

# FREEDOM

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Vol 71 No 04 • 13 MARCH 2010

## THE WAR ON EDUCATION

### Battle lines are being drawn in the bitter conflict for the future of our schooling system

On one side, a history of forgotten promises and financial shortcomings, broken commitments and the bitter echo of education, education, education slowly fading across the hollow surface of New Labour's spin machine. On the other, angry students, graduates, teachers, parents, pupils, lecturers, academics and ancillary staff, future generations left behind as a failing education system is consumed from within by the whims of a cowardly political elite tied to a privatising agenda and buoyed by the institutions of power.

Unlike the ongoing local government disputes, the war on education is set to involve more people across a broader spectrum of society hit by a greater sense of betrayal and abandonment. It's also set to become uglier, more entrenched, more confrontational and ultimately with more to lose. Education should be universal and without privilege, and only now is it becoming clear it must be fought for with real determination and without fear.

The massive funding cuts currently being pushed through by the government across **page 3** ▶▶

### LENS CAP JAILED FOR NOT KILLING



Lance corporal Joe Glenton, 27, was the first British soldier to serve in Afghanistan and publicly speak out against the war. On 5th March he was sentenced to nine months in Colchester's military jail for going AWOL and refusing to return to fight in Afghanistan, despite claims that he is suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder.

## HUNGER STRIKE CONTINUES

Women being held at Yarl's Wood Immigration Removal Centre, Bedfordshire, are entering their fourth week on hunger strike as concerns grow over their deteriorating health. Around 34 women at the centre have stopped taking in food as a protest over the inhumane and brutalising conditions suffered by those awaiting deportation. Both campaigners and human rights lawyers have raised the issue over the government's continued policy of imprisoning people before transporting them back to their country of origin, as well as the treatment suffered by those imprisoned.

One hunger striker explained that "the women have been through terrible experiences – some are survivors of rape and torture – but we are treated like criminals. When we staged a protest two weeks ago, we were locked in

a corridor, with no water or toilet facilities. One had an asthma attack and we begged the officers to let her out, but they refused. Since then, I have been detained in isolation."

Lawyers representing four women have taken their case to the high court.

Public Interest Lawyers (PIL) are applying for a judicial review to assess their claim that Yarl's Wood breaches articles 3, 5 and 8 of the European Convention on Human Rights.

Paul Shiner of PIL called the incarceration of the women "disgraceful". He added: "It is unlawful and we are calling for the policy to be struck down and for there to be an independent investigation."

Campaigners, who have been in daily contact with the women, fear retribution and further violence by staff.

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ISSN 0016-0504



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## NEWS

### IN BRIEF

**PRISONS:** Controversial open-ended prison sentences, introduced to protect the public, may have to be scrapped after inspectors warned that their cost to the penal system outweighed any benefits.

Just 75 of almost 6,000 convicts held under indeterminate sentence for public protection (IPP) have won their liberty since the measure was brought in by Labour four years ago. The result, said Chief Inspector of Probation, Andrew Bridges, and the Chief Inspector of Prisons, Anne Owers, is that prisons have become swamped with inmates whom the probation service did not have the resources to deal with. They warned that the situation has become “unsustainable” and called on ministers to begin a major review of the policy.

**HORSES:** The future of North Wales Police’s mounted section is under review less than three years after being set up by ex-chief constable Richard Brunstrom.

The four-horse team was greeted with controversy when first proposed by Mr Brunstrom, who retired last summer.

The £200,000 to £300,000 plan was described as ‘misplaced’ and ‘profligate’, but Mr Brunstrom said it would be a valuable tool. A force spokeswoman said the review would be completed in the near future.

At the time, June 2007, the plan was narrowly approved. Mr Brunstrom argued mounted police were about “six times more effective” than officers on foot and “many times more” than officers in cars. A number of North Wales MPs at the time thought the mounted section would be an extravagance.

**DRUGS:** UK academic institutions have unwittingly become the accomplices of criminals selling fake drugs online.

A security firm has discovered that many organisations using the ‘ac.uk’ domain are unknowingly pushing customers to websites offering the fake pills. The scam exploits software flaws to piggyback on the computing resources of the colleges and universities.

Researchers at security company Imperva believe thousands of organisations may have fallen victim. “It’s a pretty successful campaign,” said Amichai Shulman of the firm which uncovered the targeted attack.

**WOMEN:** The world’s leading firms are failing to make the most of the talents of their female workforce, the World Economic Forum (WEF) has said. Women are still failing to break into senior management or onto the board, according to the Corporate Gender Gap report.

**NEW TOP SCREW:** Nick Hardwick, ex-Chair of the Independent Police Complaints Commission, looks set to become the new Chief Inspector of Prisons after being identified as the “preferred candidate” by the Ministry of Justice. So we can expect any new Inspectorate reports to fully exonerate any prisons of all and every failures then.

## LENS CAP HARRY ROBERTS THE WHALE



Well, not quite – Tilikum is a bull Killer Whale who lives at SeaWorld Orlando. He resembles Mr Roberts only in that he has been involved in three deaths (the latest in February this year of a Seaworld trainer) and that he should be set free. Tilikum was captured near Iceland in November 1983 at about two years of age. Tilikum measures 22 feet 6 inches long and weighs in at 12,300 pounds (5,600 kilos), making him the largest Orca in captivity.

## Banking: the fiddle continues

A big shake-up of UK banks with taxpayer support will have been unveiled by the time you read this. An announcement on the future of Lloyds and Royal Bank of Scotland (RBS) is expected to be made jointly by the banks and the Treasury. Predictions are for Lloyds to say it will 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 the 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 in order to gain European approval

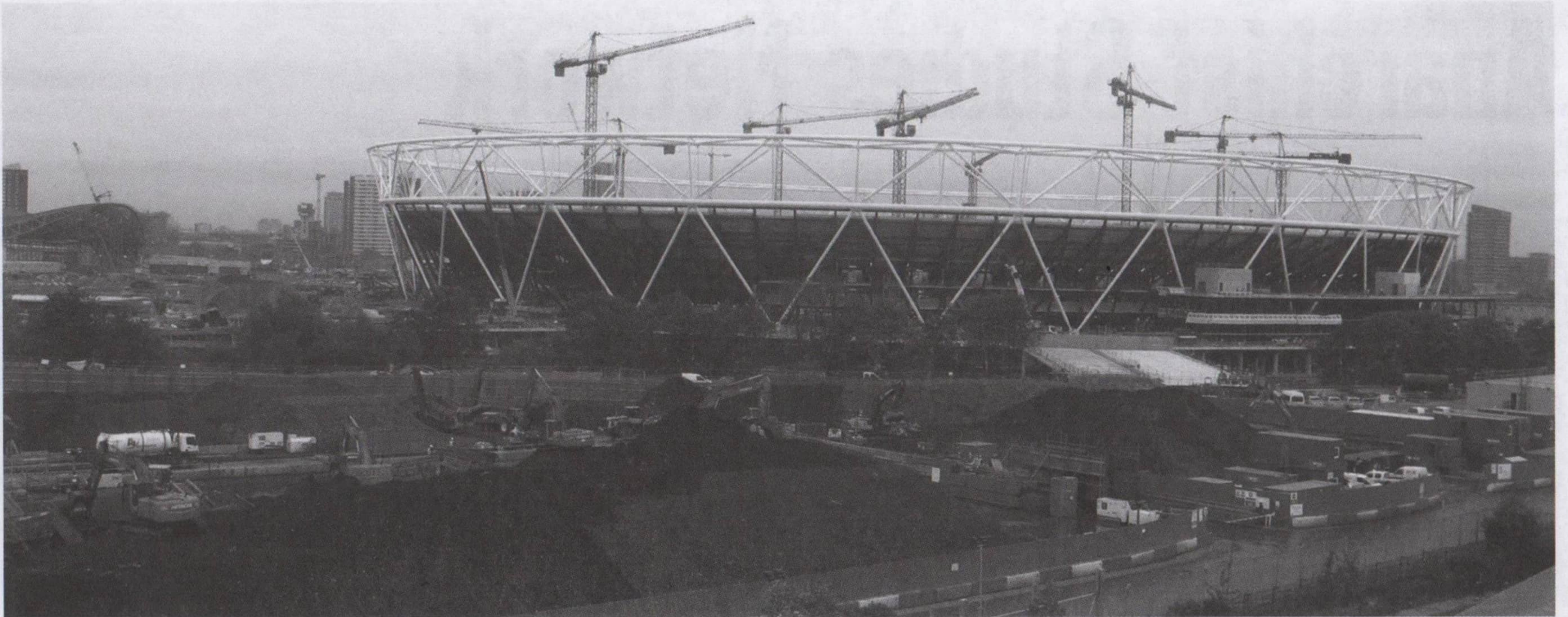
for state support it has received since coming close to collapse last year.

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 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 simpler and 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.



# One death too many

## New report exposes poor conditions at the Olympics site that led to the first fatality

The death of a worker on the massive Olympics 2012 construction site in East London forms the backbone of a new and damning report by Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) union members, some of whom work on the site, exposing systematic breaches of basic health and safety, putting workers 'at risk of injury and death', as well as management cover-ups and deception.

Shaun Scurry, 39, who worked for subcontractors Firesafe as fire systems installer, was seriously injured at the beginning of December at the Stratford City section of the Olympics site, owned by multinational shopping developers Westfield. He later died in hospital to become the first fatality of the

2012 Olympic project. The cause of his death is still being investigated by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE).

However the report, published by members of IWW who spoke to workers on site at the time of the incident, reveals a catalogue of sub-standard health and safety work practices and management cover-ups. According to eye witness accounts immediately after the accident, and before the arrival of police and HSE – who are charged with investigating any serious accidents or injuries on site – management contractors, PC Harrington, closed the sector while they erected safety signs and fences, secured ladders and cleaned walkways in an attempt to cover up their own failings.

Once the police arrived, the Firesafe workers were sent home but, incredibly, the other workers in the sector were told to continue working, and were not informed of the true nature of the incident until several days later. This, the report claims, could have led to

further serious risk of injury. Also in the report workers with direct knowledge state that Shaun Scurry was working alone on a scissor lift without a second ground operator as required for safe working. It concludes that the controls to the lift were inadvertently activated crushing the worker against a steel beam.

Workers are angered at being left in the dark about the incident and the lack of respect shown by management for not closing the site while a proper investigation could take place. The report was also critical of the construction union UCATT whose officials failed to keep workers informed or investigate the accident themselves, even failing to attend on the day of the accident.

Construction is the country's biggest industry with over 2.2 million workers. It is also one of the most dangerous. In the last 25 years, over 2,800 people have died from injuries they received as a result of construction work. Many more have been injured or made ill.

## The war on education

◀ page 1

the whole of education will have an impact beyond the campuses and school gates. Not only will the quality of education suffer, as will the access and availability to millions of ordinary people, but workers in education will be forced into a downward spiral of longer hours for less pay and fewer rewards in a more demanding and hostile environment. It is this double attack that has the potential to develop into genuine social conflict.

But what we are witnessing now are the tentative steps towards a more radical approach to addressing the issues directly. Already teachers and staff at London Metropolitan University, Tower Hamlets College and Bristol University have held protests over impending job and course cuts.

More recently staff at Leeds University staged three one-day strikes, receiving overwhelming support from students and activists alike. And despite the first national teachers strike in twenty years back in 2008 it is these small pockets of resistance that serve as a means of building confidence and communicating dissent.

On Saturday 5th March 10,000 teachers, lecturers and parents from across Scotland came together to protest against teaching cuts. The event held in Glasgow and organised by Educational Institute of Scotland saw protestors march angrily through the streets to converge for a mass rally marking the start of a long term campaign against future cuts in education in Scotland.

Add to that the recent student occupations at Sussex and Westminster universities and the parents who took direct action in Scotland and south London by occupying their children's primary school against closure; it seems there is an escalating awareness about just what's at stake, and the willingness to do something about it.

So far the anarchist response has come, perhaps naturally, from various student groups as well as the Education Workers Network, formed though members of Solidarity Federation, whose focus is on bringing together those working within education as a way of mobilising interest and developing effective political strategies against the attacks on all aspects of the industry.

## COMMENT

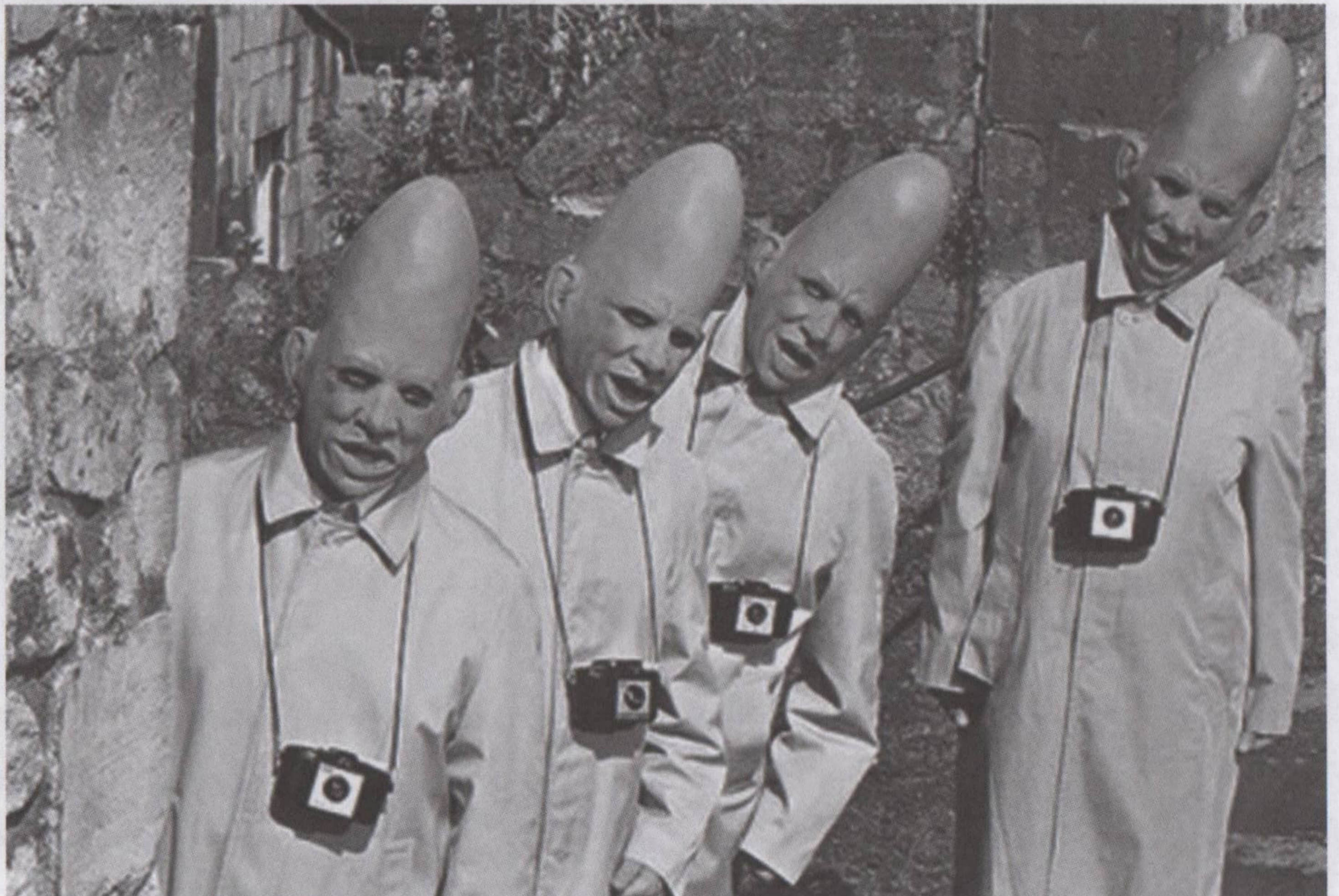
# Anarchist Studies Network

On Tuesday 2nd March Freedom hosted a social for the Anarchist Studies Network – here follows a brief outline of their project.

What constitutes ‘anarchist studies’ and where did it come from?

Following the collapse of the Soviet Union, and with it, of an entire world order based on the tension between American and Soviet power, a number of intellectuals announced (once again) that the age of ‘ideologies’ had ended; liberal democracy and capitalism had won, and no other political or economic options remained credible as contenders for the future. Energy had drained from most of the ‘New Social Movements’ that had come to such prominence in the sixties and seventies; having since been institutionalised, accommodated within the system, environmentalism and the various forms of “identity politics” were no longer to be seen as radical challenges to the status quo, much less as forming part of a revolutionary ‘Movement’.

Two decades later, this cosy perception of the world is in shambles. Nearly a third of the world’s population lives in ‘failed states’; international systems of law and order are in serious disarray; strains on the planetary ecosystem are increasingly hard to ignore; the global marketplace lurches between ‘irrational exuberance’ and crisis. The institutional managers of this world order now cannot meet without major police and military protection; everywhere they go, angry crowds appear. Many in these crowds speak not of a Movement, but of a ‘movement of movements’ that cannot be accommodated within the present order. It has become a common observation that, notwithstanding the novelty of this force, it cannot be understood without reference to another, older political tradition, one that



Freedom agreed to raise the ceiling so all those pointy heads could fit in the building!

had gone into an historical eclipse around the time of the Russian Revolution and the first victories of the women’s suffrage movement, that had long since become something less than a memory, a mere epithet: anarchism.

It is deeply ironic that there are now arguably more people outside of the academy than inside it who possess any intellectual context for this tradition. One is hard pressed to find a few scattered, often uninformed references to anarchism in the most advanced realms of scholarly discourse. Nonetheless, over the last two decades, academics have slowly begun to rediscover the historical significance of anarchism, which, as Benedict Anderson recently had to remind

his fellow historians, was for a time “the main vehicle of global opposition to industrial capitalism, autocracy, latifundism, and imperialism”. Scholars have started to study the influence of anarchism on early Korean and Filipino national liberation struggles, movements for birth control from Barcelona to Boston, Latin American labour history, Jewish immigrant life, the development of modern sociology and geography, the French Resistance, debates over eugenics and Social Darwinism, modern art and Modern Schools, avant-garde film and popular music, revolutions from Mexico to China to Russia itself.

There has even been some interest in revisiting the theoretical documents left in the wake of anarchist movements, dusting off the old ideas in search of new perspectives. Far from having been anti-intellectual ‘primitive rebels’, anarchists produced a rich critical discourse on every facet of life and knowledge, from economics to linguistics, from social history to aesthetic theory, from urban planning to ontology – a counter-institutional archive that has barely begun to be investigated. Amid a widespread increase in doctoral theses and academic publications directly engaged with the anarchist archive, some researchers have begun to draw inspiration from it, to see their work as an extension of anarchist theory and practice. For a number of us, what we are calling ‘anarchist studies’ no longer necessarily takes anarchism as its object of study but as a standpoint from which to study the world. Anarchist contributions to thought are making a reappearance in a number of fields, challenging established orthodoxies. Perhaps, against all odds, we are witnessing the emergence of a new anarchist paradigm in academia.

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## IN BRIEF

**AFGHANISTAN:** Another milestone passed in February with the 1,000th US military fatality since 2001.

This is still way behind their figure for Iraq, currently 4,378, and statistically minuscule compared to Vietnam's 58,159.

Perhaps it's fairer to compare to Soviet irrevocable losses (including dead and missing) of 14,453 during their attempts to provide aid to the Government of Afghanistan.

**SEA ICE:** In February, Arctic sea ice extent continued to track below the average, and near the levels observed for February 2007. Ice extent was unusually low in the Atlantic sector of the Arctic, and above normal in the Bering Sea.

Meanwhile, Antarctic sea ice reached its summer minimum, near the average for 1979 to 2000. More information and daily updates can be found on the National Snow and Ice Data website at <http://nsidc.org/>

**CO-OPERATION:** One of our closest primate relatives, the bonobo, has been shown to voluntarily share food, scientists report.

This sort of generous behaviour was previously thought by some to be an exclusively human trait, but a team has carried out an experiment that revealed that bonobos were more likely to choose to share their food than opt to dine alone.

The research is published in the journal *Current Biology*.

**OSCARS:** The night before International Women's Day we find Kathryn Bigelow has become the first woman to win the best directing Oscar, as her Iraq war drama *The Hurt Locker* took six prizes, including best film.

"It's the moment of a lifetime," said Bigelow, only the fifth woman to be nominated in Academy Awards history.

She praised her fellow nominees "who have inspired me for decades" and paid tribute to those in the military.

**WEATHER:** The Met Office is to stop publishing seasonal long-range forecasts after it came in for criticism for failing to predict extreme weather.

It was berated for not foreseeing that the UK would suffer this cold winter or the last three wet summers in its seasonal forecasts.

The forecasts, four times a year, will be replaced by monthly predictions.

**EXPELLED!** Record numbers of head teachers lost their jobs last year because of poor exam results and school closures, the leader of a union has said.

Association of School and College Leaders head Dr John Dunford said 163 of his members lost their posts in 2009, compared with 150 in 2008.

He links the increase to schools federating and becoming academies and to intense pressure over poor results.

# Toxic capitalism

Up until now, the term 'toxic assets' as used in relation to the banking crash has meant investments which have become liabilities. But the *Financial Times* of 18th February has added a new dimension: toxic assets, at least in the case of RBS/Nat West, could well be illegal.

Part of the Government's rescue package for the banks is the Asset Protection Scheme (APS), a Government insurance with the taxpayers as guarantors. The Government has stressed that it has no evidence of wrongdoing, but if "material or systematic criminal conduct on the part of RBS or any of its representatives" comes to light it will withdraw cover.

RBS accounts were investigated by a Treasury team for eight months prior to the Government taking an 84% stake. During that period of "due diligence", £43 billion worth of assets were excluded from the APS, which must mean that they were crooked in some way. Assets to the value of £282 billion remain covered by the scheme.

However last November, Sir Nicholas Macpherson at the Treasury wrote to Alistair Darling the Chancellor, pointing out that assets too may not fulfil standard requirements including "acting within the law, not tolerating fraud, illegality or corruption and operating controls to ensure these things".

Sir Nicholas duly received his "direction" from Darling who over-rode his concerns in the desperate need to shore up confidence in banking and in the economy generally. So part of the £282bn may also be crooked.

According to the *FT*'s informants, the possible legal problems stemmed from the "lack of knowledge among the banks [note the plural!] about exactly what risks they had taken on during the lending boom". A truly breathtaking admission. So much for all the vast salaries and bonuses.

RBS is still making losses and still paying out bonuses. Following the crash it is owners of the bank who have taken the hit through the huge fall in share prices and non-payment of dividends. There have been staff cuts at branch level, but the investment bankers and directors continue to do very nicely thank you. Not least, Sir Fred ('The Shred') Goodwin (pictured below) the domineering ex-chairman who led RBS to

destruction, who received a knighthood from Blair for "services to banking", and is now retired on a solid gold pension.

This dominance of those with day-to-day control, over those who own the company was projected by James Burnham in *The Managerial Revolution*, 1940 (no doubt Sir Fred and Co. sold whatever shares they had before the crash). In the case of vast complex multi-nationals like RBS, control no longer goes with ownership.

They prattle on about responsibility to shareholders, but the latter have failed to control the banks' direction – indeed how could they even understand it, when even their investment bankers failed to comprehend fully, what they were buying, or even its legality. There is a degree of out-of-controlness here which is truly stunning, and which further computerisation can only make worse.

In this context, it is clear that government regulation has little chance of success. It has failed before and is likely to fail again. Short of revolution, the only practical solution must be for Government to enforce the separation of retail from investment banking. Obama is cautiously treading that path, but to New Labour it seems an anathema. Compared with Brown, The Governor of the Bank of England, Mervyn King, sounds quite radical! These are strange and dangerous times.

- To keep some sense of proportion with the vast sums mentioned, it may help to recall that the annual budget of the NHS is currently running at around £100bn.
- Having given their important and exclusive news 12 column inches on the front page, plus the whole of page 3, the *FT* apparently found it prudent to refrain from comment in its Editorial of that day, or make any reference to the matter in subsequent issues.
- Under Sir Fred, Nat West traded under the slogan, 'Another Way' – just look where that got us! Now they use 'Helpful Banking', but it seems that we are helping them help themselves.
- Capitalism has developed complexities which render the simplistic Marxist model of class, based on property ownership, largely redundant. Anarchists have always been right to reject all forms of hierarchy – whatever their basis.

John Griffin



## INTERNATIONAL

### IN BRIEF

**FRANCE:** A hangar set up to provide a gathering space for migrants in Calais remains closed after a judicial decision. The hangar (really a small warehouse) was set up as a gathering space for No Borders activists and migrants. It was shut down by France's riot cops, the CRS. The hangar is now locked up with a police van stationed outside.

**HONDURAS:** In the latest attack on the civil resistance movement a 36-year-old member of the National Popular Resistance Front (FNRP) was shot dead at her home. Claudia was prominent in the San Pedro Sula municipal workers union.

**INDONESIA:** Police have used tear gas and water cannon to disperse about 2,000 anti-government protesters who tried to enter the parliament building in the capital, Jakarta.

The scuffles broke out as MPs began a debate over the possible impeachment of the country's vice-president and finance minister. The session had been called to hear the results of a probe into a £460m government bailout of privately-owned Bank Century in 2008, which opposition groups say was a pointless drain on the economy.

**GLOBAL:** The 100th anniversary of International Women's Day was on 8th March. The day, first mooted in Copenhagen by Clara Zetkin, came at the same time as the Triangle Fire in New York which galvanised working women's movements worldwide, including the Bread and Roses campaign of the syndicalist IWW.

**GREECE:** Long battles erupted on 5th March at the Athens protest march against new economic austerity measures which were being voted through by the ruling socialist party. GSEE union boss Panagopoulos, widely held to be a shill for the ruling PASOK party, was heavily beaten by protesters when he tried to speak at the protest. Battles with the police also developed for three hours across the centre of the city, after riot police attacked anti-Nazi resistance symbol Manolis Glezos.

**MEXICO:** Authorities have been accused of misusing the justice system to detain three community leaders following their protests against high electricity prices in Campeche. Amnesty International has named Sara López, Joaquín Aguilar and Guadalupe Borja as 'prisoners of conscience'. The three were detained last July, accused of 'hostage taking' after they went to energy company PGR to ask for the electricity supply to be reconnected.

**SERBIA:** Two members of the Belgrade Six, who were released on bail late last month after charges of international terrorism were dropped, have accused the government of torture. Ratibor Trivunac and Ivan Savic were allegedly abused and humiliated by guards at Belgrade District Prison, where they had been held for six months while waiting to go to court.

### LENS CAP SOUTH AFRICA



A meeting of Abalahi baseMjondolo at the Ridge View camp in Durban. The group has released a statement saying that although attacks on its former heartland in Kennedy Road have left it unable to openly operate there, it is continuing to grow and has founded four more branches since September. The group noted: "Spontaneous resistance to the attack was broken by the police, our office was destroyed, hundreds of our members and supporters were chased from Kennedy Road, thirteen of our comrades were jailed and illegally detained and we have been banned from openly organising in the settlement where our movement was founded. But our movement was never just in Kennedy Road."

## Army of God strikes again

On Sunday 28th February, a major conflict took place in the Chiapan community of Mitziton, when around one hundred members of the evangelical 'Army of God', widely seen as a paramilitary group, attacked Other Campaign supporters in the community.

Over 200 police attended, in ten police lorries, and the road between San Cristobal and Comitán was closed for many hours.

Each side took three members of the other side hostage, and several people received bullet wounds from the guns of the Army of God or were beaten up. Huge fires were lit, and ambulances were prevented from getting in to treat the wounded.

A statement from the community assembly tells how Other Campaign adherents were

tied to poles blindfolded and left like this for twelve hours: "They were brutally beaten and tortured while they poured gasoline over them, saying 'we are going to burn you alive'."

Agents of the State Preventive Police "were already in place, but when they heard the shots did nothing. They only approached when the aggression was over."

The incident, portrayed as a dispute over timber, is thought to have been intended as a threat to Zapatista sympathisers in the region who are fighting to prevent the loss of their lands to the San Cristobal-Palenque highway, which in Mitziton would destroy 40 hectares of pine and oak forest, 10 hectares of community farmland, and two wells.

Adapted from narconews.com

## Notes from the United States

As healthcare continues to occupy many peoples' minds in the US and attempts to 'reform' it flounder under pressure from the health insurance companies, a report released at the start of March shows how increases in insurance premiums (the sums that employers – and sometimes employees – have to pay in order for workers to be covered) have risen much more sharply than medical costs and inflation in the last decade.

According to Health Care for America Now, insurance premiums for families rose

97% from 2000 to 2008. Yet payments from insurers to medical providers increased only 72%, while underlying medical inflation increased only 39% in the same period.

Premiums increased over three times faster than wages, which increased only 29%. Meanwhile it emerged at the beginning of March that some healthcare insurers were refusing coverage and treatment for women who were or had been abused physically because that constituted a 'prior condition'.

# Chile: the next victim

Reports coming from earthquake-struck Chile have told of the increasingly desperate situation for the populace as they are caught between gangs and a police force more concerned with preventing looting than saving lives.

As of 5th March, one man had been shot dead by the military and over 160 arrested for expropriating necessities in parts of southern Chile, which are suffering a near total lack of basic commodities following the earthquake.

Various voices are starting to emerge from the devastated region, denouncing the urgency of the Chilean government – under the control of left-of-centre Michele Bachelet until she hands over to right wing Sebastián Piñera on 11th March – in deploying thousands of soldiers and police blockading supermarket entrances against ‘looters’ instead of initiating a comprehensive aid effort.

Many groups, in calling for civil disobedience against the machine-gun wielding military on their rubble-strewn street corners, have drawn comparisons with the military dictatorship of 1973–90.

Some parts of the country, such as the rural area around Concepción (Chile’s second city), are completely devoid of even the most rudimentary services, implying that Bachelet *et al* are prepared to let their citizens starve in order to assert the “rule of order”.

The chaos in the quake zone has been further compounded by contradictory statements from on high: while one missive ordered supermarkets to distribute basic foodstuffs for free, a regional military commander promised a “severe response” to looting.

And as the desperate and the hungry start to target smaller, less well-protected businesses, authorities in Concepción – as well as the



A soldier patrols a Concepción supermarket as customers enter in turns of ten at a time

regions of Maule and Bio Bio, amongst others – have imposed an indefinite, military-enforced curfew from 9pm until 6am.

The efficiency of the military in protecting shopfronts is in marked contrast with the clumsiness of the relief effort, which has already seen disaster in the crash landing of a plane on its way to Concepción, killing six aid workers.

One commentator based in the region said: “[To start with] many people did the common sense thing and entered the centres in which provisions were being stored, taking no more than what they needed. Such an act is logical, rational, necessary and inevitable – so much so that it appears absurd even to debate it. People organised themselves spontaneously – giving out milk, nappies and water according

to each individual’s need, with attention paid in particular to the number of children within each family. However, in the space of just a few hours, the situation changed drastically. Throughout the *penquista* (Concepción) metropolis, well-armed, mobile gangs have started to operate in expensive vehicles ... looting not just small businesses, but also residential buildings and houses.

“That these mafia elements are natural allies of the state and the boss class is manifested in the use of their undignified misdeeds in the mass media in order to make the already demoralised population enter into a panic, therefore justifying the country’s militarisation.

“What scene could be more prosperous for our bosses and politicians?”

Adapted from libcom.org

## Notes from the Unites States

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*Freedom* will be returning to other quite remarkable tactics of the health ‘industry’ in its treatment of pregnant women in the near future.

With such rising healthcare costs on top of everything else, you would expect demand for credit advice to be rising.

However in late February senate Banking Committee Chair Christopher Dodd quickly abandoned efforts to create an independent Consumer Financial Protection Agency. It would have protected consumers against abuses in mortgages, credit cards and other forms of lending.

Lacking support in his own party, he proposed the creation of a Bureau of Financial Protection inside the Treasury Department, which those who know Capital Hill liken to having the fox guard the hen-house. It will have far less power and have no jurisdiction with banks having under \$10 billion (£6.67bn) in holdings; nor will the proposed Bureau be able to enforce rules against non-bank financial

operations such as the predatory pay-day lenders, on which *Freedom* reported last August. Once again, the pressure exerted by big business has triumphed.

While it may not be offering healthcare to its population or protecting their finances, the state is starting young when it comes to watching them.

The suburban Philadelphia Lower Merion School District (the equivalent of a Local Education Authority in the UK) made news last month when its officials acknowledged that it secretly switched on cameras in laptop computers inside students’ homes.

The official excuse: to find missing or stolen laptops. The District issued laptops with webcams to all 2,300 students at its two high schools but did not inform the students that the school could (and did) remotely activate the laptop cameras to watch them at home. Sweets being eaten by one student were thought to be drugs as a result of the surveillance.

Louis Further

## Demos to build pressure against nukes

A European Day of Action to ban nuclear weapons is to take place on 3rd April. Mass actions will take place at every European NATO nuclear weapons base in Germany, The Netherlands, France, Italy, Turkey, the United Kingdom and Belgium.

From 3rd May the NPT Review Conference in New York will discuss execution of the Non-Proliferation treaty, the treaty that has to halt the proliferation of nuclear weapons and in which states with nuclear weapons promise to disarm. NATO is also due to discuss what its strategy will be for the next ten years

NATO will wrap up discussion on its strategic future at a grand summit from 19th until 21st November in Portugal.

Organisers for the day of action said: “We are not taking part in the negotiations. We can’t agree on new treaties, but we can hinder illegal nuclear weapons agreements made far away from the public.”

## OBITUARY

## Colin Ward

Colin Ward, who has died aged 85, was the most read as well as the most original British anarchist writer of the second half of the twentieth century.

Brought up in suburban East London, he was a 'failure' at school, leaving at fifteen to take jobs in building, municipal housing and then a series of architects' offices, thereby generating the expertise for the bulk of his output as a writer. In the mid-sixties he re-trained as a teacher but for most of the seventies was education officer for the Town and Country Planning Association, resigning in 1979 to become a full-time author.

It was conscription into the British Army during the Second World War that radicalised him since, posted to Glasgow, he admired its anarchist orators, attended their weekly meetings and began to write for Freedom Press's periodicals. On demobilisation in 1947 and back in London he was invited to join Freedom's editorial collective, thus beginning an intimate association with the people who were to become, in his description, his "closest and dearest friends".

His spare-time journalistic apprenticeship was daunting, writing articles for Freedom, a weekly throughout the 1950s. He was enabled to break from this treadmill when his fellow editors gave him his head from 1961 to 1970 with the monthly Anarchy (while they continued to bring out Freedom for the other three weeks of the month). Anarchy exuded vitality, was in touch with the trends of the decade, and appealed to the young – and it continues to excite. Its preoccupations centred on housing and squatting, progressive education, workers' control, and crime and punishment. It showcased Ward's distinctive anarchism, already apparent in his articles for Freedom, but now standing alone or supported by like-minded contributors.

It was the editorship of Anarchy that released him from the obscurity of Freedom and Freedom Press and made his name. During the sixties he began to be asked to write for other journals, not only in the realm of dissident politics but also such titles as the recently established New Society. From 1978 he became a regular contributor to New Society's full-page 'Stand' column; and when ten years later New Society was merged with the New Statesman he was retained as a columnist for the resultant New Statesman and Society with the shorter, but weekly, 'Fringe Benefits'. He also wrote a long-running column for Town and Country Planning and an 'Anarchist Notebook' for Freedom, and in addition contributed columns to the Architects' Journal. Through his columns many unsuspecting readers were exposed to anarchist ideas for, whatever he might be doing, he always saw himself first and foremost as an anarchist propagandist.

His first books came as late as 1970–72, but these were intended for teenagers and

published by Penguin Education. It was the third, *Anarchy in Action* (1973), which was his only work on the theory of anarchism, indeed the only one "directly and specifically about anarchism" until his final publication, *Anarchism: A Very Short Introduction* (2004).

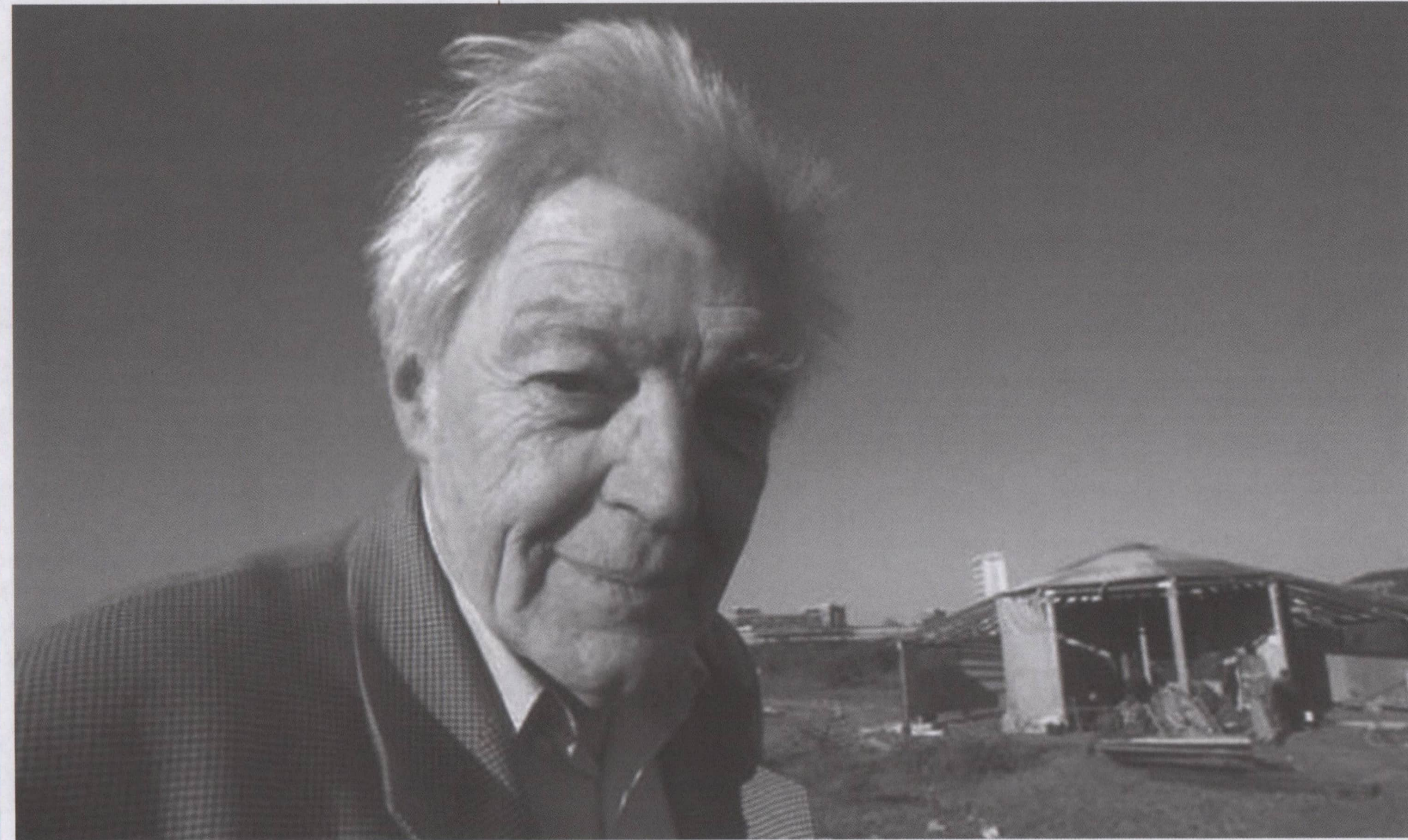
In *Anarchy in Action* he makes entirely explicit his highly original anarchism (even if, as he always acknowledged, much indebted to Kropotkin and Landauer). The opening words have been much quoted: "The argument of this book is that an anarchist society, a society which organises itself without authority, is always in existence, like a seed beneath the snow, buried under the weight of the state and its bureaucracy, capitalism and its waste, privilege and its injustices, nationalism and its suicidal loyalties, religious differences and their superstitious separatism."

His kind of anarchism, "far from being a speculative vision of a future society ... is a description of a mode of human organisation, rooted in the experience of everyday life, which operates side by side with, and in spite of, the dominant authoritarian trends of our society."

It is Ward's vision of anarchism, along with his many years of working in architecture and planning, that account for his concentration on 'anarchist applications' or 'anarchist solutions' to "immediate issues in which people are actually likely to get involved..."

Although he claimed in 1997 that "all my books hang together as an exploration of the relations between people and their environment" (by which he means the built, rather than the 'natural', environment), and while this clearly covers nine-tenths of his oeuvre, it seems rather (as he had put it earlier) all his publications are "looking at life from an anarchist point of view".

So the 'anarchist applications' concern housing: *Tenants Take Over* (1974), *Housing: An Anarchist Approach* (1976), *When We Build Again Let's Have Housing That Works!* (1985) and *Talking Houses* (1990); architecture and planning: *Welcome, Thinner City: Urban Survival in the 1990s* (1989), *New Town, Home Town: The Lessons of Experience* (1993), *Talking to Architects* (1996) and (with Peter Hall) *Sociable Cities: The Legacy of Ebenezer Howard* (1998); education: *Talking Schools* (1995); education and the environment: (with Anthony Fyson) *Streetwork: The Exploding School* (1973), *The Child in the City* (1978) and *The Child in the Country* (1988); education, work and housing: *Havens and Springboards: The Foyer Movement in Context* (1997); transport: (with Ruth Rendell) *Undermining the Central Line* (1989) and *Freedom to Go: After the Motor Age* (1991); and water: *Reflected in Water: A Crisis of Social Responsibility* (1997). A surprisingly large number of his books were written in collaboration, something he particularly enjoyed, for he was an exceptionally friendly as well as generous man.



Ward was scornful of most other anarchists' obsession with the history of their tradition: "I think the besetting sin of anarchism has been its preoccupation with its own past..." Still, despite his own emphasis on the here-and-now and the future, he wrote four important historical works, the first two with Dennis Hardy and the third with David Crouch: *Arcadia for All: The Legacy of a Makeshift Landscape* (1984); *Goodnight Campers! The History of the British Holiday Camp* (1986); *The Allotment: Its Landscape and Culture* (1988); and *Cotters and Squatters: Housing's Hidden History* (2002). The masterly *Arcadia for All*, a history of the 'plotlands' of south-east England, is simply a natural extension back into the recent past of his major interest in self-build and squatting in the present, while *Cotters and Squatters* draws from their entire historical record in England and Wales. In *Goodnight Campers!* the entrepreneurial holiday camps are traced to their origins in the early twentieth century and the 'pioneer camps', in which a key role was played by major organisations of working-class self-help and mutual aid: the co-operative movement and trade unions. The historic importance of such institutions in the provision of welfare and the maintenance of social solidarity was to become a theme of increasing significance in Ward's work; and

he is currently being identified as a 'pioneer of mutualism'.

In 1966 he married Harriet, the daughter of Dora Russell, the feminist advocate of birth control and libertarian schooling, and she survives him.

David Goodway

Since his death, I find myself wondering if Colin Ward ever got fed up with being described as a 'gentle anarchist'. It's a term which can be used in a rather dismissive and patronising way – implying perhaps that he was a lovably unworldly thinker rather than a real challenge to the established order.

This is both a misreading of his life and an underrating of the power of his ability to enlighten and persuade. I don't doubt that his righteous anger at the waste and misspent energy of a competitive market-driven economy drove him to write his continuous – but inventively constructive – critique of capitalism and all its works. Currently, it's a strange experience to hear both New Labour and New Conservatism unconvincingly preach the virtues of mutualism and co-operatives – virtues which Colin patiently promoted by deed and by espousal in every book he wrote throughout his life. And what a life.

He wrote 33 books and his energy, commitment, generosity, and questing spirit is

legendary. I believe he is the most important home-grown social theorist/activist to have emerged since the end of the Second World War and his influence is incalculable. *The Times* obituary (2nd March) lamented: "Despite international acclaim, his approach was perhaps too at odds with that of officialdom and corporate and state bureaucracies for him to make a real impact on policy-making. This neglect may one day give way to a keener recognition of the practicality, justice and fairness of his ideas."

I wonder whether 'impact on policy making' was Colin's intention. His commitment to bottom-up co-operation meant that top-down decision-making by (usually unelected) others was an anathema. What I find inspirational about his writing is his optimistic and rational tone – as evident in his conversation as in his writing. He believed in *us* working for *us* and that idea is truly a threat to the established order. I can only imagine Colin's response to the shameful neglect of patients' needs in (some) NHS hospitals. There can be no finer expression of mutuality than the NHS and no greater betrayal of it than what happened at South Staffs.

When we gathered at a local pub and tucked-in after his funeral, we looked at a display of photographs of Colin's life. There he was, young and handsome, on the first

Aldermaston March against nuclear weapons and it was at Aldermaston marches that I, and probably most of the 180 or so who attended his funeral, first encountered the anarchist paper *Freedom* – and thence Colin's writing – and *Peace News*. You will not find support for political change by violent means in any of his books and nor is there a description of its destination as in William Morris's *News From Nowhere*. Morris's book, however, fused anarchism and socialism in a way that must have helped shape Colin's anti-elitism.

In 1961 Colin founded and edited the greatly-missed journal *Anarchy* which ran to 118 issues and ended in 1970. He was a wonderful editor/commissioner and Rufus Segar designed memorable covers for its eclectic and inspired contents. Each issue was themed and Colin encouraged and supported contributions from people who had never written for a magazine before. Consequently, *Anarchy* included a kind of direct-action journalism by unknowns, as well as attracting authoritative work by heavyweight names. It was genuinely exciting reading and influenced my thinking profoundly. And all the work and thought Colin put into *Anarchy* eventually found its way into his magnificent *Anarchy in Action* (Freedom Press) which has never been out of print since and should be on every *Freedom* reader's bedside table.

In the odd way of funerals, Colin's was a rather joyous occasion enlivened by jazz and song and poetry as well as the personal testimonies of his friends and family. His and Harriet's son, Ben, told this revealing story about his father. Ben, having decided at 30 that he would, after all, study for a degree, was torn between philosophy and music. He'd told us how his father always supported him and his brothers but left them to make their own choices and live and learn by their own mistakes. When he discussed with his father whether he should be a philosopher or a musician, Colin sensibly offered this view: "Who does everyone want to listen to?" Ben chose to study music. Colin's was the voice of reason and the reason so many of us took notice.

At the end of the funeral we all sang Woody Guthrie's great hymn to friendship and collective endeavour – which is the keystone of all Colin's work – *Dusty Old Dust*. So, singing "So long, it's been good to know you" we made our own farewells to a dear friend and his towering but forever unassuming, intelligence.

I thought of appending a bibliography to this appreciation but it would be too long. Colin's clear, undecorative prose, which wears its learning lightly, never talks down and delivers social/cultural/political connections which make such immediate sense that you wonder why you never thought of them yourself.

Jeff Cloves



## COMMENT

## ABOUT FREEDOM

## ANGEL ALLEY

At the shop we're pleased to report two exciting developments. Firstly, Sunday opening has now been restored after a long winter break with the advent of fresh blood in the shop volunteer department – welcome Lee. Secondly, we now have a wildcat kids club on Friday afternoons with games and drawing in the all new 'Wildcat Colouring Book'.

We've had two events in the shop. There was a launch for Class War's election poster, copies of which can be picked up in the shop for a nominal fee, and also a benefit for Polish anarchist Rafal Gorski, who has cancer, that raised £577. We are also in negotiations with Toynbee Hall to seal off the back part of the alley behind Freedom Press, which will hopefully put an end to the fly tipping that has made it a paradise for Volterine de Goldclerk and her Freedom rat collective but a pain for us humans.

On a sadder note, several of us were able to go to Colin Ward's funeral on Monday 1st March (see pages 8 and 9 for an obituary). Well over a hundred of Colin's friends came to Ipswich to bid him farewell and sing the Woody Guthrie classic *Dusty old Dust*. Some obituaries of Colin in the mainstream press were too quick to list many of his books as out of print. Here at Freedom we're proud to say that we still have many of his books on our shelves (see list on page 11) which are available, like all other titles, post free.

Finally here's an update on who's who in the 'Freedom Team' in case anyone needs to know who the 'retired socialists' (see letters, 27th February) are:  
*Editors* Andy Meinke and Dean Talent  
*Layout and design* Jayne Clementson  
*International editor* Rob Ray  
*Reviews editor* Scott Wakeham  
*Prison correspondent* Bra Bros  
*Cartoonist* Donald Room

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## NEXT ISSUE

The next issue will be dated 27th March 2010 and the last day to get copy to us for that issue will be Thursday 18th March. You can send your articles to us by email to [copy@freedompress.org.uk](mailto: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 missed an interesting meeting the other night – a presentation of a report by Ralph Darlington, an academic who'd studied the Rail Maritime and Transport Union (RMT) on the Metronet Public Private Partnership (PPP). It's interesting at the very least partly because the union has clearly co-operated with this particular study and are keen to differentiate themselves from the other unions with their 'partnership approach'.

It's often assumed by many who comment on the unions that the leaders decide everything. This is a simplistic approach which unfortunately many anarchists are guilty of. For the *Evening Standard* or *The Times*, Bob Crow is the personification of old-style union militancy, the bane of commuters, especially in London, and fond of holding the travelling public, the government and Transport for London to ransom. However, one thing that does come out whenever there is a tube strike and commuters are interviewed, is that they are often quite admiring of Crow for his dedication to his members' cause. Few other unions have a figurehead recognised as being militant.

So why does the RMT have a militant leadership and most other unions don't, or if they do it is one that talks militancy while failing to deliver? It is a reflection of the culture of the workplace and of the union. The RMT have a strong tradition of lay representatives, basically shop-floor workers acting as stewards. This tradition was strengthened after the PPP on the tube, because the full timers had too much to cover. Bob Crow was first elected as general secretary after the campaign by the RMT against the PPP, and was unopposed the second time. He most reflected how the members felt at the time of the fight against the Tube privatisation. His election came from the struggle, not the other way round. And even though the privatisation went ahead, the RMT gained confidence and strength by actually fighting it. Not least of these was the agreement described as a 'jobs

for life charter' that meant the workers transferred to Metronet kept their terms and conditions.

Of course, conscious workers recognise that any agreement is only as strong as your organisation and its ability to enforce it. The RMT kept up the pressure – whenever there was a dispute they were prepared to fight, including the use of industrial action. Contrary to popular belief, the private firms gave in easier than the state-backed TfL because there were penalties in the contracts that hit them far harder than conceding to the union did.

The RMT have been helped by several things in their recent successes, and they remain the only union to grow significantly in the UK by recruitment rather than merger. The penalty clauses in the PPP contracts probably helped a lot, as did their strategic location and ability to shut down much of London with a brief stoppage. But most privatised industries have penalty contracts, in few are workers in any position to use them in an industrial dispute. Also vital was the sense of solidarity fostered by the lay reps, including the involvement of contractors and agency staff. Their success attracts more members because they see that taking action gets results. The RMT activists have fostered a culture whereby workplace issues get addressed at the workplace by organised workers. It's worth restating this because it is so far from what goes on in most other workplaces, even those that have a recognised union.

The RMT's relative success has been because it plays to its strengths, rejects partnership and acts in its members' interests, often being led by its members. While it might be a lot harder to do something similar in less strategic industries, I'd have thought that the lessons can be applied elsewhere. Perhaps the most important lesson is that its success is down to workers acting for themselves.

Something we all need to do.



Members of the RMT union, led by general secretary Bob Crow (foreground), during a strike in September 2007 over job concerns following the collapse of Metronet.

## LETTERS

## News from Yorkshire

The 6th February saw formation of the Yorkshire Anarchist Group at the 1-in-12 Club, Bradford. By the end of the day it was on its way to becoming a federation of groupings.

We began with a delicious light lunch accompanied by good wines, tables decorated with red and black serviettes and YAG beer mats with yorkshireanarchist.wordpress.com printed on them. Nearly 40 attended with a good mix of ages and perspectives. Observers came from a range of groups outside of the county. Some comrades warned against only reacting to what the establishment or 'people we don't like' are doing, instead of developing or own projects to show clear alternatives. Responding to the class warriors present, a brief paper was circulated advising against 'the false promises of revolution'.

After lunch about 20 people had an open discussion. We heard reports about plans for anti-election and anti-fascist actions. The conference then started to decide basic organisational tasks and who would do them. As 'an old hand', I was impressed with the lack of sectarianism and good natured level headedness that prevailed. The news from Yorkshire is very promising. Hopefully, some YAGers will be coming to the next Northern Anarchist Network gathering, Burnely, 27th March, where they have been invited to be on the agenda to share their ideas.

Martin S. Gilbert

## Imprisoned in Bulgarian

If you were walking down the street and saw 16 obvious Nazi football hooligans beating up two young Roma boys, what would you do? Possibly not what Jock Palfreeman did back in December 2007, and you certainly would not want to suffer the sort of consequences Jock has had to suffer since then.

The basic facts are these: on a night out with some friends, Jock encountered a group of Levski football club supporters. He and his friends decided that the safest thing to do was to hide in the garden of the 'Happy Restaurant' in Sofia, Bulgaria. Jock then saw that the large gang had chased and were now assaulting two Roma in front of the Ministry of Healthcare. Jock intervened to try and stop the assault, pulling a knife and brandishing it, shouting 'Nazad, Nazad' ('Get back, get back') in Bulgarian when he himself was threatened by the crowd.

The two Roma men managed to escape and Jock tried to back away from any further confrontation. However, the drunken football hooligans eventually managed to surround him, two minutes later and 100 metres away from the initial assault, attacking him with large concrete tiles, hitting him on the head and knocking him to the ground.

CCTV footage then clearly shows Andrey Monov, who had previously knelt over one of the Roma punching him whilst he lay on

the ground, joining the attack on Palfreeman. Monov is then seen falling to the ground some distance from the melee. He had been fatally stabbed and forensic evidence indicates that his wound was consistent with Monov running and falling onto Jack's blade. The other person injured, Antoan Zahariev, suffered a defensive slash wound. Jock was unable to remember the exact circumstances of either wounding, as he was concussed from the blow to the head and given the general confusion of the melee.

Eventually, security guards from inside the Ministry intervened and Jock was relieved to surrender to the police when they arrived. From there on things went from bad to worse. Jock was refused bail, spending almost two years in Sofia Central Prison prior to trial.

The police quickly established that the dead youth's father was a prominent and well-connected Bulgarian psychologist – his son's funeral was attended by a number of politicians and members of the judiciary as well as friends and family – and appear to have taken their cue from that.

No crime scene was established; gang members were not searched for weapons or tested for their blood-alcohol levels; CCTV footage was either lost or destroyed, including that from a camera in the ministry that a police officer viewed the following day but was subsequently deleted; key witnesses were never sought or interviewed; key witness statements were blocked by the prosecution; Jock's female friend, Lindsay Welsh, who herself was assaulted was never interviewed.

Then, when it eventually came to trial, the gang members and police witnesses changed their stories, totally contradicting the ones they gave immediately after the incident and even contradicting each other. However, under Bulgarian Law, only statements given in court are admissible as evidence. This law, intended to protect a defendant who has been pressured into a false statement or

confession by police during the investigation, thus became a tool for the prosecution to help railroad Jock into prison and hide their possible collusion with the gang members.

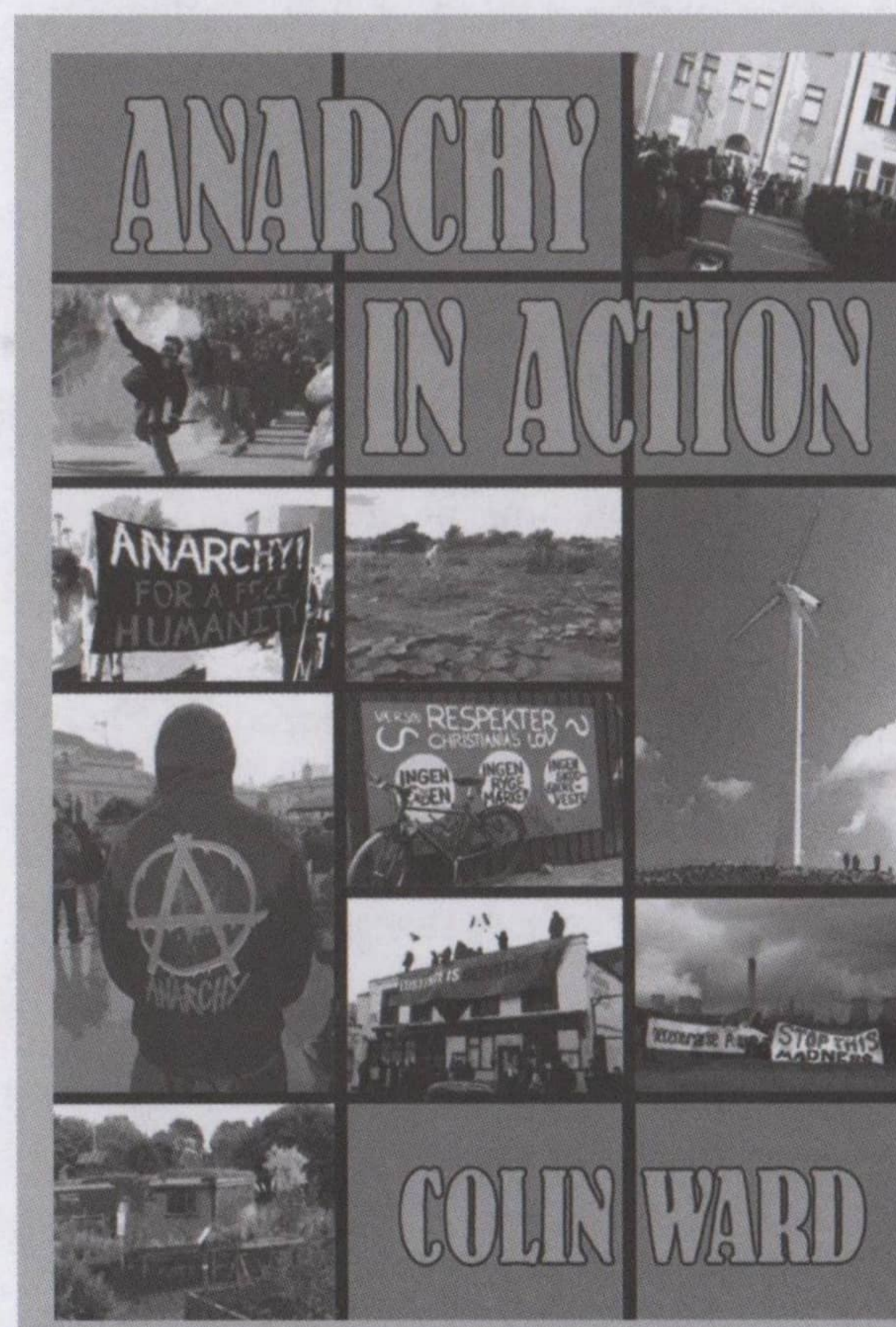
Jock is now three months into his 20-year sentence and has been placed in solitary confinement with no contact with his fellow prisoners and no access to books, radio or television. He is unable to work, to study, or to attend the prison gymnasium. All his meals are eaten inside his cell. The only opportunity he has to leave his cell is for the 90-minute period each day in which he is allowed to exercise, on his own, in the prison courtyard. This is ostensibly under a law introduced in June 2009 ordering the solitary confinement of any foreigner serving more than 15 years and awaiting a final verdict (he has an appeal in progress which could take up to two years to hear).

Interestingly, Jock is the only such foreign prisoner and up until recently had been in the general prison population. However, his run-ins with the prison authorities, support activities amongst his fellow prisoners and his anarchist reading matter appear to have forced their hands.

*"I found out that these 10–15 people, as they were moving, there was an altercation with a group from the minority and the defendant tried to stop them, after that they attacked him, he tried to defend himself and the incident occurred. That's what the boys there told me. I don't know their names. There were other people, passers-by and security guards from Sheraton. They told me the same story."* – Stoychev (Police Officer in evidence)

Bra, Brighton ABC

There is currently a letter writing campaign on Jock's behalf to try and get both his placing in isolation reversed and to get him a full appeal hearing. For details at see [freejock.net](http://freejock.net) or [brightonabc.org.uk](http://brightonabc.org.uk) or you can write to him yourself: Jock Palfreeman, Sofia Central Prison, 21 General Stoletov Boulevard, Sofia 1309, Bulgaria.



In *Anarchy in Action*, through a wide-ranging analysis – drawing on examples from education, urban planning, welfare, housing, the environment, the workplace and the family, to name but a few – Colin Ward demonstrates that the roots of anarchist practice are not so alien or quixotic as they might at first seem, but lie precisely in the ways that people have always tended to organise themselves when left alone to do so.

The following books by Colin Ward are all available post free from Freedom Press:

- *Anarchy in Action*, £7.50 (new edition)
- *Freedom to Go: after the motor age*, £3.50
- *Talking Houses*, £5.00
- *Talking Schools*, £5.00
- *Talking to Architects*, £5.00
- *Social Policy: an anarchist response*, £5.00
- *The Child in the City*, £7.95
- *The Child in the Country*, £7.95
- *Welcome Thinner City: Urban Survival in the 1990s*, £5.95
- *Influences: voices of creative dissent*, £7.95

## GETTING ACTIVE

### PRISON NEWS

#### Foreign national prisoners

The High Court of Justice has ruled that the National Offender Management Service had failed to comply with discrimination laws in its treatment of foreign national prisoners. This follows proceeding taken by the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) against the prison authority and its policy of transferring so-called 'foreign national' prisoners to new prisons without considering the potential impact the move would have on disabled or ethnic minority prisoners.

The government's own prison inspectorate has regularly highlighted the significant discrimination and disadvantage heaped upon disabled and ethnic minority foreign prisoners within the prison system. Yet the prison service, following central government dictat, has sought to create what are effectively racial ghettos within the prison system, turning over whole wings and even whole prisons to solely housing 'foreign national' prisoners in readiness for potential deportation at the end of their sentences.

The judge at the hearing rejected claims from the National Offender Management Service that it had undertaken formal equality impact assessments in advance of implementing the policy. Describing the prison service's excuses for failing to comply with discrimination law as "unconvincing", he found that no formal assessments of any kind had been carried out and that there had been a total failure to follow the statutory codes of practice.

#### French prison suicides

France has the highest prison suicide rate in Western Europe. In 2008, 109 prisoners took their own lives and last year the figure rose to 115. To date this year there have already been 22 suicides, this despite the issuing of 'anti-suicide' kits, containing tear-proof bedding and single-use paper pyjamas to prevent in-cell hangings (which accounts for 96% of all suicides) to prisons. If one also includes those on home visits, under electronic tagging or temporarily in hospital, last year's number reaches 122. If one counts the roughly 100,000 prisoners who passed through French jails last year, this makes for a rate of about 1.2 in 1,000 prisoners, 4-5 times that of the general population.

One of the main causes cited for this is clearly the state of the country's crowded, filthy and dilapidated prisons. There are currently more than 62,000 prisoners in a system designed to house 51,000. Most of the prison system is old and has long been starved of investment.

Even the screws are unhappy about the situation (10 of their number also committed suicide last year) and in the past two years the three main prison guard unions have held countywide strikes in protest the high suicide rate and prison overcrowding, even fighting with police during last May's protests.



● Five years after the initial national **Community Action Gathering**, a second is being organised in Nottingham. Invitations have been sent out to all radical, community-orientated local groups and individuals throughout the country to a gathering at the Sumac Social Centre on Saturday 27th March. According to the organisers the aim of the event is to:

- share information, local experiences and views about some of the key issues affecting our communities;
- establish better links and communication channels among radical, community-orientated local groups and individuals;
- promote collective and non-hierarchical, open and horizontal forms of organisation;
- promote anti-authoritarian, anti-state, anti-capitalist and pro-community, pro-working class grass-roots politics – that is, the interests of people rather than of governments and corporations.

The day event will look at such issues as fighting for local services and facilities in the area, affordable housing, gentrification, local workplace struggles, as well as looking at the practical demands of setting up a local group, methods of communication – newsletters, mailing lists, leaflets, public meetings, etc., and effective activity.

Groups interested in attending and getting involved should contact Community Action Gathering 2010 at [communityactionnetworkuk@googlemail.com](mailto:communityactionnetworkuk@googlemail.com)

● The latest edition of the *Hackney Heckler* is now available. Produced by **Hackney Solidarity Network** in east London, it is beautifully put together packed with useful information on the area including an Olympics update and a feature on the successes of Hackney's Unemployed Workers group. There

also a top ten of best Hackney novels which, criminally, fails to mention the Martin Amis classic *London Fields*.

Hackney Solidarity Network in association with Reel News will be hosting a film and discussion night on Sunday 14th March featuring *Copenhagen: System Change Not Climate Change!* and a discussion with a proposal for a Peoples Assembly in Hackney on 4th April.

For further details see [hackneysolidarity.info](http://hackneysolidarity.info)

● The people involved in the **Black Cat social centre**, Bath, have started an online petition to save it from closure, and to let the council know that communities need independent and community controlled social spaces.

The Black Cat has been occupied for the past six months making real inroads into the local community, becoming a popular resource for the area. It currently provides a venue for live music including a bar, plus meeting and workshop space, library and cheap café but is threatened with imminent eviction.

People can sign the online petition at [petitionspot.com/petitions/blackcatbath](http://petitionspot.com/petitions/blackcatbath) or visit their website at [blackcatcentre.blogspot.com/](http://blackcatcentre.blogspot.com/) for more information.

● Issue 12 of the bulletin for the **Hereford Solidarity League**, the *Hereford Heckler*, is out now. Featuring articles on Hereford's Tory MP and old Etonian Bill Wiggin, who criticised Cadbury's workers as a "whinging workforce" over the Kraft takeover, a look at Hereford's radical history with the Whitson riot of 1605 and a round-up of the *Hereford Heckler's* impressive first two years in existence which has seen over 40,000 copies distributed throughout the area.

The *Hereford Heckler* is available to download at <http://herefordheckler.wordpress.com/>

# Strangeways Prison Riot, 1990

Twenty years ago, the very day after the Poll Tax riot erupted in Trafalgar Square, prisoners in Manchester's oldest jail took control of the chapel for the start of what was to become the biggest riot and longest rooftop protest in British penal history and triggered a wave of revolt in over twenty other prisons across the country. It led to a shake-up in prison reform, instigated by the Woolf Report, but it also meant harsh repercussions for those involved, who went on to receive jail terms totalling 140 years for offences ranging from riot to conspiracy to commit grievous bodily harm.

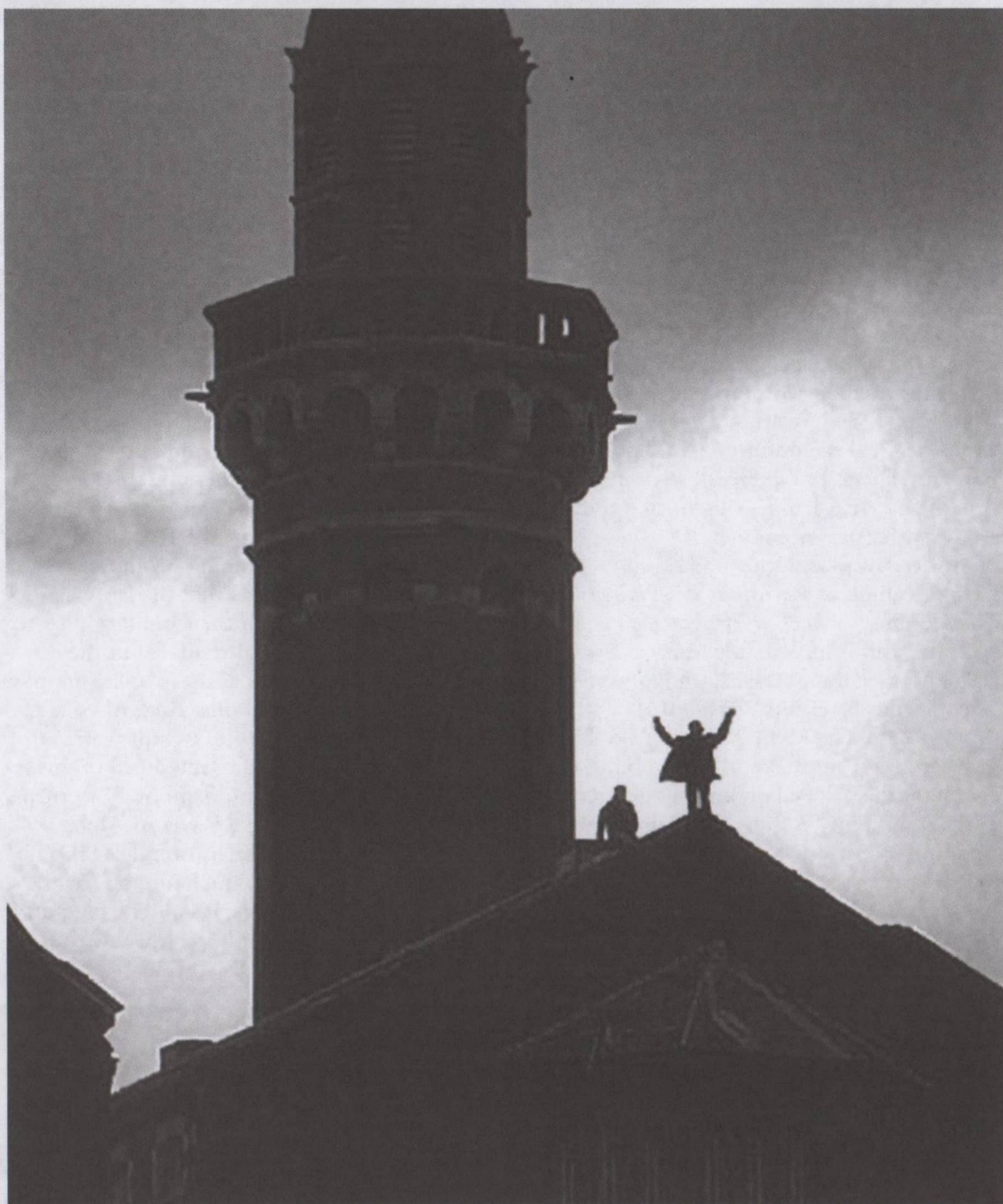
The riot brought into the public consciousness the level of brutality and barbarism inherent in the British penal system. People learned that prisoners in Strangeways, many on remand yet to be convicted of a crime, were being held three to a cell for 22 hours a day with no sanitation, one shower per week and one change of underwear. They learned that harassment and intimidation, threats and beatings were normal everyday occurrences and an accepted method of maintaining control.

The riot itself wasn't unexpected as tensions had been steadily brewing for months previously. A week before, two prisoners held a one day rooftop protest after being beaten in their cells. Later other prisoners decided to stage a sit-in protest over the systematic brutality of the prison officers. On Saturday 31st March there was a limited protest in the chapel after the film showing. Prisoners returned to their cells only after assurances were given that their grievances would be listened to and improvements made. That evening a prisoner was held down by seven officers in front of everyone and injected with largactyl (a 'liquid cosh'). It was this that triggered the riot in the chapel the following day.

Paul Taylor, who was later to become a leading figure in the protest and one of the most severely punished, remembers there was an explosion of rage in the chapel after the sermon as prisoners made their anger felt. Prison officers were ushered out, and Taylor took their keys unlocking the doors to cells letting other prisoners out. Others barricaded themselves in the chapel and gained access to the roof. All the prison staff evacuated the prison leaving the prisoners in full control of the five accommodation wings.

Of nearly 1,650 prisoners in the jail, up to 1,100 were involved on the first day. Over the course of that day 700 of those surrendered and were transferred, along with the 400 non-participants. After the initial frenzy of liberation where whole wings were ransacked, the remaining prisoners began to organise themselves; barricades were constructed, food was gathered and stored for easy access, sleeping arrangements made.

News quickly spread and along with the media onslaught hundreds of people converged



on the prison, including many friends and family of those locked up as well as ex-prisoners. The level of support outside the prison was to remain solid throughout protest.

The rooftop protest began in earnest with concrete demands being issued which included improved visiting facilities, Category A prisoners to be allowed to wear their own clothes and be able to receive food parcels, along with longer exercise periods and an end to 23-hour-a-day lock-up.

After 25 days where they kept the prison authorities at bay the last five prisoners who remained on the roof were finally lifted off by a cherry picker, defiant and saluting to the crowds below. What began as an act of desperation turned into a wave of defiance as prisoners responded to what was happening in Manchester with similar uprising in Hull, Durham, Wandsworth and other prison facilities across the country.

As a consequence nine men went on trial for the Strangeways protest charged with

riot. The charge of murder (a prisoner died during the uprising although there were doubts cast as to the actual cause; despite him receiving a beating from other prisoners) was to be dropped. Another trial was held over the battle of the wing where 14 defendants were charged with various offences, including two who were previously acquitted from the first trial, their names added to the second trial as a form of retribution. Of all those convicted for their part in the Strangeways revolt, only one, Alan Lord, remains incarcerated.

After the total destruction of the prison during the protest Strangeways was rebuilt, refurbished at a cost of £55 million. But as one prisoner put it at the time

"The better conditions in here are not down to the prison department. But for the riot, we would still be in the same old jail banged up all day and slopping out ... The rioters brought this about. They should have done it years ago but it took a riot to get them to do it"

## REVIEWS

## WHAT'S ON

## MARCH

**13th** International Women's Day and Mother's Day march and speak out event, assemble at 2pm in London's Trafalgar Square to march to Parliament Square, see [globalwomenstrike.net/](http://globalwomenstrike.net/) for details.

**14th** Screening of *Everything's Cool* at the 1in12 Club, Albion Street, Bradford BD1 2LY, at 5.30pm, see [everythingscool.org](http://everythingscool.org) and [1in12.com/monthly/day.listevents/2010/03/14/](http://1in12.com/monthly/day.listevents/2010/03/14/)

**14th** Hackney Solidarity Network and Reel News showing *Copenhagen: System Change Not Climate Change*, followed by discussion at the General Browning MOTH Club, Valette Street, London E9 6NU from 7pm until 10pm, see [hackneysolidarity.info](http://hackneysolidarity.info) or [reelnews.co.uk](http://reelnews.co.uk) for more.

**21st** Bristol Seed Swap, with stalls, workshops, tea, cakes and more, at Windmill Hill City Farm, Philip Street, Bedminster, Bristol BS3 4EA from 11am until 4pm, see [seedysunday.org](http://seedysunday.org) or contact [bristolseedswap@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:bristolseedswap@yahoo.co.uk)

**21st** Screening of *Reformat the Planet* at The Common Place, Wharf Street, Leeds LS2 7EQ, at 7pm, see [2playerproductions.com](http://2playerproductions.com) and [thecommonplace.org.uk/events-calendar/day.listevents/2010/03/21/](http://thecommonplace.org.uk/events-calendar/day.listevents/2010/03/21/)

**26th to 28th** The Sixth Anarchist Bookfair in Zagreb, for more see [ask-zagreb.org](http://ask-zagreb.org) or email [anarhisticki.sajam.knjiga@gmail.com](mailto:anarhisticki.sajam.knjiga@gmail.com)

**27th** Community Action Gathering 2010, standing up for our local communities and our interests, organise and take action, from 11am until 5pm at the Sumac Centre, 245 Gladstone Street, Nottingham NG7 6HX, email [communityactionnetworkuk@googlemail.com](mailto:communityactionnetworkuk@googlemail.com) or for updates see <http://communityactionnetwork.wordpress.com/>

**27th** Campaign Against the Arms Trade gathering, your chance to meet supporters of CAAT and get involved, at 15 Priory Street, York YO1 6ET from 10.30am until 5pm, see [caat.org.uk](http://caat.org.uk) or contact 020 7281 0297 or email [rhiannon@caat.org.uk](mailto:rhiannon@caat.org.uk)

**28th** Screening of *Reformat the Planet* at the 1in12 Club, Albion Street, Bradford BD1 2LY, at 5.30pm, see [2playerproductions.com](http://2playerproductions.com) and [1in12.com/monthly/day.listevents/2010/03/28/](http://1in12.com/monthly/day.listevents/2010/03/28/)

## APRIL

**10th** Bradford Anarchist Bookfair at the 1in12 Club 21-23 Albion Street Bradford West Yorkshire BD1 2LY from 10am until 4pm, for details or to book a stall contact [sam@samjackson6.orangehome.co.uk](mailto:sam@samjackson6.orangehome.co.uk)

**17th** The ninth Anarchist Bookfair in Ghent at 'De Centrale', Kraankinderstraat 2, 9000 Ghent, Belgium, from 10am until 8pm, for more details or to book a stall email [aboekenbeurs@yahoo.com](mailto:aboekenbeurs@yahoo.com) or see [www.aboekenbeurs.be](http://www.aboekenbeurs.be)

**24th** Campaign Against the Arms Trade gathering, your chance to meet supporters of CAAT and get involved, meet at The Anglican/Methodist Church Centre, Prewett Street, Redcliffe, Bristol BS1 6PB from 10.30am until 4.30pm, see [caat.org.uk](http://caat.org.uk)

## FILM

**Doctor Who: Peladon Tales**

DVD, directed by Lennie Mayne, BBC/2Entertain, RRP £29.99

Spoiler warning! Stop now if you don't want to know that the green guys from Mars are up to no good.

This box set covers the two Jon Pertwee stories set on the Planet of – you guessed it – Peladon. Under the usual mix of dodgy props and absurd latex monsters Peladon struggles through the big issues of 1970s Britain: joining the EEC, sorry, Galactic Federation (GF), overcoming an absurd State religion, the clash between aristocracy and the militant Miners Guild, as well as adapting to a female ruler. Fortunately Britain was never threatened by the Ice Warriors, unless that's a cold war parable I'm missing.

Aided by Jo Grant in 'Curse' and Sarah Jane Smith in 'Monster', the Doctor sorts everything out. Overcoming his initial prejudices, the Doc finds that the Ice Warriors have turned aside from their military past to be peaceful members of the GF, but they're still big on self-defence and zap away happily with the old sonic cannons. And, of course, there's a breakaway group of still-warring Ice Warriors to keep the Time Lord on his toes. With 'jelly in a goldfish bowl' Arcturus and squid-armed, squeaky voiced Alpha Centuri fronting the Federation delegation, plus the odd mute Royal Champion for the sword and sandal scenes, it's all one big party. To sort the mess the Galloping Galifreyan befriends Aggador, the Royal Beast of

Peladon (a fine performance from Stuart Fell, wearing an oversize fur coat with attached tusks), who then comes in handy to chomp up the loony High Priest Heppesh and later the greedy mining engineer Eckersley who's secretly been working for Galaxy Five – oh no, more of the plot given away, but who cares? No one knows where Galaxy Five is anyhow.

In the end the Doctor has rigged up a corporatist social contract between 'Er Maj and Ettis, the Joe-Gormley-type, compromise-minded Miners' leader, and it's all round to No 10 or, in this case, the royal chambers for beer and sandwiches. Anyone who's cheering for the more militant 'pull out of the Federation, string up the Queen, turn the sonic disruptor on the palace' Arthur Scargilesque militant Miner should be prepared for disappointment. Police truncheons are dangerous and to be avoided, but they're not a patch on Martian ray-guns.

Seventies' Doctor Who assistants didn't have a great amount to assist in, except for the Dad's watching at home. Jo's predecessor Liz Shaw was given the boot after four series for being 'too intelligent'. However in her first series, before being reduced to standard screaming heroine, Elizabeth Sladen's Sarah gets in a few blows for 'Womens Lib' as the pre-PC 70s put it, so the last line should go to Ms Smith, who tells the Queen Thalira, reluctant to appoint a Miner as her new chancellor, "There's nothing 'only' about being a miner, Your Majesty, any more than there's anything 'only' about being a girl!"



## QUIZ ANSWERS

1. Various shades of right wing US conspiracy theorists. Birthers think Obama wasn't born in the US and is not an American citizen. Truthers think the US destroyed the Twin Towers on 11th September 2001. Oathers are police and army personnel who believe the US government is plotting a fascist coup and have taken an oath not to obey orders to round up citizens for concentration camps.
2. A vegetable pie promoted during the war

and named after Lord Woolton the Minister of Food.

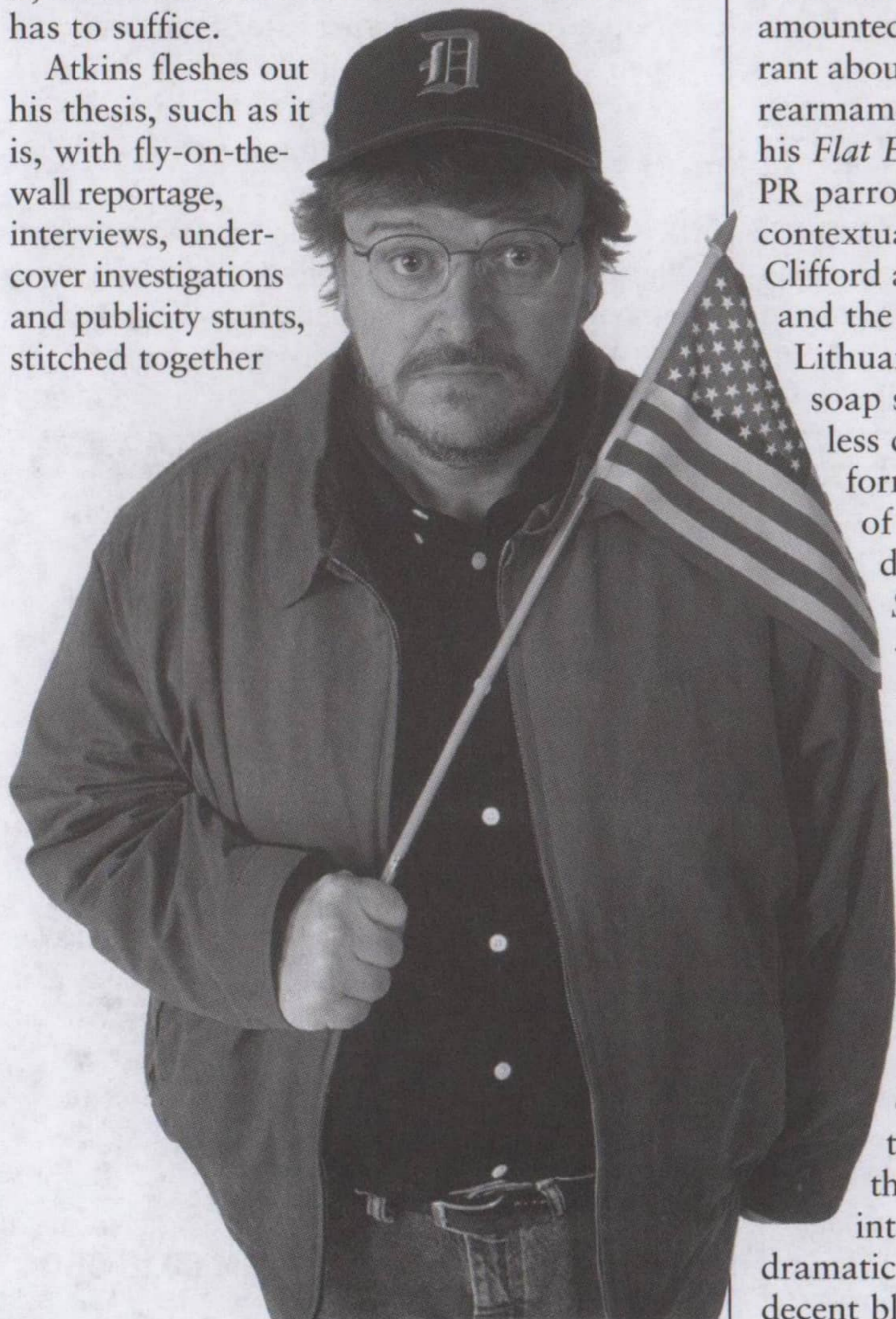
3. No one. A prank call to a radio phone in claimed that Gordon Brown did, and Fleet Street duly took it up.
4. Lord Ashcroft in his 2005 book, *Smell the Coffee*, which was aimed at making the Tories more electable. The polls that formed the basis of the book were done by him in such a way as to avoid paying VAT, as that's just for the little people.

# Liberal helpings

**Tom Jennings suspects that lack of political imagination explains the patronising undertones of two purportedly 'alternative' cinema documentaries**

Chris Atkins got the idea for *Starsuckers* – bemoaning the effects of 'celebrity culture' on contemporary society – when potential backers of previous effort *Taking Liberties* (about New Labour's erosion of civil rights; reviewed in *Freedom*, 19th January 2008) were only interested in which high-profile airheads featured. So what does it mean if value can only be ascribed in association with simplistic soundbites and iconic images of the rich and famous? The answer, it seems, is the hopeless trivialisation of all important questions of reality and truth, such that 'we' are suckered by a highly profitable conspiracy among media conglomerates and corporate advertising – encouraged by politicians conveniently deflecting attention from their impotence – keeping us all in thrall to the acquisition of visible status. Then, since most have neither the levels of blind narcissism nor material wherewithal required to achieve it, a morbid obsession with those who do has to suffice.

Atkins fleshes out his thesis, such as it is, with fly-on-the-wall reportage, interviews, undercover investigations and publicity stunts, stitched together

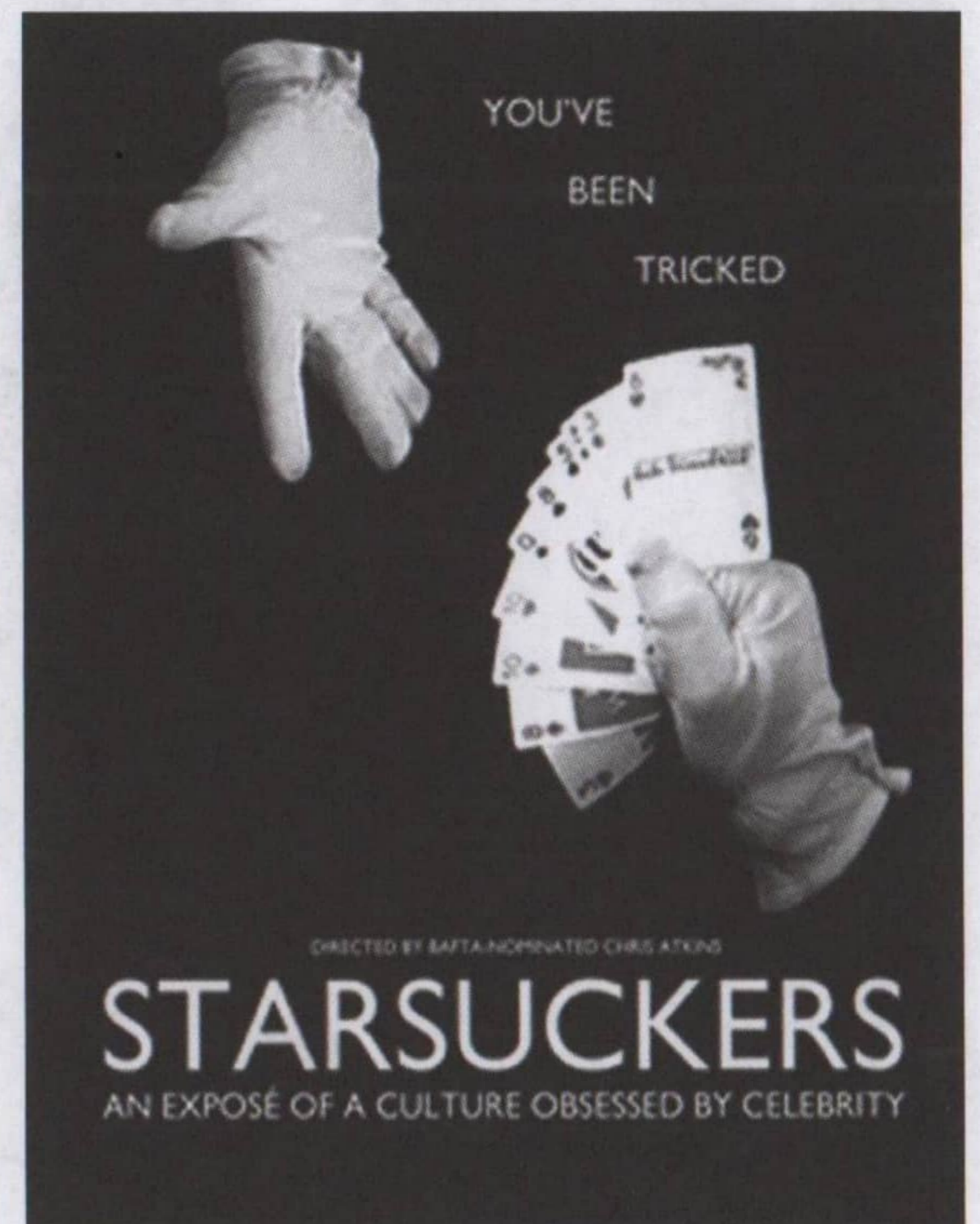


with found-footage and naff animations presided over by a hectoring transatlantic voiceover embodying the evil puppetmasters of this mediated manufacture of consent. Probably the biggest blunder of this occasionally insightful documentary is focusing on extreme examples of sad fools forcing their kids into talent show/reality TV careers who, by implication, stand in for the entire public duped into collusion – at a stroke ignoring the vast majority who take it much less seriously. Subsequent 'expert' witnesses testify to the social-psychological underpinnings and implications of fascination with instant fame, especially for today's youngsters exposed to a media barrage insisting that nothing else matters. Unfortunately, such potentially interesting themes are spoiled by overblown hypotheses masquerading as science ranging from questionable to blatantly daft – especially the just-so story of genetic dispositions rendering all consideration of cultural, social or political history superfluous.

Instead of inviting viewers to sneer at eternally vulgar masses, similarly populist treatments would have been useful of a century's-worth of philosophical speculation on the saturation of visual spectacle supplanting direct human relations (e.g. Walter Benjamin, Situationism, Baudrillard, etc). Then the concrete case studies of the lazy, dishonest media packaging of celebrity, and its increasing penetration of politics via the erosion of serious journalism, may have amounted to more than a random conservative rant about declines in standards inviting moral rearmament. As it is, Nick Davies retreading his *Flat Earth News* expose of newspaper PR parroting, Atkins' faked tabloid scoops contextualised with a covertly-filmed Max Clifford admitting the tricks of his dirty trade, and the international dimension glossed in Lithuania's parliamentary takeover by soap stars, present an overall picture far less cogent even than Chomsky's famous formulations about the manipulation of information to mystify and disempower the majority. Plus, *Starsuckers*' most substantive claim – that Geldof's 2005 Live8 concert not only distracted attention from the Make Poverty History actions, but also betrayed its stated charitable purpose – might not seem such an anti-climactic 'duh' moment.

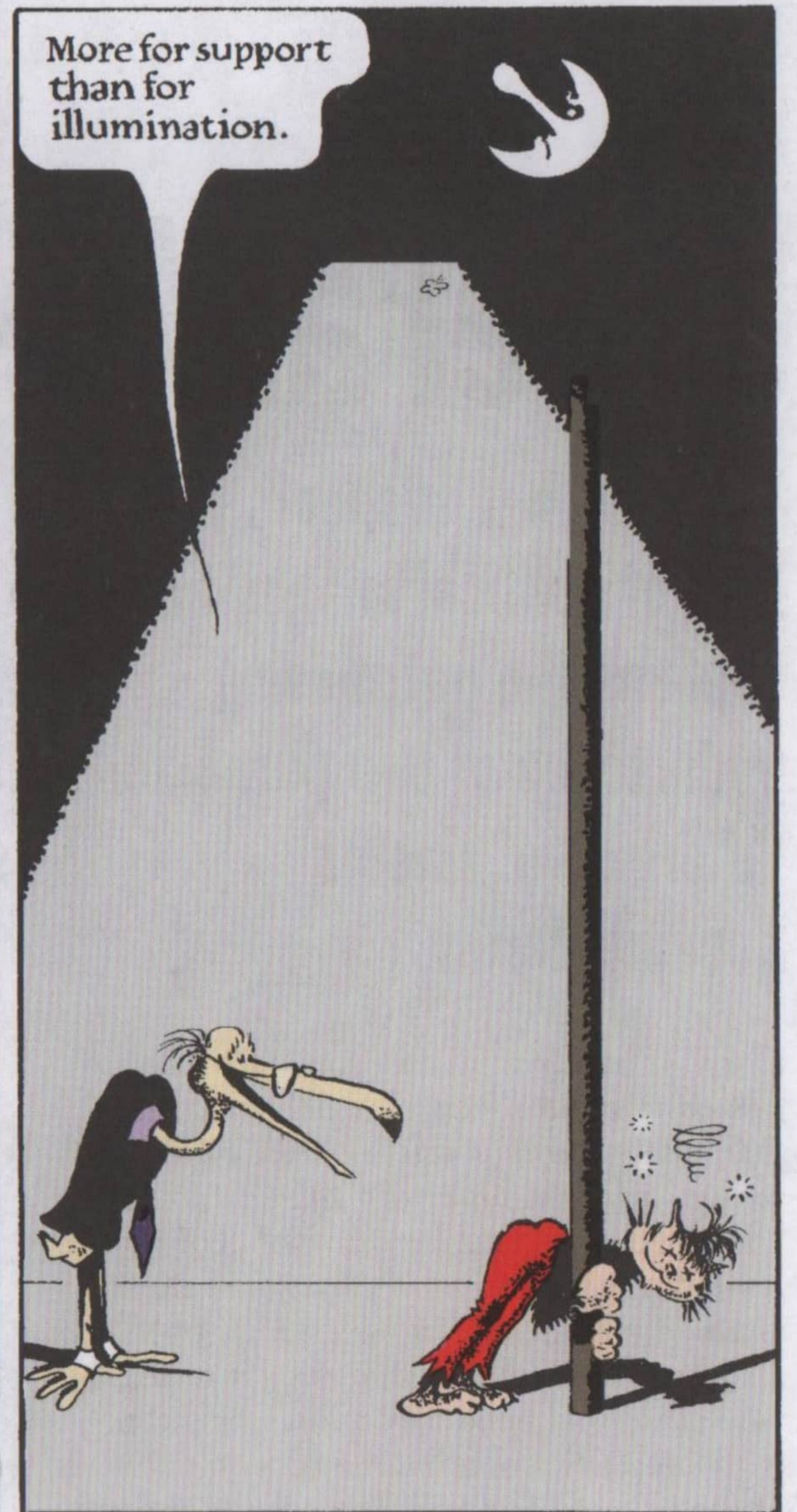
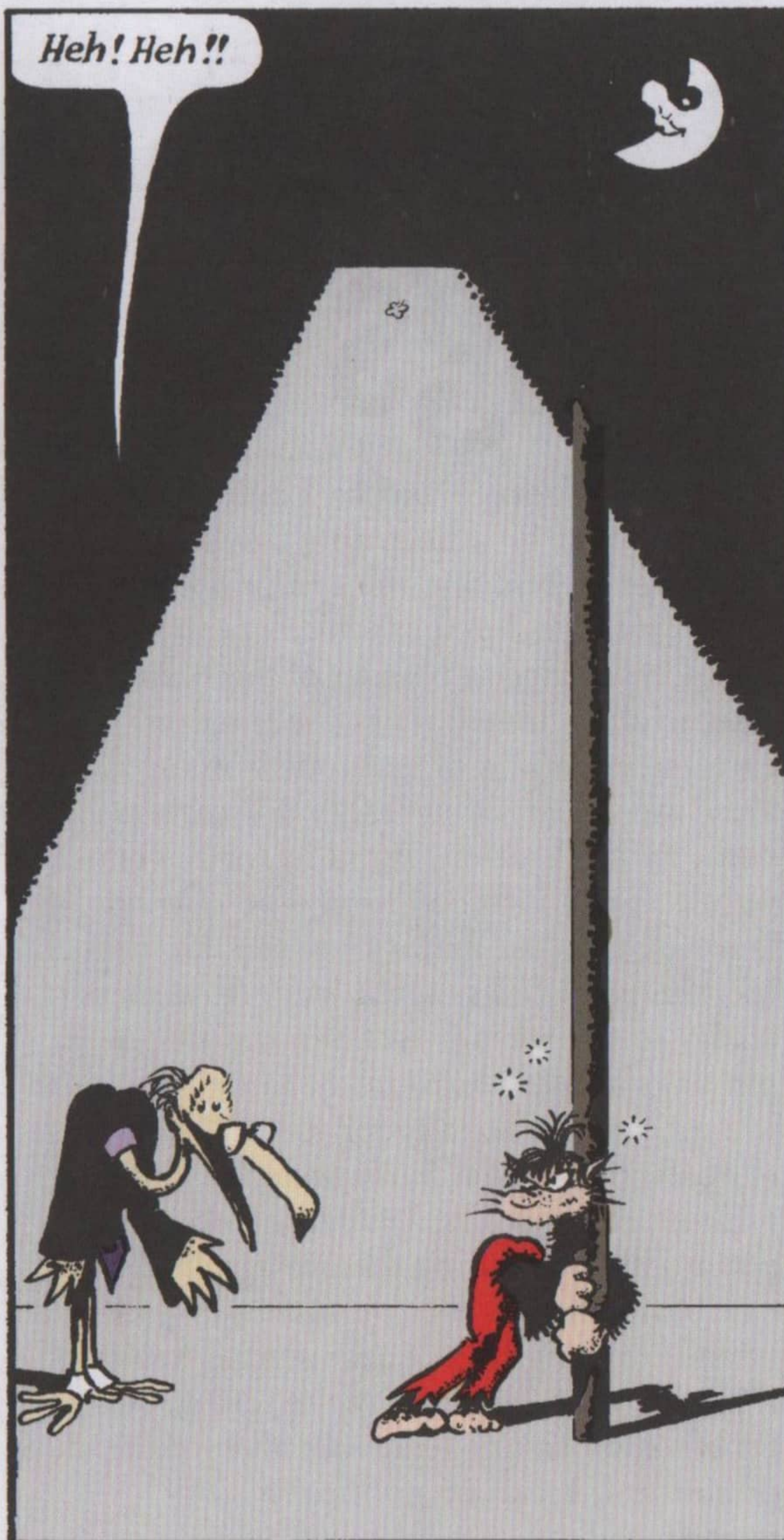
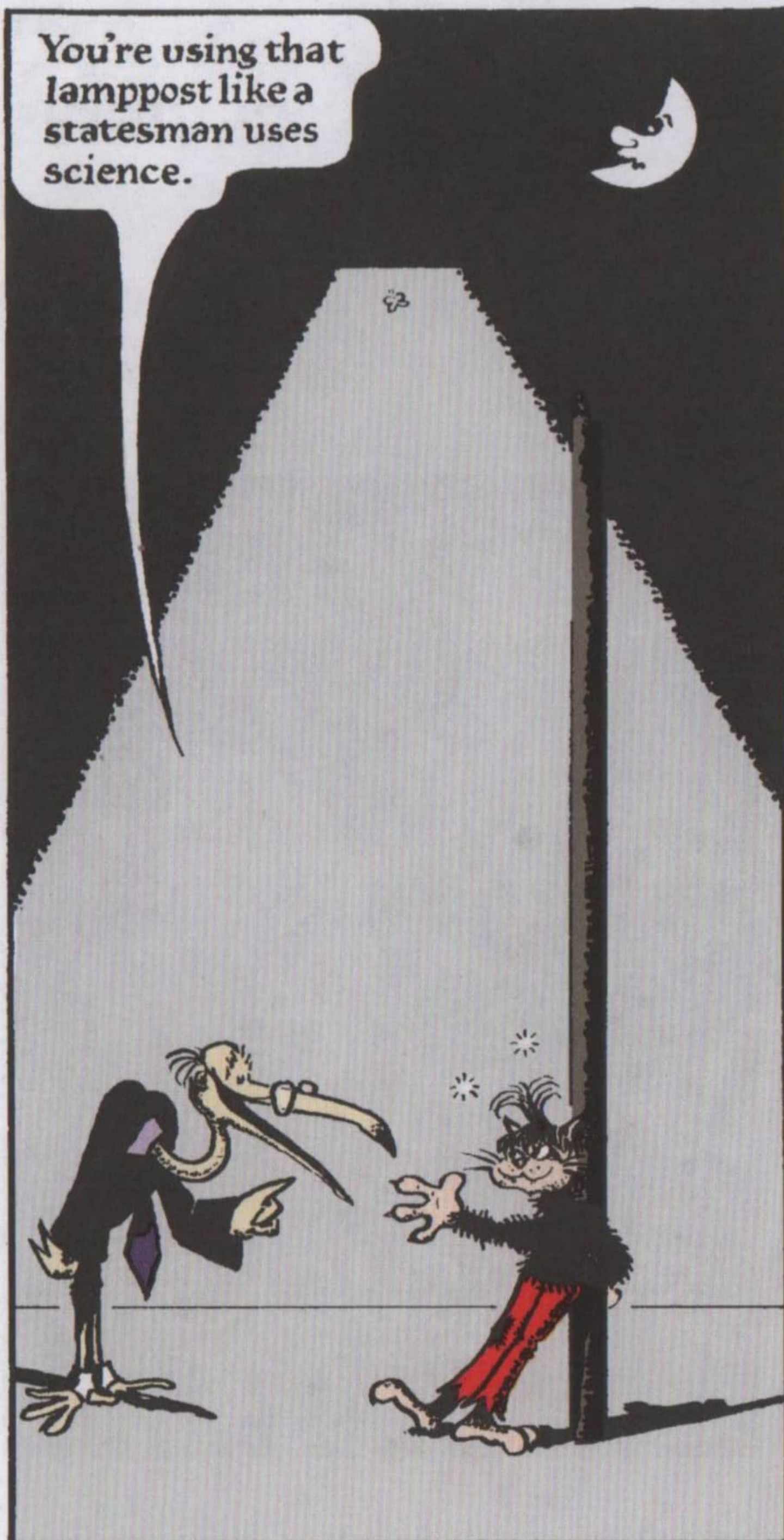
## Star-crossed haters

Michael Moore (pictured left) also goes for the jugular of 'big issues' in cinema entertainments too bolshy to pass muster (and legal advice) on the telly. However, rather than claiming intellectual high ground, his melodramatic strategy identifies tear-jerkily with decent blue-collar ordinary folks bludgeoned



by big power and big money. So *Capitalism: A Love Story* specifies the immediate human consequences of the financial crisis, recapitulating his previous soap-box antics in *Roger & Me*'s lament to de-industrialisation, through *Fahrenheit 9/11*'s military-industrial skulduggery, to *Sicko*'s disgust at the planned exacerbation of healthcare misery. Now US corporate excess and its government supporters finish the cycle of neoliberal downsizing begun under Reagan, throwing millions more out of homes and jobs with scant remaining safety nets while still enriching the ruling class whose welfare the political establishment assiduously nourishes. Even better, you'd think, is naming and shaming the system of modern capitalism itself as villain of the piece, manifested in stunts and hands-on jeremiads against the cynical greed of Wall Street mandarins or property speculators, detailing disgusting company practices beyond cutting wages and benefits to the bone, profiting from the early death of employees, or corruptly detaining juveniles in private prisons.

Moore consistently and explicitly appeals to the downhome decency of his working-class viewers and interviewees, invoking bonds of community, solidarity and altruism rooted in the family but capable in principle of infinite extension – counterposed to uncaring elites concerned only with feathering their own nests. Here the capacity of mutualism to resist the cold blight of the market is hinted in visits to thriving workers' co-ops as well as rearguard occupations of bankrupt firms. But the preoccupation with respectable conduct, even when translated into good-natured collective unruliness in the face of injustice, works against the effectiveness of his stunts – wrapping crime scene tape around Wall Street or demanding the people's billions back from Goldman-



## Review

◀ page 15

Sachs – which come across as so much self-defeating grandstanding in the absence of rather more than moral force.

Likewise, this film's stab at momentous historical resonance couples metaphors of capitalism as ancient Roman slavery, Mafia barbarism and casino economics with a devout exposition of its irreconcilable contradiction to Christianity. This faith in the historic compromises of the downtrodden yields a comprehensive aversion to robust political direct action to effect change, thus crippling his vision – confirmed when Franklin Delano Roosevelt's proposed Second Bill of Rights (to jobs, home, health, etc.) is paraded as the limit-point of democratic

aspiration rather than the bulwark of bourgeois rule it was. Like Chris Atkins, Moore won't follow through the implications of his criticisms of the present order to envisage any real mechanism for the transformation of the future outside of the parameters laid down by liberalism. At one point, Moore murmurs that he can't keep on making these films; wishing that viewers would 'hurry up' and join him in action. What for? Liberation theology watered right down to Obamahope for a New Deal? No thanks.

[www.tomjennings.pwp.blueyonder.co.uk](http://www.tomjennings.pwp.blueyonder.co.uk)  
<http://libcom.org/blog/4271>

*Starsuckers* is written and directed by Chris Atkins, see [starsuckersmovie.com](http://starsuckersmovie.com). *Capitalism: A Love Story*, directed by Michael Moore, should be available soon on DVD, see [capitalismalovestory.com](http://capitalismalovestory.com).

## THE QUIZ

1. What are birthers, truthers and oathers?
2. What was Woolton pie?
3. Who threw a tangerine into a laminating machine, as reported by a lot of national newspapers?
4. Who found out that most people believed the Tories to be "out of touch" and "opportunistic", "don't care about ordinary people", were "stuck in the past" and "care more about the well-off than the have-nots"?

Answers on page 14

*The Anarchist Quiz Book* compiled by Martin Howard with illustrations by Paul Petard, £5 (post free) from Freedom Press, 84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1 7QX or order online at [freedompress.org.uk](http://freedompress.org.uk).

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