

UNISON IMPOSES SOLIDARITY BAN

Shopfloor network not 'in line' with union objectives

One of the biggest unions in Britain has blocked members from using its funds and facilities to boost ties between workers at the grassroots level.

Bosses at public sector union Unison have barred any release of union funds or resources to the National Shop Stewards Network (NSSN) in the run up to the group's main conference on 27th June.

Sources within the NSSN told *Freedom* the ban highlights a major schism between an open attitude at the shop floor level and a culture of conservative 'control freakery' in the higher echelons.

One insider said: "Unison have these strange 'guidelines for democracy' which close down local branch contacts and affiliations and limit them to what has been passed nationally.

"This policy is beginning to tear Unison apart, for the simple reason that a large number of the remaining effective branches are run by left-wingers."

Top brass have justified the ban by arguing that the network, set up to allow direct communication between militant workers currently divided along industrial or union lines, is in opposition to their interests.

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LENS CAP TYPHOON



Despite the financial crisis, the British Government has gone ahead with an order for 88 more Typhoon fighters costing ... oops, since 2003 the Ministry of Defence have refused to release updated cost estimates on the grounds of 'commercial sensitivity'. The total order is now 232, costing at least £20 billion. The RAF however only plan to put 112 into front-line service, so no extras to keep the corporate troughs at BAe happy then. Expect another daft not-cost-saving plan like the 'replace the gun with a concrete block' that was tried a couple of years back.

OLYMPIC COUNTDOWN

As many readers will know, but few will care, it is only three years until the London Olympics.

As the games approach, *Freedom* will be following the inevitable budget over-runs, deaths and injuries to building workers, pay-offs, backhanders and corruption that go with all such events.

Hopefully there will also be stories of solidarity and resistance to report as well. It was cheering to see Michael Dooley, who is running for general secretary of the main building trade union UCATT, address the anarchist rally at Clerkenwell Green on Mayday. Ideological differences notwithstanding, his stance on working class solidarity and building a fighting union is to be applauded, as is his courage in mixing with anarchists

when it could easily be turned against him by liberal union bureaucrats. We as a movement could do worse than learn from him that reaching out to potential allies and having confidence in your own politics is more productive than cruising from the sidelines.

Another feature of the Olympics is that it is the only example where, when drug dealers move into an area, the rents and house prices go up.

As ketamine is somewhat lacking as a performance enhancer, we confidently predict no anarchist medals at the Olympics, but in the next issue will be looking at the hypocrisy and manipulation that make up the so called anti-drug stance of the Olympic and sports authorities.

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NEWS

IN BRIEF

SPEAKER SILENCED: Michael Martin has told MPs he intends to stand down, so becoming the first Commons Speaker to be effectively forced out of office for 300 years.

In a brief statement, he said he would step down on 21st June, with a successor set to be elected by MPs the next day.

Martin, who will also step down as an MP, has faced criticism over his handling of the MP expenses issue.

Tory backbencher Douglas Carswell, who put forward the motion of no confidence in Mr Martin, said the Parliamentary system had fallen into disrepute with many MPs being seen as 'parasites' over the expenses scandal. No way!

See the Svartfrosk column on page 10 for more on this.

SEA ICE MELT: With the Arctic annual melt now well underway we draw readers attention to the Cryosphere Today website at <http://arctic.atmos.uiuc.edu/cryosphere/>

This not only measures the total area of sea ice and compares it to previous years, but also has a map so you can check out the extent of sea ice in your local area!

As we write the area of sea ice in the northern hemisphere is only slightly below average and much higher than the last two year's record lows. However the thinning of the remaining ice over several years means we could still see the opening of the north west and north east passages. The ice reaches it's lowest extent around the Autumn Equinox in late September and we invite readers to write in with their predictions of the minimum ice extent as recorded by the national snow and ice data centre. The prize will be a copy of *The Last Generation: How Nature Will Take Her Revenge for Climate Change* by Fred Pearce

MORE WIND: Europe's largest onshore wind farm is to be expanded further, Scottish First Minister Alex Salmond has announced.

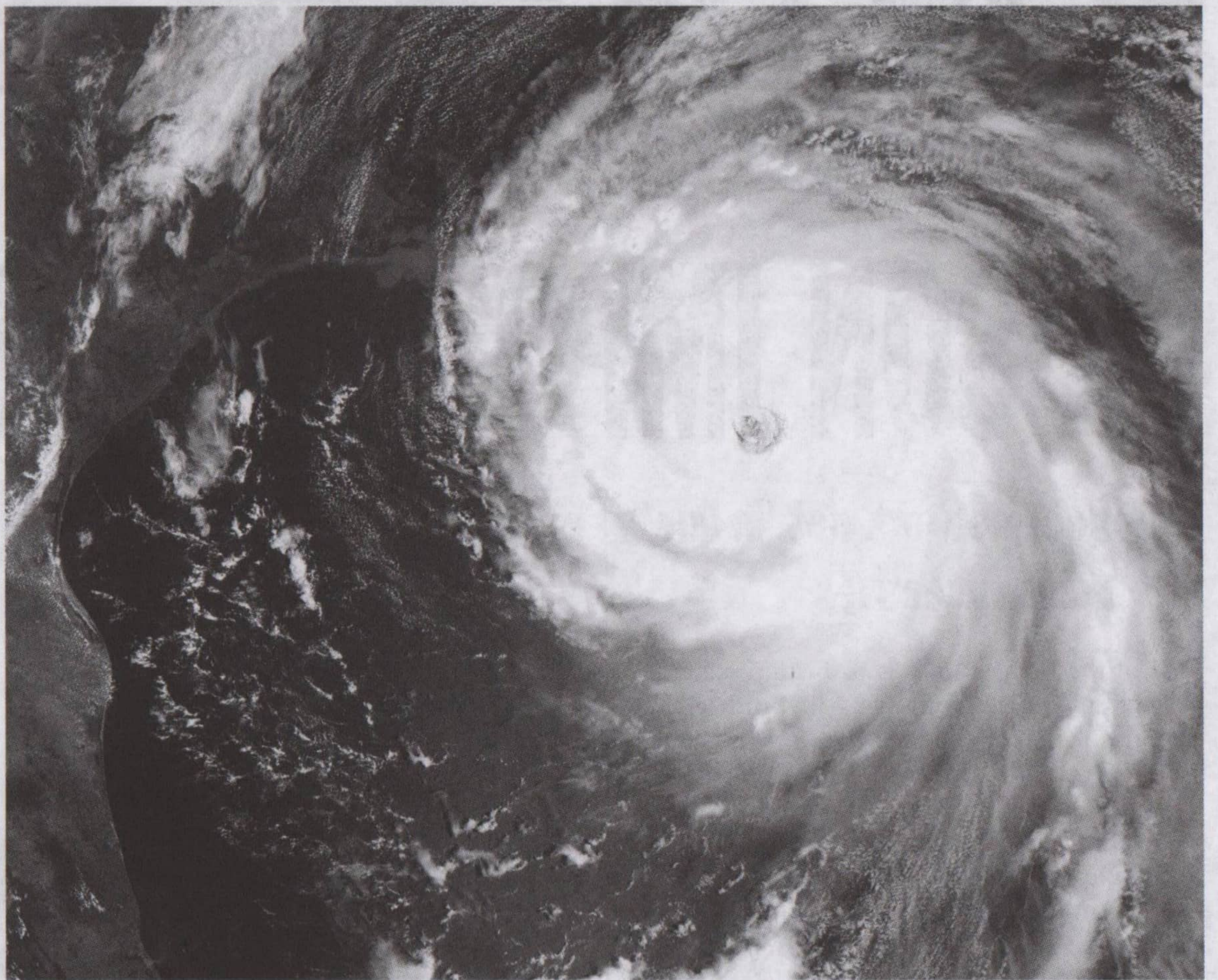
Mr Salmond was speaking as he officially switched on the 140-turbine Whitelee wind farm on Eaglesham Moor in East Renfrewshire. He said developers ScottishPower Renewables had been given permission to add a further 36 turbines to the site. That will allow the £300m wind farm to power 250,000 homes and could create up to 300 jobs, Mr Salmond added.

READERS POLL: Controversy surrounds the activities of Chris Knight the 'Mad Anarchist Professor' behind the G20 meltdown – see the letters on page 11.

So is he the new Malatesta or just a Muppet? We let you, the readers, decide – just text 'Enrico' to 07913865928 if you think he's at the cutting edge of anarchist politics, or 'Kermit' if it's time to bring down the curtain on the Meltdown Mob.

Alternatively text 'transparent parody of real anti-authoritarian decision making' if you think we should concentrate on real news.

LENS CAP HURRICANE SEASON



The Atlantic hurricane season is about to start and, although the US National Hurricane Centre (<http://www.nhc.noaa.gov/>) is predicting an average year for tropical storms, this is another natural event made worse by global warming with hurricanes becoming more frequent and more powerful as global temperatures rise.

Cops can't keep FIT photos

The ongoing saga of the Forward Intelligence Teams took a new twist with the Court of Appeal ruling on 22nd May by two-to-one that the cops should not retain photographs taken by the FIT of protestors who have not committed or are being investigated about crimes committed. Now what's the use of protestors who commit no crimes you may well ask, but if the judgment keeps the cops on the back foot we should be grateful. Readers can find the full text of the courts ruling at <http://www.bailii.org/recent-decisions-ew.html#ew/cases/EWCA/Civ>.

Anyhow *Freedom's* finest legal minds have been dissecting the judgment for the benefit of those who can't be bothered to go through the 100 paragraphs of waffle the judges have handed down. So here's what we think are the two key points, both illustrated by quotes from Lord Justice Collins.

"When I first read the papers on this appeal, I was struck by the chilling effect on the exercise of lawful rights such a deployment would have. I was also disturbed by the fact that notwithstanding that the police had no reason to believe that any unlawful activity had taken place, and still less that Mr Wood had taken part in any such activity, the suggestion that retention of the photographs was justified by the possibility that Mr Wood might attend and commit an offence at the DSEi fair several months later is plainly an

afterthought and had nothing to do with the decision to take the photographs." In other words the old codger has seen through the cops 'evidence gathering' line and knows the FIT's activity is to intimidate. So far so good.

Secondly. "Nevertheless, it is plain that the last word has yet to be said on the implications for civil liberties of the taking and retention of images in the modern surveillance society. This is not the case for the exploration of the wider, and very serious, human rights issues which arise when the State obtains and retains the images of persons who have committed no offence and are not suspected of having committed any offence." He knows this is going to the Lords for appeal, but beyond this is looking at Parliament to legislate to cover the whole area of surveillance. Here he means well, but experience shows we could be getting something much worse.

Lastly, just to prove that judges are still out of touch with normal life, at least the one who voted against us, Lord Justice Laws (no we didn't make him up) says: "The leading case of Von Hannover v Germany concerned the publication of photographs of Princess Caroline of Monaco engaged in various everyday activities such as horse riding, shopping, dining in a restaurant with a companion, on a skiing holiday, leaving her Paris home with her husband and tripping over an obstacle at a private beach club in Monaco."



Crisis at London Met University

London Metropolitan University is in the midst of a massive scandal after it was found to have had 7,000 less students than it had claimed. The Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE), who fund Universities based on the number of subscriptions, have requested that the Met payback £15 million for the year 2008–09 with the possibility of making additional requests for the three previous years. The University plans to cut at least one in four jobs and close three out of the five library sites to recuperate funds.

A library worker based at the North London campus told *Freedom* that external management had been brought in as a job share with existing senior library management in an attempt to isolate and demoralise the work force in preparation for job cuts. She said “it used to be a nice place to work here and many people have worked

here for decades, but now we are being forced to compete with each other for the last remaining jobs. Its horrible, I just want to leave.”

Students at the John Cass Art Department in East London recently occupied a room at the Commercial Road site in protest at the measures due to be introduced. Around 40 students occupied the canteen, held meetings to gather support and distributed leaflets and posters throughout the University. Students face increased fees, the downsizing of courses and the sacking of many of their lecturers. One told *Freedom* “the response has been mixed amongst students”, adding “many of them have exams but they felt the needed to act in support of the staff and for other London Met Students”. The occupation lasted four days ending only after a high court injunction was brought against the students.

The Save London Met University campaign, jointly formed by UCU and Unison, has held several demonstrations in Holloway campus. With some participation from staff, workers and students, it has already followed the standard model of appealing to the government and not inspiring resistance.

Recently thousands of University students gathered in Turin between 17th and 19th May to protest the meeting of 50 University principles from the G8 countries to discuss the further privatisation and marketisation of Universities.

The G8 University counter summit involved speakers and activists and ended with a large demonstration. Hundreds of students wearing motorcycle helmets and shields clashed with the police when they were prevented from reaching the site of the summit.

Unison imposes solidarity ban

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An internal circular stated that: ‘Some Unison branches may have been notified of a national conference taking place on 27th June. Unison is not affiliated to the convening organisation – which has interfered repeatedly in internal Unison matters.

“Unison rules and the Democracy in Unison guidelines make clear that support should be given to external organisations only if the union is affiliated to the outside organisation or its activities are in line with Unison aims and objectives.

“Therefore, no Unison funds or resources should be used in promoting the NSSN or facilitating attendance at events convened by the organisation.”

Members of the network, which was founded in 2006 and has had backing from

the RMT rail union, National Union of Journalists, the NUM, FBU and even prison officers (the POa), are preparing for a fight.

One NSSN member told *Freedom*: “We are responding to situations as they arise. In the North East recently, it looked as if a full scale anti-left/anti-NSSN witch-hunt was on the cards, but at the last minute they pulled back.

“I think maybe Unison realise that if they carry on expelling and threatening activists linked with the NSSN then it might open up into an embarrassing debate.

“The written preamble of the NSSN was ‘not to interfere’ in internal union affairs, but our unanimous view is that witch-hunts are a special case. Bullying and harassment within our own ranks is unacceptable and

should be ‘interfered with’ and condemned by every union.”

The ban comes as the NSSN builds up to a major national conference on 27th June, Stop the Race to the Bottom, which will feature speakers from several of the major industrial disputes of the last year.

Keynote talks will include Lindsey Oil Refinery veterans, construction industry workers from the recent Olympic and blacklisting disputes, car makers, London Underground staff and local government employees.

Rob Ray

The event takes place from 11.30am at Camden Community School, Charrington Street, London. For more information Tel: 020 8522 1156 or email info@shopstewards.net

PUBLIC SECTOR

Royal Mail and the BNP leaflets

Postal workers refuse to deliver racist material

Postal workers stood firm against management intimidation at the Bridgwater Sorting Office, Somerset, this week as bosses attempted to force them to deliver British National Party (BNP) leaflets in the run up to the forthcoming Euro elections.

The workers at the sorting office that covers much of the South West were subjected to days of intense intimidation in order to compel them to deliver the racist literature. Each worker was interviewed separately about their political beliefs and questioned on reasons why they should refuse to deliver such obvious racist and inflammatory material. Some were threatened with suspension and many were misled about their rights concerning the delivery of mail, with one postal worker describing managers as acting like "cheerleaders for the BNP".

The refusal to deliver post, under certain circumstances, is legal under the 'conscience clause' agreed by Royal Mail and Communication Workers Union (CWU). The clause states that "delivery will be secured by the individual due to undertake the particular delivery, local management will deal sympathetically with requests to deviate from this arrangement. Such cases may arise as a result of personal circumstances or beliefs..."

This is not the first time Bridgwater postal workers have taken such action. Back in 2004 they were a similar dispute concerning the delivery of BNP election leaflets. Royal Mail has honoured its obligations in the past, and it is not clear why local managers are willing to break the clause now.



One theory is it is part of a renewed attempt to divide the workforce who have a history of militant action. Bridgwater workers have been solid in their support of industrial action over working conditions going back many years. Back in 2002 an indefinite wildcat strike won them concessions over a shorter working week, overtime rates and an end to management bullying. There was a strike late last year over the replacement of full time with part time workers, as was there in 2007 for similar reasons. Ironically, the only person to cross the picket line was a former BNP activist expelled from the CWU.

The BNP have spent a considerable amount

of money on propaganda for the up and coming Euro elections on 4th June in the hope of gaining seats at the European Parliament and cementing a long-standing relationship with other fascist parties like Front National in France and the Forza Nuova in Italy. Militant anti-fascists have been campaigning throughout the country to prevent the BNP spreading their message and securing their first European seat.

So far a third of the 120 Bridgwater workforce has refused to deliver the literature. Union officials put this down to the campaign of fear and intimidation by managers at the sorting office.

The other side of the hill

It's always important to try to understand other people's point of view, so here we report on the difficulties of our old friend Commander Bob Broadhurst, head of public order policing in the Met.

Bob told the Commons Home Affairs Committee that officers only had two days of crowd control training a year. He added that



any inappropriate behaviour would have been because of fear. Bob, who was responsible for drawing up plans for policing the G20 event as 'Gold commander', defended his officers as the majority had "never faced a situation as violent as that" and when asked if he was satisfied officers received sufficient training, he said: "No, I'm not."

Bob whinged to the committee that there had been no large scale public protests in recent years and that many of the officers at the G20 protests were brought in from other boroughs. He said, "I do have a concern that some of our officers have not faced that. I would like to train them more but we don't have the time." ! Poor dear!

However the Met has found time to update its website. Or downdate it by taking off the public order training section that said that level two officers got four days training a year and level one (the Territorial Support

Group - TSG) gets one day every five weeks, that's at least ten days a year.

However thanks to trusty Wikipedia you can still find out all about the TSG. But be quick, for the cops have started a campaign to take down the TSG's organisational chart from the web on the grounds that some of the names on it are out of date and it could endanger officer safety.

Since the officers named are mostly inspectors or above and it is these illustrious ranks that do not have to wear identification numbers at all, we submit that old news is better than no news at all. In any event the cops seem to be getting more training than protestors, given that the protestors are always ending up in the kettle for hours on end and getting more whacks than they dish out. So play fair Bob! Open up the Gravesend training centre for a day or two so we can come and train up for the next big one.

IN BRIEF

GURKHAS: All Gurkha veterans who retired before 1997 with at least four years' service will be allowed to settle in the UK, Home Secretary Jacqui Smith has announced.

Ms Smith told MPs she was "proud to offer this country's welcome to all who have served in the brigade of Gurkhas".

This comes after a high-profile campaign by Joanna Lumley and other supporters of Gurkha rights – and an embarrassing Commons defeat for the government.

PRISON: Baby Peter's mother, her boyfriend and their lodger have been jailed for causing or allowing the boy's death.

The toddler died after enduring months of abuse in Haringey, north London. Peter's mother and lodger Jason Owens were given indefinite sentences. She must serve at least five years and Owens at least three years.

The boyfriend was given 12 years over Peter's death and life for raping a two-year-old girl. He must serve a minimum of 10 years.

Old Bailey Judge Stephen Kramer said both Baby Peter's mother and Owens would be jailed indefinitely until "deemed no longer to be a risk to the public and in particular to small children".

MORE PRISON: A man who killed his ex-girlfriend has today, 21st May, become the first person prosecuted by the Metropolitan Police under 'double jeopardy' legislation, relating to the Criminal Justice Act 2003.

On Thursday 21st March at the Old Bailey, Mario Celaire pleaded guilty to manslaughter of Cassandra McDermott and the attempted murder of a 19 year old woman, Kara Hoyte. Mario Celaire, 31, was found not guilty at the Old Bailey in 2002 of the murder of Cassandra McDermott, a 19 year-old woman who was attacked in her mother's Streatham home in October 2001.

Since the original trial there had been a change in legislation enabling a person to be prosecuted again for serious offences such as murder, where 'compelling new evidence existed'. As a result a re-investigation of the original murder enquiry was undertaken.



DISTURBING TRENDS: Both the above terrible stories are being used to justify repressive legislation. However heinous the crimes committed, the widespread use of indeterminate sentences and the abolition of double jeopardy are too high a price to pay for allowing the government to appear to be tough on crime.

Anarchy island

One of the problems in arguing for anarchism is that 'it has never worked anywhere'. We can reply with temporary bibs and bobs in the Ukraine and Spain and temporary autonomous zones of Madagascan pirates, but it's a far from convincing body of evidence. When you chuck in William Golding's *Lord of the Flies* it seems a clincher that human nature's just not like that and, let lose on a desert island, we'd all quickly murder each other. Indeed on Fletcher Christian's idyllic Pitcairn that's exactly what did happen. However there is another island in the South Atlantic called Tristan da Cunha...

In 1937, as part of a Norwegian scientific expedition, Peter Munch visited Tristan da Cunha. He was surprised to discover that the form of social organisation on the island was *anarchy* ... and had been for over a century.

There was no government, police, money or headman/woman. Munch wrote that "the principles of freedom and anarchy were firmly established in the Tristan community as a social order based on the voluntary consensus of free men and women. In such a community not only is authority, control or any kind of formal or informal government considered unnecessary and undesirable but is felt to be a menace and a threat to individual rights."

The inhabitants of Tristan were not a self-selected commune who had gone there to establish utopia. They were of all races and survivors of shipwrecks or ex-whalers who had washed up there over a hundred years. That anarchy became their natural form of

social organisation and persisted against all efforts of the British government to undermine it is all the more remarkable.

Andrea Repetto, an Italian who had been shipwrecked on Tristan in 1892, was one of the few Tristans who could read or write. Seizing there chance the British government addressed all communications to Andrea Repetto, 'head man' or occasionally 'governor'. For twenty years they never received any reply until the mail was discovered unopened. Repetto explained that as there was no head man or governor on the island so no one felt able to open the mail!

In astonishment, a government spokesman wrote in 1903: "there is an extraordinary state of affairs in this civilised century that there is no form of authority and the Tristans are curiously averse to any individual being considered to have more influence than the rest."

Munch reported there had *never* been any crime and no fist fight in living memory.

The Tristianians were not anarchists who'd read their Bakunin – they found anarchy to be the natural form of social organisation, though they would never have used the word themselves. Yet the Tristianians have proved of remarkably little interest to anarchists – maybe because we are too used to failures to recognise success.

Crisis in Utopia by Peter Munch covers the evacuation of the Tristianians to Britain in 1962 and their subsequent decision to return to Tristan and 'reject civilisation'. Well worth a read.

Ian Bone



Tristan da Cunha is also home to most of the world's Northern Rockhopper penguins

INTERNATIONAL

IN BRIEF

PERU: Miners are set to start an indefinite nationwide strike on 15th June. The National Federation of Mine and Steel Workers, Peru's largest organisation of mining unions, balloted workers who are angry at job cuts as well as demands for a bigger share of profits and improved retirement conditions. Peru is the world's largest producer of silver, second largest in copper and zinc, and ranks sixth in gold output. Some 9,750 mine workers have lost their jobs since November last year.

SOUTH KOREA: Police in Seoul have declared the bicycle an unlawful means of demonstrating. Bicycle pilgrims against the Seoul-Incheon Canal were prevented from using their bikes by police who claimed they carried political messages, and deemed them illegal. The environmentalists were to ride to the headquarters of the Grand National Party and Seoul City Hall as a protest at the environmental damage that will be caused by the canal project

GUYANA: Parliament has passed a bill increasing the number of professions banned from staging wildcat strikes. These include any health care or related service, air traffic controllers, any service related to drainage and irrigation, cemetery or solid waste services and any service essential to the provision of telecommunication. Workers involved in these services face fines and imprisonment if they participate in wildcat strikes.

ITALY: Vigilante groups have been formally recognised by the government in a new law introduced over issues of security and immigration. These groups, some dressed in paramilitary uniforms with names like Italian National Guard have over 2,000 members are to help alert the police to public order or criminal offences. Vigilante groups are especially prevalent in the northern strongholds of the Right-wing, anti-immigrant Northern League drawing parallels with Mussolini's Blackshirts.

PAKISTAN: There were riots in Karachi as the city's power supply was cut, leaving large parts of the city without electricity for up to 24 hours. Thousands of angry protestors took to the streets, burning tyres, throwing stones and chanting slogans against the privately-owned suppliers who've continually failed to provide necessary power for the city making life unbearable.

JORDAN: United Nations (UN) workers agreed to end their three-day strike (the third since April) to await the publication of a study looking at improving their wages and living conditions. The 7,000 workers, including teachers and medical staff, are part of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency providing health care and education to over 1.8 million Palestinian refugees in Jordan. Results of the study should be known by the end of May.

LENS CAP RUSSIA



Russian anti-fascists demonstrate in support of Aleksei Olesinov imprisoned for a year

Uprising over Amazon development

Conflict between indigenous peoples and state forces in Peru has intensified in the past month over plans to privatise the natural resources of the Amazon.

Indigenous communities have been blocking roads and waterways for weeks to protest against nine decrees aligning Peruvian law with a free-trade deal with the United States. The Interethnic Association for the Development of the Peruvian Jungle (AIDSESEP) want to intensify protests that began on 9th April over the decrees known as the "Water Laws," which open up natural resource sectors like gas, lumber and oil to private investors.

Last week the government declared a state of emergency in regions of Loreto, Amazonas, Ucayali and Cuzco, paving way for martial law and military control of the area. Protestors responded by calling for an insurgency.

"Insurgency means disobeying the government because of the mistreatment. They abuse us. They are killing our communities," said Alberto Pizango, president of AIDSESEP. Some 40 vessels serving various energy companies are stuck along jungle rivers unable to move because of the protests. There are also reports that Peru's only crude oil pipeline, which carries 30,000 barrel per day in the Amazon, has been shut since 24th April.

Oil firms operating in the Peruvian jungle include Argentina's Pluspetrol, France's Perenco, and Spain's Repsol-YPF among other international firms working alongside the state-run energy company Petroperu. Peru, which has auctioned off mining and energy concessions throughout most of the country, has drawn fierce criticism from environmental and human rights groups.

Notes from the United States

Despite denials by the Pentagon, it seems beyond any reasonable doubt that the US army is now – and has for some time – been systematically trying to 'convert' to (fundamental) Christianity those whose countries it occupies and wrecks.

In early May, for example, Al Jazeera broadcast film evidence of US soldiers in Afghanistan discussing how to distribute Bibles translated into Pashto and Dari. A few days later an article in *Harper's* magazine by Jeff Sharlet, author of *The Family: The Secret Fundamentalism at the Heart of American Power*, exposed the much wider extent to which the army sees it

as its role to 'hunt for Jesus'. The Al Jazeera record includes the following exchange between officers and soldiers:

Lieutenant-Colonel Gary Hensley, chief of the US military chaplains in Afghanistan: "The Special Forces guys, they hunt men, basically. We do the same things as Christians: we hunt people for Jesus. We do. We hunt them down, get the hound of heaven after them, so we get them into kingdom [sic]. Right? That's what we do. That's our business."

Lieutenant-Colonel Bob Young, for example, at Kandahar Air Base was quite up

Vietnam workers defy crackdown

Another wildcat strike hits the manufacturing industry

Vietnam could be on the verge of an all out class war as workers in Ho Chi Minh City went on strike last week in defiance of government attacks on the growing independent workers movement. The unofficial action was taken by 500 garment workers demanding better pay and conditions from the Korean-Vietnamese owned Minh Phat Garment Company, risking punishment and imprisonment.

As reported in *Freedom* recently, the Vietnam government has increased its repression of workplace militancy by arresting, imprisoning, and in some cases abducting, leading labour activists in an attempt to quell the growing unrest across the country's workforce.

This comes after a rash of crippling wildcat strikes where 40,000 workers spread over a dozen strikes forced the government to increase the minimum wage by 40%. Government officials are worried that this wave of direct action is fuelling a greater confidence and organisation amongst workers, especially those employed in foreign-owned, usually South Korean or Taiwanese, factories.

According to government statistics, Taiwanese manufacturers accounts for more than 1,408 direct investment projects in Vietnam worth \$7.93 billion. Foreign companies, such as footwear giants Nike and Adidas, have until recently viewed Vietnam, the fourth largest footwear exporter globally, as a preferable source of production to the more excessive labour and business costs in neighbouring China.

In 2007 foreign investment applications



Vietnamese workers during a wildcat strike last year in Da Nang

topped the \$20 billion mark, a third more than in nearby Thailand, pushing up office rents and other costs. The sharp increase in wildcat strikes last year was due in part to the massive 28% inflation rate and food prices rising by 42.4%. Many rural Vietnamese left their farming communities to seek work in the new industrial zones around Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City, only to see the buying power of their wage packets dwindle amid rising food and fuel costs.

The Minh Phat garment workers stoppage is the first since Human Rights Watch published its damning report, *Not Yet A Workers' Paradise*, documenting the Vietnamese government's crackdown on independent trade unions and profiling labour rights activists who have been detained, placed under house arrest, or imprisoned in violation of international law.

Workers in Vietnam are prohibited from forming or joining unions other than the

ruling Communist Party controlled Vietnam General Confederation of Labour (VGCL) and can be punished for conducting strikes that are not sanctioned by local authorities or the VGCL, which makes the upsurge in wildcat strikes all the more alarming for government leaders. Coupled with the formation in 2006 of two independent trade unions, the United Worker-Farmers Organisation of Vietnam (UWFO) and the Independent Workers' Union of Vietnam, (IWUV) it highlights a growing desire for workers self-organisation despite the threatened consequences.

Further unrest is predicted over the next six months as Nike is stopping taking orders from one of its main, Korean-owned, plants in Ho Chi Minh City putting 6,000 workers jobs at risk. Contract suppliers in Vietnam produce a third of all Nike's footwear and employ 200,000, largely female, workers in over 50 factories.

Notes from the Unites States

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front about a presentation that he had given to Afghan warlords. He explained that American government was based on Christianity, that the Christian god was what made it great, and that Afghanistan had a choice if it wanted to achieve democracy.

The face of the army

The face of the US army was further revealed in three incidents in the middle of May.

Amid all the media indignation about Iran's detention of journalist Roxana Saberi, virtually no attention has been paid to the freelance photographer for Reuters, Ibrahim Jassam, who has been held illegally in Iraq since September despite objections from the Committee to Protect Journalists, Reporters Without Borders, Reuters and even the Iraqi government.

After his capture in Afghanistan in 2001, US forces sent Ibn Shaykh al-Libi to an Egyptian prison where he was tortured – beaten and subjected to a 'mock burial' – hence illegally. Understandably, Al-Libi (later held in a secret overseas CIA prison) made up the false claim that Iraq had provided training in chemical and biological weapons to al-Qaeda operatives, which Bush used to make the case for invading Iraq. In mid-May he hanged himself in his Libyan jail cell.

Lastly, a prisoner at Guantanamo recently attempted suicide during a meeting with his attorney. Adnan Farhan Abdul Latif, a Yemeni citizen, used a furniture part to cut a vein in his wrist and throw his blood at the attorney: he has been held at Guantanamo without charge (and hence illegally) since January 2002.

Louis Further

Anarchist acquitted

US anarchist, community activist and author Peter Gelderloos has been cleared by a court in Barcelona of the charge of public disorder with explosives although he still faces deportation from Spain and a seven year ban from Europe.

Gelderloos, best known for his book *How Non-Violence Protects the State*, was participating in a small squatters demonstration on Las Ramblas in 2007 when a firework was set off scattering flyers into the air. Charged with illegal demonstration and public disorder, (carrying a prison sentence of between three and six years) he has been forced to stay in Spain for the past two years unable to work, until he could clear his name.

Gelderloos is determined to fight the ban "deportation would keep me banned from all of Europe, including many people I care about, for seven years."

Class struggles in Enfield

An interview with one of the workers active in the occupation and picket of the Visteon factory in Enfield

Workers at the car parts manufacturing plants in Enfield, Basildon and Belfast won a seven week battle against Visteon UK, (and their former employer's Ford), after they were sacked without notice when the company went bust. In what was a monumental victory against car giants Ford, whom the workers were still contracted to, they are now receiving a proper redundancy package. We talk to Vijay, one of those active in the campaign over the past two months.

Freedom: If we can start by asking about you?

Vijay: I've been there for 20 years. I started work May 1989 – at that time it was still a Ford factory. I used to do quality inspection of the fuel and temperature gauges, it was all mechanical then, so we had a big department for speedometers, one department making turbometers and one department we just made fuel and temp gauges. At that time here was nearly 1200 people employed on the shopfloor. By the time we closed it was 190 or so.

You were employed by Ford originally?
It was completely Ford – everybody had Ford contracts when it moved to Visteon in 2000. There was a big ceremony at the factory for the change over, they linked up all the plants, we said at the time we don't want to be a Visteon company, but slowly things changed and we became Visteon.

Both the union and management told us we've have the same terms and conditions, but we were still not happy about becoming Visteon, as a workforce we wanted to stay as Ford.

We started making parts for Jaguar, Honda, Land Rover, Toyota, but we always considered we were Ford workers working at a Visteon factory because we were covered by Ford terms and conditions. They actually said we would be covered for life. [Vijay shows me the original document signed between the company and the unions guaranteeing Visteon workers they same conditions as Ford.]

Visteon had committed to mirror the terms and conditions of Ford, most of us knew this place wasn't going to be there for much longer because the way they were moving the products away, but we were expected to be given a job elsewhere or at least a decent redundancy. Over the last few years there was a lot of voluntary redundancies, last October I could've actually taken voluntary redundancy but we thought we had production till 2012 on the things we were making now, so we thought they would get rid of people slowly and everyone would get a chance to go, with money, it actually says in the document signed by Ford and Visteon and the unions 'we will give a guarantee of no compulsory redundancies'.

What happened when the administrators came in?

I got a phone call from a friend about 2.30pm saying the company's gone into administration. People were shocked and nobody knew what to do, everybody just shook hands with each other and started leaving, there was only four or five people getting their stuff, there was a few manage-



Rally: Final rally outside factory as Visteon workers end picket in victory

ment people inside, I was disappointed everyone had gone, we should have done something. When everybody left the plant nobody was given any information about money or anything they said we'd receive a letter through the post, we received a booklet how to claim from the National Insurance fund, nothing from the company, not a single penny. They didn't even pay us for the last week and two days, we actually lost seven days money.

So when did you occupy the factory?

Some people went down to the pub and Kevin [Nolan, Unite convenor] had a call from Belfast that they are occupying the place so it was planned that we would occupy the building. People were told to come tomorrow morning at 10am, by the time I got there at 10.30 there was about 30 to 40 people outside, there people was already 70 or 80 inside the plant. Kevin and

17 people to stay on, but after we started they didn't cross the picket line.

Tell me about the picket?

I was there every day on the picket line. Out of the 46 days I only missed two days. The atmosphere on the picket was very good. It was a kind of family kind of thing, when we were working inside you knew a lot of people just to say hello, didn't really talk to you, but when we were sitting outside be become friends, like you've been friends for years. It changed everything completely, it brought everyone together.

Can you tell me about the role of Unite?

A lot of people were unhappy with the unions. When we were inside the union officials told us because it was unofficial strike and occupation they can't support us so people were thinking once we were outside we'd see some big support from the union, but we didn't see anything, at picket level or anything. People were very disappointed. We're all members of Unite, it's a big union, it has a lot of money and resources, the feeling was on the picket line most people felt very badly let down by the union, almost everyone felt that.

What was the deal you eventually received?

The deal we have is with Visteon Corporation, the money's coming from them. But recently Ford is trying to bail out Visteon in the US, taking all their loans on; Ford has always helped Visteon Corporation financially. We were told Ford has 51% share of Visteon, so in a way Ford is still the owner. There are three separate payments – mirror employees, that's Ford employees, then there's Visteon new hire, those who joined after 2000, then CCR [cost competitive rate employees], people who've been there three years or less.

Pensions were not part of the deal at all; there was no talk about pensions, which was the biggest loss. This is still an issue with people. We still want to carry on, but I don't know how effective it's going to be now. I wanted to carry the fight forward, create a pressure group, the unions said let's finish this, get the money, then we'll look into the pension side. It doesn't look right, but that's what happened, some of us were not happy about it at all. The unions said they will pursue it on our behalf, but a pressure group can make enquiries.

The main reason we got the deal we did was because we occupied the building and because of the picket. The top union fellas would never have bothered to get involved if we hadn't have done any of these things, everyone would've gone home, end of story. But because people have done these things, because of the action, people have to come in and do something about it. We know now if sometimes something goes wrong and you want to achieve something you have to fight nowadays.



photo: Nico (Ford/Visteon Workers Support Group)

photo: Nico (Ford/Visteon Workers Support Group)

That's understandable, but occupying a building is a civil offence not a criminal offence.

We did hear these stories, I think our biggest problem was that they didn't give us the right advice, we didn't try to find the right advice, the union gave us this advice and we decided to leave. Wednesday night we had a meeting inside the plant we decided to leave then start picketing the plant.

We wanted to carry on fighting, nobody thought this was the end, most were disappointed to leave because obviously it's a stronger fight if you are inside, Thursday midday we came out to a big gathering, a lot of people there and set up pickets at the four gates. In the beginning it was four gates but we blocked one of the main shutters, we put a lot of stuff there, so we covered three gates to stop people coming in. A few people were still employed at Visteon Enfield. On the day the company went in administration they had already asked

Piers [Hood, Unite deputy convenor] went to court and were banned from re-entering the building. The previous day we had a meeting inside and we were told by the union the company were charging Kevin and Piers with assault on one of the security men and other charges.

The union solicitors made an agreement with the company solicitors to drop all the charges and we would come out on Thursday, otherwise Kevin and Piers would go to jail, that was the explanation they gave to us. We had a meeting to decide if we should stay, we had a few arguments, some people were angry about this, they didn't want to leave, but the majority said alright because they didn't want to get a criminal record if they stayed inside, so we decided to leave. When you look at people like us we've been working there 20-30 years, we were scared; we didn't want to get involved in criminal things.

COMMENT

ABOUT FREEDOM

ANGEL ALLEY

We are pleased to report dramatic progress in the alley. Firstly, thanks are due to David and Sandy from Liberty & Solidarity for clearing up all the rubbish out the back and holding a barbecue for the Visteon workers that raised £225. This has enabled the next step of putting up scaffolding to enable us to repoint the leaking west wall – yep, rainwater literally flows through the wall and trickles down the stairs. Thanks to Tony from the IWW for co-ordinating this project and the as yet unknown volunteers who are being roped in to help him.

In another technical breakthrough, we have the internet downstairs thanks to Martin and can now check if we can get a book for you when you phone the shop – and it will mean we can update the website regularly and put up proper write ups for our titles and authors, etc. You never know but we may soon get round to putting past copies of this illustrious journal online.

Our next big event is another barbecue on the 6th of June after the first day of the Anarchist Conference, hope to see you there.

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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 10, so if your subscription runs out with this issue you'll have 7010 above your name. If the number is 7010 or less, then your subscription is due for renewal now. See page 16 for the subscription rates and a renewal form or, if you don't want to worry in the future about remembering to renew your subscription to *Freedom*, just ask us for a standing order form by emailing subs@freedompress.org.uk or you can write to us at 'Subscriptions', Freedom, 84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1 7QX.

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NEXT ISSUE

The next issue will be dated 6th June 2009 and the last day to get copy to us for that issue will be Thursday 28th May.

You can send your articles to us by email to copy@freedompress.org.uk or by post addressed to 'The Editors', Freedom, 84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1 7QX.

A sideways look

by SVARTFROSK

One of the central concepts of liberal democracy is the rule of law. It states that everyone should be treated according to it, rather than at the discretion of the powerful. Originally discussed by the ancient Greeks and twelfth century Muslim thinkers, the Rule of Law came to be a key part of democracy in the transition from feudalism to capitalism. Even now, countries where the rule of law is seen as weak, such as Russia, are treated with caution by multinational companies. The unpredictable nature of arbitrary power makes business planning more difficult.

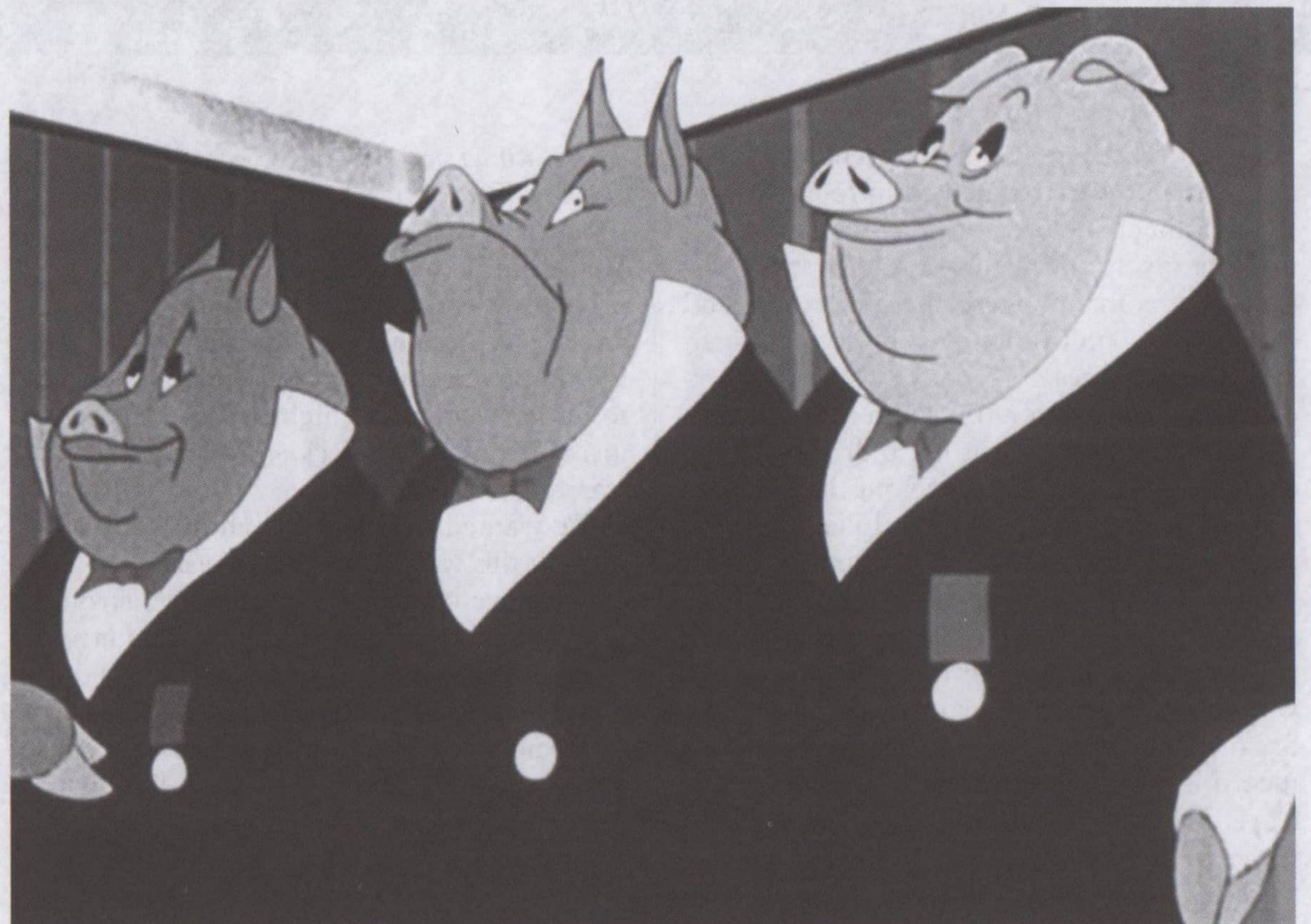
The concept is perhaps best summed up by the injustice contained in the phrase "there's one law for them and another for us"! That's certainly been a widespread feeling in the last few weeks as revelations of just how much MPs have been trousering came to light. Go to any news site and see the comments, which range from "string 'em up" to "can I have a job like that?" For anyone who's missed it, items claimed for include horse manure, cleaning a moat, treating dry rot in the Southampton home of a Luton MP, a court summons for non-payment of council tax and all sorts of dodgy property deals.

Politicians and the media that normally supports them seem to have been caught off-guard by how angry people are. These parasites can claim for lavish furnishings for the second homes that we pay the mortgage on. They then sell them at a profit and keep the proceeds. At the same time, anyone on benefits has to justify every penny. If they don't have a bed the usual response from the Social is to tell them to sleep on the floor. Anyone under investigation if they're suspected of working and claiming gets a full-on interrogation under caution, even if it was just a few hours charity work a week.

Most people in work don't get any form of expenses – those that do often get less than the real cost, particularly if they do a lot of driving. Loads of workers will get a below inflation pay rise again this year – many in manufacturing are getting a real terms cut. And they wonder why people are angry about this shower and their habits?

Once a few of the more obvious piss-takers have resigned and we get a different shade of sleazy government, there will be moves to reform this whole sorry mess. I think there are two reasons to be interested here. Firstly, the authorities will use it to try and draw a line under all the sleaze. It's not because the current crop of MPs are all corrupt that this has happened – it's inherent in having representatives who are apart from the people. The ancient Greeks recognised this danger many years ago. The Chartists saw it as a problem in nineteenth century England – they sought to deal with it by advocating paying MPs and having annual Parliaments. Neither go far enough – anarchists have always advocated that any posts held be rotated so that no one gets too used to the trappings of office. And also, we are not idealists – we don't think that human nature is some sort of wonderful thing. We think that bad things will happen, but that accountability and spreading power as widely as possible are far better safeguards than to trust in an individual.

And secondly, we should be interested because it reinforces our arguments about Parliament and democracy. Parliament is accountable, in theory, once every four years. Does anyone really believe that now? If it really is one law for them and another for us, and it certainly appears to be, why shouldn't we pick and choose which laws we take notice of? Perhaps we should start with all those nasty anti-union laws?



Chris Knight

Ian Bone's fulsome praise ('What The Butler Saw', 14th May) for Chris Knight is misguided. It was mostly anarchists who contacted the Tomlinson family, organised memorial events, secured witness statements, and forced the media the now infamous videos and photos of police misdeeds.

Chris Knight on the other hand wanted to organise a "jazz funeral procession for capitalism" on 4th April, exhorted people to "camp out with Ian's ghost" on 11th April, and promoted the involvement of Ken Livingstone in a campaign against police brutality, despite his history of fully supporting it from Maydays to Menezes, much to the dismay of many who have worked to bring the police to account, not least the families of their victims.

This confused old man is a liability and needs professional help not political support. (Chris Knight, that is).

Jeff Parks

Some mutual aid

I am grateful to Peter Gibson (Letters, 9th May) for his comments on my preface to Kropotkin's *Mutual Aid*, but I do not entirely concur with all his points.

There is no plot to downgrade Kropotkin as an anarchist thinker. Freedom Press continues to exploit *Mutual Aid* as a work of anarchist propaganda, although in fact it was not originally published as such. It is good to know that academics have been easy on Kropotkin, but this is not true of all academics. We have it from the late Stephen Jay Gould that he was derogated in standard texts on evolution, at least until the 1980s, and one esteemed intellectual, Steve Jones, derogates *Mutual Aid* in a popular science book, *Coral, a pessimist in Paradise*, published in 2007. I stand by my statement that this has unfairly damaged Kropotkin's reputation.

That I am suspected of believing co-operation results from an intellectual process, shows that I expressed myself badly. Thank you, Peter, for this opportunity to make my opinion clear. Like Kropotkin, I believe that co-operative behaviour is the result of inherited instincts in social animals. Like Peter, I think of inheritance in terms of genes, but, as Peter says, Kropotkin knew nothing of genes, nor did Darwin, nor "Darwin's bulldog" Huxley to whom Kropotkin was responding. Mendel's paper on genes was published in 1865, but remained obscure until after 1900. I fail to see how mention of genes could help in understanding how Kropotkin thought.

Donald Rorum

No Borders camp

The Calais No Border camp is a joint venture between French and Belgian activists and migrant support groups and the UK No Borders Network. It aims to highlight the

realities of the situation in Calais and Northern France; to build links with the migrant communities; to help build links between migrants support groups; and lastly, but not least, to challenge the authorities on the ground, to protest against increased repression of migrants and local activists alike.

This camp calls for the freedom of movement for all, an end to borders and to all migration controls. We call for a radical movement against the systems of control, dividing us into citizens and non-citizens, into the documented and the undocumented. We have chosen Calais for two main reasons; it is an important location in the history, development and practice of European migration controls and has long been a major bottleneck for those seeking to get to Britain. But more importantly, it is also a focus of the struggle between those who would see an end to all migration into the EU, and those trying to break down the barriers between peoples, the borders that prevent the freedom of movement for all, not just the privileged few.

Since the mid-nineties tens of thousands have lived in destitution, sleeping rough in Calais, waiting for their chance to cross the channel to England. Between 1999 and 2002 the Red Cross ran a centre at neighbouring Sangatte but this was forced to close after political pressure from France and Britain. Since then, the massive police presence and repression in Calais has forced thousands of men woman and children to wander the Calais region and all along the North coast of France, Belgium and Holland. They are routinely brutalised by the police; tear-

gassed, beaten, arrested and repeatedly interned at the nearby Coquelles detention centre. The police regularly burn their shelters and the few meagre possessions that they contain. The local groups that support the migrants by providing food and other humanitarian aid are coming under increasing attack from the police and a number of activists have been arrested in recent months. Meanwhile British Immigration Minister Phil Woolas has been calling for the construction of a permanent holding/detention centre for migrants in Calais docks. Calais however remains only one small part of the overall picture of European migration controls, a major internal border within the hi-tech EU borders regime. Since the beginning of the decade, the EU been attempting to build 'Fortress Europe'; externalising EU borders into Africa and Asia with EU border guards patrolling the Mediterranean, in Libya and off the West Coast of Africa courtesy of the Frontex borders agency; and via the European Neighbourhood Policy, where countries from the Ukraine all the way round the Mediterranean to Morocco are now paid by the EU to do its migration prevention work for it. Through this system of border controls, authorities create two kinds of migrants: a small number of 'skilled' migrants, who are designated as 'useful' to the state; and a massive number of undocumented workers who have no rights and are therefore exploitable as cheap labour. Thus is our fight for freedom of movement also a fight for the rights of all workers.

No Borders Collective

CHANGES TO THE PAPER?

It is not a antistate secret that *Freedom* newspaper loses money and thus it will come as no surprise that the we, the grasping vultures of Angel Alley, are looking at ways to stem the approximate £8,000 a year loss. First is to increase the cover price to £1. This is not likely to raise more money as most sales are to subscribers, but it will help with distribution because most magazine distributors won't deal with periodicals under a pound. It also clears up the anomaly that a standard UK annual subscription of £20 works out as 83.33p per issue – higher than the cover price of 80p. We are keeping subscription rates the same, despite postal price rises in April, while we consult our readers over the next step. That is to move to a 32-page monthly format instead of a 16-page fortnightly. This would save £1,500 a year in printing and postage costs, but would obviously also change the character of the paper from news oriented to more in-depth analysis (as an example, see the December 2008 issue). So let us know what you think and a decision will be made in the autumn. Meantime all contributions are welcome.

On the subject of grasping vultures, last week's deliberate error was to have a picture of a Lappet Faced Vulture on the page 2 lens cap about the EU allowing animal carcasses to be fed to vultures. Sadly the Lappet Faced Vulture is not found in Europe so we should have used a Griffon, Monk or Egyptian Vulture instead.

GETTING ACTIVE

PRISON NEWS

Common sense on prisons

The Howard League says prisoner-on-prisoner assaults rose by 36%. Violence in jails has risen by a third in five years, according to figures obtained by a prison charity.

The Howard League for Penal Reform says there were 40,000 acts of violence in English and Welsh prisons during 2008 – more than a hundred incidents a day. Director Frances Crook said the rise was “far above” what might be expected, blaming overcrowding and the imprisonment of mentally ill people.

Their figures claimed that between 2004 and 2008, prisoner-on-prisoner assaults rose by 36% with a total of 56,517 incidents. Young offenders institutions saw an even more pronounced jump in violence with a 58% rise. Self-harm rose by a quarter, almost half the incidents involving women – despite females making up just 5% of the prison population. Ms Crook said: “This shocking rise in violence is far above what might be expected.

“We lock up increasing numbers of men, women and children whose mental health problems and addictions will never be properly treated within our flooded jails.

“As these are recorded statistics, it is likely to be just the tip of the iceberg with real levels of assaults, rapes and arson much higher than the Prison Service is admitting.”

The charity says individual prisons saw even higher rises – including a 1,200% jump in cases of arson at Reading young offender’s institution.

Ms Crook continued: “Overcrowded and squalid conditions lead to violence and chaos.

“The answer to rising prison populations is not to build more failing jails, which churn out prisoners more dangerous from having spent time in our colleges of crime.”

She added: “It is for the government to look at wholesale reform of the penal system.”

... but nonsense from the government

A Ministry of Justice spokeswoman said: “The use of assault and self harm data by the Howard League is misleading.

“It is not appropriate to add self harm and assault then infer the total is a measure of prison violence.

“Despite an increase in the number of prisoners convicted of violent offences, the percentage of all assaults that are considered serious remains stable at about 10%.

Proper prisoner support

An armed gang disguised as police has broken into a jail in northern Mexico and freed more than 50 prisoners. A convoy of at least 15 vehicles arrived at the prison with gang members all apparently disguised as federal police officers. Once inside, the prison authorities were persuaded that an inspection was under way and guards were overpowered. That’s the way to do it!



● The long standing UK based network of housing co-ops, worker co-ops and social centres **Radical Routes** has been providing mutual aid and loans to member co-ops for the past 21 years. To celebrate this they are hosting, along with Rootstock, a one-day conference, Practical Economics, featuring workshops and discussions on open economics, local economic sustainability and co-operatives with Paul Mason, BBC Newsnight economics editor, as keynote speaker, followed by a celebration birthday bash the same evening with live music and performances from Attila the Stockbroker and David Rovics amongst others. Radical Routes 21st Anniversary Conference and Birthday Bash, Saturday 23rd May at Conway Hall, London WC1R 4RL, tickets are free for the conference and £8 (£4 concs) for the party afterwards. For more information call (0113) 262 4408 or email: bookings@radicalroutes.org.uk.

● Over recent years South Wales Anarchists have established themselves as a committed and organised network of radicals, so much so the first **Cardiff Anarchist Bookfair** looks an undeniably impressive event. With groups such as Industrial Workers of the World, Workers Solidarity Movement and No Borders hosting discussions and a mass of stalls from the likes of AK Press, Anarchist Federation, Class War and Autonomedia

(plus the obligatory post-Bookfair party!) it definitely setting its high standards. We’ve no doubt they’ll certainly live up to it.

Cardiff Anarchist Bookfair, Saturday 23rd May from 1am until 6pm at Cathays Community Centre, 36Cathays Terrace Cardiff CF24 4HX, see <http://southwalesanarchists.org/bookfair/>

● Local campaigning, environmental and community groups in the London Borough of Haringey have once again joined forces to bring us the second **Haringey Independence Day** on Saturday 30th May. Building on the success of last years event it will be offering grassroots ways to organise around issues that concern ordinary people in the area. With workshops on how to start a community group, organise local events, discussions on climate change, the media, film showings on the Visteon workers’ struggle and the Battle of Orgreave, as well as practical activities such as banner making, bike maintenance, information stalls, a free books stall and local history walk. There will be drinks and snacks on offer throughout the day as well as crèche facilities and activities for kids, starting at 10.30am, from face painting to art making in a friendly environment. Haringey Independence Day, Saturday 30th May from midday at West Green Learning Centre, Park View Academy, West Green Road, London N15 3RB, admission free.

UK anarchism gets organised

Conference09 is the biggest gathering of anarchists for over 10 years. We talk to one of the organisers about the two-day event and about the state of radical politics in the UK today.

How did the idea of the conference come about?

The idea has been knocking around anarchist circles in London for a few years now – a conference which would hold up a mirror to the movement and take a no-holds-barred critical look at who we are what we do and attempt to at least acknowledge our own self-marginalisation within our class.

We felt it was time that we took a look at what currently is composed as ‘the movement’. Many of us have been involved with anarchist, direct action and libertarian politics for decades and it has always been a debate around the question ‘if our ideas are so good why are they so few of us?’

What has the response been from the ‘anarchist movement’?

The anarchist movement is fairly fractured, though in the last few years there have been more interaction and solidarity so the response has been positive. We have had the majority of organisations back the conference and are mobilising for it.

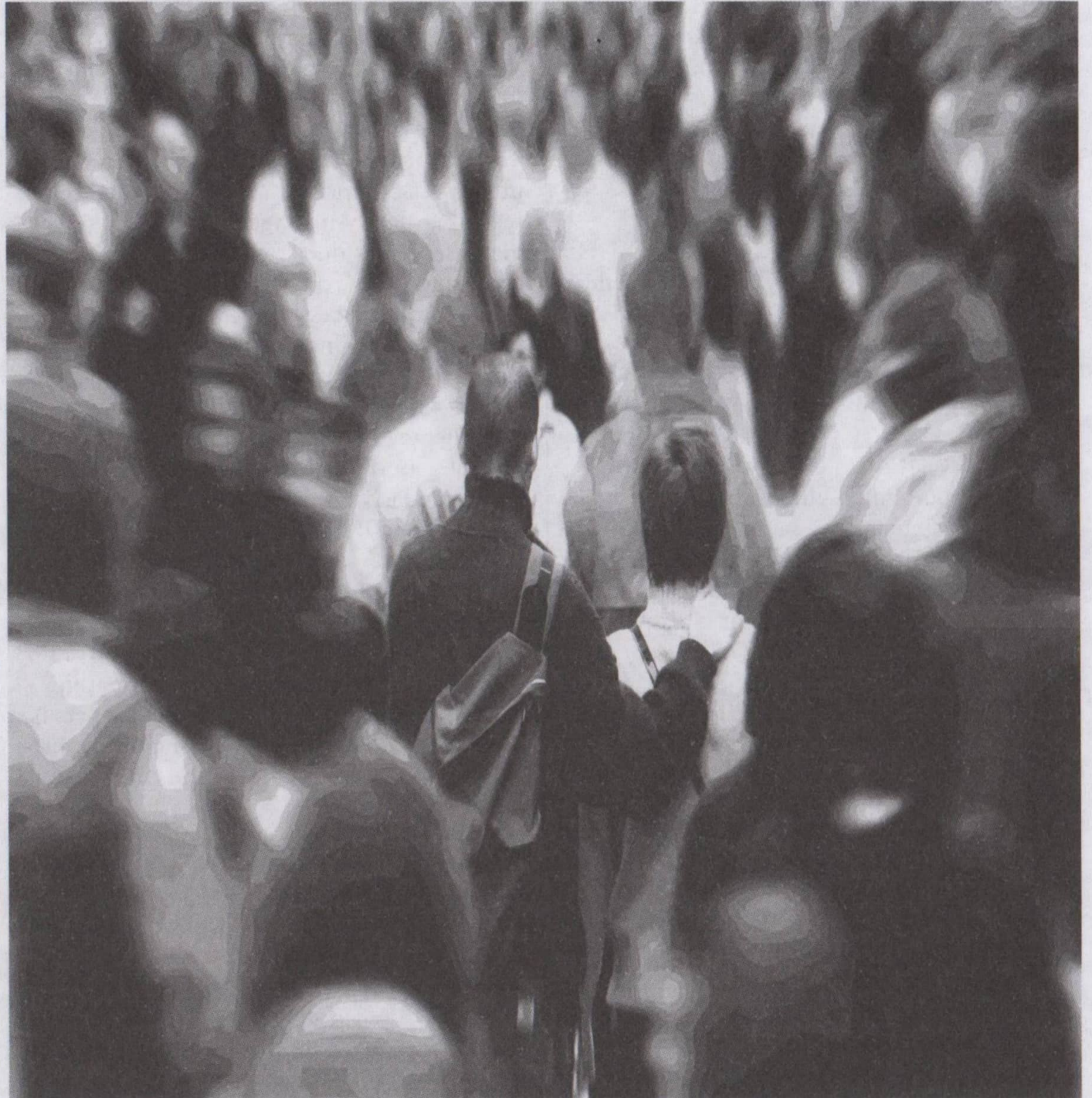
We also have many people who are involved in the Climate Camp, ex-Reclaim the Streets, ex-Class War that are coming after being cold to the idea. This has meant that the conference will be the space where a huge amount of experience and knowledge can be shared. It will truly be an exciting occasion to be involved in. There will be people who were active from the 1960s to the present day. No need to read books about those struggles, ask the participants who were there!

Is it open to anybody?

The conference will not be for everyone. It is unashamedly for and by those involved in anarchist politics in the UK and therefore is not a public event like, for example, the London Anarchist Bookfair. That’s not to say we will exclude anyone we don’t know!

Do you think this type of conference will be alienating for people new to anarchist politics?

Not at all. I think it will show people who are new that we are serious about what we do. That we are self-reflective and self-critical because we want to play a part in struggles and become a popular movement. It relies solely on the participation of people to progress these ideas and therefore demands more. The best experience of anarchists are those that have been lived experiences and not ‘inherited’ dogmas.



What’s to stop it being two days of sectarian inward looking navel-gazing?

The groups will be composed of people from all over the UK and involved in different groups. We have stated that the conference is about breaking down barriers and working together to reach solutions. The key themes which we have suggested each group discuss is aimed at starting from a self-reflective look at anarchism, then looking at effective resistance, then looking at where and how we are located in the wider schemes of things. All in all it is about challenging ideas rather than reinforcing them. At the end of the day we have designed the conference to be less about promoting our own individual groups or pet obsessions and more about looking at the bigger picture.

Why do you think anarchist groups and ideas have so little recognition in society generally?

Some would say it is the result of 150 years of propaganda against anarchism in the world’s press. Others would argue it is our own ineffectualness. I agree with both positions. Anarchism represents a society without state governance; it also represents a desire for a free communist society. Also as

a political tendency we have low self-esteem and lack self-confidence in how we communicate our politics. That affects how and when we communicate and announce our presence. If you look at other radical-left and anarchist movements say in Greece or Italy, there is a massive recognition of those movements. They both have confidence, not constantly questioning themselves to the point of inaction.

How would you consider the conference to be a success?

If people after the conference see a difference in activity, in outlook, in priority and locate it back to the discussions they had at the conference then we have achieved our aims. If there is a greater sense of common purpose and greater interests in supporting each others initiatives then I think is a start. We don’t expect overnight miracles, it will take a longer process but at least we will have a process.

Anarchist Movement Conference09 is being held on the weekend of 6th and 7th June at Queen Mary and Westfield College, London. People wishing to attend visit www.conference09.org.uk to register and find out more.

REVIEWS

WHAT'S ON

MAY

23rd Cardiff Anarchist Bookfair at Cathays Community Centre, 36 Cathays Terrace, Cardiff CF24 4HX from 10am until 6pm, see <http://southwalesanarchists.org> or email cosmoinnit@talk21.com for more.

25th Screening of *Crossing Arizona*, followed by talk and discussion, at 7.30pm, Pogo Café, 76 Clarence Road, Hackney, London E5 8HB, for more see pogocafe.co.uk or call 020 8533 1214.

25th West Midlands IWW benefit gig featuring David Rovics and Attila the Stockbroker plus DJs, starts at 6pm at Wagon & Horses, Adderley Street, Digbeth, Birmingham B9 4ED, call 07771926735 or see iww.org.uk/westmids

26th NVDA workshop for Die-in for NATO's victims in Afghanistan (see below) at 7.30pm, Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London WC1R 4RL, call 0845 4582564 or see stopbombingafghanistan.org or euroflashmob.com

27th Die-in for NATO's victims in Afghanistan at Britain's military nerve centre in Northwood, meet at 11am at Northwood tube station, call 0845 4582564 or see stopbombingafghanistan.org

30th Haringey Independence Day, grassroots gathering for social change at West Green Learning Centre, Park View Academy, West Green Road, London N15 3RB, from 12 noon until 6pm, for more information see haringey.org.uk/independenceday.

JUNE

1st Screening of *Occupation 101*, a powerful documentary on the current and historical causes of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, at 7.30pm, Pogo Café, 76 Clarence Road, Hackney, London E5 8HB, for more see pogocafe.co.uk

6th and 7th Anarchist Movement Conference, two days of debate, discussions and ideas for the future of the anarchist movement at Queen Mary & Westfield College, London E1 4NS, see conference09.org.uk

9th Benefit gig for No Borders South Wales from 7pm at Meze Lounge, 6 Market Street, Newport NP20 1PU, <http://noborderswales.org.uk/2009/04/28/benefit-gig-on-9th-june/>

23rd to 29th Calais No Border Camp, a joint venture between UK and French activists aiming to highlight the realities of the situation in Calais, for more info see <http://london.noborders.org.uk/calais2009> or <http://calaisborder.eu.org>

JULY

4th Independence from America, organised by CAAB, from 5pm until 10pm outside the main entrance of NSA Menwith Hill near Harrogate, HG3 2HF, call 01423 884076, email mail@caab.corner.org.uk or see caab.org.uk for more details.

23rd to 27th Peace News summer camp near Faringdon in Oxfordshire, call 0845 4582564 or see <http://peacenewscamp.wordpress.com/>

CINEMA

In the Loop

directed by Armando Iannucci

The hilarious BBC 4 sitcom *The Thick Of It* (2005/7) viciously satirised New Labour spin, showing the gymnastic contortions of information massaging and packaging necessary for variously venal, vacuous, mendacious and malicious actions and utterances comprising 'affairs of state' to resemble slickly-managed 'joined-up' policy. Harassed aides duck and dive delivering this conjuring trick from the heart of government to media interfaces, bullied into arbitrarily transient Party-line by Downing Street enforcers. Magnifying the premiss to cinema, *In The Loop* abandons banal bungling bureaucracy in a minor Ministry for big-budget geopolitical gravity, as Iraq war propaganda is prepared in Westminster and Washington DC. The fly-on-the-wall, on-the-hoof, faux-documentary style persists from television, as do archetypes of vacillating British politicians and squabbling, squirming assistants – with Peter Capaldi's No.10 PR supremo surviving in all his psychopathic, foul-mouthed glory. Finally, as per, he gets his warlike way – any residual principles, ethics and decency having vacated the UN building.

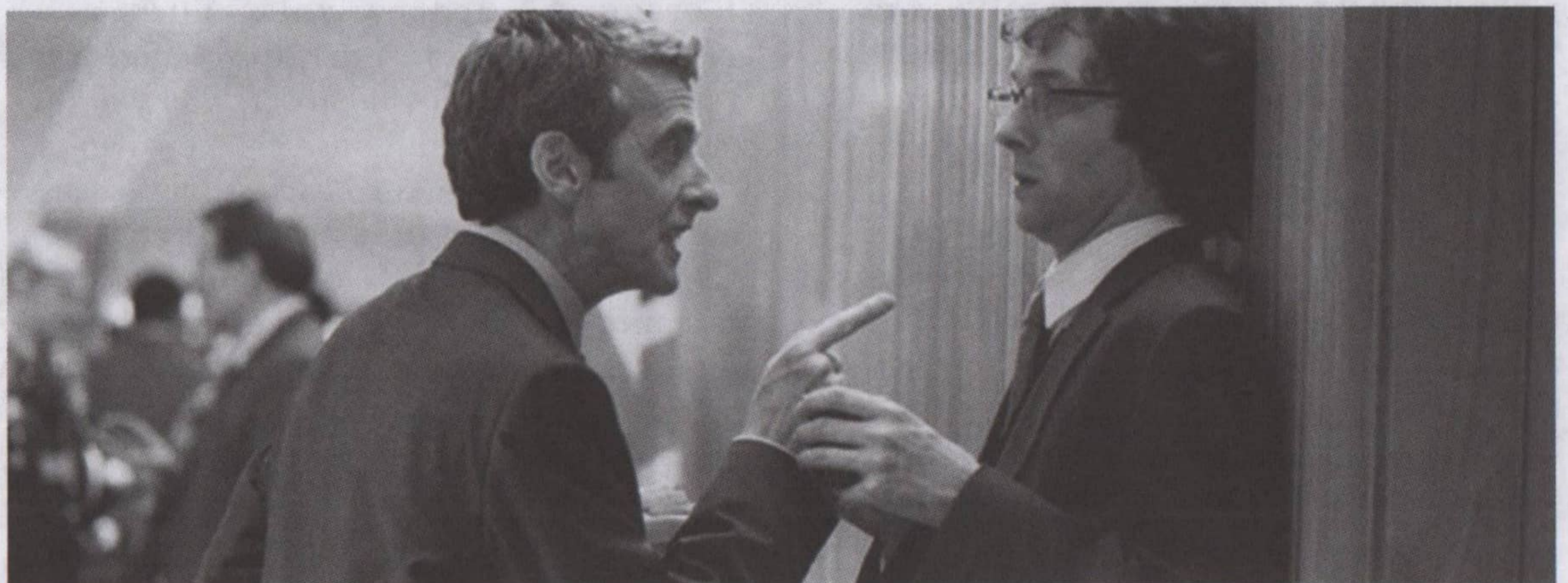
The thin of it

Iannucci's primary strategy is to fashion screwball comedy from the petty conflicts, indignities and tyrannies of office politics. Egotism, incompetence and communication-breakdown perpetually threaten conformance to bigger pictures which the protagonists are only dimly aware of, busily chasing ever-shifting targets and deadlines. This effectively updates *Yes, Minister's* (1980–82) caricature of traditional patrician government with Thatcherism's brutal diktats filtering through elite civil servants to humiliate hapless junior

ministers. *The Thick Of It* instead skewers politically-correct Orwellian fantasies of contemporary statecraft as benign 'better management', exposing an obscene class-based underbelly of barely-suppressed macho posturing, rage and shame – the symbolically violent infantility of its wit cathartically mirroring the disavowed dirty deeds diffident neoliberalism wreaks in the real world. *In The Loop*, however, bursts this hermetically-sealed pre-Oedipal bubble in the pragmatic US corridors of power – which are portrayed as, in their own way, just as ad-hoc a muddle of opportunistic rancour as ours.

Curiously, however, the film's American career politicians are given ideological coordinates underpinning their agendas, which all their connivances, complacencies and flaws are genuinely mobilised to serve. Moreover, the Yanks have no equivalent of the dictatorial puppetmaster orchestrating apparatchiks, thereby allowing a freer play of the balance of forces rather than top-down fixing. Whereas the Blairites learned their rhetorical Third Way trade at Washington Consensus seminars precisely to sacrifice authentic commitment on the altar of corporate culture. So inadvertently projecting vestiges of noble 'battles of ideas' back across the Atlantic seems a monumental failure of nerve and/or imagination – symptomatic, perhaps, of cynicism's concealed conservatism shading satire into farce. Nevertheless, at least *In The Loop* injects righteous, riotous bile into fictional power mechanics, pissing on *The West Wing's* (1999–2006) saccharine complacency, *New Labour: The Project's* (BBC, 2002) and *The Deal's* (Channel 4, 2003) pseudo-documentary pandering to tabloid celebrity obsession, and – arguably most dystopic and soporific – the yuppie student narcissism of *Party Animals* (BBC, 2007).

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QUIZ ANSWERS

1. Chris Huhne, LibDem MP for Eastleigh.
2. Lembit Opik, the LibDem MP for Montgomeryshire.
3. Tory David Willetts, called 'Two brains' because he's so intelligent; apparently not intelligent enough to change lightbulbs.
4. Nick Herbert Tory MP for Arundel.
5. Regency toff Oliver Letwin, MP for West Dorset.
6. David Miliband, the current Foreign Secretary.
7. Labour's Geoff Hoon, who as former Defence Minister has plenty of blood on his hands.
8. John Prescott. Funnily enough, I bought a new one the other day for under twenty quid. Mind you, I couldn't put it on expenses.

Consuming dilemma

Martin Gilbert wades valiantly into the murky quagmire of ethical consumerism

Whether due to money-shortages, environmental concerns, just wanting to keep the corner shop going or a mix of issues, many consumers now engage in various kinds of activism. Whether it may be buying Fair Trade goods, wider thoughts about 'ethical shopping' or boycotting your most detested oil company, Jo Littler's *Radical Consumption* offers such activists and others opportunities for self-criticism but also gives some hope about the future.

A senior lecturer in Media and Cultural Studies at Middlesex University, Littler uses many perspectives. *Freedom* readers will be familiar with some points she makes: that governments and corporations pay lip-service to 'greening' due to public pressure, but fail to meet basic environmental targets. Corporations protect themselves from exposure, spend tiny amounts on 'green' window-dressing to make themselves look good or strongly publicise tiny charity donations. She also lifts some confusion around attempts at ethical shopping, distinguishing between where it can really help producers be less damaging to the environment and when it's just sanctimonious. While it's good to have small shops, independent of big-chain corporations, Littler helps us question if such 'alternative shopping' is only another form of over-consumption with a bit of conscience. In case such thinking seems 'more-revolutionary-than-thou' – which can be very off-putting for people struggling to make sense of it all – she asks if such criticism is just "privileged liberal whining or navel gazing".

A jibe made at those trying to consume with some conscience is that they are being 'puritanical', pleasure-denying, 'unsexy' and at best 'worthy' in the face of pressures to consume. But she points to our ability to make choices that preserve individuality, rather than surrender every time to such pressures. Anarchists have aspirations but they are not imposed from above by advertisers or politicians who speak of the need, especially of the under-class, to 'aspire'. Such ideas pushed from them mainly mean following capitalist consumerist goals, irrespective of environmental damage. Littler warns that the feel-good and cosmopolitan factor in buying stuff from Third World countries can be delusive. There is nothing equal in the relationship between such producers and their First World, far more privileged consumers. But we are sold such stuff, partly with the 'hook' of 'buying the experience of being cosmopolitan'.

Alternatively, Littler finds that the Fair



Trade brand label does give producers a better deal, resulting in schools and hospitals being built, even if sadly such products are most widely available in supermarkets owing to the lack of other outlets. Such attempts to reform global trade in favour of a more just system mark them as a more progressive form of cosmopolitanism. But some critics of Fair Trade have viewed it as a 'form of imperial charity' in which a critique of capitalism is diverted in favour of seeing government aid as progress. Aid going between governments is far more likely to be misused than direct, hands-on projects as done by Oxfam and Voluntary Service Overseas.

Another confusion this book attempts to clarify is covered in her chapter on 'Greenwash, Whitewash, Hogwash': how so-called 'corporate responsibility' can be seen as a form of media management adding to the deliberately created confusion about what really is 'green' and 'sustainable'. Littler shows that there is no clear, agreed definition of 'corporate responsibility'. Humpty Dumpty-like, it means whatever the corporations want it to, so BP present TV commercials depicting a perfect countryside but pollute Alaska.

More subtle methods are found in 'corporate paternalism' where the underlying philosophy can be seen as the 'good' employer providing for his workers' 'needs'

and defining those needs in the process. An extension of that philosophy is that the state should not tax him to make such provision. Such nineteenth century thinking is contemporised in corporations baulking at legal limits to their pollutions, or taxes to try and clean them up. So we have the feebly-enforced expectations that companies who hire eco-experts will do the right thing even though so much evidence shows otherwise.

Littler recognises that economic growth "has a destructive ... impact", whether due to new 'green products' or anything else. But, in spite of her radicalism, she is no anarchist, supporting as she does Keynesian systems, and pointing to how governments push the responsibility for clean-ups on to individuals, rather than organising it themselves. But no one could get elected saying that we should all do with less stuff.

The author also asks how consumer activists think about themselves and consider how their goals might be won, in which areas, using what tactics. In other words, how do constructive developments happen or are we only creating the illusion of desired change? Naomi Klein's *No Logo*, is used pointing to the strengths and weaknesses of consumer activism, but Klein's book is less clear about how the newly-aware can connect with activists with

