

FREEDOM

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DE MENEZES COP GETS TOP JOB

Discredited police chief in Stockwell tube shooting joins IPCC

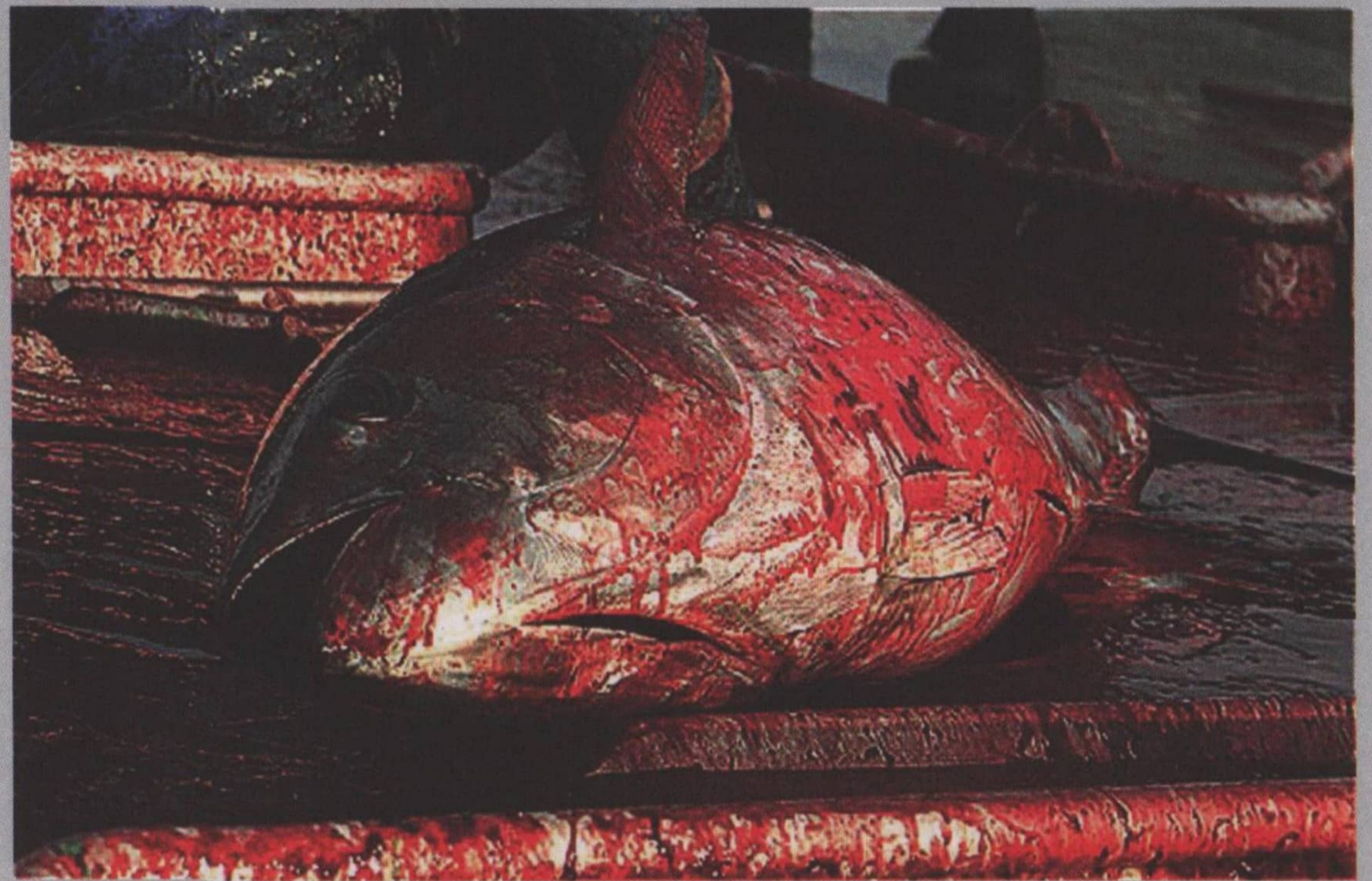
A senior police officer at Scotland Yard who was publicly criticised for his conduct during the police killing of Jean Charles de Menezes has been appointed to the board of the Independent Police Complaints Commission (IPCC), the very body instructed with investigating police misconduct.

Commander Moir Stewart, Ian Blair's staff officer at the time of the de Menezes shooting, has been appointed the IPCC's Director of Investigations and a member of its management board, once again calling into question the judgement, role and independence of the IPCC.

During the investigation into the killing of the electrician by armed officers at Stockwell tube station on 22nd July 2005, Stewart was personally criticised by the IPCC for the role he played in the mismanagement of the incident, highlighting serious failures in procedure and communication. Tellingly, despite the evidence against him and complicity in a cover up, the IPCC refused to charge Stewart with misconduct.

As a member of Ian Blair's personal staff, **page 3** ▶▶

LENS CAP NEVER MIND THE DOLPHINS



An analysis by scientists advising fisheries regulators suggests that banning trade in Atlantic bluefin tuna is justified by the extent of their decline. Advisers to the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT) said that stocks are probably less than 15% of their original size. For many years, ICCAT has set quotas higher than scientists' recommendations. The pressure this puts on stocks has been compounded by illegal fishing which, according to some estimates, adds a further 30% to the official quota. Conservation groups have warned that over-fishing risks the species' survival.

SUPPORT FOR POSTAL STRIKE

Cambridge anarchists braved the freezing autumn cold and joined postal workers on the picket line, for the night shift at the Clifton Road sorting office on the 22nd and 30th October to show their solidarity and extend the warm hand of anarchist friendship to those postal workers fighting to save their industry and jobs and secure their future.

Comrades took with them a bike powered sound system, the same one they used for Camp for Climate Action in London in the summer, to keep the pickets entertained with rough and ready popular beat combo tunes as well as food and drink.

Pallets were skipped from other parts of the industrial estate to keep the brazier going, imaginatively made from the drum of an old washing machine, and they offered a frank

exchange of opinions to those driving scab lorries in and out of the depot.

The anarchists have also been involved in raising money for the strike fund outside Cambridge United's Abbey stadium, as well as being active in the Cambridge & Stevenage postal workers support group.

The Communications Workers Union who called the strike over the management at Royal Mail reneging on national agreed conditions at work, restructuring and proposed cuts have instituted a policy of rolling strike days for different areas of the postal service involving 43,000 staff from mail centres and 77,000 delivery and collection workers.

See pages 8-9 for a question and answer article by postal workers detailing the reasons for the strike.

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NEWS

IN BRIEF

SET UP? The Government have sacked their chief drugs adviser stating that smoking cannabis created only a “relatively small risk” of psychotic illness and it was actually less harmful than nicotine or alcohol.

Following his dismissal, the professor accused Gordon Brown of reclassifying cannabis for political reasons and predicted there would be further resignations from the Advisory Council on the Misuse of Drugs after he was made to quit as its head.

The professor said Mr Brown had “made up his mind” to make cannabis a Class B drug, despite evidence to the contrary.

Since this is all true, why has the government allowed such a fiasco to occur with its own appointee? If we believed in conspiracy theories (which of course we don't) it would be because he's called David Nutt and can be lampooned as a ‘nutty professor’ to get cheap tabloid laughs while appearing to be tough on the causes of crime. Actually the Government is just incompetent.

COP UP: Scotland Yard has apologised after actors from a hit film were mistakenly identified as football hooligans being sought after riots at a West Ham game.

The images wrongly included stills of six actors from recent film *The Firm*. A television report was used to capture the images, but because there was no sound officers did not realise it included clips from the hooligan-themed film.

Scotland Yard, who released the images on Tuesday, said: “Six images of individuals who were not involved in the violence were mistakenly included.

“These images appear to have been taken from a motion picture.

“We wish to apologise unreservedly to those affected. We are going to be actively trying to contact those people to offer our apologies.”

We reckon they're safer on the run

AND SOME GOOD NEWS: A carpenter from Bridgend has won a five-year stay on any repossession proceedings against him by his lender.

Peter Bentley challenged the right of Blemain Finance, who specialise in second loans secured on a home, to repossess him.

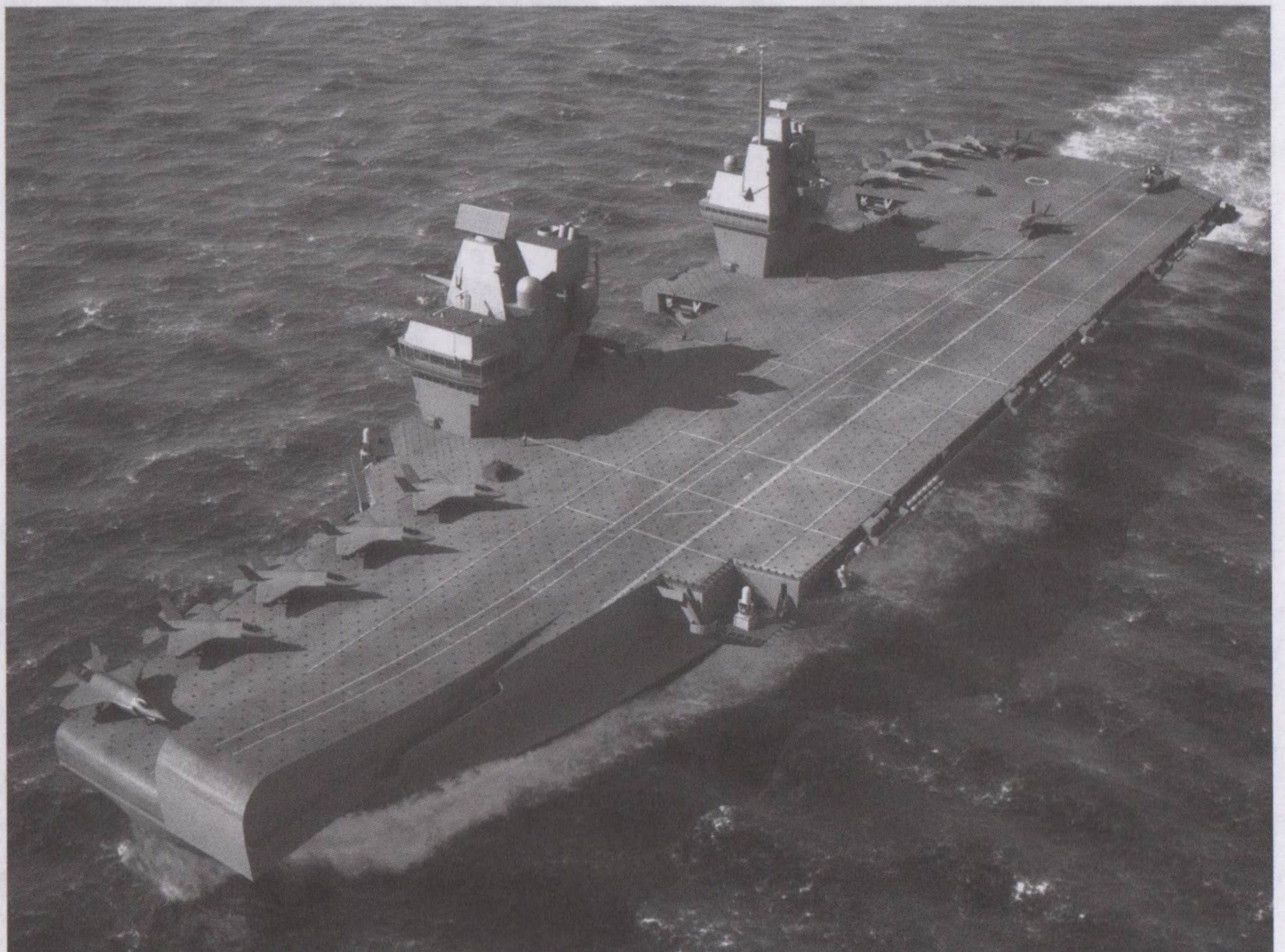
He claimed that his contract with them involved an unfair relationship that was illegal.

The lender also agreed to charge no further interest and cut his repayments from £550 to just £150 a month.

His Lawyer Cal Wright said “Peter Bentley was offered a substantial financial settlement, to ensure the case was not heard by the High Court.

“It is believed to be the first time a mortgage and loan lender has offered a client a legal undertaking not to repossess the client's home ... for the sole purpose of preventing a judge in the High Court from setting a legal precedent against their lending practices.”

LENS CAP PLANE SAILING



The Government has decided to save money by only having one of the Planned new 60,000 ton Queen Elizabeth Class Aircraft Carriers. Good news all round you may think. However, due to our old pals at BAe systems having stitched up the contract in advance, the second carrier will still be built it just won't have any aircraft on it. Military genius at its best.

Banking: the fiddle continues

A big shake-up of UK banks with taxpayer support will be have been unveiled by the time you read this.

An announcements on the future of Lloyds and Royal Bank of Scotland is expected to be made jointly by the banks and the Treasury. Predictions are that Lloyds will want to raise more than £20bn from investors in return for staying out of the state-run insurance scheme to cover toxic loans. Both will also have to set up new banks out of their existing branch networks and sell them within four years.

The creation of the new banks is on the instruction of the European Competition Commissioner, Neelie Kroes, and is supposed to boost competition.

RBS is also expected to confirm that it will participate in the government's toxic loan scheme, but on different terms. The bank, which is 70% state-owned, would buy an insurance policy from the government to cover future losses from some of its more toxic investments.

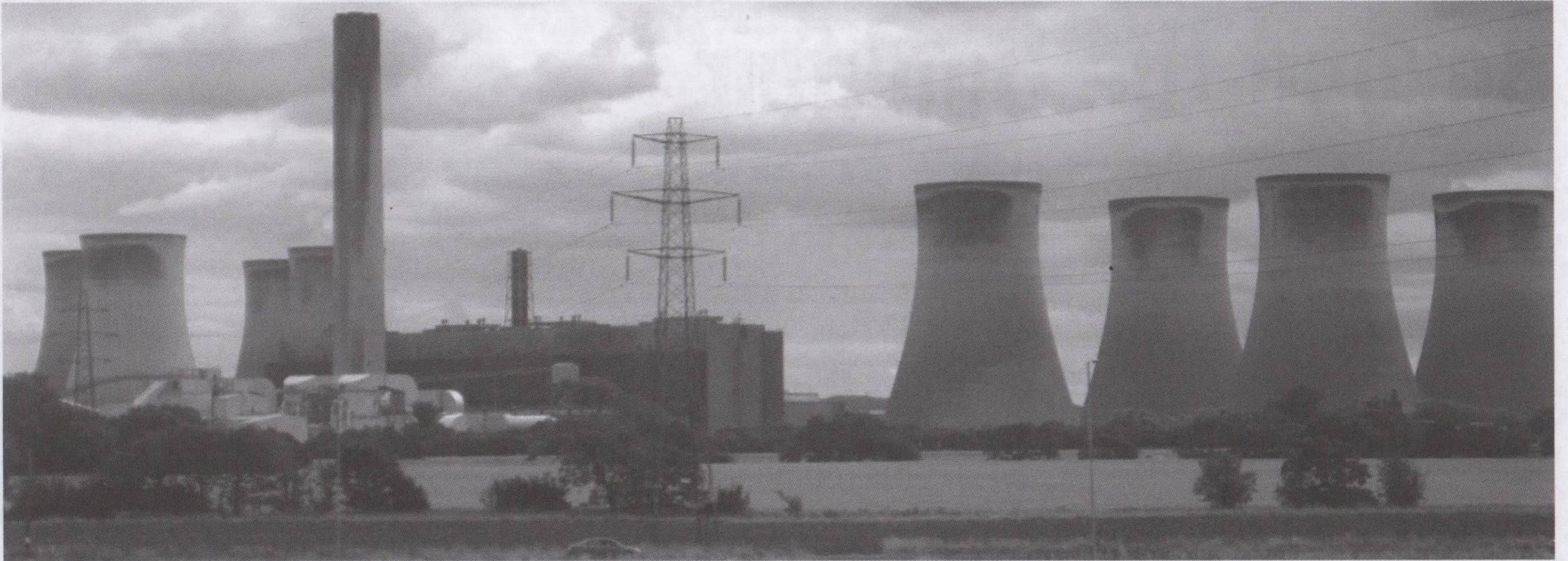
The announcements are set to include approval from the European Commission of plans to cut back the size of the banks with disposals of branches and other assets. The Commission had demanded that banks bailed out by taxpayers should be scaled down. The result being that a big asset sale will be announced. RBS has already warned that it may have to sell more of its businesses than

originally planned to gain European approval for state support it has received since coming close to collapse last year. While RBS is set to announce the sale of its insurance businesses Direct Line, Churchill and Green Flag as well as more than 300 bank branches, for its part, Lloyds will announce the sale of Cheltenham & Gloucester and Intelligent Finance.

So what is to be made of all this financial mumbo-jumbo? Obviously it can't be to protect the interests of taxpayers, workers or poor people or else the government and capitalists wouldn't be doing it. The question is whether it will make the financial system more secure from the kind of banking crisis we've witnessed over the last year.

The more economics minded amongst our readership may be better placed to look at the short-term advantages and disadvantages of the latest reshuffling of the transaction elements of capital, but from a more simple but more fundamental point of view the whole motive concept of banking that lays claim to goods and services without producing anything intrinsically useful is bound to the a house built on sand.

The bankers are undoubtedly smart folk or they would not have been able to come up with such an intricate scheme for robbing people, they just need some motivation to work for the common good not against it. An angry organised working class for starters.



High court backs blacklisted worker

Construction worker cleared of being a 'terrorist threat' in long running protest against blacklisting

The High Court rejected a bid from Scottish and Southern Energy (SSE) to silence an ex-employee and prevent him from picketing a power station, owned by SSE, where he was employed under contract before being made redundant within weeks of starting work there in December.

Steve Acheson, electrician and long-time militant trade unionist, has been protesting outside the Fiddlers Ferry power station (pictured above) near Warrington for almost a year against his dismissal from the site, claiming victimisation because of his previous union activity in the construction industry.

Freedom was present at the high court when the judge, who previously ruled on the injunction against protestors at the Drax

power station, dismissed outright the case made by SSE lawyers against Acheson as 'bordering on fantasy'.

At an earlier hearing SSE lawyers attempted to convince the court Acheson was a threat to the national power supply and sought to bring an injunction against him under the Terrorism Act without his knowledge. They also attempted to connect Acheson's grievance with the Climate Camp protest threats. The judge refused to hear that case and instructed SSE, the second largest supplier of electricity and natural gas in the UK, to inform Acheson of the allegations being pursued against him. SSE lawyers subsequently dropped the Climate Camp connection but persisted with the injunction despite producing no concrete evidence the trade union activist posed a threat to the power station or that he had committed any criminal behaviour.

After this important victory in the courts Acheson, along with other targeted workers, is determined to fight on against his dismissal and the illegal blacklist that is still being used as a tool to attack workplace militancy in the construction industry. He commented:

"I've seen my file and it confirmed definitely that I've been victimised on trade union grounds," adding "There's a full sheet of data on my last employment to the day I left. It's like a shadow following me around, someone monitoring me, it's incredible".

Confirmation of the existence of the blacklist emerged as early as 2006 during a tribunal involving Acheson at the time working on the Manchester Royal Infirmary site. The tribunal chairman admitted: "a blacklist exists in the electrical industry with the purpose of denying trade unionists employment", but official public recognition only came earlier this year when the Information Commissioners Office launched a prosecution against Ian Kerr, head of the Consulting Agency which maintained a database of confidential information on over 3,000 construction workers covering the last 15 years. Major Olympics contractors Balfour Beatty and Laing O'Rourke are just two of the 44 construction companies who paid to access the information used to blacklist militant workers and 'known troublemakers'.

De Menezes cop gets top job

◀ page 1

Stewart was one of the first to become aware de Menezes was not a wanted terror suspect, but failed to pass the information on for over 24 hours, instead colluded to disguise the fact an innocent man had been killed by police leading to a serious breach of protocol.

It was also Stewart who co-ordinated the response to the 'health and safety' prosecution of the police, mounting a smear campaign against de Menezes. He instructed barristers at the hearing to "blacken the name" of the dead man, accusing him of being an illegal immigrant, on drugs, repeating lies about his manner, demeanour and dress on the day he was shot. This was all contradicted by the

testimony of a witness who saw the killing stating "It didn't feel to me like I was in the middle of a police operation. The men who came running in seemed quite chaotic. I'd describe them as slightly hysterical. Jean Charles, to my knowledge, did nothing out of the ordinary."

The hearing eventually found the police guilty of "endangering the public", and were fined just £175,000 with £385,000 costs.

At the inquest the jury rejected the claims of the police returning an open verdict after the coroner denied them the option of returning a verdict of unlawful killing. The IPCC refused to investigate officers who lied on the stand during the hearing. No police officer was

ever charged with killing de Menezes, or held accountable for his death.

After the de Menezes enquiry Stewart was promoted to the Metropolitan Police Service's Directorate of Professional Standards, the police's internal complaints department, where he allowed back on duty the officer found to be on the BNP's leaked membership list.

The IPCC came under heavy criticism with its failures to properly investigate the death of Ian Tomlinson by police at the G20 protests this summer. Of the 1,388 police officers investigated by the IPCC for serious misconduct last year only 38 were dismissed from the force. It is not reported how many were charged with a crime.

ANALYSIS

Beyond the Bookfair

So that's another one over...

Saturday 24th October witnessed the 25th London Anarchist Bookfair. Over two thousand people attended what is the biggest anarchist event in Britain. As usual there was a vast range of books, papers, magazines, badges, t-shirts and sundry other merchandise up for grabs and plethora of meetings on every aspect of anarchism. We will not try to report on all that happened, or even cherry-pick some highlights for the delectation of our readers, but rather have a look behind the scenes at the structure, strengths and weaknesses of the event and then see what lessons can be learned about promoting anarchist politics.

First off we should doff our caps to the bookfair organising collective, a mere handful of folk who conjure up the infrastructure year after year. While it all seems to be sailing serenely as the Haringey Goose-Duck on the surface, there's frantic paddling underneath.

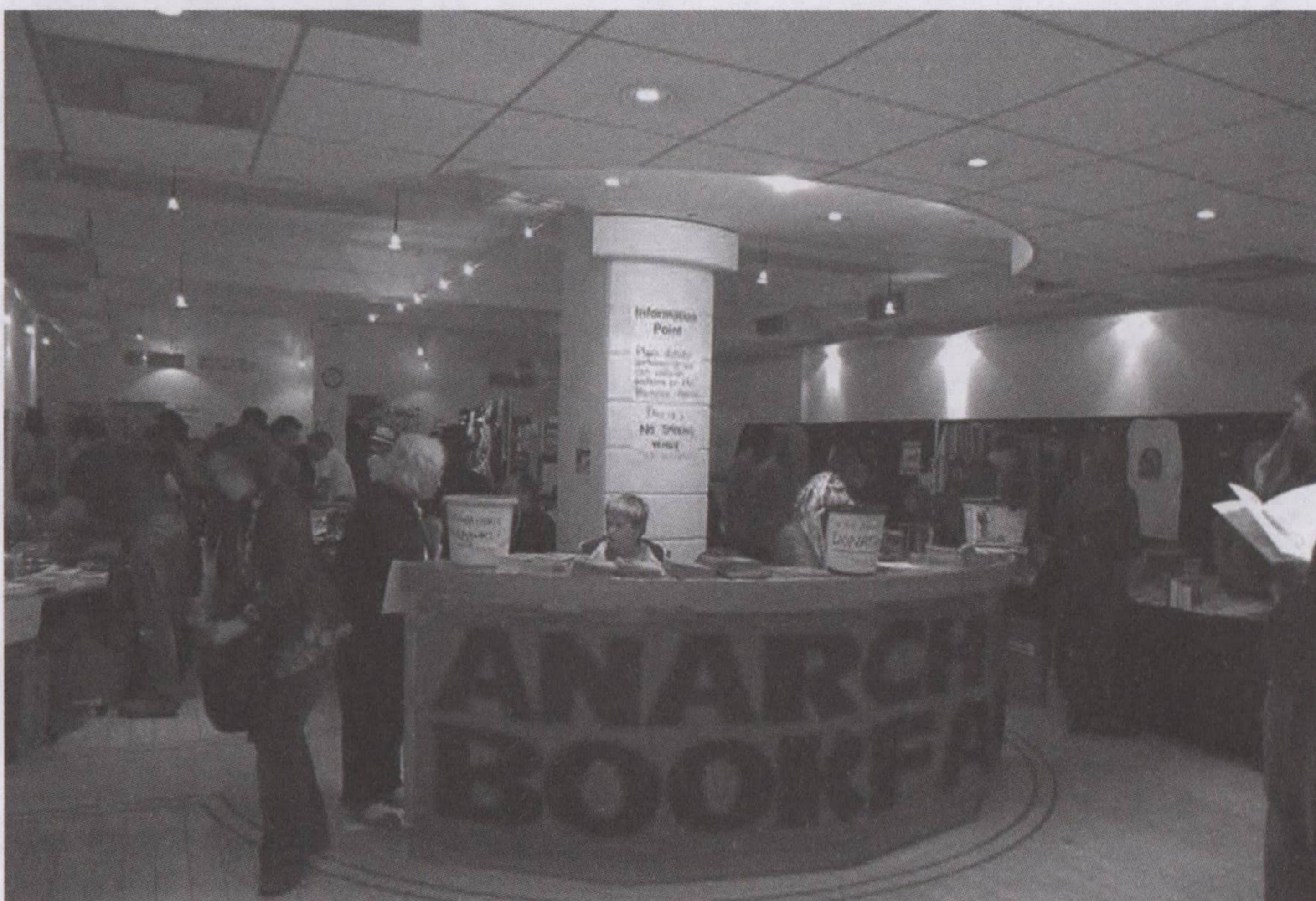
Before you all come rushing to their aid they wisely note that they do not need extra people and that it's far better that comrades are engaged in activity against capitalism and the state, provided there are enough volunteers to help out when needed.

Secondly praise is also due to those public spirited comrades who do just that, and also those that generally keep an eye out (e.g. the convicted paedophile gently persuaded that a trip to the crèche is a bad plan and they'd be much happier going home).

Thanks to these comrades we have a vibrant and successful bookfair but with no disrespect, and indeed with their agreement, this is not enough. How can we make the bookfair better?

Outreach

No cliché about the bookfair is so true as everyone wanting to get new people involved while sinking ever deeper into the anarchist swamp. Witness the cover of the last issue of *Freedom*.



The London Anarchist Bookfair at Holloway Road in 2005; below, last year's bookfair

As a movement we have a stereotypical British reserve about our politics, "Stop being so self deprecatory" an Irish comrade told me after a meeting I'd chaired, "You need to be confident that our politics are right". Too true, for it often seems the only comrades who aren't painfully shy are positively bonkers. Look, I'm doing it again.

One step that would be of great help to the movement would be to accept that public speaking is not a gift but a skill that needs to be worked on and which we should have workshops and courses on to improve ourselves. Another would be have a gathering for organising as well as the bookfair which is primarily for propagandising. This brings us to the structural limitations of the bookfairs meeting.

Muddled meetings

While the bookfair is a hive of meetings and provides the biggest potential anarchist

audience, there are grave drawbacks. Obviously many meetings clash, which is a problem, but also many folk are committed to running stalls and many are trying to catch up with old friends who this is the one opportunity to see a year. Beyond this there is no theme or co-ordination of meetings and this is hardly practical, making it very difficult to get major projects off the ground.

An underlying element though is that at the bookfair we attend meetings either as consumers or vendors. 'Join our group / campaign' or 'I wonder what the Anarchist Workers Party meeting will be like'. What is lacking in a sense of being united with a responsibility to work together.

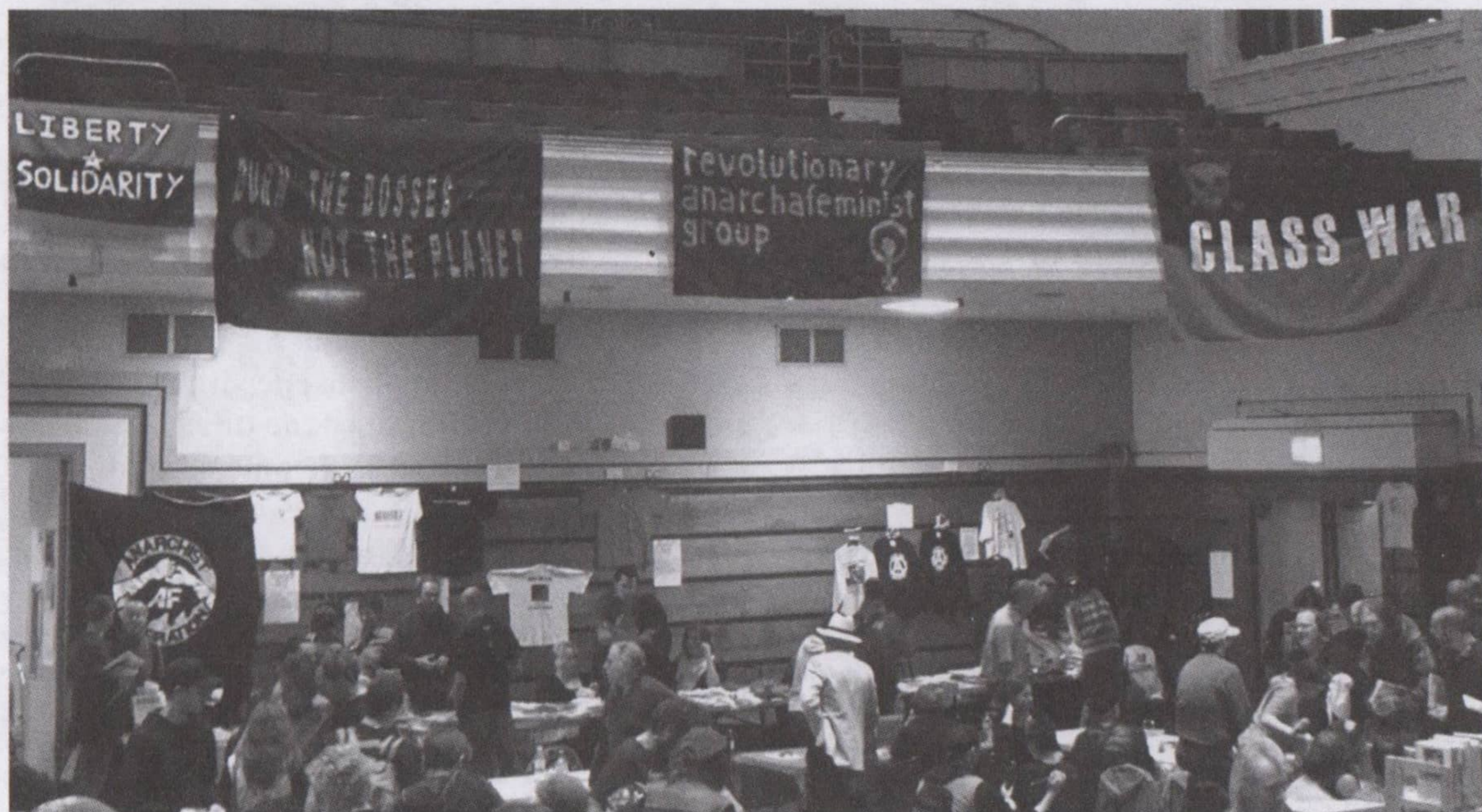
Bookfair and Conference

Much of what the bookfair cannot provide the movement could be done by a annual anarchist conference.

A discussion is already underway to see if a follow on to last years conference will happen next year, and the arguments for it were very eloquently put by Tony Wood in the last issue of *Freedom*.

However unlike the bookfair that can be put on by a purely administrative group, a conference needs to have a agreed content to be effective.

This year's conference didn't go beyond the aim of getting various parts of the movement together in amicable discussion. This was undoubtedly a good thing but to be worthwhile future conferences must go beyond this to getting things done together. To get this what is needed are firm proposals of what the next conference should be about that can be debated. A wish list of what people will like will never get off the ground or at least not get beyond a glorified social. Is anybody out there?



IN BRIEF

TROOP LOSSES: Nearly 1,000 British Service personnel have been wounded in action in Afghanistan, the latest casualty figures have disclosed.

The number seriously injured, many with loss of limbs, has also doubled so far this year compared with the whole of last year.

The figures show that up to 15th October, 386 service personnel had been wounded in action, taking the toll of injured since 2001 to 940. All but ten have occurred since 2006, when the Government sent 3,300 troops to Helmand province.

This year has been the most dangerous yet for British troops, with the number killed and wounded exceeding any previous 12-month period. In the first two weeks of this month, 42 servicemen were wounded, compared with 48 for September.

MORE NAVY NONSENSE: A US destroyer accidentally fired three machine gun rounds at a Polish city while it lay at anchor recently, but caused no injuries and no damage, a Pentagon official said.

The crew of the destroyer *Ramage* were doing 'routine maintenance' to the ship in the port of Gdynia, when a sailor inadvertently fired the burst from one of the warship's M240 machine guns, the official said.

According to an English-language Polish news site, the shooting took place at 10.40am local time on 28th October and the rounds from the ship hit a warehouse.

The *Ramage* was visiting Gdynia after wrapping up its participation in the international naval exercise, Joint Warrior, in which US warships trained with ships from the navies of Brazil, Canada, Denmark, Great Britain, Norway and Turkey.

PIZZLY BEAR UPDATE: We recently reported on the Pizzly Bear. Now Dr Ute Magiera, Dr Alexandra Preuss of the University of Osnabruck and Osnabruck Zoo and colleagues have published details of the hybrid bears in the scientific journal *Der Zoologische Garten*.

Physically, the hybrids have a range of characteristics. In terms of overall size, they fall between the larger polar bear and slightly smaller grizzly or brown bear.

They have longer necks more typical of polar bears, but also display small shoulder humps reminiscent of brown bears.

The size and shape of their heads is intermediate between the thicker-set brown bear and more slender-headed polar bear.

Hybrids have visible tails, like polar bears, whereas those of brown bears are barely apparent.

But most intriguing is the bears' hair. When viewed as a cross section, the shaft of a brown bear's hair is either solid or full of tiny hollow regions, depending on where the hair is on the bear's body. The hair of a polar bear is almost completely hollow, with large empty regions within its core. The hair of the hybrid bears display a blend of both types.

Poppy power

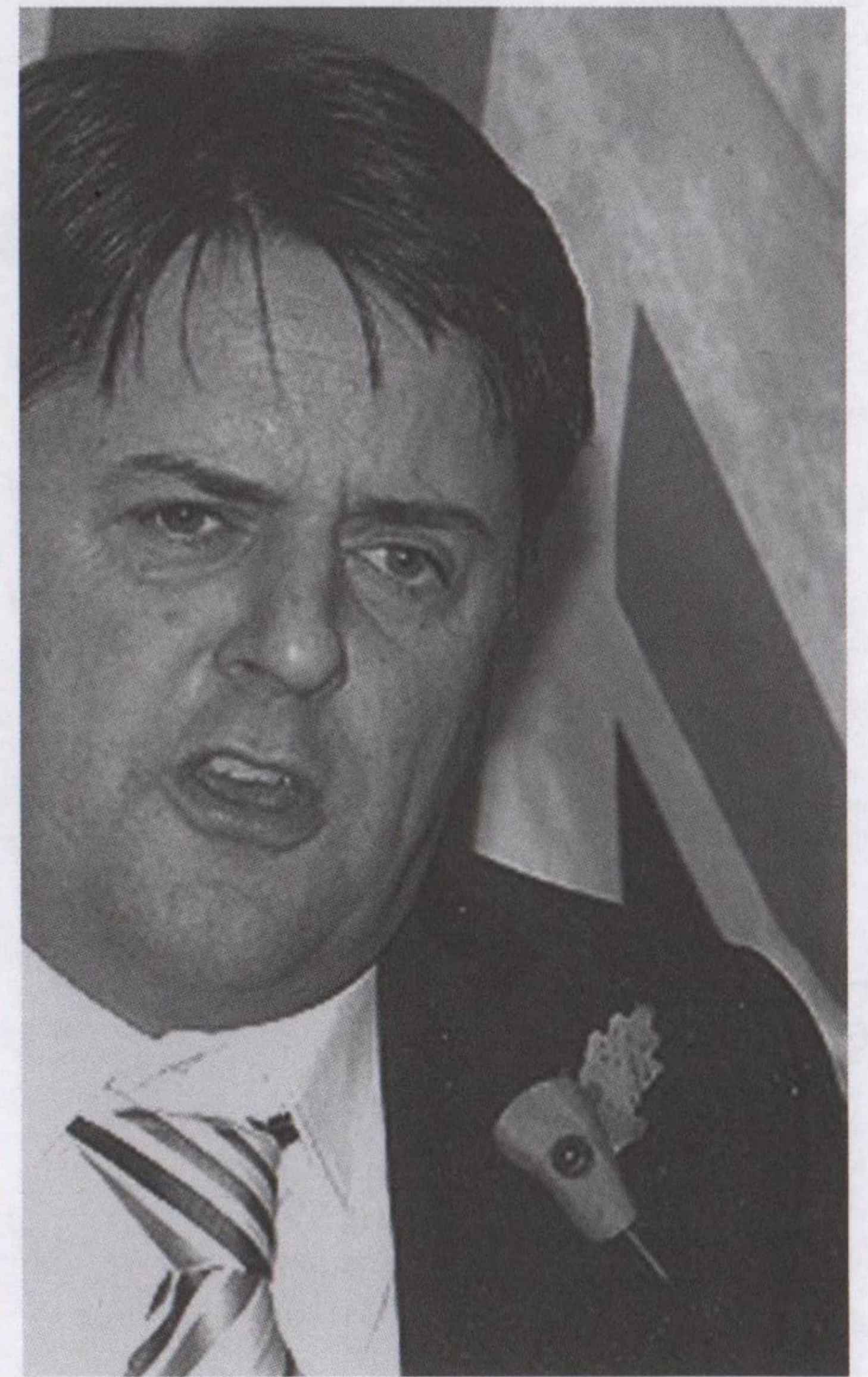
'Tis the season for poppy controversy. Here we have two pieces on differing aspects of the symbol of the Haig Fund. First Brighton ABC's take on the BNP's attempted appropriation of *Papaver rhoeas*, followed by regular columnist Ian Bone's view.

Some of you may have heard about the argument between the British Legion and Nick Griffin over his wearing their poppy lapel badge "in direct contravention of our polite request that you refrain from politicising one of the nation's most treasured and beloved symbols". The Legion even went to the extent of writing him an open letter appealed to his "sense of honour" to stop wearing it. Well, Griffin claims he has been asked to publicise (apparently by soldiers' families) the 'fact' that "Young British soldiers, sitting in hospital in Selly Oak, having lost limbs fighting for the country, are having to pay to watch TV in the wards, while criminal scumbags are sitting in prison watching TV for free". Except of course prisoners don't get to watch TV for free and one would have thought Griffin would know this, mixing every day with so many ex-prisoners. The only TVs prisoners get to watch are those in association areas, where they have little or no control over what is on. If they want to watch a TV over which they have control, they have to 'earn the privilege'. And if they have 'earned the privilege', it costs them £1.50 a week to hire that TV and, when the average weekly wage for a prisoner is around £8, that amounts to nearly 20% of their wage. I bet Griffin would not countenance paying 20% of what he is earning from the EU parliamentary gravy train on the same 'privilege'. If he actually was concerned about hospital patients being forced to pay exorbitant prices for the privilege of watching TV or for making and receiving phone calls from their beds, he would be taking on the people who negotiated these lucrative deals with the private providers, not taking cheap shots at prisoners. After all, they are suffering the same sort of extortion on the pricing of their phone calls to their nearest and dearest.

Brighton ABC

Despite its annual proximity to Remembrance Sunday, I can never recall seeing anyone at the Anarchist Bookfair wearing a poppy. Maybe this year as the outpouring – indeed out of the closet – support for our Second World War fighters on the previous post demonstrates, some poppy wearers might be a first step before we contemplate a wreath laying at local war memorials or the Cenotaph.

Certainly anything at the Cenotaph ought to be heartfelt and low key ... but we really ought to be reclaiming the day from Royals and Party leaders. It was our fucking class that won the war – maybe at long last we can show some pride in it.



I did wear a poppy last year on the Notting Hill Bash The Rich march and there was a furious response on the Libcom Forum from one individual like it was the sell out of a lifetime!!

It may be that after all it wasn't my generation of 1968 that were the true radicals, but our boring old mums and dads in their stuffy clothes and values that were the truly radical generation – fighting the war, bringing in the Labour landslide of '45, voting in Communists, ILPers and the almost anarcho-utopian Commonwealth party in the war.

As always Orwell summed up the Left's problem with patriotism and derided how out of touch with our people they were. Orwell said it was the upper class and the working class who valued physical courage and bravery – the middle class sneered and mocked it ... check out how that pans out in our movement now, comrades.

For Orwell in 1940 that meant dismissing the leftie pacifists and turning the forerunner of the Home Guard into a revolutionary fighting force. He even imported Spanish anarchists to teach petrol bomb throwing in sedate Osterley Park!

We need a similar sea change in our attitude to our Englishness and our recent history. Seeing Michael Vaughan's tearful exit from being England's cricket captain – stress, mate, stress – recalls Australian cricketer Keith Miller's response when asked if he got stressed in a test match. Miller had been a fighter pilot in the war: "Listen, mate, a Messerschmitt up your arse is stress – this is just a fucking game."

Ian Bone

INTERNATIONAL

IN BRIEF

BRAZIL: Police have launched a crackdown against troublesome anarchist organisation the Federação Anarquista Gaúcha (FAG) with a major raid on its headquarters in Rio Grande do Sul.

The government's search warrant allowed them to seize political propaganda material accusing the government of corruption, files regarding the country's World Bank loan status and on the murder of landless peasant, Eltom Brum.

CANADA: Campaigners against the 2010 Winter Olympics in Vancouver, Canada, have begun a nationwide tour to draw attention to the sporting behemoth's negative impact on the region.

The No2010 group claims that the event is causing homelessness, ecological destruction, huge public debt and has sparked a major increase in police power. It is thought regional indigenous groups are among the worst affected.

CHINA: Workers who have been denied their back wages for over two years have launched protests outside the offices of real estate developers Chengdu Xinda.

Fifty people assembled outside the company's gates to demand 30 million yuan in back pay for their twelve months of work building the five-star Regal Master Hotel in Chengdu between July 2006 to 2007.

The company has been accused of hiring the migrant workers from all around China and avoided signing binding payment contracts with them, later claiming they had no grounds to demand wages.

ITALY: Activists have warned that proposals for a 'weekly Muslim hour' to teach students about the religion by right wing politicians is likely to be a back-door method of strengthening Catholic influence in education.

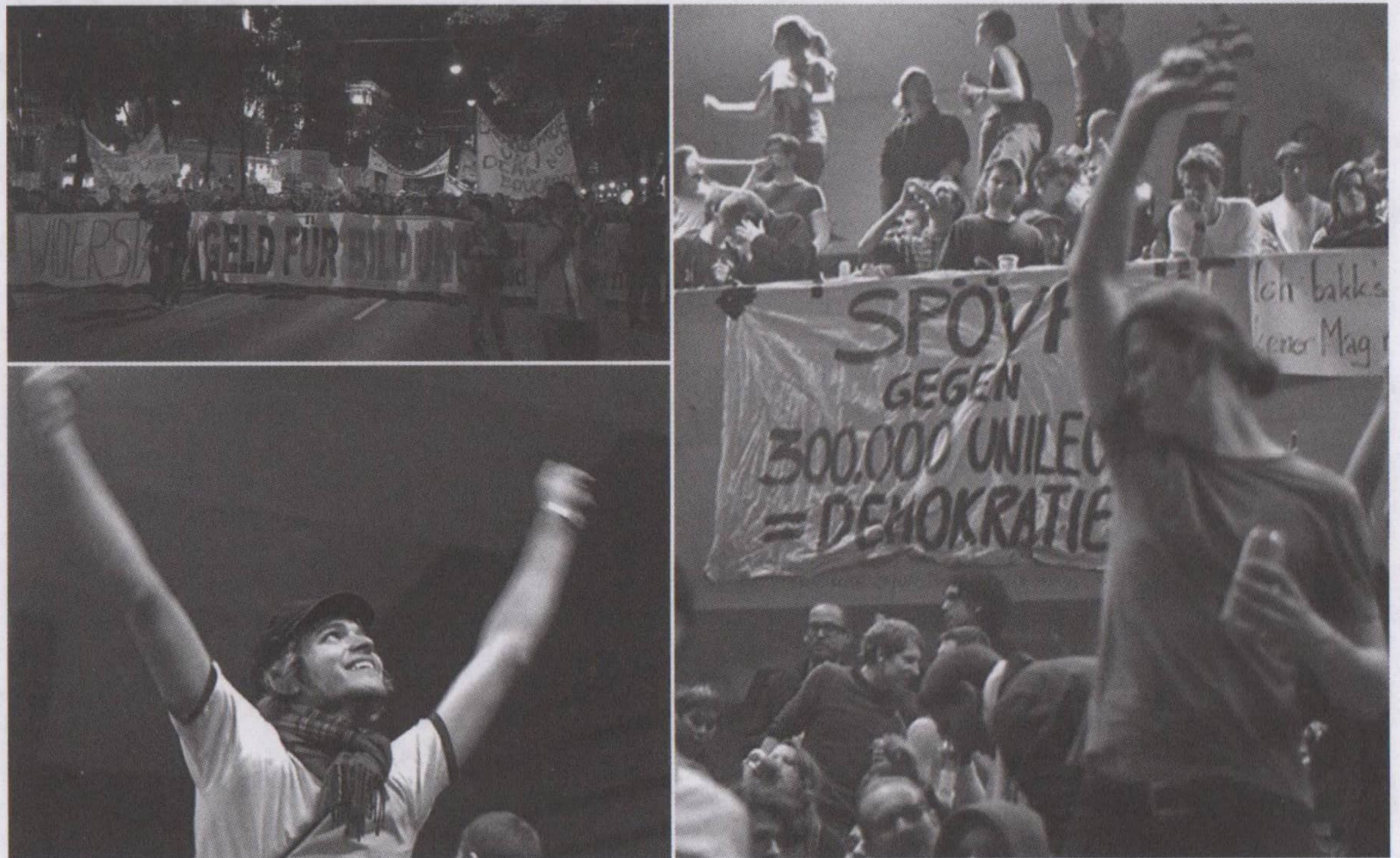
The ostensibly liberal measure would require an overhaul of laws which currently bar Catholic teachers from influencing the final marks of students, potentially opening the door to drive through measures to bring RE lessons unprecedented importance in the secular education system.

PALESTINE: Amnesty International has accused Israel of denying Palestinians the right to access adequate water by maintaining total control over the shared water resources and pursuing discriminatory policies.

Israel uses more than 80% of the water from the Mountain Aquifer, the main source of underground water in Israel and the occupied Palestinian territories, while restricting Palestinian access to a mere 20%.

While Palestinian daily water consumption barely reaches 70 litres a day per person, Israeli daily consumption is more than 300 litres per day, four times as much.

LENS CAP VIENNA



Students occupy a lecture hall in Vienna as part of a wave of protests over unfair treatment which have swept the nation. Around 15,000 students have taken part in protests, occupations and other actions as part of the nationwide uprising against plans to restrict campus access and amid demands to democratise education in the country.

Four die in Bangladesh riot

Four have died in a clash between 10,000 protesters and police on 31st October at a demonstration against the summary closure of a local factory and withholding of back wages.

At least 100 workers and an unknown number of police were injured during a brutal police assault on the demonstrators, who were demanding the payment of wages due from the Nippon garment factory.

Police fired rubber bullets and tear gas into the huge crowd as stones and brick were thrown back, in one the most violent of a number of fights to have broken out in the country over recent months.

Mainstream media sources claim two protesters and two police officers have died in the fighting.

It is the first major conflict in the region

since a new initiative to persecute labour organisers and install spies in every factory was revealed in July.

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

Garment workers in Bangladesh have come under sustained pressure in the economic downturn as clothing sales have been hit by a major downturn and amid attempts to out-source production to less organised regions of Vietnam, China and India.

The industry, which employs 40% of the country's industrial workforce and accounts for 80% of its exports, is one of the world's most militant.

Notes from the United States

Direct action, anti-corporate 'pranksters' the Yes Men pulled off another revealing stunt towards the end of October. The group, one of whose slogans is "off the screen – and into the streets", hired a room at the National Press Club in Washington, DC, for \$500 (£300) to hold a press conference at which they posed as spokespeople for the Chamber of Commerce.

The big announcement was that the Chamber, roughly equivalent to the CBI in the UK, had dropped its opposition to national legislation seeking to control climate change. The Chamber's apparent spokesperson, Andy

Bichlbaum, announced that the bosses' body would now even support taxing carbon emissions.

There was even a credible press release. The statement purportedly from the Chamber of Commerce made the highly believable point that, "...[w]ithout a stable climate, there will be no business. We need business more than we need relentlessly higher returns".

National news outlets quickly picked up the story and carried it ... until a real spokesperson from the Chamber of Commerce intervened

Overview: conflict in Greece

As violent struggle continues to escalate across Greece, workers took control of the Ministry of Culture at the end of last month to demand the back pay of around 4,000 staff and the extension of contracts for 318 workers from minister Paul Geroulanou.

Panicked police surrounded the building shortly after it was taken on 30th October, and were continuing to lay siege to it on 1st November while Geroulanou attempted to negotiate with the workforce.

The occupation of a major state building is merely the latest pressure to be laid on the new socialist government, which has been struggling to cope with the sustained nationwide response to its attempted crackdown on dissent in the capital of Athens.

There has been rising anger over the effective military occupation of Exarcheia, a well-known radical hub in Athens, with thousands of police ID-ing, detaining and raiding dozens of people and homes.

The ham-fisted measures have meant tensions continue to rise between the state, communists and insurrectionary anarchists, with bombings and attacks breaking out over most of last month.

The most notable clash on Tuesday 27th October saw five police officers shot by people on motorbikes, armed with Kalashnikovs.

Such is the animosity towards anarchists that police immediately blamed them for the shootings despite a total lack of evidence, however a few days later, the attack was claimed by a hitherto unknown Stalinist group, modelling itself on a resistance group linked to the 1930s incarnation of the Greek Communist Party.



Demonstrators angry at the death of Mohammad Atif Kamran

In a communiqué they made “a call to arms, in the struggle for the dictatorship of the proletariat and communism”.

Ms Giannakou was minister of education during the massive movement against educational reforms in 2006–2007.

Just days later, on 30th October, the house of conservative ex-minister Marietta Giannakou was bombed after warnings were called in to the media, an attack claimed by the nihilist Nuclei of Fire Conspiracy.

In a long, rambling note the group used the opportunity to demand that anarchists not go on educational protest marches and railed against liberalism, calling on children themselves to begin rebelling against their

situation. Police have called on the six-person group to surrender, saying leniency will be shown due to their youth.

On the same night, the Spanish Consulate in Thessaloniki was hit with explosive gas devices attributed to a new and unknown group, following on from several other bombings of MPs’ offices the week before.

A number of other university occupations in solidarity with Pakistani migrants in Nice added to the confusion towards the end of the month, to highlight the case of 15 people who were beaten, arrested and tortured after a police raid on their homes.

One, Mohammed Atif Kamran, subsequently died from his injuries.

Notes from the Unites States

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at the press conference and – by denouncing the message of Yes Man Bichlbaum – effectively affirmed the Chamber’s opposition to measures to address climate change.

The timing of the stunt was particularly apposite, as the figures for Chamber of Commerce lobbying of congress had recently been released for the quarter. And they’re staggering: \$34.7 million (£21.2 million); or more than \$300,000 (£183,000) in lobbying every day.

Conflicts of interest

Speaking of corporate incentivising, in mid October it was confirmed by the mainstream press that some of the largest financial companies in the United States are poised to pay a record \$140 billion (£85 billion) in bonuses in 2009.

An average figure for perks and benefits of the chief executives at 29 of the largest public financial companies which have also taken bail-out funds from US taxpayers in 2008 is

\$380,000 (£231,000) each.

This, of course, is less than a year after taxpayers bailed out many of these same firms.

At the same time, several of Treasury Secretary Timothy Geithner’s (the equivalent of the Chancellor of the Exchequer) closest aides have been earning millions of dollars from bailed-out Wall Street firms: in 2008 adviser Gene Sperling made over \$887,000 (£540,000) from Goldman Sachs plus \$158,000 (£96,000) in ‘speaking fees’.

Lee Sachs, another advisor, made over \$3 million (£1.8 million) from New York hedge fund the Mariner Investment Group.

CEO of Dallas-based lender Comerica Ralph Babb’s country club membership has initiation fees and dues of over \$200,000 (£122,000); they were paid for him. Similarly, GMAC Financial Services chief executive Alvaro de Molina received a payment of \$2.5 million (£1.5 million) from his company to help cover his personal tax bill.

Louis Further

Dutch squatters strike back

At least 15 buildings have been taken over in Holland as part of a fightback campaign against plans to break the massive squatting movement there.

Between 28th and 31st October, properties as varied as fallow land, a tourist kiosk and a restaurant were ‘cracked’ and opened to the public in a show of defiance against the government. The Dutch parliament is currently in the process of banning squatting.

The squat initiative sparked police interventions in many cases, but activists say that with huge shortages of available housing, such efforts are both misguided and ultimately unsustainable.

In a statement, one group of crackers said: “The fact is that above and behind central city shopping areas many houses are empty. As they have no private entrance, they are removed from the housing stock. We are making these places habitable again and ensuring a vibrant downtown.”

The reasons why the postal workers are on strike

As the strike by postal workers continues *Freedom* reprints an extract from a postal workers question and answer session detailing the issues surrounding the current dispute.

Q: So what's this all about then? Posties are just lazy aren't they? And that's why Royal Mail wants to sort them out?

A: No! A Postman/woman's job is one of the hardest jobs in the country – fact. Ten years ago your postie had two bags of mail to deliver each day, now your postie struggles to deliver six to eight bags per day in the same hours. This is no exaggeration – workload has more than tripled in recent years. And believe it or not 60,000 jobs have been cut in the past five years at Royal Mail with the remaining staff (many now part-time) absorbing the resulting massive increase in workload.

So why is the company saying you're all lazy and have all these 'Spanish practices' where you don't do what you're told or get loads of overtime money for doing nothing? There are in fact no so-called 'Spanish' practices and there haven't been any for years. When they did exist they did so with the blessing of management and some like the biggest, 'job and finish', were introduced by national management to encourage us to work faster! The latest agreement with the union (2007 Pay and Modernisation) abolished 'job and finish' as per company wishes. So this issue is simply propaganda to make us look bad and get the public on the company's side. The managers in Royal Mail call the shots, full stop, and in fact they regularly threaten posties with the sack if they say they can't cope and have too much work to do.

Hold on, you're saying there is more mail than ever? Royal Mail says it's dropping 10% every year?

That's a complete lie. Nationally, mail volume is measured by counting the number of boxes of mail that arrive at a delivery office. The number of boxes is multiplied by the average number of letters per box to get a total figure. Now here's the clever part – until recently the number of letters in each box was estimated at around 200. That number was arbitrarily, and without consultation with the workforce or union, reduced to 150. So overnight mail volumes dropped by 25% – now *that's* magic.

In response, the union had random counts done over a period of weeks and the average number of letters per box was found to be – 256. Other independent counts from individual postmen have found boxes contain from 230–290 letters each. But there's nothing the union can do to redress the balance, the new figure of 150 still stands and the big lie continues. On top of that, the 'Mail Volume' figure Royal Mail bang on about totally ignores the number of packets coming into the system from home shopping and the internet. These are very, very profitable for the company meaning postmen now have three to five times more packets than ever before!

Okay, so which parts then of Royal Mail's modernisation plan is the union objecting to and how would the changes affect me anyway?

Royal Mail's idea of modernisation, very simply, is to give someone three and a half hours to do four to five hours of delivery work. Royal Mail's idea of modernisation is going to make us give you a terrible service because we don't have time to do the job properly – and we hate them for it. We are given eight bags of mail to deliver when we would still struggle with five. As a result we have to run around getting rid of mail any way we can. That's not good for you and we don't enjoy it either, it's an all-out slog and at the end of it you are shattered – and



probably 45 minutes past your shift end with no overtime coming your way. That's a daily reality for most postmen hence the large majority in the recent vote. As well as making rounds even longer, they want to make most posties part-time casual staff on minimum wage.

So Royal Mail wants to cut and cut. What is their ultimate aim here for the postal service and why should I care?

Okay, we're not stupid, we know the current management at Royal Mail were put in place to 'cost cut' the company and ready it for privatisation. To some this is the ultimate way to make the service 'better'. Well, 'better' for the public and 'better' for the board of directors at Royal Mail and private investors are almost certainly mutually exclusive concepts. You may be shocked to hear that the CEO of Royal Mail, Adam Crozier, is the highest remunerated civil servant in the UK.

In an apparently 'failing company' the guy at the top gets around £3 to 4m a year in wages and bonuses. And his mates on the board get plenty too with massive pension pots recently set up by them, for them. But the thing is – the company *is not failing*. This year profits were announced at £321m for Royal Mail Plc.

But in fact the story is *much* brighter than that. Last year the company had to pay £850m into their pension fund black hole. Yes, so before that 'unique' cost the company made over a one billion profit. Actually, let's be precise here, *one billion 171 million pounds* profit – in one year. And during the past few years there have been huge one-off investments in new machinery meaning profits will be even higher in the future. All this, the company and the government want to hand over to private investors via privatisation.

So the company is actually creating vast amounts of profit? Then why is this strike happening?!!?

Two answers – the pension-fund black hole and 'down-stream access'. The pension-fund black hole varies but stands at around £3m to £10m on current forecasts. This massive shortfall in the fund was caused by a 13 year 'pension holiday' that Royal Mail took from 1990–2003. During this period postal staff still made *their* pension contributions but the company didn't pay their share into the pension fund. This was allowed by a change in pension law – introduced by Margaret Thatcher – and the result is a massive black hole that, as shown above, absorbs most of Royal Mail's profit each and every year. So

the black hole is a result of mismanagement (and poor legislation) and we believe therefore that Royal Mail's owner – the UK government – is directly responsible for allowing it to grow to such a devastating level and should pay it off. This means the taxpayer pays off the deficit but then private investors reap the huge future rewards while we are cut to a part-time workforce on minimum wages! In the not so distant past the government made massive revenues from Royal Mail and that should be the case again – private companies should not be taking the profits of this public service once it gets back into being a great institution.

And secondly, 'down-stream access' (introduced by Labour Party liberalisation of the postal market!) allows companies like TNT and UKMail to strip massive amounts of revenue from Royal Mail. Before liberalisation of the postal market a letter may have made Royal Mail 10p profit, now delivering TNT's own processed mail may make the company 3p or even make a 2p loss! These companies have been allowed to 'asset-strip' the postal service as they take the most profitable parts of the delivery network and Royal Mail are left with the less profitable parts.

Despite these two massive wedges squeezing Royal Mail, the staff is so efficient and hard-

working they *still* made a £321m profit last year. The fact is, postmen work hard, harder than most other workers in the UK and the balance sheet proves it.

Okay so you've said what Royal Mail want – now what does the Union want and is it unrealistic?

The union want nothing – except to represent us posties. Believe it or not we employ the CWU to talk and negotiate with Royal Mail on our behalf because we are too busy walking round with overweight bags on our shoulders to do this ourselves!

So what do the posties want? Shorter rounds. We want a fair and independently assessed workload so that no longer are we asked – or forced – to take out more heavy bags of mail than it is physically possible to deliver in the three and a half hours we are given.

For the sake of our health and well-being, and the quality of the service this is essential. In essence, we want an end to being expected to do five hours delivery work in three and a half hours. If this single step was introduced – a fair independently assessed workload – every postie in the country would be back at work.

In the mail centres the guys and girls there simply want assurances they won't in large numbers be sacked without warning or consultation.

More efficient machines are the way forward, the staff and the union agree, but the answer to their introduction is not to suddenly sack tens of thousands of dedicated long-term staff! A restructuring plan is the solution not executive action which will see massive sackings when staff could be moved around the company into deliveries or take voluntary reduced hours. Simple as that, indoor staff want assurances, job security, respect at work and no more harassment and bullying. That's the story of this strike. No kidding, that's it. Unreasonable?

We think not. We know the company has a huge potential for a great service *and* massive profits and that's what we want, respect at work, a fair workload and a successful company.

Written by a postie with contributions for accuracy from many experienced posties at www.RoyalMailChat.co.uk



COMMENT

ABOUT FREEDOM

ANGEL ALLEY

Thanks to all comrades who visited our stand at the 35th London Anarchist Bookfair and those who came to the party at the bookshop afterwards.

Commiserations to those unable to make it and apologies to all getting their bookfair special editions of *Freedom* long after the bookfair – blame those militant trouble-makers at the post office. Apologies on the same lines to anyone using our new all-singing all-dancing buy-online website as your orders may be delayed by the same irresponsible elements of the working class.

Back in the shop, we've cleaned up and are busy having a reorganisation of the shelves. We are also getting a new sign for Whitechapel High Street (an unfortunate accident at the party). Other improvements include a shiny new loo and the next step will be painting the outside of the building. Our phone problems should be cured by the time you get this but just in case, or if you urgently need to contact us about the shop or paper, you can ring Andy on 07913 865 928.

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 21, so if your subscription runs out with this issue you'll have 7021 above your name. If the number is 7021 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 21st November 2009 and the last day to get copy to us for that issue will be Thursday 12th November. You can send your articles to us by email to copy@freedompress.org.uk or by post addressed to 'The Editors', Freedom, 84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1 7QX.

A sideways look

by SVARTFROSK

The independent review which forcefully condemned the government over the crash of an RAF plane in Afghanistan tells us several things. Perhaps the most obvious is that the powers that be sense that new faces will be replacing the tired-looking Labour government in the near future. But I think it also tells us several other things if we look a bit deeper.

In 2006, a Nimrod plane blew up after air-to-air refuelling in Afghanistan. All 14 crew died. The review, chaired by Charles Haddon-Cave QC, found that the Ministry of Defence and its commercial partners carried out a safety review that was a "lamentable job" and accused the MoD of a "systemic breach" of the military covenant. Regardless of the view that the plane shouldn't have been there, it's still quite shocking that fourteen men should die just because the contractors didn't maintain the plane.

The latter is interesting from my point of view – the military covenant is the unstated agreement that people who join the armed forces will be properly equipped for the battles they face, and supported once their service is over. Getting a wide range of people to join the armed forces relies on it being seen to operate, which is why all the stories of soldiers having to buy their own kit in Iraq and Afghanistan are so embarrassing for the government. Should the military covenant break down or be undermined, it will impact on Britain's ability to intervene abroad. This is no bad thing.

It's worth remembering that the military have been spared a lot of the cuts that other areas of state spending have faced over the last three decades. They were not alone in this, but Thatcher for a start prioritised

spending on the police and military. Why she did so became apparent very quickly. There were always plenty of stories of squaddies doing picket duty alongside the overpaid police during the miners' strike. It was a two-way street – soldiers returning from the Falklands hung banners from their ships condemning the rail strikes that were ongoing in 1982.

So if even a sacred cow like the armed forces, generally spared cuts unlike areas like education or health, can be cut and privatised so that it doesn't work any more, what hope is there for any public service? Privatisation of defence contracting was done for the same reasons as it is with any other job. At face value, governments say that the private sector is magically more efficient, though it's hard to contrast it with maintenance being done by the armed forces themselves. The real reason is that no one is making a profit if maintenance is done by the RAF, and capitalism abhors the absence of profit. Private firms will be brought in purely for reasons of neo-liberal ideology. One expert witness at the review, a former Nimrod flight engineer, said "it's probably to do with money – treating it like a business ... [the plane that crashed] was on the ground for 14 weeks of servicing by civilian contractors, but when it left it had the same leaks it came in with. The reason given was that the fuel system was not covered by that particular servicing company."

The main firms concerned are bribery experts BAe Systems and Qinetiq, a recent privatisation from the MoD who are also dogged by controversy.

If the forces' own personnel are treated so indifferently, what are the MoD doing to the Afghans or Iraqis?



EDITORIAL

Give up anti-fascism

Your feature 'Give up anti-fascism: an anarchist response' (*Freedom*, 24th October) states that the Solidarity Federation (SF) has "re-confirmed its policy of no platform for fascists" in the latest edition of *Direct Action*. However, articles in *Direct Action* do not necessarily reflect the views of the SF as a whole.

Since then, the subsequent edition of *Direct Action* (no 48) carried a differing view on the struggle against fascism, closer to the position my local has. We recognise that no platform is a tactic, not a principle, and will continue to discuss our response to the BNP's electoral road. Much like the AF, the SF has ongoing internal debates about how best to counter fascism, the BNP and other far right groups who take to the streets.

Martin H.

Secretary South London Local, Solidarity Federation

Communities with intent

I could not believe my eyes when I saw your book review of *A Living Revolution: Anarchism in the Kibbutz Movement* (*Freedom*, 10th October). There was not one mention of the giant elephant in the room: the kibbutzim were built on land stolen from indigenous Palestinian peasants. In light of this, the most astonishing claim in the review was that the kibbutzim were organised "without authority or coercion".

Israeli historian Ilan Pappé says of the Hashomer Hatzair organisation mentioned in the review that it "officially carried the slogan of bi-national coexistence ... but at the same time proved to be the greediest, of the three major kibbutz movements" and that it was the "main beneficiary" of the "campaign of land and village confiscations" from Palestinians between 1949 and 1952 (Pappé, *A History of Modern Palestine*, page 146).

Anti-Zionist Jew Uri Davies (or "Palestinian Hebrew of Jewish origins" as this secular anti-apartheid activist prefers to call himself) relates the following story from the 1960s: "I refused to participate in the armed patrols ... [so] one of the [kibbutz] members took me to the periphery of the kibbutz ... He asked me what I could see and I said: 'A pile of stones.' He said: 'No. This is the [Arab] village of Dirma. Its residents are refugees while we cultivate their land. Now do you understand why they hate us and want to drive us into the sea?'" (*Guardian*, 23rd August).

These are not isolated incidents. In fact this trend stretches right back to the first Zionist colonies of the late nineteenth century. In 1910, for example, when the felaheen (indigenous Palestinian peasant farmers) of al-Fula refused to vacate the land they cultivated (Zionist settlers of the second Aliya strongly believed in the racist concept of 'Hebrew labour'), the colonists teamed up with absentee Lebanese landlords and the soldiers of the Ottoman Empire to force the

farmers off the land (Rashid Khalidi, *Palestinian Identity*, pages 107–111). The modern day Israeli city of Afula is situated near Kibbutz Yizre'el, which was built on the ethnically cleansed Palestinian village of Zir'in (destroyed in 1948).

The internal dynamics of the kibbutzim are irrelevant to the fact of these injustices. At a minimum, the review should have mentioned this major contradiction. If this is the vision of 'anarchist utopia' then count me out.

Asa Winstanley

Future of Freedom

I'm writing in support of keeping *Freedom* as a fortnightly news paper. The selection of news and comment is unique. Take the last issue (26th September) which included news from Oxaca, DSEi, review of the latest Loach film and a report on the Os Cangacerios (who I'd never heard of before). And it comes from across the various federations and networks.

If I want longer comment pieces I can go elsewhere – signposted by *Freedom*, thank you very much.

Being in paper format means I don't have to trawl through hundreds of bulletin board topics, email lists, or the detritus on Indymedia. I can read it on the bus on the way to work. And when I've read it I leave it with the pile of *Metros* for somebody else to read.

An obvious problem is how to get more people to read it. I wonder if a *New Internationalist*-style "three months free" offer might help.

Please keep up the excellent work and let's all – me included – put some effort in to finding some more readers and subscribers.

Peter Piper

Sales, subscriptions and finances: Currently Freedom the paper loses about £8,000 a year. Production costs are around £9,000 a year, while postage comes to £4,000. On the plus side, sales and subscriptions bring in £5,000. The best way to remedy this would be to sell more copies and get more subscribers.

We have now shifted to sending the paper 1st class folded in a A5 envelope – this cuts postage costs over 2nd class large by 8p a copy. Each new (UK standard rate) subscriber we get within the current print run thus helps cut the deficit by about £10 a year, so 800 new subscribers would thus enable us to break even. Given the size of the anarchist movement in Britain and that Freedom is the only fortnightly paper we as a movement produce, this is not an unreasonable aim and is our objective for the near future.

We also want to encourage comrades to sell the paper. If you would like to try this we will be happy to send you a bundle each issue (5 or 12 as that fits with postal charge categories). The deal is you keep half the money from sales and pay us the other half. There's no need to return unsold copies and obviously you can pay for a batch of issues, not every two weeks.

We realise that comrades do not want to emulate the SWP and will often wish to give the paper to those in struggle or in financial difficulties. As long as your sales can at least cover the postage (90p for 5, £1.24 for 12) we can keep sending you a bundle – The Editors

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GETTING ACTIVE

PRISON NEWS

'Shotgun' found in prison

In a wonderful version of the tabloid prison scare story, the *Scottish Daily Record* 'exclusively' revealed, "an inmate at Scotland's largest prison has built a deadly DIY shotgun in his cell".

Apparently "detailed plans" were doing the rounds at "notorious Barlinnie in Glasgow" of how to make this "crude, but lethal, gun was made from scratch using bits and pieces picked up around the overcrowded prison".

The 'shotgun', which "fires heavy pellets made from a lump of lead picked up in the prison's roofing workshop", was made from "items lifted from cleaning cupboards in the prison halls, prison workshops, as well as plastic tweezers from the health centre".

The prisoner in question, had "strolled out of jail with the gun components in his bag" which the paper's journalist saw "being fired – blowing a huge hole in an inch-thick piece of wood". The prisoner also claimed "he was forced to hand over a diagram of the design to hardmen prisoners before being freed".

Unfortunately, the Scottish Bluebell strike-anywhere matches (only 15p a box, we were helpfully told), which were ground down to make the explosive charge to fire the pellets, were removed from sale from the prison canteen the next day.

According to a Scottish Prison Service spokesman, "the strike-anywhere matches were bought by mistake by a new member of staff who ordered the wrong type. They were replaced with safety matches". So no armed breakouts from the Barlinnie in the near future then?

Prisoners' families

More than 90% of prisoners' children get no special help when a parent is in jail, despite being at much greater risk of turning to crime themselves, according to research.

Children's charity Barnardo's examined the provision of services in Britain's 208 local authority areas. The charity found that 188 made no reference to prisoners' families, despite a government directive that they are a vulnerable group whose needs should be met.

Local authorities must by law produce a Children's Plan to show how they are caring for the young people in their area. They are, however, only advised, rather than required, by the Government to include provision for prisoners' children, and the research shows that most have decided that they are not a special case. Barnardo's said that it was astonishing that such a group should be invisible.

Research shows that these children are especially vulnerable, suffer high levels of poverty and are unlikely to do well at school. Yet nothing is in place to help to maintain prisoner visits or phone calls home.

In Britain, more than half of prisoners are held further than 50 miles from home.



University campuses have always been fertile ground for the expression of political ideas and action, from the Paris university occupations in 1968 that pre-figured a general workers revolt, to last year's uprising in Greece where campuses were used as a base to plan strategies, encourage involvement and mobilise the population against state repression.

In the UK students played an active part in the anti-war movement including the recent nationwide campus sit-ins in response to the attacks on Gaza, this coupled with the current government's assault on the education system in the form of tuition fees, indicates an upsurge in the radicalisation of students, with anarchist ideas being visibly expressed through student groups.

We take a look at the more high profile of those groups in the hope they encourage others in universities and colleges around the country to play a more active role in anarchist politics.

● Founded at this year's Anarchist Movement Conference, **Autonomous Students Network** is a national network of radical anti-authoritarian and anti-capitalist groups and individuals in UK universities and colleges who organise and build solidarity and grassroots power across campuses, communities and workplaces. So far the ASN have a presence in Manchester, SOAS, Goldsmiths, UEL, Birkbeck, Salford, Sussex, Birmingham, Cambridge, Coventry, Queen Mary, Sheffield, Warwick, UCL, and London College of Arts. Groups involve themselves in campaigns both on and off campus, on issues such as environmental, social justice, workplace organising, anti-militarism and community activism. The network operates to help all these groups keep in touch and organise more effectively at a wider level.

● Probably the most visible and active of the student anarchist groups **Autonomy and Solidarity** is based at Goldsmith's College in south east London. They were part of the

occupation of Deptford Town Hall (pictured above), in support of Palestinian scholarships, that ushered in new kind of student politics at Goldsmiths – collective action and direct democracy. They also organised a Libertarian bloc on National Demonstration for Free Education and were active in their support of Mitie cleaners struggle in the City of London.

● Based at the University of Warwick, Coventry, **Warwick Anarchist Collective** was one of the supporting groups of the Anarchist Movement Conference earlier this year. Reasons behind setting up the group were to bring together people with similar views to talk and arrange actions nationally and locally and increase awareness of anarchism at the university. Activities so far include supporting anti-militarism – Faslane, DSEi anti-arms trade, part of the anti-EON campaign and occupations in support for Gaza.

● **Queen Mary Autonomous Group** is based at Queen Mary University, in London's East End. Their goal is to spread anarchist ideas and activities amongst students, also bring staff and students together, supporting each other in struggle, with activities based around an Independent newsheet, anti-tuition fees campaign, supporting local community and workplace struggles, while promoting anarchism and direct action as the solution to the world's problems and generating support for the anarchist movement

Contact details for student anarchist groups:

- Anarchist Students Network, <http://www.autonomous-students.net/>
- Autonomy and Solidarity, <http://autonomyandsolidarity.blogspot.com/>
- Warwick Anarchist Collective, email chris_rossdale@hotmail.com
- Queen Mary Autonomous Group, <http://www.facebook.com/group.php?gid=57189612775>
- Edinburgh University Anarchist Society, <http://euas.noflag.org.uk/>
- University of East London Autonomists, email uelautonomists@gmail.com

It's still 'no comment'

As new people become involved, it periodically becomes necessary to repeat things that every anarchist, and indeed every person, should know about what to do if arrested. So once again we return to the issue of the right to silence, and in particular what to do when interviewed in custody. We focus specifically on this aspect due to lack of space and because in other circumstances you have the opportunity to take advice and research at your leisure. This piece would not be possible without the co-operation of many people who have shared their experiences and shown transcripts of interviews to the Legal Defence and Monitoring Group – to spare their blushes all names have been withheld.

Law...

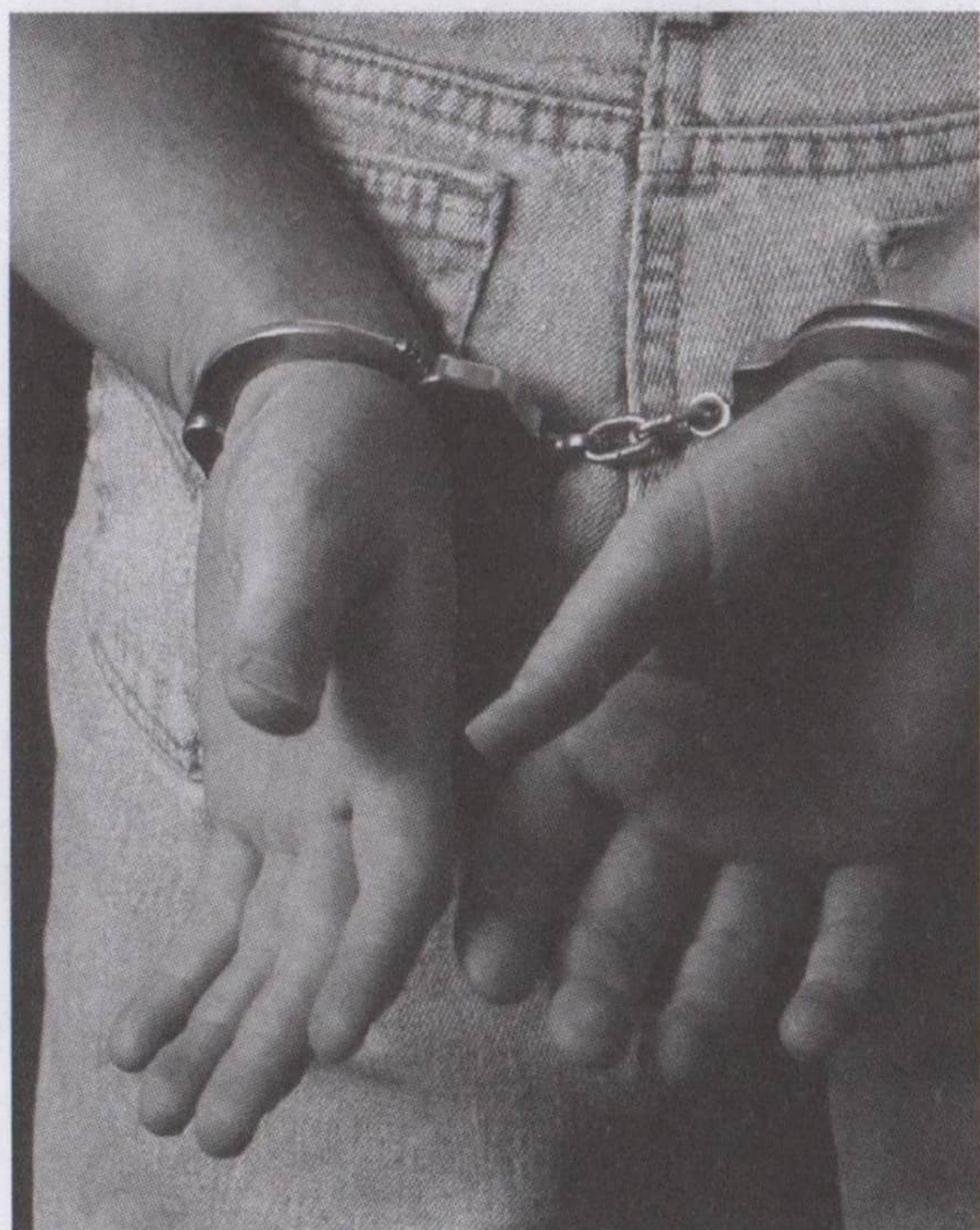
Until the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994, the fact that you didn't answer questions in police interviews could not be drawn to the attention of the jury or magistrates when you were tried.

Sections 34–39 of the Act modified the law to allow an 'adverse inference' to be drawn if under certain circumstances you rely on a defence that you could reasonably have mentioned when questioned.

The law is complex as always, but in almost all cases, and any where you do not know the full legal position back to front yourself, the best thing to do remains to answer 'no comment' to all questions. Any good lawyer will be happy to advise you to do this, which strengthens your position as you are doing it on 'legal advice'.

There are many other reasons that may be legitimate too – including, as mentioned by the Lord Chief Justice in 1997, being 'suspicious of the police'. We sincerely hope you are.

For more details the law can be read online at statutelaw.gov, the wikipedia article on right to silence is a good starting point and for an in depth analysis see *Silence and Guilt: an assessment of case law on the*



Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994
by David Walchover.

...and practice

It may seem blindingly obvious but the police are trained in interviewing techniques and very few of us are trained in how to handle interrogation.

The starting point is that you are an amateur team playing away to a professional one and the best you can hope for is a nil-nil draw by playing an uncompromising defence.

Second, remember your audience, not the people in the room but the magistrates, judge or jury who will decide your case. The tone of your voice will be important in how you are perceived. Avoid sounding angry or, worse, bored or arrogant.

Now to the common tricks that will be used to break down your 'no comment'. Easiest to deal with are threats or inducements. Tick these off inwardly as a good sign, the cops have a weak case and their tactics will look bad in court. Then there is the 'we've got the evidence, so and so's confessed and shopped you, make it easy on yourself', lies 'cos if they had you bang to rights they would have charged you already as they are in fact obliged to under PACE. Most dangerous is the verbal trickery.

- Intermixing uncontroversial questions with incriminating ones:
'This is a copy of *The Sun* newspaper?'
'Yes'
'That's your picture on the front cover isn't it?'
Now the 'no comment' sounds very weak.
- Hard followed by soft:
'You were one of the organisers of J18 weren't you?'

'No comment'

'But you know who they were?'

'Well, the ones in London...'

- Even more sneaky are blatant lies you will want to refute:
'For the tape, Ms A is nodding her head.'
 - Most perilous, because it comes first, is the slippery slope offered before the interview starts.
'Would you like a cup of water? Is the chair okay? We really should get something more comfortable, I keep telling them.'
 - There's nothing wrong in replying before they start the tape or even confirming your name for the tape when it's started, but beware! It's better to look a bit of a prat (it can always be explained in court as nervousness) than getting into the habit of answering questions.
'I'm just doing to ask some questions to check you understand the caution. Do you have to answer my questions?'
'No.'
'What might the court think if you choose not to answer the questions?'
'They might see that as suspicious.'
The suspect went on to give a perfect 'no comment' interview, but it's now a suspicious one.
 - Lastly, don't be clever. The right answer is not 'I'm sure they will follow the directions laid out by Lord Bingham in the case of *Argent*', just 'no comment'. As for the comrade who said "I'm bored of all this 'no comment' thing, I'll just name a different type of fruit each time you ask a question" – we prefer to draw a discrete veil.
- So to sum up, here's everything you need to remember after reading this article: *answer 'No Comment' to all questions in police interviews.*

REVIEWS

WHAT'S ON
NOVEMBER

10th Demonstration against the Hastings link road which will go through Combe Haven, a peaceful unspoilt piece of countryside, bring placards and friends, meet outside the White Rock Theatre on Hastings sea front, opposite Hastings Pier, at 9.50am, see hastingsalliance.org.uk for more details.

12th to 17th NATO not welcome, action to shut down the NATO parliament assembly which is meeting in Edinburgh, see antimilitaristnetwork.org.uk or <http://natowc.noflag.org.uk> for more information.



14th Peace House 50th anniversary benefit and celebration at The Cross, 126 York Way, London N1 0AX, from 3pm until 2am, for details see housmans.com/peacehouse.php or call 020 7837 4473

DECEMBER

5th National Climate March 2009, join hundreds of cyclists on the streets of London for the Climate Emergency Bike Ride to urge the government to make major cuts at the UN climate talks in Copenhagen, bring sirens, horns, bells and whistles, and decorate your bike, starts at 10am in Lincoln's Inn Fields and finishes at 12 noon at Speakers' Corner in Hyde Park to join the Climate Emergency Rally which will then lead to the Stop Climate Chaos 'The Wave' event starting from Grosvenor Square at 1pm to surround Parliament at 3pm, for more information see campaigncc.org, call 020 7833 9311 or email info@campaigncc.org.

26th International Pizza Punk Day, the global holiday that *will* replace Christmas, so celebrate the madness of imagining the impossible (an action based around cooking vegan pizzas for the revolution) by forming your own autonomous IPPD action cell! "On International Pizza Punk Day, the division between struggle and pleasure, between total insurrection and festival, will be dismantled as we bake the pizza of our desires into reality", at the Dewdrop, 58 Stewarts Road, London, SW8 5DE, from 8pm until late, bring raw ingredients for the making of vegan pizzas ... pizza bases and sauce provided, just bring toppings, see eroding.org.uk/pizzapunx.htm

BOOK

A History of the French Anarchist Movement: 1917 to 1945

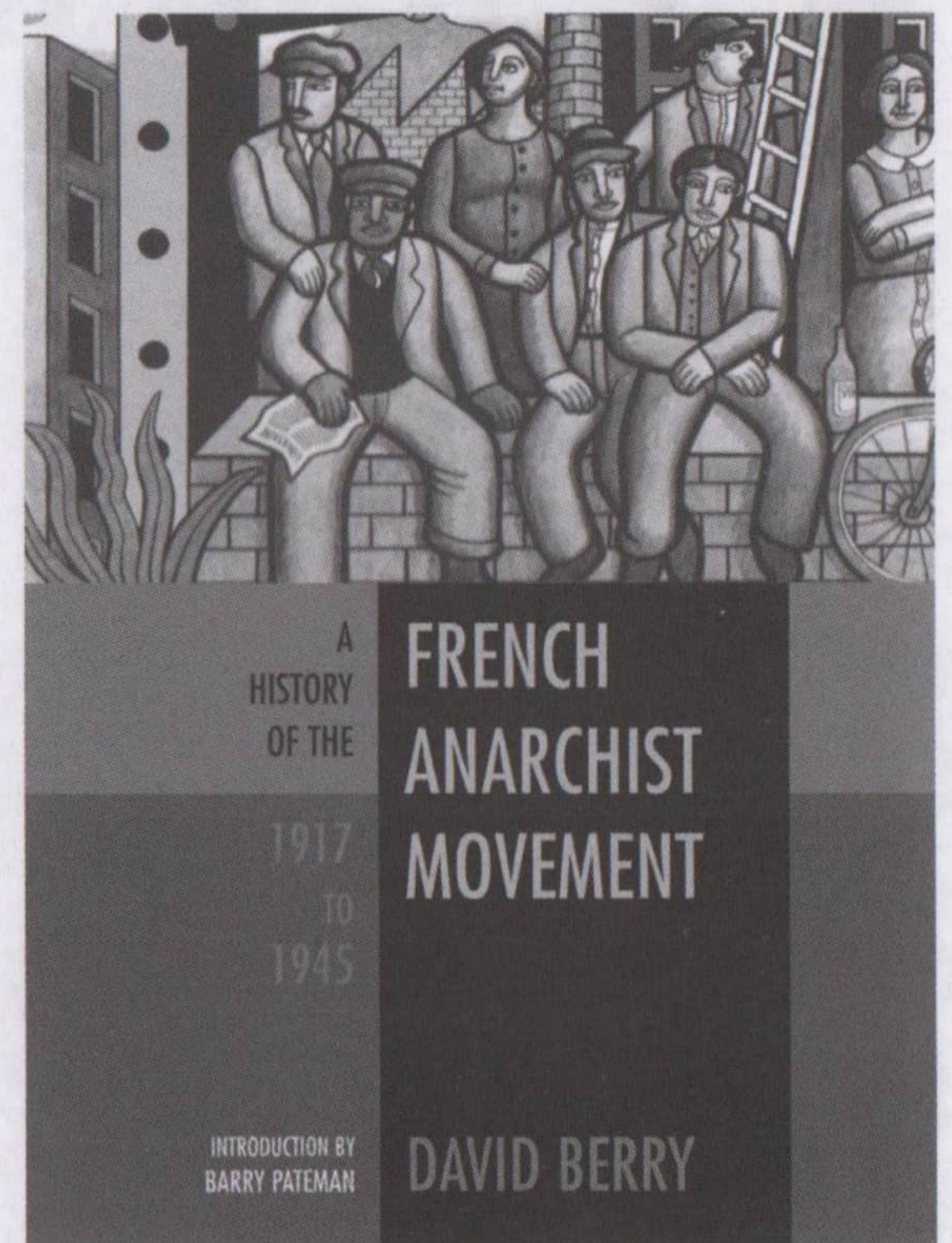
by David Berry, AK Press, £15

The first English-language analysis of French anarchism between the wars, this is a painstakingly researched and frequently insightful overview of an interesting period in anarchist history – interesting not least because it was a period in which the movement, after the regrettable fin-de-siècle / pre-war digression down the dead-end of individualist purism and the propaganda of the deed, began to place greater emphasis once again on solving the problems of working class organisation.

The two key questions anarchists wrestled with then, we learn, are much the same as those that confront us now. Firstly, how can anarchists create effective, large-scale organisations that are “supple and nuanced enough to be faithful to the complexities of anarchist practice?” And secondly, “who should, or can, anarchists work with in order to dismantle capitalism and replace it with a society predicated on voluntary agreement, equality and mutual aid?” Essentially, how can anarchism break out of its perennial mauling on the periphery and occupy its rightful place in the centre. As such, as well as filling a gap in our historical understanding, the lessons of this book – which covers the period in which European anarchism was more successful in fostering a genuine mass movement than it has come close to being since – can also usefully inform our current practice.

The principal focus of the book, then, after a brief contextual history of the anarchist movement in France prior to 1917, is on the ways in which class struggle anarchists responded to the key events of the period: the Russian Revolution and the rise of Bolshevism, the Spanish Revolution and the rise of fascism, and, running alongside and throughout these, a renaissance in revolutionary syndicalism.

As one would expect, the responses are many and varied. The initial appeal of Bolshevism gives rise to a greater rapprochement with the Marxist Left (following the distant rift in the IWMA) that takes many colours – even the birth of ‘sovietism’, a curious hybrid of anarchism and Bolshevism – before first-hand reports of Bolshevik repression lead to increasing revulsion and disavowal. The



salutary development of revolutionary syndicalism reads sometimes like a bewildering alphabet soup, as groups form, split, recombine and split again, leaving the reader wondering whether there was any time left for practical campaigning after all the infighting. The formation of a Revolutionary Front against fascism sees tensions played out between a more purist humanitarian pacifist wing and the social revolutionaries – more workerist and syndicalist, shrewdly rejecting the politics of ‘all or nothing’ in favour of a more constructive, pragmatic approach that allows anarchism to become an integral part of the wider revolutionary labour movement. And there are even some profound shocks: anarchists, admittedly a tiny minority, who collaborated with the Nazis!

Much of this will be well-known to some readers. Where this book is fresh is in its approach and in its meticulous research. Berry tries always “to emphasise the feelings, the beliefs and the commitments of ordinary ‘grass roots’ militants, to show them struggling with new and difficult situations, to rescue the memory of these otherwise unknown militants” from what E.P. Thompson called the “enormous condescension of posterity”. In this, the author has done a fine job.

Scott Wakeham

QUIZ ANSWERS

1. Sitting around with fascist mates while on a secret camp in France, some shotgun cartridges were tossed into a campfire and exploded.
2. Chief Adviser to the Government on Drugs. Apparently, you mustn't say that more harm is done by alcohol and cigarettes than by ecstasy and cannabis, especially if you are Professor David Nutt, who was sacked a couple of weeks ago.
3. The Unified Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) won the most seats in the April

2008 elections which followed the civil war. Less than a year later they introduced legislation banning strikes in Special Economic Zones. By April 2009 they were telling the press that they intended to ban strikes and public demonstrations in ‘industries and essential commodities’.

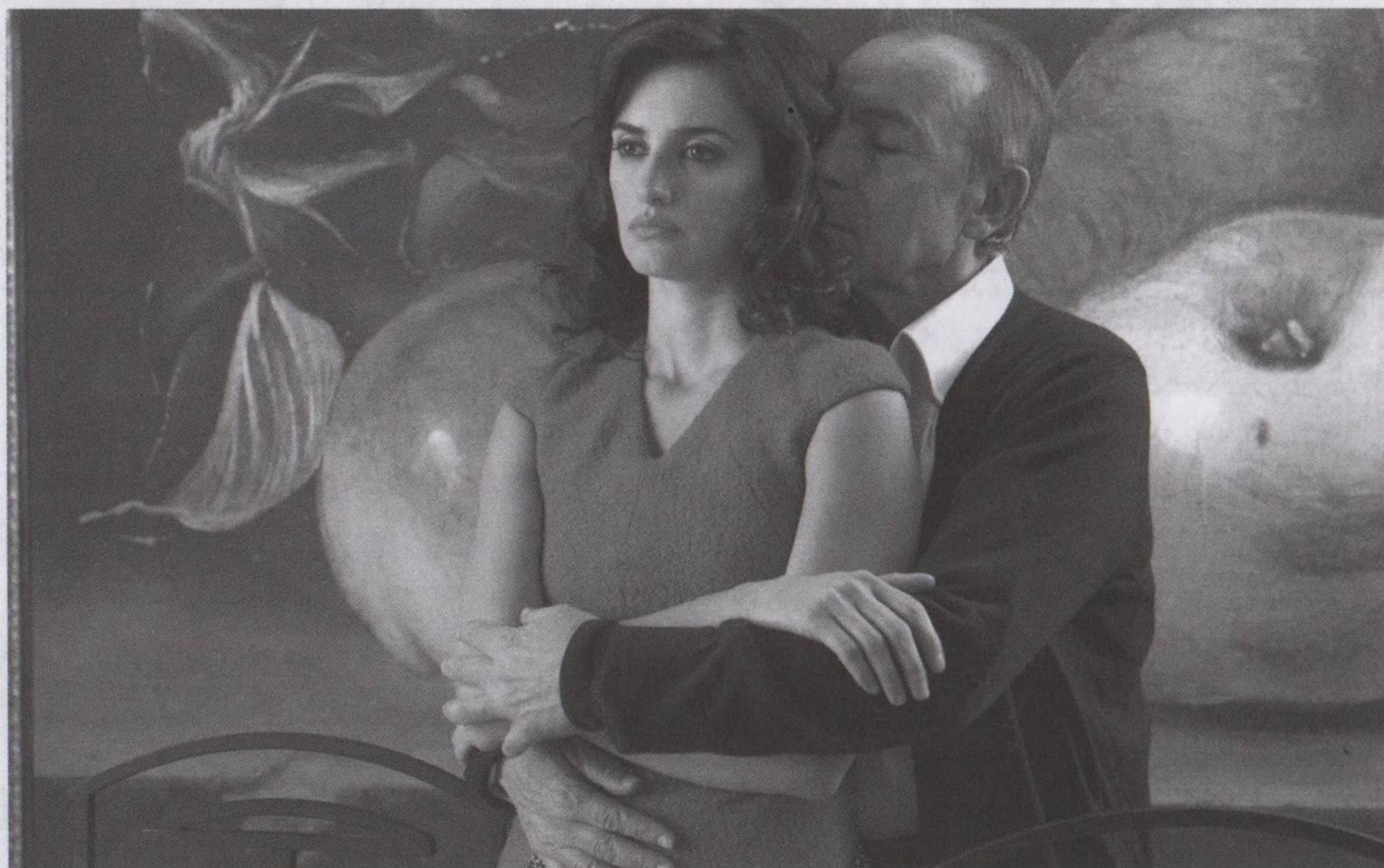
4. Because they were actors from a film about football hooliganism. Scotland Yard said “the images appear to have been taken from a motion picture”. Makes you wonder about where the other 60 came from?

Broken Embraces

It's more introspective than earlier crowd-pleasing extravaganzas, but Tom Jennings finds abundant subversive intelligence, wit, and pleasure in Almodóvar's new film.

Pedro Almodóvar's latest masterwork continues his trajectory since *All About My Mother* (1999) whereby the slings and arrows of outrageous behaviour are somewhat muted compared to earlier camp provocations, now allowing sober reflection on the vagaries of desire frustrated, sidetracked and colonised by domination. Gathering together previously tested devices like flashbacks, a film within a film, and the unreliable voiceover, *Broken Embraces'* characters are also haunted and daunted by past misfortunes in an intransigent world amid family complexity and social conflict. But unlike *Talk To Her* (2002), *Bad Education* (2004) or *Volver* (reviewed in *Freedom*, 4th November 2006), no satisfying denouement provides sentimental catharsis to sweeten cod-psychoanalytic pastiche. Instead the confusions and convolutions of the story are fashioned into something of a monograph on the writer-director's own practice – a 'love letter to cinema' musing upon the creative processes of art imitating life (or vice versa), exploiting a characteristically outlandish narrative vehicle which becomes perfectly convincing once enchantment suspends disbelief.

So an ageing sightless screenwriting hack calling himself 'Harry Caine' (Lluís Homar) won't talk about past tragedies to his long-standing agent Judit Garcia (Blanca Portillo) or her son Diego (Tamar Novas), to the extent of not even answering to his real name – Mateo Blanco, once an up-and-coming filmmaker. The death of famous tycoon Ernesto Martel (José Luís Gómez) unnerves him, however, and his story is gradually revealed through flashbacks to fourteen years ago when Magdalena Rivero (Penélope Cruz) – Martel's secretary and part-time prostitute – becomes her boss's mistress when he takes care of her dying father. These roles don't satisfy Lena's aspirations, though, and she wangles an audition to star in Mateo's screwball comedy, *Girls and Suitcases*, whereupon they fall in love. Martel bankrolls the production to keep control of Lena but Mateo flees with her to Lanzarote, leaving the film unfinished. Martel wrecks it via deliberately atrocious editing, hoping to flush them out, but their car crashes – blinding him and killing her – en route to a disastrous premiere which buries



the picture and his career. Back in the present, various long-suppressed revelations emerge, bringing Mateo, Judit and Diego closer and allowing them to complete the film properly from the newly-unearthed original rushes.

That Obscure Object of Desire

Almodóvar's meticulous attention to visual detail produces painterly tableaux which prompt almost visceral, emotional intensity to drive engagement with the interlocking progression of image and narrative – with nuanced performances, as always, beautifully soundtracked and shot. The achievement here is even more impressive given that the guiding metaphor is cinema's capacity to simulate the manner in which significant events and experiences coalesce in helping shape our fate – using as raw material signature flourishes and iconic themes made famous by the most skilful, successful, highly-regarded and closely-studied exponents of popular film styles over the decades. So the most audacious conceit in the film was the decision to namecheck his own first international hit, *Women on the Verge of a Nervous Breakdown* (1988), as Mateo's comic meta-film – now re-situated within a reflection on personal, cultural and political history which has been widely, if foolishly, interpreted as a self-indulgent, backward-looking failure of imagination.

Whereas Almodóvar refuses nostalgia – “We have to find solutions for the daily struggles we find now” – citing the socialist government's 2007 Law of Historical Memory officially sanctioning the acknowledgement of Spanish Civil War atrocities and subsequent decades of fascist brutality (albeit yielding little tangible action). Mateo's self-reinventions then parallel the post-Franco flowering of Spanish culture failing to face the past, offering not so much redemption as pragmatic re-integration to move on and not repeat

mistakes – itself hugely uncertain given the country's recent electoral oscillations between equally unappetising neoliberal modernisation and conservative reaction. Similarly, this subtle, mature film withholds simplistic payoffs – elements of tragedy, thriller, and farce simultaneously signalling victory over and victimhood to circumstance. Meanwhile, advancing beyond adolescent shock-tactics of gratuitous transgression allows the characters' perversity to measure well against conventional niceties – the concrete effects of conduct mattering more than any inherent moral status.

Thus Martel's poisonous influence and extensive government-corporate connections condense the Franco era and present trends, further specifying eternal film industry tussles for creative control. Meanwhile unabashed homages to Hollywood genres from the 1930s-60s – Douglas Sirk melodramas, Orson Welles epics, Hitchcock, film noir, romantic comedies – promiscuously cross-fertilise rather than being domesticated into fragmented consumables of pompous or mindless fluff. Even reverential references to European art cinema resound, as the sublime Cruz radiates the glamour, innocence, sensuality, and/or femme fatalism of the entire screen goddess canon. Of several Luis Buñuel borrowings, *That Obscure Object of Desire* (1977) details an alpha male's utter incomprehension of his beloved, with sinister and banal consequences all round, just as here Lena and Martel's love-hate entangling casts such baleful shadows. Acknowledging complicity and collusion in domination without downplaying the oppressor's monstrosity, Almodóvar flays bourgeois respectability like Buñuel and the Czech New Wave, Cronenberg and Lynch – projecting the chaotic terrors and appetites of the



Review

◀ page 15

unconscious onto fleshly, psychic, and social surfaces, but adding contemporary pop-cultural vulgarities and obscenities to surrealism's palette.

Consciously registering so many film-buff in-jokes admittedly risks seriously distracting viewers, yet Almodóvar's consummate translation of the rich texture of experience into dense patchworks of cinematic allusion comprehensively overflows the containment of this narrative, celebrating Hollywood's captivating spectacles while surreptitiously highlighting their profound dishonesty. Ironically, most critics misjudged *Broken Embraces* as terminally flawed – lacking resolution, clarity or attenuation of tone, or

an easily tag-lined 'message'. But this impurity mirrors life's messiness. Whereas Maria Delgado applauded "his most political film to date" as "a tale of the body in decay, of alternative families tested in adverse times, of parenthood at both domestic and institutional levels, and of the relationship between individual and institutional forms of trauma and mourning".* Few works of art ever successfully enmesh so many deeply poignant themes so intimately – let alone while consistently championing underdogs and, even better, sustaining us with visions of their outlaw desire confounding power.

www.tomjennings.pwp.blueyonder.co.uk
(see also <http://libcom.org/blog>)

* In 'Sensory Perception', *Sight & Sound*, September 2009, pages 40–44.

THE QUIZ

1. How did fat führer Nick Griffin lose his eye?
2. In what job must you evidently not state the obvious?
3. Whose long march into Parliament recently led to them calling for strikes to be banned?
4. The police issued images of 66 West Ham supporters after a riot in the game against Millwall. Why were six of the alleged hooligans particularly easy to apprehend?

Answers on page 14

The *Anarchist Quiz Book* compiled by Martin Howard with illustrations by Paul Petard is available from Freedom Press at £5 (post free) – see our website at freedompress.org.uk for details.

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