

IMPERSONATING 'MURDERERS'

CPS decision to prosecute the Space Hijackers

The investigation into the G20 have at last resulted in charges. Not of any of the cops involved in Ian Tomlinson's death of course, that would be ridiculous. Instead eleven people from the Space Hijackers group have been charged with 'impersonating police officers' and 'wearing items of police uniform'.

The Space Hijackers (spacehijackers.co.uk) are a group of "Anarchitects, we oppose the hierarchy that is put upon us by architects, planners and owners of space. Through the events that we hold and the objects that we produce we are attempting to corrupt the culture of architecture, and destroy the hierarchies that exist." Among other things they are famous for bringing a tank to be auctioned at the DSEI arms fair in 2007.

The crime they are charged with under s90 of the Police Act 1996 carries a six month maximum sentence and involved them driving around London in said tank with the word 'riot' written on it while dressed in comedy police outfits.

The Space Hijackers are of course are not real hijackers, the name is as a Special Branch copper told a Judge about the

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Spot the Space Hijacker! In case you're tempted, it's also a crime to impersonate a member of the armed forces.

VESTAS STILL IN OCCUPATION

At time of going to press, workers at the Vestas Blades UK Ltd wind turbine manufacturers on the Isle of Wight are still in occupation. Workers took action on the 20th July, frustrated by the imminent transfer of production to the USA with the subsequent loss of 600 jobs, and also to highlight the hypocrisy of a government that calls for a 'just transition' to a low carbon future, while at the same time failing to safeguard jobs in the green industries. As the occupier's state: "if the government can spend billions bailing out the banks – and even nationalise them – then surely they can do the same at Vestas. The people of Vestas matter, and the people of the island matter, but equally importantly the people of this planet matter."

With the aid of the police it became clear

that Vestas management planned to put an end to the occupation through starvation. Attempts by supporters to take food into the occupation were met with police hostility, leading to two wrongful arrests of Climate Campers.

Anxious of media attention, bosses negotiated with occupiers a supply of food in exchange for the removal of some banners, notably 'Vestas workers: starving for jobs'. Outside the gates a makeshift camp and picket line of friends, colleagues and activists from various campaigns including Workers' Climate Action and Climate Camp continues to grow with actions organised across the country in support.

Seth Wheeler

Messages of solidarity, updates and information can be found at <http://savevestas.wordpress.com>

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NEWS

IN BRIEF

CODE THREE: Telephone operators at a busy police control room in south London have reacted angrily after being told to take a note of their toilet breaks. Senior officers at Scotland Yard's central communication command recently asked staff to log their movements on a database. Hundreds of people at the force's Lambeth call handling centre must now note down trips to the lavatory as a 'code three'.

Employee Paul Drew said there was widespread opposition to the decision to include toilet breaks on a register of duties. Writing in a staff magazine, he said: "As everyone I have spoken to about this finds it deeply offensive and humiliating, I wonder if it really is necessary to record such details."

"Furthermore, if it is essential, it would be interesting to know what the public or the Met can possibly gain from making notes of such intimate details."

But Superintendent Russ Hanson-Coles, who is responsible for the force's communications wing, defended the regime. He said the codes are designed to account for what operators are doing when not answering phone calls. Mr Hanson-Coles added that 'code three' can be used to note any kind of personal unscheduled break, including an urgent visit to the toilet. He said: "The more important point is that no management information will be stored other than the amount of personal breaks, not the detail of their nature."

"Our primary role at central communications command is to be available for the public to contact and it is vital that we make the best use of our resources and plan effectively. Staff in this environment have regular breaks that compare very favourably with outside industry so the need for extra personal breaks should be minimal."

COP TO BE PROSECUTED: A police officer is to face prosecution over the deaths of two police dogs in Nottinghamshire. The German Shepherd dogs were found dead in a private vehicle outside Nottinghamshire Police's headquarters on 30th June.

Legal proceedings will be brought against an officer for allegedly causing unnecessary suffering to the animals, the RSPCA confirmed. Nottinghamshire Police confirmed that the officer has been suspended.

PANTHER'S CLAW: The commander of forces in Afghanistan has hailed the latest UK operation a success, as its first stage ended. Brig Tim Radford was "cautiously optimistic" about the future but said there was "a long way to go" to improve security in time for elections.

Since June, the first phase of Operation Panther's Claw involved 3,000 personnel. Ten died. Troops are now trying to hold areas won from the Taliban. Two more soldiers died in separate blasts on Monday, defence chiefs said.

LENS CAP A PIZZLY BEAR



This rare cross between the Polar Bear and the Brown or Grizzly Bear is becoming more common as the melting Arctic and human encroachment drives the two species into each other habitats.

Only one convicted for RWB

An anti-fascist has pleaded guilty at South Derby Magistrates court to assaulting police at the protests against the British National Party's (BNP) Red, White and Blue (RWB) festival last summer. He was the only person charged after 33 anti-fascists were arrested en masse during confrontations with police on the opening day of the weekend festival that celebrates white nationalism and promotes racist ideology.

While hundreds of demonstrators gathered for a rally on the main junction, a group of up to 80 militant anti-fascists took direct action elsewhere, blockading roads leading to the farm where the BNP have held the festival for the past two years. The group was attacked by riot police and dogs, and fought running battles over a prolonged period ending in the arrest of the 33 protestors. Despite the confrontation only one person was charged in connection with the incident.

The two-day festival, held in Codnor, Derbyshire on land owned by BNP member Alan Warner, has come under heavy criticism from locals since it moved there in 2007. Many of Warner's neighbours raised formal objections to the event taking place, with Derbyshire Chief Constable admitting afterwards "The common view of residents was that they opposed the event and did not want the BNP to return". The BNP ignored

their objections however, and Codnor residents were forced to endure the spectacle of a fascist rally on their doorstep. During the event, and for over a month afterwards, villagers had to contend with gangs of drunken thugs loudly singing Nazi drinking songs, swaggering round their village sieg-heiling, using their gardens as toilets, vomiting in the hedgerows, and making noise at all hours of the day and night.

In 2008, and again despite widespread local opposition, the RWB returned to Codnor. This time Antifa mobilised to oppose it. The threat of militant action by antifascists caused the police to oppose the BNP's drinks licence for the event, and led to strict conditions being imposed upon the event. The mobilisation also meant the fascists were 'confined to camp', but the village was swamped by a huge police operation, as the cops sought to protect the BNP from militant antifascists. The total policing cost reached a staggering £250,000 with over 390 officers deployed to ensure the festival went ahead uninterrupted.

Already anti-fascists from across the country are mobilising against this year's event which takes place on 15th and 16th of August.

The activist convicted of assault received 200 hours community service with an additional £600 fine.



Landlords benefit from housing change

Poorest to get less whilst private landlords get cash bonus

The Local Housing Allowance, introduced at the beginning of 2008, was a welcome, if flawed attempt to overhaul the shambolic Housing Benefit system.

Previously Housing Benefit rates were an esoteric secret known only to a handful of officials at the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP). It was not possible to find out how much benefit you were entitled to until you had moved into a property and made a claim. This left many moving into accommodation only to find that the Local Authority weren't prepared to pay the full rent, forcing many into either poverty or homelessness.

Now all Local Authorities set a rent based on current market value which is published for all to see and allows tenants to move into a property knowing in advance how much benefit they will receive.

In addition prospective tenants who find a property that was cheaper than the local market rate would receive up to £15 a week of the surplus benefit. This rare magnanimity towards benefit claimants was styled as a patronising way to teach claimants about 'market forces'. As the recession has bitten, this has allowed canny tenants to pick up properties a little bit cheaper and pocket a few quid extra on top of the meagre pittance doled out to the countries most vulnerable people.

But no longer. A government paper published in July reveals that it has been decided that this is "not sustainable in the current economic climate" and the

extra payments are to be stopped from April 2010.

This means that up to 300,000 people could see their current income shrink. Of these people, many already live on the pitiful sixty quid a week doled out by Job Seekers Allowance.

A cynic might consider whether this was a ploy to bribe people into moving into cheaper housing and then moving the goalposts once they settled in a new home. But it's much worse than that. Blood sucking landlords now have no incentive to offer a cheaper rent to attract benefit claimants. Every landlord in the country is now bound to set rents at, or above, the Local Housing Allowance rate.

The end result of this move will not only be further poverty for the poorest, but higher rents for everyone, funded by the tax payer. And landlords will be rubbing their filthy palms with glee.

Impersonating 'murderers'

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Wombles: "An attempt at anarchist wit M'Lud". Hijacking is serious crime carrying a maximum of life imprisonment. What's more, hijacking involves something that moves such as a plane or car, static objects cannot be hijacked. Here is clear evidence against the Space Hijackers of their deceitful nature, pretending to be what they are not. Anyone needing further proof of their guilt has only to check out their so called 'tank', which was in fact only a Saracen Armoured Personnel carrier. What's more the Saracen name is also a complete lie having no connection to the Middle East but instead

being manufactured by Alvis in Coventry.

The decision to prosecute is, of course, not made by the police but by the Crown Prosecution Service, headed by Director of Public Prosecutions Keir Starmer. Older readers may remember him as a crusading civil liberties lawyer and he was a barrister on good (but losing) side at the first hearing of the Austin v Met Police case concerning kettling at Oxford Circus during Mayday 2001. It's always nice to be proved right that the problem is with the system not the odd bad apple. With his radicalism Keir also seems to have lost his grip on the law. In

particular that prosecutions need to be not only for actual offences but in the public interest. If there was ever a case...

The next stage in the farce will be their appearance at 10am on the 3rd September at City of London Magistrates Court, right next to the Bank of England where thousands of people were detained for over six hours on 1st April and just a few hundred yards from where Ian Tomlinson died. Come along and show your support from the harmless hijackers and contempt for the 'real' constabulary and the system that supports its crimes.

NEWS

Dismissed tube workers to sue bosses

Glasgow underground bosses face lawsuit over using CCTV to catch 'skiving' staff

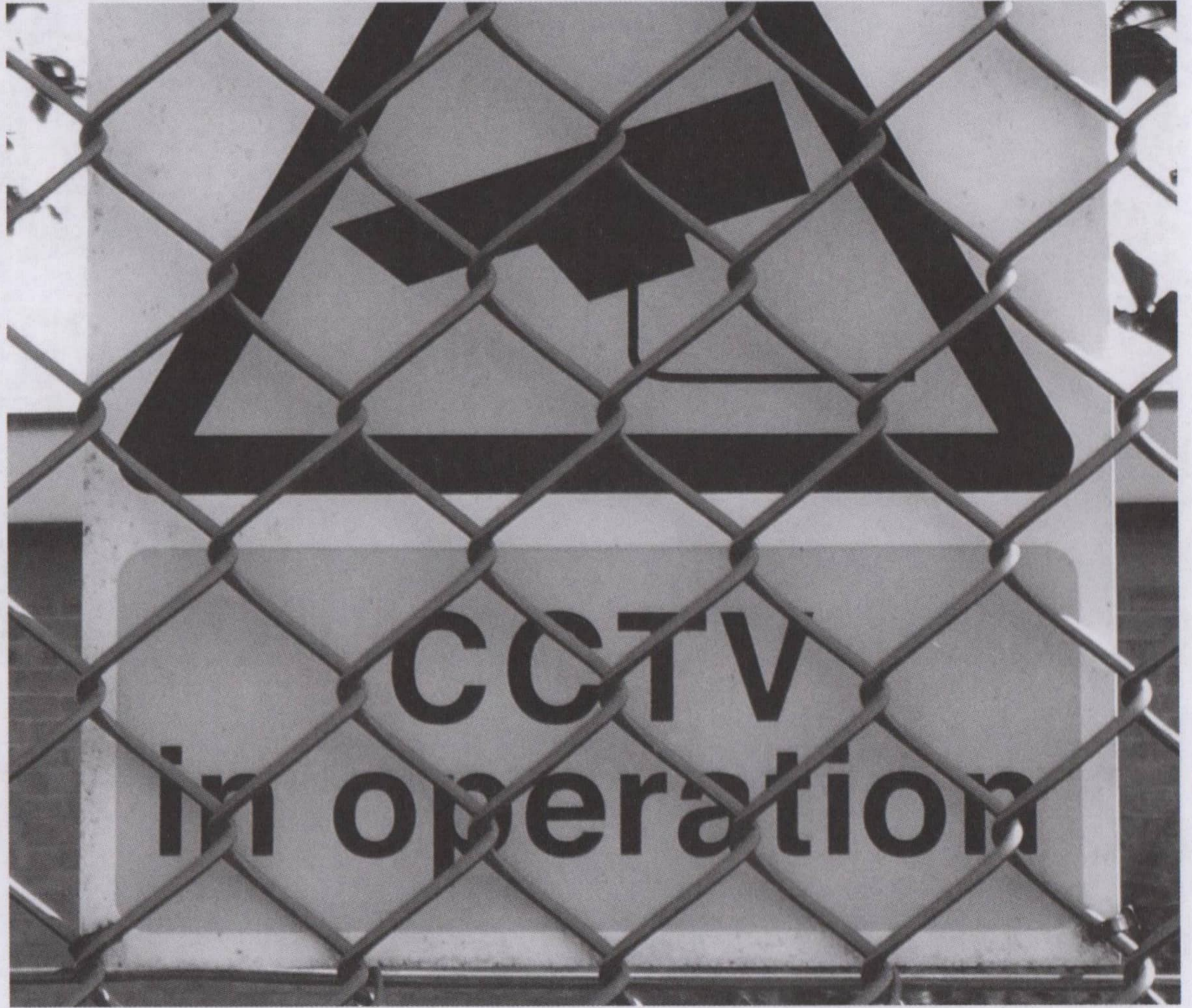
Track maintenance workers forced to resign at the beginning of July are set to sue Strathclyde Partnership for Transport (SPT) for the misuse of surveillance cameras to illegally spy on them.

Company bosses at SPT, the authority that oversees west Scotland's transport network including Glasgow's underground rail system organised a sting operation using CCTV to spy on the Glasgow tube workers at night and weekends.

Two chargehands, one with an unblemished 30-year record, faced a series of disciplinary charges and chose to resign rather than face the sack and the loss of their pensions; 15 others are still under investigation with the threat of dismissal.

Camerawatch, the body that regulates CCTV use in the UK, say SPT were previously reprimanded about the misuse of surveillance equipment. A spokesman said SPT had been warned before that they were breaking the law by using the cameras for snooping on staff. He said: "According to the registration of their CCTV system, the reason for the CCTV is crime prevention. It must not be used for anything other than what it is registered for."

Company bosses claim they caught crews skiving after monitoring CCTV footage of their activities, which led to the workers being forced to quit. The accusation of skiving is in fact is a recognised and traditionally accepted work practice on track maintenance where teams 'stack up' the workload during the week to ensure an easier weekend shift.



Workers say the practice had gone on for more than 30 years, with the full knowledge of bosses. All the necessary work was always completed and the underground was at no point left in an unsafe state.

Glasgow underground network is the third oldest in the world after London and Budapest, and is currently in the middle of a £270 million upgrade with plans for extension costing at over £2.3 billion in time for the Commonwealth Games in 2014.

Back in January SPT's chief executive

called on the company's 700 staff to take voluntary redundancy or early retirement in a desperate bid to plug a £2.5 million budget deficit describing it as "prudent house-keeping" in the current financial climate.

Many workers feel SPT management have been increasingly antagonistic towards the Glasgow tube workers ever since a series of punishing strikes four years ago and are deliberately looking for reprisals in the middle of a recession when economic conditions are hard and jobs are scarce.

Spitalfields Fair

Whitechapel Anarchist Group (WAG) staged a revival of the ancient tradition of Spitalfields Fair on Sunday 25th July. Allen Gardens just off Brick Lane was the location for six hours of merriment followed by a demonstration of practical support for local hostels and ale houses hard hit by the depression.

Kicking off at high noon, the fair drew several hundred people and, to the merriment of all, no cops. Amidst newer entertainments



such as electronically generated music, the citizenry of Tower Hamlets and diverse other boroughs were able to partake in the pleasures of tug o'war, five-a-side football and visit a plethora of stalls and entertainments. Most popular though was ye olde stocks, wherein many malefactors and illdoers were righteously bombarded with wet sponges. However this writer amongst others is still searching for the village idiot who painted the stocks with a water-based paint, leaving all us victims of the stocks with a non-proverbial black mark against them.

Just to show that there is an atheism after all, the third prize in the raffle (being a crate of ale) was won by the *Freedom* editorial team and we trust that all who took part in imbibing it shall henceforth become loyal subscribers.

Learning Wisden

It's summer and it's raining outside so it must be time for the tender thwack of leather on willow – no we're not turning *Freedom* into a bondage mag, it's Cricket. Torn between 'anyone but England' revolutionary defeatism and an unwillingness to hang corks from our hats, *Freedom* takes no position on the Ashes test series. Take note of the cunning that has moved the first Test to Cardiff where Welsh rain may wash away a dismal English performance. However enough of this petty nationalism. Praise is called for to cricket as the noblest of sports, combining the great and useful skills of throwing stuff, running quickly and whacking things with sticks. In our view all comrades should practice these religiously, or should we say atheistically, for when they may come in handy. Oh, and you can buy your copy of *Wisden Cricketers' Almanack* from Freedom Press of course.

IN BRIEF

FESTIVAL BANNED: The Big Green Gathering, a fixture in the alternative calendar, was due to return after two years this week. Around 15–20,000 people were expected to turn up on Wednesday 29th July at the site near Cheddar, Somerset, for Europe's largest green event – a five-day festival promoting sustainability and renewable energy, with everything from allotments to alternative media. Hundreds of staff and volunteers were already on site, and its cancellation came just days before gates were due to open.

Organisers, most of whom work for nothing, are gutted. A last-minute injunction by Mendip District Council, supported by Avon & Somerset Police, put the kybosh on the entire event – citing the potential for 'crime and disorder' and safety concerns. This was despite the fact that the festival had actually been granted a licence on the 30th June.

According to Avon & Somerset police's website, they went above and beyond the call of duty to ensure the event took place. This is of course utter bollocks.

SchNEWS reports rumours that people aren't going to be put off – alternative sites are being looked at and people are heading to the West Country anyway. In the words of one participant, "things are just getting interesting". Is it time for the Big Black Barney?

MEDIATORS WANTED: Independent Northern Ireland-style go-betweens could ease tensions between police and protesters, say MPs. The Joint Committee on Human Rights said poor communications lay at the heart of problems at the G20 protests on 1st April.

Its report says a decision to 'kettle' some of the London demonstrators had failed to recognise their rights. The committee said there was a "long way to go" before police put human rights at the core of their planning and live operations. You bet!

In its review of the G20 protests, the MPs and peers argued that the Metropolitan Police became heavy-handed after a lack of communication between the two sides.

"Mutual distrust was apparent and the police and protesters seemed to have different expectations of what the dialogue should be about and how it should proceed." Who says MPs are overpaid when you see the brains they have.

AND FINALLY: Esther Rantzen has said that she will stand for election as MP for Luton South at the next general election. The broadcaster first mooted the idea of standing for parliament in May, in the wake of the MPs' expenses scandal.

She targeted Luton South because the sitting MP, Margaret Moran, was embroiled in the allowances scandal, having claimed £22,000 for dry rot at a home 100 miles away from her constituency.

Fightback at Tower Hamlets College

On 5th June the Principal of Tower Hamlets College, Michael Farley, emailed staff a document called 'Securing the Future' that hit us like a tsunami. The ensuing 30-day 'consultation process' has left us with the following:

- Redundancies (voluntary and compulsory) in the region of 30 'full-time equivalents' (i.e. about 50 members of staff).
- The loss of 1,000 of our 3,000 ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) students. The need for ESOL here is huge: last year there were 800 on our waiting lists.
- Withdrawal of college ESOL classes from up to 11 Outreach centres on estates and in the community. Outreach students are almost all women, most of whom are only able to attend classes because they are near home. The plan is that the provision at the low levels will be provided by charities, mosques and churches, who can bid for government money to hire their own, (isolated and low paid) teachers.
- Attack on our working conditions and working culture – in the weeks before the cuts were announced, a leaked email from Senior Management referred to the need for a 'culture change' at the THC. Clearly this just the beginning of the attacks to come the recession is used as an excuse to destroy what's left of the progressive, community heart of adult education, and replace it with a business and skills agenda.

From 6th June, a brilliant campaign has been fought against the plans. Alongside the ongoing negotiations carried out by brave local union reps, we accomplished so much in 30 days:

- Walkout by staff and students at Poplar site;
- ESOL and other students created campaign materials including petitions,

posters and banners, and wrote thousands of letters to the Principal;

- A demonstration and rally of 750+ people through Bethnal Green to Whitechapel;
- Strike days organised so as to bring people together in mass meetings;
- Non-cooperation and mass disruption of a training event we were forced to attend, resulting in its cancellation.

What has characterised the campaign was creativity and spontaneity; people not waiting to be told what to do, but just taking the initiative and getting things done; this and the fact that everyone was affected and therefore united in sadness and anger. The more the senior management acted with callousness the likes of which had never been experienced at THC, the more people came together and experienced our strength.

Despite all our efforts to bring about a change in the Principal's intransigent position, the proposed cuts on the massive scale outlined above are set to go ahead. Staff were notified on 8th July that they were 'at risk' of redundancy. Some of these letters came by bike courier at ten o'clock at night. People are now spending what would have been their holidays trying to appeal against these redundancies.

In response and as a last resort, the local UCU branches, with the full support of the national UCU, have resolved to go on all-out strike action from 27th August 2009. This is an exciting prospect for anarchists and political activists, but the truth is that for us it is also a scary time. We have been so strengthened by the amazing solidarity we have created within the workforce, now we need the support from those outside as well. As hundreds of people also face the prospect of weeks without income, we also need money – all donations and contributions are welcome.

See <http://defendjobsandeducation.posterous.com/>



Strikers and supporters march against cuts at Tower Hamlets College.

INTERNATIONAL

IN BRIEF

CHINA: Sources close to the Uyghur peoples, who rioted earlier this month, have suggested that the violence is connected at least in part to the continuing 'enclosure' of their land by the Han Chinese and ongoing racism against the population. Preferential treatment of the Han populace has left 70% of men between the age of 20 and 40 out of work.

EGYPT: The Free Gaza campaign is hoping to try and run the Israeli blockade of Gaza to bring in much-needed supplies this August, but could be hamstrung by the hijacking of their boat, the Spirit of Humanity. The campaign is looking for funds to get the project back on track, go to freegaza.org for details.

GREECE: Around 3,000 protesters gathered in Omonoia Square, central Athens late last month in opposition to the treatment of immigrant workers by the Greek state, and were met with fascist and police violence. Known members of the fascist group Golden Dawn were spotted behind police lines, throwing Molotov cocktails at the crowd.

SOUTH AFRICA: Police have brutally suppressed a wave of riots and civil disturbances across the country as the recession continues to hit hard at the poorest. The ruling ANC party has promised to bring more aid to the poor, who have been left with nothing as 200,000 jobs disappear and neo-liberal policies have left almost no safety nets.

SOUTH KOREA: With the Ssangyong occupation continuing as Freedom goes to press, the Korean TUC has agreed to a general strike in solidarity. The union body voiced members' strong opposition to the treatment of the occupiers, as up to 12,500 police, including riot cops and backed up by violent scab mobs have repeatedly attempted to storm the building.

VENEZUELA: After taking part in a demonstration against a lack of job security in 2006, 14 workers of contractor 'Transportes Camila de Sidor' could be sentenced to five to 10 years in jail. The workers were protesting the company's failure to pay wages, and maintain health and safety, as well as the lack of tools to accomplish their work. The organisers were arrested for 'qualified misappropriation and restricting the freedom to work'.

ZIMBABWE: Up to 200 people from an informal settlement in the Harare suburb of Gunhill in Zimbabwe face being forcibly evicted without being given adequate notice or any consultation or due process, say Amnesty International. Thousands of vendors across Harare also face forcible removal from their market stalls.

LENS CAP MEXICO



A body lies in the road near the city of San Cristobal de las Cas in Chiapas, Mexico, after an attack by far-right Christian sect Eagle Wings. The violent evangelist group, which also refers to itself as the Army of God, killed one and injured five others on 21st July when it ambushed a group of people who were trying to occupy unused land. Around 60 members of Eagle Wings armed with machetes, sticks and stones set upon 14 farmers as they were walking to the site. Not content with beating their victims, they deliberately ran over Aurelio Jimenez Estrada with a truck, crushing him to death.

Deaths as West Papua deteriorates

Initial reports that West Papuan rebels shot at and injured American miners driving to the controversial Freeport mine have been repudiated by some experts who believe that infighting between the police and military is to blame. Three people, two policemen and a mechanic, were hit by gunfire shrapnel near the world's largest gold mine, which is built on a locally-sacred site and is seen as a symbol of Indonesian repression in the region.

It is the sixth attack in two weeks on the US conglomerate in a round of fighting which has claimed at least 15 lives since 11th July.

The attack happened less than 24 hours after 17 people were rounded up as suspects in the killings. Six were charged.

The situation in West Papua has deteriorated over the recent years as a three-way fight for

control is held between the civil service, the army and the police force, all of which are heavily tied up with the lucrative foreign-owned mining industry.

West Papuan independence activists have repeatedly denounced such attacks, saying they have been used as scapegoats in the conflict and that the true perpetrators are the military and police occupation forces.

The Indonesian army and police have been exposed on several occasions taking money from Freeport McMoran for protection services, including violent clearance schemes, guard services and the jailing of independence activists.

Indonesian authorities have denied suggestions military or police officials may have been involved.

Notes from the United States

Increasing attention is being drawn by both legislators and labour activists to the practice of 'pay-day loans'.

Lawmakers and public officials in – amongst other states – Ohio, South Carolina, Missouri and Washington began an effort to crack down on the controversial practice. Pay-day loans are short term loans (or cash advances) which someone in need of money secures by a post-dated cheque against their (expected) regular salary payment.

What makes pay-day loans stand out from other loans, though, is the annual interest

rate (APR). Whereas the highest APRs of even the most costly credit cards rarely exceed 36%, the rate on pay-day loans can be as high as 400%.

Consumers who are forced to renew/extend the loans they have taken out not uncommonly pay more in fees alone than the amount which they had originally borrowed. This leads to a cycle of inescapable debt.

Nor is the system a hole-in-the-wall effort. It's a \$US40 billion (£25 billion)

Dirty war of spies and co-option

New tactics brought to bear against Bangladeshi militants

Infiltrators would be placed in every industrial area in Bangladesh if a new initiative to curb ongoing industrial unrest passes through parliament.

The new plan from the Bangladeshi government is part of an ongoing effort to try and put a lid on the rebellious ready-to-wear garment industry workforce, one of the most militant in the world.

The recommendations from the parliamentary committee on the labour and employment ministry included the co-option of senior figures in the labour movement, particularly union bosses, onto the intelligence units to root out agitators.

Around 50 key instigators have already been singled out, and 50 workplaces particularly prone to taking action have been marked out according to police sources, who are also keen to beef up intelligence within the industry. Within workplaces, the splitting up of different departments is being considered to make it more difficult for organising to take place.

The committee also suggested the implementation of minimum wage laws to buy off the workforce with guarantees on living standards.

Finally, it urged factories to start paying workers on time, as withheld wages are considered to be one of the major reasons for unrest.

Frustration was voiced that bosses in certain sectors of the industry, particularly Jute fabric traders, had been treating their workers so badly that they were fuelling



militancy which then spread to other sectors and inspired solidarity actions.

It is hoped this carrot-and-stick approach will undermine solidarity within the industry and strengthen the state's hand in a volatile area which has become more and more fractured since privatisation took place in the 1990s.

Jute and the garment industry around it is one of Bangladesh's core industries, employing hundreds of thousands of people. But poor wages and conditions have built a huge feeling of resentment and fuelled the growth of a powerful workers' movement which has repeatedly challenged the government and police.

A wide range of tactics have been tried to destroy the movement in recent years. Initially using police crackdowns which did little but fuel violence, a military intervention was staged in 2007 to 'bring order' to the political situation.

The effective takeover was followed by

corruption crackdowns in which some 200,000 people were arrested, including many of the state's political enemies along with genuinely corrupt officials. Torture and even killings were reported as the military-backed initiative continued into 2008, before electoral service as usual was restored.

However even this failed to significantly impede worker militancy. In the most recent conflict towards the end of June this year, 50,000 workers took to the streets over job losses and closures which have hit the industry hard in the recession.

Over almost a week of organised blockades, strikes and organised attacks on scab businesses, entire factories including hundreds of thousands of textile machines and tens of millions in other equipment were burned to the ground. Once the buildings were ablaze some workers returned to the highway and blockaded the road; consequently, the fire services were unable to reach the blaze in time.

Rob Ray

Notes from the Unites States

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industry operating across more than 22,000 stores.

As more people feeling the credit crunch are forced to live from pay cheque to pay cheque, predatory lending is obviously profitable. Indeed some of the chains of pay-day lenders, including Advance America, which is the largest of the pay-day lending chains, are publicly traded on the stock exchange and are funded and have lines of credit from some of the biggest banks in the US.

Daniel Brook, author of *The Trap: Selling Out to Stay Afloat in Winner-Take-All America*, describes a typical scenario in which low-income earners resort to pay-day loans: "Let's say you work at a fast food restaurant, and you're going to get paid next Friday, but you've had an unexpected expense. Say your car broke down, and you need money now. You would go to a pay-day lender. You'd write out a cheque for,

say, \$US230 (£140). They'd give you \$US200 (£122) in cash right then. The cheque ... would be dated to your next pay-day.

"Then, when your next pay-day rolls around, you're supposed to reappear at the pay-day lender and buy your check back in cash for the full \$230 value. Now, on the face of it, it already sounds like a high-interest loan, but it's typically much worse than that, because the percentage of borrowers who, when their pay day comes around, are able to pay it off is very small.

"I mean, even industry-sponsored research shows that only a quarter of borrowers are able to consistently pay off their pay-day loans. State research shows rates in the 70s or 80s or close to 90% of borrowers can't pay these off. So it's clearly a debt trap."

Louis Further

Win for French workers

French workers have won an 11,000 euro rise to their severance packages after threats were made to blow up their factory if a better deal wasn't reached. Ex-staff at New Fabis, a bankrupt auto-parts supplier, got a total package of 28,500 euros with negotiators for the bosses and government making it a 'pre-condition' of further negotiation that they take the canisters away. After agreeing to the removal however, the 366 workers believe the government have backtracked, agreeing to a 'jobseeker aid' package while failing to address the situation of shop-floor workers who have been denied their statutory severance by the company. Owners Renault and Peugeot closed the site having taking a three billion euro loan from the French state earlier this year.

Following the incident, a similar threat was issued by workers at Nortel's Paris branch. The workforce have won 7,300 euros in severance pay plus proceeds from an assets sale.

Looking for Red Shoots

The 'Promissory Notes' of the Midnight Notes Collective

A common assumption across the left is that a crisis for capital presents opportunities for change that can be seized upon by emancipatory social movements. In the sober light of finance capital's morning after, the failures and injustices of capitalism supposedly lay bare for all to see and as social antagonisms intensify with the crisis, the hope is that people will 'resist' and build a better world. What seems to be harder to fathom is the current lack of resistance and in light of it, the knowledge of how to get organised. In their text, *Promissory Notes*,¹ the US based collective Midnight Notes argue that we are indeed witnessing promising anti-capitalist struggles in the wake of the crisis and that in fact it was the struggles of waged and unwaged workers that contributed to the collapse of neoliberalism in the first place. A closer look at the argument shows it to be overstated, yet their analysis of the crisis in terms of struggle is a welcome contribution to the necessary task of assessing our current political practices and their potential for achieving change.

Crisis and Struggle

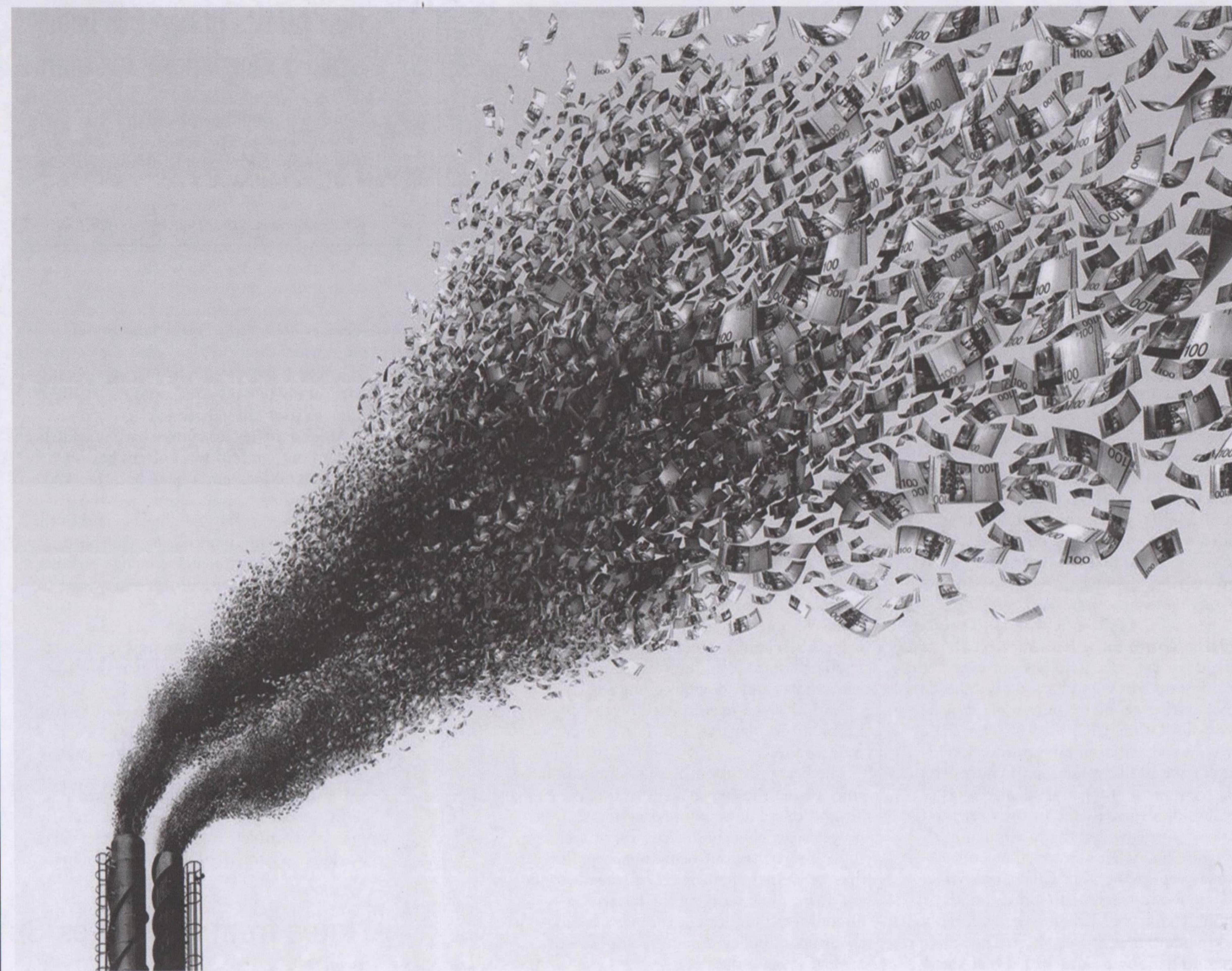
One of the strengths of 'autonomist Marxism' is its attempt to determine the role of struggle – and thus political agency – in the production and reproduction of capitalist social relations and crises. Not as part of a mere analytical quest for a supposed correct interpretation of history,



but stemming from a political impetus to understand our power – as waged and unwaged workers² – to challenge and transcend capitalist exploitation and enclosure. The point of departure for *Midnight Notes* is to chart the failures of neoliberalism³ in terms of the struggles that ensued to contest it. This is an improvement on approaches that point to the excesses of unregulated financial markets in the absence of sufficient regulation, or other Marxist approaches fixated upon abstract models of overaccumulation and falling rates of profit that become dissociated from the very real social relations that constitute such models. According to *Midnight Notes*, in global terms the rate of profit has fallen. They argue that the reasons for this are not to be found in the teleological development of a capitalism prone to crisis, but in the limits placed on capitalist accumulation by those who challenged it. They summarise this as "capital's inability to increase the rate of exploitation" without meeting with resistance sooner or later. This is logical, if these limits were not placed upon capital through people resisting its constant drive to make more money, then it would be able to go on indefinitely or until it ran up against ecological limits. Thus, struggles related to the wage (within and beyond the workplace), but also ecological struggles (climate change), pose accumulation problems for capital.

The failures of Neoliberalism

Midnight Notes identify six moments of class struggle against neoliberalism. In conjunction with the widespread protests against structural adjustment in global south countries, the anti-globalisation movement disrupted the ideology and material expansion of capital's pursuit of profit and free trade. Neoliberal restructuring failed institutionally with the bankruptcy of the IMF, the legitimacy crisis of the G8 and the inability of the WTO to complete the trade rounds, in which representatives of global south countries – given resistance in their own countries, notably farmers – refused to agree to the terms of trade imposed by wealthier countries. Further reasons include the failures of the war in Iraq to 'transform the oil and gas industries into ideal neoliberal operations', the inability to control wage struggles, notably in Asian countries (which in a globalised labour market has effects beyond the immediate sector or country of struggle), resistance to privatisation and enclosure (e.g. water struggles in Bolivia) and the 'financialisation of class struggle' with the expansion of working class debt and the demands of those hitherto excluded into the 'ownership society'. Perhaps here lies one of the specificities of the current crisis in class terms.



The debt crisis of the working class

Poignantly, *Midnight Notes* also analyse the credit crisis in terms of working class debt. The extension of debt to the working class is an important factor in not only understanding the factors that contributed to the crisis but also how debt became a tool for managing class relations and fending off wage struggles. Credit enables and increases spending power for consumption and also offers a possibility for reinvestment for capital. What role did working class debt play in the crisis? *Midnight Notes* point out: "If you own the bank \$1,000 and you can't pay, you are in trouble; but if you own the bank \$1,000,000,000 and you can't pay, the bank is in trouble ... if 1,000,000 people each owe the bank \$1,000 and can't pay, the bank is still in trouble!"

And in a system where everything is

some ideas for action. They suggest combining 'inside' and 'autonomous', or 'outside' struggles to both make demands on the institutions of social democracy – e.g. in the areas of welfare, health and education – that push the system beyond its boundaries whilst also creating social spaces and relations beyond capital towards the constitution – the building – of commons.

This 'inside-outside approach' is helpful in thinking through how we fight (and disarm) the state and capital whilst also building our power through strengthening alternatives and where *Midnight Notes* are perhaps too quick to point to celebrate existing struggles past and present, we (the sympathetic) could pause for a moment of more sombre and much needed analysis: the analysis of failure. Not as a conjunctural interpretation of the historical relations between class forces and the question of why the working class has been so massively defeated by capital and its governments under neoliberalism, but – to keep political agency central – turning to the micro-level of organising resistance in the everyday. What has worked, what didn't work and why not? What are the specifics of the struggles taking place at present and how do we connect, not just with those in struggle but with those who are not: how do we communicate autonomous practices beyond our subcultures? How do we connect with others' struggle? How can we not turn against one another in the face of fear and anger? And how to find ways to join forces between labour and environmental struggles in the fight for ecological protection? It seems we still have a good deal of questions to tackle if we are going to move from looking for towards cultivating those red shoots that signal the way out of what is not only capital's but also – even if for different reasons – our crisis.

Tricity Bandix
tricity@riseup.net

Footnotes

1. *Midnight Notes (and Friends), Promissory Notes: From Crisis to Commons*, see midnightnotes.org/Promissory%20Notes.pdf.
2. Autonomist Marxism expands the definition of working class struggle beyond the realms of directly waged work, which is a useful contribution to understanding the social relations of capital. For a good discussion see Harry Cleaver (1979/2000), 'Introduction', *Reading Capital Politically*, Leeds: Anti/Thesis.
3. Which is not to say that it did not have its successes, but that it has now reached its limits and is giving way to new restructurings.
4. Although if wages as a percentage of GDP can be taken as a measure of workers' power, then in China this declined from 53% to 41% from 1997 to 2005, according to World Bank research, see Jianwu He and Louis Kuijs, *World Bank China Research Paper No.7*, September 2007, page 11.

connected and where financial and productive capital are intimately intertwined, the knock-on effects are clear. We are part of this crisis, yet perhaps precisely here is where a strengthening of class antagonism is possible. The wave of demonstrations across Europe under the slogan, 'We won't pay for your crisis!' was an expression of this. But has this wave been and gone?

Opportunities and limits

The attempt to understand capital's contradictions in terms of the struggles of the working class remains a source of debate amongst Marxists. It is criticised for ignoring other factors that contribute to capitalist crises that have little to do with resistance (e.g. saturated markets or government regulations). And indeed, this is

not a moot point in the current climate where it is difficult to determine where resistance may be taking place or how the defensive struggles and defeats of last 30 years can really be understood as successes in bringing down neoliberalism. Not least, the celebratory tone with which *Midnight Notes* list workers' struggles in Asian countries, a "revival of anti-capitalist struggles" in Italy, Spain, Greece, Ireland, Iceland and Latvia, as well as resistances against foreclosures in the US, and perhaps we can add here in the UK, struggles such as the recent Visteon occupation or the wave of strikes in the oil industry, it is obvious that these have been momentary surges that – at least at present – are limited in their ability to connect and circulate in a move towards progressive social change.

Midnight Notes couple their hope with

COMMENT

ABOUT FREEDOM

ANGEL ALLEY

It's been a busy July in Angel Alley. The Advisory Service for Squatters have just released the new version of the *Squatters Handbook*, filled with all you need to know for a successful future in no rent housing and available from us for only £1.50 post free. A full review will be in the next issue if we can rummage up an unbiased reviewer.

Our roving reporter and former editor Rob Ray now has more free time and has taken on editing the international pages. Given we already benefit from Scott Wakeham's skills as reviews editor, editors Dean Talent and Andy Meinke are hoping their reduced workload will mean no excuses for getting the paper out on time.

Vulture-eyed readers will have noticed the four week gap in the dates on issues 7012 and 7013. As you know, we usually miss an issue out in August and one over Christmas in order to keep it to 24 issues a year, but in an attempt to get back on track we missed out an issue earlier and won't now be missing out the one in August.

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 14, so if your subscription runs out with this issue you'll have 7014 above your name. If the number is 7014 or less, then your subscription is now due for renewal. See page 16 for the current 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 to send you 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 15th August 2009 and the last day to get copy to us for that issue will be Thursday 6th August. 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

Supporters of government and the State argue that it is the most efficient way of doing things. Its latest wheeze, the Independent Safeguarding Authority (ISA), shows this to be mere propaganda.

The ISA has been set up to prevent children being killed by paedophiles. An admirable enough aim, and something that no one is going to argue against. However, as is often the case with the state and information-gathering, it is a sledgehammer to crack a nut.

Anyone who goes into a school to work with children, or has regular dealings with children in any other setting, will have to be vetted by the ISA. It was set up after the enquiry in the Soham murders, when Holly Wells and Jessica Chapman were killed by school caretaker Ian Huntley.

There are already 6.5 million people covered by the current Criminal Records Bureau checks on teachers and school staff and youth workers. This new scheme increases it to over 11 million, near enough one quarter of the adult population. If I want to go on a school trip with my kids I have to go through this check and be added to the compulsory database. While we've been told that it will be free for parents who volunteer, it will cost £64 for anyone working.

The intention of the scheme is to protect children. Instead it sends a message that they should trust no one who has not been vetted by the State. How good a job does the state do of vetting people? Not that great as it turns out. Of the CRB checks so far, 0.1% turn out to have been false positives. This doesn't sound like much, until you work out that it means 5,500 people denied work because of errors. As the furore over the ISA broke out, it emerged that a woman in Wiltshire had what amounted to police hearsay reported on her CRB check when she applied to teach in a Church Sunday school. Her crime? Leaving her children in a park while she went to a shop. The cops spoke to her about it, recorded that she'd

been 'spoken to' and it surfaced on her CRB check that she was a 'risk to children'. Had it been a real job, she'd be reliant on the reasonable attitude of the employer – less likely to be reasonable. New Labour have this mystical faith in big databases. I've had enough experience of them to know that 100% accuracy is an illusion. This one will be no better and wouldn't have done a lot of good in Soham. The police already knew Huntley was dodgy – they just didn't say so when they were asked. Nor does it address the fact that the vast majority of child abuse is done by someone known to the victim.

The news has been full of prominent authors like Philip Pullman criticising the new register and refusing to go into schools from now on. While I think it's a shame that some authors won't be reading in schools any more, the point made by Anthony Browne, current children's laureate, is perhaps more relevant. He said "the idea of us saying 'We are special and we should not abide by the same rules as dinner ladies' is wrong. If they have to be checked, authors should too."

There is already a shortage of volunteers to run youth projects and primary schools are virtually man-free zones. There are only two male teachers at my daughter's primary school, out of around 30. On the one hand the government says it's worried about kids being obese, but on the other it makes another hoop for all the volunteers who keep sports and activities going for them.

And I haven't even started on the legitimacy of the state interfering in every walk of life.

The best protection that children can have comes from the engagement of others around them, not computer systems. If people see a child in difficulties, or see someone's behaviour being unacceptable, they can either challenge it or leave it to the authorities. Encouraging the latter discourages the former. Another case of a government policy doing the opposite of what it says on the tin.



Freedom's future

I note a couple of issues ago that you are thinking of going monthly. While I can see your reasoning, I think this would be a mistake.

Firstly, coming out less often means you will be less topical. While I appreciate that a fortnightly schedule means you are not always timely, monthly will mean there is no news element, only comment and analysis. These are good, but how would *Freedom* then be any different from a more regular *Black Flag*, *Direct Action* or *Organise*?

Secondly, if copy is the problem, I suspect that being less regular will lead to less copy. I think it may also change the nature of it. We recently had an Anarchist Conference with wide participation and plenty of people with things to say. Can't you cajole a few more of them to contribute?

One of the subtexts of the Conference as far as I read it was talking about our infrastructure. Like it or not, *Freedom* is a central part of the anarchist infrastructure in this country. In the midst of an upswing in class struggle and interest in anarchist ideas is an odd time to reduce its output.

Martin H.

A response from an old old reader to your canvassing opinion on whether it would be better to switch from fortnightly to monthly publication. Whenever I feel the urge to comment on something in *Freedom* I look at the last date for copy for the next issue and find it has already passed. Mostly my copy of the paper doesn't even reach me by that date. More importantly, no journal can hope to be seen as a newspaper if it appears less than once a week.

Certainly *Freedom* always contains interesting stuff, including 'exclusives', but undoubtedly it could be of more value as a thoughtful monthly. However, to regain acceptance of the journal as a serious contribution to political-cum-whatever thought, those comrades who share responsibility for its editorial guidance and comment need to curb their tendency to indulge in or applaud juvenile remarks. I cite as one example, from the issue of 18th July, the silly aside on "the bitterly jealous" *Guardian* re its important exposure of phone-hacking by *News of the World* journalists. The amount of contempt one can heap on those who have other perspectives on the world should never be mistaken for a proper measure of the merits of anarchist propaganda.

Donovan Pedelty

John Bowden

The contents of a prison intelligence report on me is I'm sure the latest attempt by the prison authorities to prevent my release and should be looked at in the context of what happened in 2007 with the Stillman allegations. There is an obvious continuum here and a definite pattern of his falsehoods all designed to prejudice the decision of the parole board whenever it needs to consider my release.

Essentially the strategy is the same as in 2007 – to try and persuade the parole board that I am linked to an illegal group on the outside (in 2007 it was a terrorist or paramilitary group, now it's a criminal or 'gangland' fraternity) and therefore represent a risk to public safety. There never was in 2007 and there isn't now any police intelligence to corroborate or substantiate the claim of my association with illegal groups on the outside of prison and there remains absolutely no evidential basis to the allegations whatsoever. In fact, the source of the allegations is senior prison staff who keen to manufacture 'evidence' of my danger to the public have used the identity of people who have visited me in prison to claim an association with illegal groups on the outside. In 2007 'evidence' of my involvement with a 'terrorist organisation' was a visit I'd received from two members of the Anarchist Black cross, a perfectly legal and legitimate prisoners' rights group; in 2008 'evidence' of my involvement in the Glasgow underworld was a visit I'd received from an ex-prisoner who I'd served time with. Despite there existing absolutely no evidence that my relationship with either the ABC members or the ex-prisoner extended beyond the context of prison or that their lifestyles and social and political associations were anything other than perfectly legal, their visiting me was used as evidence in various prison reports to claim that I represented a danger to public safety and therefore should not be released from prison.

In July 2009 the intelligence management unit at Glenochil prison produced a report to "provide the parole board with a summary of intelligence records held on the prisoner Bowden, that are *relevant to risk*" (my emphasis) the report was intended to influence the decision of the parole board when considering my release after 28 years of imprisonment and is instructive of the way that bias, prejudice and lies are presented as apparently reliable and legitimate 'intelligence' when used to 'stitch-up' prisoners hated by the system.

In 2007 prior to an earlier parole hearing the prison social worker Matt Stillman had reported that articles by me that had appeared on 'terrorist' websites (specifically Brighton

ABC) was evidence that I was linked to and associated with 'terrorist' groups and therefore should not be released from prison.

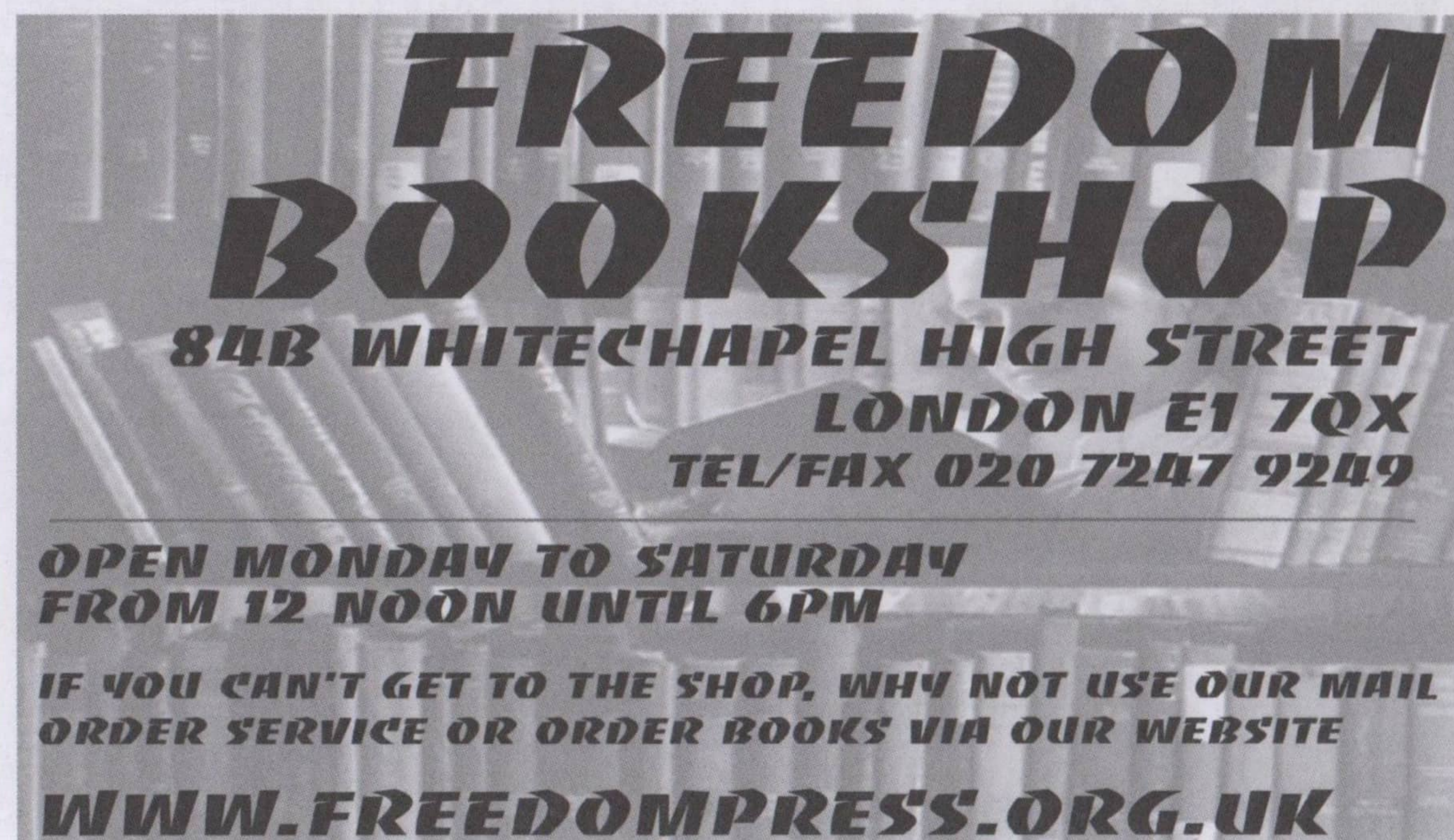
When considering the release of a life sentence prisoner following their recommended period of imprisonment imposed by the trial judge, the parole board must, first and foremost consider public safety and whether the prisoner continues to represent a risk to the community. In my own case, after almost three decades in jail and five years of regular access to the community in the form of work placements outside of prison and frequent home leaves, there was no serious suggestion that I presented any sort of risk or danger to the community. Yet in 2007 a report submitted to the parole board by Matt Stillman contained the allegation that I was linked to a 'terrorist' and 'paramilitary' group. As a consequence of Stillman's indolent lie my parole hearing that year was postponed and I was returned to a maximum-security jail for a year. Following an investigation of Stillman's allegation by various social work authorities in consultation with the police the allegation was completely discredited and revealed to be a lie, and I was returned to an open jail.

In July 2009 prior to another parole hearing the intelligence management unit at Glenochil prison in its report to the parole board claimed: "The intelligence records for Mr Bowden provide that he is a very influential individual who has connections to a number of well-known gangland figures from the Glasgow area". As in 2007, there exists absolutely no evidence to support such an allegation, which is obviously made to create the *illusion* of risk or danger to the community, and thereby prejudice the parole hearing against releasing me.

The reality is that elements within the prison system are prepared to lie, commit perjury and fabricate false 'intelligence' in order to prevent my release, and even when the lies are exposed, as with the claim that I had 'manipulated' a meeting with senior management at Glenochil prison, absolutely no disciplinary action is taken against the individuals responsible.

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LETTERS AND COMMENT



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GETTING ACTIVE

PRISON NEWS

We've all done it, or at least I hope we have, written to a prisoner in the United States, only to have your mail returned for some excuse: no return address on the envelope; the presence of gang symbols (circle A's); pictures or glitter glues to the letter or you've used coloured ink; you've sent a magazine and it's been refused because of its "express political content" or sent a book and the prison only accepts ones sent from recognised book distributors or direct from the publisher.

Well now someone has been refused copies of Obama's books *Dreams from My Father* and *The Audacity of Hope* on the grounds that they are "potentially detrimental to national security". Ahmed Omar Abu Ali, an American citizen who was convicted of plotting to assassinate George W. Bush based on a Saudi prison torture confession and is serving a 30-year sentence at a supermax prison in Florence, Colorado, requested copies of the books last August during the presidential election. The ban has only come to light now as part of the evidence of harsh conditions at the supermax put forward for Abu Ali's upcoming resentencing hearing. Brighton ABC's leaflet on *Writing To Prisoners* is available for download from: brightonabc.org.uk/texts/Leaflets/writing%20to%20prisoners.pdf

Gathering against the prison society
On 31st October and 1st November 2009 at the Cowley Club, 12 London Road, Brighton, BN1 4JA, there will be two days of discussions and presentations about the struggle for liberation, inside and outside of the prison walls.

- Prison struggles across Europe;
- Campaign Against Prison Slavery;
- Mental health;
- Fortress Europe;
- Combating the open prison.

As the economic crisis hits deeper and people get organised and angry, the state needs media diversions like the War on Terror, escalating political repression, paramilitary policing, new prisons and immigration detention centres, biometrics, surveillance, relentless imperialist incursions – all to maintain the class divisions that ensure continued economic exploitation. The UK State, leading others, is about to proceed on a major prison building project, whilst more and more our societies already resemble open prisons. It all has to go.

This is a call for debate and exchange, to reflect and agitate...

anti-state09@hushmail.com



● The Justice4Jean Campaign has launched an online petition calling on Transport for London and London Mayor Boris Johnson to allow the Mosaic of **Jean Charles de Menezes** (pictured above) to be erected outside Stockwell Tube station as a permanent memorial.

Due to the limited time to collect as many signatures as possible, they are asking people to sign the petition as soon as they can.

The petition reads: "We the undersigned call on Transport for London and the Mayor of London to allow the Mosaic of Jean Charles de Menezes to be erected outside Stockwell Tube station as a permanent memorial. Jean Charles De Menezes was an innocent man who died in tragic circumstances after being shot dead by police in 2005. The family and local community have maintained a temporary shrine for four years, outside Stockwell station, to express the huge amount of public sympathy about the manner and circumstances in which he died."

The petition can be signed here: <http://www.thepetitionsite.com/120/justice-for-jean-never-forget>

● Potential stallholders and workshop/meeting organisers are being asked by the organisers to apply for the forthcoming **Bristol Anarchist Bookfair** on Saturday 16th September to avoid disappointment. This year's bookfair takes place amidst the worst worldwide economic recession, and crisis of

capitalism, for 80 years. It is no surprise then that it will be loosely themed around the ideas of resistance and alternatives to recession. Full details about the Bookfair, including booking forms, venue and travel info, publicity and other bookfair events can be found by downloading the form from the website. Full details of what to do, cost of stalls and what information is needed are on the booking form. They emphasise that to get all your details in the programme they need your info by 12th August at latest. See <http://www.bristolanarchistbookfair.org>

● Manchester Anarchist Federation are asking political groups, campaign groups, publishers, distributors and bookshops to contribute to this year's **Manchester Anarchist Bookfair** to be held in September. The Bookfair is to be held on Saturday 26th September between 11am and 5pm. Stalls cost: Anarchist Groups and Campaigns, £10; Bookshops and book distributors, £20. There will also be a space for workshops and discussions which will provisionally include a panel session, 'Everything you wanted to know about anarchism', with representatives of the different federations present, a panel session on anarchist feminism, a discussion on No Borders and on anarchists at work/perspectives for industrial struggle. Those interested in booking a place can contact the organisers by emailing Manchester@af-north.org or Manchester@bookfair.org.uk

Welcome to Corporate Watch

Corporate Watch has now happily settled into its new home at Freedom Press, although we are yet to make our office as immaculate as ASS's! Volunteers are just about managing to squeeze in around all our boxes of publications and records of research going back over a decade.

For those of you who don't know, Corporate Watch started in the mid 1990s as a small group of people doing research for the anti-roads movement and became a workers' co-operative researching the social and ecological impact of corporations, focusing on issues such as GM. We've always been involved in movements, conducting research that's either not being done by anyone else or working on areas we felt required a state and corporate critical analysis and for which the only information available was biased in favour of those in power.

Many people have found Corporate Watch to be a useful resource, yet we always encourage people to do their own research as much as possible, to actively engage in research and campaigning themselves. We have produced a DIY guide on how to research companies and continue to do workshops on this topic to keep people up to date with the latest techniques. We try to act as a catalyst for independent research as much as possible, whilst also producing our own material. The process of researching itself can be fascinating. The frequent rejection of our Freedom of Information requests is just one window onto the ways in which the state protects corporations, and it is this state protection of corporations which represents one of our main themes of work.

We have covered a large variety of themes over the years and have made our research available in a variety of formats, from detailed reports, to briefings, DIY guides, colourful posters and comics, as well as poetry. In 1999, we produced the famous research briefing *Squaring Up to the Square Mile*, which mapped out London's financial district, in collaboration with other groups. Some of our reports include: *Corporate Law and Structures*; *What's Wrong with Corporate Social Responsibility?*; *Corporate Identity: A Critical Analysis of Private Companies' Engagement with the Identity Cards Scheme*; and *What's Wrong With Supermarkets?* Our recent *Technofixes* report, which details false technical 'solutions' to climate change, has been a very popular campaigning tool.

Most of our reports are available in Freedom Bookshop and online from our website. We've also been busy doing outreach at festivals and gatherings, which we'll be doing for the rest of the summer, and expanding our distribution network. We're producing regular news updates on our website and publishing our newsletter –



the next one focuses on experiences and analysis of mobilisations, from anti-NATO demos to plans for Copenhagen in December. The last edition discussed the politics of funding: how the not-for-profit sector is affected by funding in a variety of ways.

Corporate Watch's current projects are rather expansive and manage to keep us extremely busy. We're researching the role of the private sector in the UK immigration and asylum systems: the structural, political and humanitarian problems arising from its involvement and the impact this has had on migrants and asylum seekers, such as the dire situation of housing for migrants and charter flights deporting people. Another project involves mapping UK arms companies across the country, which will result in an interactive online map of companies involved in the arms trade.

We're also conducting research on the London 2012 Olympics to find out about the companies involved, both international and smaller local ones, such as housing corporations facilitating gentrification and construction firms that are blacklisting employees and getting workers to carry out work in dangerous conditions.

Another area of work revolves around a

fundamental question: 'How the State Protects Corporations?' We are currently looking at developments in the state's attack on civil liberties through the use of new legislation against animal rights campaigners in recent years. The state has developed new branches of the police force (ARNI and NETCU) to deal with this challenge to corporate power. Measures have been taken to prop up companies facing dissent, including the passing of legislation allowing companies to opt out of publishing data and the Bank of England granting facilities to Huntingdon Life Sciences (HLS).

Other topics that we're focusing on include: agrofuels, nanotechnology, Palestine, corporate rule (such as the revolving doors between the state and corporations), climate change, banking, the unemployment industry and corporate involvement in universities.

Please get in touch if you have any suggestions or juicy information on companies. If you want to subscribe to our news updates and newsletter, please do so via our website or fill in a subscription form on the back page of the newsletter. All the best from the co-op.

contact@corporatwatch.org
www.corporatwatch.org

REVIEWS

WHAT'S ON

AUGUST

1st Musical protest against the arms fair at the ExCel Centre, Victoria Dock Road, London SE16 1XL, from 2pm until 5pm, call 07513 792705 for more information.

3rd Pogo Café screening of *Breaking the Siege*, starts at 7.30pm at Pogo Café, 76a Clarence Road, London E5 8HB, see pogocafe.co.uk or call 020 8533 1214.

5th Anti-BNP demo at 9.30am, Liverpool Magistrates Court, 107 Dale Street, Liverpool L2 2IQ, when BNP campaigner Peter Tierney will be appearing in court charged with assaulting anti-fascists, contact liverpoolantifascists@riseup.net for details.

12th The London Free School: Notting Hill 1966, counterculture, community action and carnival roots slideshow and talk by Tom Vague from 7pm until 8.30pm at Housmans Bookshop, 5 Caledonian Road, London N1 9DX, from 7pm until 8.30pm, see housmans.com for more.

13th to 16th Welsh Climate Camp near Merthyr Tydfil, see climatecymru.org for details.

18th to 24th Earth First! Summer Gathering, ecological direct action without compromise – workshops, skill sharing and planning action, plus low-impact living without leaders – at a location in Cumbria, see earthfirst.org.uk or email summergathering@earthfirst.org.uk

22nd Violent London: 2,000 Years of Riots, Rebels and Revolts – Clive Bloom charts the story of London through centuries of popular insurrection and protest, a story of political activism expressed in street fighting and slum warfare, in assassination and bombing, at Housmans Bookshop, 5 Caledonian Road, London N1 9DX, from 7pm until 8.30pm, see housmans.com for more.

26th until 2nd September Climate Camp 2009, see climatecamp.org.uk for more.

29th A historical walk through the radical Jewish East End with David Rosenberg, for more information see housmans.com or email nik@housmans.com.

SEPTEMBER

5th Musical protest against the arms fair at the ExCel Centre, Victoria Dock Road, London SE16 1XL, from 2pm until 5pm, call 07513 792705 for more information.

5th Reclaim the Future 5 (RTF5), vast party event somewhere in London from 12 noon until 7am, see rts.gn.apc.org or email reclaiminfo@yahoo.co.uk for details.

12th Bristol Anarchist Bookfair with workshops, stalls, films, café and more at The Island, Bridewell Street, Bristol BS1 2PY from 10am until 6pm, see bristolanarchistbookfair.org for more.

OCTOBER

1st Bath Activist Network meeting from 7.30pm until 9pm downstairs at the Hobgoblin, James Street, Bath, see myspace.com/bathactivistnetwork for more or get in touch at bathactivistnetwork@yahoo.co.uk.

FILM

Wendy and Lucy

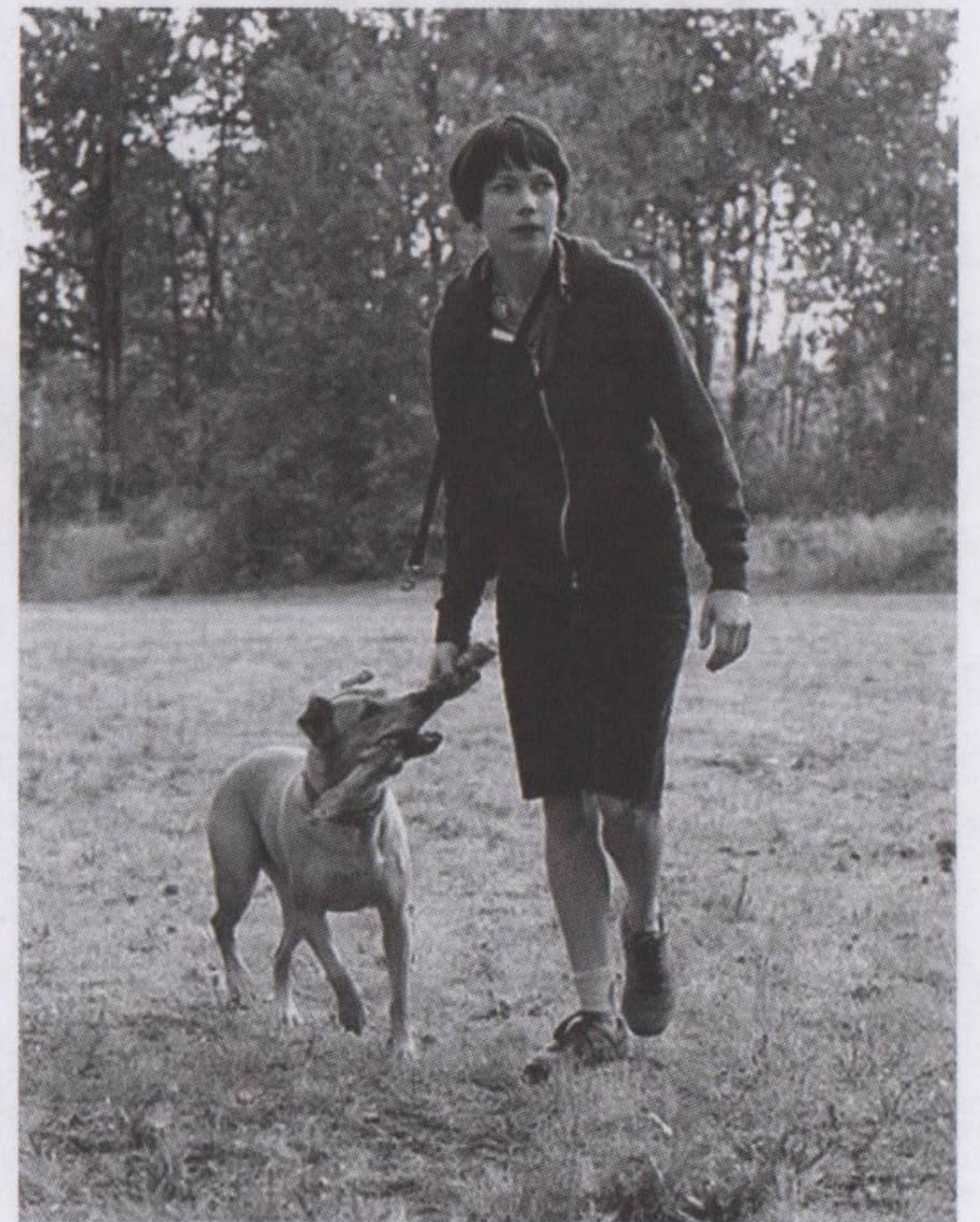
directed by Kelly Reichardt

Treading a fine line between tragic sentimentality and gratuitous miserabilism, this minimalist gem of downbeat cinematic neorealism has barely any narrative, little dialogue and scarcely more characterisation or action. Add a general tone of decay, depression (economic and psychological) and hopelessness – not to mention a denouement snatching away the one redeeming feature in the life of a lead who wasn't even particularly likeable to start with – and you'd appear to have a recipe for the pure voyeurism of abjection, as a defensively self-contained Wendy sees her precarious survival plan go predictably pear-shaped. Yet a judicious sprinkling of social interaction and nuance, merest suggestions of backstory, meticulous pacing and construction of atmosphere through naturalistic soundscape, landscape, design and cinematography allow Michelle Williams' magnificently restrained, entirely convincing performance to simultaneously encourage and undermine tendencies in viewers to disavow vicarious pleasure at other people's misfortunes with the bad faith of charitable sympathy.

We connect with this homeless lass in her twenties travelling north with devoted dog Lucy from a Midwest that had nothing to offer, pursuing vague intentions of fish-cannery drudgery in Alaska ("I hear they need people there"). The journey stalls along with her old banger's engine in a suburban Oregon whose gloomy climate echoes decrepit infrastructure and prospects – a local garage mechanic's estimate being way beyond her dwindling funds. So too are routine provisions, and she next gets caught ineptly shoplifting petfood. On returning hours later from the police station's bureaucratic machinery cranking out a modest – to her, catastrophic – fine, Lucy has disappeared from her tethering post. In mounting desperation Wendy searches the unfamiliar neighbourhood on foot – now sleeping rough, protected by neither car nor canine companion – and, buoyed only by the minor kindnesses of strangers, manages to persevere long enough for what seemed a highly unlikely reunion. Nevertheless, one supreme act of agonising altruism later, Wendy continues alone on the time-honoured hobo freight-train trail.

QUIZ ANSWERS

1. The Association of Chief Police Officers. You might have thought that it was a public body and subject to FoI, but oh no, it was set up as a private company (presumably to avoid such things in the first place).
2. The statue of Lenin. Ukrainian nationalists also damaged its arm. Police said they would now pull the whole statue down.
3. They answered every question with 'Che



Growing pain

Reichardt's previous film, *Old Joy* (2005) – also based on a short story by co-writer Jon Raymond – explored divergent middle-aged trajectories from failed 1960s counterculture. *Wendy and Lucy's* acute specificity of detail and resonance instead condenses the dilemmas of generations of contemporary lower-class American youth unable to identify with – or afford the luxury of – the hopes and dreams of prior idealisms. Amid the social wreckage of families and communities and collapsing welfare safety nets, when no collective ambitions remain, only a beleaguered individualism of barely subsistent decency can counter anti-social pathologies of consumerism and crime. Respecting Wendy's fragile, fallible character armour, the filmmakers invite orthodox blaming of those at the sharp end for their own shortcomings – then demonstrate how such moral judgementalism dehumanises while denying harsh reality. Meanwhile this couple's co-dependence is shattered by mature self-determination, signalling a coming of age in a heartless world which disallows the simple consolation of childlike love. Thereby, through mundane understatement rather than hysterical gesture, a society is subjected to utterly withering condemnation.

www.tomjennings.pwp.blueyonder.co.uk

Wendy and Lucy is out now on DVD.

- Guevara', 'Marx', 'Trotsky' or 'Lenin', hoping to make the recording unusable. Funnily enough they weren't the right answers. The left, eh?
4. A series of orchestrated killings or disappearances of dissidents and intellectuals critical of the regime during the 1990s. The regime claimed they were done by 'rogue elements' in the intelligence ministry.

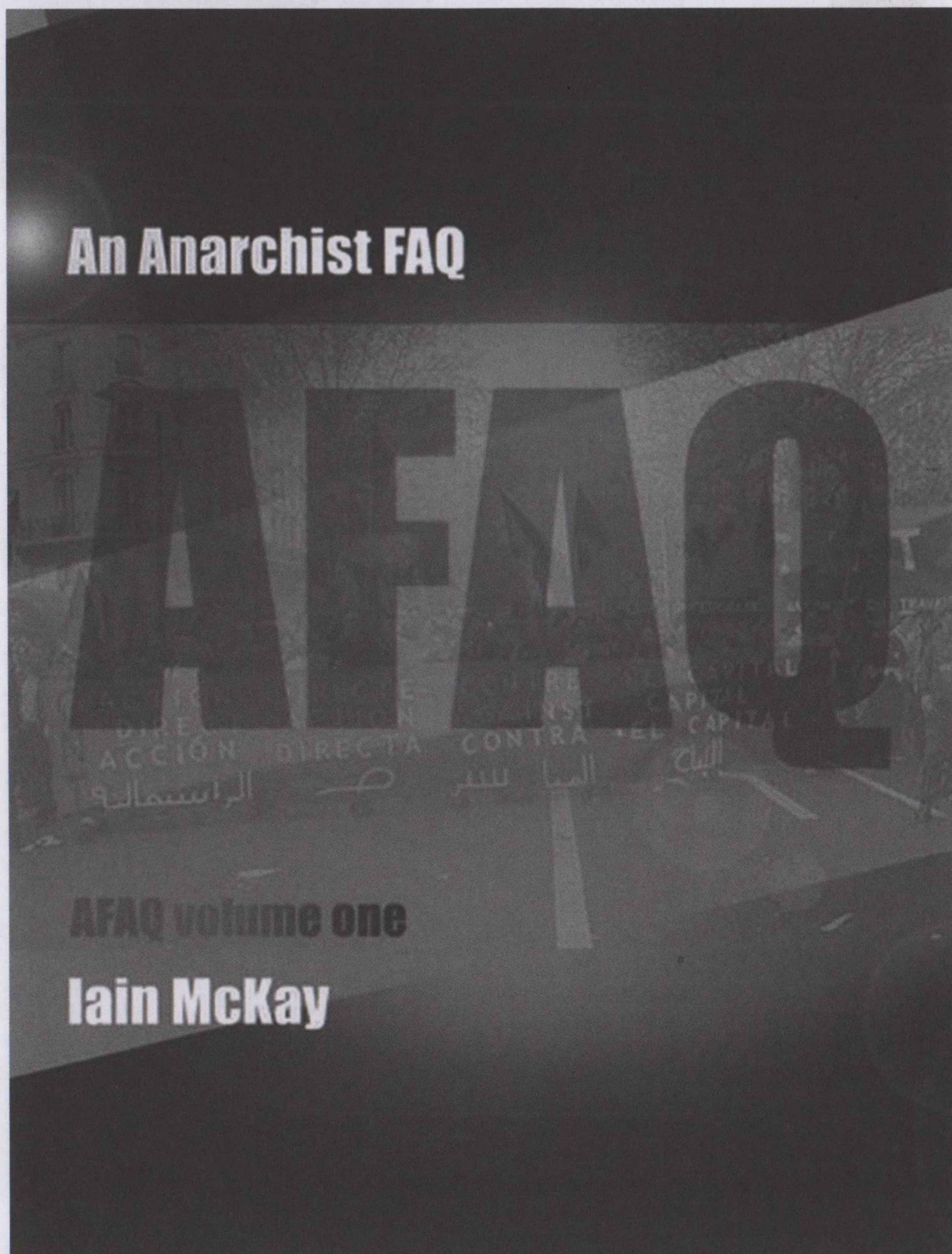
The big black book

Richard Griffin welcomes the long-awaited arrival in print of a trusty anarchist resource

At long last *An Anarchist Frequently Asked Questions (AFAQ)* has moved from the Internet onto the printed page – 555 printed pages to be precise. In an engaging introduction regular *Freedom* contributor Iain McKay sets out the aims of *AFAQ*. The purpose of the book, he writes, is to present the case for anarchism, “to convince people they should become anarchists” and to act as a resource for anarchists. All these are laudable but I suspect the main use the book will be put too is as a resource for people who already regard themselves as anarchists. Indeed it is likely to be *the* primary source anarchists turn too for information about anarchist theory and history. Want to know about the role of anarchists in the May-June revolt in France, 1968? Interested in the origins of the black, black/red flag and circled A as symbols of our movement? Want arguments for why capitalism does not benefit working class people? Need to remind yourself of the purpose of the state? This is the place to turn.

The book would also be excellent for the (small but) growing number of university courses which include anarchism as part of their programme. Interestingly while there are many good anarchists working as academics in universities and colleges this book has been produced by activists writing and researching in their spare time and contributing collectively. An example of anarchism in action in fact. As the book points out this is “an anarchist FAQ written by anarchists”. It is accessible, not laden with jargon but also built on ten years and more of solid research.

Take, for example, the answer to the question: is profit the reward for the productivity of capital (page 236)? The four-page essay that follows includes referenced quotes from Proudhon, Bakunin, David Ellerman, the economist Joan Robinson, William Lazonick, and early English socialist Thomas Hodgskin. The answer to the question, in a nutshell, is “the reason why capital gets a ‘reward’ is simply due to the current system which gives the capitalist class an advantage which allows them to refuse access to their property except under the condition that they command the workers to make more than they have to pay in wages and keep their capital at the end of production process to be used afresh the next”. While I suspect that most readers of *Freedom* would have given a similar answer having a resource that we can turn too to provide quotes from other anarchists and critics of capitalism as well as reminding



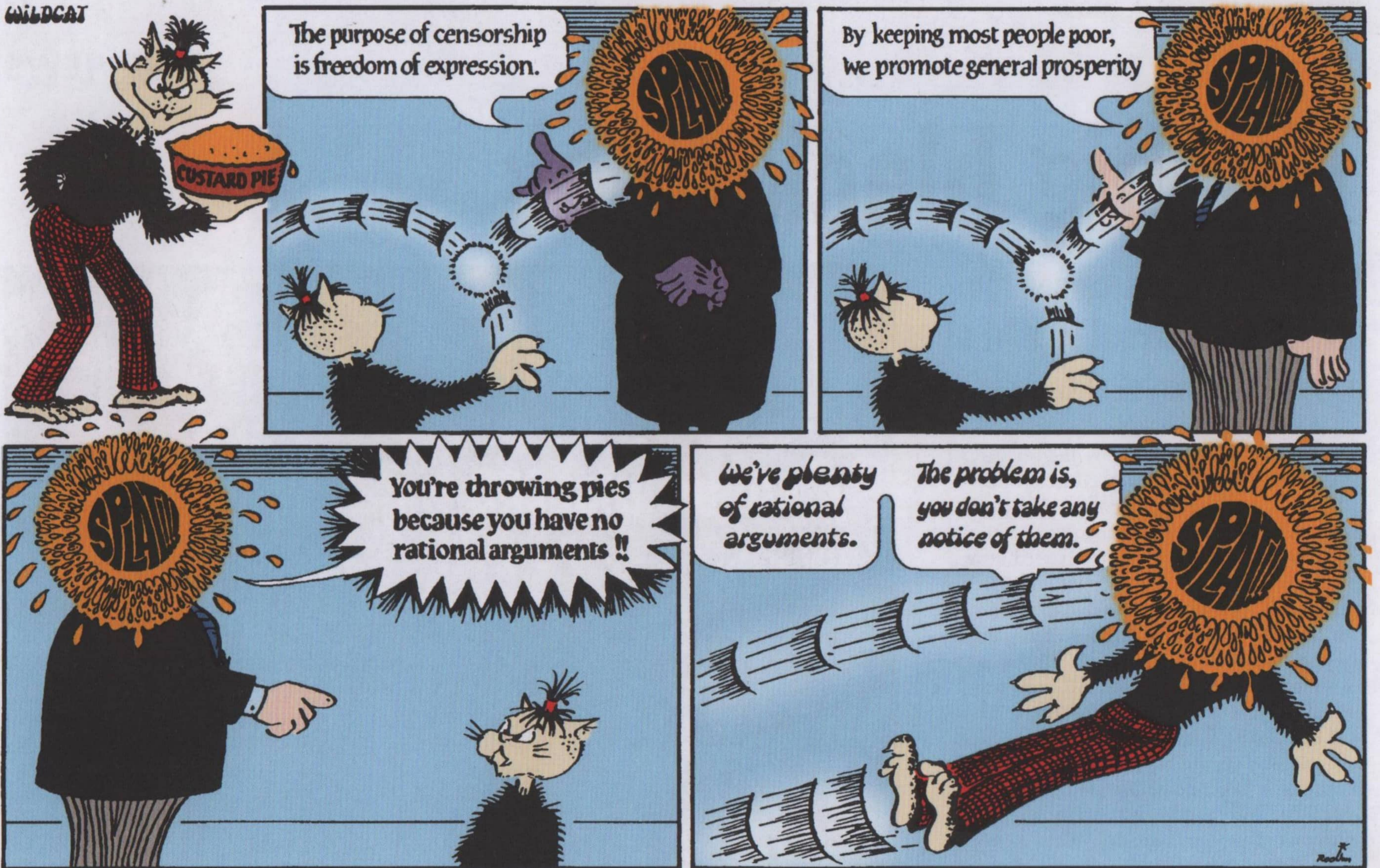
ourselves (or finding for the first time) anarchist arguments is invaluable.

The book, the first of two volumes, is organised around the following main questions: What is Anarchism?; Why do anarchists oppose the current system?; What are the myths of capitalist economics?; How does statism and capitalism affect society?; What do anarchists think cause ecological problems?; and Is ‘anarcho’-capitalism a type of anarchism? Each section is broken down into a series of sub-questions addressing specific elements of the main theme. The structure of the book is such that it is easy to dip into.

If there is a single underlying theme to the book it is one born from the original web-based AFAQ project, that is that the only political theory that can legitimately be called ‘anarchism’ is a comprehensively left

wing ideology rooted in class politics. All other claims to anarchism and libertarianism are at best partial and at worse, as in the case of so-called ‘anarcho’-capitalism, retrograde. Anarchism is a left project or it is nothing. The book also provides valuable arguments against those on the authoritarian left like Lenin who described anarchism once as “an infantile disorder”.

While addressing the big questions that anarchism as a credible political theory needs to answer as well as responding to the criticisms levelled at anarchism from both the left and right, the book also includes an interesting appendix on ‘The Symbols of Anarchy’ describing the history of the black flag, including its use by Nestor Makhno’s partisans in the Russian Revolution when they managed to keep Ukraine free of



Review

◀ page 15

authoritarian rule for two years. The use of the black flag by libertarians, however, dates much further back than that. *AFAQ* points out that "Louise Michel, famous participant in the Paris Commune of 1871, was instrumental in popularising the use of the black flag in anarchist circles". Unlike the black flag, the history of the circled A symbol is less clear. While some like Peter Marshall claim that it originates from Proudhon's maxim that 'Anarchy is Order', this as the book points out is unlikely. The first 'official' appearances of the symbol seem to have been in 1956 when at its foundation in Brussels the *Alliance Ouvrier Anarchiste* adopted the symbol and images

of anarchist militia in the Spanish Civil War with the image painted on their helmets. While the exact origins of the symbol are unknown the fact that in most languages the word for anarchism begins with an 'A', along with the simplicity of the image perhaps explains its universal appeal (and not just to anarchists).

A couple of minor criticisms. Inevitably the size of the book means that at £20 it will be out of the reach of some comrades – however the Anarchist FAQ website remains a free resource. An index and bibliography would have been valuable. However these are only small points. Iain and the rest of the collective and AK Press should be congratulated for producing this comprehensive resource. The prefix to the book is 'An' Anarchist FAQ. The collective

is too modest. This is the place to go to find out about anarchist ideas, theory and practice. It is accessible and based on sound research. Thoroughly recommended. *An Anarchist FAQ: volume one* by Iain McKay, published by AK Press, £20.

THE QUIZ

1. Who has agreed to be subject to the Freedom of Information Act?
2. Who had his nose damaged in Kiev in June this year?
3. How did Manchester University behave in the 1975 version of University Challenge?
4. What were the Chain Murders in Iran?

Answers on page 14

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