

TEACHERS WALK OUT

Anger by workers over management axing staff and courses at Tower Hamlets College

Teaching staff at Tower Hamlets College have taken a stand against the proposed management cuts by walking out on indefinite strike.

The cuts to staffing levels and student courses will hit thousands of adults in the East End wanting to learn English to help them into work in one of the poorest boroughs in the country. The walk out began on 27th August to coincide with new term enrolment which received overwhelming support from the students.

At the end of last term management circulated a document to staff at the largest community college in east London about implementing changes including the loss of 1,000 ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) students, 50 redundancies across teaching and support staff and the withdrawal of college ESOL classes from Outreach centres on estates and in the community. According to teaching staff Outreach students are almost all women, **page 3** ▶▶

LENS CAP HERE'S A TANK!



That's it in the middle hiding behind the bush. If you know what type of tank it is you spent too much time inside the London DSEi arms fair instead of outside trying to close it down. A full report on the demonstrations will appear in our next issue.

OUT OF THEIR LEAGUE?

Anti-fascist protestors clashed with the English Defence League (EDL) in Birmingham for a second time in as many months as the demonstration against Islamic extremism was met with resistance leading to 90 arrests.

The protest in Birmingham city centre on Saturday 5th September was organised by EDL against what they perceive as the growing 'Islamification' of the UK and the threat of Islamic fundamentalism. A previous demonstration in August by the group was met with a counter-demonstration organised by Unite Against Fascism who incited the crowd, made up of largely Asian youth, to 'smash the BNP' despite the British National Party (BNP) having no connection with the demonstration.

The counter protest on Saturday was hastily

organised by the Socialist Workers Party with a smaller turn-out, but still ended in violence as a larger group of EDL supporters confronted the left-wing protestors.

The English Defence League is a network of ex-football hooligans who came together as a response to the returning forces parade in Luton being attacked by Islamic extremists. Many on the left still think of EDL as a right-wing fascist group with links to the BNP, despite the constant denials by EDL to the contrary. The BNP have also publicly distanced themselves from EDL banning its members from being involved in the organisation.

Others feel the left's response to EDL actually increases racial tension in the area allowing genuine pro-fascist groups like the BNP to benefit.

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NEWS

IN BRIEF

MEAN JUDGE: A judge, unhappy with repeated interruptions from a robbery suspect, took rather direct action to achieve silence in court – he ordered a deputy to put duct tape over the defendant's mouth.

Judge Stephen Belden, of Canton Municipal Court in Ohio, said that the taping was the best way to restore order at a hearing for 51-year-old Harry Brown of Canton, *The Repository* newspaper reported. Brown complained that his court-appointed attorney wasn't prepared and angered the judge with interruptions. After a warning, the judge told the bailiff to tape Brown's mouth shut.

When the tape was removed, Brown said that the judge wasn't being respectful. The judge ended the hearing and sent the case to a grand jury.

BAKUNO'S RELATIVE DISCOVERED: A team of scientists from Britain, the United States and Papua New Guinea found more than 40 previously unidentified species when they climbed into the kilometre-deep crater of Mount Bosavi and explored a pristine jungle habitat teeming with life that has evolved in isolation since the volcano last erupted 200,000 years ago.

In a remarkably rich haul from just five weeks of exploration, the biologists discovered 16 frogs which have never before been recorded by science, at least three new fish, a new bat and a giant rat, which may turn out to be the biggest in the world.

The discoveries are being seen as fresh evidence of the richness of the world's rainforests and the explorers hope their finds will add weight to calls for international action to prevent the demise of similar ecosystems. They said Papua New Guinea's rainforest is currently being destroyed at the rate of 3.5% a year.

PROTEST: Police have cautioned three people for trespass after they spent a night on a crane protesting at the design of a new water treatment plant.

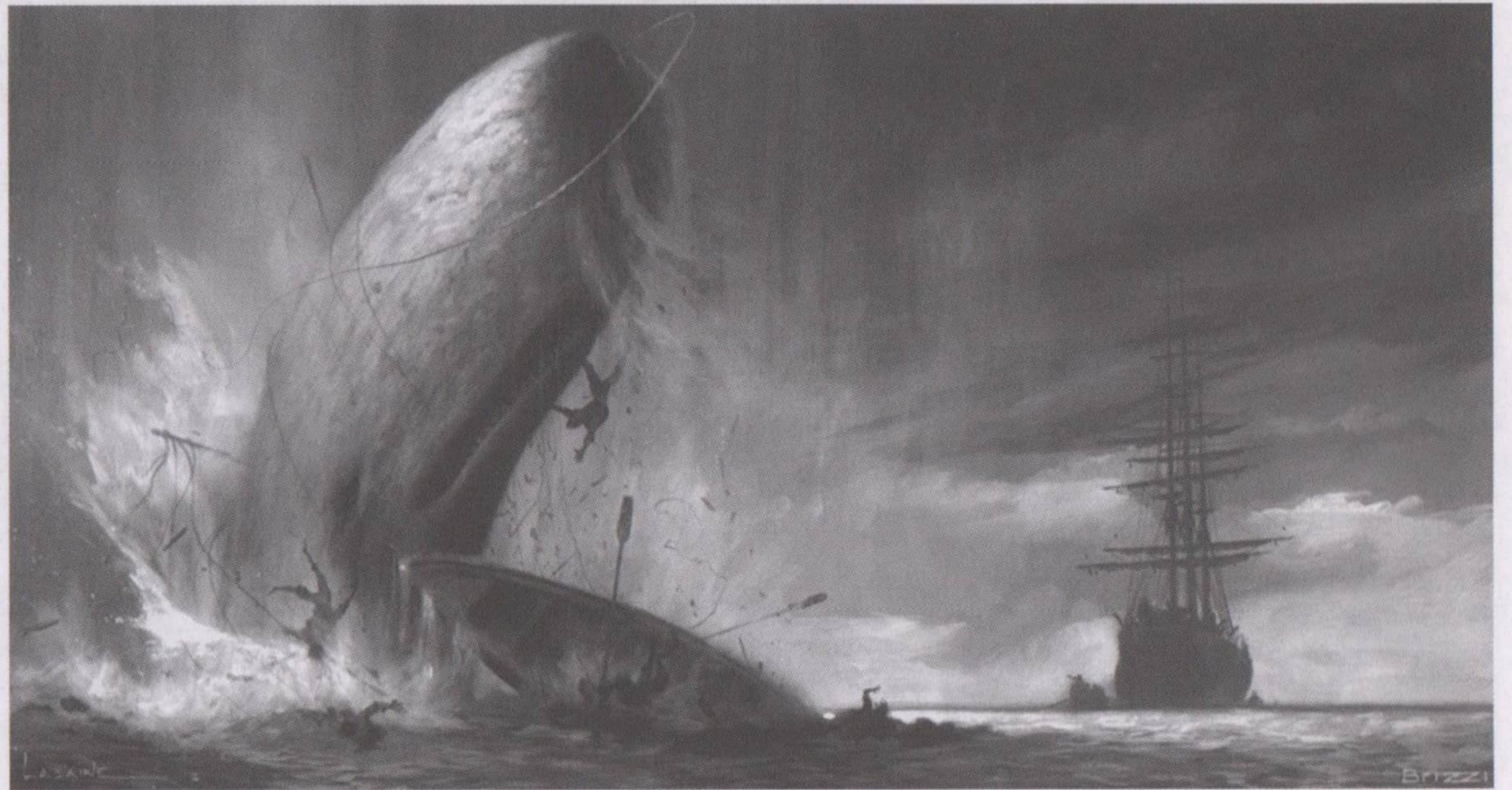
The three, including a 67-year-old man, began the protest at Glyntawe in the Brecon Beacons national park on 6th September, unveiling a banner. They claim the plant looks like a World War Two concrete bunker. But Welsh Water said the building would blend in with the area when finished and will be extensively landscaped.

The three men – Jeremy Watts, Ashford Price and Steve Rose – were later arrested and given a caution for aggravated trespass.

An action group has been formed in Glyntawe called We Want Out. It is calling for the building, which campaigners say is 40ft (12.1m) high and 80ft (24.3m) long, to have a Welsh slate roof and stone cladding on its walls.



LENS CAP ANTI-CAPITALIST HEROES



Anti-capitalist heroes number 74 – Moby-Dick: Although best known for his animal rights activities comrade Dick was also responsible for the death of the Pequod's first mate Starbuck after who the toffee-nosed coffee shop chain was named.

Angry Brigade veteran dies



Jake Prescott, who was involved with the notorious Angry Brigade, has died at the age of 65.

Jake, or Jack as he was known to his family and friends, was convicted along with other members of the militant action group in the early 1970s for conspiracy to cause bombings, serving 10 years of a 15 year sentence.

The Angry Brigade was accused of carrying out 25 attacks on government buildings, embassies, corporations and the homes of government ministers over a five-year period between 1967 and 1971. No one was killed during the bombing campaign and political communiqué's were issued to explain their actions and justify their targets. It was addressing envelopes for these communiqué's that Prescott was convicted as a member of the Angry Brigade, or, more accurately, the Stoke Newington Eight as they became known during their trial, then the longest criminal

court case in British judicial history.

Seven other political activists were also convicted of the conspiracy, but no one was ever found guilty of actually planting the bombs.

Unlike the rest of the Angry Brigade, Prescott came from a solid working class background. Growing up in Dunfermline he had a troubled early life; his mother died when he was six, his father abandoned him and he had already spent time in prison before he moved to London and was introduced to the revolutionary political scene of the day.

The early '70s was a time of intense social and political upheaval, the anti-Vietnam war movement was the preoccupation of the left, along with the British Army in Northern Ireland, industrial conflict was escalating with millions out on strike regularly, plus the Clydeside shipyard workers were locked into a lengthy and bitter dispute with Edward Heath, the then Tory prime minister.

While serving his sentence as part of the Angry Brigade, Prescott was active in the Hull prison riots of 1976, staging a mass demo on the roof in response to the brutality of prison screws.

He also studied for a university degree while inside making proper use of the prison libraries.

He eventually married and raised a family he remained devoted to until the end, never cashing in on his notoriety and even writing a letter of apology to Robert Carr who, as home secretary, was one of the people the Angry Brigade targeted.

In his own words: "As the only working-class member, I was not surprised to be the first in and last out of prison. When I look back on it, I was the one who was angry and the people I met were more like the Slightly Cross Brigade".



Is this the way forward?

Anarchists and co-operation with the left

Over the last few weeks there have been various initiatives from the left to woo a larger anti-Labour Party front to fight the elections. We as anarchists have historically not got involved on in the election machine as we have always seen it as irrelevant and divisive. But there have been developments which mean that, in the current climate, we as anarchists should re-examine our position.

One such development is the break from the Labour Party of the RMT and the proposal that the RMT would support a pro-working class alternative to the Labour Party. If the RMT called for a united Left front, would we not be mad not to get

involved? Would it be more palatable for anarchists if a trade union called for a party of class unity rather than another socialist party? Maybe? But the real issue is a working class organisation is asking for real working class support and we should back this call.

Secondly the current economic crisis has made the ground fertile for anarchists to argue that the system can't be changed, it is corrupt to its core and can't be overhauled but must be put out of its misery.

Finally, being involved in an election campaign would allow us to get our anarchist ideas out there to a wider audience. This is not the converted types who pass through the anarchist book fairs, but real people who, during an election, are more likely to talk to you about issues than at any other time. Can we let such an opportunity pass by again?

The BNP have done well organising in those white working class areas where there is genuine disillusionment with the political process and politicians. These areas should be fertile ground for anarchists as well. We need to get in there and get our ideas across on the doorstep and mix it up with the BNP.

We need to start a process of debate and reevaluation within our anarchist communities to understand where we are, how we can build working class solidarity and move forward for the future in order to bring our anarchist ideas into the present. We need to do this as soon as we can or else, once again, developments will have passed us by. We need to try and reach some agreement for an anarchist federation/umbrella, whatever you want to call it, to stand as a joint anarchist block in any call for a class unity at the election.

Tom Cullen

Tower Hamlets teachers walk out

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most of whom are only able to attend classes because of the proximity.

Part of the strike campaign is to ensure those who lost their jobs over the summer through compulsory redundancies are reinstated, although the strikers insist it's not just about fighting job cuts but ensuring vital courses don't close.

As one strikers pointed out, "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. At Tower Hamlets College we were used to thinking we were lucky to have a relatively decent

employer. With this illusion smashed overnight, the strength of solidarity was amazing".

A strike fund has already been set up with firefighters, Royal Mail's regional sorting office at Bromley-by-Bow and Docklands rail workers all committing to raising funds. Local anarchists have been actively involved in supporting the strike. Whitechapel Anarchist Group have been helping out on the picket line while London Action Resource Centre (LARC), the local anarchist social centre, is being used by the strike committee as a base.

Things people can do to support the struggle include:

- Visit the picket lines at: Poplar High

Street, E14 0AF; Arbour Square, E1 0PT; Bethnal Green Road, E2 6AB.

- Send messages of support to: Richard McEwan (branch secretary) phone 07532 364 638 Alison Lord (branch chair) email alord@tower.ac.uk John Budis (branch secretary) email jbudis@tower.ac.uk Roberto Foth (branch secretary) email roberto.foth@tower.ac.uk
- Email the college principal Michael Farley at michael.farley@tower.ac.uk
- Take a collection within your group. Send to: Strike fund, c/o Keith Priddle, Tower Hamlets College, Arbour Square, London E1 0PT

NEWS

Local activists demand action on housing

Hamiltonhill Action Group report on the failings of Glasgow's social housing scheme

Since putting in a formal request to Glasgow Housing Association (GHA) for a timetable of works to install Secured By Design steel security doors in Hamiltonhill, the Hamiltonhill Action Group have now escalated the campaign since GHA have chosen to completely ignore both the request and the complaint logged by the residents via the Action Group.

Over a month has passed since the Action Group registered their official request but the GHA has been deathly silent, despite follow up correspondence from the Group and residents. Even according to their own agenda and targets of responding to residents' requests and correspondence the GHA have failed. Considering a colossal 50% of the budget is spent on administration, surely it can't be an issue of not having enough people to answer the phones?

The GHA have shown themselves to be unconcerned for their tenants' health and safety, consistently ignoring demands for investment to be made to improve the quality of social housing in the area. However, Hamiltonhill has been subject to a systematic programme of neglect by the GHA and Glasgow City Council, prior to it being earmarked for demolition in 2008. A local resident said: "We have stayed here nine years, and our door always opens when you



An info stall for residents in Hamiltonhill

press the service button, at any time. They don't think there is anything wrong with that."

Having publicised their situation throughout Glasgow and beyond, Hamiltonhill Action Group have now gained the support of the Scottish Tenants Organisation as well as neighbouring estates giving further signs of solidarity and support. The Action Group are holding a weekly stall immediately outside GHA headquarters and have made contact with several other residents' groups in Glasgow. There have also been a large number of unaffiliated social housing residents coming up to the stall to share

stories and generally showing GHA that Glasgow is supporting the campaign for better social housing, whether it is in Possil, Parkhead or Pollockshields.

The two groups have called a national demonstration on the 24th September in Glasgow to show that the people of Scotland want and are in need of safe, secure, dry and affordable social housing and demand respect for their communities and themselves from the people who are meant to be working for them.

Contact Hamiltonhill Action Group on mobile phone 07826113198, or email hamiltonhillactiongroup@googlemail.com

Care in the consultancy

How New Labour private enterprise is stitching up the NHS

The crisis in the National Health Service reaches new and absurd heights as global management consultancy firm McKinsey and Company was recently employed by the government to advise on reducing the huge budget needed to maintain the health service. McKinsey, who charge up to £1,000 a day for their services, published its report with the proposal of cutting the workforce by 10% across the board with the loss of 137,000 clinical and admin posts, as well as a freeze on recruitments, to save £20bn by 2014. Further proposals put forward were to limit medical school places and implement an early retirement programme. The confidential

report, published in March, was publicly leaked at the end of August, forcing the government into an embarrassing position last week of openly rejecting the ideas.

McKinsey has a notoriously poor history of advising public services, having previously aided the collapse of Railtrack by encouraging the company to reduce spending on infrastructure and instead return cash to its shareholders.

The relationship between New Labour and McKinsey is a long and very close one. Both the head of the Downing Street policy directorate and head of the Delivery Unit in Blair's government were ex-employees of McKinsey, and the firm was secretly drafted in by the then Prime Minister to restructure the Cabinet Office behind the backs of government and party officials. Another government official, Lord Birt, was forced to resign his position with the consultants over his involvement in securing lucrative McKinsey

contracts when the ministers were forced to admit the Ministry of Defence alone had handed the consultancy firm £40m worth of contracts since 2001.

Another of Blair's cronies to benefit from New Labour's decimation of the health service is the consultancy firm The Campaign Company. Made up of ex-New Labour spin doctors, advisers and party members they are currently employed by various NHS foundation trusts to make the gradual privatisation of the health service manageable and more palatable to the general public. The Campaign Company, headed by two senior New Labour officials during the Blair years, is committed to ensuring all NHS trusts are eventually transformed into foundation trusts, essentially privatising the service by the back door.

The NHS currently employs over 1.3 million people with an annual budget of £92.5bn.

IN BRIEF

WAG-TASTIC: Fresh from our holiday, the Whitechapel Anarchist Group (WAG) joined in with the theatricals at Climate Camp, but were eager to return to local politics with some of us helping out with preparations for DSEi (8th September) and others supporting University and College Union (UCU) staff from Tower Hamlets College.

Since 27th August (the first day of enrolment) staff at UCU have been on strike. Funding cuts have seen redundancies remove thirty staff with the college wanting a further thirteen gone and the introduction of flexible work hours, creating a low paid insecure workforce which can be sacked with minimum notice.

Since action began membership to UCU has increased with reports from picketers stating that most staff and a large number of students have refused to cross the pickets. Getting the message to students has been made easier by picketers displaying banners in Bengali.

These cuts go further than just attacking the worker force, cuts to ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) courses could see a thousand course places at risk (a course with a waiting list of over two thousand people). This is attacking moves of independence by working class people that do not speak English, denying them the ability to learn a language needed to integrate into this society.

WAG have been doing their best to help, working to have LARC open for the unions daily strike Committee meeting and a few WAGs have opened their squatted home to the picketers providing them with toilets and tea.

With a thousand course places and thirteen jobs at risk, and the next UCU public meeting being addressed by comrades from the Vesta occupation, WAG are left wondering if Tower Hamlets UCU will follow Vesta's precedent.

Gawain Williams

POLICE REPRESSION AT SEQUANI

DEMO: Together with the Gateway to Hell Campaign, a demonstration was organised outside the Sequani Labs in Ledbury, Hereford.

Vivisectioners are always telling us that British labs are like hotels for animals, so around thirty activists decided to highlight this disgusting lie by having an all-day demo outside Sequani, a contract research organisation.

Firstly, police threatened an activist with arrest for using the term 'puppy killers', saying that it's offensive. Next they were trying to obtain details from lawful protesters, which angered them when they were refused.

The demo was so successful and with such a good atmosphere that passers-by started to honk their horns – this was met with blue lights by the police who followed them, issuing £30 fines to the motorists.

Revolting peasants

WAG at the Climate Camp

And so the site of Blackheath was announced as this year's Climate Camp, a historic venue once graced by Wat Tyler and the Peasants Revolt, in the possible hope that the camp continued the historical struggle from 1381 to the present day. Many mused over Tyler's opinion on the swooping environmental activists – would he be smiling from beyond the grave as the masses gathered to fight the good fight, wishing if only he had had a twitter account it could have all ended so differently and possibly imagining his status updates ... 'Just burnt down the Savoy Lol'.

The Whitechapel Anarchist Group were in attendance, as reported in the mainstream media, but not all went smoothly between the class struggle east enders and their environmental comrades. Tantamount to a storm in a tea cup, journalists had a feeding frenzy over the events of Wednesday 26th August, when two Metropolitan Police Officers (including Julia Pendry) walked into the site and were hosted by members of the Legal team in a tent and served tea. All this despite the fact a no police presence policy had been agreed on beforehand.

The start of the day began with WAG getting into trouble, having waited around for two hours at Bank we decided to put up our multi-lingual banner only to be told we weren't allowed because 'this is an autonomous zone'. Yeah, we didn't get that one either. Finally we swooped and, having reached Blackheath, WAG gravitated around a sound system to be joined by old Reclaim The Streets, Cambridge Anarchist and other nefarious characters. Consumption of local ales, what can loosely be described as 'dancing' and a kick-around ensued. It was then at this point everything went a bit sour when two police officers were spotted wandering around. Two tactical errors by those in charge (but isn't it non-hierarchical?) followed – firstly the officers were allowed through the gate and secondly they were ushered in a tent and given asylum. A tent right next to our drunken mob!

People swarmed from across the camp – most campers were protecting the tent entrance

and allowing tea in for the police, whereas the rest of us were chanting 'Harry Roberts' and shoving our sound system up against the tent to make the experience as uncomfortable for the cops as possible. At one point we were told not to behave so badly with media around. Due to the intensity of the situation, the camp's 'tranquility team' managed to get the police officers away, being chased and hurled with abuse by us, to the safety of the outside only to be met by Fitwatch's finest.

Rumours abounded for the next few days, various accounts differed, some blaming WAG as troublemakers whereas some people agreed with the reaction. Despite the differences, it was agreed amongst the camp consensus that the police would not come back onto site. Which prevailed.

The members of WAG who weren't staying at the camp (some of our number stayed the duration) returned on Friday 28th to debate live with Climate Camp on Dissident Island from the campsite. Out of this came a very positive discussion on class, policing the media and liberalism. We put across that the police can never be tolerated – even at that very moment, they had a cherry-picker rigged with camera watching in and microphone. The consensus had been broken with police being brought tea and thus exposing the hierarchical nature behind the non-hierarchical rhetoric. And the main point being that the original camp was losing its radical edge, more worried about the media image created in the *Guardian*, pandering to middle class liberalism as opposed to trying to build a combative anti-capitalist working class movement (the entire radio interview and reports of the day can be heard on whitechapelanarchistgroup.wordpress.com).

We hope that the next London camp takes place in a working class area. Let's see council estates given sustainable energy with solar panels, as it's the poor who need it most. Plus it would create a sense of community, autonomy and self organisation. But, for this author, I fear it will just be another event sponsored by the *Guardian*, Twitter and Flickr with lots of Ruperts and Tamsins walking round hand in hand with sunflowers painted on their faces. Let's see what happens...



INTERNATIONAL

IN BRIEF

BRAZIL: Landless farmer Elton Silva Brum was shot dead on 21st August, hit by a 12-gauge gun. Lieutenant Colonel Flávio Lopes da Silva is suspected of wielding the deadly weapon during a confrontation between 270 members of the MST landless peasants' movement – including a number of children – and 230 military police at a 14,000 hectare site formerly owned by latifundista Alfredo Southall. Activists have sworn to make the shooting a rallying cry for the movement.

CHINA: The Hong Kong Information Centre for Human Rights and Democracy has reported that a protest involving 3,000 people in Wuhan against a planned canal ended in confrontation with the police.

Fifty people were injured and 100 arrested, their whereabouts unknown.

The Wuhan City Government claims the scheme will help improve the city environment and harness pollution in the city's largest re-location project in history, involving over 50,000 residents of some 20,000 households.

COLOMBIA: The killing of twelve Indigenous Peoples in Colombia, including four children, is a consequence of the failure of the authorities to heed warnings that unless steps were taken to protect the community, more attacks would take place, Amnesty International has said. Over fifty members of the Awá communities of Nariño have been killed since September 2008 by guerrillas, the security forces and their paramilitary allies, who are contesting control of the region.

EGYPT: The head of the independent RETA-union, Kamal abu Eita, was taken in for questioning earlier this month on charges by Hussein Megawer, head of the official trade union federation, that he has been spreading "false information" that has hurt the reputation of Egypt and its official trade union system.

Kamal abu Eita in turn accuses Megawer of acting as a "union police" after failing to control the labour movement, and says that the attack on him is a sign of weakness.

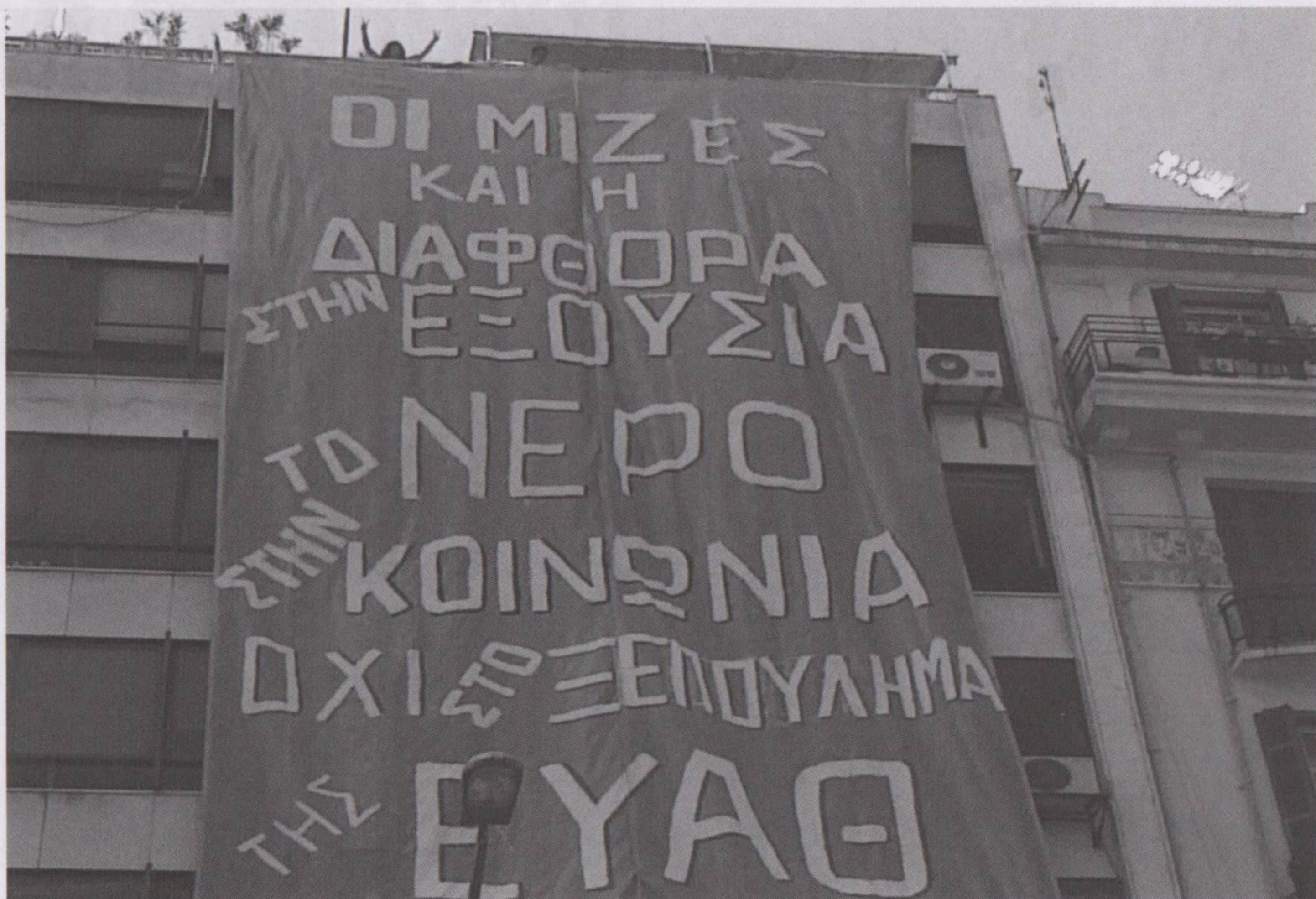
SOUTH AFRICA: Nearly 700 soldiers from the South African defence force have been sent letters of dismissal following recent strike action.

Up to 3,000 military personnel clashed with the police on the streets of Pretoria during demonstrations over pay and conditions.

The troops left their barracks and marched to the Union Buildings on 26th August, insisting on seeing President Jacob Zuma to seek a 30% pay rise. Police used rubber bullets and teargas to disperse the marchers.

SUDAN: As journalist Lubna Hussein went to court for wearing trousers earlier this month, Amnesty International called on the Sudanese government to withdraw the charges against her and repeal the law used to justify the flogging of women for wearing clothing deemed to be 'indecent'.

LENS CAP GREECE



A banner is unfurled from the roof of a building belonging to the EYATH state water company in Thessaloniki against the planned privatisation of water utilities in the city and surrounding area. The state is selling 23% of its shares in the water company as part of a plan to raise 1bn euros from state asset sales this year, a move which is being heavily opposed by unions and left groups in the region.

Terrorism charges for IWA Secretary

The Secretary of the IWA anarcho-syndicalist international has been charged with international terrorism after an obscure group attacked the Greek Embassy in Belgrade, Serbia.

Ratibor Trivunac and five other members of the Anarcho-Syndicalist Initiative Group were told on 4th September that they would have to wait in prison for up to a month for their trial to start by judges.

The other five detainees were Tadej Kurepa, Ivan Vulović, Sanja Đokić, Ivan Savić and Nikola Mitrović.

The six say they only became aware that the incident, in which members of the Black Elijah group threw Molotov cocktails before making their getaway, through media reports.

The group had condemned the action, while

noting that no-one was hurt, by the time the police reached their doors. Nevertheless, they were subsequently hounded in the press as ringleaders of a hate campaign against the state.

Activists working with the group say that the opportunity for the arrests has come as an unexpected boon for police, who have been struggling to deal with rising levels of dissent across the country.

Around 30,000 Serbs are currently in dispute and on strike, with radical elements seeing clashes with factory bosses, security forces, the police and the judiciary.

Speaking to a reporter for the CNT website in Spain, Ratibor said: "I can understand that if a large, bearded man is shown on film throwing a Molotov cocktail the police will immediately assume it's me."

Notes from the United States

The number of Bush's measures retained, enhanced or adapted by Obama is continuing to grow.

The controversial 287(g) programme is a law passed in 1996 under former president Bill Clinton. It allows local law enforcement agencies to enter into agreements with ICE, the Department of Homeland Security's Immigration and Customs Enforcement agency.

Under 287(g) police effectively now have the power of federal immigration agents. Earlier in August Homeland Security Secretary,

Janet Napolitano, announced the expansion of the widely criticised 287(g) scheme into 11 new locations across the country.

Such agreements under 287(g) have been shown to increase incidents of racial profiling and to single out immigrants for arrest without suspicion of crime. Freedom has reported before on such abuses by the likes of Maricopa County Sheriff, Joe Arpaio, in Napolitano's home state of Arizona.

He – despite being under federal investigation – is being invited to continue and increase

50,000 say No to nuclear

Huge turnout on eve of German elections

The largest demonstration against nuclear power since Chernobyl thronged Berlin on 6th September. Tens of thousands of people turned out to remind Chancellor Angela Merkel ahead of the elections on 27th September that her conservative Christian Democratic Union party, tipped to win, needs to rethink its stance nuclear stance.

The kilometre-long procession, accompanied by more than 350 farm tractors and music stacks, some of which had driven from the dump sites of northern Germany, stretched up to the Brandenburg Gate Victory Column.

Police, reacting badly to the peaceful protest, were strongly criticised for their behaviour at one location, Morsleben, where they attacked crowds without provocation. The police minister has apologised.

Most had set out from Gorleben (about 150 linear km west of Berlin), one of the nation's most notorious nuclear waste dumps, where spent fuel is now stored in a hall and where a brine-leaking pit dug in a salt deposit is planned as permanent repository.

A statement from the organisers said the demonstration sent the clear signal that the time for waiting for an end to nuclear power is over. After the failure of several nuclear dumps and power stations people were simply fed up with talk about extending the operating periods of nuclear power plants.

"Today we experienced a closing of ranks between decades of resistance put up by civic initiatives, at nuclear locations, the strengthened clean energy industries, trade unions struggling



for socially compatible jobs and churches campaigning for the preservation of creation. No government should believe it can hold on to atomic energy against this clear majority of the population. This resistance has reached a totally new quality in its breadth across society. Atomic energy is politically dead."

The demo was organised by an alliance of environmental and anti-nuclear groups, clean energy organisations, trade unions and churches.

Noting that it was the biggest anti-nuclear demonstration for more than ten years, a writer on Indymedia Germany wrote: "The anti-atomic movement is alive and perhaps also the starting point for other themes from below that we have to and want to put on the agenda again. A lot has come together here that people thought no longer existed."

Demonstrators also came from France, Poland, Denmark and Austria.

The convoy was followed by waves of colourful protesters waving flags and blowing whistles, holding high banners like 'shut down nuclear reactors', 'nuclear, no' and shouting similar slogans.

"We won't tolerate any backtracking on the nuclear exit," Fritz Pothmer, a northern German farmer, said to cheers. "It's nuclear insanity. How could Merkel become such a tool of the nuclear lobby?"

The future of Germany's 17 nuclear power plants, due to be shut down by 2021, is one of the major issues separating the Christian Democrats from the Social Democrats.

The CDU want to extend the deadline, a move opposed by the SPD and the Greens.

Notes from the Unites States

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his participation; and seems likely to be able to worsen his persecution of the Latino community under the auspices of 287(g).

A new participating area, on the other hand, is Morristown, New Jersey. Here, apparently, the chief of police himself didn't even know that his own agency was being recruited into 287(g).

In response, a community meeting of 150 community members was held in mid-August.

A typical comment was that of one woman, who said: "[I]magine if you're a victim of domestic violence. If we have this program in Morristown, New Jersey, how can you call the police? Because the police will come, they will deport your husband, even if you don't want that, and they could even deport you."

Aarti Shahani is lead author of 'Local Democracy on ICE', a report on 287(g) from Justice Strategies, and co-founder of Families for Freedom.

She describes the scheme thus: "[It] turns traffic cops and jail guards into deportation

agents. [Bush] turned [287(g)] into an all-out program to recruit law enforcement into the deportation agenda. "Our understanding, those of us who were watching Obama and had hopes in Obama, was that, under Obama, programs like 287(g) would be terminated, because they are driven off of a desire for racial profiling. [P]olice already have the power to arrest people for crimes; that power rests in criminal law. And so 287(g) comes in precisely when you lack reasonable suspicion of a crime ... Joe Arpaio has told me, '287(g) takes the handcuffs off of law enforcement. That's why we want it.'"

Obama has announced the expansion of parallel schemes. E-Verify is an electronic system that checks people's eligibility to work and eliminates undocumented guest workers more easily. Secure Communities gets ICE agents into local jails to identify and deport prisoners without documentation.

Louis Further

Independent Greek union leads Salonica march

Thousands marched an in 'independent class' protest in Salonica on 6th September, putting party-controlled unions to shame, while anti-police riots broke out in Athens.

The inauguration of the 74th International Expo of the city, a site for government speeches and promises, was met by thousands people taking to the streets in an 'independent class' protest march, separate from the party-controlled marches of PAME and the GSEE.

The march was led by PEKOP, the Athens Cleaner's Union whose general secretary Konstantina Kouneva was attacked with sulphuric acid last December by company thugs. In its call to the struggle PEKOP had announced: "In the dark days that they are preparing for us, let's get ready, let's organise and let's hit back without delay with a warm autumn and a hot winter. We do not forget [the shooting and riots of] December!"

Adapted from libcom.org

A look at the modern anarchist movement in Russia

As heirs to the legacy of our great founder Kropotkin (the anarchist formally known as Prince), we are veritably steeped in Russian history here at Angel Alley. So we leapt at the chance to learn how the modern anarchist movement is getting on.

These interviews were held at the Annual Conference of Autonomous Action, a federation of Russian Anarchists which was held at a secret location in the mountains. The setting was a necessary precaution against the numerous members of Russia's neo-nazi movement and also made for a stunning backdrop of unspoiled pine forests and crystal clear streams. Never let it be said that *Freedom* makes no sacrifices for the struggle!

We were pleased to speak to the very informative Olga. An activist of many years standing within Autonomous Action.

Freedom: Can you explain what first interested you in anarchism and how you came to get involved?

Olga: I participated in the environmental movement and particularly the Rainbow Keepers from about 1993. In the end, I came to understand that environmental problems could not be solved without a change of political system.

During the first Chechen war (1994–96), an anti-war movement began to develop. The mainstream human rights organisations seemed in shock and incapable of acting so war resistance fell to us.

The war was also resisted by the New Revolutionary Alternative whose actions included blowing up the memorial to Nicholas II and the secret police building. They were acts against property, not people, but there was a backlash and activists were targeted for arrest and imprisonment [Nadezhda Raks, Larissa Romanova and Olga Nevskay were convicted of NRA activities].

The Human Rights organisations again proved incapable of an appropriate response so we began to take on Human Rights work ourselves. Our group was called the Group for Supporting Political Prisoners. We tried to organise lawyers for the people targeted and get media coverage. We also sent food and other essentials to the prison for them and held actions to gain public attention such as street theatre.

We began to work on Autonomous Action as a project from 2000. We wanted to coordinate the activity of anarchists across Russia and become stronger.

What activities are you currently involved in?
Olga: Autonomous Action does different things in different cities. I am in the Moscow branch and we have 15 active people. We publish the magazine of the organisation, *Autonom*, and support the website.

We campaign against police harassment of the youth. Around Moscow there is conflict between the police and young people.

One young person who was an anarchist and a member of Autonomous Action was arrested and beaten after youths tried to hang out and drink near a police station. Autonomous Action held a demonstration blocking the street and spread information about the incident. There was a lot of discussion on the internet and in the media. This prompted the human rights organisations to put pressure on the police.

The campaign has been very successful because the Moscow Prosecutors office is now blaming the police for the incident, whereas originally the official line was the young man had sustained injuries in a fight with other youths.

There is another campaign to support some young people who had been wrongly accused of attacking the police. The campaign ran for three months. We held a hunger strike in the centre of Moscow – five people for two weeks – and did street theatre.

One of the cases was dropped and the other will go to court in the spring, so the campaign will resume then.

We also campaigned against the closure of a street market. The government claimed it was unsanitary. This market was one of the largest in Moscow. 100,000 people worked there. Many of them are migrants who are prevented from doing other kinds of work by racism or because they lack the right papers.

It was a difficult campaign because the market traders were used to working as individuals and had no experience of acting collectively. The tactics open to us were also limited because the authorities prevent legal actions (for example, by refusing permission to demonstrate) and the migrant workers could not risk becoming involved in illegal actions.

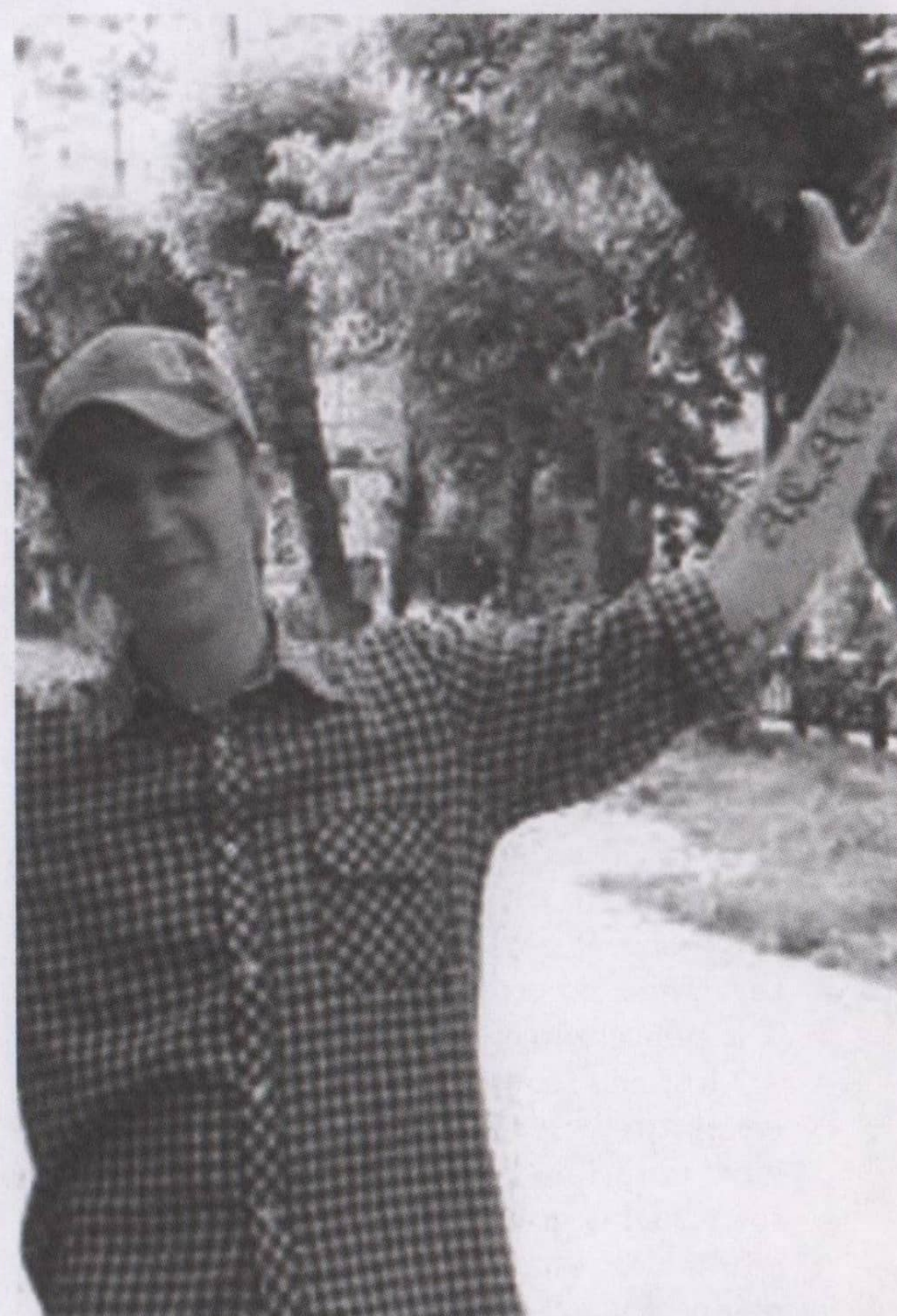
We are also involved in campaigning against fascist and right wing groups.

Could you tell me a little about the Far Right in Russia? How is the movement made up?

Olga: Well there are large differences between regions. Some areas, like in Magnitogorsk, are more conservative and have larger numbers of fascists. Others areas, like Bashkortistan, are more diverse and the right is more likely to take the form of reformist nationalist groups.

In Moscow we have the usual street boneheads and nazi skinheads. They are decentralised, like street gangs, so it is hard to say how many there are. Some are not serious, they just like to drink and talk, but others attack migrants regularly. In the past they would boast about this on the internet, but now they have become more clever about this. You can find propaganda videos showing attacks on migrants though, and they are also able to spread their ideas through concerts.

There is also Young Russia, the movement against immigration who try to give the impression of being respectable politicians. In reality they are not successful in this.



Russian comrades have been killed by fascists, above left, Ilya Borodaenko; right, Nastya Baburova

They organise large street demonstrations. Unlike us, they are able to obtain permission from the authorities so their demonstrations are legal. People are not fooled though, because they invite nazi skinheads along and so to ordinary people they just look like thugs. Also they have a lot of conflict within their leadership and have recently split after one prominent member was accused of having Jewish relatives.

For the last four years there has been a large annual demonstration of fascists through Moscow, although last year there were two because the movement was split.

I think it would be fair to say that anti-fascist activity is a high priority for Russian anarchists. How does this effect the movement? Do you think there is an effect on your ability to organise on other issues?

Olga: There are good and bad effects. The problem in Russia is that people prefer not to become members of an organisation and just like to carry out their own activity. It is not fashionable to be political. Fighting fascists is a very concrete activity. People are attracted to it and later many join Autonomous Action. The drawback is that Autonomous Action has become identified by fascists as an enemy and this brings dangers.

Could you tell me more about this – I understand that fascists have actually killed some comrades in recent years?

Olga: Yes, six people have been killed [Ilya Borodaenko, Alexander Ryachin, Timur



Kacharava, Fyodor Filatov, and Nastya Baburova]. Some were young people who were attacked when visiting concerts or participating in Food not Bombs. One person was killed in an attack on an environmental camp in Angursk.

It is difficult to establish how much danger any of us are in individuals. There is only one victim, Fyodor Filatov, who we can be sure was targeted as an individual. He was killed by a nazi outside his own front door. This is the most concrete victim. He was very active in Antifa and we are sure the nazis were hunting him personally.

In the time you have been involved, what changes have you seen in the anarchist movement?

Olga: The main difference is the size. Between 1989 and the early 1990s, the anarchists were really a very small group of people. Independent political expression was permitted for the first time in the Glasnost era, so we really had to start again from scratch.

Throughout the 1990s there was a larger anarchist movement, and of course a lot of anarchist influence within the Rainbow Keepers, but the anarchists were not too disciplined – people did what they wanted or and some did nothing!

Since forming the Autonomous Action in 2000, the movement has really grown. We are now able to get 300 participants to our 1st May demonstrations. This would not have been possible before.

How do you think Russia's history in the soviet era has effected attitudes towards anarchism and towards the left in general?

Olga: In Soviet times anarchist ideas were presented as criminal, crazy and dangerous for society. Figures such as Makhno were seen as villains. Older people have grown up being told this.

We call ourselves Anarchist Communists, and of course this can be confusing to people as communism is very strongly associated with the soviet system.

People's feelings towards the left tend to be dictated by their experiences and perceptions of life in the soviet era.

Some people remember only the bad things, but others feel that capitalism has been worse. Some people, especially older people, are nostalgic for soviet times. Then there are some young people who have not experienced this political system for themselves but feel it has some cachet. They think it's 'cool'. There is also a perception that communism is an experiment form the past that has failed.

The one thing that these reactions have in common is that in general people's understanding of these things is emotional and irrational. People are caught up in past experiences and do not consider theory or ideas.

There is also a deep cynicism towards any political ideas, not just the left. There is a perception that political people are all attempting to enrich themselves. That they will live for their own interests and are playing a game.

How do you see the movement developing? Where would you like to be in 10 years time?

Olga: I would like to see a really big movement in Russia that is able to influence the mainstream and solve social problems. I don't think these can be revolutionary times because it is not possible for people to change their minds so quickly. I would not like to see political change if it prompts a social upheaval that people are not ready for. I think that would be counterproductive. What we can do is prompt social debate and involve many more people in activity. That way they will gain from it and begin to be able to change society for the better.

Ahana and Zhenya are young activists from the Union of Autonomous Youth, the youth wing of the Siberian Labour Federation. Their enthusiasm and bravery is typical of the young anarchists we met. Freedom: Can you tell me a little about the Siberian Labour Federation?

Ahana: The Siberian Labour Federation is a syndicalist union of about six thousand members. The main workers represented are air traffic controllers, doctors and other health workers, and minibuses drivers [privately owned minibuses licensed to carry passengers on prescribed routes are a popular form of public transport].

They are strongest in Omsk, where we live. They used to be very active in Sirvesk but there has been heavy repression against activists there from the local administration which is very corrupt. The leaders were forced to escape to other cities and not so much activity goes on there now.

Zhenya: The Siberian Labour Federation also set up the Union of Outcasts to represent young people released from state orphanages. Everyone who was brought up in an orphanage is supposed to get a flat from the government, but in 20 years not one person was given a flat. The Union of Outcasts runs legal challenges and now the government is beginning to issue housing again.
Ahana: There are still problems though. One girl, she is married now and expecting her first child, was forced to sign some papers saying she didn't mind that they didn't give her a flat. She is living in the offices of the Union now because there is nowhere else for her to go.

How did the Union of Autonomous Youth come about?

Zhenya: Well we were always coming along to actions and in the end Vasili Starostin, who is very big in the union, said that we shouldn't be just their little helpers, it was time to have a group of our own. So we started one.

And what sort of actions have you done so far?

Zhenya: We organised a big protest meeting for 8th February, which is Young Anti-Fascists day. We got loads of people, even though it was really cold: minus 9°F (minus 23°C).

We also did an action against capitalism and the meat industry. That one was indoors in a shopping mall. We all dressed up. I came in a gas mask and brought a placard saying 'Your ideas stink' and my friend and his little brother came as skeletons to symbolise deaths caused by capitalism.

How did the police respond?

Zhenya: They just seemed confused. They tried to arrest us and then they just let us go. We heard that the mall security guard got sacked for letting it happen.

What about fascists, do they give you any trouble?

Ahana: Sometimes people get stabbed and one guy nearly died because he got hit on the head by a brick. But this is just normal, it's the same as anywhere.

And how do you see the future – what do you hope to achieve?

Zhenya: That's what we're here to find out! We're here to learn as much as we can and get more ideas. We want to get more organised and gain more experience so we can be better anarchists!

COMMENT

ABOUT FREEDOM

ANGEL ALLEY

Not a great deal to report this issue. The descendents of Bakuno the Freedom rat, coordinated but not led by Volterine de Goldparsons, have grown fat over the summer and are preparing their autumn offensive on the overflowing bins of Whitechapel. Anarchists too have been active with the Camp for Climate Action followed by the DSEi arms fair, as well as the usual ongoing struggles. We've also been hosting meetings for Reclaim the Future and the Legal Defence and Monitoring Group, as well as our regulars, such as the AF, SolFed, IWW, Action East End and Liberty & Solidarity. If you have a meeting for up to twenty people we will do our best to fit you in. You can book by phoning the shop or texting 07913 865 928.

This weekend 5th and 6th September we've had a special clean out of the building so the shop and meeting room will be brand shiny spanking new when you next visit us clutching a wad of notes in your sweaty paws on the look-out for the latest in anarchist literature.

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 17, so if your subscription runs out with this issue you'll have 7017 above your name. If the number is 7017 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 26th September 2009 and the last day to get copy to us for that issue will be Thursday 17th September. You can send your articles to us by email to copy@freedompress.org.uk or by post addressed to 'The Editors', Freedom, 84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1 7QX.

A sideways look

by SVARTFROSK

I came across a document the other day which set out who could apply for council housing where I live. What struck me most was a new hurdle, an income or savings qualification. Basically, the council is going to ask applicants for proof of their income or savings. If either are deemed to be too high, they will not qualify. The only exception will be existing tenants wishing to transfer.

The changes are driven by the ongoing crisis of supply and demand for council housing. Since Right to Buy in 1980, more than 1.5 million homes have been sold. There are about four million homes in the country owned either by councils or housing associations and a waiting list predicted to be around five million by next year. This is part of a move by councils to cut that number to something more manageable.

The figure I saw quoted for exclusion was a family income of more than £16,000, or similar savings. To put that in context, a couple who worked for minimum wage, one full time at 40 hours and one part time at 20 hours, would be earning too much as a household to qualify. Someone earning the London Living Wage, an amount set so low that even Boris supports it, would only just qualify. This is yet another short-term political fix to dig councils out of the hole that successive governments have left them in, with their policies designed to attack council housing. But it is also a fix that will backfire.

This particular policy means that only those on pensions or benefits will qualify for

social housing. One of the problems with the effects of Right to Buy is that it has segregated communities. The better housing has been bought and often sold on. To access it people must have a certain amount of income and this means communities are likely to be settled and have a mix of people in them. Even if none are wealthy, there will be a mix of skills and the area will have some social capital.

The undesirable estates remain undesirable. Only people with no choice live there. The flats that have been sold under Right to Buy are bought up by buy-to-let landlords. No one invests in the area and no one really wants to live there. Apart from a few older people unable to move or migrants forced into it because of poverty, there are few people able to organise themselves.

Tenants associations and other groups fall by the wayside or become empty shells, leaving the council free to claim that residents approve of all its schemes, including this one which ultimately makes council housing a benefit trap. Most tenancies now start on an introductory tenancy, changed to a full one after the probationary period is satisfactorily completed. What if the tenant gets a job in that time? Will they then lose their home? The whole thing is nonsense and yet another example of 'unjoined-up' government.

In a few years time, they'll be bemoaning that social housing tenants don't have enough skills, and that there is a particularly high incidence of people on the sick. Ever heard of cause and effect?



Future of Freedom

Two or three years back, a bookshop worker told me that the 'old' *Freedom* preached to the converted, whereas the current newspaper was angled towards winning new adherents to anarchism. I don't know how successful this strategy has been, but I do know that not one of my friends likes the newspaper, and neither do I.

Please go back to being a journal of ideas, with a few big articles on current big issues, plus a news in brief page. That way you'll get a much more lively letters page, and generate more interest. Going monthly is fine by me, but I still doubt your ability to fill 32 pages on this format, despite being assured to the contrary.

Yes, we need to win over more people to anarchism, but it is foolish to try to do this and risk losing existing readers. I want to re-open my sub. And contribute to the paper. Please confirm that you will still accept hand-written material, and give guidelines as to how many words you want.

John Griffin

Bookfair access

This year we're trying to improve disabled access to the anarchist bookfair. Please get in touch with us if:

- You're up for volunteering for an hour or so with access support on the day.
- You've got any access needs yourself or have experienced any access problems with previous bookfairs.
- You're planning to attend or run any bookfair meetings as we're making some changes to meetings.

The contact details for the bookfair access group are at the bottom of this mail, or see the website soon for more information about this

Volunteers

We're looking for help on the day so please get in touch with us if you can offer any time and you:

- Could be a guide for blind or low vision comrades to orientate around the building and read out written material, etc.
- Can help with subtitling any films if needed.
- Know BSL and can interpret or provide communication support for comrades who use sign language.
- Can touch-type- we need people to provide speech-to-text support on laptops for deaf comrades who use English.
- Can note-take quickly/clearly- we might need a few manual note-takers for other deaf comrades as above.
- Can help in other ways, such as putting up signs/helping move furniture† to set up rest areas, etc.
- Can offer any other support in ways we haven't thought of.

We will provide full information about what is needed to anyone who is up for any of the above- please get in touch as soon as possible if you can volunteer.

If you have access needs

In an ideal world we'd make the bookfair wholly accessible so that deaf and disabled comrades would not have to contact us in advance to access the bookfair. Unfortunately at the moment this isn't possible – the bookfair makes a loss of £1,000 a year so we don't have money to provide some things comrades may need and we're relying on volunteers from within the movement – so if you have any particular access needs please get in touch with us in advance. For example, if you need a copy of the bookfair programme read out on audio-tape or want a guide on the day; if you use a wheelchair and will require lift-access to other floors; if you need BSL interpreting, speech-to-text access, or an induction loop, etc. The more time we have, the better chance there will be of sorting it out so please contact us as soon as possible.

- If you're deaf or hard of hearing and want interpreting or note-taking in any of the meetings, please get in contact as soon as possible to let us know which meetings you'd like to attend so we can co-ordinate, as we won't be able to cover all meetings- you can check what's going to be on at the bookfair at anarchistbookfair.org/index.html
- If you've had problems accessing previous bookfairs we'd also be grateful if you could get in touch to feedback so we can try and improve it this year
- If you need to meet up before the bookfair to talk about what you need we can do this – please get in touch to sort a time to meet

Meetings, etc.

This year we're having a 10 minute handover time between meetings, to allow more time for comrades with limited mobility to get to meetings on time, and to give time to set up any support needed. This means the meetings will be 50 mins long rather than an hour this year, so please can everyone stick to this.

If you're running a meeting or giving a talk and any comrades who need BSL interpreting or touch-typing want to attend it, we'll need to know a bit more info from you beforehand to help with language support, and we'll send you some info about making your meeting accessible- we'll get in touch

LETTERS AND COMMENT

with you as soon as we know if this will be happening.

Contact info

You can contact the access group by Mobile (phone or text): 07807 795428; by email at access@anarchistbookfair.org or by post at Anarchist Bookfair Access, c/o Freedom Bookshop, 84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1 7QX.

Please note that the mobile number and email address above are contacts for access matters *only*. If you need to contact the bookfair about anything else please email: mail@anarchistbookfair.org instead

Anarchist Bookfair Collective

Tower Hamlets strike update

We have had two days of very active and effective picketing. The strike is solid with support from the vast majority of teachers with only three or four people going in. Many students stood with us on the picket lines and refused to enrol in solidarity with the teachers. We had over 50 members of staff on picket line duty from 7.30am to 7.00pm on Thursday and until 3.30pm on Friday.

We had a major disagreement with management about the picketing code of conduct but when the police were called they were not willing to enforce management's orders to stop speaking to students. We have six pickets directly in front of entrance and others at either side. The banners, placards, stickers and posters leave no doubt as to what we are striking for. Unison members of the admin staff are supporting us where they can – they have voted for strike action but their national union is holding them back. There were talks between UCU and management Friday which came to nothing.

MR

For up-to-date info, video and photos join the Facebook group 'Tower Hamlets – Stop the Cuts!' or see the blog at <http://defendjobsandeducation.posterous.com/>

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GETTING ACTIVE

PRISON NEWS

Leonard Peltier

Prominent American Indian Movement (AIM) activist Leonard Peltier has been in prison since 1976 after being framed in a COINTELPRO operation for the murder of two FBI agents in 1975 at Pine Ridge Reservation in South Dakota.

He is currently serving two consecutive life sentences but has recently grown increasingly ill from diabetes, high blood pressure, a jaw problem, a urinary system ailment, and other medical issues. Like all prisoners, he receives inadequate medical care.

He has also been the target of a number of state-sponsored assassination attempts, the most recent when he was jumped and severely beaten by a gang after being transferred from a prison in Lewisburg to Canaan on 13th January this year. As a consequence, Leonard yet again in solitary confinement yet again.

After 32 years in prison, he has finally had a parole hearing and needless to say it was turned down because, according to the US Parole Commission, "releasing him would diminish the seriousness of his crime". He will now not be eligible for parole again until July 2024, when he will be 79 years old.

Prison service caught red-handed

Now we all know that bureaucrats will go to any lengths to make themselves look good in the eyes of their superiors. Well now the Prison Service has been caught red-handed trying to 'cook the books' when it came time for a visit from HM Inspectorate of Prisons. It seems that prior to inspections of Pentonville and Wandsworth nicks in May and June this year prisoners were moved between the two prisons, presumably to make them appear less over-crowded.

Justice Secretary Jack Straw reacted in mock-horror, saying that it was "neither policy nor acceptable practice temporarily to move prisoners during inspections", and called for an inquiry.

Vegan prisoners

The Prison Service has finally agreed to allow vegan prisoners access to a wider range of vegan foods and products than are currently available to them via the prison canteen system run by Bookers and DHL. In future they will be able to buy mail order products from Holland & Barrett and Honesty Cosmetics catalogues.

The Vegan Prisoners Support Group welcomed the move, saying: "Vegan prisoners have had very limited access to vegan products through prison shops. Our recommendations were for basic vegan hygiene/bodycare products, i.e. a vegan bar soap, shampoo, conditioner, moisturiser, deodorant and toothpaste. In addition we recommended a vegan chocolate bar, sweet and savoury vegan biscuit, protein source such as Nuttolene or braised tofu, vegan spread, cheese alternative, soya yoghurt, flavoured soya drink and fortified soya milk."



● Contributions for the next edition of the UK's leading anarchist journal *Black Flag* are being sought. The editorial team are appealing to comrades to submit articles, particularly on current affairs, for the next edition which will be ready for this year's London Anarchist Bookfair on 24th October. The deadline is set at 19th September so all finished articles must be in by then.

Although not affiliated with any of the British anarchist federations *Black Flag* retains a friendly working relationship with all aspects of the organised anarchist movement making it a unique and much needed resource for those interested in anarchist ideas as well an excellent source of information and analysis on current anarchist thought and action.

If you are interested in getting involved or know anyone who would be interested in writing articles or otherwise getting involved contact the address below. Equally if you are willing or able to distribute the magazine, then contact them.

email: blackflagmag@yahoo.co.uk or write to: Black Flag, BM Hurricane, London, WC1N 3XX

● The Anarchist Federation have been busy of late specifically Manchester AF who have launched a new printing operation, *Peterloo Press*, with the publication of a whole selection of anarchist and radical literature aimed at offering important insights into the history

and theory of revolutionary politics. The first five titles include *Friends*, of Durruti's *Towards a Fresh Revolution*, along with two of Gilles Dauvé's more controversial texts, *Leninism or communism* and *Fascism/anti-fascism*, plus a history of the 1956 Hungarian revolution and the origins of workers councils in Germany. These compliment the London AF's Stormy Petrel series of pamphlets, of which the latest covers the anarchists and Italian Factory Councils in the 1920s. All available from: BM ANARFED, London, WC1N 3XX. England, UK

● Comrades in the North East who feel isolated from radical grassroots political activity have a new group they can involve themselves in with the emergence of **Sunderland Welfare Action Group** (or SWAG for short). SWAG is an organisation of community and political activists focused on fighting welfare cuts, improving the welfare service in the area and generally defending the working class people against persistent attacks made by the ruling elite. They also aim to link up with other similar groups on a national and regional level as well as helping people on an individual basis where possible by giving advice and help through direct action, or pointing people towards resources and other organisations where they get the required advice and help. email welfareaction@googlemail.com

Economic commentary

Gordon Brown has spent £3,000 for every household to keep the banks afloat. The sums involved here are as breathtaking as his contempt for the electorate, yet even that is not enough: the banks are still not lending enough to keep industry moving and to slow rising unemployment. This chronic case of constipation (or are the banks now anal retentives?) needs a powerful laxative which the Bank of England calls Quantitative Easing; and it means we have to cough up even more.

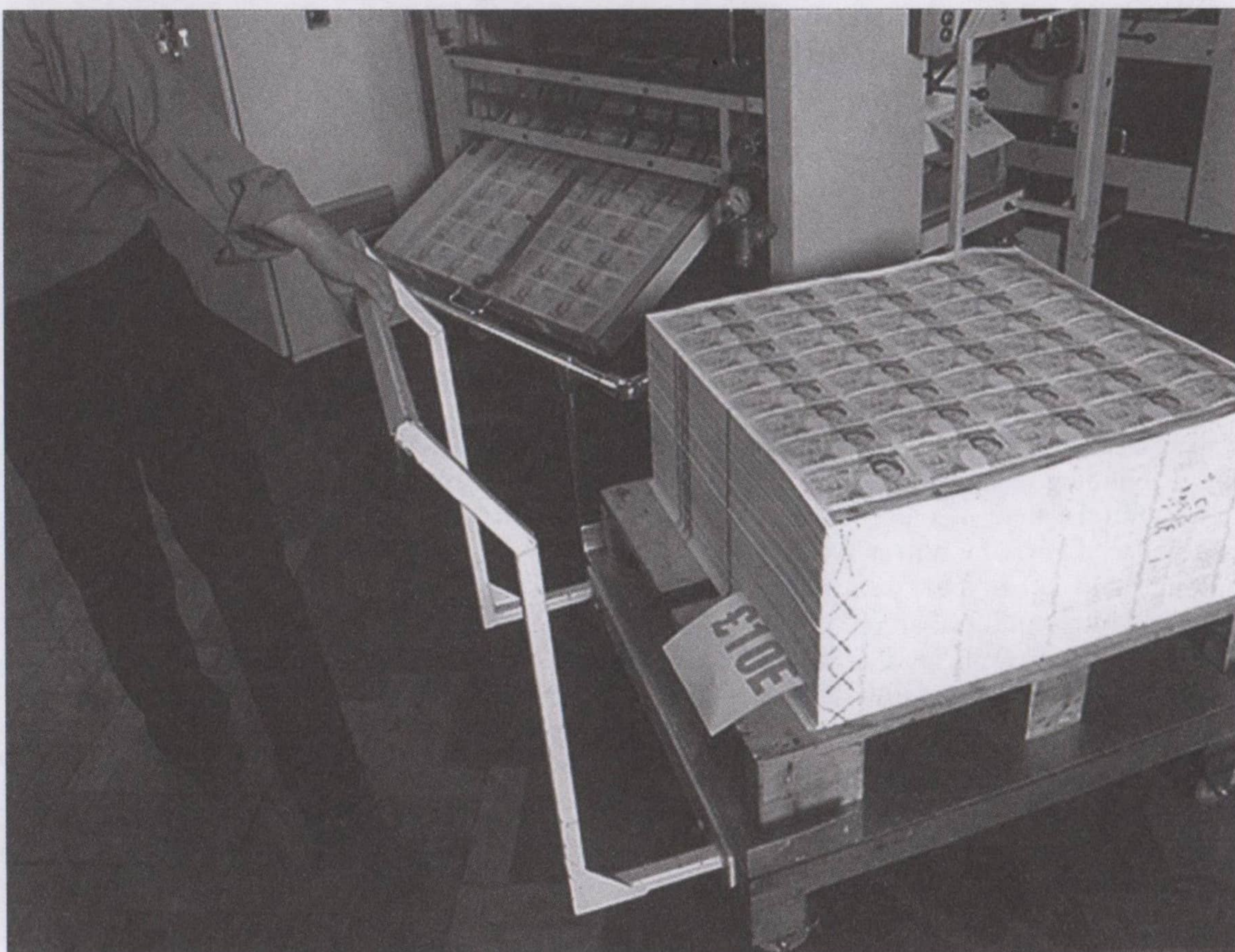
Applied in stages, Quantitative Easing reached £175 billion in August. Mervyn King, Governor of the BoE wanted it pushed up to £200 billion, but was outvoted. The City, having convinced itself, with a share price rally, that recovery was already under way, was deeply shocked. This extra dosh has been handed over to the banks in exchange for bonds with undisclosed (zero?) rates of interest.

Risk of inflation

Most economists seem to think that prices will remain stable or even fall. The latter is unthinkable for Gordon because that would mean more losses for business, and still more unemployment. Pumping in yet more money through Quantitative Easing is intended to keep inflation around 2%, but there is a danger of a surge well beyond that level. No one *knows* what is going to happen, and so it is very important for the Bank of England to be able *reverse* Quantitative Easing – and quickly! – should the need to arise.

Reversing Quantitative Easing would require the banks to buy back the above-mentioned bonds – *and when the Bank of England says so* – but you will find no reference to any solemn agreement by the banks to do anything of the kind. Suppose they prefer to hang on to all that cash?

I asked my local branch of NatWest / Royal Bank of Scotland (RBS) what agreement existed with the government for the return of our money handed over in Quantitative Easing. With great assurance, the young woman on the information desk quickly



pointed out that, as a retail bank, even the manager could not provide an answer, then suggested that I might like to ring their head office.

Two days later, on impulse and en route to *Freedom*, I tried the NatWest in Whitechapel High Street, and was rewarded with a degree of success: Yes, the manager understood investment banking and macro-economics, and yes, he felt sure RBS would buy back the bonds when required. He was not surprised that no agreement had been made public, but thought that since we all own 70% of RBS through part-nationalisation, the directors were sure to play ball...

The wretched Mr Brown

That seems a reasonable answer, but regulating banks is not one of Gordon's strong points. Following the crash in 2008,

his creation, the Financial Services Authority (FSA) threatened the banks with much tougher regulation, then in August this year softened its proposals. At the end of July, a cross-party Treasury Select Committee had condemned Chancellor Darling's current proposals as being "largely cosmetic" and stated that the FSA had "failed spectacularly" as a regulator. See what I mean?

Given their disastrous performance, it's difficult to be fair to the banks, but successive Tory and Labour governments, from 1979 with Thatcher, have been enthusiastic 'reformers' – i.e. scrappers of bank regulation – including Blair's when the wretched Mr Brown was chancellor.

So now, with all these chickens having very determinedly flown home to roost, Gordon wants the banks to quickly increase the cash they hold (liquidity), without recourse to risky speculative investment, and to increase lending to forestall the developing slump in output and employment.

These requirements are inconsistent, and are doubtless driven by Brown's desperate need to salvage at least his own reputation as Chancellor, if not the Labour party at the 2010 election. In this context, Quantitative Easing is a hoped-for quick fix. But surely it's too late now. This dreadful government has been appallingly incompetent; it has privatised monies that could have been used by us all, whilst nationalising risk-taking and debt. Tax rises and benefit cuts are sure to follow the election.

Whoever they vote for, the government gets in!

John Griffin



REVIEWS

WHAT'S ON
SEPTEMBER

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

12th to 16th Working Class Music Festival at The Picket, Jordan Street, Liverpool L1 0BW, with Chumbawamba, Leon Rosselson, Robb Johnson, Attila the Stockbroker and much more, see workingclassmusic.org.uk for full details.

19th Another World is Possible, join the World Development Movement and some of the best thinkers and campaigners around for a thought-provoking day of talks, discussion and practical workshops on responding to the climate and financial crises and the fight against global poverty, with special guest by film-maker, culture jammer and star of *The Yes Men fix the world*, Mike Bonanno, at St Augustine Church, George IV Bridge, Edinburgh, from 10am until 5pm, call 020 7820 4900 or see wdm.gn.apc.org for more.

22nd Family Picnic to Stop Tesco at Titnore Woods, a fun-filled picnic in the fields behind the Tesco car park, where building work for the new Tesco has begun – bring food to share and anything else that you think will help make the point that we don't want Tesco destroying our landscape and our communities, the protest camp is nearby and welcomes visitors, meet at the roundabout outside existing West Durrington Tesco Extra, Worthing, West Sussex, BN13 3PB (where Romany Road joins New Road) at 12 noon, then move to the field at 12.30, see titnore.wordpress.com for more.

24th Scotland's For Council Housing demonstration, meet at 11am at Marks & Spencers, Trongate, Glasgow, email hamiltonhillaction@gmail.com 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.

17th Anti-arms demonstration at Brimar, manufacturers of a range of screens and viewing equipment used for military applications, at 12 noon in Manchester, see targetbrimar.org.uk for further details.

17th and 18th The Great Climate Swoop, a mass blockade of at Ratcliffe-on-Soar in Nottinghamshire, one of the UK's biggest coal fired power stations, called for by The Camp for Climate Action, Plane Stupid, Rising Tide and Climate Rush, see thegreatclimateswoop.org for more.

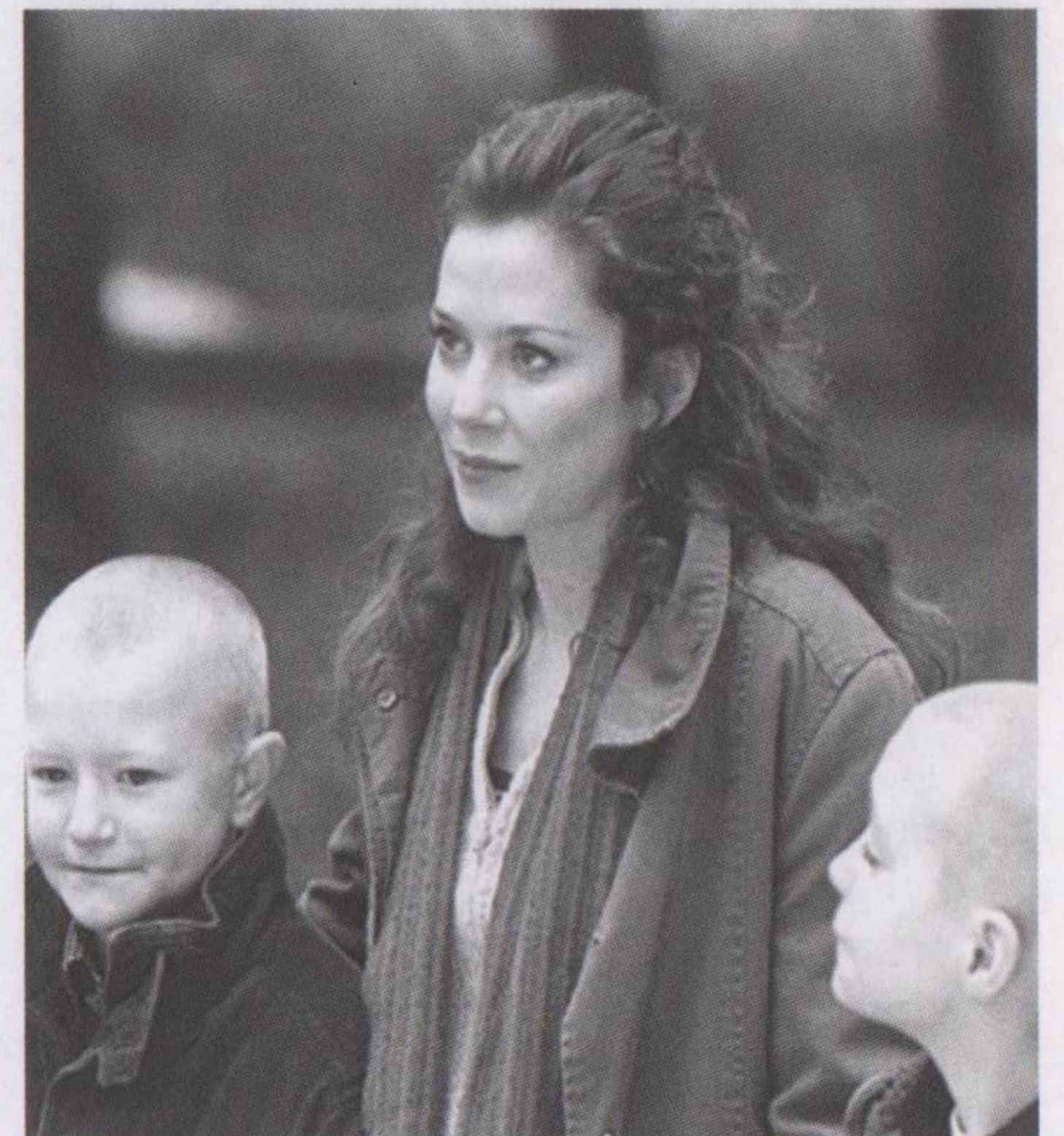
24th London Anarchist Bookfair at Queen Mary & Westfield College, Mile End Road, London E1 4NS, from 10am until 7pm, see anarchistbookfair.org.uk for details.

TELEVISION

The Street, series 3
by Jimmy McGovern, BBC1

The third run of these Naked City Manchester portmanteaux will, it seems, be the last – as the Beeb follows rivals downsizing original drama (doubly ironic, given production by ITV's Granada). As before (see review of series 2 in *Freedom*, 15th March 2008), a mixed bag of manipulative melodrama verging on hysterical downbeat sentimentality always pitches interesting, well-crafted story-lines, razor-sharp dialogue and excellent ensemble casts – attracting critical plaudits and larger audiences than can be stomached by the legions of haters hostile to any broadly naturalistic representations of working-class tribulations. Its success may be attributed partly to pandering to a gamut of soap-opera stereotypes, magnified to fill the screen with misfortune, bad behaviour and worse decisions – concentrating on hero/anti-hero thematics and the difficulties of kin- and friendship in extremis – and also a distinctiveness borne of diminishing returns from related genres jostling for superficial sensationalism and vacuous populism.

Counterintuitively, though, *The Street's* overarching connectivity chronicles the ongoing erosion of neighbourliness – except when heartstrings need tugging either way, whereupon other episodes' characters pop up dispensing passing wisdom, concern and/or bile. Witness this season's bookend turns from decent-bloke central typecasting by Bob Hoskins (pub landlord standing up to local hardman) and Timothy Spall (cabbie “big soft lump who'd do anything for anybody”) – the former's mates melting away when money and power trump respect, the latter loved by everyone but respected by none. In between, strong performances by Anna Friel (single-parent prostitute getting son into good school) and Jonas Armstrong (squaddie disfigured in Afghanistan rebuilding his life) illustrate moral relativism and ambivalent respectability among the near-and-dear – with only scripting wit and acting commitment rescuing subsequent unconvincing tales of tediously unredeemable masculinity (Joseph Mawle's racist bully transformed by Polish immigrants; Stephen Graham's craven alcoholic failing Downs Syndrome son). In



the background throughout, however, wives and mothers persevere – with their comparably complex intensity never explored beyond its salience to sundry male malaises.

Neighbourhood nervous breakdown

True enough, for better or for worse, endlessly patient and forgiving, fiercely loyal women populate many of our families – plus, with community cohesion evaporating, where else would newly-emergent mutuality be likely to gestate? But there's surely a limit, beyond which credulity won't stretch – exemplified in episode 4's black bureaucrat even tolerating the pathetic xenophobe, let alone contemplating a relationship. Acknowledging generations of bigotry, poverty and ignorance, she doesn't hate him for his prejudices: after all, “you wouldn't blame a homeless crippled beggar for having bad teeth”. Undeniably fair comment, but, as elsewhere with McGovern (not least his breakthrough *Cracker*), sophisticated historical, socio-political patterns relentlessly translate into self-indulgent individualist guilt-tripping. Obsessing over our infinite compulsive flaws may suit conventional dramatic formulae (as well as those of inadequately-lapsed Catholicism), but frankly, sometimes, you couldn't give a damn – especially when the urgency of collective (rather than privatised) redemptive potential is so systematically obscured.

www.tomjennings.pwp.blueyonder.co.uk

QUIZ ANSWERS

1. Because it was sanctioned by the union, while the same image on a leaflet suggesting that Unison's links with the Labour Party be discussed, was used as an excuse to suspend four branch secretaries who happen to be members of the Socialist Party. It's racist, apparently, but only if done by the right people.
2. Small fake seeds were carved out of wood. Sylvia Pankhurst gave this as an example of sweated labour.
3. They are all indigenous peoples of the

Americas whose preferred name for themselves means ‘people’.

4. In 1975, political officer Valery Sablin seized control of the *Storozhevoy*, a soviet destroyer, and tried to sail it to Leningrad to broadcast a call for an end to corruption and a true revolution. The ship was recaptured and a spooked Kremlin pretended that it had been trying to defect to the west, leading to the incident inspiring Tom Clancy's *Hunt for Red October*. Sablin was executed.

Revolution in the 21st century?

Iain McKay revisits a neglected classic and is pleasantly surprised by what he finds

This year marks the 200th anniversary of the birth of Proudhon, the person who first used the word 'anarchist' in a positive light. This was in his 1840 book *What is Property?*, which makes anarchism, as a named socio-economic theory and movement, 170 years old next year.

While not as famous as he once was, Proudhon was during his lifetime and for some time after one of the world's leading socialist thinkers. Kropotkin became a socialist after reading Proudhon, while Bakunin was a friend and proclaimed his anarchism as simply "Proudhonism widely developed and pushed right to these, its final consequences". The *General Idea of the Revolution in the Nineteenth Century* was one of Bakunin's favourite Proudhon works (along with the sadly untranslated account of the 1848 revolution in France, *Les Confessions d'un Révolutionnaire*). Reading this classic of anarchism, it is easy to see why: it is the first constructive anarchist manifesto and raises such key libertarian ideas as self-management, federalism, anti-statism and anti-capitalism.

Written in prison, in seven studies the book sketches out the lessons of the events of 1848 and presents an alternative that will emancipate labour: "capitalistic and proprietary exploitation, stopped everywhere, the wage system abolished." Needless to say, Proudhon spends some time addressing issues specific to 1851 France. However, there is much material within this work which is directly relevant to our situation in the 21st century and for libertarian alternatives to our capitalistic and statist oppression. Its 'Epilogue' contains his justly famous and widely quoted rant against government: "To be governed is to be kept in sight, inspected, spied upon, directed, law-driven, numbered, enrolled, indoctrinated, preached at, controlled, estimated, valued, censured, commanded, by creatures who have neither the right, nor the wisdom, nor the virtue to do so..." And so on.

This is one of the many joys in the book. All, though, need to be read to fully understand Proudhon's thought. For example, while 'The Principle of Association' sees him oppose 'association' it becomes clear from reading 'The Organisation of Economic Forces' that he was against the kind of centralised and compulsory 'association' of state socialist Louis Blanc and *not* against workers' associations running industry: "Thus we need not hesitate, for we have no choice. In cases in which production requires great division of labour, and a considerable collective



Pierre-Joseph Proudhon

force, it is necessary to form an association among the workers in this industry; because without that, they would remain related as subordinates and superiors, and there would ensue two industrial castes of masters and wage-workers, which is repugnant to a free and democratic society."

So when workers form co-operatives "the importance of their work lies, not in their petty union interests, but in their denial of the rule of capitalists, money lenders and governments". There would be free access to the means of life, with land, workplaces and housing becoming communal property and possessed and run by those who use them, either individually (for agriculture and artisans) or collectively (for industry).

Proudhon also critiques the state and its centralisation, refuting attempts to reform rather than abolish the state: "No authority, no government, not even popular, that is the Revolution". He advocates a radically decentralised and self-governing society of associations: "In place of laws, we will put contracts. No more laws voted by a majority, nor even unanimously; each citizen, each town, each industrial union, makes its own laws". He was well aware that the state was *not* neutral, that it existed to defend capitalism: "Laws! We know what they are, and what they are worth! Spider webs for the rich and powerful, steel chains for the weak and poor, fishing nets in the hands of the Government."

He calls for the masses to transform society from the bottom-up, by their own efforts and organisations.

While Proudhon is sometimes accused of racism (thanks to a few anti-Semitic rants in his private notebooks), this is absent from his published works and so we find him proclaiming that there "will no longer be nationality, no longer fatherland, in the political sense of the words: they will mean only places of birth. Man, of whatever race or colour he may be, is an inhabitant of the universe; citizenship is everywhere an acquired right." In this area, as in many others, this book will make enlightening reading for anyone who *thinks* they know Proudhon from the stereotyping inflicted upon him by Marxists (starting with Marx's incredibly spiteful and usually inaccurate attack on him in *The Poverty of Philosophy*) and those who read the secondary material influenced by such distortions.

While the reader will, rightly, question Proudhon's reformism and his free credit panacea it becomes obvious why the likes of Bakunin, Kropotkin and Rucker thought so highly of the Frenchman and what modern anarchism owes him for many of its defining ideas and concepts.

Robert Graham's introduction is excellent, giving a good summary of the Frenchman's life and ideas. As far as the translation goes,



Review

◀ page 15

Robinson systematically translates 'commune' as 'town' and 'salariat' as 'wage system'. Both are flawed, as 'commune' can represent any habitation from hamlet to city, while 'salariat' is better translated as 'wage-labour' as Proudhon was in favour of distribution according to deed rather than need. Salariat specifically refers to a class of workers hired by a boss in return for a wage, i.e. wage-workers or wage-slaves.

So, all in all a classic book which I think all anarchists will find of interest. I know that I was pleasantly surprised by his arguments against wage-labour and for workers' self-management, his arguments against the state and for decentralisation and free federation

and a host of other ideas which are nowadays usually associated with the revolutionary anarchism inspired by Bakunin and Kropotkin. Like his author, this work is not without flaws, but it is a key text in anarchist thought and in the evolution of anarchism. It still has lessons for us seeking revolution in the 21st century.

General Idea of the Revolution in the Nineteenth Century by Pierre-Joseph Proudhon (translated by John Beverley Robinson), Pluto Press, 1989

Iain McKay is currently working on a Proudhon anthology (entitled *Property is Theft!*) to be republished next year to mark the 170th anniversary of the use of the word 'anarchist' in a positive light. If you wish to contribute to the translation of material from French to English, please contact him at anarchistfaq@yahoo.co.uk

THE QUIZ

1. Why has a leaflet using the three wise monkeys cartoon put out by Unison's South East Regional Disabled members committee proved controversial?
2. How was rhubarb jam put into the more expensive raspberry jam in Victorian times?
3. What links the Shuar of Ecuador, the Cherokee, the Lenape of NE USA, the Inuit and the Wayuu of Venezuela and Colombia?
4. What was the Storozevoy Mutiny and what did it inspire?

Answers on page 14

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