

FREEDOM

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EXPOSED TO POLITICAL POLICING

Infiltration of anarchist groups by undercover cops

Over the past few weeks details have been emerging, almost on a daily basis, of the extent of undercover police infiltration within UK political protest movements. So far four people have been positively identified and exposed as undercover police officers working inside anarchist, environmental and activist scenes stretching back over the past ten years, and overlapping into Europe. It makes for uncomfortable reading.

Mark Kennedy (who went by the name of Mark Stone) was outed as an undercover cop back in October 2010 and opened the floodgates into the rarely acknowledged world of secret political policing. Kennedy had spent at least eight years reporting back to his bosses at National Public Order Intelligence Unit (NPOIU) on the activities of environmental, anti-capitalist and anti-fascist groups. He was embedded within the radical environmental scene in Nottingham as far back as 2003, becoming heavily involved in the Dissent Network, which organised around the anti-G8 protests in Gleneagles 2005, and later Climate Camp. So far he is the only one to 'go public' about his true identity.

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LENS CAP A PROPER EDUCATION?



The first major student demonstration of the year saw several hundred young students defy police and march on Parliament Square to protest at the coalition's scrapping of the Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA) which would see thousands of students from poorer backgrounds deprived of essential financial aid to simply attend college.

BLAIR LIES TO IRAQ INQUIRY, AGAIN

Tony Blair, the New Labour war criminal sat impassively as he delivered his lines, rehearsed and well managed, before the Chilcot inquiry, a shallow PR performance that echoed his time in office as Labour leader, Sedgefield MP and prime minister.

The politician was forced to return on Friday 21st January to answer more questions at the Iraq war hearing due to discrepancies in his previous evidence and the contradictions between his testimony and other witnesses, especially the attorney general, Lord Goldsmith, whose legal warnings were originally ignored then denied by Blair.

What emerged was a man whose only loyalty was to George W. Bush and a US policy of invasion, war and bloodshed. What lay beneath the scripted answers, as he

struggled to ensure the soundbites got out, was that his obligation was not to his cabinet ministers, Parliament, or those who voted him into power, all of whom he deceived and lied to in order to secure consent to go to war, but to his political superior at the White House. An admission that was offered up in a casual almost mundane way during a day of undemanding questioning.

Blair revealed he hadn't shown his government any papers about plans for war, despite the ongoing preparation, and went on to declare "What I was saying to President Bush was very clear and simple: 'You can count on us. We are going to be with you in tackling this'" in secret documents a year before the issue of weapons of mass destruction arose.

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NEWS

IN BRIEF

BANKS: Barclays Bank in Dulwich got a visit in the early hours of 17th January – a flaming can of petrol was left at the entrance of the south London bank. Those claiming responsibility say it was a small attack on the banking system in solidarity with the Greek comrades in court on 19th January for the start of the Conspiracy of Cells of Fire trial.

FOOTBALL: Pompey fans held a demonstration before Portsmouth's home game with Leeds on Saturday 22nd January. Angry fans have organised the action group SOS Pompey to put pressure on the team's two owners to reveal the plans for the club. They fear the multi-millionaire businessmen and property developers, who only bought the club on a temporary basis, are deliberately running down the troubled team. The owners have already secured loans against the Fratton Park stadium and future television revenue but offered no transparency in their financial dealings.

OBITUARIES: Tributes continue to be published for Jayaben Desai, one of the most prominent and militant voices in the famous Grunwick strike of the 1970s who died in December aged 77 after a long illness. It is perhaps an indication of the importance of her role in the strike that she continues to be honoured, despite the betrayals of trade union officials. The Grunwick film processing plant, employing mostly Asian female labour, was the centre of a two-year dispute over union recognition. It was Desai who led the initial walk out and continued to be the voice of strikers, unrepentant and defiant throughout. She is rightly remembered a true working class heroine.

STRIKE: Workers at Wigan's Heinz factory, which produces the long-standing working class staple baked beans, are back at work after a 75% vote to accept a revised pay increase of just 3.9%. The drawn-out dispute ended after a compromise settlement was agreed by union officials and management. However many workers are far from happy with the deal as they will lose out in real terms. Unite union originally recommended they accept a 3.3% increase in line with management directions. Definitely a case of 'meanz heinz beanz'.

STUDENTS: Violence erupted at the eviction of the student occupation at Birmingham university on the evening of 18th January. Security guards, assisted by the police, viciously attacked students who had occupied the maths-physics bridge on their first day back at university. Witness testimony states the guards instigated unprovoked attacks on the occupiers in an attempt to evict them from the college premises. UCU representatives present were horrified at the level of violence used by both university staff and police on a peaceful occupation. At least three students are said to be pressing charges.

LENS CAP A HARD DAY'S PLIGHT



Liverpool Solidarity Federation have thrown their support behind the campaign to save Madryn street, the birthplace of Ringo Starr. The condemned housing was originally built for local dockers in an area known for its radical political tradition. But as Solfed make clear, "the streets should be spared, not because a Beatle used to live in one of the houses, but because they are part of our local working-class heritage."

Benefits claimants strike back

A national day of action was called for Monday 24th January against benefit cuts. The coalition's attack on societies poorest and most needy in order to force through their 'austerity measures' agenda is amplified through their all out assault on the benefit system.

With a call to focus on those companies who are set to make hundreds of millions out of benefit reforms, many groups chose to target Atos Origin, a private company who carry out medical assessments for people claiming Employment and Support Allowance (ESA), which is replacing Incapacity Benefit.

Atos Origin have just been awarded a £300 million contract by the Con-dem government to continue carrying out 'work capability assessments'. It is claimed assessments are to test what people can do rather than what they can't. The real purpose is to strip benefits from as many people as possible.

This testing system has already led to people with terminal illnesses and severe medical conditions being declared fit for work and having benefits cut. GP's are ignored in favour of decisions made by Atos Origin's computer. Plans announced for the scrapping of Disability Living Allowance have also revealed that this intrusive testing is likely to be extended to everyone on some form of disability or health related benefit. To date around 40% of appeals against Atos Origin's decisions have been successful.

The Government also plans to cut £2.5

billion from Employment Support Allowance. Plans to limit the benefit to just one year will mean that even those who are deemed unable to work will be presumed to have made a miraculous recovery. Meanwhile the budget for Disability Living Allowance is to be cut by 20%.

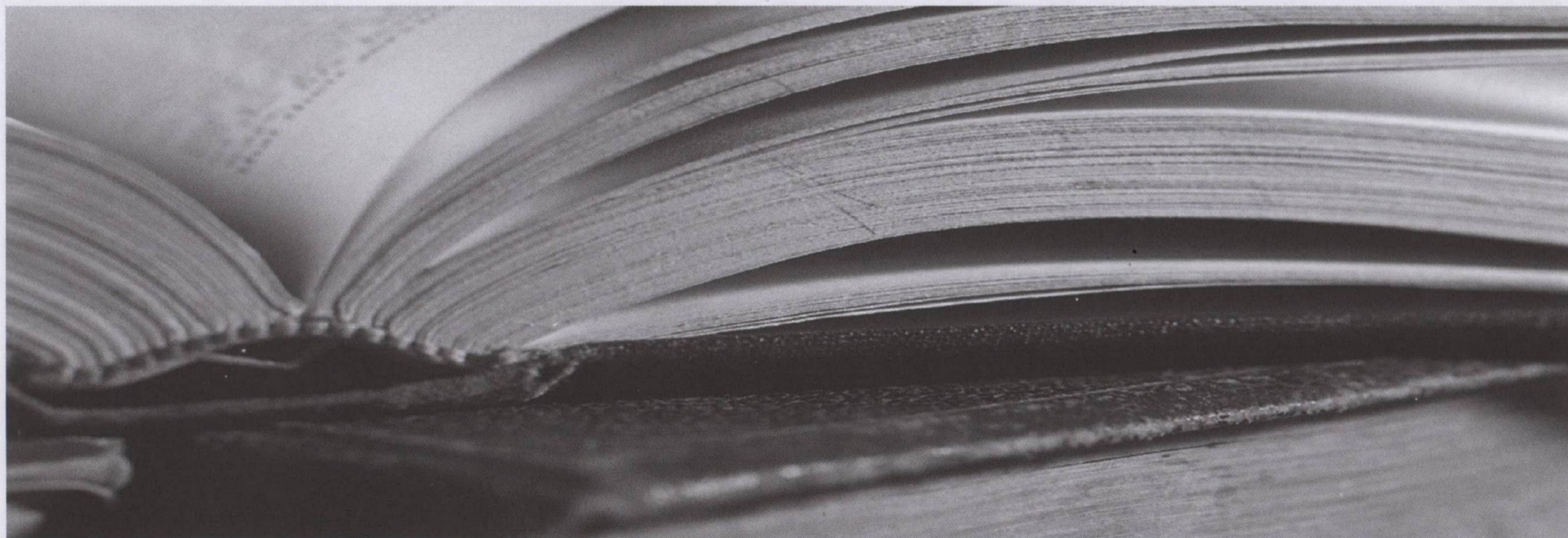
With the recent changes in Housing Benefit and possible changes to Council Tax benefit, these cuts will leave hundreds of thousands of people with severe health problems without enough money to feed themselves and heat their homes.

In London there was a party and a picnic in Triton Square near Euston, the headquarters of Atos Origin Ltd. Beforehand Haringey Claimants Action Group and Islington Poverty Action Group, along with a lively crowd, demonstrated outside Atos Healthcare in north London.

In Scotland protestors targeted Atos Origin's Scotland Office in Livingston, not far from Edinburgh, while there was an anti-benefit cuts leafleting outside Atos in Glasgow.

Atos will also be the scene of a protest in Leeds called by West Yorkshire Solidarity Federation along with local claimants who picketed outside Atos then moved on to another notorious parasite on benefit claimants, A4e, at noon

Tyneside Claimants Union met at the offices of Newcastle A4e for a Protest and Picnic Against Benefit Cuts and Poverty Pimps. Here were other such actions and similar protests up and down the country.



Burning learning

How councils are neutralising the library resistance

A little bookworm has, in between tutting about the state of the cataloguing system, been giving *Freedom* an inside story about council tactics to shut down a third of our libraries.

From their cosy paper nest in East Anglia, they've carefully bookmarked the phrase 'divide and rule'.

Somewhere between 800 and 1,300 libraries are due for closure thanks to cuts to council budgets, but in Suffolk at least, the plan is not to pick their paper-pushing victims out of the whole crop.

After much glaring over glasses, it has been acknowledged that it will not be possible to run the biggest and busiest buildings through the phantom volunteers of the Big Society.

Libraries are thus being subjected to a division into 'good and bad' which will see some left untouched while other are left for the vultures. But this has allowed the council

to effectively break up solidarity between librarians by telling most people their job is secure – undermining the collective will to stick their necks out.

Without the backing of the biggest institutions, individual libraries with small staffing numbers and less public backing are going to be faced with the full force of the cuts machine, making it much less likely they will survive.

Our bookworm tells us that in Suffolk, the policy has helped dull dissent despite headline protests from the usual worthy TUC suspects.

The little libraries are very much the front line for the service, working in communities which often have little else as places for self-education, internet access and crucially, says our bookworm, as drop-ins for the socially excluded. As the wealthy can use their ability to travel to the bigger, unthreatened centres, the entire mess will fall on the shoulders of those least able to bear it.

Despite such tactics, some strong initial steps have been taken to save little 'uns from extinction.

In Stony Stratford near Milton Keynes, and Newport on the Isle of Wight, mass withdrawals have been stage in highly-visible displays of support, temporarily emptying the libraries entirely.

Online, a highly effective writing campaign has been launched by voicesforthelibrary.org.uk, which is also carrying information about exactly what is happening around the country.

The justifications for the destruction of a third of the library system meanwhile – that technology has moved on and usage has dwindled, have been dealt a serious blow as library stalwarts hunt down the facts.

Demand for the system has actively been growing year on year, with 1.8 million more books being issued in 2009/10 than in 2007/8 – over 309 million and counting. Visits stand at 440 million.

Reprieves have already been won in Doncaster, Somerset and Merton, showing that paper can beat rock. If such local groups can link up into a nationwide network, then the divide and rule tactic may be truly beatable.

Rob Ray

Exposed to political policing

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A female undercover cop known as Lyn Watson was also involved in Dissent and Climate Camp. She was embedded in Leeds in 2005, disappearing from the activist community some time in 2008. Suspicions had already been raised about her, later to be confirmed by Kennedy in the press, admitting she was part of the same unit. The third undercover cop and last to be exposed publicly was Jim Boyling who was involved in Reclaim The Streets, the London based anti-car, anti-capitalist environmentalist group, during its most active period in the late 1990s.

The other is a Mark Jacobs. Having unsuccessfully attempted to latch onto the Brighton activist scene around the time of Dissent, he moved on to the Cardiff Anarchist

Network (CAN), who were one of the more active groups organising around the G8. Jacobs is interesting as he infiltrated an anarchist group rather than the eco-activist scene. Whereas Kennedy, Watson and Boyling played a very pro-active role in the groups they were involved in, Jacobs was considered a disruptive and divisive element in CAN.

Despite going public, Kennedy has said little about the intelligence gathering role of these agents – why these groups were targeted, what was the information being passed on and for what purpose. What is known is that he was a serving Met officer who was contracted out to work for NPOIU who not only bankrolled his eight years undercover,

using taxpayers money, but were not accountable under normal policing procedures (see page 4 of this issue of *Freedom* for information on the shadowy intelligence gathering bodies).

What does this mean for radical political groups still active and organising? Anarchists throughout history have always been the target of state repression and it should come as no surprise that our actions and activities are being monitored both overtly and covertly. Involving ourselves in political struggle and advocating revolutionary social change will always attract the attention of those in authority, and as such we must be prepared to confront such institutions however they present themselves.

ANALYSIS

Acronyms of the state

A brief introduction into the police surveillance agencies

In 1998, with the rise of the roads protest movement the National Public Order Intelligence Unit (NPOIU) was created at Scotland Yard, widening the remit to include the monitoring of environmentalists. It brought Animal Rights National Index (ARNI), at that time lead by 'Rod' Leeming, and a number of other small intelligence gathering units from around the country under its wing. Leeming, a Special Branch officer, appears to have risen to the head of NPOIU, but left the force in 2001 to form Global Open Ltd, a private security firm openly marketing itself as a resource for companies affected by protest. The revolving door between police specialising in protest movements and these companies is another story waiting to be told.

A new political strategy: 'domestic extremism'

However, ARNI failed to stop the growth of the animal rights movement, which if anything was getting stronger. After a decade of victories and high profile campaigns the crunch came in 2003/4 when large pharmaceutical companies started threatening to pull out of the UK in the face of sustained campaigns from the likes of Stop Huntingdon Animal Cruelty and others. Tony Blair met with representatives of the pharmaceutical companies and the security agencies at a secret meeting in Oxford. A new strategy was being created, one that gave birth to NETCU.

The aim was to explore new, political ways in which campaigns and protests could be countered and marginalised. It would actively work with the media, lawyers and corporations to achieve this. Protest groups were to be re-branded as 'extremist', starting with the animal rights movement – the whipping boy used to justify bringing in various measures curtailing protest in general. 'Domestic extremism' has no legal definition, as opposed to 'terrorism' which does. However, in the words of NETCU, it is defined by the police as: "... the activity, individuals or campaign groups that carry out criminal acts of direct action in furtherance of a campaign. These people and activities usually seek to prevent something from happening or to change legislation or domestic policy, but attempt to do so outside of the normal democratic process."

As, however, the intention behind it was inherently political, an arms-length approach was needed. The solution was to do it under the aegis of the Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO). Its membership consists of all the top ranking police officers; it is also an independent organisation providing consultancy work to the various police forces



and the Home Office. As such, it is not actually part of the police and does not have to answer Freedom of Information requests. This is despite the large number of police seconded to work for ACPO, and the fact that many of its operations are based at police headquarters. By 2010 they had a budget of £8.1 million and approximately a hundred staff.

Several units were formed including NETCU and the National Domestic Extremism Team (NDET). All this was to be overseen by the National Domestic Extremism Co-ordinator (NDEC). NPOIU would also be brought into the fold, with the SDS now morphing into a sub-unit known as the Confidential Intelligence Unit (CIU). 'Confidential intelligence' being a euphemism for 'human intelligence', that the CIU ran the infiltrators and informers focused on protest movements. All the units are based at Scotland Yard, with the exception of NETCU which was head-quartered at Hinchingsbrook police station in Cambridge.

Another unit which is part of the Metropolitan Police has the job of carrying out on the ground policing of demonstrations in London, and with whom NETCU and NPOIU are often associated. Called Central Operations 11 (CO11), also called the 'Public Order Operational Command Unit', it is the unit that runs many of the Forward Intelligence Teams (FIT), that are now regular features at protests.

There are a number of FIT officers who, given their wide-spread experience of protests – in many cases starting with animal rights demonstrators before broadening their work – appear to have been seconded pretty much permanently to NPOIU.

At the same time as awareness of NETCU was growing, the reaction against FIT was also taking place. Though connected, and with overlapping purposes, there has been a steady confusion that FIT and NETCU are

one and the same, perhaps giving NETCU a more fearsome reputation than it otherwise might have. FIT are as likely to be working for or in conjunction with the NPOIU.

However, the campaign against the FIT lead by FITwatch brought not just active resistance to the police's attempts to gather information on demonstrators, but raised the profile of the reasons for it.

Late 2010 it emerged that the domestic extremism units were to be merged, and brought back 'in-house'. That meant that they would no longer be independent of the mainstream police forces by being part of ACPO. In 2009 the 'Inspectorate of Constabulary' produced a report which criticised the grey area in which ACPO operated, including the domestic extremism units and the "lack of clarity" over the role of FIT.

Key findings were: "Uncertainty about the governance and accountability mechanisms best suited to support public order policing at both the national and local levels: the Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO) must have transparent governance and accountability structures, particularly when it is engaged in quasi-operational roles, such as the collation and retention of personal data. There is a need to clarify the monitoring role for police authorities in relation to large scale public order operations – currently there is no guidance for them.

Review of the status of the Association of Chief Police Officers to ensure transparent governance and accountability structures, especially in relation to its quasi-operational role of the commissioning of intelligence and the collation and retention of data."

It is believed that this report led to the re-organisation which will see the units brought back under the aegis of the Metropolitan Police.

Information courtesy of Corporate Watch
<http://www.corporatewatch.org.uk/>

NEWS IN BRIEF

ANTI-FASCISM: An anti-fascist who was arrested during the anti-EDL demonstration in Bolton last year walked free from court after the charges against him were dropped. Having been dragged from the crowd and charged with threatening behaviour, independent film footage disclosed to the prosecution before the trial showed the police were lying about their actions. In typical understatement, the Crown Prosecution Service conceded that "One or two things appear to be somewhat inconsistent with the way the prosecution case was brought. There is doubt about how the case was pursued."

EDUCATION: One of the coalition's flagship free schools has come under criticism for excluding pupils from poorer backgrounds. The Bolingbroke Academy in Battersea, South London, set up by City finance firms, is refusing to take pupils from the local school on the nearby council estate. Bolingbroke, funded by the taxpayer but run as a private facility with no local council involvement, was agreed by Tory-controlled Wandsworth council which is spending £13m buying the site and using more public cash to convert it into a school to the tune of £6m a year.

LAW: Research published suggests that a working-class accent could damage your chances of finding a training contract in the legal profession. The study in the *Law Gazette* revealed prominent law firms favour candidates with 'smart' accents and public school backgrounds. It found that good working-class candidates are being rejected in favour of middle-class graduates.

Dr Louise Ashley, who led the study, said that more than 90% of the lawyers surveyed had fathers who had been managers or senior officials, while at two of the firms more than 70% of lawyers were privately educated.

PROPERTY: New Labour's most successful party leader has just bought his eighth home. The ex-prime minister and war criminal Tony Blair is spending his hard earned cash on buying up properties for his family. Having secured a nice little earner on the lecture circuit telling the rich and powerful how war should be done, the New Labour spiv and religious zealot is considering a guest appearance on television's *Property Ladder*. The latest purchase is said to cost £1.3 million for a central London house for his daughter.

TRADE UNIONS: The high court has once again intervened to prevent legitimate strike action going ahead. A strike by RMT workers on the Docklands Light Railway has been deemed unlawful by Mr Justice Tugendhat because of a legal technicality, despite 162 workers, out of 175 balloted, voting for strike action. The tendency for bosses to use the law courts to prevent industrial action is becoming an all too common tactic undermining the basic right for anyone to withhold their labour, indeed making it unlawful to do so.

Watching the corporates

Second in the series of groups using the Freedom Press building

You last heard from the folk at the Corporate Watch workers' co-op in October 2010 when we were gearing up to the London Anarchist Bookfair. Since then, we have been braving the freezing Freedom building almost daily to work on our various projects.

Our next newsletter will be coming out in the next week or so. It's about free papers and it'll include articles on the history of free papers and how they've hampered investigative journalism; the history of spoof papers; a company profile of News Corporation; business models of free and pay-for papers; and the 'intellectual cleansing' that happens when working for corporate media.

In February, we're launching an exciting new project – a website called 'Corporate Rule'. It will contain original resources on many aspects of how corporations rule our lives, such as corporate control of resources, philanthropy, corporate technology, and the complex relationships between governments, global institutions and corporations. The aim is for the site to be updated by people as they use it, in order to build up a useful and comprehensive resource for critical analysis of current corporate-controlled global politics.

So far, there isn't an accessible, anti-capitalist resource that brings together these issues. We want to contribute towards the development of our collective understanding of the widespread inter-relationships between corporations and the state, which continue to change and manifest themselves in different

ways. Knowledge about how corporate control operates is essential to our struggle against these, often complex, mechanisms. Look out for the launch of the site in a month's time and if you'd like to contribute anything you've written or suggest any resources, get in touch.

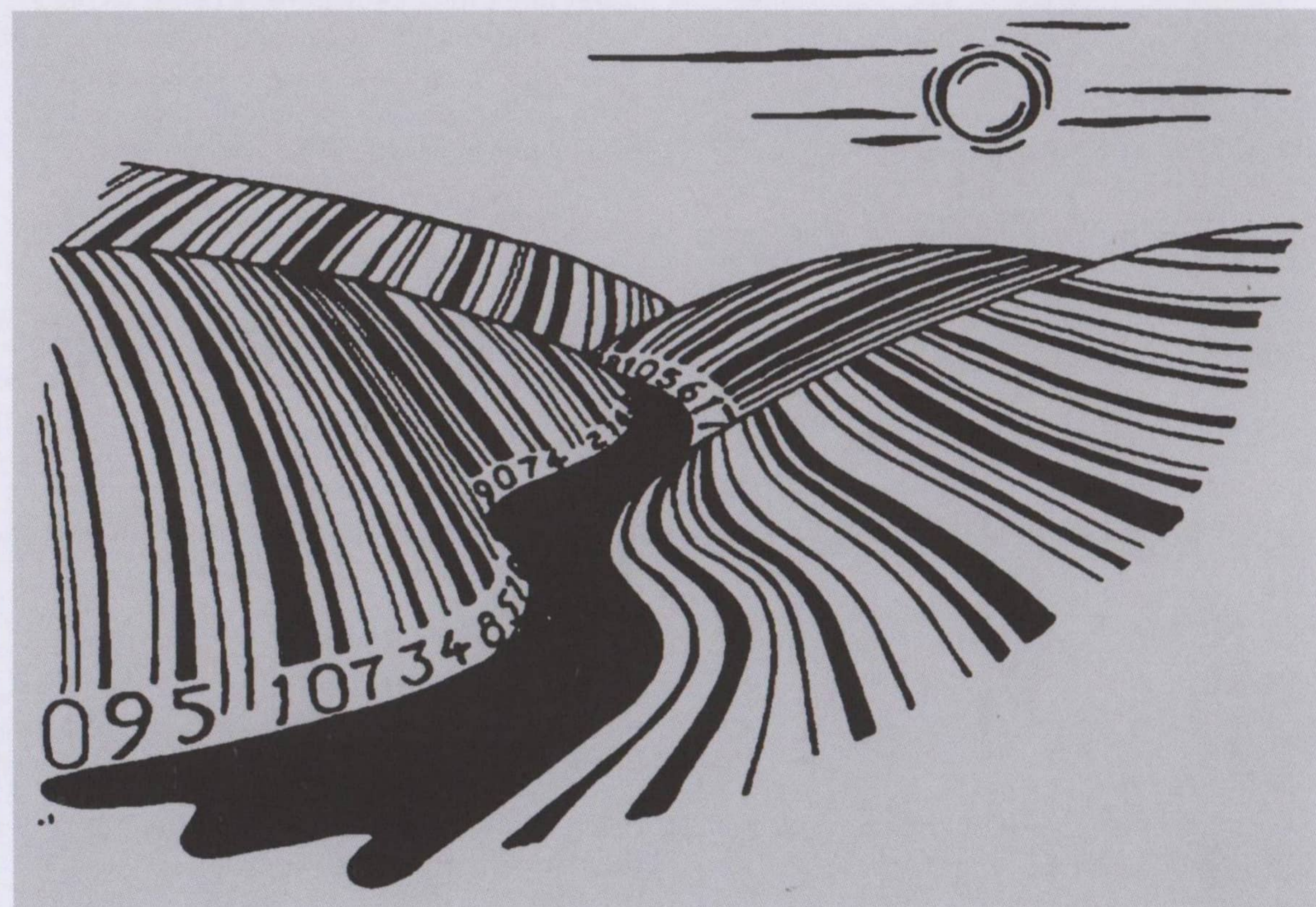
When we last wrote in *Freedom*, we mentioned a project on privatisation: a toolkit for anti-privatisation campaigners. This is now underway and will be launched in three months. It will provide resources and arguments for campaigners to use and will include a history of privatisation and commercialisation in the UK, in-depth interviews with campaigners involved in current struggles, a glossary of terms used in pro-privatisation rhetoric as well as analysis of mechanisms of privatisation. If you'd like to be interviewed or contribute to this project, get in touch.

The co-op have been continuing with our various other projects, such as a blog on banking and finance. Recent articles on our website have included: one on the history of NETCU and political policing; GM corruption in Germany and a new generation of GM activism in Europe; corporate espionage; big business and Wikileaks; the cuts as profit opportunities and the UNFCCC in Cancun.

In the near future, we'll be bringing out a pamphlet on the Olympics and how it has affected cities throughout the world, as well as an in-depth report on Palestine and a briefing on bio-energy. We'll be doing more work on climate issues soon and we're always looking for volunteers to help with research, so if you have any spare time and fancy writing something, that really would be great.

All the best from the co-op, see you in the streets.

contact@corporatewatch.org



INTERNATIONAL

IN BRIEF

ARGENTINA: Hundreds of railway workers blocked Buenos Aires' main train station at peak hour to protest the murder of a Workers' Party activist Mariano Ferreyra. Ferreyra is supposed to have been shot in October last year by supporters of a trade union – Jose Pedraza and Juan Carlos Fernandez, whose prosecution the activists demand. There have been several protests last year, and the activists threaten to carry on until their demands are met.

GERMANY: An East German village, Jamel, has been 'seized' by Neo-Nazis, according to a report made originally in the *Daily Telegraph*. Swastikas adorn windows and a plaque at the village entrance declares: 'Village of Jamel – free, social and national', making it a 'nationally liberated zone' according to one apprehensive resident. The local mayor says neither the police nor the authorities are taking any action.

IVORY COAST: The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) has urged the UN Security Council to authorise forceful intervention against Laurent Gbagbo, who's sticking to the presidency, while the UN recognises Alassane Outtara as the legitimate winner of the recently held presidential elections. Outtara has also called for a ban on the exports of cocoa, trading in which accounts for 20% of the GDP.

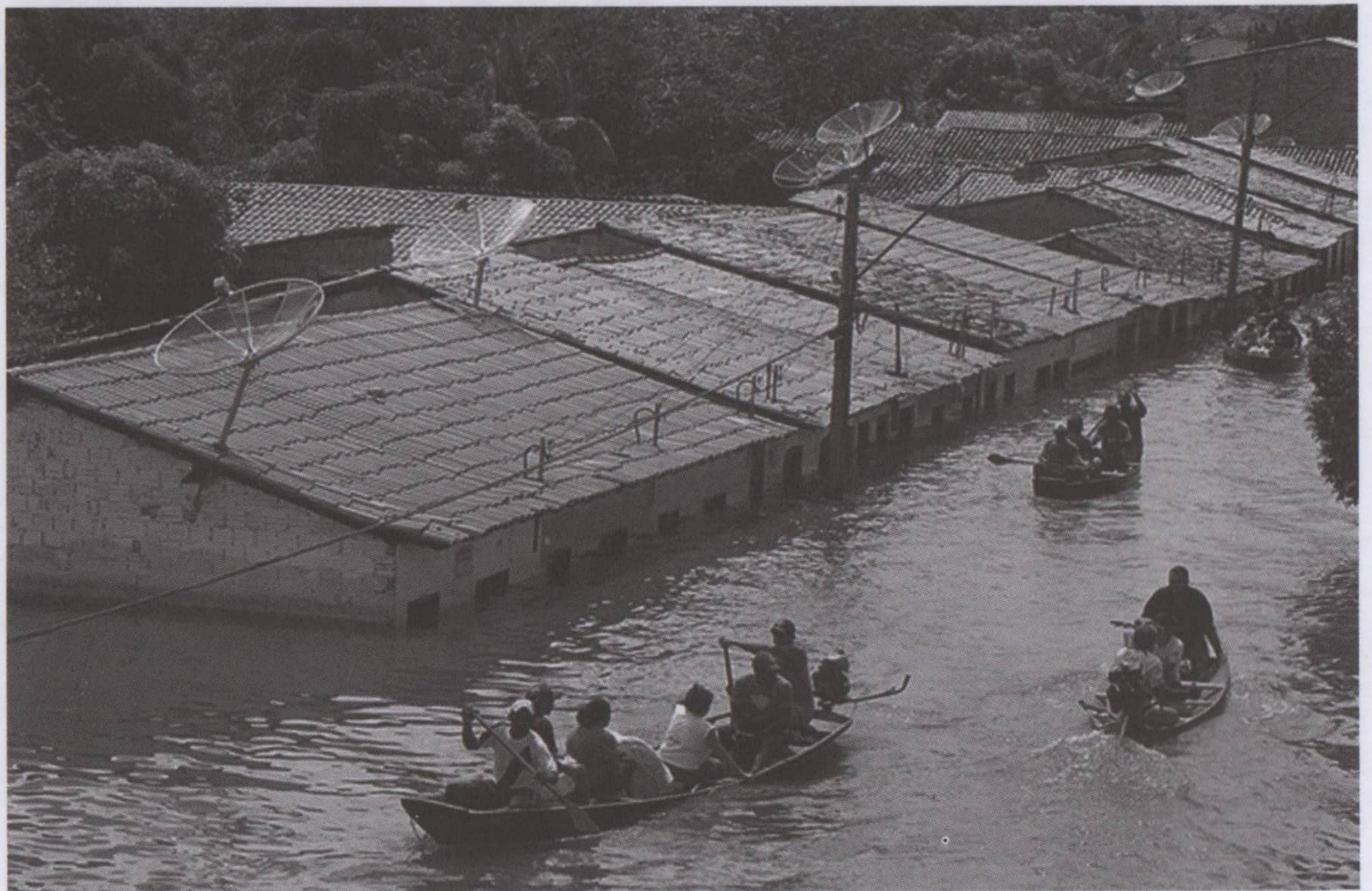
MIDDLE-EAST: Anti-Slavery International and International Trade Union Confederation will begin a campaign to protect immigrant Nepali labourers' rights in the Gulf States. There are an estimated 700,000 Nepalis in the Gulf working legally or illegally in highly underpaid jobs. The immigrants, who end up getting paid peanuts or nothing at all, are mostly recruited by dubious recruitment agencies. The workers, whose visas do not allow them to change employment get trapped in forced labour situation.

PAKISTAN: Over 10,000 people, organised by activists of Jamaat-i-Islami, marched in Peshawar on the 23rd January to oppose US drone attacks, which last year killed around 1,200 civilians. The activists are calling for the arrest and trial of key US officials involved. These attacks, unsanctioned by the UN, have escalated under Obama's rule.

SRI LANKA: In an outrageous show of authority, a new law-to-be will require all university students to undergo a mandatory 'leadership training' in military camps, including waking up on time, how to sit and stand and also 'how to use cutlery'.

SWITZERLAND: A Swiss banker, Rudolf Elmer, has been arrested for handing information to WikiLeaks about 2,000 major tax evaders – both individuals and companies, including 40 politicians. It's not certain if Elmer has broken any laws by doing so, but he can be held for 48 hours without charge.

LENS CAP SOUTH AMERICAN FLOODS



In Brazil's worst natural disaster in recent years, floods and resulting landslides have killed more than 800 people, almost a third children, and rendered thousands homeless. Whole neighbourhoods are reported to be wiped out in the south-eastern region of the country. Many are angry at being abandoned by the government in terms of aid and rescue.

Apple under attack in China

Apple's i-phone might be the coolest thing, but the story behind it is not so cool. A survey conducted in China by 36 NGOs and led by the Institute of Public and Environmental Affairs, and Friends of Nature, has found Apple guilty of gross labour rights violations and neglect of environmental standards.

The study, which spread over nine months and covered seven of the company's sub-contractors, found that at least 200 of the manufacturing workers under the various subcontractors have become sick. And this isn't an exception. Last year 13 workers at Foxconn, a major subcontractor of Apple, committed suicides because of ill-treatment.

Another Taiwanese-owned subcontractor, Lianjian Technology, effectively poisoned 47 of its employees when they were made to use N-Hexane rather than a non-toxic

chemical to clean touchscreen glass. Following protests in January last year, the company had to pay 80,000 yuan (around \$ 12,000) in fine. This has led the NGOs to nickname Apple the 'sweatshop brand'.

Despite all that, Apple refuses to name its suppliers and denies the allegations. CEO Steve Jobs reportedly said, "You should educate yourself. We do more than any other company on the planet." Other multinationals that have been named on this illustrious list include Nokia, LG, Sony among others, while companies like BT, Vodafone, Hewlett-Packard and others were found to be just about keeping to the law.

Now we know the secret to China's success in global economy: to beef up the multinationals while ruthlessly exploiting its own workers.

Notes from the US

Let's start with some good news: in mid January the state Senate in Illinois approved a ban on capital punishment; this followed a House vote there the previous week.

Although the governor, Pat Quinn, has not yet indicated if he will sign it into law (he has the power to veto it), supporters of the measure believe he will. State murder there was suspended in January 2000 when it emerged that at least 20 prisoners on death row were innocent. Illinois will be the first state to abolish state executions since 2009.

Not so encouraging is news that the new Republican-led Congress plans to repeal recent healthcare 'reform' (even though the Associated Press reported at about the same time that only 30% of people now strongly oppose the new healthcare law, only half as many as polled at the start of the month); and to halt what paltry and token attempts have been made as nods in the direction of tackling climate change (they see the crisis as left wing rhetoric). Their plan was published as new figures announced this month by the

Tunisia and the ripple effect

The Tunisian uprising, dubbed the Jasmine Revolution, has emboldened the people of surrounding nations to try and do the same – take to the streets and force political reforms.

In Algeria, where street protests have been banned since 1992, five people have been reported dead due to political unrest. Still, people continue to organise pro-democracy rallies and demonstrations.

In Egypt, two men died by setting themselves on fire on 18th January in protest against economic hardship. Even while appearing confident, Egypt's ruling elite must be quite rattled by people's new-found boldness, since in Syria, the President Bashar al-Assad has backed down from imposing austerity measures. People in Egypt have called for a nationwide protest to be held on 25th of this month.

In Yemen, a tamer agitation for regime change has led to the arrest of journalist and activist Tawakkol Karman, the head of Women Journalists Without Chains. In protests held on 23rd one person died and about 20 have been arrested. Although Yemen purports to be a 'democracy', President Ali Abdullah Saleh has been in power for more than thirty years. The arrest of Karman can only make the situation worse.

People have also been taking to the streets in Jordan and Albania demanding democratic reforms. In Tirana, Albania's capital, three protesters were shot and killed by police. One of the shootings has been captured on film. The trigger for all of these protests is the same: rising costs of essential goods and widespread unemployment.

In Tunisia itself, protests haven't abated yet. The interim government headed by the ousted President Ben Ali's Prime Minister



Police clash with protestors in Tunisia on 17th January 2011.

Mohammed Ghannouchi and other old-timers has not pleased anyone. Tunisia's main union, UGTT, has called for the dissolution of the interim government and the formation of a 'national salvation government' with new politicians. Teachers across the nation have gone on strike to demand the removal of Ben Ali-associated politicians from power.

Although the Prime Minister has 'promised' free elections within six months, no timeline has been set, making the people even more skeptical. A sleep-in was also organised close to the prime minister's office. Meanwhile,

Ben Ali is in hiding in Saudi Arabia.

Although the ongoing protests have been largely non-violent, the death toll from the protests throughout this month and the last in Tunisia has been 66 to 78, according to different accounts. The UN puts the number as high as a hundred.

Agriculture ministers from Germany, Poland, Ukraine, France, Morocco, Kenya and Canada in an exclusive meeting have warned of further political instability if food prices keep on rising, while the mainstream media studiously ignores the economic causes behind the political changes.

Notes from the US

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National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration identify 2010 as the hottest year on record; the previous decade included nine of the 10 hottest years ever recorded.

Afghanistan

In other news of violence and aggression, a study released in mid January by the Afghan government shows US-led military actions are responsible for over US\$100 (£63) million of damages – specifically to homes and crops (mostly fruit) in southern Kandahar province. In 2010 there were tens of thousands of terrorist offensives by the US. Mohammad Sadiq (Afghan presidential adviser) said that the so-called 'Hope' military operation "has inflicted severe damage on the people there".

Subpoenas and spying

In an extremely disturbing development in the WikiLeaks story, it emerged early this

month that on 14th December last year the US Department of Justice issued subpoenas to Twitter demanding personal records, logs and IP addresses, etc., of those following WikiLeaks. It's unclear how far this demand extends.

It was also confirmed that the FBI continues to infiltrate peace groups: 'Karen Sullivan' began to attend meetings of the Twin Cities Anti-War Committee during their planning of events to respond to the Republican National Convention in the summer of 2008. 'Sullivan' played a active part in the work of the group; she chaired meetings, worked with the group's accounts and liaised with many similar organisations. She even had a key to the group's office, which she used to facilitate the FBI's eventual raid there that September, shortly before which she suddenly left the area.

Louis Further

March in Phoenix

A band of anarchists, number unknown, marched in the streets of the art district of Phoenix, USA on the first Friday of this year. The march was in solidarity with immigrants who were killed by Phoenix police. Two young immigrants were found dead in a canal, and a third person – only 17 years old – was shot dead by a Border Patrol cop while trying to climb a wall at Nogales.

According to the flyer by the Phoenix anarchists, indigenous peoples, especially of O'adham, have been subject to repeated police repression and abuse. Last October another young immigrant, Danny Rodriguez, was murdered by a cop.

The anarchists accuse local human rights activists of silence and negligence in this matter. Despite allegations of brutality and corruption against the Phoenix police no punitive action seems to be taken against them.

Network X – the gathering of the tribes

Freedom attended the Network X gathering in Manchester on 15th and 16th January – the largest political gathering of radicals since the Anarchist Movement conference in 2009. We asked those who attended to feedback their thoughts on the event. Below are the responses which, due to space, have been edited down (sometimes severely), for which we apologise. The full text of those who contributed will be put on the Freedom website.

Where to Network X?

Before it started it raised much curiosity and expectation from many of the London anarchists who attended it, including myself. I was there in the hope that this new endeavour in the anti-authoritarian political scene might help consolidate the anti-austerity movement among anarchists and ‘activists’, and help bridge the gap between us and the students.

But the conference, when it started, addressed no such issues. Because there was no clear purpose to the conference, it turned out to be a mere talk-shop of political ideas. Attendees were made to sit and discuss meaningful agenda points such as politics, strategy and organization, but these weren’t in relation to Network X (at least, not in my group). There were some useful discussions on outreach, direct action, political outlook etc but without an anchor to give these discussions a coherence and purpose, they remained general. Sometimes, the facilitator of a group presented the ideas discussed poorly during the feedback, and that put me off.

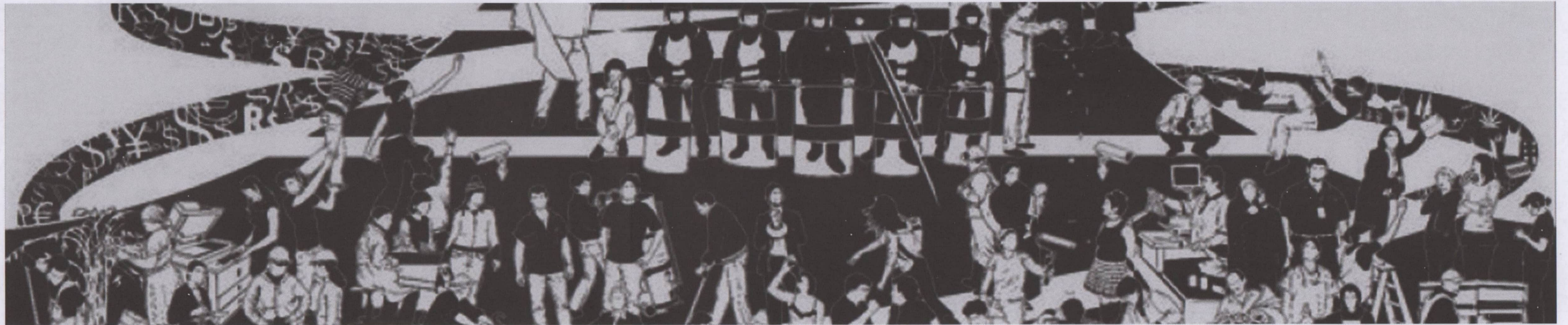
At one point, the hall was opened up to a discussion of what Network X should be (much too late into the conference). Amidst much confusion and argument, the only conclusion arrived at that I could discern was that the idea of a national network is still new but useful in the near future, and that it might help coordinate our disparate actions.

Student agitator

Network X Network why?

That there was not enough time devoted (on a gathering wide scale) for discussion, re: what it was that had brought us there beyond the call-out, what Network X should be, let alone whether another network was at all necessary, let alone desirable. Without this conversation, people quickly reverted to ‘stock positions’ in order to guide their activity. There was no fresh collective experimentation with politics or form and no broad attempts to understand what was so unique and transformative about the student/education struggles and why these have inspired us.

This ‘return to type’ was best expressed on the Sunday when 61 ‘class struggle’ activists spent two hours producing a pretty standard set of ‘anarchist’ points and principles for a



‘network’ which at that point may not even have existed! Nonetheless this may prove useful as ‘Network X’ may have provided a platform by which the various federations can continue to work together in the face of the coming austerity.

On the other side of the room the majority of ‘activists’ planned actions without a strategic/political discussion to guide activity. Repeating the ‘do something’ mantra of uncritical activism. It should also be noted that their culture and decision making structure was also imposed on all in attendance.

The proof of the pudding as they say is in the eating. I’m not that hopeful that Network X can break with the cycle of subcultural repetition that ultimately becomes a stopgap to our method of struggle/our ideas from generalising. But if there is another gathering perhaps a commitment to discussion and experimentation would leave people with a feeling that their time had not been totally wasted even if this led to no ‘concrete activity’.

Anonymous

Networking X wise

It was great to see so many people who are all determined to do something about the current wave of cuts, with the ambition not just to try and save what we have, but to fight for a world that is fairer and freer than what has gone before. However, I feel that the time could have been used more productively. In particular, there were issues that slowed us down and I think should be avoided in future.

Something that didn’t work is trying to sideline political theory in attempt to make more action-based decisions. Unless we are clear about what type of problem we are facing, and what we are fighting for, it is hard to decide on strategy and actions. I felt that the debate about whether we should talk about political theory or strategy/

action didn’t lead anywhere interesting. I do not agree that whether we talk about politics depends on whether we are a group or a network: it is potentially illuminating to discuss politics because people will have different ideas, but we may discover broad ideas that we can agree on, even if the details and emphasis remain contested. Both politics and strategy are important, and I think both need to be talked about.

Anonymous

Organising an alternative

An event such as Network X was never going to come up with a Master Strategy for the struggle ahead, or even a single banner that all non-hierarchical, decentralised groups can unite around. That would have been implausible with such a diverse group of independent-minded activists over the course of a single weekend, and I doubt it was ever the intention of those who put the call out. Its real value lay in providing a space for people to explore ideas and strategy, share skills and experience and build the friendships and organisational links that will be vital to building a widespread movement to resist the Coalition’s blitzkrieg against working people.

As is usually the case, it was the small group discussions and workshops, and the drinking in the bar later, that was most productive in this respect. The larger group meetings were slow and infuriating at times and I saw more than a few activists get up and leave during what seemed like an interminable discussion on Sunday morning about what process should be used for deciding what Network X is (if anything!). Amongst the political and strategic wrangling, one definite point of agreement I was able to detect was that none of us want to relive that familiar impotent feeling of passively shuffling from A to B at the TUC’s ‘March for the alternative’ on 26th March – we want to be heard, not herded as it were.

Many of the people engaging in anti-capitalist politics for the first time are searching for new sources of inspiration and ideas outside of the suffocating structures of some far left organisations. If Network X can do what it can to encourage and build this energy, by providing a space for people to meet, discuss and plan on and offline, then it will definitely have proved its value.

Guy C

A few reflections

It isn’t okay to ask for proposals under 150 or 250 words so they can be printed, and then not print them. I don’t accept that the one-line summary of the proposal my group submitted was a comprehensive reflection of its content. We wanted to put the proposal as it was written, not as an facilitator/organiser decided to frame it. (If, at a student union meeting, the president rewrote all the motions in her or his own preferred form before discussion, we’d think that was outrageous, right?)

If there’s a proposal to significantly change the agenda, it shouldn’t be spirited out of feedback, but made from the floor in front of the whole meeting by someone who actually wants it to happen enough to propose it and argue for it.

Another example of this was the setting of the questions for the politics and strategy/organisation discussions. Who asked the facilitators to come up with a series of questions, and define the agenda of that discussion? The most democratic way would have been to take the proposals for discussion and start with them.

This is what Starhawk says about one of the preconditions of consensus decision making: “A group thinking process cannot work effectively unless the group is cohesive enough to generate shared attitudes and perceptions. When deep divisions exist within a group’s bonding over their individual desires, consensus becomes an exercise in

frustration.” I think that a lot of the time we were partaking in an exercise in frustration, and that’s why. It isn’t enough to say ‘yeah but we put the PGA hallmarks on the website’, because a) they are incomplete and partial, and not enough to establish the basis for consensus in the current environment; b) they are the product of an earlier movement operating in a different time, they don’t really answer the questions we have today, and from the first session, a significant number didn’t think them to be a clear of adequate basis for discussion.

Something about process, and the problems of the small group discussion followed by feedback. It’s frustrating if it’s just feedback and not a collective discussion. I really, profoundly disagree with things like ‘the importance of growing our own vegetables’ – but I didn’t feel like there was any way to challenge it. I understand the good reasons to break down into small groups, but unless there’s also a collective conversation that comes out of it, it ends up being totally diffuse, and we never move closer toward being a coherent whole.

TC

The good the bad and the ugly

The primary focus of Network X was the libertarian milieu; climate camp, other ecological activists, established class struggle organisations, and looser groups were there too. The improvised format was a mix of largely plenary conference-like gatherings and small workshop sessions that fed back into the plenaries, approx six at a time, with an emphasis on participation.

Plenary sessions were held in order for the participants to discuss and contextualise the limits and possibilities of the agenda, which seemed to mutate like a mutating thing at times. Overall, continuing recent radical history, the way these events are organised precludes any old left domination. This was an opportunity for members/activists of a

range of networks and (potential)networks to gather in person to conspire, discuss and make the necessary steps forward to pose questions of student struggle, economic cuts, relationships with trade unions and protest groups, and plan further and other activity and growth.

Will we return to our busy everyday life after the hype recedes or strive for a deep commitment to libertarian cooperation? It is urgent to collectively attempt to see what happens if and when networks becomes the driving force we need. How can this network maintain its critical edge when going beyond what it is today? It must get bigger and more politically relevant or it will fail.

In this first loose and unstructured stage Network X was good enough. However, to be worthwhile and relevant the most pressing question is whether this informal network can transform into a more organised and political network that constantly engages and tests participation in and beyond the Network in relationships with the emerging crisis. Carrying on growing, including original participants and gaining more – a session on practical and targeted networking to build Network X may have been useful.

Organising such a network does not necessarily mean the end of spontaneity and the rise of rigid rules and hierarchies. Hopefully this proposed organised network can provide an environment for sustainable knowledge development, sharing and production, and perhaps most importantly, reproduction. Face-to-face meetings are crucial for a network to maintain momentum, revitalise energy, consolidate old friendships and discover new ones (the most important part), recast ideas, and plan further activities.

I hope Network X can become the organisation we need but it is not inevitable and lots of hard political work will be necessary for success.

An independent report from Trevor Bark; IWW, Mayday, Class War, Tyne & Wear Left Unity.

COMMENT

ABOUT FREEDOM

ANGEL ALLEY

The new year is in full swing down here in the Alley with us having to cram in up to three meetings a night into the building. Whether this results in anything getting done, of course, is an entirely different question.

Our neighbours at LARC (London Action Resource Centre) are also rushed off their feet with activity, but still managed to put on a fantastic Red and Black Club Social on Friday 21st January, the hangover from which your correspondent is still recovering.

More dedicated Freedom folk have been up in Manchester for the Network X conference and busy with the Green and Black Cross working for legal support of those arrested last year and preparing for the demos to come.

We are grateful to the comrades who have been donating secondhand books to the shop and to reassure those living further away who have agreed to give books but can't get them to us that we are on the case. However the movement is down on van drivers at the moment, due to lack of support from the Met, so we will be asking MI5 to step in and fill the gap.

SUBSCRIPTIONS

This issue is vol 72 no 02, so if the number above your name on the address label is 7202 or less, then your subscription is now due for renewal. There's a renewal form on page 16 of this issue or you can subscribe online at freedompress.org.uk/news/subscribe or, if you don't want to worry in the future about remembering to renew your *Freedom* sub, ask us to send you a standing order form by emailing subs@freedompress.org.uk or you can write to us at 'Subscriptions', Freedom, 84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1 7QX. Unfortunately our sub rates will be soon be increasing, so renew at the old rate now if you want to avoid this.

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NEXT ISSUE

The next issue will be dated 12th February 2011 and the last day to get copy to us for that issue will be Thursday 3rd February. You can send your articles to us by email to copy@freedompress.org.uk or by post addressed to 'The Editors', Freedom, 84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1 7QX.

A sideways look

by SVARTFROSK

The government have pledged to be more open. They have ordered Whitehall and councils to publish all details of expenditure over £500. This is no bad thing, if only so we can see just how much money is wasted with private contractors like Capita. Perhaps more of a double-edged sword is the opportunity for armchair auditors to get councils bogged down by querying every penny.

In reality, the pledge is a smokescreen. By concentrating on the detail, we will miss the bigger picture. Some things will be subject to 'commercial confidentiality'. A good example is the recent loan that Newham Council are advancing to West Ham United Football Club, to help them in their bid for the Olympic Stadium. Newham is one of those unfortunate councils that have an elected mayor, in this case Sir Robin Wales. He is a season ticket holder at West Ham and has received dozens of gifts from the club. The council still had to vote on the loan; plenty of councillors were prepared to say off the record that they were uncomfortable about it but none would say so publicly. The councillors didn't get to see all the background papers until a few hours before the meeting and it is not clear whether the council, which ultimately means the residents, will have to pay if the football club defaults. Optimists point out that West Ham's business model allows for them to be relegated, still move and pay off the loan. They may be right, but so much for 'open government'.

In truth, 'commercial confidentiality' has often been used to bury unpalatable decisions. I can remember being told of a contract given to a private company by Lewisham Council where the in-house option was cheaper; it didn't matter – the council was dead set on privatisation.

One area the government don't want to open up to scrutiny are the billions of

pounds of PFI contracts negotiated since John Major's time. These are kept secret because they represent appalling value for money and at their heart is a political deception that plays some part in how the UK's finances got to be in the mess they are in. Basically, it was started small scale by the Tories as a way of boosting private investment in infrastructure projects. When Labour won in 1997, part of their mandate was to address the running down of that infrastructure under the previous 18 years of Tory rule. They knew this would be a problem with the City and financial markets, so agreed to keep the costs off the books by running it through PFI. The financial interests were brought on board by a promise to pay well over market rates. The true costs are hidden behind the screen of 'commercial confidentiality' and we get a trickle of stories about paying hundreds of pounds to change a light-bulb. The civil servants and politicians involved in creating these schemes often end up working for the companies running them.

In 2009 George Osborne said "The first step is transparent accounting, to remove the perverse incentives that result in PFI simply being used to keep liabilities off the balance sheet ... Labour's PFI model is flawed and must be replaced." Now he has the opportunity to do so, but hasn't. What a surprise! Most PFI schemes cite 'commercial confidentiality' when refusing any freedom of information requests.

The reason why is obvious – if people knew how much PFI projects were costing (and some are a lot worse than others) then there would be pressure for nationalisation. While I'm not a fan of the state running stuff, it's taking the piss that services should be cut just so that some shadowy outfit based in a tax haven can make profits of up to 662%. At that price they don't need compensation, either.



The Olympic Stadium – Newham Council are advancing a loan to West Ham United Football Club to help them in their bid.

On Proudhon

First, I would like to thank Bob Potter for his kind words (*Freedom*, 4th December). Second, I should give an update on the status of my new Proudhon anthology *Property is Theft!*

This was expected to be published in late 2010 to mark the 170th anniversary of the publication of Proudhon's *What is Property?* and so anarchism as a named socio-economic theory. Unfortunately, due to the wealth of newly translated material in it, this deadline was not met (nearly, though). At the suggestion of AK Press I've been busy writing a biographical sketch for the book and it is due out in February – a wee bit later than expected but not too bad considering the size of the thing!

I hope that the wait will be worthwhile. I hope that this will not only be the definitive anthology of Proudhon's work but also transform our understanding of his ideas in the English-speaking world as well as enriching our understanding of the evolution of anarchism in the nineteenth century.

I plan to continue discussing Proudhon's ideas while I steadily place the book on-line at www.property-is-theft.org. I'll end with this little extract from Proudhon's 1858 magus opus, *Justice in the Revolution and in the Church*, where he indicates the solution to *System of Economic Contradictions* he analysed 12 years previously:

While, for a communist-anarchist like myself, mutualism may not hold all the answers, it did lay the foundations upon which the likes of Bakunin and Kropotkin built *revolutionary* anarchism. His advocacy of socialisation of the means of life (land and 'capital' to those who use it) and the corresponding end of wage-labour (and so the exploitation and oppression associated with it) shows he was well aware of the roots of our problems *and* how to solve them.

Finally, once the book is available I plan to have a launch at Freedom Bookshop and take the opportunity to discuss his ideas and why they are still important.

Iain McKay

32 reasons not to plead guilty

Following on from the advice in the letters page (*Freedom*, 15th January), we'd like to point out why pleading guilty is a bad idea.

Standard legal advice is that, if the evidence is against you, pleading guilty at the earliest possible stage will result in a 30% discount on your sentence. This is undoubtedly true for most criminal offences. When David Chaytor MP was recently sent down, the judge noted that normally a guilty plea at the first opportunity would see a one-third reduction in sentence, but he would only allow a 25% reduction because Chaytor had also tried to argue that he could not receive a fair trial in the courts because of damaging press coverage.

The position for anyone convicted of a public order offence (and we use term widely here) for taking part in protests is very different.

Take the recent case of Edward Woollard, the 18-year-old who threw a fire extinguisher from the roof of the Conservative party's Millbank headquarters in London during the student protest on 10th November last year. He is now serving a sentence of 32 months (two years eight months) having followed this standard legal advice.

He was convicted of violent disorder, for which the maximum term is five years. The Crown Prosecution Service sentencing guidance gives examples of sentences:

- *R v Chapman (2002) 146 SJ*

C took part in street riot over a number of hours. Threw stones at Police and re-armed himself in order to continue. Three years in YOI on guilty plea.

- *R v Hebron and Spencer 11 Cr. App. R (S) 226*

Both under 21 and took part in new year's eve riot. H threw bottles at the police. S shook fists and shouted 'Kill the Bill'. Ten and 12 months respectively was an appropriate sentence.

- *R v Watson & others (1990) 12 Cr App R (S) 477*

Retaliatory violence. W with others, broke into premises, caused damage. Attacked innocent persons. Good character. Eighteen months prison.

Now consider Edward's case. He was of good character, had numerous fine references from people who support him, was young, caught up in the moment and pleaded guilty

LETTERS AND COMMENT

at the first opportunity. There were no adverse factors, no evidence of pre-planning, etc. The sentencing judge, Geoffrey Rivlin QC, of course had to pay lip service to the one third reduction. He did so by taking the starting point for the sentence as four years. This was for throwing an empty fire extinguisher, which didn't hit anyone. Compare and contrast with the examples given above. And then, of course, no discount was given for the other mitigating factors.

In sentencing Edward, Rivlin QC described it as a deterrent sentence, but stressed that "this is not a case of making an example of you alone" and that "anyone who behaves in this way and comes before the Court must expect a long sentence of custody."

Writing in the *Guardian*, Debra Orr (no friend of revolutionaries) was more blunt, stating that the judge was wrong in his sentencing of Edward Woollard, "a disproportionate punishment to discourage others is unfair."

So what is the advantage of delay, even where the evidence is against you? Well the CPS may mess up the prosecution (defence lawyers don't call them 'Can't Prosecute Shit' for nothing); an undercover cop may be exposed; or the glare of publicity will die down and the desire to make an example out of you will fade. At worst, you are unlikely to get a harsher sentence.

Legal Defence and Monitoring Group

Read the Judge's full sentencing remarks on the LDMG website <http://www.ldmg.org.uk>
CPS sentencing guidance can be found at:
http://www.cps.gov.uk/legal/s_to_u/sentencing_manual/violent_disorder/

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GETTING ACTIVE

PRISON NEWS

The fallout from the Ford open prison riot at New Years has continued, and I don't mean that from the asbestos in the torched building that prison authorities have denied being present.

The Prison Officers Association (POA) have used the opportunity to ratchet up pressure on the Ministry of Justice (MoJ) over manning levels, especially as they stand to lose upwards of a thousand members in the proposed MoJ cuts.

So, amongst the steady stream of recent POA press releases were claims that only 17 trained prison officers and 26 support staff were on duty to cope with 3,012 men in the seven largest open prisons in England and Wales on 26th November last year (a carefully chosen date no doubt).

The MoJ tried muddying the waters with their own figures (26 screws and 65 support staff) but refused to date these, to specify how many open prisons they covered (there are 16 in total) or to even dispute the POA numbers.

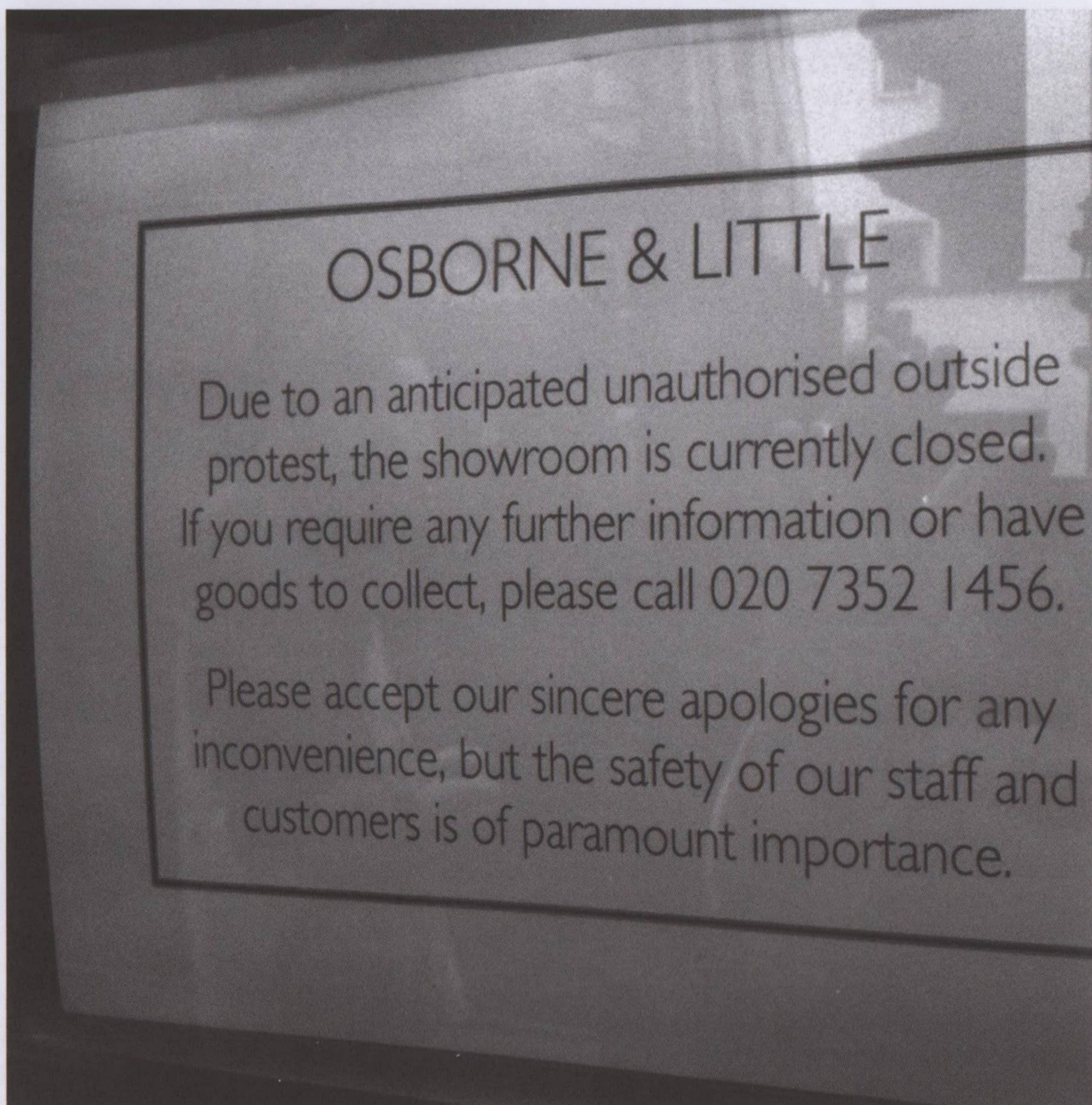
On top of that came the claim that the MoJ had been warned by the local Independent Monitoring Board (IMB) two weeks before the Ford riot that night-time staffing levels were inadequate, that the staff were not experienced enough to exercise "proper control" over the prisoners and that drug and alcohol smuggling was rife.

The media seized on the news as a stick to beat Ken Clarke and his even less popular junior Crispin Blunt, the prisons minister, with. The *Daily Express* even tried to blame the previous government for the riot as the IMB had raised these issues in previous year's annual reports.

Unfortunately, it turned out that MoJ staff were too busy coping with plan for departmental cuts to actually have gotten round to putting the IMB report in to Ken Clarke's in tray.

Another consequence of the Ford riot has been an increasing media focus on any prison disturbance, no matter how small. Low-level unrest, prisoners trashing their cells and the like, which makes up most of the more than 300 incidents resulting in the use of prison Tornado riot teams that the POA claim have occurred since the election of the Coalition, usually goes unreported except in the news-starved local media. Thus incidents at HMP Swaleside prison, where ten staff were injured during a mobile phone search ("Prison staff bravely prevents riot" claimed the POA), and at HMP/YOI Littlehey (one female officer injured and a male screw with boiling sugary water thrown over him – a favoured method of assault in prisons) suddenly become national news.

We should definitely expect a lot more of this in coming months as the cuts begin to bite and the POA, using the excuse of health and safety in lieu of the right to strike, step up possible industrial action.



● **Class War** anarchists, led by veteran agitator Ian Bone, descended on the Chancellor of the Exchequer George Osborne's family business in the select Kings Road area of West London, forcing it to close for the day and make a loss on the day's takings. The exclusive fabric and wallpaper designers Osborne & Little, part-owned by the multi-millionaire Tory aristocratic, was forced to turn customers away, locking the doors and putting up a sign 'due to an unauthorised protest the showroom is closed'.

Support for the demo was offered by passing white van men, builders and postmen. After a successful afternoon the anarchists regrouped at a nearby hostelry and vowed to make a return visit in the near future.

● **Solidarity Federation** are expanding with the formation of a new local – Oxford and Reading. Founded by a group of class struggle anarchists and anarcho-syndicalists, it will look to cover both cities as a constituent part of the larger Federation, which now has a total of nine branches.

The new grouping has already participated in two local anti-cuts demonstrations and are looking to promote the messages of direct democracy, direct action and worker self-organisation in Oxford, Reading and the surrounding area.

If you are interested in anarcho-syndicalism and live or work nearby, get in touch with them through the main Solfed website at www.solfed.org.uk

● **Anarchist Federation** have been busy throughout winter with the new publications

of both their magazine and newsletter.

Organise #75 includes a scathing attack on the Tory's 'big society', two articles on the voluntary sector, as well as articles on The United Isle of Absinthe, update and analysis on welfare reform, austerity and internationalism, plus a profile of Stig Dagerman.

Resistance #128 bulletin, comes in a fetching coloured-coded pale blue and as a folded free-sheet ideal to be distributed on demonstrations or street pitches. It contains articles on the growing student movement, actions against government rise in tuition fees, regular workplace round-up, the winners and losers of the financial crisis, further examination of the NHS 'restructuring', a history of sabotage in the workplace, plus their annual Bastard of the Year awards!

See <http://www.afed.org.uk/>

● Around 20 supporters of the **Citizens United** group – encompassing pensioners, students, environmental campaigners and workers – held an occupation of an RBS office building in Glasgow on 20th January.

The group have previously held occupations of a number of banks around Glasgow city centre in protest at public sector and welfare cuts and 2009's bail-out of the financial sector.

The protest placed particular emphasis on bank bonuses, which have dominated headlines recently, with bankers claiming that their 'period for remorse' is now over.

Citizens United say that this is just the beginning of a year of protest – bankers politicians and tax dodging corporations, be warned!

The Wapping dispute, 1986

Wapping remains one of the most extraordinary, vindictive and provocative industrial actions of the last thirty years

Coming just ten months after the collapse of the miners' strike, the year-long Wapping dispute (which was defined by ferocious nightly battles outside Fortress Wapping between police and pickets – and many anarchists – who were determined to prevent the distribution of Murdoch's scab papers) was to be the final body blow to the trade union movement by Thatcher's Tory government. But perhaps a more telling legacy is the dispute laid bare the corrosive relationship between union leaders and their membership – a besieged and vanishing militant working class. Below we reproduce the text from *Printers Playtime* pamphlet written shortly after the end of the strike.

In January 1986 Rupert Murdoch's News International (publishers of *The Times*, *Sunday Times*, *Sun*, and *News of the World*) sacked 6,000 striking members of SOGAT (Society of Graphical and Allied Trades) the NGA (National Graphical Association), the AUEW (Amalgamated Union of Engineering Workers) and also some journalists.

Low profitability in the newspaper industry had been aggravated by the success of skilled and semi-skilled printworkers in resisting the application of new technologies over the last twenty years. As Fleet Street's most profitable publishing group, News International was in a strong position to force through a programme of rapid restructuring. The elements were investment in a new plant and equipment at a site in Wapping, on the western edge of London Docklands (under the pretext of the company's announced intention of launching a new title), and a plan to subdue and re-organise the workforce more quickly and more thoroughly than any of News International's competitors had attempted.

Having provoked a strike by presenting the print unions with a list of unnegotiable demands, News International used a legal technicality to sack almost its entire London workforce. Production was transferred almost overnight to the new factory, run by scab labour. The print unions were completely excluded, and News International instead hired the services of the EETPU, a modernist union in tune with the realities of the broader labour market. SOGAT, the majority union in the strike, was fucked, and stayed fucked. The NGA was already fucked after Warrington. Although officially 'in dispute', the strikers were out in the cold. Nevertheless, it took SOGAT, the NGA, the company and the police 13 months to demobilise them.



Workers were bussed in and out of the Wapping plant using security-enhanced coaches from secret rendezvous points throughout the south east of England.

(Picketing virtually stopped within a week of SOGAT withdrawing its franchise).

The public demand of the strikers was for 'full reinstatement'. Their individual and collective assessments of the situation produced a different set of objectives, ranging from better compensation to bloody revolution. The only way the strikers could apply direct pressure was by harassing scabs, disrupting distribution of News International titles and generally making a nuisance of themselves, so that the leaders of the strike became the pickets, and in particular the violent pickets who were prepared to risk repeated arrest in order to keep the stakes high. As in the miners' strike, their relation to the union was ambivalent.

The unions needed the violent pickets; their only other bargaining chip was a facile PR campaign, which was hardly likely to cause Murdoch to turn in his grave. But it needed control over them, and through the offices of skilled manipulators like picket coordinator Bill Leeman and chief steward Mike Hicks (both of them old-style Communist Party creeps), they managed to get a hold on the picketing and isolate the real nutters. And as in the miners' strike, the end of serious and systematic picketing of the distribution network meant that the collapse of the strike was not far off. The pickets, however, needed the union early on since the union (organised by chapels horizontally and in a rigid hierarchy of committees and officers) controlled the important lines of communication between different groups of strikers. Without the assistance of the officials, and without an unofficial network which included strikers and pickets from all union chapels and none, the picketing would have been marginal,

sporadic and badly-organised, as it became in the later stages of the strike.

Wapping was the scene of a number of violent mass demonstrations over the months, culminating in 24th January. The police were forced to engage the pickets in running battles in the streets north of the plant, the nearest the violence came to a sudden general escalation. The reaction was quick; the company brought the law to bear on the SOGAT leadership, which announced the dispute officially over within a few weeks. The strike then collapsed in a matter of a few more days as one chapel after another disbanded itself, and even the most militant pickets gave in to exhaustion.

Below is an extract from one of the last unofficial bulletin's *Picket*, dated 28th January 1987, which was published 43 times during the strike.

"For months we have taken stick from the police. On Saturday we got one back. Brilliant. They must've wondered what hit them, even the veterans of May 3rd. For hours they had to sit there and take it, the noise of concrete on Perspex deafened us, what must it have been like for them? It was too dangerous for them to charge us as they would have liked. Many thanks to all those people 'unconnected to the dispute' who were right up there in the front, showing they know quite well what the police are about and what they deserve from working class people. We need no excuses for hating the police. Thanks especially to the football supporters from Millwall, West Ham, Chelsea and Charlton. You were an inspiration."

From *Printers Playtime* (Dark Star and Phoenix Press, 1987)

REVIEWS

WHAT'S ON

JANUARY

■ **29th** Cut Cameron Festival punk all-day, a benefit for Anarchists Against The Cuts and to defend the Millbank protesters, free and tasty food provided by Taunton Vegans plus over 20 bands on two stages, stalls, from 12 noon at The Winchester Arms, Castle Lodge, Castle Green, Taunton TA1 4AD, tickets £5/£6 on the door, for full details see myspace.com/anonpromo or email anonpromo@myspace.com.

■ **30th** Full Unemployment Cinema presents an Education Special, starting at 6pm at Colourama, 52-56 Lancaster Street, London SE1, free entry.

FEBRUARY

■ **5th** Kebele Sound and Bristol ABC present a benefit for the Thesaloniki 4 and Bristol Direct Action bust fund, with Generic Eric, Rapsallion Sound, Clayton Blizzard, plus DJs Miss Fit, Krackpotkin, Peverly Knight and more from 9pm until late at The Plough, 223 Easton Road, Bristol BS5 0EG, £4/£5, see <http://kebelesound.wordpress.com/> for further details.

■ **6th** Seedy Sunday with seed swap, stalls, demonstrations, talks and more, find out how to save seeds, make compost, keep bees, use surplus crops, make seed bombs, join the community food project, feed your family... Hove Town Hall, Norton Road, Hove BN3 4AH, from 10am until 4.30pm, for details call 01273 235580 or see seedysunday.org

■ **6th** Sustainable energy and transport skillshare from 1pm to 5pm, and Seed Swap from 2pm to 4pm at Tottenham Chances, 339 High Road, London N17 6QN, for more details see sustottenham.wikispaces.co.uk, sustainableharingey.org.uk or <http://haringeyskillshare.wikispaces.com>.

■ **12th** The Story of the Leytonstone Arts Trail with speaker Frances Bowman, a News From Nowhere Club event at The Epicentre, West Street, Leytonstone, London E11 4LJ, 7.30pm buffet (bring something if you can), 8pm talk and discussion, for details call 020 8555 5248 or see newsfromnowhereclub.org.

■ **19th** Lewisham Carnival Against the Cuts, make Lewisham echo to the sound of protest from 11am to 12 noon then join the march assembling at 1pm outside Catford Town Hall and marching to Lewisham Library, for more information contact info@carnivalagaincuts.org.uk, text 07806545279, call 020 8691 9649 or see CarnivalAgainstCuts.org.uk

MARCH

■ **12th** Countercultural Connections with speaker/performer Michael Horovitz, a News From Nowhere Club event at The Epicentre, West Street, Leytonstone, London E11 4LJ, 7.30pm buffet (bring something if you can), 8pm talk and discussion, for details call 020 8555 5248 or see newsfromnowhereclub.org.

MARKETS, MARX AND

Iain McKay finds a recent attempt to take socialism into the future fails even to get to grips with its past

When the Eastern Block collapsed some suggested that it vindicated the arguments of the 'Austrian' school of (right-wing) economics, notably Thatcher's favourite economist Friedrich von Hayek. Hayek had argued that central planning could not work because it would be impossible for central planning to find, gather and process the dispersed information in an economy. Theodore Burczak agrees but rather than reject socialism, he seeks in *Socialism After Hayek* to synthesise Marx and Hayek and so redefine it to meet the 'Austrian' challenge.

The resulting book is both interesting and frustrating. Interesting because it discusses ideas anarchists have long held dear – workers' self-management, the end of exploitation, the necessity for decentralisation and free agreement. Frustrating because Burczak seems utterly ignorant of *libertarian* socialist ideas which means that, while he thinks he is being extremely innovative, he is often merely re-inventing the wheel.

This lack of awareness of another major school of socialism can be seen when he talks about developing a "libertarian Marxism"

(3). No, not council communist or such like, but rather right-wing "libertarian" or, more correctly, propertarian. So Burczak seeks a socialism based on private property and markets, or a "market socialism" (144) – if he had a better grasp of socialist history he would have discovered its original name: mutualism. "Classical socialism," he declares, "was a movement to replace ... capitalism with national planning, public ownership, and distribution according to human need" (1). Well, yes – but only if we limit "socialism" to orthodox Marxism. Communist-anarchists embrace the last two objectives, mutualists the middle one, but both are clearly socialists.

Burczak's attempt to fuse markets and Marx is on weak ground. Marx's analysis of capitalism *does* mix up critiques of wage-labour and market forces but the latter simply cannot be ignored. He asks whether Marxists can "overcome their residual market phobia" (138), yet does not address the many critiques of markets *as such* found in socialist theory. Burczak also confuses wage-labour (selling labour to a boss) with the wages-system (distribution according to work done). While abolition of the latter implies the abolition of the former, the opposite is not the case. Thus he misconstrues Marx's ideas when he suggests Marx "explicitly called for the abolition of the wages system, a goal that would be achieved in workers' self-management" (99). While Marx's critique of capitalism rests on an understanding that wage-labour allows

ABOUT ANARCHISM

Nicolas Walter with an introduction by Natasha Walter

The case for anarchism as a pragmatic political philosophy is explained in this new edition of the classic work by Nicolas Walter, who was a writer, journalist and active protester against the power of the state. It has often been reprinted and translated into many languages, including French, Spanish, Japanese, Serbo-Croat, Chinese, Polish and Russian.

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QUIZ ANSWERS

1. Ostensibly, it was a report into the difficulties faced by America's disabled. In reality, it was an attempt to get children screened for mental illness and then treated by expensive pharmaceuticals.
2. Predictably enough Bush's appointees over-ruled him.
3. Between 20 to 30,000 Haitians living on the border with the Dominican Republic

- were killed on the orders of the Dominican President Trujillo. It is called parsley because the Dominican soldiers held up parsley and asked what it was called, the Spanish word being very difficult for Haitians to pronounce.
4. They are likely to be a Scientologist. The word was invented by L. Ron Hubbard founder of the religion.

MUTUALISM

unpaid surplus labour to be appropriated from workers, his vision of socialism rests on the (eventual) ending of money and markets.

So if you ignore all this in favour of Marx's critique of wage-labour, then perhaps a "post-Hayekian socialism" (145) "can be teased out of Marx's writings" (102), but why bother? It really does go against the grain of Marx's ideology and there is another leading socialist thinker, Proudhon, who already *explicitly* proclaims much of what would be "teased" out anyway.

At best, you *can* tease out a grudging admission that market socialism is not "self-managed capitalism" from Marx's work. Burczak is right to suggest that Marx "recognised the difference between private property and capitalist private property" (110) but to proclaim a market Marxism is disingenuous – for while there is evidence that Marx supported a *transitional* market economy based on co-operatives, it was not his goal.

That Burczak's book could have benefited from a wider reading of socialist theory can be seen in his arguments that self-management ends exploitation as workers keep the products they create. This simply repeats Proudhon's arguments that workers' associations were required because the proprietor appropriates the "collective force" and "surplus of labour" produced by workers, but he goes unmentioned. Similarly, he sounds very much like Proudhon when he notes that "entrepreneurs usually are capitalists, because the asset poor are unable to obtain credit" (75) and asks "why would anyone ever choose to work for someone else if credit were easily accessible to all?" (72)

The book does, correctly, stress that self-management would ensure the use of "tacit, local knowledge in the production process" (119) as this is held by groups of workers, knowledge which under capitalism is used to enrich their bosses rather than, as under socialism, themselves. The capitalist firm is marked by top-down central planning and the hierarchical structure of the capitalist workplace blocks the flow of essential information, as well as restricting the entrepreneurial activity of workers by (formally) limiting it to the owners/managers who also, due to their position, monopolise the outcome of the (informal, but essential) "entrepreneurial" activity of their workforce. Very few 'Austrians' turn their fire against the capitalist company in spite of the similar issues involved – it is not hard to work out why. Needless to say, workers' tacit knowledge can easily be included into Proudhon's notion of "collective force."

Burczak also utilises the work of Marxists Resnick and Wolff who, he states, present "non-traditional definitions" (6) of both capitalism and Stalinism. Perhaps non-traditional to orthodox Marxism but very



traditional to anarchism! This exposes a serious limitation in his analysis, the confusion of *nationalised* property with *socialised* property. Thus he argues Russia showed that exploitation "can persist" with "socialised property" (7). Yet property was *nationalised* in the Soviet Union, placed (along with those who use it) under the control of the state bureaucracy. In such circumstances exploitation would obviously continue – as anarchists have long argued.

He suggests we need to end wage-labour "rather than socialising" productive property (110). Yet ending wage-labour implies socialising the means of production as only common-ownership can ensure that new members of a workplace have the same rights as existing members. Without socialisation – i.e., when "the worker self-managed firm would also be worker owned" (122) – new members would become the wage-slaves of the existing collective of workers. That was why Proudhon argued that property should be "undivided" (socialised), where those who use a specific part of it manage/control it ("possession"). Only *socialisation* can end exploitation by ending master-servant relations in production and so as well as confusing that with nationalisation, he also labels possession as "private property" (albeit, non-capitalist).

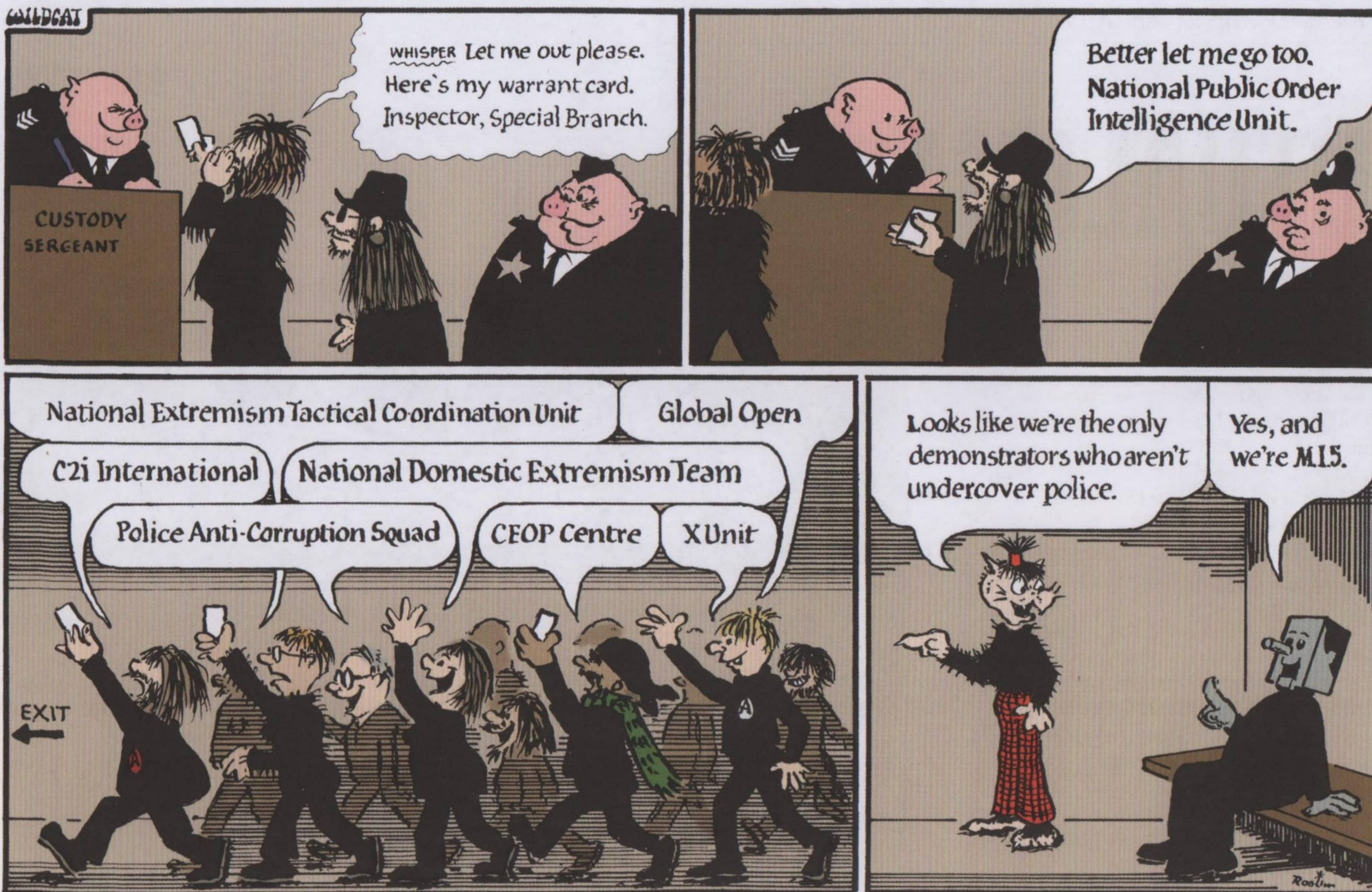
And while Burczak is right to argue that market socialism avoids the knowledge problem – the "inability of central planners to access and utilise individual's subjective, situational knowledge" (2) – he fails to discuss whether a decentralised (libertarian) communism can also avoid it.

Well aware of Marx's dictum on "from each according to their needs," Burczak

argues for both a "welfare state" (143) and a "socialist stakeholding society" (134), namely a redistributive wealth tax which would give everyone a cash grant large enough to promote equality of opportunity. This would also allow workers to create co-operatives by pooling their grants together. There is no discussion of credit institutions nor the need for federations of co-operatives – so no "agro-industrial federation" – in spite of the fact that the most successful co-operatives have such federal support structures. And while Burczak's system ends the labour market and stock market, it seems to tolerate other forms of non-labour income like rent and interest as workers could "borrow or rent capital from non-worker owners." (122) These are steps backwards compared to mutualism.

Another weakness is that Burczak seems overly impressed with 'Austrian' economics, proclaiming that it has "a richer theory of market processes" (4) than neo-classical economics. That would not be hard. He ignores post-Keynesian economics, however, which recognises the problems of *laissez-faire* capitalism while sharing the better aspects of 'Austrian' economics, but without its compulsive, ideological love of capitalism and the wealthy. The book, though, usefully critiques 'Austrian' economist Israel Kirzner's "finders-keepers" defence of income property and Hayek's notion of the neutrality of common law.

Burczak admits that "[m]ost socialists will probably find this Hayekian socialism thin soup" (139). Perhaps, but this is due to much of socialism being lumbered, thanks to a few scattered remarks on planning by



Review

◀ page 15

Marx and Engels, with a utopian perspective (of the kind Proudhon refuted in 1846) on what constitutes socialism – a utopianism which, as can be seen from the Bolsheviks and the factory committee movement, can actively destroy genuine socialist tendencies in favour of centralised state capitalism. Libertarians, however, may find his arguments of some use, even if they show little awareness that he is unknowingly repeating *our* ideas much of the time.

Ultimately, if Burczak had been more aware of the libertarian tradition he would have discovered that Proudhon had argued, against the centralised Jacobin-socialism of Louis Blanc, that without competition the

prices of goods would be arbitrary and so meaningless. That, for Kropotkin, “a strongly centralised Government” managing the economy was not only “undesirable” but also “wildly Utopian” and that communism needed free agreement to ensure the use of “the co-operation, the enthusiasm, the local knowledge” of the people. So rather than invoking Hayek, Burczak could have elaborated upon these existing discussions *within* socialism.

Given all this, perhaps *Socialism after Hayek* would be better entitled *Socialism before Marx*.

<http://anarchism.pageabode.com/cat/anarcho>

Socialism After Hayek by Theodore A. Burczak, published by The University of Michigan Press, Ann Arbor, 2006.

THE QUIZ

1. What was the New Freedom Commission in the US?
2. *Grand Canyon: A Different View* by Tom Vail is a 2003 book which claims the Grand Canyon was formed a few thousand years ago by Noah's flood. What happened when the Park Superintendent tried to stop the book being sold in National Park stores?
3. What was the Parsley massacre?
4. If someone uses the word ‘enturbulate’, what conclusion could you draw?

Answers on page 14

The Anarchist Quiz Book compiled by Martin Howard, with illustrations by Paul Petard, is available for £5 (post free) from freedompress.org.uk.

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