

FREEDOM

80P ANARCHIST NEWS AND VIEWS

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INSIDE ►►

BAE under investigation page 3

More on France page 4

Steve Booth on technology page 5

Magazine roundup page 7

SHOWN TO THE GATE

The government has announced the full Thames Gateway plan for the first time, pledging £9 billion for the area to build 160,000 new homes by 2016.

However the new report reveals that the development will bypass local input, jobs are going to be concentrated in central London, while affordable housing makes up just one eighth of the total proposed with most concentrated on the outskirts of the city.

The figures lend weight to accusations from groups such as the Independent Working Class Association (IWCA) that the unspoken plan for the project is to oust working class people from the centre of the city and re-settle them in cheaply-built suburbs, creating a more French style distribution of population.

The IWCA have noted that the building plan comes alongside extensive efforts to gentrify parts of London, particularly near the financial hubs: "Many inner London boroughs are actively promoting not just the regeneration of their boroughs, but a massive demographic change that favours highly paid middle class professionals over the working class. This means a squeeze on the supply of social housing, longer waiting lists, and in the words of Tower Hamlets Council: 'Tower Hamlets is an area where demand is greater than the supply of affordable housing'.

"Inner London councils are seeking

to offer tenants transfers out of London where appropriate. At the moment, these are not large scale schemes as they involve transfers to housing in the midlands or the north.

"Understandably, there are not many takers. However, more effort is going to be put into expanding transfer schemes into growth areas such as Thames Gateway."

Around £850m is going to be invested in 15,000 'affordable homes' by the government directly, (£50,000 per house), with the rest being built by private contractors incorporating around 5% of housing as affordable – though if the London Plan is taken into account, 'affordable' could include people earning up to £49,000.

This compares to proposed spending of:

- £500m on 'Thames gateway programmes;
- £2.4bn for further education provision;
- £600m refurbishing existing hospitals;
- £100m on local transport;
- £278m on surestart centres;
- £1.2bn on new schools building.

The PFI model of funding, where the government takes out a 30-year loan to pay private companies to make improvements, is the preferred option despite a recent report which found that such projects are 6% more expensive than direct state control and can offer less quality.

Much of the infrastructure for the



PUPIL POWER: Last month students from across the Netherlands walked out and clashed with police on the streets over a proposed new law which would force them to stay longer in school. In Amsterdam, riot police on horses chased 13 year olds over the Museumplein and fired watercannon bursts at them. Around 250 children were arrested across the country and many small riots broke out, including an attack on the parliament building in The Hague which had eggs and sticks thrown at it.

huge project will incorporate private model provision which is still officially in the stages of early rollout and have proven highly controversial.

New schools will run largely on the independent stakeholder model, with the government putting up early funds, and companies, church groups or other

well-heeled independents taking control in exchange for top-up funding.

Three major academies will be brought

► page 8, column 3

BLOOD SERVICE IS BLEEDING WHAT NOW?

The IWW is launching a second phase in its campaign to reverse closure decisions to much of the infrastructure which makes up England's National Blood Service. While NBS bosses plan to close ten blood centres with a loss of over 600 jobs, it is becoming increasingly clear that the unpopular plans are very far from a 'done deal'.

National Blood Service staff have been in industrial dispute with the NBS board of directors/management for the past year, over reconfiguration plans which will see local processing and testing sites condensed into just three 'supercentres', in Bristol, Manchester and Colindale. This would mean that blood collections

will have to be driven hundreds of miles around the country to and from the 'supercentres', putting even more reliance on an already overloaded and frequently clogged up motorway network. Testing centres are currently located in Oxford, Bristol, Southampton, Tooting, Colindale, Brentwood, Manchester Birmingham, Liverpool, Newcastle, Cambridge, Sheffield and Leeds.

UNISON and Unite (Amicus) have expressed their concerns over the cuts to the service, but critics have said their response has been lacklustre to mobilise nationally to oppose the measures. As a result of the firm stance taken by the IWW against the closures however, a number of staff have become increasingly close to the union, with a new job branch for the wobblies (IWV) being formed within the service, and sympathy for the IWV's class struggle stance known to be growing rapidly.

The IWV has distributed around 55,000 leaflets, and spent many hours building public support for the campaign. "We've hit dozens of sites across the

country, and we've helped to distribute over 5,000 workplace bulletins, but this is only the beginning!" comments Nick James, an IWV organiser involved with the campaign. "We are going to hit these NBS bosses so hard they won't know what's come at them."

The IWV is aiming to try and build for mass mobilisations targeting those in political office, in a bid to force a rethink. Pointing out that bosses in the blood service are not the board of a private firm but a quango accountable ultimately to the government, Wobblies believe with a strong campaign to put pressure on the Health Secretary, the closure plans will be overturned. "We are confident of victory. We're going to unleash a whirlwind here. They are just not going to know what's hit them," James finished.

For further information on the Save Our Blood Service Campaign, what the closure plans will mean for you, or how you can help to stop the closures, visit the website of the staff campaign, nbs-sos.blogspot.com, or see the blog of the IWV NBS section, iwwnbs.wordpress.com

We at Freedom have just finished for another year, and will be back in January. But we want to make some changes.

At the moment, we have enormous trouble getting the paper out to you on time, which is down to a combination of factors during the writing, layout, printing, folding and mailout.

The main bit we can look at is the folding. At the moment, it's sent out from Aldgate, who can't fold at the size we are printing. However, they can fold to A4 size, so we are looking at the possibility of scaling down, meaning we could keep it in the vicinity of the press and hopefully be able to cut down substantially on our turnaround time.

To this end we may (depending on whether we can sort it out in time) see if we can do a test 16-page A4 version for the first or second issue of 2008.

We're pretty sure there won't be any less content, and the design will be to the same standard as before, so the idea would simply be to resize what it

already there for convenience.

We are also debating whether to stay fortnightly or go monthly. This would improve our ability to hit deadlines, but would necessarily change the timeliness and focus of what is written (e.g. it would have to focus over a longer timescale and be more analytical than news led).

Both of these ideas though, and more, need to be debated, not by us but by you. In a questionnaire on page 6, we are asking what you want to see in the paper, what direction you would like, what you think is missing, what would draw in your friends and any other comments or suggestions you think valuable.

Let us know what you think of us!

On page 7 of this issue we present the winter crossword – the first correct entry out of the hat on Friday 4th January 2008 will win a very special prize (we'll give you the answers and announce the winner in our next issue).

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Home and away

ANTI-FASCISM: Over a thousand protesters gathered outside the Oxford Union debating club to try and stop it from hosting a 'forum' featuring two leading Nazis. The decision to roll out the red carpet for Nick Griffin, leader of the fascist British National Party (BNP), and convicted Holocaust denier David Irving, had caused outrage among students, trade unionists and community groups. Around 35 people made it into the debating chamber and argued with the people inside, telling them that what went on in their chambers had real effects in the outside world.

GREEN PARTY: The Green Party have announced the results of a party-wide referendum to adopt a new leadership model, shifting from the current set-up of two Principal Speakers to a defined hierarchy. Of the party's membership, 50% voted, with 73% voting in favour of switching to a Leader/Deputy Leader or Co-Leader structure, while 27% voted to stay with the current system.

MEDIA: BBC unions have voted unanimously to ballot for national strike action, in protest at compulsory redundancies and other changes. Representatives of BECTU, NUJ, and Unite voted for industrial action ballots after hearing that the BBC planned compulsory redundancies, despite the emergence of hundreds of volunteers.

Representatives heard that talks had been held earlier in the week with BBC Vision and BBC News over Director General Mark Thompson's proposals to slash a total of 2,500 jobs across the corporation, which were announced on 18th October.

The ballot will take place on 9th January. The BBC have called a halt to all talks while plans for a ballot continue.

PLANNING: The Planning Bill was introduced on Tuesday 27th November. The bill gives central government more direct control over infrastructure projects of 'national significance' to bypass planning systems.

SURVEILLANCE: Two people have been found not guilty of obstructing a police constable as they attempted to block the civilian cameraman from filming people as they arrived for protests against the DSEi arms fair.

The cameraman, who was working for the police Forward Intelligence Team, found banners which read 'No cameras' placed in front of his lens. This went on for some time, until people left to attend the meeting. By the time they had crossed the road and entered ULU, both protesters were seized and shortly after, were handcuffed and taken to a police carrier. A further two trials are scheduled to take place at Uxbridge Magistrates Court in the New Year. Both defendants face the 'obstructing a PC' charge.

YOUTH CENTRES: Teenagers have gathered outside the corn exchange in Leeds to show their opposition to Zurich and their plans to turn the alternative centre into a food emporium. Some of them stood on the steps and sang 'We shall not be moved' and the public were asked to sign the petition to 'Save the Corn Exchange'. Thousands of signatures were gathered and the public who showed immense support.

The Corn Exchange plays a major part in the city's youth alternative culture, but the community has alleged a campaign of smears against it since plans began to be drawn up to sell the space to retail developers.

Around the world

CHINA: On 11th October and 14th November, a group of unknown and unidentified people came to destroy the properties of labour group The Shenzhen Dagongzhe Centre. On 20th November, a lawyer working for the centre, Huang Qingnan, was attacked by two people with machetes while on his way to visit an injured worker shortly after leaving centre.

Huang is seriously injured. In recent months, workers report they have also been assaulted and verbally threatened by their employers when claiming their wages. Reports to the police have not met with success or interest. They are disappointed to find the local government behaving with indifference.

CYPRUS: A group of anarchists has claimed responsibility for the explosion outside a Hellenic Bank branch in the Larnaca district earlier this month. The anarchists, who call themselves the 'Zenon' Larnaca Resistance Group, said the attack was motivated in reaction to capitalism and its symbols, which the group believes to be banks. The group made the claim to *Politis* newspaper. The attack occurred on the Larnaca-Dhekeliia road. It involved five gas bombs placed at the bank's front entrance and setting of fire to papers outside the door.

CZECH REPUBLIC: Some 128,000 workers from 7,000 kindergartens, elementary and secondary schools, which is more than a half of the total of about 10,500 regional education facilities, took part in a major education strike, according to Frantisek Dobsik, chairman of the Czech School Workers' Union. The unions announced the strike after they failed in the negotiations

about adding three billion crowns to the Education Ministry's draft budget for 2008. Of the 3 billion crowns, the unions want 2.5 billion to go to teachers' wages and 0.5 billion to school equipment and further education of teachers.

More than 12,000 school workers went on strike in Prague alone, according to figures provided by the unions.

IRELAND: Social centre Seomra Spraoi has been shut down by fire authorities accompanied by a large number of police. At the time there were six to eight people inside the building. This follows hot on the heels of a police raid on 23rd November by around 20 police who forced their way on to the premises to shut down a private party.

From this initial raid the police lodged a report to the planning authorities which, it seems, led to the police-supported presence of the fire department last Saturday night. The speed of this action, and such a large police presence, suggests that this was a reasonably planned operation. The report filed with the planning authorities includes allegations of open drug consumption and an illegal bar, although no such complaints were made to the individuals liaising with the police on either occasion.

ITALY: Cab drivers caused gridlock in central Rome in a dispute over liberalisation and rates. Hundreds of white cabs blocked traffic at Rome's central Piazza Venezia while drivers protested in front of the nearby City Hall. The strike was called by the taxi drivers' union after it abandoned talks with the mayor. Cab drivers have staged several strikes in recent months in opposition

to government plans to liberalise the service and grant more licenses, and for rates increases.

The blockade follows a stoppage in May, and a wave of wildcat strikes in 2006.

NEW ZEALAND: On 8th November Solicitor General David Collins QC announced that terrorism charges would not proceed against 12 of the 17 people detained in a massive 'anti-terror' police operation three weeks earlier.

The arrests were carried out on 15th October following raids involving 300 police in Auckland, Wellington, Palmerston North, Hamilton, Christchurch, Whakatane and Ruatoki. Sixteen people appeared in the Auckland District Court on firearms charges, which remain in place. Twelve had their cases referred to the Solicitor General for consideration on 29th October under the Terrorism Suppression Act.

Police claimed that about 20 to 40 people had been participating in bush training camps in the Uruweras, involving the use of firearms and other weapons. The operation was followed by a full-blown media scare campaign about 'terrorists' training for attacks against prominent public buildings and figures.

SWITZERLAND: Police attacked anti-military activists in Switzerland late last month while they were protesting a military parade in Lugano.

The police intervened a first time during the military parade, where they arrested 11 people from the Clown Army. At the peaceful sit-in that spontaneously started to protest against the arrest of the clowns which, included children and old people, the police

used their nightsticks and pepper spray. They arrested five people and wounded a dozen people, one media activist got a broken arm.

UGANDA: Amnesty International has accused the criminal justice system in northern Uganda of ignoring, denying and tacitly condoning violence against women and girls, while it protects suspected perpetrators. The accusation came as the organisation issued a new report detailing individual cases of sexual abuse against women and girls in northern Uganda.

Amnesty International researchers visited five districts in northern Uganda – Gulu, Amuru, Kitgum, Pader and Lira – and spoke to scores of women, girls and their families about the discrimination that they suffered when they tried to access the justice system, and the culture of impunity around cases of rape, domestic violence, assault and other forms of violence against women.

VIETNAM: Thousands of workers have gone on strike at a Vietnamese plant that makes shoes for Nike, demanding higher pay.

Workers, who produce about 10% of the 75 million pairs of shoes made annually for Nike in Vietnam, want more pay, bonuses and cost of living allowances.

Strikes have become more common in Vietnam, as inflation – now at 9.5% – has risen. The average monthly salary at the South Korean-owned plant is \$62, about 20% more than the minimum wage.

The plant in Dong Nai, near Ho Chi Minh city, employs some 14,000 people.

Prison news

'Political Prisoners' calendar

The Certain Days calendar is a collection of artwork and political texts addressing some of the most pressing political issues of our day, with all funds raised by going directly to supporting political prisoners and anti-imperialist struggles. Since 2001 political prisoners Herman Bell, David Gilbert and Robert 'Seth' Hayes have worked with activists in Montreal (and in 2005 and 2006 New York City) to produce the calendars.

The theme for 2008 is the legacy of the Panthers, as the collective explains: "The 2007 targeting of the San Francisco Eight (SF8) shows, more than ever, that COINTELPRO is ongoing. Over thirty years after the incident of which they are accused, eight Black Panthers face new charges ... During 2008, as this calendar hangs on your wall, the SF8 will be in court and the Black Panther Party will be on trial once again. So this year's theme is the Legacy of the Panthers. Now more than ever, it is vital that their contribution be celebrated."

Contributors to this year's calendar include Mumia Abu-Jamal, Joy James, Ashanti Alston, Emory Douglas, Ward Churchill, Laura Whitehorn, Gord Hill, George Katsiaficas, David Gilbert

and many others.

Beyond its own value, the calendar is also a worthwhile fundraising tool, funds raised from this year's sales will go to support the work of the New York State Task Force on Political Prisoners, Addameer, a Palestinian Prisoners Support and Human Rights Association, and the San Francisco Eight's support campaign. The calendars cost £7 including postage to the UK, email orders@natterjackpress.co.uk or see natterjackpress.co.uk for details.

Harmondsworth Four

In November 2006 detainees at Harmondsworth immigration detention centre protested against conditions inside the centre and their treatment by the guards. The centre was damaged and the detainees were moved to other detention centres and prisons.

Their trial starts on 7th January 2008 at Southwark Crown Court, London. Once again a handful of men are scapegoated for the failure of an unjust detention system. The campaign is supported by London NoBorders, Barbed Wire Britain Network to End Detention, Institute of Race Relations, National Coalition of Anti Deportation

Campaigns, Black Women's Race Action Project, All Africa Women's Group, Fight Racism Fight Imperialism, Campaign to Close Campsfield and other individuals.

A year ago today, there was a mass protest at Harmondsworth Immigration Removal Centre near Heathrow. The protest broke out shortly after 10pm when guards stopped detainees from watching television news of a highly critical inspection report on the centre by Ann Owers, Chief Inspector of Prisons. The centre was seriously damaged and detainees moved to other detention centres and prisons, and the centre was closed for some time – as it was after another protest in 2004.

It is run by Kalyx (formerly UK Detention Services; owned by Sodexho), and in 2006 was the UK's biggest detention centre. Now it has 259 beds. (Home Office website, 18th November 2007). The human rights organisation Liberty has called for a public inquiry into the protest and its background. email: harmondsworth4@riseup.net

Write to Marco

In 1980 anarchist and eco-activist Marco Camenisch was arrested, and after a year being on remand, the court

pronounced a 10 year prison sentence, for direct action against a pylon and a nuclear power station for ecological reasons. In 1981, together with five other prisoners, he escaped from prison – a prison warden died, another was seriously injured. Marco wasn't part of the group which shot them. After ten years of clandestine living and struggling, Swiss federal police and media claimed him responsible for the killing of a border police officer.

After a shootout with the Carabinieri, he was arrested in 1992 in Italy, served nine years and was extradited back to Switzerland, where he remains in prison. In June 2004, he got a further 17 year prison imprisonment for the murder of the border guard, though he always denied his involvement in the murder (see his statement before the court on freecamenish website). As he escaped from prison in 1981, he'll also have to serve the eight years he had left when leaving with five fellows. The court didn't find him directly guilty of murdering the prison guard during the escape, but he was considered jointly responsible for it.

• Marco Camenisch, Poeschwies, Postfach 3143, 8105 Regensdorf, Switzerland.

News

CIA investigate BAE

An investigation into UK military contractor BAE systems is alleging systemic corruption in the group

Following the closure of a UK investigation into BAE systems' alleged payment of huge bribes to Saudi officials in return for military contracts on the grounds of 'national interest', the US has opened its own investigation.

Led by the CIA, investigators in the US have reported early findings suggesting a systematic campaign of bribes and illegal deals across the world run by the military contracting giant.

Deals in Saudi Arabia and South Africa have been the most heavily reported, but investigations into the sale of Gripen fighter jets in Hungary and the Czech Republic have also been mentioned.

In Saudi Arabia, a payment of £1bn to the Saudi royal family which help clinch a deal for £40bn in weapons systems sparked off an investigation by the Serious Fraud Office, which was closed by then Prime Minister Tony Blair in a move widely seen to be a tacit admission of guilt.

BAE and Saudi royal family representatives have said the payments are fully legal, while the US Justice Department is examining whether BAE violated international laws against bribery and money laundering.

The vast payout for weapons in the Al Yamamah arms deals remains the biggest contract ever sealed by BAE and represents a huge proportion of state funding in the oil-rich country, which pays out more on the military than for any other form of public spending.

In South Africa, BAE along with several other major arms contractors

have been accused of bribing senior ANC politicians and civil servants and for putting funds in place for election campaigns in exchange for influence over military contracts.

BAE payments made it to the pocket of the defence minister and some of his senior advisors, among others. Rather than allow an investigation, South African resident Thabo Mbeki has decried western interference and quashed investigations by the South African parliament, the auditor general and the director of public prosecutions.

In a country where \$75.93 billion is spent on public services annually, which faces few external threats but has huge problems with endemic poverty and one of the worst HIV crises in the world, the diversion of huge resources to military contracts rather than to medical or educational programmes is causing huge hardship.

In Hungary and the Czech Republic, Saab (20% owned by BAE) was given the contract for fighters following a series of shadowy negotiations which led to CIA complaints of corruption to the UK government.

In response to the US investigation, which if substantiated could see BAE faced with massive fines and a ban on operations on US soil, the UK has delayed handing over files related to the Serious Fraud Office investigation for nearly seven months, claiming it is still under 'due consideration'.

Meanwhile CIA investigators are turning to Switzerland, where most of the deals were made, for financial records, which they are confident will be handed over.



Backhanders? The Gripen fighter, built by Saab, was the focus of a CIA complaint over corruption

The stakes of the investigation are high. If proven, the allegations which have surfaced in the course of the CIA investigations will be hugely damaging for the Saudi, UK, South African, Hungarian and Czech governments.

It will give the US leverage to turf BAE out of the US, where it has acquired substantial holdings and is threatening the hegemony of established players, but on the way, could expose staggering misuse of public funds by corrupt state

officials in Eastern Europe, the Middle East and Africa, and expose UK complicity in ripping off funds which could otherwise have been put towards social projects for some of the most disadvantaged people in the world.

Darzi let-down

Campaigners have warned that the Darzi plan for the future of health services in London, due to be released for public consultation, is in danger of degenerating into nothing more than a smokescreen for another wave of hospital closures, service cuts and privatisation of key facilities.

The consultation document has been gutted of any specific recommendations on local service changes but it is crystal clear that the thrust is to reduce the number of district general hospitals in London and that the whole package is overshadowed by a massive financial crisis at the sharp end of the capital's NHS which has been deliberately covered up in official statistics.

London Health Emergency pointed to the example of new figures issued today which claim that the NHS in London has a surplus of £300 million but which ignores historical levels of debt. For example, today's statistics claim that Bromley only has a deficit of £9 million when the true figure is £99 million. The same bogus figures

have been applied across the city.

Dr John Lister, London Health Emergency Information Director, said:

"Rather than the serious attempt to address the health inequalities in London which we hoped for, debate over aspects of the Darzi report looks like degenerating into an expensive smokescreen for a fresh wave of cuts and closures which would be an absolute disaster for staff and patients in the capital.

"We are also alarmed that Lord Darzi, who since his initial report been elevated to a straight political position as a Minister in the New Labour Government, has been having top level meetings with American private health giants like United Health.

"£15 million is being spent on this consultation which is being run through pollsters Ipsos Mori and we fear that the real views of Londoners will be engineered out of the picture giving the management consultants and bureaucrats a clear run to target hospitals for cuts and closures.

"Along with the patient forums and

staff, we will be fighting to make sure that the real views of Londoners on the future shape of services that we really need are heard loud and clear."

The fears raised by London Health Emergency strongly parallel predictions earlier this year in Freedom (6820) by the Anarchist Federation that the Darzi report would be an enabling factor in continued attacks on the NHS.

An Anarchist Federation member and health worker described the report as "a charter for cuts. We saw attempts to shut hospitals last year. It looks like this was just the start".

Allyson Pollock, the director of the Centre for International Public Health Policy at Edinburgh university said it "reveals a return to pre-1940s thinking and the launch of US-style healthcare".

London Health Emergency/Rob Ray



CWU back down

Despite widespread dissatisfaction with a proposed deal between Royal Mail and the CWU, the union has returned a Yes vote from members.

On a 64% turnout, 64% of voters accepted a settlement offer worth 2.5% a year, subject to allowing attacks on working time, terms, conditions and overtime pay.

The result has severely disappointed activists across the country, with some shock being registered that turnout was so low given the high levels of solidarity shown at the picket line.

One poster on web forum royalmailchat.co.uk noted: "However well organised the No lobby was, to overcome HQ with its access to mailing lists, financial resources, trusted position and best of all Vote Yes ballot papers, would, I think you must concede, have been a difficult task."

The bitter dispute has seen widespread victimisation of union activists, huge loss of funds to the workforce, and vilification from wide sectors of the press.

Some Royal Mail workers have stressed that the dispute is not over, and that staff should continue to 'work the 318' - do their job and hours according to the rule book and so put pressure on management.

Union chiefs are now looking to the next phase in negotiations, involving final salary pensions. Royal Mail are trying to impose the end of final salary pensions for all new entrants, a measure which has not been agreed and will require a separate vote.

A new front which looks likely to open up in the dispute now that the main battle is over is on workplace surveillance, with both walk sequencing machines and vehicle telemetry machines now set to spread across the company.

Workplace monitoring of staff is becoming increasingly standard in warehousing and allows company bosses to monitor workers' levels of activity, something which it is claimed improves efficiency but also severely compromises the freedom of workers.

News

Clashing on all fronts

Student demonstrations and occupations are finding themselves the targets of violence, reports Jef Costello

The keyword in current French politics is reform. Under this guise the new Sarkozy government is launching attacks on virtually every front; hitting workers, claimants and students across the board.

The EDF, GDF and rail-workers are at the forefront of the struggle over new 'special regimes' for pensions, where workers in certain industries can retire on full pension earlier than others. The government has presented this as pampered public sector workers being allowed to retire ten years earlier than those in the public sector.

A small number of workers do get to retire at 50, however for most the difference is smaller as private sector workers only need two and a half more years of contributions to qualify for a pension. To add insult to injury the rail-workers already pay higher social security contributions, so they have actually paid for their pensions.

In the university sector a new law, the LRU, is a direct attack on teachers and students. Supposedly aimed at giving universities 'autonomy' the aim is in fact to cut government funding, allow tuition fees and eventually to privatise the universities. The introduction of competition between universities will lead to the creation of a two-tier university system and the cancellation of less 'marketable' courses. One teacher said "this is not just a struggle for wages or conditions, we are fighting to defend our discipline itself".

Although public sector pay and conditions are under attack the main bone of contention is that the Sarkozy government will at most permit half of retiring staff to be replaced, and in some cases fewer than one in three. Medical interns have already begun striking over measures to force them to work in certain parts of the country.

On top of this Sarkozy is also trying to put an end to the 35-hour week. The country is polarised, with many low-earners thinking reforms will help them or simply jealous of others' better conditions. Sarkozy has deliberately provoked a massive conflict with virtually every opponent possible.

The irony is that Sarkozy is attacking workers as greedy whilst awarding himself a 140% pay rise. His election made the private sector feel more comfortable in pressuring workers, there have been strikes in several sectors over the last few months.

Transport workers have held two official strikes, the first, a one-day strike, held in some parts for five days with workers' assemblies deciding to continue action. The second strike ran for nine days before the union leadership persuaded it's members to stop, during this strike union leaders found themselves thrown out of assemblies by militant workers. More action is planned for December.

The most bitter strike so far has been at the Paris Opera which initially



held out for a month, with 17 performances cancelled and eight going ahead in reduced form. Gas and electricity workers have struck four times since October and more action is planned.

French students have begun to strike and blockade universities the movement

seemed to peak in late November with half of French universities at least partially blockaded and another quarter suffering some disruption. The movement seems to be weakening but many of these students were involved in the successful battle against the CPE and they won't give in easily.

Many striking workers and students recognise the need to unite their struggles and to further extend them by calling for a general strike and trying to bridge the division between private and public sector workers. For more information online, go to libcom.org/tags/france-strike-wave-2007

A grand Spanish voice

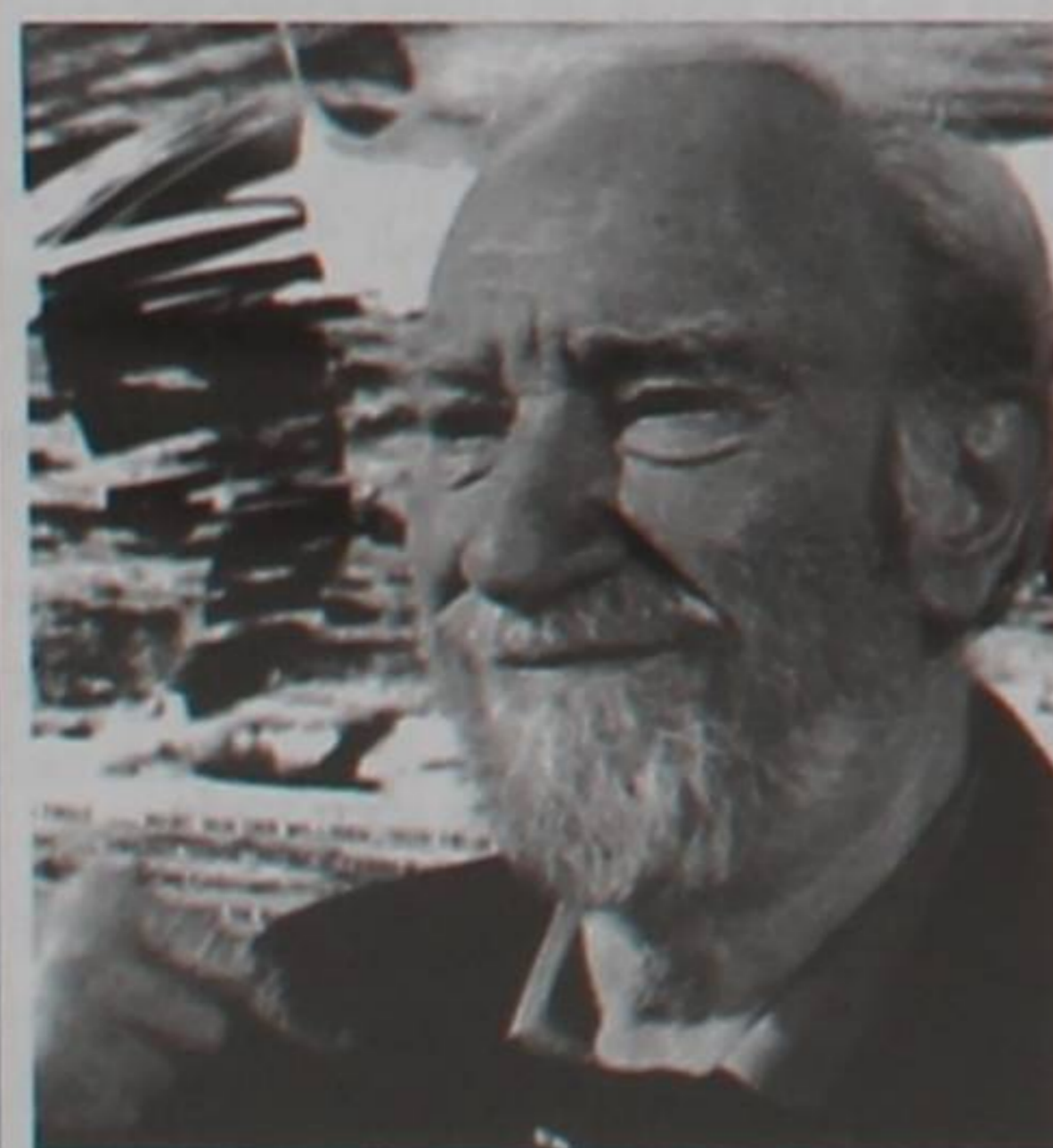
It is not every day that a distinguished national newspaper commemorates the death of an anarchist on its front page with a photo of the coffin draped with the black and red banner of anarchism. Yet that is what *El Pais*, the respected Spanish daily, did two days after Fernando Fernán-Gómez died on Wednesday 21st November 2007.

It is perhaps rarer to have a State president, Zapatero, and the Mayor of the capital city sending their respects to the memory of an anarchist, as it is too have the Spanish Royal Family send their condolences to his family.

On his death the voices of the artistic community were raised in praise of Fernando, including the film directors Almodovar and Fernando Trueba, the actresses Angela Molina and Charo Lopez. For the anarcho-syndicalist trade union federation, the secretary of the Federal Committee of the CGT (General Confederation of Labour) declared his desire on behalf of that organisation "to express our final adios anarcho-sindicalista to compañero Fernando Fernán-Gómez a figure without equal

in the history of the cinema, theatre and literature of twentieth century Spain."

The anarchist movement has lost a great symbol with the death of this significant Spanish anarchist, intellectual and actor. He was born in Lima to the famous Spanish actress Carola Fernán-Gómez during her tour of Latin America, probably on the 21st August 1921, but his birth was not registered until the 28th August in Argentina and he took on Argentinian nationality until 1984, when he adopted Spanish nationality.



He moved to Spain in 1924. After the Spanish Civil War he studied philosophy and letters, but his real vocation was in the theatre. In 1942, he began to work in cinema, but he also kept working on theatre. As a director and writer, he formed his own theatre company and got many awards. In the 1950s he began to direct movies, and was the director of the film of his play, *Las bicicletas son para el verano*, however he was not respected in this area until 1958, with the comedy *La vida por delante*, which had a sequel.

The two recent films that stand out for me as representing the anarchist spirit of Fernando are *Belle Epoque* and *La Legua de las Mariposas* (*The Butterfly's Tongue*). In *Belle Epoque*, starring a young Penelope Cruz, Fernando plays the father of a family of three girls in an anarchistic mini-utopia in the early 1930s before the Spanish Civil War. *The Butterfly's Tongue* has Fernando as a radical progressive schoolmaster in a Gallician village just as the Civil War threatens.

Brian Bamford

US notes

The Violent Radicalization and Homegrown Terrorism Prevention Act had already (in October) passed (400 to 6 votes) in the House of Representatives. Now it's due to go before the Senate Judiciary Committee. If it becomes law (which is likely – in one form or another), then there will be significant changes affecting which political and social beliefs are legal (and/or can be legally expressed), and which are not.

Under the proposals, two government-appointed bodies would be set up. These would 'study' and monitor activists inside the United States with a view to 'suggesting' ways to limit those types of activism which the bill terms 'homegrown terrorism and extremism'.

A National Commission (the first of these two agencies) would sit for a year and a half in the first instance and produce three reports at six-monthly intervals. Next a 'Center for Excellence' – probably based at a university or universities – would convene academic specialists. They would recommend laws and other

measures to curb 'extremist' activities.

The bill defines 'violent radicalisation' as "the process of adapting or promoting an extremist belief system for the purpose of facilitating ideologically-based violence to advance political, religious, or social change".

Many activist groups – including anarchists – would subscribe to varieties of radical thought and change. Most might substitute 'force' for 'violence'. Force as in the kind of direct action to block shipment of weapons (reported on in a recent *Freedom*). But also the force necessary at sit-down demonstrations, for instance, on the picket line, in some acts of civil disobedience, with vocal interruptions at racist rallies, when insisting that a planned protest march take place, during rent strikes, and simply as heckling.

To anarchists the distinction between force and violence is an important and useful one. To the State it's one that's likely to be blurred and dismissed.

Feature

Primitivism and technology

Steve Booth, former editor of Green Anarchist, argues it is not technology which should be feared, but the human hand behind it

If the notion that technology interlocks and is out of control can be shown to be false or meaningless, then Primitivism is refuted. This idea that technology interlocks is, on the face of it, an assertion about reality. It appears to be a factual claim, but it carries with it a covert value judgement: 'We cannot have the good parts without the bad'. Without the working through of a proof, such a judgement is speculative. The second part of this, the idea that technology is out of control, is about who is in charge; man or machine? Its falsity is shown in the fact that, to hold this view we must first accept the Pathetic Fallacy (John Ruskin, in *Modern Painters*, 1856 – the error of ascribing mental states to inanimate things): "Technology repeatedly forces freedom to take a step back". Something inanimate cannot be in charge. Prior to the human beings losing control of things, the situation must have been set up; the flaw must have been in the design, or the defect in the manufacture, or some mistake committed in its operation. The loss of control is a human defect, a mistake. The Primitivist understands technological civilisation as a conscious entity, making demands, having desires, taking charge, but this belief is mistaken. We created the machines. If they get out of control or bring harm, that is our fault. We are to blame.

Technology is not out of control. At the beginning of any project, there is always a customer, a commissioner, a designer, a builder, manufacturer, an operator who pushes the start button. Ellul regards the process as a race to the bottom. The scientist is forced to create animal-human hybrid embryos (say), because even if she refuses, her cloven hooved rivals at the other company, will. Ellul's argument is analogous to the imperatives driving the nuclear missile building race, but as the history of the Cold War showed, it is quite possible, and rational, for both parties to get off that particular treadmill. The issue here is not about the reality of technology, but rather to do with the choices over how technology is used.

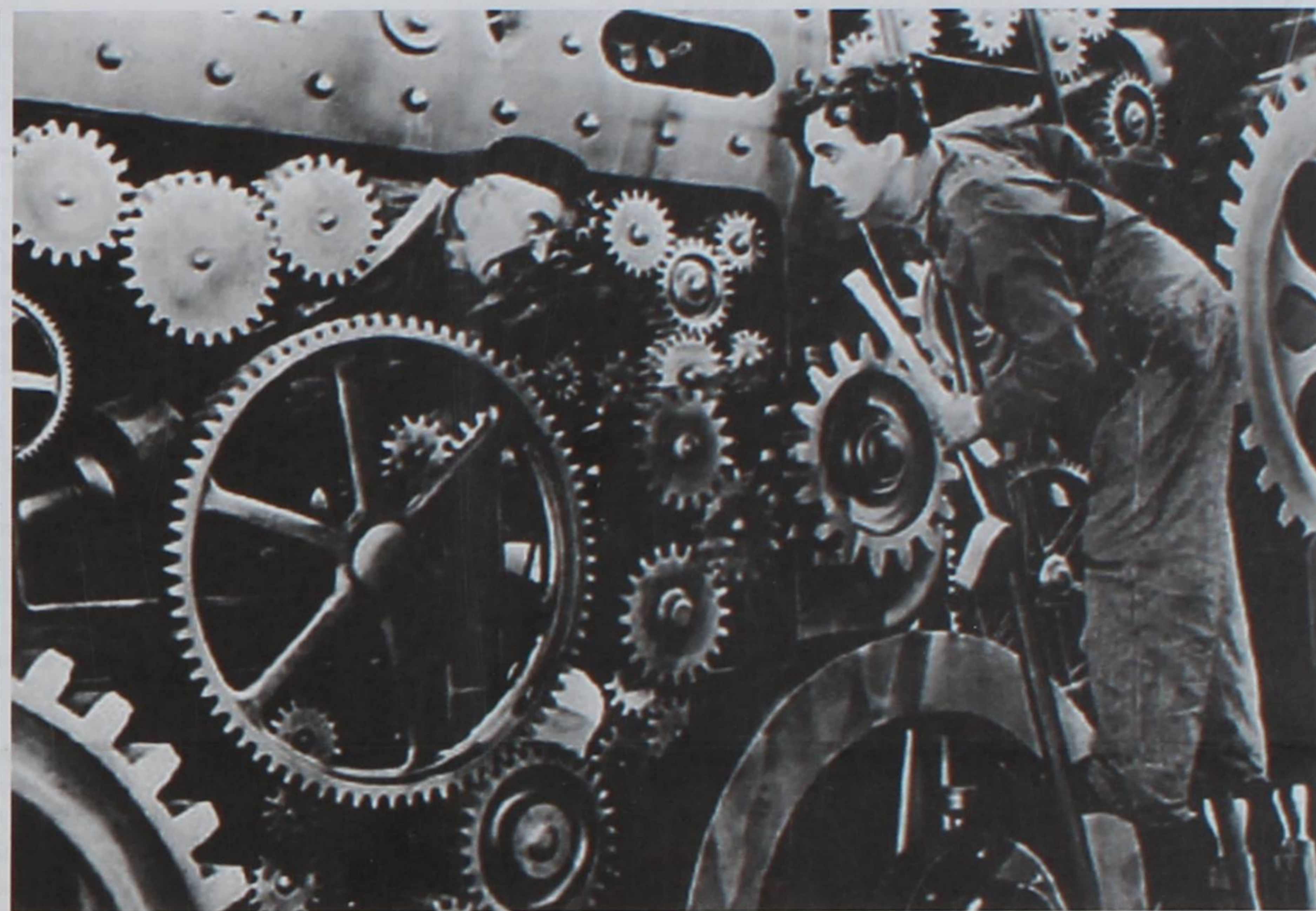
It is quite possible for humans to choose to act otherwise. It is possible for governments to choose different policies; to tax polluters, and promote green measures. It is possible for customers to be more discerning in their purchasing choices. The Unabomber's ruling that it is all much too complicated to be disentangled, is a deplorable abdication of responsibility.

Lewis Mumford and others treated the problem as an example of 'runaway', borrowing the term from cybernetics. All the possible feedback paths have been severed. Jacques Ellul used the graphic method; progress is not a straight

line, but a rising curve. The gerbil wheel must turn ever faster, faster. Jerry Mander, examining the way the downside of a new invention is never openly discussed, prior to its introduction, questioned whether or not the new products really did make people happier. In some respects, progress is like a treadmill, but in other ways it is like the advertising campaigns for new fashions. Next week, the billboards will be different. The old is torn out, the new is brought in. Nothing lasts. Can an ever rising curve be sustained? People observing the house prices might tend to think not. It is quite possible to doubt that progress is really happening. Comparing the railway timetable for the modern London to Glasgow 'Pendolino' tilting train, we see that it is a mere 14 mph faster than the July 1937 Coronation Scot. The analogies offered here are useful, but they have their limitations. Can this ephemeral process really be thought of as unitary in character? The gurus and their products come and go, yet treadmill or catwalk, the underlying process remains the same (they assume), but the whole is somewhat like the Ship of Theseus. What do the Edison Phonograph cylinders really have in common with MP3 players? The assumption of the common substrate, Baudrillardian Hyperreality, takes up the Postmodern method. In their haste to grasp the essence of the whole, something important, the specific connections, are lost. Yet this is an important part.

Not all new technological developments are necessarily harmful. The September 2007 Buddhist Monks' protests against the Burmese Junta were filmed using mobile phones, and transmitted around the world through the internet.

The effect of the dystopian novels like Zamyatin's *We*, or Ellul, with his *Determinism*, or Mumford's idea, drawn from cybernetics, that it is all in runaway, leads to despair and paralysis. It is not enough, however, to show that the consequences of holding a particular doctrine are bad. It is rather necessary to show that the belief is not true. It is a Kafka-esque nightmare, the individual is insignificant, enslaved, terrorised, trapped within the vast, impersonal, incomprehensible, technological processes. Such a position demonstrates little sense of what is possible, our capacity to create new possibilities. Rather this position is constrained by their ideology. To deny the neutrality of technology is to commit the Pathetic Fallacy. Just as it is possible to create new projects, it is also possible to put the brakes on, to block, obfuscate, and even to prevent undesirable projects. By far the biggest obstacle to a project, is money. Money which is not spent cannot be used to



exploit, money which is not earned cannot be taxed, high wages eat into their profit margins. It is really about making choices. Again, this comes down to specific examples – the residents' campaign to prevent the building of an incinerator at Catterall near Garstang, or the clean-up of the polluted lake at Wilmslow. Contrary to the claim made by Mr Kaczynski, the system as a whole can be disentangled, bit by bit, even though this is a long, arduous process of unpacking particular links.

The statement that technology interlocks appears to be a factual claim about reality. It may in one sense be true, but trivial, tautological and uncontroversial, in the same way that we might say 'technology is technological'. In my discussion about Ellul (in 'Four Mandarin Thinkers'), the umbrella concept, or catch-all concept, was discussed. The term 'technology' can be used in a classificatory sense, but there is a tendency to go beyond this, and to think of it in a causal sense. Concrete paving slabs form the surface of a patio, and can be classified as technology, but how do the innocent paving slabs cause genetically modified maize? (One cannot have the good parts without the bad.) Again, the Pathetic Fallacy is invoked. Back in 1999, following the 18th June City of London 'Squaring up to the Square Mile' mass anti-capitalism protest, a paper, *Give Up Activism*, was published. Written from a Vaneigemist position, the anonymous author noted that activists began by campaigning on a specific issue, and from this, the political role of 'activist' emerged. Following the M11 road protest camps

in 1994, and the Criminal Justice Act, the slogan 'No More Single Issues!' gained currency. Activists moved away from their focus on a single issue, into an attempt to build a broader protest movement against many or even all of the negative aspects of global capitalism. This process is similar to that demanded by the Primitivists against civilisation. 'All or nothing!' In making this step, they lose focus on the particular concrete aspect, the factual, and instead chase after the abstraction.

In holding to their abstraction, the Primitivists fail to take notice of the specific details of the causal relationships. They treat a classification as a cause, and confuse causes with effects, and effects with causes. It is true that we cannot have Windscale without machine tools, but we can have machine tools without Windscale. The different elements of technology, which themselves are also mistakenly believed to be alive, conscious and responsible, are all charged, under the principle of 'Guilt by Association', along with technology as a whole. Technology interlocks in the classificatory sense that it is a global network of things, but their analysis moves from this point to the error that the parts act in concert, as a conspiracy against us. Technology, by virtue of the fact that it is technology, is guilty. In truth, the weak classificatory bond between them is not strong enough to sustain the charge. It is not the factory chimney which kills, but rather the customers who buy the poisonous chemicals. Somebody pushed the accelerator pedal, somebody bought the airliner ticket or the fast food burger, somebody withdrew the reactor control rods,

somebody threw away all those useless and trivial plastic products which were then burned in your municipal incinerator. It is not fashionable to write of responsibility. It is easier to blame an abstraction. Yet, for the product to be sold, there has to be a customer. Lewis Mumford and Jacques Ellul complain of the 'infantilism' of consumerist culture. The consumer is often blind to, or unwilling to acknowledge the consequence of his or her bad choices. It might be complicated to disentangle all the chains of causation. The buck might eventually stop in the boardroom, but it starts with the credit card transaction.

Technology connects together in a classificatory sense. Close attention should be paid to the way that the parts interlock in a causatory sense. There are limits to how we can apply the chains of causation, because more than one route can be taken to arrive at a particular invention. The fact that some technologies have been used for bad purposes does not mean that all technology is bad. Despite the perception that it is a factual claim, the view that technology interlocks is an ideological abstraction. Those holding the view disregard the particular details of the chains of cause and effect, confusing one with the other, and conflating classification with causation. When the Primitivist offers us the false choice 'All or Nothing', the probability is that we will get nothing. The activist, faced with the choice between taking down the entire industrial technological civilization, or going home empty-handed, invariably chooses the latter.

Commentary

FREEDOM

Volume 68 Number 24

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

As we move into the festive season, it is time, as always, for a bit of reflection on our lord and saviour, Jesus Christ.

This year, Christ has shown us ... um, well, not very much really. In fact we've mostly been taking our lessons from the people who rule in His stead, and those lessons are:

- We need to save the environment, but not by making the wealthy cut back.
- We need to save the poor in other countries, but not by stopping the corruption and economic imperialism that causes much of the trouble in the first place.
- We need to cut back on poverty in the UK, and the best way to do this is to give all our assets over to monopoly contractors who hike the prices of basic utilities and transport, while giving massive tax breaks to the rich.
- We need to protect our freedoms by giving the government the right to lock us up whenever it wants to, for however long it wants to, and to pry into every aspect of our lives while demanding we carry a card with the basics on for their convenience.

We're looking for writers, editors and anyone who can get us out to the wider public.

In the face of all this good cheer, we're hoping to continue being an oasis of truth to help undermine their raucous celebration, and, as always, would like you to help us spread this Bad Word far and wide as the good party-poopers you are.

Merry Christmas and a happy New Year? Bah humbug.

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The Purgatory of Others

I never argued that the central narrative arc (East German Stasi Captain sabotages his own investigation) didn't happen – only that there is no evidence that it did, and good reason (that organisation's obsessive scrutiny of its employees) to doubt it.

Here I was merely undermining the film's claims to realism, not making pronouncements about fact. The other criticisms I made were equally contentious, though plausible – yet mysteriously absent from mainstream discussions of the film's significance.

Such silence allows the rhetorical force of the main character's individual moral redemption to substitute for serious analysis – a basic ideological process of both Hollywood-style fantasy and much of what passes for political debate these days. Those were the limited angles I was trying to cover.

Tom Jennings

Editor's note: On that note, it might be best to call it a day for this conversation...

Morris reply

I agree with Brian Morris, reviewing Karen Armstrong's *The Great Transformation* (Freedom, 20th October) that "the world is in a sorry state". But I cannot follow his reasoning when he rejects her preferred remedy, a spiritual revolution, and advocates his own, a social one.

"My advice to Karen Armstrong" he writes, "is, in the words of Bertrand Russell, remember your humanity and forget the rest." That will suffice, he thinks, because "Humans of all cultures (including humanists and anarchists) have opposed greed, egoism, hatred, intolerance and violence, and stressed the importance of compassion, generosity, mutual aid, sharing, non-violence, and respect for others."

But if humans of all cultures have always been so keen on compassion, etc., would the world today be in such a sorry state? How come all these weapons of mass destruction? Morris writes: "Religious teachers such as Confucius, Buddha, and Jesus were simply expressing the moral values of the common people." But in the next

paragraph we read: "Christianity served as an ideological precursor in the establishment of capitalism and the British Empire – Pax Britannica – in Africa."

So, if Christianity is simply an expression of the common people's moral values, then the common people of Africa have only their own moral values to blame for what Christian colonialists and capitalists did to them. Is that it? My advice to Brian Morris is to take a look at the teaching of J. Krishnamurti, which I think is basically the same as that of the anarchistic Lao Tzu. Krishnamurti said the only revolution that could save the world was "actual transformation in our consciousness."

Francis Ellingham

Moving to Iran?

Dear comrades, if you've got a map-book handy, you no doubt can guess why it would be inadvisable for Wrekin Stop War to put the following on our web-site; at is nevertheless, we feel, worthy of some wider publication.

We were told that Donnington is sending supplies to a new British Forces' Post Office address in Iraq, (not the Basra ones) which suggests a base for different sorts of activity, such as an attack on Iran.

Also that there is considerable evidence of preparations for privatisation of Donnington, one incidental and farcical bit is that transport is now done by a – private carrier, recently a £30 exhaust was sent by palette transport, that is what can be put on a palette costs £50, this exhaust, being long and thin, needed two, so the transport cost over three times the value of the goods, goods which could have been bought at any garage.

Laurens Otter

Brown's speech

The Brown constitution was an interesting speech purporting to offer a major change to how the government deals with freedom of information, protest and generally presents itself as a fount of liberal freedom.

The idea appears to be to regain some of the ground Brown lost in his ill-fated attempt to make the next elections a sure thing, by presenting

him as a man with a vision for the future of a free Britain.

I say interesting, because after a load of waffle about Britain being the cradle of democracy, it has some bits in which might almost be considered progressive (or at least, repealing unprogressive things the government have attempted in the last few years).

Among other measures being considered is the reworking of anti-protest laws to allow people to once again wave placard outside the houses of parliament, make the decision to go to war more accountable to MPs and take a more hand-off approach to the judiciary. Plans to weaken Freedom of Information laws would be scrapped, and most interestingly, the books might be opened to the public in some public service roles undertaken by the private sector.

While some of the proposals sound positive on the surface, they are tacked on to acceptance of measures which have proven hugely unpopular. So while we might have the right to protest in front of parliament, we will also have the 'right' to have our biometric details checked en route via the discredited ID card scheme, to be thrown into jail for longer without trial, and to have our information to be kept indefinitely.

Much of the reforming agenda is a sop the public. Brown's big idea is effectively a rehashing of the oldest one going – divide and rule. By presenting himself as a defender of our 'historic freedoms', he hopes to hoodwink the public into praising his statesmanlike behaviour even as he continues to help build an apparatus designed for repression.

By promising new measures to protect our data he will hope to drag away some of the support for anti-ID campaigners by offering a 'compromise' position of surrendering some freedoms rather than others.

Yet this is a false suggestion. Privacy regarding what is known about us, our DNA, biometrics, where we live, with who, why, our preferences, where we shop, was a large part of the 'old' government policy too, with little success given that the system they hope to secure with all our data on it stretches across countless government departments.

Regardless of the number of laws you enact to 'protect' the public from misuse of its information, the mere fact of gathering it in one place by statute, on a database that hundreds

of thousands of people can access, leaves the system open to abuse.

One corrupt person in all that network is all that's needed for our information to be distributed to whoever wants it.

Even if you believe that the government won't misuse that same information under the guise of anti-terror work, or simply as a means to repress dissenting voices, to believe that in the entire police, NHS and social services there is not one person who will take a bribe to pass on the details of people who for example, have been arrested for anti-fascist activities is plain gullibility, or if you're a bit more wealthy, your details for cold calling, scams etc etc.

What Brown does offer is in no way moving towards any greater freedoms for any of us in real terms. We still can't walk out on sympathy strike, or take direct action to defend ourselves or for improvements without expecting to be photographed, DNA swabbed, have our possessions rummaged through and likely get a beating for our troubles.

While it is a more wide-ranging series of policies on the subject of privacy and the 'rights of the citizen' than was expected, Brown's political maneuvering should not be seen as anything but that.

Rob

Questionnaire

- What would you like to see more of in the paper, and do you have any contacts or ideas for getting it?
- Would you prefer a shorter fortnightly or a longer monthly publication through the door?
- Is A4 a better size for the paper or do you prefer the current format?
- Do you like the way the paper is written/presented? If not, what would you suggest to improve it?
- While the editorial group is focused on class in its writing, there can be a tendency for some topics not to get the attention they deserve. What topics/geographical areas are underrepresented?
- What would help persuade your friends to read the paper?
- What would make the paper an easier sell?
- Any other suggestions?

Let us know what you think – send your answers to 'Questionnaire', Freedom Press, 84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1 7QX

Quiz answers

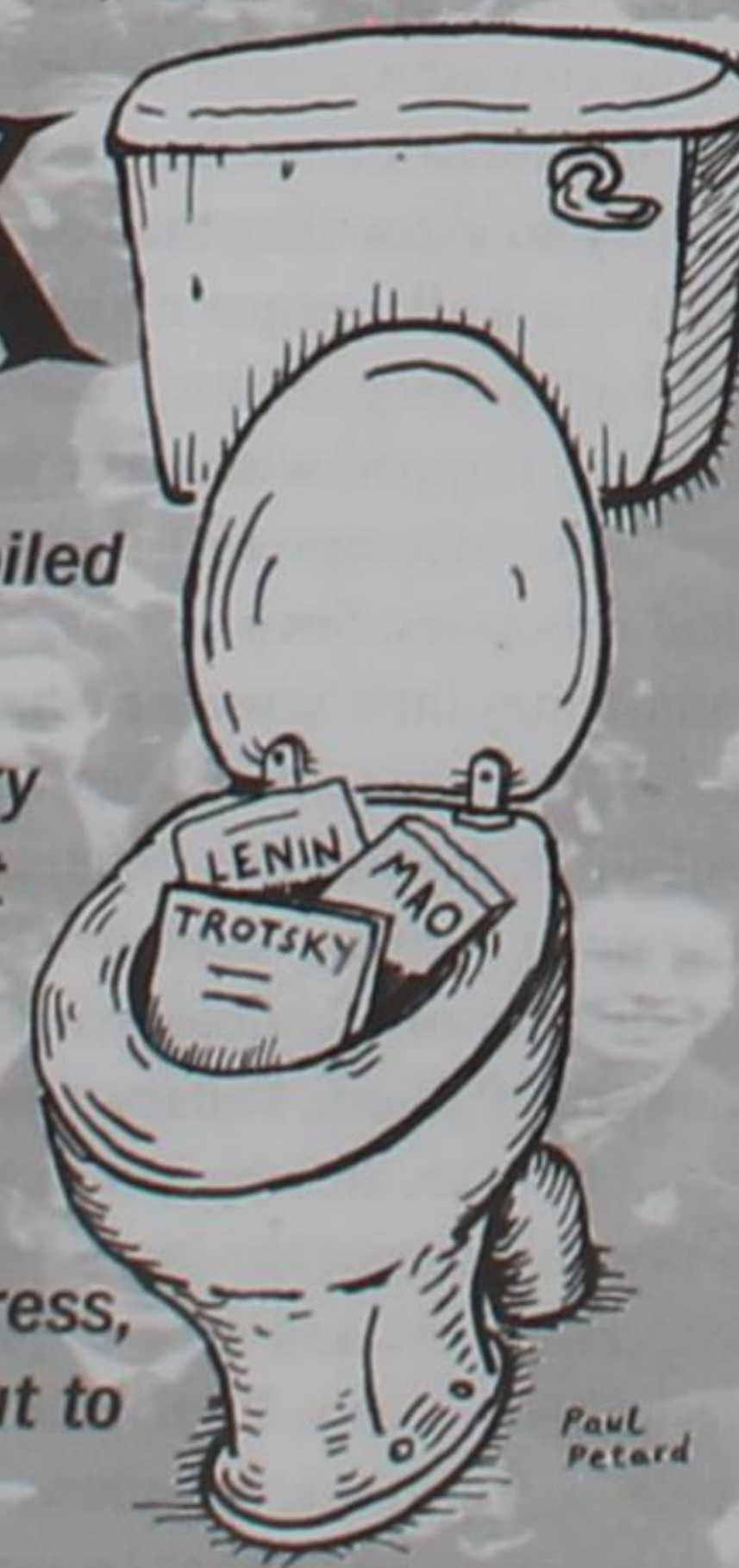
1. It is the Chinese state's term for acts of rebellion against local government or developers.
2. Karl Marx, as described by his drinking partner Wilhelm Liebknecht.
3. He is the son of the last Nizam of Hyderabad, though India abolished that title in 1974. He is also descended from a daughter of the last Caliph of Turkey. Observers of some of the islamists may note that a restoration of the Caliphate is high on their agenda.
4. His wife Yoko Ono after he was shot by Mark Chapman, a former psychiatric patient.

The Anarchist Quiz Book

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

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

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



REVIEW

Richard Alexander takes a look at some of the libertarian magazines and pamphlets which have recently hit stores

Workers Solidarity no. 3

Issue three has arrived from the USA. This issue has a debate about workers centres and the labour movement; accounts of various transport related labour disputes; farm workers struggle and some other smaller pieces including a couple of book reviews.

Obviously produced on a tight budget, the writing is clearly focused on working class issues written by activist-participants.

Price is \$10 for four issues (in USA) from 339 Lafayette Street – Room 202, New York, NY 10012 (email wsany@hotmail.com for overseas rates).

Kate Sharpley Library Bulletin

no. 52 (October 2007)

This contains a translation of an account of a solidarity action during a 1931 Spanish labour dispute; review of books on librarians as cultural hero, and a two-volume history of Siberian anarchism. Usual selection of shorter notices etc.

The price of a subscription is £3 for four issues (£6 outside UK).

Direct Action

no. 40 (Autumn 2007), £1.50

The new look *Direct Action* continues to improve, with a feature packed issue. Items on privatisation, academy schools, sexuality, National Shop Stewards' Network, nukes, the "clash of civilisations" myth, a couple of

history articles: one on factory committees in Russia and the other covering the revolution in Britain that never happened in early 20th century, capitalist causes of alienation, anti-social behaviour, etc.

International articles cover recent class struggles in Egypt, a picket of the Columbian Embassy, and the struggle for survival by the Penan people of Sarawak. There is also a book review on Bolivia, a critique of the take-over by capitalism of football plus letters and various other bits.

Emilio Canzi. An anarchist partisan in Italy and Spain by Paolo Finzi and others KSL pamphlet, £3

A fascinating collection of articles and extracts relating to the life of Emilio Canzi, anarchist militant and anti-fascist fighter.

In the immediate aftermath of the First World War Canzi, a war veteran, joined the anarchist movement and was involved in the training of the Arditi del Popolo in their struggle against the fascists.

Following Mussolini's seizure of power Canzi had to flee to France where he continued the struggle. Later he joined the fight in Spain against fascism there, but returned to France in mid 1937 after being injured in the failed attempts to take Huesca, where he had been the commander of the 36th Brigade.

Following the fall of France he was imprisoned, then sent to a concentra-

tion camp in Germany. In 1942 he was transferred to Italy where he was interned but with the fall of Mussolini he eventually escaped in September 1943 to take up the partisan resistance in northern Italy around his home town of Piacenza.

In 1944 he became the Commander of the XIII Zone, a position he held on to despite the machinations of the PCI who tried to have him replaced by someone more to their liking.

With the end of the war he became involved with the anarchist movement. Ironically having survived two world wars, a civil war and several bouts of imprisonment in different countries he was killed from complications caused by being accidentally run-over by a British Army truck.

He was buried in Peli di Coli, where a statue stands to this day in memory of him and his struggle.

The extracts are backed by a useful map, glossary of organisations and six pages of biographies of principal characters in the pamphlet. A fine testimony to a heroic life and yet another reminder of the duplicity of Stalinists.

Workers Solidarity

no. 99 (Sept-Oct 2007)

A glossy freesheet from the Workers Solidarity movement in Ireland. This issue has more on the Terence Wheelock case, Anarchists against the Wall, Equal pay, Anti-Nuke action, Rossport gas terminal, a factory occupation, climate change and the



British postal workers' dispute. Neatly put together and well written.

Red and Black Revolution no. 13, Winter 2007

Latest analytical glossy magazine from WSM. Four big articles: the first on the Irish (Republic) Health service which is in dire need of reform together with a sketch of how an anarchist society might organise health care; A long piece from the Internet analysing the political and economic situation in Turkey; An analysis of "left communism" covering council communists and left-communists from an anarchist perspective; community activism in Glasgow with the Praxis group.

Finally there's a detailed review of Benjamin Dangl's book on resource wars and social movements in Bolivia.

Priceless but I suspect that £2 will buy you a copy in the UK.

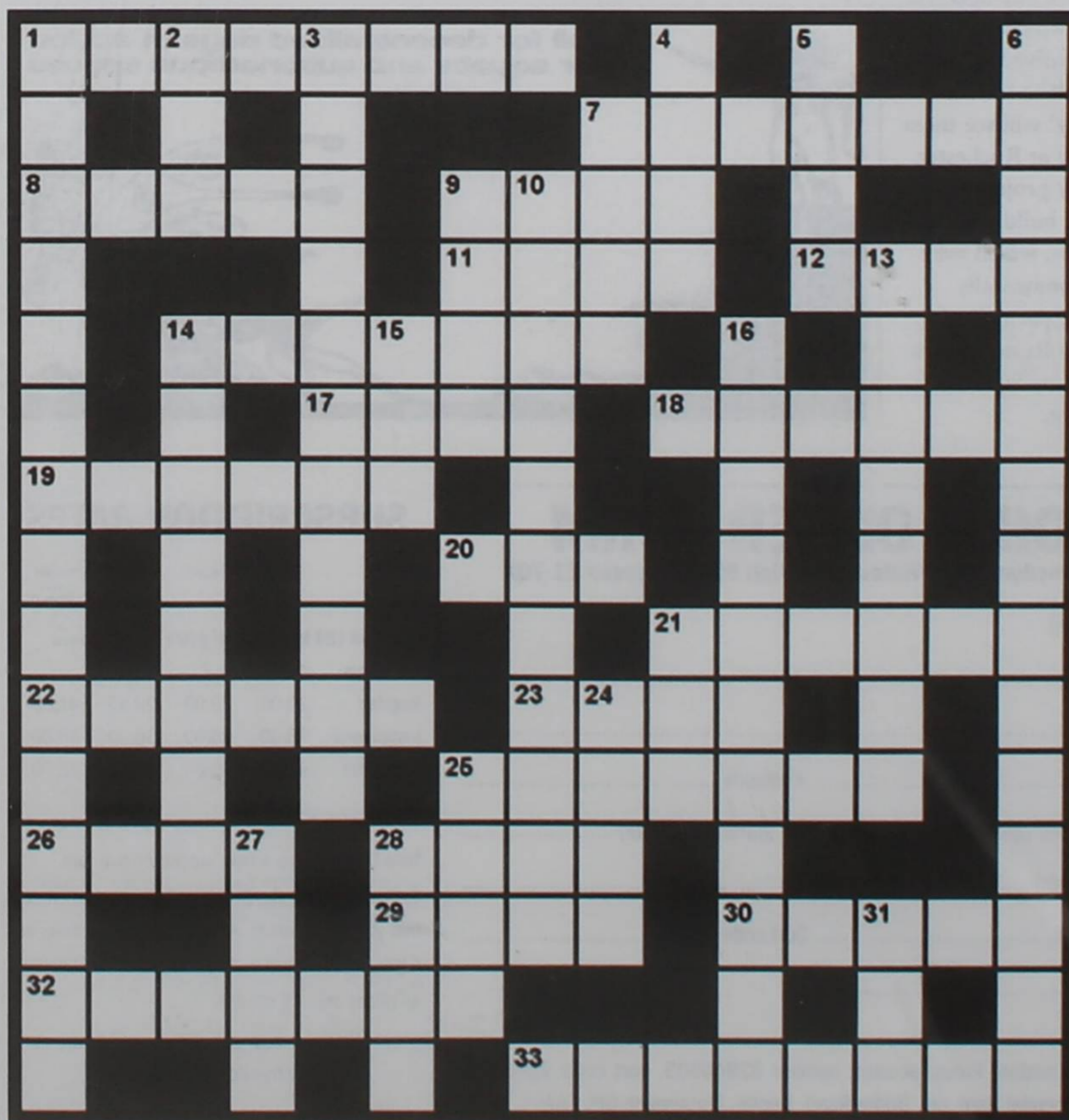
Organise

no. 69 (Winter 2007/8), £1.50

Hot on the heels of *Direct Action's* make-over, comes the Anarchist Federation's re-designed *Organise ...* for revolutionary anarchism. And very smart it looks too. The writings not bad either! This issue has articles on the reading Community Garden; Defy-ID and No Borders co-operation; a critique of Academy schools; environmental surveillance; grassroots environmentalism from a class struggle perspective; New York City Anarchist Bookfair 2007; a biography of the anarchist photographer Margaret Michaelis; and reviews of Nick Cohen's latest book, a biography of Bakunin and a KSL pamphlet on Italian volunteers in the Spanish Civil War. Plus other misc items.

A snip at £1.50 – buy extra copies to show to your friends.

THE WINTER PRIZE CROSSWORD by Bjarni Halfnelson



Send your entries to 'Crossword', Freedom Press, 84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1 7QX to arrive by Friday 4th January 2008.

Across

- Do horn up imaginatively for nineteenth century libertarian writer (8)
- Newspaper to scrutinise non-drinker with a point (7)
- Days long ago help to make up foretold enlightenment (5)
- Wild animal's home in political airlift (4)
- Lied about not working (4)
- Does badly for lyric poems (4)
- Spontaneous strike of anarchist cartoon strip (7)
- Profound, returning pissed! (4)
- Maker of counterfeits no good for Reg (6)
- Turn by to go around, or you could get well hung here (6)
- Dry grass at Nechayev's centre (3)
- Drop an organisation to show mercy (6)
- Get it wrong with backward schoolkids? (4,2)
- Plant giving eye-colour? (4)
- Silly nut involved in alternative demo getting on horseback (7)
- Chopped up meat that could get you high! (4)
- Wetlands are somewhat inoffensive (4)
- Reckless itchy bits? (4)
- I have silly game for representation (5)
- What the blokes would be, anyway, in an anarchist society, if a lake in the Netherlands ran back into the marsh (4,3)
- Be seen at assemblage where you're not present (8)

Down

- Philosophy of 1 across explains why anarchists drink herbal infusions, so we hear! (8,2,5)
- Not even different (3)
- Dour old Noam could change for creator of 14ac (6,5)
- What mutual aid assumes we do – just race about (4)
- Typical place to find 'Freedom'? Dome? Not exactly! (4)
- Where no worm turns with 28 across mixing in to achieve Morris's utopian dream (4,4,7)
- Covered in gold, but sounds like admitting responsibility for something (4)
- Insect parasites left behind when the mail deliverers leave the pigs (4)
- The Western dating system gets some regurgitated antipasto and comes up with ecological adjustments (to climate change, etc.) (11)
- What the global environment is getting – add greed in a nasty way (8)
- IWW tie up a blood group over untruths (8)
- Fox's 9 across with sad end (3)
- 1990s ecowarrior anarchists, alternative not brigades (6,5)
- American political badge that lets you into the hole in the wall? (3)
- Warmongering US president loses head and gets right to make speed! (4)
- Averagely ungenerous? (4)
- Back of foot can make you better, so it sounds (4)
- Release – no charge! (4)
- Craft found at centre of the Earth (3)

A Sideways Look

A wealthy property developer has some problems with getting planning permission for a major scheme. He donates a large amount to the ruling Labour Party, via intermediaries, and his scheme gets the nod. Now the developer is clearly a bit of a Walter Mitty, but what was the Labour Party thinking?

And it's not just this – there was Formula One head Bernie Ecclestone who donated a million quid, got the tobacco advertising ban delayed, and got his money back. It seems the only people who don't get anything back for the money they donate to Labour are the unions. Despite bankrolling the party for decades, the last ten years has seen any union-led agenda ignored. As *Freedom* goes to press, Brown will be jetting off to Portugal to sign the European Treaty. His condition for not blocking it, and he could easily have allowed a referendum which would have rejected it, was that Britain would be able to opt out of European legislation giving temporary and agency workers basic employment rights after six weeks in a job. The unions supported this measure as a first step in doing something about the two-tier workforce in many parts of Britain.

But of course, the Labour Party is financed by large donations from rich individuals, most of whom don't care about the conditions of workers. The unions helped the 'modernisers' in the Labour Party erode any sort of internal democracy. The leadership consistently showed total contempt for the sort of people who did the donkeywork of local politics – and in return expected some sort of say in the politics they were expressing. None of the main parties has any need for activists any more – they can just call on some rich benefactor who will give them money so that they can hire people to work for them.

Nor is it just Labour that is corrupt. The Tories are hoping we might forget the stench of sleaze from the last time they were in government. They are also taking donations from someone who doesn't live here, and they will probably win the next election based on Belize-based Lord Ashcroft's targeted finance. The LibDems have had money off dodgy financiers as well. The Scottish National Party are enjoying the discomfort of Labour after their leader in the Scottish Parliament received a donation just under the £1,000 money laundering reporting limit from a businessman based in Jersey. But the SNP ditched a long-standing policy of re-regulating buses after a donation of half a million pounds from Brian Souter, founder of Stagecoach, who has made millions from deregulation.

Political parties all represent different factions of the ruling class. They need to survive, and cannot get the public to swallow their preferred method of state funding. The police

are accepted as being institutionally racist, after their incompetent handling of crimes involving black people. I think it's fair to draw an analogy and describe the government as institutionally corrupt. As Labour and the SNP have shown, intentions don't matter; political parties exist in a world where deals are cut to make things happen. It's natural that people who need to use the political process to make lots of money, like property developers, are attracted to donating. The system cannot be reformed, though throwing a few of the worst offenders in jail might not be a bad idea, even if just for the entertainment value.

Svartfrosk

The quiz

1. What are 'mass group incidents'?
2. Which socialist philosopher used to smash street lights after pub crawls?
3. To what titles does former Hollywood cameraman Azmet Jah have the strongest claim?
4. Who said of John Lennon's death "I think of John's death as a war casualty – it is the war between the sane and the insane"?

Answers on page 6

Imagine if...

Richard Branson was confused. He couldn't get his head around this idea of carbon offset for airlines the government had come up with.

"So let me get this straight", he motioned for his aide to sit down. "We're expected to pay all this money to plant trees to 'offset' our carbon emissions, except actually we're not, because we're being given 'carbon credits' by the government to cover our costs?"

His aide nodded, his brow furrowed. Neither of them really got it. Richard snapped his fingers. "I know, I'll phone Ruth Kelly, she's transport minister, she'll know what this is on about."

Ruth was succinct in her explanation. "Well you see planes are stupid, they pour out loads of nasty gases which help cause climate change."

"Enough technobabble minister, get to the point!" Branson exclaimed.

Kelly sounded a bit affronted. "Well, we're trying to look green by making companies like you plant trees, because although that's not going to do anything to stop climate change, it sounds nice to say 'we're carbon neutral'. But we can't ask you to pay for it, otherwise you'll put prices up which will make us unpopular. So what we do is we give you billions of pounds of free permits to cover your costs, thus allowing you to carry on as normal and us to claim we're making you be green."

Branson beamed "That's a wonderful idea minister, so what we



actually have to do is bugger-all!"

"Precisely."

Branson looked thoughtful as he put down the phone. "You know, now that we're a green company, I think we're going to have to make some changes around here. I mean ethical is expensive, know what I mean?"



Shown to the gate

page 1

into the area, focusing on Financial Services, Construction (for the Olympics) and Port Logistics, despite the system's inability to improve results – recent reports have shown systemic cost over-runs and below-average results

New further education campuses will also work on a more business-led model than at present, which will see corporations heavily involved in the educational process – plans for the 'Universities at Medway' will see them situated on the BEA site at Rochester.

The Thames Gateway project also proposes removing and building on the North Kent Marshes, which are recognised as an Environmentally Sensitive Area by the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs and are largely covered by Sites of Special Scientific Interest.

Listings

15th December Worldfair, London's liveliest ethical market, will be at Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London WC1 from 11am until 6pm, see worldfair.org.uk for more

15th December March and demo against Sequani in Ledbury – Sequani (used to be called Toxicol) are a contract testing lab in Lebury who test all sorts of products on animals – meet 12 noon at Ledbury train station car park, see animalliberation.co.uk
17th December Booksale for Amnesty: all books £1, plus Amnesty Christmas cards, diaries, calendars. from 11am to 6pm at Conway Hall, 25 Red Lion Square, London WC1R 4RL, for info call 07771 888825

19th December South London SolFed film night presents *Pan's Labyrinth*, a gothic fairy tale set after the Spanish revolution, 7.30pm at Café Crema, 306 New Cross Road, London SE14, £4 includes delicious veggie meal
22nd December Grand Anarchist Winter Solstice Party from 2pm at Freedom, 84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1

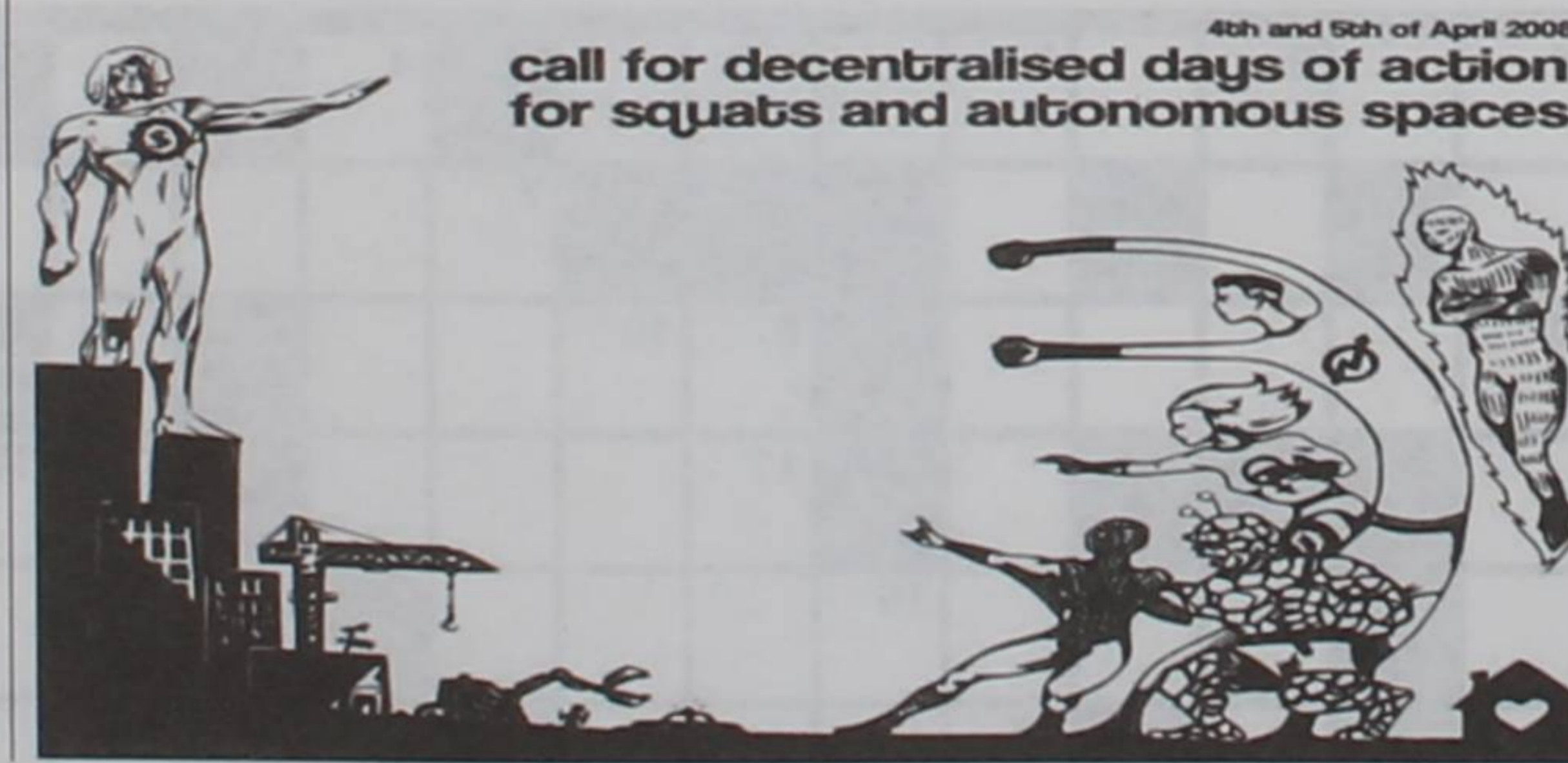
31st December Offline New Year's Eve party with the Brixton-based urban75.com crew from 9pm until 4am at Prince Albert, 418 Coldharbour Lane, Brixton, London SW9 8LF, for info call 020

7274 3771 or see offline-club.com
12th–13th January Lewes Wellbeing Festival at Corn Exchange (Town Hall) & Assembly Rooms, Lewes, for info see starcommunities.com or call 01273 488924.

16th January South London SolFed film night presents *Devil's Backbone*, 7.30pm at Café Crema, 306 New Cross Road, London SE14, £4 includes delicious veggie meal February

17th February Southampton's 3rd Seed Swap from 10am to 4pm at Woolston Community Centre, Woolston, Southampton, for more details see octoberbooka.org/seedswap.

March/April Smash EDO Tour 2008 – for almost four years the Smash EDO campaign have been demonstrating outside EDO/MBM, the US arms manufacturers in Brighton, and the campaign will be touring the UK (or beyond) showing the new full length film *On The Verge*. Initially the campaign is looking for dates in March/April, the tour will allow those involved in the campaign to discuss tactics, get feedback, and organise for the future, so if you want the tour to visit your area email on-the-verge@hotmail.com or you can see the *On The Verge* trailer at smashedo.org.uk



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