

# FREEDOM

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## WHO BENEFITS FROM CLAIMANTS?

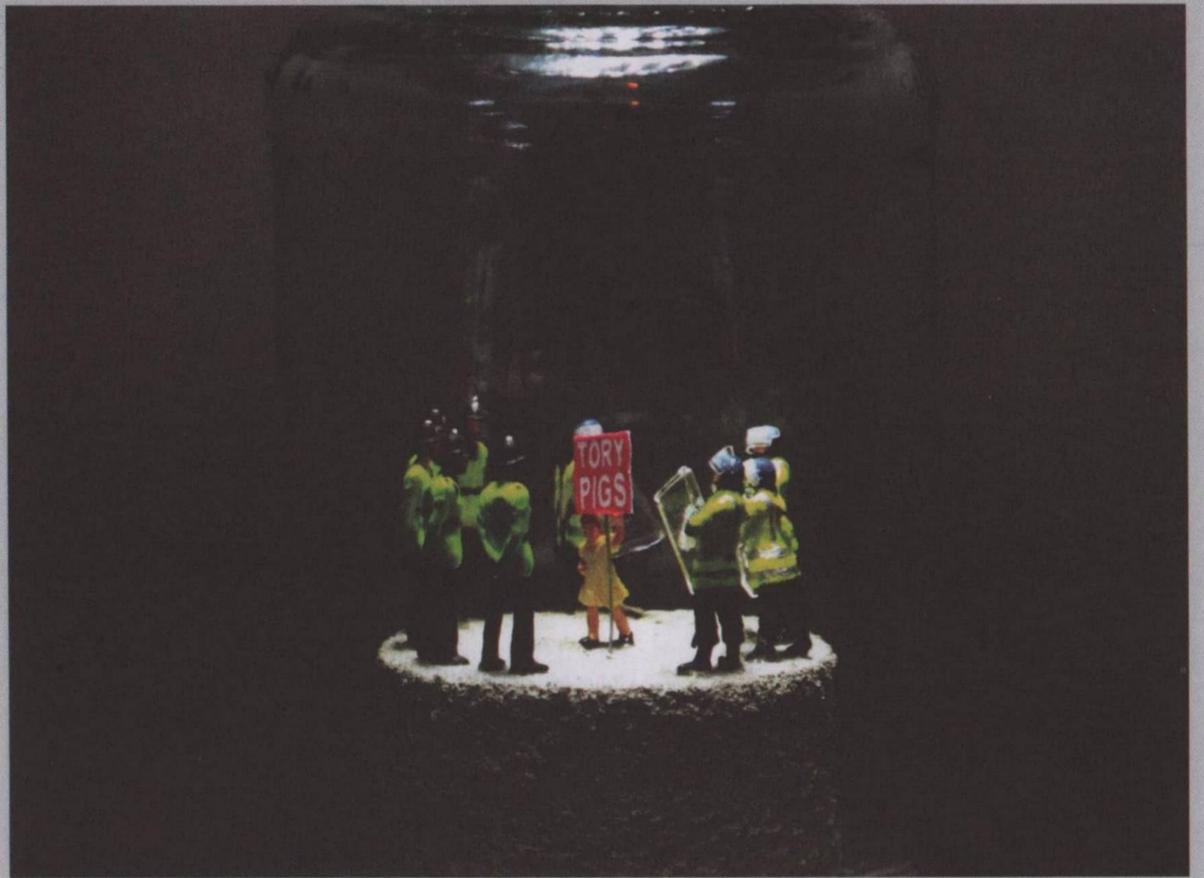
### Private companies accept free labour under government plans

The coalition government has finally launched its controversial new back-to-work scheme that will see those claiming benefits forced into compulsory work programmes or risk being excluded from receiving further social assistance. The new work programme, dubbed without irony 'workfare', is an attempt by the government to not only penalise those unable to work due to their circumstances, but to ensure private companies have a supply of free labour emanating from job centres across the country.

The Work Programme, which will run for seven years, is worth between £3bn and £5bn to contractors. Over the next few years year, the government is looking to put around one million unemployed people on these work schemes run by private companies and charities. The top four main contractors, Ingeus, A4e, Working Links and Seotec, will be dealing with more than half of all claimants going through the scheme, with the rest shared between just 14 providers nationwide. Those companies will then be paid between £4,000 and £13,700 for every person they return to

page 3 ►►

### LENS CAP A RIOT IN A JAM JAR



'Anarchist Scum', one of the pieces featured in James Cauty's exhibition, A Riot in a Jam Jar, which presents super-real, reduced and aspirational revolutionary vistas until 3rd July at the L-13 Light Industrial Workshop, 31 Eyre Street Hill, Clerkenwell, London EC1R 5EW (for details and opening times call 020 7713 8255, e-mail [L-13@L-13.org](mailto:L-13@L-13.org) or see [www.L-13.org](http://www.L-13.org)).

## STRATHCLYDE STUDENTS TARGETED

Following on from the recent *Freedom* report about the state's response to education protests comes news that Glasgow police are stepping up their campaign of targeting student demonstrations using violent tactics against protesters.

On Thursday 2nd June more than 100 students staged an angry protest around the Strathclyde University campus in opposition to the scrapping of geography, sociology and community education courses. This is part of £12 million worth of cuts at the university involving 100 job losses and other departments threatened. According to eye witness accounts, the entire campus was on lock-down with security and police positioned around the entrances fearing a potential occupation of one of the buildings. Well known Glasgow writer James Kelman addressed the crowd

and urged them to oppose all cuts.

It was during this time that police moved in to arrest a student activist and began attacking other members of the crowd. A student was assaulted by officers, thrown to the ground and subsequently arrested. A young woman was punched in the face as she tried to help her partner. Protesters responded to the attack by blocking the police vans from moving for over two hours, filming and photographing the actions of the police. Around 25 police and a helicopter were eventually deployed.

There has been a policy of continuous harassment by police of student activists in Glasgow since the campaign was set up to fight the education cuts. The Glasgow Defence Campaign has been established to oppose political policing and defend democratic rights in the struggle against the cuts in Glasgow.

### INSIDE ►►

**Cyberspace and class** page 3

**Spanish occupation** page 4

**Occupying Athens** page 7

**Chris Knight replies** pages 8 and 9

**Svartfrosk column** page 10

**Reviews** pages 14 and 15

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## NEWS

## NEWS IN BRIEF

**ARMS DEALER:** A presentation by arms manufacturer BAE Systems at the University of Manchester had to be abandoned following protests by staff and students angry at the company's presence on campus. Representatives of BAE were invited by the Mathematics Department to take part in an "industrial maths workshop" but protesters blocked the entrances to the intended venue and after attempts to switch rooms for the meeting, the seminar was called off.

**BUSINESS:** Austerity it seems isn't as global as we think. UK companies spent more buying up foreign businesses in the first quarter of this year than any other quarter since 2007. The value of overseas acquisitions rose to £18.3 billion up from £3.8 billion the previous three months, figures from the Office for National Statistics show. In contrast foreign companies spent £6.4bn buying British firms during the same period. Whoever is buying whatever, a lot of money is being exchanged in the supposed age of global financial crisis.

**FIRE SERVICE:** More than half a billion pounds of taxpayers' money has been committed to providing the fire service with eight empty buildings that will never be used for their intended purpose. FireControl is a private finance initiative set up to replace England's 46 emergency call centres with nine regional sites, but eight of those will never become operational after the initiative was cancelled due to serious delays. In the mean time rent must be paid on the properties of the building that are left empty under contractual obligations by the government. The cost amounts to more than £342m of public money.

**JUSTICE:** The 36th anniversary of the start of the Birmingham Six trial was marked with a demonstration through the city to highlight the fact that miscarriages of justice continue to go unchallenged. Paddy Hill, Gerry Hunter, Johnny Walker, Hugh Callaghan, Richard McKelkeny and Billy Power were freed in 1991 after their convictions for murder in two pub bombings were quashed. They served 17 years each in prison having been framed by a corrupt police force that fabricated evidence, suppressed other evidence and tortured the men while in custody.

**POLICE:** A community campaigner and mother of four was arrested, handcuffed and driven thirty miles to a police station, all for filming a council meeting on her mobile phone. South Wales police arrested the woman, who was attending the public meeting of Carmarthenshire Council as someone who is campaigning to keep a day centre open, after council officials asked her to leave the meeting. When she refused, four officers immediately arrested her to prevent a further breach of the peace.

## LENS CAP DRESSED TO PROTEST



Slutwalk UK attracted over 5,000 people who took to the streets of the capital in support of women's right to dress as they please. The protest movement was sparked by a Canadian policeman who advised students not to "dress like sluts" if they didn't want to be victimised. Since then thousands worldwide have taken to the streets to highlight the hypocrisy of blaming the victim rather than the abuser.

## Generalising the strike

Throughout the UK anarchists are busy organising ahead of the massive public sector workers strike pencilled in for 30th June. Groups and individuals have been busy co-ordinating activities and planning an appropriate anarchist response to the day of action called in support of the striking workers from public sector unions.

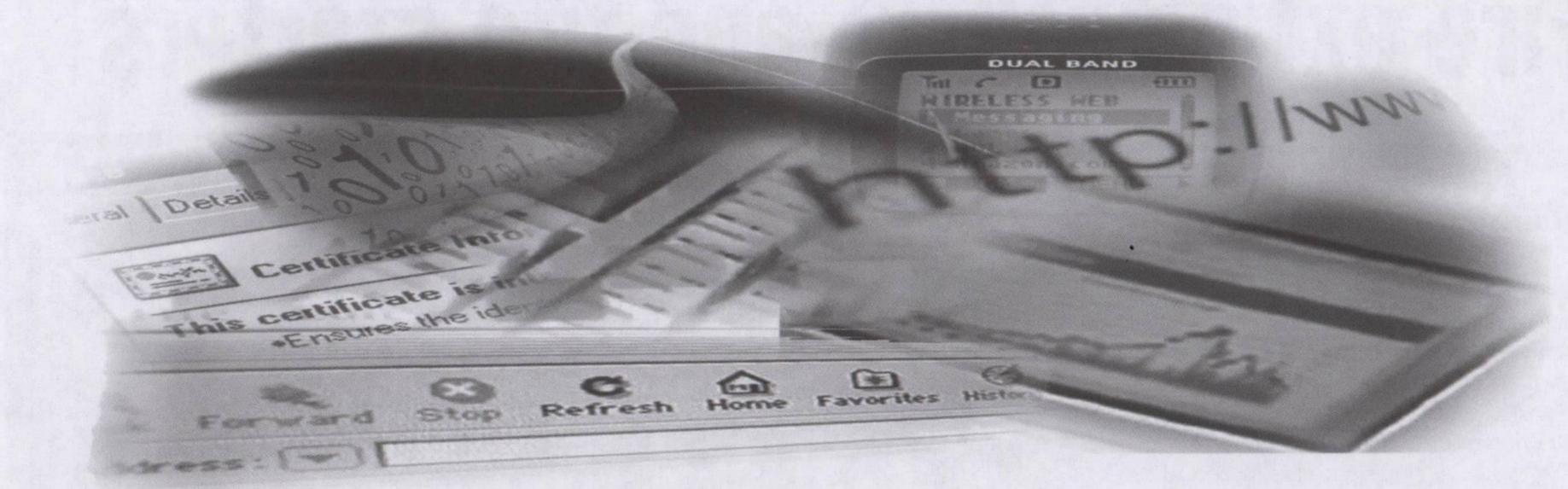
So far four unions – University and College Union (UCU), Association of Teachers and Lecturers (ATL), National Union of Teachers (NUT) and Public and Commercial Services union (PCS) – have balloted for strike action on 30th June which could see as many as 750,000 teachers, civil servants and other public sector employees take part in a massive walkout over job cuts, pay levels and pension reductions. The RMT have also balloted their members on a separate issue but are taking strike action on the same day.

The day itself is expected to be seen as a benchmark in gauging the level of anger, militancy, and action people are prepared to take against the coalition government's imposition of the much hated 'austerity measures'. Coming just three months after the TUC's march against the cuts, it once again gives activists and radicals an opportunity to join workers out on the streets in opposition to a government determined to continue its all out attack on the living standards of ordinary people, who are paying the price for the economic crisis. But unlike the TUC

event this is a day of industrial action and as such anarchist groups have been meeting to decide concrete objectives in support of those on strike.

Radical groups from cities across the country including Birmingham, Bristol, Leeds, London, Norwich, Sheffield, and Sunderland, have been holding assemblies under the banner J30 – Generalise the Strikes – Day of Action Against the Cuts, to bring as many people together to organise solidarity actions for the day. The strike assemblies are a new and informed method adopted to ensure the greatest number of people are included in organising and participating in the day of action. The London J30 assembly has already committed itself to a number of proposals for the day with groups from a range of backgrounds – activist direct action groups, local anti cuts groups, radical political groups (including Anarchist Federation, Solfed) rank and file trade unionists, workers going on strike that day and students from university occupations (including UCL, Goldsmiths, SOAS) actively involved.

Anarchist Federation have already issued a statement in support of the day and Solfed have produced a range of propaganda to be distributed around workplaces. *Freedom* will be producing a 30th June picket line special for the next issue, where we will cover all the aspects of the struggle from all angles.



# Class struggles in cyberspace

## How the working class are not represented online

Despite the ubiquitous nature of new social media with the proliferation of such networking sites as Facebook, Twitter and even Youtube, it seems there is still a class distinction to be drawn from those who not only have access to the internet but those who actively engage with the medium. According to a new study from the University of California, Berkeley, content creation on the internet is overwhelmingly produced by the affluent and well-educated. Certainly in America.

The author of the study Jen Schradie, a doctoral candidate in sociology and a researcher at the campus's Berkeley Center for New Media, analysed data from more than 41,000 American adults surveyed between 2000 and 2008 in the Pew Internet and American Life Project. What she uncovered was that amongst people who are online a class-based digital production gap exists.

Overall the study found less than 10% of the US population is participating in most online production activities, and having a college degree is a greater predictor of who will generate publicly available online content than being young and white.

The results suggest that the digital divide for social media users is wider between the haves and have-nots than it is between young and old, and that ordinary working class people, or those from poorer backgrounds, lack the same level of access and input online than their middle class counterparts.

“Conventional wisdom tells us that the internet is levelling the playing field and broadening the diversity of voices being heard. But my findings show the internet is actually reinforcing the socio-economic divisions that already exist, and may even heighten them” said Schradie.

Schradie's latest study breaks new ground in that it tracks the relationship between socio-economic status and 10 online activities most likely to influence the public, opinion shapers and policy makers. Among those uses are such social networking

activities as Facebook; website building and design; blogging; photo-and video-sharing, such as on YouTube; chat room and news-group participation; and the posting of comments and ratings.

In 17 surveys, she tracked the demographics of users, including education level, income, gender, race and ethnicity. Despite users' racial, ethnic and gender differences, all 10 online activities showed a socio-economic class divide.

Many observers of social media assume that participation rates will increase as younger generations, known as ‘digital natives’, embrace new technologies and modes of communication, but the study shows strong patterns of inequality that are not likely to disappear when the next social media tool appears.

The final conclusion makes uncomfortable reading as Schradie noted “The working class is underrepresented on the internet. Without their voices, their issues are ignored ... That chasm is unlikely to break down until everyone has a host of digital production tools at both home and work.”

## Who benefits from claimants?

◀ page 1

‘proper, long-term work’, i.e. get them off benefits.

The issue that concerns campaign groups opposed to the plans is the continued stigmatisation of those claiming state benefit as somehow undeserving and taking money away from most needy people in society. However a full breakdown of the Department of Work and Pensions own statistics tells a very different story.

According to official figures of the one million people who have been receiving the same benefit continuously for ten years, only 1,050 have been job seekers, 65,000 have been lone parents, 23,000 carers and 900,000 on incapacity benefit or more recently employment support allowance (ESA).

Crucially the figures show nine out of ten claiming long term benefit have been judged to be unable to work because of illness or disability. The others significant numbers – cares and lone parents also constitute society's most needy.

But it is because of these figures that the government has been involved in a ruthless negative press campaign to smear benefit claimants, especially disabled people and single parents who have been branded ‘scroungers’ and ‘cheats’, creating a climate of blame as a means of easing through their new unemployment policy and making it more palatable to the general public.

Already grassroots campaigns have formed in response to the imposition of forced labour.

Boycott Workfare, a coalition of groups made up of unemployed people, anti-cuts campaigners, charity workers, trade unionists and allies, has been set up to challenge the government's Work Programme and the companies profiting from the free labour it provides. Boycott Workfare spokeswoman Joanna Long said: “The Work Programme is a cash gift from the government to businesses which can replace employees with a constant free labour source mandated to work by the job centre at risk of destitution.

“It is a disgrace that the government and providers are talking about this as a boost to jobseekers' prospects when it is putting them to work – often in unsuitable roles – for far below the minimum wage.”

## ANALYSIS

# Fire extinguishers and fire starters

## Anarchist interventions in the Spanish revolution

Anarchists from Crimethinc who were present at the Barcelona camp during the 15M Spanish mass camp assemblies give their critical view of the issues raised around the movement (see last issue of *Freedom*).

The characteristics of the occupation What we have experienced in Barcelona is a rupture – not so much in State control, in view of the democratic forms chosen by the occupation movement, but most definitely in people's affective reality. Society left its isolation cells and physically manifested itself in the middle of the plaza, and many people were feeling its presence for the very first time. They were recognising how isolated they had been until now, in the plaza, where they encountered a force, a collective power, waiting to be reborn. In these unprecedented circumstances, people could begin to believe in the possibility of situations that were entirely new.

People's aesthetics no longer marked their political niche. The most important thing was their bravery and sincerity. Many times I saw grandparents berating young punks for being too passive, or people dressed for work taking a more radical position than activist hippies. And everyone was talking about real possibilities. For at least the first week, these people meant it when they chanted *Aquí comença la revolució!* (The revolution begins here).

So where did the so-called Spanish Revolution end up?

Within the complexity of the Spanish Revolution, one could find plenty to denounce. For a critical anarchist, it would be easier to reject the whole thing than embrace it. Fortunately, on the whole Barcelona anarchists refused to take the easy road.

Most noteworthy in its long list of faults were its disappointed pretensions of being revolutionary. The Democracia Real Ya activists did their best to place the whole movement in an ideological straightjacket from the beginning. In Barcelona in particular, these activists were joined by a legion of minor league politicians, particularly Catalan indepes, as well as Trotskyists and dogmatic pacifists, all trying to get a piece of the pie. These in turn were aided by a great mass of well-meaning people who were simply reproducing the values of democracy and nonviolence taught to them by the system, and no small number of highly skilled and no less well-meaning activists of the anti-globalisation or student variety – including some anarchists – who cherished the processes of consensus and direct democracy.

Democracia Real Ya (DRY) did an excellent job of formulating a mediocre politics defined by its populism, victimism, reformism, and moralism. Everything was structured around



demands communicated to the existing government, but prettied up in populist language. Thus, the popular, anarchist slogan *Ningú ens representa* (No one represents us), was distorted within their program to mean, 'None of the politicians currently in power represent us: we want better ones who will'.

The beautiful thing about the encampment in the plaza was that it had multiple centres for creation and initiative-taking. The central assembly functioned to suppress this; had it succeeded, the occupation would have died much sooner. It did not succeed, thanks in part to anarchist intervention.

The central assembly did not give birth to one single initiative. What it did, rather, was to grant legitimacy to initiatives worked out in the commissions; but this process must not be portrayed in positive terms. This granting of legitimacy was in fact a robbing of the legitimacy of all the decisions made in the multiple spaces throughout the plaza not incorporated into an official commission. Multiple times, self-appointed representatives of this or that commission tried to suppress spontaneous initiatives that did not bear their stamp of legitimacy. At other times, commissions, moderators, and internal politicians specifically contravened decisions made in the central assembly, when doing so would favor further centralisation. This is not a question of corruption or bad form; democracy always subverts its own mechanisms in the interests of power.

In cities where this activist core did not exist, DRY activists or Trotskyists quickly homogenised the encampments and vigorously suppressed radical ideas. These encampments soon shrunk like a desiccated corpse, with more parasite than host body. In Barcelona, on the other hand, anarchists enjoyed legitimacy and presence from the get-go, and the grassroots politicians generally had to pay lip service to anarchist organisational

ideals, giving radical anarchists more room to work in.

One of the most repugnant features of the occupation, which ultimately caused many anarchists to stop participating, was the imposition of nonviolence. Nonviolence was one of the original principles of the DRY platform, and in Barcelona the first anti-authoritarian participants either did not try to or were not able to reject it. Nonviolence was never debated, but always included in every action proposal, so the choice before the central assembly was always nonviolence or nothing.

When anarchists in Barcelona distributed flyers on the third day of the occupation, they quickly released a statement, not approved by any assembly, saying that the occupation was strictly pacifist, and that the police were trying to infiltrate and encourage violence; therefore all the good citizens should bring their cameras and take pictures of everybody and everything.

I believe it was the first Wednesday or Thursday when a group of activists dropped a huge banner from a major building alongside the plaza, reading 'Politicians, Bosses, Bankers, CCOO UGT [the major trade unions] Fuck Off'. The crowds cheered exultantly. Two days later, another group blocked a street and cut open a section of the giant billboard covering another building, to reveal a large spray-painted slogan beneath; if I remember correctly, it said 'No one represents us'. On this second occasion, some people cheered, but self-appointed leaders tried to stop the action and denounced it as violent.

The following Saturday was the worst day, when the pacifists formed human chains to keep football fans out of the plaza and cheered police as they arrested hooligans. When there were still comrades in critical

## NEWS IN BRIEF

**BUSINESS:** The billionaire tycoon Asil Nadir, who fled the UK in 1993 after the collapse of his business empire with debts of more than £1.3bn and being charged with 66 counts of theft totalling £150m, has been granted legal aid in a court case to clear his name. The crook stole millions from subsidiary companies and sent the money to Cyprus where he has been living for the past 20 years. A spokeswoman for the Legal Services Commission said Nadir could be entitled to claim up to £145 an hour to cover legal fees.

**HONOURS:** The pop singer Bryan Ferry, who recently performed at a concert in support of the right-wing candidate for the Mayor of Milan, has been given a CBE (Commander of the British Empire) in the Queen's Birthday honours. CBE's are awarded to those who have made a distinguished contribution in their area of activity. Ferry has previously praised Nazi iconography in a 2007 interview saying "the way in which the Nazis stage-managed and presented themselves, my gentlemen! I'm talking about Leni Riefenstahl films and Albert Speer's buildings and the mass rallies and the flags \_ simply fantastic. Really lovely."

**POLICE:** Officers from the violent and unaccountable Territorial Support Group have been cleared of subjecting Babar Ahmed to a series of violent assaults as they attempted to arrest him in December 2003. Originally accused of providing financial and logistical support to al-Qaeda, he was released without charge only to be re-arrested eight months later on the instruction of the US Government. He since spent almost seven years in prison without trial, fighting extradition to the United States.

**POLITICS:** Tory multi-millionaire Prime Minister David Cameron has spent £683,104 of public money on renovating Downing Street since being in office. The figure could be even higher as only sums over £25,000 have been publicly published. The figures were revealed after a Freedom of Information request was issued when it was discovered the Cameron's had spent £30,000 having a new kitchen installed at Number 11 Downing Street, their 'home' in London.

**SOCIAL CARE:** According to Age UK charity there are over 800,000 elderly people who are excluded from receiving care and support. Social care is means tested dependent on savings but councils are tightening the eligibility criteria to save money making it increasingly difficult for those who do meet the income threshold to get care. Today only 18% of councils provide support to people with moderate needs, compared to six years ago when it was more than 50% of local authorities.



## Fire extinguishers and fire starters

◀ page 4

condition in the hospital, injured from rubber bullets shot by police officers, these same pacifists proposed going to support a rally the police were holding to protest their upcoming wage cuts.

On the whole, however, there was much in the plaza to value. It was an extensive, chaotic space of self-organisation where people met their logistical needs – sometimes going through the official channels, sometimes not. There was a library, a garden, an international translation centre, a kitchen with big stoves and solar cookers, and at any time there were a couple concerts, workshops, debates, and massage parlors taking place, along with innumerable smaller conversations and encounters.

And it was amazing to encounter a wider anarchist community there, to find that most comrades had the same idea to come down to the plaza even though the most visible discourses emanating therefrom were staunchly social-democratic. The comrades we met there were not always members of our pre-existing affinity groups, but also libertarians we had never worked with before. On the whole, comrades demonstrated an impressive commitment, agility of action, and a nuanced and incisive critique. It became clear again that the old stereotype of the anarchist ghetto is at best only partially true. At the first chance to join a collectivity and communicate with others, most of us were there, even though it was often an

uncomfortable or even hostile environment. The very fact that we can speak of an 'anarchist ghetto' indicates that we are less isolated than most people. This communality that we carry with us makes us stand out; the 'ghetto' is formed less by attitudes on the interior and more by the imposition of a general social isolation on everybody else. In Barcelona, this has become truer in the last few years, now that many anarchists have distanced themselves from the tradition of squatting for the sake of squatting.

Not exactly on the turn of a dime, but within the space of a couple days, many dozens of us dropped our routines and threw ourselves wholeheartedly into the occupation – staffing the literature table, writing or finding texts and photocopying them, having conversations and arguments, joining the commissions, and organising debates, talks, and concerts. It was an incredible feeling to find so many accomplices in the middle of a social singularity, to spend the night conversing, arguing and analysing the day's events, to spend the following morning writing the next round of announcements and critiques, to pass the siesta printing, and then to go back down to the anarchist tent for an afternoon and evening of distribution, meetings, and the assembly.

More can be read about the anarchists involvement during the #Spanish Revolution on the Crimethinc website <http://crimethinc.com/>



Above and top: this is what democracy looks like, Friday 27th May, Plaça Catalunya.

## INTERNATIONAL

### NEWS IN BRIEF

**AUSTRALIA:** Erstwhile singer Steve Ignorant of anarcho-punk legends Crass is currently on a world music tour the Last Supper, playing all his old Crass classics with his band and promoting his autobiography, *The Rest is Propaganda*. The tour is supporting Sea Shepherd, the radical marine conservation group, whose logo is a modified skull and crossbones and who have had stalls at all their performances Down Under. Who says pop and politics can no longer mix?

**BAHRAIN:** Trials have begun against 48 medical professionals accused of attempting to topple the ruling monarchy. Those on trial include some of the country's top surgeons, who along with other paramedics are being tried for supporting weeks of pro-democracy protests in the country.

It is believed the 48 are being punished for their role in treating hundreds of wounded protesters at Salmaniya Hospital, Bahrain's main state-run hospital, during the anti-government demonstrations where 31 protesters were killed along with thousands more injured.

**DENMARK:** Copenhagen courts found Stine Gry Jonassen and Tannie Nyboe guilty of being organisers and instigators of violence and vandalism during the COP 15 climate summit protests last December. At the time both were spokespersons for the 'Climate Justice Action' network and had argued for the right to protest and for the freedom of speech. They were found guilty of planning the 'Reclaim Power' demonstration and of plotting violence against an official, serious disturbance of public peace and order, and of illegal trespassing. Several hundred people were arrested in relation to the action, which was entirely peaceful, but none have since been accused of anything illegal.

**SRI LANKA:** Thousands upon thousands of garment workers launched a wildcat strike after the unions called off a strike following pressure from the IMF. Police were called in and mounted a vicious attack on the protesters. However, this led to even more workers coming out, with striker numbers estimated at forty thousand. At a protest outside a factory on 1st June, police fired shots into the crowds. Ratnasekera was amongst the many wounded, when bullets hit his legs. Despite massive bleeding, police refused Ratnasekera medical treatment at their station. Two hours later, he was dead.

**SYRIA:** Security forces violently dispersed university students protesting against Bashar al-Assad, the president, in the country's second-largest city Aleppo. Many of the students were chased into their dormitories and badly beaten. The university has seen several anti-regime demonstrations in the past weeks. Meanwhile, Syrian activists used Facebook to call for a general strike throughout Syria to protest against the security crackdown.

### LENS CAP CHINA CRISIS



There was three days of continuous rioting by migrant workers in southern China's manufacturing heartland of Guangdong. Prior to this hundreds of migrant workers clashed with police in Chaozhou, also in Guangdong, following a dispute over unpaid wages. In Lichuan, Hubei, as many as 2,000 protesters attacked government headquarters after a local politician who had complained about official corruption died in police custody.

## Belarusian anarchists jailed

On 27th of May, the Zavadski district court of Minsk delivered verdicts to a group of anarchists charged with a series of attacks on governmental buildings, including the Russian Embassy in Minsk in August 2010. The five anarchists – Ihar Alinevich, Mikalaj Dziadok, Aliaksandar Frantskievich, Maxim Vetkin and Yeveni Slivonchik – have all been found guilty of a number of political actions, including 'property destruction' and 'aggravated hooliganism', receiving custodial sentences between eight years and 18 months. They must also pay 100 million Belarusian rubles (around \$20 000 dollars) compensation to the respective institutions.

Both Vetkin and Slivonchik co-operated with the police in giving evidence against the other accused which went to form the basis of the prosecution's case, although it is unclear how much they were coerced into complying. Alinevich, Dziadok and Frantskievich have all denied their involvement

(with the exception of the action at the military headquarters) in any of the acts they have been accused of. They are considering challenging their convictions, although the appeal court may issue even harsher sentences.

Aliaksandr Dziadok, the father of Mikalaj and an experienced lawyer, who has also worked as a judge, made the following statement: "There were plenty of violations during the court process. The prosecution's case was not proven. The sentence is unjust and illegal. An objective, law-abiding court would have dropped all charges against the accused."

Anarchist Black Cross of Belarus considers the sentences politically motivated. They point to the fact that most of the attacks were merely symbolical, and material damage was insignificant, not warranting such severe sentences. They continue to ask for solidarity for the anarchist prisoners.

## Notes from the US

Some would say that the real criminals go free. *Freedom* has reported before on Massey Energy, one of the most vicious, destructive and criminal corporations in North America. Now an independent inquiry in West Virginia has found that the mining giant was indeed responsible for the explosion in April 2010 at the Upper Big Branch mine which killed 29 underground coal miners. It confirms what federal investigators found earlier this year: that Massey repeatedly violated federal

rules on ventilation and minimising coal dust to reduce the risk of explosion. Interestingly, the report draws attention to Massey's strong political influence; this it uses 'to attempt to control West Virginia's political system' and regulatory bodies.

But the company meets with continued and determined opposition. In that part of the country it's determined to blow up (literally – a bit at a time) the last great mountain in

# Occupying in Athens

**Comrades in Greece update us on the rapid changes occurring there**

It's been about 20 days now since random people decided to create a webpage and an event on Facebook calling out for a radical change by occupying central squares in big cities, following Spain's example. What needs to be said in advance, is that the initiative for these assemblies was taken by some non politically active individuals motivated by a slogan that had appeared in a Spanish assembly saying "Sssssss... silence... we will wake up the Greeks". Regardless of this superficial motive, some thousands of people gathered at Athens' Syntagma (Constitution) Square with the strong feeling that they deserve a better life.

For about 20 days now, these people sing, dance, eat pop corn and shout 'Thieves, Thieves!' towards the Parliament carrying the Greek flag and neglecting all political parties and all workers' unions. Or this is how the mainstream media would like you to have it – trying to convince their audience that the movement of the 'indignants' (as it has been dubbed, after the 'indignados' in Spain) is a peaceful movement, harmless for the authority, and that it will fade out soon. The same impression about this movement is also expressed by a big part of the left and a smaller of the anarchist scene.

However, a closer look of what is happening in these assemblies these days would instantly reveal how misleading the mainstream information has been. First of all, the media are trying to lead this movement in order to have it under their influence. Secondly, the left is trying to sabotage the movement



because it can't control it. In other words, these are the two sides of the same coin – they both forget that the multitude cannot be manipulated eternally.

Reality itself and the ones who are determined to stay until they make a change, have surpassed these efforts to underestimate the most massive assemblies that have ever happened in the recent history of Greece. The most important fact is not the numbers of the multitude, but its dynamics. In just a few days, it managed to neglect all nationalists who were trying to take advantage of the situation and to organise call-outs in smaller neighbourhoods of Athens and in other cities. The main feature of all these assemblies is that they become more mature by the day, applying direct democratic procedures in

their decision making and demanding direct democracy for the society to come.

It is impressive to see people who had never been involved in politics before, to listen, participate, vote or try to reach a consensus, to decide for themselves and delegate themselves. These days the alternation of the country's official constitution is being discussed in these assemblies and soon there will be a public proposal based on the assembly's decisions.

One other important fact is that it has been decided in many cities around the country that all strikes and rallies organised by independent workers' unions will join the peoples' assemblies in the central squares in order to achieve coordination and to discuss further steps in this struggle.

## Notes from the US

◀ page 6

Central Appalachia in order to strip the coal 'inside'. Local residents, however, want it left in place and a wind farm built on its summit... better ecology, better economics, better citizenship. Amazingly, every week explosives are used with the power equivalent to that of one bomb as used on Hiroshima. Massey has already powdered 500 of the mountains in the area (or 1.4 million acres) letting the rubble find its way into rivers. Already 2,000 miles of rivers are effectively dead.

The company has a string of citations and convictions for critical safety violations and environmental violations so long as to be a joke. It appears as though Massey decided some years back that it was cheaper and in their better interests to pay the repeated and multiple fines imposed upon them than to comply with the law. They also get their own

way by manipulating the political system in their favour.

For example, a violation the Clean Water Act leads to a US\$31,000 (£19,000) fine. You may want to sit down now. In a six-year period Massey had... 60,000 violations! That's a crime on average every single hour – and getting on for US\$1.8 (£1.1) billion in fines. The state Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) refused to act, but ultimately settled for a single payment of US\$20 (£12) million or under 1% of what was required. Don Blankenship, the head of the company, was recently asked, "Is it possible for you to do your job without breaking the law?" to which he replied, "No, it is not"!

One of their justifications, of course, is that Massey generates jobs in a depressed economy. In fact they create very few jobs,

are notorious for attacking the United Mine Workers; and everything they do is against the backdrop of a CEO who makes \$30 (£18.5) million a year.

Louis Further

● One prison in Illinois has paid out nearly \$6.9m in medical compensation payments to prison guards since 1st January 2008, despite an internal Department of Corrections report finding that opening and locking prison cells does *not* cause Repetitive Stress Injury, as warders have claimed. Bizarrely, a Department spokeswoman claimed that: "The report did not recommend any changes in procedures at IDOC... Since the report determined that the injuries were not caused by IDOC workplace procedures, we did not institute any changes."

# In Defence of Activism: Chris Knight replies to Freedom Press

A number of anarchist journals and websites have criticised my own and my comrades' activism in recent months and weeks. Criticism from the right is easy to dismiss. When it comes from comrades I know and respect, I need to take it seriously and come up with a considered response.

The tabloids have depicted me as a 'top anarchist' or 'anarchist ringleader'. The truth is that I count myself a marxist. But like any consistent marxist, my goal is a stateless society. My political beliefs are based on my understanding of human origins and pre-history. For 95% of our existence, our species lived as egalitarian hunter-gatherers, without any kind of state, showing in practice that anarchism works. My interest has been to elucidate precisely how such a lifestyle came into existence and how it worked. Hunter-gatherers are not free in the sense of 'lawless'. They certainly uphold norms and principles of conduct, particularly with respect to sex. But these norms are enforced bottom-up, not top-down. It seems to me that we have much to learn from hunter-gatherers who still practice anarchism/communism today!

Do I think the state can be used as a revolutionary instrument today? No, I do not. The state is intrinsically tied up with territorialism, with borders, with passports, with war. In my view it has to be smashed and replaced with self-organised forms of resistance cutting across all borders. Earlier marxists used to think in terms of stages, leaving abolition of the state to some future date following a successful revolution. In today's world, this makes no sense. The revolution is intrinsically internationalist from the start, so talk about retaining the territorial state in any form is just reactionary. That's my view. Whether it makes me an anarchist, I leave for others to decide.

Am I a 'leader', as the tabloids keep describing me? I am active and prominent in 'The Government of the Dead', a small street theatre troupe. We do have our supporters,

but I doubt any of them consider me their leader. What's happening here, I think, is a sense of humour failure. The tabloids strive to prevent any element of theatrical comedy from coming across, since it challenges their narrative about 'anarchist thugs'. But if you consider the outcome – in the *Sun* newspaper, for example – what you have is a so-called 'anarchist leader' who looks like a top-hatted zombie making a complete clown of himself, apparently on purpose. This is surely preferable to the media creating a believable leader. In my view, we don't need any more Lenins, any more Great Helmsmen. In the spirit of Rabelais and Bakhtin, my theatrical project has been to dissolve any such idea in peals of laughter.

I respect those comrades who say we should never speak to the media. I also respect those who limit their media contacts to liberal middle class publications such as the *Guardian* or the *Independent*. But 'The Government of the Dead' has its own particular project, which is to help break through the wall of censorship erected by the mainstream media. Our project is to break out of the middle class bubble altogether and reach the working class.

Of course it would be nice if we could persuade the *Sun* or the *Evening Standard* to publish a positive piece on the need for revolution and the creative potential of anarchism. But that's cloud cuckoo land. So we have to think of other ways. Accepting that we will be called 'extremists', 'thugs' etc., etc., can we persuade the tabloids to publish the crucial information? Sometimes things go wrong, but we've had our successes, too. In an *Evening Standard* article published just before the TUC march, we managed to insert a map of the route with all the planned feeder marches, encouraging people to expect an interesting day and not just an A-to-B march. Yes, the headline was 'anarchist extremists plan to hi-jack TUC march', but it seems likely that such detailed and informative coverage, however 'negative', may in practice



have had a positive effect on the day. Ordinary people who read newspapers are not stupid: they can read through the lines.

Let me now come to the royal wedding. As far as I can see, every section of the anarchist movement was determined to do very little on that day. 'The Government of the Dead' planned some street theatre with a plywood guillotine. Inevitably, the tabloids insisted on describing us as 'anarchist thugs'. They even reported supposed words of mine to foster that impression. I would ask comrades to remember that the mass media systematically lie. They attributed words to me that I never said, and would never have dreamed of saying.

On the day following the wedding, crime reporter Rebecca Camber of the *Daily Mail* (30th April, page 26) reported not only that 'hundreds of anarchists' had planned to 'wreck' the event but that on the morning itself 'masked thugs gathered in central London' only to be 'thwarted' by police as they rounded up 99 'troublemakers'. So who were these 'masked thugs' seen gathering in their hundreds in Central London? Was there a single arrest of anyone wearing a mask? Those who arrived that morning in Soho Square were a few dozen young people including small children wearing zombie outfits and face-paint. None looked remotely like a 'masked thug'.

Engaging with the media is always going to be a gamble. There will be costs as well as benefits. I accept that many anarchists have felt upset, particularly when it seemed there was a direct link between sensational coverage and subsequent police repression. Following the G20 protests, I was well aware that the media frenzy prior to our 'Storm the Banks' action was being blamed in some quarters for the climate in which Ian Tomlinson got killed. Immediately following that tragic event, I helped form the United Campaign Against Police Violence, working with the Tomlinson family among many others whose loved ones had died while in police custody. Yes, I had moments of doubt. Suppose we hadn't 'stormed the banks'. Suppose we'd all stayed at home. Wouldn't Ian still be alive? It was all very difficult, to say the least. But as I said at the time, none of the violence on that day came from our side. We didn't assault anyone; we didn't kill Ian Tomlinson. Please lay the blame where it belongs: with the police! If we allowed state violence to persuade us all to stay in our beds, wouldn't we be on a slippery slope toward a police state? We need to take inspiration from our counterparts in Syria – comrades who are still protesting despite being shot in the streets and even in their homes.

The Solidarity Federation, like Freedom

Press, made their position clear in advance of the royal wedding. 'We're not planning anything', they said on their blog. The Solidarity Federation insisted that it was business as usual – they would continue to focus their energy and resources on the working class. Other anarchists announced that the monarchy is irrelevant – 'an embarrassing throwback to a bygone era.' These are legitimate views. But if the monarchy is irrelevant, why did the state resort to such an unprecedented clampdown, arresting dozens of us for merely thinking of doing something on the day? The explanation, surely, is that this feudal spectacle remains vital to the maintenance of capitalist class rule in Britain.

Some people have accused me of wanting to replace monarchist pageantry with some other self-promoting media spectacle. Actually, the project is to dissolve all such spectacle, opening the door to celebratory street parties, occupations, picket lines and, in general, popular revolution as 'the carnival of the oppressed'. Glimpses of this have begun breaking out during moments of victory across the Arab world and more recently across Greece and Spain. Humour, dance and theatre maximise the difficulties for the media in portraying us as thugs. Anyway, liberation should be fun. As Emma Goldman said: 'If I can't dance in your

revolution, it's not my revolution'.

To me, it seems ironic that some anarchist organisations mirror many of the worst aspects of their Leninist and Trotskyist counterparts. They jealously guard their sectarian boundaries, promote their supposedly 'correct' theories, insist on being worthy and boring, insist that their radical ideas are the vital ingredient that the working class needs. The truth is that the working class doesn't need any of this. Workers need information about their own solidarity, their own unity in action, their own ability to stand up to the bosses and liberate themselves, their own human creativity and potential. As workers become collectively empowered, they'll work out their own theories, making use, perhaps, of some of the ideas we activists can provide. Against that background, any insight which helps expose division and weakness in the enemy camp is useful; anything which fosters the impression that the ruling class is invincible is reactionary.

Let me conclude by saying that the worst possible kind of theory is the sort which says that everything is a ruling class conspiracy, that the police have got it all sewn up, that the system of mass media censorship is totalitarian and invincible, that there's nothing we can do. A case in point is a recent *Freedom* article expressing the paranoid idea that Chris Knight and his comrades are actually part of a huge, well-organised police/media conspiracy designed specifically to justify repression of anarchists.

Well, believe that if you like. In fact, though, the ruling class aren't so devilish clever. The deeper their crisis, the worse their mistakes. I pose this question: Why did the state feel obliged to make those pre-emptive arrests before and during the wedding? Was it a sign of strength? Or of weakness? Despite being arrested and imprisoned, few of us feel in any way intimidated or cowed. As far as the 'Guillotine Three' are concerned, we've found it hard to stop laughing. We are now in the process of building a movement to defend the right to protest in the face of a regime which appears more intolerant and insecure by the day.

If workers have accepted capitalist society, it's because the system has offered limited freedoms and improvements in living standards. If it can't offer either any more, people will be looking for alternatives. We're heading for interesting times. Let's stop attacking one another and focus on winning the revolution!

Chris Knight

1. By the way, I am not a primitivist. If you want to understand more about the relevance of hunter-gatherers to revolutionary politics today, see the Radical Anthropology Group website ([radicalanthropologygroup.org](http://radicalanthropologygroup.org)), the lunarchy website ([lunarchy.org](http://lunarchy.org)) or my shorter articles on [libcom](http://libcom).



## COMMENT

**ABOUT FREEDOM  
ANGEL ALLEY**

June is bursting out all over here in the Alley. The bunting is up for Max and Lois's wedding party and any delays to this issue are therefore entirely due to the effects of corn whiskey. In another part of our whirlwind social calendar, we had a pleasant day out at the races last Saturday watching the Queen's horse fail to win the Derby. Doubtless this puts the knock on any chance of anyone at Freedom following Sir Herbert Read into anarchist knightdom, but that's no bad thing.

Having learned our lesson on getting adverts out in advance for shop events, we can let you know now that we will be entertained by singer/songwriter Cosmo on Saturday 23rd July. If you don't know him you can find out more on his webpage <http://www.myspace.com/cosmoguitar>. The event will start at 2pm and will be followed by nibbles and refreshments.

We are very grateful to the comrades who have donated secondhand books but we are still looking for more. It doesn't matter what they are, political or not, fiction, non-fiction, the lot. If you can't bring them in give us a bell and we will try to collect them.

**SUBSCRIPTIONS**

This issue is vol 72 no 12, so if the number above your name on the address label is 7212 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](http://freedompress.org.uk/news/subscribe) or, if you don't want to worry in the future about remembering to renew, ask us to send you a standing order form by emailing [subs@freedompress.org.uk](mailto:subs@freedompress.org.uk) or write to us at 'Subscriptions', Freedom, 84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1 7QX. Unfortunately our subscription rates have to increase, so any subscribers paying by Standing Order are asked to contact their bank to update the amount payable.

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**NEXT ISSUE**

The next issue will be dated 2nd July 2011 and the last day to get copy to us for that issue will be Thursday 23rd June. You can send your articles to us by email to [copy@freedompress.org.uk](mailto:copy@freedompress.org.uk) or by post addressed to 'The Editors', Freedom, 84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1 7QX.

# A sideways look

by SVARTFROSK

Before the election, many on the left thought Vince Cable was some sort of economic genius, having predicted some of the all-too-predictable problems that came with the banking crisis and credit crunch. Since then, he has become Business Secretary in the coalition government and his stock has dropped. His recent speech to the GMB union showed where he was coming from all too clearly.

The media picked out his anti-strike message, in advance of 30th June, to no great surprise. The gist of it was that unions should be allowed to strike, but better watch out if they do actually go on strike, because then the government might restrict the right to do so.

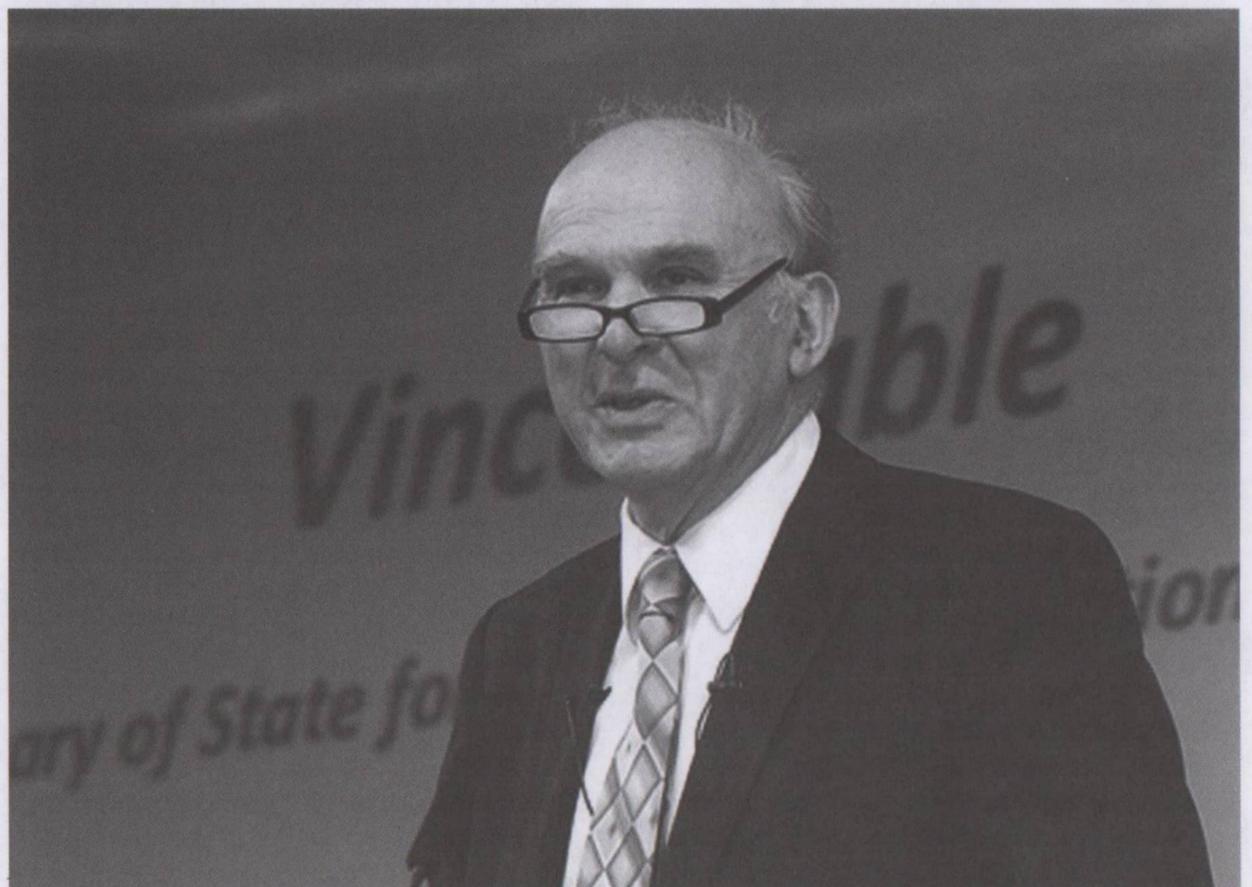
This is specious nonsense, to be honest. Strikes are practically impossible anyway. There was a ruling against an RMT ballot last year which was so stark that a friendly judge had to be found to overturn it. The anti-strike laws restrict who can go on strike, when they can do so, how much notice the employer must be given and how many people can picket. The law is complex enough that a handful of union members being sent ballots to the wrong address can make the ballot invalid.

Cable was playing to two audiences when he talked about the strikes, the first was right in front of him, the second was the Tory right personified by Boris Johnson, who want strikes banned. He was rightly jeered and heckled at the union conference. However, if you read the rest of his speech, you can see he's actually a continental-style partnership model politician rather than a neo-liberal attack dog. The substance of his speech puts him to the left of New Labour, and probably to the left of most of the current opposition front bench.

He advocates a form of industrial democracy and is harsh on the irresponsibilities of some capitalists. He is in favour of partnership between unions, business and state and wants investment directed to manufacturing and high quality jobs. This sort of thing only appears radical in Britain, it's unremarkable across the political spectrum in Europe. Being a critically engaged economist in favour of regulating markets is what endeared Cable to the soft left before the election. It's also what makes him as wrong as if he was the caricature of Toryism painted by the reaction to his speech.

A left-communist contributor to the [libcom.org](http://libcom.org) forums argued that Cable greeted the unions in his speech as one part of the State advising another. Initially I was sceptical of this – the unions have been shut out of any serious state role since 1979. I'm still not convinced, but should Cable's plans come to fruition the unions would once again fill a junior role within the state. He proposes involvement in regional development, training and growth. He boasts he is meeting TUC General Secretary Brendan Barber regularly.

Now, it's nice that working class people will at least be thought of, but there was a reason that the corporatist state was opposed by anarchists in the 1970s when it existed. It offers no solution to the problem of capitalist exploitation, merely a smoother way of collaborating in our exploitation. Involving bureaucrats who claim to represent workers in the odd bit of economic planning might appeal to Vince Cable and the TUC, but it's also likely to be shot down by the other three-quarters of the government, who already think uppity workers have too many rights. Furthermore, it offers nothing for the workers.



The message sent by Business Secretary Vince Cable is that unions should be allowed to strike, but better watch out if they actually do so.

## Canny Little Newcastle Library

In Newcastle-upon-Tyne there is a new collection for anyone wanting to use and find out more about critical and alternative ideas. While local public libraries face funding cuts, the Canny Little Library, based at the Star and Shadow Cinema, is a free resource stocking an amazing selection of books, pamphlets and zines. The library is organised by a local collective keen to spread the availability of and access to literature critical of our society. Opened in September 2010 by local author, historian and legend Jack Grassby (author of *The Unfinished Revolution: South Tyneside 1969–1976*), the library has hosted letter writing events, screen-printing workshops and reading nights.

The catalogue started out in boxes piled high in people's rooms, including some rare and sought-after magazines and books well deserving of wider access. Through months of sorting and categorising donations, building shelves and creating a borrowing system the volunteer-run library now boasts over 1,000 titles. The collection includes sections covering Philosophy, Politics, Global Struggles, Prison Struggles, Anarchism, Queer, Feminism, DIY, Health, Environment, Art and more and has links with info-libraries in Berlin and Bucharest. The library is open Sundays and has a blog at [cannylittlelibrary.wordpress.com](http://cannylittlelibrary.wordpress.com)

## Standing on the picket line

During the election campaign that saw Labour sweep to power in 1997, Tony Blair boasted that his government "would leave British law the most restrictive on trade unions in the Western world." And so it did, not only maintaining the anti-strike laws implemented by Margaret Thatcher and Norman Tebbit but adding to them. Aside from the other arguments that this adds weight to – such as the need for the organised working class to end all loyalties to the Labour Party – this point demonstrates the need for a strategy of re-empowering worker militancy.

There is an organisation known as the United Campaign for the Repeal of Anti-Trade Union Laws, which has been trying to challenge restrictions through law and policy changes. The core of their argument is that Britain's laws are in violation of the conventions of the International Labour Organisation (ILO), which the country has signed up to. Thus, there are legitimate grounds to "demand our human rights and freedoms for the 21st century." It cites the United Nations' view that "the common law approach [in UK law] recognising only the freedom to strike, and the concept that strike action constitutes a fundamental breach of contract justifying dismissal, is not consistent with protection of the right to strike."

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

## If Stalinism has survived anywhere, it is in football

I have always believed Sir Alex Ferguson is the greatest ever British Stalinist (his association with new Labour and personal friendship with Alastair Campbell being merely a modern variant of Popular Frontism) The way in which he publicly humiliated Wayne Rooney, before bringing him, supine, back into the team last season, was masterful. When he recently asked for the exclusion of a journalist posing tricky questions about Ryan Giggs, you knew the individual concerned would soon be travelling on the media equivalent of a slow train to Novosibirsk. And all this relayed accidentally, because a microphone was left on? Do me a favour – that was about as accidental as the assassination of Kirov!

My theory reappeared watching coverage of the recent FIFA Congress. Lots of elderly men in suits, completely impervious to events around them, happily holding an election with only one candidate. I was recently given a copy of UEFA's corporate magazine, *UEFA direct*, and it is a publication any Stalinist would be proud to be associated with. It has literally nothing to say or report, but trundles through 24 pages of conference reports, news of national federations and

half-hearted attempts to promote a diversity you know they do not believe in.

Paul Stott

(who is has almost escaped and almost come back again)

<http://paulstott.typepad.com/>

## Becoming the anarchist movement paper at last

Aside from the formation of ALARM, the two most positive recent developments in London have both been at 84b Whitechapel High Street.

Firstly Andy Meinke and the team of volunteers have turned Freedom Bookshop into a friendly welcoming space for anarchists to meet up – especially first timers – and become an important hub for the movement.

Secondly Dean Talent and Jayne and other volunteers has done a great job in transforming *Freedom* from your embarrassing great aunt into an on-the-ball newspaper reflective of our glorious movement in all its diversity, but combined with the much better updated website able to offer comment and news actually relevant to anarchists. And at the same time performing the non-sectarian task of welcoming contributions from all the different anarchist organisations.

All *Freedom* needs now is for people to wake up to this fact and start selling the paper again. As an aid to this, *Freedom* are now posting back issues online. Check it out if you've not seen *Freedom* for ages

Ian Bone

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

The next issue of *Freedom* will coincide with the massive 30th June public sector workers strike. We intend to distribute the paper around picket lines and on the various marches and rallies happening throughout the country throughout the day, so the content will seek to reflect what's happening during the strike, its political implications and the anarchist response to it. If you are interested in contributing an article for the next issue please send it to [copy@freedompress.org.uk](mailto:copy@freedompress.org.uk) indicating '30th June Article' in the subject line.

Freedom Editor

## DONATE YOUR OLD BOOKS

The ravaging wolves of capitalist depredation are constantly howling around Angel Alley seeking the destruction of our noble bookshop.

You can help keep these fey hounds at bay by donating books that you no longer want so that we may sell them on to knowledge-hungry proletarians for a pound a piece (more to rich arty types who only came in 'cos they got lost on the way to the Whitechapel Art Gallery).

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## GETTING ACTIVE

### PRISON NEWS

Hunger strikes by prisoners in pursuit of their grievances feature regularly in this column as this form of protest is one of the few avenues for confronting the prison system that can be taken whilst still maintaining some form of dignity and control and without automatically provoking the standard response from the prison authorities: the massive overwhelming use of force. Prisons after all only operate with the implicit consent of their inmates and any attempt to withdraw that consent is viewed as a direct threat to the 'good order and discipline' of the State. Thus, the prison hunger strike is a confrontation between so-called 'soft force' (on the part of prisoners, alongside other forms of non-cooperation with a prison regime such as work strikes) and 'hard force' (in the guise of the prison regime itself and its riot squads). It also falls between the two stools of all-out rebellion – riot or mass escape, and suicide or other acts of self-harm – and as such this form of non-cooperation often avoid the more violent forms of immediate retribution by the authorities.

The prison hunger strike can be a very successful tactic in winning any number of important concessions from the State, one only has to witness the outcomes of the hunger strike by more than 7,000 prisoners in Greece in 2008 or the more recent protest by three members of the Lucasville Five<sup>1</sup> in January this year, which resulted in all their demands being granted, for them and for all Ohio State Penitentiary Death Row prisoners being held under 'administrative maximum security' conditions. Drawing inspiration from the concession won by the Ohio prisoners, inmates in the Security Housing Unit (SHU) of California's Pelican Bay State Prison have announced that 50 to 100 of their number will begin an indefinite hunger strike from 1st July. SHUs operate under some of the most restrictive of regimes that operate in US prisons. They are designed to force suspected gang members to inform on others but most SHU prisoners are not gang affiliated and any 'extracted' information inevitably feeds an endless cycle of the brutalisation of 'innocents'. The hunger strikers demands are: eliminate group punishments; abolish the debriefing policy and change the gang status criteria; comply with the recommendations of the US Commission on Safety and Abuse in Prisons (2006) and end long-term solitary confinement; provide adequate food; provide constructive programs and privileges for indefinite SHU inmates.

<sup>1</sup> The April 1993 Lucasville prison rebellion was the longest prison rebellion in US history and, more importantly, it was organised across racial barriers and gang affiliations. The 'Five' acted as negotiators between the different groups and spokespersons for all the prisoners. Singled out as ringleaders, they were framed for the murder of a prison guard and two fellow prisoners killed during the rebellion.



Students and activists, including members of the Anarchist Federation, occupied Glasgow university earlier this year as part of the campaign against fees and cuts.

● The London group of the **Anarchist Federation** have now held two successful meetings on the cuts. The first meeting was held at Freedom Bookshop on the Thursday after 26th March and there was a lively discussion with 30 people participating (two of whom turned out to be *Times* journalists and wrote a shock-horror story in their rag the following day). There were contributions from students who had taken part in occupations and actions at Glasgow University, at the LSE, Goldsmiths, etc. The general feeling from the floor of the meeting was that the meetings should continue as a cuts forum. At the next well attended meeting where the leading topic was why anarchists should oppose the cuts and how we had a very useful introductory talk from an AF member from Brighton (summaries of the talk can be obtained from [london@afed.org.uk](mailto:london@afed.org.uk)). The feeling from the floor of the meeting was that the forum be opened up so that other groups could sponsor and support it. As a result we will be contacting ALARM and the London groups of the Solidarity Federation. Next meeting will be on the first Thursday after 30th June, on 7th July, venue tba.

● **Solidarity Federation** members in Chester and East Yorkshire are looking to set up new locals. Anyone interested in getting involved, feel free to get in touch! As with all Solfed locals their immediate aims are to create an anarcho-syndicalist presence in East Yorkshire and Chester, alongside promoting solidarity in the workplace and the community. Chester contact: [chestersf@solfed.org.uk](mailto:chestersf@solfed.org.uk)  
East Yorkshire contact: [eysf@solfed.org.uk](mailto:eysf@solfed.org.uk)

● Still hitting 'em where it hurts, the latest **Hereford Heckler** pulls no punches as it takes the fight to local Tories, councillors, bankers, supermarket giants and the census. There are also articles on the resurgence of women's football, the 'won't pay' movement in Greece, Hereford's Mayday march, radical arts scene and a report back from their successful benefit night. Doing Hereford proud. Again. Copies can be downloaded from their website, or picked up at the more discerning outlets around the South West. See <http://herefordheckler.wordpress.com/>

● Another excellent freesheet is the **East Thurrock Heckler**. The *Heckler* is an experiment in bringing a radical take on local and national issues to people in working class areas of Stanford-le-Hope and Corringham. It's an attempt to produce a publication that ordinary working class people can relate to without feeling they're being patronised. If anyone wants to help distribute the *East Thurrock Heckler*, please get in touch – they'll be very grateful for any help! For details see <http://thuralmedia.wordpress.com/> or email [thuralmedia@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:thuralmedia@yahoo.co.uk)

● Issue nine of East London's favourite rabble-rousing working class newsheet **East End Howler** has sixth form students speaking out against tuition fees, a feature on how the cuts will affect the areas of Tower Hamlets and Newham, as well as an update of all their ongoing campaigns. Still the authentic voice of the East end. See <http://eastendhowler.wordpress.com/> to find out more.

# Miners banner relaunched

## Dave Douglass on the relaunch of the 1938 Follonsby Miners Lodge banner

At first glance one might ask why anarchists and syndicalists would take more than a passing interest in what looks like a Stalinist icon. The question and to some extent the answer is tied up with the revolutionary movement as it emerged into the twentieth century.

Contrary to revisions of history, the 'anarchists' were a crucial and integral part of the world communist movement. Marx was an elemental conclusion on the state but was still in contest with ideas of Proudhon, Bakunin, and Blanqui and later Kropotkin. His notion of 'the state' was in any case nothing like modern understandings of that structure. His vision of 'the withering away of the state' was in terms of days, not decades of an iron monolith as it developed in the USSR, so called. Those on the anarchist wing of the world workers movement, particularly in the USA and important parts of Russia, Britain and elsewhere, were central parts of the overall movement. It was in the maelstrom of ideology and the fire of debates on tactic and principles rooted in the actual experience of class struggle worldwide that such distinctions were fought out. There was no room for any self exclusionary ghetto or academic anaemic abstract criticisms from studious armchairs.

The formation of the Industrial Workers of the World in Chicago in 1905 brought together for a time the anarchists, anarcho-syndicalists and the revolutionary Marxists. In this vision of the world wide industrial union, uniting all workers, many seen the vehicle which would not only fight for the bigger loaf in the here and now, but form the frame for seizing and running the bakery. Staying with the struggle to the other side of an anti capitalist revolution forming the democratic structure on which workers would administer society. They were in essence 'soviets' around the time the soviets as such were developing in Russia. Marxists inside the IWW of the period saw the workers councils, committees and industrial unions as the instrument for workers power rather than their own party or central committee.

Later with what in the first flush of the successful 'soviet revolution' seen to be the first substantial achievement of this vision, anarchists and communist workers were at once won to that cause while arguments for direction and control still raged. Anarchist members of the IWW rushed to Russia to support the revolution and help build the soviets and direct workers power. As we now know, but few realised then, soviet democracy was deliberately crippled within three years of the revolution. The last stand for the soviet revolution was probably at Kronstadt in 1921 as the Bolsheviks took power from the workers councils and increasingly concentrated it into the Central Committee then in turn its General Secretary.

So the inspiration of this banner is directly tied into this history and our history is tied up with it. The central cameo of course illustrates V.I. Lenin as he centrally assumed control of the world communist movement, his vision of uniform Communist Parties across the world, extinguished hundreds of other irons in a thousand fires. Many who had cut their teeth on anarcho-syndicalist and anarchist communist ideas were won to what at that time seemed practical workable models of workers power.

James Connolly, founder member of the IWW, later founder of the Irish Transport and General Workers Union and the Irish Citizen Army, died leading the Irish 1916 rebellion in the middle of an imperialist world war. Their aim was a demo-

cratic socialist republican Ireland north and south, protestant and catholic based on small farmers and workers councils.

George Harvey, one of the leaders of the Ruskin College strike of 1909, a founder member of the Plebs League and Industrial Union of Britain, became a leading light in the revolutionary miner's movement following the Miners Next Step and the great coalfield debates on Industrial Unionism, syndicalism, anarchism and later Bolshevism.

Arthur Cook, the President of the Miners Federation of Great Britain during its most testing time in 1926 the general strike and great lock out which followed. The ruling class feared insurrection and the newly formed CPGB drew back for fear of losing control, leaving the TUC to betray the miners and crush the revolutionary momentum.

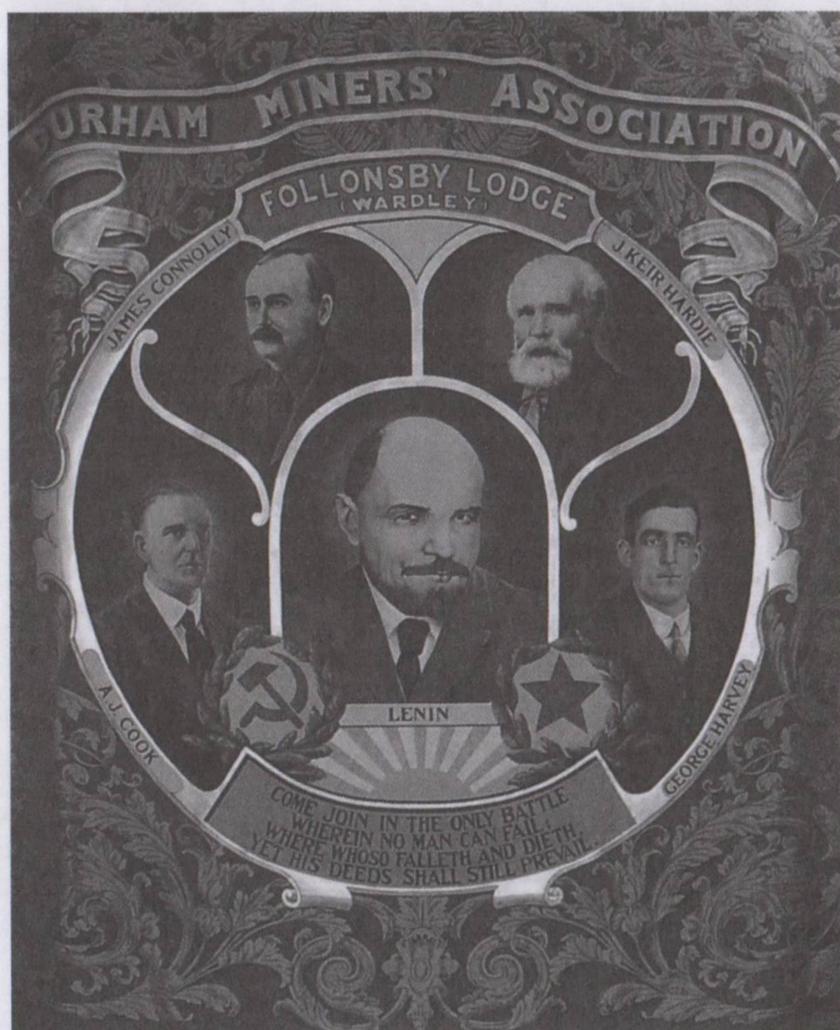
Keir Hardy, a man christened the founder of the British Labour Movement, the first independent working class member of the parliament and founder of the Independent Labour Party. A lifelong socialist-pacifist campaigned tirelessly against the pointless slaughter of world war one, when erstwhile comrades to his left like Peter Kropotkin supported its aims.

What is so strikingly unique about this banner is its encapsulation of the three major revolutionary ideologies and movements of the period, Social Democracy, Syndicalism and Bolshevism. Here the options of the ballot box, the bullet, Parliament and /or the general strike, its motto a call to revolutionary struggle to death if needs be. Proclaiming the union of the peasantry and proletariat inspired by the hammer and sickle while a new dawn brings in a brighter day.

First commissioned in 1928, it died in a blaze ten years later which nearly claimed the lives of Harvey and his wife. It was re-commissioned but had little enough time to bask in any glory as moderate forces painted it over not many years later.

So it gives me great pleasure, as a third generation Follonsby miner, member of the IWW and syndicalist, to be able to invite readers of *Freedom* to attend at our relaunch on 18th June 2011. This is our history too, the arguments are still being engaged in, not simply about then but more importantly now. This banner provides a valuable illustration to that debate and political struggle within the workers movement, what lessons we have learned from that long bitter road, which are as vital now as they were then.

The banner will be unveiled at Wardley Legion Club, Sunderland Road, Gateshead, 10.30am on 18th June 2011. Speakers, brass band, folk singers, buffet, drinking and singing. Everyone is welcome. A specially commissioned history of the Lodge and its banners, *The heroes on the silk*, will be freely available at the launch. After that time they are available at £10 each post paid from [djdouglass@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:djdouglass@hotmail.co.uk) proceeds to the Follonsby Miners Lodge, Band and Gala fund.



## REVIEWS

## WHAT'S ON

## JUNE

■ **18th** Anarchist and Working Class Bookfair from 11am until 5pm at Museum Vaults, 33 Silksworth Row, Sunderland, Tyne-and-Wear SR1 3QJ, for further details call 07931301901.

■ **18th** Green and Black Cross Network Gathering, the first ever, at The School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS) Thornhaugh Street, Russell Square, London WC1H 0XG from 11am until 6pm, for more email GBCLegal@riseup.net or see <http://greenandblackcross.org>.

■ **18th** Summer Solstice sale from 11am to 2pm at 25 Wolsey Mews, Kentish Town, London NW5 2DX – fundraiser for the new building and future home of the Crossroads Women's Centre, for details call 020 7482 2496 or see [www.crossroadswomen.net](http://www.crossroadswomen.net).

■ **24th** Cabaret with Magic and Burlesque, a fundraiser for the new building and future home of the Crossroads Women's Centre, doors open 7.30pm, show starts at 8pm, tickets £10/£15, for details call 020 7482 2496, email [contact@crossroadswomen.net](mailto:contact@crossroadswomen.net) or see [www.crossroadswomen.net](http://www.crossroadswomen.net).

■ **25th** A Beginner's Guide to Anarchism, with Ruth Kinna (editor of *Anarchist Studies*) who will describe the anarchist 'seeds beneath the snow' that come to life in exhilarating ways throughout history, from 12.30 until 1.15pm at Lowdham Book Festival in Nottinghamshire, for details see [www.lowdhambookfestival.co.uk](http://www.lowdhambookfestival.co.uk)

■ **30th** J30 Strike, a day of action against the cuts, from early morning pickets, direct actions, occupations and demonstrations – whatever you're into, let's all do it, see [www.indymedia.org.uk/en/2011/05/480187.html](http://www.indymedia.org.uk/en/2011/05/480187.html) for details of what's planned so far.

## JULY

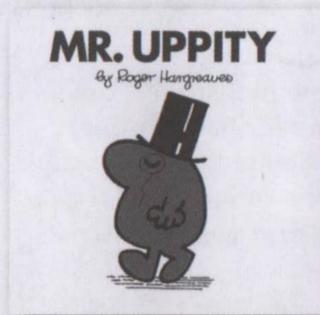
■ **2nd** Bradford Zine Fayre from 12 noon until 4pm at Impressions Gallery, Centenary Square, Bradford, BD1 1SD, stalls/tables are free, to apply email [BZF2011@lists.aktivix.org](mailto:BZF2011@lists.aktivix.org), for updates keep an eye on <http://northernindymedia.org/events/2030> and there will also be an after party at the 1in12 Club in Bradford.

■ **9th** 'Will the internet encourage the public to engage in the planning process in Waltham Forest', speaker Adrian Stannard, a News From Nowhere Club event at The Epicentre, West Street, Leytonstone, London E11 4LJ, 7.30pm buffet, 8pm talk and discussion, call 020 8555 5248 or see [newsfromnowhereclub.org](http://newsfromnowhereclub.org) for details.

■ **16th** Zero Carbon Britain, Nationwide Day of Action to promote the goal of a Zero Carbon Britain by 2030. Organise in your town or region, a cycle ride, a rally, a carnival, a fair... nationwide, for details/ideas email [phil.thornhill@campaigncc.org](mailto:phil.thornhill@campaigncc.org) or see <http://www.campaigncc.org/zcbday>

■ **28th to 1st August** Peace News Summer Gathering, this hothouse of creativity will be at Crabapple Community, Berrington Hall, Berrington, Shropshire, SY5 6HA, for details see <http://peacenewscamp.info>.

## BOOK



**Mr Uppity**  
Roger  
Hargreaves

In the opening few pages of this, the 11th work in the Mr Men series, we are almost led to expect of Hargreaves a foray into dialectical materialism.

We meet Mr Uppity with his top hat and monocle – a clear and overt representation of the bourgeois industrialist. Other arriviste trappings such as his long limousine and imposing townhouse further give the game away.

In a thinly-veiled reference to the oppression of the workers by the ruling class, we are told that Mr Uppity is rude to everyone, and the detail that he has no friends in Bigtown explicitly informs us that the masses are on the brink of revolution. Are we about to bear witness to class war, Hargreaves-style? To see Mr Uppity brought to account by the revolutionary power of the proletariat? Vanquished and overthrown by the party of the workers?

Not so. Mr Uppity is no Marxian analysis, no Leninist prescription for class action. As always, Hargreaves' inherent and essential conservatism comes to bear. His critique of the bourgeoisie comes not from the proletariat but from the feudal aristocracy. It is the authority of a king that places limits upon

Mr Uppity's excesses, as his usurpation and arbitrary exercise of power has violated 'the natural order of things'. Hence the protection the masses are dealt in response to this transgression is paternal, and they receive it as subjects not radical agents of change.

Being so staunch a traditionalist, Hargreaves of necessity is a reformer not a revolutionary. The King does not have Mr Uppity executed, imprisoned or even sent into exile. There is no state seizure and collectivisation of his wealth, or in fact any redistribution at all. (Despite his pomp and grandeur, the King no longer has such powers – both the outward self-importance and ultimate weakness of his intervention appear little more than a face-saving exercise for his waning hereditary rule.)

Rather, in the end it is the mildest of all regulation that is imposed upon the capitalist class. The ownership of the means of production remains the same, with no fundamental change to the economic base – just some superstructural tinkering to rein-in any overly brutal treading on the small man. The ruling class can do pretty much as it did before, as long as it says 'please' and 'thank you'. The aristocracy is duly appeased.

Hence we arrive at the Britain Hargreaves lived in – a gently regulated capitalism coupled with sham aristocracy, maintained by our own collective nostalgia and a national lack of appetite for mass action.

Hamilton Richardson

<http://www.hamiltonrichardson.net/>

*Mr Uppity* (Mr Men Classic Library) by Roger Hargreaves, paperback, published by Egmont Books Ltd, £2.50.

# The Anarchist Quiz Book

Who said "I shit on all the revolutionary vanguards of this planet"? Find out in the new Anarchist Quiz Book from Freedom Press, compiled by Martin Howard and illustrated by Paul Petard.

Some say that it should not be the highest priority of a revolutionary movement to ask itself obscure questions, but it's good fun and if it encourages an enquiring mind to find out more, than all the better. So agitate, educate and organise, all in this very handy question and answer format!

Get your copy now for £5 (post free) by mail order from Freedom Press, 84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1 7QX (cheque/PO made out to Freedom Press) or from [www.freedompress.org.uk](http://www.freedompress.org.uk)



## QUIZ ANSWERS

1. Six people have picked the song. Former London Mayor Ken Livingstone and SNP leader Alex Salmond chose Robeson's version as their favourite.
2. The culture shock suffered by Japanese tourists when Paris doesn't live up to their romantic idealisation. Yes, it's so common it has a name.
3. It set aside £8,937. Teaching staff weren't invited to Geoff Pine's party. Quelle

surprise, as students won't be learning.

4. Britnell, the adviser who told a salivating crew of US Private Health firms that "the NHS would be shown no mercy", used to work for Dr Foster. He then became head of commissioning, a key idea in the Tories plans, for the Department of Health. Shortly before he left, for a job at KPMG, he awarded a contract to a joint venture between KPMG and Dr Foster.

# The Land of Ned

**This tale of disaffected youth trades in traditional rhetorical flourishes but succeeds in avoiding pat answers, finds Tom Jennings**

Film and television actor and director Peter Mullan's is an interesting exception to stereotypical luvvie trajectories, traversing teenage gang membership and Southside pub bouncing before travelling across Glasgow to university after his violent alcoholic father's death. His career commenced in a hotbed of radical Scottish drama with the 7:84 and Wildcat Theatre companies, and even recent Hollywood incursions (with *Harry Potter* and Spielberg) have scarcely softened outspoken left-wing views – minor celebrity status regularly mobilised in campaigns against the Immigration Service HQ in 2005 over dawn-raid deportations and boycotting the BBC for not screening the Disaster Action Committee's 2009 Gaza charity appeal. Public acclaim first accrued as a petty criminal addict struggling to recover in Ken Loach's *My Name Is Joe* (1998), dubbed Best Actor at the Cannes Film Festival, and directorial respect for cinematic realism shone through *The Magdalene Sisters*' (2002) denunciation of Irish Catholic institutional tyranny. His previous project, however, the monumental comic nightmare *Orphans* (1998), deconstructed Thatcher's 'There is no such thing as society' – cod-philosophical *fait accompli* disguising callous policy – with a parallel critique of reductive naturalistic victimisation and pessimism regarding lower-class potential. Mullan's new film, *Neds*, attempts a comparably ambitious – if less hysterical – realignment of generic conventions in tackling profound thematics with personal resonance.

The title signifies the ancient, ubiquitous Scots mythological equivalent of 'chavs' – wastrel sink estate denizens as idealised repositories of respectable disgust – popular media images of whom are familiar from the BBC sitcom *Rab C. Nesbitt* (in which Mullan guest-appeared). A latterday military designation is the acronym 'Non-educated delinquents,' rendering cannon-fodder recruits vicious cretins – but with identifiable instrumental utility for official purposes, thus linking the 'reserve army of the unemployed' under capitalism with the disciplinary power of cultural governance. Deploying these twin metaphors to illuminating effect, the film refutes contemporary moral panics about grievous youthful bodily harm via relocation to the school and neighbourhood milieux of its writer-director's own rites and wrongs of passage. So a soundtrack of glamrock and protopunk replaces gangsta rap or grime, with



mundane kitchen knives instead of Glocks wielded by teenagers sporting early 1970s sartorial street splendour rather than hoodies. Otherwise any urban era menaced by unruly youth comes to mind – though this was before neoliberal austerity decisively eroded postwar social contracts, abolished full employment, and essentialised underclass impoverishment; state education still supposedly supporting meritocratic mobility. Yet the clichéd narrative arcs, sticky ends and redemptive resolutions of decades of coming-of-age movies, while inevitably invoked, are scrupulously avoided.

The painful progress of John McGill – shy mummy's boy from a dysfunctional proletarian home – includes initial academic promise encountering indifferent, increasingly forceful prejudice from peers and elders alike as primary school is left behind. Frustrated sociality finds provisional acceptance in the local Young Car-Ds, courtesy of his older brother's hardman renown – the siblings serving contrasting apprenticeships in the dynamics of domestic violence. This heritage helped hone John's intuitive nous, hitherto channelled into studiously avoiding conflict's depressingly predictable outcomes. Now comprehensively disillusioned just when adolescence bites, awkward intelligence lends formidable advantages over lads lacking the dubious benefits of such additional perspective. But subsequent wholehearted descent into murderous teenage kicks outflanks the comfort zones of both tribal and family hierarchies. Devilish bravado strikes fear into rival gangs, whereas the accompanying individualist unpredictability ensures exclusion from his own. No longer brooking bullying, John beats his dad up – becoming outcast from kin as well as kith. Collective psychopathology morphing into psychotic collapse, losing hope, sleeping rough and sniffing glue escalate hallucinatory persecution, where even a fantasied Christ attacks him. In the nick of time he returns home, refusing the easiest option of putting his pater out of everyone's misery – later being readmitted to a Special Needs class along with his first,

brain-damaged, victim, whom he takes the trouble to protect.

## A Neducation

This film is perhaps the most movingly un sentimental I've seen in delineating the tragedies of working-class disaffection. Cinematography and visual design unobtrusively charge an uncannily powerful atmosphere, reflecting the recognisable universality of alienation in teenage's inevitably misfitting passage. More outlandish surreal sequences are anticipated with subtle, pitch-perfect expressionism highlighting boredom, misery and small pleasures in the environment's familiar strangeness. Acting styles similarly match, with heightened naturalism among the professional adult cast counterposing emotional realism and improvised dialogue in amateur youngsters, who view grown-ups as inherently alien anyway. Authenticity is consistently reinforced by dark sharp Glaswegian humour intensifying and lightening pivotal moments, emphasising disjunctions between mature conformity and rebellious baulking at arbitrary constraints. Such sensitively convincing evocations contextualise meticulous fight scene choreography, where *Neds* nods to 1970s cinema like Peckinpah and Kubrick's *A Clockwork Orange* as well as the uncompromising social-realism of Alan Clarke and Ken Loach. These risky strategies integrate, with no hint of romantic seduction or safe distantiating via nostalgic fetishisation or shirking their terrible angry poignancy, John's various Catch-22s – which newcomer Conor McCarron's towering turn captures magnificently.

The story stands head and shoulders above its genre – including recent honourable efforts by such as Shane Meadows – depicting damaging deviance as sympathetically intelligible without glamourisation or demonisation and, even more unusually, soliciting neither heroic identification nor grotesque differentiation. However, its protagonist is still an all-round outsider, disallowing attention to crucial ambivalent



## Review

◀ page 15

nuances of solidarity and malevolence in peer group behaviour affecting how different kinds, levels and patterns of biography, personality, thought and action interact. The double theme of educational failure and gang phenomenology exacerbates the problem, ratcheting up the dramatic force required to maintain narrative balance. Hence the crushing ordinariness of everyday unfairness experienced by most of us ranged mid-spectra rather than at the extremes drains away – and with it the polemical precision of Mullan's message. Why a genius swot, rather than merely a mischievous imagination and nimble mind? Or male relatives so monstrously cowing all comers, with the parallel overkill of utter

social dislocation when houses of macho cards tumble down? Completely invisible now are aspirations hampered by lack of horizons, social aptitudes, and training in middle-class taste and networking – as are other underlying barriers to cultural cohesion, mutual respect and care and, especially, refusal of superior pretension, which might bulwark lower-class lives against the deprivations and degradations of our 'betters' irrespective of fame, fortune or abandonment of roots. *Neds* may subject to punishing account the philanthropic presumptions of liberal social democracy, but its broken promises surely need transcending altogether.

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

*Neds* is available now on DVD.

## THE QUIZ

1. How many guests on Desert Island Discs have chosen the song *Joe Hill* and who made the Paul Robeson version their favourite?
2. What is Paris Syndrome?
3. Cash-strapped Greenwich Community College has had to close a Music Centre and halted all its courses in foreign languages. How much did it set aside for its principal's retirement bash?
4. What links David Cameron's candid health adviser, Mark Britnell, with health consultancy groups KPMG and Dr Foster?

Answers on page 14

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