

UK: WORSE THAN TORTURE

Asylum applications fall as draconian laws come in

Asylum and immigration levels are dropping with life being made ever more difficult by legislators, according to evidence from new reports into migration to the UK, as the government announces its latest measures to seal the borders.

Figures released by the Home Office have also revealed the shocking truth about the number of people being sent to countries with some of the worst human rights records in the world – and an ongoing fall in new applications despite continuing hardship.

Across the board, there has been a 1% drop in applicants this year, with the figures largely masked by a spike in applications from the Democratic Republic of Congo – currently suffering millions of deaths as part of the fallout from recent wars.

Most stark has been the case of Zimbabwe, where the numbers asking for asylum has fallen from thousands in the early part of the decade when white farmers fled Mugabe's land expropriations to just over 200 today. A bare 18% of the total applying got leave to stay despite information on torture and murder being employed against the regime's enemies being widespread.

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LENS CAP ASYLUM RIGHTS



Activists from No Borders South Wales and No Borders Bristol demonstrating outside the UK Border Agency's regional office for Wales and South West in Cardiff in protest against the UK's migration controls. In a statement the group said: "One of the main reasons we do a regular picket of this place is to distribute leaflets to the refugees who are victimised there. By informing them about the support that is available and urging them to campaign for the right to stay in the UK, we encourage people to take control of their lives rather than submit to whims of an asylum regime that aims to de-humanise them at every turn."

COMMON PLACE IN CASH CRISIS

The Common Place social centre in Leeds is today attempting to find an alternative income after its ability to raise funds through public events was effectively frozen by police.

The three-year-old building has been threatened with closure by police, having lost its license on the grounds it does not act as a club "in good faith" shortly after it screened a controversial film.

The centre, which has been a haven for alternative political views in the North, hosting fundraisers, cultural events and acting as a gathering spot for activists across the region, recently screened *On the Verge*, a film about the movement against arms manufacturer Edo in Brighton.

Several venues have been threatened by police over showings of the movie, which

charts the growth of SmashEdo alongside ongoing attempts by both the company and police to break it up.

The Common Place collective noted: "A few months ago, we screened a film that showed police violence against peaceful campaigners, and the police tried to intimidate us into not showing it. Following that they began harassing us, until eventually we had our performance and alcohol license withdrawn. We're in the process of appealing against this, but meanwhile we're struggling to stay open without the income from selling beer at events."

The Common Place faces possible closure in October if the case fails.

Contact cpmusic@thephonecoop.coop or write to 23-25 Wharf Street, Leeds, LS2 7EQ for more information.

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NEWS

IN BRIEF

COMMUNITY: Politicians are “leaving black youths to die” by cutting funding to community groups, an independent adviser to the Home Office has said.

Dr Derrick Campbell's comments follow the violent deaths of three young men within 24 hours in Birmingham, Wolverhampton and London. Dr Campbell said funds earmarked for community cohesion were not going to the right organisations. He went on to say there was hard evidence from community groups in the Birmingham area that their funding was being cut – a situation which he said was reflected nationally.

DEFENCE: Newbury magistrates have dismissed a case of trespass on a nuclear licensed site against an Aldermaston peace campaigner. The prosecution was the first of its kind brought under the Serious Organised Crime and Police Act (SOCPA s128, as amended by s12 of the Terrorism, Act 2006, to apply to nuclear licensed sites).

Juliet McBride was arrested inside the perimeter fence at the Atomic Weapons Establishment in March 2007, during a no Trident replacement protest. Magistrates dismissed the case on the grounds that the SOCPA legislation applies only to the nuclear licensed site, not the entire space within the perimeter fence, and that Juliet McBride had not entered the licensed area when arrested.

EMPLOYMENT: Lawyers and legal helplines have reported a sharp rise in the number of businesses seeking advice on how to sack staff, raising fears that a wave of redundancies is about to hit new sectors of British industry.

Allianz, the insurance group, said its legal helpline Lawphone received a record number of calls seeking advice on redundancy issues in July. More than a third of calls were about employment issues, compared with just 2.4% in the same month last year.

SANITATION: Binmen and street cleaners in Edinburgh are considering a work-to-rule as part of a pay row. Action is likely if no breakthrough over a below-inflation wage offer of 2.5% is made. The work-to-rule by members of the Unite union will only take place in the Scottish capital, as part of a campaign of action by thousands of local government workers across the country.

TRANSPORT: A 72-hour strike on London Underground has been called off after an improved pay offer was made. Some 1,000 track, signal and train maintenance staff working for Tube Lines, the contractor responsible for running the Piccadilly, Northern and Jubilee lines, were due to walk out. RMT said the action had been suspended and it would be putting the offer to members in a ballot with the recommendation that they accept it.

The company raised its offer on a two-year deal to 4.99 per cent this year (backdated to April 1st), and RPI plus 0.85% from April 2009.

LENS CAP ZAPPED BY PROTESTERS



Passengers hurrying into the main check-in at Edinburgh international airport on 22nd August are greeted by demonstrators from Edinburgh Chiapas Solidarity Group. They were denouncing Mexican government repression, particularly in the southern state of Chiapas, where the Zapatista indigenous movement has created over a thousand autonomous 'communities in resistance'.

Esther McDonald of the Solidarity Group said: "The Mexican government are stepping up the long-running 'war of low intensity' against the Zapatistas. The army have invaded Zapatista villages, Zapatistas have been arrested and tortured, political prisoners in Chiapas have been on hunger strike, and paramilitary groups are active, with the active support of the army 'Special Forces'."

Unions fail woman workers

Trade unions have been slammed by the Equality and Human Rights Commission for selling out low-paid women members.

Up to 150,000 women have received too little from local authorities and the NHS in landmark equal pay cases because unions "rushed into ill-considered back pay deals and accepted too readily pleas of poverty". Not only did unions cave into to employers demands they also in the words of Lord Justice Maurice Kay "failed to give members informed choice about options".

A low-paid GMB member, who works for Middlesbrough Council as a home carer said "I have been paying my union subs to the

GMB for 11 years and the only time I have gone to them was over my equal pay claim. What I found out was that we counted for nothing".

Unions have been criticised for not taking equal pay claims forward leaving women members with little choice put to take individual cases using private legal firms which can take up to 25% of any pay out".

A retired Unison rep and ex-care worker said "for the last three decades the unions have been telling us how they are going to fight for equal-pay workers and nothing has happened".

Richard Griffin

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Workers suffer as recession hits

As the British economy slides into recession bosses are using the downturn to attack worker's rights. Unions report of employers trying to delay pay rises, cut back on overtime payments, axing staff and slashing terms and conditions.

Genting Stanley, the Malaysian gaming and energy group, has asked its workers to forego a pay rise which was due in May until the beginning of 2009. While the company has used the economic downturn as an excuse, the GMB union which represents the company's workers have accused Genting of "asking staff to take a pay cut" in order to achieve "a short term gain for the company".

Genting are not alone. The GMB says that it has seen a sharp rise in the number of companies seeking to cut costs by reducing

workers' benefits. Examples include reducing the period of time that sick leave is paid and cutting back on overtime payments. The union reports that workers in some companies who have stayed beyond the end of their normal shift to finish tasks have not been paid for the extra time.

The energy BP giant over the summer put its workers on a nine day fortnight. Other companies have been getting rid of temporary workers.

The rise in the number of temporary workers, who have fewer rights than permanent employees, means that many are vulnerable to being laid off at short notice without any compensation.

Workers are being hit doubly hard. While pay and conditions are being squeezed, prices are spiralling up. Commenting on

employer's tactics Adrian Baker, GMB full time officer, said "employees will be horrified given the current rises in the cost of living and the inflationary pressures being placed on them". Sadly but predictably the union is not fighting back. Being outraged at the actions of bosses is one thing, doing something about it – like balloting for industrial action – is something else.

While industrial action is on the rise – over a million days were lost to strike action last year – the vast majority (96%) were amongst public sector workers like teachers and levels of militancy are still historically low. During the 1970s on average 12.9 million working days were lost a year as workers fought back against pay restraint.

Richard Griffin

UK: worse than torture

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Iranians meanwhile saw 80% of their applications turned down after years of complaints about the regime from state and media sources alike. Among the other countries where the most refusals were handed down, the war zone of Afghanistan had 63% of refugees told their lives weren't in enough danger there, and Iraq was considered safe for a whopping 80% of people.

In its advice for UK tourists in both countries, it is advised not to go at all and if you do, to hire a private military guard, due to the unsafe conditions.

The UK government has been heavily criticised for its treatment of asylum seekers waiting for the results of their applications. Alongside a high suicide and self harm rate

in the detention centres where people are being held, it has been found that the treatment of vulnerable cases and children has been "unacceptable" in the government's own reports. The inmates have been forced to repeatedly go on hunger strike, most recently on 9th August at Campsfield where 50 people refused food after the death of an inmate.

The asylum system is also set to get tougher even before people arrive on UK shores, with the government rolling out compulsory biometric and ID checks for all incomers to the country – and threatening sanctions against other countries which don't introduce biometrics to their own systems. By 2012, it is hoped that the database will allow the new border control force – given the power to

detain people, seize property or stop and search, to track any non-national going in or out of the country almost at will. Over 2.5 million people are already part of the database, and all foreign nationals are expected to be counted in and out of the country using 'eborders' security checks by the end of 2008.

Meanwhile the number of economic internal migrants from the EU has also fallen to its lowest level in four years. Around 854,000 Europeans are registered in the UK under the worker registration scheme, but applications have dropped to their lowest since the accession of the Eastern European states as workers stay at home. As a result, farmers are predicting chronic labour shortages, particularly in fruit farming.

PUBLIC SECTOR

Free prescriptions for all

In April 2007 the government in Wales abolished the country's £3 prescription charge. As a result the number of dispensed items rose 5% from 59.1 million in 2006/7 to 62 million in 2007/8, the equivalent to 20 items per person. Nearly three million Welsh people who previously were unable to afford to buy medicine are now able to.

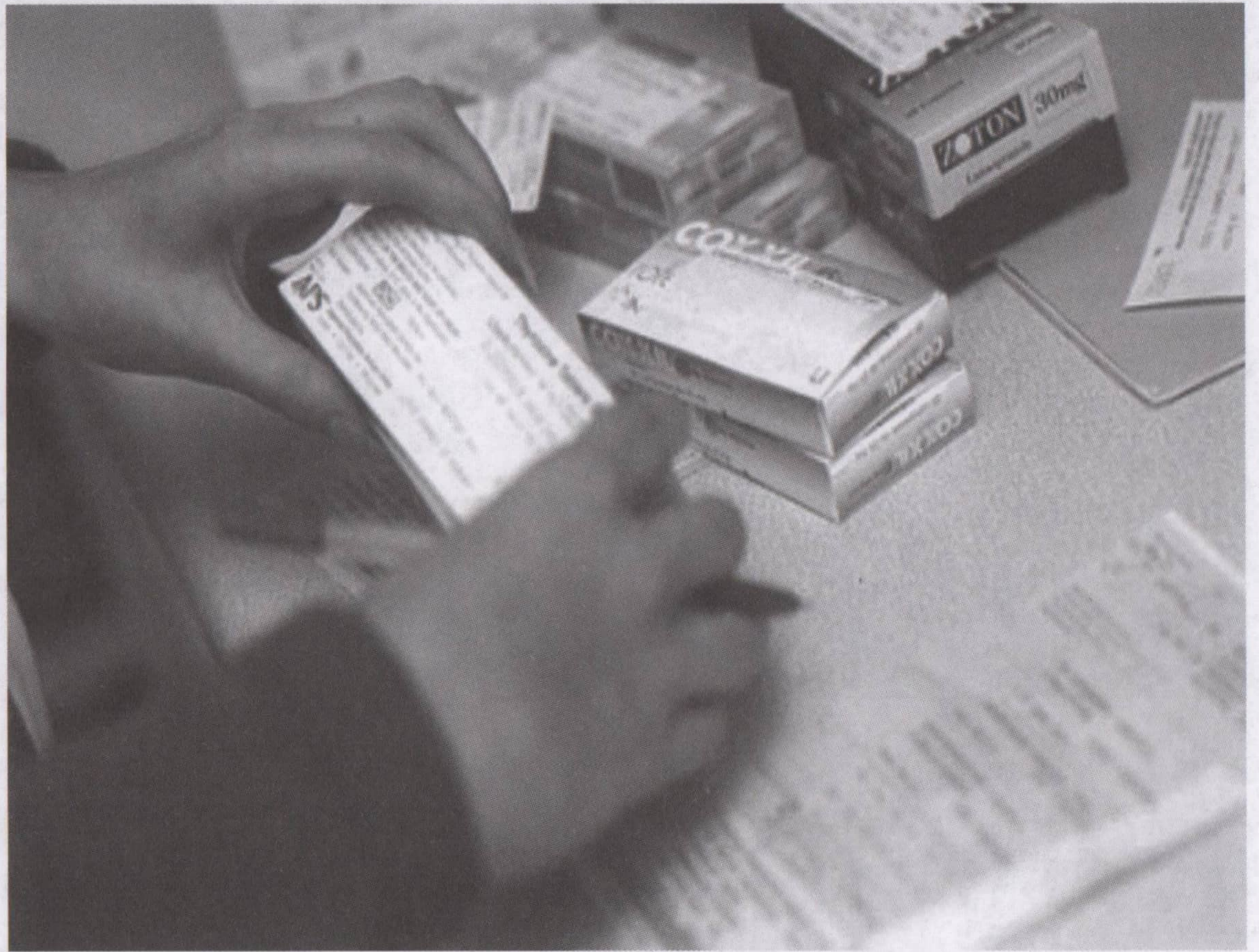
While the cost of ending charges is now £588 million, the policy has resulted in cost savings elsewhere in the system. The average cost of medicines has also fallen as more are used "with GPs prescribing medicines which are helping people manage their chronic conditions and keeping them out of hospital, reducing the cost and pressure on the NHS" according to the Welsh chief medical officer.

The independent health think tank the Kings Fund has argued against prescription charges, because of the evidence that the cost stops some poor people from taking the medication that they need, resulting in more expensive treatment later on.

The doctor's union the BMA have said "the price of a prescription often hits those who cannot afford such charges. There are many people with chronic conditions who are not exempt and those on low incomes find it very difficult to pay. This causes a disproportionate levy on a limited section of the population".

Other organisations that are calling for the end of prescription charges include the Citizen's Advice Bureau and the Macmillan cancer charity.

Prescription charges have a long history in the NHS, being first introduced by the Conservatives in 1952 and set at one shilling a form. They were abolished in 1965 by Harold Wilson but reinstated three years



later and have been in force ever since. In 1979 Thatcher raised the charge to 20 pence per item. After eleven years of a Labour government it currently costs £7.10 per item.

An obvious outcome of a health system that requires people to pay is that some – the poorest – are forced to go without. Over one million fewer people, for example, went to a dentist last year than two years ago despite 655 more dentists providing subsidised (but not free) NHS treatment.

The government in England raises just under £500 million a year from prescriptions – a quarter of the surplus the NHS made this year.

A poll by the BBC this summer found that three quarters of Britons would like to see an end to prescription charges. Scotland is set to follow Wales' example and remove them in 2011. In Northern Ireland charges are under review. In England though the government has ruled out any changes.

Richard Griffin

Union weakness in the NHS

NHS workers are paying the price, finds Richard Griffin

They pushed this year's below inflation pay deal through despite the opposition of other NHS trade unions. They said it was the best in the public sector. Now, just over a month later, Unison is saying the deal is not enough.

In the face of opposition from Unite, GMB and professional health unions like the Royal College of Midwives, Unison full time officers last month, backed by the Royal College of Nurses won by a single vote on the NHS union Council agreement for an effective pay cut.

The three-year deal they squeezed through, as *Freedom* has previously reported, is worth just 2.75% this year – and less in future years.

Meanwhile in August inflation hit 4.4% – and the NHS in England made a surplus of £1.6 billion.

Faced with rising inflation last month Unison head of health Karen Jennings said: "Nurses and other health workers are already struggling to cope with almost daily increases in the cost of basic necessities such as food and energy." This was also true however when Unison officers initially agreed in principle to the deal when it was first offered by the government three months ago. Everyone also knew at that point that inflation was going to go up. Yet back in June Jennings said "the 2.75% on offer this year is the best in the public sector and the three-year deal offers stability."

There is a clause in the NHS pay agreement that allows unions to renegotiate the three year deal if inflation rises 2% above predicted levels. This is though a long drawn out process with no guarantee at the end

that workers will see a decent pay increase.

An IWW health worker said "there is real anger about what the unions have been doing. What was needed was a coordinated fight over the summer. All we got was a lobby of Parliament!"

The large number of NHS trade unions makes it easy for the government to 'divide and rule'. Health workers are also pointing to close links between Labour and Unison – Jennings will be a Labour candidate at the next general election.

- In a separate development NHS Supply Chain, an outsourced organisation that provides logistical support to hospitals, is attempting to break away from national terms and agreements. When privatised workers were told that their NHS conditions were safe. Now though the company is attempting to introduce new unsocial hours working, a move being opposed by the unions.

IN BRIEF

DEFENCE: After four years of developmental setbacks the Raytheon IV guided bomb is now in full production in the UK. The new weapon is intended to replace the Paveway III guided bomb, the most commonly used munition in the 2003 'shock and awe' bombing of Iraq.

EDO MBM Technology Ltd (now owned by ITT Corp) are UK design and production partners on the new 'smart bomb' with Raytheon, Portsmouth Aviation, and Thales. The bomb has been a joint programme between RSL in the UK and Raytheon Missile Systems (RMS) in Tucson, Arizona. RSL in Harlow is the Weapon Design Authority. 'Raytheon's UK Paveway Team also includes Portsmouth Aviation Limited (Air Foil Group and Navalised containers) and EDO MBM Technology in Brighton (Aircraft Umbilical Interconnect System and Quad Containers).

EDO have come under pressure at their Brighton facility from anti-war and anti-munitions groups, under the umbrella organisation Smash Edo.

ENERGY: Scottish and Southern Energy (SSE) was the latest energy company to announce price rises on its gas and electricity tariff, following E.ON's price hike.

SSE has increased its electricity prices by 19.2% and gas by 29.2% but said it plans no further increases this year. This follows E.ON's announcement that it will raise its electricity prices by 16% and its gas prices by 26%. The firms are the third and fourth of the big six companies to increase the cost of domestic energy bills in a second round of rises this summer, with the remaining firms – Scottish Power and npower – expected to follow suit.

FOOD: Northern Foods has said that its factory in Grantham, Lincolnshire, which produces Marks & Spencer ready meals, will close after two decades spent supplying the retail group. The plant lost its contract in May after failing to agree new terms with M&S. It had employed 730 staff.

MANUFACTURING: Manufacturers' expectations of future output sagged to a seven-year low this month, the CBI reported. The gloom came as industry order books declined for the second month in a row and by more than they had expected. In better news, the CBI's gauge of price pressures in industry fell to plus 31 for August, from an 18-year high of plus 34 in July.

TRAVEL: Following intensive negotiations through the arbitration and conciliation service ACAS, Swissport have tabled a revised pay offer for baggage handlers and check-in staff. Unite will hold a consultative ballot with its members at Swissport which will begin shortly. Therefore, the union will suspend industrial action at Gatwick, Stansted and Manchester airports pending the outcome of the ballot result.

Nuke dump deal on ice

In a surprise silver lining for environmental campaigners in Russia, the US is set to put a major deal to dump massive amounts of nuclear fuel in Russia on hold as part of ongoing diplomatic wrangles over the conflict in Georgia.

The US and Russia had been negotiating for the setup of an international 'nuclear fuel bank' within Russian borders as part of a general move towards greater co-operation over nuclear issues, including arms control.

The bank, which would be administered by the International Atomic Energy Authority, is intended to act as a reservoir of usable nuclear material which could then be sold around the world in the event of a market failure. At present, 30 countries use nuclear power while only ten have the technological capacity to enrich uranium for use in reactors.

The US government have been attempting to push through the deal against scepticism

over Russia's dealings with Iran, and it looks to be among the first casualties of a rising squabble between the two powers, centred around national spheres of influence in Eastern Europe and control over fuel distribution (one of the major pipelines serving the West runs through South Georgia).

Moscow has put great store in the civil nuclear co-operation deal, which would permit the potentially lucrative transfer of fuels and materials between the two countries.

The Russian state has until now been doing good business using its spare land to hold nuclear material, but the initiative has proven unpopular with many Russians. In October 2007, protests greeted the docking of a ship carrying large quantities of waste from Europe following a deal struck between EU nuclear powers and then-president Vladimir Putin.



Paper cuts sting NUJ

Nation Union of Journalist members in the Midlands have called on the union to ballot for strike action in response to the announcement of major job cuts. Branches across the centres affected have written to management expressing their anger at the way staff were told that they would have to reapply for their jobs. They have also made it clear that they will not accept compulsory redundancies.

The decisions to call for industrial action ballots were taken at meetings of NUJ members late last month.

Trinity Mirror has announced that it is restructuring its Midlands operations, with the reported loss of 65 jobs. The NUJ is concerned that the cuts will inevitably

impact on quality journalism at the titles affected.

The chapels say that the fast pace at which the changes are being introduced has forced them into action. Their letter states: "The chapels condemn the company's decision to make people reapply for their jobs if they want to remain as employees of the company. This creates uncertainty for employees and their families and is hugely damaging to staff morale."

The letter goes on to outline a number of concerns about the proposals, including wage disparities between reporters and photographers and worries that some people may face a cut in wages.

INTERNATIONAL

IN BRIEF

AUSTRALIA: According to the Student Housing Action Collective (SHAC), studies done at Melbourne University have shown that as many as 1,000 students there could be classified as homeless. Many more are eligible for public housing. With this in mind, a group of students affiliated with SHAC have taken over a university building in protest at the continuing crisis. The building used to house Melbourne University's counselling service but has been vacant since 2005.

CHINA: Former Indymedia journalist and blogger Bryan Conley was released on 26th August after having been arrested for filming pro-Tibet demonstrators in the capital Beijing.

Bryan, founder of grassroots media video-blog *Alive in Baghdad*, was one of ten people detained in China for covering the actions of Students for Free Tibet during the Olympics.

INDIA: Landless organisations, labour leaders, students and others have denounced the use of force by the Punjab police on 'peaceful' farm workers during a protest march to Lambi, the home turf of Chief Minister Parkash Singh Badal, on 21st August. BKU district general secretary Gurmail Singh Burjan said the protesting farm workers were intercepted by the police near village Kheowali on their way to Lambi and were attacked by police leaving many of them injured.

IRELAND: 23rd August saw the start of a week of action in Rosspport, County Mayo, as Shell attempt to push forward with the next stage in the Corrib gas development. Tens of locals resisted, many were arrested and one hospitalised. The Rosspport community are calling for people to come to the area to help them resist at this crucial time.

PHILIPPINES: Civilians who have already suffered from the renewal of violence in Mindanao could be at even greater risk if the Philippine government supports the creation of unaccountable civilian militias, Amnesty International have said. Armed conflict in Mindanao escalated when the Supreme Court suspended a peace agreement between the Philippine government and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) on 4th August. A number of MILF units have occupied farmlands and burned houses, displacing more than 200,000 people.

SWAZILAND: More than 1,500 mostly HIV-positive women have marched in protest on the streets of Mbabane against the excesses of the royal household after nine of the King's thirteen wives chartered a plane and high-tailed it to Europe for a shopping binge.

"While the country is affected by a number of socio-economic challenges, we find it inappropriate for government to finance some activities that are neither national priority nor interest, such as the trip that has been undertaken by the Emakhosikati to His Majesty the King, children, aides, bodyguards and their maids," states the petition.

LENS CAP NUCLEAR PROTEST



Police arrest 30 foreigners from at least 18 countries and 3 Turkish citizens who took part in a peaceful 'die-in' action in front of the Sinop province Governor's residence in Sinop, Turkey. The action, which took place on 23rd August, was against plans to build a Nuclear Technology Centre in the Sinop region. Participants are members of environmentalist movements worldwide.

Protests against Starbucks

CRAS speak out on Georgia conflict

The Russian section of anarcho-syndicalist international union body the IWA has published a statement condemning the conflict between Russia and Georgia. CRAS noted: "The Saakashvili regime in Georgia keeps two thirds of population in poverty, and the greater internal discontent in the country this causes, the more it desires to find a way out from the deadlock in the form of a "small victorious war" in the hope, that it can write everything off. The government of Russia is full of determination to keep the hegemony in the Caucasus. Today they pretend to be the defender of weak, but their hypocrisy is abundantly clear.

"The ruling circles of both Ossetias and Abkhazia aspire to strengthen their role as exclusive allies of Russia in the region. Leaders of the USA, the European states and NATO, on the contrary, wish to weaken the influence of their Russian rivals to keep control over fuel resources and their transport. Thus, we became witnesses and victims of the next coil of world opposition in struggle for power, oil and gas.

"This fight does not bring to working people – Georgians, Ossets, Abkhazians or Russians – anything, except for blood and tears, incalculable disasters and deprivation. We shouldn't fall under the influence of nationalist demagoguery which demands unity with 'our' government, flying the flag of 'protecting the homeland'. We call on the working people to reject the bait of nationalism and patriotism and to turn their anger on rulers and the rich on both sides of the border."

Notes from the United States

Two or three apparently minor developments failed to make news in the middle of August as national attention was on the Olympics and the wait for announcements by the two main presidential candidates of their 'running mates' for November's election. Both party conventions are imminent. Indeed, disturbing details emerged of the building in Denver which has been chosen to house arrested protesters during the convention.

Activists are already protesting the plan to put those arrested in an abandoned and dirty warehouse, in August, at a time when temperatures can reach triple digits

(Fahrenheit), and without air conditioning. The city has set up rows of metal cages with barbed wire around their tops. A sign in the makeshift jail reads, "Warning! Electric stun devices used in this facility."

The city once used the warehouse to store voting machines, but it had to be abandoned because temperatures became too high.

This is at a time when the City of New York, famous for its maltreatment of protesters at the 2004 convention, has had to pay \$2 million to a group of 52 protesters who were arrested en masse during a

Inflation soaring in India

Millions strike with more on way

Unions are warning that unless something is done to alleviate the suffering caused by soaring inflation and 'anti-worker policies' in India they will initiate a follow-up to the day-long strike which saw millions of workers down tools last month.

The strike on 21st August, called by the communist-led All India Trade Union Congress, brought out transport, telecoms, public sector and banking workers across the country in bitter opposition to the government, adding to the withdrawal of communist support in parliament of the ruling coalition.

With 48 unions joining in, as many as 10 million people were estimated to have participated in the action, according to Madhukar Kashinath Pandhe, president of the Centre of Indian Trade Unions.

Further action has been promised in late September by bank workers if plans to merge and privates public sector banks go ahead, and a series of demands over contract working, pensions and pay scales aren't met.

In the public sector, the strikers have expressed their anger that a 21% pay rise designed to keep up with inflation has passed over junior staff, while in banking, workers were angry at both inflation and plans to merge the nationalised banks, as a precursor to major outsourcing plans.

"The agitation will be a warning to the government ... not to pamper the corporates and speculators, both domestic and foreign, at the cost of the rights and livelihoods of the toiling people," a union statement said.



Flights out of Delhi were grounded, while public transport ground to a halt in West Bengal, where the police put 10,000 men on the streets "as a precautionary step", and a solid strike was observed in government departments nationwide. Around 900,000 people joined the banking strike alone, with a large rally taking place in Mumbai.

Inflation, the main focus of the strike, is running at a 13-year peak of 12.44%, fuelled by higher fruit, fuel and manufactured goods prices, causing huge hardship to lower-paid employees, according to the official Wholesale Price Index. Inflation has nearly tripled from 4.39% a year ago, reaching its highest level since the current inflation series began being compiled 13 years ago. Some economists forecast inflation, which has nearly tripled from a year ago, could hit at least 15%.

In response, the government is seeking to

shift the Indian economy into a more neo-liberal model in the hope that this will take some of the pressure of the government and attract renewed foreign investment, moving towards privatisation of telecommunications along with the banks.

- West Bengal is also the scene of a worsening industrial showdown in car manufacture, as one of India's biggest firms attempts to roll over local farmers by getting the state to forcibly requisition land for its use. Opposition groups are protesting over the claimed seizure of 403 hectares of farmland in the region, but are being undermined as other states in the country have said they would welcome the manufacturing giant, prompting threats from the company that it will move the mass production facilities for its 'Nano' car – the cheapest in the world – elsewhere.

Notes from the Unites States

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peaceful protest against the war on Iraq five years ago.

The protest occurred outside the HQ of the Carlyle Group, with which prominent British public figures have ties; Carlyle is an investment firm with multiple holdings in the military and 'defence' sector. But the military never gives up: according to *US News and World Report* it also seems likely that The Pentagon has plans to send up to 15,000 more US soldiers to Afghanistan – maybe even before the end of 2008; this on top of an already planned increase during next year.

- The US Census Bureau has announced that at the next census (2010) it's not going to recognise the thousands of same-sex couples expected to be legally married in California and Massachusetts. The Bureau apparently plans to 'edit' the responses of legally married same-sex couples, listing them as 'unmarried

partners'. Shannon Minter of the National Center for Lesbian Rights said, "To have the federal government disappear your marriage ... will be painful and upsetting. It really is something out of Orwell. It's shameful."

- Lastly, in environmental concerns, it seems as though the Bush administration is attempting to bring into law a measure that would significantly enfeeble the regulation of exposure to dangerous chemicals at places of work.

The rule change would insist that the ways in which risks are determined be re-examined. It would also impose new requirements before government officials could control such limits.

David Michaels, an expert in the field at George Washington University's School of Public Health, has commented, "This is a guarantee to keep any more worker safety regulation from ever coming out."

Louis Further

Le poison Pen

According to Jean-Marie Le Pen, France's debt-ridden National Front is selling its headquarters. Yet its anti-immigrant policies and slogan 'Keep France for the French' has not stopped it selling it to the Chinese, namely a Shanghai university. So not only are they selling it to foreigners, they are 'communist' ones at that.

Hypocrisy is not Le Pen's only worry, as his party faces financial difficulties: a total debt of 9m Euros (£7m) due to poor results in the 2007 legislative elections which forced it to cover its own campaign costs. It has already sold its bullet-proof car on eBay while the party has also had some of its bank accounts frozen after disagreements with creditors.

The Chinese higher education institution has reportedly paid between 12 and 15 million Euros (£9.4–11.7m) for the huge mansion, which was inherited from a millionaire supporter in the 1970s.

Iain McKay

FEATURE

The hideous irony of a Tory calling for social justice

Iain McKay looks at the Conservative basis of today's problems

George Osborne, the Tory shadow chancellor, has decided to show how much the Conservatives respect the intellect of the people. In a recent article, 'A blueprint for fairness' he asserts his party are now "developing a policy agenda that delivers fairness and social justice".

He proclaims that it is shocking that "the gap in life expectancy between rich and poor now at its widest since the Victorian era" and that "there is nothing progressive about growing inequality, falling mobility and rising poverty". Which is true, but what he failed to mention (never mind address) is that is precisely what happened under Thatcher and Major. The real reason for Britain's growing inequality is due to the neo-liberalism Thatcher introduced in the '80s. Has Osborne really forgotten how inequality and poverty exploded under her and her bland successor? And has he failed to notice that these were policies continued by New Labour? Has he forgotten how the Tories denounced New Labour for stealing them?

Is Osborne really unaware of the overwhelming evidence across the globe that neo-liberal policies lead to greater inequality? He proclaims, in his best ex cathedra tones, that "we have established, after a long and bitter ideological argument over two centuries, that the free market economy is the fairest way of rewarding people for their efforts." Yet free market capitalism has always been marked by massive inequality. It is not hard



to see why. A free exchange between two parties will benefit the stronger, ie, those whose market position is stronger, those with capital.

Then there is the claim that capitalism rewards people for their effort. Which is why, presumably, nurses, cleaners, shop workers, and so on, all have two homes, yachts and flashy cars while hedge fund managers, company directors and bankers struggle to make ends meet? Moreover, every society rewards effort and work. Even slaves received food, clothing and housing and their owners rewarded the most productive, probably the least rebellious, more. What he should have said was that "a fairer society" rewards effort and work in a fair way, so suggesting that the Tories, unsurprisingly, do not know what 'a fairer society' is.

In reality, capitalism rewards people for owning things other people use. In return for being bosses about by the owners, said owners get to keep the product of their labour – and so make money on other people's effort, and so increasing inequality. It is doubtful that Osborne is now proclaiming that old socialist demand that labour receive its full product.

And does his comment that a fair economy "rewards effort and work" while "a fairer society means ensuring fairness between generations" means that the Tories will increase inheritance tax to penalise unearned wealth and hereditary inequality? His comments, considered out of political and historical context, definitely would suggest that, but we can safely assume the Tories intend the opposite. Particularly as Osborne was seriously proposing flat taxes a couple of years back, which are designed to give a massive tax rise for those on low to middle-incomes and a massive income tax cut for the extremely wealthy.

Does free market capitalism work best for the working class? Looking at the Conservative record on the matter while they were in office, we can conclude the opposite. Reality hardly provides a glowing endorsement for Osborne's platitudes. Particularly when Labour's feeble attempts at social welfare had a limited success: "Data from the Office for National Statistics showed that without the redistributive measures Mr Brown has introduced, the UK would be a far more unequal society" (Larry Elliot, 'Inequality at same level as under Thatcher', *The Guardian*, 18th May 2007).

And best not to mention the glaring contradiction between proclaiming "the free market economy is the fairest way of rewarding people for their efforts" while grudgingly admitting that "unfettered free markets are also flawed". Then he proclaims that the Tories will take "sensible steps to create a robust framework for a free and fair economy".



DEMOLITION JOB: The Tories are complaining about a lack of social justice, but they themselves were the ones who tore down industries, began the rout of public welfare, and brought the working class low: pictured left, shadow chancellor George Osborne

So a free economy is now a fair economy. What happened to the flaws? Would that be the inequalities associated with Thatcherism and Blairism? Or the drop in social mobility that started under Thatcher but over which Osborne cries crocodile tears when it continued under Blair/Brown? If, as he proclaims, "a fairer society spreads opportunity" then he is again denouncing precisely the Thatcherite legacy he wants build upon. Unsurprisingly, his article fails to mention any actual policies beyond belief that the free market is the solution.

Needless to say, Osborne remains silent on all those state interventions which benefit property and the capitalist class. Thus redistribution is attacked, so suggesting that the only intervention in the market is on behalf of the working class. When he proclaims

that the Conservatives "have always stood against the utopianism of controlled economies", you would be mistaken in thinking that he considers New Labour are Marxist-Leninists.

And as any worker will tell you, capitalism is based on workers being controlled by their bosses. The Tories spent most of the 1980s ensuring that control was maximised by breaking the unions. It is doubtful that fighting the top-down control inherent wage slavery will be at the top of the Tory's plans.

It is somewhat ironic that the Tories are trying to benefit from New Labour's fall from favour by trying to promote a more extreme form of the very policies which caused the problem in the first place while, at the same time, wittering on about fairness and equality! But then, there is rarely anything politicians

will not say to get votes – no matter how surreal given their previous track record. So waiting in the wings to replace a corrupt neo-liberal government is an even more corrupt and neo-liberal one. Anyone who thinks that the Conservatives will reverse the positions of Labour is in for a very rude awakening. Need the 1979 Tory election campaign ('Labour isn't working') be mentioned? They were right: but they quickly turned one million out of work into over three million.

The reason for the inequalities generated by Labour is because they have behaved just as the Tories propose. As New Labour has messed up they will, rightly, be held to account. Unfortunately, this will mean the taking of office of a party which will be just as bad, if not worse. This implies only one thing – we simply cannot rely on politicians

FEATURE

to act for us. We must impose from the streets and workplaces that what politicians cannot do and that means self-organisation, direct action and solidarity. If we do that then perhaps we will be able to be in a position to create genuine freedom rather than tolerate a system in which we pick one gang of politicians to run capitalism other another.

Increasing inequality

Britain is a more unequal society now than it was before the welfare state was created.

The welfare state is having to work much harder merely to keep inequality standing still than it did in 1949 when it was established because of the rising gap between rich and poor, according to a report by the London School of Economics (LSE) published last year.

A sharp growth in income for the very rich under New Labour, along with a real-terms fall in income for less affluent households has helped pile pressure on the welfare state.

While inequality fell during the 1950s and 1960s, mainly due to full employment rather than benefit payments, the gains that the working classes made started to make during this period were rolled back once Thatcher took power in the 70s.

This trend has actually gathered pace in the last decade. One of the main reasons is the shift from direct taxes such as income tax to indirect ones like VAT. Indirect taxes mean that the rich and poor pay the same.

Professor Glennerster of the LSE, who led the survey, said that the welfare state "has not led to a more equal society than in 1948. Tax and benefits policy is having to work much harder merely to stand still in terms of redistribution".

Another recent study has found that people are less likely to get out of the working class than ever before. University College Hospital in London found that the poorest fifth of the population are 10 times more likely to die in their 50s than the richest fifth. They are also five times more likely to die between the ages of 60 and 74.

The author of the study – Sir Michael Marmot, a professor of epidemiology and public health said "the relationship between health and wealth is affected by childhood conditions, education, what happens to you in employment and whether you feel secure and in control of your life".

COMMENT

ABOUT FREEDOM

ANGEL ALLEY

Well this was all a bit of a mission – as the editor for this issue, you'd think I'd know when the dates were for it to be finished. Nope, I only twigged when a mildly concerned email came through from our sub wondering where her copy was, having phoned her up to make absolutely sure it was next week that evening...

Cue two days of spectacularly fast editing, writing and begging for articles, and hey-presto! Never missed out one of my issues yet and I'm not about to start now.

On which note, I should say that having missed out one collective issue earlier in the year, we are one off our normal 24 at this point, so a bumper December issue looks likely as a kind of christmas make-up present. Don't say we never think of you.

Finally, a bit off-topic for Angel Alley, but did anyone else notice that Margaret Thatcher's daughter has revealed the ex-Prime Minister has been suffering from dementia for the last eight years? At least karma gets things right once in a while...

Rob Ray

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NEXT ISSUE

The next issue will be dated 13th September 2008 and the last day to get copy to us for that issue will be Thursday 4th September. 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

In several countries, when you buy a drink, whether in a can, bottle or even carton, you have to pay a small deposit on the container. By returning the bottle or can, you get your deposit back. When I was younger, this was common practice in this country, at least on lemonade and beer bottles. Now, you'd expect this sort of thing in Scandinavia and Germany, but it is also law in 11 US states and one Australian one.

The Campaign for the Protection of Rural England wants something similar introduced here. The government says it is uneconomic, because if the market supported it companies would be doing it voluntarily.

This is nonsense, as there are all sorts of things that companies do or don't do, based largely on the prejudices of their managers and shareholders rather than some mythical 'invisible hand'. One thing that is interesting is to look at who lobbies against laws like this. As if you couldn't guess, it is the bottlers of drinks and their pals in big retail. In Maryland, for example, brewer Anheuser-Busch flew in lobbyists from their headquarters and spent tens of thousands of dollars lobbying against a Bill to introduce a deposit on drinks containers.

The angle of the CPRE is to stop littering – much of the rubbish dumped alongside country roads originally contained a drink. However, it is not the only reason that a policy like this would be a good idea. England reached 30% of waste recycled in 2007, which is woeful compared to most of the rest of Europe. As a significantly more urban, densely

populated country, it ought to be easier for England at least to do better. Part of the reason other countries do is that they make it easier. In Scandinavia, there are machines in shops which take in used bottles and cans and give back a voucher for using at the till.

The thing that would make a scheme like this work, though, is the same factor that makes the recycling rates of countries like Bangladesh and Senegal so high – if there is value in recycling, someone will do it to help them make ends meet. This summer I went to a music festival where the good people at the Workers' Beer Company had put a ten pence deposit on the paper cups they were serving drinks in. What happened was that loads of kids started going round collecting the cups, even asking you for them while you were still drinking at times. Some of them must have made a tidy sum, judging from the numbers of cups they were carrying. If it can work in a festival, why not the rest of Britain?

It does take us full circle back to when you got money on Corona bottles (which in those days was lemonade or cherryade or some other brightly coloured -ade, rather than posey Mexican beer). If you needed some money for something, you'd go round asking for any bottles that had a deposit you could take back. I can even remember adults arguing about throwing away a Newcastle Brown bottle as they had deposits on them.

Businesses argue that they haven't got the logistics to deal with it – but I would ask what goes in the lorries as they head back to the depot?

Blog Bites

(from libcom.org/blog/rob-ray)

Winston Churchill has been revered for telling Britain to keep going under the bombing raids of the Luftwaffe. But outside his propaganda work, there's a less widely-known part of dear old Winston's personal history which is often glossed over.

Starting with Churchill's support of the Kurdish gassings. This was a dirty little war between the British state, looking to keep hold of what is now Iraq, against campaigners for independence.

Come the hour, come the man. From the *Guardian* newspaper: "Churchill was particularly keen on chemical weapons, suggesting they be used "against recalcitrant Arabs as an experiment". He dismissed objections as "unreasonable". "I am strongly in favour of using poisoned gas against uncivilised tribes... (to) spread a lively terror."

This was said in 1919, shortly after the horrors of the first world war as a Geneva ban on such weapons was being debated.

A few years later, he brought this attitude to the table in Britain where, as editor of strike-breaking paper the *British Gazette* during the General Strike of 1926, Churchill was reported to have suggested machine should be used on the striking miners.

He was back sticking it to foreign civilians again during the second world war, as Britain started to gain the upper hand and send its bombers over German cities, saying: "If the bombardment of

London became a serious nuisance ... I may certainly have to ask you to support me in using poison gas. We could drench the cities of the Ruhr and many other cities in Germany."

His other suggestion wasn't exactly wonderful either. Between 25,000 and 40,000 people died during the firebombing of Dresden. Churchill had been the one to press for it.

In the colonies meanwhile he presided over a man-made famine in India in 1943 (the British army having destroyed villages and crops to quell an uprising) which led to as many as four million deaths.

His charming response when asked about this was to castigate the Indian people for "Breeding like rabbits and being paid a million a day by us for doing nothing by us about the war"

Finally, our Winston wasn't above a bit of fascism if it could get rid of the reds, saying of Mussolini's triumph: "If I had been an Italian I am sure I should have been whole-heartedly with you in your triumphant struggle against the bestial appetites and passions of Leninism... (Italy) has provided the necessary antidote to the Russian poison."

In his own words, Churchill saw fascism as the ultimate defence against communism. His antipathy to Hitler was not based on great politics or fine motives, but on a rivalry of power.

Harold Sculthorpe

Brian Bamford's obituary of Harold Sculthorpe (5th July) deals well with the last 15 years of his life. As his partner of the most recent 23 years I can fill in a few of the remaining gaps.

It was only in an early two decades of his long career that he worked in a London hospital. The next 20 years he spent lecturing in biomedical science at North East Surrey College of Technology, where for many years he was Principal Lecturer in the biggest department of biological science in the country. Among his achievements there was to play a central part in establishing one of the earliest degrees in nursing.

He was academically brilliant, but a colleague of those teaching years said at his funeral that "He was unaware that his ability was special. For every course he took or taught his results were exceptional. He was a quiet, shy man; modest to the extreme, able beyond words, who came to life in front of a class. At his retirement party the Principal of the college said "Harold, you were a relatively quiet presence at our meetings but when you spoke your contribution was worth ten of anyone else's".

That last statement has echoed many times.

In the '50s he was in Liverpool, living in an anarchist commune with people who became life-long friends. During that time he regularly spoke from a soapbox at factory gates about anarchism and the possibility of a different way of life, he sold freedom

wherever he could and regularly went fly-posting around the city. During those years he also went across to Ireland in order to smuggle in contraceptives and then distribute them.

After retiring in 1988, while still living in London, he spent two days a week helping behind the counter in the Freedom bookshop and became a regular at the London Anarchist Forum. He took over the *Freedom* subscription list and organised the mail-out. He also edited two editions of *The Raven* and for several years conscientiously prepared the annual index for that publication. I think his only regret at moving to Yorkshire in 1993 was that he could no longer be there with his friends in Angel Alley.

Harold gave me great love, wonderful sex and total support in everything I did. He was, quite simply, the finest human being I have ever known. I treasure the memories of him and all that we did together.

Gwendoline Goddard

I first met Harold Sculthorpe, long before he was called Harry, in 1949 at the Anarchist Summer School in Liverpool. Forty years later, when we were both retired from paid employment, we worked together at Freedom Press. He devised a loose-leaf ledger system for recording letters, sales, subscriptions and donations which he and I used for a total of thirteen years. As long as he stayed in London we shared our journeys home as far as Victoria station, where once a week we called in the

coffee bar for hot chocolate, which he called our weekly indulgence.

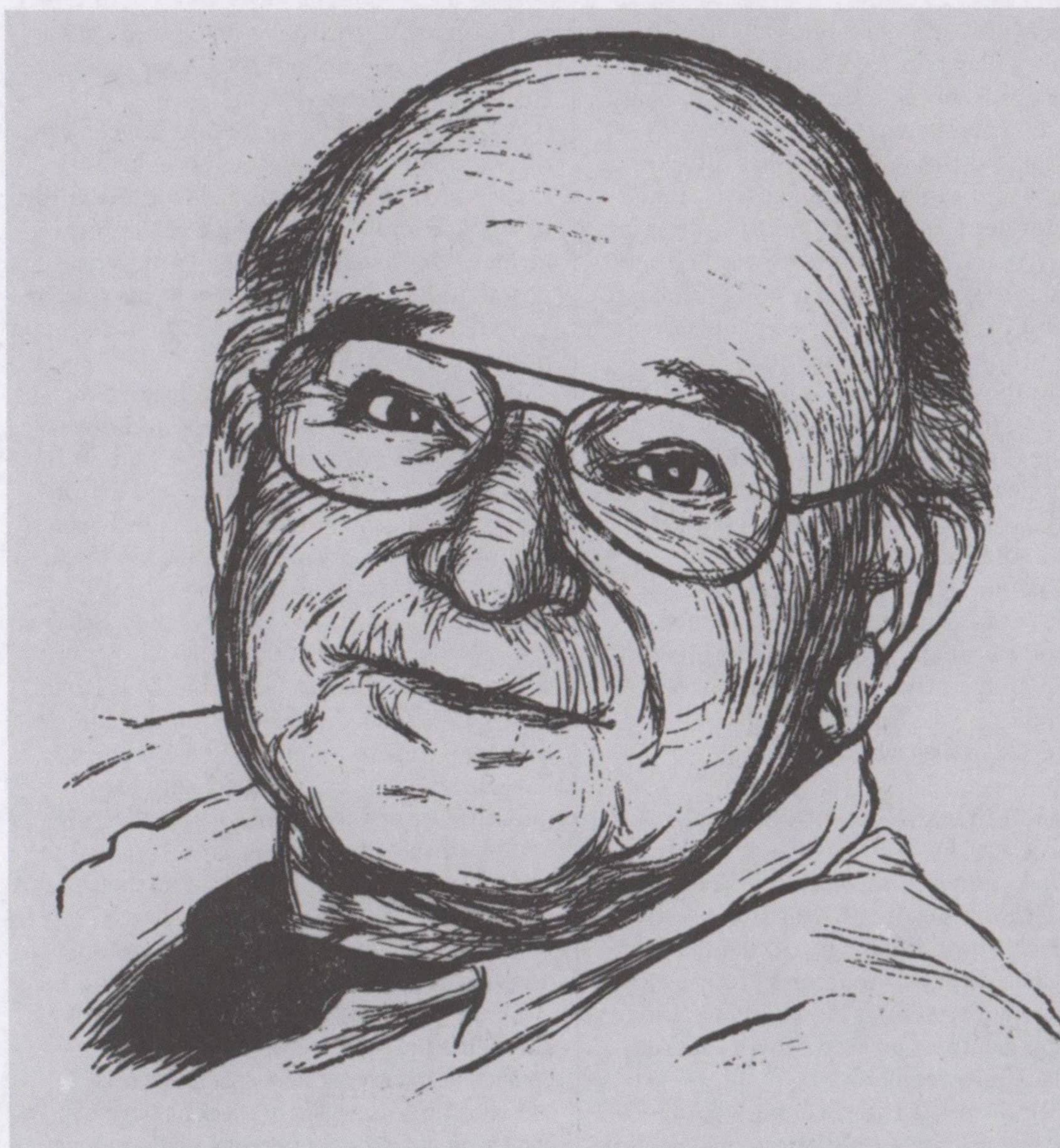
I cannot now put precise dates to all that I remember of him. As a hospital scientist investigating an epidemic of baby enteritis, he found that the spread of infection was caused by a misguided attempt to stop it – the nurses, between putting one baby down and picking another up, dipped their hands in bowls of Dettol, which were reservoirs of pathogens. His job was useful to his social life. He came to a party I was at with a phial of pure alcohol, and carefully measured out small quantities into people's glasses of orange juice.

He told me that when he was an army conscript, he once went out in civilian clothes and was questioned by police, who tailed him to the barrack room where he lived and watched him get into bed, then checked with the regimental police that he really lived there. He had aroused their suspicion by carrying a copy of *The Communist Manifesto*.

He was a wise and kindly man with a very quiet manner, but not without passions or humour. At one time he lived in an anarchist commune which got regrettably quarrelsome. Harold, I heard, never joined in the shouting matches, but one of the other residents found him in the kitchen methodically smashing cups. He said in his quiet way, "I have to get through my quota".

A lovely chap in every way, and all who knew him will miss him.

Donald Room



HARRY SCULTHORPE

22 September 1923 - 22 May 2008
30667 days

Rambler. Theatre. Author.
Dance. Anarchist. Music.
Scientist. Campaigner. Friend.
Music. Lover. Red Wine.
Teacher. Film. Grandfather.
A Fine Gentleman.

Many Thanks

GETTING ACTIVE

PRISON NEWS

Casellas hungerstrike continues

As *Freedom* goes to press, Spanish anarchist prisoner Amadeu Casellas has been on hunger strike for over two months against both the authorities' refusal to give him a release date and against poor conditions in Spanish prisons.

Amadeu continues to be kept in jail 22 years after he took part in a series of bank robberies to help finance anarchist activities in the country, beginning his hungerstrike during a mass action across Europe against the prison system.

After being lied to by the director of the prison during his last hunger strike in April, Amadeu has decided that this hunger strike will be to the ultimate consequences – if the prison authorities don't grant him an open regime (this is equivalent to day work release, where the prisoner signs out and goes to work during the day, returning to the prison in the evening), or a lessening of his sentence, he will continue the hunger strike.

Amadeu has lost more than 25 kilos (50.7 lbs) and he is being maintained on glucose in water. His sugar levels are down to 50 mg/l, and he is being given Valium.

Although his health is deteriorating, Amadeu has not lost his sense of humor and his morale is high. He asks everyone to pressure the General Direction of Penitentiary Services (DGSP) and the Penal Junta 2 of Manresa.

- You can write to him at:
Amadeu Casellas Ramón, Hospital de Terrassa, Mòdul penitenciari, Ctra. Torrebonica, s/n, C.P. 08227 Terrassa (Bcn), España
- Or write to the prison authorities at:
Dirección General de Servicios Penitenciarios, Albert Batlle i Bastardas, c/Aragó, 332. Barcelona, España

Chip parole hearing

Romaine Chip Fitzgerald, the longest held US political prisoner, is due for a parole hearing in the next few months. Supporters are asking people to help Chip by signing a petition on his behalf.

Chip is a former member of the Southern California Black Panther Party. He has been incarcerated since 1969 for altercation that took place with a CHP officer during a traffic stop. Chip and several Panthers defended themselves against an officer who later admitted he had orders to shoot and kill any and all Panthers.

During the altercation, the officer was shot and Chip managed to flee. When arrested for the incident several weeks later, he was informed that he was also being charged for a murder of a security guard during a robbery in a Vons market in Los Angeles. Chip has steadfastly denied the murder charge, but was sentenced to life in prison for both incidents.

To sign the petition go to freechip.org/sign-petition.html

Bristol Anarchist Bookfair
Saturday 13th September 2008
10am - 5pm

free entry

St Werburghs Community Centre,
Horley Road, BS2 9TF
Stalls, tools & workshops for social change
www.bristolanarchistbookfair.org

Freedom
via social change

Boredom
via shit work, low pay
via party politics

Apocalypse
via climate change & resource wars

Fear
via debt
via repossession
via state repression

● Bristol's first anarchist bookfair for 15 years takes place on 13th September (see picture). Andy Brigade from the organising collective explains why:

"Bristol and the south west has a lot of anarchists and other radical activists, but there's not been an overtly political gathering for many years. Sure there's a lot of leftfield festivals and networking, but no real focused event, and the vast majority of people don't make it to the London bookfair.

"Given the current crisis of capital worldwide, and a lot of interesting local initiatives, now's the time for a public event to gather people together and provide an entry point for all those looking for a viable solution to local and international problems. It's looking good, we've been booked up well in advance with 28 stalls and 22 workshops inside and outdoors, and there'll be a right knees-up after in true Bristol fashion. See you there!"

Full details at bristolanarchistbookfair.org

● August 16th saw a day of demos as United Against Fascism (UAF – a Trot front group) held a march through the streets of nearby Heanor, heading towards the festival, after which 30 odd managed to demonstrate outside the entrance. Anarchist group Antifa had their own response, managing to bring together a group of around 80, all masked up in black and ready to go.

The demo took a trip through woodland near the festival site – only attracting a police

helicopter towards the end – and the group blockaded the junction at Condor Lane, the road to the festival.

As riot police, FIT Team and police dogs turned up and started attacking, the anti-fascists fled back into the fields followed by riot police and one obliging nutcase local farmer. Mr Sewell of George Farm went postal and drove at protesters in his tractor, as well as attempting to block them escaping riot police with dogs.

Battles ensued as the group headed across the fields followed by riot cops and dogs, sending a volley of ammunition back in their direction. Thirty-three people were arrested for such things as breach of bail and Section 2 (violent disorder) of the Public Order Act. Contact Antifa at info@antifa.org.uk

(from Schnews)

● Inspired by the success of the Mill Road Social Centre in Cambridge, some people have moved into ex-pub, the Rose and Crown, in Occupation Road with the intention of turning it into a social centre.

One of the new tenants said: "If anyone wants to call by and get involved then that'd be brilliant. It's not always possible to rely on the owner giving people three months to do what they want, so please come and help clear the place / fill it up with useful things, and get it usable as soon as possible." Contact millroadsocialcentre-announcements-subscribe@lists.riseup.net or check out the group homepage at millroadsocialcentre.wordpress.com

The LA riots of 1992

A brief account of the six day-long Los Angeles riots of 1992 (also known as the Rodney King uprising or the Rodney King riots), which began on 29th April 1992 when a jury acquitted four police officers accused in the videotaped beating of black motorist Rodney King.

The riots left 53 dead and as many as 2,000 injured. Estimates of the material damage done vary between about \$800 million and \$1 billion, although insurance records indicate that the riots caused far wider destruction than was televised or noted in contemporary news reports.

The first rocks started to fly as the four LAPD officers who beat Rodney King and the jury who acquitted them were leaving the courtroom in suburban Simi Valley. Subsequent to the acquittal, on the afternoon of 29th April 1992, thousands of people began pouring into the streets of Los Angeles. In a few hours, rioting spread across the LA metropolitan area. Conditions rapidly approached the level of civil war. The police withdrew from the main areas of fighting, ceding the streets to the insurgent poor. Systematic burnings of capitalist enterprises commenced. More than 5,500 buildings burned. People shot at cops on the street and at media and police helicopters. Seventeen government buildings were destroyed.

The *Los Angeles Times* was attacked and looted. A vast canopy of smoke from the buildings covered the LA Basin. Flights out of LA airport were cancelled and incoming flights had to be diverted due to the smoke and sniper fire.

The rioting was the single most violent episode of social unrest in the US in the twentieth century, far outstripping the urban revolts of the 1960s both in sheer destructiveness and in the fact that the riots were a multiracial revolt of the poor. In the initial phase of the LA riots, the police were rapidly overwhelmed and retreated, and the military did not appear until the rioting had abated.

The *New York Times* noted: "Some areas took on the atmosphere of a street party as black, white, Hispanic and Asian residents mingled to share in a carnival of looting. As the greatly outnumbered police looked on, people of all ages (and genders), some carrying



Photo by Hyungwon Kang (kang.org)

small children, wandered in and out of supermarkets with shopping bags and arm-loads of shoes, liquor, radios, groceries, wigs, auto parts, gumball machines and guns".

The 30,000 square foot military enlistment centre for all nine counties of Southern California was burned to the ground on the first night. The state portrayed the rioting as an episode of indiscriminate mayhem where rioters attacked each other like sharks in a feeding frenzy.

While most media coverage and subsequent histories have focused on a few negative events, such as the horrific beating of truck driver Reginald Denny, in fact crimes against people, such as rape and drive-by shootings, virtually disappeared as previously atomised working people of different colours and ethnicities came together in mass collective violence, proletarian shopping [looting] and a potlatch of destruction.

There were far fewer rapes and muggings during the period than there are in LA under the normal rule of law. On a conservative estimate, more than 100,000 rebel poor in the greater LA area have now collectively experienced, in arson, looting and violence against the police, the intelligent use of violence as a political weapon. The number of participants in the uprising is well into the six-figure range. We know this because there were around 11,000 arrests (5,000 black, 5,500 Latino, 600 white) and the vast majority of participants got away scot-free.

Following the lead of events in the nation's cultural capital, mass spontaneous rioting spread to several dozen cities across the US. In San Francisco more than a hundred stores were looted and rich areas were attacked. One of the large posh hotels had its windows smashed by a gang of youths chanting "The Rich Must Die". Protesters marched onto

the Interstate Freeway, causing a massive tailback affecting several hundred thousand car commuters. In San Jose, students looted and attacked police cruisers. Police were shot at in Tampa, Florida, and in Las Vegas, armed rioters burned a state parole and probation office. Armed confrontations between the police and locals continued in Las Vegas for the next 18 days. In Seattle a burning police car was pushed into police ranks and there was loads of looting, smashing and burning in downtown Seattle. Similar events happened all over the US.

On 2nd May, 5,000 LAPD, 1,000 Sheriff's Deputies, 950 County Marshals and 2,300 Highway Patrol cops, accompanied by 9,975 National Guard troops, 3,500 Army troops and Marines with armoured vehicles and 1,000 Federal Marshals, FBI agents and Border Patrol SWAT teams moved in to restore order and guard the shopping malls. Hundreds were wounded. Most of the people killed in the uprising were killed in the repression of the revolt. After much fighting and the largest mass arrest in US history the LA '92 insurrection came to a close.

(Note: Following the riots, mounting pressure for a retrial of the officers involved in the Rodney King beating led to federal charges of civil rights violations being brought against the officers. On 17th April 1993, Officer Laurence Powell and Sergeant Stacey Koon were found guilty, and the other two were acquitted. The four have since quit or been fired from the LAPD. King himself has since been arrested eleven times on a variety of charges including spousal abuse, hit-and-run and other misdemeanour charges).

edited by libcom from an article in *Anarchy – A Journal of Desire Armed*, No. 34, Autumn 1992.

REVIEWS

WHAT'S ON

SEPTEMBER

1st to 7th London FreeSchool Week with workshops, discussions, skill sharing, etc., see <http://londonfreeschool.wordpress.com> or email deschooling_society@lists.riseup.net to find out more

6th Belfast Anarchist Bookfair at Belfast Unemployed Resource Centre (beside the John Hewitt) on Lower Donegal Street from 12 noon until 6pm, see <http://belfastanarchistbookfair2008.blogspot.com>

6th See *Yellow Gate Women*, inspirational Greenham Common film at The Portobello Film Festival, Westbourne Studios, 242 Acklam Road, London W10 5JJ, show starts at 5pm, film shown at 7pm, see margarettadarcy.com for more

6th Carnival against vivisection, rally against Sequani labs animal testing, meet at 12 noon outside Ledbury train station in Herefordshire, please bring noise-making equipment and wear green, see <http://smashsequani.wordpress.com>

7th London Vegan Festival from 11am to 8pm at Kensington Town Hall, Hornton Street, London W8, see vegancampaigns.org festival for more.

13th Bristol Anarchist Bookfair from 10am to 5pm at St Werburghs Centre, Horley Road, Bristol BS2 9TJ, see bristolanarchistbookfair.org

14th Benefit gig for Class War and No Sweat – 'No Sweat on a Sunday' runs from 2pm until late at the 12 Bar, 179 Westcott Place, Swindon, Wiltshire, SN1 5HT, artists include Headjam, The Parodies, 2 Sick Monkeys, Robb Johnson & the Irregulars and Tommy Munroe, also a BBQ, raffle and stalls, more info from nosweat.org.uk or londonclasswar.org

26th Guerrilla Gardening benefit kicks off at 7.30pm at The Rooms, 33–35 Western Road, St Leonards, East Sussex, TN37 6DJ, featuring Robb Johnson and others, see robbjohnson.co.uk or guerrillagardening.org for more

OCTOBER

4th Keep Space for peace, protest at Menwith Hill US base near Harrogate, North Yorkshire, from 12 noon to around 5pm, see caab.org.uk and space4peace.org for details

15th Smash EDO mass demo against the arms trade, meet opposite Falmer station (next to the Sussex University sign), Brighton, at 12 noon, see smashedo.org.uk/shut-itt.htm for details

18th London Anarchist Bookfair from 10am to 7pm at Queen Mary & Westfield College, Mile End Road, London E1 4ND

NOVEMBER

1st Peasants Revolt 2008, a peaceful protest representing communities and individuals suffering under an unsustainable system, march to Hyde Park in London for solidarity rally, see peasantsrevolt.org for more details.

BOOKS

The God Delusion

by Richard Dawkins, Bantam, £7.99

One of the surprising facts of our time is the return of religion. Long used by governments as a threat to keep people in line (see, for example, the way the Roman Empire took over Christianity), religion seemed in irreversible decline with the rise of modern science. Science, especially the theory of evolution, provided an alternative explanation for the origins and development of life on earth and even for the universe itself. And so different myths have been devised to keep people under control, nationalism, parliamentary democracy, the free market and so on. Dawkins is almost oblivious to this social aspect of religion. Instead he contrasts unreason (religion) with reason (science). The fact that the way science has been applied may have brought us to ecological catastrophe seems to have escaped his attention. Dawkins also thinks that without religion we wouldn't have had the Crusades. But the Crusades took place to gain control of the spice trade, retaking Jerusalem was just an excuse.

And while Dawkins points out that Emperor Bush used "God told me to do it" to justify the invasion of Iraq he doesn't go on to look at the possibility that Bush has no religious beliefs at all and is probably an intelligent hypocrite who despises those naïve enough to fall for his lies.

Given that Dawkins starts from such a limited perspective, his rousing call to atheism is surprisingly good. He's funny, well-informed, and lists dozens of further atheistic books to read. If you want to know the state of play with atheism today, start with this book. Just remember that Dawkins isn't aiming his book at people whose philosophical outlook

is anti-government, anti-capitalist, anti-hierarchy. Instead he's attacking creationists, the nutters who deny the theory of evolution and think that life and the universe started six thousand years ago, just as it says in the Bible.

The Anarchist Past and other essays

by Nicolas Walter, edited by David Goodway, Five Leaves Publications, £9.99

Nicolas Walter was one of the principal writers in the British anarchist movement from the early 1960s until his death in 2000. A prolific writer with a vast knowledge of anarchist history, he rarely turned his knowledge and talent into book form. His best-known work, *About Anarchism* (Freedom Press) is really a pamphlet (and originally appeared as an issue of *Anarchy* magazine in 1970).

We are therefore all indebted to David Goodway and Five Leaves Publications for rescuing a collection of Nicolas's articles from obscurity by putting them into a book. As well as articles on William Godwin, Bakunin, Nechayev, Kropotkin Emma Goldman and other anarchist figures, there are major reviews of two important books, George Woodcock's *Anarchism* (an introduction to the subject) and John Quail's *The Slow Burning Fuse* (a history of British anarchism from the 1880s to the 1930s). Since both of these books are out-of-print Nicolas's reviews are all the more useful. Two further collections of Nicolas's writings are mooted, one on his involvement with the radical end of the peace movement and another on atheism. Nothing in the immediate future, however.

Mo Moseley

ABOUT ANARCHISM

Nicolas Walter with an introduction by Natasha Walter

The case for anarchism as a pragmatic political philosophy is explained in this new edition of the classic work by Nicolas Walter, who was a writer, journalist and active protester against the power of the state. It has often been reprinted and translated into many languages, including French, Spanish, Japanese, Serbo-Croat, Chinese, Polish and Russian.

available at £4.20 (post free) from
Freedom Press, 84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1 7QX

QUIZ ANSWERS

1. They suggested the Northern League ate polenta, the cornmeal mush that is a speciality of the north. Embarrassed Northern League leader Umberto Bossi quashed the boycott.
2. John Taylor Caldwell. The phrase is from *The Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam*. *With Fate Conspire* is the second volume of his biography.
3. In Vancouver, Canada, from 1976 to the mid 1980s.
4. For flying a Devon flag in his back garden without planning permission, which is apparently needed for flying non-national flags. In a rare display of common sense, a government minister said that local authorities could turn a blind eye to this sort of thing.

Grains of truth

Tom Jennings is captivated by *Couscous* and its sympathetic but unflinchingly honest portrait of an extended family struggling to make various ends meet.

Writer-director Abdellatif Kechiche's new film details the bonds and fissures within a French-Tunisian clan and social network beset by sundry economic, cultural and institutional pressures in the Mediterranean port of Sète, where the fishing and ship-building industries are rapidly declining. The film's title (originally *Le Graine et le Mulet* – semolina grain and mullet; couscous's contrasting main ingredients) emphasises the patterns and texture of daily existence, and its central set-piece mealtime scenes directly echo classic French family melodrama – though in a socio-economic milieu alien to the familiar upper-middle-class complacency. Superficially resembling Robert Guedigian's downbeat Marseille-based social realism, here the manipulation of script, structure and pacing interconnects multiple levels of reference and significance to give an epic, novelistic feel. Fortunately this doesn't detract from the specificity of characters and situations – Kechiche and the largely non-professional (but completely convincing) cast hailing from the background portrayed and intimate with the trials and tribulations tackled.

Facing redundancy after refusing to sacrifice craftsmanship to 'flexibility', world-weary



60 year-old ship's carpenter Slimane (an impressively restrained Habib Boufares) collects fish from trawlermen mates and distributes them to his ex-wife Souad and their children's families – whose responses (to him, his news and the fish) reflect their own diverse dilemmas and difficulties. The mullet eventually surface in Souad's renowned Sunday-lunch – Slimane is not invited, but sons Hamid (unemployed) and Majid (an inveterate womaniser) deliver some to the low-rent hotel owned by his new partner Latifa. They suggest he return to the Tunisia he left as a young man, but instead he spends his severance renovating a rotting hulk into a floating restaurant showcasing Souad's couscous. Latifa's teenage daughter Rym (the superb Hafsia Herzi) helps negotiate the patronising, prejudicial, dismissive town bureaucracy, and everyone pitches in preparing for an opening night to seal official licensing. But Majid disappears for an assignation with the centrepiece semolina still in his car-boot, and the film ends with Slimane running round in circles in pursuit while Rym and his Tunisian friends entertain those gathered with traditional music and bellydance...

The Fine-Grain of Community
Couscous skilfully deploys, and undermines, prevailing multiculturalist discourses which misrepresent the immigrant experience as exotically (and dangerously) distinct from a supposedly indigenous mainstream – emphasising many interacting dimensions of difference which only translate into 'otherness' from a wilfully separate perspective. This family is thoroughly integrated in terms of local employment, neighbourhood and marriage, embodying a range of relationships with 'native' French and people from other backgrounds. Cross-cultural contrasts may result in enrichment and/or conflict, with

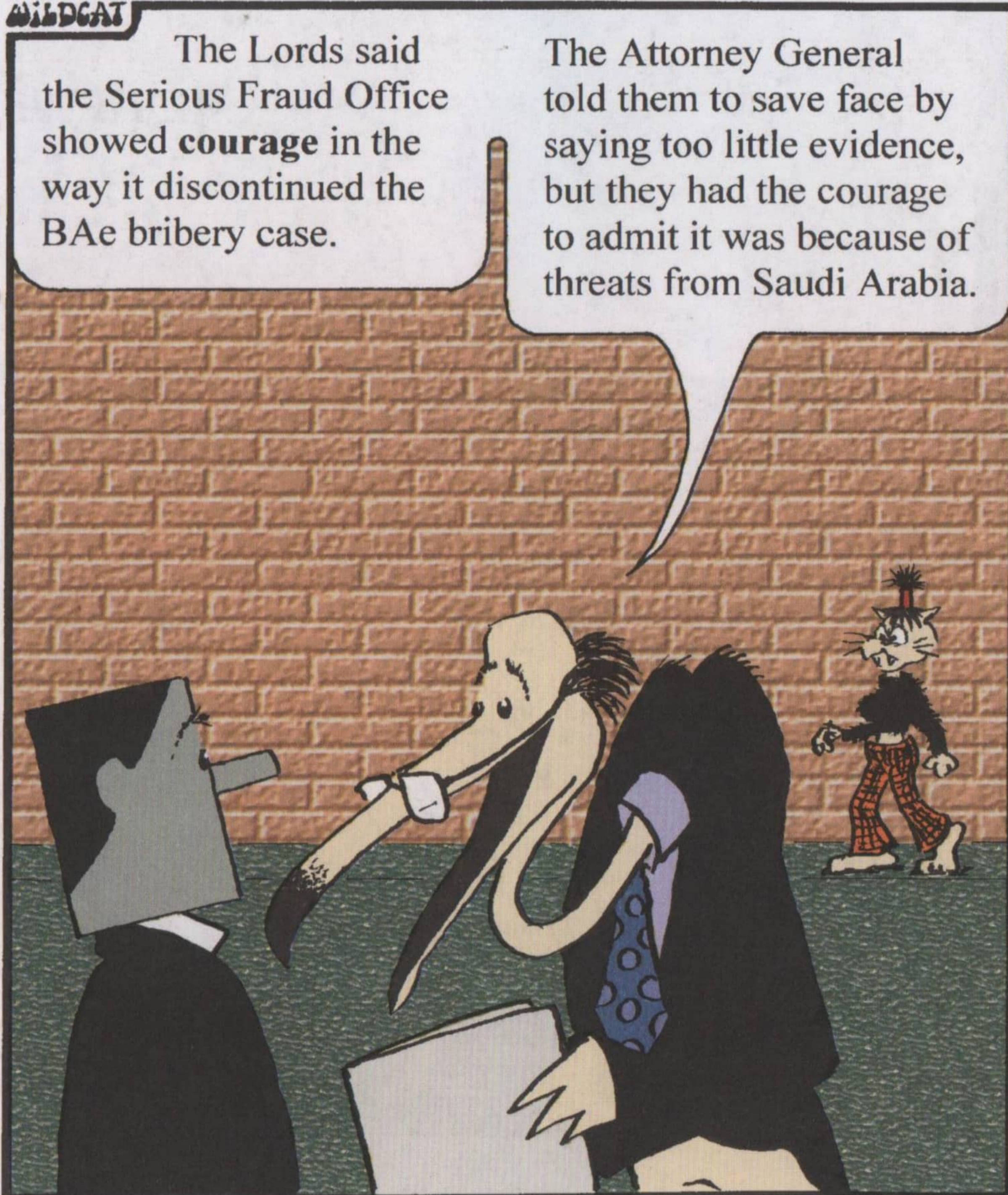
outcomes impossible to simplistically attribute to tribal clichés – compare, for example, Majid's betrayed Russian wife, bereft in isolation, with Slimane and Souad's fully embedded estrangement. Furthermore, drawing on roots and customs can reinforce collective memory, practice and orientation; but may also represent defensive constraint – the illusory allure of looking backward when Slimane considers giving up, or the compulsion towards kin cohesion effectively colluding in Majid's destructive philandering while keeping Latifa and Rym at arm's length.

Crucially, issues of race and racism, while not denied, are only decisive when modulated by class division and hierarchy. Thrown on the modern economy's scrapheap, Slimane rescues its rejected flotsam – not just the boat, but himself and what social and cultural capital he can muster – and gambles on his own account. Ironically, self-commodification in the post-industrial service sector entails artificially singling out, objectifying and amplifying those very markers of special identity that hitherto nourished everyday life in concert with all the other influences. Now, providing a niche-market 'ethnic' product means simultaneously appealing to, competing with, and satisfying the disciplinary gazes of the middle-class establishment. The business community leaders, local government functionaries, hangers-on and tourists are thus conflated here in the restaurant's homogeneously grotesque, increasingly drunken patrons seeking suitably aestheticised touristic experience while remaining oblivious to the underpinning mundane human dramas reminiscent of working-class struggles to survive and thrive the world over.

The film's bravest risk is to suspend this climax on an unbearably drawn-out knife-edge, with no way to predict the result.

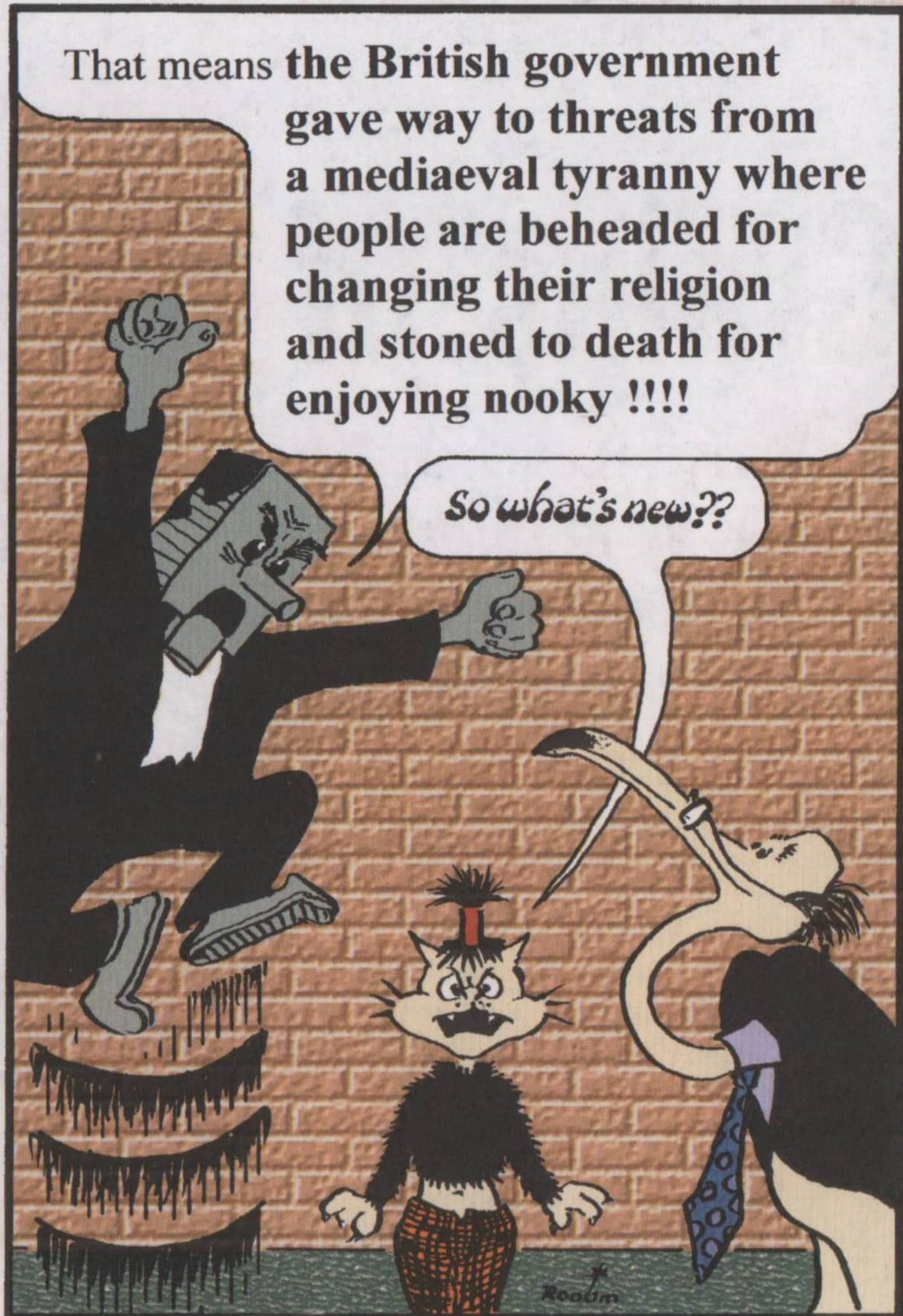
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The Lords said the Serious Fraud Office showed **courage** in the way it discontinued the BAe bribery case.

The Attorney General told them to save face by saying too little evidence, but they had the courage to admit it was because of threats from Saudi Arabia.



That means the **British government** gave way to threats from a mediaeval tyranny where people are beheaded for changing their religion and stoned to death for enjoying nooky !!!!

So what's new??

Review

◀ page 15

Confronting his desire to leave an enduring legacy after a disappointed life, our scarcely authoritative patriarch sets events in motion with his secular 'loaves and fishes', but heroic individualism is decidedly beside the point as he flails helplessly at the mercy of others. The kids stealing his moped crystallise his waning agency, leaving younger generations to work it out for themselves – with prospects hinging on the balance of internal forces as much as external limits. Nevertheless, the strengths and shortcomings of the elders appear uncannily reflected in their descendants, though recomposing in very different circumstances. If the daughters' invocation

of engagement, perseverance and solidarity can overcome pride and resentment and help galvanise the sons from their reluctance to act responsibly, the cultural matrix inherited from the past – whether concerning music, food or love – could clinch the blending of capabilities in fruitful directions. Devised partly as Kechiche's tribute to his own father (a friend of the lead actor who died shortly before filming), *Couscous* succeeds well beyond his aim "to show all the complexities of this Franco-Arabic family ... looking to a future which does not necessarily mean the denial of their own identity". *

www.tomjennings.pwp.blueyonder.co.uk

* Abdellatif Kechiche, in Ginette Vincendeau, 'Southern Discomfort', *Sight & Sound*, July 2008, page 47).

THE QUIZ

1. When members of Italy's far right separatist Northern League called for a boycott of southern pizza, what was the response from Naples, traditional home of the pizza?
2. Which anarchist's autobiography is called *With Fate Conspire*? And where does the phrase come from?
3. Where and when was anarchist paper *Open Road* published?
4. For what was Rodney Lock of Ottery St Mary threatened with legal action in 2004?

Answers on page 14

The Anarchist Quiz Book by Martin Howard with illustrations by Paul Petard is available from Freedom Press, £5 (post free).



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