

AT RISK OVER BENEFIT CHANGES

Fears over new local housing allowance plan

The government has implemented the switchover from Housing Benefits (HB) to Local Housing Allowances (LHA) as of 7th April, but is already being hit by a string of complaints.

As the first month of full operation begins, in High Peak tenants have found that they are being offered far below the necessary amounts to live on, as they fall into the Tameside rental area.

As a result, housing benefit payments could be cut by as much as £1,000 a year. Similarly, the SK22 and SK23 postcodes have been linked to south Manchester. While a minority are getting more money, most are getting less, particularly in areas bordering less affluent neighbourhoods.

The change from HB to LHA means that rather than private rentals being based on the amount asked for by local landlords, rates are now calculated by averaging out the amounts paid in a given area each month, depending on the size of the property and number of tenants.

While current tenants will retain the payments for the buildings they currently

page 3 ►►

LENS CAP FOSSIL FOOLS DAY



On 1st April the Edinburgh battalion of the Clandestine Insurgent Rebel Clown Army (CIRCA) were in Tesco to point out the absurdity of long-distance flying of fruit and veg. Events and protests took place across the country to raise awareness of fuel wastage, including a blockade of an off-shore gas terminal at Bacton, banner drops and visits to the offices of companies which contribute to pollution.

BT MONITORS CUSTOMERS

BT Broadband has been caught out after an investigation found it has been secretly monitoring 18,000 customers' internet usage while testing an online monitoring system for advertisers. BT admitted the secret trials, which are testing a piece of technology from adware company Phorm, to the Register news website early this month, having done the trials in late 2006 and summer 2007.

The communication giant's actions may breach the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act, which makes it illegal to intercept internet traffic without a warrant or consent.

The technology, which uses the profiling to target advertising to individuals when they log on to large websites, is also to be involved in a public testing of 10,000 accounts this year.

Internet monitoring looks likely, under current government guidelines, to be legal as long as consent has been granted. Alongside BT, both Virgin Media and Talk-Talk are looking at implementing it, potentially affecting ten million internet users.

BT have said Phorm's technology would be opt-out for their customers, meaning users would have to know about it and ask not to have their online use checked. Talk-Talk meanwhile would make it opt-in, and Virgin Media have made no comment – it is understood the deal is dependent on how it could affect the Virgin brand.

Before the controversy over Phorm began, City analysts estimated BT stood to gain £85m annually in extra revenues.

INSIDE ►►

Piracy in Oxford page 2

Teachers set to strike page 4

The far-right in Russia pages 8–9

Svartfrosk column page 10

Anarchism in Israel page 13

Bash the Rich reviewed page 15

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NEWS

IN BRIEF

ANTI-FASCISM: Amber Valley Borough Council has recently received an application from Mr Alan Warner to hold the BNP's Red, White and Blue Festival on land at Denby, Derbyshire from the 15th to 17th August 2008. People have until the end of the month to register objections. If no representations are received the application will automatically be granted.

Representations should be sent to the Licensing Section, Amber Valley Borough Council, Town Hall, Market Place, Ripley, Derbyshire DE5 3XE. For more on organising against the festival, go to nobnppfestival.wordpress.com.

ENERGY: The TUC is throwing its weight behind building a new generation of coal mines, saying clean coal could help cut emissions and secure energy supplies.

A report by the union umbrella group says that government reluctance to back clean-coal technologies has delayed investment.

FREE SPEECH: *SchNEWS* and SmashEDO have combined forces to bring the world "the film they tried to ban" – *On the Verge*, the story of the four-year campaign against EDO MBM, Brighton's favourite bomb-builders. Determined to beat the censorship imposed by Sussex Police and their allies, SchMOVIES have taken the show(ings) on the road.

According to movie director Steve Bishop, "The whole thing has been massively energised by Sussex Police's cack-handed attempt at censorship. Venue organisers have been surprised at the turn outs – obviously huge credit has to go to everyone who organised a screening at short notice."

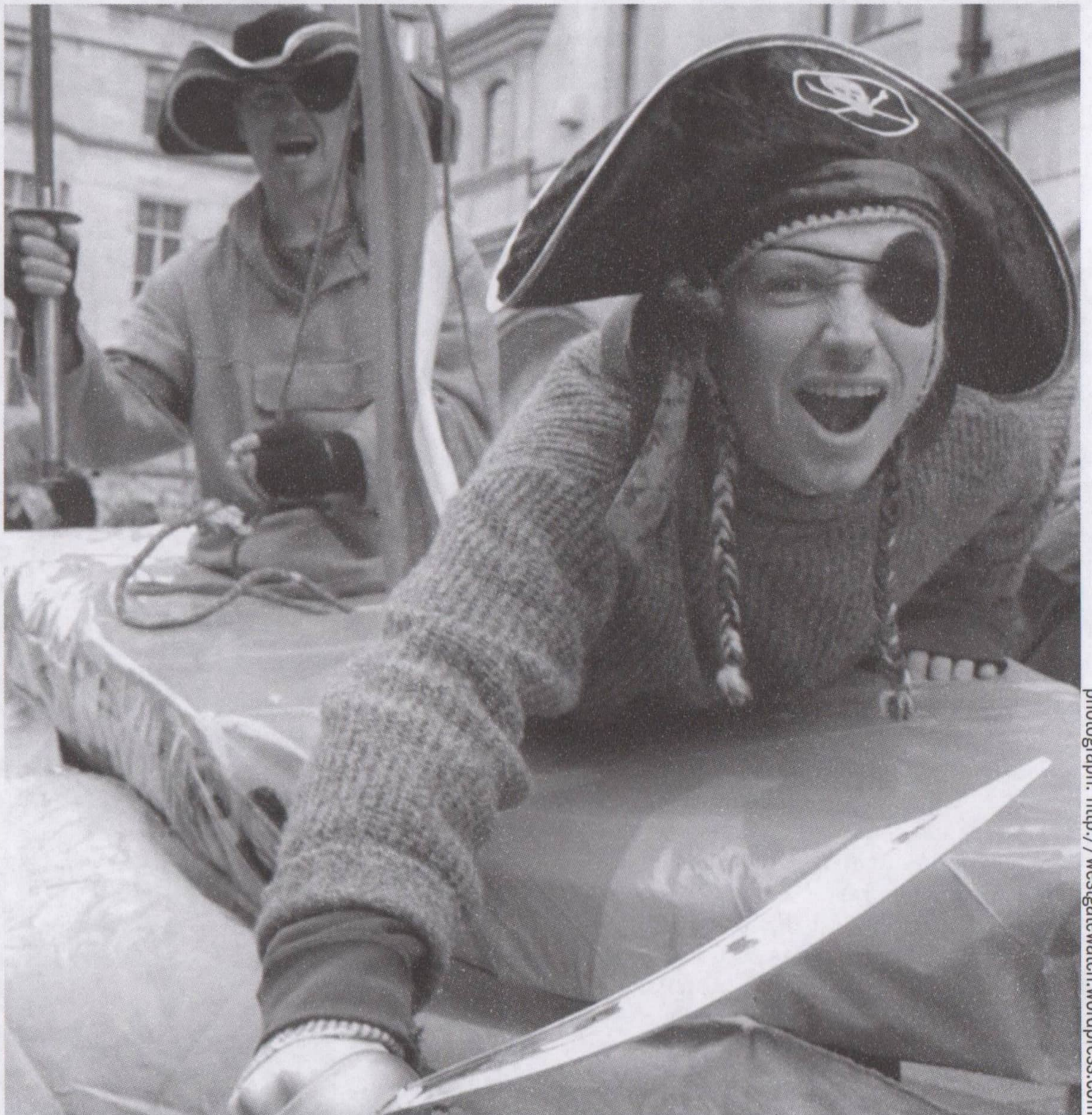
IMMIGRATION: The new UK border control agency began operations this month. The new 25,000 strong organisation includes more than 9,000 warranted officers operating in local communities, at ports and other border locations, and in 135 countries worldwide. Over the next four months 1,000 frontline staff will be extended both immigration and customs powers, and staff in England and Wales will be given police-like powers. They will be able to board and search vehicles, planes and trains, and can enter buildings and seize goods.

OLYMPICS: One of the torch-bearers due to carry the Olympic flame across London has dropped out in protest at Chinese repression in Tibet.

Disabled comedian Francesca Martinez said that she felt taking part would legitimise the ongoing violence in Tibet, where recent weeks have seen authorities carry out a heavy-handed crackdown on protesters.

Britain's number one badminton player Richard Vaughan also said he would not take part in the torch relay.

LENS CAP OXFORD



photograph: <http://westgatewatch.wordpress.com>

Campaigners took a pirate ship, inflatable sharks and a samba band into the Westgate Shopping Centre on Saturday 29th March to celebrate a significant setback for its planned expansion. Building work on the expanded Westgate – which Oxford residents say will increase traffic, flooding and greenhouse gas emissions – has been postponed until 2009. The expansion would have seen the destruction of sheltered housing and public space.

LU backs down

London Underground have backed down over a range of safety and staffing issues under threat of the three-day tube strike from the RMT and TSSA unions.

The proposed joint action would have effectively shut down rail operations in the capital, as unionists refused to work in the face of proposals to close or cut staffing to ticketing offices and casualise vital safety work.

Up to 40 ticket offices were to go, with opening times sliced for many of the offices remaining, and the company wanted to bring in 'mobile supervisors' for tube stations, with each officer responsible for several – potentially disastrous if they were at the wrong station in the event of an emergency.

Terminal Five was to be staffed by people subcontracted from other firms, wearing LUL uniforms.

The company has now dropped these plans, pledging to use trained and full-time, trained

personnel and keep ticket offices open, and agreeing that safety duties on Heathrow's Terminal Five will be given to LUL staff.

The offer would also end a long-running dispute with station staff on the Bakerloo Line who will no longer be asked to detrain passengers while working alone.

"We were told that agency and security staff and the crazy concept of mobile station supervisors were models for the future, but we now have a guarantee that there will be proper supervision and that the current use of agency and security staff during traffic hours will be brought to an end," RMT general secretary Bob Crow said.

"Our members have blocked changes that would have undermined the Tube's excellent safety standards, and despite the usual media vilification I hope Tube users will recognise that we have successfully defended their safety."

The strike ballot saw 1,673 members vote for action with 333 voting against.



Pensions threatened

Pensions consultants are warning that next year could see a new wave of closures and attacks on final salary pensions.

There is currently a budget surplus in pensions which is based on a surge in the stock markets, but recession hitting weak areas of the financial markets where pensions are heavily invested and also proposed changes to accounting rules could see deficits run into the hundreds of billions.

Redington Partners have warned that the government are set to tighten accounting rules, hitting pension viability. The pensions regulator are also arguing that an increase in men's lifespans has not been taken into account under current rules.

Last year saw a tailing off of pension closures after a massive round of assaults left the vast majority of final salary pensions either closed or spun off from the parent

company to clear huge paper debts.

Final salary pensions have defined payments based on the final salary a worker earns, but have been replaced in many cases by a working-life pension, which links payments to stock market performance and caps them by averaging out pay over an employee's working life.

City analysts are likely to base their judgments of pension funds and likely impact on corporate profits under the proposed new standards. Redington spokesman Robert Gardner said surpluses would be wiped out if the proposals were implemented.

This first round of attacks followed massive losses on the stock markets when the dot com bubble burst, leaving pension pots which had invested heavily in the risky shares badly affected

One of the first companies attempting to

implement the closure of its final salary pension scheme is Royal Mail, which is also intending to raise the basic retirement age for company workers to 65 from 2010.

The CWU has called on postal workers to vote no to the proposals, but the ballot is purely consultative and makes no call for strike action. CWU Deputy General Secretary Dave Ward has made clear that the union leaders will give Royal Mail what it wants, saying that the CWU "understand and support the need for pension reform ... no change on pensions is an option that will cripple the company financially."

The scheme has operated for many years with a huge deficit and now stands at £5.6bn. This is because successive governments, like many private companies, took a 'pensions holiday' when the pension fund was in surplus for 12 years from 1988.

At risk over benefit changes

◀ page 1

live in, all new tenants will be required to live under the LHA system.

It is being pushed as a fairer way to allocate housing benefits, with the government saying that it gives tenants more control over how the money is spent, and offering them a rebate of up to £15 per month if they move to cheaper areas where the rent is below the average.

However, warnings have been sounded not just over how the rates are calculated, but on their potential social impact as a whole. Fears have been voiced after initial trials, held in 'Pathfinder councils', held in 18 different local authorities, showed a number of potential problems.

In a report from Darlington council, it

was found that the £15 rebate was encouraging people to live in substandard accommodation to save money, potentially impacting on health and leaving no incentive for private landlords to improve the quality of their properties.

The introduction of the LHA could also restrict the number of properties available for claimants to rent, actively undermining the government slogan of 'more choice', while the requirement for anyone needing additional help to prove 'vulnerability' may also undermine provision.

Alongside reducing the number of properties available for its clients, the LHA is unpopular with private landlords. In feedback during the trials, 56% said they

would be less likely to let to housing benefit tenants, under an LHA agreement, with 23% having decided not to renew an existing arrangement and 26% declining new tenancies during the period.

In Leeds for example, eight out of 52 agents had stopped letting to claimants because of the system. Bury council is considering stepping in to make sure benefits are paid, with powers to intervene if someone is struggling to manage with payments.

Councillor Dorothy Gunther, from Bury council, said she had reservations about the new regime. "I worry that landlords will be reluctant to rent to people who are on benefits."

PUBLIC SECTOR

NUT set to strike

Members of the National Union of Teachers are set to take part in the first national teachers strike in 21 years.

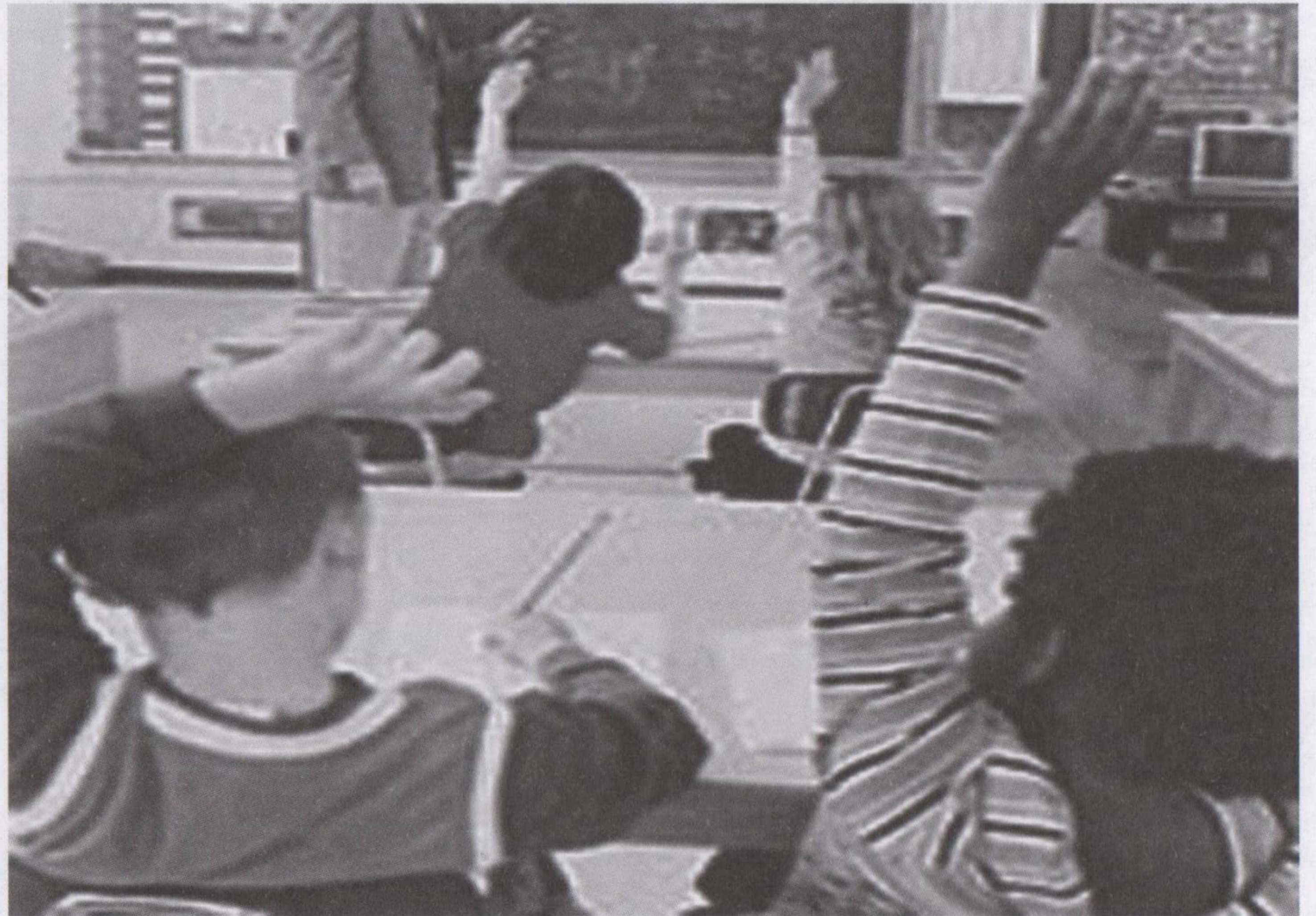
After four years of below-inflation pay increases, up to 200,000 members of the National Union of Teachers (NUT), are set to strike on 24th April. The membership voted for a one-day walkout.

75% of those voting were in favour of a one-day walkout, with 25% against. Turnout for the vote was 32%.

The NUT's last national strike was under Margaret Thatcher's government in 1987. This latest call for industrial action is in response to a proposed 2.45% pay-rise, which, while above the 2% cap prime minister Gordon Brown called for on public sector pay increases, falls below the rate of inflation. Teachers say the offer reflects a significant cut in the standard of living for both primary and secondary level teachers.

The 2% cap urged by Gordon Brown is based on the Consumer Price Index (CPI, at 2.1%), while teachers want the pay-rises to be matched to the Retail Price Index (RPI, at 4.1%), which takes into account prices of housing, mortgage rates and is a more accurate reflection of actual costs of living. Many new teachers are facing student loan repayments, the interest-rates of which were matched to RPI – this has further angered teachers.

Other teaching unions, such as the NASUWT had previously accepted the proposed 2.45% rise, having perceived it as favourable in comparison with other public-



sector workers who received a 1.9% rise.

Nearly half of schools in England and Wales could be forced to close by the first national teachers' strike for 21 years, an online survey suggests.

Six out of ten teachers back the National Union of Teachers' 24-hour strike on 24th April, the survey said. Just under half of 7,300 teachers polled by the *Times Educational Supplement* also thought the strike would close their school.

A spokeswoman for the Department for Children, Schools and Families said the online poll was a self-selecting: "As with all surveys of this kind, only those who feel very strongly will bother voting. The truth is

that just one in ten teachers actually voted for a strike."

The poll also found some support for the strike among teachers not represented by the NUT. Of these 52% backed the walkout.

Meanwhile on April Fools day staff at Glasgow Caledonian University protested as part of their campaign to keep the private firm, INTO, out of the University.

The campaigners oppose plans by INTO to open an access college for international students using public funds and university resources.

INTO have already been successfully kicked out of the Oxford Brookes campus.

Adapted from libcom.org

No Link between Joblessness and Sickness Benefits

Particularly in the government's sights are the 2.67 million people in Britain who claim ill health benefits. In last month's budget the Chancellor set a target to reduce the numbers of claiming sickness related benefit by a million by 2015.

Recent research however shows, rather embarrassingly for the government, that there is in fact no link between high numbers of joblessness and incapacity benefit. The shocking truth appears to be that people claiming sickness benefit are, in fact, ill.

Towns that have recorded high levels of increase in the numbers claiming benefits in the last decade include Crawley in West Sussex, Gosport (up 25.6% since 1999), Slough, Fenland, Cambridgeshire (24.3 per cent up), Chelmsford and Westminster in London (up 23%). All these locations are characterised by high employment levels at

or above the national average.

The highest increases in claimants are in the south of England where most jobs are. Age wise, the biggest increase is amongst 35 to 44 year olds.

While employment levels nationally are just under 75%, in Crawley 82% of the town's population who can work, do work. In Gosport, Westminster and Chelmsford the figure is over 80% – the government's target for the economy as a whole. In other words the growing numbers of people claiming benefits has nothing to do with avoiding work and everything to do with ill health. Total numbers of people claiming incapacity benefits has fallen since 1999 – by 1.8%.

In recent years there has been a growing awareness of medical conditions such as stress and other behavioural disorders. Over half of the people who claim sickness benefits, aged

between 16 and 34 have mental or behavioural problems. Quite rightly people are no longer willing to 'put up' with conditions. These factors are the reason why sickness claims are relatively high.

The long term sick already feel marginalised and isolated by society. Government claims that they are somehow responsible for their plight and need to be forced back to work adds to this. Work under capitalism, whether you live in commuter belt Crawley or ex mining communities like Durham, causing physical and mental problems. The eroding of worker's rights and the decline in the power of organised labour means people are working longer and harder. Rather than attacking the poor, Labour should shift its attention to the rich who exploit tax loop holes and fail to pay their way.

Richard Griffin

IN BRIEF

DEFENCE: MoD moves to wind down its fighter pilot training programme, citing plans to shift its fast-attack capability towards unmanned aircraft, and a recent failure to find alternative contracts, mean BAe will be cutting 600 jobs at two factories in Hull and Manchester.

The Hawk programme is experiencing a lull in orders after missing out on a £500m order from the United Arab Emirates last year.

Some 450 jobs will go from the Hawk's home at Brough, near Hull, and 134 from Woodford, near Manchester, where BAe makes the Nimrod. Most countries are training fewer pilots and therefore require fewer training aircraft – a trend that is likely to continue, according to the MoD.

MEDIA: NUJ members at the *Express* and *Star* have gone on strike following a refusal by the papers' management to enter into meaningful negotiations on a fair pay deal for journalists. It has been the first full-day strike by journalists on a major national newspaper in 18 years.

The strike at Express Newspapers comes as the company attempts to force a 3% pay rise on journalists, despite having increased its printers' pay by 4.3%. NUJ members working on the company's papers, the daily and Sunday titles of the *Express* and *Star*, say they are working under ever-greater pressures yet getting scant recognition for their efforts by management.

NUCLEAR: Unions representing 12,000 nuclear workers are to reject a pay offer, raising the prospect of industrial action just as the Government privatises the running of Britain's fuel reprocessing centre.

Prospect, the GMB and Unite are set to throw out a 2% pay offer and ballot for strike action as *Freedom* goes to press in a dispute that centres on Sellafield, the reprocessing site in Cumbria; Sellafield's technical facility at Risley, near Warrington; and Capenhurst, the former uranium enrichment plant in Cheshire that is being decommissioned.

Final bids recently went in to the Nuclear Decommissioning Authority (NDA) for the running of Sellafield. The preferred bidder, which could want to receive about £20 billion over a 20-year period, will be selected in the summer and will begin to run the site in the autumn.

TRANSPORT: Balpa, which represents 3,000 British Airway pilots, has called for BA's chief executive Willie Walsh to be sacked, blaming him directly for the fiasco surrounding the opening of Heathrow's Terminal 5.

The British Air Line Pilots' Association (Balpa) is preparing a statement condemning Mr Walsh and calling for better leadership of BA as it faces the twin challenges of moving to a new terminal and greater competition on its lucrative transatlantic routes.

Harmondsworth hunger strike

Protests and a mass hunger strike broke out at the Harmondsworth immigration detention centre at the start of this month, with the vast majority of detainees at the West London facility refusing food "you wouldn't give to a dog".

Around 300 people have taken part in the hunger strike, which started on 1st April, with around 120 occupying the courtyard even at night.

They wrote and signed a petition and sent it to the European Court of Human Rights, to local MP John McDonnell and others. On the 2nd April the detainees resumed eating late in the day, after meeting with Immigration. However, as no results came from the talks, on 4th April the detainees resumed the hunger strike.

They are complaining that they are being deported without having their cases properly heard, due to time restrictions and bad legal representation, and that they are detained in the meantime, in very bad conditions, without having committed any crime.

Benjamin Osa-Iduma, from Nigeria, has his entire family here here. He said: "They give us food you won't give to a dog. Some people are here for 18 months or more without having committed a crime, some people want to go back and they are held here."

The complaints are a further humiliation for Kalyx, the company running Harmondsworth, which was told to return over £5million to the UK Government last year after failing to run the detention centre to an acceptable standard.



Photograph: Indymedia

STARK: Harmondsworth prison in a visitors room at the facility.

Gas prices may rise by 50%

A report by investment banking group UPS into EU carbon emission regulations has suggested that gas prices could rocket by as much as 50% in the next five years, with a mass switchover forcing prices skyward.

Shares of BG Group, formerly British Gas, have soared on the back of the report, which suggests that Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) will most likely be used to replace the current output of most of the coal-based power supplies within the EU.

Increased demand would lead to increased competition with the US and elsewhere for supply, adding 13% to global LNG demand, it suggested. "We believe the only viable solution would be for Europe to raise prices substantially in order to bid LNG volumes away from the traded market, particularly from the US, but this may require prices

over 50% higher than our current forecasts," UBS analysts said.

They added: "BG has a global LNG business ... We estimate there could be an 11% uplift to our BG NAV [net asset value] if gas prices rose by 50%."

BG group would capitalise on such gains as 80% of its liquefied natural gas (LNG) to the highest bidder, rather than on long-term contracts, and currently has around 40% of the global LNG market.

If such rises become a reality, it could have a strong impact on people living in fuel poverty in the UK and Europe as a whole. Recent hikes of 13% or more have already proven extremely difficult for many families and individuals to deal with, particularly as state subsidy has failed to keep up.

INTERNATIONAL

IN BRIEF

BELARUS: In a 6am raid at the end of last month, police raided a private home in Slupsk and detained about 25 activists, including those from Poznan, Torun and Szczecin, who a day earlier had taken part in a demonstration against the US anti-missile shield. Those detained claim the police broke into the home, used tear gas and assaulted several people. One person has a broken hand. Eight have been charged. All the others are charged with disturbing the peace, even though most were sleeping. They all got fines of 500 zł. (around £100)

GERMANY: The German discount supermarket chain Lidl has been accused of spying on its employees. The detectives' records include details of precisely where employees had tattoos as well as information about their friends. The most shocking case allegedly occurred at a Lidl store in the Czech Republic, where a female worker was forbidden to go to the toilet during working hours. An internal memorandum allegedly advised staff that "female workers who have their periods may go to the toilet now and again, but to enjoy this privilege they should wear a visible headband".

PHILLIPINES: The dispersal of striking port workers in Dumaguete City turned violent last month, resulting to the injury of four strikers and five policemen. The Philippine National Police (PNP) attempted to break picket lines, where dockworkers had brought their families, by driving a truck through them, nearly running over picketers and children. In response, they had bottles and stones thrown at them. Police are now considering prosecuting the workers for 'child abuse' saying they shouldn't have brought their families along in the first place.

QATAR: Yvonne Ridley has won about £13,800 after a four year legal battle, after she was sacked without warning from her job as a senior editor on al-Jazeera's English language website. A series of exclusives highlighting US military injustice in Iraq and Afghanistan led to a confrontation between her and her bosses after American officials complained and the stories were pulled.

Yvonne Riley said: "No one was disputing the facts of the stories, but it was obvious the US military were uncomfortable, to say the least, when the stories were published."

Ridley also upset senior management when she launched an NUJ chapel after discovering a huge pay differential between Arab, Asian and Western journalists.

SOMALIA: In the first three months of 2008 alone, 60,000 people fled Mogadishu due to ongoing conflict, including 'search and sweep' operations conducted by the Transitional Federal Government of Somalia and the Ethiopian military. Displaced Somalis told Refugees International of the indiscriminate killing of civilians and the shelling of entire neighborhoods.

LENS CAP POLITICAL PRISONERS FREED



In what has been declared a stunning but partial victory for the Zapatistas' 'Other Campaign' in Mexico, the Chiapas government freed thirty political prisoners on 31st March in response to years of protests for their freedom, but not before giving some of them one last thorough beating. As *Freedom* goes to press, seventeen prisoners remain incarcerated in Chiapas and Tabasco, thirteen of whom are on a hunger strike which has already lasted over a month. The prisoners were incarcerated under a wide array of circumstances.

RuSal miners rise again

Miners at the Red Riding Hood Bauxite mine in Russia's Urals have called off their occupation of the tunnels after managers agreed to negotiate a new pay settlement for next year, and said they would fulfil all existing contract agreements.

The ten-day underground hunger strike against RuSal was initially declared illegal by the company, which is owned by Russian Oligarch Oleg Deripaska, who is one of the biggest players in ore extraction in the country.

RuSal also threatened to close the facilities, saying they could not afford the wage increases. However the estimated loss in production over just ten days is thought to have cost the company upwards of \$90 million, while the full increase in pay

would have cost \$14 million per annum.

Workers are demanding the opening of a new mine which was currently being held but not exploited, and a 50% wage increase, along with the restarting of social care programmes in the area which RuSal recently stopped, and greater investment in mine safety.

The strike began on 26th March, when 107 miners – members of the Independent Miners Union – on completing the night shift refused to leave the mine. Twenty-four hours later, they sent up their demands.

Other larger unions in the region condemned the actions. The Mining and Metallurgical Union, representing 2,300 workers in the area, said it was illegal, though they send down aid to the strikers and refused to testify against them in court.

Notes from the United States

Women who have been sexually abused in Iraq have so far been unable to do more than privately recount their own stories, rather than seek official or judicial recognition and redress. This is because of clauses in their employment contracts. Nevertheless a group of such women are now becoming more vociferous and making their experiences more widely known.

Mary Kineston is an Ohio mother who went to Iraq to drive trucks. She is on record as saying that she really thought she had had the worst of it when her supply convoy was

ambushed in April 2004. Yet shortly after the incident she was allegedly sexually assaulted by at least two other drivers at her company, KBR (formerly Kellogg Brown and Root, previously exposed for their links to Dick Cheney over no-bid contracts to rebuild in Iraq), who both kept their jobs.

She was fired for complaining: "KBR ... didn't do anything. I still have nightmares. They changed my life forever, and they got away with it."

Damaging uranium mines restart

New nuclear boom will hit Africa

With 349 new nuclear reactors now either under construction, on order or in the early planning stages around the world, the uranium mining industry has been kicking into high gear with a glut of new extractions underway.

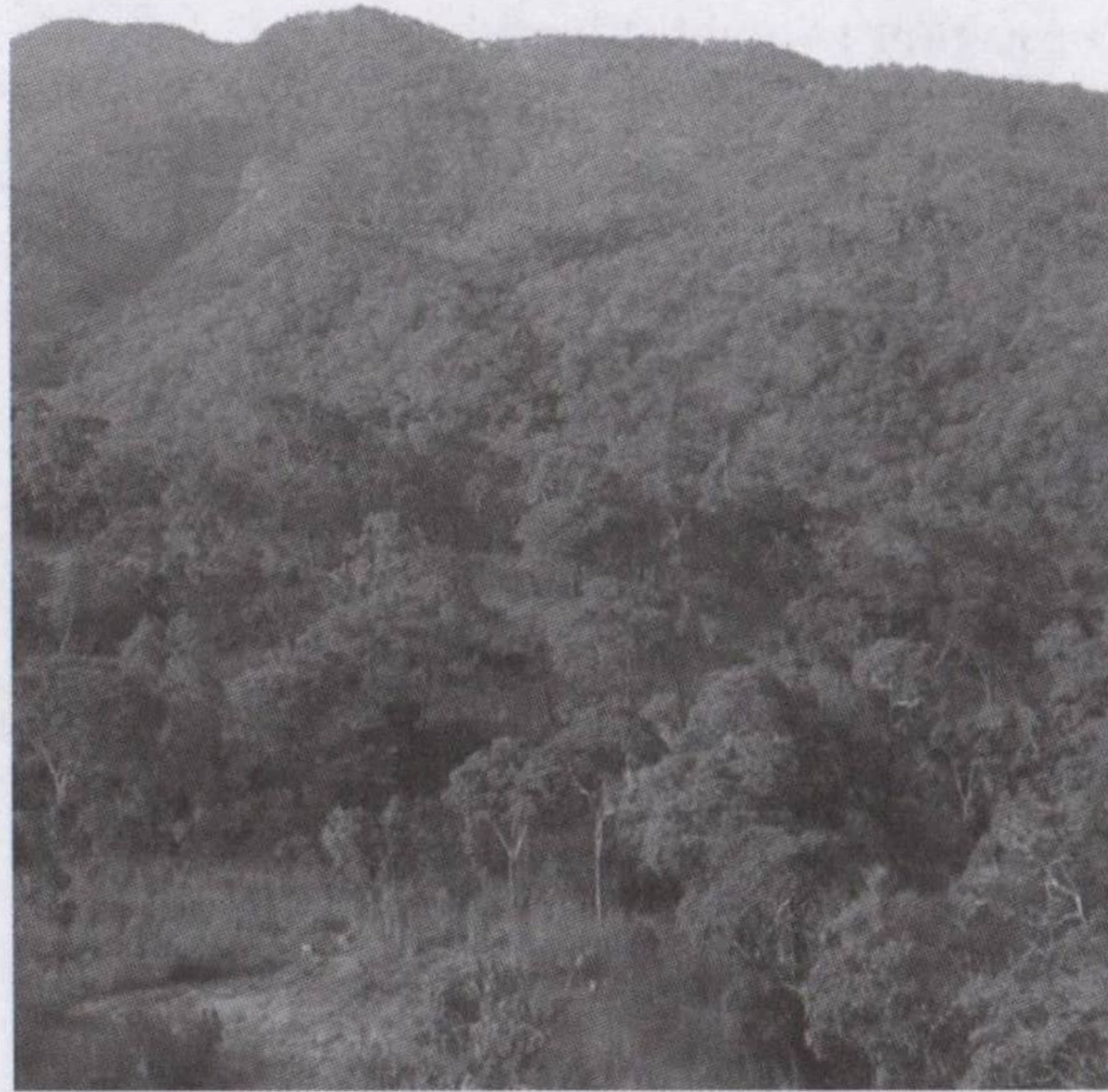
While in western countries mining of uranium is subject to stringent environmental and safety testing following years of campaigning by anti-nuclear groups, NGOs in Africa have been warning that huge damage is threatening for communities and delicate ecological niches there.

In particular, the recent activities of Paladin, an Australian mining company, have come under scrutiny in Malawi and Namibia as uranium mine holdings which had been held over during the last ten years of downturn in the industry are restarted.

The Kayelekera project in Malawi under construction and is set to begin operations in early 2009. The project has come under both public and legal pressure following allegations that environmental tests were fudged.

Paladin is the main owner of the site, having bought out the Malawi holding company and negotiated a deal with the Malawian government which grants it a 15% stake and offers some healthcare and educational investment, in return for full exploitation rights, various tax-exemptions, a 100% capital write-off against tax and a ten-year guarantee that taxation will not increase subsequently.

Paladin want to extract some 56 million tonnes of valuable minerals within the next ten years, mostly via open-cast mining. But Malawian rights groups are angry over the



Photographs from www.paladinenergy.com

OPEN CAST: Promotional shots of the mining operations at Kayelekera.

project, and are trying to sue Paladin and the government for flouting procedure when agreeing the environmental impact assessment.

John Chawinga, secretary of the Catholic Commission for Peace and Justice, one of the rights groups, said: "The project to mine uranium at Kayelekera in northern Malawi could have catastrophic consequences for future generations."

The coalition believe the project could pollute Lake Malawi, Africa's third largest freshwater body and a source of clean water, fish and employment for millions.

The Langer Heinrich uranium project has been beset by similar criticisms. The mine, which was officially opened by the president of Namibia, saw strong public opposition when proposals were put to the government.

The park it is sited in is home to the indigenous Topnaar people and is a haven for 42 red-listed rare plant species. The govern-

ment granted Paladin's 25-year licence despite reports finding that the environmental assessment by Paladin underestimated the radiation dose per person in the vicinity by a factor of four, noting that not only did the assessment halve the average number of breaths taken by a human being when making its assessment, but it didn't state how far away from the site the impact would be felt, and no estimates were given for the workforce at all. Disposal of waste was also not adequately discussed and, as with Kayelekera, there are fears that underground aquifers used for drinking water could end up being contaminated.

Langer Heinrich will become the largest single consumer of water using over 1.3 million tons per year – making it the country's single biggest user with potentially disastrous consequences in a dry country such as Namibia.

Notes from the Unites States

◀ page 6

It now seems likely that the scale of these attacks is greater than previously thought. Proper figures on sexual assaults among contractors are unavailable: no-one in the government or contracting industry is tracking them; and KBR and other contractors are requiring that employees in Iraq sign away what few rights they have and agree to take personnel 'disputes' to private arbitration, rather than sue the companies in American courts.

It was only in December last year that the silence was broken: Jamie Leigh Jones, a former employee of KBR, testified at a congressional hearing that she had been gang-raped in 2005 by co-workers in Iraq. Now others are beginning to speak up, although their voices are scarcely being aired in the mainstream media.

Such 'it's over there' exceptions are also being found as new information about the start of the Iraq war comes to light.

A Justice Department memo from 2003 was

released at the very end of March. It said 'military interrogators' could effectively ignore the law when it came to interrogating suspects.

It endorsed assault, maiming and even the administering of mind-altering drugs to prisoners. The document was written by then-Justice Department Deputy John Yoo and suggests that US 'interrogators' would be immune from prosecution for any crime because Bush's wartime authority overrode the law: "If a government defendant were to harm an enemy combatant during an interrogation in a manner that might arguably violate a criminal prohibition, he would be doing so in order to prevent further attacks on the United States by the al-Qaeda terrorist network.

"In that case, we believe that he could argue that the executive branch's constitutional authority to protect the nation from attack justified his actions."

Louis Further

Mumia denied retrial

The death sentence of radical US journalist Mumia Abo-Jamal has been put down by the Third Circuit Court of Appeals, but has refused to grant him a new hearing or trial, dismayng supporters.

The ruling denied three main prosecution attempts to appeal: prosecutors using racism to exclude African Americans from the jury during Abu-Jamal's 1982 trial; the prosecutor making improper comments to that '82 jury at the end of the trial; and pro-prosecution bias by the '82 trial judge during a 1995 appeals hearing.

The new ruling, overturns previous casework by the appeal body.

The Third Circuit had previously granted relief to persons convicted of murder in Philadelphia after ruling that Philadelphia prosecutors had illegally excluded African Americans from juries.

However, in this Abu-Jamal case ruling, the court found no fault in evidence of exclusion of African Americans from the jury in his 1982 trial.

Fascists mouthing the language of the far left

Uri Gordon interviews veteran anti-fascist Peter McNally (a pseudonym) on Russia's far right

Uri Gordon: What kind of activities are you talking about here? What do these people do, and how do they organise?

Peter McNally: Normally it's your typical skinhead bully-boy politics, beating up a black or a leftist or whatever. Then a lot of times it's the tit for tat, fascists versus anti-fascists politics that has a momentum of its own.

There are areas where people are pretty threatened about a very strong presence of right-wing people who, like in a lot of places, are in full complicity with the cops. Because the cops prefer them to the crazy fuckin' anarchists, right? So they can go, "Okay, I don't understand your Nazism, but as long as you beat up these fuckers I don't like, I'll turn a blind eye. Oh, and here's some money for beer."

So that's the gutter level. Then the next level is the smart young skinheads who are

being groomed, not so much for political office but for higher-profile activity.

Political parties like the National Bolsheviks (NBP) have rallies and publications, a web site and conventions to show how legitimate the party is. Then you go to people like Zhirinovskiy, who is in a sense a right-wing liberal economically, coupled with a Russian supremacist geopolitical belief system. Or in the case of some of the more conservative rightist parties in Russia, there is a serious structure and part of the military and security apparatus is behind them. And these parties all have extra-parliamentary activities and networks as well.

The Moscow Bureau for Human Rights have estimated that there were about 50,000 people on the Russian far right. Does that figure seem pretty accurate?

Well, it depends on whether that's people with sympathies or people who are active cadre. The NBP claims it has 15,000 people. The skinhead stuff, I honestly couldn't tell you because it's so marginal, and because very few of those people ever put out any written work, they are far harder to track.

With the NBP, all the demonstrations that I've ever heard about have either been in

Moscow, St Petersburg, or the Baltic republics; Pamyat were much the same I think, more specifically mostly Moscow. I think the further east you get, it becomes more local. You may find out that there's some isolated places that have a very large population that's sympathetic. But because it's such a vast country it's hard to say.

What can you tell us about the emergence of the modern far right in Russia?

There was actually a large range of political discussion within the social context of the old Soviet Union. You had people who were more to the left of the main line, or far more to the right; but they were still inside the discourse sanctioned by the Party.

The collapse of the Communist bloc is when you had the start of a more overtly fascist movement, basically people who wanted to hearken back to a time of stability.

One of the most notorious groups early on was Pamyat, who were Russian-Orthodox Nazis, who were vehemently anti-Semitic and talking about a 'Zion-Masonist plot', mixing in occult references and lots of other stuff.

Pamyat broke up in the early '90s and out of it came the Russian National Union and the Russian National Socialist Party, a straightforward Nazi splinter group, and that last put out a paper in 2003. More importantly, Aleksandr Belov who was in Pamyat, now heads the Movement Against Illegal Immigration, which is pretty big and active right now.

At this point you also started to have Soviet exiles returning, with the specific example of Eduard Limonov who set up the National Bolshevik Party. This party is difficult to discuss in simple left-right terms. Eduard Limonov was a dissident, he got an exit visa, he went to New York and his first book, which is about his adjustment to being in the US, describes how he met this black guy and they became lovers, and it's like "well, we just needed each other". But he looks to Stalin as a great period of social stability within the Soviet Union, and this is the part about National Bolshevism.

The roots of this go back to the early days of the NSDAP and the writings of the Strasser brothers, and Niekisch – who wanted a synthesis of nazi and left-wing theory.

Then in the '60s you had people like Jean-François Thiriart in Belgium who was a fascist and looked at Niekisch's writings and he started to mix the extreme left with the extreme right.

For Limonov this was a logical extension of where to push Russian nationalism, so that's sort of where he comes from. He also attracts a lot of people on the cultural margins. Russian skinheads, people who are in punk bands, industrial bands or whatever, who he courted because he was a marginal cultural

worker and was sympathetic to those aesthetics. And these days he heavily recruits within the Goth and black metal scene.

Okay. Now what about specifically Russian forms of xenophobia?

Well, within Russia specifically you always had a fear of different encroachments, whether it's from the West or the East. This sentiment goes the opposite way as well: many people in the West have a fear of the 'great Russian hordes'.

And then there's what some people would call the 'inbred' anti-Semitism of Russia and Eastern Europe. I mean, you have to remember that the Protocols of the Elders of Zion were first printed in Russia, and that in Poland there were pogroms in 1946–47! So this is more endemic than something taken over from the Nazi policies. In the Soviet Union specifically this was bound up with opposition to Zionism.

Then there's the fear of the East – the Mongol hordes, the Yellow Peril, which again doesn't come from nowhere. Since the Mongolian invasions of the middle ages, these have been important historical bogey-men.

The same goes for the fear of Islam, which also goes back in historical memory as far as the Ottoman takeover of Constantinople. So you have the decadent West, anti-Semitism, the Islamic threat and the yellow peril.

Plus you have all these groups being played off each other across the Soviet Union. The Crimean Tartars, who are Islamic, Christian and Buddhist even though they're from the Ukraine, were shipped off to Siberia after the war. After the fall of the old Soviet Union they could go back, and now there's a xenophobic reaction to them there among the white Russians and Ukrainians.

There's a strong military ethos underlying all this...

Definitely – for example The NBP has a paper called *Limonka*, which means little lemon, which is a name that the Russian soldiers who went to Afghanistan called their grenades. And in the '70s and '80s you had a disgruntled population who fought that war, which was Russia's Vietnam, so you had a lot of people who wanted at this point to save the face of mother Russia, and those people were also sympathetic to a more conservative nationalist orientation. And some of them were also involved in drug smuggling at the time, which is a sort of the link between the gangster side and the far right.

And more generally some of these people have spent some serious time in the Zone. The Zone is a unique Russian thing that goes back to the old Soviet period. The Zone includes the prisons, the gulags, the orphanages, mental hospitals, but importantly the military in general is also part of the Zone, and that's another place where some of these ideas and some of the criminality was involved, plus the Soviet Union and Russia today has very strict laws against what we'd call hooliganism, in fact you could get tried and convicted as a hooligan and end up in the Zone.

Can you explain more about that?

The term 'hooliganism' covered a wide variety of offences in the Soviet Union, from vagrancy to gang activity. It was also used against political dissidents. When guys were charged with hooliganism they entered the Zone, and in the Zone they would encounter right-wing political ideas and imagery.

It's important to understand that the old gulag was actually one

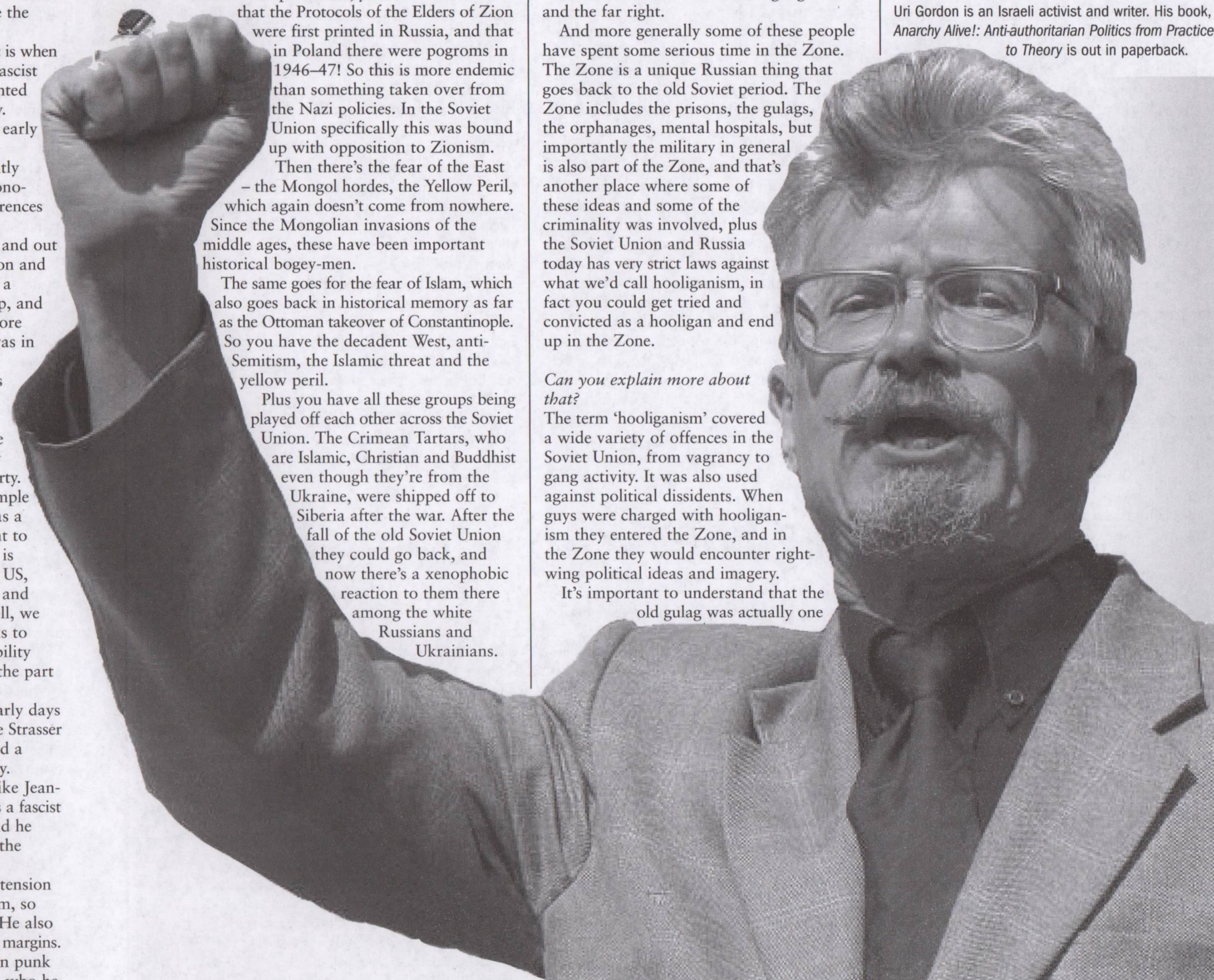
of the freest places for political debate. I mean, once you got stuck in there, there were maybe twenty different Trotskyist groups around and they'd just have their political arguments in the open because nobody was going anywhere.

So ironically, the place with the largest freedom of speech in the old Soviet Union was the gulags. So you had this marketplace of ideas. Now who's also in the gulag in the '40s and '50s? Nazi soldiers! And being a product of a Third Reich education I'm assuming they may have had some influence.

Uri Gordon is an Israeli activist and writer. His book, *Anarchy Alive!: Anti-authoritarian Politics from Practice to Theory* is out in paperback.



STREET FIGHTING: Flowers are left next to a picture of Alexey Krylov, an anti-fascist activist who was killed recently by skinheads.



NATIONAL SOCIALIST: Eduard Limonov talks at a National Bolshevik rally after his return to Russia.

COMMENT

ABOUT FREEDOM

ANGEL ALLEY

So, as there hasn't been a *Freedom* through your door in the last while, it should be safe to assume that we've missed one.

Unfortunately, though we have had some volunteers, it's taken a little longer to sort out some of rota which is likely to work than we had time for in the last two weeks. This one is coming out as I'm sorting it, and hopefully (fingers crossed, bit of wood fondled and other superstitious claptrap) the next one will be the one which we'll have sorted out by the new collective.

We've already had a few ideas from the new people, which hopefully will be getting put into our future content, but bear with us, if it doesn't work out this time we may be going monthly for a while.

As always, we're still looking for people to help out with news gathering, story writing, selling it, distributing it ... the usual shortages which tend to afflict small-scale publishers such as ourselves. On the whole people seem to like it, and we'd like to spread that around a bit!

On a quick shoutout for *Black Flag*, as well, the magazine is having its first outing of the year on 1st May as a bi-annual magazine, and hopefully it should be a good 'un with a lot more contemporary work this time around.

Rob Ray

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NEXT ISSUE

The next issue will be dated 29th March 2008 and the last day to get copy to us for that issue will be Thursday 20th March. You can send your 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.

A sideways look

by SVARTFROSK

An 18-page 'consultation document' called *A Picture of Health* came through the door a while ago. It's the latest government attempt to spin cuts in local health provision as something that will improve the NHS, and that are somehow led by patient demand. It is a measure of the opposition the authorities expect their plans to get that they have gone to such lengths to 'consult'.

Sir George Alberti, the man in charge of pushing New Labour's agenda across London's NHS, says "Health services in Bexley, Bromley, Greenwich and Lewisham need a radical overhaul if they are to meet patients' demands for modern, 21st century healthcare and offer the public value for money ... No change is not an option." This sounds all well and good, until you understand what is on the table in terms of this 'consultation', and more importantly, what's driving it.

There are currently four main hospitals in the four boroughs affected – Queen Elizabeth (QEH) in Woolwich, Queen Mary's in Sidcup (QMS), Princess Royal University Hospital in Farnborough (PRUH) and Lewisham Hospital. None of these institutions has a clean bill of health. Only one (Lewisham) has adequate public transport, and Queen Elizabeth and Princess Royal could be said to have particularly poor access by public transport, as well as particularly high car parking charges.

There are three options proposed by the four borough Primary Care Trusts. All involve leaving QEH and PRUH with all services intact, and closing the accident and emergency and maternity departments at QMS. The chief differences between the options are whether Lewisham retains an A&E department, children's services and a maternity unit. The process is so bad that even Lewisham's right-wing elected Mayor is campaigning against them; meanwhile

Sidcup saw its first demonstration for decades when the Tories and LibDems led a march to the hospital protesting about its downgrading.

Unfortunately, the reality of it is that QMS doesn't stand a chance, though Lewisham may be able to evade some of the cuts. The borough of Bexley is bounded by the River Thames in the north, Greenwich to the West, Bromley to the south and Kent to the east. The neighbouring health authorities all have hugely expensive new hospitals funded under the Private Finance Initiative (PFI). PFI is a Treasury scam to keep capital expenditure off the Public Sector balance sheet. It does this by paying vastly inflated prices to management consultants and private companies for services that were once procured in house.

The contracts that the hospitals are tied into mean that the running costs of QEH and PRUH are twice those of other hospitals in South London. Both these hospitals are technically bankrupt, while the contractors running the PFI reap millions in windfall profits. QEH has had to close wards, while PRUH was condemned for its poor standards of cleanliness.

The government have attempted to blame the hospital management for the deficits, but it is clear that the deficit is manageable once the excessive PFI-related costs are removed from the equation. QMS is the only hospital where there is no PFI; it is surrounded by three bankrupt PFI hospitals where the NHS is contracted to pay for operations and other services, regardless of whether they happen. Lewisham has the distinction of being partly rebuilt by PFI, a new building which has had one floor empty since it opened, though it's probably still paid for by the hospital.

This consultation is bogus – its concern is the health of the PFI's profits, not the health of the people in South East London.

Blog Bites

(porkupineblog.blogspot.com)

This is the fifth time I have visited Chile in the last 17 years and never before I have seen as much evidence of social action. Graffiti and murals advocating popular struggles and radical organisations are everywhere, and most especially in the working class neighbourhoods. Much of this is anarchist.

Support for the Mapuche to regain their stolen lands is a big issue right now. The three cities I visited, Santiago, Concepcion and Chillan all have anarchist activists. Santiago has the Espacio Comunitario Emma Goldman which I visited and the Centro Socio Okupado y Ziblioteca Sacco y Vanzetti, which I did not get a chance to visit.

The Espacio Comunitario is located in the basement of a neighbourhood bar and contains a book shop and library. It is also a space for meetings, work shops and get-togethers. According to a companero who was minding the premises when I dropped in, they have had many visitors from foreign countries this summer.

He told me that I was right in thinking there was more anarchist activity than before and that the upsurge was in large measure due to an influx of youth in the last two years. (I suspect this is related to the huge student strike that occurred in 2006).

Most of these are really young, 15 and 16 years old, and the companero, who was all of 21, said that he was one of the older members of the movement. Most are working class, with a few middle class and no upper class members at all. Although the Chilean state is oppressive, few anarchists have been arrested, but police do videotape rallies.

Later using the videos they are able to identify the younger members and then go to their parents. If needed, they bully the parents into stopping their child from being involved in the movement.

The group also holds a gathering at a park every Sunday to bring together anarchists and other youth. There are a number of different tendencies in Chilean anarchism, of which anarchist communism is the most evident, yet there is dialogue and unified action among the tendencies.

The most important publication is *Hombre y Sociedad*, now in its 23rd issue, but there are others like *Accion Directa* and *Agitacion* which, if you are interested, are available from the Espacio Comunitario. There is an on-line publication which gives news about anarchism and social struggles in Chile at www.labatalladelostrabajadores.blogspot.com

Thoughts on Freedom

Here's my tu'pporth in response to your questionnaire.

What I'd like to see more of: news of anarchist-influenced civil liberties and trade union struggles in the UK. Detailed exposés of state dodginess. One example is the work of Alex Harrowell (not an anarchist) exposing international arms and kidnap flights on his blog here at yorkshire-ranter.blogspot.com, especially the posts in this sequence yorkshire-ranter.blogspot.com/search/label/Operation%2QFiredump.

I'd rather a shorter fortnightly than a longer monthly. There is enough scope elsewhere for discussion: I want more news.

An A4 size probably is better, although the current format is good for cleaning shoes on. I like the way that the paper is written.

Keep the focus on class. If you've got more time to spend on community politics and detail about engagements such as social centres, then good. Articles that go into depth, pointing out what's going wrong, are better than "this is happening and isn't it great" pieces. I can read those in *Red Pepper* if I could be arsed.

My friends are more likely to read it – i.e. I am more likely to stick it under their noses, when it carries detailed exclusives of ongoing issues in the UK. Much of the recent stuff on prisons has fallen into this category: well done. "What the anarchists are up to" is all very well, and useful, but "what the state is up to and how people are trying to stop it (even if they are not anarchists)" is the killer point here.

Easier sell? See paragraph above. Mainstream newspapers put 'exclusive' on the front for a reason.

How can I help? Hardly at all, on account of being part of a very busy family. I might up my standing order a bit, though.

Chris

Remembering Ralph

On 1st February I got a call from Ruth Benn that Ralph DiGia, aged 93, had died at St Vincent's here in New York City. I had visited him recently and sensed he was losing his battle – he had fallen and broken a hip about two weeks before, got an infection in the hospital (hospitals in the US are notoriously dangerous places for the sick and wounded to go!), and despite rallying several times, died.

Ralph DiGia was of an Italian family, a second generation Italian anarchist. His father was a friend of Carlo Tresca. When the Second World War came. Ralph refused military service and was imprisoned, taking part during that time in the hunger strikes that desegregated federal prisons. Very soon after his release from prison, Ralph, along with Dave Dellinger, Roy Finch, Roy Kepler, and a handful of others who had been in prison or alternative service camps, took over the War KesTstefs League as a kind of band of 'young Turks', seeking to explore Gandhian nonviolence, and to deepen the programme of WRL from resisting war to changing the society that produced war.

It is not a surprise that Ralph was drawn to WRL, which, because it was a secular pacifist organisation, had become a home for young anarchists and socialists. Ralph was a qualified accountant and became the 'financial guy' for all the various groups that formed, keeping track of the money. If the term 'hidden saint' has a certain truth it was because Ralph did the scut work of the organization. He was not the speaker, not the writer, but always at the centre of the work of WRL, a kind of radical conscience for it, a man who hated internal conflicts, faction fights, who wanted, above all else, to make sure the daily work of the organisation got done.

In 1951, Ralph, along with Dave Dellinger and several others, tried to ride their bicycles across Europe, from France through the 'Iron Curtain', to Moscow. They failed to make it through the 'Iron Curtain' but it was one of the early efforts, internationally, to use the methods of Gandhi to question the insanity of the Cold War.

In 1955, in the first protest against the Civil Defence Drills by which the government hoped to give the public some confidence they could survive a nuclear war, Ralph was among those arrested, along with A.J. Muste, Dorothy Day, Bayard Rustin, and a number of others, for refusing to take shelter in City Hall Park.

Ralph left the drama of the movement to others. He felt that stuffing envelopes was as important as speaking to college students. Keeping the books made the organisation go around. There were times when, I know, he felt impatient at this.

In 1964 he joined the Quebec to Guantanamo Peace Walk, organised by the Committee for Nonviolent Action. This was long before Guantanamo would become infamous as an American site of torture. It was then a symbol of a US military base in Cuba, a country which had become the target of wrath for the American establishment because it had had a revolution which wouldn't go away. Ralph never got close to Cuba – the team of walkers, which included the late Barbara Deming, was arrested in Albany, Georgia, beaten, and held for, I think, a month, during which time they took part in a serious and prolonged hunger strike.

It was a rough experience for the marchers, an inter-racial team in a state that was fiercely resisting challenges to Jim Crow. Ralph came back to the office and returned to the routine of keeping the books and, of course, of counseling draft resisters.

Ralph was a kind of 'non-denominational' radical, who kept on good terms with a range of folks in the midst of the ideological wars of the left. But he was not without clear opinions on key issues.

There were occasional political struggles in which, in my view, Ralph took the right side. In the 1960's WRL voted to fund *WIN* magazine, a nonviolent 'hippy' publication that had been started by a group of young New York pacifists. The Executive Committee was very skeptical about a group of pot-smoking, free-loving youth running our magazine. But Ralph and I were able to carry

LETTERS AND COMMENT

the day – though at least two members of the Executive Committee quietly resigned.

In large part because of Ralph, WRL went on to play a central role in all of the Vietnam peace coalitions and Ralph, along with Grace Paley, was arrested on the first day of the 1971 Maydays in Washington DC, a time when over 15,000 people, most of them very young, were arrested in a three day period, while the smell of tear gas wafted over the capital, including Georgetown.

Ralph used to work at the office each day long after the rest of the staff had left. He came in on weekends to make sure mailings go out. He was the 'boss' of the loose group of us who made up the staff, but a 'boss' in such an indirect and gentle way that he held his authority over the rest of us simply by working harder than any of us, and shaming those, including me, who hated the routine work of stuffing envelopes.

Fairly late in life he met and married Karin, and became a family man, trimming his time in the office to a more reasonable burden. When I saw him in the office three weeks ago (and he was still coming in almost every day) I asked how he was doing. "David, I feel so tired. And my memory – it's lousy", Shortly after that he fell and broke his hip, entered the hospital and is now gone.

There will be a memorial – though when I do not know. I do know that a great spirit has moved on. One without pretensions, one who wore his radicalism in his life, not on his sleeve. I am among the hundreds – if not thousands – of people who are lucky enough to say we knew Ralph DiGia.

David McReynolds

ZAPATA OF MEXICO

by

PETER E. NEWELL

Zapata was the leading figure of the Mexican Revolution of 1910. He fought for the rights of local communities against greedy landlords, treacherous politicians and foreign-owned companies. Under the slogan 'Land and Liberty!' he became the purest embodiment of the Mexican Revolution. Zapata's memory, like his ghost, rides on in Mexico.

£9.50 from Freedom Press

GETTING ACTIVE

PRISON NEWS

Briana Waters facing prison

Briana Waters was recently found guilty on two counts of arson related to a politically motivated action that took place at the University of Washington in 2001. This fire has been linked to the string of arsons that took place along the West Coast said to be committed by members of the Earth Liberation Front.

Briana has steadfastly maintained her innocence, and was convicted primarily by the testimony of two admitted arsonists who provided questionable information to the government in return for drastically reduced sentences. The judge who heard the case consistently denied defence motions, and serious questions about the proceedings remain for many. An appeal is likely.

Briana was taken from her family (including her three year old daughter Kalliope) immediately after the verdict, due to spurious allegations that she was a 'flight risk', and is being held at a detention centre in Seattle awaiting sentencing on 30th May. She faces between five to twenty years.

Friends of Briana are encouraging supporters and well wishers to write her when possible to express support. Please do not mention her case in any way.

• Briana Waters #36432-086, FDC Seatac, Federal Detention Center, P.O. Box 13900, Seattle, WA 98198, USA

Marie Mason under house arrest

Marie Mason has been released from prison after her imprisonment as part of a general crackdown on environmental activists in the US. She is under house arrest at a relative's and only able to go outside with permission for two hours a week. She also needs special permission to see her lawyer because his office falls outside the western district.

There is a tentative trial-date set for 27th May, but this will almost certainly be pushed back as there has not been adequate time to prepare the case.

Marie is under strict rules from the court as to who she can be in contact with. Because of this, supporters are encouraging anyone who wishes to be in contact with her to email your contact info to freemarie@riseup.net. In a recent phone call she wanted to express gratitude for all the letters of support and offers of help.

The General Defense Committee of the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) has issued a \$10 assessment stamp for members, the proceeds of which will go to Marie and the other non-cooperating defendants. Additionally, any individuals who choose to join the GDC in March, April or May can choose to have their entire one-year membership fee (\$25 donated to the support of Marie and the other non-cooperating defendants.

Go to iww.org/en/projects/gdc for more details. Mail can be sent to:

• Friends of Marie Mason, P.O. Box 19065, Cincinnati, OH 45219, USA
Listserv freemarie-subscribe@lists.riseup.net



● The ASBO social centre (pictured above) in Radford has finally been fully evicted, after two-and-a-half years of radical activity. All access routes have now been blocked with metal plating.

The squatted space, which in its hey-day brought together people from around the area for community activities and social events, from support for critical mass bike rides, bike fixing, and a free food kitchen, to refugee and asylum assistance.

The collective broke up in acrimony earlier this year when individual residents violently seized control of the building, destroying much of the restoration work which had been done in the process.

● A new movement-wide initiative exists in London for class-struggle anarchists to bring the multitude of anarchist and libertarian groups, individuals and campaigns together in a space of discussion so as to organise and develop strategy for our movement.

Since the event-based, anarchists inspired street demonstrations of the past few years have regressed, anarchists in London have continued to seek other means of implementing and establishing anarchist ideas and action with social centres, local community groups, anti fascism, cinema screenings, anti-poverty campaigns, workplace organising and freedom of movement struggles.

These current initiatives, some pre-dating the big mobilisations, have continued in large part in isolation of each other. There does not exist currently any space whereby we can bring what currently stands as the

'movement' together – until now.

Already since this process has started people are getting organised in different areas of London. Camden has a new anarchist group, Newham/Tower Hamlets are in the process (Eastend Action for community and solidarity) and Lambeth have a meet-up organised in addition to Haringey Solidarity Group (HSG), Hackney Solidarity Network and Walthamstow Anarchists.

HSG has had a long history of organising within the community, and has managed to create an extensive network of contacts throughout the borough. On 26th April there will be the 'Haringey Independence Day' organised by HSG and supported by tenants and resident associations, trades councils, environmental and social justice groups. Hackney Solidarity Network is a coalition of groups that meet regularly to discuss issues and to support different campaigns in Hackney. Though not explicitly anarchist, these initiatives are complementary to the ideas of anarchists, and are continually involving people from their area in direct action politics.

There will be a real push in the coming months for anarchists to call for local meet-ups in the areas they live and set-up local anarchist and solidarity groups if there is sufficient interest. This is an important step in creating a more dynamic movement, and involving a bigger number of people in our initiatives.

To get involved contact Camden Anarchists at camdensolidarity@riseup.net

A short history of Israeli anarchism

Anarchist ideologies arrived in Palestine during the wave of immigration from Eastern Europe at the beginning of the twentieth century. Many of the most prominent figures of early Labour Zionism, including A.D. Gordon, Yitzhak Tabenkin, Berl Katzenelson, Chaim Arlosoroff, Mark Yarblum and Joseph Trumpeldor, were heavily influenced by the anarchist ideas prevalent in Russia at the time. The philosophies of Kropotkin and Tolstoy in particular had a visible influence on numerous early socio-political movements including Hapoel Hatzair, Poalei Zion, Zeirei-Zion, He-Halutz and the anarcho-syndicalist communal labour force Gedud HaAvoda which evolved in the Hameuhad kibbutz federation in the early 1920s.

Inspired by the wave of revolutionary activity that swept Europe in the years immediately following the First World War, many of those who arrived in Palestine during the early Mandate period did so with their major aspiration being to subvert the emergence of permanent state institutions and establish an anarchistic commonwealth in the region. The ideas of German anarchist intellectual Gustav Landauer in particular impacted profoundly on a generation of European halutzo-Zionist youth groups, felt most strongly within Hashomer Hatzair whose communities in 1927 became the kibbutz Artzi federation.

Though the ideological self-understanding of many of the movements increasingly shifted towards Marxism during the 1930s, anarchism retained a strong presence within the Jewish labour movement, and that decade saw many of the kibbutzim's anarchists travelling to Spain to join the ranks of the CNT-FAI militia in the fight against Franco's fascism.

Despite the prevalence of anarchist ideologies during the early years of Zionist settlement,



Anarchists blockade the streets in Tel Aviv during a recent action

it wasn't until after the Second World War, when a wave of European survivors of Nazism arrived in Palestine, that the country's anarchist movement proper came into being. The first formal organisation was established by a group of Polish immigrants in Tel Aviv in the late 1940s, and from the mid 1950s the nascent anarchist scene centred on the Yiddish-speaking group Agudath Schochrei Chofesh (ASHUACH), the 'Freedom Seekers Association', founded in Tel Aviv by Russian-born writer and philosopher Aba Gordin. The monthly review *Problemen/Problemot* Gordin established ran until the late 1980s, and although ASHUACH itself numbered only around 150 members, the conferences it organised on the philosophy of anarchism often drew hundreds of people.

During the late 1960s and early '70s, more and more antiauthoritarian groups came together, given impetus and inspiration by the student movement in Europe and the various revolutions taking place outside Israel.

The rise of new protest movements in the 1980s in opposition to the occupation of the West Bank and Gaza, and to the Lebanon conflict, together with Israel's then-nascent punk scene, the animal rights movement, the increase in conscientious objection and the first Intifada, again provided the movement with a significant boost. The first anarchist student cells set up during this period and, whether self-identified anarchists or not, many of the country's radical left-wing groups around at that time saw some anarchist involvement.

The contemporary movement came together during the wave of anti-globalisation activism that took place across the world in the late 1990s. Although small in comparison to its European and North American counterparts, (presently numbering around 300 Israelis and a few hundred Palestinian allies), sections of it are highly active. Many of those involved participate in the peace, environmentalist and animal rights movements, but since the beginning of the second Intifada in 2000 the activities of anarchist groups have been focused almost exclusively on opposition to the Occupation in Palestine, and in particular against the construction of the Separation Wall.

Numerous organisations of joint resistance to the Occupation presently exist throughout the country. Ta'ayush (Arab-Jewish Partnership) for example, created in the autumn of 2001 by Jewish and Arab Israelis, engages in various different solidarity actions in the occupied territories. The Anarchists Against the Wall (AATW) initiative, a direct action group established in 2003 in response to the construction of the wall, similarly works alongside Palestinians in non-violent resistance to the Occupation.

Though destructive/preventative action against the Occupation remains the movement's primary focus, grass-roots peacemaking and the construction of practical libertarian alternatives is also considered an important



Anarchists marching in Tel Aviv for May Day 2006

REVIEWS

WHAT'S ON

APRIL

16th Class Acts presents *Winstanley* at Cafe Crema, 306 New Cross Road, London SE14, at 7.30pm, £4 including food.

17th Private view of exhibition of cartoons by Donald Rooum at Conway Hall, 25 Red Lion Square, London WC1 (Holborn tube) from 4pm until 8pm (for invitation call 020 7791 2246). Exhibition continues from 18th April, see conwayhall.org.uk for details.

19th Colin Ward's *Anarchy in Action* has now been reprinted and there will be a special launch event at Housmans Bookshop, 5 Caledonian Road, London N1 8DX, see housmans.com for details.

24th Worthing Alliance meeting at 8pm upstairs at The Rest, Bath Place, Worthing, see eco-action.org/porkbolter.

26th and 27th Solidarity Federation national conference in Manchester, see southlondonsf.org.uk for details.

26th SHAC National March and Demo at Novartis Primate Research Centre, Wimblehurst Road, Horsham, West Sussex, meet at 11am, Horsham Park, Horsham, see shac.net for details.

27th London Zine Symposium 2008 at The Rag Factory, 16-18 Heneage Street, London E1 (just off Brick Lane) from 12 noon until 6pm, call 07909991778 or see londonzinesymposium.org.uk

MAY

9th to 11th Big Blether 6, a gathering for activists to share ideas, information and enthusiasm at Talamh Life Centre, 30 miles South of Glasgow, see bigblether.org.uk for details or email ellie@bigblether.org.uk

10th 1968 and All That, international conference and bookfair to celebrate the hopes and dreams of May 1968 with talks, films, food, art, debates and books, plus speakers from around the world, at Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London WC1 (Holborn tube) from 10am until 10pm, see 1968andallthat.net for details

17th Anarchist Bookfair hosted by the 1 in 12 Club, 21-23 Albion Street, Bradford, West Yorkshire BD1 2LY, from 12 noon until 6pm (stalls at £5 a table) followed by a Social in the evening.

18th Anarchist Writers, Publishers and Design at 1 in 12 Club, 21-23 Albion Street, Bradford, from 10am until 4pm, tickets £5, contact sam@samjackson6.orangehome.co.uk or call 0777 914 7005

31st Demonstration At Heathrow, a spring carnival of resistance to airport expansion, details to be announced, see hacan.org.uk, campaigncc.org or notrag.org for more

JUNE

23rd to 28th International Anti-Nuclear Festival at Eurajoki in Finland, close to Olkiluoto which is the the nuclear plant and building site of the world's biggest nuclear reactor, see olkiluoto.info/en for more details

MAGAZINES

Black Flag

Issue 226, £3.00

Subscribers and contributors have finally got their hands on the first of the new style *Black Flag*, and it has to be said that it's a handsome beast, with a glossy colour cover. Inside you get well-laid out articles with plenty of graphics to accompany the text.

Contents-wise it's heavy on the history for this issue with items of the French Popular Front of 1936-38 and an analysis of what went wrong with the Russian Revolution (and what's wrong with Trotskyist interpretations of it). Plus there's three major items about recently deceased comrades with an obit of Murray Bookchin plus a reprint of an article of his about the 1848 Communist Manifesto; one on Chris Pallis (aka Maurice Brinton) represented by a review of his selected works, plus an excerpt of his excellent article on the People's Temple and Jonestown Massacre; and finally there's an obituary of John Taylor Caldwell (his name is also given as 'Caulwell' and 'Cauldwell').

Other texts reviewed include of a collection of the writings of Lucy Parsons (much neglected compared to her contemporary Emma Goldman) and a long review of the new edition of Abel Paz's *Durruti and the Spanish Revolution*.

The only current item is an analysis of the election of the new French president Nicolas Sarkozy – and even that has no reference to his new 'libertarian' missus Carla Bruni. Whilst the individual items are okay (though a couple could have done with some editing to sharpen their focus) the overall impression is with a magazine with its head in the past.

Hopefully once it gets into its stride we'll see more contemporary material analysing what's happening today and even what might happen tomorrow, but that depends very much on what is contributed and what the team can write themselves. Definitely worth getting, and a subscription will only be £10 for three issues, so it won't break the bank.

Direct Action

Issue 41, £1.50

The latest issue of the magazine from the Solidarity Federation has appeared and the quality remains high. Although only four pages fewer than *Black Flag*, this has a



lighter feel with a bigger type face, and shorter articles, making it an easier and quicker read.

There's an interesting mix of articles kicking off with one giving politicians a good slugging which also introduces the mag; a look at asylum seekers through the focus on a Watford FC footballer; a longer item on NHS actions including support of Karen Reissmann and a timely look at why there are so many superbugs in hospitals.

Health issues include an item on home carers and nursing homes; shorts on casualisation, prostitutes and inequality; why treaties won't solve the climate change problem; a droll look at the problems that Respect / SWP? Gorgeous George Galloway have in staying in bed together; and an attack on supermarkets / global capitalism.

History is represented as the 85th anniversary of the foundation of the IWA is celebrated and events surrounded its formation recounted. International news includes CNT struggles in Spain, German 'strike bikes', strikes and stuff in Russia and indigenous struggles in Venezuela. *Direct Action* also has a reviews section, covering Katsiaticas on autonomist struggles, two KSL pamphlets, Art against authority, a cartoon look at the monarchy and a couple of music CDs.

The issue ends with an appreciation of the work of the Situationist International. Overall *Direct Action* has a good balance and is 'up-to-date' and at the price, good value for money!

QUIZ ANSWERS

1. Chilean anarchist Magno Espinoza on 1st May 1899, in the newspaper *El Rebelde* to test Chile's freedom of the press law. He was jailed and *El Rebelde* was closed.
2. *Farscape*, in the character of Zhaan. Arguably, Chiana, another character with a marked distaste for rules, is also an anarchist.
3. According to the UNHCR, 700 a day were returning, in part because of tougher visa restrictions by Syria. 1200 were leaving Iraq for Syria every day.
4. Turkey, where the courts banned the Refah Party in 1998. Its successor, the Justice and Development Party, who are Islamists, are currently being considered for a ban.

No war but the class war...

Class War was the organisation which made the early eighties look as if it was going to break out of the tiny world of British anarchism and achieve the sort of numbers and influence that we know our ideas really deserve.

In the end they didn't succeed but *Bash the Rich*, the autobiography of Class War's leading figure, Ian Bone, recreates the excitement of those days. The book is brilliantly written, exceptionally readable. Ian's description of a disastrous creche is one of the funniest things I've ever read.

The book starts with Ian's early years as the child of a class-conscious butler and housemaid, then covers his years in Swansea (and the highly successful local investigative paper *The Alarm*) before Ian moves to London and founds Class War. Unfortunately the book ends before Class War attempted to become a national organisation and promptly collapsed.

I was on the outskirts of Class War in the early days and knew some of the people and events Ian refers to. But I was nowhere around in Class War's later days and don't know if Ian (or anybody else) plans to bring out the story of those years.

Class War's hysterical rage, strong sense of humour, and commitment to dubious tactics such as trying to disrupt CND rallies, caused widespread bewilderment in the wider anarchist movement. A critical article in *Freedom* produced the following response from a Class War member, printed as a letter in *Freedom* in July 1983:

"Just read with great amusement the article about the formation of a Welsh Anarchist Federation (*Freedom*, July 2nd).

"Being one of these 'Class War anarchists', I noted with boring regularity the very patronising wording about our attempts to put across the notion of class war to our 'comrades'.

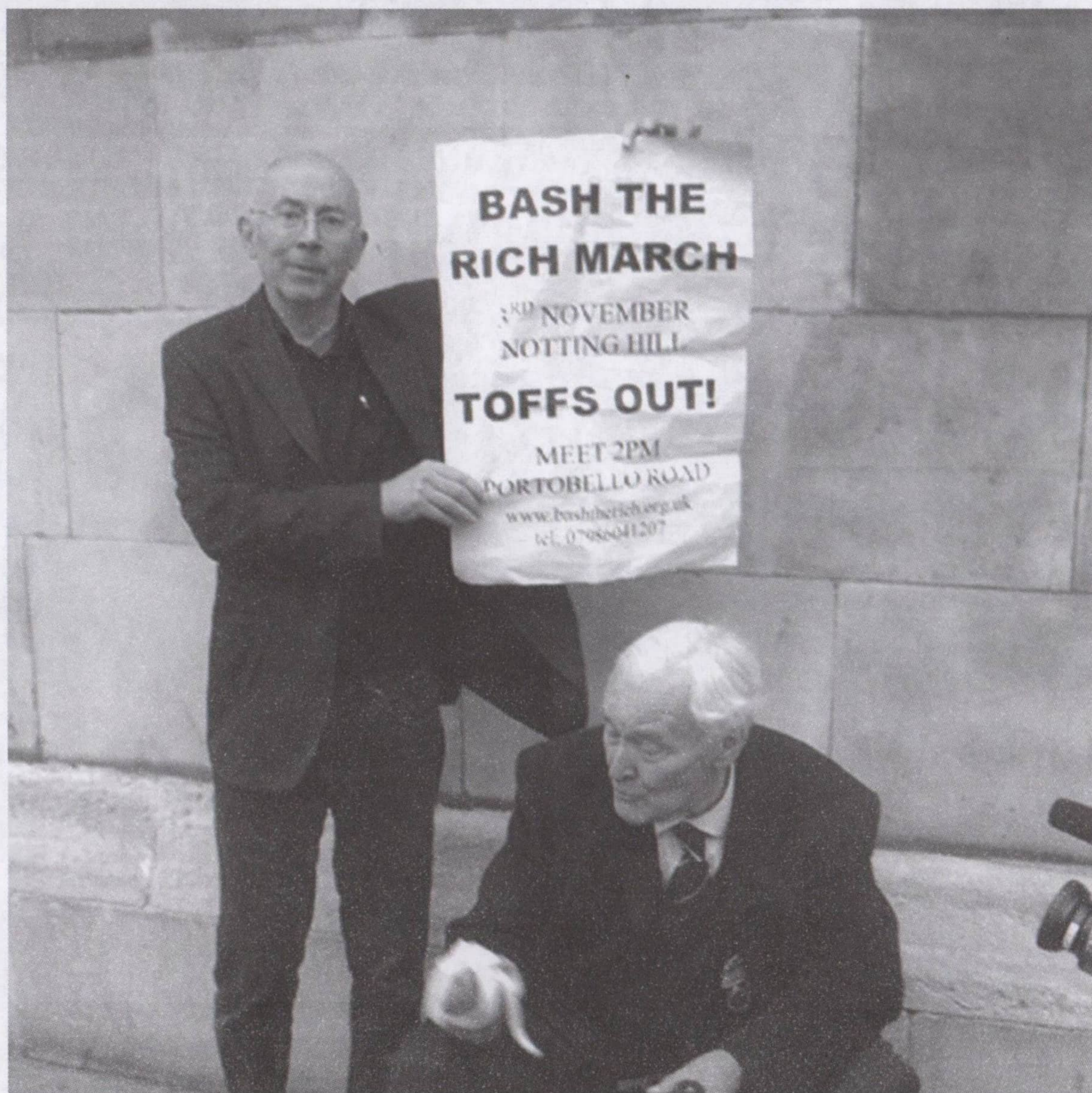
"The wording 'unable or unwilling to explain coherently what they actually meant by 'class war' just shows we are one side and they – typical of the middle-class, liberal anarchist movement I'm supposed to be a part of – on the other side of class confrontation.

"Kids on the streets, workers, housewives, will always recognise 'rich bastards, snobs' so why the fuck can't you?

"Most anarchists spend their time in intellectual wanking debates on Kronstadt, Spain '36, anarcho-syndicalism, THE RIOTS!! Jerking off on the past.

"When will most anarchists realise it is not only during election charades that they must go out on the street, and the rest of the year fester in smoke-filled rooms plotting revolution with yer old friends from university days (fuck you all).

"I'd like to end this with a big fuck-off to all liberal, middle-class anarchists who don't know there's a war on the streets here and in Northern Ireland.



Ian advertising last year's Bash the Rich march

"Until ordinary people understand what anarchism is all about, it will continue to be the irrelevant dogma it is now.

"Sean M and Stella C"

(By the way, I asked Stella a question about this letter and she denied all knowledge of it and suggested that Sean had written it himself, simply adding her name to it.)

Apart from bringing out a paper that sold, by anarchist standards, in massive quantities, Class War pulled stunts like disrupting CND rallies, thereby getting coverage, hostile and dishonest, in the Fleet Street press. This meant that a distorted version of anarchist politics reached a far bigger audience than would otherwise have been the case. And then there was the miners' strike.

After that failed Class War organised Bash the Rich marches, all of which were failures. Then there were genuine riots, nothing to do with Class War, in Handsworth, Brixton and Tottenham.

As Ian says, if only these had taken place when the miners' strike was still on.

Following its collapse after trying to become a national organisation, Class War resurrected itself and is today a small respectable organisation like all the other small respectable anarchist groups.

Check out their website classwar.org or see the theoretical journal they produced last year *A Touch of Class*. Well worth a read but Class War today shows no sign of being about to break out of the anarchist ghetto.

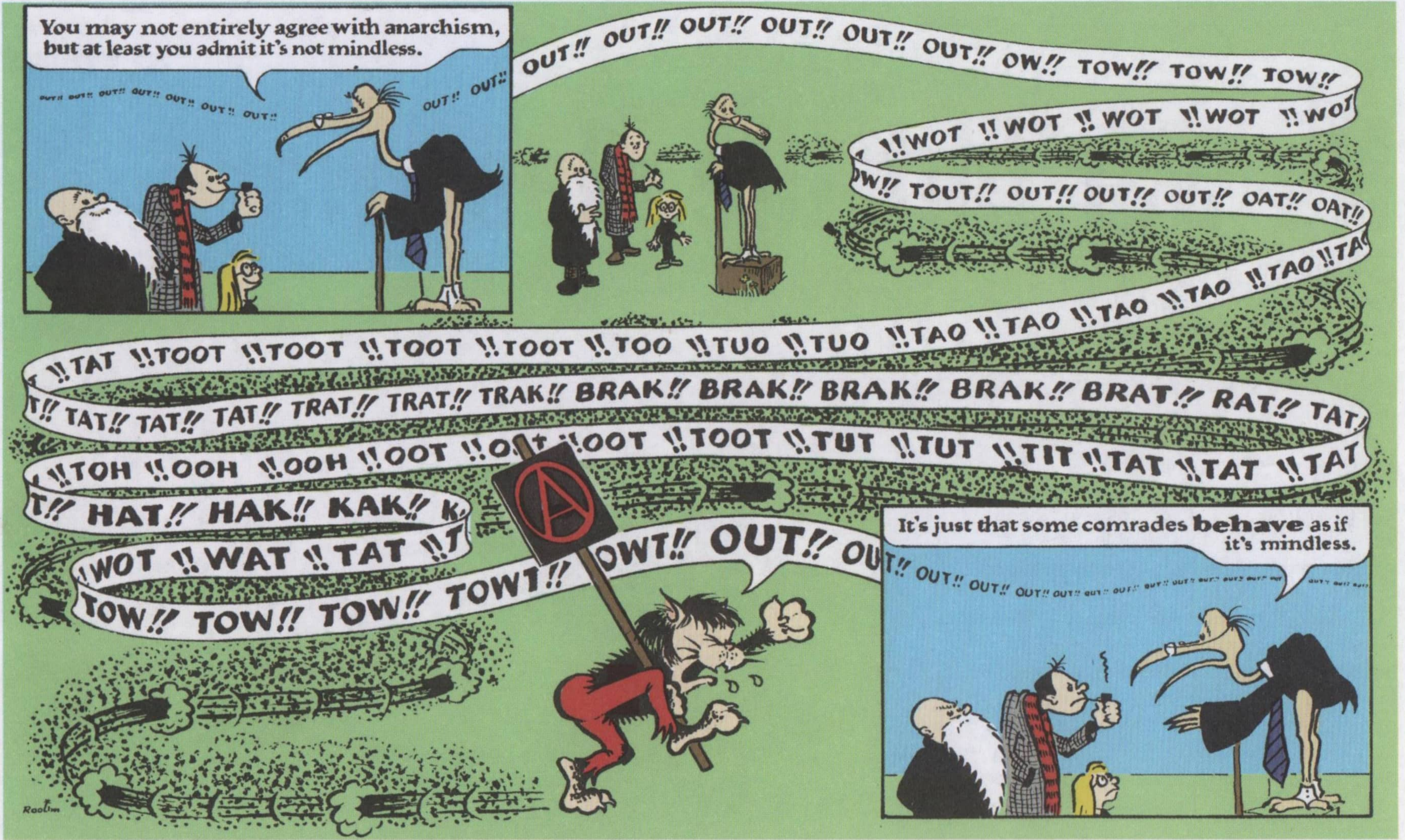
Maybe it's time for a reassessment of the old Class War, its successes and failures, its underlying ideas, its relevance to today's changed conditions. Ian stresses the working class credentials of many of the early Class Warriors such as Stella and Angie but neglects to point out that some of the others were actually middle-class.

Ian agrees that the Hampstead Bash the Rich march was a failure. Personally I thought Henley was too, in fact I thought that everyone did. Today's Class War had a Bash the Rich march in Notting Hill last October but this time widening its appeal to oppose gentrification, not just focussing on the tiny minority of ruling class toffs, people that most of us never even see. And the idea to hold a celebration in Trafalgar Square the Saturday after Thatcher dies could be a great one.

Whether you were there or not Bash the Rich is a great read. If it brings up more questions than it answers then feel free to answer some of them yourself.

Mo Moseley

Bash the Rich by Ian Bone, Tangent Books, £9.99



Israeli anarchism

◀ page 13

thread of resistance in the region. Alongside Jewish-Arab initiatives like the Negev Coexistence Forum, the women's solidarity group Bat Shalom, the Arab-Jewish Center for Equality, Empowerment and Cooperation in the Negev and the children's and youth centre Netivei Ahava (Paths of Brotherhood) in Jaffa, the more prominent examples often referred to in anarchist literature include co-operative communities like the Neve Shalom/Wahat al-Salam (NSWAS) 'peace village'.

Established in 1976 as a joint venture by Jewish and Arab Israelis in an effort to counter the clashing national narratives contributory to the conflict, NSWAS carries out educational work to promote peace, mutual understanding and cooperation between the two peoples. One of the few communities in the country

with bilingual schools in which Jewish and Arab children are educated together in the culture and traditions of each people, the village is also home to the School for Peace which runs workshops for young people and adults in conflict-resolution training, and a Pluralistic Spiritual Center. It also operates a programme providing humanitarian assistance for Palestinian villagers affected by the conflict.

Though Zionism has today become synonymous with the antithesis of anarchism, libertarian ideologies have always had a strong presence among the Jewish community in Palestine. Since the imposition of the Jewish State on the region in 1948, Israel's anarchists have been at the epicentre of what continues to be one of the world's most complex and intractable conflicts, the dilemmas that confront them and their Palestinian comrades on a daily

basis remaining some of the most extreme faced by social movements anywhere in the world.

James Horrox

THE QUIZ

- Who said "We wipe our arses with the paper on which you print your laws" and why?
- Which science fiction television programme had an anarchist who was also a walking intelligent plant and a high priest?
- At the end of 2007, the Iraqi authorities laid on a convoy of refugees returning from Syria, as the situation was allegedly safe after the US surge. How many went to Iraq from Syria, and vice versa, in January 2008?
- In which country was the political party in government banned?

Answers on page 14

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