

# FREEDOM

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## NO JUSTICE, NO PEACE

### Round-up of the ongoing issues connected to last year's London G20 protests

It's been a year since newspaper vendor Ian Tomlinson was killed by police at the anti-G20 demonstrations in the City of London. His family are still awaiting the prosecution of the officers responsible for his death.

Up to 2,000 demonstrators had converged on the Bank of England to protest against the G20 financial summit being held in London that week. Tomlinson, who was not part of the demonstration, was walking away from the scene, his back to police with his hands in his pockets, when he was struck from behind with a baton by riot police who then proceeded to charge into him sending him crashing to the pavement. He was helped to his feet by protestors who watched him stagger away dazed. A few minutes later Tomlinson collapsed where again demonstrators went to his aid but were forced away by police, who refused to communicate with the emergency services about his condition. He was eventually taken to hospital, where he was pronounced dead.

Initially police denied there was any physical contact with Tomlinson, but had to reverse **page 3** ▶▶

### LENS CAP BATTLE FOR THE SKIES



British Airways cabin crew defied management intimidation and bullying and staged a three-day strike over cuts to the workforce. BA employs around 13,500 flight attendants, of whom around 12,000 are Unite members.

## BATTLE OF STOKES CROFT

Local anarchists, activists and community campaigners fought a defiant battle to prevent bailiffs evicting them from the site in the Stokes Croft area of Bristol which is set to become the home of eighteenth Tesco supermarket in the city.

Around 200 protestors converged on Cheltenham Road on 16th March and blocked the busy high street as bailiffs, aided by over 70 police, including mounted police and dog handlers, took all day to evict the occupiers from the barricaded building.

Protestors occupied the former Jesters comedy club in February when it was discovered that Tesco were planning to open yet another one of its supermarkets in the area. Initially it took the bailiffs almost an hour to gain access in which time they were

met with fierce resistance by the occupiers who threw buckets of water, paint missiles and let off fire extinguishers. Around ten people had made it onto the roof with some positioning themselves on scaffolding tripods and ladders to make eviction more difficult.

One protester managed to attach himself to the cherry picker, preventing bailiffs from evacuating people off the roof of the building, to the obvious approval of the crowd.

Previously there had been a massive demonstration against council approval for the unwanted Tesco store. Bushra Randhawa, a postmaster and resident for 24 years, said: "It's taken a huge effort from local groups, traders and the community to regenerate this area and only now does it feel like a real community spirit is developing".

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## NEWS

## IN BRIEF

**SEA ICE:** Much of the record breaking loss of ice in the Arctic ocean in recent years is down to the region's swirling winds and is not a direct result of global warming, a new study reveals.

Ice blown out of the region by Arctic winds can explain around one-third of the steep downward trend in sea ice extent in the region since 1979, the scientists say.

The study does not question that global warming is also melting ice in the Arctic, but it could raise doubts about high-profile claims that the region has passed a climate 'tipping point' that could see ice loss sharply accelerate in coming years.

The new findings also help to explain the massive loss of Arctic ice seen in the summers of 2007-08, which prompted suggestions that the summertime Arctic could be ice-free within a decade.

About half of the variation in maximum ice loss each September is down to changes in wind patterns, the study says.

Masayo Ogi, a scientist with the Japan Agency for Marine-Earth Science and Technology in Yokohama, and her colleagues, looked at records of how winds have behaved across the Arctic since satellite measurements of ice extent there began in 1979. They found that changes in wind patterns, such as summertime winds that blow clockwise around the Beaufort Sea, seemed to coincide with years where sea ice loss was highest.

**DRUGS:** Fifty students who use mephedrone are being recruited in Liverpool for a study into the effects of the drug.

Psychologists at Liverpool John Moores University hope to find out more about the sensations experienced by users.

Mephedrone, also known as 'bubbles' or 'meow meow', is currently a readily available and legal substance and has become a popular drug among clubbers.

The legality of the drug is to be examined after the deaths of two teenagers who died after taking it.

**EDL UPDATE:** Four people have been charged with public order offences following a demonstration in Bolton.

Thousands of demonstrators from Unite Against Fascism and the English Defence League gathered in Victoria Square to air their political views on Saturday 20th March.

Police arrested 73 protesters. They have now released 34 without charge, issued 13 with fixed penalty notices and 17 remain on bail. Three people were cautioned, Greater Manchester Police said. Another man was transferred to West Yorkshire, over an unrelated assault.

According to police, of those arrested, 54 were affiliated to Unite Against Fascism and 17 were affiliated to the English Defence League.

Police have denied claims that they were heavy-handed during the protest.

## LENS CAP JUICY POLICE VIOLENCE



A policeman struck a G20 protest twice with a baton after mistaking a carton of orange juice in her hand for a weapon, a court has heard. Metropolitan Police sergeant Delroy Smellie, 47, said he hit Nicole Fisher, 36, because she posed a threat during the protests on 2nd April last year. As we go to press there is no verdict yet-but can you guess?

## EDL in London

On Friday 5th March the English Defence League came to march in London. I'll pause there. Anyone waiting for a tale of derring-do as our heroic comrades take on the might of the Fash and Filth à la Cable Street, Lewisham, Southall, Welling or Waterloo should look away now. It should be said that both demo and counter demo were called at short notice and on a weekday in response to rabid right wing Dutch MP Geert Wilders who was showing his anti-Islam film in the House of Lords.

The EDL met in the Duke of Norfolk pub on Millbank from 11am, moving to outside the Tate Britain art gallery just after 1pm and then, surrounded by cops, marched slowly to Parliament Square, stood in a pen for a couple of hours, had a couple of their number nicked for swearing and were then marched to Westminster tube.

However the more interesting question was what response would there be to a far right group marching in central London? Not much is the sad answer. Unite Against Fascism (UAF) had called a counter demo and around 150 people turned up at Parliament Square, but only a handful of enterprising souls made the bold step of going to find the EDL. The majority waited sheep like for the cops to move them out of the route of the march.

Thus we come to the desperate struggle for control of Britain's streets. The UAF (or

Unite Against Fighting) linked arms and formed a huddle in the middle of the road defying the constabulary to move them. The police were only able to breach this schiltron of socialism by the use of an underhand tactic-strength. Using 'strength' the cops plucked the whingeing 'student grant' types willy-nilly from the street and into the paddy wagon after filling three vans the cops commandeered a bus and filled that.

Finally with forty odd carted away and half expecting Norris McWhirter to rise from the grave to announce a world record for pointless arrests, the cops called a halt.

Their new plan was to push the UAF off the road. Again using the aforementioned 'strength' technique the battling battalions of anti-fascism were flung into the park by the river. This was a wise conservation of resources by the rozzers as, unlike the traditional 'kettle' which requires police on all sides of the demonstrators, the innovative 'park kettle' only requires four cops on the park gate plus one each side to tell people not to climb the fence.

The remainder of the crowd faced the choice of making a quick move or being kettled on the other side of the road. Guess what?

The whole sorry event was best summed up by a cop from the Public Order Intelligence Unit "It a demonstration by an extreme right wing group and the extreme left wingers are upset 'cos they can't stop it."



# Party political funding

With the Unite union giving £11 million to the Labour Party since 2007, on Radio 4 it was astonishing to hear Derek Simpson, one of the Unite general secretaries, declare Gordon Brown's the recent attacks on the union's decision to launch a strike at British Airways only goes to show the Government is not in the union's pocket, or words to that effect. £11,000,000 of Unite member's money going to the Labour Party and now to draw?

Some say this money is allowing Unite, through its political director and Downing Street groupie, Charlie Whelan, to place Unite candidates in constituencies such as Stalybridge & Hyde, where the Labour Party is looking for a successor for James Purnell, former Work and Pensions' Minister. Nick Robinson, the BBC's political correspondent on Radio 4, drew attention to Unite's role in the struggle going on in that constituency Labour Party association. Purnell's entry in the Register of Member's

Interests shows the Stalybridge & Hyde Constituency Labour Party got £2,000 from the Unite union – or rather, from the Amalgamated Union of Engineering Workers as it then was, in 2001. It is not clear if this record is up to date and Purnell's local Party didn't receive anything after that date (see *Northern Voices* no. 11, out shortly). At least one Unite Branch Secretary in the North West has been seeking information about details of political payments from the union to regional MPs like Purnell and their constituency associations.

In the February/March issue of Unite's *The Workplace Reporter*, the joint Unite general secretaries, Derek Simpson and Tony Woodley, say that "the Tories will do nothing to help hard pressed communities". What would those Northern folk who are right now having their houses bulldozed by New Labour's HMR Pathfinder Project in Derker, near Oldham, and in Toxteth, Liverpool, on the famous 'Welsh Streets' have to say about that?

They'd be better off saying nowt, as to call upon us to fight for something as devoid of meaning as traditional social democracy.

So why does Unite keep throwing its members' money at the Labour Party? It can't be idealism or ideology, when it just amounts to managing and engineering social democracy. And the BA dispute seems to show that it's not about furthering our members' interests – after over 12 years in power the Labour government shows no sign of getting rid of, what Simpson and Woodley admit, are "the most restrictive anti-trade union laws in Europe..." Perhaps, in the end, it is nothing less than another case of 'cash-for-honours' – arise, Lord Simpson of Stalybridge! Don't forget that predecessor of yours, Lord Scanlon, who went from being a communist party fellow-traveller in Manchester to playing golf with the bosses on the South Coast of England.

Brian Bamford  
(*Northern Voices*)

## No justice, no peace

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their story when extensive footage was uncovered of the incident that campaigners say led directly to his death.

The original post mortem concluded that Tomlinson died from natural causes, despite contrary evidence. The coroner had been previously investigated and reprimanded for his conduct, and was later suspended. A second post mortem found Tomlinson had died because of abdominal haemorrhage, the cause of which remains unknown. A third was conducted on 22nd April at the request of the accused officer's defence team. The results were not made public.

The Ian Tomlinson Family Campaign held an anniversary vigil on 1st April at the site he was killed, and again demanded a full

investigation, along with criminal charges to be brought against those involved in his death. Tomlinson was the first person to be killed by police during a demonstration in almost exactly 30 years, since Blair Peach in 1979.

At the same time The Metropolitan Police Authority's Civil Liberties Panel published its final draft on the policing of the G20 protests. The 68-page report criticises the unaccountable actions of the Forward Intelligence Teams (FIT) and recommends the police "justify and modify the purpose role and proportionality of FIT deployment", calling into question "whether some tactics and powers are inappropriate for use in public order situations".

On two related notes, Sgt Smellie of the Territorial Support Group, who was filmed attacking a female protestor, is currently in court at the time of going to press charged with assault.

The G20 protestors who were detained when police raided the convergence centre could be awarded up to £250,000 compensation when police finally admitted the raid was unlawful. Up to 70 people who were using the building as sleeping space during the G20 summit protests where they were threatened with taser guns, assaulted and handcuffed during the raid. The Met Commissioner admitted it was unlawful to arrest, search them, and force them to be recorded on film.

## ANALYSIS

# Greece under siege

## Update on the tensions and continued social crisis in Greece

“Greece is going to hell, it is going to hell and I am glad it is so that we can come back and start things from the beginning” – these were the last words of an anarchist comrade in Greece as we spoke about events that have taken place in recent weeks because of the austerity measures introduced by the Government to tackle Greece’s enormous debt.

Greece’s Premier has likened the Greek economic situation to that of a country in ‘wartime’, in which he announced that the public must come together in order to ‘survive’

Although this wartime reference was used as a metaphor, Papandreou might only too soon find his Government locked in a state of war with the working classes. Trade Union leaders have called the measures an act of war and the Communist Party Leader of Greece has already called for the working classes to rise up against the European Union and the International monetary market and began its efforts by blocking the Athens Stock Exchange through members of its Union PAME. These ‘calls to arms’ however, have typically fallen on deaf ears among Greeks who claim the communist party, as one taxi driver said to me, “are a party who want to take us back one hundred years”. However, this might prove to be an understatement as the newly introduced measures on force people onto the streets in what they see as an unfair burden that has been placed upon ordinary Greeks by the international banking community and the Government.

Among the new measures that have been imposed are rises in value added tax from 19% to a staggering 21%. A further rise in the price of fuel, cigarettes and alcohol, which if one has already visited Athens, is above the average price of these commodities in other European cities, and are especially high for common Greeks who earn much less. And an added tax on luxury purchased goods.

The same taxi driver who condemned the KKE also admitted to me that it would be cheaper to not drive the taxi at all, due to the introduction of the new economic measures. This explains why taxi drivers have staged walk-outs in recent weeks in response to a government austerity measure which forces them to give receipts to clients and keep a log of all their earnings. The small amount of extra money they were able to make through driving extra hours in order to save, will to now be consumed by the state in order to feed the enormous public debt bubble and bring it back under control.



A protester throws stones at riot policemen during clashes in Athens on 11th March when Greek police fired tear-gas as thousands marched to protest against austerity plans

The mainstream press are claiming that most of the electorate, two-thirds in fact, are behind the new Government’s plans to cut public finances, including the 14th salary in which civil servants are paid an extra bonus over Christmas, which they depend on and is a historic part of the labour movement in Greece. Yet, one has to question this statistic when only this week, at the beginning of March, labour activists attempted to break into the labour ministry to disrupt the labour minister’s meeting with an EU Finance Minister Olli Rehn, only to be beaten back by police armed with pepper spray and batons.

One again, one has yet to question this statistic when two national strikes and demonstrations have take place, called by private and public trade Unions ADEDY and GSEE, which brought most of Greece’s public services to a standstill. There was even a media blackout as journalists joined the some 50,000 demonstrators on the streets of Athens. If one were to believe the statistic of public backing, the only questions remains is why? Why are Greeks backing this austerity package the Government is so rapidly and desperately trying to put together at the behest of the international markets? Simply because the revolutionary spirit has been dampened and people do not know what to do next. Revolution or reform is the question on everyone’s mind.

In a further blow to Greece’s sovereignty, Goldman Sachs, US investment bank has entered the fray. Using similar derivatives which caused the bursting of the subprime mortgage market bubble, financial instruments known as currency swaps, allowed Greece to

mask up to a billion euros of its deficit. As one professor of economics from an Athens University told me, although this deal, which was brokered through Goldman Sachs, only accounts for less than 1% of Greece’s deficit, it is the principle of their actions which should be scrutinised. Once again we are seeing investment banks act above governments, in using over the counter deals, fixing rates, which are not regulated. Ben Bernanke, chairman of the Federal Reserve stopped himself short of announcing that there would be an official inquiry into the deal the Greek government made with Goldman Sachs. A guerrilla group, named Conspiracy of Cells of Fire, have already claimed responsibility for an explosive device which ripped through the entrance to Athens headquarters of JP Morgan Chase, a bank backed by Goldman Sachs.

With further strikes planned for later in March only time will tell how the public will react to the introduction of these measures, one thing that is certain is that young Greeks soon will have to seek opportunities abroad as unemployment figures will inevitably rise. Another telling moment for developments will be in a couple of months when Greece will be called upon to refinance its 21.2 billion euros debt and is forced to tap capital markets amidst a potential downgrade from credit ratings agencies. If however, Greece is unable to acquire aid from its European counterparts, there is speculation that the IMF will enter the arena, and for economists and activists alike who are aware of the nature and history of the IMF’s policies, one can only fear a repeat of the 2002 bankruptcy of Argentina which brought the country near the brink of collapse.

## IN BRIEF

**BUDGET:** A comprehensive and detailed analysis of the budget will follow in our next issue – any takers for economics correspondent? Meanwhile, we learn that the Chancellor is launching a full scale attack on cider with a 10% increase in duty. Sobering news for many anarchists indeed.

**BA:** British Airways cabin crew who took part in the Unite union's three-day strike will forfeit their travel perks permanently, the company has confirmed.

Staff are eligible for free and heavily discounted flights, depending on how long they have worked for BA. Petty little so and so's.

**BAE:** Sorry news for our old pals at BAe. They've lost the contract for Britain's new light tank to General Dynamics in the US.

Worse may be to come after the election as all the major parties will be planning big defence cuts should they come to power.

What, you cry aghast! I thought the government was in BAe's pocket? Well yes but not as much as they are in the pocket of the bankers.

**FISHY NEWS:** The Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES) has been meeting in Doha, Qatar.

So far the endangered animals to have received no help whatsoever are the Atlantic Bluefin Tuna and seven species of Shark. Apparently there's money to be made in catching and eating these fish and under a daft system called capitalism that's all that matters. Calls to abolish capitalism were rejected.

**THE NAGS:** While we by no means wish to encourage honest workers frittering away their money at the bookies, particularly after Imperial Commanders upset win in the Cheltenham Gold Cup brought tears to the eyes of many a punter, we would like to praise the comrade who came into the Freedom bookshop last Thursday and bought a £25 book saying he'd promised to spend the money here if he won on the gee-gees – thanks Martin.

**GIGANTASEAL:** Is it for real? The latest cryptoid beast to hit the spotlight is the gigantaseal. Supposedly an immense carnivorous seal of the arctic that feeds on rorquals. The only evidence comes from bite marks on the fossilised bones of minke whales and a single piece of primitive art showing the 'giant seal' in company with a whale. If this drawing were taken to scale, it's 96% longer than the whale depicted with it, gigantaseal would be around 16 metres in length with a weight based on extrapolation from the largest extant phocid, the elephant seal of around 60 tons, making it one of the largest flesh eaters of all time.

# WAG round-up

## Here's the latest from our local comrades in Whitechapel Anarchist Group.

Our election machine thunders on, our new Election Special paper is out – it's got colour and comes with a free match to burn your ballot with, and it's sooo good that even the great *Freedom* will be copying us and having an election special.

We're tearing into action at the moment, getting ready for the poll tax rally, Mayday planning, our public meeting (29th April at the London Action Resource Centre) and organising a rally in Altab Ali Park on 2nd May in honour of Altab Ali who was murdered by the NF forty years ago.

But we've planned ahead. After the election we're gonna be a bit bored of the old shouting, egging, smashing, chopping off the limbs of potential MPs, etc., so we're going to be striking a blow for fun. First were going to be having a summer day trip down to Margate and then on Sunday 15th August we will be seeing the return of the Spitalfields Fair. Expect classics such as the five-a-side football (maybe this year WAG won't be out in the first round), tug-of-war (with a real rope this time) and a stage for various acts (yes we're going to have real entertainment instead of just podgy people wrestling). We're reclaiming the old

traditions of the East End, seizing the space for a day and putting on a fun family event for the community to get involved in. We're in the early stages of planning but if you fancy getting involved or want to perform please email us.

But for now we're on the streets. A few weeks ago a couple of people with spray cans went around subverting the now infamous Cameron posters. As a result the entire Tory election campaign has shifted in emphasis. A few anarchists around the country managed to change our next government's election strategy – imagine what a few hundred of us could do. At the very least every reader of this paper could get on the streets and get active handing out the *Freedom* election special. This election, get active or fuck off.

Gawain Wanker Williams  
Whitechapel Anarchist Group

The editors write: Comrades concerned by the swearing in recent editions of this august journal by the author of this article will be pleased to know that the editors have now spoken to Citizen William's mother and, to quote her, "If you have to swear you've already lost the argument", so we trust no further outrages will occur. For a more in-depth and unbiased view of the role and impact of expletives in anarchist propaganda, may we suggest purchasing a copy of 'Peaceful and Constructive Dialogue with the Well To Do' (aka *Bash the Rich*) by Ian Bone, available in the Freedom Bookshop for a mere £9.99 or post free upon receipt of your address and a cheque payable to 'Freedom Press'.



## INTERNATIONAL

### IN BRIEF

**CUBA:** The government has been accused of suppressing dissent after police forcibly broke up a protest by the 'ladies in white', relatives of a group of prisoners in the country categorised as political prisoners by Amnesty International, on 17th March. The prisoners were first detained in 2003 after a major crackdown on dissenters within the Republic.

**INDIA:** At least 43 workers in New Delhi have been killed at building venues for the upcoming Commonwealth Games due to dangerous work sites and a lack of proper safety gear.

**IRELAND:** The Workers Solidarity Movement has called for a return to public sector strike action this spring, arguing the impact of the unions' current work to rule strategy is having a minimal impact. Up to 300,000 public service workers have had their pay cut by an average of 16% over the last 12 months.

**POLAND:** Tenants groups in Warsaw took direct action at the city's council on 19th March and forced lawmakers to devote a session to the issue of housing. The debate dealt specifically with the issue of how council housing is run, with demands being made that they hand over supervision of public housing to tenants.

**SAUDI ARABIA:** A television presenter from Lebanon is facing execution for 'sorcery' if his final appeal fails, after he was arrested for presenting a programme in which he gave people advice and predictions for the future. The court argued his execution would deter 'foreign magicians' which it said were operating in the region.

**SPAIN:** The syndicalist CGT union has called on the Mexican government to "repudiate its threats against Zapatista friendly bases" and is inviting other groups to join its stance. The region has come under increasing pressure from military and paramilitary forces as the government attempts to circumvent the negotiated peace in the region. See [aninfos.ca/en/ainfos23728.html](http://aninfos.ca/en/ainfos23728.html)

**TURKEY:** The state has announced it intends to forcibly remove over 100,000 Armenian workers from the country who are not registered with state authorities. Left-wing groups in the country are comparing the move to the government's actions in the First World War, when Armenians were rounded up and killed or removed en masse, with their assets stolen by the state.

**WEST BANK:** After months of demonstrations and clashes between protesters against the separation fence in Bil'in and Na'alim, the Israel Defence Force have designated them closed military areas. The clearance of the area by troops runs until 17th August, and follows the killings of 23 Palestinians including 12 minors.

### LENS CAP GREECE



Over 1,000 demonstrators turn out in the Dafni neighbourhood in Athens to commemorate the death of anarchist Labros Fumdas on 20th March. The 35-year-old was shot dead by police on March 10th. They claimed he was an "armed terrorist attempting to steal a car".

## Paedophile promoted by church

It has emerged that even as the Pope was writing a controversial letter apologising for the Catholic church's coverup of an Irish paedophile ring, the Vatican was in the process of promoting a Bologna priest who had been convicted of molesting children.

Don Andre Agostini was handed six years and 10 months in jail in 2008 for repeated attacks on children of between three and six years old by civil courts in Bologna.

However the priest has been transferred into the sanctuary of the Madonna San Luca, where he continues to receive full salary and have contact with young girls who visit the famous shrine.

The details of the affair which have leaked out have pointed to a major attempted coverup.

When an auxiliary bishop with the church and a teacher went to the senior local prelate about Agostini in 2005 they were allegedly told to "remember who pays your wages" and to "forget this meeting ever happened".

The Catholic church has been rocked by the emergence of a worldwide paedophile ring within the ranks of its clergy over the last few months, primarily in Ireland but also in Germany and South America.

A recent letter by the Pope which refused to condemn the internal workings of the Holy See has been roundly condemned by victims and their families, who say it offers little hope that serious measures will be taken to prevent further cases of child molestation.

## Notes from the United States

In March, 15 towns and cities in the American Midwest (specifically, in Kansas, Illinois, Indiana, Ohio, Missouri and Iowa) sued Syngenta, the manufacturer of a popular weedkiller, atrazine, over drinking water contamination.

The toxin and pollutant is commonly used in Midwestern cornfields. Atrazine has been banned within the European Union since 2004, but in the United States about 80 million pounds of the toxin is used each year. This action coincides with a recent study that found that the weed killer can turn male frogs into females.

Also in environmental news, Obama has been criticised by the The Center for Biological Diversity for adding only two species to the Endangered Species List. Rob Mrowka of the centre said: "To date, the Obama administration has not improved on the Bush administration's progress in providing protection to the nation's most endangered species."

Statistically Obama's yearly rate is less than 15% of that of Bush, who in his eight

# Mexico hits boiling point

## Diverse interests driving coalition of the left

Mexico may be facing an all-out conflict between workers at some of the country's largest companies and bosses who are using increasingly draconian and desperate measures to try and keep control or break the unions.

A national strike in the country which threatens to bring together forces across the country who are engaged in some of the most militant battles in South America was launched on 17th March under the banner 'It's them, or us'.

Actions took place in 25 states in support of combatants at the conflict-torn Central Light and Power company, Cananea copper mine and under-fire teachers' unions.

Activists said alongside solidarity work their aim was to pile pressure on the right-wing government to bring tax cuts, an emergency wage increase, universal health-care and the impeachment of President Calderon to the table.

Also demanded is the ending of privatisation in the oil, water, minerals and electricity industries, the freeing of political prisoners and new policies to respect the rights of indigenous peoples.

On the 17th 15,000 people marched to the offices of Secretary of Labour Reform Javier Lozano in Mexico City, demanding his resignation after it emerged that while the general populace has received pay rises of around 1% this year, the army and police have seen 115% and 40% pay rises respectively.



Critics say this reflects the increasing right-wing militarisation of the country and a failure of priorities as Mexico falls further into an economic crisis prompted by the falling away of US consumption in 2009.

Fears have been raised that with the international community beginning to make noises that Mexico risks becoming a 'failed state' the way is being paved for direct US intervention in the country.

The mass demonstration was accompanied by blockades of Mexico City's thoroughfares, with thousands more demonstrators bringing traffic to a halt on a lane leading to the Mexico-Puebla and in the TAPO.

Around 10,100 riot police were deployed in the city on the day and were heavily criticised for their tactics – with use of tear gas being so liberal that clouds of the toxic substance rolled over a kindergarten, affecting

180 toddlers of between four months and four years old.

In Oaxaca, the main thoroughfares were blocked and facilities at the state university occupied, while similar actions took place in Puerto Escondido. Actions also took place in Coahuila, Veracruz, Chiapas, Michoacan, Guerrero, Texcoco, Morelos, Chiapas and Nayarit, among other places.

Central Light and Power was unilaterally dissolved in October last year by the government, sparking nationwide protests over the sacking of 44,000 workers organised with the SME union.

Cananea, the giant copper mine which sparked the Mexican Revolution in 1909 when it went on a strike organised by the anarchist Ricardo Flores Magon, is facing armed government intervention in its own two-year dispute.

## Notes from the Unites States

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years added 62 species; Clinton added 522 in the same time span.

Speaking of a lack of improvement, cuts to public education have slipped by largely unnoticed until the start of 2010, when a slow but steady increase in opposition (and in organised protests) began.

Hundreds of thousands of students and teachers took part in a national day of action on March 4th to defend education. Much of the day's focus was on the state universities and colleges in California; here students face a 32% increase in tuition fees.

Thousands of students in that state staged a one-day strike and took part in rallies from San Diego to Sacramento, the state capital. Encouragingly, similar actions were held in at least 30 other states. But it was not without reprisals: some protesters were held in jail for several days. About 140 protesters, for example, were arrested in Oakland, California, for blocking traffic on Interstate Highways 880 and 980. Among those arrested were

journalists Brandon Jourdan and David Martinez; they were documenting the police beating protesters.

Also on the streets – this time in Washington, DC – thousands of people marched in a rally organised by the group Health Care for America Now. They met at a hotel which was hosting an event held for and by the health insurance industry's lobbyist front group, American Health Insurance Plans. Organisers delivered symbolic arrest warrants for top insurance executives and affirmed, "I do solemnly affirm to support and defend the Constitution of the United States against all enemies, foreign and domestic. Among these domestic enemies, I count big insurance companies."

Finally, in March the Spectrem Group reported that the number of US millionaires increased last year by 16% to 7.8 million. This jump came at the same time as a rising rate of unemployment and a flat rate in wages.

Louis Further

## Facebook scabs take on dockers

Striking stevedores in Helsinki, Finland, were astonished on 17th March to see a group of scabs arrive at the harbour – who, it turned out, had been recruited by activists on the social networking website Facebook.

Around 15 men, mainly students and 'young entrepreneurs' turned out to volunteer as strikebreakers against the AKT and POA unions, who have been on strike over job security, working times and subcontracting rules.

The group, which claimed a membership of 2,500 people against the strike, was launched by Aki Kakko, Juha Viitala, and Jari Ollila, who said they "felt anger at the unreasonable strike".

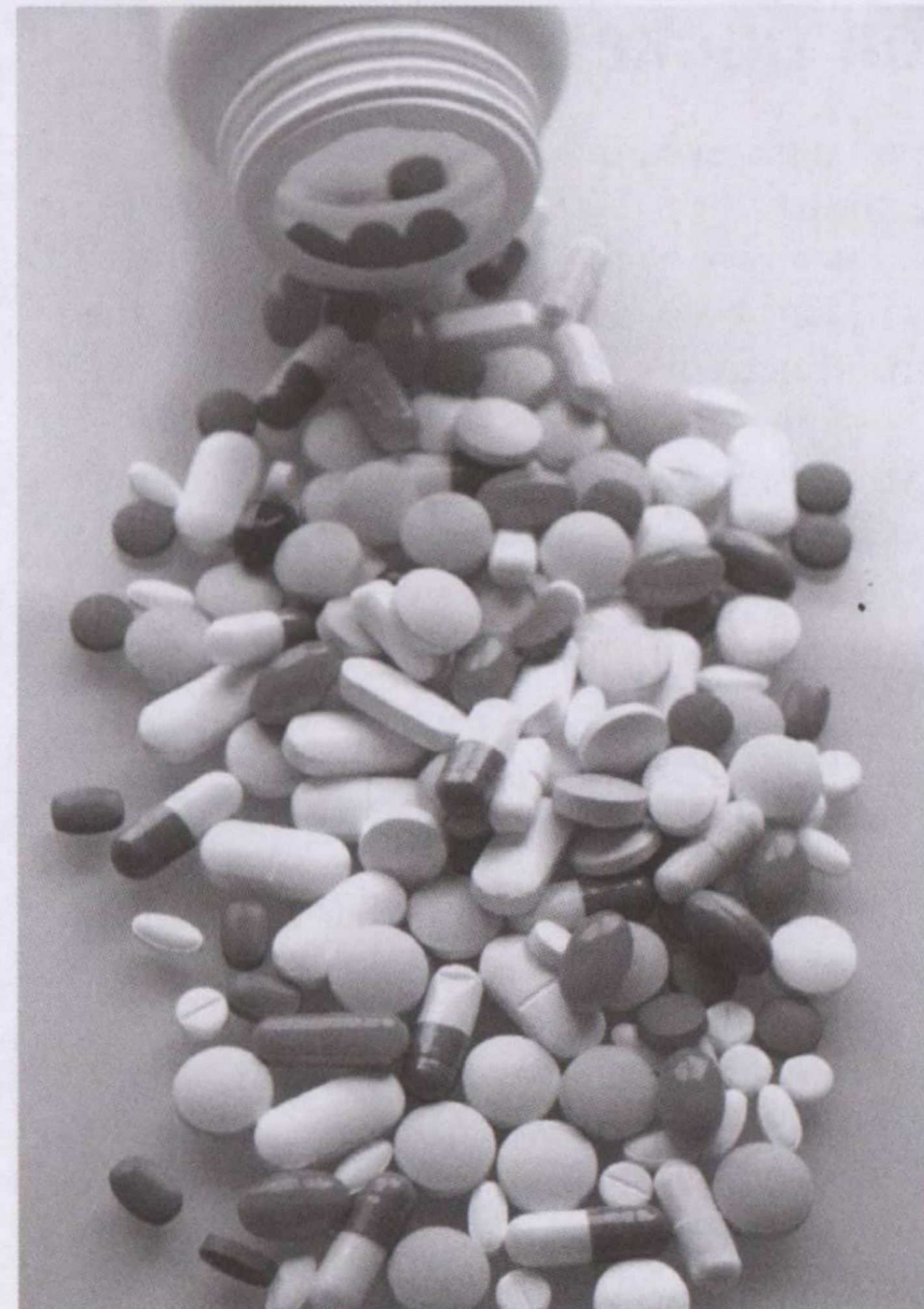
The strikers have been outraged by the entry of right-wing activists into the fray, and a scuffle broke out on 18th March at 8am as over 100 stevedores attempted to block around 20 scabs from clearing a 1,000 container backlog at the Vuosaari Harbour.

# Anarchism and the National Health Service

**An anarchist working in the NHS gives their view on the future of healthcare in Britain and what anarchists can do to bring about effective change**

Healthcare is an area that has a tendency to be largely overlooked in anarchist circles. Just as healthy individuals tend to think about their own health at times when they or someone close to them, are ill, outside of theoretical articles, healthcare tends to not be mentioned by activists in periods where overt struggle over the issue surfaces. Sadly this overt struggle normally takes the form of defensive actions against, for example, government cuts. It rarely is an escalation of the continuous existing covert struggle that occurs (as with all areas in a capitalist economy) between management and health workers or the people using health services and those who see them as a means of profit. Likewise, it is unusual (although not unheard of) for conflict in the healthcare to take the form of offensive action aimed at improving already existing health provision or the situation of health workers.

With this in mind, I aim to give a brief outline of the current situation of healthcare in this country. An article of this length will inevitably give massive omissions and is not intended to cover all areas or any area in particular detail. Instead it is an attempt to promote thought and discussion about healthcare and to encourage activists to think how to better understand currently occurring struggles and make positive interventions.



After all, the NHS is the world's fourth largest employer, only being beaten by the Chinese Army, Indian railways and, in the past five years, the US Army. Nursing is the most numerous working class occupation.

The RCN (Royal College of Nursing) has already realised the political potential of this, launching a campaign to point out that politicians should listen to nurses since having their vote could make the difference between being re-elected and spending more time with their ducks. Unfortunately, the RCN being a useless liberal institution has attempted to focus this campaign on pleading for politicians to take into account nurses opinions, rather than pointing out that the workers run the NHS and so should make all the decisions as opposed to politicians and over paid managers whose one aim is making money as opposed to providing healthcare.

Recent debates in Australia about the expansion of 'Medicare' and in the USA about increasing free healthcare show that there is neither the political will nor the ability to repeat such a model around the world. The best that can be hoped for, through capitalist democracy, is the expansion of already existing free healthcare options.

In the USA the mobilisation right wing politicians and the powerful lobby groups on behalf of pharmaceutical companies and medical equipment providers against Barack Obama's proposed reforms resulted in the NHS being described as 'Evil and Orwellian' by the lovely rational Sarah Palin and myths being spread about how universal healthcare would result in people not being cared for. Complete bollocks of course, but indicative of how healthcare is a major industry. Like any other industry it is based upon the pursuit of profit and the actual well being of the people it claims to be there for is secondary.

Within Britain, of course, healthcare provision is dominated by the NHS. The NHS arose out of a distinct set of circumstances which would probably never be repeated. Basically the Beveridge report (1942) outlined the idea of the welfare state and Bevin's appointed as Health secretary resulted in the formation of the NHS. The initial principles of the NHS were that healthcare would meet everyone's needs, be free at the point of delivery and be based upon clinical need and not ability. At first glance it can be argued to be a state socialist principle, being put into practice. While it is true that the majority of people who benefited from the establishment were the working class, it should be remembered that it was implemented as part of the labour party's attempts to rebuild Britain following the Second World War. Labour has never been a socialist party. What it did do was adopt vaguely socialist ideas and use this to rebuild post war Britain, in order to reinforce liberal democracy.

Yet it is indicative of the state of Britain that the initially the majority of funding went



towards treating untreated long-term illnesses that people had suffered with and were previously unable to afford to get treatment for. The idea of free healthcare became embedded in Britain and showed that a form of imperfect altruism was possible. No government since then has been able to repeal this, since the removal of free health care would be viewed as an obvious act of class war aimed at the most vulnerable people in society. In essence the NHS benefits the working class by providing healthcare which is free at the point of delivery. However it is not a revolutionary institution and was designed to support post-war capitalist society. Yet as the capitalist economy has moved forward, such concepts as national industry and the welfare state have been viewed as holding back the development of the economy and the free movement of capital.

Attempts have been made to chip away at the idea of universal healthcare. These attempts are partly motivated by the fact that pharmaceutical companies, makers of health equipment, etc., need a market in order to make profit. After all, unlike with wide screen television's and watching *Eastenders*, patients, doctors and nurses don't really care what the cardiac monitor is like, as long as it's showing a clear and accurate ECG trace. However a company who makes the over-priced monitors needs some kind of false market and competition, otherwise everyone would settle for the old working monitors and

not bother buying the over-priced ones. The same thing, of course, applies to incontinence pads, rubber gloves, ventilators, scalpels and so on. Research can provide newer improved versions of these, but the prime market is focused on what's best for people as opposed to the normal consumerist market of trying to get people to buy one of many essentially the same products. The answer of course was to introduce the market into the NHS.

The first steps towards this was the 1983 Griffiths report which introduced what was described as modern management instead of consensus management. The NHS has, of course, never come close to workers rule, but the introduction of general managers, who often had no health experience, marked a shift from the NHS being run according to the wishes of clinicians and instead saw it run by managers who were interested in controlling spending. This often resulted in cuts detrimental to patient care.

From here, Thatcher announced a review of the NHS and two white papers were published in 1988: *Working for Patients* and *Caring for Patients*. These basically outlined the creation of the internal market within the NHS. Combined with health cuts, they resulted in reduction of health services, variation in levels of patient care within the NHS and the attempts to make services throughout the country compete with each other. The 1990 National Health Service Community act defined this market and, in

essence, each health authority had to purchase care and plan their own budgets, being run like an independent business. This was great news for the health industry but of course often had dire effects for both the people attempting to receive health care and those attempting to provide it. It was obvious that the Tories were slowly moving towards privatising and abolishing the NHS.

'Dirty' hospitals are always in the news, but can be argued to be an effect of this reform. It made hospitals purchase private cleaning services and, more often than not, they would purchase from the cheapest contractor. This contractor was so cheap because they made cut-backs on staffing levels, training and pay for staff.

Blair came to power promising to abolish the internal market and to build the health service up. However, as with all promises from politicians, he went back on this. He soon argued that in order to modernise the NHS (whatever that means) he had to strengthen the internal market. Service standards, league tables and an increase in the involvement of the private sector (most notably the PPF eating away at public money) have all been markers of labours latest stint in power. In real terms, Labour continued the reforms started by Thatcher and put a nice smile on them. Because there is still the myth amongst the left that Labour in some way are the party of the working class or a bit nicer than the old Etonians of the Conservative

Party, opposition to these reforms has largely been silent and unseen.

So with such a situation what can be done to improve the healthcare provision we currently have? Worldwide anarchist revolution would be quite a nice start, but probably won't happen until at least 2011. In the meantime, we need to recognise that, while the NHS is not perfect, it is providing healthcare and any attacks on healthcare or attempts to base healthcare provision on profit not need, should be opposed.

So, here are five suggestions of actions anarchists could do in defence of healthcare and to try and make existing healthcare provision more in line with what the community needs.

- Long boring marches with Labour MPs and trade unionists giving lectures on defending the NHS change nothing. However grassroots campaigns to save services *do* help. The continued existence of Guy's Hospital and Great Ormond Street are examples of this. If there is such a campaign in your area, get involved. If, due to the market, they are trying to cut health services in your area, why not start such a campaign. This sounds obvious, but such campaigns rarely have many political minded people in them since they are all busy doing other 'more worthy' activities.
- Often, especially at election times, MPs like to visit hospitals. Why not turn up and oppose them. Point out how they've fucked health workers with pay and taken decisions that are to the detriment of the local community. Spoil what they see as an easy photo opportunity (health workers themselves often can't do this without facing disciplinary action with absolutely no support from their unions).
- Talk with people about health care. Discuss pharmaceutical company's role in the world with others. Or how the so called internal market benefits no one but the rich and powerful. If you're waiting at a doctors for ages, why not get a discussion going in the waiting room?
- In the same vein, try complaining. If your local surgery is cutting back hours, complain as much as possible. Most such changes are meant to be done with consultation. Normally they ignore this, but people complaining can form the beginnings of campaigns to stop this.
- Always support health workers. Whether it is in a pay dispute or they are opposing changes to how their work area is managed. Offer solidarity, do solidarity actions and encourage them to ignore things such as all the unnecessary paper work (like ethnic monitoring forms). Why not even get them to record you have specifically refused to co-operate with such forms. That way there is nothing the managers can do against the health worker.



## COMMENT

## ABOUT FREEDOM

## ANGEL ALLEY

This issue we can report on the dramatic 'anarchists blow a fuse' saga. While carrying out vital improvements to the toilet light, the building's ancient regime wiring once again inflicted a setback on the path of prolaterian progress by blacking out the shop for a day and a half. Apologies to those unable to find what they wanted in the dark and thanks to Nic for fixing the problem and to those who joined us in the White Hart while repairs were conducted.

Corrections and cock-ups: Due to the savage demands placed on the Stakhanovite toilers at *Freedom*, the occasional minor error may appear in these pages. Here's what's been pointed out to us since we last fessed up. Issue 7105 was incorrectly labelled 7104, but we did change the date to 13th March. Sincere apologies to Jock Palfreeman who is imprisoned in Bulgaria, not Bulgarian as we put in last week's letters page.

Market research: As to the owl in issue 7104, we've have had two guesses so far, 'Eagle Owl' and 'Brown Fish Owl'. These are both close but we will wait for the next issue to announce the winner. You can still have a go on 07913 865 928, but meanwhile we're putting the textline to more serious purpose. We're hoping to act as compilers of a 12-page 'anarchist election special' debunking the professional parties and advocating anarchist alternatives. To this end we'll be seeking out contributors from across the movement. But first to gauge potential demand for a project we'd like your help in some market research. If you'd be interested in distributing such a publication during the election campaign – we're assuming it'll be 6th May – just text us a number of how many you think you or your group could give away/sell at 50p a go, e.g 50/10 if you reckon you could sell 10 or give away 50. Thanks.

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## NEXT ISSUE

The next issue will be dated 10th April 2010 and the last day to get copy to us for that issue will be Thursday 1st April. 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

A few days ago, a comrade came to stay while speaking at some meetings locally. It's always good to have the chance to talk to someone about their own experiences. He'd been politicised in the early 1970s and had been a shop steward in an active, militant workplace. I came in on the tail end of this in the latter part of the '80s, when we only had more defeat to look forward to.

So it is quite a shock for me to see the cabin crew at British Airways pilloried in the media as a throwback to the 1970s. This particular dispute is getting more bile than even the RMT can boast, but a few things stand out. Firstly, public opinion doesn't win industrial disputes. Allowing for statistical bias, the ambulance drivers in 1989–90 had 100% support. They still lost. The results of the BA strike will probably be known by the time this is published. In this country, workers have virtually no rights and the courts are blatantly biased against them. Unlike baggage handlers or pilots, cabin crew have no history of militancy – yet here they are about to go on strike, despite a relentless media campaign against them and warnings that they will bankrupt the company. They must be really annoyed about something. Their two strike ballots have had margins in favour of action of 93% and 81%, on high turnouts. The anti-union commentators seem to be blissfully unaware of how it is nearly impossible to have a legal strike in this country – and since the first strike ballot was thrown out by the courts in another precedent-setting anti-union ruling – it's getting harder.

It may get harder still – the usual foaming at the mouth commentators are saying that strikes should not be allowed, at least not in essential industries. And yes, some of them really think an airline is an essential industry.

Boris Johnson is hoping that a future Tory government will allow him to have a no-strike clause on the Tube, which would guarantee that Tube workers pay and conditions could be attacked.

In 1973, the share of Britain's gross domestic product paid out in wages was 65%. Today it is 53%. Some of this is circumstance – most of the manufactured goods we have now are made in countries where industrial action is met with the bullet or cosh. But there are still big profits to be made here – and this has been the big change since the 1970s. It's no accident that the markets have reacted positively to BA's union-busting management by lifting its share price.

Throughout Britain, there are campaigns against the over-powerful business sector – supermarkets, property developers, airports, the press. There are also campaigns against specific elements of them, such as demanding they use fair trade ingredients or stop using sweatshop labour. These are all perfectly good, as far as they go, but none address the underlying problem – the profit motive and the fact that we have to work for a living.

When the summit protests happened I don't think many involved really thought that a consistently anti-capitalist approach involved fighting the police and smashing MacDonalds' windows. The essence of capitalism is that it demands a return on the capital invested. The most obvious way to attack it, then, must surely be to increase the share of what is produced to other factors in production. Like wages.

Changing things requires organisation, forethought and commitment. It may be difficult but we have to start somewhere.



## LETTERS

## Remembering Colin Ward

While we were working at Friends of the Earth, my brother Jonathan tipped me off about an anarchist ex-architect and teacher who had just visited the Covent Garden office. It was Colin Ward, co-editor of the new *Bulletin of Environmental Education* (*BEE*) with Tony Fyson, a former town-planner.

My first meeting with him was at the education office of the Town & Country Planning Association in 1971. We discussed collaboration and some common ground. Both of us had lived in the same neighbourhood of Fulham, attended the early CND demonstrations and marches, read the infamous 'Spies for Peace' document and studied town planning and architecture. It baffled me that he knew of all the schools I ever attended. He also knew my current head of department at the Polytechnic of Central London, Professor Thom Blair. Who and what did he not know, I wondered.

I mentioned to Colin something about Jacqueline Palmer who taught out-of-school environmental education in London during the post-war period. He knew of her as well and asked me to write about her work for *BEE* ('Jackie's Kids') and to contribute my regular environmental fact sheets. His general approach with *BEE* was appreciated in the world of education because it dealt with the sensory impact of the urban environment, particularly on children (see *The Child in the City*, 1978).

Before editing *BEE*, Colin worked as editor of the monthly magazine *Anarchy*, which he also founded. This will be remembered as one of his most worthwhile projects – each of which received about 10 years of his life's work. Previous to that he edited *Freedom* newspaper from 1947–1960. Just two years before that *Freedom* made the error of refusing George Orwell's offer of *Animal Farm – a Fairy Tale* but with *Anarchy* they got it right. It became a quality publication.

An editorial policy he adopted for *BEE* was learned from both these anarchist publications – it was to accept contributed articles rather than commissioned ones because this led to better writing and eliminated the hacks. This may explain why *Anarchy* was so original. Allotments, anarcho-syndicalism, Kronstadt, McLuhanism, prisons, race, squatting – the articles were broad ranging for the time and not abstract. It was also a convenient size for reading on public transport and had some striking cover designs and good typography. I for one used to enjoy going to Angel Alley to get a copy of *Anarchy* on my way home from school through the grim East End of London. If it were too foggy it was easy to miss the turn for the Alley, but Colin's personal radar that honed in on books, typewriters, ink and printing presses saved him from such a fate.

*Anarchy* was not linked to any party, group or movement or compromised by the demands of advertisers and bean counters. It was generously bank-rolled by Vernon Richards

however. This provided the freedom that is necessary in order to be original. From 1961–1970, Colin managed to attract articles from Naom Chomsky, Michael Duane, Charlie Gillett, Paul Goodman, Lewis Herber (Murray Bookchin), Charlie Radcliff, Herbert Read, Vernon Richards and Nicolas Walter. It needs to be said that Lewis Herber never acknowledged his great 'debt' to the 'Contemporary Issues' group (the 4th International), and others, in his articles for *Anarchy*.

There was a bigger picture to the timing of Colin's departure from *Anarchy*. The Movement of Occupations in 1968 created a seismic wave. Organisations and publications came to a crossroad after the Situationists' modern critique became so well known through its practice. The 'Contemporary Issues' project folded and the short-lived 'Confrontation' sprang up. With *Anarchy* things just seemed to fizzle out. The articles from this time make little reference to the events throughout Europe, even in 1968, although the story around the pamphlet *On the Poverty of Student Life* was covered. Colin did not embrace the SI but admired their perspective on cities and he seemed oblivious of the fact that they had attempted to reunite critical threads in the works of Bakunin and Marx.

My recollection is that he did not make reference to deep theoretical critiques of capitalist society or refer to them in his writings, and he resolutely steered clear of Marx. This may have something to do with Colin's encounter with Emma Goldman, through whom he would have heard of Alexander Herzen and the watered down version of Marx in Engel's *The Dialectic of*

*Nature*. Colin was too much of a fan of Kropotkin's theories as well and it is unclear how the anarcho-pacifist in him reconciled his respect for the reluctant prince with the fact that he supported the cause of the First World War – an event that helped to open the door to Lenin and co. Regardless of that, Kropotkin's ideas and writings on geography and natural history influenced Colin, as did those of Patrick Geddes, Gustav Landauer and Lewis Mumford.

Whether this provided enough of a basis to advance or strengthen the critique of the modern capitalist society we inhabit is for people to decide, but for my part something was lacking. Colin did succeed in keeping many in touch with the historical relevance of anarchist and libertarian ideas, the residual body of theory and a life-affirmative world view. And let us not forget that Colin enthused people with intellectual curiosity and was a great advocate of non-directive out-of-school education.

For all this libertarians in spirit, but not in ideology, can acknowledge Colin Ward.

Nicolas Holliman

## Camp Bastion

The First Casualty of War is Truth. Because the British contingent is much smaller than politicians want to believe, maybe because of their own delusions of grandeur, the American camp Fort Bastion has been reported as a British camp called Camp Bastion using a picture from when the Americans flew the British flag on the day of a British funeral.

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## GETTING ACTIVE

### PRISON NEWS

#### Mexican prison deaths

Whilst the killings of a number of US consular staff and family members in the Mexican city of Ciudad Juarez have hit the headlines recently, we rarely hear about the massive numbers of drug-related deaths of the Mexican themselves. This is doubly true of the regular riots and associated deaths in Mexican prisons, where allegiance to the rival cartels splits prison populations in an even starker fashion than does gang affiliations in US jails.

Just four days before the Ciudad Juarez deaths, a shoot-out between members of the Mexicles and La Linea gangs in the Aquiles Serdan state penitentiary, 340km south of Juarez, left five prisoners dead (two from gunshot wounds) and 14 wounded. Both gangs are heavily involved in the war for control of the drug trade in Chihuahua's biggest city, Ciudad Juarez.

Three hundred heavily armed soldiers and police took several hours to retake control of the prison.

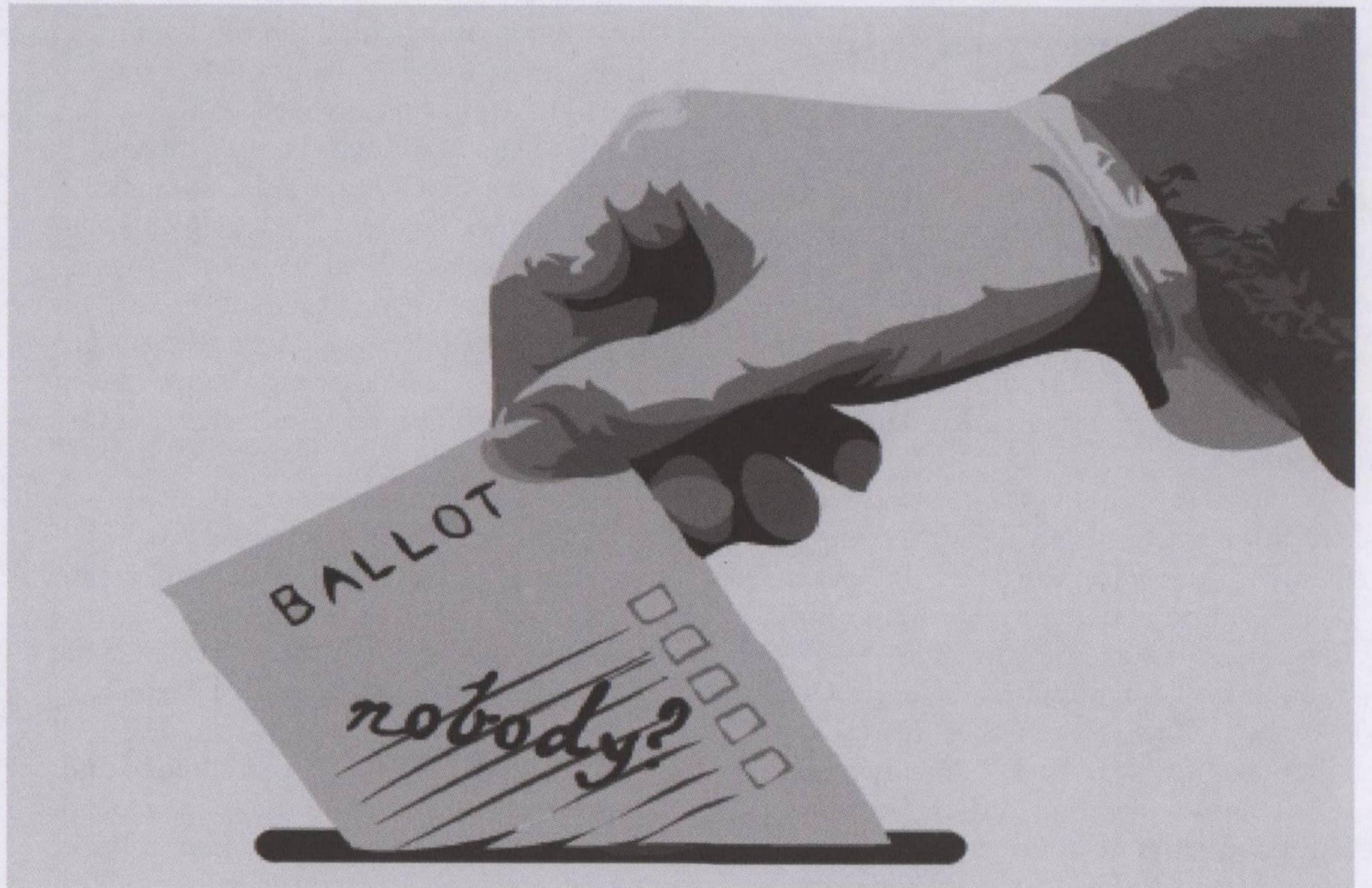
This is only the latest in a long line of prison drug-related riots, the most recent being the riot at the grossly over-crowded Gomez Palacio prison that left 23 dead in battles between Gulf and Sinaloa drug cartel members, also the scene of 19 riot-related deaths last August (see *Freedom* vol. 70, no. 16, 29th August 2009).

Meanwhile, 5000km to the south in Bogota, six prisoners and 42 others had been injured in two separate prison incidents the previous day. An attempted breakout by eight prisoners at a juvenile prison in the Venezuelan capital resulted in a riot, left three staff injured as prisoners fought them with sticks and stones. Further south the same day in Yare I prison, six prisoners were killed and 15 injured in another riot. Venezuela's prisons are the most violent in South America, with 366 violent deaths in 2009 and 422 in 2008, three times as many as in Mexican jails.

#### Breast is best

In the annals of truly bizarre assaults on prison guards, the use of breast milk as a weapon must top the list. We all know cops and screws consider their jobs to be highly stressful and that they are subject to the most outrageous dangers, witness the mass hospitalisations due to insect bites and exposure to the sun that resulted from the Kingsnorth protests. But being charged for squirting breast milk on the face and neck of a cop must really take the biscuit.

Arrested for 'misdemeanor public drunkenness' in Owensboro, Kentucky, Toni Tramel was obviously pissed off at being told to strip by the female arresting officer, Lula Brown, so she used the only weapon at hand to show her displeasure. The result, a third degree assault charge for use of a 'bio-hazard' weapon. Thus breast milk has joined the long list of other 'bio-hazards', such as spit, urine and faeces, routinely used against those that hold the handcuffs/keys.



● The **Bristol Radical History Group** has organised a range of events throughout the month in the run up to the general election. The programme, from 5th to 25th April, includes public lectures, debates, history walks and musical evenings, all connected to the history of struggle for democracy in Britain covering such topics as the chartists, suffragettes and internet activism. There will even be an appearance from anarchist heavyweight and ex-Class War founder Ian Bone on his experiences of contemporary interventions into the electoral process. See their website for the full calendar of events at <http://www.brh.org.uk/election2010/index.html>

● Yorkshire comrades are busy putting the final touches in what promises to be another excellent day out in the form of the **Bradford Anarchist Bookfair**. To be held in the legendary 1in12 Club, featuring a multitude of stalls covering all aspects of anarchist and radical thought and action, including workshops, discussions and lively debate. The bookfair will be on Saturday 10th April from 10am until 4pm, at the 1in12 Club, 21-23 Albion Street, Bradford, West Yorkshire, BD1 2LY, contact [sam@samjackson6.orangehome.co.uk](mailto:sam@samjackson6.orangehome.co.uk) for further details.

● Keeping it book and Yorkshire based, 22nd May has been pencilled in for the first ever **Sheffield Anarchist Bookfair**. They are still inviting groups to get involved. Rates for stalls are £10 for groups/campaigns and £20 for book stalls/distro's. Please contact them in good time to reserve your stall. They are also welcoming proposals for meetings/workshops from groups and individuals. Contact email [sheffield@bookfair.org.uk](mailto:sheffield@bookfair.org.uk)

● Leeds radical social centre The Common Place is hosting a weekend of discussions on the 17th and 18th April under the heading **Social Centres in the Time of Crisis**. It asks the question: How can a new generation of social centres learn from the successes and failures of established ones? Open to all

with an interest in radical autonomous social centres Food will be on offer during both days and there will be entertainment provided.

For details email [socialcentres@googlemail.com](mailto:socialcentres@googlemail.com)

● A round-up of the latest issues of local radical news-sheets available now on the streets:

• Issue five of East London's free working class news-sheet *The East End Howler* has six pages packed with articles and information relevant to the people of East London.

Produced by Action East End, it features a neatly argued article on the 2012 Olympics including an interview with tenants on an estate affected by the games, as well as a campaign to save the local market and those resisting gentrification. <http://actioneastend.blogspot.com/2010/03/howler-issue-5-out-now.html>

• In true tabloid fashion the latest newsletter from the *Whitechapel Anarchist Group* has a free giveaway gift – a match with which to burn you ballot paper! This election special covers all the issues that will be at the forefront of debate during the general election – from housing to immigration, unemployment to the police – in its usual robust and unapologetic style.

<http://whitechapelanarchistgroup.wordpress.com/>

• Longstanding local freesheet *The Bath Bomb* continues to keep the people of the south east entertained and informed in its own inimitable way. Frank, intelligent and easy to read *The Bath Bomb* is everything a radical news-sheet should be, including articles on public sector cuts, Black cat social centre and the goings on in Greece. Long may it continue to agitate.

<http://thebathbomb.blogspot.com/>

• Still getting excited about minor, unfashionable causes like freedom, justice and nature Worthing's the *Pork-bolter* (apparently an obscure nickname for Worthing people dating back to the fishing village days) continues to tell it like it is – an independent newsletter produced by and for the ordinary residents of Worthing

<http://www.eco-action.org/porkbolter/index.html>

# The Poll Tax Riot remembered

Saturday 31st March 1990 was chosen as the big national demonstration against the poll tax. Over 250,000 from across the UK were to protest in London against the imposition of hated tax. The community charge (nicknamed the poll tax after the 1831 tax that provoked the peasant's revolt) was introduced in Scotland a year previously and met with universal resistance from the start.

The day began with thousands of people descending on Trafalgar Square and ended with the biggest riot the capital had seen in living memory, the poll tax in tatters and the beginning of the end of Margaret Thatcher's reign. Below is a personal eye witness account of the day.

## I saw things I'll never forget

The most important thing for me was the way people were prepared to face the riot police. I've never seen anything like it. It was incredible to see people running in to pull others out when they were being arrested (not that arrests were foremost in the pigs' minds – it was take no prisoners as far as they were concerned).

The next thing that sticks in my mind was seeing the ordinary pigs in full flight down Whitehall, and the roar of the crowd chasing them. For an hour or so it was class war on both sides rather than them constantly shitting on us! And they got more than they expected, I'm sure.

During the earlier part of the day, the animosity shown to the pigs by some marchers was uplifting, coppers being spat at and abused, etc., instead of the usual quiet acceptance of their authority it was brilliant, and when they tried to arrest people they were shown how we can beat them when we try.

When we were stopped in Whitehall, after the 'sit down' or the 'attack on Downing Street', neither of which were known to me at the time because of misinformation from the stewards, I amused myself by talking to some of the cops who were obviously shaken and nervous, some of them looked like they hadn't a clue why they were there and their



white faces looked more worried every time a copper was carried past them. Then the provocation started, the horses pushed us up the road, a few coppers found that this wasn't an ideal tactic if they intended staying healthy.

The rest of the afternoon passed so quickly, repeated charges and counter charges. It felt so good to be a part of the eruption of anger that had been bottled up, by the people involved, for so long. All sorts of ideas went through my mind. thoughts of Ireland, East Europe, South Africa, Orgreave, etc., thinking about how it will have to be like this more often if we are to get anywhere positive.

When I eventually got into the Square, it was incredible to see the people on the scaffolding. I remember trying to collect my thoughts and concentrate on how I felt, in order to remember it.

The noise was brilliant; the bravery of people on my side was enough to convince me that we are not so helpless after all. I was expecting tear-gas at any time by now and also thinking about what would happen if we had to face plastic bullets or grapeshot.

I don't believe that people need to justify ever attacking coppers and I want to avoid saying that the events were purely self-defence, a lot of it was, but we don't need any more excuses for fighting back, we've got enough already, we've always had. It's important though not to get carried away with the events of the day, they pale into insignificance when put alongside the amount of work we still need to put into the anti-poll tax campaign and everything else if we are going to change this shit world for a better one. The real battle is a political one, and that includes beating the left scum (preferably with a big stick), all of whom have tried to make political gain out of the 'riot', none of them have any concept of people being able to act without leadership even when they see it for themselves. From Militant to Workers Power, they all repeat the words of the tabloids and talk of 'troublemakers'.

As I had to get my bus at 5pm, I left the Square before the fire. By this time I'd lost my friends or I might have stayed. As our bus was leaving, though, we saw the smoke and joked about it, not knowing that it really *was* coming from Trafalgar Square. We had a good laugh when we passed the cop car with no window in the driver's side.

I was surprised to see all the scapegoating of Class War and all the talk of anarchists, but not too worried by it – we cleaned up the house just in case.

It's interesting that Trafalgar Square has been the scene of battles of the class war many times in the past 200 years, but after the scapegoating (usually of 'anarchists') – it is quickly wiped out of the history books to hide the tradition that is definitely there. My overriding feeling on the day is pride, I'm proud of the people involved and I'm proud of my own actions. I saw things that I'll never forget, and that were brilliant.



## REVIEWS

## WHAT'S ON

## MARCH

27th Community Action Gathering 2010 from 11am until 5pm at the Sumac Centre, 245 Gladstone Street, Nottingham NG7 6HX, email [communityactionnetworkuk@googlegmail.com](mailto:communityactionnetworkuk@googlegmail.com) or for updates see <http://communityactionnetwork.wordpress.com/>

27th Campaign Against the Arms Trade, your chance to meet supporters of CAAT and get involved, meet 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/)

30th People's Court at Southwark Crown Court, where three Labour MPs and a Tory lord will be on trial, assemble outside Southwark Crown Court, 1 English Grounds, London SE1 2HU between 10am and 5pm, see [meltdown.uk.net](http://meltdown.uk.net) for details.  
31st Rioters Re-united, to commemorate the 20th anniversary of the poll tax riot, meet at 3pm at Trafalgar Square, London, open loudhailer, top speakers, Class War, misty-eyed memories, pub afterwards.

## APRIL

1st Remember Ian Tomlinson, one year on and still no justice – join the Tomlinson family in laying flowers at the spot where Ian died at Cornhill by Threadneedle Street, London, arrive at 10.45 to observe a minute's silence at 11am.

1st to 4th Fossil Fools weekend gathering at Huntington Lane near Telford, Shropshire, at the proposed open cast mining site, see <http://wmclimateaction.wordpress.com>  
3rd Protest against EDL march, meet from 11am at Market Place, Dudley, see [facebook.com/group.php?gid=261360796387&ref=mf](http://facebook.com/group.php?gid=261360796387&ref=mf) for details.

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) for details or call 020 7281 0297 or email [rhiannon@caat.org.uk](mailto:rhiannon@caat.org.uk)

## MAY

1st Mayday Meltdown, meet at 1pm and 2pm at various points around central London, see [http://meltdown.uk.net/election/The\\_Plan\\_Mayday.html](http://meltdown.uk.net/election/The_Plan_Mayday.html) for details.

## BOOK

**Ghost Dancers: The Last Generation of Miners**

by David John Douglass, Christie Books, £12.95

This is the final volume in Dave Douglass's mining trilogy, *Stardust and Coaldust*, published to coincide with the 25th anniversary of the end of the miners' strike. A first-person, insider's view of, probably, the last generation of miners and their union. Following on Cameron's description of "a broken Britain" this book comes close to describing who broke it and how.

The definitive history of the great coal strike of 1984–85 and the background to it, this book explodes all the prevailing myths around that epic period, and corrects the inaccuracies in dozens of books previously penned by academics and journalists. Written by a participant at the sharp end of that struggle, it uniquely deals with the post-strike period, which hitherto no other writer has attempted to describe, nor any commentator understood. It portrays the efforts of the miners to stay in the ring and stay on their feet, in the run-up to the John Major assault in 1992–93 and the last stand of the miners as a social force.

The book reveals the harsh internal relations within the National Union of Mineworkers in the post-strike years, set against a back-

drop and commentary on other world and domestic events like the Poll Tax, the Gulf War, and the Good Friday Agreement. Inevitably, it addresses the role of Arthur Scargill both during and after the strike – which in the author's view displays two distinct and conflicting aspects of his leadership. However, Dave shows how the central role in both periods was that played by the miners themselves organised in their Union. Dave has not sought to exclude those smaller, more personal aspects that intersect this trajectory and link the personal to the political, the major to the minor. Though it is not written in the style or with the pretensions of academic neutrality, this book will be an essential reference for any serious academic study in the future.

The title of this work, *Ghost Dancers*, is inspired by the last stand of the Native American Indians in their efforts to retain their culture and dignity, and by the Durham Miners' Gala as a mining equivalent of that same endeavour. The book records the last stand of the last generation of pitmen and their communities.

*Ghost Dancers* can be ordered from Freedom for £12.95 (post free), cheques payable to Freedom Press. There will be an event at the Freedom Bookshop with readings by Dave Douglass on Saturday 17th April at 6pm.



## QUIZ ANSWERS

1. For science writer, Simon Singh, an expensive libel trial. He said there was "not a jot of evidence" to support the British Chiropractic Association's claims that they could cure colic, ear infection and other childhood diseases. The BCA is suing him for libel, but their brief admitted that if he had written "no reliable evidence" the suit would not have happened.
2. Kropotkin. It's an essay assessing how relevant his *Mutual Aid: A Factor of Evolution* continues to be.
3. 'From the Paris Commune to the Kronstadt Rebellion', by anarchist poet Kenneth Rexroth. It detailed the hypocrisy of Trotsky and other Bolsheviks for denouncing the slaughter of the Paris Commune, on its fiftieth anniversary, the day after they'd slaughtered the last defenders of Kronstadt.
4. Those of Japanese ancestry; they were interned in camps and had their possessions taken from them.

# An honest con

The powerful contemporary spin on the conventions of crime films and prison dramas gives this film resonance well beyond those limited horizons, argues Tom Jennings

French director Jacques Audiard has developed a distinctive focus on the ambivalent motivations of male characters trapped in cycles of deceit, violence and all-round moral turpitude – from *A Self-Made Hero's* (1996) fake Resistance hero, through *Read My Lips'* (2001) petty criminal aiding a downtrodden office worker's revenge on her corrupt bosses, to a property scam thug in *The Beat That My Heart Skipped* (2005) seeking escape from mundane malevolence through classical musicianship. Now polishing a screenplay by Abdel Raouf Dafri – who also wrote Jean-Francois Richet's *Mesrine* (reviewed in *Freedom*, 26th September 2009) – this new film, *A Prophet*, represents the more audacious ambition to revise the grandiose gangster saga formulas of *The Godfather*, *Goodfellas* and *Scarface*. So, although the cinematic reference points remain classic Hollywood film noir melodrama – twisted through 1950s/60s French variations (by Dassin, Clouzot, Melville, et al) specifying rich social milieux rather than bloated tragic antimartyrs – *A Prophet* heralds Audiard's concept of a new prototype of criminality.

We begin with Malik El Djebena (Tahar Rahim) – an illiterate teenager of North African descent reared in state institutions – graduating from homeless delinquency to a six-stretch for assaulting a policeman (probably the 'his head attacked my truncheon' variety). With no friends, family, resources or knowledge – and, crucially, no malicious streak or particular axe to grind (beyond a short temper when messed with) – his sensible strategy to keep his head down, surviving day to day, collapses immediately. Refusing a mid-level gangster's sexual proposition, he is press-ganged into executing him by the rival Corsicans. This horrific initiation into the service of the jail's head mafioso, Cesar Luciani (Niels Arestrup), yields diligent adaptation to dogsbody status, despised as a 'dirty Arab' but increasingly relied on by his patrons. Assimilating the first, most brutal lesson – whose victim thereafter haunts his dreams – Malik starts to educate himself, in reading and writing but also the minutiae of power and domination in the shifting sands of influence and allegiance among cons and screws.

Gradually grasping the bigger picture of the dynamics of the drugs trade sustaining



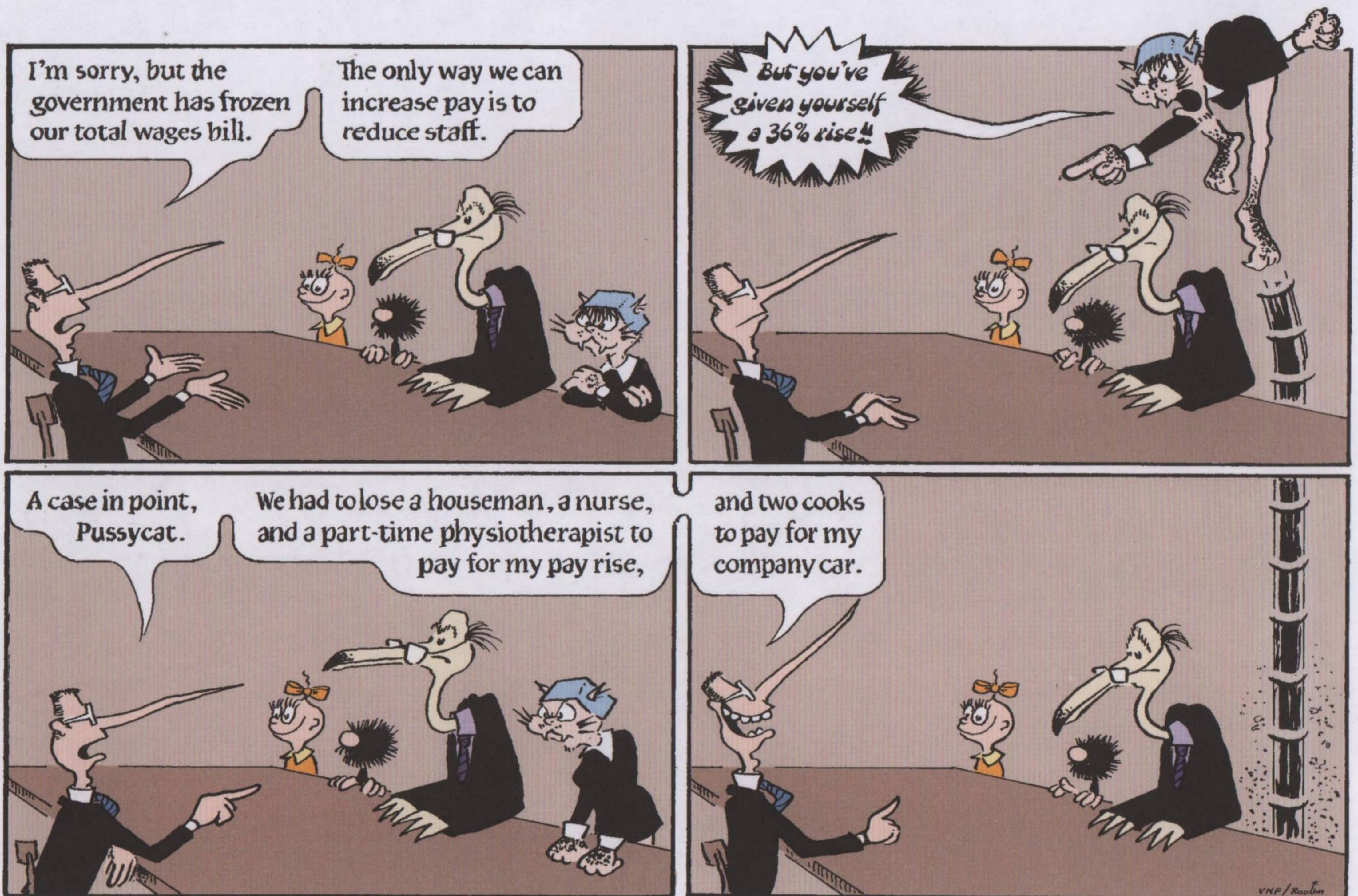
the illicit enterprise, Malik imperceptibly senses his own potential agency. Observing his friend Ryad's (Adel Bencherif) difficulties upon release encourages a perceptual shift from survival now to more long term. Then, entrusted with increasingly sensitive tasks during day release (supposedly, and ironically, for 'job-training'), he realises that the traditional fixed hierarchies and protocols of organised crime are crumbling in betrayal and acrimony – unable to adjust to social, economic and demographic change. Meanwhile his lack of fixed identity and ambiguous tribal affiliations, not to mention new skills of mediation and diplomacy, leave him well-placed to scheme and network in building his own little empire, both in jail and outside – where, it turns out, similar rules appear to apply. Moreover, though now capable of bypassing conscience to channel post-traumatic stress in strategic viciousness, he remains basically decent and honest – with, nonetheless, a pragmatic appreciation of a world that is decisively neither.

## A New World Oracle

Audiard's primary script-doctoring was to render Malik a virtual éblank slate' – surely inured during an abject upbringing to alienation from impersonal official authority, but certainly no cliché hardened malcontent predisposed to aggression. At a stroke, this sidesteps Hollywood's enduring default cod-psychology of criminality – individual character flaws magnifying into social psychosis – reinforced by casting a first-time actor with no star charisma to overdetermine character. Any disbelief in such innocence is then suspended by keeping the camera close, allowing viewers to encounter with his fresh, agonised eyes successive levels of humiliation and degradation – with focus and perspective

sharply narrowed to emphasise restricted fields of action and understanding. His rites of passage subsequently manifest through markers of identity ascribed by others – object of control and condescension for criminal justice and law enforcement, or contempt from the Corsicans as a Muslim – until apparently slavish compliance with their peremptory dominance gives room to manoeuvre, ultimately summoning positive capabilities they can't even recognise.

These structural and stylistic choices avoid conventional prison drama archetypes and stereotypes – the mawkish redemption of *The Shawshank Redemption* (1994) or *The Green Mile* (1999) being no more an option than the sociological naturalism of *Carandiru's* (2003) Brazilian hell-hole or the balancing of convict factions against trends in institutional policy in the American television series *Oz* (1997–2003). Likewise, the pretensions of mobster revisionisms like *The Sopranos* (1999–2007), *American Gangster* (2007) or *Gomorrah* (2008) – matching the evolutions of organised crime, modern capitalism and class stratification – rather miss the point here. Audiard's more fundamental insight is how disciplinary power in our emerging 'carceral society' of surveillance and biocontrol shapes conduct – where the 'free' citizenry willingly submit to the enclosure of physical and imaginative space for the sake of illusory security. So Malik's learning from experience inside equips him admirably outside. He transcends the outmoded paternalism of the Corsicans – reliant on unearned privilege rooted in static ethnic and cultural heritage – whereas mobile resistance to prevailing discourses claiming to define him facilitates his entrepreneurial success while reproducing the structure of



## Review

◀ page 15

exploitation within which it thrives.

The film's most general allusion, then, is to any careers, respectable or outlaw, specialising in manipulation – including, say, in politics, commerce or management – which have historically remained the preserve of the enlightened middle-classes who instinctively believe in their 'enatural rights' in these fields. Audiard's general dictum that "Cinema for me only has meaning when it has a relationship with what I see on the street" led to this particular narrative vehicle but, perhaps predictably, the critics preferred misreadings in terms of orthodox liberal critiques of French prisons, or as some kind of exotic multicultural 'social issue' parable.

But *A Prophet's* blatantly cinematic construction and complete lack of documentary realism, not to mention its concentration on practical power relations and tactical alliances at the expense of any kind of essentialism, make the director's exasperated refusal of such positions entirely plausible. It seems that the intelligentsia have trouble stomaching a story in which those among the excluded sections of society are just as capable, given propitious circumstances, of mobilising higher cognitive capacities in their own interests – and without necessarily needing to dehumanise anyone else in the process.

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

*A Prophet* is due for release on DVD by Optimum at £19.99 on 7th June 2010.

## THE QUIZ

1. What is the difference between 'no reliable evidence' and 'not a jot of evidence'?
2. According to evolutionary biologist Steven Jay Gould, who was "no crackpot"?
3. The poem originally entitled 'March 18, 1871–1921' was later known as what? And what was it about?
4. Which American citizens were stripped of all their rights in 1942?

Answers on page 14

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

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