

FREEDOM

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WHO CARES FOR CARERS?

How privatisation is costing social care workers

The full impact of two decades of privatising social care on the working conditions of carers has been revealed in newly published research.

Analysis by the Thomas Coram Research Unit of the University of London has found that on average social care workers are earning £12,338 per annum for a 32-hour week, with wages in the private sector dragging down averages which are already more than £1,200 below the poverty line for families.

The report also highlighted a significant and growing gender gap in the sector, as women remained working in a growing number of care and assistant working positions, while their male counterparts tended to move into higher-paid 'education' occupations.

In a damning statement, the research unit said: "Pay and conditions in the 'for profit' sector are mostly lower than in other sectors, especially the public sector. The 'for profit' sector dominates the provision of both 'childcare' and 'elder care' services, which rely heavily on low paid women workers with relatively low levels of qualification. Whatever other benefits it may have brought,

page 3 ►►

LENS CAP MILITARY ACADEMY PROTEST



Protesters were banned from marching through Cardiff city centre on 26th April as police invoked the Public Order Act to minimise the visibility of a demonstration against the St Athan military academy, a £16bn training facility. Police insisted written applications would be needed for further protests and threatened march organisers with arrest if anything untoward should happen at the event. Arms companies involved in this PFI plan include the arms manufacturer Raytheon which, as well as making cluster bombs and depleted uranium munitions and selling arms to violent regimes, also supplies the electronic guidance systems for the British nuclear weapons system Trident. Many countries have banned investment in Raytheon.

ANARCHIST 'TERROR'

A report by Europol on left-wing and anarchist 'terrorism' has said that 12 anarchists from Spain and Italy have been jailed for terror offences in the last year, although no casualties occurred from any of the acts recorded as such.

The Te-Sat 2008, which records incidents of terrorism across the EU, found that Greece, Italy and Spain were the most likely areas to be linked with direct actions which they would categorise as terrorism, mainly including cases of large-scale vandalism and destruction of property.

While the number of incidents emanating from the left and anarchists was found to have decreased across Europe, it was noted that the activities of groups under the banner of FAI in Italy seemed to be on the increase, along

with a tendency for mergers between single-issue groups and wider-based organisations.

The G8 in Germany was noted mainly as a civil disorder case, though Sweden and Belgium recorded particularly high numbers of arrests of their nationals.

Sweden also got a mention as having a number of autonomous groups prepare to use violent action, primarily among the under 30s.

In Greece, "the main targets were bank branches, vehicles and political party offices". Greek records on anarchist terrorism were noted to be substantially understated compared to other states, as they only counted major activities, as opposed to graffiti and other forms of vandalism, as terror incidents.

INSIDE ►►

RIP Naomi page 2

Egyptian crack-down page 7

Projectile festival pages 8-9

Svartfrosk column page 10

Anarcho-capitalism page 13

Sky Blue reviewed page 15

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NEWS

IN BRIEF

DEFENCE: The Serious Fraud Office (SFO) is challenging a legal ruling that it must look at restarting its investigation into a £43bn arms deals between BAE Systems and Saudi Arabia. Richard Alderman, the new director of the SFO, said that he would not reconsider the original decision to halt the investigation.

The SFO were humiliated last month when justices ruled that the SFO “unlawfully submitted” to “blatant threats” from the Saudis. The SFO had argued that the inquiry had to be stopped because of a threat to national security.

ENERGY: Workers at Scotland’s Grangemouth oil refinery have gone back to work after a two-day strike which saw hundreds come out in support. The strike drew headlines across the country after commentators voiced concerns that the two-day shutdown would cause fuel shortages in the region, which led to some panic buying and pushed oil prices up to nearly \$120 a barrel. Supplies were rushed by tanker from abroad.

The workforce walked off the job over an attack being launched on their pensions by owner Ineos, which is pledging to shift the workforce off final salary pensions despite a healthy bank balance. Ineos’ campaign of escalation culminated in a letter being sent to all Grangemouth workers saying that it would introduce the new defined contribution pension scheme from 1st August 2008.

Grangemouth supplies power and steam to the Forties crude processing plant at Kinneil but these supplies were cut because of the strike, forcing the closure of the whole Forties system which carries up to half the UK’s oil production.

FOOD: Families have been warned that the prices of basic foods will rise steeply in the next few weeks because of acute shortages.

Prices of rice, wheat and vegetable oil are likely to rise. Food-price inflation has already pushed up a typical family’s weekly shopping bill by 15% in a year.

SUPERMARKETS: Britain’s four biggest supermarkets are under investigation by the Office of Fair Trading (OFT) for fixing prices of health, beauty and grocery products. Asda and Morrisons confirmed that the OFT visited their head offices, while Sainsbury’s and Tesco said they had been asked for information. Mars, Unilever and Reckitt Benckiser also confirmed they had received letters from the OFT requesting information.

WEALTH: The UK’s super-rich have never been richer, according to this year’s *Sunday Times* ‘Rich List’. The top 1,000 richest people in the country now have more than £400bn between them, it estimates – up almost £53bn in the last year.

Philip Beresford, who has compiled the list since it was first published in 1989, said: “The 11 years of Labour government have proved a boon for the super-rich, rarely seen before in modern British history.”

LENS CAP REMEMBERING NAOMI



Well known Brixton girl Naomi was run over by a police driver as she tried to stop a Serco van carrying eleven prisoners to the nearby jail. A crowd of around a hundred turned out to protest the killing, and riot police were called in to protect the driver. The previous evening, before the killing of the 30-year-old on 23rd April, a crowd of people had blocked another Serco van transferring prisoners through Brixton and police had to be called to disperse the situation.

Rail charges hit pockets again

Changes to rail fares from this month to ‘simplify’ rail travel will see rail fares for some journeys rise by around 10% this month.

From May, rail travellers will be presented with just three choices: advance, offpeak, and anytime.

Refunds for advance tickets will no longer be offered, and the fee for amendments to journey times will double.

Special offers, such as the East’s Anglia Plus ticket, are to be scrapped, raising the price of local routers, while a standard return from Ipswich to London is rising from £53 to £58, a rise of 9.5%, under the new system.

There are also new restrictions being introduced on the use of off-peak tickets. Now

passengers with off-peak tickets will not be able to arrive in London before 10am and will not be able to leave the capital between 4.29pm and 6.34pm.

The TSSA have condemned the changes. Gerry Doherty, of the rail union, said: “This will hit the people who can least afford it, families, the young and the elderly who can only afford to travel by booking well in advance. They should be compensated if forced to change their plans, not penalised.

“These changes are meant to make travel easier. They should not be used as an excuse by the rail companies to increase profits by scrapping refunds and doubling the fee for changing journey times from £10 to £20.”



An Olympic Park construction worker

Threat to London living wage

The London 'living wage' may have to be scrapped along with a raft of other industry-wide wage standards following two recent EU judgements, on the grounds they "restrict [companies] freedom to provide services" across borders.

The most recent ruling, delivered last month, found that German company Objekt und Bauregie were within their rights to pay a Polish subcontractor under half of the minimum wage prescribed by the local government in Lower Saxony. The court argued that capping the pay at a minimum limit, which forced companies and their subcontractors to maintain a comparable wage standard to local firms, effectively reduced the ability of Polish companies to provide services in Germany, thereby breaching internal EU market law.

Labour advocates from ETUC, the European trade union lobbying arm of the national TUCs, have condemned the ruling

as "destructive and damaging", while in the UK, fears have been raised that it effectively means London's local minimum wage could be illegal and would need to be reduced to the base figure.

The London Living Wage was established in 2005 and currently sees all local government contracts and subcontracting in the Greater London Authority area paying a £7.20-an-hour minimum as part of any deal, up from £5.52 across the rest of the country.

Other councils run similar schemes, including the Welsh Regional Assembly, and as of next year, Oxford, which could also be affected.

The case follows a similar ruling known as the Laval case from 2007, when Latvian company Laval un Partneri won a landmark ruling against Swedish construction union Byggnads. The construction company, located in Riga, posted workers from Latvia to work on Swedish building sites. The work

was taken on by subsidiary Baltic Bygg AB and included the renovation and extension of school premises in the town of Vaxholm near Stockholm.

When Byggnads started negotiations which attempted to tie Baltic Bygg to local pay standards for the area, the company refused to negotiate and as a result, a blockade of the building site was initiated.

Byggnads were taken to court, where they were told that it was illegal to take collective action to force a foreign company to observe local pay deals.

The Unite union has said the ruling has implications for the construction of the London Olympics to be held in 2012. Union chief Derek Simpson said: "This decision effectively means that foreign companies working here in the UK, or in any other European country, can flout domestic laws and collective agreements with regard to pay."

Who cares for carers?

◀ page 1

the growth of 'for profit' providers, especially in childcare and social care services, has had adverse consequences for the pay and conditions of the care workforce."

The research further noted extremely high job turnover in the care industry, which has come in for heavy criticism in recent years for its treatment of staff and casualised approach to sensitive work with vulnerable people: "Social care workers have the second shortest period of continuous employment with the same employer among the six main occupational groups (in the social service sector), with care assistants and home carers having a particularly short period of continuous employment."

Social care workers include home care assistants or people who work in residential care homes, covering a wide range of roles working with older people, children and families and people with disabilities.

Forty percent of employment in the social care sector is for private companies, while 27% is covered by the not-for-profit sector and only a third of workers are directly employed by the government, following a trend of privatisation which started in 1982 with the passing of the Social Security Act, which was accelerated by the mass closure of NHS beds in the 1990s.

Unison, the major union body covering social care work, has lobbied for an end to

state outsourcing of the remaining jobs in social care, with some local success in Bristol and Carmarthenshire, but improvements to working conditions, particularly in the private sector, look unlikely in the near future.

Underinvestment in the sector has been a recurring theme for advocacy groups, with a recent Help the Aged report finding that up to 500,000 elderly people in the United Kingdom may be suffering some form of physical, emotional, sexual or financial abuse. Age Concern have reported that one in five care homes and home care providers did not meet minimum standards for residential care as of last year.

PUBLIC SECTOR

Safety before profit

The government's on-going policy of privatising hospital cleaning services is causing problems. Health campaigners are also questioning whether the 'deep clean', announced by Brown at the Labour party conference last October has, in fact, worked.

Leading health service union UNISON is calling for the sterilisation of surgical instruments to be brought back within hospital control. The move comes as surgeons say that operating theatres are being thrown into chaos and operations cancelled because of broken, missing or dirty tools. They say the problems have become worse since cleaning started to be handed over to private firms – a practice encouraged by the Department of Health that UNISON has long branded as dangerous.

"UNISON has warned time and time again that taking sterilisation services out of hospitals and replacing them with super centres – which are often miles away – is a recipe for disaster," said Unison senior national officer Mike Jackson. "Lives should not be put at risk unnecessarily because surgical instruments have not been properly decontaminated and sterilised" Jackson went on to say.

Over 1,000 people die in England and Wales each year because of hospital acquired infections from viruses such as MRSA. A similar number probably die in nursing homes and the numbers are rising. Concerns in the media about deaths and headline cases such as at Maidstone and Tunbridge Wells hospitals, where 90 patients were killed as a result of NHS superbugs, led to the government launching a so-called 'deep clean' of hospitals in England.

London Health Emergency has questioned whether the deep clean of hospitals launched



last year, which was meant to be completed in every English hospital, has been effective.

Geoff Martin, Health Emergency Head of Campaigns, said: "We understand that many hospitals, because of the sheer pressure on beds, have been unable to decant patient areas and deep clean them properly. Instead they have had a bit of a spring clean around the beds and that is not what we were promised".

"Deep cleaning a hospital environment means decanting patients to another ward, sealing the area and fogging it with a deep

cleaning agent that kills off the super bugs wherever they are located. We fear that financial pressures and demand for beds has meant that in many areas the deep clean has been a cursory exercise, ticking boxes rather than doing the job required."

There has been a rapid increase in deaths from super bugs, up a quarter last year, and there seems little doubt that the policy of both the Tories and Labour to privatise cleaning and other support services in hospitals is a major contributing factor.

Richard Griffin

Little shift following mass strike

There has been little noticeable shift in direction from Labour over wages for school-teachers following the first all-out strike in decades from the NUT.

The one day strike on 24th April saw a concerted one day walkout across several industries and state bodies, including the NUT, UCU, coastguard, Birmingham City Council and PCS members, over a variety of different complaints but united by below-inflation pay offers. Despite only being one day long, the strike saw continuity problems after NASUWT and ATL, the other two main education sector unions, refused to ballot members on industrial action and told their members to continue working.

NUT members are being offered a 2.45% increase on last year, which falls far below inflation and continues a trend of real-terms pay cuts across the public sector. The union is also complaining bitterly over problems with recruitment, claiming teachers' training

costs and pay mean the average graduate will be £10,000 behind their peers in comparable careers after five years. The UCU meanwhile say their lecturers are getting on average 6% less than teachers, even doing comparable work with comparable students.

In Birmingham, 20,000 council workers came out alongside 5,000 other workers in the city while in London, up to 7,000 members of the NUT, UCU and the Public and Commercial Services union, marched through Westminster.

More ballots for action may take place across several major unions in the near future, with Unison likely to ballot half a million members over their own pay offer, the PCS discussing a national strike ballot and the NUT not ruling out further action. The UCU can strike again before the summer.

But militants fear that widely spaced, single day strikes will not make the desired impact, amounting to gesture politics against a govern-

ment which has proven largely impervious to such tactics.

A member of the Education Workers' Network, an anarcho-syndicalist organisation linked to the Solidarity Federation, noted: "The government has not altered its position on teachers' pay in response to the NUT strike. It is obviously the case that more pressure needs to be exerted. Yet the TUC's only response is to call a lobby of parliament in June and the NUT has merely said it will consider further strike action.

"These feeble and disparate measures simply reflect the weakness and moderation of the existing education unions – an attitude which has clearly failed to counter the poor pay and stressful conditions that teachers suffer.

"The Education Workers' Network is campaigning for a single anarcho-syndicalist education union which can link all struggles in the sector. Let's break with the failed tactics of the past and organise to win."

IN BRIEF

CARE: Workers at Winifred Dell care home in Brentwood Essex protested on 27th April against its closure by owners Excelcare. Residents' families have received letters informing them they have 60 days to get their loved ones out of the home as the company intends to demolish it. This is the second Essex care home that Excelcare have demolished and GMB know of two more in the pipeline. Staff at the home have been told that their jobs are at risk and have 30 days of consultation before they are sacked. Excelcare are refusing to pay staff redundancy they would have had under Essex county council, claiming they can't afford it.

CONSTRUCTION: Tens of thousands of construction workers could find themselves out of a job over the next few months, after the country's biggest housebuilder said it is stopping new builds until the economy bounces back. Works in the north have already been hit by the new policy, and it's expected that other housebuilders will be following suit in the next few weeks.

ENERGY: Royal Dutch Shell plans to cut up to 300 jobs in total in Aberdeen as oil and gas production declines in the North Sea. Shell said that the job losses would be mainly administrative positions at its headquarters in Aberdeen and would take place over the next three years. Shell, the world's second-largest listed oil company, has been scaling down its North Sea operation since June.

ENERGY: Ofgem, the energy regulator, has begun a formal investigation in energy giant npower over allegations it has lied to customers and used illegal selling practices.

It is claimed npower particularly targeted customers with poor language or comprehension skills, making people sign forms when they didn't know they were contracts.

If found guilty, Ofgem can impose a maximum fine of 10% of owner RWE's global turnover, which was £33bn in 2005.

MEDIA: NUJ members at eight Trinity Mirror owned newspapers were shocked to be told that their papers would be closing that week and that they should clear their desks and leave the same day. The papers affected are the *Belper Bugle*, *Derby Trader*, *Ilkeston Trader*, *Ripley Trader*, *Peterborough Herald and Post*, *Stamford Herald and Post*, *Whittlesey Standard* and *Deepings Standard*.

It is expected that 23 members of staff will be made redundant.

RAIL: Over 130 senior conductors at the new East Midlands franchise are striking on the first three Saturdays in May over a breakdown in industrial relations with the company. The dispute centres on the company's plan to use managers and other grades to guard trains on Sundays and to impose a new grade of senior conductor with inferior conditions, outside existing negotiated structures.

Printers thwart union

Private equity investors Media & Print Investments plc have shut down their holdings at Butler & Tanner Printers in Somerset, blaming unionists at the plant for threatening strike action over major changes to working conditions.

The workforce was informed by post that the company had been closed and is going into receivership, owing thousands of pounds in unpaid wages and deducted pension contributions. Most are owed around £1,200 in total.

In response, a picket was set up at the plant on 28th April, where company bosses have locked the gates and told the printers they are redundant with immediate effect. The company has now applied for receivership.

The move came just a day after the latest round of negotiations between the Unite union and B&T bosses at conciliation service ACAS, where no warning was given that closure might be on the cards.

Union members had agreed to a 5% pay cut, on top of a previous 8% last year, and changed working practices, but rejected a clause in the new contract effectively barring the union from future negotiations.

B&T was heavily unionised, with a membership of 210 out of a staff of 287. The firm was bought out by MPI just last year for an undisclosed sum. Union reps have said they will be taking legal action following the sackings.

It has been speculated that the large site, which is located on prime land in a housing boom area, will be sold off to developers while any re-opened printworks would be union-free in the future.

National officer Ann Field said: "Unite will be demanding recompense in full from the perpetrators of this despicable act sacrificing people's jobs and livelihoods. Mike Dolan and former boss Andrew Hillman should be called to account."



OUTRAGED: Picketers outside the Butler and Tanners print building in Somerset

BAA breakup could mean expansions

A Competition Commission demand for BAA to sell up to three airports could lead to plans for an expansion of Gatwick airport being revived.

The Commission, which is due to bring out a report into BAA's working practices and monopoly ownership of airports in August, has said in its emerging thinking that a breakup of the company could be on the cards.

It noted that BAA has been slow to expand its services post-privatisation and was providing passengers with poor service as a result.

The tone of the preliminary report has led to fears that a forced sale could be the catalyst for a major new expansion in the

next few years by incoming companies.

Analysts have said that Gatwick would be a prime target for expansion in the event of a takeover, as it is set out of London and has a flight-path over farmland – the danger of urban crashes has been a major plank of anti-expansion campaigning at Heathrow.

While BAA have agreed with West Sussex County Council to hold off from building a second Gatwick runway until 2019, this can be overturned by Parliament in the event that a new company takes over and indicates an interest in expansion.

BAA is widely expected to make at least one pre-emptive sale before the full report comes out, with Gatwick a likely candidate.

INTERNATIONAL

IN BRIEF

INDIA: Over 280 Indian legal professionals have attacked attempts by the Government of India to grant immunity to US transnational corporation Dow Chemical for its liabilities in the Bhopal toxic disaster. The lawyers say the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) is colluding with Dow in an attempt to evade its liabilities to facilitate Dow's proposed investment of some \$1 billion in India.

The Bhopal disaster of 1984 saw the drinking water of thousands contaminated by highly dangerous chemicals illegally dumped by Union Carbide (UC), which was subsequently bought out by Dow.

SOUTH AFRICA: The Chinese Foreign Ministry have indicated that an arms shipment for Zimbabwe that the ship is likely to return home without attempting to unload after unionists in South Africa refused to move the cargo. However, the London-headquartered global union federation noted that the Chinese government has again deferred the final decision to Cosco, the ship's owners, and that the company has not yet made a definite announcement.

SRI LANKA: SriLankan Airlines has been forced to cancel many of its scheduled flights following a sick note campaign by its pilots.

Pilots are protesting the non-fulfillment of several promises they had been given by President Mahinda Rajapaksa and his brother, Aviation Services Minister Chamal Rajapaksa. Many pilots have tendered their resignations in view of the institutional and administrative problems that have cropped up at the airline.

SWEDEN: The Swedish government have been severely criticised by human rights organisations after it approved the sale of military equipment to Colombia, exploiting a loophole in legislation designed to stop arms sales to countries guilty of human rights violations. A special parliamentary commission agreed to allow the sale of radar equipment to the Colombian government, despite widespread corruption and links to far-right paramilitary groups in the country which has led to the deaths of thousands of civilians, trade unionists and political.

TRINIDAD: Health and postal workers in Trinidad and Tobago have been out on strike over hospital overcrowding and pay and conditions respectively. Accident and Emergency staff carried out a mass sick day strike at San Fernando General Hospital on 16th of April in protest at overcrowding. The situation has become so bad that the asthma room, which is supposed to be dedicated to people awaiting emergency asthma treatment, is being used as a holding bay for those awaiting hospital beds.

WORLDWIDE: At least 1,200 people were executed in 2007 and many more were killed by the state, in secret, in countries including China, Mongolia and Vietnam. The figures come from Amnesty International's yearly statistics, *Death Sentences and Executions in 2007*, issued earlier this month, which say that at least 1,252 people were executed in 24 countries. Up to 27,500 people are estimated to be on death row across the world.

LENS CAP RUSSIAN ANARCHISTS



A demonstration in Moscow took place earlier this month against police brutality in the city and torture practices taking place at Sokolniki police station. Around 200 demonstrators, mostly anarchists, demanded an end to beatings and the violent dispersion of demonstrators in the city. Police were slow to arrive at the scene, and when three riot vans did turn up, they were hampered by heavy traffic at the unauthorised action, allowing the demonstrators to escape before felony charges were laid over the action. The mainstream media followed the official police line that traffic had been halted by '20 football hooligans'.

One year on strike for journalists

It has been the longest lockout in newspaper history, and shows no signs of abating, as journalists at a Quebec newspaper are celebrating a year on strike – and the foundation of their own rival free newspaper in the city.

The *Journal de Québec* newspaper is still refusing to enter negotiations having found strike-breakers to continue production, or even engage in arbitration with the reporters, who have set up a rival publication, *Media-Matin Québec*, with a paper circulation of over 40,000 and a popular website. In response, *MMQ* are calling for a boycott of their new rivals until they agree to come to the table.

On 22nd April last year, Quebecor's flagship newspaper locked out its employees following

a dispute over how an expansion into new media would be handled. Reporters on the paper were among the best paid in the country, but drew the line at plans to extend their working week, forcing them to provide photos and web material and potentially eroding the quality of their work.

Within two days, the journalists had decided on a course of action, and were bringing out their own daily publication. Commentators gave them only a few weeks to survive, saying the paper was overstaffed and under-advertised. Yet through a combination of solidarity fundraisers and new advertising, the paper is still going while the *Journal* continues to pay exorbitant rates to its strike-breakers, including high salaries, four day weeks and paid birthdays off.

Notes from the United States

A new bill being brought forward would prohibit state schools in Arizona from teaching anything which "encourage[d] dissent from the values of American democracy and western civilisation". Further, if passed, it would prevent students in Arizona's universities, and community colleges (the equivalent of the further education sector in the UK) from forming groups based in whole or part on the race of their members. Potentially this would rule out such groups as the Black Business Students Association (at Arizona State University) and Native Americans United (at Northern Arizona University) and the

Movimiento Estudiantil Chicano de Aztlan. They would not be allowed to operate on any (publicly funded) campus.

The sponsor of the proposal (introduced as an amendment to State Senate Bill 1108 and approved 9-6 by the House Appropriations Committee) is Representative Russell Pearce; he objects to the use of public money in "indoctrinating" students in "anti-American or seditious thinking". "This bill basically says, 'You're here. Adopt American values,'" commented state legislator John Kavanagh. "If you want a different culture, then fine,

Egypt cracks down post-strike

Following a period of upheavals in Egypt, the state is attempting to reassert control with a series of measures aimed at curbing both the labour movement and the Muslim Brotherhood, the country's largest radical Islamic group.

In its most recent bill, parliament has cleared legislation outlawing public demonstrations in or near religious establishments, and continues to hold a large number of labour activists in jail.

Some commentators are arguing that the new measures stem from a string of incidents of labour unrest, in particular from severe rioting in the town of Mahalla which took place in early April.

Over 200 people were spirited away by the state during the fighting, which started in response to violent police attacks on peaceful demonstrators, and there have been widespread reports of torture in the prisons since then of people considered ringleaders.

In response, a general strike was called by socialists which was widely held to be an example of 'online organising' by the mainstream media. While the strike did see Cairo emptied of people, the government reacted swiftly, with web activists were among those arrested, most notably the administrator of a group on online social networking site Facebook who was calling for support, Ghad Party member Israa. Organisers called for demonstrations to begin from mosque sites around the capital of Cairo.

However some class struggle writers are downplaying the significance of the strikes, saying that, called by middle-class socialist bloggers, they failed to reach into working class neighbourhoods. Hossam el-Hamalawy, a journalist based in the city, said: "I expressed



Photo: Sarahawwy

DUPLICITY: Police sabotage their own trucks before blaming demonstrators during the April riots, in part to justify subsequent repression.

reservations which I and my comrades in the Socialist movement had about the 6th April strike call. And let's face it, the country was not brought to halt. The trains kept on going, so did the buses and virtually all other main government and business facilities. The factories that were brought to a halt or semi halt where the cement and grain mills ... places where the socialists either have a presence or sympathisers on the ground."

At most, according to another commentator, Khawaga, the strike have helped focus Mubarak's forces on re-monopolising Egypt's political life. The closing down of dissent at the mosques was on the cards before the strikes primarily as a measure against the Muslim Brotherhood, which is the main

threat to state dominance of the mosques. It comes on top of an existing law banning more than six people congregating in a public place, which is used at the state's discretion.

The state does however seem intent on avoiding a repeat performance. Khawaga told *Freedom*: "There are still a few hundred rioters from Mahalla in jail, a few labour organisers, bloggers and journalists, and tons of Muslim Brothers (even though they did not take part in the 'general strike'). As Mahalla was the symbol of resistance/opposition to the regime, Mahalla was also made an example of. Talking to a few activists here we believe that the call for a general strike in no small part added to the severe repression in Mahalla."

Notes from the Unites States

◀ page 6

go back to that culture."

It also seems likely that such a measure would have the effect of destroying Mexican American curricula in Arizona's publicly-funded schools, colleges and universities.

- In November 2006 a young black man living in New York, Sean Bell, was murdered by New York police on what would have been his wedding day. They fired over 50 bullets; this necessitated the police reloading even though Bell and his companions – all unarmed, all black – were already down. At the end of April a judge acquitted the police responsible for the murders. The response of community leader and activist Al Sharpton: "We strategically know how to stop this city so it will stand still and realise that you do not have the right to shoot down unarmed innocent civilians with no probable cause... But they show now that they will not hold

police accountable. Well, guess what. If you won't, we will."

- As previously reported in *Freedom*, hundreds of cases have recently come to light where women serving in the military were assaulted, attacked and raped by fellow soldiers. Perhaps the failure to act by the US Department of 'Justice' is an example of the 'culture of life' Bush espoused in a recent speech to the Pope during his visit.

The best those reporting crimes could hope for, it seems, was an admission by Sigal Mandelker, an attorney with the department's criminal division, that the 'events' "can be hard to investigate. It is an unfortunate fact that the crimes occur in a war zone and there are numerous difficulties of investigating a case when the conduct occurred in a war zone," she said.

Louis Further

Anti-war day call from Spain

Moc-Valencia, part of the Spanish anti-military group alternativa antimilitarista, are calling for a Europe-wide day of action against rising militarism and co-operation with the US war machine.

The group, linked to the European Peace Action campaign – which includes War Resisters International, Aldermaston Women's Peace Camp and Trident Ploughshares on its list of affiliated groups – is suggesting November 14th-15th as an umbrella date for autonomous actions to protest all current conflicts involving EU countries.

In a statement, the group wrote: "Europe serves as a launch pad for military interventions worldwide. In 2003, there were 54,000 Europe-based US military personnel who were directly involved in the war against Iraq. More than 25,000 European soldiers fight under NATO command in Afghanistan. EU forces are intervening in Africa. Both NATO and the EU are developing rapid intervention forces. War Starts from Europe. Let's stop war from Europe."

Weblinks: europeanpeaceaction.org or insumissia.org

The Anarchist Film Festival on Tyneside

David Douglass looks at the big spring show for Projectile's fourth year

One of the highlights of the anarchist calendar has to be the Projectile Festival in Newcastle Upon Tyne. Developing from The Radical Side Cinema on the Quayside Newcastle, Projectile moved to a new venue in 2006, The Star and Shadow up at Ouseburn.

Built in a converted warehouse, 'the Star' has provided a backdrop to the event ever since, and it has been going from strength to strength in the range of the topics debated as well as the quality and impact of its films.

From its inception the Star has aimed at bringing 'niche' films enjoyed among the chattering classes in exclusive studios, if not to 'the masses' then at least to a wide swathe of the Geordie population.

Linked to this has been the venue as a platform for working class historians and libertarian speakers opening up genuine debate and enquiry, in the style of the working men's clubs at their inception. In those days crowds of working people would flock to the club to hear a debate on Anarchism or Communism or Christianity versus Humanism, rather than see a stripper or hear a club turn.

Projectile continues this tradition, with a range of dynamic topics and guest speakers, coupled with a glittering array of well-chosen films, and highly rated bands and musicians. The event is rapidly outgrowing its straining budget and crowd capacity. Next year there are bold plans to spread the festival into numerous clubs and pubs and make the town and its population an integral part of the event.

The 'Tyneside' in the title isn't simply a geographical location – but also a place of history and ideas for the revolutionary working class movement. This is an important part of the festival for it links our politics in the here and now to those of our forebears. The collective see it as a continuation of that deep tradition, which once caused a Home Secretary of the 1700s to describe Tyneside as a hotbed of "anarchism and atheism". This is however not simply some exercise in history and 'roots' it is an organising conference too, debating ideas of how to advance how to meet the challenges of the current global ruling class.

Full Weekend Passes for Projectile cost £25 (or £15 unwaged/low waged), though no one will be turned away. Those attending can also opt to buy a Day Pass for £10. Those not wanting to buy a Weekend or Day Pass can pay 'per film' (£4/3). In addition, from Saturday onwards, all talks and workshops are free. Without a pass, we are asking for a £5/3 donation for the Chomsky session and entry to the Friday Cabaret is £2. The Saturday and Sunday gigs are £7 each.

Programme

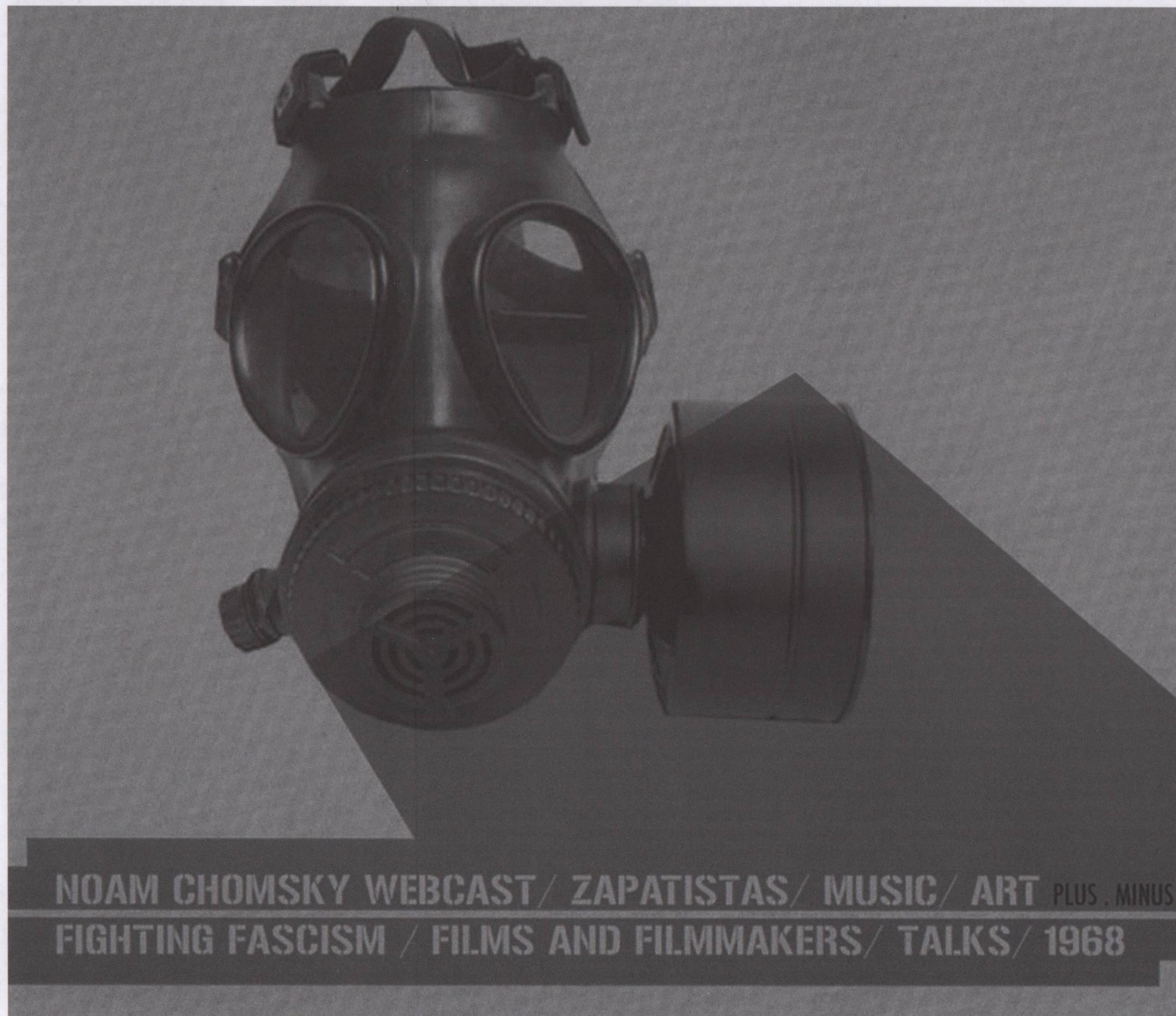
- 5.30pm Registration opens.
- 7.30pm Noam Chomsky Webcast. Professor Noam Chomsky's work in linguistics is recognised as internationally significant. He is also a self-professed

FRIDAY 23rd May

- libertarian socialist and outspoken opponent of capitalism. (This event will be held at the University of Northumbria, City Campus, see projectile.org.uk)
- 10pm Back to the Star and Shadow for a Cabaret Night, starring Alistair Hulett.
- 11.30pm *Lady Snowblood 2: Love Song of Vengeance* (89 minutes). Yuki, the avenging heroine of *Lady Snowblood*, returns in *Lady Snowblood 2*. To escape the gallows she must accept a mission to kill the dangerous anarchist Tokunaga Ransui. Will she succeed? Perhaps you can guess the rest...

SATURDAY 24th May

- 11am *Non Son L'uno Per Cento (They Are Not One Percent)* (75 Minutes). In director Antonio Morabito's documentary, we see a publisher, a university professor, a sculptor, a historian and a typographer taking the audience on a journey talking about anarchy, the FAI (Federazione Anarchica Italiana), departing from 1894, through major historical events up until the present. Alfonso Nicolazzi, Gigi Di Lembo, Dominique Stroobant, Massimiliano Giorgi and Donato Landini invite us to a world that is often talked about in an awry way – or not talked about at all.
- 11am The ABC of Anarchism. Everything you ever wanted to know about anarchism, but were too afraid to ask – an introduction to the groups, the ideas and the jargon.
- 1pm *Ethel MacDonald: An Anarchist's Story* (75 minutes). Mark Littlewood's documentary looks at the remarkable life of Ethel MacDonald, the life-long revolutionary. During the Spanish revolution, she made English language broadcasts from Barcelona. The filmmaker will be available after the screening.
- 3pm Roundtable Discussion – Current Struggles and Community Organising. You've heard the theory and the ideas, but what do anarchists actually do? In this session, there's a chance to discuss the actual struggles that the working class engages in and the role libertarians play.
- 4.45pm Paul Mason – The Paris Commune. Paul Mason, author of *Live Working or Die Fighting: How the Working Class Went Global*, talks about the self-organisation of the working class from the Paris Commune to modern day China.
- 6pm *Building a Broken Mousetrap: The Ex Live in New York* (63 minutes). Its 2004 and veteran Dutch anarcho-punks The Ex



are in New York to play the Knitting Factory. However, George Bush and the Republican National Convention are also in town. Jem Cohen's documentary provides coverage of this frenetic gig – cut with images of New York life and the anti-war protests.

- 8pm Gig, a line up headed by punk legends Oi Polloi and supported by local bands.

SUNDAY 25th May

- 11pm May '68 and After... a Geordie perspective. Based upon the forthcoming autobiography *Coaldust and Stardust*, Dave Douglass presents an account of Tyneside's

education. In this neglected classic, the children react against that oppression with a fast moving revolt – a kind of anarchist Saint Trinians. Introduced by Nick Heath.

- 6.30pm *The Free Voice of Labor: The Jewish Anarchists* (58 minutes). This 1980 Pacific Street film examines the history of Jewish Anarchism in the early twentieth century. Marking the closure of the newspaper *Freie Arbeiter Stimme*, *The Free Voice of Labor* examines the centrality of anarchism to this migrant community in America.
- 8pm Gig featuring The Ramonas plus a night of Ska and local DJs.

MONDAY 26th May

- 11am *Porto Marghera: the last firebrands* (52 minutes). The story of workers struggling against precarious employment and hazardous working conditions in this booming industrial zone, from the 1950s through to the '70s. Those active speak of their experiences and the role of autonomous assemblies.
- 11am Fighting the Fash 1: An Introduction. Fascism hasn't gone away and groups like the NF remain a threat. The BNP too still peddle filth and division. What's the best way to combat them? A chance to discuss this with people active in Antifa and the Green Brigades
- 1pm *Matewan* (135 minutes). Set in the 1920s West Virginia coalfields, John Sayles 1987 *Matewan* is based on true events. The film explores a struggle for unionisation, set against company violence and attempts to create ethnic divisions.
- 1pm Fighting the Fash 2: A Workshop. Following on from the earlier introduction, an opportunity to put some ideas together about ways forward.

ACCOMMODATION

The collective are happy to provide free accommodation for anyone travelling from outside the area. Bring a sleeping bag and let them know when you are coming (along with any special needs) email info@projectile.org.uk

Alternatively, Newcastle has a number of cheap hostels, for example The Albatross Hostel at 51 Grainger Street is about a mile from the Star and Shadow Cinema. They have 24-hour access and currently, spaces in a mixed dorm. Prices are around £19.50 per person per night. See hostelworld.com/availability.php/Albatross-NewcastleuponTyne-14250

The Newcastle YHA Hostel is in Jesmond, just over a mile north-east of the City Centre. It currently has spaces at £16 (£12 for under 18s) per person per night. Its only drawback is an 11pm close. For more details go to www.yha.org.uk

Cheap hotels/bed and breakfasts tend to get snapped up early. However, you could try The Roseberry Hotel in Jesmond. From £24 single and £50 double/twin, see roseberryhotel.co.uk/hotelrates.htm

the screening there will be a discussion led by Mike Valance, an anarchist from the Scottish Zapatistas Solidarity Group, and the filmmakers.

- 3.55pm Chris Reeves, Platform Films – a chance to meet Chris Reeves of Platform Films, makers of *The Miners Campaign Tapes*; *Not in My Name* and *Proud Arabs and Texas Oilmen*. There'll be an opportunity to see extracts from these important films and to discuss the work of Platform Films.
- 5.20pm *Zero de Conduite* (43 minutes). Jean Vigo's influential 1933 film draws on his own experience of boarding schools and the repressive nature of institutionalised

contribution and perspective to the events of May '68 and the period following. It tells of 'the bold and Geordie Cong' a sarcastic term given by the 'old left' to the regions young anarchists and revolutionary socialist milieu, which became a badge of identity.

- 1pm Open Meeting Slot. Anybody attending Projectile can hold their own meeting, discussion or performance.
- 2.40pm *Salud y Solidaridad (Health and Solidarity)* (21 minutes). This new film documents the struggle of the people of Zapatista autonomous municipality '16th February' to construct their own health clinic, run by and for the community. Following

COMMENT

ABOUT FREEDOM

ANGEL ALLEY

Welcome to our election special! To mark this very important occasion, which has seen a bumbling fool take over from an incompetent crook in working out how best to encourage big business in London, and a bunch of reactionary neo-liberals wrest control of powerless local councils from a bunch of other neo-liberals, we're publishing absolutely nothing at all about any of them.

That's right, no breathless adulation of preferred candidates, no half-assed 'analysis' of voting trends, no terrified moaning that the BNP have picked up a few more councillors and it's all our fault for not turning out in greater numbers.

In an age when it has never been more stark that these non-entities who call themselves our 'representatives' are all dependent on business, when left and right are the same side of the same coin, the news coverage of such inanity has never been so hysterically enthusiastic. We see no reason to copy them.

So instead, hopefully some of the news we're publishing this issue will be genuinely useful. Certainly the plight of social carers and by extension, their clients is something which needs more than a change of face at the councils to sort out. Projectile may well be something you genuinely find interesting, and who knows, maybe a bit of knowledge about the situation in Egypt may inspire someone to build up those international links so vital to real 'regime change'.

Rob Ray

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NEXT ISSUE

The next issue will be dated 24th May 2008 and the last day to get copy to us for that issue will be Thursday 15th May. 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

Recently, the National Union of Teachers held a one-day strike over pay. Workers at the oil refinery in Grangemouth struck over pensions. Civil servants and some further education lecturers also joined the striking on the 24th April, again over pay. Staff at housing charity Shelter have also been on strike over changes to terms and conditions and pay cuts.

Most of these strikes are limited, usually only a day or two long. While it is encouraging that workers are starting to stand up for themselves, it's hardly the 1970s. All these workers have legitimate grievances and all are complying with the UK's draconian anti-union laws, which criminalise solidarity and make unions jump through hoops.

However, the media reaction has been overwhelmingly hostile. The teachers' union presented their dispute in simple terms: a pay offer below the rate of inflation is a pay cut; if Britain is serious about education, teachers' pay needs to compete with other graduate-level jobs. All the main parties fell over themselves to condemn teachers for "harming children's education". However, I'm not sure it compares to the damage done by year after year of failed government experiments whether the rigid, doctrinaire national curriculum of the Tories; or Labour's regime of testing and gimmicks. The media were hostile, and letters pages of newspapers and online comment was filled with a lot of ill-thought-out bile.

Many people who work in the private sector for small, nasty, mean employers think the public sector is featherbedded. They still have some form of pension, have holiday entitlement above the statutory minimum and enjoy the limited protection offered by unions. Of course, any pay increase

for teachers or civil servants will have to be paid for by the government. However, the government is so hard up it's paying billions on the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, and has pledged a further £50 billion to bail out greedy banks who've got into trouble through the sub-prime crisis.

The money is potentially there – the argument is about what else it would be taken from. The media try to frame the debate about resources in such a way as to limit it to choosing between several equally worthy causes. But why not cut spending on arms, or war, or management consultants?

The workers at Grangemouth, who work for a chemicals multinational called Ineos, have been described as greedy and selfish by the press. In fact, they are behaving more selflessly than most by fighting to keep a final-salary pension scheme open to new entrants. Again, the grumblers complain that they don't have a pension scheme. A lot of the smallest and meanest companies only have schemes for the bosses, and many others have closed over the last decade. Again, if workers had been prepared to fight to defend them, maybe they wouldn't be.

By concentrating on the grumbling from the poorest workers the question of resources is neatly sidestepped. The answer to all those who complain about teachers asking for more is to remember that the teachers are in this position because they are prepared to band together and fight. If people in parts of the private sector never get a pay rise, then perhaps they should do something about it. Might I suggest getting together with their workmates, putting together some demands and asking the boss for more money?

Blog Bites

(from ianbone.wordpress.com)

Well let's admit it – to celebrate 25 years of Class War is to admit to failure – we haven't abolished class society or overthrown the ruling class and established proletarian autonomy.

But the process of failure has had its moments – its Days Of Hope – its heart surging adrenalin rushes – the 1985 riots, the miners strike, the poll tax riots – as well as its fiascos and absurdities.

My favourite Class War outing was the Henley Regatta in 1985 – but you couldn't get away with that now without being policed into holding pens.

Class War the paper started out one rainy weekend at 19 Shelley Crescent, Mayhill, Swansea – one of Swansea's more notorious streets shall we say – with no intention of the paper lasting more than one issue or spawning a political movement that was still going a quarter of a century later.

For some of us it has been central to our

lives throughout that time, others have come and gone but all added something to the extraordinary mix that has been Class War. To mention here two people – Jimmy Grimes who co-produced the first issue and Jan Green who financed it – both still feistily alive and kicking. We ain't won yet – but we ain't stopped trying comrades. When we first held up that raggedy sheet reading 'BEHOLD YOUR FUTURE EXECUTIONERS' outside the Dorchester in Park Lane – we didn't put a date on it!

Class War is currently undergoing a bit of a revival – there's a new paper out and there'll be a lively Class War presence at all next week's momentous events. Old members are returning and we have our own youth Death Brigade, plus the funniest paper and stickers... and banners which reject bourgeois ideas of spelling and grammar... what are you waiting for, JOIN CLASS WAR TODAY!

Anarchism in China

For me the article 'Anarchism in China' (*Freedom*, 2nd February) was not an easy read; 'exasperating' is the word that comes to mind. It begins by considering "multiple locally specific reasons why anarchism gained such widespread popularity in China" and seems to agree, grudgingly, with one expert on the subject, that there were "connections between Taoist ideas of 'order without coercion' and the later emergence of anarchism". I would say that order without coercion is the very essence of anarchism.

The reader is then given a stern warning: "what must be deliberately avoided is any over-focusing on the 'anarchistic' elements contained within Chinese traditional thought to the detriment of an understanding of the important role played by global migration and by colonialism itself."

When I'd finished rubbing my eyes, I wondered: why the inverted commas round 'anarchistic'? And what is anarchistic about colonialism and global migration?

The argument seems to be that colonialism (though widely regarded as a particularly abhorrent form of exploitation of the weak by the strong) and global migration (though rarely perceived as a harbinger of anarchism) brought China into contact with Western ideas, which then popularised anarchism much more effectively than the pre-existing 'anarchistic' elements.

But what exactly were those ideas? The article says: "It was through the conduit of influential Western ideas of liberalism, scientism, and progress that anarchism was able to gain its strongest foothold." But those ideas have nothing necessarily to do with anarchism at all.

Having represented Western ideas as a great boon for anarchism, the article goes on: "And ironically, it was the new realisation of China as a nation-state in a decentralised, cosmopolitan world of nation-states, rather than the centre of all culture, that brought about the rise of an ideology that called for its abolition." So the upshot is that irrelevant Western ideas first popularised anarchism in China and then abolished it. Is this a likely story?

If the article is right, then why didn't those Western ideas play the same futile role in Africa, India, and wherever else they went? Or why didn't they play it in the West? Isn't it more likely that the first people in the world to see the need for 'order without coercion' had been the Taoists, and that this revolutionary insight was spreading in China, only to be wiped out by the poisonous nationalism and Bolshevism which were the only Western ideological factors in the story, and turned it into a tragedy?

Francis Ellingham

Governments Lie

It should be stamped on every reporter's forehead that governments lie. The run-up to the Iraq invasion should be proof enough of that, you would think. However, this is not the case as can be seen from the media's

reporting of Iran. The USA wants to invade and spreads the appropriate misinformation to facilitate that aim, while the media dutifully reports it.

This can be seen from the media response to the incident last March, when Iran seized fifteen British sailors and marines and held them for several weeks. At the time, this was portrayed as an unprovoked attack by Iranian troops. The Defence Secretary informed Parliament that there was "no doubt that HMS Cornwall was operating in Iraqi waters and that the incident itself took place in Iraqi waters". However, newly released Ministry of Defence documents on the arrest of state shed a different light. Firstly, the arrests took place in waters that are not internationally agreed as Iraqi. Secondly, the USA/UK had unilaterally designated a dividing line between Iraqi and Iranian waters in the Gulf without telling Iran where it was (the Iranian boats were crossing this invisible line at a rate of three times a week). Thirdly, British troops apparently raised their weapons first before the Iranian gunboats came alongside. ("Report reveals Iran seized British sailors in disputed waters", *The Times*, 17th April)

In other words, the Iranian's were telling the truth while the government repeatedly told Parliament and the country that the personnel were seized in Iraqi waters. Unsurprisingly, this awkward fact has been somewhat less prominently reported by the media than the original international incident.

Meanwhile, in America, Hillary Clinton is raising the prospect of nuclear war in the Middle East, discussing "the potential for a nuclear attack by Iran". While there is absolutely no evidence that it is, she asserts that Iran "appears to be its continuing goal of obtaining nuclear weapons". If so, it would be "risking massive retaliation were they to launch a nuclear attack on Israel". Given that the US has repeatedly refused to rule out nuclear first strikes against Iran and that the US Nuclear Posture Review made public in 2002 specifically envisioned the use of nuclear

weapons on a first strike basis, even against non-nuclear armed states, raising the possibility "an unprovoked nuclear attack by Iran" is surreal. Moreover, it is America, not Iran, which has the track record of launching 'unprovoked' wars in the Middle East (and elsewhere).

Her comments are surreal, as is the speculation that "if Iran were to become a nuclear power it could set off an arms race that would be incredibly dangerous and destabilising because the countries in the region are not going to want Iran to be the only nuclear power so I could imagine that they would be rushing to obtain nuclear weapons themselves." Conveniently unmentioned is the awkward fact that Israel already is the sole nuclear power in the region, ignoring the US occupation forces in Iraq of course. Needless to say, she did not ponder her comments that "other countries ... might be intimidated and bulled into submission by Iran because they were a nuclear power". Still, as invasion of Iran is a long term goal of US imperial interests, her comments were not subject to the mockery they so richly deserved. Unsurprisingly, this insanity is shared by John McCain.

In the real world, International Atomic Energy Agency officials complained in 2007 that most US intelligence shared with it to date about Iran's nuclear program has proved to be inaccurate. In later October of that year, the head of the IAEA stated that he had seen 'no evidence' of Iran developing nuclear weapons. He was worried about the growing rhetoric from American which focused on Iran's alleged intentions to build a nuclear weapon rather than evidence it was actively doing so. Given the Iraq debacle, we can guess the response of the media when the US state decides that the time is right to launch an attack on Iran – conduits for state propaganda at the time and the pronouncement, afterwards, that they will not be fooled next time...

Iain McKay

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GETTING ACTIVE

PRISON NEWS

Hayes diabetes fears

Robert Seth Hayes is a former Black Panther Party member who has been incarcerated in New York State for 35 years. Seth has diabetes and hepatitis C and, as many of you know, he has received shockingly poor medical care. Recently, his diabetes has been out of control and he has had an infection on his toe which has gone untreated. Despite the fact that his blood sugars have often been sky-high, in the eight years that he has been diagnosed with diabetes, he has never seen an endocrinologist or diabetes specialist.

His supporters are asking that letters be written to Brian Fischer, Commissioner of the NYS Department of Correctional Services (Building 2, 1220 Washington Avenue, Albany, NY 12226) to insure that Seth get the care that he requires.

They are demanding that: a) Seth's toe infection get dealt with immediately, and b) he is seen and his care supervised by an outside diabetes specialist (if they cannot do it at Wende or in the Buffalo area, he should be transferred to a facility where that can happen).

If possible, please send a copy of any correspondence to Susan Tipograph, 350 Broadway, Suite 700, New York, NY 10013, USA.

Antifa prisoners

- Lasandra Burwell W063658, Ohio Reformatory for Women, 1479 Collins Avenue, Marysville, OH 43040, USA. Serving five years for taking part in an anti-fascist demonstration that turned into a riot.
- Vahtang Devitlidze, ul. Libbedova 42, UO 68/2, otryad 14, brigada 142, g. Hagyshensk, Krasnodarskiy Kray, 352680 Russia. Serving two years for stabbing a neo-nazi in the leg whilst defending himself from attack.
- Augustin Kraus, Vazebni veznice, PP-1, Litomerice, 41 201, Czech Republic. Serving 14 months for his participation in attacks against local neo-nazis. His charge was 'bodily harm'. He speaks Czech, Slovak and Polish. You can also write him short postcards in English.
- Fabio Milan, C.C. via Pianezza 300, 10151 Torino, Italy. On remand accused of fighting with the police after an anti-fascist protest.
- Andrea Neff, Bnr: 746/07/2, Justizvollzugsanstalt für Frauen in Berlin, Arkonastrasse 56, 13189 Berlin, Germany. Serving 14 months for anti-fascist activity.
- Christian Sommermann, Bnr: 441/08/5, JVA Plötzensee, Lehrterstr. 61, 10557 Berlin, Germany. Serving 40 months for breaching the peace whilst serving a suspended sentence issued for anti-fascist activities.
- Tomasz Wiloszewski, Zakład Karny, Orzechowa 5, 98-200 Sieradz, Poland. Serving fifteen years for accidentally killing a neo-nazi whilst defending himself.



● Last month protesters blockaded UK Border Agency depots to try and combat Labour's immigration policies, and prevent vans leaving to snatch families from their beds. Annie Davis, one of the protesters from No Borders, said, "The snatching of children from their beds and imprisonment is one of the most repulsive elements of the UK immigration system. It is unacceptable for this to happen to children, it is unacceptable for this to happen to anyone."

The UK No Borders network are also taking this action in support of the detained mothers currently on hunger strike at the Yarl's Wood immigration detention centre in Bedford. To show support or if you want to get involved contact noborders.org.uk

● Campaigners are calling on people to send a letter or email of protest to those responsible for a proposal to make the Residential Caretaker for William Patten Primary School redundant.

Ricky Jones (pictured with supporters) has been in the job for ten years. He lives on the school site with his wife and three children. On 12th February 2008 the school management presented Ricky with paperwork informing him of a proposal to make his position redundant. If this proposal goes ahead Ricky and his young family will be evicted from their home.

Despite 1,400 parents, residents, colleagues and Trade Unionists signing a petition against the eviction, William Patten School and the Learning Trust are still pursuing the plan.

They claim the school needs more space although the residential property is ill-suited for educational purposes and would need major renovation.

Email: Kathryn (Head teacher of William Patten School) on kylekatherine@hotmail.com, and Walker (Chair of Governors) on admin@williampatten.hackney.scho.uk Copy in messages of protest or send messages of support to Matthew Waterfall, Hackney Unison Branch Secretary on matthew.waterfall@hackney.gov.uk

● Manchester University was the scene of a large student protest late last month, followed by an occupation of the Arthur Lewis Building led by members of the student union executive. A supporter wrote: "The Arthur Lewis building is a new million pound building that epitomises the university authorities spending priorities, while courses and staff are cut and students are getting into thousands of pounds of debt because of fees."

● Good news for the Titnore trees, as one of the developers for the West Durrington project has announced that the economy has forced it to halt new building work.

The area has been the site of a long-running protest camp designed to stop the building of a road through pristine woodlands.

On Saturday 24th May at 2pm, there will be a celebration of the second anniversary of the tree camp on the steps of the town hall. There will also be a celebration at the camp itself that evening.

Ring the camp phone at 0780 4245324 or email info@protectourwoodland.co.uk.

Anarcho-capitalism

Are anarcho-capitalists really anarchists?

In a word, no. While ‘anarcho’-capitalists obviously try to associate themselves with the anarchist tradition by using the word ‘anarcho’ or by calling themselves ‘anarchists’ their ideas are distinctly at odds with those associated with anarchism. As a result, any claims that their ideas are anarchist or that they are part of the anarchist tradition or movement are false.

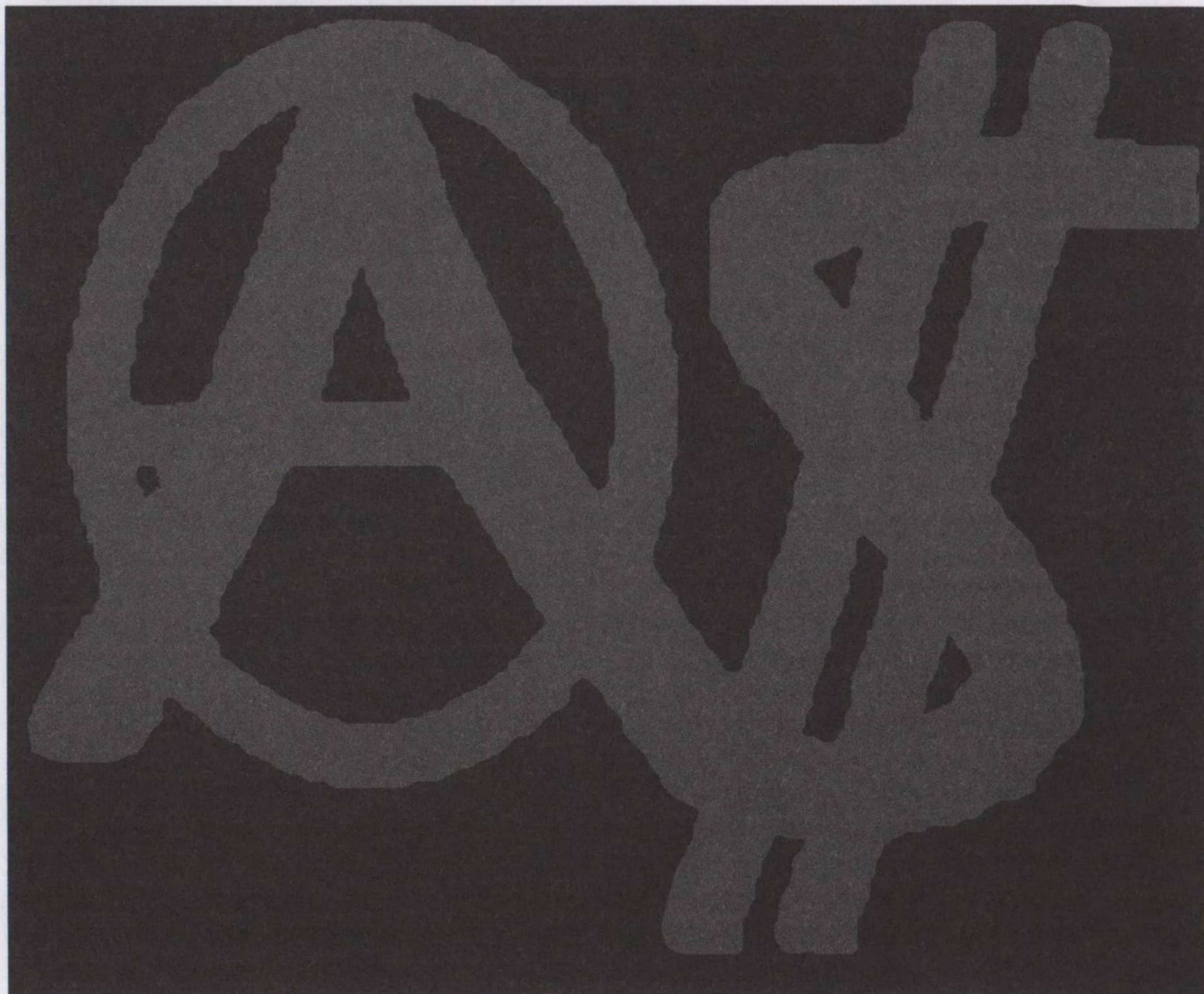
‘Anarcho’-capitalists claim to be anarchists because they say that they oppose government. However, this fails to appreciate that anarchism is a political theory. Thus, opposition to government is a necessary but not sufficient condition for being an anarchist – you also need to be opposed to exploitation and capitalist private property. As ‘anarcho’-capitalists do not consider interest, rent and profits (i.e. capitalism) to be exploitative nor oppose capitalist property rights, they are not anarchists.

Anarchist critique applies not just to the state but to all other authoritarian social institutions and how it fits into the overall anarchist analysis and struggle.

While anarchism obviously opposes the state, “sophisticated and developed anarchist theory proceeds further. It does not stop with a criticism of political organisation, but goes on to investigate the authoritarian nature of economic inequality and private property, hierarchical economic structures, traditional education, the patriarchal family, class and racial discrimination, and rigid sex- and age-roles, to mention just a few of the more important topics.” For the “essence of anarchism is, after all, not the theoretical opposition to the state, but the practical and theoretical struggle against domination.” (John Clark, *The Anarchist Moment*, pages 128 and 70)

This is also the case with individualist anarchists whose defence of certain forms of property did stop them criticising key aspects of capitalist property rights. As Jeremy Jennings notes, the “point to stress is that all anarchists, and not only those wedded to the predominant twentieth-century strain of anarchist communism have been critical of private property to the extent that it was a source of hierarchy and privilege.” He goes on to state that anarchists like Tucker and Spooner “agreed with the proposition that property was legitimate only insofar as it embraced no more than the total product of individual labour.”

It would be fair to say that most ‘anarcho’-capitalists are capitalists first and foremost. If aspects of anarchism do not fit with some element of capitalism, they will reject that element of anarchism rather than question



capitalism (Rothbard’s selective appropriation of the individualist anarchist tradition is the most obvious example of this). This means that right-‘libertarians’ attach the ‘anarcho’ prefix to their ideology because they believe that being against government intervention is equivalent to being an anarchist. That they ignore the bulk of the anarchist tradition should prove that there is hardly anything anarchistic about them at all. They are not against authority, hierarchy or the state – they simply want to privatise them.

Leading ‘anarcho’-capitalist Murray Rothbard thunders against the evil of the state, arguing that it “arrogates to itself a monopoly of force, of ultimate decision-making power, over a given territorial area.” In and of itself, this definition is unremarkable. The problems begin for Rothbard when he notes that “[o]bviously, in a free society, Smith has the ultimate decision-making power over his own just property, Jones over his, etc.” (*The Ethics of Liberty*, pages 170 and 173). The logical contradiction in this position should be obvious, but not to Rothbard.

Now, this contradiction can be solved in only one way – the users of the ‘given area’ are also its owners. In other words, a system of possession (or ‘occupancy and use’) as favoured by anarchists. However, Rothbard is a capitalist and supports private property, non-labour income, wage labour, capitalists and landlords. This means that he supports a divergence between ownership and use and this means that this “ultimate decision-making power” extends to those who use, but do not

own, such property (i.e. tenants and workers). The statist nature of private property is clearly indicated by Rothbard’s words – the property owner in an ‘anarcho’-capitalist society possesses the “ultimate decision-making power” over a given area, which is also what the state has currently. Rothbard has, ironically, proved by his own definition that ‘anarcho’-capitalism is not anarchist.

Hans-Hermann Hoppe helpfully expands on the reality of a successful ‘anarcho’-capitalism: “In a covenant concluded among proprietor and community tenants for the purpose of protecting their private property, no such thing as a right to free (unlimited) speech exists, not even to unlimited speech on one’s own tenant-property. One may say innumerable things and promote almost any idea under the sun, but naturally no one is permitted to advocate ideas contrary to the very purpose of the covenant of preserving private property, such as democracy and communism. There can be no tolerance towards democrats and communists in a libertarian social order. They will have to be physically separated and expelled from society.

Effectively the proprietor has power/authority over his tenants and can decree what they can and cannot do, excluding anyone whom they consider as being subversive. In other words, the autocratic powers of the boss are extended into all aspects of society – all under the mask of advocating liberty.

Adapted from the Anarchist FAQ

REVIEWS

WHAT'S ON

MAY

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 from 10am until 10pm, see 1968andallthat.net

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 British Anarchism and Freedom Press, a talk by Donald Rooum at 11am in the Brockway Room, Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London WC1. You'll also be able to see the exhibition of Donald's cartoons.

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

24th Happy Second Birthday Titnore Tree Camp! Party on the steps of Worthing Town Hall in Chapel Road, Worthing, from 2pm, bring music and party stuff, followed by evening celebrations at Camp Titnore.

28th Nick Heath will be giving us his take on the events of 1968 from an anarchist perspective, from 7pm at Housmans Bookshop, 5 Caledonian Road, London N1 9DX, 020 7837 4473.

29th Worthing Alliance meeting upstairs at The Rest, Bath Place, Worthing, at 8pm.

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

4th Carnival Against the Arms Trade. National mass demo against EDO MBM, wear red and bring whistles, drums etc., meet at The Level in Brighton at 12 noon, see smashedo.org.uk

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 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 or see 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, see climatecamp.org.uk

FILM

**Lust, Caution**
directed by Ang Lee

Chinese genre chameleon Lee follows gay cowboy tragedy *Brokeback Mountain* (2005) with another epic of transgressive desire in the espionage thriller *Lust, Caution* – both expanded from short stories by strong women (E. Annie Proulx, Eileen Chang) struggling against convention. Trumping the former's contrast of the constraints of cultural rootedness and middle-class mobility in shaping sensual expression,* the doomed romance here resonates with epochal historical significance – referencing ideological, cultural, and national conflict inextricably complicating individual vicissitudes of gender role, performance and identity. Again, universal themes are conjured from highly specific contexts (the Second World War Japanese occupation of China) and characters (student Wong Chia Chi erotically ensnaring for assassination purposes collaborationist secret police chief, Mr Yee) through immaculate structure, design, acting and cinematography.

So, our Hong Kong college theatre ensemble graduates from patriotic productions to plotting a strike at the puppet state in the person of its chief enforcer. As bait, Wong insinuates herself into Mrs Yee's circle, honing the simulation of upper-class mores and inching closer to intimacy with the quarry while her most dissolute comrade initiates her in the sexual athleticism necessary to complete her task.

QUIZ ANSWERS

1. Boredom.
2. To forbid.
3. To dig themselves a grave.
4. It's painful to suffer the bosses; it's even stupider to pick them.
5. Others will think for you.
6. To degrade all pleasures.

Despite the amateurism they nearly succeed but the set-up fails, and three years later Wong is aimlessly ensconced in her impoverished Shanghai family. Yee's glittering career is also established there, and the rest of her troupe – now under Maoist direction – make contact to continue the plan. However, the ensuing passionate affair develops a life of its own as the group's cadre commander defers the payoff in favour of gathering further intelligence. When the crunch finally comes, Wong's attachment leads her to warn Yee, who escapes and has the conspirators executed.

This lustfully cautionary tale escalates from the traditional Chinese scandal of private yearnings disrupting the public cultivation of respectable decorum. Yet whereas suffocating strictures of conformism bolster the status quo, the unruly desire exemplified by sexuality and its discontents may be deployed subversively in the gaps between the minutiae of custom and surface appearance. But with seductive tension mounting towards ecstatic release, Wong's initial motivation to play a part in liberating her social world from oppression is undone by the exquisite bodily intensity experienced in the liaison – having subsumed her entire existence in perfecting its foreplay and consummation. Lee underscores the contradictions with magnificent explicit sex scenes, convincingly depicting both protagonists' anguished, aggressive, will-to-connect forcefully overflowing other agendas. Illuminating the fundamental obstinacy of bodily urgency in socialisation, *Lust, Caution's* melodramatic sublation of sex and death moreover illustrates the fatal naiveté of instrumentally linking libidinal logic to conscious, rational projects – whether mundanely personal, cynically self-interested, or those their adherents imagine to be wholly collectively worthy.

www.tomjennings.pwp.blueyonder.co.uk

* See my comments on *Brokeback Mountain* in 'Cowboys and Injuries' (starandshadow.org.uk).

Into the wild blue yonder

There are some cartoonish elements, but the *Sky Blue* has the happiest of endings, finds Rob Ray

Growing out of the east-asian graphic novel form known as manga, anime is a phenomenon which has often passed western audiences by, bar a few major hits such as Hayao Miyazaki's *Spirited Away* and derivative Hollywood blockbusters such as *The Matrix*.

In Japanese culture in particular, anime – a form of film animation originally inspired by the combination of Japanese graphic works and Disney characters – is a major art form which regularly outperforms Hollywood's best efforts.

It has in recent years made significant inroads into the west. Most notably splashing into youth culture with *Akira*, and reaching huge audiences with *Transformers*, it has come to at times dominate children's cartoon programming, with shows such as *Pokemon*, *Digimon*, *Yu-Gi-Oh*, *Astroboy* and others all coming from original Japanese programming.

Its more adult showings are now increasingly reaching across the divide, mainly through a strong cult following of its science fiction and fantasy arms, with film-length anime such as *Ghost in The Shell*, *Vampire Hunter D*, *Ninja Scroll* and the back catalogue of Studio Ghibli all not only influencing today's teenagers, but cutting edge creative talents as well.

Recent works in the US with a major anime influence include *The Boondocks* animated series, *Afro-Samurai* and famously, *Kill Bill*.

Big colourful action movies dominate the market for English translations, particularly following a formula of anti-heroes in a post-



CHANCE MEETING: Shua and Kay come across each other as he flees Ecobahn.

apocalyptic setting which follows the path to mainstream success forged by *Akira*.

Sky Blue steps smartly into this category. A 2004 showing from South Korea, it was designed to be the country's breakout effort into the international anime business, receiving mixed responses when it premiered at the Sundance film festival. No expense was spared in creating a lavish visual experience, mixing cutting edge camera technology (prototypes from Episode 2 of *Star Wars*, no less) with traditional hand-drawn character animation.

What drew this review however is its 'class and grass' content. It's a feel-good movie for class struggle environmentalists – perhaps surprisingly, given who its next-door neighbour is.

Set in 2140, the story begins on an earth which is post-environmental disaster. As pollution spread, it upset the ecological balance, causing a permanent cloud cover to form over the world, toxic rain poisoning water

supplies and soil, killing or damaging the vast majority of the population.

Wealthy greens, seeing the disaster coming, created Ecobahn, a magnificent, cathedral-like enclosed city-space, genetically engineered to withstand the harsh environment of the world around them.

When the crash occurred they, safe in their new home, retained amazing technologies, powered by a form of toxic fuel which had to be mined from the world outside. For this, they turned to the dispossessed, living outside in this horrifying environment with their diseases and mutilations, offered a tiny handout of technological expertise and aid in exchange for dangerous mining work.

The two sides clash, with miners and the impoverished communities they live in rioting for better conditions on the off-shore platforms, for more food and better housing, which the Ecobahn residents easily crush with their vastly superior technology. The Ecobahn creed is a Prussian view of militaristic elitism – their industrial workforce are scum to be shot almost at will.

Into this dystopia steps Shua, a vigilante expelled from Ecobahn, who plans to detonate its core in the hope of returning blue skies to all. In the course of his attempt, a chance encounter with Jay, an old flame from the city, and her lover – the reason for his exile – threatens to undo his efforts and provides the romantic sub-plot.

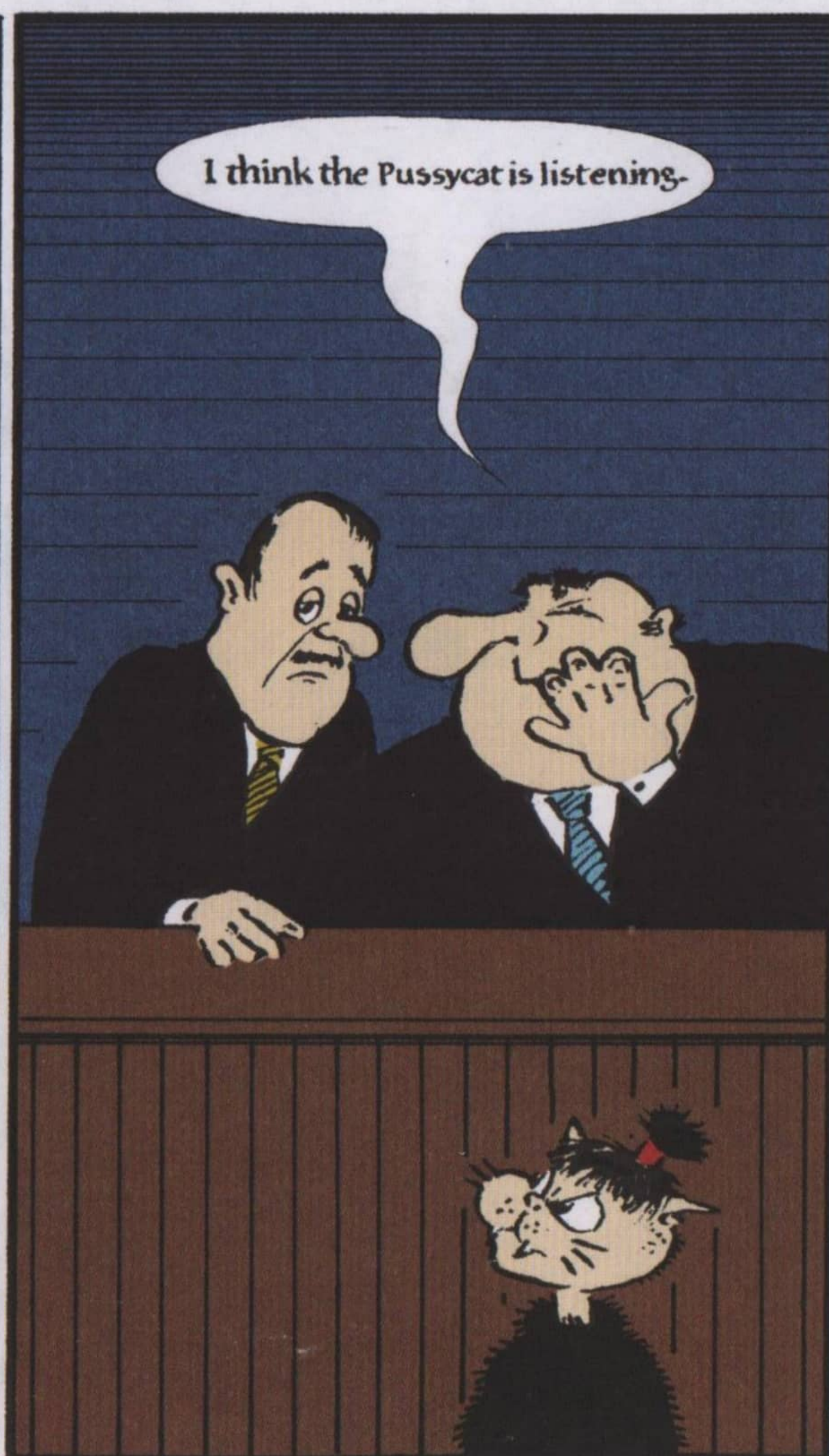
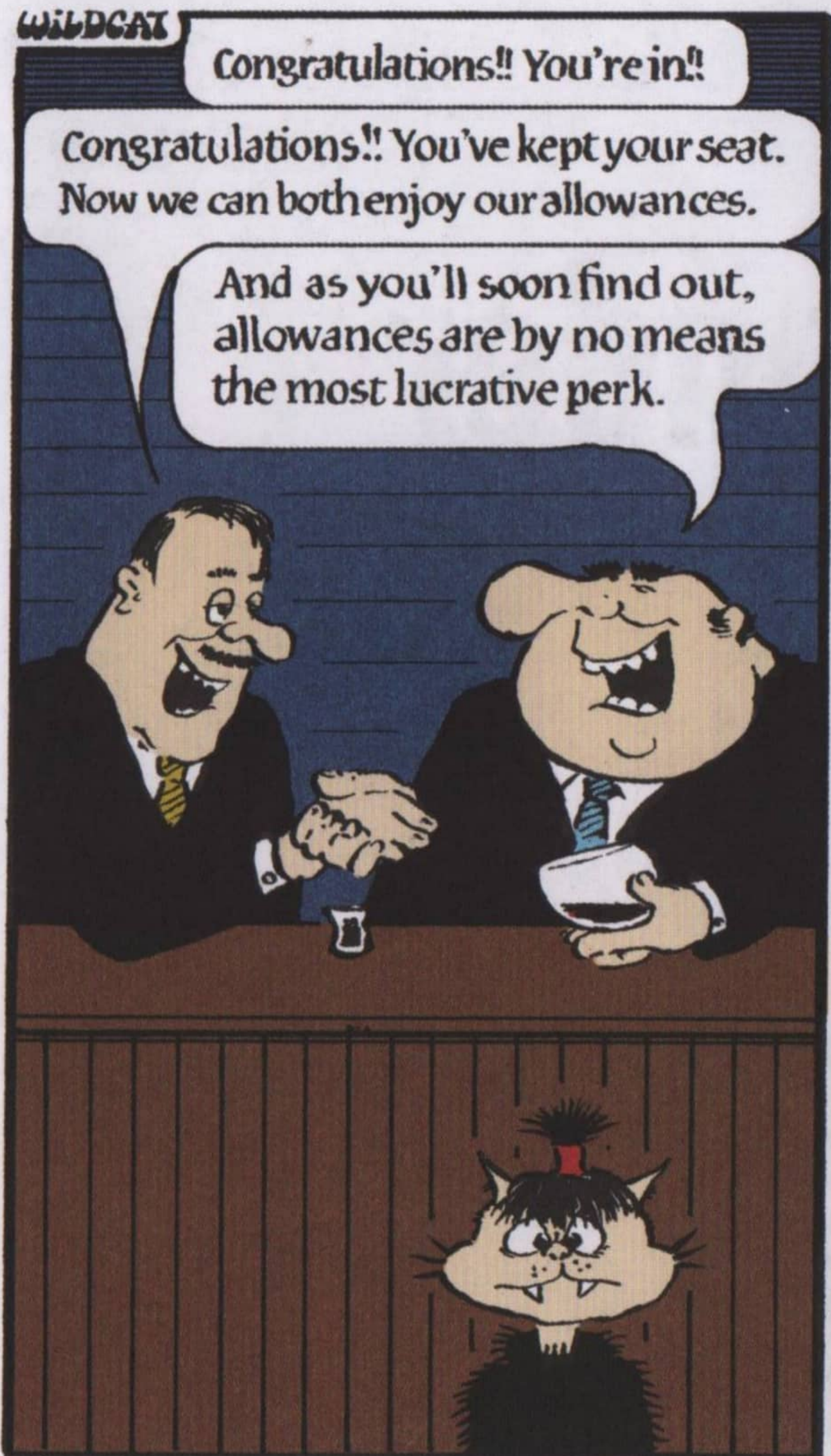
Visually, *Sky Blue* is truly stunning. The depth of colour and imagination brought to every frame is a remarkable artistic achievement rivalling that of *Ghost in The Shell: Innocence* – a recent film outing of one of Japan's most successful franchises.

Within the supposedly grey world which Shua inhabits, there are the baby-blues and sea greens of Ecobahn, contrasting with darkened slums and beautifully-rendered, eerie landscapes with the skeletons of past industry.

page 16 ►►



RIOTS: Tear gas is fired at slum dwellers by the Ecobahn police



Review

◀ page 15

The beauty of the backdrop is such that the people, traditionally drawn in the style which has come to more-or-less define the difference between new anime and CGI film, can be jarring with less detail, less depth and a more cartoonish look.

The storyline meanwhile suffers from a plethora of problems, not least some extremely ham-fisted character development. In aping Japanese anime, director Moon-sang Kim picks up some of its most two-dimensional characters, from the cyber-punk thugs of *Fist of the North Star*, *Akira* and countless other productions to the clever old man directing Shua from a distance (Dr Noah).

Shua himself is straight out of any 'lone-wolf hero with a heart of gold' adventure you could care to name. His character is flat and lifeless, embodying little more than the

focal point for fight scenes for much of the movie.

If he'd had some flaws to make him seem a bit more human, it would have gone a long way, but his supposedly quiet-type/enigmatic persona is carried to such extremes that he merely becomes boring. His status as a fallen elite, saving the day for downtrodden workers too wrapped up in their own affairs to help save themselves, is a disappointing addendum.

The love story too, leaves me cold – frankly, the wet weekend which is Jay and her incompetent soon to be ex-lover intent on hunting Shua down would have both benefited from a good kick in the arse, not to mention some serious rethinking of their scripting and even of the voice actors playing them.

However, this is not to take away from the fact that *Sky Blue* is a reasonably entertaining way to spend 86 minutes.

Without spoiling the end too much, just for once the *entire* upper-class gets its comeuppance, with the direct and palpable result that the workers have a bright future ahead of them.

THE QUIZ

All are based on slogans from the May '68 events in France

1. According to slogans from May '68, what was counter-revolutionary?
2. And what was forbidden?
3. And what was the fate of those who make revolutions by halves?
4. What is even stupider than suffering the bosses?
5. What happens if you think for others?
6. What is the only pleasure of the Bourgeoisie?

Answers on page 14

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