

DIRECTLY UNDERMINING NHS

Push to make the NHS private steps up

The next round in moves to privatise the NHS could be underway after the signing of the Health Bill and NHS Constitution at the end of January.

The Bill, which has gained most attention for its introduction of a constitution including a slate of patients' rights within the NHS, is also piloting the practice of Direct Payment, where rather than paying hospitals direct for every case they work with, Trusts will be expected to pay patients a sum to spend on going wherever they want.

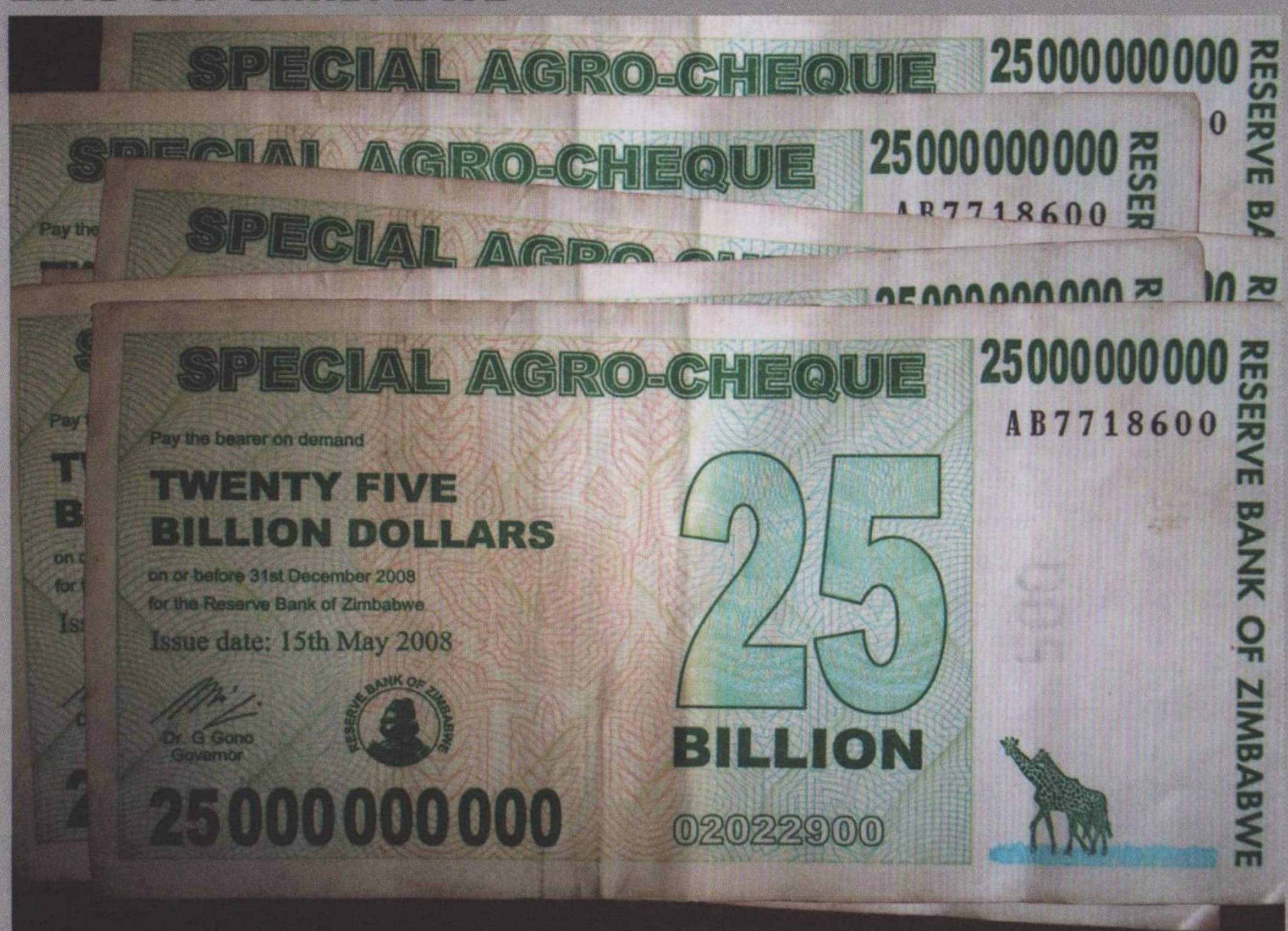
Part of the patient choice agenda drawn up by Lord Darzi last year, the measure has received a warm welcome almost across the board, with only the Unison and Unite unions, both heavily invested in healthcare, sounding mild notes of caution in the mainstream.

However Direct Payments may be intended to drive another agenda – the growth of private hospitals at the expense of the NHS.

The measure pushes forward the plan which was originally intended for Choose and Book, a system which was introduced to

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LENS CAP ZIMBABWE



Z\$25 billion Zimbabwe dollar notes. Inflation has reached dizzying levels in the crisis-ridden country, with teachers going on strike again earlier this month after being paid an average of Z\$29 trillion for January – around £5. Very little learning took place at public schools in 2008 as teachers spent the better part of the year striking for more pay or sitting at home, because they could not even afford the bus fare to work.

DALE FARM EVICTION APPROVED

Up to four hundred people are facing a cold end to the winter at Dale Farm in Essex, after a final ruling at the court of appeal found in favour of Basildon District Council's plan to spend some £3 million on an eviction at the site.

The ruling means that Basildon's bailiffs – the notorious Constant and Co., whose previous evictions have been heavily criticised for their alleged brutality – will now be able to forcibly remove hundreds from the traveller community.

Once the eviction is carried out, the affected families, including more than 150 children, will be able to stay for 28 days on a nearby strip of land they had bought in case they lost the case.

However after that time, the future is

uncertain. Since the late '90s, there has been a severe shortage of suitable sites for caravans to stay on, and unhomed groups are regularly moved on by police if they attempt to park up on public land.

Originally, Dale Farm had won a decision in the High Court that the Council's eviction plan was unlawful as it was indirectly discriminatory, and the council had failed to take into account its obligations to the homeless, responsibilities towards travellers and individual travellers' needs.

The Dale Farm case has been registered with the United Nations Advisory Group on Forced Evictions. Their eviction will now be observed by a team of monitors.

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NEWS

IN BRIEF

ANIMAL RIGHTS: Seven animal rights activists have been sentenced to up to eleven years in prison for 'conspiracy to blackmail' in their campaign to shut down animal testing laboratory Huntingdon Life Sciences (HLS). The government linked the defendants to a controversial campaign website that published all news related to the movement to shut down HLS, both legal and illegal. It was not contended that the defendants committed the illegal acts, but that, through their vocal support for those tactics and publication of communiqués, they 'conspired' to do so.

EDUCATION: Eleven colleges across the country were due to strike on 5th February in a row over their failure to honour a pay deal agreed over four years ago.

The colleges that will be hit are Nelson and Colne, Croydon, Greenwich, North West London, Dearne Valley, Doncaster, Rotherham, Evesham, Sandwell, Sussex Downs, and Askham Bryan.

FREE SPEECH: An anti-war demonstrator was arrested and detained for five hours following complaints from celebrity liberal MP Lembit Opik that she was making it difficult for him to record a piece to camera. Barbara Tucker was campaigning outside the gates of parliament when she was taken away.

HEALTH: Campaigners have reacted angrily to news that a survey to be published later this month will show that the pay of NHS Chief Executives has risen by 9.5% over the past 12 months.

LAW: Labour peers are prepared to accept fees of up to £120,000 a year to amend laws in the House of Lords on behalf of business clients. Lord Truscott, the former energy minister, and Lord Taylor of Blackburn were both implicated.

MEDIA: On 22nd January an Indymedia server was seized by the Police in Manchester. This was related to postings about the recent Stop Huntingdon Animal Cruelty trial.

Kent Police had e-mailed imc-uk-contact in the morning requesting that personal information about the trial judge be removed from the site.

The machine was handed to the police by the management of UK Grid, a Manchester based colocation facility.

PAY: More than 1.5 million workers are being 'cheated' out of the national minimum wage by dishonest employers, with hairdressers, hotel and bar staff most likely to suffer, according to new TUC research.

SURVEILLANCE: Campaigners from No2ID have warned that Clause 152 of the Coroners and Justice Bill, first debated at the end of last month, could remove all limits on the use of our private information by officials.

LENS CAP CAMBRIDGE



Students occupy the Cambridge University Law facility in protest at Israel's occupation and blockade of Gaza, and against the recent war. A statement released by the occupiers said: "We, the occupiers of the Law Faculty of Cambridge, condemn Israel's action in Gaza; the Israeli blockade of Gaza; and the continued Israeli presence in Gaza and the West Bank. We issue this statement in solidarity with the Palestinian people and international peace movements, in particular those in Israel and Palestine. We want to express solidarity with all occupying students across the country. We thank those involved in both the continuing and the successfully completed occupations. We have drawn a lot of inspiration from your actions and your demands."

Over a dozen universities, including Kings College, Oxford, Leeds, Sussex, Manchester and Newcastle, saw occupations in January.

Railways in line for cuts

Moves to cut both the amount of rail renewal work taking place and the number of trains on the lines has angered rail unionists who say that the rail regulator and train companies must invest more in the service.

The RMT union have found out that Network Rail are to defer some 28% of its track renewals programme due to a cutting of its financial settlement by the Office of Rail Regulation, which they say could cause a catastrophic accident if it is not reversed.

The union has demanded a reversal of the cuts and a reinstatement of the entire renewals programme.

"The 22% efficiency savings demanded by the ORR are being translated into a massive assault on planned renewals, inspections and

maintenance that raises the spectre of another Hatfield or Potters Bar," RMT general secretary Bob Crow said.

It is only a few months since Network Rail was slapped with an improvement notice on its inspection regime after the tragedy at Grayrigg, and memories of the Hatfield disaster of 2000, caused through a catastrophic underfunding of maintenance by private companies which led to the establishment of Network Rail in the first place, is still fresh in the mind for many.

The cuts come as private train operators that have seen revenues and dividends rise by some 33% attempt to win permission to operate fewer services than specified in their franchise agreements.

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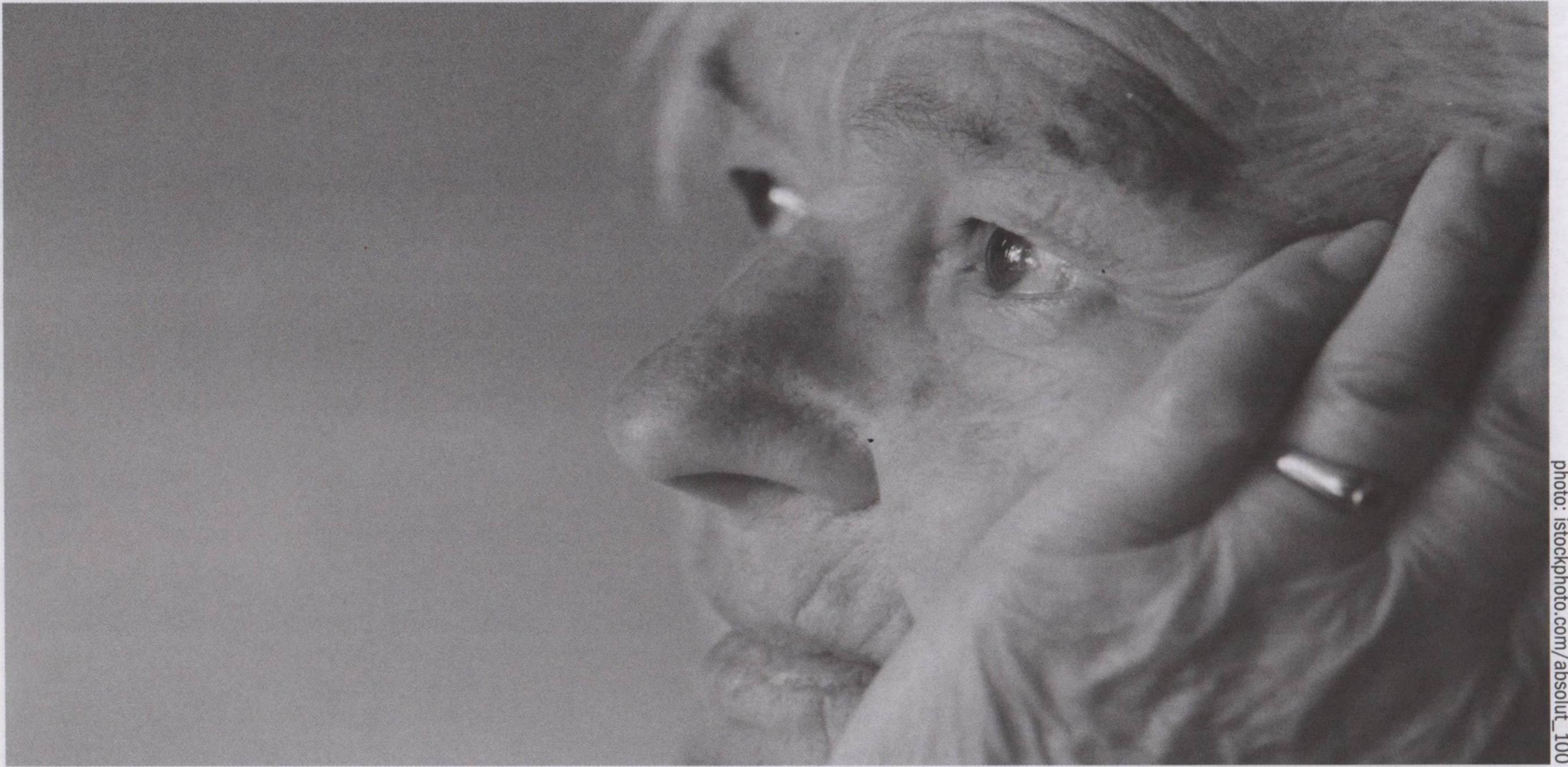


photo: istockphoto.com/absolut_100

Worst pension fears coming true

Just weeks after *Freedom* raised warnings that private sector pension funds could follow the public sector by coming under attack from companies desperate to clear their liabilities, it has been announced that up to 1,000 funds could be closing to new members and many more may be converting their payout systems to lesser 'defined benefit' schemes.

The losses could affect some 2.5 million pensioners and people coming up to retirement by destroying their final salary schemes, which pay out regardless of market performance, and replacing them with smaller, market-dependent payouts. The losses can run into the tens of thousands of pounds for the average pensioner.

With investment markets continuing to fail

and pension funds coming under increasing pressure, the National Association of Pension Funds says the economic situation has damaged the ability of schemes to provide for their members.

The underfunded Pension Protection Fund has also had warnings sounded over its ability to underwrite pensions for companies which are going bust. The Fund, set up in 2005, monitors 7,800 final salary pension as part of EU rules on pensions.

Funded through a levy on private pension funds, it was organised several years after the EU deadline and long after other countries, and has been controversial in the UK, with advocacy groups being stymied by government reluctance and pressure from major companies to reduce the payments they must make to

insure their funds in case of bankruptcy.

As a result, although the recession is still in its early stages, the Fund is already stretched as a number of companies have gone under, with more seemingly on the way.

Rather than make up for their earlier mistake in holding off on payments to the Fund, companies are now telling the government it must guarantee the payments in the event that they are unable to.

Nationally pension funds recorded a deficit at the end of December of £194.5 billion, largely as a result of pension fund managers – often the same people who run the companies they are attached to – putting funds into high-risk areas such as insurance and sub-prime lending which has either collapsed or is suffering in the downturn.

Directly undermining the NHS

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allow patients to choose any hospital to be treated in.

Choose and Book, which incorporated private sector hospitals by paying them for any state sector work undertaken, was hoped to be a major vehicle for breaking the grip of the NHS proper on patient loyalty, diverting cash away from state institutions and fostering a pro-private mentality.

However, since it was introduced in 2005, Choose and Book has not been the success the government hoped. After an initial burst of interest, feedback from the market suggested that this flattened out in 2008, and is unlikely to provide the catalyst for a real undermining of the NHS hospitals' functions.

The new system takes this a step further, potentially massively expanding the ability of NHS Trusts and a new generation of private groups to compete with each other for custom via the full range of commercial advertising techniques.

Union activists fear that Direct Payments could lead to attacks on workers, create another layer of bureaucracy and actively damage the care of those less able to negotiate the system.

Steven Lintott, an IWW and Unison union member, said: "Aspects of it give people more control. But what happens if they run out of money? What happens if they're not very good at budgeting?"

"It will also create a huge bureaucracy on how things are spent. The advantage of the old

bloc contracts was that you didn't have to count very much but with this you'll have to count everything down to the smallest detail."

Mental health has been an early indicator of how the idea might run, Stephen notes.

"From a staff point of view, looking at social care it will lead to short term contracts, indirect employment with abysmal terms and conditions, people can be easily sacked, few benefits, pension problems. Most will end up self-employed which will make organising much harder.

"For patients, it will work better for people who understand the system. The people who take up the services are the middle classes and this will benefit the better-educated first of all."

PUBLIC SECTOR

Fears for public sector as cuts bite

The public sector is bracing itself for severe cuts in services and job losses. In a desperate bid to claw back public spending – which last month hit its highest level ever: an incredible £44.2 billion – the government is planning to make £5 billion of savings from the public sector. These are on top of £35 billion of so-called efficiency savings already announced.

The NHS is braced to brunt the lion's share of cuts. The health service is expected to find £2 billion of savings this coming year. This is on top of a cut in the amount of money the health service was expecting to receive following a record a £1.8 billion surplus year. Instead of receiving this surplus as expected the Treasury is only allowing the NHS £800 million, meaning an overall £3 billion cut in spending.

The NHS is not alone in facing hard times. The Chancellor announced in the Pre-Budget Report that he now wants local government to make more savings through efficiency measures to support the economy, with these efficiencies coming through lowering the cost of back-office operations; better procurement; examining property holdings; and asset sales. This means jobs will be lost as services are contracted out and assets sold.

When the government first started introducing efficiency savings they claimed that the money saved would be put back into frontline services. Trade unions warned this was unlikely to happen. They were right. Efficiency savings have meant cuts and services being overstretched, in some areas, like social care, to breaking point.

Public sector workers have long been suffering as a result of Labour's failed economic policies. Last year most received



photo: istockphoto.com/fin33

pay rises below the rate of inflation. Local government workers received just 2.45% last year but experienced an increase of over 4% in their cost of living. While the pay of ordinary workers has been cut, their bosses pay has soared. Local government chief executive's pay has risen by a massive 34% since 2004.

Its not just pay that is likely to be hit. Public sector unions expect to see a rise in casual contracts, attacks on terms and conditions and pensions. Increasing 'marketisation' of services is also likely.

As unemployment edges towards 2 million workers everywhere are suffering. "The dole office was absolutely packed when I went to sign on today. When it came to my turn, they just asked if I'd been looking for work and when I went to produce the booklet of evidence I needed to prove it, they said they had so many claims to get through that they weren't bothering to check, they just wanted people to turn up and sign the piece of paper" an Anarchist Federation member told *Freedom*.

Richard Griffin

Profits from job losses

Royal Mail has announced another profit rise on the back of massive cuts to staff and facilities, with profits for the nine months to 31st December reaching £255 million. Bosses have announced that all four sections of the company are in profit for the first time in 20 years, but did not give information on precisely how these figures were achieved.

There is also reason to believe that damage from EU rules which limit Royal Mail's profitability and make it uncompetitive against private companies may have brought the figure lower than it was in the previous nine months, which while lower, included losses from a major industrial dispute over job losses and working conditions.

The company is in the midst of completing its latest round of mergers in the sorting offices, which will see 20,000

jobs go on top of 40,000 lost in the previous year. The losses came as sale volumes rose by 3% – though much of this involved moving other companies' mail at cost.

This year they are expecting mail volumes to fall by 7%, and warned that the universal service itself may come under threat, as it is a loss-making part of the company.

The continue profitability of Royal Mail has led to some neo-liberal figures, most notably Lord Mandleson, to call for the partial privatisation of the service. Mandleson, who was controversially appointed Business Secretary by Gordon Brown last year after a series of corruption scandals, and who has since come under scrutiny for his irregular financing of a large house, is backed by Adam Crozier, the chief executive of Royal Mail.

Councils to keep housing rent

The rollback of measures taken against the direct state building of council housing as part of the shift over to social landlords has taken a new turn, as it emerged that councils would be able to retain all of the rents brought in and keep the money from sales under the Right to Buy scheme.

The government has struggled to keep supporting social landlords as the construction industry, which has until now provided most of the housing for them to buy and rent out, has fallen apart.

Until now, much of councils' rental income, and 75% of Right to Buy sales, has gone into central government coffers.

The extra money could free councils to invest in building council houses, a practice which until last year had all but died out as the government effectively blackmailed communities into shifting housing stock out of public hands by refusing to release funds.

IN BRIEF

ECONOMY: Britain's economy is about to suffer its most vicious slump since 1946, shrinking by a drastic 2.8% this year, a Brussels Commission has warned. The Commission expects unemployment to jump by more than 900,000 people over the next 12 months, driving the official jobless total to 2.55 million by the end of the year. The real figures are likely to be much higher, factoring in groups currently off the books.

ENERGY: A lobbying of parliament has been launched by the GMB after Gas regulating body Ofgem announced they were considering a review of pension provision in the sector. The GMB fear that the review, opened at the back of a policy document in December last year, is an attempt to make an early start on destroying members' final salary pensions.

ENERGY: Centrica, the owner of British Gas has cut prices by just 10%, despite a near-halving of the wholesale price since last summer. Centrica also kept its electricity prices frozen so that even after the cut, average dual-fuel customers will still be paying 36% more for their gas and electricity than they were a year ago.

FARMING: The mother of a teenage ground worker killed in a farm machine in Bristol has branded the £7,500 fine handed to his bosses as "disgusting". Farmers Roy and Michael Hill were convicted on health and safety breaches following the death of 17-year-old Lee Mason in April 2007.

FINANCE: A second bank bailout has been announced by the government. It will offer a massive package to guarantee lending and insure banks' bad debts.

Barclays may have to accept government stakes to take part in the £200 billion scheme, under which the taxpayer could foot a potentially unlimited bill for bad debts.

MANUFACTURING: Steelmaker Corus is set to cut 3,500 jobs worldwide, including more than 2,000 in the UK.

MEDIA: Journalists at daily newspaper the *Morning Star* could walk out next month after deciding to ballot for industrial action over a pay dispute. The journalists are angry in part because of the time negotiations have taken and because an anonymous consortium donating about £500,000 to the paper over three years has stipulated that the money could not be spent boosting the pay packets of journalists.

NUCLEAR: Derek Simpson, the joint leader of Unite, has urged the Government to push ahead with the nuclear rebuild programme, saying it will reduce energy bills and maintain security of supply. Support from unions such as Unite, Prospect and the GMB has angered greens who have put a strong case for nuclear to be scrapped.

Media crisis

Troubles deepen in the media as recession bites

Cuts across the media have continued to bite as the sector goes into near free-fall, with advertising drying up and major companies cutting staffing levels to the bone.

Most recently, a major series of cuts have been announced in the regional press across Newsquest, Trinity Mirror and Archant, three of the biggest players in the printed newspaper business. Alongside closures and mergers of offices, a round of cuts have bitten as papers reduce in size alongside a reduction in advertising sales.

In Bristol and Colchester, where there were two major daily titles covering each area, newsdesks are to merge and severe cutbacks imposed, with the *Western Daily Press* to become a freesheet.

Other parts of the industry have been discussing short-time working, while more militant chapels, including that of the *Financial Times*, have been holding mass meetings to discuss their response and beginning campaigns to reverse cuts which would see 10% of the workforce axed. According to the latest company figures, each *FT* worker makes £35,000 profit for the shareholders.

The redundancies, part of an ongoing withdrawal of jobs from newsprint which has been occurring for several years, are widely tipped to herald the closure of a number of papers and the downgrading of others to weekly or free-paper status by the end of the year.

Newspapers have been among the hardest hit by the recession, as the already-battered industry historically loses out heavily during downturns because advertising is one of the first things to be reigned in as a non-essential cost.

The resulting cuts have been spectacular, and thousands of jobs have been lost in the last six months as proprietors attempt to make major cost savings and retain short-term profit figures.

Such measures have incensed journalists across the industry, with a major meeting called by the NUJ at the end of January bringing around 150 delegates to the table to talk about the future of the industry and what campaigners can do to prevent the cuts.

A motion agreed at the conference noted: "This meeting believes the excessive profiteering and poor management – in some cases demanding returns of up to 40% and pushing the companies in to significant debt – have left companies unable to cope with the current advertising downturn or structural changes happening in the industry. This meeting condemns the policy of making staff pay for such management failures and executive rewards through widespread redundancies and pay freezes.

"This meeting registers its anger that such a situation is taking place whilst titles and companies remain profitable and executive pay continues to rise at a significantly faster rate than journalists' pay."

However significant industrial action still seems unlikely in most cases, with a poor translation from widespread anger to active resistance.

Meanwhile in television, ITV has recently been granted leave to axe around half of its rural services, representing over 1,000 jobs, following a rumbling dispute which has been going on since September of last year.

NUJ General Secretary Jeremy Dear said: "I can't exactly say we're surprised by today's announcement. It was clear even before the latest consultation that a deal between Ofcom and ITV had already been struck. So exactly what was the point of consulting on these cuts to ITV local news?"



INTERNATIONAL

IN BRIEF

GREECE: Anarchists have raised £12,000 for an elderly woman from Thessaloniki whose kiosk was torched during rioting. "As anarchists, we felt we should support a fellow human victimised by blind violence," Anarchist Initiative explained.

The organisation set up a bank account to support 74-year-old Harikleia Ananiadou after she received no compensation from the state for the damage.

The Greek government recently introduced compensation packages for business owners following the wave of violence that swept the country after the fatal shooting of a teenage boy. "I received only empty promises from the state, I feel very fortunate that these boys came along to help," Mrs Ananiadou said.

ISRAEL: While Israel has recently stopped its senseless onslaught against the people of Gaza, behind the scenes a growing number of Israeli soldiers are becoming 'Shministim' or refuseniks.

One high-school senior who refused to enter the Israeli military process said she was "proud to refuse to serve in an army that claims to be for humanity and defence but hurts people on a daily basis".

In the past the Israeli army repeatedly jailed refuseniks, but there have been no reports in the last month of soldiers being imprisoned for their acts of conscience.

Figures show that up to 25% of the population do not participate in the country's mandatory military service.

RUSSIA: A leading human rights lawyer was murdered along with a young journalist in broad daylight in central Moscow on 19th January. Lawyer Stanislav Markelov, 34, and journalist Anastasia Baburova, 25, who was with Mr Markelov, were shot dead outside Kropotkin metro station as they left a press conference.

Officials say they believe that Mr Markelov was the target, having brought cases against the Russian military, Chechen warlords and fascists in the past.

A eulogy posted to a left-wing Russian blog described the dead lawyer's immense contribution to struggle in his country. "He defended environmentalists, he defended trade union activists, and he defended anti-fascists. He took part in human rights conferences and social forums, trying to unite the ideas of human rights and social justice. In this sense, he stood out from other human rights activists and, probably, from other lawyers. He turned his convictions into actions."

VIETNAM: More than 1,000 workers at a Taiwanese-owned Valley View garment factory in central Vietnam took part in a wildcat strike this month to demand their promised one-month-wage year-end bonuses before the start of Tet, the Vietnamese lunar New Year. When workers received no payment they surrounded the office of Valley View general director Wong Sung Hsin to stop him leaving Vietnam for the holiday.

LENS CAP ICELAND



Riot police had to rescue the Icelandic Prime Minister, Geir Haarde, from his official limousine after protesters surrounded it. Anarchists protesting the Government's handling of the financial crisis banged on the car and pelted it with eggs while bodyguards tried to keep them away before riot police arrived to clear a path.

Factory seized in Poland

Over 200 recently dismissed workers in Warsaw, Poland, have occupied their factory demanding that money owed to them by management be paid immediately.

Workers at the Thomson factory in the Warsaw suburb of Piaseczno, a former producer of television screens, are fighting to get salaries owed and compensation of up to 15000 zł (about £3,200) following their recent dismissal. The money was due to be paid by 10th January, but so far workers have not received any payment.

The factory has suffered a number of severe cutbacks in recent years with its workforce being wittled down from 5,000 to just 300 following its takeover by Videocon.

In documents sent to the Polish union Solidarity the new owners had complained "salaries were too high".

Arvind Bali, vice-president of Videocon

stated in 2007 that planned investments in Poland were delayed for two reasons: "We did not get support from the government and we have problems with the union. We expect change in both cases".

The first round of lay-offs hit 1,000 people and was justified with claims of a decrease in demand for glass screens, despite receiving huge orders from Russia and Turkey. Salaries were then lowered by 40% for the summer.

To avoid having to pay workers proper redundancy, Videocon did everything in its power to get workers to voluntarily leave, while others took severe pay cuts of up to 30%.

As the occupation continues the head of the Solidarity union has tried to convince workers to go home by claiming that the money owed was being transferred to their accounts. However, workers say they are not going anywhere until they have confirmation of payment.

Notes from the United States

As a possible model for a nation-wide expansion of army recruitment strategies, a shopping arcade in Philadelphia (the Franklin Mills mall) has recently been equipped with a \$13 million video arcade offering 'shoot-'em-up' type games that simulate, of course, death and destruction. It occupies 14,500 square feet and also contains three full-size simulators, including an AH-64 Apache Longbow helicopter, an armed Humvee and a Black Hawk helicopter with M4 carbine assault rifles.

Not that the army is even honest about this move, which is an attempt to bolster under-target recruitment figures: "We want to put people in the Army, but that's about our third priority," said a Sergeant Jennings. "Most people think joining the Army means being a grunt, and that Iraq equals death. We try to show them that there's more to the Army than carrying a gun. If people come in here and they learn that but they don't join, that's okay." The simulators have humanitarian

Iceland in turmoil

As workers the world over have been left reeling from the collapse of the international banking system, Iceland has been feeling the effects the hardest out of all the Western states.

As a member of the European Economic Area, Iceland is allowed access to European Union markets but is not a member of the EU outright. As a result the country has had to turn to the International Monetary Fund, Russia, its former colonial master Denmark and even the Isle of Man to bail out their three major banks, which collapsed early last November. At the time of writing, Iceland is still appealing to its Nordic cousins for financial aid, while diplomatic relations with Britain have broken down over banks being unable to repay short term loans to British owned banks.

On the 22nd January demonstrations, which had, in the main, been conducted along cordial lines without much presence of police in riot gear, stepped up a gear into full riots.

For the first time since the anti-NATO protests of 1949, riot police used tear gas and baton charges to disperse a 2,000-strong (according to police figures) crowd gathered in front of Parliament buildings.

An editorial in *The Times* on the same day commented that the wave of protests sweeping across Europe from Greece to the Baltic state to Iceland represented "a new age of rebellion and riot" in Europe.

Iceland's three major banks have debts between them up six times greater than the actual GDP of the country, which comes in at an average of £13 billion, each year. As 2008 ended Iceland's foreign debt came to just over £37 billion, 80% of which was made up of banking debt.

Before the crisis began Iceland's unemploy-



Finance minister Björgvin Sigurdsson (right) resigned on 25th January because of his role in the current Icelandic financial crisis, and was swiftly followed by prime minister Geir Haarde (left) throwing in the towel the next day.

ment rate stood at 1%, one of the lowest in Western Europe. In November last year, as the banks descended further down the hole threatening to suck the whole country down with them, 200 Icelandic workers were losing their jobs daily.

Public reaction in Iceland to its government's mishandling of the crisis, and the fact that their neo-liberal agenda allowed them to get into this situation in the first place, has been strong, vocal and sustained.

In the beginning protesters focused on Government corruption and allegations of nepotism, demanding their leaders come clean and speak to the people openly about what has been going on. As the months have worn on the people have become more

radicalised as the true nature of the state has become clear to them.

Rallies, which started off with moderate demands, are now full of anti-capitalist symbolism with effigies of capitalists being hung and the flags of the Icelandic banks are being burned in the streets, while one protestor, who was later sprung from the police station, managed to climb atop Parliament buildings and raise the flag of national chain store.

The Government has attempted to respond to demands by demonstrators to hold elections by stating that elections will be held next May. While this is a first step to recuperate the developing struggle it remains to be seen whether or not elections alone can satisfy the demands of Icelandic workers.

Notes from the Unites States

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'missions' with aid in Iraq and Afghanistan

Since it opened earlier this year, about 35 visitors have enlisted.

A little more realistic is the experience of a group of army 'veterans' who have just spoken out and accused the CIA of using them to test mind-controlling drugs. Eric Muth and Frank Rochelle held a news conference in the first week of January in San Francisco. They are part of a group of six veterans who claim they were exposed to dangerous chemicals and germs during government-sponsored Cold War experiments – without their consent. They have sued the CIA, Department of Defense and other federal agencies. The case aims to force the government to contact all those who participated in the experiments and give them proper health care.

As long ago as 2003 the US Department of Veterans Affairs published a pamphlet

admitting that nearly 7,000 soldiers had been involved and more than 250 chemicals used on them. These included hallucinogens (LSD and PCP) as well as biological and chemical agents. Lasting from 1950 to 1975, the experiments took place at Edgewood Arsenal in Maryland. According to the lawsuit, some of the volunteers were even implanted with electrical devices in an effort to control their behaviour.

Rochelle said, for example, that in one experiment he was given one breath of a chemical in aerosol form that kept him hallucinating for two and a half days. Now he's rated 60% disabled and has struggled to keep jobs. He has breathing problems and his short-term memory is so bad that he once left his son at a petrol station. He has trouble sleeping and still sometimes has visions from the drug.

Louis Further

Clash over abortion rights

Anti-abortion protestors marched in San Francisco's Embarcadero Waterfront District on 24th January. The so-called pro-life supporters were met with a vibrant counter-protest from the Bay Area Coalition for Our Reproductive Rights group (BACORR).

The pro-choice supporters set out to challenge the 'ultra right-wing agenda' of the anti-abortion demonstration, calling the protest misogynistic, patriarchal and anti-women.

The Catholic Church, along with Evangelical Christians, were the main source of finance for the Walk for Life campaign, which can boast Sarah Palin as one of its supporters.

According to BACORR, such protests are an attempt to roll back women's rights and the pro-choice demonstration had a broad base of demands for free abortion on demand, no to forced sterilisation, LGBTI right, rights for immigrants and a call to stop the actions of the anti-immigrant group the minuteman.

Watching Israel's heartland: beyond the bombs

Rob Ray interviews an Israeli anarchist on the recent conflict

The statistics have flown around the world, accompanied by pictures of unimaginable suffering. In 24 days, 1,312 Palestinians were killed by the armies of Israel, including 417 children and 108 women, with 5,340 injured. On the other side there were three civilian casualties of Qassam rocket fire, and a number of soldiers were killed or injured throughout the offensive.

UN resolutions and the half-hearted pleas of national leaders made absolutely no difference until Israel unilaterally declared a cease-fire, followed shortly by Hamas.

Internationally, solidarity actions aimed at pressuring international governments and Israel's leadership to call a halt were enthusiastic, but fractured and ineffective.

Within the city, blogs by English-speaking activists, such as at talestotell.wordpress.com, brought home in a deeply immediate way what was happening on the ground, describing the families and children being brought in to the Gaza City hospital as shells and missiles fell all around.

But where were the Israeli people as this happened?

Certainly in the UK, the impression is generally given that 'Israel' as a single entity was supporting the war in Gaza, and that there was a political consensus.

Freedom talked to Uri Gordon, an Israeli anarchist, on what the movement there has been faced with as the crisis went on. His analysis is not heartening: "Overall it's accurate – polls show that up to 78% of the

total Israeli population supported the war throughout, which means the non-supporters are Israel's 20% Arab population and a few thousands of Jews on the far left.

"Palestinian-Arab citizens of Israel were holding militant demos in the north of the country and in Jaffa, largely organised by the conservative Islamic movement, but also the bi-national communist party Hadash and the Abna-el-Balad movement [democratic nationalists]. In the Jewish sector it was the usual suspects – Hadash, the Coalition of Women for Peace and we anarchists."

The general reaction to what anti-war sentiments have been making themselves heard has been difficult. A powerful pro-war media presence and a nationwide sense of 'fortress Israel' has left the pro-peace message heavily outnumbered by hawks. Uri notes: "It's been very hateful and marginalising. On the second week of the war there were some 500 counter-demonstrators in Tel-Aviv against the anti-war demo (which had some 3,000 participants) with Israeli flags and signs like 'Traitors – go to Gaza'.

"There have been calls on the street and in the comments section of the online newspaper editions for imprisoning all anti-war activists and stripping them of their citizenship. Anti-war demos abroad were reported as 'demonstrations against Israel' which for an average Israeli audience means that the demonstrators want to see Israel destroyed and all the Jews sent to the gas chambers.

"The mainstream media has been entirely conscripted and patriotic. There were hardly any reports from inside Gaza (also due to the fact that reporters weren't allowed in and the soldiers had their mobile phones taken away). I think it's fair to say that the Israeli public was entirely shielded from



Israeli anarchists march in Jaffa on 17th January.

seeing the devastation that the army was causing in Gaza."

Amidst this culture of militarism and fear, it would be inconceivable that the small voices for another way would go about their business unmolested. And so it transpired, with some 700 Palestinians, over half of them minors under the age of 18, detained in Israel since 27th December along with a number of Jewish citizens.

It has been suggested by some commentators that the number of young people appearing is part of a concerted campaign by the state to intimidate that generation and push it away from direct action.

The anarchist response to these events has been brave and largely internationalist in its scope, though the immediacy of the fighting meant that until the ceasefire was signed there was little time for analysis.

"The response has been first of all practical – demonstrations, vigils, distributing flyers with pictures of dead children from Gaza on the streets, a die-in at the entrance to an

priorities of the Obama administration. Hamas is still standing and will no doubt re-arm. The Israeli government is unlikely to enter into negotiations with it. What does seem to have changed is that Israel has lost much of its international support, so perhaps a boycott, divestment and sanctions campaign may finally take off.

"Right now the first priority is helping with the humanitarian crisis in Gaza. Here are two major relief agencies working on the ground: anera.org/index.php and ri.org. Money can be donated directly at litrom.com/helpgaza.

"Politically, I think it is time to put a lot of energy behind the boycott, divestment and sanctions movement. The UK site is bigcampaign.org."

DEBATING POINT

During the fighting, a debate has broken out over the position the left and anarchists should take on the war and its main players. Several groups have suggested, most notably the SWP, that support for Hamas as the main vehicle of resistance should be placed as the highest priority for international solidarity groups, as they are the main vehicle of resistance.

Others, such as the libcom collective, have argued that calls for a new resistance based on internationalism and a class-conscious rejection of both Israel and Hamas as warring gangsters should be the main role of anarchists and communists.

Freedom asked Uri what the tendency is among Israeli anarchists on this score. He said: "Israeli anarchists are not organised as a formal association, federation, etc., and therefore cannot present a unified collective position on any topic.

"My own assessment, however, is that the overwhelming majority of Israeli anarchists would reject Hamas as an authoritarian, statist, misogynist and homophobic entity. Many of us express affinity with the PGA hallmarks which include a clear rejection of religious fundamentalism of any creed.

"I would also assume that Israeli anarchists would avoid advocating a 'correct' form of resistance for the Palestinians, whom we as citizens of the occupying state are in no position to advise on the appropriate forms of struggle. I also think most of us would not couch our politics in the traditional class-struggle formulas.

"In practice, we put our energy into a micro-politics of building direct ties of solidarity with those Palestinians who are prepared to cooperate with radical Israelis, primarily the popular committees of villages in the West Bank resisting the Segregation Barrier. Most Israeli anarchists would probably tell you that direct action on the ground, and the creation of a living example of bi-national solidarity, are more meaningful than any political manifesto."

airbase in Tel-Aviv ... you can see aggregated reports on israel.indymedia.org.

"We usually don't see a lot of use in publishing detailed analyses of the situation, since these don't really do much to stop the killing. Some can probably be found at alternativenews.org though.

"It is clear that this attack was making use of the last window of opportunity to pound Gaza with the support of the Bush administration, and that Barak and Livni wanted to score political points towards the coming election by looking tough. But I think the most important factor is Israeli mass psychology – the assertion of victimhood, the logic of 'they started it' and the total hardening of the heart towards the suffering of Palestinians."

Such hardened hearts were needed after it emerged that Israel may have been not just overreacting to aggression from Hamas, but the authors of the conflict from start to finish. Reports that the rocket fire initially blamed for the war came in after an anti-tunnel

operation which saw six Hamas fighters killed have been damaging to Israel's protests of innocence.

Uri said: "Yes the Israeli army was the one to break the ceasefire on 4th November. There are hundreds of tunnels on the Gaza-Egypt border, used to smuggle anything from food and medicine to drugs and weapons, since Israel has closed the Rafah crossing and hasn't been allowing free movement of goods for months.

"I don't know if that particular tunnel was custom-made for a kidnapping operation [as was claimed by the military], but it sounds strange since they could have used any existing tunnel for the same purpose had they actually managed to capture a soldier."

Now that the war has ceased, for the time being, it is difficult to see what will happen next, but Israel's anarchists are preparing for the worst. Uri said: "It's difficult to predict anything. Likely there will be some remission until another cycle of violence. The specifics of when and how depend on the policies and



COMMENT

ABOUT FREEDOM

ANGEL ALLEY

With the adding of libcom to our stable of contributors, our reviews editor going great guns and other writers now including an ex-member of the *Bristle* collective, and potentially with a new public sector specialist as well, *Freedom* is looking more healthy editorially than it has done for a while.

However that is not the full story! We still need expertise in many different aspects of news, analysis and, desperately, marketing. We're putting out a pretty good and wide-ranging paper these days, and we need people to now about it, to sign up to it and the like. The more you can help us out with that, the better.

On that note, you will I'm sure be thrilled to hear that we are getting ever closer to our revamp of the website, with the possibility of being able to put up a big chunk of our articles online, along with an online shop (though honestly, browsing through the brand-spanking new shop will have more options and be much more fun).

It seems to be positive days for *Freedom* at the moment, and you're very welcome to join us!

Rob Ray

SUBSCRIPTIONS

To work out if your subscription is due for renewal, look at the number above your name on the address label. This issue is vol 70, no 2, so if your sub runs out with issue you'll have 7002 above your name. If the number is less than 7002 then your sub is overdue for renewal. See page 16 for the sub rates and renewal form or, if you don't want to worry in future about renewing your subscription to *Freedom*, ask us to send you a standing order form either at subs@freedompress.org.uk or write to us at 'Subscriptions', Freedom, 84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1 7QX.

CONTACT DETAILS

Freedom Press, 84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1 7QX

Tel/fax: 020 7247 9249

www.freedompress.org.uk

Enquiries: info@freedompress.org.uk

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NEXT ISSUE

The next issue will be dated 14th February 2009 and the last day to get copy to us for that issue will be Thursday 5th February. 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

The Runnymede Trust have done us a favour with their recent report on the white working class. For the best part of two decades, class has been left out of politics. Major talked about a 'classless society', while New Labour have gone out of their way to talk about all kinds of discrimination, except for that based on class. This isn't surprising – it's one of the functions of government and media to smooth over such things, or, where they are acknowledged, to deny that they matter very much. Class is reduced to accent, food, and occupation, rather than seen as a social relation.

The right-wing media and the political far-right have long claimed that the white working class is discriminated against on the basis of race. Their argument is that well-off people don't have to worry about immigrants taking their jobs and can benefit from the cheaper cost of services provided by those same immigrants. However, the tabloids, BNP and so on seem to have missed who is really doing well in modern Britain. It's not the immigrants, by and large, and it's not the non-white working class. Lakshmi Mittal isn't powerful because he's Indian, he's powerful because he's rich. Similarly, the indigeous working class don't want jobs at sweatshops paying £3 an hour, regardless of race. It is class that makes the difference, not colour.

This line of argument is echoed by many in the Labour Party, anxious that they can no longer count on working class votes, or at least apathy, to keep them in their Parliamentary seats. Hazel Blears said it was time "for white working class voices and grievances to be heard". Phil Woolas attacked immigration and promised to crack down on immigrants. I recognise a coded message of blame the immigrants easily enough.

The Trust's report skewers both these. It

baldly states that there is discrimination against the white working class, but it is because of class, not race. As obvious as what bears do in woods! It says a lot about the political discourse of this country that it takes a think-tank to come out and say it – presumably the media and politicians are still praising the Emperor on his choice of outfit.

I well know that this isn't what many white working class people want to hear. It suits a certain narrative to say that the problem is all because of immigrants and all that is needed is a return to a mythical past, where people left their doors open, there was no crime and everyone knew their place. This conservative version of the past needs rejecting as much as the multiculturalist relativism of today. Indeed, both are tools used to keep us in our place. The former stopped working after the second world war but is being dusted off again; the latter has served the ethnic middle classes well, but is now running out of steam.

The grievances expressed as "we're discriminated against because we are white" are still real, however. Resources are short, particularly in housing and other services. The ruling class are very happy to see these grievances go down the dead end of racial politics and multiculturalism. It is a problem for those of us who want to see a working class fighting for its own interests, but it's good news for those who seek to represent certain communities.

However, we can try to overcome these divisions. Shortage of housing affects everyone – regardless of colour. Closure of services and benefit cuts do likewise. We need to get people talking to each other because, in the words of the report, "Feeling that you have less and less control over your life is not the monopoly of Britain's white working class".

Blog Bites

Left slips and trips still lower

The leadership of the Socialist Workers Party (SWP) avoided a major schism at its annual conference in January when blacklisted members of the outgoing party leadership withdrew from the elections for the new central committee. Although a split was averted, the party remains damaged, divided and stuck in a political impasse.

Since the failure of the SWP-led Respect electoral alliance last year, those in the party's inner-cadre who championed the project (notably John Rees and Lindsey German) have been sidelined and effectively neutralised. Although all the party's bosses had backed Respect with equal enthusiasm (at least in public), they opted not to share responsibility for its demise, seeking instead to punish those individuals now targeted to take the blame.

Despite being subject to increasingly vocal internal criticism, Rees and German had made few attempts to defend themselves. Withdrawing their names from an alternative electoral slate on the eve of the conference vote came as the final admission that the party's leading apparatchiks would carry the day overwhelmingly.

Determined to expunge the stain of Respect from the party's history, the SWP will now attempt to bleach all references to it in the party lexicon. What makes the task of reprogramming the party faithful all the more difficult is that the incoming leadership has no big new idea with which to animate the troops in its place. For top-dog Callinicos and his central committee followers, the repercussions of Respect will continue to punish the party.

Another individual on the left caught in a
page 11 ►►

On bailouts, co-ops and conflicts

I am writing in response to reading the two articles 'Bailouts or co-operatives' by Iain McKay and 'Co-ops or conflicts' by Joseph Kay, both in *Freedom* of 20th December.

It is true that there has been a move for co-ops in Britain and much of the rest of the world for the last two centuries. In the 1970s there were moves after workers occupations to keep plants open under workers' control. Examples that come to mind include the Upper Clyde shipbuilders at Govan and the Meriden motorcycle plant at Coventry. At that time a Labour government was interested in using public monney to back the ventures.

One of the problems with creating co-operatives seems to be the problem of finance and credit. The Mondragon co-operatives in the basque region of Spain have a huge financial system used to back them. If workers were to attempt in the present economic climate to create a co-op out of their workplace they are going to need to face problems of finance and credit. Obviously it cannot be assumed that the prevailing economic forces are going to help them. There would need to be a strong/active libertarian socialist movement to help with making demands for the co-operatives.

In conclusion, I don't think organising in the workplace for the best working conditions and suggesting co-operatives as an alternative to nationalisation need to contradict each other.

D. Dane

Blog bites

◀ page 10

similar downward spiral is the increasingly desperate Tommy Sheridan. The former leader of the Scottish Socialist Party has now followed in the footsteps of 'gorgeous' George Galloway and entered the *Celebrity Big Brother* house. Insisting that, as a poor undergraduate (he is now studying at Strathclyde Law School) he could not turn down the appearance fee that Channel Four offered (reported in *The Scotsman* at £100k), Sheridan appeared confident his gift for self-publicity would carry him through the grotesque spectacle. "It's light entertainment, not real life" he explained. "Hopefully it will give people a bit of a laugh at a time when too many are worried about their jobs and paying their rents."

Sheridan's current political party Solidarity has opted to remain tight-lipped about the affair, masking its acute embarrassment with the announcement that it "neither endorses nor condemns this TV appearance".

Trotwatch

Stocks are just gambling

There is a cartoon by Gary Larson of a Red Indian wrestling with a large bison. A bison in the audience calls out, "Vince! Just trample him! He's drawing you into his kind of fight!" This is what has happened to Iain McKay. He attempts to analyse the stock market (*Freedom*, 25th October 2008) and to beat financiers at their own game using their rules. It cannot be done because they are playing silly buggers.

Iain appears to think there is some sense to be seen in banking finance and its failure. There is none. The stock market is based on an innate wish to gamble. People think they can to get something for nothing. The same is seen in any game based on chance. In horse racing people study form in the hope that they can win. The riches of Las Vegas have been built on people's uncontrollable desire to gamble. There is no secret formula to beat capitalists. It is like fighting with oneself.

Iain appears to think that a few well chosen arguments will demolish the opposition. He believes in reason and that people can be swayed in his favour. Don't we all! Unfortunately it does not work like that. Our lives do not depend on reason. I hope I have made my genetic determinism clear, and it is directly opposed Iain's environmental determinism. There is no room for intellectual manoeuvre. We all have views, ideas, hypotheses, philosophies and I enjoy them as much as the next person.

However, I know perfectly well that these have almost no effect on the way we behave. We operate on self interest and attempt to justify ourselves by using reasons. This is the tragedy of anarchism. All anarchists can do is observe the follies of others and have a good laugh at their expense.

Peter Gibson

LETTERS AND COMMENT

David Carruthers RIP

David Carruthers died peacefully, at home, on Thursday, 11th December 2008, having lost his 18 month battle with cancer, and his death at 55 is hard to bear. Dave restarted the Glasgow Anarchist group in late 1974, opening up a squat at 21 Bute Gardens.

He was an inspired public speaker, operated a hand duplicator as if he was Popeye, yet always appeared to cut a frail figure, with a severe visual impairment.

The group hosted several public meetings around 1976-77 with well-known speakers such as Albert Meltzer, Miguel Garcia, John Olday, etc. Dave wanted John - a man who tried to assassinate Hitler - to move to Glasgow, although it didn't happen.

He went on to develop a passion for anarchist communism, hosting a conference of the Anarchist Communist Association (ACA) in the late '70s. Dave became the national secretary of the ACA after a more platformist tendency left to join forces (the LCG) with a trot group, and the Lotta Continua¹ who were influenced by Big Flame².

Dave moved on to free schools and helped keep Barrowfield in Glasgow open for a while. He became a teacher and eventually was the teacher for sick children at Yorkhill hospital: he was great with kids and at least one anarchist in the 1990s had Dave as a primary school teacher.

He devoted a lot of time to his family and his adopted son from 1990. Dave was a warm, caring person, with an infectious sense of humour. At the funeral various Glasgow anarchists were present.

Jim McFarlane

1 Lotta Continua were an Italian communist party.

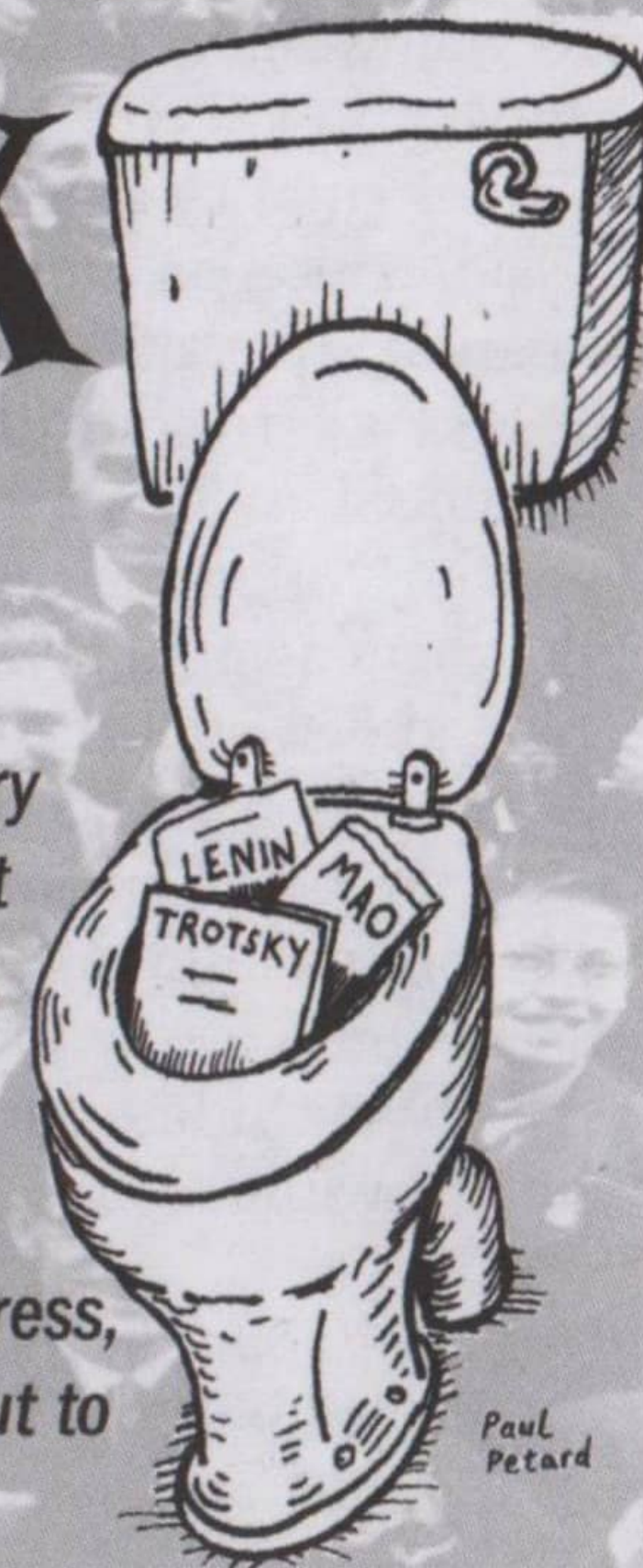
2 Big Flame were a UK libertarian Marxist party.

The Anarchist Quiz Book

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

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

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



GETTING ACTIVE

PRISON NEWS

German groups are planning to dedicate protests against Nato later this year to Natalja, an anti-Nato protestor arrested in the early part of last year for resisting arrest and jailed until 6th June 2009.

On 9th February 2008, Natalja was arrested during the yearly demonstration against the NATO-Security-Conference in Munich (Germany). They accused her of violently resisting police measures. A warrant was issued against her and since then she has been in Munich behind bars.

Natalja had already been arrested during the G8 summit of 2007 in Germany and was sentenced to ten months of imprisonment. She also has a third trial coming up because of an arrest at a demonstration on 1st May of the same year.

Natalja said: "For me, the imprisonment started with a kind of shock which slowly vanished. It is replaced by a condition of permanent grief in the background covered by a lot of tiredness, boredom and exhaustion. However I request that people be more defiant than ever, so that this national intimidation propaganda is not spread inadvertently via my case. Nobody should be discouraged and certainly not brainwashed on my account."

Initially Natalja was refused mail because it had political content. On 11th December 2008 she was physically forced to give a DNA sample.

On the weekend of 6th to 8th February there will be days of action in solidarity with Natalja and all prisoners in struggle. It is the weekend of the annual demonstrations against the NATO Security-Conference, and the weekend when Natalja was arrested nearly one year ago.

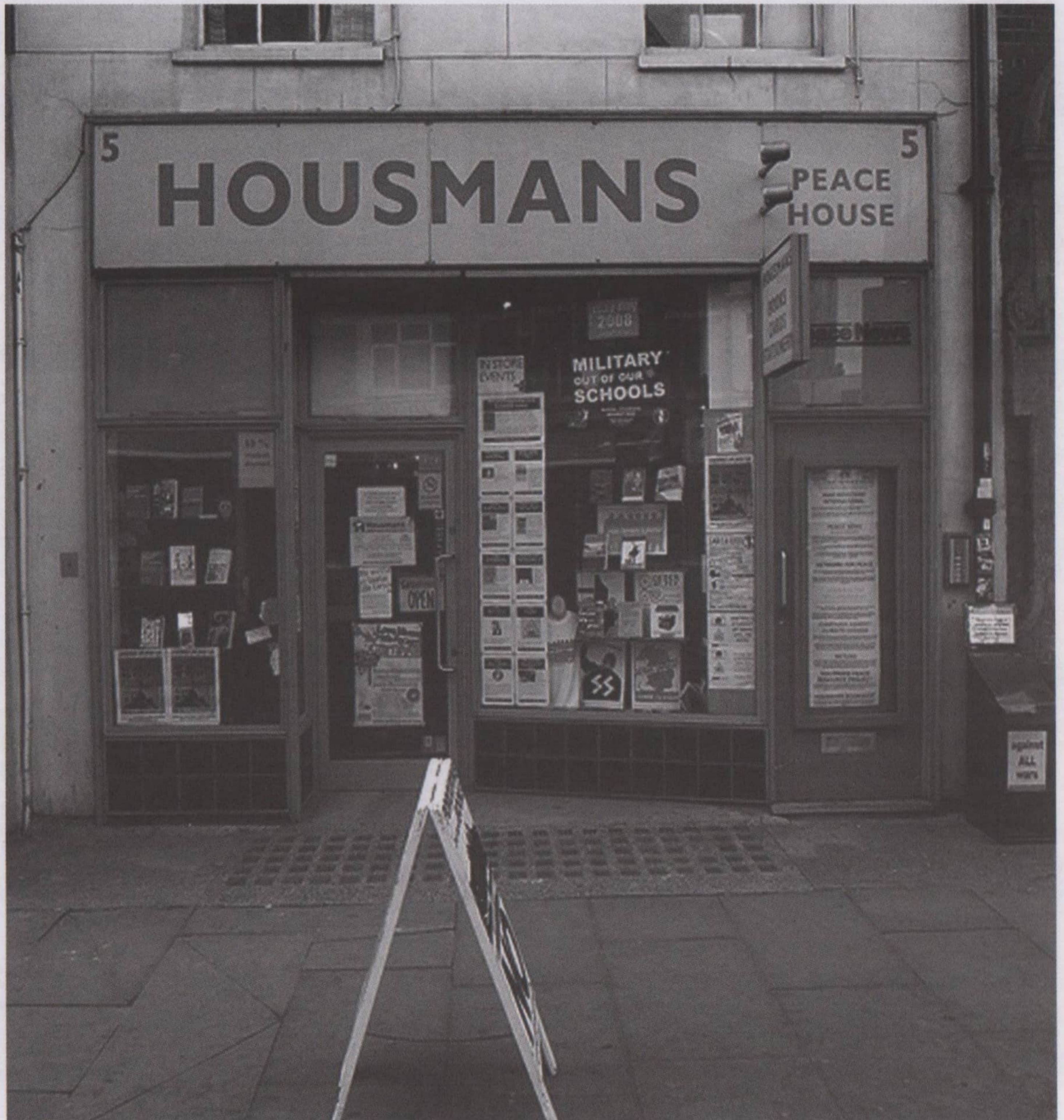
- ABC-Orkan and northern Anarchists: abc-orkan@riseup.net
- Anarchist Black Cross Berlin: mail@abc-berlin.net

Message from Koridallos prison, Athens
Once again the corrupt and arrogant state, feeling the ground rumble under its feet and the overflowing rage of the people brought on by the murder of Alexis amongst many other causes, with concise pre-decided procedures and false statements by cops threw people into jail with carbon copy charges in an attempt to repress the social rage.

To mention an indicative example of this situation, after the investigator and before the decision for our pre-trial detention was announced, we heard the cops in the corridor shouting 'Bring the prison van so we can take them away quickly'. Obviously the political decision for our imprisonment had already been taken much earlier.

We the prisoners in the so called 'correctional establishment' of Koridallos feel the need to say that our bodies might be imprisoned but our thought and spirit remains with the struggle that continues outside.

- Apostolis Kiriakopoulos (and others)
A' Pteriga, Filakes Koridallou, 18110
Koridallos, Athens, Greece



● An organising discussion for a **national anarchist meeting** has been held in London. The event, called by a number of individuals within the London movement, is likely to be based on the Bradford meeting of the 1990s which saw hundreds of people brought together for the closing meeting of Class War. The hope is to bring together many different strands of anarchist thought into an open discussion as to how activity can be co-ordinated as the recession continues.

A working group has been formed to look at venues in the capital, and it has been proposed that a two-day conference take place shortly after Mayday in London. An email list, conference09@haringey.org.uk, has been set up to keep people informed of how the process is going. Groups are being invited to provide mandated delegates to put their views on what should be talked about forward, and individuals are also welcome.

The next national meeting, which is open to anyone interested, has been set for 21st February, venue to be announced.

● A new **No Borders** group has formed in the north east of England. No Borders is a network of groups calling for the freedom of movement for all and an end to all migration controls: "We call for a radical movement against the system of control, dividing us into citizens and non-citizens. We demand the end of the border regime for everyone, including ourselves, to enable us to live another way, without fear, racism and nationalism."

see nobordersnortheast.wordpress.com for more info, or email nobordersnortheast@ucrony.net

● A room above **Housmans bookshop** (pictured above) is **looking for tenants**. The room will be available from 1st February at 5 Caledonian Road, London, N1. The venue is home to Housmans Bookshop, *Peace News*, War Resisters' International and the Campaign Against Climate Change. Tenants are sought from social, campaigning, or educational groups in broad sympathy with the centre. Rent £1,980 pa, service charge approx £340 pa (excluding business rates), premises eligible for Small Business Rates Relief. For more details contact Ian Dixon, Peace News Trustees, Tel/Fax: 020 8660 0093

● The **Smash EDO campaign** has been contacted by a group of campaigners who forced entry into the ITT/EDO MBM arms factory on 17th January. They destroyed equipment inside the factory.

ITT/EDO MBM, on Home Farm Road in Brighton, manufactures release clips for F-15s and F-16s as well as the Paveway system of munitions which were recently used by the Israeli military against civilians in Gaza.

Chloe Marsh, spokesperson for the Smash EDO campaign, said: "This is a peace messenger city, ITT/EDO MBM is an obscenity that must be removed from Brighton and the directors of this foul company ought to be tried for war crimes by the International Criminal Court."

A brief history of the crisis

As part of a new collaborative project, the libcom.org collective have volunteered to take on the theory and history section, editing down material from their excellent online archives, which should hopefully free up previous editor, James Horrox, to do contemporary work! In this first installment of libcom's new series, Joseph Kay looks at the historical roots of the 'credit crunch'

However it may seem, the current crisis didn't come out of nowhere. Following World War Two, the government and employers were keen to appease a population weary from years of war and rationing. The NHS was founded in 1948, and the opportunity for a reconstruction boom created the possibility of 'productivity deals'. These were agreements between employers and the unions for workers to implement productivity improvements in return for a share of the profits in the form of higher wages.

This settlement lasted up until the late 1960s, when two factors converged to derail it. Firstly, there was a growing wave of industrial unrest with strikes and other forms of action rippling out around the world. Many of these took the form of wildcat action outside of union control. Workers were fed up with years of producing more and more while their lives were still reduced to work, as all that extra productivity hadn't led to shorter hours.

The second factor was the end of the post-war boom, which saw economic growth slow dramatically – making productivity deals unaffordable if profit levels were to be maintained. It also saw rising inflation eat away at the wage improvements over the last decade, adding fuel to the fire of workers' militancy. The struggles of this period were highly successful, with workers winning large concessions. However, this set the stage for a concerted counter-attack.

At the end of the '70s, Margaret Thatcher came to power in the UK on a mission to break the working class. Reagan soon followed in the US. Both of them isolated and took on workers sector by sector, doing deals with some unions while attacking others in a divide and rule strategy. The decisive defeats were the miners' strike of 1984/5 in the UK, and Reagan's attack on the air traffic controllers in the US in 1981. These are defeats from which we've yet to recover.

With workers broken, Thatcher and Reagan set about a series of reforms which set the scene for today's crisis. Firstly, old centres of workers' militancy (mining, manufacturing) were systematically dismantled and outsourced to low-wage economies overseas. Whereas in the UK in 1971 over 70% of people were



The Lloyd's building in London

employed in primary industries (like mining) or manufacturing, today over 70% of workers are in the service sector. Secondly, the banking sector was massively deregulated, allowing the creation of all sorts of complicated 'derivatives' markets, which ultimately resulted in the credit crunch as it proved impossible to know what all these pieces of paper were really worth.

An effect of breaking workers' militancy was of course to keep wages down, and we've all got used to sub-inflation pay rises every year (in other words pay cuts). While this boosts profits, the problem with this is that it keeps consumer spending – and thus economic growth – down, since you can't buy lots of things when you're skint. Unless, of course, you get a credit card. So this problem was 'solved' by extending massive consumer credit, based mostly on rising house prices, to provide the spending power to purchase all those commodities coming out of the new manufacturing centres in the Far East and elsewhere.

Parallel to this, without primary industries or manufacturing the economy came to rely more and more on the banking and financial

sector, with the 'square mile' of the City of London alone accounting for around 5% of the UK's economy. This sector was also now heavily reliant on rising house prices, with complicated 'mortgage derivatives' being one of the major assets held by the big banks. Of course when the housing bubble burst, everything started to unravel. Household name banks teetered on the brink of collapse, as did the entire financial system. Credit dried up, and with it the economy swung into recession.

There is much talk comparing it to the collapse of 1929, except nobody knows how bad it's going to get, and this time it's global. Already there have been riots by workers laid off from thousands of factories in China, and food riots across the globe as food prices rise much faster than incomes. This then is the context for the coming 'claw back' attacks on our living standards that are set to try and make us pay for a crisis that was not of our making.

Joseph Kay is a financial services worker and editor of libcom.org. For ongoing coverage and analysis of the credit crisis see libcom.org/tags/credit-crisis

REVIEWS

WHAT'S ON

JANUARY

31st East End Radical History Pub Crawl beginning at Salmon & Ball (where Bethnal Green Road and Cambridge Heath Road meet) at 5pm sharp! A guided radical history tour crossed with a pub crawl. No excuses.

31st There will be a book signing by Iain McKay of his *Anarchist FAQ* at Freedom Bookshop, 84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1 7QX, at 2pm.

FEBRUARY

14th Benefit for Greek rebellion defendants/prisoners and the Smash EDO Eight, with bands and DJs from 8pm at The Plough, Kilburn Street, Easton, Bristol, £4, see <http://bristolabc.wordpress.com>

14th Anarcho speed dating, come and have a giggle, check out the stalls, buy a newspaper and meet some anarchists at this anti-valentine's day event at The Cross Kings, 126 York Way, London N1 0AX from 7pm, see <http://londonclasswar.org/newswire/> for more

16th Film showing of *The Wobblies* (aka the Industrial Workers of the World, or IWW) at Pogo Café, 76a Clarence Road, London E5 8HB at 7.30pm, contact 020 8533 1214 or see pogocafe.org.uk for further details.

18th Campaign for Climate Change present a talk and book launch for *Too Little, Too Late: the Politics of Climate Change* by Colin Challon MP at Housmans, 5 Caledonian Road, London N1 9DX, at 7pm, see housmans.com for details.

21st and 22nd Brighton Zine Fest at Cowley Club, 12 London Road, Brighton BN1 3PS and West Hill Community Village Hall, Compton Avenue, Brighton BN1 3PS, from midday, see brightonzinefest.co.uk for more details.

26th Amnesty book sale at Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London WC1R 4RL from 11am until 7pm, all books £1 or £2, contact sarah.dodgson@amnesty.org uk or call Sarah D. on 07771888825 for more.

27th SHAC (Stop Huntingdon Animal Cruelty) demo at the Bank of England, Threadneedle Street, London EC2R 8AH, at 12 noon, for details call 0845 458 0630 or see shac.net for more information.

MARCH

14th Freedom March against police state, meet at Worthing Town Hall, Chapel Road, at 2pm, part of Worthing festival of liberty, see eco-action.org/porkbolter for more.

14th 25th anniversary of the miners's strike, working class bookfair from 11am until 4pm at Linskill Centre, Linskill Terrace, North Shields, Tyne & Wear NE30 2AY, see <http://workingclassbookfair.vpweb.com> for more information.

21st Brighton Vegan Fayre at Brighton Centre, Kings Road, Brighton BN1 2GR from 11am until 6pm, call 0117 9239053, email info@yaoh.co.uk or see <http://brighton.veganfayre.org.uk> for more.

BOOKS

Belching out the Devil

by Mark Thomas

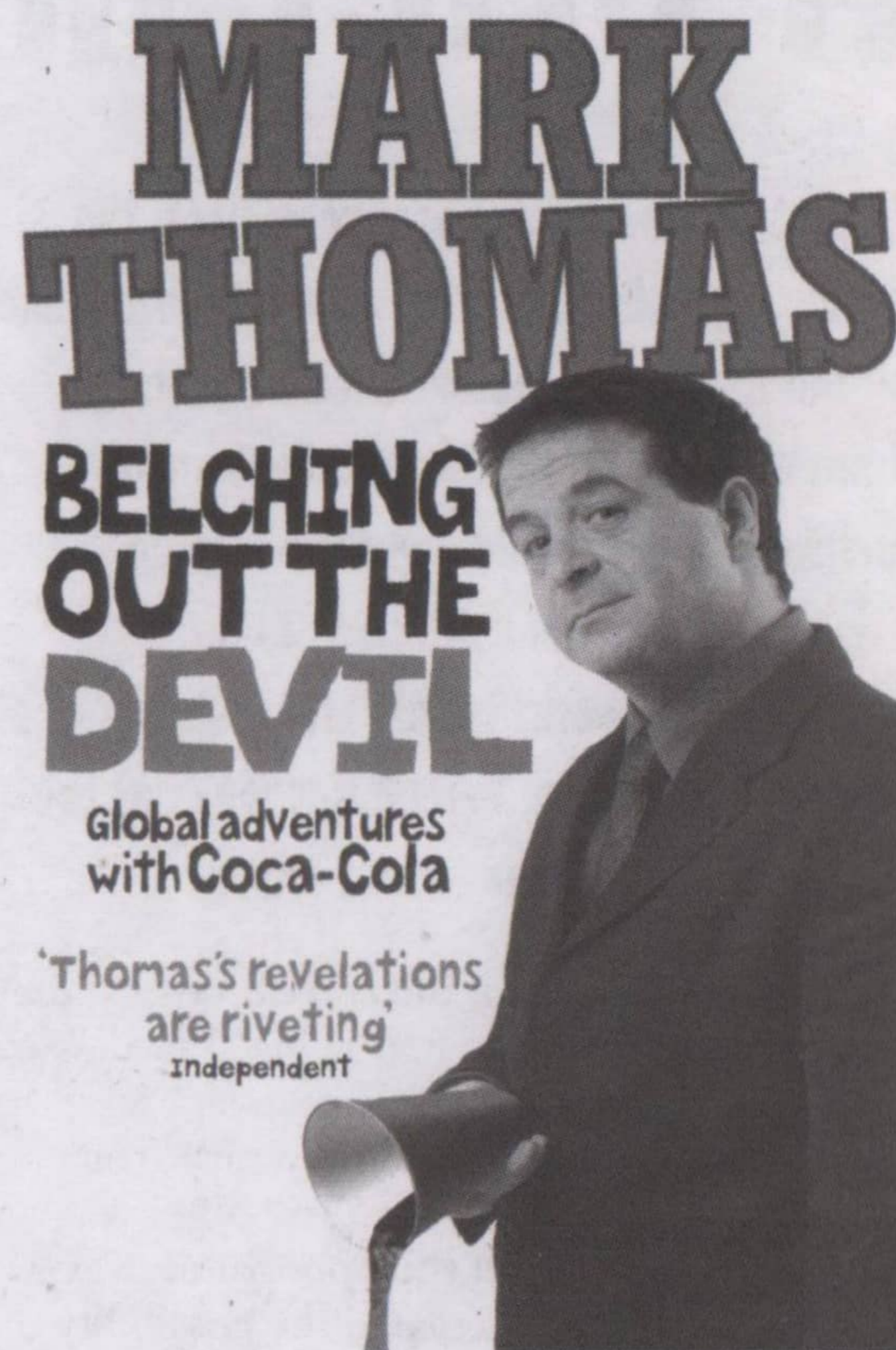
published by Ebury Press, £12

Comedian and presenter Mark Thomas travels the globe scrutinising and exposing the ruthless inner workings of the Coca-Cola company. It's written in a travelogue style, at times funny, but too often meandering and anecdotal. He takes the reader on a tour of the many issues that emerge wherever Coke sets up operations. They are themes so common to globalisation: outsourcing, offshoring, exploitation of cheap labour, casualisation of the workforce, repression of union activists and members, child labour and over exploitation of poor communities scant resources. Despite appearing to be a huge multinational, the Coca-Cola company is relatively small, it outsources most of its operations. Thus it attempts to distance itself from the malpractices of its sub-contractors even though it directly controls most aspects of employees working lives.

He starts in Colombia, meeting Sinaltrainal (the National Union of Food Industry Workers) in exile. At a Coke bottling plant in Uruba, union leaders and negotiators were murdered by paramilitaries in collusion with the bottling company management. Coke used Columbia's regressive labour laws to casualise the *fleteros* (delivery men and porters), this legally denies them union membership. Two *fleteros* who attempted to organise a union were remanded for six months on trumped up charges – to this day union activists still receive death threats.

In 2005, the year Coke pledged to allow union activities without intimidation, 105 members of Turkish union Nakliyat-Is were dismissed from a bottling plant in Istanbul. They occupied the lobby of Coke's headquarters in Istanbul. Despite making initial headway in negotiations, the company management raised no objections as demonstrators and their families were tear gassed by Cevik Kuvvet (Turkish riot cops) in the confines of the lobby. Both Sinaltrainal and Nakliyat-Is are attempting to sue Coke in the US for murder, false imprisonment and torture. Using the Alien Torts Act their case was initially thrown out on grounds of jurisdiction; they have currently lodged an appeal.

In El Salvador he joins a Human Rights tour bus searching for child labour. They find children of ten years and older harvesting sugar cane on plantations supplying Coke's refineries. Some are



working in full view of company offices.

I felt the company's worst crimes were in India. Here their bottling plants depleted the water supplies in Kaladera (Rajasthan). Farmers' and village wells dried up, women and children had to walk miles to fight it out at standpipes. By contrast NGO's had previously set up successful rainwater harvesting projects and irrigated large areas of an arid landscape.

The book further explores issues around pesticides, water contamination and closure of a union dominated factory in Ireland manufacturing concentrates. The book concludes at the company's AGM with some great anti-coke activists. Teamsters, nuns and Tibetans all put allegations to the then CEO Neville Isdell. They are predictably rebuffed with PR and spin – profits keep increasing, the company have no real interest in changing any of their practices.

I enjoyed this book, and it certainly gave me more reasons to hate Coke. It missed the opportunity to draw the obvious comparisons with other multinationals and anti-globalisation struggles. Also it lacks contacts for anti-Coke campaigns and suggested actions. Surprising, given the author's track record. Let us not forget that casualisation, union derecognition and offshoring are too common here at home. Criticisms aside, a good and easy read, but perhaps a tad expensive.

Mike Stand

QUIZ ANSWERS

1. Kropotkin, in his contribution about anarchism to the 1910 edition of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*.
2. The Poll Tax.
3. The Act has been used to stop 62,584 people at railway stations. Another 87,000 were questioned under 'stop and search'

- and 'stop and account' legislation.
4. They banned all public sector strikes. Well, what did you expect? Maoist Finance Minister Dr Baburam Bhattarai said "I appeal to the management that they should provide the minimum wage. The workers shouldn't resort to *bandas* [stoppages] and strikes".

Ahead of his time

The colourful Life of Edward Carpenter

Edward Carpenter, overlooked for much of the last century, was so far ahead of his day that society still hasn't caught up with him; he truly represents the advanced guard of the avant-garde. Sheila Rowbotham's new biography *Edward Carpenter: A Life of Liberty and Love* is an admiring, sympathetic yet balanced account of her subject. It is also critical when necessary, attributing for example the occasional whiff of anti-Semitism to her subject's 'old Cambridge snobbery'. Attention from the author of *Women's Consciousness, Man's World* and *Hidden from History* confirms Carpenter's continuing influence on the 1960s generation and today. This captivating and mostly forgotten English seer, who united the personal and political and, through his thoroughgoing radicalism, took up an extraordinary number of causes. However, more than a biography of Carpenter this is a study of the wider socialist and progressive culture from the 1880s to the Interwar period. His personal circle included such luminaries as Walt Whitman, William Morris, Raymond Unwin, Tom Mann, Olive Schreiner, E.M. Forster and Bertrand Russell.

Black Carpenter

Carpenter's wider network, which included Peter Kropotkin and Charlotte Wilson, was also the crucible from which *Freedom* was forged in the 1880s. He was a regular contributor and his story includes a *dramatis personae* of late Victorian anarchism. An advocate of what he conceived as a 'larger socialism' beyond party politics, Carpenter struggled to reconcile and unite the state socialist and anarchist wings of an increasingly divided labour movement. Setting out his vision of 'The Future Society', Rowbotham records that he advocated anarchist-communism as the 'ideal' with collectivist socialism being a means to the 'transition' from existing capitalist relations, presumably like Karl Marx anticipating a 'withering away' of the state. In her autobiography *Promise of a Dream*, Rowbotham described herself as "too Anarchist to be a Marxist and too Marxist to be an Anarchist" and has taken a non-aligned, grassroots approach to activism since becoming disillusioned with what she regarded as the vanguardism of the left in the 1960s. It is in keeping with this spirit that she finds Carpenter's strategy appealing – a combination of moral force and networking among those souls loosely sympathetic to what he termed an "oceanic rise of human feeling". Carpenter however, was happy to call himself an anarchist, favouring a non-governmental society and being resolutely anti-capitalist and internationalist in outlook to the end of his



life. He was courageous enough to put on the record that he regarded himself as an anarchist to support Walsall anarchists on bomb-plotting charges in a legal case at the Stafford Assizes in the early 1890s.

Green Carpenter

When Carpenter lived in industrial Sheffield he found an environmental disaster due to permanent smog and severe contamination. He campaigned vigorously for smoke abatement and moved to a rural community. Carpenter set up the communal small-holding called Millthorpe which was to become his centre of operations for the remainder of his active life before ending his days at Guildford. This combination of public campaigning and personal change through self-sufficiency and simple living was characteristic of Carpenter's approach. From Millthorpe he supported anti-militarism, vegetarianism, anti-vivisectionism and was a major influence on initiatives as diverse as garden cities, organic agriculture, the League Against Cruel Sports and the Woodcraft Folk. He was also an early ethical consumer attempting to identify links between his personal economic activities and the global exchanges in which these were situated. He formulated an early critique of the shortcomings of scientific objectivity, agreeing with Morris

who believed that technology should be auxiliary to humanity. All this gave him a world readership, winning him countless admirers including Leo Tolstoy and M.K. Gandhi. It also won him a reputation as the prototype of the crank. When George Orwell expressed disdain for those that he dismissed as the bananas and sandals brigade, it was very much Carpenter and his associates that he had in mind. It was left for E.F. Schumacher to reclaim the term 'crank' when he later pointed out that cranks are small ingenious devices capable of making great revolutions.

It is important to recognise that the affection for outdoors and the natural world that emerged during the Interwar period was not all linked to dodgy Volkish politics of blood purity and chauvinism of the right but had distinct, rich, left-libertarian currents that should be celebrated. It is also clear that Carpenter's lifestylism was never an opt-out from political struggles in the public arena. He continually demonstrated an interest in more weighty concerns, such as supporting syndicalism and workers' control of industry on the part of the Triple Alliance of miners, railway and transport workers; campaigning against conscription and eventually for an end to hostilities in the First World War; and

WILDCAT

The Surveillance Society!!
CCTV cameras everywhere!!

So how come
the crime figures
are increasing??

Elementary,
Pussycat.

CCTV cameras
are not intended
to prevent crime.

Their purpose is
to provide clues.



Review

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participating in the University Extension movement for adult education.

Pink Carpenter

If Carpenter was to link early conservationists such as John Ruskin and William Morris with the twentieth century green movement, his pivotal role in linking underground homosexual culture of the 1890s with the gay activism of the Beat Movement was equally direct. Carpenter claimed to have had sexual relations with Walt Whitman as a young man and with Chester Arthur, one-time lover of Neal Cassady and confidant of Allen Ginsberg, towards the end of his life. Carpenter contributed to Havelock Ellis's pioneering studies

of human sexuality based on his own relationships with working-class lovers George Hukin and George Merrill. He bravely, if cautiously, wrote on same-sex relationships in *Homogenic Love* (1894) and elsewhere, in the perilous cultural context of the persecution that followed Oscar Wilde's trial the following year. He also advocated a broader sexual politics of liberation, championing feminism and naturism.

Several of Edward Carpenter's books, including *My Days and Dreams*, *The Intermediate Sex* and *From Adam's Peak to Elephanta*, have deservedly come back into print in recent years. Rowbotham's tale of sunbathing, sex and syndicalism will help to raise his profile further.

S.E.H.

Edward Carpenter: A Life of Liberty and Love by Sheila Rowbotham, published by Verso, £24.99.

THE QUIZ

1. Who described anarchists as constituting the left wing of socialists?
2. What were convicted prisoners, the severely mentally handicapped, long-term hospital patients, foreign diplomats and special agents of the state exempt from 20 years ago?
3. How many trainspotters and others have been stopped under the Prevention of Terrorism Act since it was introduced in 2000?
4. What was the response of the Maoist-led government in Nepal to a wave of strikes and stoppages?

Answers on page 14

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