

FREEDOM

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BUSINESS AS USUAL

CON-DEMned to Tweedle-Dave and Tweedle-Dumb

As the two leading figures, looking almost indistinguishable from each other, walked out onto the lawn behind Number Ten Downing Street to cement their new coalition government and announce their future working plans together, both David Cameron and Nick Clegg looked at ease with their partnership in power acknowledging that there will be “difficult decisions” ahead and that “spending should bear the brunt of the burden in terms of cutting the deficit”. It was with this brief and outward show of unity that ushered in the new administration and will set alarm bells ringing across the country for the vast majority of working class people.

This is the first coalition government since Second World War and both leaders were determined to emphasise the need for “stability” and “strong government”. The objective was to ensure that despite no party achieving overall majority in the House of Commons, and thus unable to command their own political agenda, the business of government would not alter course – all parties had threatened massive cuts on public spending in attempt to balance the

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LENS CAP FIRST OF MANY?



Staff at the National Gallery, London walked out over low pay in the first strike of the Cameron/Clegg administration. Some 72 employees at the famous tourist attraction took industrial action and staged a two hour strike on Thursday 13th May to demand a London living wage of £7.60 an hour.

Photograph: National Gallery by Chetna

FIRST SHEFFIELD BOOKFAIR

The famous industrial steel town of Sheffield is hosting its first ever anarchist bookfair this weekend, Saturday 22nd May. Organised by the local anarchist movement under the banner of Sheffield Anarchist Book Fair collective, and held in the city centre’s popular Corporation night club, it is set to be a weekend of intense political activity with organisers promising “a great starting point into the ideas, activism, ethics, creativity and history of the contemporary anarchist movement, with publishers comix, zines, film, art, food and fun stuff” with groups such as Anarchist Federation, Solidarity Federation and Class War sharing space with the likes of Corporate Watch, Leeds Surrealist Group and No Borders.

As well as a huge array of literature on offer there are also talks and meetings on a range

of topics covering such issues as an activist guide to the web, communism from below and corporate complicity in the occupation of Palestine. There will also be a Yorkshire anarchist co-ordination meeting to “to discuss better co-ordination of the anarchist groups, federations, networks and individuals currently operating in the Yorkshire area”. As always with anarchists there is an after-bookfair social where the day’s events can be recounted over suitable refreshment along with some skilicious tunes and a few revolutionary anthems thrown in for good measure.

The organisers have been working hard to ensure that the day is a great success, both for the groups involved and people attending, preserving the city’s great radical traditions.

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NEWS

IN BRIEF

VOLCANO: As we write flights are once again being disrupted by the unpronounceable Eyjafjallajökull – see our ‘Crisis in the clouds’ article for more detail. However the worry for the future is that Eyjafjallajökull will set off the much bigger Katla volcano. Previous eruptions of Eyjafjallajökull have triggered a Katla eruption within the year, so we will wait and see what happens.

SEA ICE: One ‘benefit’ of a really big volcanic eruption will be to counter global warming by the ash blocking sunlight. Meanwhile the Arctic sea ice is shrinking fast. Of course it always shrinks at this time of year, reaching a minimum in September, but it is shrinking faster than usual.

As of the 15th May the total extent of sea ice was lower than the average between 1979 and 2008 by 44 Wales’s (see our last issue for the definition of the international scientific unit of area measurement – the Wales).

STORMS: Another of our environmental concerns is the potential increase in tropical storms due to global warming. To that end we will be closely monitoring the Atlantic Hurricane season that starts on 1st June.

Initial predictions based on ocean surface temperatures indicate that it will be more active than normal. You can find out more at the National Hurricane Centre website at nhc.noaa.gov/

AFGHANISTAN: Britain’s fourth Afghan War continues in spite of the election, volcanos or global warming.

Curiously, the last three started under Liberal Prime Ministers, while this one looks like it won’t end under a Lib-Con coalition.

Although casualties are not yet as heavy as previous incarnations: there were 969 dead in one day at the Battle of Maiwand in 1880, for instance, or even the Third Afghan War of 1919 where Britain suffered 1,251 combat deaths.

So far the war has cost 285 British dead, but this year is shaping up to be the most costly so far, and typically the fighting intensifies during the summer.

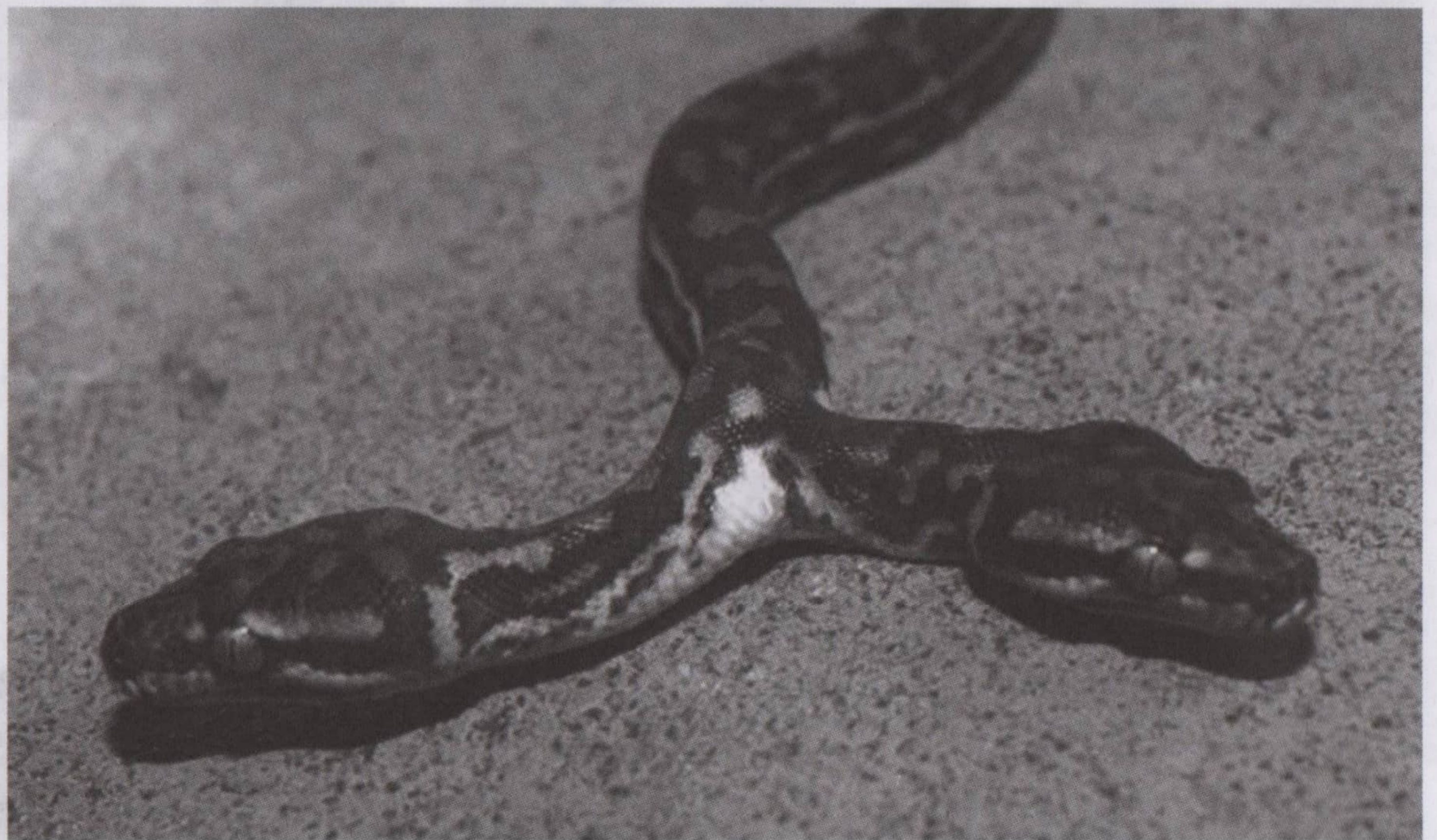
JOB: Jobcentres are giving unemployed young women the opportunity to earn £700 by advertising positions as nude performers on an adult website.

Applicants for the job, which is being advertised at Jobcentre Plus offices in Birmingham, Warwickshire and Shropshire, are told they must be willing to perform naked in front of a web camera in their home. They are also told they should be willing to engage callers in conversation and go along with any other activities they feel comfortable with.

According to the advertisement, positions are also available for men and couples.

The company behind the recruitment drive is an adult chat line company.

LENS CAP MISUNDERSTOOD ANIMALS NO 74: THE SNAKE



Millions of people a year are killed by politicians, a very dangerous species that should be made extinct as soon as can be. Unfortunately many innocent snakes are killed by mistake in the ongoing hunt for our political masters, so spot the difference. This snake is certainly two faced, crawls on its belly and is difficult to catch hold of, but is nowhere near as venomous as a politician.

A very expensive cop

The overtime bill for the police has reached an unprecedented £400 million as independent research reveals the true cost of keeping bobbies on the beat and criticises the current price we pay for the police. It also recommends a fundamental rethink in the role and purpose of the police.

The report by The Centre for Crime and Justice Studies (CCJS), the first independent study of police authority spending over the last decade, found that police expenditure grew in real terms from £9.83 billion in 1998/1999 to £14.55 billion in 2008/2009. Much of the burden of this rise fell on local council taxpayers, rather than the Home Office. It also revealed overtime payments have risen by a staggering 90% as police are using dishonest methods to boost their incomes.



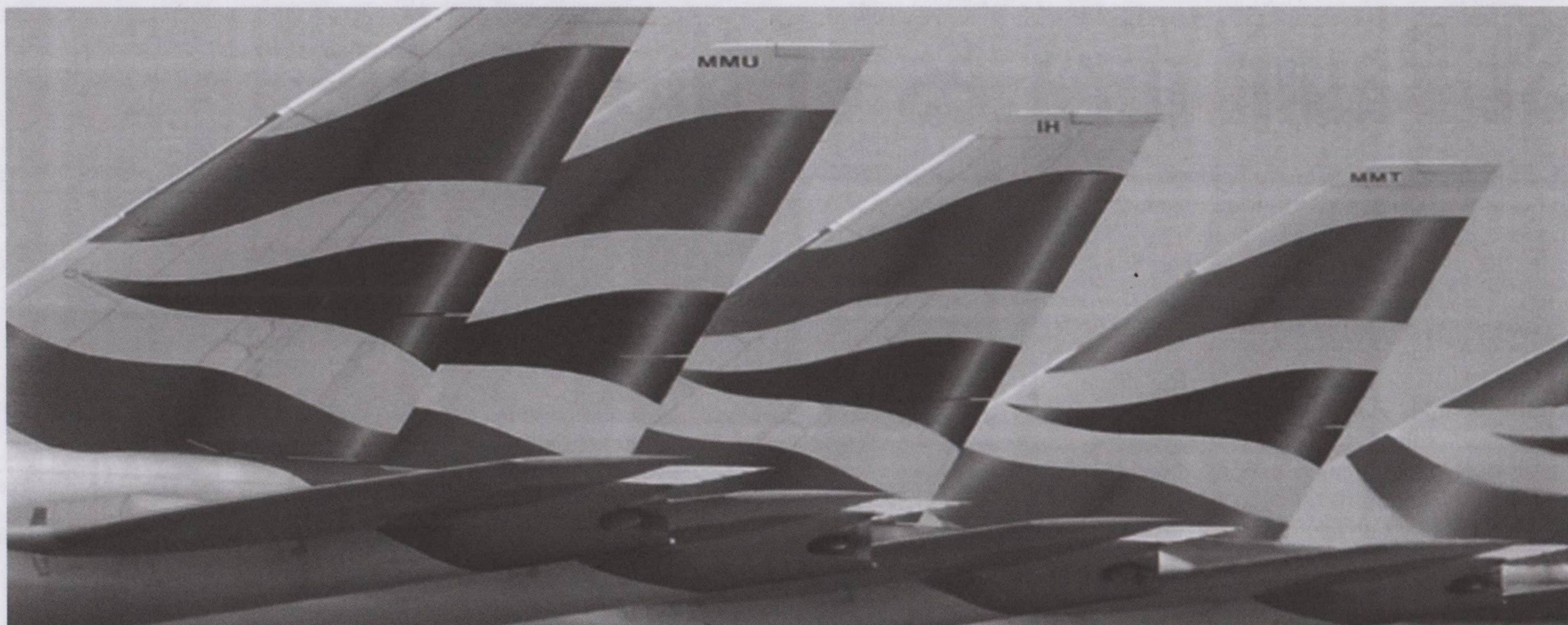
By far the major portion of the increased spending – just over three quarters – has been devoted to staffing expenditure, with rising numbers across the different staff sectors. Over the decade, the number of officers rose by more than 15,000 to 142,151 with more than 16,000 police community support officers being recruited. Despite this it “did not bring about the expected decline in overtime” the report noted.

One trick police use is to claim overtime of four hours at a rate of time-and-a-third for simply taking a call and making a decision after their shift has finished. Another practice is for officers to claim double time for working at short notice on their rest day. Unsurprisingly the highest overtime rates were in the Metropolitan Police where on average officers took home an extra £4,483 a year.

Richard Garside, director of CCJS said: “Spending has gone up by nearly a half but the value of this huge increase is much harder to pin down. We now have the largest police service ever. Yet there seems to be no clear rationale behind this incremental growth, nor a clear measure of its success.”

Despite threats by the Tories to introduce massive cuts in public spending they made no firm commitments to curb the runaway policing bill in their manifesto pledges. The policing cost for the G20 protests where demonstrators were attacked and injured by police was estimated at £7.5 million.

The report finished on a stark warning: “A new political debate about police numbers could become a sterile diversion unless there is a fundamental discussion about what the police are for, and what that means for the public purse.”



Crisis in the clouds

Update on the controversy caused by the volcanic ash clouds and the threats to the airline industry

As *Freedom* goes to press, another ash cloud from Eyjafjallajökull is drifting towards British airspace, shutting airports and provoking outrage from airline bosses. No matter how much money Sir Richard Branson is losing, or how loudly he complains that airport closures due to ash are “beyond a joke”, capital (or the lack thereof) can’t alter the laws of physics.

This new wave of airline groundings follow the emergency landings of two Ryanair jets bound for London on 9th May. Moments after both flights took off from Belfast City Airport an acrid odour filled the cabins, and the pilots opted to immediately return to the airport. Ryanair initially claimed the jets were afflicted with separate mechanical problems,

completely unrelated to volcanic ash. However, only 24 hours later the airline admitted that siliceous ash was found glued inside the engines. Despite the landings, Ryanair assures future passengers that there is “no risk and no cause for concern”.

This public concern for passengers is undermined by allegations that the airline illegally left people stranded during six days of airport closures in April, refusing to pay for lodging, food, or alternative transport.

In defence of the company’s actions, Ryanair CEO Michael O’Leary declared that “the laws weren’t designed for these circumstances”.

As the entire Eyjafjallajökull debacle demonstrates, laws are enforced only when they direct cash into the pockets of the rich, otherwise they cause “unnecessary damage to the UK economy”.

Richard Branson is not alone in his condemnation of airport closures. Troubled British Airlines’ 16th May statement that “airlines are best placed to take the final decisions on whether or not it is safe to fly” echoes the sentiment of an industry

desperate to preserve profit.

On 16th May, alongside cries from British Airlines and EasyJet for the UK Civil Aviation Authority to lower safety standards regarding volcanic ash, news broke that British Airlines expects a record annual loss of £600 million.

Eyjafjallajökull isn’t the only force grounding British Airways’ fleet. Cabin crew have balloted to walk out on 17th May in the first of four four-day strikes over jobs and working practices. The airline is petitioning the High Court to rule the strike illegal.

British Airlines exemplifies that air transport is an industry that has grown to unsustainable proportions in the current economic, social and environmental climate.

The complicity of corporate concerns and government regulation are apparent in the similar strategies deployed against worker unrest and impersonal atmospheric ash: reform the legal goalposts. Unite is adamant that workers will not be easily placated, and Eyjafjallajökull is indifferent to regulation.

Business as usual

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books. The subtext of which lies in the business and financial world being reassured that despite the differences in ideology the practice of safeguarding the growth of capital remains the priority both parties in power are committed to.

Ironically the move by Cameron, as the new Prime Minister, to invite Nick Clegg and the Lib-dems into the Cabinet allows the Tories a get-out clause – blaming the liberal intrusion if the economic crisis isn’t resolved by their expansive cuts in spending. Of the 22 key cabinet posts, five have been given to Lib-dem MPs, including Nick Clegg as Deputy Prime Minister.

What is perhaps more illuminating is the class background of those now charged with running the country. No less than 15 cabinet ministers went to Oxbridge, with 12 of the 22 being public school educated. There is also a distinct lack of women (just three) and no ethnic minorities involved in any of the top jobs.

But what has become clear over the past few weeks is attacks on the working class are to begin in earnest with both parties taking a hatchet to every aspect of social welfare in order to implement their agreed ‘austerity’ measures. Already Ian Duncan Smith as Work and Pensions minister is planning to punish

the poor and low paid by “eradicating tenancy for life in social housing” and slashing the benefit system which would see “all benefits streamlined into two”. The new health minister has acknowledged the NHS will need to make more savings than has been planned for and Treasury officials have targeted child benefit payments as part of the cuts. This comes after the Lib-dems agreed that spending cuts will start this year as part of an accelerated deficit reduction plan.

Whatever excuses political parties put up as a gesture of difference it is always us who will suffer as a consequence. These are harsh times ahead.

NEWS

St Pauli: pirates of the league

FC St Pauli, the football club beloved of radicals everywhere, is 100 years old this month. As part of the celebrations a collection of former players and other 'St Pauli All Stars' will be playing a friendly match against FC United of Manchester, The Red Rebels, and Republican's favourites Celtic. A St Pauli statement said: "This game will be the highlight of the unique friendship between the sides."

Although the centenary happily coincides with their elevation to the First Bundesliga, the club is more known for the quality of its supporters than the quality of its football, widely recognised for its unique culture. It is the quintessential 'Kult' team and has support that spans continents.

Located in Hamburg's traditionally working class dock area and close to the night life of the Reeperbahn, the Millentor stadium would attract a few hundred or so supporters as befitting a lower division team. Then everything changed.

During the 1980s an alternative squatting scene emerged in the area, notable for its radical political nature and consequent battles with the police. They also adopted St Pauli as their club and soon the ranks of the handful of dockers, prostitutes and other faithful were swelled with anarchists, punks, bikers, anti-fascists and other politicised groups from the scene. Not only did they embrace the club but went about changing it and, in a stroke of branding genius, adopted the now iconic Skull and Crossbones as their logo. A game became an event. A party.

A unique aura surrounds St Pauli... the games themselves have more of a party feel than a sporting event. As the team enters the field AC/DC's *Hells Bells* blares through the PA. The famous singing stand erupts. A home goal is celebrated with a few 'woo-hoos' to the sound of Blur's *Song 2!* Indeed many bands are keen to associate themselves with the Club, including Turbonegro, Sisters of



Mercy, Bad Religion and London's Asian Dub Foundation.

The club can boast some 20 million 'sympathisers' in Germany and about 200 registered fan clubs, many of them outside Germany. St Pauli has close links with many other foreign clubs, enjoying a particularly close friendship with Celtic.

But it is the political aspects of the 'Pirates of the League' that impress most. In an era of football hooliganism used by fascists for recruiting and galvanising, St Pauli became the first German team to ban right wing activity and presence in its stadium. The Club is staunchly progressive in anti-fascism, anti-racism anti-homophobia and anti-sexism. The club president Corny Littmann, long

active in German theatre and head of the Schmidt Theatre on the Reeperbahn, is openly gay. It has the most female supporters in Germany and famously banned a chauvinistic advert from *Maxim* magazine in the Millentor. This approach on occasion leads to violent confrontations against clubs with right wing ultra support, notably Hansa Rostock and Hamburg SV (who have a 'special relationship' with Glasgow Rangers.)

The fans have always been central to the nature of the club. Having a say in such things as the strip (camouflage one year), the official team photos (such as in front of Hamburg's Main Prison) and having a direct relationship with the players.

But as the club celebrates the coming year in the top flight things are changing in St Pauli. The once forsaken area is undergoing gentrification (well captured in the film *Empire St Pauli*, see www.empire-stpauli.de) as capital colonises and sterilises the culture. The Millentor itself is currently undergoing a total renovation (expanded seating, new amenities, etc.) which is expected to be completed in 2013 and cost around 30 million euros.

Will St Pauli, always struggling for cash (bailed out in the past by donations from the chairman's theatre-world connections, charity friendlies with major clubs and t-shirt appeals) be able to retain their integrity in the face of encroaching capitalism? Club legend Holger Stanislawski, who has been a player, sports director, vice-president and is now their coach, has told German newspapers that "St Pauli can't afford to be a social utopia anymore".

So if its 'social utopian' urge is neutered then what will be left of this unique and noble phenomenon? Certainly not it's football.



IN BRIEF

JAIL: Kendall Gibson has spent the past 10 years in the segregation unit at the Greensville Correctional Center in Virginia. Nothing strange about that in America, two of the Angola Three spent 30 years in segregation. The strange thing about his case is that he is there because he refuses to have his hair cut – he's a Rastafarian – and having hair longer than his collar and a beard falls foul of Virginia Department of Corrections Operating Procedure No. 864.1.

When the rule was brought in in 1999, 40 prisoners ended up in seg rather than visit the barber.

A federal lawsuit in 2003 failed and their number dwindled to 23.

The current number is unknown, though it's believed there are at least 10 Rastas, along with an unknown number of members of other religious groups such as Muslims, Sikhs and native Americans whose beliefs prohibit shaving or the cutting of hair.

About a dozen other Southern States also limit hair length with only a few making any concessions to these non-Christian religious groups.

MORE JAIL: The Massachusetts state legislature look set to vote on a bill that will allow county sheriffs to charge prisoners up to \$5 a day for board and lodgings, to charge inmates \$5 for any medical or dental visits and prescription glasses, and \$3 for prescription drugs.

If the prisoners are unable to pay whilst they are inside, they will have an outstanding bill that they will have to pay off once they are released. However, if they are not reconvicted within two years, then the bill will be waived permanently.

Bizarrely, this might result in it paying to be caught and convicted in counties where the charges have not yet been introduced. Though this may well be a temporary advantage as even the average dumb hick US lawman will eventually cotton on and bring the charges in to cut his local burgeoning crime wave.

AND EVEN MORE: If you are going to try and spring someone from jail then it's probably not a good idea to dress up in a Snoopy costume to do it – doesn't make you look any more threatening than you already are or make it any easier to break down a door (though it might just pad your shoulder a bit).

At least that's the experience of one man who tried to break into HMP Albany the other day armed with a water pistol.

Having failed to get inside what turned out to be the wrong part of the Isle of Wight prison cluster, he and his accomplice (who was sans fancy dress for some reason) preceded to take their frustration out on vehicles in the screw's car park. Both were detained under the Mental Health Act.

Letter to the anarchists

What does it mean to be an anarchist? This, I believe, is one of the most important true political questions of the 21st century for the trends of our civilisation – both cultural and material – show me that the 21st century will be the century of anarchism. I know what you are thinking when I say that. 'How can that possibly be so?' and I know that you probably base this fact off of your gut or implicit 'cultural feeling' you receive from your everyday life. But where I live, there's something happening. It's hard to see it at first, for my city is cloaked in a heavy cloak of bourgeois style lofts and condos but you can feel it in the air and in the streets and in the shops. You can hear people saying 'We've gone too far'.

You can see slogans of cultural freedom and awakening such as 'This ship is sinking' or 'Kill Wall Street before Wall Street kills you' or 'Smash the state' painted and inscribed on walls and homemade t-shirts. And in book stores, anarchist books are being pawed off the shelves like hot pockets as ever growing populations of disenfranchised and outsourced workers attempt to grasp an alternative to the madness of consumer culture. All this, I can see and feel and hear.

Yet, I keep finding myself asking the same question over and over again: 'What does it mean to be an anarchist?'

It is for certain that to be an anarchist, you must have a great love not for your country or nation but rather for all of humanity. As an anarchist, you believe that a single human life transcends the worth of any nation, company or group unless that person willingly accepts to give his or her life for it. I believe, that to be an anarchist, you must be ready to look and think beyond the political and religious doctrines that divide us and be capable of basing your beliefs on the fact that a human civilisation

based on truly democratic and peaceful principles is attainable. As an anarchist, you believe in the abolishment of capitalism as it impedes everything from human rights to the meaningfulness found in cultural values. You also believe in the abolishment of the state as it handicaps the very freedoms it is said to protect. All this, I know.

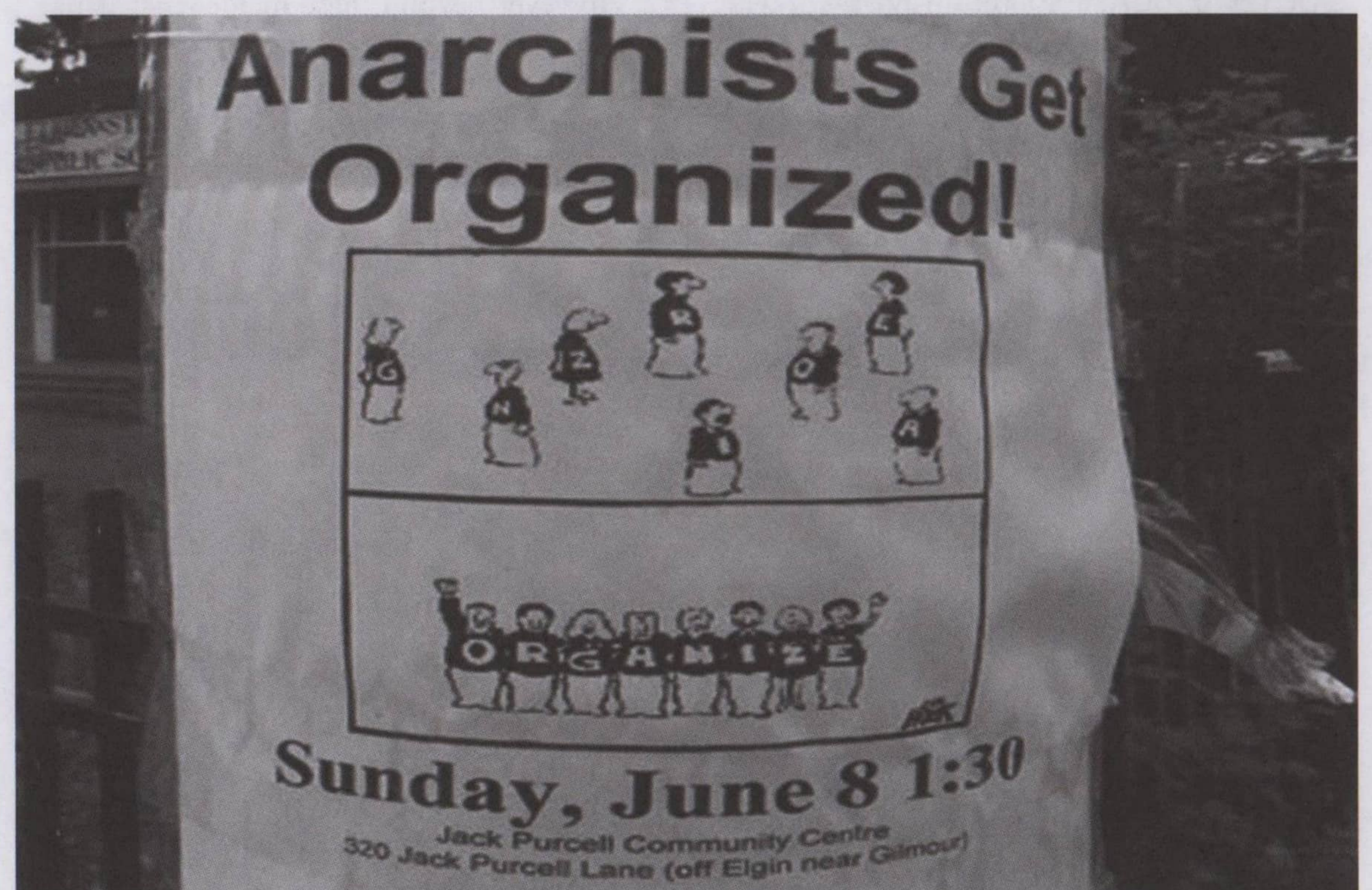
Yet I still find myself asking the very question I have sought to answer at the beginning of this letter: 'What does it mean to be an anarchist?'

Perhaps, I have been asking the wrong question or rather, I have been asking said question not precisely enough. Let me rephrase: 'What does it mean to be an anarchist now, in this time period?'

It is said that we are not the cure for this society but rather the disease. In that sense, we must see ourselves as, above all else, the destroyers of the cultures that have allowed this sham of a fair civilisation to exist. Everything, my friends, starts with culture for anarchism cannot face head on the material world for it is dominated by the culture of the consumer. What does it mean to be an anarchist now? It means to be a cultural warrior, it means that you have chosen to face the culture of greed and insolence and stupidity and madness head on. It means that you are ready to act out in defiance of said culture; it means that you are ready to create your own culture imbued with the values of anarchism and everything it stands for.

That's it! I think I got it. What does it mean to be an anarchist now? It means to be free in the mind. And freedom of the mind is the first step towards total freedom, both material and cultural. Freedom of the mind is the first step towards anarchy.

Francois Lebrun
Ontario



Notice on a tree in Ottawa, Ontario.

INTERNATIONAL

IN BRIEF

CANADA: More than 150 people at the Clarabelle Mill in Sudbury have been digging in their heels and vowing to continue their back-to-work protest. The protesters – strikers, family members and community supporters – vowed to continue their peaceful actions until they got a contract from Vale Inco. About 3,000 Steelworkers in Sudbury and Port Colborne have been on strike against Vale Inco since 13th July over pensions, the nickel bonus, seniority transfer rights and contracting out.

EGYPT: Protests have been held after the government extended its hated State of Emergency decree, which has been used as a tool for repression across the country by President Mubarak. The measure has outraged international opposition and human rights groups as it was hoped the laws, which have been used to detain peaceful protesters without charge for long periods, would be repealed. They were originally launched as a ‘counter-terror’ measure.

ISRAEL: Famed libertarian thinker Noam Chomsky has been barred from entering the state of Israel. Noam, who was on a speaking tour to the region, was due to speak at Bir Zeit University in the West Bank. The MIT professor said the interrogators had told him he had written things that the Israeli government did not like.

KENYA: A threatened strike by flower workers is in danger of wilting after it was declared illegal by an industrial court. Principal Judge Charles Chemmutut ordered Agricultural Employers’ Association (AEA) and Kenya Plantation and Agricultural Workers Union (Kpawu) to start negotiations on Collective Bargaining Agreements of employees in the industry. Employees have accused Agricultural Employers Association of disregarding workers’ welfare in the flower industry.

SOUTH AFRICA: 50,000 transport workers in South Africa have been on strike since 10th May. Major South African exports, including fruit, metals and wine, have sat idle in warehouses following the walkouts of railway and port workers.

The walkout was announced following the failure of pay negotiations with management at freight and logistics giant Transnet, with an official demand of a 15% pay rise in opposition to management’s offer of 11%. The citrus fruit trade, second only to that of Spain, has come to a total standstill.

YEMEN: The Yemeni General Labour Union has called all its members and supporters to begin a general strike starting Saturday 15th May. Following a sharp rise in prices and cost of living that has been afflicting Yemeni citizens in the last two years GLU is demanding a rise in wages and salaries and establishment of a minimum wage of at least 300 dollars, as well as the recognition of employees’ rights for cleaning sector workers.

LENS CAP ARGENTINA



Marchers in San Miguel de Tucumán, Argentina. More than 3,000 indigenous people demonstrated on 14th March against their exclusion from decision-making about the future of their communities and racially-divisive policies from the government.

Quiet after the burning

Police arrests and two more bombings have marked an otherwise quiet period for Greece following the deaths of three bank workers in Athens rioting earlier this month.

A courthouse and a prison were targeted by bombs on 13th May which lightly injured two people after warnings were phoned in to police to clear the area.

Earlier in the week police effectively occupied the Exarcheia area of Athens, a heavily squatted ‘autonomous zone’, arresting dozens of anarchists and handing out punishment beatings.

However beyond these incidents spasms of street fighting which had wracked the capital city in particular have given way to a period of relative calm and the anarchist movement deals with the police crackdowns

and in some cases, reflect on tactics.

The movement has been severely affected by the burning of a bank in Athens in which three people died, trapped in the building after being locked inside by management during protests and confrontations with police on 5th May.

While it is not known who set fire to the building, with agents provocateurs being blamed in parliament and rioters also having the finger pointed at them, the incident has highlighted the risk of injury and death to civilians during fighting between anarchist and police forces.

The situation has become significantly more explosive in recent years, as Greece bears the brunt of market panic over its ability to pay off its national debt.

Notes from the US

Hundreds of people have taken part in Washington DC in a rally for weapons. Speakers urged those attending to back lawmakers who oppose gun control.

Right wing Chicago radio host Erich Muller summed up the feeling: “My message to the federal government is obey the laws. We have a right to have guns. I live in the city of Chicago. It is a bloodbath, and I don’t have a right to protect my family.

“The average response time, 911 call, is 15 minutes... I don’t have that kind of time. I need a gun to protect myself. It’s my right as an American.”

A second such rally was held nearby in Virginia; attendants openly carried guns on their hips and over their shoulders – the first armed rally in a national park since Obama authorised weapons in national parks in 2009.

These events took place within hours of a shooting murder-suicide in Tennessee. An armed man shot three women in the waiting room of a hospital: he killed one and wounded the others, then turned the gun on himself.

Federal prosecutors also filed weapons

Class war Europe

Rob Ray looks at the damage

Every nation in Europe is announcing the beginnings of rising taxation alongside major 'austerity' cuts to benefits systems and public sector services.

The measures are being raised as a pre-emptive method of paying for the 'sovereign debt crisis' of countries with high borrowing levels in comparison to their Gross Domestic Product (GDP).

In **Greece**, the most heavily publicised case – despite its debts being lower than those of Japan, Britain, Ireland, Spain and barely more than that of the US – measures include:

- 2-3% on VAT;
- Public sector pay freeze and recruitment frozen;
- Retirement age lowered to 53 from current 67;
- Mass privatisation programme;
- Switch from 13 to 12 payments a year for public sector;
- Non-renewal of short-term public sector contracts;
- Closure of more than 800 state entities;
- Ending of 'closed shop' professions.

However these are just the front line of a wave of cuts as markets pressure the world to follow suit and raise cash for wealthy debt-holders.

In **Ireland**, public sector workers are already facing an 8% pay cut, a lowering of the income tax threshold and rises in other regressive taxes.

In **France**, the benefits system is being attacked, public spending will be frozen until 2013 and major employment cuts will be made



not replacing half of all civil servants who retire.

In **Portugal**, there will be pay cuts throughout the civil service, VAT rises to 21%, income tax up by 1.5% and local authority grants cut by £100m

Spain will see a 5% cut for civil service pay, salaries frozen in 2011, an end to automatic pension rises, £5bn in spending cuts and childbirth payments scrapped.

While remaining tight-lipped about the full extent of its own measures, **Germany** is planning a major deficit reduction from 5% to 0.35% over the next six years and has ruled out any tax cuts over that period.

Holland is set to knock 20% off public spending and increase the retirement age to 67.

Luxembourg is increasing taxes and imposing

a three-year freeze on public-sector wages.

Italy is planning a freeze to civil service salaries and the 'deferral' of some state pensions.

Austerity measures and massive privatisation is already in place in many eastern European states, including Lithuania, Latvia, Hungary, Estonia and most recently, Romania which is proposing to cut public sector wages by 25%, pensions and benefits by 15%.

In most cases the problems have been caused by major borrowing programmes brought in to deal with the banking crisis of 2008, with some coming as a result of panic on the markets following the EU agreement to underwrite Greece as it comes under sustained attack from the markets.

Notes from the US

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charges at around the same time against five former top officials at the private military mercenary firm Blackwater.

The charges relate to their alleged roles in illegally stockpiling automatic weapons at Blackwater's North Carolina headquarters. Among those charged are former Blackwater president Gary Jackson and former Blackwater legal counsel Andrew Howell. Blackwater rose to public attention when George Bush pushed millions their way to carry out non-governmental attacks in Iraq and Afghanistan in particular.

- There's a follow up on a story recently carried in *Freedom* about a school district in Philadelphia which issued laptop computers to some of its pupils for home use.

Officials have now admitted to capturing more than 55,000 photographs and screenshots from these computers.

The Lower Merion School District first claimed that they were trying to recover

missing or stolen computers. Then a federal lawsuit was filed by the family of a student targeted by the monitoring: he was photographed over 400 times during a 15-day period – sometimes as he slept or was half-dressed. Now the district seems to have owned up.

- Finally, on a related spying topic, a group of journalists, attorneys and human rights activists set a challenge to revisions to US surveillance laws in motion in April. Members of the group told a federal appeals court that they've been forced to avoid communicating by phone or email for fear of government surveillance.

Joanne Mariner of Human Rights Watch said that she had made three trips to meet former CIA prisoners in Jordan lately – just to avoid speaking to them by phone. The revised 2008 surveillance law dropped a requirement that the government identify the subjects of its surveillance.

Scandal of Italian police brutality

The police beating and hospitalisation of a group of young men in Rome has sparked an outcry over brutality in the service and its attitude to football match policing.

Two separate videos have been released showing heavily armed riot policemen attacking Stephen Gugliotta, 25, and his friend after a match between rivals Roma and Inter on 5th May.

Stephen had to be rushed to hospital after the incident, where he was treated for a large bloody gash in his forehead, a broken tooth, severe bruising all over his body and shock.

The videoing of the arrest of Stephen, his friend and seven other young men has sparked an investigation into the incident, in which they were targeted by anti-hooligan forces despite not even having tickets to the game.

Early questions have been asked about the police's lack of any form of identification.

Deep Economy

An analysis by John Griffin exploring the contradictions between green economics and radical ecology

PART I: ecology economics and culture in relation to anarchist theory

The recent Copenhagen talks on climate change showed the huge gulf between what most ecologists say, and the behaviour of most people and their governments. Most appear to be quite happy with consumer capitalism, as long as they can get their share of the action, and merely look towards Government to somehow make it green. Governments know this and so are unwilling to do anything which might upset their electors, or of course, business interests.

If governments were serious they could legislate to introduce fuel rationing, or enforce higher manufacturing standards; they could encourage a make-do-and-mend culture, the very opposite of consumerism, as in the 1939-45 war. Afghanistan excepted, this is not wartime, but we humans are making war on Gaia,* an 'enemy' which continues to support us, even as it bites some – in Bangladesh (using sea level) and Ethiopia (expanding deserts) for instance.

The divide between the behaviour of Mr and Mrs Average and hard science is one thing. What I find more depressing is how little interest there seems to be among humanities scholars in addressing the problem – indeed it is humanities graduates working in advertising, etc., who are encouraging the



madness. We interact with our planet through technology, itself an expression of culture, and so all of the humanities – philosophy, sociology, anthropology and psychology – have their relevance, but the key discipline is surely economics. Economists should be spending far more time studying the most effective use of the earth's resources rather than making money for its own sake.

Economics must engage far more with the technologies and culture which Gaia demands.

Of course the green movement has its academics, but even there the approach is shallow and timid. They want you to recycle more, buy a bike, install loft insulation, eat organic – all very laudable – but you can't escape the fact that this is still consumerism, albeit with green knobs on. Greenpeace knows the limits of Mr and Mrs Average too – just as we on planet Anarchy prefer to ignore them!

Anarchists carry a much deeper appreciation of human interaction with the natural world, and the late Murray Bookchin bridged the divide between the humanities and the sciences with the key concept of 'social ecology'. He was definitely on the right track there, but you won't find any meaningful economics in Bookchin's work. Indeed, he wants no contractual arrangements which he thinks can be transcended given 'post-scarcity' conditions. Take a walk down the high street and you'll see no scarcity of goods, but we need to be aware of the growing scarcity of clean air, soil and water and proceed on that basis.

Bookchin, an anarchist-communist, wants to get rid of money. Unfortunately money is the only means we have of measuring relative values, and in a more equal society, I see no problem with using high prices to ration goods, or to restrict practices which are ecologically damaging.

Some 21st century anarchists are still in love with non-monetised economics which pre-dates the industrial revolution. So let's rewind the tapes to 1650 to find the roots of this disdain for the use of money, and often for economics along with it. And 1650 was probably about the last time the UK economy was fully in accord with Gaia.

The population in 1650 was about one-seventh of what it is now. Feudalism had been replaced by agrarian capitalism, but the rural economy was still based around draught animals, windmills and the village smithy. With relatively little monetisation, it was natural for radicals to look to the Diggers for inspiration: commerce to be abolished and property to be shared equally.

And the success of the Spanish agrarian collectives during the revolutionary period 1936-39 must have given the communist vision still more power, perhaps even set it in stone. The fact that the economics of rural Aragon was comparable to rural



England in 1650 did not detract from its iconic relevance to a revolutionary future. Nor did the communists take note that Spanish industry, where collectivised, continued to use cash for perfectly sound practical reasons which had nothing to do with ideological purity.

Our thinking lacks depth, and often seems to function in a vacuum. We ignore or sneer at industrialisation and the monetisation which necessarily went with it, even though along with all the crap, they brought such useful technologies as piped water and electric power for all. We condemn the madness of capitalism, and often conflate it with economics – even though at its deepest levels it is through economics that we connect directly with the planet's ecology. A simple-minded rejection of economics carries with it a rejection of solutions to the ecological crisis, and disengagement with the real world.

Of course, within the real world lie the rigidities of Mr and Mrs. Average – probably beyond the reach of anarchism – but that should not discourage us from developing and updating our theory.

job to another, in my bookishness not at all engaged with the wretched business of 'earning a living'. An industrial injury stopped my erratic career and prompted another round of meanness, but this one had anarcho-eco ideology neatly bolted on. Greenness came easily to me; I've never had to work at it.

I didn't learn to be 'green', just as Mr and Mrs Average out for a drive in their car, did not learn to be 'profligate'. We are all the product of our life experience meshing with individual impulses. We are all our inertias. Everything is relative.

Fifty-odd years on from my childhood days watching the blacksmith, an ironically similar scene recently unfolded at my garage, door up, as I worked at the bench. Young boys turned up to watch on their bikes. The bikes, with suspension and umpteen gears, were sadly neglected and I found myself tightening loose bolts and oiling rusty drive chains which clearly hadn't seen oil since they left some factory in the Far East. Globalisation. The computer literate it seems have never learnt to use basic tools like spanners and oil cans, and it soon became clear that they didn't want to learn – especially if it meant getting their hands dirty. Equally, I don't really want to engage with computers whose relevance to me is limited.

Faced with no obvious threat, as in wartime, people are usually slow to change their habits, but if the ecologists are right, time is running out fast. Anarchists tend to see social freedom going hand-in-hand with greenness, a question of *relatedness*, both to each other, as well as to the earth. But in the absence of radical social change, a sustainable future could mean one which is more authoritarian, if governments are forced to act.

As always, it remains for individuals to act responsibly, but as I've tried to show, 'going green' is easier for some than others and hinges on complex psychological factors.

Talking points

Ecological considerations tend to challenge the notion that economic equality means a levelling up of incomes – should we not be talking about a levelling *down*? Depending on their priorities, even people on benefit can have sufficient spending power to wreak significant ecological damage.

A study published in the *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* has found that "shoppers choose hybrid cars, 'green' washing-up liquid and energy saving devices over cheaper, dirtier alternatives partly to improve their social status" (*Guardian*, 30th March 2010).

Footnote

* From *The Revenge of Gaia*, by ecologist James Lovelock

PART II: approaches the same concerns from an individual viewpoint, using autobiography, to probe the complexities of lifestyle, social change and stasis.

Looking through the out-of-plumb doorway was like looking back to an alien past where everything was dark and dirty. By the forge there was a tub of dingy-looking water on a floor of blackened earth; the air was thick with the smell of animals and burning when hot iron met hoof. Still in short trousers, I would stand outside the blacksmith's to watch the electric trolley buses, clean, swift and silent, in stark contrast to that remnant of earlier more 'organic' times. 'Prices' still delivered bread from a horse-drawn van, and neighbours would shovel up any droppings to put round their tomato plants. Hundreds of men in gabardine raincoats and flat hats cycled to the many factories, a recognisable proletariat.

Rationing had just ended, and in that austere post-war period, government exhortations to 'Dig for Victory', to mind the 'Squander Bug' and to ask, 'Is your journey necessary?' were still lodged in the public's consciousness. I make it sound 'green',

but there were all those coal fires, and on the nearby railway steam locomotives made their majestic but sulphurous and sooty ways to and from Paddington. Consumerism hadn't quite caught on; there was still plenty of make-do-and mend.

My paternal grandfather, an ex-farmworker, would have used the blacksmith's. One of a dwindling band, he knew how to grow vegetables, breed rabbits for the table, and make his own tools, his initials 'OG' burnt into their handles. Owen even made his own furniture, a skill passed on to my father; our family would go to extraordinary lengths to avoid buying anything!

It was a life of heroic resistance to the capitalist ethos, but it did not exactly come about through free choice, more a way of 'getting by' when beset by financial cramp. What we would call greenness carried with it elements of meanness and un-freedom.

Often out of a job, Owen drank too much and tried to rule his family with the proverbial rod of iron. His fear of unemployment trickled down to me via my father who tried to impress on me the importance of 'getting a trade'. Alas, I lurched from one unsuitable

COMMENT

ABOUT FREEDOM

ANGEL ALLEY

As everyone recovers from the excitement of the election, things have been ticking along steadily here at Freedom Press. We are starting to put more books on the website, starting with Phoenix Press and Attack International titles.

We also take the opportunity to thank Jay, a surveyor by trade who took the time to look at the building and see what it needs in terms of upkeep and repairs. The good news is it is not likely to fall down in the near future! We do have 'waves' running through the brickwork, but no major cracks or structural problems and we'll probably hold together longer than the Lib-Con Pact.

Lastly an appeal for more letters. Thanks to those comrades who take the time and trouble to write us letters. Unfortunately not enough letters reach us for each issue for eagle- (or even small hawk) eyed readers will have noticed that we often cannibalise features to fill the letters page, but it's not substitute for the proper debate that a full letters page can produce. As we move with the times you may guess that some of this issue's shorter letters are from texts, which can be sent to 07913 865 928.

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NEXT ISSUE

The next issue will be dated 5th June 2010 and the last day to get copy to us for that issue will be Thursday 27th May.

You can send your articles to us by email to copy@freedompress.org.uk or by post addressed to 'The Editors', Freedom, 84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1 7QX.

A sideways look

by SVARTFROSK

As the dust settled on the election results, one trend that went against the national grain was Labour's much improved performance in local elections, particularly in London.

A lot of this is down to increased turnout. Normally, turnout for council elections in London is about 40%, holding it on the same day as the general election pushed it up to over 60%. When turnout is low, it tends to be the most committed and ideological who vote; hence in the last few years there have been a number of local elections where the main parties have lost out to smaller parties from their left (Greens, Socialists) or right (BNP).

In Lewisham, this was particularly pronounced as there was a directly elected Labour Mayor who made a lot of unpopular decisions. Parts of New Cross, Brockley and Lewisham became virtually Labour Party-free after a storm of local issues like school places and closing swimming pools made voters turn against Labour.

Now of course, an increased turnout has meant that most of the Green and all of the Socialist councillors lost their seats. I suspect that Labour did better in these elections than they expected and there will be plenty of by-elections in the next few years, as an awful lot of the new councillors are ambitious to become MPs. On one of the local websites there was much hand-wringing about 'hard-working local councillors' and complaints about the election being decided on national issues, rather than the competence or otherwise of the local council. Rather than seek to understand why a lot of people voted Labour, some on the forum moaned about the ignorance of people who could vote that way. Across London, in Barking and Dagenham, a similar rising turnout did for the BNP – though I'm sure the right-on

residents of Brockley are a lot happier about that result.

Now the local Green and Socialist councillors who lost their seats are all good folk who worked hard. Their replacements may not be. But to be honest it's beside the point. Councillors are there to 'represent' you, but being represented doesn't mean they will act in your interest. The Green councillors particularly won their seats on the back of strong campaigns.

At every set of elections, there's usually someone somewhere suggesting that now is the time for anarchists to abandon their traditional opposition to electoralism and try to stand or back candidates. I think this is the wrong way round. It's actually the electoralists who should be working at building strong campaigns away from a focus on the council chamber. It is the experience of struggle that changes people's ideas. We are about to face a huge wave of cuts and tax rises – this will be resisted in local campaigns. Those campaigns need to act in our own interests, looking to preserve services for example, rather than electing a sole councillor whose influence will be minimal.

Labour will probably go through a period of renewal now that Brown has stepped down. It will start making left of centre noises and try to fool another generation. What is needed from anarchists is the argument that only direct action can stop cuts. If we accept the logic of capitalism we're shafted. Greeks are on the streets as I write because they know that the more they do so, the better the deal they will get. That the newly elected Cabinet of multi-millionaires takes a 5% cut in pay to pretend we are 'all in it together' tells us all we need to know. Our rulers do not intend to let up in the class war.



Lewisham's mayor Sir Steve Bullock has made many unpopular decisions.

Who won?

Surely you had the wrong headline in issue 7109 (8th May 2010), they all lost!

Richard Parry

Minority Pastime

James Farrow's review of the film *A Minority Pastime* was excellent. I was pleased to read it in *Freedom* (8th May 2010). However, I am confused.

When, on the AF online forum, I politely expressed my opinion that the abuse and exploitation of nonhuman animals was part and parcel of the exploitation and abuse of humans too under capitalism, I was vulgarly and confrontationally bombarded by anarchists there who expressed a Cartesian disdain for any consideration of nonhumans within the question of capitalist exploitation and abuse. Their view is best summed up by a quote from another page on that libcom forum: "A pig isn't aware it exists!"

Having encountered years ago this same retrogressive Cartesian attitude on the part of Marxian socialists, I was dismayed to encounter it yet again on the part of anarchists. It shows the individuals concerned to be abysmally ignorant of nonhuman animal sentience and emotions, as revealed not only recently by ethology, but even at the time of the vivisecting crank Descartes himself, and, a little later, brilliantly expressed by Voltaire. Kropotkin, in *Mutual Aid*, also excellently shows the sociality of nonhumans, not to mention Reclus' all-encompassing enlightened views in the nineteenth century.

Steve Best, renowned author and total liberationist, has come across the same socialist/anarchist cartesianism, expressed thus: "A dog is no different from a chair or item of furniture"(!)... All this leads us to the conclusion that many, if not most, of those (socialists/anarchists) who should be in the forefront of progress are in fact more reactionary and dismissive, when it comes to fellow animals, than the mainstream population.

In my forum contribution I had carefully made it clear that I despise the 'animals-only' rights movement which fails to challenge capitalism and even drifts in certain cases toward fascism in some of its pronouncements (from ignorant individuals). I can understand socialist/anarchist kneejerk reactions to these people in those cases, but, honestly: cartesian human supremacism sits ill with any movement for emancipation from exploitation and shows really unforgivable ignorance of biology, ethology, science, and a dearth of common sense!

Maybe the excellent and needed condemnation of foxhunting is then due to its being the bloody and execrable 'sport' of the bourgeoisie, on your part, and not the activity itself? But the brilliant review belies this.

Anthony Walker

Did you hear new that the new Minister for the Police is called Nick Herbert.

Nick Durie

A young anarchist in rural England

First time voter and it made me feel dirty. Melton Mowbray is one of the safest Conservative seats in the land. I'm 18 now, attending the local sixth form, and it's full of the worst conservatives possible.

I know a lot of people voted Conservative because they didn't know who else to vote for, even the people I know who didn't vote Conservative could never comprehend that the state and the government are a curse on our lives.

I've tried telling the alternative opposition of a free life and either it actually scares them or they won't have any of it, nearly always saying: 'Where's the proof that it will work'.

The number of people I know who truly believe that Thatcherism is a good thing is amazing and that Britain was at its best when Maggie was in power – they either don't care about the massive unemployment she caused and the worst child-poverty rate in all of Europe, or just deny that ever happened. The worst thing is that some people in my sixth form have said that when we talk about politics a few people will say communism failed, which is a fair statement, but then they have the guts to say fascism worked and wasn't so bad, saying, 'Well it got things done'. How the hell can any

LETTERS AND COMMENT

decent person say something as evil as this, but then I remember that it's not all their fault, they don't know any better – in these parts most people I know see casual racism as okay, no doubt from their parents. Most of my friends when they're being brought are told that trade unions are wrong and that workers don't deserve any rights.

The point that I am trying to get at is that there needs to be a way to reach out to these massively hidden individuals for who, as far as they are concerned, life can't change and we're stuck with our way of life so there's no point in pushing for change. I've tried talking to some individuals and some have nodded along and sort of liked what they heard but regard it as an impossible utopia that would be crushed as soon as it started. I have thought about making leaflets and posters to promote anarchism in Melton, but I soon realised that there would have to be some future event that would push these backwards-thinking people to demand change. I have no idea what level of corruption in government or the size of social injustice that would bring about rebelliousness where here, even for the young, it seems it would take a lot for change to ever happen, here in this beautiful rural England where the people are backwards and the forwards thinkers are frowned at.

Christopher Day

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GETTING ACTIVE

PRISON NEWS

G4S: outsourcing lack of care since 1992

G4S, the self-styled 'world's leading international security solutions group' that runs four prisons, four Secure Training Centres (prisons for children) and three immigration detention centres in England and Wales – plus Dungavel Immigration Removal Centre in Scotland (IRC) – is back in the news following the adverse publicity surrounding the death of Eliud Nyenzi in mid April at Oakington IRC.

That incident stemmed from the apparent refusal of G4S staff to pay any attention to the 40-year-old's requests for analgesics for his chest pains. A simple referral to the detention facility's healthcare centre would almost certainly have resulted in the prevention of his death from what appears to have been a heart attack.

His death led to protests about the lack of medical care by more than 180 of his fellow detainees the following day and 60 of the protestors being bumped up the deportation queue for their efforts.

Now the latest criticism of the way G4S runs its operations comes from the jury in the inquest into the 2006 death of Emmanuel Buyoya, a 20-year-old remand prisoner found hanged in his cell at HMP Parc near Bridgend in Wales.

Parc a 1,200-bed privately run Category B local prison housing so-called 'young offender' (aged 18-21) and juvenile (aged 15-18) sentenced and remand male prisoners, in addition to convicted adults, and has seen 11 prisoners commit suicide over the past decade.

Mr Buyoya's death followed two separate periods in the segregation unit, the second lasting six days and ending in his death.

The jury concluded that, as a young and vulnerable person, the length of time he spent in segregation, the lack of documentation and communication between G4S and Prime Care staff, the private medical company responsible for health care in Parc, and the lack of monitoring of his obvious deteriorating mental health status directly contributed to his death.

Suicide is unfortunately an all too common occurrence in the prison population. Last year there were 168 deaths in prison custody, of which 60 were self-inflicted, and the overall suicide rate in UK prisons is about 15 higher than for the general population.

Women appear to be much more vulnerable in this situation but, given large oscillations in suicide numbers (one in 2008 versus eight in 2007) amongst a relatively small women prisoner population, it is difficult to give comparable numbers. However, it is known that women newly released from prison are 36 times more likely to kill themselves than those in the general population (compared to eight times for men).



A fast was held outside Hackney Town Hall in April to highlight the campaign for decent housing in the borough.

● The activists down at *Hackney Heckler* continue to raise the bar in terms of design and layout with the latest summer edition of the Hackney Solidarity Network (HSN) newsletter.

With the features on vital local news – the campaign against hospital cuts, the housing crisis in the borough, the persecution of union militants by their leadership and the ever focused feature on London Coalition Against Poverty, there is also an irreverent look at the cultural side of Hackney including a top ten of films from Hackney (*Die Another Day* anyone?) and the ever popular community noticeboard.

HSN was formed in 2008 to bring the residents and groups within the London borough together, to exchange information and encourage joint working and campaigning. Anyone from the area is welcome to get involved and can contact them at hackneysolidarity@hotmail.com or phone 07757289726.

● Another East London publication going from strength to strength is the *East End Howler* – East London's free working class news sheet.

Published by Action East End it has now developed into a proper eight-page paper with an interview with a local tenant on the affect of the 2012 Olympics to the area, advice on bailiffs and a round up of local groups and campaigns.

Action East End bases itself around the Tower Hamlets area of East London and seeks to contribute to resistance by

encouraging collective action and promoting solidarity and community. Those wishing to get involved can do so by contacting them at actioneastend@googlemail.com

● Worthing's May issue of their newsletter the *Pork-Bolter* comes with an illustrated run down of what it takes to be a new breed of local hero. Attributes include x-ray specs (to see through politicians lies), bonnet (Bee resides in here), and best foot (maintained in forward position). *Pork-Bolter* is a must-read for people living in the West Sussex area who want to keep updated on all the local radical activity. To order your copy contact them at porkbolter@eco-action.org

● Sheffield Anarchist Federation's own agitational newsletter *The Fargate Speaker* comes out fighting with it's May edition supporting Samuel Musarika's right to stay in Sheffield (he is facing severe danger if deported back to Zimbabwe), the dinner ladies demands for better pay as well as an article kicking the election into touch. There is also an excellent historical piece about Sheffield Asian Youth Movement who formed in 1982 after Ahmed Khan was arrested and charged with serious wounding for fighting back against racists went on to organise against police harassment, and deportations.

Sheffield remains a rich and politically engaged environment for anarchists and radicals – anyone in the city wishing to get involved can get in touch with them at thefargatespeaker@gmail.com.

Direct action for houses

A little while ago *War Commentary* reported the arrest of seven families who had settled in an empty 20-room mansion and a cottage at Blantyre. However the case ended it was, as this paper pointed out, “an indication of the kind of incident which is likely to become frequent during the aggravated housing shortage after the war”. And now we read even in the reactionary dailies, reports of the activities in Brighton of the ‘Ex-Servicemen’s Secret Committee’, whose ‘vigilantes’ so far number over 400 members. Working at night, they break into unoccupied houses and install the homeless families of serving men, with their belongings and household goods. At their open-air meeting on Sunday 9th July, the movement’s secretary described how they had received enquiries from London, Portsmouth, Sheffield, Liverpool and other parts of Britain, and added: “I have told them, ‘If you see a house, take it and let the law do its damndest’. We have started a movement which we hope and pray will spread over the length and breadth of the land.” Delegates of the Brighton movement have now visited London to attend a secret conference with the object of developing a similar organisation there.

The Great Rent Strikes

Remember the Glasgow Rent Strikes of the First World War period. All over the city, when rent increases were made the house wives banded together street by street, refusing to pay, and forming the Women’s Housing Council. They spied on the movements of the bailiffs and rent collectors, barricaded their homes, put the furniture of evicted people back in the houses as soon as it was pitched out, and even had actual fights with the factors. The men came out from the big shipyards and works, and the government, finding that their promises of enquiries and legislation did not satisfy the workers, or prevent more men from stopping work, were forced to pass the First Rent Restrictions Act, while the landlords had to withdraw the increases.



Above and below left: Glasgow rent strikers in 1915.

The second great Rent Strike Movement grew from London in the years just before the Second World War. In 1938, 250 tenants at Quinn Square, Bethnal Green, started a strike to demand not only the repayment of money charged above the limits of the Rents Restrictions Act, but for a general reduction of rents in the future. They succeeded and were followed by a strike of 131 tenants of Southern Grove, Mile End, who picketed, barricaded, and demonstrated to get repairs done and rents lowered. They too were successful and shortly afterwards workers living in three London areas, Holborn, Stepney, and Poplar, whose flats all belonged to the same landlord, struck: “900 tenants secured victory and signed an agreement which established a flat rate for every type of dwelling and provided for adequate repairs and redecorations to all flats to be started immediately and carried out periodically” (*Reynold’s News*, 16th April 1939).

The Stepney tenants conducted the Langsdale Mansions strike and the ‘Great Brady Street Battle’, as well as many others. The 340 Brady Street tenants barricaded their homes and fought the landlords for 21 weeks, after which they won big reductions; the return of evicted tenants; and an agreement by the landlord to carry out the necessary repairs to the extent of £2,500 for the first year, and £1,500 for each year afterwards. Rent Strikes also occurred at Amersham, Balham, Bellingham, Dagenham, Hammersmith, Hampstead, Hendon, Holborn, Maldon, Woolwich, Wood Green, and many others places in and around London.

In the Municipal tenants’ strike at Birmingham, 40,000 people fought for 19 weeks to prevent rent increases, and 15,000 of them got reductions amounting to £30,000 a year. The continued success of these Rent Strikes and their rapid spreading, frightened landlords everywhere into doing repairs, and some even offered to reduce rents, while the government at the beginning of the War passed the second Rent Restrictions Act, (although this has been widely ignored or evaded by landlords).

From examples mentioned, we can see how effective direct action can be when applied to our housing problems. It works, it gets results. Already the Brighton Corporation has promised to requisition houses officially for its homeless people. But it wouldn’t have even come ‘limping along behind’ in this matter, but for the action of the Vigilantes. Our message to them should be:

- Act on your own - no reliance on the politicians, especially those who try to cash in on your success.
- Stick together, and work on as big a scale as possible!
- Don’t give up, and don’t give a damn for the authorities!

If the Vigilantes have these three prerequisites for successful action, **INDEPENDENCE, SOLIDARITY, AND DETERMINATION**, we can be sure that their movement will ‘spread over the length and breadth of the land’, and may have consequences and give opportunities which it would be criminal for the workers to ignore.

The original article appeared in *War Commentary* on 28th July 1945, written by Colin Ward.

REVIEWS

WHAT'S ON

MAY

22nd Sheffield's first anarchist bookfair from 10am until 4pm at the Corporation night club, Milton Street, Sheffield S1 4JU and followed by a social in the evening, for details see <http://yorks-afed.org>

22nd Indymedia: ten years in the UK, a grand party to celebrate 10 years of reporting resistance with workshops, films and other social pleasantries starting at 4pm, then from 8pm music from Headjam, Anarchistwood, Beast of No Nation, Radio Revolution and more, and from 11pm assorted DJs will keep the party going until dawn, see <http://london.indymedia.org/events/4663>

23rd Benefit for West Midlands IWW with David Rovics and Attila the Stockbroker at The Wagon & Horses, Adderley Street, Digbeth, Birmingham B9 4ED from 6pm, £6, see <http://iww.org.uk/node/241>

27th Acoustic Insurgency at The Grosvenor, 17 Sidney Road, Stockwell, London, SW9 0TP from 7.30pm, £5/4 for details call 07956 429059, email guy.smallman@btinternet.com or see myspace.com/acousticinsurgency

29th London Zine Symposium, bringing together zine, small press, comic and radical writers at The Rag Factory, 16-18 Heneage Street, London E1 5LJ from 12 noon until 6pm, see londonzinesymposium.org.uk

30th The far-right EDL are planning to march through Sheffield, see <http://yorks-afed.org> for details.

JUNE

5th No Strawberry Fayre? Cambridgeshire police may think they have shut down one of the last free festivals in England, but let's show them otherwise – bring instruments, sound systems, friends, and assemble on Midsummer Common, Cambridge, email classwarcambridgeshire@worker.com or see cambridgeanarchists.wordpress.com

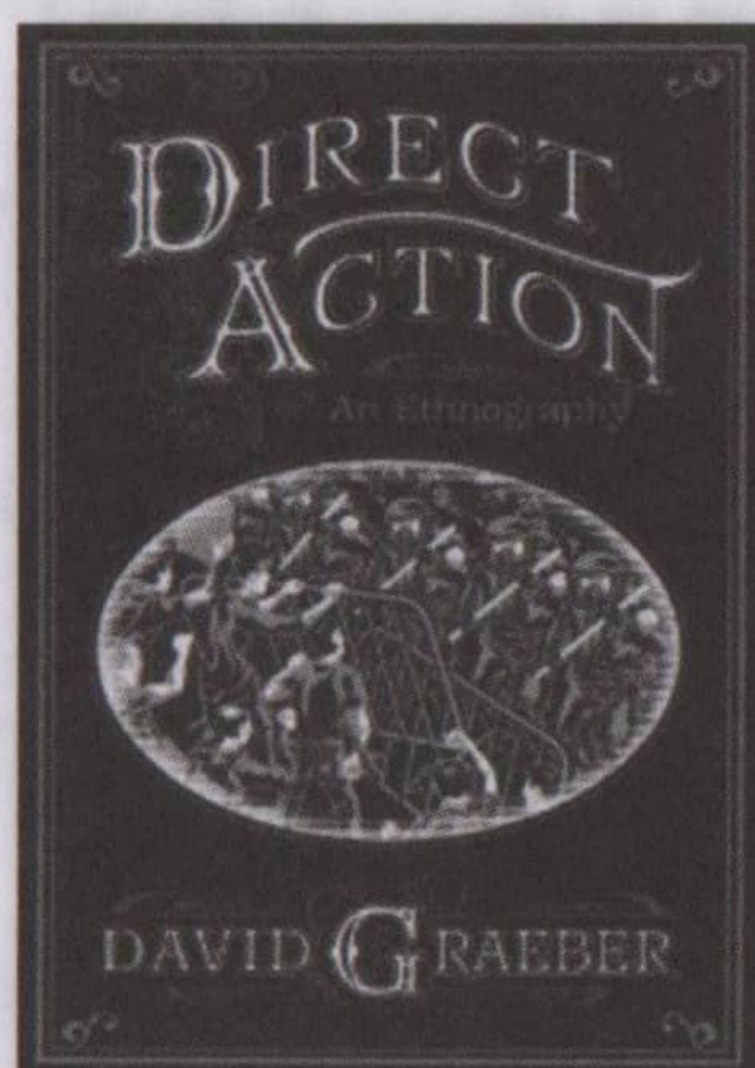
5th Song and Dance at Faslane Naval Base, Helensburgh, Scotland from 12.30pm until 2.30pm, for details see <http://bellacaledonia.org.uk/2010/05/12/song-and-dance>

7th The trial of six anti-arms trade activists who broke into EDO/ITT bomb factory and caused extensive damage begins at Hove Crown Court, protest outside from 9am, see smashedo.org.uk or <http://decommissioners.co.uk> for details.

10th SPES Book Club, Victor Serge's *Memoirs of A Revolutionary 1901-1941* translated by Peter Sedgwick, discussion facilitated by Terry Liddle in the Bertrand Russell Room, Conway Hall, 25 Red Lion Square, London WC1R 4RL at 7pm, email spesevents@yahoo.co.uk for further details.

21st Showing of *The Free Voice of Labor: The Jewish Anarchists* (Paul Avrich, 1980, 58 mins), 7.30pm at The Cowley Club, 12 London Road, Brighton, BN1 4JA, blending participant's interviews with stills, newsreel footage and selections from old motion pictures, this documentary gives a fascinating and penetrating insight into the lives and struggles of Jewish anarchists in the USA, see cowleyclub.org.uk for details.

BOOK



Direct Action: An Ethnography
by David Graeber, AK Press, £22

As the title suggests, this a descriptive account of direct action groups from a participant's

perspective. David Graeber, is not only an academic anthropologist, but an active participant in street direct action groups. This book is an account of his observations of how, in particular, certain New York DAN groups, actually operated, how they organised themselves, how they conducted their meetings and arrived at decisions, and how they operated during direct actions at events as varied as New York street parties and marches, to the Anti-Globalisation actions against the Quebec Summit of the Americas in 2001 (pictured below). Graeber also utilises sociological, political and anthropological theory to help understand the participants and the processes.

Anyone wanting the nitty-gritty on how self-managed groups discuss matters, how consensus is achieved, what sort of issues are discussed and so forth, will find this books gives more than enough detail. Graeber also discusses the political importance of the processes involved in the way the direct action groups operate, including how issues around race, class, and gender still raise important

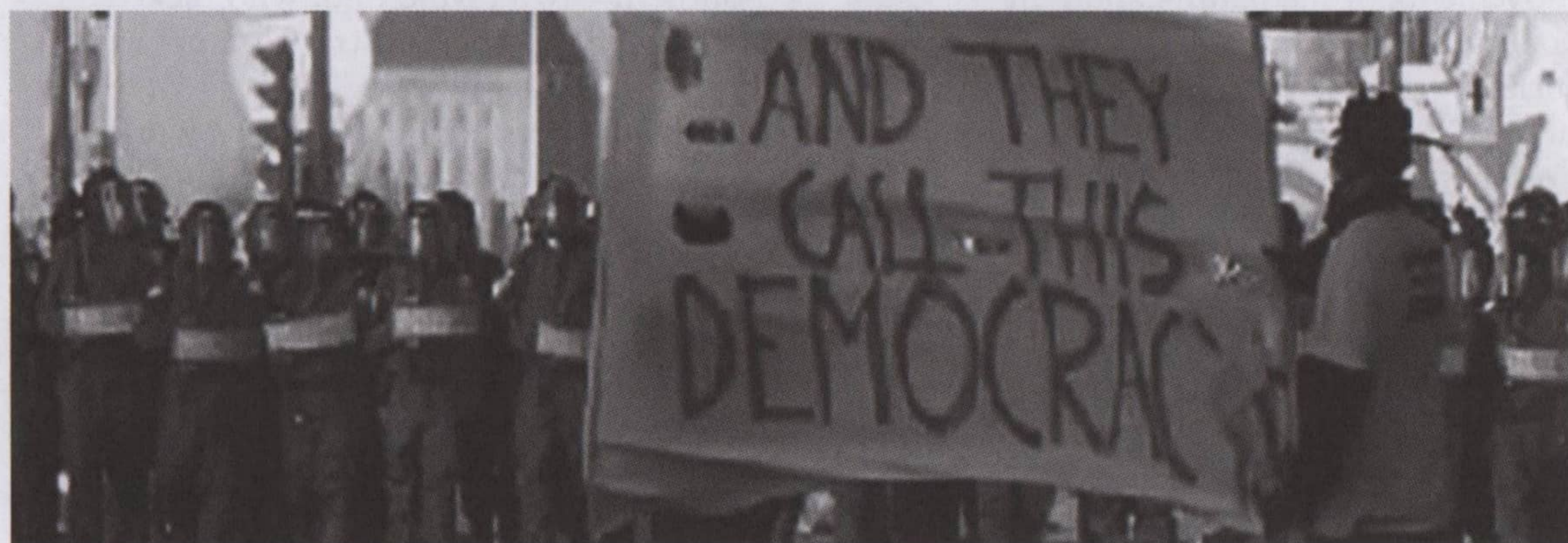
issues for such groups, especially when they are numerically dominated by white males (even if many of the most important members are women).

The book contains detailed descriptions of the activities of the Black Bloc at street actions and demonstrations, and the Independent Media Centres (IMCs) that have spring up to document the demonstrations and other actions. The book shows how important for the global activist community the Internet and the IMCs have become in making known actions that would otherwise be trivialised, demonised or ignored by the mainstream media.

Graeber also pays attention to the role of the police in handling direct action: how the US context means that force (normally short of the lethal variety) is normalised in the handling of protests and actions, and why the police have such a hatred for giant street puppets; how groups such as the various clowns, billionaires, radical cheerleaders and the like are sometimes able to defuse potentially violent situations; and the seemingly inevitable barrage of lies that precede any major actions. The police are psyched up to confront direct action and the media winds up its readers with lurid tales – often those fed to them by the police themselves. (Now where have we seen that before every May Day?)

That's a short summary of some of the contents of this book. Despite its title and size, it is a very accessible and thought-provoking read, and if the price seems daunting, a visit to the local public or college library should enable a copy to be obtained after a suitable wait.

Mal Function



QUIZ ANSWERS



1. The original poster used in the 1930s featured Tony Gibson, an anarchist who was surviving by posing for art school classes.
2. He was jailed three times as an unregistered conscientious objector during the Second World War. In the advert,

the picture was touched up to show him in an RAF uniform.
3. He did a rambling denunciation of their latest book *We are an Image of the Future: The Greek Revolts of 2008* on his 3rd May show. They've responded with an open letter trying to address how little he knows about anarchism.
4. He said "Within the next five years, the indigenous people of London will be a minority. It is going to be too late for Barking, but it is not too late for Britain." Perhaps it's too late for him?

Latin lessons

Tom Jennings mulls over two fascinating South American films which reflect schisms of class and culture in women's responses to personal crisis

Argentinian writer-director Lucrecia Martel's distinctive cinematic style deploys bold technical disjunctions to layer allusion and metaphor in depicting the lives of the relatively well-off in her northwestern home town of Salta. Originating in exasperated youthful perplexity at her own folk, an astute story-telling tactic treating grown-ups as essentially children pretending to be adult pays dividends in *La ciénaga* ('The Swamp', 2001) and *The Holy Girl* (2004). These films characterise in form and content the provincial bourgeoisie's aimless anomie and compulsive decadence, contrasting hapless moral confusion and chaotically incestuous relationships with more straightforward contempt and condescension projected onto the lower classes. *The Headless Woman* now goes further than comprehensively exploding conservative pretensions of propertied propriety by excavating fetid depths of family dynamics – showing the ramifications radiating outwards to over-determine domination, emphasising psycho-social processes of distraction and disavowal which both facilitate the real violence of class stratification and conceal its beneficiaries' responsibility.

María Onetto (pictured below) delivers a compelling performance of tainted grace as Vero, a middle-aged dentist at the centre of an extended clan and community busily bound up with the comfortable little trials and tribulations befitting their station – tended to by a veritable army of indigenous retainers who their mistresses and masters barely register. Driving back from one among her complex diary of social engagements, Vero fears she may have knocked down a youngster in the rain. But she daren't go back to check, thereafter sinking into almost catatonic detachment in horror at the damage she might have done – primarily, it seems, to her flatteringly noble self-image rather than another human being. Still, life goes on, and the genteel sheen of everyday activity scarcely suffers apart from her nearest and dearest patriarchs closing ranks in reassurance that the problem has gone away despite, in fact,



not existing in the first place. The generalised collusive hypocrisy soothes her toward reconciliation, signalled by a superficial consumerist gesture of changing hair-colour. Lo and behold; history is rewritten.

The deftly awkward framing, focus and camera movement persistently obscure crucial details, powerfully evoking fractured memory and perception. So flirtation with generic thriller conventions soon dissolves into pervasive, dreamlike anxiety, with visual non-sequiturs mirroring the dialogue's banality and highlighting the dissembling of a milieu devoted to avoiding awareness. Meanwhile the ambient noise and incongruous pop soundtrack jar the seamless simulation of experience, forcing viewers to see through the eyes of Vero in most abjectly vulnerable disarray. Paradoxically, Martel's surgical precision stems from deep love for her family, but simultaneous hatred of it as an institutional prototype of societal structure; whereas the vagaries of desire ruin individual and collective integrity and cohesion while promising liberation from the dead hand of 'civilisation as we know it'. These dialectics resonate strongly with Argentina's trajectory – the murderous military junta years whose horrors still cannot be faced, through to recent and continuing economic and social crises which once seemed likely to prompt revolution. Yet beyond the parochial anchoring, light is undoubtedly shed on universal concerns – not least, the perennially fashionable denial among middle-classes everywhere of the profound political implications of their identity.

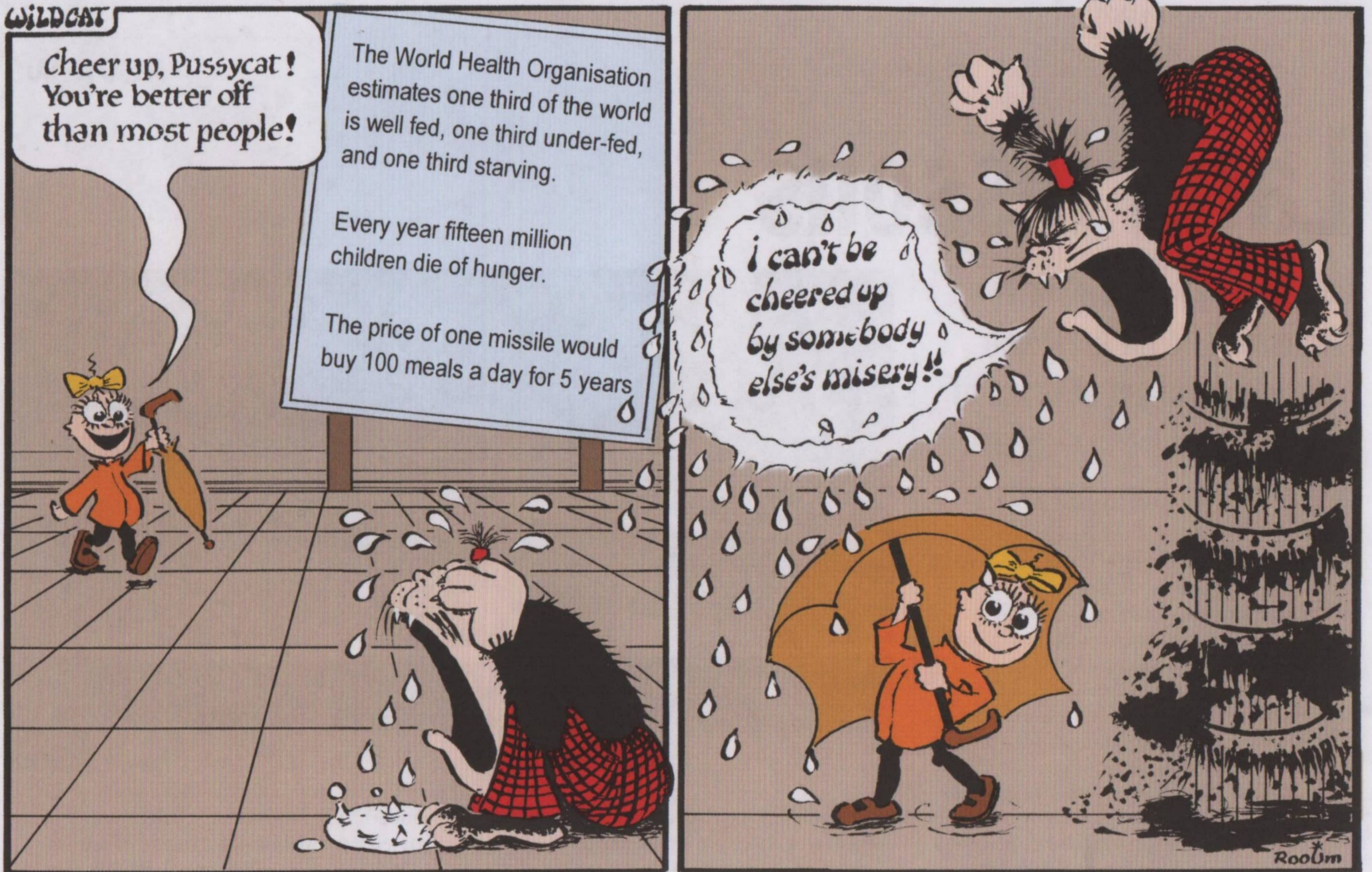
Femmes fatalistic

In contrast to Martel's self-critical gaze, Peruvian writer-director Claudia Llosa unapologetically privileges Andean perspectives in exploring the resilience of descendants of the Incas suffering double whammies of colonial legacy and contemporary capitalist primitive accumulation. Her portrayal of

modernity's ambivalently baleful influence somewhat ameliorates dangers of anthropological exoticisation by a dominant outsider – first in the quasi-ethnographic *Madeinusa* (2006) centred around an isolated Quéchua village and its carnivalesque Easter festival whose pagan-Catholic hybridity celebrates frenzied sin, with god pronounced temporarily dead. The Hollywood progression introduced via the well-worn Western trope of a stranded stranger upsetting applecarts of traditional power is reversed in *The Milk of Sorrow* (again starring the magnificent Magaly Solier, pictured above) where, rather than escaping the seedier suffocations of inward-looking communalism, a young woman deploys matrilineal folklore – even though it physically poisons her – to survive various ravages of European urbanity.

Perpetua's deathbed testimony recounts mass rape and spousal murder in their mountain village to her daughter Fausta (foetal at the time). This initial harrowing intimacy economically condenses the natives' unimaginable suffering – also causing controversy in blaming Maoist Shining Path guerrillas, whose rare leftist 'discipline' hardly matches the 1980s government forces' widespread deliberate practice of such tactics. Nevertheless both parties did terrorise the ancient settlements, whose traumatised inhabitants fled rural subsistence to city slums primed for superexploitation. Now, superstitiously infected by 'the frightened tit' (the film's Spanish title), Fausta plants a potato in her vagina to assuage mortal fears of sexual assault. But her mother's ancestral home burial requires considerable courage, as well as cash. Finding maidservice in a Lima mansion, she nourishes her soul rehearsing oral history according to Quéchua custom in haunting ballads – for which her concert pianist employer Aída promises to pay handsomely. Aída having stolen the melodies to refresh her jaded repertoire, Fausta is

WILDCAT



Review

◀ page 15

summarily dismissed without recompense – but then summons the strength to collect her dues, and duly does right by Perpetua.

Hamfisted Eurocentric portentousness is clearly risked here – from the Latinate names to inspiration not from direct engagement but case studies of the effects of political violence on women, especially in their role as carriers of culture, by a Harvard academic. But mythology is only ever apposite to concrete historical instances inevitably compromised by inherent contradictions – here rescued by Llosa's light touch on characters too fragile to bear the pompous symbolism of more lurid magic realisms. Yet the cold-heartedly capricious elite musician

must surely be interpreted as the director's dark alter-superego, justifying plunder by vilifying a rapacious imagined other. The immaculate cheerful positivity of the shanty town and Fausta's family – tribal wedding planners, no less – then represents a classic ruse displacing privileged bad faith, with the weight of the world on the victims given an unconscionably rosy glow to mitigate the oppressor's guilt while validating his/her objectifying sentimentality. Nonetheless the conflictual tangles of motivations infesting the identity politics in both Martel and Llosa's work do reach the surface for scrutiny, thanks to feminist sensibilities that grapple – if never satisfactorily – with the complex interplay of diverse dimensions of domination.

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

THE QUIZ

1. Which anarchist advertised Brylcreem?
2. What happened to the anarchist? And how did it jar with changes to the Brylcreem ad?
3. How has right-wing media mogul Glenn Beck been promoting anarchist publishers AK Press?
4. Current BNP leader Nick Griffin, was defeated in Barking. What spin did he put on his rejection by the voters of Barking?

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 (cheque payable to Freedom Press) or from freedompress.org.uk.

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