

# FREEDOM

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## SCHOOLING? IT'S ACADEMIC

Strong warnings have been sounded as it emerges that within the next two years, two-thirds of state-funded secondary schools in Manchester will be operating outside the public sector.

As part of a massive roll-out of academies across urban centres, aiming to bring in 400 academies (accounting for around a tenth of all secondary schooling), six new academies are set for the city, replacing existing institutions and bringing the total ratio to one in three. Among the independent sector groups involved are the Co-op, Manchester Airport, ITV Granada and Microsoft.

Alongside this, another third of the sector is already made up of 'voluntary aided' schools run by religious institutions.

The academies system, which has seen rapid implementation since the government controversially declared trials to have been a success, allows non-state bodies, including religious groups, businesses and voluntary groups to take control of schools in exchange for a nominal amount of funding for new facilities.

The government have been accused of effectively blackmailing local authorities, after promising substantial investment for those who take up the change, and none for those who don't.

Academies have met with widespread condemnation from NGOs, who point to

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### LENS CAP HARINGEY HOUSING ACTION



Residents from Alexandra Court in Haringey, London, are campaigning to improve poor housing standards in the area. In a recent action they marched to the borough council building to demonstrate and demand improvements. For more see [lcap.org.uk](http://lcap.org.uk).

## DUMP THE MAYOR

An initiative for the London elections has seen anarchist groups organising against 'The Crook, the Toff, the Cop and the Fascist' for the 1st May elections.

A mobilisation of a wide variety of anarchist groups has been called for a demonstration on 2nd May outside city hall as the results are called out, condemning candidates Ken Livingstone, Boris Johnson, Brian Paddick and Richard Barnbrook.

The campaign, which has been advertised at major events across London, was agreed at a meeting of individuals and groups from across the city as a wide-based issue that could bring together disparate elements under a single banner.

The meeting, which included members from the IWW, Class War, Anarchist Federation,

No Borders, Haringey Solidarity Group, Hackney Solidarity Group, Camden Anarchists, Indymedia, Antifa and Fitwatch, is part of a drive to build anarchist groups in each of the 32 boroughs of London.

Around 20,000 stickers and leaflets have been distributed, and a news-sheet featuring analysis from anarchist class struggle groups is also being brought out.

An agreed statement said: "The office of Mayor is a massive government institution designed to keep us from making real choices and decisions about our own city. All over London Livingstone is selling off public facilities and open spaces for luxury housing at our expense while siphoning off taxpayers' money for his own pet projects and personal cronies. But would (the others) act any differently?"

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## NEWS

## IN BRIEF

**OLYMPICS:** Olympic chiefs have been accused of understating costs of the Olympic games, as costs have soared since the figures were originally announced. The Olympic delivery Authority found that the contract for the aquatics centre in particular, which was awarded to Balfour Beatty, had quadrupled in price since 2005, from £75 million to £303 million.

The Olympics are feared to be spiralling out of control after recent estimates found that the total cost could rise to as much as £20 billion by 2012 – more than twice the original estimate. The cost of the main stadium has jumped from £280 million to £496 million.

**POLICE:** Crime is set to pay for the police, after a new round of ‘asset recoveries’, where they seize assets from those arrested, netted them £17 million between October and December of 2007.

This asset-stripping has pulled in five times as much money as it did in 2003, and new laws will allow the police to seize a wider variety of goods from those deemed criminals – also allowing them to seize assets decades after the event. Home Office Minister Vernon Coaker has set a target for more money to be pulled in over the next two years, saying: “I have committed to recovering £250 million a year by 2009–10.”

**HEALTH:** The first case of ‘popcorn lung’ has been found in the UK. Yorkshire factory worker Martin Muir, 38, has picked up the condition, with tests finding he has the lungs of an 80-year-old man. After three years at flavourings firm Firmenich in 2003, exposure to an artificial butter flavouring used in thousands of products cost the father of four his marriage, his health and his job. In December 2005, the firm, based in Thirsk, North Yorkshire, referred him to a chest physician, who confirmed he had bronchiolitis obliterans.

In the US, hundreds of food workers have been affected by bronchiolitis obliterans, caused by exposure to diacetyl – a flavouring found in brand name products present in most UK kitchens. So far over 500 claims have been filed. At least three affected workers have died. The disease scars the bronchioles, small airways in the lung, causing irreversible damage.

**LOCAL GOVERNMENT:** The three unions representing local government workers in Scotland have rejected a pay offer made by council leaders. The deal would have given local authority workers a pay rise of 2.5% for each of the next three years. The unions said it was less than inflation and did not address losses suffered by members over recent years. A total of 220,000 local government workers would have been affected by the deal.

The GMB said the rejection of the offer placed the unions on a course for industrial action.

## LENS CAP PLANE STUPID SPY



Toby Kendall, 24, an employee of aerospace security consultants C2i International, was caught out by intrepid investigators at Plane Stupid when he attempted to infiltrate the group. After feeding him false information which led to security being tightened at places he thought were to be targeted, the group tracked him down to his Bebo page, confirming his real name and background.

## No pro-migrant bias in housing

New research based on Labour Force Survey data has found that migrants are not only *not* being favoured over UK citizens over housing allocation, they are more likely to be biased against.

According to an interim report, which will be published in full later this year, new migrants to the UK make up less than 2% of those in social housing while representing 3% of the population, and over 90% of people in UK housing were born in the UK.

The report also found that most new migrants to the UK, particularly from Europe, have been ineligible to claim social housing, and that there is no evidence that ‘queue jumping’ has taken place. More than 60% of migrants rent private accommodation out of their own pockets.

However, the report found that migrants had been disproportionately renting cheap accommodation in ex-council housing, which increased the appearance of council provision for migrant communities.

The findings directly contradict widespread media reports that migrants have been taking housing away from the existing population.

In particular far-right group the BNP have repeatedly suggested that migrants are being favoured for social provision as a scare tactic to draw in support.

Social Housing in the UK has plummeted in the last decade since Right To Buy legislation saw millions of homes sold at knock-down rates, with little replacement housing being built. At present there is a shortage of between 1.4 and 1.6 million homes thanks to a lack of new building over the last three decades.

In a related development, a new report from the police has found that immigration has not led to higher levels of crime.

The report, prepared for the Association of Chief Police Officers by two chief constables, says that offending rates in Polish, Romanian, Bulgarian and other immigrant communities are in line with the rate of offending in the general population.



# Has BNP gone mainstream?

A spate of recent showings in the press has led some analysts of the BNP to warn that the party is going mainstream as the mayoral elections come to a head.

While the far-right group's mayoral candidate Richard Barnbrook is out of the running for a mayoral posting, the BNP look certain to pick up one seat, and possibly two, in the London Assembly.

This increased voting profile seems to have had a strong effect on the mainstream press. Feature articles on Barnbrook have appeared in *The Times* and on the BBC website, while Archant, one of the most influential newspaper publishing groups in London, has now carried BNP adverts in a number of its publications, most notably the *Hampstead and Highgate Express*.

The editor of the *'Ham & High'* has argued that not to carry adverts, titled 'People like you voting for the BNP', would run counter

to Archant's ethos – despite the group's background as a company founded by non-conformist leftists.

Its decision sparked a widespread backlash with political groups, unionists and the paper's own staff condemning its actions. Individual members of the group, including the *Hackney Gazette*, have distanced themselves and pledged not to carry BNP adverts.

The company has now pledged to give the money paid by the BNP to charity, but has refused to rule out carrying further BNP advertising in the future across its titles.

Simon Darby, a leading BNP figure employed as its Director of Information Technology, has since alleged that other companies are making enquiries about future advert sales. In a triumphalist article he noted that "there is every chance that somewhat more substantial adverts in

support of the party will be placed in the very near future".

The *Times*, running an article under the title 'Barnbrook runs the gauntlet', were studiously neutral in their coverage of the party, while the BBC website carried a feature piece by correspondent Emma Griffiths which stopped just short of being actively positive on BNP policies.

The party also qualifies for a party political broadcast for the first time, as it fields a slate of 650 seats across the UK.

Some commentators are warning that these elections represent a potential major step forward for the BNP. 'Kac', who has been researching the BNP's recent growth, said: "This set of elections is very important to see if their medium term strategy has worked. Their position will be strengthened by their vote staying at the same level as it normalises their political presence."

## Schooling? It's academic

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continuing poor results under existing schemes, and near-unanimous condemnation from anarchist and union groups.

An education activist with syndicalist union the Industrial Workers of the World, contacted by *Freedom*, said: "This is basically privatisation by the back door, and all the TUC unions are against it. It is designed to break the back of the unions while bringing in private investment – just like with the utilities and railways. Academies don't recognise national agreements, unions or normal teaching contracts."

Both the Anarchist Federation and Solidarity Federation have attacked academies in their recent publications, with SolFed noting in its *Direct Action* magazine: "Academies have to

be resisted not just because they threaten pay but also because they would debase an already appallingly class ridden and unequal education system."

There is strong evidence to suggest that academies are helping to increase divisions rather than reduce them. Doug explains: "At the moment, it's creating a two-tier situation. The academies are excluding troublemakers – one got rid of 17 shortly after it took over – to improve results but these kids have to be educated."

Wealthy individuals and partisan groups taking over schools have also had a notorious effect on prejudicing teaching, with the attempted introduction of creationism a particularly famed early example from Peter

Vardy.

More recently, a whistleblowing teacher was awarded £70,000 for unfair dismissal against the King Fahad Academy in Acton. He had refused to use books likening Jews and Christians to 'monkeys' and 'pigs'. While the school is fee-paying, the academies system stresses such groups are allowed autonomy for their religious projects.

What is being asked for in return has also been scaled back. Few groups wanted to pay the £2 million the government was originally asking in return for a working majority on the school board. This has now been reduced to a donation of £40,000 a year.

For more information, go to [antiacademies.org.uk](http://antiacademies.org.uk).

## PUBLIC SECTOR

# Pay offer for health workers

## Divided NHS unions gift low pay to government

NHS trade unions are split after Unison and the Royal College of Nursing (RCN) signed up to a three year pay deal. The remaining unions, which include Unite, the Royal College of Midwives and Society of Radiographers, have put out a statement saying that while they accept this year's pay offer of 2.75%, they have "grave concerns" about the amounts agreed for future years. Health workers though are pointing out that this year's offer is considerably less than the rate of inflation which is running at above 4%.

It is unclear why Unison and the RCN have signed the long-term pay deal, which will give 2.4% next year and 2.25% the year after (2010). The deal effectively puts the independent Pay Review Body on ice for the next two years. The review body hears evidence from health service unions and employers and then decides what increase to recommend. This year's recommendation is above the government's public sector pay target of 2%, but below what health workers need to keep pace with rising prices. As the eight unions who have not signed the deal point out "the current uncertain economic situation leads us to believe that the deal would not meet our members expectations and would represent a real terms pay cut for our members."

The NHS can easily afford to pay more – it is predicted to make a £2 billion surplus this year. The three-year deal means that the Review Body will have no job to do in 2009 and 2010. This will make it a lot easier for a future Tory government to close it down if they want, something Thatcher wanted to do



but never managed to. A fear for the future of the review body is one of the reasons that the other NHS unions are holding off signing.

Last year health unions threatened to take industrial action when the government reduced the value of the pay award but backed down because they thought there was going to be an autumn election. It is possible that Unison's decision to sign up to the new pay deal has something to do with their ties to Labour. The RCN's position though is harder to explain. The College, which is not

TUC affiliated nor has any contacts with Labour, have long campaigned to preserve the review body. Speculation is that the move is an attempt by the two biggest unions in health to consolidate their power over the smaller unions and Unite.

Whatever Unison's and the RCN's motives for signing the deal it is clear who the winner of a divided union movement is – the government – and who the losers will be – health workers.

Richard Griffin

## Blood from the stone

A picket of the National Blood Service office block in Watford recently resulted in heated debate between campaigners and bosses over the proposed cuts to the service. The demonstration was called to protest against the NBS Directors refusing to release documents related to a review that had forced upon management by the campaign.

During the review it became clear that top management consultants firm, McKinseys, who had been drafted in at great public expense, had slated the bosses and the cut plans. The review amounted to a partial victory for the campaign, but cuts in the South West (left out of the review) continue.

The lively demonstration, backed by community groups Hackney Solidarity Network, Stop Haringey Health Cuts Coalition, the West Midlands Coalition of Health Campaigns and others, caught the

Office off guard; it is located in a suburban business park, unused to public attention. Around a dozen people drumming and shouting "Release the McKinsey report!"

After half an hour a management official finally left the office to approach the demonstration. Carrying banners from the local Watford trades council, the Health-workers Union, IWW, which is spearheading the campaign, as well as from the Solidarity Federation, the crowd met a Mr Evans, who is head of Human Resources at the NBS.

He initially denied there was a hard copy of the review, a position which he clarified on camera to mean that there were in fact 'multiple analyses' rather than a single document. Pressured on this point he agreed to send the campaign the related information which they confirm they have now received and are currently determining whether it is new material.

## Public sector goes out on strike

Teachers, lecturers and other public sector workers across 10 government departments and agencies are preparing for a one-day strike as *Freedom* goes to press. Over 100,000 workers are striking in protest at the government's policy to cap public sector pay to below inflation, which will result in cuts to living standards across the civil service. They are protesting over the Government's decision to impose a 2.45% pay rise this year, which represents a salary cut in real terms as inflation rates are running at 4%. Starting salaries in the civil service are just above the minimum wage. A quarter of staff earn less than £16,000 a year.

For the teachers, this is the first national strike in 21 years. They are also looking for a strategy to protect teachers' salaries, reduce their workload and limit class sizes. Classroom assistants have agreed to a deal but school principals are still waiting for more information to complete the process. Apparently deciding who should be upgraded and receive thousands of pounds in back pay is a complex process and no progress has been made.

## IN BRIEF

**ARMS:** The High Court has ruled to re-open investigations into corruption between BAE arms traders and the Saudi government. The first investigation was halted after BAE warned the Blair administration it would itself lose lucrative future arms sales with the Saudis, and the Saudis threatened to cut diplomatic ties with Britain. The successful judicial review of this ruling was brought by the NGO Corner House and Campaign Against the Arms Trade.

**MEDIA:** Staff voted to strike after Express Newspapers proprietor Richard Desmond refused to offer more than a 3% pay rise. Members of the National Union of Journalists voted at a meeting to strike for three days between 22nd and 24th April – putting in jeopardy the *Daily Express* and *Daily Star*'s coverage of the Champions League semi finals, which feature Manchester United, Chelsea and Liverpool. Journalists had been due to down tools on the 11th, but the strike was called off after they found out that Express Newspapers management had lined up casual staff and shuttle buses to get the papers out as normal. "This is a guerrilla tactic," said Steve Usher, the NUJ chapel representative for the *Daily Star*. "We suspended today's action because they had already lined up casuals, the Press Association and shuttle buses. They spent a whole lot of money. We thought it would be good to cancel at no cost to us to show them we still mean business."

**SUPERMARKETS:** Tesco is to monitor and record the shopping habits of more than 60 million customers around the world in an unprecedented deal with the 'Big Brother' company behind its Clubcard loyalty card scheme. The supermarket chain's partnership with Dunnhumby, the market research specialist, is being rolled out to nine countries where Tesco operates, including Thailand, South Korea and China but not, as yet, the United States. Dunnhumby analyses the data gleaned from Tesco tills to discover why customers change brand allegiance and how best to target different products. Crucially, this information is itself for sale, so that retailers have the ability to build a profile of their customers across the consumer spectrum. This is a huge amount of information as currently one pound in every seven is spent at a Tesco store.

**UTILITIES:** Severn Trent water have been found to have provided a poor service and then lied about it in their performance report in 2005. This comes from Ofwat, the government water regulator, who have ruled Severn Trent will be fined £35.8 million. Despite being private companies, water providers have a monopoly market over their areas identical to the state run system they have replaced. This creates a huge potential for this kind of fraud, making it necessary for state intervention to continue.

# Housing nightmare

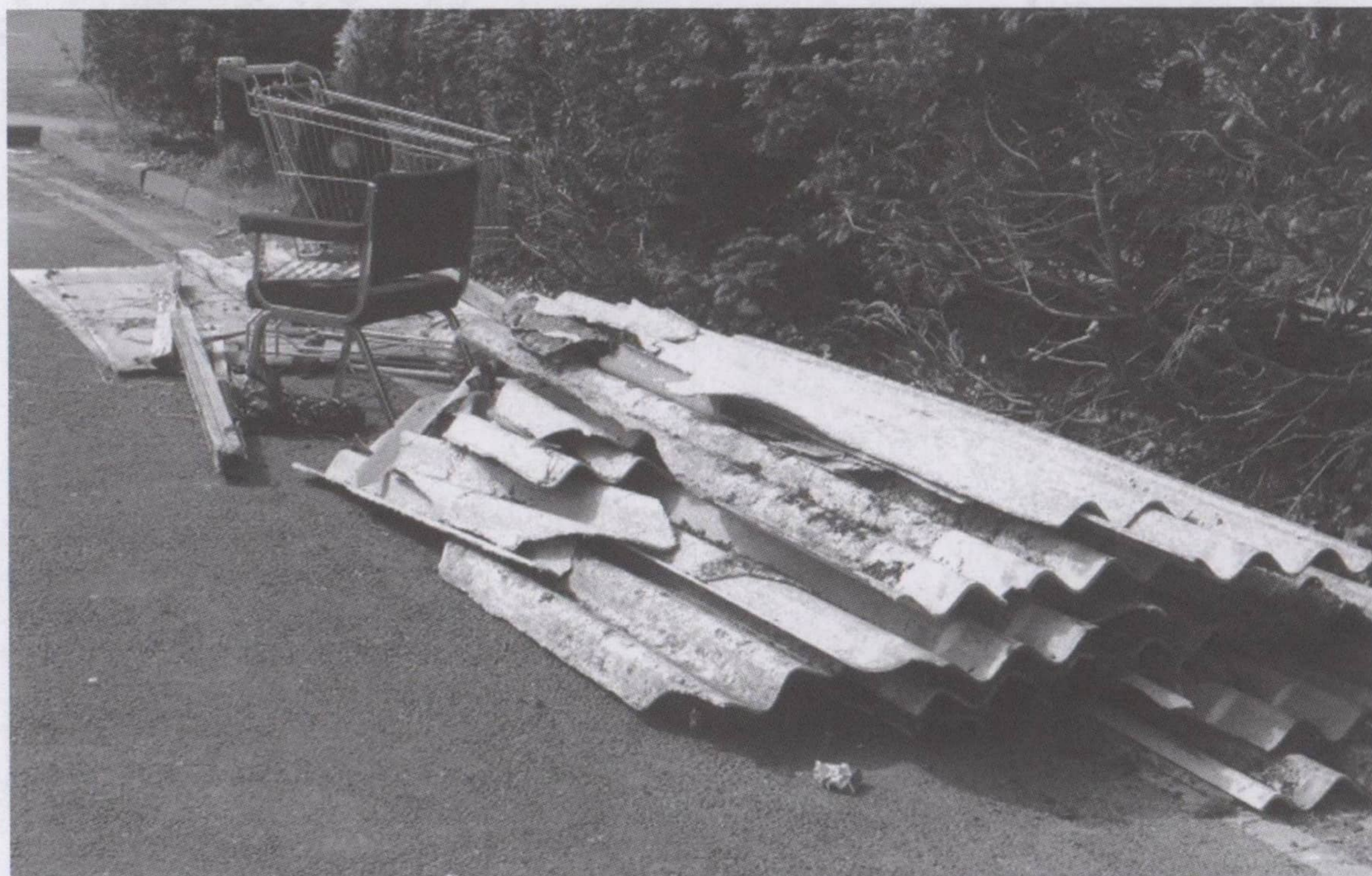
Social housing tenants in Farnborough are complaining of serious neglect by their new landlord. The current conditions have been documented in a photographic exposé posted on the Indymedia website. They include a balcony propped up with plywood, extensive damp and mould, and broken windows boarded with card. Asbestos roofing from demolished garages is shown dumped in piles on the road. Extensive upgrades were carried out on the property for the 'Decent Homes Standard by 2010' programme, but some residents assert that these are actually inferior to the original levels.

In what is seen as an admission of this, when newly-fitted cupboards fell off the wall owners were told they needed to pay £100 difference for cupboards equal to the ones originally taken out.

Tenants complain they have been charged for cleaning which they allege does not take

place on top of rent, were charged £2,000 for minor roof repairs and £200 pounds each for the construction of three washing lines. Where poor work has been carried out, Pavilion refuse to fix it, even when it relates to water or gas lines. Pavilion have a reputation of warning off critics via the courts, having threatened a local councillor with an ASBO and attempted to have him removed from his post by lodging a complaint against him. The author of the online exposé has allegedly received a phone call from the police advising him to stay away from the flats.

In line with a national programme of moving social housing to 'arms-length' organisations, Rushmoor council advised their tenants to transfer to Housing Association status in return for promised funding for changes. The creation of Pavilion Housing Association resulted from a 'yes' vote.



Photograph: Indymedia

**DANGEROUS:** During renovation work, asbestos roofing was left lying in the road.

# Poverty payments for energy

In the face of soaring fuel costs, the government's announcement that it will force energy providers such as British Gas and EDF Energy to spend £225 million over three years to help customers living in fuel poverty came under immediate attack from charities and consumer groups.

Gordon Lishman, director of Age Concern, said: "A figure of £225 million over three years is well under the £150 million a year the Government said it would be looking for in the Budget. Helping 100,000 households is just a drop in the ocean."

Energy providers have welcomed the deal and say they should not be expected to do more for social provision.

There are currently 4.5 million people living in fuel poverty – defined as spending more than 10% of income on heating the home. One million of these are using pre-pay meters installed in their homes, which cost 45% more than the rates paid by internet customers. This difference is hidden by the method, regular small payments of cash, characterising the hand to mouth existence of their customers – typically pensioners and the poor.

The Government is legally bound to eradicate fuel poverty in the next two years. But by 2010, there may still be 1.3 million vulnerable households – around the same number as at the time of the Government's Fuel Poverty Strategy in 2001.

## INTERNATIONAL

### IN BRIEF

**GAZA:** Israeli forces killed 17 Palestinians, most of them civilians, including a Reuters cameraman, in the Hamas-controlled Gaza Strip on Wednesday, medical officials and witnesses said. The dead included Fadel Shana, 23, a Reuters cameraman who was felled while trying to film in central Gaza. Footage from Shana's camera showed an Israeli tank firing a shell in his direction from several hundred yards away. An Israeli military source did not address the cause of Shana's killing immediately, telling Reuters only that the area saw "ongoing fighting" and was therefore dangerous for journalists.

At least three youths, a 67-year-old man, and four Hamas gunmen were also among the Palestinian dead. Signaling escalation, Hamas official Sami Abu Zuhri said his group's armed wing were authorised to "strike the Zionist enemy everywhere".

The Western-backed administration of Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas, who lost Gaza to Hamas last June, censured the Israeli attacks but made clear peace talks would stay on track.

**IRAN:** Riot police have violently evicted a factory occupation in Iran. Police smashed the gates and climbed over the walls of Kian Tyre factory, in the outskirts of Tehran, to forcefully evict hundreds of striking workers. Scores were beaten up and arrested, with some needing hospital treatment.

"They used axes and kicked in doors and began brutally attacking the workers with electric batons" reports Farhad Ghaasemi, WPI reporter in Tehran. "Roaming the site on motorbikes, they battered anyone who happened to be on their way... Scores were arrested and at least two busloads of detained workers were taken out of the factory."

The workers of Kian Tyre (formerly Alborz Tyre) have been on strike since Tuesday in protest at the non-payment of their wages – overdue since the autumn of 2007.

**ZIMBABWE:** Over 50 MDC supporters have been arrested in a clampdown by security forces, targeting those who participated in Tuesday's stayaway. Although police have only confirmed the arrest of 30 opposition activists, the MDC insists the figure is much higher, with suggestions that over 100 might have been picked up countrywide.

According to MDC spokesman Nelson Chamisa, most of those arrested are MDC staff members and include a recently elected member of parliament.

The MDC called for the stayaway on 15th April to press for the release of presidential election results. With 80% unemployment and most people self-employed, the response was low key. However, there were enough incidents to suggest a restive population. By late afternoon the situation was calm and most shops and businesses made the decision to then open. Chamisa says they have received several reports that companies who took heed of the stayaway are being victimised by state security agents.

### LENS CAP ROSSPORT PIPELINE



On 17th April Shell revealed a new pipeline route through RosSPORT for its notorious gas extraction project. It's still an unprecedented high pressure raw gas pipeline, it still has no local community consent, the refinery is still in the wrong place, the route cuts through a number of supposedly 'protected' Special Areas of Conservation and Special Protected Areas, according to campaigners.

## General strike in Burkina Faso

Workers in Burkina Faso, West Africa, launched a two-day strike throughout the country at the beginning of the month in protest at high living costs and demand wage increases. In Ouagadougou, the capital, few shops were open. In Bobo-Dioulasso, the second largest city in the west of the country, the central market was closed. Police were out in force in front of banks and government offices.

The unions are pressing the government to increase salaries by 25% in the public sector, and to reduce taxes on fuel and foodstuffs. In a joint statement the unions accused the government of "leniency and complicity" with the businessmen.

Rising food prices in recent months have brought thousands of demonstrators to the streets in the country's major towns and cities,

resulting in hundreds of arrests. More than 46% of the 14 million people in Burkina Faso live below the poverty line.

"We need an equalisation between the cost of living and purchasing power," said Laurent Ouédraogo, secretary general of the Confédération Nationale des Travailleurs du Burkina (CNTB).

The government said it had already responded to workers' demands by suspending import taxes on basic food products and increasing subsidies for water and electricity. The economy and finance minister Jean Baptiste Compaoré said salaries had increased in 2005 and 2007 and increasing them again would fuel inflation.

The unions have declared that they will continue marching until the situation improves.

## Notes from the United States

A recent report demonstrates that US lawmakers have a huge financial interest in the military aggression in Iraq and Afghanistan. Members of Congress invested almost \$200m (£100m) of their own fortunes in companies specialising in manufacturing weapons of mass destruction and connected terrorism.

These companies get back many times as much money each and every day through contracts which are largely funded by the Pentagon.

Towards the start of this month David Petraeus, chief US general in Iraq, tried to convince the Senate Foreign Relations and Armed Services committees that 'all was well' with the onslaught. At the same time the Center for Responsive Politics (CRP) published lists those who have the largest stakes in the bloodshed and destruction. Investments under

US\$5m (£2.5 million) were excluded from these findings; so the involvement is actually greater.

John Kerry (Democrat, Massachusetts) ran for president four years ago with the claim that the war was not being fought well enough. No wonder: his holdings were worth over \$30m (£15m) at the end of 2006. Other significant profiteers include Rodney Frelinghuysen (Republican, New Jersey) who holds between \$12m and \$50m (£6-£25m) – congresspeople are only required to disclose broad ranges – Robin Hayes (Republican, North Carolina) between \$10m and \$38m (£5-£19m); the infamous Republican from Wisconsin James Sensenbrenner with over \$5m (£2.5m); and Jane Harman, a popular California Democrat, between \$2.7m and \$6.3m (£1.4-3.6m).

# Bangladeshi strike

Workers in Dhaka went on strike last week in protest over rising food prices, local agencies said. The strikers closed factories and clashed with police after damaging cars and shops. The police opened fire on protestors to scatter them and nearly two dozen people were injured. The army was reportedly brought in to bring the situation under control.

Dozens of factories were closed for the day crippling the garment industry, the country's biggest exporter. The riots came after stone-throwing crowds clashed with police over the previous weekend. The previous strike led owners of at least four factories in the Fatullah industrial area to raise worker salaries by 200-250 taka (3 to 4 US\$). Last month riots over food prices were broken up by police using tear gas and batons. At least 50 people were injured, most of them police officers, and several factories vandalised.

Factory workers say high food prices have meant many have little to eat, and are demanding wage increases. Trade union rights were suspended when the country brought in a state of emergency over a year ago.

The county's army backed interim government is often criticised for failing to tackle food prices, notably rice, which have almost risen sharply in the past year due to a massive production shortfall after devastating floods and a cyclone. The country's garment manufacturers and the unions said the workers are badly hit as they earn some of the lowest salaries in the world.

The basic minimum monthly salary of a garment worker is less than \$1 (51p) a day. A family of four usually spends half of this amount on food. However the country's



army-backed interim government has often been criticised for failing to tackle food prices that have almost doubled over the past year.

The basic minimum monthly salary of a garment worker is only 25 dollars. "The 25 dollars basic minimum salary was fixed in 2006. But since then prices of rice and other food items have doubled or tripled," said Nazma Akhter, president of the United Garments Workers Union.

"With our poor salary, it is now impossible to buy three meals a day. Some of us are even going hungry some days," said Jamal Uddin, a sweater machine operator, who earns 30 dollars a month.

Akhter said the workers have been demanding salary raises from the owners, but "they rejected our pleas. Foreign buyers

have even cut the prices of our items in the recent months."

Last month, the Bangladesh Garments Manufacturers and Exporters Association urged the government to distribute subsidised rice to 2.5 million workers, fearing the food price hike could cause unrest in the industry.

Experts say 30 million of the country's 150 million people could go without daily meals – a crisis that threatens the military-backed regime in Dhaka.

The Bangladesh violence came amid mounting unrest globally over soaring food costs. At least five people have died in similar protests over high food and fuel prices in Haiti, while disturbances have rocked Egypt, Cameroon, Ethiopia, the Philippines, Indonesia and other countries in the past month.

## Notes from the Unites States

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Other well-known investors in war include Jay Rockefeller (Democrat and former governor of West Virginia) who chairs the Senate Select Intelligence Committee; Joseph Lieberman (Independent, Connecticut) who presides over the Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee; and Howard Berman (Democrat, California) who heads the House Foreign Affairs Committee.

Over 150 current members of Congress – more than a quarter – have investments in US terrorism in Afghanistan and Iraq. The companies in which the investments are the greatest received more than \$275bn (£190bn) from the government in 2006.

The total profit? Somewhere between \$16m (£8m) and over \$60m (£30m) in dividend income, capital gains, royalties, and interest between 2004 and 2006.

War profiteering isn't the only way that

lawmakers are influenced. Last year was a record one for lobbying in US. According to the Center for Responsive Politics, corporations and other interests spent a record \$2.79bn (£1.9bn) – a staggering £8m per day.

This sum represented an 8% increase over 2006 with the drug industry increasing its spending the most – by 25%. The finance, insurance, and real estate sector came second with nearly \$420m (£120m) thrown at lawmakers to influence them. Then Electric utilities (\$113m, over £56m) and computer and internet firms (\$111m, or a million pounds sterling a week).

The Center for Responsive Politics executive director Sheila Krumholz comments, "At a time when our economy is contracting, Washington's lobbying industry has been expanding. Lobbying seems to be a recession-proof industry."

Louis Further

## Oaxaca: activists assassinated

Two announcers of the radio station 'La Voz que Rompe el Silencio' (the Voice that Breaks the Silence) were assassinated on 7th April while traveling by car in the southern Mexican state of Oaxaca, according to the civil society organisation Centro de Apoyo Comunitario Trabajando Unidos (Center for Community Support – Working in Unity, CACTUS). According to State Police the two women were killed and four injured, including two children, when their car was shot up near Putla de Guerrero in the indigenous Mixteca region 350 kilometers west of Oaxaca City.

The radio station started broadcasting on 20th January, on the first anniversary of the declaration of the autonomous community of San Juan Copala. On 9–10th April, the victims were due to take part in a State Gathering for the Defense of the Peoples of Oaxaca, where they were to coordinate a workshop on community radio.

## FEATURE

# Enshrined in law, ignored in practice

## Rob Ray takes a look at the eight-hour day

Entire families of Chirala saree makers in India work 12–14 hours a day for their take-home pay of just over £50 a month.

The intricate process of weaving, which is done on hand looms, is dragging in children and the elderly as new processes drive down wages and force longer hours on the workers.

Yet India is one of many countries – the vast majority in fact – which has, written into its labour laws, an hourly and weekly limit to working times – nine hours and 48 hours respectively, effectively the eight-hour day averaged over a six-day week.

Around the world, largely thanks to the efforts of international labour lobbyists, the picture is broadly similar. Preliminary findings from an investigation carried out by *Freedom* show barely a dozen countries which have not got the eight hour rule enshrined somewhere in their labour laws as a basic standard. Of those, even fewer fail to place strict limits over the course of a week.

The eight-hour day has been one of the oldest demands of organised labour. The old cry of eight hours to sleep, eight hours for recreation and eight hours of work has been one of the most potent in history. The battle for it which culminated in the historic events in Chicago (see box), the Haymarket Martyrs and the installing of 1st May as a celebration of labour has passed into legend as one of the working classes' greatest victories. Yet that victory today seems as patchy as it ever was in the nineteenth century.

Where the weaving families working in India's poverty-stricken villages of Andhra Pradesh fall through the cracks is their status as self-employed family concerns – there are no rules covering the hours and remuneration for work done at home.

Rather than listening to the concerns of the families being affected – their work in this protected craft is being undercut by cheap, mass-produced prints – the Indian government seems to be headed in the other direction, extending labour norms for all rural garment workers to twelve hours a day, or sixty hours a week.

And a similar picture emerges in a host of industries across the globe. Certain groups are excluded from the eight-hour rule in a variety of countries, for example in Gabon, one of the more extreme examples, where exceptions are made for retail, transport, dock work, hotels and catering, housekeeping, security, medical work, domestic work, 'liberal occupations' and the press.

It's not just unskilled or low-paid work which is affected by such opt-outs. In recent years skilled labour from India has frequently been brought to Bahrain to take on roles such as accountancy – but again, due to opt-outs and threats to jobs, 12-hour days are not uncommon in the industry there.

In many countries, such as Malta or Mozambique, the eight-hour week can be opted-out of by the individual or union, making for a potential loophole vulnerable to abuse by employers.

In the UK, we do not have a specific bar on working more than eight hours in a day, instead having a 48-hour limit over the course of the week – which can be opted out

of, the only country in the EU to have refused to make it a definitive maximum. As a result, people have effectively been worked to death, in particular in the field of medicine, with 80 or even 100-hour weeks recorded.

Research by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) subsequently places the UK in official terms as the fourteenth longest working country.

The US, placed at seventh, has an average workday of 8.4 hours, despite its status as home to the Haymarket Martyrs. In professional industries like investment banking and large law firms, and in medical practice, the forty-hour week is routinely opted out of, as working week hourly limits are not uniform.

Such opt-outs have allowed governments to repeatedly undermine international standards which have been agreed through the International Labour Organisation (ILO).

Even in countries where this isn't the case, or where exemptions do not exist, the rules are routinely ignored or abused. Some of this reflects weak punishments for abuse of the system – in Ghana and many other countries companies face nothing more than a small fine for being caught out.

ILO agreements, negotiated at international level, have seen hundreds of countries sign up to a raft of progressive legislation. Women's rights, the right to free assembly, measures against impromptu sackings and enforcing redundancy rights are all common.

But in the majority of cases, law-breaking reflects the weakness of mass movements in backing up laws passed as part and parcel of international agreements.

In recent years, a huge array of information has come to light illustrating horrific working practices around the world, making a mockery of such laws, which are simply ignored.

Your iPod, made in China, is built by workers who spend more than a third of their working lives pulling shifts which total sixty hours or more over seven days. The home of communism has an official limit of eight hours a day and 44 hours a week.

The bananas you eat, grown and picked by Fresh Del Monte, sees workers in Costa Rica spend fourteen-hour days cutting, or packing, or washing, despite an eight-hour limit and 48 hour week.

The chocolate you indulge in is produced not just on a twelve-hour shift, but via enslaved African children on the Ivory Coast, which has signed up to an eight-hour day, a forty-hour week, and as you might expect, laws against slavery.

The massively widespread nature of these abuses reflects a general rule – that weak grassroots support of even the most progressive legislation renders it null and void.

Where strong labour forces prepared to fight for their rights has existed, by contrast, the results have been spectacular.

## THE HAYMARKET MARTYRS

The Haymarket Martyrs were eight anarchist labour organisers who were wrongly arrested and hanged for bombing the Haymarket in Chicago. Such was the injustice done that worldwide the labour movement rallied around their banner to help bring about their core demand – the eight-hour working day. It is this the worldwide marches of May 1st commemorate.

The rally began on 4th May 1886. August Spies spoke while a large number of on-duty police officers watched from nearby. Samuel Fielden, the last speaker, was finishing his speech at about 10.30pm when police ordered the rally to disperse and began marching in formation towards the speakers' wagon. A bomb was thrown at the police line and exploded, killing policeman Mathias J. Degan.

Eight people connected directly or indirectly with the rally and its anarchist

organisers were arrested afterward and charged with Degan's murder: August Spies, Albert Parsons, Adolph Fischer, George Engel, Louis Lingg, Michael Schwab, Samuel Fielden and Oscar Neebe.

The prosecution, led by Julius Grinnell, did not offer evidence connecting any of the defendants with the bombing but argued that the person who had thrown the bomb had been encouraged to do so by the defendants, who as conspirators were therefore equally responsible.

The jury returned guilty verdicts for all eight defendants – death sentences for seven of the men, and a sentence of 15 years in prison for Neebe.

In the moments before the men were hanged, Spies shouted, "The time will come when our silence will be more powerful than the voices you strangle today!"



# ctice



Photo: badbananas.wordpress.com

**LONG HOURS:** Banana workers for Fresh Del Monte work 14-hour days in Costa Rica

In Europe, France and Germany have had some of the strongest and most militant post-war labour movements. As a result, France has a 35-hour workweek enshrined in law, and Germany has at times seen working weeks of far below that, particularly in the motor industry.

Further afield, Bangladesh has recently come under scrutiny in the radical press for the ferocity of the labour abuses taking place there. Long hours followed by withheld pay, widespread corruption and physical abuse of the workforce have not been uncommon.

The Jute industry, producing cheap fabric in massive mills employing thousands of people, has as a result of these years of

abuse formed powerful trade unions and taken part in mass militant activity, including strikes, occupations and even rioting. The success of the labour movement in defying major business concerns is such that the military took control to 'restore order' last year.

Despite such massive revolts, the average workday for 20–30% of the population is still 10–14 hours a day, and over 50 hours a week. Bangladeshi law has for years stipulated a nine-hour workday, and a 48-hour week.

Yet average working hours for the whole of Bangladesh have fallen at a considerable rate in the last decade, to 32 hours a week from a staggering average of 59 hours a week in the 1990s.

It is this ability to fight which has seen the promise of the eight hour day become a reality for some – though not all.

Governments around the world have over the decades signed up for a huge number of rights and regulations which satisfy the dreams of liberals and social democrats and progressive thinkers.

But without the strong arm of labour to enforce these rules, nothing happens. People continue to have their 'rights' ignored, under threat of sackings, or wage withdrawals, or worse. States, without mass pressure to make them enforce these laws, have only the honeyed words and veiled threats of investors and business leaders to influence them, and they act in kind.

## COMMENT

## ABOUT FREEDOM

## ANGEL ALLEY

If this is in your hands, and it's not mid-May, it looks like the new, more-collective-than-ever-before Freedom has worked!

We've had different editors working on different sections this time around, with Ana sorting out the public sector, Tacks working on business, Matt on the international section, me on general news, David on Get Active and James on Theory.

This has made things a lot more complicated, as we're having to pull in stories from a wider variety of people, and if the paper has the odd glitch here and there this time around, it's also hopefully getting a lot more care and attention to the different sections.

Having a few new people does not of course mean we are short of things we need help with, particularly in distribution and marketing at this point, but also in writing and editing. If you have an area of expertise, we need correspondents we can call on when we find complex stories that need to be unravelled.

If you've got the gift of the gab when it comes to selling things, we need your talents. And of course, if you are in London and have a free pair of hands, envelope stuffing, shop work and other jobs all need doing at the press. So come along and get involved!

Rob Ray

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## NEXT ISSUE

The next issue will be dated 10th May 2008 and the last day to get copy to us for that issue will be Thursday 1st May. You can send your articles to us by email to [copy@freedompress.org.uk](mailto:copy@freedompress.org.uk) or by post addressed to The Editors, Freedom, 84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1 7QX.

## A sideways look

by SVARTFROSK

The government's decision to abolish the ten pence starting rate of tax looks like a spectacular own-goal. While I don't expect a lot from the Labour Party, the decision to increase the tax burden on the poorest, while cutting it for the better off, really is like Robin Hood in reverse.

The changes affect people who earn under £18,000 a year, because the standard rate of income tax has gone down by two pence in the pound. However, not everyone is affected equally. There are increased allowances for those aged over 65, which offset the increase. There are increases in child tax credits for those with young children, though the pain of dealing with HM Revenue and Customs over these may put people off. The record on child tax credits is dreadful – loads of people don't get their money and they are so inefficient they generate lots of overpayments, which the unfortunate family has to pay back.

At the same time as making the poorest pay more, Brown and his chancellor have cut the rates of inheritance tax, for the wealthy. Until the Tories made a song and dance over it, only people whose estate was worth more than £250,000 paid inheritance tax. Now it will be those worth more than £700,000. The message is clear – those struggling by on £300 a week can pay more. Those who inherit a mansion can pay less.

It is also at odds with what the government says. They've been trying to force people into shit jobs so that they're not on benefits, but if you're going to be paying more tax why bother? Those on benefits aren't going to be hit by this – it's those in

the worst paid jobs who will, especially if they've not got young children. Talk about joined up government!

I'm sure that the Conservatives and Liberal Democrats are suddenly very concerned with the plight of the very poorest, so, they intend to join with veteran Labour right winger Frank Field, who plans to amend the government bill which agrees this change. All of these 'champions of the poor' believe in the tough 'welfare to work' model, used in some American states, which denies benefits to anyone not working. They are more worried about people not working and living off benefits than they are about the desperation of those who earn so little.

Brown's reputation for economic competence has been undermined by other scandals recently, but this is plainly a bad decision. Everyone gets a tax-free personal allowance – had these been raised they could have offset the difference caused by the abolition of the ten pence rate. It could perhaps have been paid for by not letting the already wealthy pay even less tax.

It may well be that the political pressure, which is currently coming from all sides, gets the government to alleviate these measures soon. It does beg a couple of questions though. Why do the unions continue to keep the Labour Party afloat? It's beyond masochism.

And secondly, what do you do if you are earning less in real terms? Demand a pay rise. Go on, you deserve it. Tell your boss it's thanks to those nice men in the government.

## Blog Bites

(from [stroppyblog.blogspot.com](http://stroppyblog.blogspot.com))

I recently discovered that by law, local Councils which have a Scrutiny Commission responsible for education must co-opt representatives of religions onto that Scrutiny Commission with voting rights (Section 21 of the Local Government Act 2000\*). My own local Council, Hackney, has gone a step further and appointed three extra religious reps, presumably because if you are going to privilege religion, then why not privilege them all equally?

My first gripe is that any post in government that has any power should be elected. Voting rights for unelected people is anathema to democracy.

But the main issue I want to take up here is the involvement of religion in education. What if you have a complaint about your school or your borough's education system that, for example, it is giving too much of a platform to religion? What if you want the Scrutiny Commission to look at improving sex education? Will you get a fair hearing? Who will speak up for secularists, even for atheists?

And what of 'choice'? Several times on this blog, I have taken issue with the very existence of religious schools. But even if you accept or defend religious schools, this law goes a step further – it gives religious organisations a say in education whether you want them to or not.

My partner and I chose to send our kids to a secular school, Brook Community Primary School. Many defenders of religious schools make their case on the basis of 'parents' choice'. I invite any of them to explain what happened to my 'choice' when unelected religious representatives still have a say in my kids' education even when I opted for a non-religious school.

\* Para 52: "Overview and scrutiny committees are able to co-opt people who are not members of the authority. However, in general, such co-optees will not have voting rights. Schedule 1 contains the right for church and parent governor representatives to be appointed with voting rights onto an overview and scrutiny committee where the committee's functions relate wholly or partly to any education functions which are the responsibility of the authority's executive."

## A pessimist in paradise

I share Iain McKay's disappointment in Steve Jones ('A pessimist in paradise', 2nd March). Steve Jones is an entertaining and erudite writer and lecturer, and I have long thought his work well-researched and trustworthy, an opinion I must now revise with regret.

In addition to the errors to which Iain McKay draws attention, a bit of research would have told Steve Jones that Kropotkin's opinions were not idiosyncratic, but in agreement with other Russian Darwinists of his time. Unlike British Darwinists, who studied natural history in the tropics, the Russians studied in Siberia, where conditions are harsher and mutual aid more important for survival. Steven J. Gould changed his mind about Kropotkin after reading a paper on this subject by Daniel P. Todes in *Isis* 78 (1991). *Isis* is the foremost American journal of the history of science (the paper is reprinted in *The Raven* 24, Freedom Press, 1993).

These days there is a body of study called 'evolutionary psychology', linking specific items of modern human behaviour with behaviour said to have been more useful to the hunter-gatherers who were modern humans' ancestors. Steve Jones appears to think this unscientific, and he may be right. But he is wrong to attribute such a notion to Kropotkin.

Donald Room

## Photo correction

In reply to your article entitled 'Anarchism in China' (*Freedom* 2nd February, page 13), the photo you use is from 1920s Rangoon when an ethnic Chinese minority attempted a coup upon the ruling Burmese nationalists.

The ethnic Chinese had been taken to Burma in 1855 by British Imperialists from Hong Kong and Singapore to break organised Burmese labour. The executioner wheres a Burmese silk shirt (definitely not Commie) and in the road in the background is a horse mounted policeman (horse riding is against Chinese culture)

CA

Rob Ray replies: Oops! Well spotted CA, I pulled that from a Wikipedia page and didn't check it properly.

## Freedom's working-classness

Sorry to come over so negative but clearly there are serious problems with the current publication and for what they're worth, here follows my feelings on the matter:

The biggest hindrance to *Freedom* being accepted as a valuable progressive voice is its 'working-classness'. C'mon folks, if the working class were going to be the catalyst for revolutionary change we'd be there by now. A nice, almost quaint romantic thought, but it ain't gonna happen.

*Freedom* should take note of publications such as Liverpool's *Nerve* or *Anarchy, Journal of desire armed (A:Joda)* in the US. Whilst not finding myself agreeing with everything finding its way into *A:Joda*, levels of tone and debate/ideas are light years ahead of the (mostly) boring topics/discussion in the pages of *Freedom*.

As much as 'workerist' adherents don't like/deny it there is only one issue confronting the human race which absolutely everyone is going to have to deal with in the immediate future – beyond which there may be no future – and for want of a better label, it's Green.

Everything else is peripheral. As *Freedom* correspondent Francis Ellingham remarks, without conscious effort towards effecting personal change liberatory revolution is a non-starter, no matter how much we all wish for it.

*Freedom* also needs to embrace wider cultural expression. Anarchists and libertarians are pedagogical beings yet this is rarely reflected in the paper. What about music? Art? Poetry? Where is the appetite for intellectual nourishment? The fixation on working class/factory gate issues is forlornly patronising, dumb even.

The paper desperately requires an injection of cultural aspiration and there's no reason why it shouldn't happen at the expense of the dreary political discourse currently occupying so much space.

Every anarchist knows politics has failed us so why state the obvious week in, week out when there is an unfulfilled and desperate need for progressive liberatory inspiration and which won't be found dissecting the flaws of the Labour Party *et al.*

Give us a paper, monthly and A4 if need be, we can be duly proud of.

Frank Douglas

Rob Ray replies: Nothing wrong with being a bit negative on occasion Frank, criticism is after all the lifeblood of change. In this case I'd disagree with your analysis however.

## LETTERS AND COMMENT

What point is there in anarchism if its role is no longer to champion the cause of the working class?

Personal liberation is in a capitalist system effectively limited by economic status – I can be as green as I like if I can pay £3,500 for solar paneling, or £17,000 for a Toyota Prius, but I don't have that sort of money lying around (fortunately I live in town so I take the bus, people living out of town aren't so lucky).

What really makes a difference to green issues is mass organisation in the interests of a group which can deal enough damage to force change.

The upper class and middle classes have little incentive to do this. It would require a significant fall in their consumption and a major shift in thinking to a more co-operative outlook. Instead, their inevitable solution is to attack us and ask for personal change and 'austerity', while making 'changes' to the modes of production which add up to little more than tinsel on the tree. This is what the elite does, they offset their emissions by demanding we pay for it – a few who take the brave decision to make and demand radical change as activists notwithstanding.

It is the working class, those most affected by climate change, who around the world are going to have to defend themselves, as is already happening in South America, Africa, East Asia, the Middle East – and here.

It's not a matter of the working class being old hat, the world has always been, and still is, defined by class struggle whether the working class are currently mobilised or not (and it is singularly short-sighted to suggest that the current downturn in activity is going to be permanent, history has shown otherwise time and time again).

It's always going to be there until we win, and as long as it is, *Freedom* should be fighting the corner of those who most need it.

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## GETTING ACTIVE

### PRISON NEWS

#### Natalja's time

On 9th of February, Natalja was arrested during a demonstration in Munchen, Germany, against the NATO security conference that is held there every year. She is accused of having violently resisted arrest. A judge decided that she was to be taken to the prison of Munchen. Natalja had been previously arrested during the G8 summit in Germany last summer and was sentenced to ten months imprisonment.

She also has a third trial hanging after that she was arrested on the demo on the first of May last year. It is likely that she will have to spend some time in prison – her trial is due on 30th April.

She writes: "I have to say I feel ashamed of my own damned passive behaviour. I am confronted with an artificial environment constructed to control people and force them to adapt to a way of life that seems to be frozen.

"Prison is a complex structure of intimidation, emptiness, humiliation and pressure.

"I'm learning about the personal situation and the problems of the other inmates and get a feeling of the tragedies of so-called 'illegal immigrants', a feeling for what it means to wait for your deportation behind bars, isolated and helpless.

"For me imprisonment began with a kind of shock that is slowly disappearing. It is replaced by a state of permanent distress, which is, however, rather in the background and is covered with a thick layer of tiredness, boredom and exhaustion.

"It's hard to say something about social life in here in general. The 'community' of the imprisoned women is full of contrasts and contradictions and each one of the inmates probably experiences the social structure her own way – depending on her individual situation and point of view.

"There is a kind of strong solidarity amongst the women as well as mobbing. There are tactical alliances as well as real friendship.

"Everybody is lonely in some way. Nearly all women hide most of their feelings – and long for being understood. There is a lot of social pressure to pretend you are strong and to keep emotions for yourself; no one wants to be reminded of her own deep sadness and her own worries.

"But all this does *not* mean staying in distance from one another. The women do give each other a lot of warmth, sympathy, compassion and encouragement. Material needs and hierarchy based on different 'wealth' remains an important factor however. Everybody longs for any interesting thing, any news or any person that promises to be a splash of colour in the grey of day-to-day life behind bars."

You can write to Natalja at:  
Justizvollzugsanstalt Munchen, Frauenanstalt,  
Natalja Liebich, Am Neudeck 10, 81541  
Munchen, Germany.



● In Reading on 12th April hundreds of local people turned up to show their support for the re-opening of a Community Garden (pictured above) which had been forcefully evicted by Police in October last year.

The land had sat derelict for years and was home to dozens of heroin needles and other dangerous objects. Local members of Reading Grassroots Action (RGA) identified the demand for green space in the area, and so began transforming the land into a community garden in early 2007, in order to highlight the council's negligence and the need for community initiative.

During the re-opening RGA managed to obtain hundreds of signatures demanding community sovereignty of the land. A member of the group said: "We've got a strong base of support locally, and have forced numerous concessions from the council including changes to the housing policy, and the promise of a legal garden. We are now the biggest, most active class-struggle organisation in Reading, with real links in the community – and hope to move forward in 2008"

See [www.rgacollective.org.uk](http://www.rgacollective.org.uk) and to get involved email [rgacollective@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:rgacollective@hotmail.co.uk)

● The Autonomous Centre of Edinburgh is open and continues to organise. It is located at 17 West Montgomery Place and is open every Tuesday from 1pm to 4pm, Thursday 6pm to 8pm and Saturday 11am to 6pm, with cinema every Sunday 3pm and Edinburgh Claimants advice and solidarity every Tuesday. You can contact them at 0131 557 6242.

● From the *Hackney Independent*: "For 10 years Ricky Jones has been the caretaker at William Patten Primary School in Stoke Newington Church Street. He and his family face eviction from their home because the school's governors say there is no longer a need for a residential caretaker." You can send protest emails about his case to [aileen.walker@blueyonder.co.uk](mailto:aileen.walker@blueyonder.co.uk) and find further information about the demo on [hackneyindependent.org](http://hackneyindependent.org).

● From Indymedia: Following an international meeting at 'Les Tanneries' in Dijon last year, there was a call out for decentralised actions in defence of free spaces on Friday 11th and Saturday 12th April. The aim is to develop inter-connections and solidarity between autonomous spaces and help create more visibility for them as a political movement.

In the UK, new squats have opened in Bristol, Leeds, Birmingham, Nottingham, and London. In Reading, the Common Ground Squatted Community Garden was reopened, in Manchester multiple spaces were invaded; the new space in Nottingham hosted workshops, films, discussion, 'zines, and free jumble stalls; London distributed events at different spaces, with a squatters estate agency and a programme of workshops, films, discussion and art plus a benefit gig for the Advisory Service For Squatters. A squat themed spoof newspaper was also been distributed in participating cities. Actions also took place against dodgy landlords exploiting asylum seekers.

# Post-left anarchy

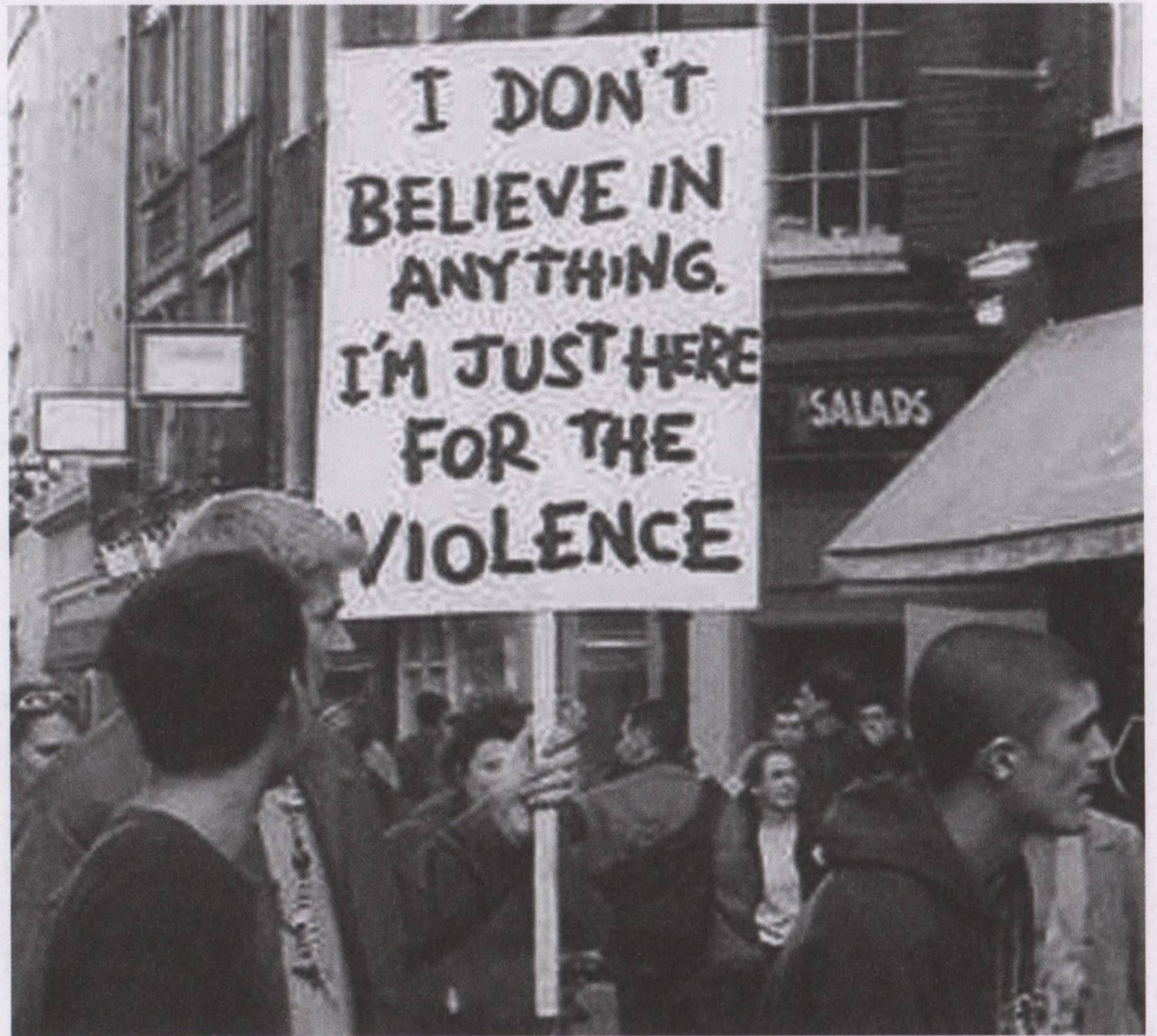
Post-left anarchy is a recent current in anarchist thought that promotes a critique of anarchism's relationship to traditional leftism. Seeking to escape what its proponents see as the stifling confines of abstract ideological frameworks, the term Post-left anarchy is deliberately used instead of 'anarchism'. Post-leftist thought has developed rapidly since the fall of the Soviet Union, an event viewed by many as the death of authoritarian leftism.

Post-leftists argue that the left, even the revolutionary left, is anachronistic and incapable of creating change, and offer critiques of radical strategies and tactics that it considers antiquated: the politics of protest and demand, the demonstration, class-oriented struggle, focus on tradition and the inability to escape the confines of ideology and history. The book *Anarchy in the Age of Dinosaurs*, for example, criticises traditional leftist ideas and classical anarchism while calling for a rejuvenated anarchist movement. An essay by the CrimethInc. Ex-Workers' collective entitled 'Your Politics Are Boring as Fuck' is another critique of 'leftist' movements, one widely considered the position paper of post-leftism.

"Why has the oppressed proletariat not come to its senses and joined you in your fight for world liberation?" it asks. "[Because] they know that your antiquated styles of protest ... your marches, hand held signs, and gatherings ... are now powerless to effect real change because they have become such a predictable part of the status quo. They know that your post-Marxist jargon is off-putting because it really is a language of mere academic dispute, not a weapon capable of undermining systems of control. They know that your infighting, your splinter groups and endless quarrels over ephemeral theories can never effect any real change in the world they experience from day to day."

Similar conclusions have been reached by some post-anarchists, albeit for different reasons. In his 2001 book *From Bakunin to Lacan*, Saul Newman remarks: "There is a certain litany of oppressions which most radical theories are obliged to pay homage to. Why is it when someone is asked to talk about radical politics today one inevitably refers to this same tired, old list of struggles and identities? Why are we so unimaginative politically that we cannot think outside of this 'shopping list' of oppressions?" (page 171).

Post-leftists argue that anarchism has been weakened by its long attachment to contrary leftist movements (i.e. movements framing their self-understanding in terms of what they're against rather than what they're actually for) and single-issue causes (anti-war, anti-nuclear, etc.). Pointing to what it sees as the impotence and vacuity of hegemonic protest-orientated mentalities and class-based struggle and criticising the left's historical inability to think beyond the confines of



abstract ideological systems, Post-leftism calls for a synthesis of anarchist thought and a specifically anti-authoritarian revolutionary movement outside of the authoritarian leftist milieu, often focusing on the individual rather than speaking in terms of class and in many cases shunning organisational tendencies in favour of attempts at absence of hierarchy, with some attention paid to the idea that informal, unstructured groups tend to create informal hierarchies.

The anti-sectarian, anti-ideological Post-leftist worldview is often rooted in a rejection of authoritarian leftism's reliance on 'compulsory morality' or 'compulsory moralism', that is, self-subjugation to a system or value set demanding obligatory adherence despite its grounding outside the individual's directly-lived subjective experience. Socialised value judgments requiring compulsory compliance, seen by post-leftists in political ideologies like Marxism – and even anarchism – are viewed as perpetuating alienation and hampering the individual's capacity for critical thought. In his 2004 essay 'Demoralising Moralism: the Futility of Fetishised Values', Jason McQuinn argues that anarchism demands organic, subjectively derived self-theory rather than adherence to abstract ideological doctrines conducive to narrowly or partially rationalised decisions incapable of accurately reflecting oneself or one's context. McQuinn argues that the formation of any coherent and

effective anarchist perspective and strategy necessitates the independent development of critical self-theory and critical social theory through direct and meaningful interaction with one's natural and social environments, a fully developed understanding of oneself and one's place in one's social and natural worlds understood as "two essential poles of one comprehensive project".

The ideas associated with post-left anarchy have been criticised by other anarchists, notably Murray Bookchin. In his polemic *Social Anarchism or Lifestyle Anarchism: An Unbridgeable Chasm*, Bookchin attacks these recent trends in anarchist thinking and instead advocated a continued adherence to the traditional focus on class struggle. His arguments were rebuffed by Bob Black in his 1997 book *Anarchy After Leftism*, a pivotal post-leftist work written in response to Bookchin's criticism. Anarcho-communists have also criticised post-leftist thinking.

Many primitivists, including John Zerzan, can be said to be post-leftists (Zerzan himself has claimed to be 'anti-leftist'). However, most proponents of Post-left anarchy are not primitivists. Groups and individuals associated with Post-left anarchism include the CrimethInc Ex-Workers' Collective, Jason McQuinn, Bob Black, and the magazines *Anarchy: A Journal of Desire Armed* and *Green Anarchy*.

(adapted from Wikipedia)

## REVIEWS

## WHAT'S ON

## APRIL

26th SHAC National March and Demo at Novartis Primate Research Centre, Wimbleshurst Road, Horsham, West Sussex, meet at 11am, Horsham Park, Horsham, see [shac.net](http://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](http://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](http://bigblether.org.uk) for details or email [ellie@bigblether.org.uk](mailto: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](http://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](mailto: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](http://hacan.org.uk), [campaigncc.org](http://campaigncc.org) or [notrag.org](http://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](http://olkiluoto.info/en) for more details

## JULY

4th Independence from America, demonstrate at the US spy base, Menwith Hill, near Harrogate, North Yorkshire from 5pm until 10pm, call 01423 884076 or mobile 07949897906, email [percy@starbecj.eclipse.co.uk](mailto:percy@starbecj.eclipse.co.uk) or see [caab.org.uk](http://caab.org.uk) for details

7th to 9th G8 Summit at Toya Lake, Hokkaido in northern Japan, for details see <http://linux7.sanpal.co.jp/no-g8>

## AUGUST

4th to 11th Climate Camp at e.on's proposed new Kingsnorth coal fired power station near Rochester, Kent, with day of action against agrofuels on Wednesday 6th and a day of mass action on Saturday 9th August, for more see [climatecamp.org.uk](http://climatecamp.org.uk)  
7th to 10th Northern Green Gathering, somewhere in North Yorkshire, for more see [ngonline.org.uk](http://ngonline.org.uk)

## PAMPHLETS

## KSL Bulletin

No. 53, February 2008

Kate Sharpley Library

This issue kicks off with a brief history of the beginnings of German Syndicalism; there's a personal recollection of learning about the Spanish Revolution; an obituary of William (Woolf) Weiss; the history of the Syndicalist Workers Federation – all reprints from various sources.

The *KSL Bulletin* is planning a 'Review Special' in the near future so do contact them if there's any books you'd like to write about (nothing too lengthy – around 500 words). The bulletin costs 50p in shops but I'd recommend getting a subscription (only £3 in the UK) as that also entitles you to a discount on their other publications.

### My Revolutionary Life: Juan Garcia Oliver interviewed by Freddy Gomez

translated by Paul Sharkey

Kate Sharpley Library, £3

This pamphlet features an interview Juan Garcia Oliver gave to Freddy Gomez in 1977 and covers both the period leading up to the Spanish Revolution and during it (Garcia Oliver was 'Minister for Justice' for a time).

Also has some interesting things to say about the formation of the Los Nosotoros and why the CNT proved initially so successful in countering the General's uprising in July 1936 in Barcelona (because the regional CNT had organised defence cadres ready to

respond immediately to any such uprising, whereas elsewhere in Spain, the regions did not have these committees and were only prepared for a general strike – a position that proved disastrous in places such as Zaragoza.

Garcia Oliver also claims never to have been a 100% anarchist only an anarcho-syndicalist, so did not feel so conflicted by serving in a Government.

The pamphlet concludes with an interview with Luis Andres Edo summarising Garcia Oliver's relationship with the Defensa Interior during the 1960s. Neatly produced as ever and an thought-provoking read, this 40-page A5 pamphlet will set you back the enormous sum of £3 if bought in shops, but subscribers to the *KSL Bulletin* only have to pay £2.

### Ned Kelly's Ghost: The Tottenham IWW and the Tottenham Tragedy

by John Patten

Kate Sharpley Library, £1

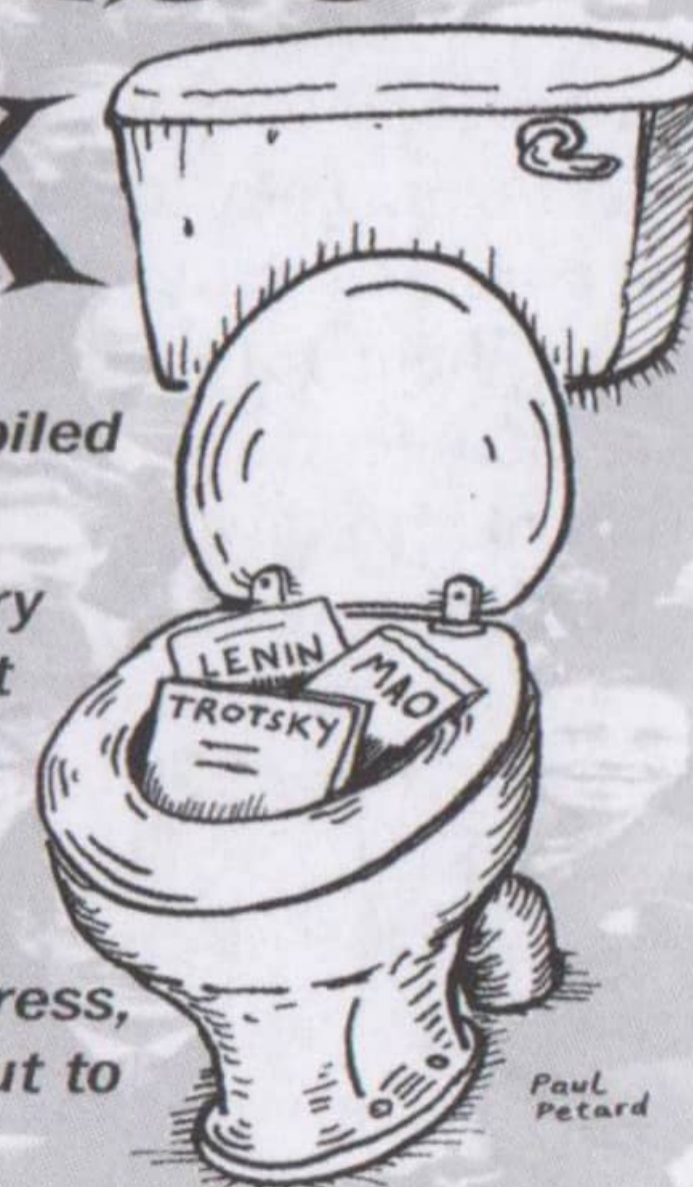
Note that this concerns Tottenham in New South Wales, Australia, and not north London, England. The pamphlet is about the trial of three IWW members who were accused of shooting a policeman in 1916, two of which were subsequently found guilty and hanged. It's also about the historical background for the killings which took place during a period of intense class struggle. The text is fully annotated and for an A5 pamphlet of 24 pages, the price gives nobody an excuse not to buy it.

# The Anarchist Quiz Book

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

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

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



## QUIZ ANSWERS

1. It takes its name from the calibre, 6.35mm, of the Walther PPK which Hitler used to shoot himself.
2. The Channel Island of Sark began its transition to democracy in July 2007 to comply with the European Convention on Human Rights. Its law reforms were approved in April 2008 and there may be elections next year.
3. An explosion at a Barcelona nightclub killed three people in 1978. The authorities claimed that striking workers had blown

- themselves up and arrested CNT members, attempting to criminalise the union.
4. Milly Witkop and Rudolf Rocker arrived in New York on the 29th May 1897. The authorities refused them entry as they were not legally married. Rocker said that their relationship was "a purely private matter that only concerns ourselves, and it needs no confirmation from the law." Witkop added "Love is always free. When love ceases to be free it is prostitution."

# How five beat the power of Shell

At one level this is the story of a successful campaign against plans by the Shell oil company to exploit an off-shore gas discovery on the cheap by despoiling the countryside of County Mayo in the west of Ireland and needlessly putting the local population in danger. On another it points up in microcosm some of the broader changes that have occurred in Ireland with the emergence of the Celtic Tiger economy.

In particular it highlights the baleful effects of arrogant global economic power and the almost laughably obsequious attitude towards it of officials in publicly accountable institutions, the Roman Catholic church hierarchy and democratically elected politicians at almost every level. (Neither Fianna Fail nor Fine Gael, the main two political parties, come out of this episode with any credit.) It is not for nothing that at one point Maureen McGrath, the wife of Vincent – one of the Rosspport Five, refers to Ireland as a “banana republic”.

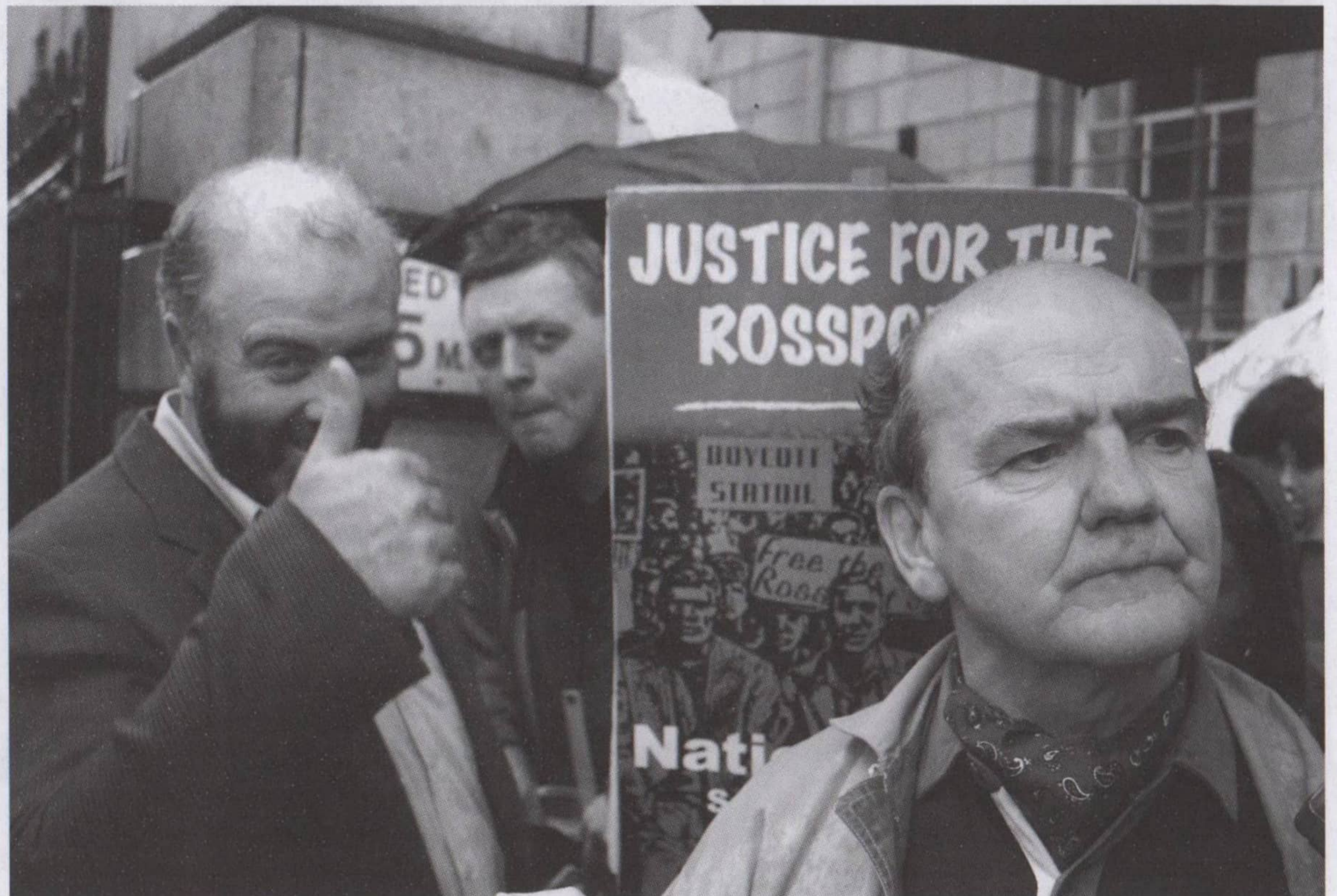
Vincent refers derisively to An Bord Pleanála, the planning authority, as Bord Stampála, and Mayo Council is simply referred to as Shell County Council. In addition we have the sight of the church scoring yet another own goal with its uncritical support for the project, culminating in the spectacle of the Bishop of Mayo being flown out to the gas platform in the Atlantic in a Shell helicopter so that he can dish out his blessing.

Four of the five chapters are based on recorded conversations and the participants explain compellingly in their own words how they felt obliged to act because their sense of who they are and what their community meant was in danger.

Three of the five are farmers, some of whose land had been penciled in for use for the pipeline and the sense of violation is almost palpable in the words of Willie Corduff. “I was born and reared on this farm. Our footsteps are around the place since we were able to walk. There are memories of our father and mothers and how hard they worked to bring us up.”

The Rosspport Five were sent to jail in June 2005 for contempt of court after they were declared in breach of a High Court injunction obtained by Shell allowing their employees access to private land so they could prepare to install the gas pipelines for the terminal/refinery at Ballinaboy. The men refused to “purge their contempt” and remained in Cloverhill prison in Dublin jail for 94 days when Shell withdrew the injunction.

In retrospect Shell must now realise they made a huge mistake in doing this and it is clear from the accounts here that its lawyers were shocked when they were marched off. The men received bags of post, more than the rest of the prison put together, motorists started a spontaneous boycott of Shell and Statoil petrol stations, taxi drivers sported ‘Free the Rosspport Five’ stickers, the other inmates in Cloverhill cheered them on after



Willie Corduff (left) and Micheál Ó Seighin face a media scrum outside court following their release in September 2005 after they and three other men had spent 94 days in jail. The five had been jailed at the request of Shell.

the issues had been explained, the prison warders didn't think much of it, even the police took a benign attitude. When they were finally released the journey home was a triumphal cavalcade with celebratory bonfires in town and villages along the way.

But along the way it had often been a bumpy ride and clearly several people dropped out because of stress. Philip McGath, who objected to the scheme because the high pressure pipe was so close to his home, gives a graphic insight into how the community was split. “You could be criticised as well any time you went to the pub. You wouldn't be able to sit in the pub and listen to some of what was being said without arguing back. It was constant abuse.”

This is Vincent McGrath on how Shell operated: “They would go about in Land Rovers and jeeps and insist on keeping to the middle of the road. They wore dark glasses and earmuff and helmets and yellow jackets as part of the psychological campaign. They took photographs and were always wired.

“After they got their injunction they upped the tempo psychologically and would travel along the road, over and back past our house, at about five or ten miles an hour with their hazard lights flashing. They were saying ‘We got what we wanted and now we can do what we like’.”

The reason for this was in large part because the Establishment, locally and nationally, had swallowed Shell's mixture of half truths and omissions.

The campaigners had to do all their own research to rebut the claims being made by Shell, sometimes facing obstruction from local authority officials as they attempted to

copy plans that were in the public domain. But the Establishment made it crystal clear that nothing would be allowed to stand in the way of the project.

Kevin Moore, a senior inspector for An Bord Pleanála, had the temerity to reject the application with these ringing words, quoted in the chapter by Brendan Philbin: “From a strategic planning perspective this is the wrong site. From the perspective of government policy, which seeks to foster regional development, this is the wrong site; from the perspective of minimising environmental impact, this is the wrong site, and consequently from the perspective of sustainable development this is the wrong site.”

No es un problema, within days a damage limitation operation was in operation, senior oil executives were holding talks with Bertie Aherne, the prime minister, and Fianna Fail politicians were telling the companies to reapply.

Finally, of course, after all else had failed, Shell decided to take them to court and jail them. Judge Finnegan, the president of the High Court, had taken four days to grant the original injunction, and expressed misgivings about it all, but when they went back to court he was in a totally unforgiving mood threatening to put them in jail indefinitely and threatening to confiscate all the assets of all those that had breached the injunction. They faced jail and ruin. But they won and Ireland did too.

Michael Wagstaff

*Our Story by the Rosspport 5: The truth by the men in their own words*, by the Rosspport Five, published by Small World Media, £10.95

WILD CAT

Of course all governments are in danger of external conquest and/or military takeover;

but as long as democracy holds, elected rulers conform approximately to what most people want.

Not if most people don't want to be ruled by anybody!!

POLITICAL SCIENCE LECTURES



## Antifascist News

Welcome to the first of many correspondences of conflict, broadsides of battle, articles of argy-bargy, the (iron) column of Antifascist News! First up and first prize to go to prize tosser Ellis Hammond. Lying about his BNP membership to become Community Support Officer, Eltham's cop shop got wise to the situation only when the Post Office intercepted a Taser Hammond had ordered from a country where they aren't illegal. Raiding his flat they found material from nazi paramilitary group Combat18, crossbows, combat knives, cuffs, knuckledusters and CS gas. Smooth.

Next up we send commiserations to any Leeds Landlords hosting the BNP who lost their no-claims-bonus throughout March via vandalism. The pubs were glued, smashed and daubed by concerned citizens... Stick to karaoke nights next time perhaps!

What do you do if your Saturday paper sale is surrounded by antifascists? If you're the Glasgow BNP, you call your mum for backup. No shit. She was apparently pretty scary.

But not half as scary as Roberto Fiore and his neo-fascist Forza Nuova party. The Italian Fiore was convicted for his part in the Bologna train bombing and whilst he was hiding over here, he seems to have put down roots – in the form of a string of youth hostels for young Italians. The Camden hostels are managed by Nick Griffin's parents. This double whammy of neo-Nazi nepotism has drawn the attention of local anarchists who are working to blow the lid off this snake pit. They shouldn't expect any help from local paper *The Ham & High*, whose bosses ran an ad for the BNP despite furious staff (see page 3). Probably not as furious as the BNP media team though, when they realised they had missed downtrodden Dagenham by a number of miles and forked out for an ad in well-heeled

Hampstead. The only immigration problem its liberal denizens struggle with is where to find a cheap Philippino cleaner!

Tacks

This column is not linked to them, but if you want to get involved in anti-fascist activity, you could do worse than get involved with antifa. Go to antifa.org.uk or call 07880697831 for more information.

## THE QUIZ

1. Where does anti-fascist group The 635 Group get its name?
2. Where was the last feudal system in Europe and when was it abolished?
3. What was the Scala case?
4. Which anarchists were refused entry to the United States because they were unmarried?

Answers on page 14

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