

PUBLIC SECTOR ATTACK

Labour swoops on public sector

Two major attacks on the public sector have been launched by the government, as 'struggling' schools and NHS hospitals could face mandatory switchovers to private for-profit firms.

Executives from companies are set to be brought into managerial roles in the NHS to replace existing bosses, under new guidelines, taking control of NHS assets, though ministers have said ownership would remain with the public sector.

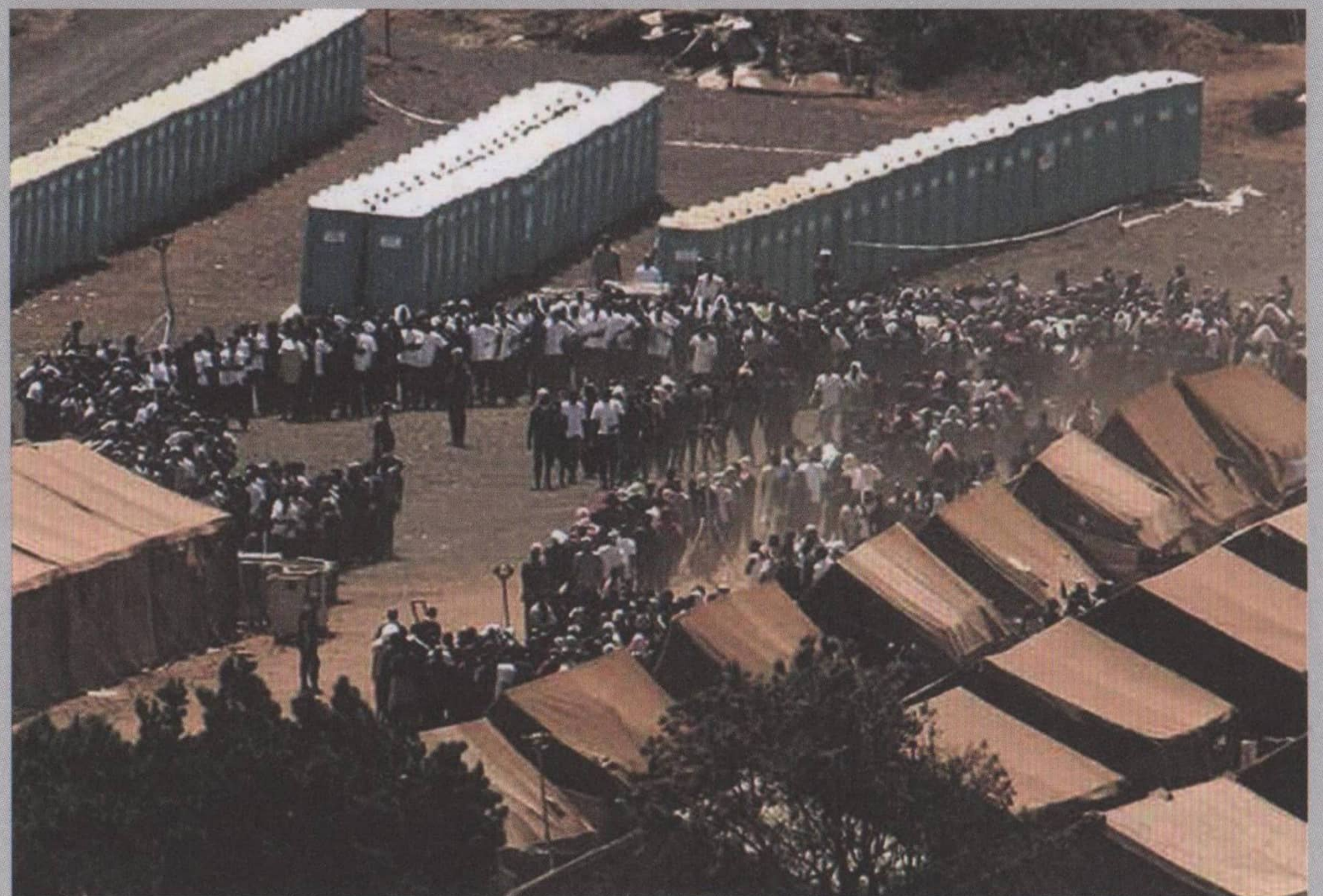
Around 20 trusts are at risk from the new proposals, which would affect administrative functions across the service, effectively allowing private firms to build up management experience which could help them to shift over other functions in future.

Health chiefs have said that private enterprise would take on only a minority of cases, but critics say it opens the door to a wholesale privatisation of administration across the NHS in the future.

Dr Jonathan Fielden, addressing the BMA Consultants Conference, said: "How many of us have seen our Trusts bring in the management consultants, paying through the nose, only to get a half baked solution and one

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LENS CAP IMMIGRATION



UNSEEN: Immigrants are held in a camp in Andalusia, late last month. Activists investigating the conditions in Spanish border camps set up to hold immigrants while they await decisions on their status have been appalled by reports from the inmates of poor access to legal or social aid, bad food, cold and lack of medical care. The camps, which come under the authority of the police, have no operational standards in place, relying on the work of NGOs for any improvements to living conditions.

TRANSPORT CUTS BITE

Network Rail is likely to attack working conditions and jobs, halt expansion plans and raise major new loans from the markets as Labour cuts funding for the railways by £1.5 billion a year.

Fare increases could also be on the way in the medium term as the company seeks to offset its losses from the new settlement.

Network Rail, a not-for-dividend group which maintains the railway network in return for payments from major train companies, saw a 20% increase in profits in the last year, to £1.2 billion, which it hopes will offset rising loan costs as it asks for £10 billion from the market over the next five years.

It is already in the process of trying to impose a 'harmonisation' process on its

workforce which the RMT union is responding to with strike action. Members went on a two-day strike on 14th and 15th June.

RMT general secretary Bob Crow said: "On top of total flexibility, multi-skilling, dangerous cuts in team sizes and an end to any idea of work-life balance, they are now talking about a jobs cull as well." The company is looking to implement up to 2,500 job cuts over the next few years.

By cutting Network Rail's settlement, the government has stripped away a layer of indirect protection for rail companies which are struggling to make profits for shareholders while maintaining a reasonable and cheap service.

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ISSN 0016-0504



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NEWS

IN BRIEF

MUSEUMS: More than 200 Museum of London (MoL) employees have begun a campaign of industrial action with a one-day strike on 9th June, in protest at their 2007/08 pay award, which is thirteen months late and, at 2%, is half the rate of inflation.

Staff at the Museum of London site and the Museum of London Archaeology Service (MoLAS) represented by the Prospect union voted by a majority of nine-to-one to strike.

POLICE: Is it okay to shoot someone not wearing body armour in the chest with a shotgun? If you answered "Let's find out!" then you may well be a member of Manchester's finest, who this week fragged a father of two whilst on a training exercise in an empty warehouse.

PC Ian Terry was playing the role of an 'escaping criminal' when he was popped off by a colleague, suggesting that the reality of the exercise was something along the lines of how to kill fleeing suspects.

WAGES: Workers are being asked to take pay cuts of up to 40% because of the economic slowdown, one of UK's biggest unions has warned.

The GMB said it had received reports from members about wage reductions of between 30% and 40%.

POLICE: The story of the two Nottingham Uni students who were arrested on bogus terror charges two weeks ago has turned into a victimisation. Hicham Yezza, one of two men arrested for downloading information about Al Qaeda from a US government website, is languishing in the Dover Immigration Removal Centre, where he is being threatened with deportation to Algeria.

Once Hich's six day stint of interrogation under Terrorism laws was over, he was promptly re-arrested by immigration officials accusing him of living and working illegally in the UK, despite the fact that he's been living, working and studying here for 13 years.
Web: freehichamyezza.wordpress.com

WORKING CONDITIONS: UK agency workers will still qualify for equal treatment after 12 weeks of employment, despite a new EU directive pressing for equality from day one.

The text of the EU Agency Workers Directive pushes for agency and temporary workers to get the same rights as permanent employees from day one of employment.

But last month, the TUC, CBI and the government agreed those equal rights would only apply after twelve weeks of employment.

FUEL: As *Freedom* goes to press, a strike by truckers at Shell has closed one in four forecourts in a dispute over a strike with their company over pay. The company transports from Shell depots across the UK. The government have considered using emergency powers, including drafting in the army, to break the strike.

LENS CAP WORLD NAKED BIKE RIDE 2008



Thousands of people turned out for this year's naked cycle ride in London. The event started in Hyde Park, then progressed through central London, through Oxford Circus, past the Houses of Parliament and across the river where people eventually dispersed. Large crowds awaited the cyclists at many parts of the event, which aimed to promote cycling as a transport choice and raise awareness of green issues.

Construction downturn hits jobs

The economic downturn is being cited by construction bosses as causing redundancies increase across the industry.

Brickmaker Weinerberger has announced the closure of two plants in Devon and Surrey with the loss of 80 jobs. Persimmon Homes, based in Fulford, York, had already announced it would not be opening any new sites until house sales began to improve, and has now announced an expected 'several hundred' redundancies. Work on about 30 new sites nationally has been postponed. Persimmon has about 500 sites operating nationwide, including about 20 in West Yorkshire and others in the Humber and South Yorkshire areas, and the company's website says 4,500 people are employed by the firm across the UK. The lay-offs will be blue collar workers, they announced: "There will be no regional offices closed and Persimmon will maintain widespread local presence." The firm blamed the lack of cheap mortgages and a fall in consumer confidence for the downturn.

The Chartered Institute of Purchasing and Supply's index of the construction industry, meanwhile, showed a downturn in activity for the third month in a row. It came in at 43.9 in May, down from 46.1 in April. Any result below 50 indicates contraction. Roy Ayliffe, director of professional practice at

Cips, said this was the worst result since the survey began in 1997. "May data for the sector heralded a further, more marked, contraction in levels of new business and, notably, the use of sub-contractors," said Ayliffe.

The Department of Communities and Local Government said construction began on just 32,144 new homes in the first quarter of 2008, 21.5 per cent fewer than in the final three months of 2007 and almost 25% down on the same period a year ago.

The collapse again reflects mounting concern among housebuilders about homebuyers' inability to borrow money to buy homes as mortgage lenders have cut back on advances after the credit crunch.

Although home creation in no way counts for the majority of construction, it often is where those who are not self employed will be paid the most, as specialists. This will translate into greater competition for skilled jobs and increased casualisation as more are forced to take non-specific labouring work on larger builds. From on site the perspective was that the firms were 'going into hibernation' until house prices increased at the levels of the last five years; Keith Hallack, a skilled labourer who recently left the industry said "it's not as if there's a lack of demand for new homes".



SMASHING IN: Protestors push into a thin police cordon on their way to the doors of the EDO headquarters

Smashing time for anti-war activists

Organisers of the SmashEdo Carnival Against the Arms Trade in Brighton have claimed a victory after marchers penetrated a tight security cordon around the headquarters of arms group EDO MBM on 4th June.

Around 150 members of 500-strong march forced their way into the compound, which has had tight security installed following years of campaigning by anti-military groups.

Protestors smashed windows, graffitied anti-war slogans on the buildings and attacked cars on the site, having poured through a gate which opened fortuitously at the crucial moment and outflanking an attempt by police to block the way.

The march set off from The Level, a public park in Brighton, with attendees from around the country, on a march to the EDO site and were able to dodge police lines, which proved inadequate to hold back the sizeable and militant crowd.

Some commentators believe that following the success of recent efforts to publicise police brutality, including widespread screenings of scathing Edo documentary *On The Verge*, alongside recent legal victories, softer tactics were being tried.

One commentator said: "Police used thin lines and barriers that might have stopped a Sunday School outing, but not a determined demonstration of any size, holding reinforcements and the riot police back."

However later in the day, police tactics became tougher, with attack dogs, pepper spray and batons being brought to bear as the protestors made it into the EDO building car park and as they withdrew.

Ten people were arrested during the march and invasion, detained for up to 30 hours each, while eight of the arrestees had their homes raided. All have now been bailed and are due to return to Hollingbury Custody Centre on

7th August, though no charges have been brought.

There has been active campaign against the presence of EDO MBM in Brighton since the outbreak of the Iraq war. Campaigners include students, Quakers, Palestine solidarity activists, anti-capitalists and academics.

The campaign aims to expose EDO MBM's complicity in war crimes and to remove them from Brighton. They hold regular weekly demonstrations outside the Moulescombe factory on Wednesday's between 4pm and 6pm.

EDO MBM Technologies Ltd are the sole UK subsidiary of U.S weapons manufacturer EDO Corp. The company manufactures vital parts for the Hellfire and Paveway weapons systems, laser-guided missiles used extensively in Iraq, Lebanon, Palestine and Somalia. EDO Corp were recently acquired by ITT in a multi-billion pound deal.

Public sector attack

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that the real talent in the NHS could have delivered for less?"

A proposal in an early release of Lord Darzi's review of NHS services for Polyclinics offering a wide range of services has already seen accusations from GPs that it would lead to the privatisation of primary care and put them out of business. Ministers want up to set up to 300 centres running across the country.

The method of bidding for the contracts to run the Polyclinics is also designed to fit large commercial operations, rather than existing service providers, NGOs or charities, say critics.

The British Medical Association has handed a 1.2 million-strong petition to the government demanding the idea be scrapped.

At present, some 20% of the NHS is operated on a private basis, a major increase based on the widespread introduction of Independent Sector Treatment Centres (now renamed NHS Treatment Centres despite being entirely privately owned) over the last few years.

The new plans come as the NHS racks up a £1.65 billion surplus in funds following a major series of cuts in spending and 'austerity measures' which have cut support to financially weakened hospitals.

As a result, despite the massive spare cash-flow, one in five hospitals is currently in the red, while others have turned a huge profit. Mental health services, public health, and addition rehabilitation services are all being

starved of funds. The total deficit in the 'red-zone' hospitals totals £917 million. A surplus of £1.8 billion is forecast for 2007/8.

Some commentators have suggested that the policy of 'self-reliance' which is being forced on weaker hospitals as surpluses mount up is a deliberate ploy to justify private sector intervention in the system.

Meanwhile in education, a mass closure of 'failing' schools has been announced by the government, with the facilities to either be taken over by private interests, or converted to the controversial new private-sector Academies system.

The figure represents a third of the 638 schools where 30% pupils only gained five GCSEs.

PUBLIC SECTOR

CWU delegates back strike ballot

The possibility of a new strike in the Royal Mail over pensions and the company's business model has been raised as a motion to ballot has been unanimously passed at the union's annual conference.

The union originally backed down over radical changes to the working conditions, pay and pensions changes last year after a tough fight, but it is believed that despite a drop in membership from people leaving, organisers getting ousted and disillusionment amongst the grassroots, the balance of power has shifted.

Poor profit margins and ongoing failures at the top of the company have put Royal Mail under pressure as managers lobby for a government bailout. Under EU regulations designed to encourage a private sector takeover of the post, Royal Mail has found itself unable to compete on profitable lines while retaining the responsibility of the universal postal service.

As a result, the service is in a precarious financial position and is attempting to hit targets, a situation which the CWU believes could help in negotiations. Alongside reversing changes to the pension plan, the union is demanding a voice in a major reorganisation of the mail centres which could impact 40,000 jobs.

The last round of strikes cost the company around £100 million last year, a loss which the union believes could not be swallowed again.

Dave Ward, CWU general secretary, said that the strike ballot was part of a "major industrial and political campaign effectively to secure the future of our industry".

At the moment, Royal Mail has closed its final salary pension scheme to new members and introduced a new career average scheme.



In a separate demand at conference, the CWU has demanded that Royal Mail bosses Adam Crozier and Allan Leighton should be sacked for presiding over what has become a financial rout for Royal Mail.

Crozier has been paid £3 million in the last year, while watching profits tumble and receiving warnings over its performance from Postwatch and Postcomm.

The company is asking for an £8 billion bailout from Labour, which the union says will turn into a demand for privatisation when the money is not forthcoming. Royal Mail has already begun demanding that the

flat rate for delivery, the universal service, be scrapped.

The CWU say that Royal Mail is being run to fail and that deregulation is not working.

Britain is the first country to attempt to open up its market to competition from Europe, with the result that other countries, seeing the situation, are actively attempting to get around the directive which demands they open up their own markets.

The Dutch government, which is supposed to be opening up its own markets, has put it off, and is being attacked by German company Deutsche Post for violating EU law.

Government walkouts?

As balloting begins for the PCS and Unison unions in England over possible strike action in local government later this year, Scottish civil servants are preparing for a 48-hour strike as *Freedom* goes to press.

Pay talks have broken down after Scottish parliamentary leader Alex Salmond followed Gordon Brown's lead in imposing a 2% pay increase for this year, despite a claim of 6% from the unions.

Nearly 20,000 people could be out for the strike, which would hit public services in July, under the banner of three main unions, the PCS, Prospect and the FDA which represents senior civil servants.

Meanwhile in England, Unison has opened the phone lines for a call-in ballot in local government over their own pay offer, which again has come in at well below inflation, with results expected in late June. The PCS are also preparing to ballot

their 280,000 members in the public sector over the cap in public sector pay.

Delegates also reaffirmed a commitment to co-ordinate industrial action with other public sector unions over pay following April's one-day stoppage.

However the tactic of one- or two-day strikes has come under strong criticism from libertarian and socialist groups, following the failure of similar tactics last year to stave off attacks on living standards.

Public sector pay has lagged behind that of the private sector in recent times, as private pay has averaged around 4% – though this is still below RPI inflation, the rate by which inflation is calculated.

Gordon Brown is aiming to force public sector workers to accept a 2% deal over the next three years along with imposing a raft of cutbacks and redundancies.

UCU strike

College lecturers with the UCU further education union have gone on a one-day strike over a 2.5% pay offer for this year.

The London lecturers took action as they, and members of six other education unions, rejected a pay offer which is well below the 6% catch-up increase which has been asked for.

The increase would establish a £7.38 minimum wage for further education workers in England.

The strike comes as the union calls a 'greylisting' of Keele University – an academic boycott which would see workers refuse to lecture, take jobs, write for its journals or mark external examinations. It represents the toughest sanction the union can impose against an education institution.

Keele bypassed the union to announce 38 redundancies and cut wages in December of last year, prompting both strike action and other industrial sanctions.

IN BRIEF

ENERGY: Energy regulator Ofgem is investigating claims that customers using pre-paid meters are being misled by companies which switch them onto more expensive rates.

Ofgem have found that nearly two-thirds of electricity pre-pay customers, generally working class households, were persuaded to switch to one of the the most expensive services by British Gas, E.On and nPower. 56% of gas customers did the same thing.

GM FOOD: Farmers have come down on the side of Genetically Modified crops as pressure to bring down the price of poultry feed increases, and are asking supermarkets to rescind the 'no GM' requirement. The National Farmers Union are saying that while the UK has remained a largely GM-free zone (experiments are ongoing by BASF), the spread of GM crops in soyabeans worldwide has led to a shortage in non-GM feed.

MANUFACTURING: 150 workers at Fujitsu's Birmingham manufacturing plant went on strike on 9th June in protest at the company's proposal to move their jobs to America.

NUCLEAR: Talks between British, French and US nuclear regulators are being held in the hope of speeding up the licensing of a new generation of largely untested nuclear reactor designs for the government's planned expansion of the industry.

ONLINE: Virgin Media are cracking down on file sharing by sending out letters to thousands of people warning them to stop or face prosecution. The home broadband provider is the first major company to begin threatening its own user base, and seems unconcerned at the possibility of people switching over to other providers.

RAIL: Senior train conductors in the East Midlands Trains company have taken three days of strike action over plans to use managers and other grades to guard trains on Sundays and introduce a new 'senior' conducting role with inferior conditions outside the existing negotiated structures.

SUPERMARKETS: The United Food and Commercial Workers' Union (UFCW) in the US has condemned Tesco's as "two faced", saying the company is mistreating its staff across the Atlantic compared to similar British roles. The union is campaigning for recognition at the retail giant's Fresh & Easy stores – the Tesco name in America.

WAGES: Next is cutting the results needed for its executives to take home their full bonuses. The company says the market is getting tighter and therefore executives needed easier targets.

Marks & Spencer are also lowering the profits the firm has to make for directors to earn bonuses.

Titans go to consultation

Plans for a series of three 'Titan' prisons built along the lines of major jails in the US have reached the consultation stage.

Last December £1.2 billion was announced to cover spending plans for extra prison places in the next spending cycle, with spending including the introduction of biometric scanning and bar-coding of inmates.

The prisons, which have been slated for building in the Southeast, Northwest and the Midlands, were announced as part of an initiative to build 10,500 more prison places and bring the overall prison capacity to 96,000 people by 2014.

Labour has increased the number of prison places by around a quarter since it came to power in 1997, largely using private services to build and staff the new facilities despite a series of public failures both in the UK and the US, where the system was pioneered.

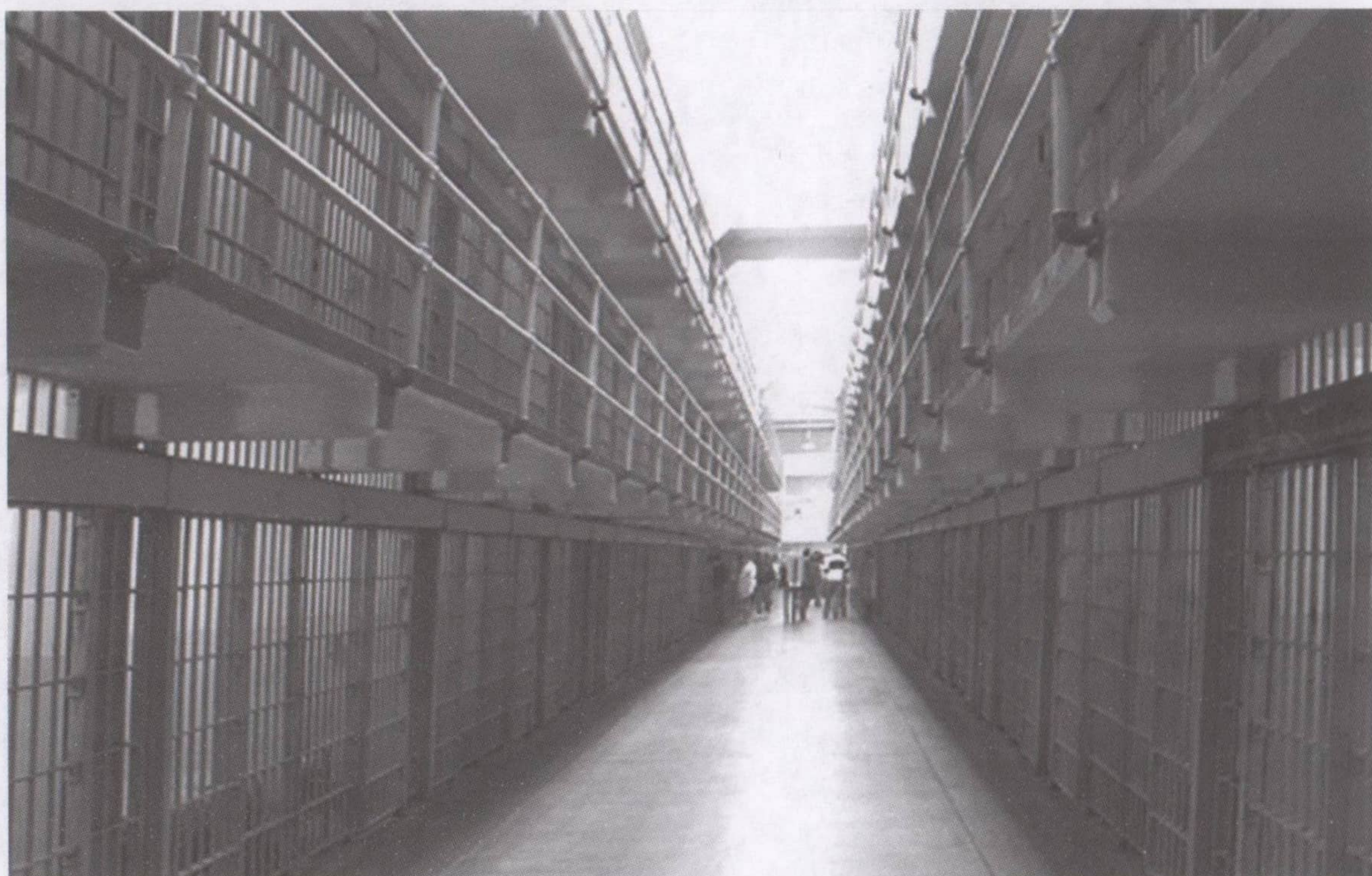
In the US, imprisonment has increased

exponentially, with over 7.2 million people now part of the prison system – more than three in every 100 adults – up from 500,000 in 1980 when tougher prison sentencing was first brought in as part of president Nixon's war on drugs.

In the prisons themselves, prisoners and staff alike have repeatedly been injured due to massive cost-cutting and poor conditions within the closed environments.

Critics of the scheme have noted that the US system, which emphasises incarceration as punishment rather than providing education, training, detoxification or mental health support, has not acted to reduce crime but has instead forced more people into repeat offending on release – hence the 1,200% rise in population.

Finland is pointed to as being the country with the lowest prison population in Europe and the smallest police force – it remains one of the lowest crime areas in the west.



Job cuts mount up

A wave of jobs cuts has hit the insurance and banking sector, with more likely in property and law in the near future.

Aviva, the largest insurer in Britain, has announced the loss of 1,800 jobs over the next two years, following up on several previous rounds of cuts and outsourcings in the business worldwide over the last five years.

The company's profits fell to £1 billion this year following major outlays for last year's floods. Job losses are going to be concentrated in 22 towns and cities including Dundee, Glasgow, Leeds, Sheffield, Liverpool, Cheadle, Birmingham, Bolton, Southampton, Basildon, Ipswich, Exeter and Worthing.

Zurich are also cutting up to 900 jobs in a

drive to decrease overheads by 10%. The company said it heavy liabilities following a series of freak occurrences, including the floods, had undermined its viability.

However in its most recent earnings report, the company's profits were up 3%, to £700 million following tax and dollar earnings, and its exposure to the sub-prime mortgage crisis has been minimal.

Meanwhile a new report by the Centre for Economics and Business Research (CEBR) says up to 15,000 jobs could go in the next couple of years in the real estate sector, approximately 5% of the workforce.

Architects, lawyers, consultants, research and development firms and accountants could follow the trend in 2009.

INTERNATIONAL

IN BRIEF

GREECE: On 29th May residents of Lefkimi in Corfu erected barricades to stop the construction of an open rubbish dump near their town. Clashes with riot-police have left one dead, one paralysed. The area is under police occupation.

The residents of Lefkimi in the south of Corfu are opposed to the construction of an Open Garbage-Dump (XYTA) near their town. The residents claimed that their marginalised, underdeveloped area known for its left-wing tradition and defiance was being used as a refuse for the tourist-industry produced garbage of the north. Underlining the class aspect of the government's decision on the location of the site within 1.5 km of the residential area, the residents denounced it as a "colonial policy".

JAPAN: As the G8 protests began union offices were raided by Kyoto police in an attempt to disrupt organisers. On 10th June at 9.00am, the 'public safety department' raided and searched the union office which is used by Rakunan Union,

Rakunan Workers Network, Asia Joint Action (Asia Kyodokodo), along with the house of 'A' who is a member of Rakunan Union on suspicion of a 'fraud related incident'. Kyoto Police claim that the union member unlawfully received unemployment allowance in 2004, proof of which they claim was found after the search of his house. ('A' denies this.) They spend three hours searching and occupying the office trying to find proof, but were unable to. Instead, they brought back a list of Rakunan Union members and their payments of union fees.

RUSSIA: A dispute over collective bargaining rights at Nestlé Russia, which started in December 2007, has ended in a union victory. Nestlé has agreed to formally recognise the union. The agreement signed on 11th June between union and management clearly states that wages and wage scales will be an integral part of the collective bargaining process, which is to be conducted annually. The first negotiations will start in September before the company sets the factory budget for 2009.

SPAIN: In another showdown over fuel prices, Spanish truckers began a blockade of their country's border with France on 9th June, lining up their rigs and slowing them to a crawl to protest the cost of fuel. The strike blocked the highway in both directions in southwestern France. The protest turned ugly when would-be strike-breakers in Spain found their windshields and headlights smashed and their tyres slashed.

But the Spanish drivers were not the only ones feeling the pinch. French drivers slowed traffic near Bordeaux to demand lower fuel prices. Portuguese drivers blocked roads, and in Belgium thousands of labour union members demonstrated in Liège to protest the rising cost of living as a result of fuel costs.

LENS CAP BERKELEY HIGH SCHOOL PROTEST



On 22nd May more than 2,000 Berkeley High School students of all different nationalities streamed out of class and formed a human chain around the school to protest the escalating attacks on immigrants. As they linked arms, they chanted 'Immigrants are people!' A young woman with the group Fighting for Immigrants' Rights and Equality (FIRE), which organised the protest, said, "Most of the school went out with us ... Ooooh it made the whole school feel good, like we were a family, no matter what race you are or nothing, like we were together."

1.2 million too low?

A new report has suggested that death tolls in Iraq could be higher than even the top estimates of 1.2 million people suggested by Opinion Research Business (ORB) late last year.

But a series of interviews of Iraqis living across the country, published by the IPS news network, has found that many of the estimates, based on official figures, will have been unable to count a large number of deaths taking place in militia 'safe zones' where figures can't be acquired.

It has been suggested that at villages such as Huwaider on the Diyala river, known as killing zones for captures Sunni fighters, are beyond the reach of analysts, thus watering down the true death count.

Three major studies have been made on the civilian and military death toll in the now five year old war. The most famous of these, published in the *Lancet* medical journal in 2006, estimated 655,000 deaths. Subsequently, Just Foreign Policy and ORB have both placed the figure at nearly double that.

The US has admitted only to 'hundreds of thousands' of deaths, a figure which has been widely derided in Iraq itself.

If the latest figures are correct, it would dwarf the number of people killed by Saddam Hussein throughout his entire 24-year reign. Including the Iraq/Iran war and the results of the first Gulf War, US analysts have suggested a total number of dead under Hussein at just over one million.

Notes from the United States

On 6th June, protesters took to the streets in Warsaw, Poland to protest against the policies of Frontex, the central body which deals with guarding the borders of 'Fortress Europe'.

The EU agency conducts migrant hunting operations, trains border guards and special units to hunt down people crossing national borders and which helps to coordinate and implement EU immigration policy.

Frontex, which was founded in 2005 and maintains its own air and sea fleets, has its headquarters in Warsaw. The group was given the green light last year to develop a 'rapid reaction' force of border patrols along

the southern coast last year.

Under the slogans 'No Borders, No Nations, Stop Deportations' and 'Shut Down Frontex', campaigners went to the headquarters, and a transnational conference took place explaining the function of Frontex.

The conference was opened by New York journalist and anarchist theorist Laure Akai and included presentations by Amadou Mbow, a human rights activist from Mauritania, Devi Sachetti from Italy, who deals with issues of migrant rights, including the issue of precarity and migrant labour, Vincent de Jong from

Riot brutally crushed

An armed intervention by police in Morocco may have left up to ten people dead following clashes with rioters over chronic unemployment in a coastal town.

A demonstration at Sidi Ifni, southwest of the capital Rabat, by hundreds of people angered by ongoing poverty and lack of work ended in blood, theft and rape on June 7th after state police were sent in to quell the disturbance.

"They beat them harshly using truncheons and broke bones," Morocco's main independent human rights group AMDH said in a statement. "They raped, used sexual harassment and insults, and stole goods from the houses."

Al Jazeera, the Pan-Arab news service, has reported that around ten people may have been killed in the initial attack, a claim the government denies, saying only that there were 48 injuries and 182 arrests.

The police carried out the alleged atrocities in the course of clearing out protestors who had been blocking the town docklands since 30th May. Among other complaints, the demonstrators said the town had been passed over for economic improvements and the jobs were being diverted by the government.

The protestors had called for greater economic development in their wilaya and the construction of a fish processing plant to reduce unemployment, after eight minimum-wage jobs had to be drawn by lottery from 120 applicants.

They managed to block 800 tonnes of fish from leaving the docks as they attempted to extract promises of development, and according to the authorities, set fire to one public vehicle.

Since the police attacked, up to 200 people have been forced to hide out in the hills around



CLASH: A mosque in Sidi Ifni, Morocco

the town, coming down at night to take on security forces numbering in the hundreds who have been stationed to hold the port open.

Demonstrations are relatively common across Morocco, but the ferocity of the police response has shocked the population, and there appears to be no end in sight for the impoverished protestors, as the forces push outwards into the mountains.

"In Ifni things took a more dramatic dimension than elsewhere because certain people tried with extremist intent to give the demands a more political character," Morocco's Communications Minister Khalid Naciri said.

Popular Movement leader Saïd Ameskane told Parliament: "things are starting to become politicised. So we must re-think national policy with a fair distribution of resources across all regions of Morocco."

The wider situation in Morocco has increasingly seen disillusionment and anger at the government and King Muhammed VI, who maintains an iron grip on the country. At the general elections in 2007, a large number of ballots were spoiled on a 37% turnout, and just 27% of the population believes the political parties are a positive force for change.

Notes from the Unites States

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Holland, who is active in resistance against detention and deportation in Holland, Georgios Maniatis from Greece and Hagen Kopp from Germany.

The speakers presented information about the Frontex operations near the coast of Africa and their consequences, the operations in Libya and the Mediterranean and Aegean Seas as well as an overview of Frontex operations, the ideology behind this and arguments against it.

It was pointed out during the presentations and later discussions that Frontex policies are destructive, and that migrants can be victimised twice – for example, by the practices of some businesses which undermine their traditional livelihoods at home and then by the policies of the countries these businesses tend to come from, which seek to exclude people.

On 6th June, a demonstration was held in front of Frontex headquarters. People from many countries and various social movements

were present, along with some refugees living in Poland. The protestors demanded that Frontex be shut down and that freedom of movement should be given to all, and demanded an end to discriminatory practices.

Afterwards, a demonstration was held at the Presidential Palace to protest Poland's immigration policies, in particular its agreement with the Vietnamese government to deport 5,000 Vietnamese people. The Polish border police, along with Vietnamese security forces, carried out a number of raids recently in which Vietnamese people were beaten, detained and deported.

Afterwards activists met and agreed to continue working on this issue, to make the issue more known and to provide a deeper analysis of the processes, including appeals to working class people: "Not to be fooled by the divisive ideology of the statist and capitalists which pits working people against each other".

Raytheon six free

Six anti-war campaigners have been unanimously acquitted of causing damage to property, on the grounds they were attempting to stop a war crime.

The six, Eamonn McCann, James Kelly, Eamon O'Donnell, Colm Donal Sarto Bryce, Sean Heaton and Kieran Vincent Gallagher, were all acquitted of damaging the building and offices of Raytheon and an employee's car on 9th August 2006.

Raytheon, a military industrial group, were picked by the protestors due to their involvement with the Israeli Defence Force, which the protestors accuse of committing war crimes in the Lebanon.

A jury found that the campaigners were justified in this belief, and were correct in their actions under international law. Only journalist Eamonn McCann was convicted of stealing two computer discs belonging to the company.

The company is the maker of 'Bunker Buster' bombs, Tomahawk and Patriot missiles, and manufactured the missile that killed 62 civilians in a Baghdad market in 2003.

Crimethinc and the Corrupting Influence of Art

Jim L. looks at the Gulf between art and Art

The left has always had something of a love affair with art. From the mural paintings of the Mexican revolution, to the Bolshevik Constructivists and Left Front of the Arts, to the Situationist International. They themselves looked back approvingly at the Paris Commune's Federation of Artists, which, chaired by the painter Gustave Courbet, pulled down the Vendôme Column, a monument to Napoleonic Imperialism. 'Art' is seen as integral to the history and traditions of the movement, including the libertarian wing this paper comes from.

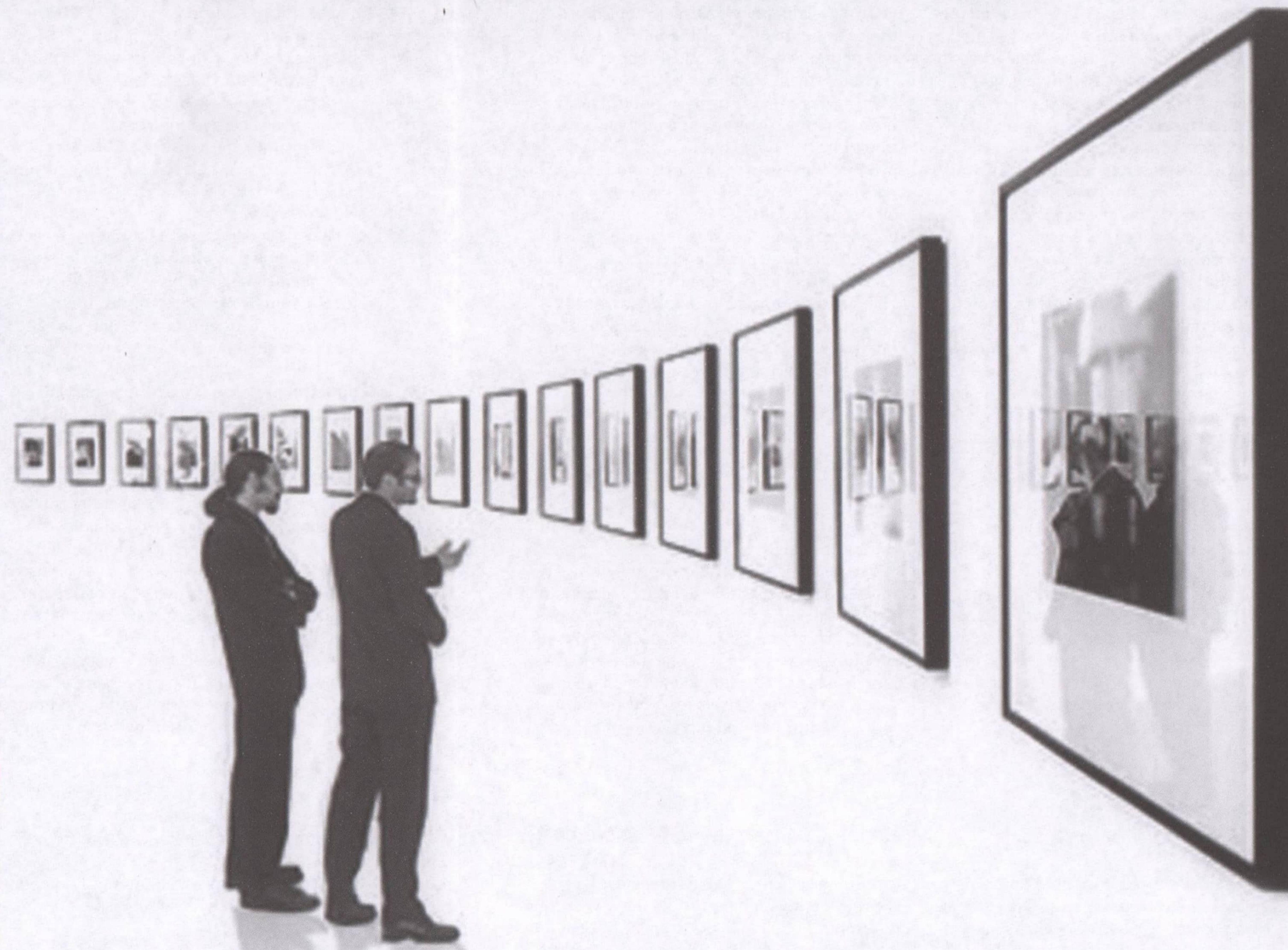
This continues in today's anarcho-scene, with squatted 'art spaces' and exhibitions common. Several such exhibitions opened during April's days of action on squats. With the increasing professionalisation of graffiti, becoming the 'Street Art' now hawked by dealers and the art press, witty stencils and 'interventions' increasingly take up page space in anarcho publications. AK Press produce books about *Art Against Authority*. Meanwhile, the left critique of art – that it was conceived as an elitist institution and will always remain so – is both longstanding and long marginalised. It can still receive hostile treatment from self-styled radicals. I remember a conversation with a stranger at last year's bookfair, where the suggestion that Art be abolished was greeted at first with bemusement and then with accusations of fascism. Such an attitude is also visible in the publications of American lifestyle, anarchist and primitivist group Crimethinc. The fourth issue of their magazine *Rolling Thunder* contains some pretty risible politics: condemnations of video games, "adventure movies, romance novels and the comedy channel", and the argument that hygiene is an invention "designed to



weaken children's immune systems, discourage them from interacting with the natural environment, and deprive them of the information and pleasure otherwise communicated by pheromones." But just as striking is their article on art, flagged up in the magazine's editorial. Crimethinc's core politics are that people should 'drop out' of capitalism, and it is interesting that they should attack working class people for propping up the system while at the same time writing apologetics for elite culture, such the issue's article 'Entartete Kunst', ('Degenerate Art'), named after the Nazi exhibition of 'deviant' painting and sculpture in 1937.

The article acknowledges the left critique of Art once, in a shallow and facile way: "In every charge that art is incomprehensible and elitist, there is an echo, however faint, of the Nazi accusations of decadence and degeneracy ... any implication that all art should be accessible and amenable to all people is borderline fascism, even when it is framed as class-conscious populism." This isn't the first time that Crimethinc have thrown accusations of fascism around. We should ask why groups like this can compare all workers with jobs to the Nuremberg war criminals (*Rolling Thunder* #2, page 21), whilst dismissing anti-elitists as fascists. Just as a logical criticism, it is interesting that they should attack libertarians who believe in workplace struggle on the grounds that everyone who works is complicit in The System, making class struggle irrelevant, whilst at the same time valorising art (or in the case of issue #5, the 'anti-art' of Brener and Schurz) for its critical potential, even if it is complicit in elite culture and ideology. But ultimately, the fact that they see no contradiction in dismissing the left critique as 'borderline fascism' whilst condemning anyone who drinks alcohol, watches television, reads lowbrow books or enjoys trashy films makes sense if put in the context of the unfortunate influence of art on the left movement.

Art, contrary to the assertions of its apologists, is not a timeless and universal category of human activity. It was invented as a recognisable concept during the long bourgeois revolution(s) – the change to capitalist production in eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. This process is well described in Larry Shiner's *The Invention of Art* and Roger Taylor's *Art, An Enemy of the People*. An 'art', for both antiquity and the middle ages, was a rule-bound activity requiring skill and training – the medieval philosopher Thomas Aquinas saw shoe making and cooking as arts as much as painting or sculpture. Despite the prestige of painters and sculptors in the Renaissance, the culture had no word for 'artist' as we would mean it, as there was no hard and fast distinction between artists and artisans, beauty and utility, looking and using. This split took



place in the second half of the Eighteenth century, with the development of aesthetics as a unique category of human experience. This new 'sense' was originally based on the mystified standards of taste and decorum of the aristocracy. This elitist common culture passed into the hands of the capitalist class, as developing changes in production brought them to power. They adapted it accordingly. Painting went from being something integrated into design to the production of individual commodities meant to be viewed as self-contained objects. The increasing importance of artists as unique individuals developed at the same time as bourgeois individualism.

Unsurprisingly, this change involved the exclusion of their class enemies. Working class people, women, non-whites, and the idle rich were excluded from the capacity for aesthetic sense. Aesthetic ideology contrasted the work of artists, who were supposed to

'anti-art', which is nothing but a parasitical inversion long co-opted by the art industry. Their iconography of 'resistance' is drawn from the myth of the struggling artist: their manifesto-like article 'Déclassé War', in their propaganda newspaper *Harbinger*, compares anarcho-dropouts to the novelist Henry James struggling in aesthetic poverty in Paris, and abuses class-conscious workers as "indignant and materialistic".

The point is not to criticise images, writing and so on, but their use. What makes the distinction between art and popular culture? Why is Stockhausen art and Dizzee Rascal not? Why are Braque's collages art and not CD covers? Art is what can be co-opted by the ruling class institutions that provide the elite with a common culture, and this is as true now as ever. The question is why accept these terms, why aspire towards inclusion in institutions and an ideology based on class exclusion, the terms of a system we see as unjust? Criticisms of elitism are not 'borderline fascism'; the belief that the institutions of the ruling class have an inherent worth and need to be defended against hordes of philistines is. The controversy around 'impenetrable' art is seen by the likes of Crimethinc as 'borderline fascism'; I'd say that its the anger of people against institutions which exclude them being exploited, warped and sold back to them by the editors of reactionary tabloids. Those of us who stand for a society of self-management, equality and direct democracy, should ask what place art would have in this system. 'Creativity' would not be ghettoised into a class of 'gifted' individuals and institutions full of speculative capital, but part of everyone's daily lives. The pleasure of making something which looks and feels good would be both part of self-managed production, and likely also part of people's social life – either way not a rarefied class of commodities and the elitist institutions that trade in them. The abolition of this separation would not be 'art made by all' but the end of art and its replacement with something more egalitarian, honest and rewarding.

To contact the author, email skumbot@gmail.com



create freely, through the pursuit of their artistic concerns, with that of workers, who copied and imitated, and produced for use. The most important distinction was that artists were seen to create irrespective of financial pressures, whereas workers act because of the need for money.

The parallels of this attitude to contemporary anarcho-lifestylism are striking. However, artistic ideology has long infected revolutionary movements. The Commune's artists actually proposed rebuilding the column somewhere more discrete, though the people of Paris had other ideas. The syndicalist CNT organised squads to protect art from the class anger of their own militias during the Spanish revolution. The Situationist International explicitly viewed revolution in artistic terms. The philosopher Hegel put art at the level of philosophy and religion, and likewise the Hegelian-Marxist SI's theory saw

revolution as "the realisation and suppression of art". Though for them Art as a professional activity would be abolished, its generalisation to the population is still problematic. The SI saw the distinction between pre- and post-revolutionary work as the distinction between art and labour. The revolution and work following it would be "poetry made by all", as free, joyous and rewarding as art. In the same way, they saw their art activities of 'drifting', a revolutionary inversion of the nineteenth century aesthetic flaneur, as having a critical potential. All of Crimethinc's belief in dropping out of capitalism and living freely now can be seen embryonically here. While the SI rightly advocated class struggle and workers' democracy, Crimethinc take their belief in the revolutionary content of counter-cultural activities and make it the cornerstone of their politics. With this in mind it is unsurprising that they can fawn over art and

COMMENT

ABOUT FREEDOM

ANGEL ALLEY

This issue has been a difficult one. As the sole editor of one issue in two, I tend to end up doing a lot of the writing myself and this issue coincided with quite a hectic week, so I apologise if the work seems a bit rushed.

It's been a very big week for the public sector. We are seeing the fruits of years of preparatory work winching open the floodgates, and all of a sudden hundreds of schools, dozens of hospitals and most of London's health service is flowing out into the shark-infested waters of private enterprise.

Demonstrations and campaigns on a local level have been proving strong bulwarks against the expansion of the private sector in areas with active and organised groups of people to defend universal and service-driven care.

It's difficult – nigh on impossible in fact – to explain in a few hundred words the depth of what is going on, and has been going on, in health, education and local government in the last few years, but neo-liberal ideology is infecting every part of the national safety nets we take for granted.

Wide-scale resistance to this, better communication across distance, and co-operation between everyone of an even slightly anarchist bent is a must under these circumstances, or we shall quickly find ourselves staring out into a private world of privilege, stamped 'NHS' on the side.

On a completely different note, if anyone has seen something cool and fancies sending in a review, we're running a bit short at the moment...

Rob Ray

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NEXT ISSUE

The next issue will be dated 5th July 2008 and the last day to get copy to us for that issue will be Thursday 26th June. 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

Few people are unaffected by the rise in petrol prices. Alongside food, gas and electricity, fuel price rises have been one of the main factors in the recent jump in inflation.

According to the AA, the average price for a litre of unleaded in May this year was 112.6 pence, compared to 95.9 pence in May 2007. This represents a rise of over 17%. I live in a part of London where the public transport is geared pretty exclusively towards people commuting into central London or Docklands, so for anyone heading in a different direction a car is useful, if not essential. For people I work with who live way out in the suburbs or beyond, it becomes even more so. Even the dedicated petrol-heads are thinking about trading to a more economical car or driving more carefully to conserve fuel.

The economics of putting a car on the road can be under £500 plus the cost of buying one, unless you're a new driver or under 25, where the insurance can cost more than the car is worth. So long as it's not a gas-guzzler, a regular car will cost between 11p and 20p a mile. If you've already paid for the car, insurance, servicing and so on, the marginal cost of using one in most cases make it considerably cheaper than public transport, particularly if you're taking a whole family.

While this may not elicit a lot of sympathy among readers, drivers are right to be angry about the rising cost of petrol, even if they ought not to be surprised. Most people, particularly outside the big cities, have little

choice but to get around by car. They either can't afford the alternatives, or there are none. While many won't have considered the greenhouse effect or the impact of cars on communities, it's not as if there's much encouragement to do so.

For every pound spent on public transport infrastructure, the government spends something like five on road building. Labour promised investment in trains and light rail, but have scrapped publicly-supported schemes all over the country. Manchester is only getting an expansion of its trams by agreeing to a congestion-charging scheme.

New settlements are built with no thought about public transport, or even any local amenities, thus giving new residents no choice but to own a car. Shopping becomes ever more centralised, meaning both shoppers and goods have to travel further by road. There's even a ridiculous scenario in food production with salad being shipped from Lincolnshire to Holland for packing, before coming back to British supermarkets; and prawns being flown from Scotland to Thailand for processing, before coming back here. I can't see either of those surviving.

Personally, I expect the government to give in to demands that the fuel duty increase of two pence a litre in the Autumn be scrapped. There's very little that can be done about the supply, which is what is pushing the price rise. But perhaps the economic model of UK plc where everything travels by road transport is looking a little dented now.

Blog Bites

(from fatmanonakeyboard.blogspot.com)

The journalist and science writer Francis Sedgemore recently commented on a letter in the *Telegraph* which suggested lifelong learning is being buried under a "blizzard of legislation". The line is a familiar one, with which I mainly agree. Francis also makes a highly pertinent comparison with Denmark, whose system of 'folk high schools' (a network of self-governing institutions which work entirely outside government reference while remaining largely state-funded) is something I have long envied.

I would like to sound just two minor dissenting notes. The first is that though we are indeed sinking under ever-increasing bureaucracy, some of it is self-inflicted by ingrained formal practices and overly complex systems.

Secondly, in the *Telegraph* letter the authors say: "We have the same objectives as this Government in wanting to offer a first-class education and training to all and, in particular, to narrow the attainment gap between the most and least advantaged. We have, however, become increasingly dismayed by ministers who are intent on permanent revolution of every aspect of the education system: in so acting, they demonstrate a deep lack of trust in the professional education community."

There is one problem with the call to trusting

professionals *per se*. There are quite a few of them whom I wouldn't trust an inch. What the government needs to do is to trust the ones who are committed to equity and who want to make change happen. And they are the most alienated and despairing of the lot.

In 1997 all of us in lifelong learning were excited and energised that, at last, we were going to move from the margins to the centre of our institutions. We dreamt of new, flexible, community based universities that would begin to break away from the old, stuffy elitism and start to become open institutions. We thought that Labour was on our side, but each new initiative narrowed the vision. Now, it seems, we are simply being offered one-chance diploma factories aiming to give people the qualification for a better job. Overall, the institutional conservatives have won.

It is not just that we need "a more consultative, democratic and inclusive way of developing and enacting policy for all the public services", we also need a vision. The narrow, instrumental vision of the government is not mine and Francis is right when he says that, "the Tories have neither the ideas nor the competence required to put things right". It is no wonder that we are fed up.

Gibson misleading

Reading Peter Gibson's letter (24th May), it struck me that his main issue is that neither myself, nor Kropotkin, fits into the safe little stereotype he has of communist-anarchists. How else to explain the attribution of ideas to myself which I do not hold?

Peter asserts that I "clearly believe that mutual aid depends on liking one another sufficiently to give up any possibility of gain". Where do I 'clearly' state that? Where does Kropotkin? He clearly states the opposite: "Love, sympathy and self-sacrifice certainly play an immense part in the progressive development of our moral feelings. But it is not love and not even sympathy upon which Society is based in mankind." But, then, Peter somewhat contradicts himself when he asserts that I "cannot accept that people are motivated by self interests" yet, apparently, I also admit "that mutual aid is an expression" of what I cannot accept! How strange.

Peter, sadly, makes the elemental error of confusing selfish genes with selfish people. He asserts "Jones is right. The struggle is a description of events which is driven by genes". Yet, as Richard Dawkins put it, "there is no more connection between a selfish gene and a selfish human than there is between a rock and a rain cloud". He also notes that it is "now widely understood that altruism at the level of the individual organism can be a means by which the underlying genes maximise their self-interest".

In *The Selfish Gene* itself, he acknowledged that the title could be misleading and argued that "if anything, it devotes more attention to altruism" than selfishness. This is because "gene selfishness can translate itself into individual altruism". The selfish gene does not exclude, and in fact can encourage, what Dawkins calls "mutualistic co-operation".

In fact, Dawkins suggested that an alternative title of his classic could have been 'The Co-operative Gene'. Yet Peter asserts, in his best *ex cathedra* tones, that there "is no such thing as mutual aid and co-operation". Sadly, there are numerous biologists, including many "dastardly sociobiologists", who would dispute that. But then, what does the author of *The Selfish Gene* know about selfish genes? Perhaps Peter is one of those philosophers who, Dawkins complains, "prefer to read a book by title only, omitting the rather extensive footnote which is the book itself". I get the impression Peter has done that to Kropotkin.

As for Jones, the ostensible reason for Peter's letter, it is suggested that his "real crime is that he does not endorse this view". In reality, his 'real crime' is that he systematically distorted Kropotkin's position. First, the awkward fact is that, regardless of what Jones may think, Kropotkin was not discussing symbiosis in *Mutual Aid*. Second, Kropotkin explicitly and repeatedly noted that *Mutual Aid* presented a one-sided perspective to counter the dominant perspective that stressed competition between individuals. As such he clearly did not think (to quote Jones) "altruism our true state" but rather argued that mutual aid provides "more chances to survive" and animals and humans "find in association the

best arms for the struggle for life: understood, of course, in its wide Darwinian sense".

Thirdly, almost seventy years later, in an article entitled 'The Evolution of Reciprocal Altruism' Robert Trivers refined the concepts Kropotkin advanced and explained how co-operation and, more importantly, a system of reciprocity (termed 'reciprocal altruism') could have evolved and there is overwhelming evidence to support it.

Then there was Jones' self-contradictory assertion that for scientists "neither symbiosis nor the struggle for existence has much message for human affairs" before concluding a few pages later that anarchism has been "sidelined by the iron rules of greed that rule the globe". That is a "real crime" against logic and simply not true, as his fellow scientists have proven. And Peter asserts that Jones' position "accepts reality"!

So I would suggest that it is Peter's letter which is "sophistry" and "twaddle". If he were aware of the reality of the situation, he would know that rather than *Mutual Aid* being a "somewhat soiled white rabbit" its arguments have been confirmed by subsequent research. As for his speculation on human society, well, what can I say?

He seems to think that the majority of people are so unselfish that they will tolerate a minority exploiting and oppressing them forever. Personally, I'm not that pessimistic. As Kropotkin and Dawkins both show, internally co-operative societies are evolutionary superior to internally competitive ones. So I'm optimistic that we can create a society in which we can reach our full potential as free individuals. It is in our self-interest, both as individuals and a species, to do so.

Iain McKay

The Cinematic Guerrilla

(aka 'a constructive dialectic of destruction')
"Going to the cinema is like eating or shitting, it's a physiological act, it's urban guerrilla" – Marco Ferreri

This is a cultural guerrilla declaration! We have to free ourselves from images in order not to be hostages of them. To be free from images means to succeed in placing our visual perceptions within a compositional process between perception and knowledge, image and intellect, material and spiritual.

We believe that cinema and audiovisual productions in general are part of the proactive materiality of life and not of the illusory virtuality of it.

We are living through an historical phase of utter visual control – CCTV cameras monitor us day and night – whereby the detraction of images is the only possible form of resistance against the spectacular empire. To show the least possible in order to make visible the highest possible number of elements: factors, feelings, spirits of revolt, honesty and political emotion for a social community (in the sense of shared life).

Images are necessary to the formation of concepts, also our imaginative abstractions are produced by images, but we have to make clear that an image does not represent nature but a contact with it, a continuation of a

LETTERS AND COMMENT

material relation. Can we imagine images not of this world? Very rare! Almost every visual construction refers to an earthly heritage and engages into a material discourse with nature.

The phoney images with which we are force-fed reinforce the violent offensive of the sensation of reality these images try to suggest. A massive (mis)impression of 'reality' is super-imposed onto us through the visual bombing attacking us everywhere in order to obtain the complete control. A set of images and sounds does not constitute a Language since its mechanical statements are not part of a codified set of rules ... those who pretend to monitor us have not understood the power of images ... there will probably be a cinematic backlash.

They are trying to control us with images ... we are adopting the same weapon ... cinema, intended as pure expression of a free and pragmatic visual journey, stimulates sensations without preaching about security, morality and reality. To reduce images in simulacrum of control and command directing consumerist desires is the most fierce and dangerous violence of these spectacular times!

To grasp the subversive essence of cinema we have to clean our violated look from visual pollutions. To divide (the vision) taking a stance against the violent nature of power (Straub – Huillet)

Let us penetrate the social texture creating free spaces of transversal cinematic struggle where is possible to catch sight of vital outflows in the occluded cage of integrated spectacle where everything is allowed as long as it is not questioned.

It is up to us to research another direction of the image in relation to the world, its (in)justice, its evolution until technical reproducibility, its use and its subversive permeability. Let us produce and consume cinema in opposition with the cultural event where hundreds of films are shown but few are attentively watched, appreciated and discussed.

Let us get together in events not yet reduced to mere cultural consumption but spaces for real confrontation and research, to humbly look for the ambition of launching a new approach to cinema ... the freest possible, open to anyone, not only to swanky 'experts' but also to children and elderly.

Long live the cinematic guerrilla!

Celluloid Liberation Front

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GETTING ACTIVE

PRISON NEWS

AR crackdown in Austria

On 21st May Austrian police forced entry to the homes of 23 animal right activists across Austria. Fourteen persons were charged with suspected forming of a criminal organisation in connection with direct animal right actions.

Ten people are in prison as suspects. At first nine were sent to the Vienna Neustadt prison and one to Innsbruck who has been brought to Vienna Neustadt on 28th May. Five prisoners are in hunger strike at the time of writing, at least one since the 21st.

Homes were entered with weapons drawn. Doors were smashed, despite tenants asleep inside, and PCs, files and papers confiscated and homes left in chaos. No evidence of any criminal offence could be proved against the 14 charged – they were arrested purely on suspicion. Since the files handed to the lawyers could not prove any criminal offence, an application for immediate release was filed.

Remand under these circumstances is absolutely against human rights.

The vegan diet of the prisoners in Vienna Neustadt was totally insufficient at first, but after an intervention it has since improved. However on 28th May four prisoners were brought to the prison in Wien Josefstadt and two brought to Eisenstadt. It is not clear yet how the vegan catering is handled there.

Send letters concerning the vegan issue to the prisons in Wiener Neustadt, Wien Josefstadt and Eisenstadt.

- Justizanstalt Wiener Neustadt, Maximiliangasse, 32700 Wiener Neustadt, Austria
- Justizanstalt, Wien Josefstadt, Wickenburggasse 18, 221080 Wien, Austria
- Justizanstalt Eisenstadt Wienerstrasse, 97001 Eisenstadt, Austria

For more go to antirep2008.tk

Swain victimised

Anarchist prisoner Sean Swain writes from prison: "I'm in the hole. There's been a recent rash of staples in doors and various sabotage and they are targeting me as the grand poo-bah of the secret squirrel society.

"After they took me away, I heard, the sabotage intensified. There's a rumor that I could be on a fast track to supermax. I sure hope not. This is a rather low point for me. A bump to supermax for me is a death sentence by slow incarceration. Not good. My brain is being pickled. Nothing to read back here. I won't even begin to describe conditions it's madness. They ran out of soap ... we're just stinking ... I'm going to write a few other places also, so if your supplies of reading are limited, send them to others first. However, if you can spare some inspiring literature, the regs for Ohio are: New Books *only* with publisher/distributor address and invoice enclosed with prices in dollars.

- Sean Swain, #A243205, P.O. Box 80033, Toledo, OH 43608, USA



- Bus drivers at CT Plus bus company struck on the 2nd June to following the dismissal of shop steward.

The action was voted for overwhelmingly by members of the UK's largest trade union. The bus company provides Transport for London, school contracts and special need services, and just won a contract for the 2012 Olympics in London.

Action took place between 3.30am and 9.30am on 2nd June, and a second strike is planned for 13th June between 1.30pm and 7pm.

For further information or to send messages of support contact Peter Kavanagh on work 0208 800 4281 or mobile 07980 721422

- Estates Plus is Hackney Council's plan to sell off the their 'underused land' on estates to Housing Associations for redevelopment. What is underused land? Inevitably, It is going to be the green spaces, playgrounds and car parks.

Meeting on Wednesday 18th June, Pitcairn House at 7pm, see hackneyindependent.org

- The 150-year-old Bath Road reservoir site covers 5.38 acres and lies to the north west of the Bath Road, In Tilehurst, Reading. It is the only large green space left within the RG1 area. Campaigners (pictured above at a recent demonstration) argue "Reading is slowly destroying itself and that it will cease to be a pleasant place to live if no green spaces remain within its town centre." The site is currently owned by Thames Water who are

planning to redevelop it into 102 residential units, thereby destroying the site and a 150 year old ecosystem.

You can support the campaign by signing the petition at petitiononline.com/rard/petition.html or contact them via savethebathroadreservoir.co.uk

- A meeting of the Indymedia UK network has given an overview of the project and its various regional strands. Concerns have been raised that too often the Indymedia collectives are acting as IT support groups rather than functioning newswires, and that the project is stagnating in certain areas.

A lack of links with younger groups is also thought to be a problem, as it could leave Indymedia open to being seen as 'the baggage of the old'. However some exciting new developments are said to be in the pipeline.

In particular across the regions, Sheffield remains a largely 'dead' site, as the acrimonious breakup of the Matilda social centre and the loss of various key organisers has wiped out most of the collective. Leeds and Bradford is also under threat as the last two people currently involved may not be there for much longer.

In London, concerns have been raised that the collective element of the site's organising has disappeared, despite members' pride in coverage of the impact of Socpa legislation on activism and on the G8. There has been talk of shutting the site down for a period of renewal, but as a new design for the site is being worked on at present.

Peter Kropotkin

Forefather of anarchist communism and *Freedom* newspaper co-founder, Prince Peter (Pyotr) Alexeyevich Kropotkin (1842–1921) was among the most prominent and most influential of the anarchist ideologues of late nineteenth and early twentieth century Europe. A central figure in the foundation of the Russian and English anarchist movements, Kropotkin provided an intellectual contribution to the anarchist canon such that his theory of mutual aid and decentralised cooperative production has come to underpin most subsequent communitarian anarchist thinking.

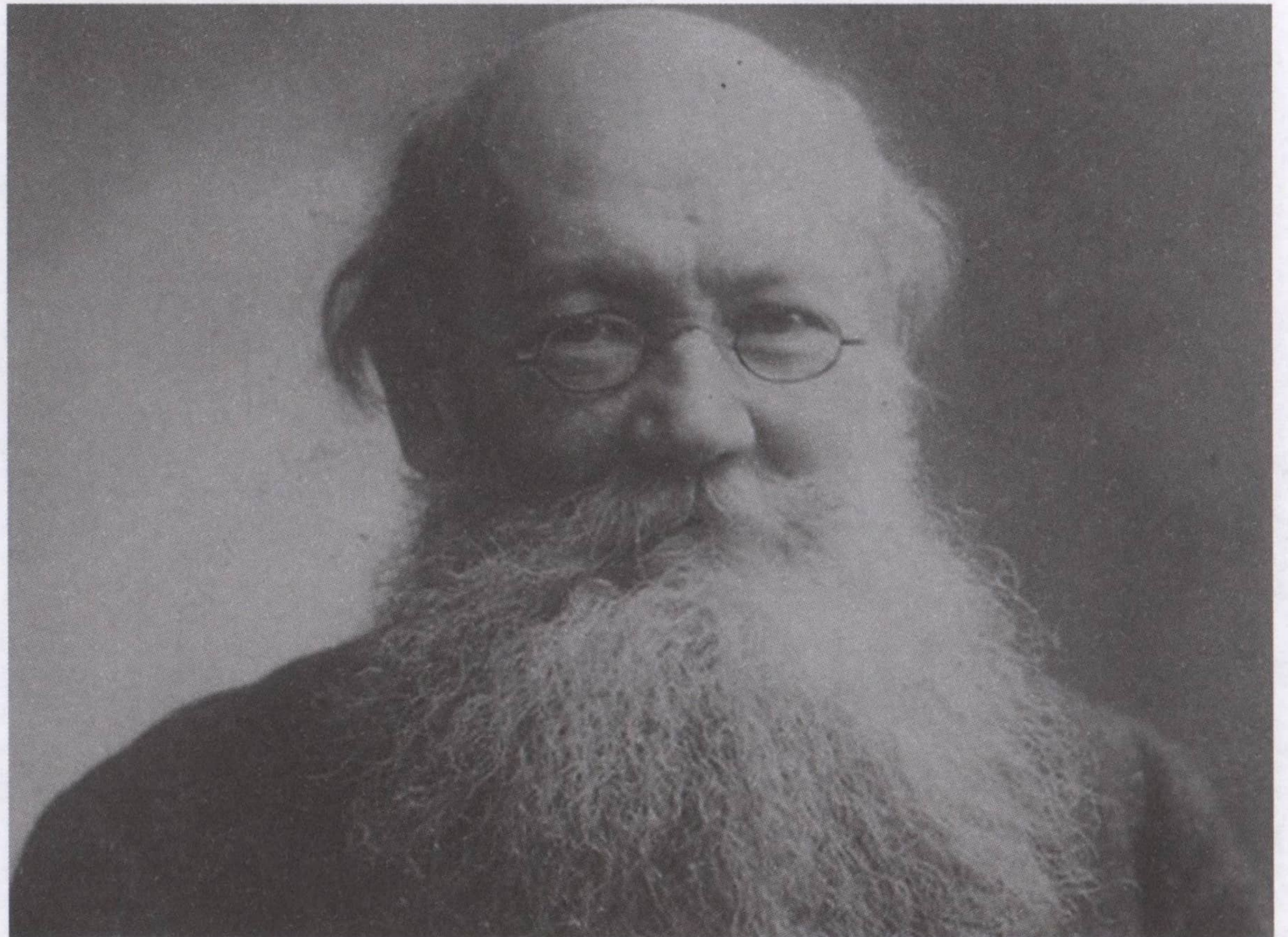
Born into a wealthy, upper class family in Moscow, Kropotkin had a privileged upbringing in the heart of the Russian aristocracy. In 1857, at the age of 15, he entered the elite Corps of Pages at St Petersburg, and in 1862 joined the army where he served in the Amur district as an officer in a Siberian Cossack regiment. For a time he was aide de camp to the governor of Transbaikalia at Chita, and he was later appointed attaché for Cossack affairs to the governor-general of East Siberia at Irkutsk.

In 1864 Kropotkin accepted charge of a geographical survey expedition crossing North Manchuria from Transbaikalia to the Amur, and shortly afterwards was attached to another expedition in Manchuria. After he left the army in 1867 and entered the University in St Petersburg he became secretary to the geography section of the Russian Geographical Society.

Before he left Moscow for Siberia, Kropotkin had developed an interest in the plight of the Russian peasantry under the Czarist regime and this interest increased as he grew older, particularly as he came under the influence of the new Liberal-revolutionary literature gaining popularity among Russian intellectual circles at the time. In 1871 he joined the revolutionary party in St Petersburg, and the following year became a member of the International Workingmen's Association (IWA) in Geneva. After spending some time with leading figures in the more radical Jura Federation at Neuchâtel he came to adopt an explicitly anarchist outlook.

Following a period of imprisonment (1873–76) Kropotkin travelled to England and Switzerland, where he joined the Jura Federation. After spending some time in Paris in 1877, during which he helped establish the city's socialist movement, he returned to Switzerland in 1878 and spent the next few years editing the newspaper *La Révolte* and publishing a slew of articles and revolutionary pamphlets, including his *Revolutionary Government* (1880), *The Spirit of Revolt* (1880) and *An Appeal to the Young* (1880).

After his expulsion from Switzerland in 1881 Kropotkin went to London, where he remained for nearly a year before returning to Thonon. In 1883 he was sentenced to five



years in prison for his involvement with the International Workingmen's Association, and following his release in 1886 he settled once again near London. Kropotkin became friends with a number of prominent English socialists including William Morris and George Bernard Shaw. In 1886, alongside British essayist Charlotte Wilson, Kropotkin co-founded *Freedom* newspaper.

In 1902 Kropotkin published his major scientific work, *Mutual Aid: A Factor of Evolution*, in which he laid out a scientific basis for anarchist political theory. Putting forward an analysis of animal and human behaviour that turned the social Darwinists' idea of 'Survival of the Fittest' on its head, Kropotkin argued that the 'fittest' are those creatures that have developed the capacity to help each other rather than to struggle against each other for dominance. He thus outlined his belief in mankind's innate propensity towards mutual aid, contending that society evolves through co-operation rather than competition. As well as drawing on an extensive array of evidence of cooperation within the animal kingdom and on anthropological studies of early human history to support his claims, he pointed to contemporary voluntary organisations such as the Red Cross, the Lifeboat Association, public libraries and so on as evidence of similar tendencies toward cooperation intrinsic in the human species. A new, free society, he argued, will arise as a spontaneous and natural extension of these tendencies.

In his works *The Conquest of Bread, Fields, Factories and Workshops* (1899) and countless pamphlets and articles, Kropotkin put forward his vision of anarchist society

based on a freely federated network of voluntary, agro-industrial communes, administered democratically by their members with no hierarchical authority structures or any framework of legal sanctions. Within these decentralised communities people would live in equality as both producers and consumers, the distribution of goods and resources taking place along the lines of 'from each according to his ability to each according to his need'. Property and the means of production would be owned in common, money and the wage system abandoned and the division of labour replaced by the integration of manual and white-collar work. With self-management and direct democracy taking the place of centralised decision-making structures in both the workplace and the political arena, this system, he believed, would serve to ensure a free, classless society.

Later in his life, Kropotkin controversially supported the First World War, a stance which alienated him from many of his contemporaries. He remained in England until revolution in Russia in 1917 enabled him once again to return to the country of his birth. By this time he was 75 years old and had spent more than half his life in exile. While the communes and soviets springing up across Russia at that time gave him some hope that a new, classless society was indeed in the making, however, he flatly refused the new government's offer of a position as secretary of education and put forward stinging criticism of the Bolsheviks' authoritarianism.

Kropotkin died on 8th February 1921 in Dmitrov near Moscow.

James Horrox

REVIEWS

WHAT'S ON

JUNE

23rd to 28th International Anti-Nuclear Festival at Eurajoki in Finland, close to Olkiluoto which is the the nuclear plant and building site of the world's biggest nuclear reactor, see olkiluoto.info/en for details
 25th SPES secondhand book sale from 11am to 5pm in the Bertrand Russell Room at Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, Holborn, London WC1, see freewebs.com/bookevents
 26th Manifesto Club Night debate 'Drugs: Where Do We Draw the Line?' at Old Queen's Head (upstairs), 44 Essex Road, London N1 8LN, doors open 7pm, debate begins around 8pm, see manifestoclub.com
 28th to 6th July Open eco-houses in Brighton and Hove, visit eco-houses in the area, see ecoopenhouses.org for more.

JULY

1st Archive work nights at 56a Infoshop, 56a Crampton Street, London SE17 from 7pm – no experience needed, just willingness to shuffle papers and sort leaflets, meet the nerds at 56a, drink tea and destroy capitalism (slowly)!! See 56a.org.uk/archive.html
 3rd Stop Airport Expansion paper plane flash mob at the Department of Transport, 76 Marsham Street, London SW1P 4DR at 11am, see stopairportexpansion.org
 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
 5th Day of action focusing on the UK Border Agency (Home Office) offices in Croydon, part of the International Day of Action Against the G8, see noborderslondon.blogspot.com
 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
 7th to 10th Northern Green Gathering, somewhere in North Yorkshire, for more see nggonline.org.uk
 13th to 18th Earth First! Summer Gathering, those involved (or who want to be) in radical ecological direct action get together for five days to talk, walk, share skills, learn, play, rant, find out what's going on, what's next, live outside, strategise, hang out, incite, laugh and conspire, see earthfirstgathering.org.uk
 16th Anti-fascist mobilisation, Shut Down the BNP's 'Red White & Blue' Festival in Derbyshire, see antifa.org.uk for more.
 21st to 24th International Animal Rights Gathering, a time to get together and talk, to socialise and build up networks, to be held south of Vienna, Austria, at the foot of the massive Schneeberg mountain, see ar2008.info

FILM

Ethel MacDonald: An Anarchist's Story

It was something of a surprise when the obscure story of Ethel MacDonald, dubbed the Scottish Scarlet Pimpernel, came out in 2006 in a well-made and largely sympathetic drama/documentary.

A year earlier, the film had won backing from the European Commission to tell the story of a Glaswegian anarchist-feminist, and writer for *Freedom* newspaper, who defied the dangers to report from the front line of the Spanish Civil War.

A protégé of the noted writer and anarchist theoretician Guy Aldred, she spectacularly outshone her mentor when her writing and radio broadcasts came through from the war-torn country, making her an instant celebrity around the world as one of the few English-speaking voices coming out of Barcelona.

Sent to Spain in 1936 by the United Socialist Movement, she was one of the first to report on the May riots which saw Stalin's supporters arrest their erstwhile allies and hand victory to the fascists.

An active supporter of the prisoners, she was herself arrested in 1937, prompting an international outcry which stretched as far as the US mainstream media and the UK Houses of Parliament, which eventually saw her freed and deported to France as the conflict ground on.

Review

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drudgery for the twentieth century's new middle-classes unravel before our eyes ... [P]rofessional media tourists avoid the countless people making horizontal links, conducting joint operations, productive relationships, cultural exchanges and social interactions at the base. Thus a view of society is reproduced as no more than interlocking networks of exclusion zones, where the only negotiation between dimensions of difference – whether biological, social or economic – occurs on the state's terms at its own designated, tightly-policed sites, carried out by the market's credentialled experts. In which case converging material situations, interests, expressions and struggles among foreigners, natives, underclasses and the new nearly-destitute simply disappear from view." Furthermore the best corrective can be found where rivers of blood literally flow from the vicious intersection of capitalist structural adjustment and national state ideology – yet South African militant shanty-dwellers counter xenophobic violence insisting: "Don't turn your suffering neighbours into enemies".⁴

www.tomjennings.pwp.blueyonder.co.uk

Notes

1. See Institute of Race Relations, 'Rehabilitating Enoch Powell' (www.irr.org.uk/2008/march/ha000018.html).
2. On this occasion, anyway. In less threatening

Upon her return to the UK, disillusioned, she continued to campaign against the Stalinist attacks on the anarchists for the rest of the war.

Director Mark Littlewood takes a sympathetic line in his treatment of MacDonald, stressing the immense mental toughness and independent streak which took her first into the heart of one of the UK's most influential anarchist groups, and later to centre stage in one of anarchism's defining periods in history.

Rob Ray

To see the film online, go to brightcove.tv/title.jsp?title=596410448



contexts the fortunes of the 'white tribe' have, for example, been cheerfully charted by Michael Collins – though scrupulously avoiding the politically conscious and active – in *The Likes Of Us: A Biography of the White Working Class* (Granta, 2004) and *The British Working Class* (Channel 4, 2005).

3. In 'Craven New World', *Variation* 32, pages 9–12 (www.variant.randomstate.org/32texts/issue32.html). See also 'The End of Tolerance', Daniel Jewesbury's useful discussion of UK racism in the same issue.
4. In a statement by Durban-based Abahlali baseMjondolo, 'No One Is Illegal' (www.abahlali.org/node/3582).

QUIZ ANSWERS

1. The first headquarters of the Cheka in Petrograd. Under the Tzar, it housed his notorious security service, the Okhrana.
2. Tesco. The company later claimed it was a "mistake". Apparently there aren't unions in the US who can be quite as subservient as USDAW.
3. At the 1936 Berlin Olympics, where the torch was carried from Mount Olympus in Greece through countries later to be invaded by the Nazis. It never happened in ancient Greece.
4. Alexei Gan

Great white hopeless

A rash of TV documentaries explain away tense British resident-immigrant relations with typical middle-class prejudice in reproducing forty years of media and state-managed mystifications of the ravages of capitalism, according to Tom Jennings.

Shock, horror! Television bosses recently made the surprise discovery of defensive, backward-looking racism among the depressed, so-called 'indigenous white working class'. Purporting to explore this phenomenon, BBC 2's *White Season* (screened in March) and Channel 4's *Dispatches, Immigration: The Inconvenient Truth* (April) focussed on recent UK population trends. Each resurrected Enoch Powell's infamous 1968 'Rivers of Blood' speech as the most appropriate interpretive prism through which to understand hardening attitudes towards immigrants and the electoral gains of the BNP (who vocally applauded the series). So although countless interesting and enlightening aspects of the subject crop up in passing throughout all nine programmes, many important issues are ignored altogether. The clear editorial direction imposed on the material – neglected poor white natives blame migrants for their woes, and that Powell was (kind of) right – is legitimised and reinforced despite being repeatedly undercut even by much of the partial and selective evidence gathered.

The Beeb's hotch-potch started with the classic observational elegy of *Last Orders*. The ex-Labour committee members of Wibsey Working Men's Club bemoan its decline, with support having haemorrhaged for decades – yet regretfully cite the overweening problem of Bradford's growing Asian population. No one's quite clear on cause and effect, or why mainstream politicians are uninterested in the impoverishment and social breakdown of their community of 'forgotten people'. Meanwhile the destruction of local industries which depended on Asian labour, or the blatant manipulation of the race card by all municipal parties and media ever since, are hardly mentioned – let alone countervailing voices with a less jaundiced and prejudiced and more critical awareness of the situation. With the pattern set, complexity is obliterated completely in Denys Blakeway's putrid glossing of *Rivers of Blood* with contemporary allusion – 'forgetting' that the whole analysis, its assumptions and predictions, were completely



wrong for 1968 (never mind now) despite Powell's best efforts kickstarting the poisonous national chauvinism that Griffin etc., inherit. The disavowed subtext? If middle-class white people wish-fulfil themselves as 'last bastions of civilisation', alliance with boneheads becomes respectable.

The following programmes more or less subtly put the boot into the white underclass. *White Girl* fictionalises a Northern teenager (from a 2006 Channel 4 documentary) finding refuge in Islam from a dysfunctional home – whereas such narratives could apply to any class, race or creed. *The Primary*'s Birmingham school with kids of 17 different nationalities just about copes despite inevitable difficulties – by implication, in this context, thanks to the utter absence of white working class people. *The Poles Are Coming!* then looks at Eastern Europeans in Peterborough working more diligently in worse conditions than locals tolerate in construction and agriculture. Though focussing on infrastructural and planning chaos and the fracturing of community by the buy-to-let slum-landlord epidemic, migrants themselves are squarely positioned as the problem's cause – with anti-social workshy white youth in the background making it a crisis. Finally, *All White in Barking* gestures towards 'balance' in comparing old-school Essex responses to the global influx – one pensioner glaring hatefully at African residents and organising BNP stalls, apparently without registering that his kids and grandkids are colour-blind and/or mixed-race; while another couple transcend similar hostility and suspicion by befriending Nigerian and Albanian neighbours, and an elderly Auschwitz survivor squires his Ugandan carer at a local Jewish community dinner.

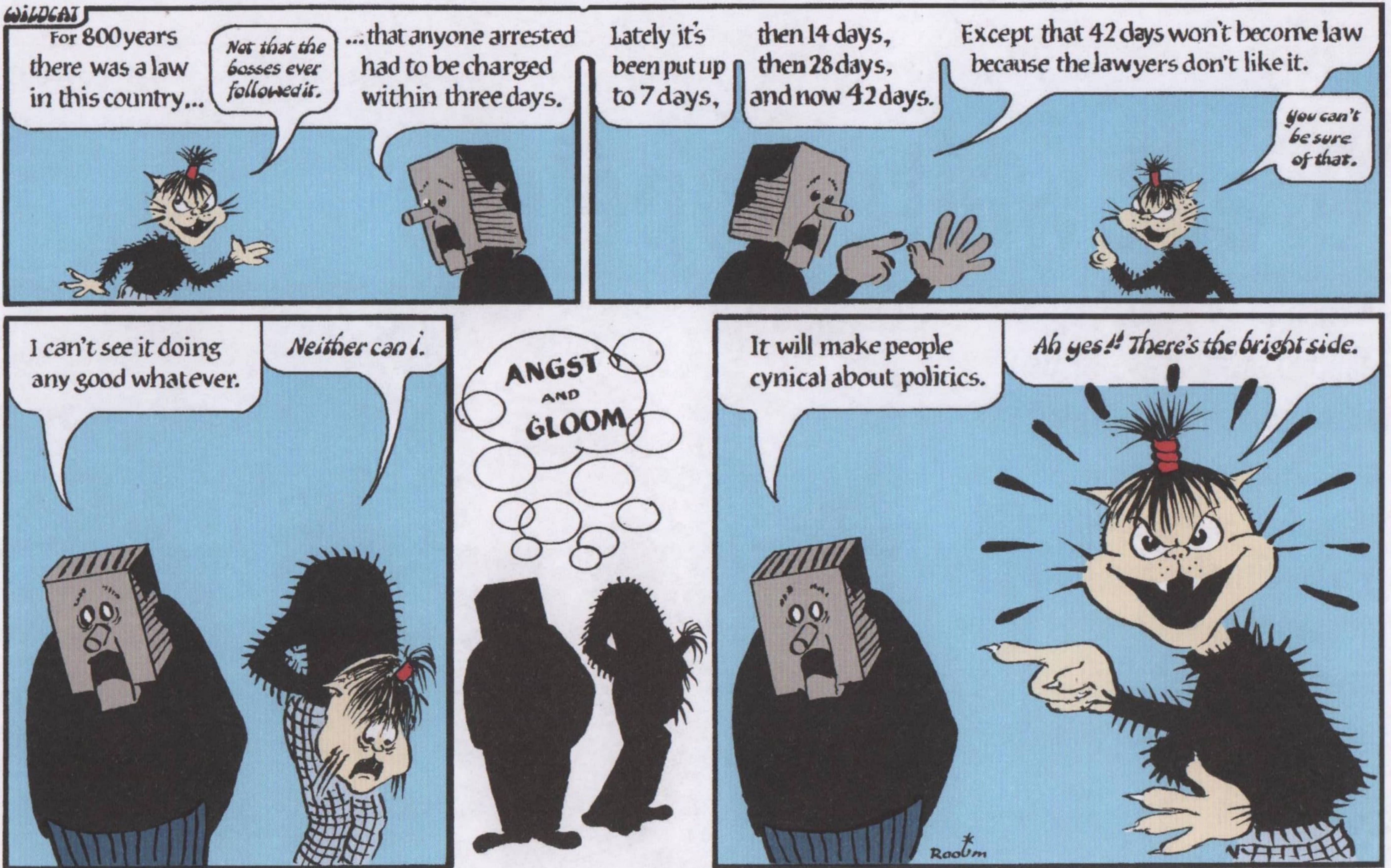
A better title for the *Dispatches* trilogy, fronted by son of Somali immigrants Rageh

Omaar, would have been 'Immigration, the Convenient Scapegoats'. Relentlessly suppressing evidence to the contrary, the narrative consistently asserted that we all subscribe to 'swamping' logic, using a specially-commissioned YouGov public opinion survey which bore all the hallmarks of such spurious, tendentious pseudo-science.

Trusting viewers to swallow outrageous extrapolations from flimsy 'proof', even cursory attention revealed confusion about who counted as Britons or 'settled migrants' or their descendants, and what difference this made to assertions of immigration being 'a problem' or 'in crisis'.

The clumsy Yes/No questions disallowed considered responses and virtually ensured inaccurate results, whereas many of the empirical findings were clearly far more ambiguous than the simplistic editorial agenda permitted. So, by the third episode, the apocalyptic tone had subsided somewhat. But instead of the obvious need to question the whole basis of official nationalist and multiculturalist discourses, the tangible awareness that global economics had something to do with it prompted a retreat to the favoured culprit – the inflexibly hopeless white working class unable to compete in the New World Order. But the visible desperation and hardship twisted into resentment in many places is only part of that story, which the BBC and Channel 4 had neither the bottle, desire, nor wit to follow up.²

To conclude, then, as I argue elsewhere,³ this current affairs coverage disingenuously maintains "distinctions between those whose survival is most imminently threatened and the comfort zones of aspirational experience – just when the economic and structural conditions which underwrote the flight from



The Iron Column

On Friday 30th of May a Huddersfield student was assaulted in what appears to be a targeted attack by fascists.

She was walking to work, taking a route down an alley, when she was approached by two men she did not recognise. They asked her to confirm her name, and when she did, they attacked her, pulling her to the ground and kicking her.

Her assailants were armed, as a chunk of her hair was slashed off, and she suffered fractured ribs. The assailants were identified as fascists from what they said during the attack, calling her a "dirty red", "filthy lesbo", and a "Britain hater".

The local 'Unite Against Fascism' (a coalition which includes all main political

parties) website has attempted to link the attack with the BNP, but so far the matter lies with the police as an assault by persons unknown.

The victim confirmed in interview with *Freedom* that she did not recognise her assailants. She has been an anti-BNP organiser, arguing for a 'no platform policy' at her college, but off campus she has not been a high profile campaigner, leaving many questions over why she was targeted so specifically.

In better news the BNP have been denied a music and alcohol license for their annual 'Red, White and Blue' festival by the events local council, and police were unhappy about giving their cooperation having raised fears there would be an attack by antifascists. If any members of the constabulary are reading this, I've heard there will be millions of us,

armed with swords, causing mayhem. Better cancel the event.

Bill Stickers

THE QUIZ

1. What was Gorokhovaia 2?
2. Who advertised in a US newspaper for an employee relations director describing the primary responsibilities as "maintaining non-union status" and "union avoidance activities"?
3. Where and when did the first Olympic torch relay take place?
4. Which Russian artist, famous for inventing 'constructivism' had a regular column in the Moscow anarchist paper *Anarkhiia* in 1918?

Answers on page 14

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