

## LIARS, DAMNED LIARS AND BANKERS

### OPINION

#### Looking at the current financial crisis

The roots of the current crisis lie in the nature of the financial system, in its tendency to generate bubbles. Before the housing bubble, it was dot.com. Before dot.com, it was the Savings and Loans fiasco.

Seeking ever-increasing profits, banks create easy credit based on our savings and the City gambles with it, pouring resources into specific markets in an attempt to make money.

The odds of a crash get worse as capital hoards wealth while rising inequality cuts into the overall demand for goods. It becomes impossible to clear rising debts, new buyers dry up and finally the whole thing collapses. Irrational exuberance gives way to fear and panic, turning easy credit into expensive, hard-to-find credit.

This lack of financial capital next impacts on the real economy as industry cannot find funding and consumers cut back on spending. Investments no longer pay off,

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#### LENS CAP ARGENTINA



Residents of Cordoba in Argentina demonstrating ahead of a crucial vote on the future of metal mining in the region. Campaigners against open-cast metal extraction have been celebrating a victory after their sustained pressure on local legislators paid off with a law passed prohibiting any open-cast mining of nuclear or metal materials, and a further ban on the use of certain toxic substances in future mining projects. The victory overturns national rulings from the '90s which notoriously gave mining companies *carte blanche* to operate without any input from local people or environmental standards.

## PFI HOUSING COSTS FAIL TO IMPRESS

A new report on the Pathfinder scheme for building Private Finance Initiative (PFI, publicly bought, privately built and run) housing has found that councils are seeing at best marginally cheaper costs from the initiative's estimates, as the project rolls out across some of the most deprived areas of Britain.

Pathfinder, notoriously launched as part of a plan to demolish and rebuild huge swathes of housing in the north, was originally touted as a major plank in the government's plan to revitalise social housing stocks, rebuilding them to the 'decent homes standard'.

Alongside the controversial stock-transfer and arms-length-management (ALMO) schemes which have seen housing transferred out of council hands, it has been suggested repeatedly by the government that PFI has

the potential to improve social housing at a radically decreased risk and cost.

The government have been accused of forcing local authorities into taking on one of the three options, as funding has been blocked for direct investment into council-owned stock.

But according to a housing report summary publishing by PA Consultants recently, the biggest PFI scheme is estimated – before implementation – as just 1% cheaper, with only one of the other six projects seeing a significant improvement.

Critics have pointed out that the costs of change are likely to be significantly higher in reality, with areas including Islington, Newham and Camden in London, Manchester, Reading, Leeds and others, including some extremely deprived areas.

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## NEWS

## IN BRIEF

**DEFENCE:** Safety blunders at the nuclear bomb bases on the Clyde have rocketed to a record high, shutting down submarine reactors, spilling radioactivity and contaminating workers. An internal Ministry of Defence (MoD) report has revealed that there were 100 nuclear safety lapses at Faslane and Coulport, near Helensburgh, between June 2006 and May 2007. This was 40% higher than the previous year and nearly three times higher than in 2000-01.

**EDUCATION:** On Tuesday 23rd September the University of Birmingham Guild of Students attempted to stop its own members from holding and distributing materials criticising the Royal Bank of Scotland, a paying exhibitor at a corporate freshers fair held on the same day in another part of the building.

**EDUCATION:** Anti-war student Artem Liebenthal has been suspended from Newcastle College for asking military recruiters on his campus "How many of our students would be killed?" Contact [linda.moore@ncl-coll.ac.uk](mailto:linda.moore@ncl-coll.ac.uk)

**EDUCATION:** Brighton & Hove City Council has been singled out as a discriminatory employer because of its handling of a case brought by a transgender teacher.

In June 2007, the Council was ordered to pay a transgender teacher £35,000 after being found guilty of victimising and discriminating against her. It has been estimated that the Council spent £100,000 fighting the employment tribunal. Calls to investigate the council's handling of the case are being ignored.

**HEALTH:** Thousands of people suffering from exposure to asbestos during their working lives are stuck in 'compensation limbo' as a result of a House of Lords ruling on negligence, according to Unite, the UK's biggest union. Unite is urging the Government to overturn a disastrous 2007 Law Lords' ruling to end a 20-year right for pleural plaques victims to receive compensation.

**HOUSING:** Campaign group Justice Not Crisis are organising a demonstration to highlight the issues of homelessness and other housing issues in Birmingham.

There is £100 million of government grants allocated for Birmingham that are not being spent because of the council's policy. This money could build 2,000 new homes for rent. [justicenotcrisis.wordpress.com](http://justicenotcrisis.wordpress.com)

**IDENTITY:** Biometric identity cards are to be issued to foreign students in the UK from 25th November. Within three years all foreign nationals applying to enter or remain in the UK will be required to have a card. By 2014, 90% of foreign residents in Britain should have identity cards. British workers in 'sensitive roles' will have to have cards from 2009. They will be introduced into the general population from 2011.

## LENS CAP BIRMINGHAM



Zimbabwean band Ngoma play reggae roots music to celebrate the revolutionary traditions of Africa and the experiences of those forced to flee their homes. The group played in Birmingham city centre at an event organised by the Birmingham Anti-Racist Campaign to mark the long history of migration that has made the city what it is today. Ngoma's music was interspersed with short speeches from refugees, asylum seekers, anti-racist campaigners and other citizens of Birmingham.

## Ploughshares group to shock AWE

Campaigning anti-war group Trident Ploughshares has called a major non-violent blockade of Atomic Weapons Establishment (AWE) Aldermaston, near Reading, for Monday 27th October from 6.30am.

The event, which is supported by the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (CND), Block the Builders and the Aldermaston Women's Peace Camp, is aimed at disrupting work on existing Trident warheads and their successors.

Hundreds of peace campaigners from around the country and beyond are expected to converge on Aldermaston in what organisers hope will be the biggest day of direct action

against Trident nuclear weapons since the Faslane Big Blockade last October.

In March 2007, Westminster voted in principle to retain nuclear weapons and to build new submarines from which to launch them. To date, there has been no vote in Parliament on the future of warheads. However, Ministry of Defence (MoD) documents obtained by CND in July 2008 confirmed that contrary to repeated ministerial denials, the government has already made the decision to replace the warheads.

The MoD has already committed billions of pounds to a massive ongoing construction and recruitment programme at AWE, where Britain's nuclear warheads are researched, developed and maintained.

AWE first outlined its expansion proposals, which it claimed would be on the scale of Heathrow Terminal 5, in its 2002 Site Development Strategy Plan. Building work commenced on the Orion laser – a key facility for the future of Britain's WMD project – in 2005 and continues to this day.

In their strategy notes, available online at [tridentploughshares.org/section20](http://tridentploughshares.org/section20), the group said: "We want to stop all traffic and pedestrians from getting into the base for as long as possible by nonviolently using our bodies and our imaginations to block the entrances to the site."

"No one should do anything they are not happy with. Usually the police only arrest people who refuse to move from the roadway so arrest of supporters who do not wish to be arrested and move is unlikely unless they place a section 14 order on the demonstration."

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# Crisis builds over waste

A raft of plans to bring in incinerators across the UK are likely to accelerate as Britain fails to bring its recycling levels and waste reduction into line with EU guidelines, a stark new report has found.

Lack of funding and support for comprehensive recycling packages and an unwillingness to bring in newer technologies mean that without incinerators local councils will miss their targets for reducing landfill waste to EU targets by 2013 – incurring a cost of around £30 extra per household in green fines.

However the commission sounded a warning over incinerators, saying: “Few councils generate enough waste alone to justify building an incinerator with energy recovery of the most efficient scale; and few partnerships are able to achieve the maximum benefits of coordination and scale.”

It also noted that new technologies and the high costs of building such facilities

could make them an obsolete and expensive exercise over the longer term.

The report, which reveals the UK as one of the least recycling-friendly Western countries, coming in behind the US, said that incinerators are being looked at by most Waste Management Authorities as a quick fix to deal with rising levels of landfill, even though in the long term the measure would be unsustainable in many cases.

The Audit Commission’s *Well Disposed: responding to the waste challenge* report highlighted that the UK’s current landfill capacity will run out within the next seven years if dumping continues at the same rate, with many authorities struggling to find spare capacity before that point.

The EU meanwhile has set three targets for 2010, 2013 and 2020 to cut back landfill use – but crucially for green campaigners, has not specified how this change should happen, making measures such as incinerator

use, which potentially makes money by burning for power supplies, an attractive proposition for cash-strapped councils.

The report found that most of the plans for waste management in the next 12 years are likely to revolve around PFI contracts, with government credits for worth £2 billion currently on the table as an incentive to use the private sector in providing large-scale, centralised facilities.

However alarm bells have been sounded over how such schemes are going to keep up with demand in the long term, as procurement for major projects such as incinerators and large-scale recycling projects can take up to seven years – meaning today’s plans may be unable to keep up with dumping by the time the 2020 deadline came around.

Less than half of local authorities are confident that they will be able to recycle over half their biodegradable waste.

## Liars, damned liars and bankers

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firms go under and the calls for wage cutting and bailouts begin.

In America, the Republican politicians have been hamstrung by their own rhetoric. Their penchant for less obvious forms of state intervention for capital has become a handicap now that the government needs to be seen to act.

On the left, we can expect the dusting off of calls for nationalisation. For the reformist left, the Swedish financial rescue of the early 1990s is the preferred option rather than a Republican-style Savings and Loan style approach. For the ‘revolutionary’ left, the aim will be full-blown state capitalism.

While this may be preferable to neo-

liberalism or Leninist ‘socialism’, anarchists should be stressing these are not our only alternatives. We need to push the point that this is a crazy way to run an economy, that we do not need to live by bribing the rich to invest. We need to raise the necessity for anarchism as replacing capitalists with state bureaucrats is no real change.

The great unknown in these times is working class people. If we remain quiet then any bailout will reflect the interests of big business, no strings attached. If we remain quiet then the costs of recovery will be inflicted on us in the shape of rising unemployment, lower wages, higher taxes. If we remain quiet, then neo-liberalism will

shrug off this crisis like the previous ones and continue privatising the gains while socialising the losses and costs.

Our task as anarchists is to raise our voices and encourage direct action. Attempts to cut wages must be resisted. Attempts to close workplaces must be met by occupations. Attempts to evict families from their homes must be stopped.

We need to socialise the means of life, not have them run by a few capitalists or state bureaucrats. To do that, we need to organise community and workplace assemblies and build an alternative to a system in crisis, one based on solidarity and freedom.

Iain McKay



## PUBLIC SECTOR

# Surveillance unleashed

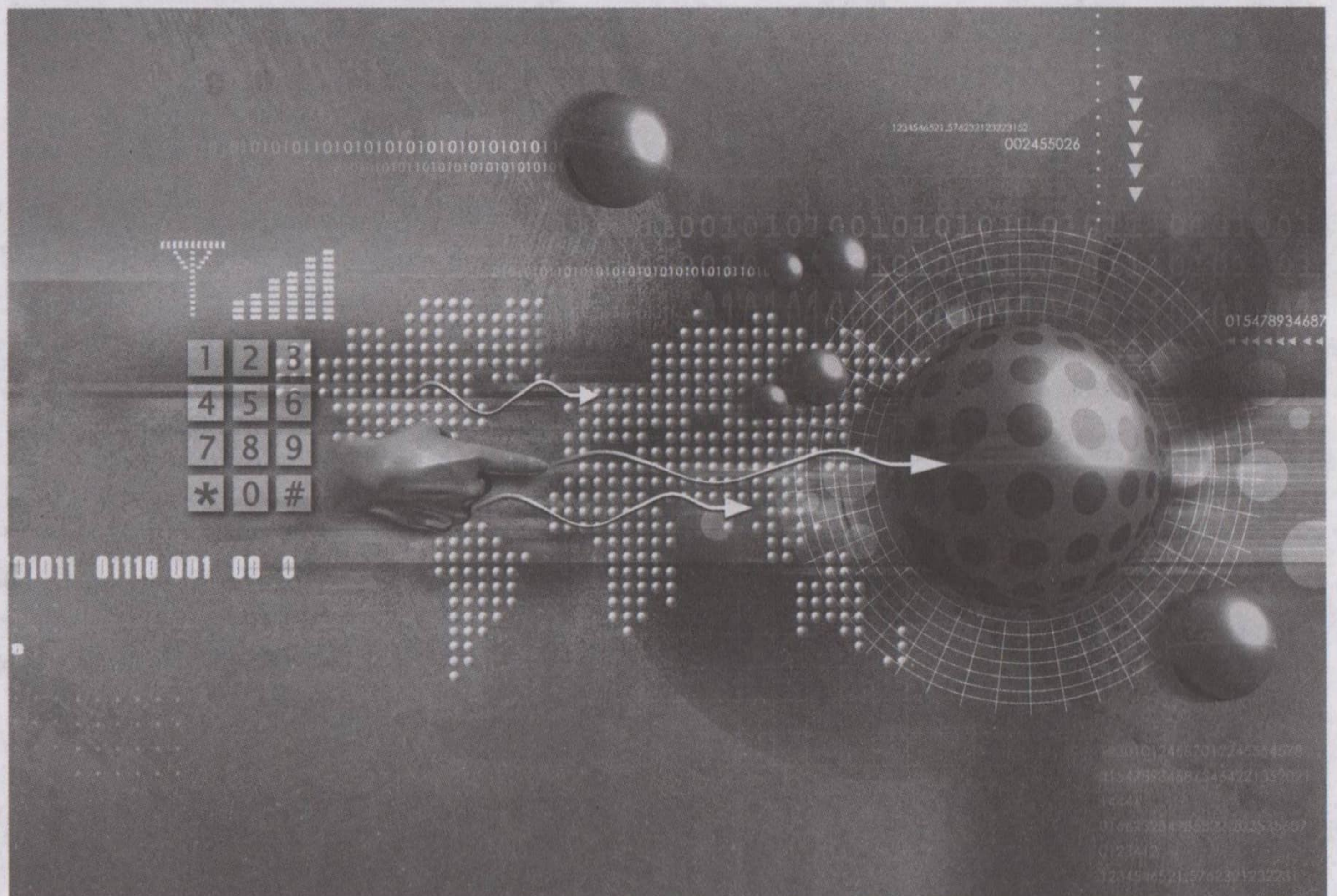
A report released by civil liberties group Statewatch has suggested that EU chiefs are “pursuing unfettered powers” to access, gather and retain masses of personal data on the everyday lives of EU citizens in the name of security.

A raft of proposals are being set out by the High-Level Advisory Group on the Future of European Home Affairs Policy (the Future Group) as part of the EU’s new five year strategy for justice and home affairs and security policy for 2009–2014.

The Future Group presented its final report, *Freedom, Security, Privacy – European Home Affairs in an Open World*, at the Justice and Home Affairs Council’s July 2008 meeting.

Analysing the Future Group’s proposals, including the “unquestioned adoption of the EU surveillance society and a proposed Euro-Atlantic area of cooperation with the USA”, and looking at their relation to existing and planned EU policies and their impact on civil liberties, Statewatch’s report, *The Shape of Things to Come* is warning of the potential for huge intrusion by the state into private lives.

The proposals laid out by the Future Group include a range of measures such as new surveillance technologies, enhanced cooperation with the United States and harnessing the power of the ‘digital tsunami’ for the benefit of law enforcement and security agencies. In other words (to quote from the EU Council presidency paper): “Every object the individual uses, every transaction they make and almost everywhere they go will create a detailed digital record. This will generate a wealth of information for public security organisations, and create huge opportunities for more effective and



productive public security efforts.”

Following the 2004 EU Directive, governments across the European Union have adopted (or are adopting) national laws for the mandatory retention of every individual’s communications data – all forms of communication (phone-calls, faxes, mobile calls including locations) – which will be extended to keeping a record of all internet usage from 2009. Though few might be aware that this is happening, this effectively enables law enforcement and security agencies to access all traffic data (in the UK, access is already automated).

When traffic data including internet usage

is combined with other data held by the state or gathered from ‘non-state sources’ (tax, employment, bank details, credit card usage, biometrics, criminal record, health record, use of e-government services, travel history, etc.) a “frighteningly detailed picture of each individual’s everyday life and habits can be accessed at the click of a button”.

Statewatch’s report concludes that the EU has rejected wholesale the idea that personal data relating to EU citizens should be kept private from state agencies, in favour of the principle that the state should have access to every last detail about our private lives.

James Horrox

## Mental health criticisms

Recent reports have suggested that children and young people have been getting inadequate access to mental health support due to a postcode lottery of aid.

While support has been said to have gone up in some areas, according to government reports, in areas where healthcare in general has suffered, mental health in particular has been left short on funds.

Mental health is often at the bottom of the list for funding, and is referred to as the ‘pariah’ of the health service by many advocates within the sector.



While the government insists that an extra £1.2 billion has been put into mental health services, it was found in particular that children were not receiving the specialist care required, and are instead sequestered in adult facilities.

The government’s target is that, come 2010, no children under 16 should be placed on an adult ward, but the survey showed that some children were put in this situation for up to a year and not given the support they needed.

The survey was done with the children’s charity Young Minds, whose chief executive Sarah Brennan said the research revealed “a bleak picture of the condition of mental health services for young people”.

Meanwhile in Northern Ireland, advocacy groups have slammed a lack of progress in the six years since a major review of mental health services was commissioned for the area.

The Bamford Review, which examined such services, was said to have failed in addressing chronic under-staffing.

## Unite ballot for action in NHS branches

Thousands of NHS employees are being asked to take industrial action in a pay protest ballot later this month by the Unite union. Unite will ask its members whether they are prepared to take industrial action, including strike action, in the ballot starting on 28th October. The ballot is underpinned by a 95% rejection by members of the government’s unilaterally imposed three-year pay deal, worth in total 7.99% – barely half the current rate of inflation. It is further reinforced by a 75% vote in favour of an industrial action ballot. Unite represents the Community Practitioners’ and Health Visitors’ Association, Mental Health Nurses Association, Guild of Healthcare Pharmacists, Society of Sexual Health Advisers, Medical Practitioners’ Union, College of Healthcare Chaplains and the Hospital Physicists Association.

Like many health unions, including the largest health union Unison, Unite had initially accepted the deal, but decided to re-open negotiations earlier this year using a contract clause as inflation had spiked.



## IN BRIEF

**BANKING:** The administration group now controlling Lehman Brothers has laid off 750 people redundant in the fixed-income banking division.

PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC) said that it was abandoning the sale of the European debt and credit unit after exhausting all avenues.

**BANKING:** HSBC has announced it is making 1,100 investment banking staff redundant, including 500 in Britain. Back-office and administrative staff in London are set to be most affected.

**CHEMICALS:** The Dutch owner of ICI, the paint and chemicals company, plans to cut 3,500 jobs. Akzo Nobel, which bought the firm for £8 billion in January, said that it was attempting to make up for a fall in demand and rising prices for raw materials.

**CONSTRUCTION:** Corby firm Welwood Roofing Services and the Watford-based Building Research Establishment have been fined £50,000 and £17,500 respectively over the death in a vehicle accident of 34-year-old Shane Neal, who died while carrying out work at the former RAF Cardington in Bedfordshire. Mr Neal was crushed by a truck in Hangar No 1 when the vehicle he had been using to dismantle a fire test rig overturned.

**ECONOMY:** GDP has failed to grow in the second quarter, with the economy stagnating for the first time since 1992. Output fell in manufacturing by 0.9% and in construction by 0.5%, while in the services sector it grew by 0.2%.

**CHEMICALS:** A UK multinational with a multimillion pound trade in skin care products has been fined after trashing the skin of its own staff. Unilever was ordered to pay £28,000 in fines and costs after 25 Merseyside workers contracted dermatitis.

**FINANCE:** Bank charges and insurance premiums are set to rise after high street banks and insurers were ordered to pay up to £14 billion under the terms of Bradford & Bingley's nationalisation.

**MANUFACTURE:** Steel maker Corus has been fined again for serious safety failings. In the latest in a long sequence of prosecutions, the firm was fined £15,000 at Hartlepool Magistrates Court and ordered to pay £6,248 costs after a crane operator was crushed and seriously injured.

**RAIL:** Around 2,500 Tube infrastructure workers at Metronet are to be balloted for action over breakdowns in industrial relations following the victimisation of RMT union safety rep Andy Littlechild, who was fighting dangerous plans to reduce signals maintenance and attempts to impose rosters.

# Bus drivers down wheels

Around 6,000 people are due to take part in the London bus network strikes this month to fight against unequal working conditions across the sector.

Workers at 12 garages across the city totalling 2,500 employees are adding their weight to 3,500 already in dispute, when they voted 88.5% in favour of industrial action in a ballot held by the Unite union.

The Metroline employees are joining their fellow at First Capital East, First Centre West and Metrobus who went out on strike last month.

Unite members at Transdev Sovereign, which covers North and North West London, have just voted in a consultative ballot by 98% in favour of strike action with a full postal ballot now set to proceed.

Led by calls from drivers across the city, Unite is calling for a single rate of pay for drivers of £30,000 a year, based on a 38-hour week. Currently the eighteen London bus

companies all operate with different pay structures, with pay inequalities of up to £6,000 a year.

Drivers at Sovereign, a company with garages in Harrow and Edgware, last month voted to reject management's pay offer – overturning the recommendation by their union reps to accept the deal.

Peter Kavanagh, Unite Senior Regional Organiser, said: "There is a startling disparity between bus drivers pay in the capital, with rosters in some companies seeing many drivers complete nearly 60-hours per week. Not only is this unsafe, it is unfair."

Paul Brandon, at Metroline's Holloway bus garage in North London, told one paper: "The drivers are prepared to take strike action not only to improve their pay and conditions but also to get people to sit up and take notice of the fact that the London bus system is unfair and needs changing."



## ITV set to cut jobs

Industrial action could be seen across ITV after it was announced that 1,000 jobs could be lost, primarily from the company's regional news service.

Up to 40% of the company's regional staff could face the axe after regulator OfCom agreed to proposals to make sever cutbacks to the service, which is among the less profitable sections along with children's television.

The National Union of Journalists has said that it is considering balloting for industrial action following the news, saying the company should have "meaningful negotiations" over the proposed cuts.

Bectu, the broadcasting union, has also refused to rule out industrial action over the cuts.

Among the hardest hit areas will be Plymouth, Bristol, Carlisle and Gateshead, where about 90 jobs will go. ITV is eliminating its West Country and Border regions and merging them with neighbouring operations.

Another 400 jobs will go in Manchester, Leeds and London, and more cuts will come from business disposals.

The news comes hot on the heels of expected cutbacks in Johnston Press and on the *Telegraph* newspaper, where it is rumoured that negotiators have been called in from the *Daily Mail* group to help cow unionists.

A shift in emphasis to online, along with falling sales and a collapse in advertising, has seen several major attacks on pay and jobs in the sector over the last few years.



## INTERNATIONAL

### IN BRIEF

**COLOMBIA:** A series of incidents involving leaders of the Colombian agricultural workers' trade union Fensuagro, as well as their children, indicate that assassination attempts against them are imminent. The two individuals believed to be at most risk – Aidee Moreno and Eberto Diaz – have visited the UK to speak at union conferences and other events. Justice for Colombia urges all supporters to take action. The union has requested protection from the Colombian authorities but this has been denied.

**FRANCE:** At the end of last month CNT together with fellow workers from SUD and CGT turned out at post offices in support of Serge Reynaud, a postal worker of Marseille 01 CNT member, on the day of his disciplinary hearing over his role in organising a strike there. After an eight-hour meeting, the ultimate penalty of sacking was rejected. Management instead imposed the second-harshes available penalty of two years' suspension without pay. The CNT demands that the Post Office take back this decision and that it leave Serge Reynaud in peace.

**INDIA:** Workers in the massive Bollywood film industry have gone back to work after bosses agreed to implement in full an agreement to reduce working hours and improve pay by 15%. Unionists had estimated that 147,000 people stayed at home, with poor pay for long hours being at the heart of the issue. A film worker gets 600 rupees (£7.50) per day and a television worker gets paid 500 rupees per day, but payments have fallen months behind schedule and some filming sessions have lasted up to 30 hours.

**MEXICO:** Schoolteachers in the state of Morelos have been on indefinite strike against proposed an educational reform being forced through by their union leader which would remove their job security. As well as striking, the teachers – from Sección 19 of the Sindicato Nacional de Trabajadores para la Educación (SNTE) – have established a *plantón* (permanent encampment) in the city of Cuernavaca and also used motorway blockades, the 'liberation' of tollbooths and even marched 85km north to Mexico City in order to demand the reform's reversal.

Teachers say that the ACE reform bill will strip them of any security in their positions and jeopardise their ability to plan classes.

**USA:** The Starbucks Workers Union has announced today that Starbucks has settled with the National Labor Relations Board on charges of anti-union malfeasance, ranging from interrogation of union activists, threats against workers and illegal firings, to surveillance of union activity. The settlement comes in the wake of the reinstatement of IWW barista Erik Forman to the Mall of America on 31st August. Forman, a union organiser, was illegally fired on 10th July for allegedly "discussing a written warning with a peer".

# Man arrested over Sally Grace death

A widespread call-out by Mexican activists from Oaxaca has led to the arrest of a man in connection with the rape and murder of a US volunteer and Indymedia correspondent.

Yoguez Singu was captured thanks to the quick action of Oaxacan activists who publicised her murder internationally.

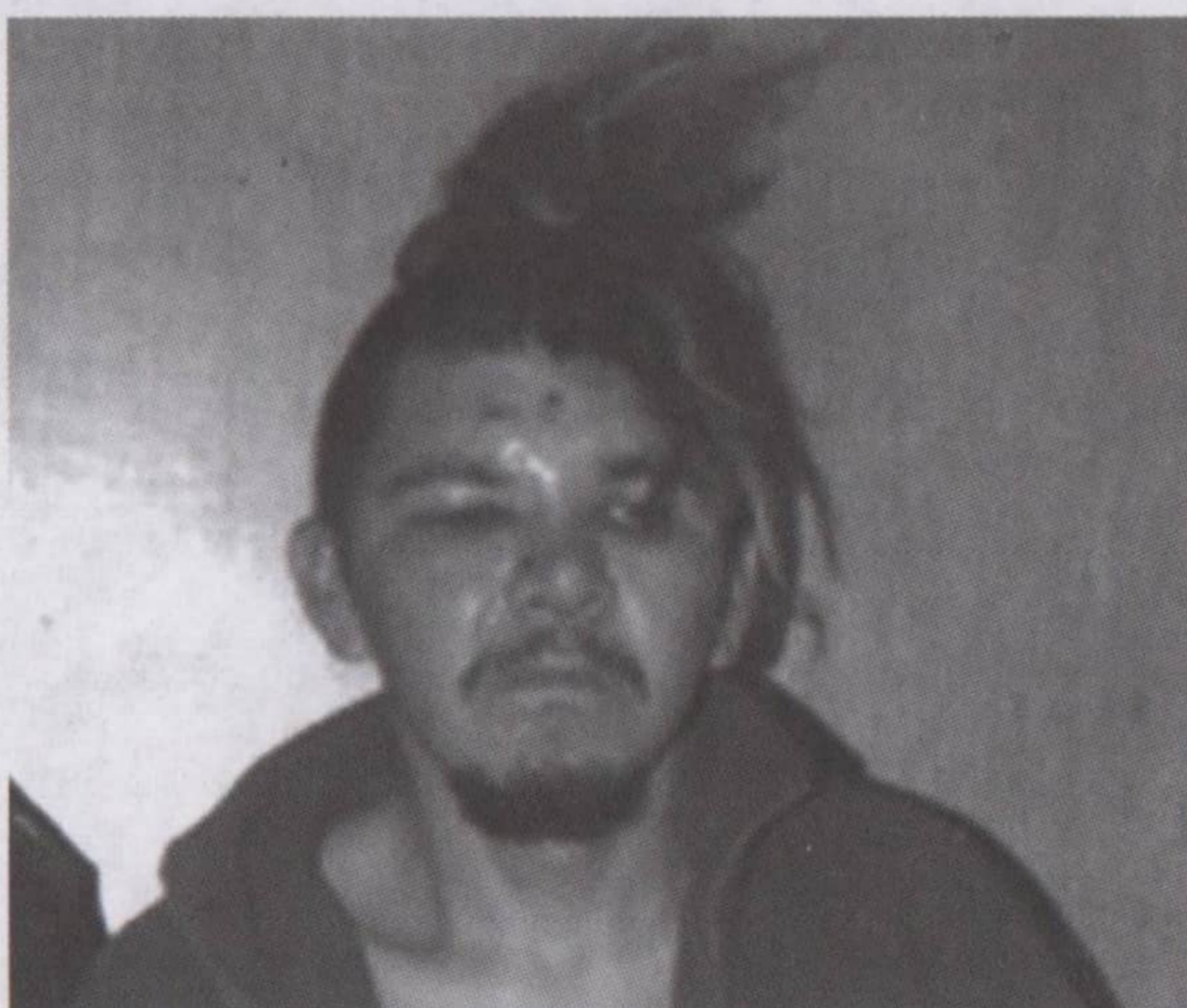
Singu, 32, claims he had consensual sex with Sally, then killed her with a machete during an argument.

He raised the suspicions of his friends when he returned to Mexico City from a recent trip to San Jose del Pacifico, where locals discovered Sally's decaying and mutilated body in a cabin. They noticed that he was injured and that his two dogs were missing, so they asked him what happened. Singu reportedly told them that one of his dogs bit a child in the community, so locals tried to kill the dog with a machete. He allegedly told them that he was injured attempting to save the dog.

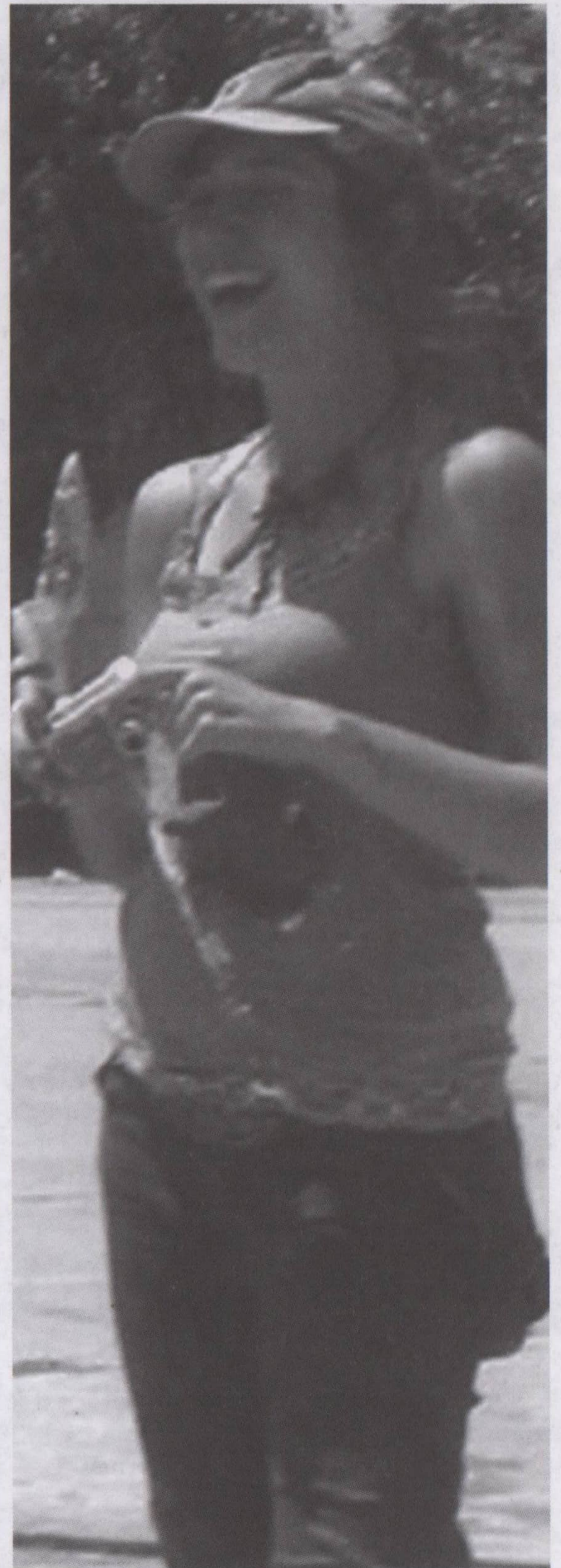
Thanks to the widely disseminated statement signed by Oaxacan organisations that Sally worked with, people in Singu's circle of friends knew that a woman had been murdered in San Jose del Pacifico while he was there. They called activists in Oaxaca to confirm Yoguez Singu's story about his dogs.

Townspeople from San Jose del Pacifico denied Yoguez Singu's story. He was arrested shortly afterwards.

Sally Grace had been active in a number of organisations in Oaxaca since 2007, documenting and helping with the activities of the APPO social movement there.



ARREST: Yoguez Singu



MURDERED: Sally Grace is shown in this picture released by friends after her death.

## Notes from the United States

The news in the US has been dominated by the \$750 billion (£350 billion) doling out of taxpayer dollars to a few, rich financial houses, banks and the like on Wall Street in response to the failure or imminent collapse of some of them. Citigroup, for example, bought the country's fourth largest retail bank, Wachovia, in the last week of September.

As might be expected, members of the House of Representatives who supported bailing out the financial sector have received 51% more in campaign contributions from

the finance, insurance and real estate sector in their congressional careers than those who opposed the Bill, according to a report from The Center for Responsive Politics. Opposition has been vocal, organised and concerted.

As the headlines were dominated by the housing crisis, and it became obvious that many of those who were tricked into unrealistically high debts were going to receive no help, several semi-permanent protests were set up. In the last weeks of September tent



# Chinese 'miracle' exposed

A new study into the effects of China's major privatisation programme of state-owned enterprises in the 1990s has found that millions of people were thrown out of work, victimised and found themselves attacked by the state.

*No Way Out: Worker Activism in China's State-Owned Enterprise Reforms* by the China Labour Bulletin found that the driving force behind China's 'economic miracle' resulted in a massive rise in militancy as workers found themselves paying the price of the move and with no way to legally register their problems.

In the early 1990s, the government launched a full-scale restructuring programme that allowed private investors to take over and run ailing State Owned Enterprises (SOEs).

While retaining control of the state's major and economically strategic SOEs, the government 'let go' nearly all of the rest. By the end of 2001, a survey showed that 86% of all SOEs had been partially or fully privatised. The number of SOEs fell from 64,737 in 1998 to just 27,477 in 2005.

But Beijing's massive sell-off gave businesses and corrupt local government officials a licence to plunder state assets, while at the same time getting rid of millions of SOE employees.

After years of living with the certainty of the 'iron rice bowl' – a job for life, housing, schooling, medical care and pensions – the implementation of free-market forces was traumatic.

No fewer than 30 million SOE employees were laid-off during the privatisation process from 1998 to 2004, and the number rose further thereafter.

The government's failure to implement clear policy guidelines for enterprise restructuring, combined with a lack of transparency, flawed



Demonstrators at the privatised Tuopu Power Plant in Shantou, formerly the state-owned Shantou Power Bureau. The large banner says 'Maintain Legal Rights' and 'Give Our Jobs Back'.

auditing of company assets and widespread official corruption, left millions of workers out in the cold, with no job and barely enough income to support their families.

Huge numbers of laid-off SOE employees sought redress, both through the official Complaints and Petitions system and through the labour arbitration and court systems, but in most cases to no avail. Eventually, they were left with little alternative but to demonstrate publicly to bring their plight to the attention of local governments. However, many local officials perceived these worker demonstrations as posing a threat either to 'political stability' or to their own positions, and saw to it that the activities of the protest leaders were banned or arbitrarily punished.

The report noted: "Disputes arising from

the privatisation of SOEs have typically dragged on for many years, sometimes even for decades, as local governments, the courts and official bodies such as the All-China Federation of Trade Unions (ACFTU) failed to address the widespread injustices against workers in the course of SOE restructuring.

"Indeed, these long-running collective labour disputes amount to a festering wound at the core of China's economic success story. Workers' leaders who fought for the rights of their colleagues have been persecuted, silenced or imprisoned, while the grievances of those they represented have been all but ignored by the authorities and the laid-off workers have been left to fend for themselves in an increasingly cut-throat market economy."

## Notes from the Unites States

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cities for the homeless began to appear and/or increase in size and population. In Seattle, Washington, for example, such an encampment – known as Nickelsville – was established, raided (with a couple of dozen arrests) and rebuilt on City property with over 150 tents.

But, although Congress voted down the first bill at the very end of September, government spending of money on other state and capitalist bodies has continued.

In the final week of the month the Senate approved a \$634 billion (£315 billion) spending bill. Included are a \$25 billion (£12 billion) helping hand to the car industry and a record budget for the Pentagon budget of almost half a trillion dollars (£250 billion). In an apparent deal between Republicans and Democrats a longstanding ban on offshore oil drilling was dropped – this opens the way for more environmental destruction.

- A former executive director of the CIA quietly pleaded guilty in the last week of the month to 'wire fraud' as part of a plea bargain. Kyle 'Dusty' Foggo was the third-highest ranking official at the CIA until his resignation two years ago. He is accused of accepting up to \$70,000 (£35,000) worth of gifts from a friend of his, Brent Wilkes, in exchange for lucrative CIA contracts. Foggo originally faced nearly 30 counts, but prosecutors agreed to drop twenty-seven of them in exchange for a guilty plea for wire fraud.

- At the end of the month two people (one adult and one child) were taken to hospital in Dayton, Ohio, after a gas attack on a mosque with over 300 Muslims inside celebrating the last ten days of Ramadan. Apparently two men sprayed chemicals into a room where babies and children were being cared for while their mothers were praying.

Louis Further

## Lecce anarchist in court

Twelve anarchists accused of a number of actions against banks, immigration detention centres and in solidarity with international causes are due to go on trial in Italy.

Accusing the 12 of 'subversive association' and a number of other crimes, the Nottetempo trial was set for 9th October in Lecce, Italy, and is widely thought to be part of a general crackdown on groups organising solidarity with migrant and minority groups currently under attack by the state.

The long-running trial, which has been live since last year, has been highly controversial, with doctors being accused of compiling false certificates following a violent beating of immigrants who had tried to escape from the notorious Regina Pacis camp which sparked reprisals from activist groups.

Supporters wrote that these "are struggles ... that the State wants to stop with terror, trials, sentences and years in prison."



## FEATURE

# Morales vs Bolivia's opposition:

## Bolivian anarchists on politics in the state

Bolivia has once again been thrust into the public eye by the latest in a series of political convulsions as the right and left wings of capital clash in this South American country.

This time, violent right-wing groups are opposing the regime of president Evo Morales, backed and funded by a broad sector of the Bolivian bourgeoisie who disagree with Morales about how to manage capitalism in that country and therefore seek power, or at least, a devolving of power to the regions they control.

The actions of these right-wing and fascist organisations have already claimed the lives of more than thirty peasants who were attacked with firearms while en route to a political demonstration in support of Evo Morales. These same right-wing groups have also attacked the offices of media and social organisations allied to Morales.

But what is behind all this conflict?

Last August Morales won a referendum on whether he should remain in the presidency. Following this victory, Morales called for an

inquiry to be held in December to ratify the new constitution, adopted just last year and representing in it the whole program of his government.

The new constitution, like the last, is an integrated defence of capitalism, namely the private property of class society. The world of exploitation and merchandise is in no way threatened, and neither are the privileges of class from the Bolivian bourgeoisie. It will continue to maintain the exploiters in their dominance over Bolivians – but then, why are there so many problems?

The Bolivian elite are well aware that their system of domination will not be touched and that Morales has no intention of doing so, however, he does defend certain points which are making the rural bourgeoisie very uncomfortable, for example, in December a law will be debated 'against the large estates', which aims to reduce the amount of land individuals can own from 10,000 hectares to 5,000.

In addition, departments like Santa Cruz, dominated by the rightist opposition, are claiming the right to receive part of the HDI (Tax of Hydrocarbons) which is currently managed by central government.

The new constitution also allows for the

indefinite re-election of Morales and this, of course, is not something that pleases his political opponents.

But the explanation of the conflict can not simply be reduced to the struggles of both parties (government and opposition) on a national level, this same confrontation goes beyond the borders of Bolivia and affects various interests of imperialists worldwide.

According to Morales, his government has evidence which shows the Bolivian right has received strong financial support from the US, which is suspicious of the friendship between leftist Venezuelan president Hugo Chávez and Morales. It thinks of the Bolivian president as an inconveniently-placed piece in the Latin American political chessboard.

Indeed Morales is an ally of Chávez, who in turn has been establishing a strong commercial and political relationship with Russia, which has woven a strong rivalry with the United States. Through its relationship with Venezuela a marker has been put in the backyard of the US as it supplies high-powered weapons to the state.

### Evo Morales and the rightist opposition: enemies of the proletariat alike

The actions of the opposition groups have made it quite clear they are ultra-reactionary and completely contrary to the interests of the exploited Bolivian masses. They have inflicted terror on indigenous peasants who were massacred in departments of Pando, where these groups have operated with funding from the local bourgeoisie and the US, and with the benefit of Leopoldo Fernandez, prefect of the department, who has been blaming it on their opponents.

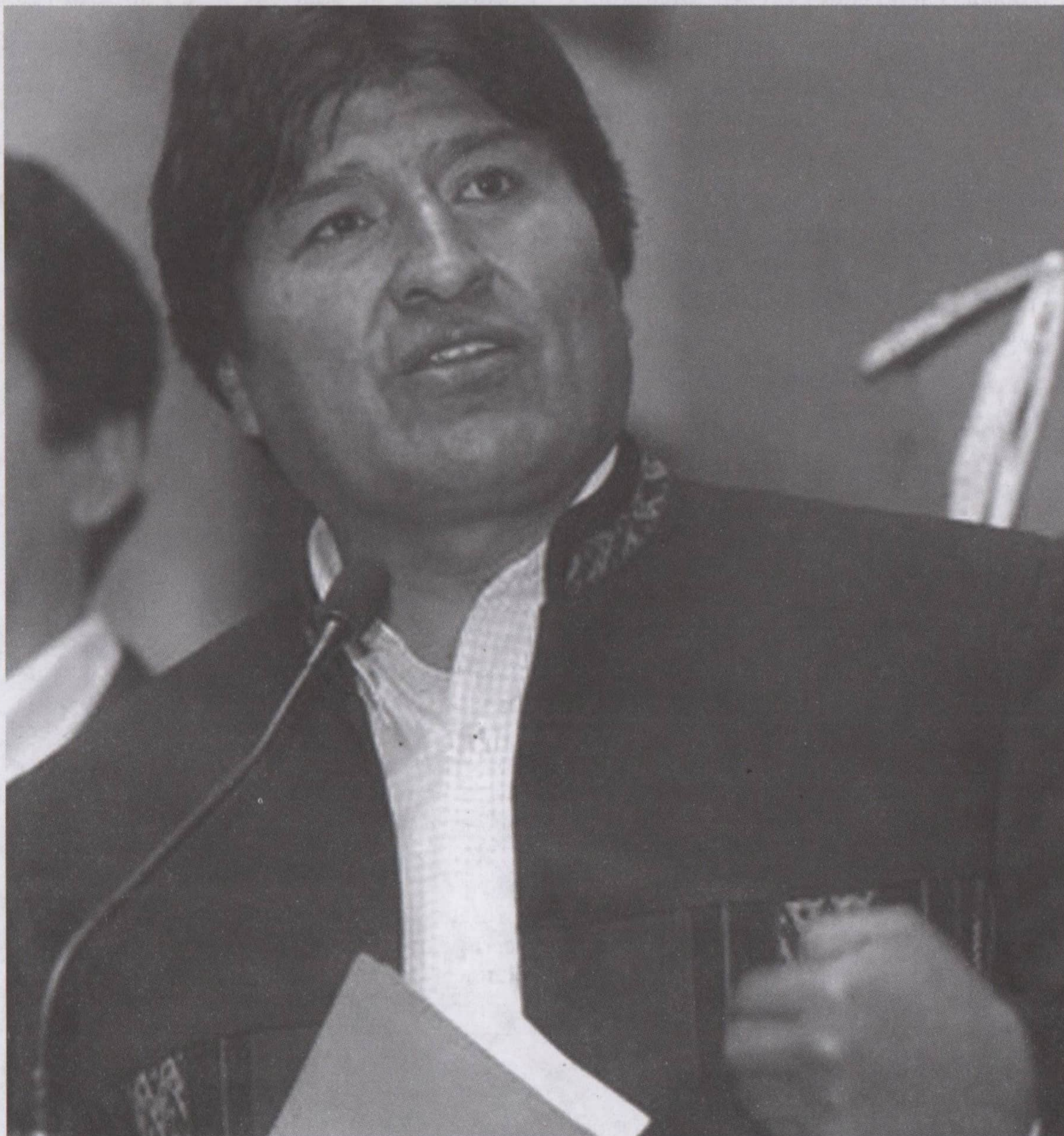
But if it is obvious that the right has a pernicious and anti-proletarian character, the left that now governs in Bolivia still does so on behalf of the bourgeoisie.

The left of capital worldwide has put out a call to 'defend democracy' in Bolivia, namely to defend the Bolivian state and its government, as if the government, unlike the right, is not an enemy of the working class in Bolivia.

These defenders of the government of Morales seem to forget that just last August, five people were killed by police bullets.

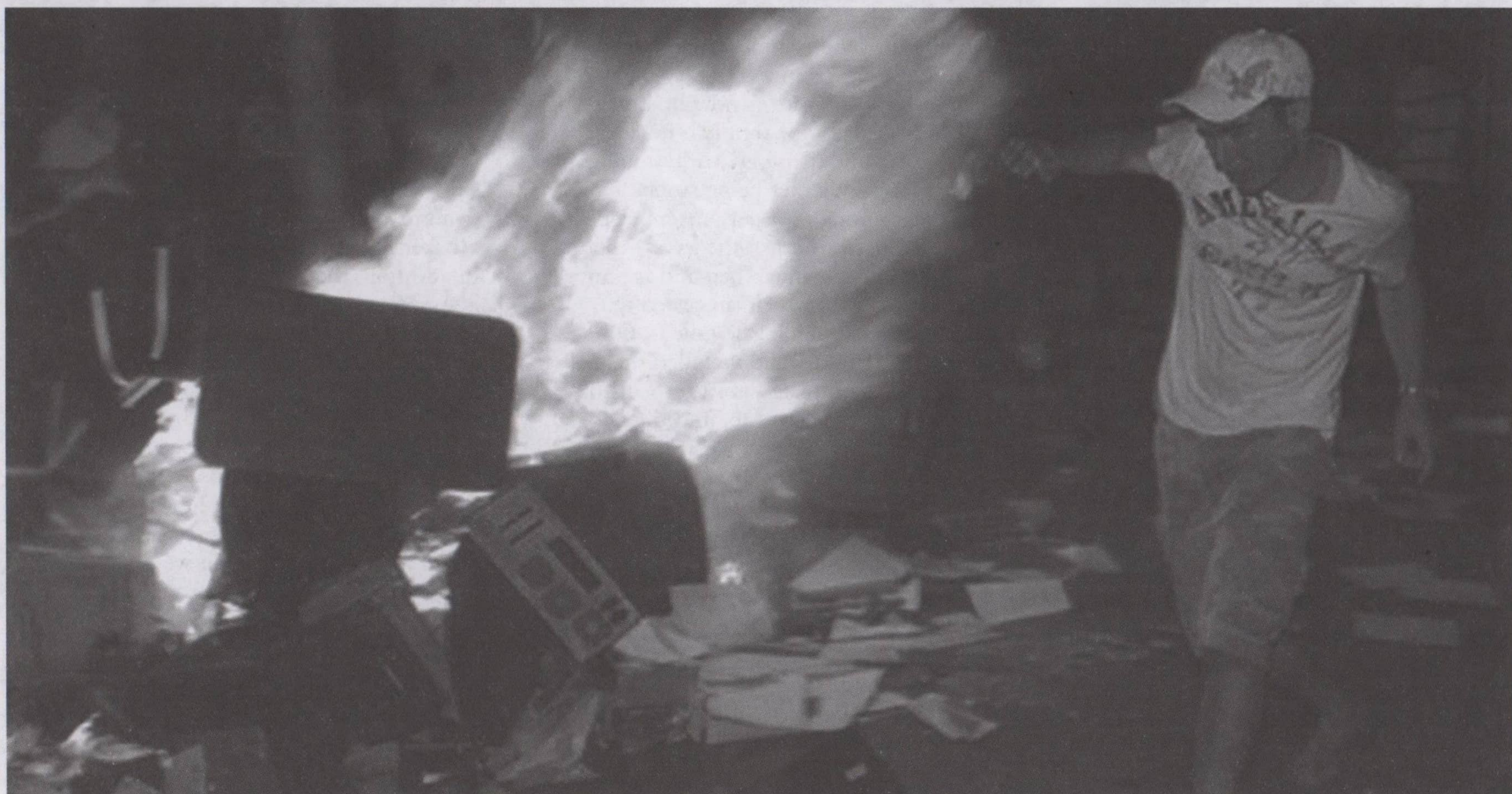
Two of these were miners at a union mobilisation which demanded a better pension system, after the mobilisation was violently repressed on the direct orders of the government. Before this, a previous miners' strike had also been severely repressed and facilities in the mine militarised.

The bourgeoisie itself right across the continent has recognised the good work of Morales as a defender of the capitalist system. At a meeting held just a few days after this crisis, in the city of Santiago in Chile, all the presidents of the UNASUR (South American Union of Nations), agreed to support the





# the proletariat always loses



Santa Cruz, 10th September 2008: An anti-government demonstrator passes a fire during a protest to demand Bolivian President Evo Morales (pictured left) gives more revenue to their regions and scraps a constitutional reform

regime and Morales spoke in defence of bourgeois democracy in Bolivia.

That all other capitalist governments give support to Morales, whose government has ongoing trade relations with the bourgeoisie of these countries, is a clear sign they know he is no threat to capitalism.

Clearly they believe Morales is the right man to manage these business interests – though it is likely they would understand and sympathise with the motives of the Bolivian right if it succeeded in overthrowing him.

The bourgeoisie and nearby states, in order to keep a foot in the system of profit and the dictatorship of capital gains, are able to look beyond their individual inclinations toward right or left.

No-one has spoken out more strongly in support of Evo Morales than Hugo Chávez, who knows Morales is one of his allies in Latin America for the project of a ‘Socialism of the twenty-first century’ – which is nothing more than the same capitalist system with greater state intervention in economic participation and regulation. It’s the old semi-statist capitalist model with new names submitted by bourgeois nationalists like Chávez and Morales.

Evo Morales and his vice president, Alvaro Garcia Linera, have stated that their project is not designed to eliminate capitalism, but rather, to create an ‘Andean capitalism’, in other words: exploitation of the proletariat, class domination and inequality, but ‘Andean’.

## Our view

It is urgent and vital that the exploited class assert their independence against all sides of the bourgeoisie.

As we have said almost from the outset, this inter-bourgeois fighting on resources and taxes, along with the struggle for territorial control within the Bolivian State and these two different visions of how to manage capitalism, is largely a way of pushing Morales into acceding to some of their requests.

This becomes clear when after which saw dozens of deaths on the left, the government has seen the need to sit down to talk with the opposition.

From this dialogue the Bolivian working class can not expect anything good, it is simply a negotiation between two warring sides that have nothing to do with the class interests of workers. The Bolivian working class has shown a great fighting spirit in recent years and an enthusiasm to fight to change their reality, after years of being held down in ferocious misery.

But the great weakness of the Bolivian workers has been its inability to check the nationalist bourgeoisie, with the exploited being dragged in time and time again to defend bourgeois causes, such as *estatizaciones* or electorally supporting Evo Morales, and now ‘their’ government.

This proletarian combativeness must be unleashed on an autonomous basis, fighting the right fascists and the bourgeois nationalist regime of Evo Morales alike.

The explosion and the spirit of struggle of the Bolivian workers will acquire a great revolutionary potential only to the extent that these ingredients are combined with autonomy. Without it, that fighting will only continue to be used to launch the proletarians as cannon fodder by one capitalist side or another.

It is necessary that this autonomy also includes a break with the COB, the central trade union organisation which for years has talked ‘radical’ and which now leads the Bolivian workers into an alliance with the government.

On 17th September the COB signed an “agreement for the defence of democracy, unity and integrity of the country” with Morales, in order to drag the proletariat into defending ‘Andean capitalism’, and the typical nationalistic poison that characterises it.

This arrangement is called to “defend the unity of the motherland”, it welcomes the “revolutionary process” of “our brother Evo Morales to build a new homeland”. All this comes through “a new Constitution of the State”.

For this reason we emphasise the need for the construction of an independent movement of workers (Indians, mestizos and whites alike), to take into their own hands their struggles against these exploiters and which, in view of the violent actions of the right, also self-organise legitimate self-defence classes to counter both the paramilitaries and the forces of the state ‘left’.

Libertarian Socialist group



## COMMENT

## ABOUT FREEDOM

## ANGEL ALLEY

This should, with any luck, be the bookfair edition of the paper, so a big hello to all of you who have been browsing around the shelves and stalls of this year's big anarchist gathering. If this is your first time seeing *Freedom* for a while, you may have noticed some more changes to the format. On the whole, we've got good feedback on it so far but we would love to hear some more, so feel free to stop by our stall and have a chat with people, you may even see a couple of the writers and editors yakking around there as well!

We are, as always, looking for a bit of help, not just in financial terms (donations always welcome) but also in certain areas where we often have problems, such as mailout, marketing and keeping the paper-work up to date. If you'd be up for doing any of that, again head down to our stall and talk to us. Failing that, the details for mailing us, etc., are, as usual, below.



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## NEXT ISSUE

The next issue will be dated 25th October 2008 and the last day to get copy to us for that issue will be Thursday 16th October. You can send your articles to us by email to [copy@freedompress.org.uk](mailto:copy@freedompress.org.uk) or by post addressed to The Editors, Freedom, 84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1 7QX.

## A sideways look

by SVARTFROSK

A close comrade of mine used to work for a local authority in its library service. He would regularly tell me how political extremists of the Islamic variety would try to order books from the library that dealt in such tasteful subjects as how homosexuals should be killed (apparently a much-debated point in Islamic theology, with arguments raging about whether being stoned to death was enough, or perhaps an elephant should be used to crush the gays – there didn't seem to be much demand for any Islamic literature which suggested that perhaps gays shouldn't be killed). Other thorny issues addressed included the evil of the Jews, complete with Protocols of Zion and other such crap, and the allowable thickness of the rod with which to beat a misbehaving wife.

Sensibly, this sort of bollocks was ignored by the library my friend worked in (as I hope it is in the ones you use). It's not a restriction on free speech for libraries not to buy in this sort of hate – if someone wants it that much they can buy it without recourse to my council tax.

In these times of the Internet, free speech is much expanded, unless it is in a country that goes to great effort to censor it, such as China. People can go anywhere they want on the Internet, there are sites for almost all political persuasions, even those who think that the Internet is a bad idea which should be got rid of. The one place you can't

guarantee to access these sites, outside of China at least, is at your local library.

Most local councils take it upon themselves to censor the Internet. Some of this censorship is easy to justify – after all, why would anyone need to gas passengers on a tube train? (And of course there are age limits on some sites). But there are other sites which I suspect the state has included from its own whims. Some political sites are blocked – both from the left and the right. In addition, the software doing the blocking is American, so why sites are blocked is often not so obvious. Abortion and dinosaurs are both controversial in the US, so you can forget about your child's palaeontology project in that case.

I have come across sites like [libcom.org](http://libcom.org) being blocked because it is a 'filtered category', which is bad. The particular filtered category is 'advocacy site', which doesn't sound so bad. Can we really have no advocacy sites? No one to suggest that third world poverty can be cured by a wrist band and a few hail marys?

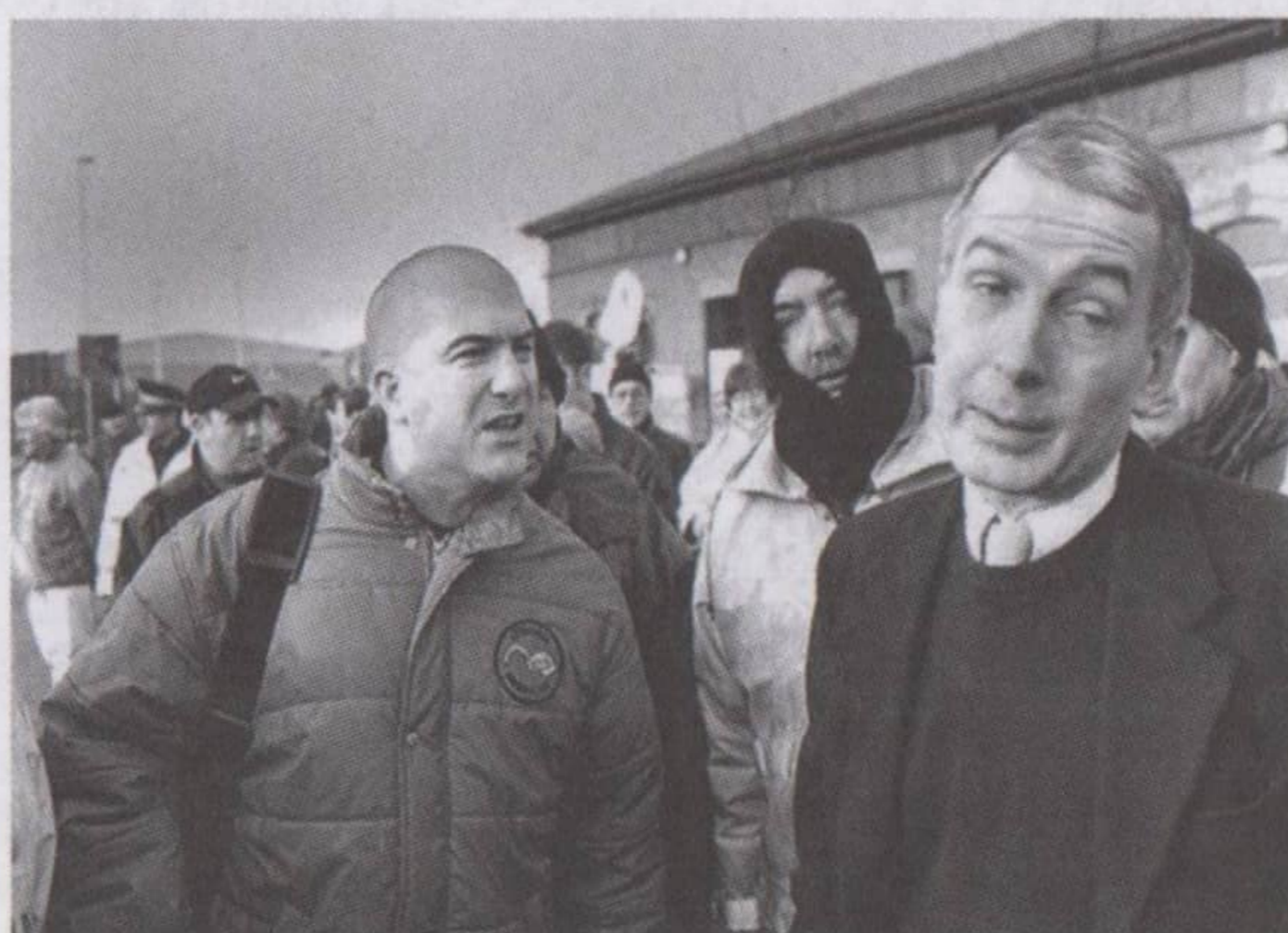
Of course, in their usual clumsy way, councils are trying to protect us from ourselves. Who knows what we might do if we read some of the lunacy available on the Internet uncensored. A message – we don't need protecting. There is no financial cost for allowing wider access to content through the council's library networks. Perhaps they are afraid there may be a political cost?

## Blog Bites

(from [dreaming-neon-black.blogspot.com](http://dreaming-neon-black.blogspot.com))

On 25th September 1995, the marathon Liverpool docks dispute began when 329 stevedores refused to cross a picket line mounted by eighty former co-workers, who had been sacked by the Torside contractors.

The Mersey Docks and Harbour Company – who sought to crush any resistance to the casualisation of working conditions – then made the 329 redundant. A two-and-a-half year campaign for reinstatement was initiated, which was isolated and then strangled by the Transport and General Workers Union. The end finally came in February, when the sacked dockers accepted a settlement of £28,000 from MDHC – just £85 per head.



The efforts of the sacked dockers and their relatives attracted both international solidarity and celebrity support (most notably from then Liverpool FC forward Robbie Fowler), and has since been seen as one of the first examples of working class people using the internet in struggle against bosses.

It was also notable for the alliances made between sacked dockers and social movements outside of organised labour, such as Reclaim The Streets. In 1999, Liverpool writer Jimmy McGovern dramatised the dispute for television, with Irvine Welsh.

In 2008, an exhibition at the FACT centre showed photos taken during the dispute by Walton-born photographer David Sinclair.

Sinclair's offers a candid and fascinating look at the dispute. Perhaps the most extraordinary snapshot shows a confrontation between picketer Jimmy Davies Jnr and Birkenhead MP Frank Field, who at the time was a Minister for Welfare Reform in Tony Blair's new Labour government. Some had held out hope that Labour would support the sacked dockers, but instead Blair used the dispute to send an unambiguous signal to his big business



## Harold Sculthorpe

Further to your issue on 13th August, I'd like to add to the various comments by Dr Peter Good, Gwen Goddard and Donald Room on Harold.

I first met him in 1949 in Liverpool, where he founded the Liverpool Anarchist Group. There were weekly meetings at his flat in Catherine Street, and the group also held meetings on the bomb site on Liverpool's Bold Street, modelled after Speaker's Corner at Hyde Park in London.

There followed the Anarchist Commune on Upper Parliament Street in Liverpool, founded in 1951, comprising of three couples and their children along with myself and another student. The community was only a temporary solution to the living problems of the founders – it was triggered by John Noble inheriting £8,000 and finding he could buy the expiring lease of the building, and the community sprung forth. Harold, although head of the lab at Liverpool School of Tropical Medicine, decamped to London in 1952. The community collapsed in 1953, but the founders all kept in touch and prospered in their various ways.

Harold Sculthorpe has been noticed as a four-square anarchist from 1923 to 2008.

Rufus Segar

## Anarchism, spirituality and commodification

Anarchism indicts the central role of authority in political philosophy and power structures. These include the hierarchy of leaders and led, church and state, the predation of capitalism and its twin ally of exploitation and repression the centralised state, and class system (Bakunin defined the state as "the pillars of capitalism").

As a moral philosophy and style of life it rejects authoritarian psychology, and the principle of coercion in all relationships, and in general presents an implicit faith in the creative self-determination of the individual, in co-operative solidarity with the group. Its vision is a society based on mutual aid through voluntary association. This political tradition stems from radical liberal and secular humanistic movements that rejected the brutal conditions of nineteenth century industrialism and the exploitation of the working class.

For Karl Marx, the working class had a 'historic role' to fulfil, the overthrow of

## Blog bites

◀ page 10

backers: he was very much on their side. The photo was taken at one of the very last pickets, at the Twelve Quays development in Birkenhead, and it clearly shows Field's face etched with the desire to escape from one of his constituents; a class enemy of his government.

capitalism and the bourgeoisie and the creation of a classless society. Bakunin, his anarchist sparring partner during the Working Men's Internationals, claimed that implicit in the Marxian formula for revolution was the seeds of the new ruling class, inherent in the use of the state, and centralised power.

The area of neglect and decay within the anarchist movement rests on a number of factors. One is its historical association with late nineteenth century terrorism, and nihilism, and the other concerns the inner, or psycho/spiritual areas of revolution.

Most anarchists I have known over thirty years activism have been committed to non-violence, because violence is an essential part of authoritarian power. Disturbed and desperate people are always attracted to freedom movements. The area of neglect and decay concerns the secular, the inner world of intellect and reason, that within western society and anarchism has become a dangerous obsession.

For some four hundred years western philosophy has been defined by scientific measurement, the head split from the heart, the true deadly sin of Cartesian dualism; or 'if-you-can't-put-it-in-a-test-tube-it-doesn't-exist'. Our true religion in the west, which, thanks to globalisation, means the world, is quantification, dualism and commodification. Anarchism may be the most free and dynamic political philosophy for thought and action known to human experience, but without a dimension of experience that concerns transcendent, spiritual reality, beyond the cerebral, like all philosophies concerning revolution it founders into the dead end of ego, 'me-ness' and dominance behaviour. Let no one fool themselves, the capturing of power and power games could easily lead to firing squads in red and black uniforms.

Anarchists reject the ultimate power of god and the state. Both are connected to murderous bureaucracies because the ultimate power, particularly that of god and religion, have been used for centuries to manipulate, exploit and kill people. Inherent in all religions (the word means to be connected to an ultimate power) is a personal illumination, a transcendent transformative experience that connects the individual to the universe and the source of its creation.

That source is experienced as the core of personal consciousness; and in its connection it breaks down the inherent fear and hostility that the ego, and specifically the authoritarian personality feels towards, themselves, life and the universe. This cosmic consciousness, revelation of the divine, mystical experience has been outlawed by external structures of ruling class power for centuries. For 1,600 years human consciousness through the conditioning of the western Christian church has inflicted a doctrine of fear, guilt, sin and mystification through perverting the teachings of Christ, via the teachings of St Augustine, 'the godfather of sin', a key creator of early Christian doctrine, compounded in the early fourth century at the Council of Nicea.

It is small wonder that radicals, and especially anarchists, in most cases reject

## LETTERS AND COMMENT

completely any dialogue concerning religion, god, etc. However in doing this we throw out the baby with the bathwater, which is exactly what happened during the eighteenth century enlightenment.

When the superstition of religion was thrown out with it went spirituality, and autonomy was given to reason and 'evidence'. It is my contention that we need both, but have lost touch with our spiritual roots, of in a world where all value is being reduced to iconised symbols for buying and selling, i.e. commodification, via a world church commerce, i.e. globalisation.

The purpose of this paper is not to evangelise but open up dialogue about the radical spiritual tradition that goes deep within the anarchist tradition, where 'neither god nor master' meant the god of the ruling class; god or ultimate spiritual truth was experienced as a living reality within the individual, putting into perspective the power antics of church and state.

What do anarchists have to learn from this? Can we resolve the ultimate crime of dualism through a holistic integration of mind, body and spirit? I contend that a radical renaissance is required if the planet and its population is to survive the current addiction to rational/dualism and its twin gods of money and power. I would conclude by saying that my recent research ('The World Church of Commerce', PhD) suggests that the belief and value systems concerned with combating commodification are themselves being subjected to its 'religious transformation' through a recycling of ideology as commodification itself. If you take a hard look at most anarchist meetings you will see that exactly this process is being enacted like a sacred ritual.

The dogma has become an end in itself, a possession or Holy Cow, there is no juice, because dogma by definition is impervious to new thinking, or feeling. We must learn from other traditions that openly love life and hold it to be sacred. The Native Americans have a saying *Me-Tak-Qyay-Q-Yasin*, which means 'We are all relative', there is a non-violent holistic response to the world based on love and solidarity with the universe and its creator, within and without. Can we shake off the dusty hairshirt of dogma and move together into a new cycle of time that is relevant to now?

Mark A. News

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## GETTING ACTIVE

### PRISON NEWS

A Prison Abolition strategy meeting will be held on 1st November in London, as a follow-up to some previous workshops, with the goal of gathering together existing groups working on prison abolition, and also to strategise around how to best connect with other folks who are working on related issues in order to build stronger links and coordinate campaigns. Part of the agenda will include planning for larger UK-wide gatherings and launch a broader grassroots campaign against the Titan prisons. Ideas include:

- facilitating regional and UK-wide networking to connect people currently working on prison issues and related struggles;
- organising a Prisoners Justice Film Festival;
- launching a Direct Action Campaign to stop the proposed Titan prisons;
- a listening to prisoners voices event, sharing audio recordings of prisoners talking about their experiences and their struggles inside;
- starting a queer/trans prisoners penpal group;
- organising prison-abolition workshops that link up with other related struggles, such as border/migration issues, poverty, addictions, violence, labour issues, education and environment.

Saturday 1st November at London Activist Resource Centre (LARC), 62 Fieldgate St, Whitechapel, London E1 1ES, from 2pm until 5pm, contact [building.safe.communities@gmail.com](mailto:building.safe.communities@gmail.com)

#### Albert's conviction overturned

Black activist prisoner Albert Woodcock has had his 1972 conviction for the murder of a prison guard overturned after 36 years in solitary confinement.

The state intends to appeal and retry the conviction, but currently Albert is no longer convicted of the murder, and there is at least a possibility he could be released on bail in the near future.

Woodfox and fellow inmate Herman Wallace have been imprisoned since 1972 for the murder of prison guard Brent Miller. The federal judge's ruling acknowledged that Woodfox has been wrongfully imprisoned. His conviction rested on the testimony of a fellow prisoner, a convicted serial rapist who was promised and received the warden's help obtaining a pardon in exchange for testifying against Herman and Albert. The deal was not disclosed at trial; the witness was pardoned and freed later.

The pair were originally imprisoned in the 1960s, and contact with members of the Black Panthers while they were in prison led to the creation of prison chapter of the Black Panther Party in 1971. The men then organised prisoners to build a movement within the walls to desegregate the prison, to end systematic rape and violence, for better living conditions, and worked as jailhouse lawyers helping prisoners file legal papers.

After organising multiple strikes and sit-ins for better conditions the three men were taken out of the general prison population and were held in solitary confinement from 1972.



● The official launch of the Whitechapel Anarchist Group took place on 23rd September. The group have launched their own freesheet and are in the process of looking at resisting the spread of the BNP in the area. The freesheet will be available for the next month being distributed on Brick Lane every Sunday. Copies can also be picked up from Freedom Bookshop, LARC and Ramparts in London. email [whitechapelanarchistgroup@riseup.net](mailto:whitechapelanarchistgroup@riseup.net)

● About a year after the eviction of the former New Camberwell Centre, a new social centre has been opened in Camberwell, not far away from where the previous one stood.

The building where the Camberwell Centre stood has been left empty all year, and only last week the boards that were placed outside were seen with a gap to allow physical access through the door.

The new social centre's is at 52 Knatchbull Road, although the entrance is through the gate on Burton Road, and the building is right behind Minet Library. Meetings are happening weekly and all are welcome to get involved. email [spadella@no-log.org](mailto:spadella@no-log.org).

● Organisers say around 200 people showed up at an anti-war and pro-freedom of movement march called on 20th September in Manchester (pictured above).

The NoBorders/Anarchist Federation bloc aimed to shift the focus of anti-war movement in the city to make clear that capital, state and nation are to blame for war, and that political action has to go beyond lobbying and handing in petitions. They noted: "By joining the demonstration as a bloc we were able to challenge police provocation, which extended to constant videoing and photographing and cordoning us along the sides."

● The anarchist bookfair website is now fully updated for all the films, cabaret, meetings and stall holders (see [anarchistbookfair.org](http://anarchistbookfair.org)). They are also calling for volunteers to leaflet tube stations, shopping centres, or anywhere people might be interested.

The group are also asking if anyone is prepared to provide crash space on the Friday and/or Saturday, though they are unable to vouch personally for the people asking. email [mail@anarchistbookfair.org](mailto:mail@anarchistbookfair.org)

● Fazzel, a leader of the Campsfield hunger strikers who protested at intolerable conditions in the immigration detention centre earlier this year, has contacted the International Federation of Iraqi Refugees from Northern Iraq to tell the story of his forcible deportation.

Fazzel was removed with approximately 51 other Iraqi Kurds late on 17th September while he was still very badly injured from a failed deportation two days before, when during a disturbance on the plane a Home Office Guard had allegedly pushed Fazzel's head through one of the windows.

Fazzel had been taken back to Colnbrook and promised a doctor, but no one came to treat his injuries prior to his deportation on the 17th September.

Fazzel is currently staying with a friend. To contact him call 00 96477 0368 6037

● Hot on the heels of the successful Bristol Bookfair comes a flurry of activity, with the Subvert 2008 Festival of Resistance over the weekend of 24th to 26th October, followed by the latest week-long series of events by Bristol Radical History Group (BRHG) entitled 'Off with their heads' from 25th October to 4th November!

Subvert 2008 sees a series of meetings, cafés, film and a gig (see 'What's On', page 14) organised by Bristol ABC and Bristol No Borders. It doesn't take an anarchist to see the links between border regimes, increased state surveillance, clampdowns on dissenters, and more prisons and prisoners, particularly as we enter a major economic depression.

Meanwhile BRHG's week of events focuses on regicide, republicanism and political assassination, taking as its starting point English history in 1649 (when Charles I was executed) and moving on to the late nineteenth century.



# Council Communism

## A short history and explanation of the ideas and practice of council communism

**C**ouncil communism was a radical left movement originating in Germany and the Netherlands in the 1920s. Its primary organisation was the Communist Workers Party of Germany (KAPD). Council communism continues today as a theoretical and activist position within both left-wing Marxism and libertarian socialism.

The core premise of council communism, in contrast to both reformist social democrats and Leninists, is that the government and the economy should be managed by workers' councils composed of delegates elected at workplaces and recallable at any time. Council communists therefore oppose state-run authoritarian 'State socialism'/'State capitalism' and the idea of a 'revolutionary party', on the premise that a revolution led by a party will necessarily produce a party dictatorship. Council communists support a worker's democracy, which they aspire to produce through a federation of workers' councils. Council communism (and other types of 'anti-authoritarian and Anti-Leninist Marxism' such as Autonomism) are often viewed as being similar to Anarchism since they criticise Leninist ideologies for being authoritarian and reject the idea of a vanguard party.

Council communists also believe that the role of the revolutionary party is not to have a revolution for the working class, but just to agitate amongst the class, encouraging people to take control of their own struggles through the directly democratic institutions of workers' councils.

It has sometimes been thought that council communists have maintained an 'outside and against' position on bureaucratic reformist trade unions, seeing them as a break on workers' militancy and believing that the leadership, whose role is seen as little more than 'cops with flat caps', will always eventually sell out the membership. It is true, historically at least, that council communists have been anti-trade union. However, this has largely been due to the context in which council communists were writing. For instance, German council communists of the 1920s were fully aware of the German trade unions' role in betraying the attempted workers' revolution in 1918. However, in modern times, though maintaining a highly critical view of trade unions and their undemocratic nature, council communists generally believe that having a union is better for workers than not having one.

Council communists obviously also held a strong criticism of the 'successful' Russian



Otto Rühle

revolution of 1917. 'Soviet' is the Russian word for 'council', and during the early years of Bolshevik Russia workers' councils were politically significant. Indeed, the name 'Supreme Soviet', by which the national parliament of the Soviet Union was later called, as well as the name of the Soviet Union itself, implies that the country was meant to be ruled by workers' councils. Although this was largely the case in the beginning, the workers' councils quickly lost their power and significance. As the new regime was turning into a single-party system, the Supreme Soviet was soon relegated to the role of a rubber-stamp parliament, and real power was concentrated in the hands of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. For these reasons, Council Communists described the Soviet Union as a capitalist state, believing that the Bolshevik revolution in Russia became a 'bourgeois revolution' when a party bureaucracy replaced the old feudal aristocracy. Although most Council Communists felt the Russian Revolution was working class in character, they believed that the Soviet Union was a state capitalist country, with the state replacing the individual capitalists (an additional argument in favour of that was the continued existence of capitalist relations, as manifested e.g. in the New Economic Policy).

Council communism emerged largely out of the German rank-and-file trade union movement, who opposed their unions and organised increasingly radical strikes towards the end of 1917 and the beginning of 1918. When the Left Communists were expelled from the Communist Party of Germany they formed the Communist Workers Party (KAPD), whose hey-day was in the attempted German

revolution of 1918-19. Similar parties were formed in the Netherlands, Bulgaria and Britain. The KAPD rapidly lost most of its members and it eventually dissolved. However, some of its militants had been instrumental in organising factory-based unions like the AAUD and AAUD-E, the latter being opposed to separate party organisation. The leading theoreticians of the KAPD had developed a new series of ideas based on their opposition to party organisation, and their conception of the Bolshevik revolution in Russia as having been a bourgeois revolution. Their leading figures were Anton Pannekoek and Herman Gorter, as well as Otto Rühle. Rühle later left the KAPD, and was one of the founders of the AAUD-E. Another leading theoretician of Council Communism was Paul Mattick, who later emigrated to the USA. A minor figure in the Council Communist movement in the Netherlands was Marinus van der Lubbe, whose name was attached to the burning of the Reichstag in 1933.

The early councilists were followed later by the Group of Internationalist Communists, Henk Meijer, Cajo Brendel and Paul Mattick, Sr. Councilist groups and ideas experienced a revival in the New Left of the 1960s, through the Situationist International, Root and Branch in the United States, Socialisme ou Barbarie in France and Solidarity in the UK. Alongside and sometimes connected to the councilists were the early Hegelian Marxists, Gyorgy Lukacs (a council communist himself from 1918-21 or 22), Karl Korsch (who turned to council communism in the 1930s), Evgeny Pashukanis and I.I. Rubin. (text by libcom.org, 2005)



## REVIEWS

## WHAT'S ON

## OCTOBER

**11th** Freedom Not Fear, international day of action against surveillance, meet at New Scotland Yard, Broadway, London SW1H 0BG at 1pm and bring stuff to make a noise, see [freedom-not-fear.eu](http://freedom-not-fear.eu) for more.

**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](http://smashedo.org.uk/shut-itt.htm) for details.

**16th** Amnesty International book sale from 11am until 6pm in the Brockway Room, Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London WC1R 4RL, see [conwayhall.org.uk](http://conwayhall.org.uk) for more.

**17th** Benefit gig for Bristol Antifa and Bristol No Borders, with The Bloggers, Restart, Rejected and Spanner, from 8pm until 2pm at The Attic, Stokes Croft, Bristol BS1, see <http://bristolantifa.org/> for details.

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

**24th** Bristol ABC meeting, 'Why prisons don't make our communities safer' with speaker Sam Lamb, 7pm at Kebele social centre, 14 Robertson Road, Bristol BS5, for more info see [bristolabc.wordpress.com](http://bristolabc.wordpress.com)

**25th** Benefit gig for Bristol ABC and Bristol No Borders from 6pm until late at The White Hart, Whitehall Road, Bristol BS5, see [geocities.com/bastardsquadcollective/](http://geocities.com/bastardsquadcollective/)

**25th** 'Off with their heads', start of a week of talks, discussions, socials, etc., until 2nd November organised by Bristol Radical History Group, see [brh.org.uk](http://brh.org.uk)

**25th** Bristol ABC from 11am until 2pm at Kebele, 14 Robertson Road, Bristol, vegan café plus prison support info.

**26th** Bristol No Borders from 6pm until 9pm at Kebele, 14 Robertson Road, Bristol, vegan dinner plus No Borders talk and film.

**27th** Aldermaston Big Blockade, Trident Ploughshares will be upholding international law by blockading this nuclear bomb factory in what promises to be a colourful celebration of life and people power, see <http://blockawe.blogspot.com> or [tridentploughshares.org](http://tridentploughshares.org) for details.

## 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](http://peasantsrevolt.org) for more details.

**1st** Labour Movement Conference on class, climate change and clean coal, the climate campers and the unions, to be held at The Upstairs Lounge, The Bridge Hotel, Castle Garth, Newcastle Upon Tyne from 11.30am until 5.30pm with speakers including David Douglass, Rachel Whittaker, Arthur Scargill, Paul Chatterton, Bob Crow and many more, and afterwards there will be a social from 7.30pm with live bands.

**1st** Prison Abolition strategy meeting at London Activist Resource Centre (LARC), 62 Fieldgate St, Whitechapel, London E1 1ES,

## BOOKS

**Anarchy in Action**

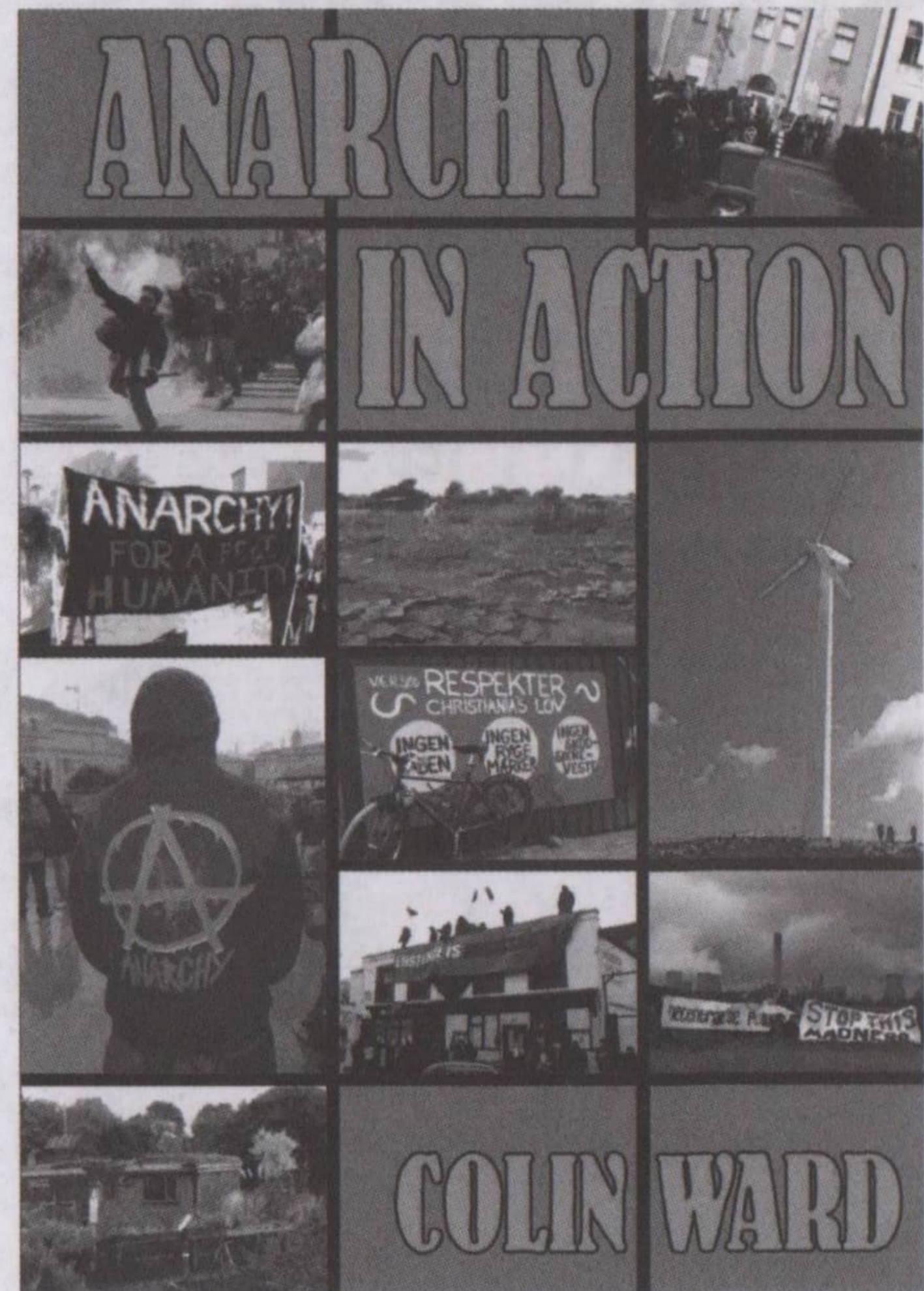
by Colin Ward

Freedom Press, £7.50

Most seasoned readers of *Freedom* will already be aware of Colin Ward's trusty classic, but, having perhaps taken its combination of homespun anarchism and practical good sense to heart so many years ago, they will probably by now have forgotten much of its detail. Equally, readers less long in the tooth may never yet have had the pleasure of sampling its considerable riches. With these two much to be regretted possibilities in mind, a fresh reprint – attractively typeset to make the text much easier on the eye and adorned with a vibrant new full-colour cover – can only be greeted with wholehearted enthusiasm.

In spite of its now being over three decades old, *Anarchy in Action* is still very much a book to be reckoned with, an essential read brimful of ideas that, far from having grown hoary and dated, are still in many ways years ahead of their time. The brunt of the argument, that a latent anarchist society is always in existence, "like a seed buried in the snow," still holds as true as it did when the book was first published back in 1973, and Ward's attempt to bridge the gap between present reality and anarchist aspirations, "between what is and, what, according to the anarchists, might be," is still as urgently needed as it ever was.

Ward rightly believes that, if anarchists are ever to make a convincing case for revolutionary change, they will need to be able to show that what they advocate is not as far-fetched as people too often dismissively assume. It is precisely in its ability to demonstrate that the roots of anarchist



practice are not so alien or quixotic as they might at first seem, but can be found precisely in the ways that people have always tended to organise themselves when left alone to do so, that the book's major strength lies. Offering a wide-ranging analysis, drawing on examples of such practice in education, urban planning, welfare, housing, the environment, the workplace, the family and more, this book is a string every anarchist would benefit from adding to their bow.

Seasoned readers would do well to revisit an old favourite. Those that have not yet made its acquaintance, should waste no time before doing so.

Anton Pawluk

## 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. Conservative Shadow Chancellor George Osborne. Cat out of the bag.
2. The Spanish Falange, in the Comedy Theatre in Madrid on 29th October 1933.
3. Former Chairman of the Federal Reserve Alan Greenspan. The citation announced at the time by the British Treasury stated "the award is in recognition of his outstanding contribution to global economic

stability and the benefit ... realised from the wisdom and skill with which he has led the US Federal Reserve Board."

4. John McCain, in an article called 'Better Health Care at Lower Cost for Every American'. Apparently this would "provide more choices of innovative products less burdened by the worst excesses of state-based regulation."



# Standard Operating Procedure

**In addition to its revealing 'worm's eye view' of the Abu Ghraib scandal, Tom Jennings sees this film as a more general fable of modern governance**

Iraq, 2003. Thousands of fleeing civilians and comparable numbers rounded up on extremely tenuous suspicion of involvement in the full-scale insurgency cower at its epicentre in Abu Ghraib prison between Baghdad and Fallujah under constant mortar attack and with guards outnumbered several hundreds to one. Ranking Guantanamo veterans and military, CIA and privately-contracted interrogators parachute in to extract information by any means necessary, backed by the Commander-in-Chief and his White House cronies with policies trashing the Geneva Convention. A contingent of young army grunts fresh to this hell-hole witness the routine humiliation, torture and murder of detainees. Some complain, but are told it's their professional and moral duty as warriors for liberty, and with varying degrees of diligence and enthusiasm comply with orders to 'soften up' prisoners using 'standard operating procedures' devised by superiors. Still partially disbelieving, many shoot camera-phone stills and videos of the planned and sanctioned insanity. These then leak into the public domain, and the rest is history – which director Errol Morris proceeds to comprehensively dissect in his new cinema documentary.

*Standard Operating Procedure* centres around spoken testimony from five of the seven low-ranking 'bad apples' scapegoated by subsequent inquiries. Sergeant Charles Graner and Ivan Frederick – ringleaders choreographing the sexualised humiliation rituals – were still in jail, but Javal Davis, Sabrina Harman (notoriously smiling thumbs-up over a murdered 'ghost' detainee unlisted in prison records), Lynndie England (with hooded prisoner on leash), Megan Ambuhl (now married to Graner; supervising with Harman and England the 'human pyramid' of naked Iraqi men) and Roman Krol feature, as do several other former military police alongside their Brigadier-General Janis Karpinski (now demoted to colonel) and the Criminal Investigation Division's Brent Pack (who assisted the prosecutors).<sup>1</sup> The interviews – filmed using Morris' famed Interrotron, whereby interviewees answer straight to camera while actually seeing the questioner – and the gigantised iconic snapshots and video clips (some never seen before in mainstream media) are supplemented by staged 'illustrations' of the events described, with ominously-lit widescreen cinematography and melodramatic score reconfiguring Abu Ghraib's



Sabrina Harman with Mr Manadel al-Jamadi after his death under CIA torture at Abu Ghraib

bedlam as sinister gothic otherworld.

The film's rendering of human beings in an inhuman situation, rather than emblems of evil-doing, erodes stereotypes of underclass psychopaths relishing malevolence, despite rationalisations of unconscionable cruelty characterised by ambivalence, alienation and disgust at themselves, their colleagues, and military and government hierarchies, as well as towards purported enemies. Facing uncertain prospects for physical and career survival, the pathetic patriotic training-camp pep-talk of 'noble causes' couldn't completely erase their intelligence and sensitivity or fully underwrite the twisted sadism required of them. And certainly neither could it equip them to comprehend their later demonisation without hefty doses of the bitter fatalistic cynicism and resentful detachment radiating from them now. So letters home from Sabrina Harman to her partner support her assertion that, whereas she saw no option but to follow orders, the photographs were intended as proof of what occurred. Naturally she didn't imagine them scuppering an otherwise successful cover-up orchestrated by her top-brass – explicitly commanding all relevant visual evidence destroyed once the shit hit the fan – or that she would end up in the dock when those who actually tortured, maimed and killed detainees were never even considered targets of justice. In that sense, then, the whitewash worked.

## Telling tales of torture

Thus far may have sufficed for your bog-standard crusading investigator exposing the stitch-up of relatively defenceless underlings as primary villains of the piece – their bosses all the way to the top wriggling and squirming

behind pseudo-legalistic sophistry while pinning medals on each other. But ex-private eye Morris always digs deeper to deconstruct the framing of images (as well as of people) and their deployment in media and informational management to advance institutional interests – *The Thin Blue Line* (1988) famously saving the life of a prisoner on Death Row, and the Oscar-winning *The Fog Of War* (2003) laying bare the delusional arrogance of the powerful in the person of Robert McNamara (one of the US government architects of the Vietnam War). Here the material leads in many fascinating directions – most only hinted at, such as the much-vaunted prominence of women in the US armed forces unraveling into archetypal virgins (e.g. Jessica Lynch subjected to faked 'rescue' by US Special Forces), witches (Karpinski as 'bad mother') and whores (Harman *et al.* fucking with Iraqi men's heads); yet all, of course, puppet-mastered by patriarchs large and/or small-minded.

In interviews Morris emphasises that "the photographs actually hide things from us"<sup>2</sup> and a rare achievement of his film is showing this awareness emerging naturally among the MP patsies, irrespective of philosophically sophisticated ruminations on virtual hyper-reality and spectacle.<sup>3</sup> To Ambuhl, "The pictures only show you a fraction of a second. You don't see forward, you don't see behind, you don't see outside the frame"; Harman concludes "The military is nothing but lies. I took these photos to show what the military's really really like"; and England shrugs, "It's drama, it's life" – cementing the theme of fictionalisation at all levels. The questioning thus extends beyond why these





## Review

◀ page 15

particular images arose, survived and proliferated, to not only their editing and incorporation into discourses concerning the war but, most crucially, what focusing on them as the 'truth' of the matter therefore facilitated being excluded from consideration. More conventionally worthy efforts sometimes tackle such complexity – such as the Tate Modern media art exhibition *9 Scripts from a Nation At War*,<sup>4</sup> which presents the thoughts of various protagonists and observers with different positions, perspectives and prevailing understandings of the Iraq conflict. But the visceral impact of *Standard Operating Procedure* undermines any simplistic or transparent relationship between information

and scientific 'reality', exposing the manner of its manipulation in wider structures of contemporary power.

[www.tomjennings.pwp.blueyonder.co.uk](http://www.tomjennings.pwp.blueyonder.co.uk)

1. The book version, *Standard Operating Procedure: A War Story* by Philip Gourevitch and Errol Morris (Picador, 2008), integrates the participant accounts of the operation of Abu Ghraib's torture regime gathered in research for the film.
2. See, for example, [www.greencine.com/central/morrisop](http://www.greencine.com/central/morrisop) for a comprehensive discussion.
3. An exhaustive analysis of Sabrina Harman and the Cheshire Cat McGuffin of 'that' smile can be found in Morris' *New York Times* blog ('The Most Curious Thing' at <http://morris.blogs.nytimes.com/2008/05/19/>).
4. June-August 2008; see Imogen O'Rourke's review, 'Flipping the Script' at [www.metamute.org](http://www.metamute.org).

## THE QUIZ

1. Who said "Well look, no one takes pleasure from people making money out of the misery of others, but that is a function of capitalist markets."
2. What right-wing group was born in a comedy theatre?
3. Who was knighted in 2002 for his outstanding contribution to global economic stability?
4. Who recently urged that the US health insurance market be opened up "to more vigorous nationwide competition, as we have done over the last decade in banking"?

Answers on page 14

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