

FREEDOM

80P ANARCHIST NEWS AND VIEWS

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AUTUMN OF DISCONTENT?

Hope that autumn would see coordinated industrial action across the public sector were dampened as Unison NHS members joined Unite and GMB health service members in accepting the government's revised pay offer. Although Unison members voted two to one to accept the deal, turnout was just 22.5%. Unite and GMB also had low turnouts. "There is no doubt" a health worker told *Freedom*, "that Unison's decision to take a neutral stand on the revised offer, which is only worth £38 to most NHS workers, played a big part in contributing to members' apathy." The union's head of health, Karen Jennings said "there will be a lot of catch-up to do next year". Unison though refused to recommend rejection of the pay deal.

Elsewhere in the public sector though the threat of industrial action is hotting up with one million local government, civil service, post office and prison staff threatening coordinated action. Unison's lay executive rejected an improved offer for 850,000 council staff. The union is now considering whether to ballot for strike action.

In other developments talks between Royal Mail and the CWU which had led to a suspension in industrial action broke down despite an increased pay offer. The union has told its members "although talks are set to continue the union is disappointed that Royal Mail has ended the agreed 'period of calm'.

The union therefore can only presume that Royal Mail are set to implement un-agreed operational changes. As a result, despite being committed to further talks and being determined to reach an agreement, CWU will announce further strikes to be held prior to the end of September."

CWU activists though had argued that pausing industrial action last month had been a mistake. A postal worker, who is also an anarchist, told *Freedom* that "the dispute was gathering pace. We were seeing more and more people on picket lines and the numbers going on strike was growing. Stopping was a mistake. Jobs are still under threat. We will have to build momentum from scratch."

Following a wildcat strike the prison officers' union forced the government back around the table to discuss pay.

The unions have, at last, woken up to the fact that they face a coordinated government attack on public sector workers' jobs, pay and conditions. At the TUC Congress in Brighton last month, civil service union PCS boss Mark Serwotka said "we know that central government workers are not alone – staff in the NHS, education, local government and Royal Mail are all being asked to accept reductions in their standards of living as a consequence of the Treasury's 2% limit." Ninety thousand PCS members working for the Department of Work and Pensions recently voted by over 70% to reject their pay offer.



The TUC backed proposals for public service unions to work together on pay, including joint campaigning, lobbying and, if necessary, industrial action.

"We have had enough," Jean Geldart of Unison warned. "We cannot put up with it any longer. The comprehensive spending review covering the next

three years will continue this pay freeze. That's what makes this campaign essential, not just now but for the future. We need to move forward together."

The unions have though been dragging their feet despite their members' growing anger. The public sector pay round

started in April. Only now – six months on – are they talking about 'campaigns' and ballots. There is a real danger that this will be 'too little, too late'. For public sector workers – many of whom earn less than £11,000 a year that's not good enough.

Richard Griffin

GDF-SUEZ MERGER

The merger between GDF (the main French gas supplier) and Suez (the main Franco-Belgian energy supplier) was officially decided four days after the deal was concluded by the Italian group Enel in April 2006.

Dominique de Villepin, then French prime minister, and Thierry Breton, French economics minister, worked out the terms of the merger with the two companies CEOs; Jean-François Cirelli (GDF) and Gérard Mestrallet (Suez). De Villepin talked about "economic patriotism", as the unions were already denouncing the privatization of GDF.

At the time, Nicolas Sarkozy (then

interior minister) was opposed to the project. In 2004, as he was opening GDF for private investment, he promised that the state would keep at least 70% of the company, and even passed a law in August to guarantee this. If the final merger deal was announced he would have to break this promise, not to his advantage less than a year before the presidential election.

However, the merger was not yet possible. The Constitutional Council and the European Commission denounced the state intervention as incompatible with the rules of free competition, and the companies were too unequal.

In order to merge with GDF, Suez had to part with its Environment Pole. Gérard Mestrallet was against this splitting of the company. Since his election as the new French president, Nicolas Sarkozy had been negotiating with Gérard Mestrallet, supported by Albert Frère, the main Belgian shareholder in Suez. Albert Frère was

followed by the other main shareholders, working hand in hand with Sarkozy and another good friend of his, the notorious CEO of Power Corporation Canada, Paul Desmarais. In the end, it was decided that Suez would part with its Environment Pole, keeping 35% of it. The other 65% of the pole will be redistributed to ... Suez stockholders.

This led a lot of people to say that the whole operation was 'a gift of Sarkozy to his millionaires friends'. Quite a gift, considering the new company, named 'GDF Suez' will be the fourth energy group in the world, with a turnover of 70 billion Euros.

As well as the cronyism, the workers and the consumers are worried. In nearby countries where gas has been privatized during the last ten years, consumers faced amazing price hikes (up 100% in Germany, up 65% in the UK).

At the moment the state will have 34% of the company, and will

BOWDEN IS CLEARED

After a long campaign to clear the names of prisoner John Bowden and the Anarchist Black Cross from accusations of terrorist sympathies, victory has finally been declared.

Bowden, who had served his time and looked to be due for release after an extensive stretch in open prison conditions and an evaluation that he was no longer a threat to society, was sent back to a high security prison on the word of an American social worker, Matt Stillman, who accused Bowden of consorting with a 'terrorist group'.

In a statement John Bowden said: "On Friday the 31st August, representatives of the management at Castle Huntley prison and Glenochil prison met at Glenochil and agreed to accept the recommendation of Dawn Harris that I be returned to an open prison. The allegations of social worker Matt Stillman, claiming that I was linked to a 'terrorist group' (the Anarchist Black Cross) had been effectively discredited

and proved false.

"I would like to express my deepest heartfelt thanks to the ABC and others who expressed support and solidarity with me over the last few months, and provided me with the strength and encouragement to endure the consequences of Stillman's ludicrous allegations."

John's parole hearing, which was originally to be held in May has now been put back to December.

Despite the trashing of Stillman's report, what's happened may have damaged his chances of release – he's been back in a high security prison, not working in the community, not having family contact, etc. Hopefully though, he'll be free for Christmas.

Bowden's case saw several demonstrations in solidarity from his supporters, as well as correspondence designed to put pressure on the prison system and keep the case live.

As a consequence of the move, the ABC has actually gained a new branch, the ABC Scotland.

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Home and away

Police federation 'bite back'

Rank and file police officers demanded last night that their right to strike be reinstated as relations with the government fell to a 30-year low. The move highlights mounting unrest in the public sector over pay as unions threaten an 'autumn of discontent' for Gordon Brown.

The Prison Officers' Association (POA) staged a wildcat strike over pay and conditions and there are concerns in Whitehall that other key unions could follow suit. The Police Federation, with 140,000 members, the Fire Brigades Union and the prison officers' union are to meet to discuss a joint campaign to highlight grievances over what they say are below-inflation rises.

Last night the federation said its members wanted the right to take industrial action unless the Home Office agreed to a more favourable pay deal. "You can only bite people so much before they want to bite back," said Alan Gordon, the federation's vice-chairman.

The prospect of the police making public demands over the right to strike would be hugely embarrassing to the Prime Minister as the government tries to convince the public it is winning the war on crime. It would further damage the service when officers are leaving 'in droves', said the federation.

Police again

A Metropolitan Police officer has been convicted of kerb crawling in Ipswich six months after five prostitutes were killed in the town. Det Sgt Mark Daniel was seen with a prostitute in an unmarked police car in the Suffolk town's red light district on 10th June.

Daniel told officers he initially went into Ipswich to fill his car with diesel, before going to look for potential properties to buy in the red light district. He claimed he was approached by Ms Drewry and decided to ask her to help him find a burger van as he was feeling hungry.

Daniel, who previously worked in the vice squad in Islington, north London, denied soliciting the prostitute and said it would be against his "moral beliefs" to do so. He also described himself as a "hygiene freak" and said Ms Drewry had smelt "quite unclean".

Parliament Square Peace Camp protestors in court

On 14th September at Horseferry Road Magistrates Court, five peace protesters will stand trial for attending an 'unauthorised' peace camp in Parliament Square. The 'No More Fallujahs' camp was held to mark the second anniversary of the November 2004 US/UK assault on the Iraqi city of Fallujah.

This trial follows the trial and convictions of five other peace protesters arrested or reported by the police at the event in October last year including Maya Evans and Milan Rai, the first to be convicted under the Serious Organised Crime and Police Act (2005).

The peace camp - backed by CND, the London Federation of Green Parties and Stop the War - marked the anniversary of the attack on Fallujah in 2004, in which war crimes were committed. Hundreds of Iraqi civilians were killed, health clinics were bombed and white phosphorus - a substance that burns down to the bone - was used as a weapon.

The trial is one of the first to take place since Gordon Brown signalled his intention to overturn the Serious Organised Crime and Police Act that prevents protests within 1 km of Parliament.

Around the world

BANGLADESH: Student protests against the military government have spread to include slum dwellers and the exploited classes generally, who fought riot police with sticks and rocks in increasingly violent clashes in several cities. Protestors in the capital, Dhaka, burned buses, cars and at least one military vehicle. Troops have been withdrawn from Dhaka University, where the unrest started, which was the students' original demand. The six-month old 'emergency' government has also responded by indefinitely imposing curfews and school closures in six cities, and a media and communications blackout through the country.

BOLIVIA: Thousands of Bolivian government supporters marched in Sucre on 10th September to demand the revival of a constitutional assembly that has been derailed by a string of violent protests in recent weeks.

Leftist President Evo Morales, an Aymara Indian from a poor background, was elected on pledges to nationalise the energy industry and draw up a new constitution to empower the indigenous majority in South America's poorest country.

Elected delegates to a constitutional assembly began work earlier this year in the central city of Sucre but a string of anti-government protests raised concerns about their safety and they are now on a one-month recess until things calm down.

"The rightist opposition wants the constitutional assembly to fail, but we are not going to allow that," said coca leaf grower Ascencio Picha, who marched with thousands of Indians, fellow coca growers and trade union members.

They rallied in a stadium, avoiding Sucre's downtown area, and there

were no clashes with anti-government protesters.

Organisers said groups that support the assembly will camp out in Sucre until it is able to finish its work.

GREECE: Large marches and violent clashes between anarchists and police in Thessaloniki have marred conservative Prime Minister Costas Karamanli's annual state of the nation's economy address in the run up to the 16th September general election. Prior to Karamanli's speech around 5,000 people marched around the city without incident.

A few hours after the address was concluded, masked rioters blocked roadways with burning barricades and attacked riot police with molotov cocktails in the area around Aristotelio University. About 30-40 youths wearing hoods and helmets - some of them carrying a banner with a slogan against elections and forest arsons signed with an 'A' circled - attacked squads of riot-police and undercover policemen moving inside the university area. The youths repelled the police using molotov cocktails, fireworks, stones and sticks, while the police threw tear gas, CS gas and some flash grenades. The clashes went on for over three hours. About three undercover policemen were injured (one of them taken to a hospital) and one of their cars broken down, whilst trying to arrest some youths.

Police arrested a 19 year old female suspect outside the Aristotle University library, on university grounds despite the fact that they are legally barred from entering the campus unless they are invited by the administration. The city's top prosecutor is thought to have given police the go ahead to ignore the

law in his efforts to crack down on home-made explosives.

IRAQ: In Baghdad, a carefully constructed compromise on a draft law governing Iraq's rich oil fields, agreed to in February after months of arduous talks among Iraqi political groups, appears to have collapsed. The apparent breakdown comes just as Congress and the White House are struggling to find evidence that there is progress toward reconciliation and a functioning government here.

Senior Iraqi negotiators met in an attempt to salvage the original compromise, two participants said. But the meeting came against the backdrop of a public series of increasingly strident disagreements over the draft law in recent days between Hussain al-Shahristani, the Iraqi minister of oil, and officials of the provincial government in the Kurdish north, where some of the country's largest fields are located.

Shahristani, a senior member of the Shiite Arab coalition that controls the federal government, negotiated the compromise with leaders of the Kurdish and Sunni Arab parties. But since then the Kurds have pressed forward with a regional version of the law that Shahristani insists, much to the irritation of the Kurds, is illegal.

Many of the Sunnis who supported the original deal have also pulled out in recent months.

IRELAND: Many thanks from the Just Books Collective and Organise! to all involved in making the first Belfast Anarchist Bookfair a great success. It's estimated that over 150 people attended the bookfair and film showing over the evening of Friday

31st of August and throughout the day on Saturday 1st of September. There will be more in-depth reports from individual meetings and from people who attended the bookfair later.

ITALY: In Milan, the success of a grassroots anti-politics campaign spearheaded by an iconoclastic comedian is giving Italian politicians pause for thought.

Beppe Grillo is the man behind V-Day (the V stands for a very rude Italian expletive), which attracted 300,000 people to sign a petition supporting a common goal: purging Italy of its corrupt political class which, in Grillo's view, includes political parties, most government institutions and the media.

Grillo's protest began through his blog (beppegrillo.it), now one of the top five most read websites in Italy with more than a million hits in July, according to Nielsen//NetRatings.

The blog has spawned hundreds of grassroots groups - called 'meet ups' - that have organised around Italy and abroad to collect signatures.

SOUTH AFRICA: More than 1,000 residents from Joe Slovo informal settlement on the N2 highway near the Cape Town airport have blockaded the highway, setting up a burning barricade just off the N2, stoning police and their vehicles, breaking up dwellings under construction in the N2 Gateway project alongside Joe Slovo and setting a bakery delivery van alight. The residents are protesting the lack of opportunities for participation in development for the area as well as their imminent forced removal to the wasteland of Delft, over 30kms away. They held the highway for almost five hours including peak morning traffic

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Prison news

Itoiz dam suspect jailed

The latest Itoiz Dam suspect to be captured is Julio Villanueva. He was arrested on the 17th of August.

His arrest is connected to the Itoiz dam action in Spain, where back in the late 1990s anonymous eco-activists sabotaged the construction site of the controversial Itoiz dam causing so much damage the construction was delayed by over a year. One of the things the activists did was cut the cables of the machines which took the dam wall blocks to the top of the dam.

As ELP reported at the time, following the action, eight men, who were all linked to a lawful campaign against the construction, were accused of involvement in this action. Despite being innocent all eight feared they wouldn't get a fair trial so all eight went underground. However despite not having their suspects in detention that didn't stop the Spanish police who held a trial for the eight men in their absence. Surprisingly enough, as the eight weren't there to explain their innocence, all eight were found guilty and sentenced to four years and ten months imprisonment.

As ELP supporters will be aware, over the following years a small number of

the Itoiz Dam suspects have been caught by the police and thrown into prison.

Please send letters of support to: Julio Villanueva, C.P. Prision De Pamplona, 31080 Iruna (Navarra), Spain

Support anarchists in Russia

Statement of anarchist initiatives of St Petersburg, Russia:

On 16th of August 2007 in the Novgorod Region, in area of Maloy Vishery two members of St. Petersburg Anarchist League (PLA) Andrey Kalyonov and Denis Zelenyuk were arrested.

Police suspect they participated in the bombing of a bridge under the 'Nevskiy express' train, which took place 13th August between Okulovka and Malaya Vishera, and which is being investigated as a terrorist attack. On the 18th August court of Malovisherskiy area of Novgorod region agreed on arrest of both for 30 days, after which they have to be accused or released.

We, participants of anarchist initiatives in St Petersburg, categorically refute the accusations against our two comrades, and we

declare that they have nothing to do with the bombing of 'Nevskiy express'. Anarchist views do not allow violence against innocent people.

A. Kalyonov and D. Zelenyuk were in St Petersburg 13th of August, which may be confirmed by witnesses. Our comrades happened to be in area of Maloy Vishery, because they were travelling to a general meeting of Association of Anarchist Initiatives (ADA-IFA) in Yaroslavl with local trains.

We consider the arrest of our comrades as just another aggression on the part of an authoritarian state regime. Violating norms set by the state for itself, police searched the home of Andrei Kalyonov when nobody was there. The door was broken, and officers from the nearest police station were used as witnesses, although neighbours of A. Kalyonov were not against being witnesses. Mother of Andrei, also resident of the flat, was not provided a search warrant. Due to these violations, no 'proof' confiscated from house of Andrei may be regarded legal.

We are calling for actions of solidarity for imprisoned anarchists,

one of whom, Andrei Kalyonov, announced that he has started a hunger strike.

Contact Brighton ABC for more information: PO box 74, Brighton, BN1 4ZQ

New pamphlet from Leeds ABC

Prison Was Created For The Poor focuses on two tireless militants of the Spanish prison struggle, Xose Tarrío Gonzalez and Gabriel Pombo Da Silva, who fought against the brutal FIES. isolation units. Xose was killed by a life behind bars, and Gabriel now rots in a German prison. The main part of this book though, is written by neither Xose nor Gabriel, instead it is the text of an interview with their mothers, Pastora and Julia. Through this medium, they tell a powerful and emotional story, which not only takes us inside the world of Spanish high security prisons, but reflects on jails throughout the world. *Prison Was Created For The Poor* is a compelling read.

Prison Was Created For The Poor, 32 pages, £2 plus 50p UK postage (please contact us for trade and international rates), from Leeds ABC, PO Box 53, Leeds, LS8 4WP, England, email leedsabc@riseup.net

News

Postal strike

The CWU is still threatening nationwide strikes by the end of September if their dispute with Royal Mail is not resolved

The CWU is still threatening nationwide strikes by the end of September if their dispute with Royal Mail is not resolved. The latest round of talks has ended without agreement.

At the end of June postal workers across Britain took the first national strike at Royal Mail for a decade. About 130,000 members of the CWU walked out for 24 hours after talks over a pay dispute collapsed.

On the latest round of talks, the union has said that: "despite being committed to further talks and being determined to reach an agreement, CWU will announce further strikes to be held prior to the end of September." Royal Mail is refusing to budge on pension proposals including increased employee contributions and a later retirement age. An agreement on working conditions, such as the start of early shifts has also still to be reached.

The government has created an environment with competition and the Postcomm regulator that tries to force a level of restructuring that the union, at the moment, is unlikely to agree to. The government and Royal Mail want a smaller workforce under worse pay conditions and decreased pensions. They also want to cut costs by reducing the service that the post office offers members of the public.

A lot of postal workers are angry that the strike was suspended when Royal Mail was under pressure, however the practice of suspending strike action, with management also agreeing to suspend executive action is fairly standard in industrial relations.

The negotiations were instigated after the first two one day strikes when workers were concerned that the action wasn't working. In the subsequent staggered strikes, the union discovered a powerful way of escalating the dispute at no extra cost to pay. The union, however, is happy to be able to negotiate.

Royal Mail may have been over optimistic in the belief that they could push through a business plan involving rapid painful change for the employees without resistance. Royal Mail underestimated the strength of support that there was for a strike and were not prepared for staggered strikes. This has forced them to modify their initial position of 'weathering' the strike, and to enter into negotiations.

It is likely that Royal Mail will settle for something less than they previously were expecting. The government is also likely to be worried about the encouragement a long running solid postal strike will give to other public sector unions concerned over below inflation wage offers. The possibility of a sudden election before Christmas and the undesirable prospect of strikes during election campaigning may also be behind government influence on Royal Mail to return to the negotiating table.

However the government has the possibility of retreat; they can return with their proposals in six months or a year. The government will also be unwilling to send a positive signal to the rest of the public sector. Part of the strength of posties, is that jobs cannot be exported, unlike other industries where the threat of global competition



is used to keep workers in line. The government's introduction of competition in the postal sector has been to artificially create a competitive environment. Workers are still required to accept Royal Mail's attacks under the threat that jobs will

go to other companies.

If the union agrees to a bad deal, which workers may reluctantly vote to accept, there is a likelihood that unofficial strikes and actions will break out as Royal Mail try to implement the deal. There are two

issues on the table: protecting the union's role as negotiators, and protecting the posties conditions as workers. The union is likely to fight harder to defend the former than the latter.

For more see libcom.org

Gatwick No Borders Camp

The UK No Borders network is calling for an international coordinated day of action on 22nd September 2007 in support of the continuous campaign against immigration prisons.

The Day of Action will be during the first No Border Camp in the UK (19th to 24th September, near Gatwick Airport, see noborders.org.uk). The Camp was prompted by government plans to build a new immigration prison at Gatwick, designed to hold 426 migrant prisoners. On Saturday 22nd there will be a march (starting at midday) from Crawley town centre to Tinsley House.

Tinsley House, the already existing immigration prison at Gatwick, was the first purpose-built detention centre in the UK. It was opened in 1996 and has a capacity of 135 people, including families and children, with 11,000 detainees going through it each year. Next to Tinsley House the Home Office has started building a new detention centre, called Brook House.

Gatwick airport is a border in the

middle of Britain. People are forcibly deported from here everyday. It is a place where people are imprisoned for unlimited lengths of time without trial, forced to hide underground, and treated as criminals for the 'crime' of crossing the border. Not far from Gatwick there are other border fortifications: the immigration reporting centre at Croydon, the airline companies who charter deportation flights and the ID Interview centre in Crawley. In the UK, there are ten so-called Immigration Reception Centres, with a total capacity of 2,506 places, but the government is aiming for a total of 4,000 places by building new detention centres.

While the physical borders get fortified, governments also tighten up the internal controls: from international databases to video surveillance, biometric ID cards to electronic tagging. Just recently, the UK government has announced the introduction of the Sirene System. This will grant Britain access to the SIS (Schengen Information System), a EU wide police database for refugees and migrants, planned to be

extended to keep protesters from moving around.

All over the world, refugees and migrants are being locked up in special prisons, disguised under various names, for the only 'crime' of fleeing wars or persecution or wanting to improve their lives. Without trial and with no automatic bail review, they can face months and years of incarceration in terrible conditions, before being forcibly deported to unsafe countries. There have been numerous reports of abuse and mistreatment at the hands of 'staff', lack or denial of medical care, obstruction of detainees' trying to handle their legal matters and so on. In the most extreme cases, these desperate conditions have led migrant prisoners to take their own lives.

Resistance, both inside and outside these prisons, has been getting stronger and stronger. Hunger strikes, riots and pickets have become a common occurrence. But not enough is being done as thousands of people continue to suffer in their cells.

Metronet strikers

More than 2,300 Metronet maintenance workers who struck for two 72 hour periods in the first week of September have succeeded in forcing Metronet not to implement proposed job losses and staff transfers.

Following Metronet's collapse after years of mismanagement, administrators Ernst & Young told unions RMT, Unite and TSSA that all previous understandings with management were void.

The security of workers pensions remains a critical issue although the union is reporting progress. TfL pensions trustees have unanimously approved a full rescue of the fund, the only issue outstanding is Pension Protection Fund (PPF) agreement.

TSSA has now been given oversight of the PPF Board agreement to the rescue of the TfL Pension Fund and received an understanding that they will be involved in any further talks on issues felt to be outstanding by other unions. TSSA now feels that all goals in the dispute have been achieved.

Despite this the employers have tried to claim in the media that they have not made any concessions.

RMT general secretary said "This means that our members will now actually have their pensions restored to them, which is rather different than promises from a man in an expensive suit."

"Further to the existing assurance that there will be no job losses or transfers during the period of administration, we also now have written commitments that any subsequent proposals will be subject to proper discussions through the existing negotiating machinery and the code of practice agreed at the time the PPP was introduced. This means that the threat of 691 job losses, tabled before Metronet's collapse and postponed by the administrator, has been withdrawn entirely.

"Our members are to be congratulated for their rock-solid action, and can return to work with their heads held high after sustaining their strike in the face of enormous pressure and hostile media."

News

Which 'anarchists' lie

In the second part of Freedom's investigation, CIPO-RFM responds to accusations of lies, state collusion and authoritarianism from the group

Raul Gatica will not reply to any calumny: his personal history speaks for him, very few in Oaxaca have suffered the number of incarcerations, assassination attempts, torture, and now exile, that he has suffered without giving up the struggle.

It's important to say that we have had accusations made against us, that has been the case since the birth of the CIPO-RFM. Most of these accusations and more have been in the newspapers of the government, or stirred up in radio and television programmes.

They are like all slanders, political acts tending to generate an environment of isolation, discrediting and facilitating the repression of our organisation.

Although in order to make them credible they promote them with the voice of persons and organisations that are called fighters, so it can be said there are conflicts between groups, the real origin of it all is with the state.

As our history demonstrates, in Oaxaca CIPO-RFM are the only organisation that never gives in. These slanders aim to force us away from our 'radicalism' and force us to accept deals which are against the movement.

In relation to the charge that we use an alliance of organisations, that we break accords, that we are a minority, that we speak for the movement: What accords did we break? How are we a minority and for what? What do we say in the name of others?

We have only participated in two movements of state breadth: the Syndicate of the Three Powers of Oaxaca, with 11 organisations, where it was verified that OIDHO, CODEP, CODECI and the UCP were using them in order to sign documents against the CIPO-RFM and negotiate personal benefits for their leaders, while the majority continued to work with the CIPO-RFM.

The second movement is that of the APPO, of which we remain members and part of its council. Nationally we are part of the Indigenous National Council.

In each we possess appreciation, respect and recognition for our work, with commissions assigned to us and visits that honour us such as those of the EZLN and the CNI. Outside of this we are not part of any other process.

So who says that a great number of Mexican organisations renounce their relations with the CIPO, if the only ones we are related to at a national level have strengthened their relations with us?

On the delicate point of money, such as of the collection of federal funds, CIPO-RFM collected 21 cheques for all the world between 1998 and 2006, including those managed by Alejandro Cruz Lopez, Soledad Ortiz and Raul Gatica. Save in the case of Alejandro, all the cheques were made because the organisations were quiet in respect to what was happening in Oaxaca. It was



to be the basis for a movement of international solidarity with Oaxaca, of which nobody knew anything and few believed there was a grassroots movement.

We were of the few that with our deaths, imprisoned, tortured and persecuted, maintained resistance against the tyranny in Oaxaca and helped the world learn of Oaxaca and later the APPO could count on strong international solidarity.

From where does the CIPO take

money in order to give it? All we have is poverty, a great heart, solidarity, organised work and dignity. This we distribute and maybe this permits the influence that they grant us.

To those who don't know us, we tell them that we are not a perfect organization. We invite them that to come to the house of CIPO-RFM, to know these people of flesh and bone who are slandered with such rage.

The organising group of the CIPO-RFM The APPO are an umbrella body which was

set up as an alternative locus of power during the Oaxaca rising last year, and retains the support of many radicals across the region. The EZLN are the Zapatistas, an autonomous force opposed to the government and effectively in control of the Chiapas region of Mexico. CODECI, along with the CIPO-RFM, self-identifies as a libertarian grouping largely based in the Oaxaca region.

Freedom will attempt to contact the APPO and EZLN to confirm CIPO's status with the organisation, along with that of CODECI.

Make them ill

Towards the end of August, in a move that's almost too callous to believe, the Bush junta took the first steps in its promise to deprive children of better health care. (Health care in the United States is all privately provided and issued against payments made, usually by employers, of a premium, termed 'insurance'.)

Certain States have been planning to expand the popular 'Children's Health Insurance Program', or CHIP. But new standards were outlined in a letter sent to state health officials in New York and California (the most populous of the several states affected) in the middle of the summer's month-long congressional recess. The aim of these changes is to make it almost impossible for the reach and scope of CHIP to be expanded.

States are typically passing local legislation to provide health care to families with incomes three to four times the poverty level (currently around \$20,000, or £10,000) where two to two-and-a-half times that income is the present maximum. Despite the fact that there is no federal position (e.g.

congressional legislation) preventing such an increase, the White House is attempting to suppress such state initiatives. About one in eight of all children in the United States has no access to health coverage – and the number grows yearly. A study just released by the The Kaiser Family Foundation reveals that premiums (the price paid by those who have health 'insurance') have risen by nearly 80% since 2001, more than four times the rate of inflation in the same period. Up to two million people are said to lose health insurance each year.

The understandable response of state officials was that such a move could adversely affect their efforts to provide more children with better health coverage. Ann Clemency Kohler, deputy commissioner of human services in New Jersey, said: "We are horrified at the new federal policy. It will cause havoc with our program and could jeopardise coverage for thousands of children." Stan Rosenstein, the Medicaid director in California, said the federal policy was "highly restrictive, much more

restrictive than what we want to do."

Retailer WalMart is now facing yet another allegation of unlawful labour practices – in Mexico, where nearly 20,000 teenage children are thought to be working as baggers yet receiving no payment except for tips from customers. WalMart classes them as 'volunteers'.

Kill them

There is the same anti-immigrant hysteria in the United States as in Britain, of course. Over the summer three undocumented guest workers died whilst in immigration jails: 23-year old Victoria Arellano died – shackled to her bed – after her AIDS treatment was withheld in a California immigration jail. Edmar Alves Araujo also died because officials ignored his relatives' requests that he be allowed to take his drugs for epilepsy. Rosa Isela Contreras-Dominguez died in a jail in Texas while seven weeks pregnant.

Where direct murder by the state is not possible, you get others to do it for you: although it's never made the headlines to the extent that you might

War on Terror

In California, Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger has vetoed a measure which would have allowed voters to suggest a vote on calling for an immediate withdrawal from Iraq. The ballot initiative would have gone on the presidential primary ballot in February of 2008 but it will now be impossible for anyone even to propose that such a ballot be drawn up.

Where direct murder by the state is not possible, you get others to do it for you: although it's never made the headlines to the extent that you might expect, the CIA has long 'rendered' suspects to a network of secret prisons outside the country, where restrictions on torture are fewer than inside the US.

Now a confidential report from the International Committee of the Red Cross has deemed that these detention and interrogation methods are themselves tantamount to torture, warning the US officials responsible that they may have committed 'grave breaches' of the Geneva Conventions

and may have violated the US Torture Act. The Red Cross issued the confidential report to the Bush administration last year, since when nothing has happened except this leaking that it even exists.

Meanwhile two men, Iraqi citizen Bisher al-Rawi and Yemeni citizen Mohamed Farag Ahmad Bashmilah, have joined a lawsuit originally filed in May by the ACLU (the equivalent of Liberty in the UK) on behalf of three others similarly abused. The suit is against a subsidiary of Boeing, Jeppesen International Trip Planning, for its participation in the CIA 'extraordinary rendition' programme.

As for Guantanamo detainees, a group of five intelligence officials has filed sworn declarations advising against the release of information on Guantanamo prisoners. This is part of Bush's attempt to reverse a recent court ruling which allows Guantanamo defence lawyers to access information on their clients. Two of these statements were themselves classified as top-secret.

Feature

Muppet of the week!

George Monbiot has never let his ignorance of anarchism stop him from commenting on it, says Iain McKay

George Monbiot, the green activist and writer, has never let his ignorance of anarchism stop him from commenting on it. It takes a wilfully ignorant person to write the nonsense about anarchism contained in his self-contradictory book, *The Age of Consent*. Sadly, many of those reading and reviewing that book were equally ignorant (Johann Harri, please take a bow) and so he had little to worry about.

One thing seems sure, like many a liberal and Marxist he dislikes our ideas and seeks to smear us by means of 'guilt by association'. This he did recently in *The Guardian* when discussing neo-liberalism. As he put it, the neo-liberal "project was assisted by ideas which arose in a very different quarter. The revolutionary movements of 1968 also sought greater individual liberties, and many of the soixante-huitards saw the state as their oppressor ... the neoliberals coopted their language and ideas. Some of the anarchists I know still voice notions almost identical to those of the neoliberals: the intent is different, but the consequences very similar." ('How the neoliberals stitched up the wealth of nations for themselves', 28th August 2007.)

Yes, indeed, how could those in the Parisian streets fighting the riot cops who had attacked their protests possibly consider the state as oppressive? How could they fail to see how wrong they were to consider the state as the defender of social hierarchy as well as the capitalist class and its power and property? How did we anarchists fail to note how neoliberalism was, in fact, really fighting against wage labour and factory fascism? How could we fail to note Milton Friedman's and Frederick von Hayek's outspoken opposition to profits, rent, interest, wage labour, hierarchical authority and patriarchal family structure? How could we fail to see the neoliberals proclaim with Proudhon that property is both theft and despotism and urge its abolition?

Equally strangely, the "US oligarchs and their foundations" who have "poured hundreds of millions into setting up think-tanks, founding business schools and transforming university economics departments into bastions of almost totalitarian neo-liberal thinking" have not been as forthcoming funding anarchist projects and organisations. Don't these people realise that we share their "language and ideas"? Apparently not.

True, the neo-liberals do waffle on about 'liberty' a lot, but the Stalinist bureaucrats used to waffle on about 'solidarity' a lot, too. Presumably, that means we anarchists "still voice notions almost identical" to those of

the Stalinist dictators? Unlikely, although some on the right (like, say, the neoliberals) say we do. Perhaps we can look forward to Monbiot's critique of Rousseau by noting he talked about democracy and republics a lot which means that Democratic Republic of China's rulers have "coopted" his "language and ideas"?

The underlying mentality is interesting. Rather than anarchists being in agreement with ideas of neo-liberalism (or vice versa), it is in fact Monbiot who agrees with them. Clearly, for him, freedom simply means being free to exploit, to oppress, to be anti-social and anti-ecological rather than, say, the freedom to be yourself and manage your own affairs in association with others and in harmony with the planet. Thus freedom is associated with capitalism and our radical helps push back the struggle for an ecological society by associating it with statism and rule by (at best) well-meaning, but ultimately clueless, politicians, bureaucrats and intellectuals. Monbiot's logic is clear: people cannot be free to govern themselves as this will lead to the excesses of capitalism – and the neoliberals join in and proclaim 'hallelujah, another convert!'

In reality, a lot of state violence was required to create capitalism and, of course, to maintain it – the state has always been an instrument of minority rule and capitalism, like any hierarchical system, depends on it. When left alone, people form communities and associations to determine and look after their own interests and to defend themselves against those seeking to exploit or oppress them – something no ruling class happily tolerates (particularly as such popular organisations create the potential of a new world while fighting the old). Hence the neo-liberal assault on unions, community organisations, and protest in general. This is a truism, given the nature of capitalism as a system but also given that its vision of humanity is at odds with real people. Neo-liberalism, at heart, aims to make the real world resemble the model of neoclassical economists which, in turn, allows the latter to appear more realistic than it actually is. As Bakunin warned, to impose the abstractions of scientists (to be generous to mainstream economists, ideologues would be more accurate) onto the world would be both devastating to the general public and require state force.

Unsurprising, then, the authoritarianism at the heart of neo-liberalism – even a superficial look at the politics of neo-liberalism shows that it is firmly in favour of 'archy'. Obviously, this applies economically within the workplace (wage labour gives them no problems) but it also applies politically as well. The neo-liberal agenda has always



turned to the state, just as capitalism has always done. Even Monbiot recognised this: "The conditions that neoliberalism demands in order to free human beings from the slavery of the state – minimal taxes, the dismantling of public services and social security, deregulation, the breaking of the unions – just happen to be the conditions required to make the elite even richer."

Breaking of the unions? That has always required state power, as does dismantling public services and so forth. Anarchists, of course, prefer direct action – like, for example, strikes and organising workers on the shop-floor – you know, the kind of thing neoliberals use the state to stop. What better example do you need that we anarchists "voice notions almost identical to those of the neoliberals" than that? Nor should we forget that the "first neoliberal programme of all was implemented in Chile following Pinochet's coup, with the backing of the US government and economists taught by Milton Friedman". Some socialists may subscribe to the parliamentary road to socialism, but no anarchist advocates the military

dictatorship way to anarchism.

So, implicitly, Monbiot presented enough of reality to show that anarchists and neoliberals really do not share anything in common. In fact, neoliberalism has always explicitly pursued a statist political strategy and goal, namely the state reduced to its 'minimum' role as protector of private property and the power which goes with it – i.e., the kind of regime anarchism cut its teeth on opposing in the nineteenth century. As anyone even vaguely aware of anarchism would know.

Within a week, he noticed the contradiction. "After my column last week," he wrote, "several people wrote to point out that the neoliberal project – which demands a minimal state and maximum corporate freedom – actually relies on constant government support. They are, of course, quite right." ('This great free-market experiment is more like a corporate welfare scheme', 4th September 2007)

So why say otherwise in the first column and suggest that anarchists and neo-liberals share common aims and ideas? Do anarchists support the neo-liberal agenda of "constant government support" to ensure a

"minimal state and maximum corporate freedom"? Of course not. We just realise that freedom is too important a word to leave to the supporters of capitalism to monopolise and that the state, even Monbiot's beloved social-democratic one, exists to keep capitalism going and ensure that the general public do not free themselves from both state and corporate rule.

That the corporate elite may object to certain functions of the state should not blind us to the fact that they need it. Nor to the fact that they will always turn to it when required – even to accept social democratic reforms if pressured by direct action from below (particularly if the alternative is genuine social transformation). We anarchists argue that without that pressure, things will get worse. That is why we support direct action, solidarity and popular self-organisation and struggle – as the neoliberal era shows, relying on politicians to do it for you is doomed to failure. Only pressure from the streets and workplaces can countermand the power of capital on the state – and, ultimately, get rid of both once and for all.

Commentary

FREEDOM

Volume 68 Number 18

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

Whitechapel Art Gallery continue on good form with their experimental art music (some kind of electro-noise-jazz-hiphop this evening) usually of a good standard, even if it does make editing the paper a little harder ...

We've a bevy of new bookshop staff, which is always good news. Otherwise the press continues to be fairly sleepy, scarcely even disrupted by the police overtime bonanza that is the Docklands yearly arms fair (for a report on some of the DSEI action see page 8).

To celebrate our influx of volunteers, a poem instead of the usual requests for editorial assistance, etc.

MB

Poisonville

An archetypal Western in modern urban dress / brutal lyrical one-liners and hard-boiled compassion / Socialism is in the air as Anarchists get scapegoated / crime, political corruption, human passions, jealousy, / cupidity and hypocrisy intertwine with tarnished saints / and sentimental sinners as / key characters betray principles to satisfy baser needs

Peter Burton, 2007

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Next issue

The next issue will be dated 13th October 2007 and the last day to get copy to us for that issue will be Thursday 4th October. 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.

Vietnam sham

What a moron! No other words really do justice to the idiot who nominally heads the US government. What else can be concluded by Bush's attempt to justify the continued occupation of Iraq by comparing it to what followed the US pullout from Vietnam.

The most obvious factual inaccuracy is his claim that one of the consequences of leaving would be that "the enemy would follow us home." Except, of course, that did not happen after Vietnam despite claims made at the time. The Vietnamese were too busy trying to repair the damage that US invasion had caused to their country. We can be sure that Iraq would be the same particularly as the vast bulk of the insurgency are Iraqi Nationalists and not Islamic fundamentalists.

Equally wrongly, he opined that "one unmistakable legacy of Vietnam is that the price of America's withdrawal was paid by millions of innocent citizens whose agonies would add to our vocabulary new terms like 'boat people', 're-education camps' and 'killing fields'." Except, of course, America did not 'withdraw' voluntarily. It was losing both the war in Vietnam and the (class) war at home. Nor did Bush explain how defeat in Vietnam led to the 'killing fields' in Cambodia. Strangely he failed to note that it was the covert carpet bombing of Cambodia by the US that created the opportunity for the Khmer Rouge to seize power. So it was not American 'withdrawal' but intervention that led to the killing fields.

Nor Bush did note that the US bombing killed around 700,000 people in that country. Nor did he bother to mention that the US, like the UK, supported, armed and trained the Khmer Rouge after the Vietnamese state invaded Cambodia in response to its attacks (and the US accused Vietnam of aggression when it ended Pol Pot's genocidal reign).

So, according to Bush, the US must remain in Iraq because of what happened in another country unoccupied by the American Empire but subject to its bombing campaigns. Logic, we can surmise, is not Bush's strong point (or, perhaps, this analogy is used to explain a forthcoming bombing campaign against Iran?).

But, then, you would expect Bush to be a bit ignorant of the details of the US record in Vietnam and Asia. He was, thanks to his family connections, in Texas defending it against imminent attack by the Viet-Cong. Still, to be fair there is a big difference between Vietnam and Iraq – Bush knew how to get out of Vietnam.

Bush pointed to the fact that "in Vietnam, former allies of the United States and government workers and intellectuals and businessmen were sent off to prison camps where tens of thousands perished". Yes, when foreign occupation ends there is a tendency for revenge killings of collaborators to occur. In post-occupied France, for example, many thousands were killed because they had sided with the Nazis. This does not make the killings justifiable, of course, nor should we forget that Stalinism involves state terror, it is simply to state a fact of history. Nor should we forget that, like Bush's grandfather, many right-wingers and businessmen were happy to work with the fascist regimes – they kept the working class in place and profits were readily available. Equally, we should

note that Vietnamese deaths were well over two million due to the war.

So, again, the logic behind this argument is hard to grasp. It appears to be that America should continue its occupation because leaving may result in fewer deaths than continuing the war. It is possible that if the US leaves Iraq then tens of thousands will die and hundreds of thousands displaced. Sadly Bush fails to note that this is what has already happened – except that hundreds of thousands have already died and millions have been displaced.

Then there is his comment that "our troops have killed or captured an average of more than 1,500 al Qaeda terrorists and other extremists every month ... this year". So, in 2007, US troops apparently killed at least 13,500 'al Qaeda terrorists and other extremists' (presumably the corpses had the appropriate membership cards). Before the US invasion and occupation, there were no 'al Qaeda terrorists and other extremists'. In other words, the US should continue to occupy Iraq in order to kill the tens of thousands of 'extremists' created by its occupation of Iraq.

Bush was at pains to associate Islamic fundamentalism with past tyrannies like Fascism and Stalinism. Thus fighting in Korea was important because otherwise "the Soviets and Chinese communists would have learned the lesson that aggression pays". Yes, the Soviets definitely learned the lesson that it could not interfere in other countries like Poland, Hungary and Czechoslovakia just as China realised occupying Tibet would not pay. Just as America learned the lesson that it could not invade, say, the Philippines, Panama or some oil-rich Middle Eastern country and expect to get away with it.

Remember, though, that "the militarists of Japan and the communists in Korea and Vietnam were driven by a merciless vision for the proper ordering of humanity. They killed Americans because we stood in the way of their attempt to force their ideology on others." Of course, invading a country to introduce American approved notions of what 'liberty' and 'democracy' are is completely different, just as America supporting military coups against democratically elected governments simply shows how much it values both liberty and democracy.

The historical revisionism continued, with Bush asserting that "Asia would pull itself out of poverty and hopelessness as it embraced markets and freedom". Except, of course, it did not. Asia industrialised by violating the market, but means of statist industrial policies (including protectionism and state planning). Needless to say, these regimes also tended to ban unions and other forms of popular organisation, i.e. the freedom of workers to organise and protest. Similarly, while Bush stated that "today most of the nations in Asia are free" and he did not mention that those nations which are 'free' did so in spite of the US supporting (when not helping to impose) the dictatorships they had to overthrow.

China, it should be noted, is very successfully following this Asian model of industrialisation, namely interventionist dictatorship to both govern the market and crush working class resistance to oppression and exploitation. And if, as a result of popular struggle, China does become a democracy the equivalent of Bush will undoubtedly proclaim that some

later time that it pulled itself out of poverty by means of markets and freedom.

So, for anyone with a grasp of the facts, "the lesson from Asia's development" is not "that the heart's desire for liberty will not be denied". Rather, it is denying working class people freedom to organise and access to a free market is a key way to successfully industrialise. Capitalism has always developed by denying the majority liberty and has always been marked by imperialism (in the interests of civilisation and those subject to it, of course). America is no more an exception to that rule than the Asia economies.

One thing Bush said was true, though. Yes, "once people even get a small taste of liberty, they're not going to rest until they're free". Which is precisely why capitalists have always turned to the state to protect their powers and privileges and why moronic politicians like Bush rewrite history when it suits them.

IM

GDF-Suez merger

➔ page 1

apparently control the prices "until 2010". However, consumers and workers agree on one thing: they don't want any privatisation of GDF, whether it is effective right now or in three years.

Five of the main unions (CGT, CFDT, FO, CGF-CGC and CFTC) have declared they will start a national mobilisation for the fall of 2007, and some of them have already started petitions. Knowing that the fusion will only be effective at the beginning of 2008, they agree on the idea that "nothing is definite for the moment" and want to take advantage of the next few months to raise a social movement, coming both from the workers and the consumers.

Around the world

➔ page 2

hours. More than 30 Joe Slovo residents were seriously injured by police who shot them with rubber bullets at very close range. These residents have been taken to the Bonteheuvel Day Hospital.

"We are angry. We want RDP house in Joe Slovo. We want the Department of Housing to stop moving our people to Delft. We refuse to be moved there. It is far from our workplaces and also from places where we look for work. Those of us who are not getting paid undecent salaries are spending every day looking for work. We can't and won't move. The government took this decision without consulting us and now they must change it," said Mzwanele from the Joe Slovo Task Team.

Housing Minister Lindiwe Sisulu said residents of the Joe Slovo informal settlement had to decide whether they wanted to co-operate with the government and qualify for housing. "If they choose not to co-operate, they will be removed completely from all housing waiting lists."

The Anti-Eviction Campaign described the situation as "absolutely terrible". It said police had opened fire on the protesters at close range with rubber bullets. "They shot women and children, and people are seriously

injured ... Dozens of residents have been arrested and the police are refusing to say where they have taken these residents, even though some are injured."

Police occupied the settlement after Monday's action. Residents are afraid to leave their houses because of police harassment and because they are afraid of being arrested.

Mncedi Diko and Mzwanele Zulu from the Joe Slovo Task Team went to the police station to inform police that the community wanted to have a general meeting inside the settlement to discuss the way forward. As they left the station, police arrested them. They were released on bail the next morning after a crowd of Joe Slovo informal settlement protested outside the Bishop Lavis Magistrates Court until the two were released.

Make them ill

➔ page 4

IM expect, the CIA has long 'rendered' suspects to a network of secret prisons outside the country, where restrictions on torture are fewer than inside the US. Now a confidential report from the International Committee of the Red Cross has deemed that these detention and interrogation methods are themselves tantamount to torture, warning the US officials responsible that they may have committed 'grave breaches' of the Geneva Conventions and may have violated the US Torture Act. The Red Cross issued the confidential report to the Bush administration last year, since when nothing has happened except this leaking that it even exists.

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Quiz answers

1. It is a transliteration of the Dutch for droplet, but grew out of a site called drop.org, which was a type for the Dutch word for village, dorp, based on the community aspects of its development.
2. Volapük, invented by Johann Martin Schleyer in 1879. It has over 100,000 articles on its wikipedia but, according to the English language entry on it, there are only 20-30 speakers of the language in the world. There are currently more entries for Volapük than Esperanto (up to two million speakers) and plenty of real living languages.
3. Regicide, in 1900, 1649, 1908 and 1958 respectively.
4. Kerensky, who made a speech calling for a war against the soviets.

REVIEW

Richard Alexander is unimpressed by Critchley's latest work on the philosophy of resistance

If you combine the title with the book, with a blurb that promises that the book "culminates in an argument for anarchism as an ethical practice and a re-motivating means of political motivation" then one might expect this to be an exciting and engaging text.

Sadly it isn't, unless you are of the few people who are involved in or studying the dialogue about ethics and politics amongst the philosophers working in the Continental (European) tradition. Now that's not to put anyone off from attempting to read this as I'm sure someone might find something worthwhile in here, but unless you've studied philosophy to degree level you find yourself struggling with both the terminology and conceptual apparatuses employed in this book (even if you have a reasonable dictionary of philosophy at hand like I had!).

That caveat stated I'll attempt to summarise Critchley's argument (luckily Critchley does this himself in his introduction so I'll crib it from there).

Critchley opens with a claim that philosophy is founded in disappointment coupled with human inability to accept our finite nature. Having decided that disappointment comes in two flavours: religious and political, Critchley opts for a discussion of the latter, for which we can thank him.

In particular he states that our political disappointment comes from the realisation that we inhabit a violently unjust world, a world dominated by war and the politics of fear, and it is this situation that calls forth the need for an ethics to face that situation.

To clear his way he then discusses two forms of nihilism: passive and active. The passive nihilist sees a world without meaning and without the possibility of change or improvement. S/he therefore focuses on themselves and tries to obtain a mystical stillness,

an inner calm.

The active nihilist also sees a world without meaning, but attempts to destroy this world and bring another into being. In this category he lumps not only the expected revolutionary groups, including the Spanish anarchists – especially Durruti, the Situationists and the Angry Brigade but also al-Qaeda.

Anyone who can equate Osama bin Laden with Durruti has a lot of explaining to do as far as I'm concerned!

Critchley wants nothing to do with nihilism and so is forced to come up with an alternative. However he begins by acknowledging the sheer awfulness of the present world, its violence, poverty, its deceit, its lack of purpose (except to maximise the bottom line).

This shows the insufficiency of secular liberal democracies – they simply fail to motivate people. Citizens "experience the governmental norms as externally binding but not internally compelling".

Whereas those who are most motivated appear to be those who reject the *status quo* (was it not ever thus? Whoever went on a march to keep things just as they are? Unless that status was being threatened by unwanted change) in particular those with religious agendas. As Critchley rejects either form of what he calls nihilism, to get to an ethics that motivates he is impelled to construct a new argument.

This starts with a theory of ethical experience based on approval and demand and how this theory presupposes a model of ethical subjectivity. This requires a detailed discussion of Kant and his notion of "the fact of reason", which attempts "to unify the justification of moral norms on the basis of universality with the motivation to act on those norms".

Critchley follows this with a theory of ethical subjectivity which assembles



Simon Critchley

with ideas from three other writers: from Alain Badiou, the idea of fidelity; from Knud Ejler Logstrup, the idea of ethical demand, which is one-sided, radical and unfulfillable; and from Emmanuel Levinas the idea that the unfulfillability of the ethical demand is internal to subjectivity.

This he then subjects to a psycho-analytical reading borrowing the notion of trauma from the later Freud. (If you're not familiar with the work of these writers you're in good company as I found this section very heavy going and couldn't say whether his theory is credible or not.)

Cracking on (though I suspect many will have given up by this point) the author then attempts to show how this conception of the ethical subject he has just created runs the risk of overloading the self with responsibility in a way that calls for sublimation. This involves an invocation of Lacan and a visit to Heidegger and German Idealism which suggests that the psychoanalytic discourse on sublimation is hostage to a "tragic-heroic paradigm". In opposition to this Critchley proposes the use of humour as a practice of minimal sublimation.

If this wasn't complicated enough Critchley then turns to a discussion on conscience which wishes to place at the heart of ethics, despite the claims of Nietzsche that conscience culminates in self-hatred or Freudian claims about the cruelty of the super ego.

Instead Critchley conceives of an ethics of discomfort "a hyperbolic ethics based on the internalisation of an unfulfillable ethical demand". For Critchley the experience of conscience is "that of an essentially divided self, an originally inauthentic humorous self that can never attain the autarchy of self-mastery".

On the basis of that convoluted and highly confusing and contentious theory he wants to discuss political action.

In many ways though the later parts of the book are the most accessible. His discussion on Marx is sensible and I suspect many will agree that the

Marxist theory of the simplification of classes into a binary opposition of proletariat and a bourgeoisie has failed to occur and there is no reason for it to occur, whilst at the same time agreeing with much of Marx says about the socio-economic nature of capitalism.

If, as Critchley contends, the proletariat has failed to be the political subject of revolutionary praxis this raises the question of political subjectivity. Enter Messrs Gramsci and Laclau and their theory of hegemony and a discussion of the nature of political organising in the face of the dislocations caused by global capitalism.

Critchley rejects the ideas of Negri and Hardt on 'multitude' instead focusing on the politics of indigenous identity as an example of a new political subject (i.e. one not based on pure economic categories) and then he lands on what he calls 'contemporary anarchism' (something he distinguishes from the anarchism of the 1960s which he seems to think was all about sexual liberation – he obviously wasn't there at the time!) and in particular the spectacular forms of civil disobedience.

Note Professor Critchley sees no prospect of an anarchism that actually destroys power structures and economic systems of exploitation (that would be so nihilistic), rather he wants a politics of disturbance – anarchism as a mild stomach ache in the body politic.

A form of politics that is a questioning from below of any attempt to impose order from above – but which is incapable of actually changing anything structurally.

Now this is a brief and possible distorted summary of what is a highly technical and complex set of arguments (and my apologies of the author feels I haven't done him justice). However I can't help feeling that this is more a book about positioning Critchley in the ongoing debates in the rarefied world of political and ethical philosophy than

something that is going to be of much use to political activists operating in the real world.

I've no doubt that Critchley has his heart in the right place but the text is far too demanding for most readers. What is worse is that even when he does get around to talking about political activism, his recommendations would seem to me to a recipe for the very thing he set out to avoid – disappointment.

Is there any point in a politics that starts from the premise that it can't actually change anything meaningful, merely cause some form of disturbance in the not particularly orderly world of late capitalism? Assuming activists do jump through all the hops this book proposes (and you'll need to be a contortionist to manage some of them) they will end undertaking actions which they will conclude make no difference.

End result – a minority will take up what Critchley describes as 'active nihilism' that is they will take their activism onto a more violent level or they will succumb to 'passive nihilism', get religion, take drugs, drop out or simply become cynical conformists – maybe even Professors of Philosophy.

So is this a book worth reading? If you're doing a degree in philosophy or have completed one recently then you may be up to speed with the book and find it intellectually stimulating. The rest of us will, I suspect, find it requiring too much prior understanding of *Continental Philosophy* to be able to do more than skim the surface of it.

Buried in the notes is a promise from Critchley to write a more populist version of his thesis. General readers would be well advised to wait for that to appear rather than tackle this book, but even then his political position required further work to be useful for activists.

Simon Critchley, *Infinitely Demanding: Ethics of Commitment, Politics of Resistance*, published by Verso, London, 2007, ISBN 978-1-84467-121-2, price £17.99/\$26.95 (USA)

HISTORY OF THE MAKHNOVIST MOVEMENT

1918-1921

by
PETER ARSHINOV

The Russian Revolution was the time when the old order was totally swept away. Nestor Makhno stood for freedom, and his struggle to destroy both the old and the new oppressors is as powerful today as it was then. It was in prison in 1911 that Peter Arshinov established a close personal and political friendship with Makhno, which continued after their release, and Arshinov's history of the Makhnovists is undoubtedly the most important source work available.

Now available at £9.90 (post free inland) from Freedom Press

A Sideways Look DSEi

In the 1970s, when print workers had organisation and industrial muscle, they managed to win the concept of 'unworked overtime'. It was a way of evening out the hours spent waiting for journalists to phone in stories. Sadly, the problem we face these days is of unpaid overtime.

According to the Trades Union Congress, unpaid overtime saves the bosses over £23 billion a year. Nearly 20% of the workforce admitted to doing it. However, there are some reasons to be cheerful – the people most likely to be doing it are management. However, even they are beaten by teachers, who top the league table for professions working unpaid overtime for 2005 with a massive 11 hours 36 minutes. Per week! The next five professions are all managerial, until we get to agricultural labourers who did just under nine hours. Health professionals did seven and a half hours, welders and construction trades just over seven, social workers just under seven; engineers and journalists six and a half, IT workers just over six, butchers and bakers around four and a half, down to hairdressers and beauticians who average two hours and twelve minutes.

Of course, these figures are averages, and there are regional variations. Some groups of workers are exceedingly unlikely to do any unpaid overtime, such as drivers, factory workers, road sweepers and refuse collectors, dockers and warehouse workers. Good for them! I suspect that it is because, for many of those workers, pay is so bad that it is only by overtime they can approach a living wage.

It's good that the TUC draws attention to this issue, but their solution is a bit on the crap side – to work one day at your correct hours to make a point!

The long-hours culture that is associated with unpaid overtime doesn't do anyone any favours. It's obviously bad for the workers, but it isn't exactly great for productivity, either. I know of one server engineer who deleted group policies on an entire domain while working his 16th hour of the day. Imagine how much more dangerous it is if you're in charge of air traffic control (who work five hours 24 minutes unpaid overtime on average a week), or driving a forklift, or carrying out surgery.

The culture survives because workers let it. The older workers at my workplace tend not to do it; some are very steadfast about taking their breaks and refusing to work overtime, even when pay is offered! The younger ones and those on contracts tend not to refuse. The managers are the worst – many are in hotels for four nights a week and only go home at weekends. This encourages them to work even longer, and get annoyed if we don't all display such loyalty to the company. 'Flexibility' is even a category in the annual appraisal, under which we can be marked down if we don't have a suitably flexible attitude.

Svartfrosk

The fourth Defence Systems and Equipment International (DSEi) to be held at the ExCeL Centre in London's Docklands was the focus of a concerted campaign in response to the callout for a Week of Action.

Some actions took place in advance of the opening, with Army recruitment adverts subverted in Oxford, and a lock-on and weapons inspection at MSI in Norwich by Norfolk Campaign Against the Arms Trade. Actions on the previous day included a picket of a defence conference in Central London, and an action at AWE Aldermaston.

On the opening day, Tuesday 11th September, the security cordon around DSEi, was breached shortly after 7.30am, when a group of about twenty activists ran into the car park. Later a solidarity blockade of BAE took place in Manchester. About eighty people joined a CAAT march and rally, and about fifty cyclists arrived at Custom House DLR station from a critical mass style ride that left Bank tube station mid-morning. Two people were arrested after 'rivers of blood' were poured onto the ramparts of the Arms Fair venue.

Space Hijackers managed to get a tank and sound system to the main entrance of ExCeL, after diverting the police with a decoy tank. They auctioned off the tank and invited the 200 strong crowd to a party against the arms fair to let the fair's delegates know what they think about their murderous business.

Teachers tent city protest

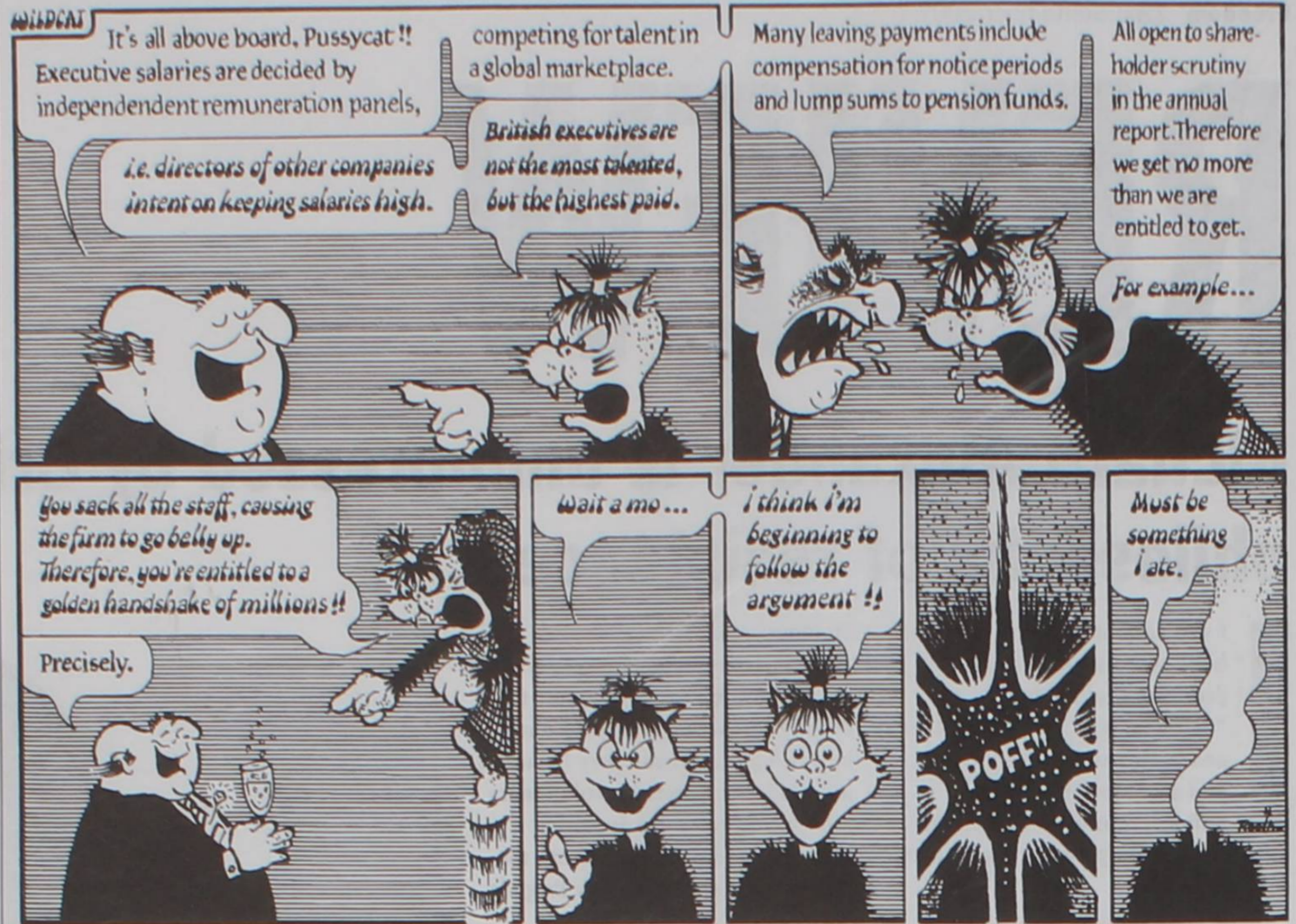
For six months teachers have squatted the sports ground on Forty Lane in Wembley, North West London, to protest against a privatised City Academy school being built on the site.

The council threatened to evict them and the sports ground leaseholders if they did not leave. So, in true fighting fashion, the teachers, with some advice from the Heathrow Airport Climate Camp, erected tree platforms right under the noses of the authorities and took to the branches on Friday night.

Saturday saw a very loud protest on the ground and from the trees, informing local people of what it means to send your children to a City Academy.

City Academy's, for those not in the know, are funded by wealthy business people, who get a say in what is and is not being taught. Other City Academy's have eradicated any sign of Darwinism and evolution from the classroom, only teaching creationism. Other Academy's have designed the education program to suit their corporate interests, training children for jobs, not educating them, cutting out activities like art, music and other creative outlets.

One Academy, as one of the teachers told me, does have after-school activities though – a fully working call centre, where children as young as 11-years can learn the joys of working your



proverbials off in probably the most pitiful form of employment known to the human race. Academy Schools do not like play areas for their kids. The proposed Academy at Wembley has no space for play or outside activities.

Imagine if...

Thatcher tottered up the stairs looking like she was about to keel over at the door to Number 10. Gordon Brown put his hand out to help her over the threshold and shivered as his hand touched her back.

The Scot, steeped (as has so often been said) in labour history, was close enough to just give her a little shove – payback for the miners and the printers and the factory workers ...

But Gordon knew the eyes of the world were upon him. He helped her get inside the door and smiled. "You know Baroness, we have much in common."

She glared at him in that slightly bewildered manner of the old Tory who just won't fucking die – did she live on simply to spite her enemies?

"What do you mean?" She grated "You're a labour politician. My cabinet was full of Tories, I hated the TUC and the unions and tried to crush them, I complained bitterly about the left-leaning bias of the press despite all evidence to the contrary, I did everything the CBI wanted and then blamed the resulting mess on the working classes, supported nuclear arms and nuclear power. I was the rottweiler of the right!" She drew herself up proudly "What exactly do you think we have in common?"

Gordon, who had been about to talk about their shared fascination with power, paused.

Clearly, he wasn't flash. Just Thatcherite.

Listings

until 24th September Gatwick area No Borders Camp, a space to share information, skills, knowledge and experiences, and to plan actions together against the system of border controls, see <http://noborders.org.uk>

23rd September Car Free Day in Amsterdam, see iamsterdam.com

23rd September Benefit comedy gig to raise money to help pay court costs to get the Serious Fraud Office to re-open the investigation into bribery by BAE Systems – with Mark Thomas, Russell Brand, Omid Djalili, Simon Amstell and others, at Hammersmith Apollo, London, see markthomas.info

28th September Critical Mass where cyclists re-take the roads, see critical-mass.info/international.html#europe

30th September Peoples' Commons, picnic on the green in Parliament Square, London, from 1.30pm

1st October Faslane 365 Big Blockade, starts at 6.30pm at the north and south gates of Faslane naval base, for details see faslane365.org or call 0845 4588365

2nd October SPES Book sale from 11am to 5pm at Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, Holborn, London WC1, email spesupdate@yahoo.co.uk

7th October South Place Ethical Society talk on Shelley and Freethought by James Herrick at 11am, Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, Holborn, London WC1, see ethicalsoc.org.uk, or contact 020 7242 8034 or spesupdate@yahoo.co.uk for full programme

13th October Keep Space for Peace protest at Menwith Hill, near Harrogate, North Yorkshire from 12 noon until around 4pm, see caab.org.uk or call 01423 884076

26th October Critical Mass where cyclists re-take the roads, see critical-mass.info/international.html#europe

27th October Anarchist Bookfair 2007 at Queen Mary & Westfield College, Mile End Road, London E1, from 10am to 7pm, with books, speakers, workshops, meetings, films, creche, exhibitions, food, and so much more, see anarchistbookfair.org

3rd November 'Bash the Rich!' march on David Cameron's house in Notting Hill, London, see londonclasswar.org for details.

3rd November First Annual Working Class Bookfair from 10am to 5pm at St Nicholas Church, Market Place, Durham City, sponsored by North East NUM

9th November Books for Amnesty, all books £1 at Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, Holborn, London WC1, contact books@amnesty.org.uk or call 07771888825

Contacts

East Kent Anarchists is now up and running with members from Canterbury, Swale and Thanet. If you live in Kent and want to get involved contact eastkentafed@hotmail.com

The quiz

1. Where does the name of the open source computer programme drupal come from?
2. Which constructed language has significantly more entries on wikipedia than speakers?
3. What action was carried out by an Italian anarchist, an English parliament, Portuguese freemasons and Iraqi army officers?
4. Which Russian leader was invited to address the 1918 Labour Party Conference?

Answers on page 6

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