for most of his time behind bars, and is able to describe his experiences articulately and powerfully.

*Tear Down The Walls!* includes two texts by John, the first being autobiographical, and the second a fierce condemnation of the prison system from an abolitionist point of view. The pamphlet also features an introduction by anarchist ex-prisoner Mark Barnsley, who served time with John in several prisons and segregation units. *Tear Down The Walls!* can be obtained directly from Leeds ABC, PO Box 57, Leeds, LS8 4WP. It costs £1.50 plus 50p (UK) postage. As with everything produced by Leeds ABC, all proceeds from the sale of this pamphlet will go towards the direct support of anarchist and class struggle prisoners. If you require more information you can email Leeds ABC at [leedsabc@riseup.net](mailto:leedsabc@riseup.net)

**New animal rights prisoners**  
On 6th March three British animal

rights activists were jailed for their part in a non-violent campaign against Huntindon Life Sciences. Mark Taylor, Suzanne Taylor, and Trish Portwine were accused of entering the offices of companies with links to HLS and demanding that those companies sever their ties.

They were also accused of organising loud demonstrations against the companies, and of taking photos of the people who worked for them. They were sentenced to four years, 2½ years, and 15 months respectively. Please send letters of support to:

- Mark Taylor, TT6636, HMP Belmarsh, Western Way, Thamesmead, London, SE28 0UB
- Suzanne Taylor, TM7154, HMP Cookham Wood, Rochester, Kent, ME1 3LU
- Teresa Portwine, TM7153, HMP Cookham Wood, Rochester, Kent, ME1 3LU.

## From Dusk 'til Dawn

*From Dusk 'til Dawn* is the title of the long-awaited book by former ALF prisoner Keith Mann, and is primarily Keith's personal perspective on the direct action wing of the Animal Liberation Movement. The book takes you on tour with the ALF as activists carry out raids, and allows the reader to gain a better understanding of the thinking and motivation of some of the people who work within ALF cells or alone. Keith lays before you his

personal view in a collection of stories which promise to, in turn; move, shock, entertain and enlighten. For more info see [fromdusktildawn.org.uk](http://fromdusktildawn.org.uk)

## Sad news about Thomas Tripp

From his supporters: "On Friday 2nd March, Thomas Tripp committed suicide at his home in Springfield, Oregon. Some of you will remember that Thomas was associated with a group of rebel prisoners in Oregon who came to be known as the 'Children of the River' during his five years in prison. He regularly contributed writings to anarchist and prisoner support publications. He was released from prison in late 2003 and became friends with many people in Eugene's radical community. Thomas had a difficult time adjusting to life on the outside with all of the barriers and obstacles that exist for ex-cons, especially those suffering from post-traumatic stress and living with no real resources. Thomas was an intelligent, fun and sweet person who will be missed by all who knew him."

## ABC updates

Leeds ABC now send out a regular e-bulletin containing news of the international prison struggle, updates on political prisoners, and information about forthcoming events. To receive it, email [LeedsABC@riseup.net](mailto:LeedsABC@riseup.net) and ask to be put on their mailing list.

compiled by Mark Barnsley



# News

## The great media hoedown

A major new alternative media gathering has been called by Schnews, Rob Ray interviews the organisers

Following a recent resurgence of news-sheets and alternative media sources over the last few years, one of the most successful activist news-sheets of the last few years, Brighton-based *Schnews*, are calling a media gathering this May.

Titled 'M for Media Malarkey – the Schnews media gathering 2007', the three-day get together will see training and the chance to network and get involved for print, video, radio and online media, with screenings and introductory stalls.

*Freedom* caught up with 'Jo Makepeace' (the *Schnews* pseudonym) for an interview on their concept for the proposed conference.

"We decided that there hasn't been one for a long time and there are a lot of people who we aren't quite in touch enough with who are doing alternative media in Britain, such as yourselves.

"We wanted to get a lot of people together and the next job was to decide what we wanted to do once we did. It's all started taking shape, an agenda has emerged in the last few weeks. A couple of people have latched on to the idea that a lot of people are coming from an activist background and they don't know a lot about methods of research and other things which journalists do.

"Basically we think some of the research is a bit poor and people do newsletters and so on, which is good, but some of them suffer from pasting in Indymedia. If you're doing a regional newsletter you need to be able to say what's going on where you are rather than just running another article about Iraq."

Although the full details of the event, which runs from 11th to 13th



May, have not been confirmed yet, Jo told *Freedom* about the preliminary planning that is going on.

"On Friday it's mostly an evening and we're treating that as a screening and putting up stalls for the print publications, a lot of people will be drifting into Brighton late and a lot will be staying at the Cowley Club so there will be some socialising and then on the Saturday and the Sunday we'll be getting a set of workshops going.

"There's different things competing at the moment but at the moment

we're looking at a number of workshops; one could be from Tony Gosley, he does research stuff in Bristol and there's a couple of other journalists floating about who will be able to give different angles on research methods.

"Then maybe on the Sunday we might be able to do something more practical on how to put together and distribute publications, and as with reporting, a lot of activists aren't trained in design so there's that as well.

"So that's focused on the print side

of it. P, who does Schmovies is going to be doing the video. What we're talking about with improving people's skills this all applies to video people. It's hard to say whether these themes will transfer straight over to video people.

"We were going to bring in radio but there's not so much of it about, there's a handful of pirate stations, there's print video and web, obviously the regional Indymedia crews, Libcom and a number of others who are basically web publications – that's the

other thing, using the web as an activist resource.

"The focus at the end of the day is about promoting political activity and direct action campaigns. It's not about the media in itself, the media is a tool for that."

The alternative media gathering runs from 11th to 13th May at the Cowley Club, 12 London Road, Brighton.

Email [schnews@brighton.co.uk](mailto:schnews@brighton.co.uk) or call 01273 685 913 for more information.

## Mobilising educators

This June looks likely to see a resurgence in organising for the education sector, with an anarchist networking meeting involving three federations and individuals from around the country.

The education meeting held at last year's anarchist bookfair was one of the most successful of the day, with a surprisingly large response and an intention mooted to set up a full national meeting on the subject for this March.

Although the March gathering was not organised in time, it looks likely to happen in June, with Anarcho-syndicalists SolFed, Syndicalist Union the IWW and the Anarchist Federation coming together nationally for the first time over one issue.

*Freedom* spoke to members of SolFed and the IWW over what they expected from the event. 'Tony', from the IWW, said:

"I think the IWW is keen to work with other groups and unattached left-

libertarians, just because we recognise that none of us are particularly powerful and so if we club together we can make a bigger difference and have a bigger presence. The IWW is the biggest of the groups that are involved, but that doesn't make us able to go it entirely alone. I see the network as a good place from which we can mobilise for demos or pickets, get some anarchish agitprop out, and just generally keep each other informed with what we're up to and help each other out. There's no reason for us to fight over minute theoretical details when we've got so much more to fight against outside of our ghetto.

"Hopefully we can build for it better this time, with wider advertisement and clearer goals. I think it's nice to have a gathering of like-minded folks in the same industry, but I'd personally like to see it produce some good results that we can all go away and play with at our own workplaces."

One SolFed member in their Education Workers' Network (EWN) said: "The EWN discussed this at its recent conference, and will participate and help with the organising. We see the wider grouping as a useful discussion forum, but are not in favour of yet another anarchist education organisation emerging from it, not least because it would contain such a diversity of views within it as to make it unworkable."

A member of the AF said: "Our aim is to improve communications between education workers, to improve solidarity and co-operation. We are not trying to set up a new organisation. We'd like people to be able to work on common issues. It seems ridiculous that we don't co-operate already. Our network is fairly embryonic still. Mostly occasional communications between each other. We will be discussing how it's going at the AF conference in April. It is not intended as a rival for others."

## Earth First!

A member of this year's Earth First Organising collective explains what will be happening with the big green anarchist gathering:

July will see environmental activists from all over the UK, and possibly further afield, coming together in Norfolk for the fifth Earth First! Summer Gathering.

Earth First! in the UK is a loose-knit, network engaging in "Direct action for people and planet". The Earth First! Summer Gathering is an opportunity to skill-share, network and enjoy camping together with like-minded individuals.

The gathering will take place from Wednesday 18th to Sunday 22nd July. The exact location is kept secret until a couple of weeks before the gathering, in order to protect the land owner from harassment by the authorities until the last possible moment.

Last year's gathering, which took place in Glaneirw in Wales, was smaller than previous gatherings,

possibly due to all the hype surrounding the Camp For Climate Action at Mega Watt Valley in Yorkshire. Attendees of last year's gathering maintain that it was still a worthwhile event.

One activist from Norwich commented "It was one of the most positive experiences I've ever had. I met so many wonderful people, all with very diverse backgrounds, but everyone had a common goal and was committed to halting the destruction of our planet"

Over the four-day period, there will be workshops covering a huge range of topics including non-violent direct action, plumbing and electrics, first aid, using two-way radios, self defence, and navigation skills.

Anyone wishing to run a workshop should email [martinshaw64@riseup.net](mailto:martinshaw64@riseup.net)

For more information call 07962 406940 or 01865 770833.



# News

## 1,000 revolutionary songs in your pocket

This April will see an attempt to bring together the international syndicalist community in one place – France – for i07

The i07 in April will see a major gathering in Paris aimed at bringing together syndicalists from around the world for a major conference. Tackling issues such as outsourcing, cost of living, the co-operative movement, women's struggle, anti-fascism and section meetings in a wide range of industries, the gathering will take place over four days and invitations have been extended in several different languages.

The conference, which has several times slipped past deadline after it was originally planned at i02 in Essen, will bring together both participants at the previous conference, and promises that

### PRE-PROGRAMME

**Friday 27th April** Reception of delegations.

**Saturday 28th April Morning:** Union meetings (the cost of living, wages, de-localisations, redundancies, privatisation, labour rights, institutions/revolutionary syndicalism, union repression, the EU, etc. **Afternoon:** Sector meetings: Building, education, postal service, healthcare, cleaning, culture, press, transport, steel industry, agricultural workers, etc. **Evening:** Concert.

**Sunday 29th April Morning:** Meetings by theme: Women's struggles, anti-fascism, social ecology, housing, migrations, anti-imperialism, etc. **Afternoon:** Summary of the various meetings. **Evening:** Big international meeting.

**Monday 30th April Afternoon:** Showing of militant movies, tour of Paris

**Tuesday 1st May 2007 Afternoon:** International May Day demonstration. **Evening:** Concert.

all revolutionary syndicalists and anarcho-syndicalists will be welcome.

The event is being hosted by CNT-Vignoles, in a move which has already courted controversy internationally as the organisation has been effectively outlawed by major anarcho-syndicalist international the IWA after an acrimonious ideological split.

Its presence as the organising group has led to substantial criticism from IWA member sections, though German section the FAU – already on a final warning over its close links to 'enemies' of the IWA – looks set to send a substantial delegation and it's thought a large number of people from other countries will also go in their individual capacities.

The main bone of contention is on the move to 'representative' politics which Vignoles, along with other expelled IWA sections, have taken in recent years. The conflict is going to be tackled head-on at i07 with talks on revolutionary syndicalism, anarcho-syndicalism and institutions, and representativity, law, syndicalist freedom and antisindicalist repression taking place on the first full day of the conference.

Lengthy talks have also been bought in on the privatisation of the public sector across Europe, a topic which is particularly relevant for the UK as the NHS and education have come under sustained attack from the government.

In a press release, Vignoles said: "Globalisation is nothing new to capitalism. But mobility, aggressivity



**RAILING AGAINST BUSH:** The visit of the US President to Colombia sparked a full-scale showdown between anti-capitalists protesting the presence of the leader of the free world and heavily armed police on 11th March. The situation was made worse, according to Colombian activists, by agent provocateur groups, who were allegedly made up of military personnel and metropolitan police wearing civilian clothes. In a comment to Colombia Indymedia, translated for *Freedom*, an activist said: "If there was an atmosphere of support which some natives of Bogota demonstrated to Bush and Uribe, the presence of more than 3,000 demonstrators at one of the most important crossings of the presidential caravan, and the later disturbances also demonstrated the anger with which some greeted this visit."

and the capacity of this system have never been so strong as they are today. Closing profitable factories where workers have acceptable working conditions only to open the same factory somewhere else with lower wages and worse working conditions only to rise benefits for stock holders is unfortunately not surprising these days.

"What is the point for anarcho-

syndicalists and revolutionary syndicalists and all those for a workers controlled world to meet at an international level?

"In such a conference, what's happening (where and how) can only be an introduction to debate with concrete examples from the practice and struggle from each of us.

"The immediate goal should be: what are we concretely capable of doing

together? Our ultimate goal, and our hope, should be to start rebuilding links and uniting workers of different countries, to reappropriate the means of information, struggle and action by organising international solidarity."

The i07 conference will take place in Paris on Saturday 28th, Sunday 29th, Monday 30th April and Tuesday 1st May 2007.

## Egypt rises

Spontaneous actions continue to erupt throughout Egypt. Illegal strike actions and factory occupations have spread in just a few months from a base in the textile industry to workers in cement factories, shipyards, poultry farms, railways, public services and hospitals.

A wave of strikes began on 1st February at the premises of the Misr Shebin Al-Kom Spinning and Weaving Company in the Nile delta region. 4,200 textile workers struck illegally both to claim seven months' worth of unpaid bonuses and in reaction to the impending privatisation of the factory, which was sold off to Indian investors well underneath its actual value. Two weeks later, 11,000 workers struck for their bonus payments at the Kafr Al-Dawwar Spinning and Weaving Company, demanding better healthcare, labour elections and the removal of the corrupt company leadership.

By 21st February, the strikes had spread to include more than 35,000 workers, an extraordinary development

in a country in which such wildcat strikes are expressly prohibited and official brutality is endemic. As Gamal Eid of the Egyptian Organisation for Human Rights told the *San Francisco Chronicle*, "It's very unusual. There's been nothing like this in at least five years. It's not just the number of strikes, it's the number of people involved."

According to Raguii Assaad, an Egyptian labour expert, "Control over the unions has always been thought of as a national security issue ... it's about making sure the state has control over an active, organised, movement that can make trouble." This tight control has recently begun to weaken.

Company executives have blamed the rising militancy on subversion and 'terrorists' while the Muslim Brotherhood has been blamed for infiltrating workers' ranks. But in the context of steadily rising food prices and stagnant wages, there is no mystery about the source of the discontent. As Khalid

Ali, a worker at Mahalla factory says, "When the ruling party has a bad dream, they wake up and blame the Muslim Brothers" but according to him the real reason is that "conditions have reached a dismal level. It's bad for workers all over Egypt."

Pressure for strike action had been building for months. In December, a watershed strike at Mahalla – the largest public sector factory in Egypt – drew 27,000 workers away from work. The government scrambled to reach a settlement on unpaid bonuses and workers' rights but recently workers there have been reported to be considering further action. According to union leaders, managers at Mahalla retaliated against the wildcat strike by beginning the eviction of troublesome employees or their parents.

The system of state-run unions is being challenged. Spurred on by rising prices, increasing privatisations and an authoritarian government, Egyptian workers are organising in a way that they have never done before.

## Law of the gun

It was announced quietly in the middle of March that, in addition to the 21,500 soldiers Bush ordered to Iraq in January, over 8,000 more are to be sent there and to Afghanistan at an extra cost of \$3.2 billion (£1.7bn).

Bush has also recently announced plans to build the United States' first new nuclear weapon in nearly twenty years. The National Nuclear Security Administration has selected the Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory to design a new nuclear warhead to replace older designs as part of the country's 6,000 strong nuclear stockpile.

Peace protests continue around the United States.

In Washington state two dozen activists were arrested in the middle of March at the port of Tacoma as they attempted to stop the army from shipping Stryker armoured vehicles to Iraq.

In New York the 'Granny Peace Brigade' staged a six-day protest in Times Square at the same time. They

read the names of known Americans and Iraqis killed since the war began on 19th March 2003.

Meanwhile a federal appeals court has ruled that a lawsuit centering on the CIA's secret prisons and use of torture cannot be allowed to proceed because it would 'expose government state secrets'. Khaled el Masri, a German citizen, sued the CIA after being kidnapped in Macedonia and flown to Afghanistan, where he was held for five months in a secret prison and drugged, beaten and interrogated. Anthony Romero of the American Civil Liberties Union commented "the state secrets doctrine has become a shield that covers even the most blatant abuses of power."

Similarly, the administration is leaning on another appeals court to dismiss a lawsuit which accuses telecom company AT&T of illegally helping the National Security Agency to spy on internet usage – again using the 'state secret' excuse.

Louis Further



## Feature

# Organising for Resistance

Freedom talks to 'Bob', a longstanding member of the Anarchist Federation, about UK's main anarchist-communist group

**T**he Anarchist Federation is growing in membership and involved in a range of campaigns including Defy ID. Its magazine *Organise!* has recently reached its twentieth anniversary issue.

**Freedom:** Why did you join AF?

**Bob:** I joined the AF back in 1999. Before that I'd been a member of a council communist group called Subversion. We'd been going for about twelve years, based mostly in the Manchester area. We'd come together after the Wildcat group dissolved itself in 1987. One of our main tenets then had been the need to be anti-sectarian and work with other like-minded communists.

As time went by we found that the group we had most in common with was the ACF (AF was previously the Anarchist Communist Federation). We shared views on trades unions, parliament, national liberation and so on. We held a number of joint day schools together and organised a couple of summer camps too. I'd actually wanted us all to join the ACF anyway, but as some of the Subversion group held to a more Marxist line that didn't happen [most of Subversion's material is still online, it's now on the AF Manchester website: [af-north.org](http://af-north.org)].

After the collapse of Subversion, I got on the phone to ACF comrades in London and said I'd like to join. In the end three of us from Subversion joined, though one has since left. If we'd joined up earlier, the result would have been a much stronger organisation which would have had a strong group in London and in Manchester. Sadly that wasn't to happen and it took us a number of years to successfully create a Manchester AF group. Having known and worked with ACF members for the best part of ten years, it was a simple move and one I wish had happened before.

*What changes have you seen over the years you have been a member?*

Well, we've grown quite a lot since then. I think we've doubled in size. And of course we've joined up with IFA [the International of Anarchist Federations]. Not so many of the new members are old crumbles like me, either – there's a healthy number of young anarchists joining us.

When I joined we weren't really a federation. There was just a London group and a load of individuals around the country. Now we have groups in Manchester, Liverpool, Nottingham, Surrey and we've got the makings of groups in a few other towns too. We've just taken the decision to start rotating the editorship of *Resistance* around the country. Manchester have produced four issues, Nottingham are doing the current one and so on. We've also taken a collective decision to involve ourselves in the anti-ID cards campaign. AF members are heavily involved with Defy ID, for example. We also collectively decided that working together on solidarity with Rosspport was a priority.

One major change has been that a number of AFers have joined the IWW. However, we haven't really worked this out yet and haven't sorted out how it relates to our attitudes to trades unions, for example. This is something we'll have to deal with soon.

Joining IFA has meant that we've focussed our international work mostly through that organisation. I think we've recently realised that this hasn't been wholly for the good. It has allowed us to let our contacts with the Irish groups slip somewhat, for example. Since some of us got involved with doing solidarity work for Rosspport we've come to realise the need to improve things in that area. Personally I've got high hopes, but we'll have to see what happens. You guys ought to do interviews with *Organise!* and the WSM in Ireland.

*What do you think the relevance of anarcho-communism is today?*

There is still a need for an anarchist communist organisation. Too often the anarchist scene is incredibly elitist. There are loads of friendship groups doing things that exclude the participation of working class people. They have no structures that allow people to join them, no internal democracy that places everyone on an equal footing. No point of contact for people new to anarchism. And ultimately no staying power.

Anarchist communism offers a set of perspectives in struggle that maximise the chances of success – direct democracy, mandated delegates, the right to recall, mass assemblies and so on. It's a strategy that builds confidence, rather than inhibits it. And because our strategy is based on real experience of real workers in struggle, it brings with it a respect for the people most directly involved in the struggle. The people at the Rosspport Solidarity Camp have found this. A number of those heavily involved in the camp are anarchist communists (one's AF, the others are WSM). They have impact with the local community because they operate in an inclusive way, they don't go round saying, 'We're the activist experts the rest of you watch us in action.'

*AF and Sol Fed along with IWW have begun to work more closely together, jointly creating the Education Workers Network for example. What is your view of this? Do you think there should be just be one anarchist federation?*

Well, as I was one of the movers behind its creation, I reckon it's a pretty good idea! We also worked hard in the North to organise the anarchist bloc on the September 23rd demo at the Labour Conference. We get on pretty well with the local Solfed people, so it was natural to work with them. You know how big the anarchist contingent was. We distributed thousands of anarchist leaflets and copies of *Resistance* and *Catalyst*. It is no exaggeration to say that people were coming up to us asking for the literature. They were interested because there were so many of us. Mind you, it was exhausting organising it and afterwards all I wanted was an early night.

One anarchist federation? That's a tricky one. Ideally I'd say yes. I know it's a bit controversial, but I don't see much difference between the AF and Solfed. We are basically an anarchist

communist propaganda group, so are they. If you read their pamphlet *The Economics of Freedom*, what you see is an attempt to work out what an anarchist communist society would look like. There's little in it I disagree with. I suppose the biggest problem is that we see the need for a specifically anarchist communist grouping. I believe that the attempt to create an anarchist union will lead to the emergence of an anarchist leadership within it. *Freedom* published a pamphlet on this some time ago, *The anarchist Revolution: Polemical articles 1924-1931: Errico Malatesta*. It's worth a read.

But yes, I reckon we could work together. It'd give us a joint federation of around 150 members. We could really do some good work then. The comrades in Ireland managed to work out how to do this – the Anarchist Syndicalist Federation and the AF (Ireland) merged to form *Organise!*. It's still going pretty strong. If they can, I guess we could. The problem of course is big fish in small ponds.

*Although AF is growing, most anarchists do not belong to a national federation. In the editorial of the 20th anniversary issue of AF's magazine Organise! you call for anarchists to take a serious look at organisation. What do you think the movement needs to do?*

It needs to recognise that we are more effective when we work together. We need to present a non-elitist public face that interested people can communicate with.

The activist scene doesn't fit this bill. It depends too much on friendship networks, which are notoriously hard to break into. If people agree with us, then they should join us. If they agree with Solfed they should join them. It's that simple. It's a question of understanding the need to work effectively in a sustainable way, not just to feel good about spectacular 'actions'.

*Can you tell us some of the issues that AF is campaigning on in at the moment?*

We're working heavily on the anti-ID campaign. In Nottingham and Liverpool this is the main focus of work. We've let it slip a little in Manchester, but are refocusing back to it and will be helping re-launch Defy ID there soon. The London comrades are basically the secretariat of the International of Anarchist Federations, which takes up a lot of time, and they do most of the production of *Resistance*.

Somehow they find time to go on the streets and do solidarity actions too! Some of our members are busy setting up or sustaining social centres. Others are busy in their local IWW branches. Then of course there's asylum seeker support. The list just keeps going on. And finally we support our comrades at Rosspport and have organised a number of pickets, etc., over here and some of us will go over again when we get a chance.

The AF can be contacted at BM ANARFED, London, WC1N 3XX or email [info.afed.org.uk](mailto:info.afed.org.uk), website: [www.afed.org.uk](http://www.afed.org.uk)

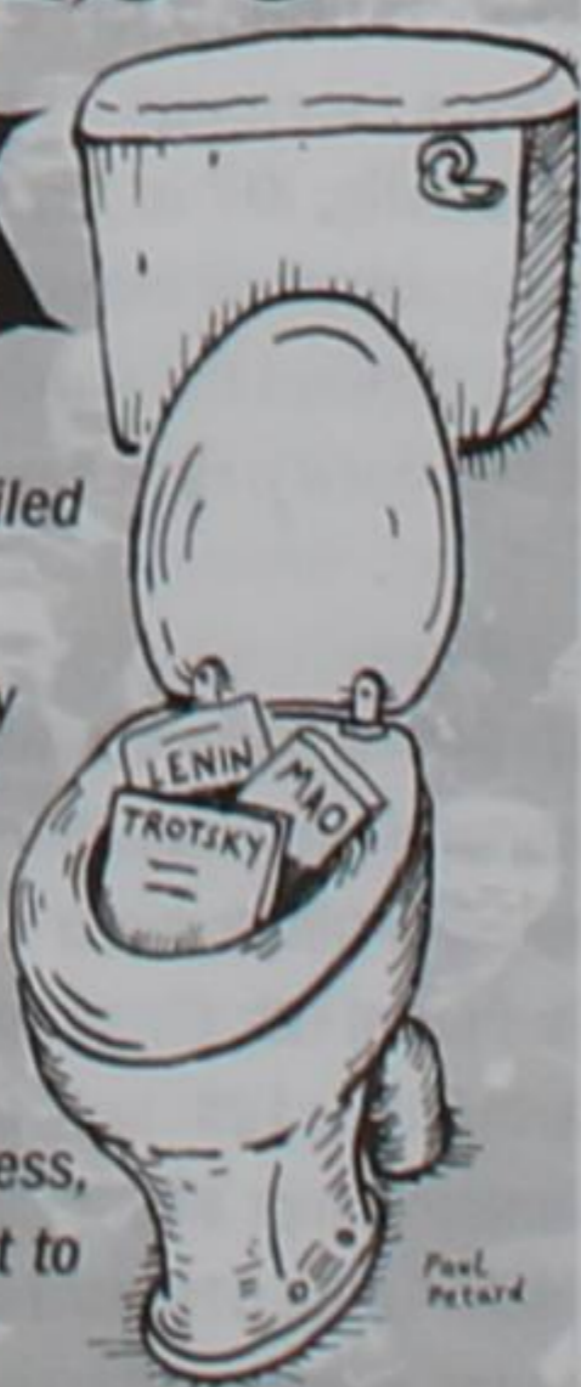


## The Anarchist Quiz Book

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](http://www.freedompress.org.uk)





# Commentary

## FREEDOM

Volume 68 Number 06

### 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, as I'm sure you're aware by now, is having more than the usual run of problems with its mailout.

One of the reasons for this is that we have lost one of the collective's most stalwart members to the world of work. It's been three years since he became involved, and for many months his contribution has kept the bookshop alive, gotten the mailout done, built up the hacklab and generally made the whole operation viable. Though it is impossible to do anything but wish him the very best along with a great deal of gratitude for his work, his absence is going to make life very hard.

With his departure, we are in dire need of organisers, workers and mailout folk to keep Freedom operating. While the editorial collective seems stable for the moment, distribution is dying on its feet and this is why all your mail has been so late.

If you live in London, we desperately need your help to organise the mailout! Contact us at the address below if you or someone you know can volunteer. If the shop is closed (there is a danger of this) you can email or leave a note at the door.

### Contact details

Freedom Press, 84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1 7QX  
Tel/fax: 020 7247 9249  
www.freedompress.org.uk  
Enquiries: info@freedompress.org.uk  
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distro@freedompress.org.uk

### Next issue

The next issue will be dated 7th April 2007 and the last day to get copy to us for that issue will be Thursday 29th March. 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.

## We evolve what we need

Reading something mentioned by Engels in his 'The part played by labour in the transition from ape to man', I couldn't help but feel that the fantastical worlds of Restif De La Bretonne\* and other eighteenth century utopians are not so far fetched.

Beings evolve capabilities they need to live in their particular environments. Engels explains how humans evolved their capacity for spoken languages as a result of living and working in mutually dependent communities.

As the human hand evolved through attempting to do things (labour to produce and realise what humans desired with regard to food, clothing and shelter), their speech evolved also in response to the need to communicate – the lack of I being felt as a defect – ideas among people living together in societies of co-operation.

Little by little the larynx and vocal capacities of early humans were thus modified over hundreds of thousands of years to produce what we today recognise as human speech.

Engels writes: "Comparison with [other] animals proves that this explanation of the origin of language ... is the only correct one. The little that even the most highly-developed animals need to communicate with each other does not require articulate speech.

"In a state of nature, no animal feels handicapped by its inability to speak or understand human speech. It is quite different when it has been tamed by man. The dog and the horse, by association with man, have developed such a good ear for articulated speech that they easily learn to understand any language within their range of concept.

"Moreover, they have acquired the capacity for feelings such as affection for man, gratitude, etc., which were previously foreign to them. Anyone who has had much to do with such animals will hardly be able to escape the conviction that in many cases the now feel their inability to speak as a defect, although unfortunately it is one that can no longer be remedied because their vocal organs are too specialised in a definite direction.

"However, where where vocal organs exist, within certain limits even this inability disappears."

Engels also dismisses the usual indifference to parrot-talk:

"Let no-one object that the parrot does not understand what it says. It is true that for the sheer pleasure of talking and associating with human beings, the parrot will chatter for hours at a stretch, continually repeating its whole vocabulary. But within the range of concepts it can also learn to understand what it is saying. Teach a parrot swearwords in such a way as it gets an idea of their meaning ... tease it and you will soon discover that it knows how to use its swear words as correctly as a Berlin costermonger."

We won't here go into the multiplicity of methods of communication between animals in the 'wild' – languages unknown or little understood as yet by humans, and which are in many cases anything but simple or limited (i.e. elephants). Let us instead imagine those species referred to by Engels, which we have tamed, and whose conscious lives are intricately bound up with our own on a daily basis.

While it is true that existing species are too specialised, biological evolution continues, and will continue. For us mammals if we humans oust capitalism in time before it wipes us out completely. If we do, we can all look forward to a spectacular future, and in hundreds of thousands of years hence shouldn't it be feasible that those other species who share out lives so intimately would develop the biological capacity to converse with us in our speech? This would follow logically from the fact that we evolve in accordance with requirements. We evolve what we need.

In such a case, different species would long have come to regard each other as people, in the same way that the human 'races' (so-called) now do so; and the exploitative human practices of today, such as factory farming and vivisection, would be regarded with the same horror that we now regard human exploitation and the murder and consumption of other humans.

"The more you look at animal eyes, the more you begin to perceive them not as animal eyes but as the eyes of other people. So we call animals 'people'." – Oren Lyons, chief of the Onondaga nation (quoted in Joan Dunayer, *Animal Equality*).

\*Nicholas Edme 'Restive de la Bretonne' (1734-1806) wrote *La Decouverte australe*, in which the human meets beings who are a mélange of more than one species.

AKW

## For joy and agony

I write to thank you all for stirring times and valiant efforts for anarchy and co.

Although I qualify as an 'old lag' of the UK anarchist movement, I actually still think you are more or less right. So, congratulations on getting out the past two editions (13th and 27th Jan 2007), which came today (29th Jan) in the same envelope. What organisation and economy, the envelope was even franked 'Mount Pleasant'. Even the stuffing team would not have seen that.

The issue of 13th January was a corker – it led with Iceland, had dear old Donald Rooum's obit of Richard Boston, and a sparkling review of *Mischief Night* by Tom Jennings. Then to cap it all was Donald's Wildcat, this fortnight on religions – all interlocked with more good stuff.

Keep up the excellent work, ££s can be sent for further issues, stocks of ink and paper, etc.

Brickbats: Proofreading: In 13th January issue, Iceland is continued on page 1 – surely page 6? Armed madhouse is published for £0.00? Surely not? Even Freedom would not go that far.

Freedom is fortnightly, why does it look like a newspaper? Issue 27th January has a deadline of 18th January. So, make it 12x9inch page size (16 pages!)

Pictures (I have said this before): Run them smaller and have the good grace to say Where, When, What and Why. Even more pointedly, you could also say Who took it, How much Freedom paid for it and Who got the money. (You don't have to do this for all of these, just what are seen fit.)

You still have too much white space per issue and the typematter is too widely spaced. Less leading please.

Are you short of a) cash, b) contributors? On either account, ask.

Richard Segar

Ed's note: Thanks Richard your letter raised a smile. We are genuinely sorry about the problems we've been having with getting the mail out on time, sadly having just lost one of our most dedicated collective members (see Angel Alley column) we are now on the skids a bit for getting anyone to actually organise it, let alone do it.

I'm personally based far out of the city so can't get down to do the mailout on the weekdays, which as our little collective is now down to five or six people – at best – for the entire enterprise and two for mailout who won't do it by themselves (fairly so, I think) is wreaking havoc, not least on any attempt to get this stuff into shops – who won't take us if we aren't on deadline.

Just quickly on the suggestions. Fortnightly is just about manageable for a newspaper I think as long as we're running enough unique content, and moving into the magazine market puts us in competition with groups such as *Resistance*, *Direct Action*, etc. We could do this, but would we want to, especially as various members of the collective are looking into helping relaunch *Black Flag* as the magazine equivalent to *Freedom*? As a matter of pride for the anarchist movement, too, I think it's important that *Freedom* keep running as a newspaper.

Your point on pictures is fair enough I think – we don't pay anyone for pics, which are mostly lifted from our own archives, Indymedia where necessary (the pictures there are non-copyright unless otherwise stated and are rarely by-lined with real names) or anywhere else we can beg/borrow from. I agree wholeheartedly on a who, what, when, where, why approach though and will endeavour to incorporate it where possible (I'll even try and throw in 'who' it's of as a bonus on occasion!)

On spacing and leading, that's a matter for the designer rather than myself I think.

And in answer to your final question a) always b) of course!

Rob Ray

## Prepare yourself

page 1  
organised work in the education sector.

In community activism, the Haringey Solidarity Group continue to take the lead in promoting locally-targetted work, and community groups in London, Glasgow, and Edinburgh among others are looking to expand their networks and links (to subscribe go to CommunityActionList-subscribe@yahoo.com).

In the UK all-federation conferences in education look set to bring closer co-operation to the organised anarchist groups (see page 3) while internationally, i07 in France will attempt to bring together class-struggle anarchists from around the world in an atmosphere of solidarity this April.

Key dates:  
i07: 27th April to 1st May  
Schnews Media Meeting: 11th to 13th May  
Projectile film festival: 18th to 20th May  
Shut down G8: 6th to 8th June  
Earth First!: 18th to 22nd July  
Climate camp: 14th to 21st August  
Disarm DSEI: 11th to 14th September  
London Anarchist Bookfair: October

## Projectile

page 1  
small cinema with a cafe that can host shows and some extra spaces. There are hipster artist types involved, neighbourhood characters who have just wandered in, serious cinephiles, and of course us. Amazingly we are all still getting along.

Call The Star and Shadow on 0191 261 0066 for more information or go to www.projectile.org.uk  
Accommodation can be provided if requested.

## UK news

page 2  
not happy about the way the debate has been conducted. This is an issue of international importance and will not just affect us but leaves the spectre of nuclear holocaust over generations to come."

Elsewhere four people were arrested outside the Faslane base in Scotland where the nuclear submarines are kept and another five were arrested after dropping a banner from the Scottish Parliament at Holyrood.

These actions come during an upsurge of anti-nuclear protests with nearly 580 people arrested since last October, including 30 from the eastern region, in a year long blockade of the Faslane base and regular actions at the Atomic Weapons Establishment at Aldermaston.

## International news

page 2  
• that continued harassment of Kevin Johnson be stopped;  
• that C/O Dutton not be allowed near Kevin 'Rashid' Johnson #185492;  
• that Kevin 'Rashid' Johnson be allowed to receive mail and his visiting privileges reinstated;  
• that he receive food regularly.  
Mailing addresses:  
• Tracy S. Ray, Warden of ROSP, PO Box 970 Pound, VA 24279  
• Tim Kaine, Governor of VA State Capital- 3rd Floor Richmond, VA 23219

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## Quiz answers

1. Toys – they had no draught animals to pull wheeled vehicles, so the only use they had for wheels was in toys.
2. The three principles were nationalism, democracy and people's welfare. The end goal of them was "communism and anarchism", apparently, according to the eclectic Sun.
3. Canadian band Godspeed You! Black Emperor, who took their name from a film by Mitsuo Yanagimachi.
4. Peru – it's produced by the Grupo Qhispikay Llaqta from Lima, and means the people's freedom.



# REVIEW

## Tom Jennings welcomes renewed interest in eighteenth century Tyneside radical Thomas Spence

Newcastle in the late eighteenth century was a hotbed of radical political associations (e.g. Constitutional Club, Independent Club) and dissenting church sects. It was also a thriving centre for printing (French revolutionary Jean-Paul Marat visited regularly and launched *The Chains of Slavery* there) and grassroots education. One notable beneficiary of and contributor to this climate of ferment and potential was Thomas Spence (1750-1814), an indefatigable enemy of exploitation and oppression who expounded lower-class insurrection and seizure of the land.

The newly-formed Thomas Spence Trust's *The Hive of Liberty* introduces his life and work; with the latter scarcely in print over two centuries but now largely reproduced on their website. The pamphlet includes various perspectives on the man, his ideas and their significance – including his virtual disappearance from history and patronising appropriation by authoritarian Marxism – together with extracts from his writing and the responses of others over the years.

One of nineteen children, Spence's self-education started with his Glassite (dissident Presbyterian) parents, impoverished Scottish immigrant netmakers. Characteristically ahead of his time, he published an educational tract with a new phonetic alphabet to encourage literacy among the poor while working as a teacher on the Quayside. Active in local debating clubs, he gave a talk (later called 'The Real Rights of Man' or 'Spence's Plan') to the Newcastle Philosophical Society after the colonial war in America started in 1775, having been the first to use the term 'the rights of man' (in a 1782 tribute to Jack the Blaster, an ex-miner cave-squatting at Marsden Rocks, South Shields).

He later distributed Thomas Paine's book of that title, stressing its flaws concerning the private ownership of land – the abolition of which he asserted was fundamental. Regrettably, the Newcastle freethinkers were intransigent in supporting bourgeois property rights; Spence even being cudgelled by his friend, engraver Thomas Bewick, over the issue.

Unable to make headway up north, Spence moved to London and by the

time of the 1789 French revolution was busy agitating, educating and organising – though again too extreme for groups such as the London Corresponding Society. Travesty conservative Edmund Burke's characterisation of ordinary people as "the swinish multitude", Spence called his regular broadsheet *Pigs Meat*.

He also minted hundreds of coins and tokens bearing cartoons, attacks on politicians of the day and general radical mottoes. This propaganda method combined with bill-posting and wall-slogan blitzes proved much more difficult for the authorities to quell than his stream of books and pamphlets, which included *The End of Oppression*, the proto-feminist *The Rights of Infants*, and several works about fictional utopias 'Spensonia' and 'Crusonia' – sequelising Defoe's popular *Robinson Crusoe* in revolutionary directions.

Paranoia about the English masses emulating their French counterparts yielded many Acts of Parliament suppressing freedom of speech from the 1990s onwards, when Spence endured severe beatings from government agents and periods of imprisonment, with or without trial, on charges of seditious libel and high treason for distributing his own and Paine's work.

When at large he ran a bookshop ('The Hive of Liberty' in Holborn) and stalls selling printed matter along with the drink 'saloup'. Affinity groups and their missionary work disseminated Spence's Plan organised via 'free and easy' pub gatherings to avoid surveillance, with lectures, debates, songs and poetry. After his death in penury in 1815, supporters expanded their grassroots activity despite relentless suppression – a law even being deemed necessary in 1817 to explicitly prohibit "societies or clubs calling themselves Spencean or Spencean Philanthropists".

### Pearls before swine

Of course Spence (and most early agrarian socialists) could not tackle questions of industrial development and capital accumulation in complex societies. Static universal principles ignoring historical process in the oppositional politics of the time usually derived from millenarian religious traditions, overcompensating



for feudal ideologies of 'divine rights' with naïve redemptive faith in rationalist enlightenment.

Nevertheless the pragmatic emphases on local, bottom-up control, federalism and direct democracy resonated loudly among the rabble but appalled the contemporary great and good and later leftist intellectual aristocrats alike – who were naturally also contemptuous of his trust in the potential integrity of the common people. The sensitivity to issues of colonial encroachment, land use and ecology, and the social positions of women and children similarly resonates across the centuries; while the perennially unhelpful unhinging of righteous idealism from concrete

struggle haunts us still.

Purportedly bringing *The Hive of Liberty* 'up to date', Newcastle artist George French concludes that: "the Spencean project has failed ... we can no longer rely on solidarity, association or community action ... The only oppositional space left to exist is in our own heads and ... personal action".

Oh, really? Presumably intended to provoke debate, such defeatist sophistry would certainly have Spence spinning in his grave. Whereas the refusal of elitism, twisting of popular culture, and enthusiasm for grass-roots intercourse and the irrepressible anti-hierarchical power of dialogue, humour, and shared enjoyment in

spaces collectively created amidst worldly misery remain indispensable – but only given the humility and empathy to resist jaded delusions of intellectual grandeur. As he put it: "Can tyrants hinder people from singing at their work, or in their families? Sing and meet and meet and sing and your chains will drop off like burnt thread."

[www.tomjennings.pwp.blueyonder.co.uk](http://www.tomjennings.pwp.blueyonder.co.uk)

*The Hive of Liberty: The Life and Work of Thomas Spence*, edited by Keith Armstrong, with introduction by Joan Beal, is available for £5 (plus £1.50 p&p) from the Thomas Spence Trust, 93 Woodburn Square, Whitley Lodge, Whitley Bay, Tyne & Wear, NE26 3JD; see also [thomas-spence-society.co.uk](http://thomas-spence-society.co.uk)

## MUSIC

### Paranoia Braintax (Lowlife)

Braintax is back and not afore time. While Hip Hop in general has wallowed in the exploitative gutter for long and weary years, this head has been planning a counter attack of devastating form. Not only does he spit in the face of corporate Hip Hop and its seemingly endless line of scab and scumbag promoted but he also

takes UK Hip Hop to new savvy heights of achievement in identity and production.

Blessed with a Northern sneer not unlike his brother Skinnyman and with the best beats to come out of London since Nellie Hooper's time, *Panorama* is a blast of sense and taste and skill.

Syrianna Style and The Grip Part 2 (A day in the life of a suicide bomber) cover the war and the plight of the Palestinians with the same nous employed by Jerry Dammers and Elvis Costello

in their prime. And that's not the only similarity as Brains takes *Panorama* beyond his own genre into the pantheon of UK street genius alongside Gang of Four 'Entertainment and The Great Leap forward' Don't be Afraid of Change...

As Banksy adds Disneyland to the Israeli Apartheid Wall, the Guggenheim Museum and The Tate as his chosen canvas, there is a real sense that left field art is back and that in some cases it's never looked or sounded as good.



Unlike his peers inside and outside of Hip Hop, Brains has managed to harness the spirit of former giants while presenting a genuinely brand new groove. With Rawdog's beats the best since Bristol was on fire, Brains has had to rise to the challenge and in so doing has produced an album that dwarfs all around with its creativity and conscious.

If you were ever going to spend some hard earned shekels on a CD then now is the time to do it.



# A Sideways Look

I'm fortunate that it'll be a few years before I need to worry about my kids going to secondary school. A friend, who's eldest reached 10 a couple of years ago, asked why he couldn't just go to the local secondary school. When he looked at it, it became clear that there wasn't a local secondary school, instead there were schools run by the religious and schools run by businessmen, that focused on sport or language or art or something that kids from disadvantaged backgrounds are meant to be good at.

My daughter has already lost several class-mates to the older sibling effect, where parents move to avoid the poor choices at secondary for their older brothers (there is better local provision for girls at schools deemed good). Some friends of mine did this recently, moving to Bromley, where there is still academic selection and an intense war among the middle classes to get their kids into the 'right' schools. When they moved, the local school wanted to see the deeds of their house before they'd admit the kids. Apparently, some parents are so competitive they will rent a house near a popular school to make sure their kids get in.

The issue of who gets into what school has been rumbling on for many years, but recent government guidance has brought it to a head. While the government says that proximity, having a sibling or religion are all acceptable reasons for selecting pupils, it has also pushed lotteries by band as a way of evening out the intake and giving poorer kids a chance to get in to the successful school. Brighton and Hove recently became the first authority to adopt a policy of lottery for its popular schools.

There will be some interesting outcomes from Brighton's decision, not least that some people will have spent a lot of money buying houses next to good schools and will see both the academic and financial value of their investment fall. As this was never an option for the vast majority of parents, particularly in Brighton with its low wages and high property prices, I really don't care. I'm sure that private school owners in Brighton are rubbing their hands in anticipation, though.

Not all of Brighton's secondary schools are affected, but eight have been put into six catchment areas. If a school cannot take all the children who apply, the council will allocate places randomly, giving preference to those within the catchment area. This is fine as far as it goes, but I am left with the impression that this is a fight between two sets of pushy middle class parents, with one side able to pretend that letting a few poorer kids into the nicer schools is why their preferred method of allocating school places is fairer. The question this scheme begs is: what about those schools that don't need to be in a catchment area - are they so bad that they are never oversubscribed? And if so, why?

Perhaps our rulers should be honest and say that they have always favoured

selection. Selection by the old method of using the eleven-plus delivered some schools which were overwhelmingly middle class, as the exam was always skewed to middle class values. The current method has been selection by high property prices. It seems that it will be replaced with selection by 'catchment areas' - I suppose there is a slight advance for working class kids to get into better schools that they might even be fairly local to. But what's the betting that the catchment areas match the districts being gentrified, while the out of town estates remain with the worse schools?

Svartfrosk

## Bookworm notes

I have a soft spot for old-school English radicalism. Say what you like about their conclusions, but Tom Paine and his contemporaries were enraged by the right things, and they knew how to communicate to a mass, working class audience. Witness the multiple, cheap, and often pirated editions of their works in pamphlet form. Like Paine, William Godwin found inspiration in the French Revolution. Unlike Paine, he is best known as a novelist - not least for *Caleb Williams* which has a claim to the title of first fully-fledged crime novel.

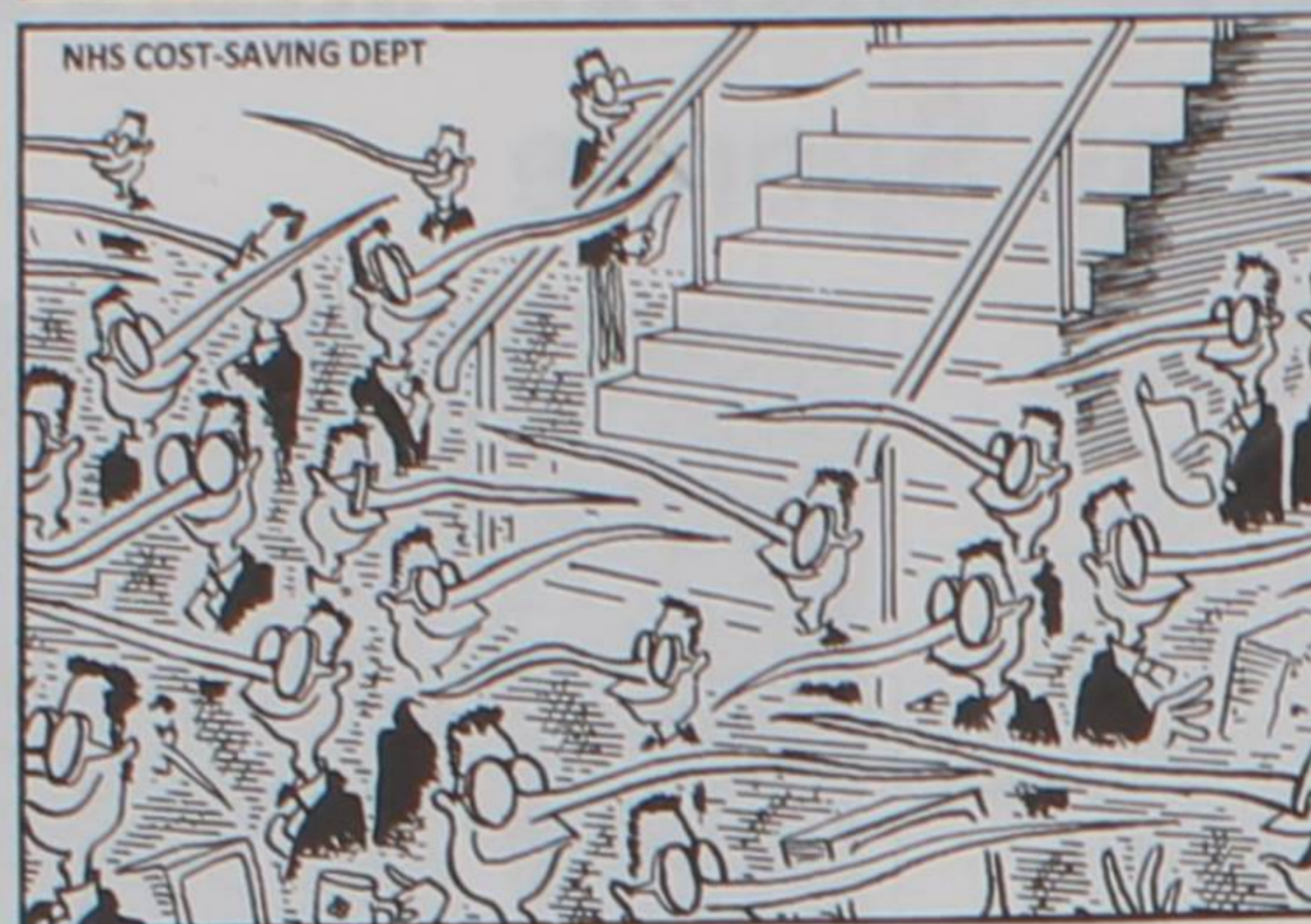
Godwin's distinctive brand of 'philosophical anarchism' lives on mostly in the poetry of Shelley, who found him an inspiration throughout most of his short life. Peter Marshall's ably edited and introduced book of *The Anarchist Writings of William Godwin* (Freedom Press, £4.50 - a bargain!) is an excellent place to start exploring the ideas of the man himself. Where Tom Paine's approach is more polemical, explicitly starting from the questions of the day, Godwin is more radical, in the sense that he begins from first principles. For Godwin, this entails starting with human nature, and passing from there to ethics, and on to politics. Many readers will be challenged by his portrayal of politics as "one chapter extracted out of the great code of morality". I was. Many readers will also disagree with an approach that appears to either ignore or disdain working class struggles. I did. But it would be a dull old world if we only read books we agreed with.

£4.50 (post free) from Freedom Press, 84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1 7QX

## The quiz

1. What did the Aztecs and Mayans use the wheel for?
2. According to Chinese nationalist leader Sun Yat-Sen, what were the end goals of his "three peoples' principles"?
3. Which anarchist band got their name from a 1976 Japanese documentary about a biker gang?
4. Where does the anarchist journal *Qhispikey* come from?

Answers on page 6



## Imagine if...

Al Gore posed heroically in front of his Apple Mac and waved to the adoring crowds. Dressed in combat fatigues and wearing a bandana, the ageing statesman looked every inch a revolutionary leader.

Gore was calling the charge once again. Fresh from his stunning victory over global warming in what he was now referring to as the great *Inconvenient Truth* campaign, where he had told the masses to buy their way out of climate change, he was now taking on the might of the established media, which had for so long held a powerful hegemony over truth and justice.

Speaking to reporters of the great push by his liberal guerrilla forces, he had told them: "This is not going to be a political or an ideological channel in any way. We like to think it's far more revolutionary than that."

His revolutionary attack on the system would see content lifted from a tie-in with the online home-movies host Google video, and would see brief segments of branded television play instead of the standard high-cost shows on more traditional channels.

The new channel, which would air exclusively on paid-for TV networks, would at a stroke allow wealthy consumers to watch poor-quality home movies from the comfort of their armchairs rather than having to sit at a computer screen.

As he basked in the love of the revolutionary masses, Al considered his next move on the road of social progress. Perhaps he could design some new revolutionary handcuffs or something?



## Listings

- 24th March Northern Anarchist Network meeting at the Hare and Hounds Public House, Shudehill, Manchester from 11am to 5pm. An American anarchist visiting the UK will be speaking, along with Dave Douglass and Graham Moss.
- 25th March What is the Importance of Hegel Today? by Joseph Tendler. 11am at South Place Ethical Society (SPES), Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London, for more see [ethicalsoc.org.uk/events.htm](http://ethicalsoc.org.uk/events.htm)
- 26th March ID-Day national day of action against ID cards and the database state, to coincide with the opening of the passport centres where people will have to go to be interviewed, fingerprinted and iris-scanned for the ID card system, for more info see [no2id.net](http://no2id.net)
- 28th March The Future of Black Flag magazine, meeting at Freedom Bookshop, 84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1, from 7pm
- 31st March Reclaim the Future 4, an all-day event in a self-organised space in London with practical workshops, café, political cinema, stalls, infoshop and art, and party till late with live

- stages, dance rooms, urban cabaret and visuals (money raised for anti-war and anti-capitalist action) for more info see [rts.gn.apc.org/diary.htm](http://rts.gn.apc.org/diary.htm)
- 31st March and 1st April Zagreb Anarchist Bookfair (Anarhisticki sajam knjiga or ASK), for a stall/accommodation in Zagreb email [ask-zagreb@net.hr](mailto:ask-zagreb@net.hr), for info see [ask-zagreb.org](http://ask-zagreb.org)
- 5th and 6th April Expose Exxon Day, 24 hours of protest at Exxon (Esso) headquarters, details of events to be announced, for more info see [campaigncc.org/stopexxon.html](http://campaigncc.org/stopexxon.html)
- 28th April to 1st May i07 conference in Paris, details at [cnt-f.org](http://cnt-f.org).
- 11th to 13th May SchNEWS Alternative Media Conference, a coming together of independent media with discussions, screenings, stalls, practical workshops, plus the obligatory messy party on the Saturday night, at the Cowley Club, 12 London Road, Brighton, see [schnews.org](http://schnews.org)
- 18th to 20th May Projectile, a festival of anarchist film, culture and ideas at Star and Shadow Cinema, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, see [projectile.org.uk](http://projectile.org.uk) for details

we fix, we build... occupied against speculation against gentrification

This building had been left to fall down by developers. Eventually it would be expensive flats that most local people cannot afford. A small group of mainly local people have begun to repair it, re-use it and recycle it for a free space for those who wish to take back a little freedom into their lives. We occupy and use the space without needing tons of money to enable us to enjoy a free social space. But we occupy to share the space with those who are a little bit tired of how things are.

Come along and get involved. Be occupied!

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