

FREEDOM

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NONE OF IT IS WORKING

Workfare designed as an attack on the poor

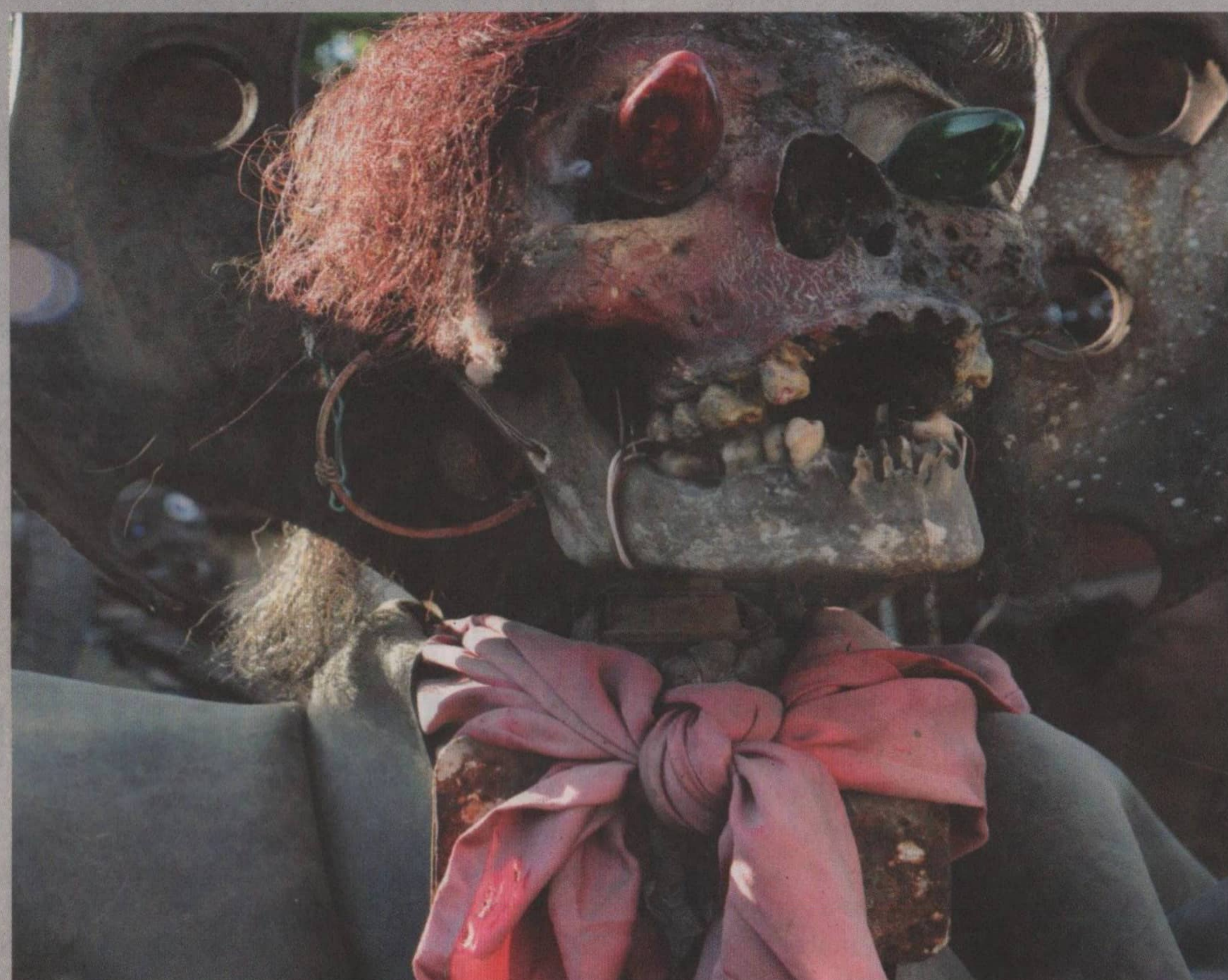
When the coalition government rolled out its plans to reform the benefits system, it was a Tory party middle England wet dream come true – punish the poor, attack the young, exclude the vulnerable and deny those with the least what little they were entitled to. It was also a nod to the real power brokers of government policy – the big business interests whose profits need securing during the prolonged recession and whose tax evasion far outweighs those claiming welfare support.

Rather than spend their energy ensuring companies who have so far refused to pay their outstanding tax bills – estimated at £95bn a year – the millionaire's government has targeted the benefits system as a means of saving money as part of their austerity measures. As a cost-cutting exercise it allows the wealthy and business class to continue extracting millions out of the economy while taking from the most needy essential financial assistance.

Ian Duncan Smith, the Works and Pensions secretary, declared the reforms "ambitious" with the introduction of 'work incentives' and a universal credit system with the explicit aim of ensuring less people will be able to

page 3 ►►

LENS CAP HAITI RE-VISITED



Haiti Revisited is an exhibition of photographs by Tracey Moberly taken before the 2010 earthquake and two years on. There will be a private view from 6.30pm until 9.30pm at Freedom Press on 5th April. The show continues daily from 12 noon until 6pm (4pm Sundays) until 2nd May.

Photo © Tracey Moberly

BLACK ROSE BLOOMING

Sheffield has got a brand new radical space. The Black Rose Centre is a new social centre project established by the Sheffield Social Centre Collective, based just north of the city centre. Opened in February, it has already become a hub for the city's political activists and those curious and interested in progressive political ideas. Both Sheffield Anarchist Federation and IWW regularly hold their meetings there, as do the organisers of the impressive annual LadyDIYFest and Sheffield Animal Friends. There's also computer fixing café every Saturday and a reading group for those interested in exploring radical perspectives. Added to that a Temporary Autonomous Arts event and Queer exhibition in response to LGBT history month, the Black Rose is becoming a very active environment.

Like Social Centres in other towns this is

an anti-capitalist space for people to get together to discuss ideas and take action for social change. It is also a space to share skills and food, run events and watch films in a non-commercial setting. This social centre is run without leaders (non-hierarchically) with a 'safer spaces' policy that rejects racism, sexism, homophobia and all other forms of oppression.

Anyone in the city who is interested in getting involved should make their way down – you'll be assured of a warm welcome. Anarchists are encouraged to get involved in actively keeping the place running and contributing to the radical development of the city.

Black Rose Social Centre, 268 Verdon Street, Burngreave, Sheffield S3 9QS
<http://sheffieldsocialcentre.org.uk/>

INSIDE ►►

Kettling is lawful page 3

BP crying over spilt oil? page 6

International news pages 8 and 9

Prison news page 13

Svartfrosk page 16

Reviews pages 20 and 21

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NEWS

MONITORING A SECURE OLYMPICS

The Olympic organisers have promised the 2012 Games will be the most inclusive. In terms of security it is certainly going to be the most expensive and as a society we are going to be the most surveilled, monitored, recorded, scanned, photographed, searched and filmed for the duration of the event. And, as has been noted elsewhere, the Games will see the biggest mobilisation of military personnel on the streets of the UK since the Second World War.

It is this that gives us an insight into just how the Olympics is being viewed by the political class and government in power. The security systems being brought in for the Olympics – scanners, biometric ID cards, number-plate and facial-recognition CCTV systems, disease tracking systems, new police control centres and checkpoints – will remain long after the last medal has been won. And all without question or protest.

In addition, the Ministry of Defence has admitted that it will provide 13,500 military personnel (more than are currently deployed in the occupation of Afghanistan) to support the police and other civil and Olympic authorities during the Games.

Despite the government desperately trying to play down the presence of the armed forces by stating their responsibilities would be confined to 'security of the venues', it is still unclear just what the role the military will play on the streets during the Games especially in terms of responding to social unrest or political disruption.

If the real role of the military is to guard against terrorist threats then neither the games organisers nor the MoD are telling us. There has been very little in the way of press speculation either, perhaps on instruction, so as not to put off the lucrative overseas state visitors or corporate sponsors that the Games are really aimed at.

Equally the August riots and the police's inability to adequately respond to mass social unrest left a very serious question mark over the capabilities of current policing measures that must have had both government and Olympics organisers looking for alternatives.

Perhaps the biggest winners of the 2012 Olympics though is the UK security industry itself. The Games is an opportunity to demonstrate the latest in surveillance tools and techniques from biotechnology to crowd control equipment to a captive global market.

As one Whitehall official put it: "The Olympics is a tremendous opportunity to showcase what the private sector can do in the security space. Not only do you have a UK security kitemark on the product but you've got an Olympic kitemark to boot."

LENS CAP SOLIDARITY FOR JOCK



Photo courtesy of Leeds ABC <http://leedsabc.org/>

On 15th March, a solidarity demonstration was held outside the Bulgarian Embassy, London, in support of Jock Palfreeman, the anti-fascist who is serving a 20-year sentence for defending himself and others from a neo-Nazi attack in Sofia. The picket included comrades from Brighton, Bristol, London Anarchist Federation, Surrey/Hants AF, Staines Anarchists, Leeds Anarchist Black Cross, London ABC, ALARM and the Traveller Solidarity Network. Leaflets explaining Jock's case were handed out and a Bulgarian Flag was burnt in front of the embassy.

Workers lock out

A new tactic seems to be emerging which bosses are adopting in industrial disputes to counteract workplace militancy in the form of factory lock-outs. Recently workers at two factories, both in the Merseyside area, have been subject to a lock-out during disputes over wages and redundancies.

Employees at the Austrian owned Mayr-Melnhof Packaging (MMP) factory in Bootle have been locked out for over a month now after negotiations over redundancies broke down and management simply locked the gates. Initially workers had occupied the factory that makes packaging for cereal, pet food and confectionery, and demanded proper negotiations after management finally announced it was to axe 49 jobs. It is reported that around 40 workers entered the building, telling management that nothing would move in or out of the site until employers met with the union for emergency negotiations.

There had been a series of one day strikes previously in the run up to the planned job losses over the proposed method of selection for the redundancies and the terms and conditions of those redundancies.

As a response the company took the unprecedented step of locking the gates and the entire workforce were informed not to show up for work and that they would not continue to be paid. Fearing the company was set to move stock and equipment from the closed factory to its other UK operation

in Wales workers mounted a blockade to prevent lorries leaving and have maintained a picket outside the gates ever since.

It is understood that this is the first time a company has locked workers out as part of an industrial dispute since 1958.

Meanwhile in Birkenhead over 200 workers at the meat packaging factory were locked out by their new owners Tulip, the UK arm of Danish Crown, who closed the factory and boarded up the site after an ongoing dispute over redundancies. When employees arrived for work they were handed a letter simply stating the factory had been closed because of 'significant operational issues'.

Factory workers were already in a consultation period over plans by the new management to shut the plant after a recent decline in orders.

It is thought the company took the action it did to prevent its obligation in paying out a proper redundancy package to the workforce. It is also understood they want to move production to another site in Cornwall.

What is clear is both lock-outs came as part of a deliberate, if desperate, strategy by the companies' owners to force those fighting for their jobs and a decent wage to accept inferior deals. It is perhaps an indication of things to come that methods not usually associated with disputes in the UK are being brought out and used now.



Scenes from the police kettle at Oxford Circus on 1st May 2001.

Kettling is lawful

European Courts finally rule that the police kettling tactic does not violate human rights

The controversial police tactic of kettling (corralling large numbers of people into a confined space and detaining them for long periods in order to maintain public order) has been ruled lawful by the European Courts of Human Rights in a landmark judgement.

The case was brought before the European courts by three people who were kettled for over seven hours during the 2001 Mayday anti-capitalist protests in central London. More than 1,500 people were surrounded by police and forcibly detained in Oxford Circus without access to food, water or toilet facilities because senior officers feared a 'breach of the peace' even though there had been no major outbreaks of violence throughout the day.

Many people trapped in the cordon were not part of the protest and many more suffered injuries as a result of police violence during their prolonged detention. Despite this the court in Strasbourg found that "the people within the cordon had not been deprived of their liberty within the meaning of the (Human Rights) Convention".

The ten-year battle against the Mayday detention finally ended in March, after the judges returned a majority verdict of 14-3 in favour of the police, concluding that kettling did not amount to an infringement of article 5 of the Convention of Human Rights – the right to liberty. This final ruling reinforces an earlier House of Lords judgement that stated kettling as a crowd control measure was "necessary, proportionate and lawful".

David Pannick QC, who represented the police, argued the convention's guarantee of liberty – except for individuals lawfully held in criminal matters – was not meant to concern "mere restrictions of movement".

In its summing up, the court stated: "The police had imposed the cordon to isolate and contain a large crowd in dangerous and

volatile conditions. This had been the least intrusive and most effective means to protect the public from violence".

Adding: "Even by 2001, advances in communications technology had made it possible to mobilise protesters rapidly and covertly on a hitherto unknown scale. Article 5 did not have to be construed in such a way as to make it impracticable for the police to fulfil their duties of maintaining order and protecting the public."

What this means for the future of political protest is incredibly worrying, especially as the 2012 Olympics approaches. Kettling will now be imposed during demonstrations as a first means of crowd control, limiting people's freedom of movement and, paradoxically, the right to leave a demonstration. The purpose of protest will now be wholly managed by the police as a public order exercise rather than as right to express dissent. For anarchists it is equally troubling as it allows for greater state repression of those identified as anarchists, who will be detained simply for their political beliefs under the pretext of maintaining public order.

None of it is working

◀ page 1

claim less welfare, despite there being fewer jobs on offer and little economic growth. The Welfare Reform Bill, having passed through the House of Lords, is now law and will soon affect everyone who claims some form of welfare assistance – from the young unemployed to disabled people, single mothers, the sick and those on low income.

One of the more malevolent changes to the benefits system is the workfare programme. Originally introduced by New Labour under Blair, the Tories have now refined it as part of a package of 'work incentives' to be rolled out on a massive scale in the coming year.

The workfare programme is a compulsory scheme where the unemployed are forced to

work for private companies, or risk having their benefits withdrawn. It also means the participating companies have access to a continuous supply of cheap labour, undercutting and driving down wages in those work environments.

According to the grassroots campaign group Boycott Workfare: "Workfare profits the rich by providing free labour, whilst threatening the poor by taking away welfare rights if people refuse to work without a living wage."

Companies involved include big global multinationals like McDonalds, HMV and Tesco.

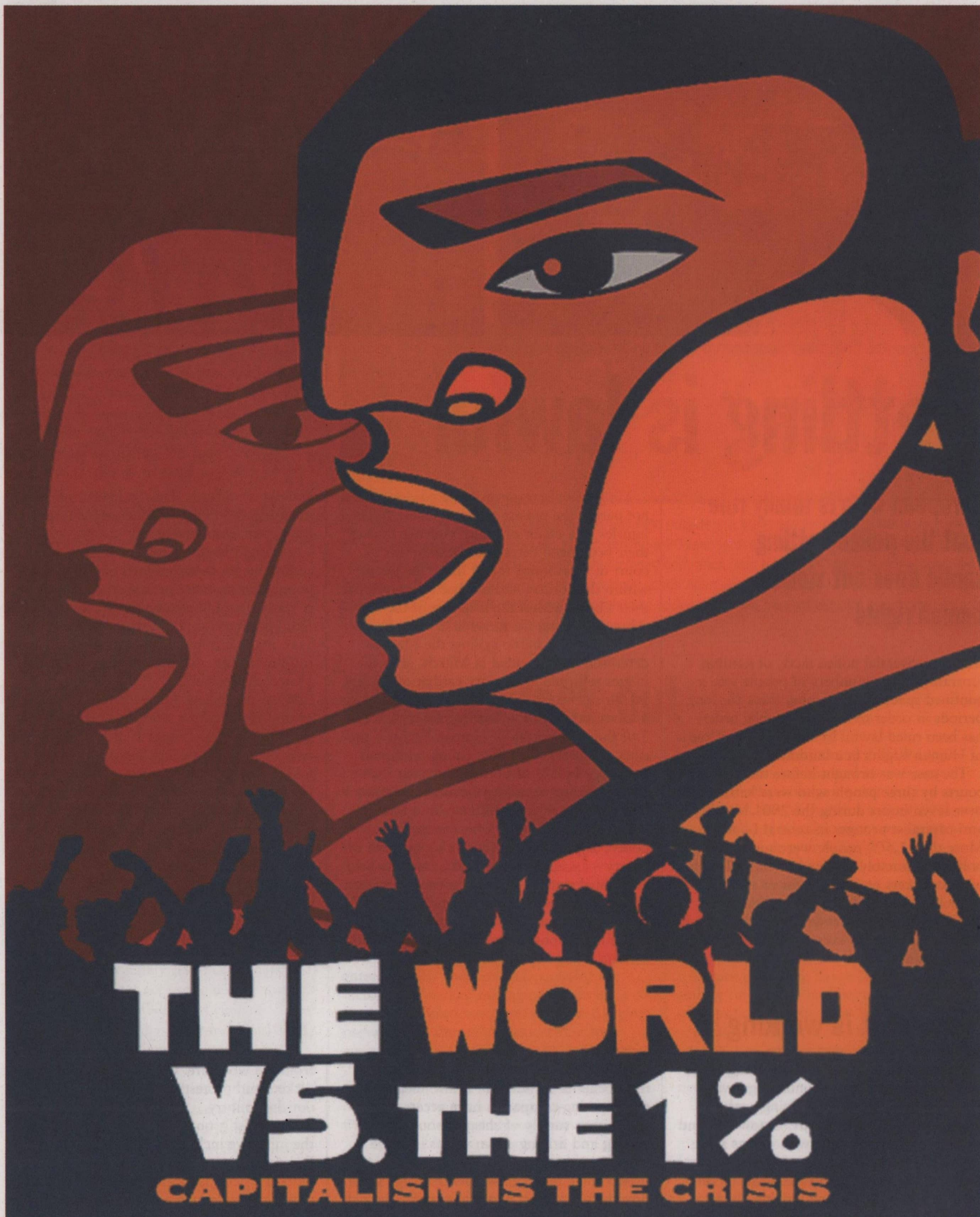
As a response Boycott Workfare called a Day of Action on 3rd March, asking groups to target those companies profiting directly

from the workfare. Over 35 demonstrations, pickets and protests were organised throughout the country.

Anarchist groups who publicly supported the initiative included Brighton Solidarity Federation, who were involved in anti-workfare actions locally and called on Solfed nationally to launch a concerted campaign against workfare. Other Solfed locals active on the day were Liverpool and Thames Valley Solfed.

Edinburgh and Bristol Anarchist Federation both endorsed the day and joined in actions in their area and Lincoln Underground Collective took a tour of Lincoln to picket and protest companies involved in workfare.

THE BIG PICTURE



The Occupy London camp outside St Paul's Cathedral was finally evicted on 28th February 2012. The camp, which has been the centre of radical political activity for the past four months, was completely cleared the early morning darkness as bailiffs, supported by hundreds of riot police, forcefully evicted the occupiers and dismantled the camp which had become part of a world-wide protest movement against global banking institutions. A free paper has been put together documents some of the poster graphics to emerge from the Occupy movement. Available from Freedom Press Bookshop, or visit <http://occuprint.org/> to see the entire selection of graphics from around the world.

Anti-fascism out on the streets

A look at militant responses to the return of the far right to 'street politics'

Saturday 25th February saw several protests and demonstrations by reactionary and right wing groups organised on the back of recent events in an attempt to gain public support and recognition for their politics of racial and social division. The English Defence League (EDL) and British National Party (BNP) were out in Greater Manchester trying to make political capital out of an incident where two young white men were attacked by a group of eight Asian males, while in Glasgow the Scottish Defence League (SDL), buoyed by the 'success' of preventing an Irish republican march going ahead in Liverpool a week previously, called a protest in Glasgow.

Glasgow

The SDL, having been refused permission to hold a march, opted for a static demonstration in the centre of the city. Unite Against Fascism, the liberal-left front group of the SWP had set up an information stall and gathering under the banner 'Celebrating Multicultural Glasgow', but it was Glasgow Anti-Fascist Alliance (GAFA), made up of militants and anarchists, who provided a more coherent and dynamic response on the day – amongst other things organising to protect the Palestinian Human Rights Campaign stall which had been attacked by the SDL in the past. The anti-fascist wing of the Celtic football club supporters, The Green Brigade, were also out and about.

In total there were around 200 militant anti-fascists in the city to counter the presence of the SDL and their assorted friends – North West Infidels and North East Infidels (both splinter groups from the EDL) were present, which numbered no more than 60 and were for the most part surrounded by a police cordon.

As the report back from Glasgow anarchists stated: "One of my favourite memories of the day was when the Palestine stall felt a bit too exposed as the circling sharks began increasing, and texted that we could do with a few more antifa around. Within a few minutes a beautiful sight appeared as 50–70 antifascists confidently and loudly marched up Buchanan Street, masked up, black flags waving. The streets were ours to demonstrate on today, and the fascists were reduced to scurrying around."

However they refused to be complacent about the job required to confront fascists. As they themselves admitted: "we can do better. We need a debrief and a proper plan for next time. We need literature ready to roll. We need a decent communications network. We need to be ready to properly build for counter demos. And as the SDL

will now have to retreat back into flashmobs and small word of mouth fly-by attacks on the Palestine stall we need a proper strategy to sustainably defend it."

It is this kind of critical self analysis, recognising what needs to be done, that puts militant anti-fascism at the forefront of organising against the far right.

Manchester

Meanwhile both the EDL and BNP were out in Hyde, Greater Manchester following an attack on two young white males the police said they were treating as racially motivated. The BNP attempted to leaflet the area but ended up as a simple photo opportunity due to such a low turnout with the EDL consigned to an empty car park on the edge of town.

Racial tensions have increased in the north over recent weeks with a highly contentious court case involving a group of Asian men charged with grooming young girls for sex in Heywood area of Rochdale. A local takeaway was attacked by a group of some 200 youths in response to the ongoing trial which again has inflamed tensions amongst the different communities in the area.

As an anarchist anti-fascists we must be able to respond politically to these kind of antagonisms. This summer may well be a serious wake-up call for anarchists in terms of how we have no option but to organise to confront the far right.

Liverpool

Meanwhile Liverpool anti-fascists have had a serious re-think about strategy after the relative ease in which far right – EDL and

their off-shoot groups could muster high numbers and go unchallenged in the city. As a summary of the day it was left to an anarchist to deliver some hard truths: "a mob of between 150–250 fascists ran free on the streets of Liverpool. As well as hounding a tiny demonstration against police brutality out of Derby Square, they were able to turn an Irish Republican march way from the City Centre. Yesterday was a definite win for the far-right and underlines the need for a serious re-evaluation of anti-fascist organisation".

Following this a co-ordinating meeting was called involving anarchists and militants to address the rising confidence of far right groups in the area. It was a positive and highly productive event detailing the challenges ahead. Having acknowledged their failings they went on to address the practical issues of defence of political meetings and events from attack, anti-fascist stewarding and building within the trade union movement, particularly at a grassroots level.

The overwhelming message that came out clearly was the need for militant anti-fascists to respond effectively to the far right's realignment towards controlling the streets and build a broad working class movement that is willing to oppose them directly.

For people wanting to get involved in anti-fascist activities:

- Scottish Anti-Fascist Alliance:
<http://scottishantifascist.org.uk/>
- Liverpool Anti-fascists:
<http://liveraf.wordpress.com/>

Also check www.freedompress.org.uk links page for an anti-fascist group in your area.



ANALYSIS

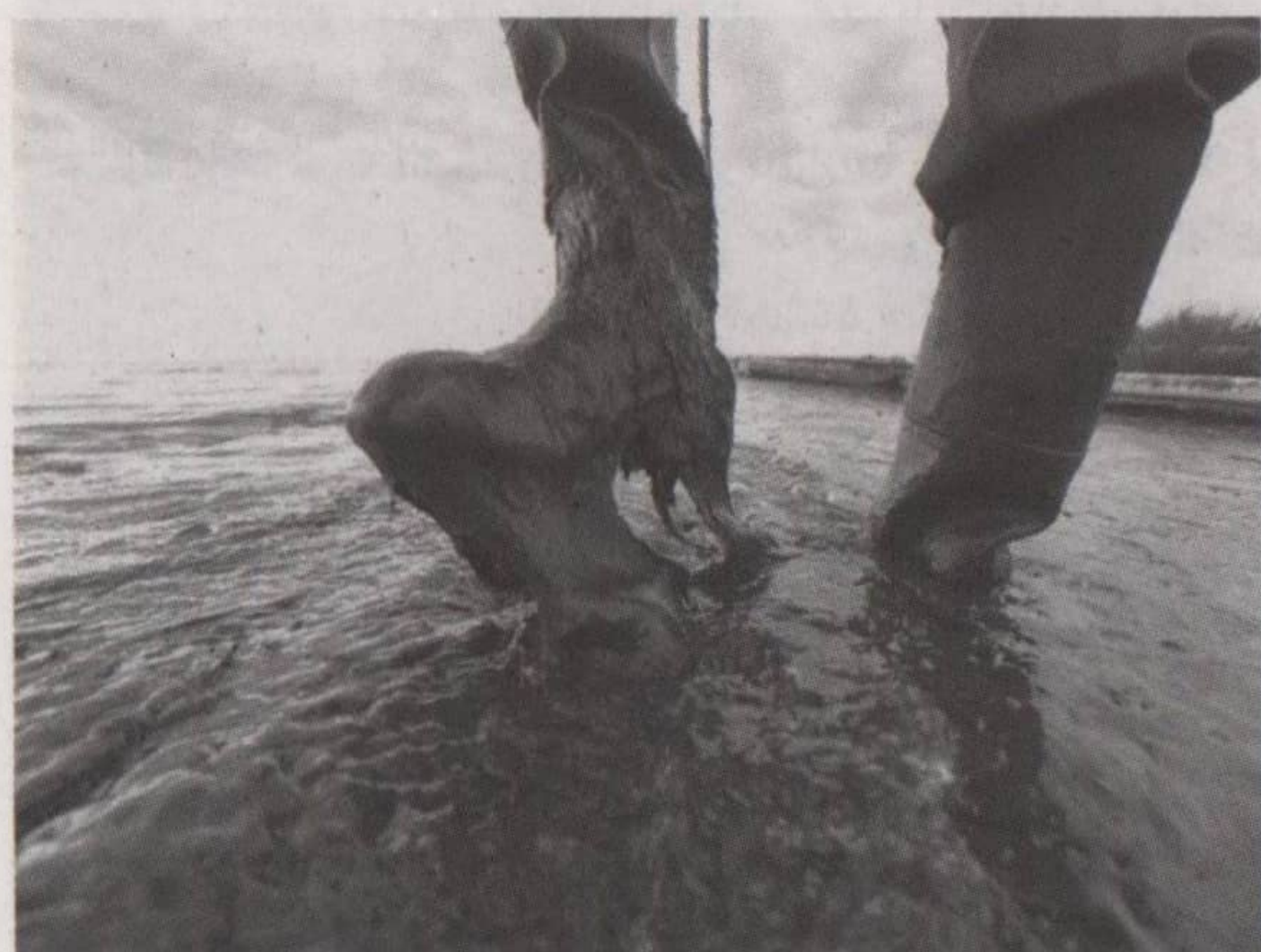
BP trial: no crying over spilt oil

On 20th April 2101, a BP-owned offshore oil well in the Gulf of Mexico exploded, sinking the oil rig, killing 11 workers, injuring 17 more and spewing millions of barrels of dangerous slick into the sea. Much more damage has been recorded since, but as we approach the second anniversary of the event the judicial trial, which was due to begin in New Orleans in February, has been postponed twice, this time indefinitely.

The event and the actors

The well that exploded, the Macondo Prospect, extending 18,000 feet below the sea surface in the Gulf of Mexico, was leased to BP by the US federal authorities. The rig, Deepwater Horizon (DH), was owned by the Swiss-based company Transocean, and the cementing operations to plug the well after drilling were provided by Texas-and-Dubai-based Halliburton. As such, all three are defendants in the non-jury, civil trial, charged under pollution laws.

But BP is pulling out all stops to settle out of court. The big story doing the rounds right now is that the corporation has settled with over 100,000 individual plaintiffs to the tune of \$7.8bn. This money is coming out of the \$20bn fund that BP was already forced to set up to compensate victims. But the cases



brought by the federal government and several states against the defendants still stand and these could cost BP a few billions more, and the US could still, theoretically, bring a criminal case against BP.

However, previous accidents and safety violations by BP has been disallowed as evidence in the first phase of the trial. Such evidence, common sense would say, is necessary to establish a clear and consistent pattern of behaviour by a major oil company whose profiteering has cost quite a few human lives, not to mention ravaged pristine ecosystems.

For example, in the Texas City refinery accident in 2005 fifteen workers died and well over a hundred were injured. BP was accused of safety breaches both before and after the incident. In July 2011 BP-operated Valhall oil field in the North Sea off the shores of Norway caught fire, and the field had to be closed down. In 2006 BP was found guilty of spilling more than 260,000 gallons of oil into Prudhoe Bay, Alaska, but got off by paying \$20 million in compensation.



Workers are fair game ...

When millions of barrels of oil started spilling out of Macondo, tens of thousands of oil workers and local fishermen were roped into the clean-up operation conducted by BP and trustingly overseen by the US. Toxic chemical dispersants were used to break up the oil slick, as they usually are during large spills. It took three full months to plug the leak, and has taken months of constant cleaning to wash hundreds of miles of coastline along the southeast of the US, even as 'tar balls' are moving inland.

Predictably enough, workers started to fall sick. They started complaining of serious symptoms like headaches, dizziness, nausea, various ears, nose and throat infections, memory loss, sight and respiratory problems, skin rashes, diarrhoea, etc, the more pernicious of them manifesting a year or so after the clean-up started. Some even had to be hospitalised.

BP initially denied that these illnesses had anything to do with the chemicals that were being sprayed from ships and planes across the landscape. In fact, workers who cleaned up the Exxon Valdez spill in 1989 off Alaska's coast had complained of chillingly similar symptoms. In both instances, cleaners had been working in preventably unsafe conditions.

For instance, a letter of May, 2010 sent by various environmental and other groups to relevant US authorities pointed out, "BP is not requiring the use of respirators for workers and has not developed a respiratory protection program." Not only that, there have been accusations that BP threatened to fire workers who demanded safer conditions.

... and so is mother nature

Perhaps one of the most heart-rending scenes spawned by the disaster was the sight of

hundreds of live pelicans completely covered in oil washing up on the shores. The Gulf of Mexico is designated a Large Marine Ecosystem (LME), and thousands of pelicans use that area as their nesting sites. Many of those eggs will never hatch and the chicks born will probably never make it to adulthood.

By the end of 2010 millions of gallons of dispersants had been sprayed over land and sea, and no one really knows what the long-term impact of this will be. Although BP and the producer of the chemicals, Nalco, claimed that they were the safest options available, the US government's own environmental agency (EPA) later told BP to use safer varieties because the dispersants in use were too toxic. According to known effects, both oil and dispersants can cause birth defects and stunted growth.

Despite all this, only a year after the disaster, BP was given a free pass to drill again in the gulf. To add insult to injury, BP has become Pentagon's largest oil contractor after the incident. The US government has also opened up new waters in the delicate Arctic sea for deepwater drilling which environmental organisations have been fighting hard to stop, as that area forms the ancient migratory routes and berths of many different wildlife.

In the meantime, BP is making profits again. Its CEO Bob Dudley was recently paid a bonus of \$1.6m along with his regular income of \$1.7m. He was not the only BP executive to go home with millions. Call me pessimistic if you will, but this chain of events does not bode well for our future, and as long as the matter is out of the hands of the common people, our collective future is likely to get grimmer.

An extended version of this article with further updates will be put on the website.

FREEDOM STOCKISTS

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email cowleyclub@riseup.net
<http://cowleyclub.org.uk/>

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- **Birmingham Bike Foundry**, 1539 Pershore Road, Stirchley, Birmingham B30 2JH, tel: 0121 459 7276, email: info@birminghambikefoundry.org
<http://birminghambikefoundry.org>

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Remembering the Falklands

This month is the 30th anniversary of the beginning of Falklands War. Except it wasn't a war, it was a conflict or a crisis. It was jingoism writ large that defined a Tory leader's term in office and ensured the 1980s would become a truly ugly and unforgiving decade. The anarchists' position, then as now, could be summed up in the hot angry temper of Crass' lyrical storm. In 1982 it took an enraged punk singer to ask the prime minister what it felt like to be the mother of a thousand dead.

The war was tied up between two desperate governments – one a dying imperialist nation, the other a dictatorship, both unpopular, both facing massive domestic unrest and economic problems and both using a couple of small islands with less than 3,000 inhabitants as the means to reinvigorate their damaged days in power.

In the UK it was manifested as a surly imperialism that echoed around the Houses of Parliament as frothing career politicians almost sang for military intervention. It was, of course, the party of war (old Labour same as the New Labour) that was the most voracious cheerleader in sending warships to the south Atlantic. Just as they had sent warships to the south Atlantic when they were in power, secretly, to see off the Argentinean threat. It was a time of one word *Sun* headlines and three million unemployed. It was before the miners' strike. The start of the decline.

The islanders though never got a mention. They were the objects of government policy;

they were some corner of a foreign field that would forever be a Tory party landslide victory at the next election.

I visited the Falklands in 1986–87, some four years after the war. I was working on board the RRS Bransfield, a cargo ship that supplied the various British Antarctic bases, and we would dock at Stanley several times during the year. There was still an active military presence on the Islands. Mount Pleasant airport, a purpose built RAF station, was a sprawling network of army barracks, fighter planes would roar over Stanley almost hourly as a constant reminder of the military's overarching presence.

And yet it was a presence that was met with almost universal hostility by the islanders; the locals despised them being there. Squaddies were refused entry into the pubs in Stanley, certainly weren't welcome to drink there, and the biggest shop in town was the NAAFI shop which wouldn't serve the locals. The resentment was enduring and the locals felt the British military was an 'occupying' force with no love lost between them.

This is the nature of war. It benefits no-one, including those that the government and armed forces think they are 'protecting' and 'defending'. The preparations for war in Iran, via Syria, can only worsen already fragile conditions in the Middle East and, if he continues, Cameron, like Blair and Thatcher before him, is destined to become a feted war criminal.



INTERNATIONAL

APPEALS FROM RUSSIA

Anarchist anti-fascist murdered in Samara, Russia

On 9th February, the body of 20 year old Nikita Kalin was found at the Physical Institute of the Russian Academy of the Sciences. He had been stabbed 61 times, his ribs were fractured multiple times, and had head injuries. No property was stolen. Currently there is one murder suspect under arrest. Nikita's blood was found on the clothes of the arrested suspect.

Nikita was attacked by a group, police also told his mother off the record that the detained suspect is a national socialist activist and refuses to name any accomplices. The investigation has still not questioned his friend who was the last person who saw him.

We suspect that the investigation is working in the interest of the arrested, will be an attempt to cover up the case, as it often happens in Russia, so support is necessary. At this point, a human rights organisation has provided a lawyer, but funds are still needed for funeral costs.

Nikita was from a simple working class family, and never hid his anti-fascist and anarchist views.

If you'd like to help Nikita's friends and family with funeral costs, you can donate to Anarchist Black Cross of Moscow, see <http://wiki.avtonom.org/en/index.php/Donate>

Nizhny Novgorod appeal for solidarity

Anti-fascists and anarchists of Nizhny Novgorod (Russia), are appealing for solidarity and support. The political police, the Center for Combating Extremism, have fabricated a criminal case against our comrades.

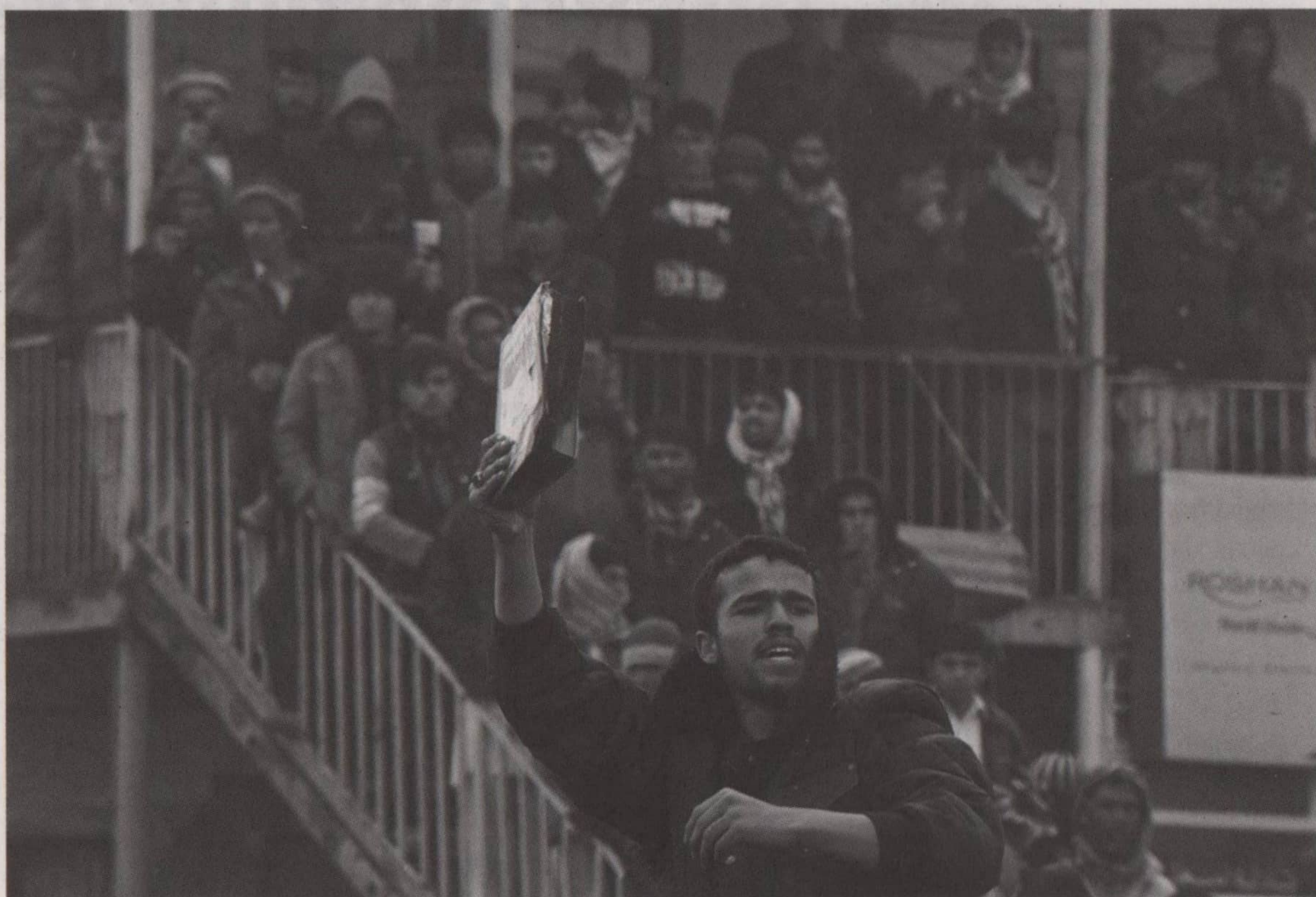
Five young men Artyom Bystrov, Albert Gainutdinov, Pavel Krivosov, Dmitry Kolesov and Oleg Gambaruk are alleged to have formed this organisation in order to carry out assaults on people espousing ultra-rightwing views.

The notorious IDs, which allegedly prove that the accused were involved in an extremist organisation, were planted during police searches. The allegations of violent actions against neo-Nazis, is likewise filled with fabrications and contradictions.

Since late April, Artyom Bystrov has been under house arrest. He has been involved in Food Not Bombs for many years. Like Pavel Krivosov, Artyom Bystrov is an anti-fascist, and an environmentalist. Bystrov and Krivosov have been involved in organising and providing security for anti-fascist concerts, and have taken part in animal rights, environmental, anti-nuclear and anti-fascist protests. Dmitry Kolesov is a musician in a hardcore group who also makes no secret of his anti-fascist convictions.

We would be grateful if you were able to make a personal donation to the defence fund for our comrades or hold benefits or concerts to raise money on their behalf. For more information on Nizhny Novgorod Anti-Fascists see <http://avtonom.org/node/17032>

LENS CAP AFGHANISTAN'S IRONICAL UPRISING



It took the burning of Koran, not the daily slaughtering of innocent villagers, to impel ordinary Afghans to fight back against the American occupation – as this man holding a burnt Quran outside a US air base illustrates. At least 12 US soldiers have been killed, while recently 16 villagers were slaughtered by a 'rogue' US soldier.

US anarchists anti-fascist arrests

On Monday 27th February, white supremacist groups attempted to hold demonstrations in a number of cities across the US, under the banner of supporting white South Africans. These were opposed by anti-racists, most notably in Sacramento, California, where around 100 counter-protesters, including a large black bloc from Occupy Oakland, turned up to oppose a group of around 35 fascists.

Clashes broke out between the police and anti-racists, in which two police officers were injured and a total of four people were arrested, including Eric Desouza who is now facing a number of serious charges including assault on a police officer and incitement to riot. Similar confrontations occurred in Harrisburg, Philadelphia, where an anti-fascist was arrested and charged with assault and possession of a concealed weapon.

These arrests happen at a time when US law enforcement agencies appear to be clamping down generally on anti-fascist activity: Dane Rossman, who was arrested for opposing a rally by the openly Nazi National Socialist Movement in Arizona in 2010, was told at the time that charges against him were not being actively pursued, but a decision was recently made to prosecute him, and he is now facing seven charges that could mean over 20 years in prison. Meanwhile, New York City Antifa report that an anti-fascist activist in the city was visited by three FBI agents on Tuesday 3rd March.

For more information about Dane Rossman's case, see azantifa.wordpress.com or email AZAntifa@gmail.com, and bayareaabc.wordpress.com has information about the defendants in Sacramento.

Notes from the US

Propaganda

In schools some interesting examples of rather absurd propaganda have emerged. The Heartland Institute is a right-wing think tank funded by the Koch brothers, Microsoft, and other prominent corporations. Now it's planning to develop a 'global warming curriculum' for primary schoolchildren that presents climate science and the threats from carbon emissions not as a crisis, but a 'major scientific controversy'. The brain-washing exercise will be developed by Dr

David E. Wojick, a coal-industry consultant.

Similarly, gay rights groups in Tennessee made last ditch attempts in February to block legislation that would ban all discussion of homosexuality in the state's schools, making discussion of 'natural human reproduction science' the only topic allowed. Then, just as the New Jersey State Senate voted in favour of a same-sex marriage bill in February, Governor Chris Christie vetoed it. Still, Washington became the seventh

Ireland: protests against new tax

WSM involved in campaign against community charge

The campaign to stop a new 'household' tax, introduced by the Fine Gael and Labour coalition government, is gathering heat. The €100 tax being levied on residential owners across the board is a flat tax, that is everyone pays the same amount, regardless of the value of their property.

This new burden is being imposed on the people as part of the Irish government's pact with the EU/IMF/ECB troika. However, instead of introducing a property tax as originally instructed by the troika, the government has chosen to introduce this uniform tax as an 'interim' measure. The government claims that the tax is necessary to pay for social services (which are supposed to be paid for by existing taxes).

Campaigners and protesters say that though it is a comparatively small amount (equivalent to £88), it is a 'gateway tax'; it is meant to open up an opportunity to charge people far more in the near future. No one is fooled as to the real purpose of this tax which is to pass the burden of austerity further on to the people, but rather than tax the really rich, the Irish government (as every other) is going



after what is known as the 'squeezed middle'.

The Irish anarchist organisation, Workers Solidarity Movement, is fully supporting the campaign. Their website informs, "The €100 charge is designed to pave the way for a combined property and water tax which will amount to over €1,000 per household for the average household by 2014."

However, explaining the importance of getting involved in the campaign, they state further, "Opposition to the household tax is important also because it provides a focus around which opposition to the financial policies of the government can be mobilised. This issue can provide an opportunity for people to begin to resist the programme of austerity and attacks on our living standards."

The main campaigning body, the Campaign

Against Household and Water Taxes (CAHWT), is attempting to create a mass campaign urging people not to register to pay the tax. The deadline is 31st March, and the government requires 1.8 million people to register in order for the law to take effect. Even though there is a penalty of up to €2,500 for non-payment, only a very small minority has registered so far.

According to CAHWT, the government can only fine people by taking them to court. Neither can the government automatically deduct the amount from people's incomes. Therefore, campaigners are hopeful that if they can get huge numbers of people to refuse the government will then have to drag thousands, maybe even millions, to court, which it surely cannot attempt.



Notes from the US

◀ page 8

state to legalise same-sex marriage – even though opponents are planning a referendum to overturn it.

Dysfunction

This is election year, of course. As anarchists such charades mean next to nothing to us. But for those who still feel such things have any validity these facts may come as a shock: a report published at the beginning of last month by the Pew Center on the States found that amongst the deficiencies in the system itself are the presence of more than 1.8 million dead people listed as active voters, while 24 million active voter registrations (or 12% of the total) are invalid or inaccurate in one or more of several ways. Conversely,

about a quarter of those eligible to vote in the United States are not registered.

Health

Republican-backed attacks on reproductive rights in a number of States are gaining momentum: Virginia's governor, Bob McDonnell, earlier this month signed into law a bill that forces women seeking abortions to have an ultrasound. The senate in Georgia approved steps to stop abortion coverage under that state's employee healthcare plan and prevent employees of private religious institutions from demanding contraception coverage under their insurance.

Then New Hampshire passed a similar measure to exempt religious institutions

from including contraceptive coverage in their insurance plans. In Utah, lawmakers have now passed legislation that would make that state the first to ban state schools from teaching contraception as a way to prevent pregnancy or sexually transmitted disease. The measure would also bar teachings on homosexuality or other issues of human sexuality, with the exception of abstinence before marriage.

Meanwhile the city of Stockton, California, is moving ever closer to being the largest city in the United States so far to file for bankruptcy; its long-term debt is US\$700 (£441) million and has already laid off many workers – including a quarter of its police force.

Louis Further

ECONOMICS

In Search of Economic Alternatives



Whenever the establishment is challenged on the fact that they have no real economic 'solutions' to offer, the stock response is that the anti-capitalist naysayers have no alternatives to offer. That there is no way out of capitalism and the traps it has set for us. On the contrary, many people around the world are doing just that – finding ways of circumventing the cruelties and impotence engendered by capitalism.

For instance, community kitchens and community gardens are already popular and widespread. We are also familiar with the concept of social centres, which are run on gift/donation for communal purposes, bypassing the payment-for-services system.

Social currency

But there are also community currencies. An interesting example is the Toronto dollar, which was started in 1998 by a non-profit organisation in Toronto, Canada. This local currency is backed by the Canadian dollar, and over 100 local businesses have endorsed it.

People can trade their Canadian dollars for Toronto dollars (TDs), shop in the local area, and when they don't need them any more they can sell them back. But when they do, 10 cents from each dollar traded back goes into a fund to finance community projects, such as social services or homes for the homeless. TDs are also 'gifted' to welfare recipients who provide free/volunteer services, but without affecting their welfare payments in the least. This is a non-punitive way of making people contribute to the society they live in.

True, this system does not 'overcome' money; it is not wholly anti-capitalist either. But it goes some way in practically demonstrating

that financial autonomy within a small region is achievable. It also demonstrates the concept of 'social money', where the needs and priorities of a whole community are woven into the currency itself, rather than the individualised money we all use, where instead of donating to a tangible community that one lives in, one pays an abstract 'tax' to a proxy institution (the state) out of the money that one feels entitled to.

In co-operatives is our strength

Although it is no longer a dominant movement, the co-operative is still a practical and favoured model for ensuring basic securities and fostering solidarity within a community. There are housing and workers' cooperatives all over the world, but here I shall consider the UK-based Radical Routes, which is a radical and open organisation that attempts to form a solid network of different kinds of co-ops.

Active members of Radical Routes include social centres, printers and housing co-ops. Their objective, as they state it, is "working towards taking control over our housing, education and work through setting up housing and worker co-ops, and co-operating as a network," and by doing so "we aim to reduce reliance on exploitative structures and build secure bases from which to challenge the system and encourage others to do so." Their ultimate aim is to have a "nationwide network of like-minded co-ops and individuals."

Formally set up in 1992, Radical Routes also provides educational workshops for promoting co-operatives. They host four open gatherings a year where important decisions are made and new members can

offer to join. The next one this year will be from 25th to 27th May in Lanarkshire, Scotland.

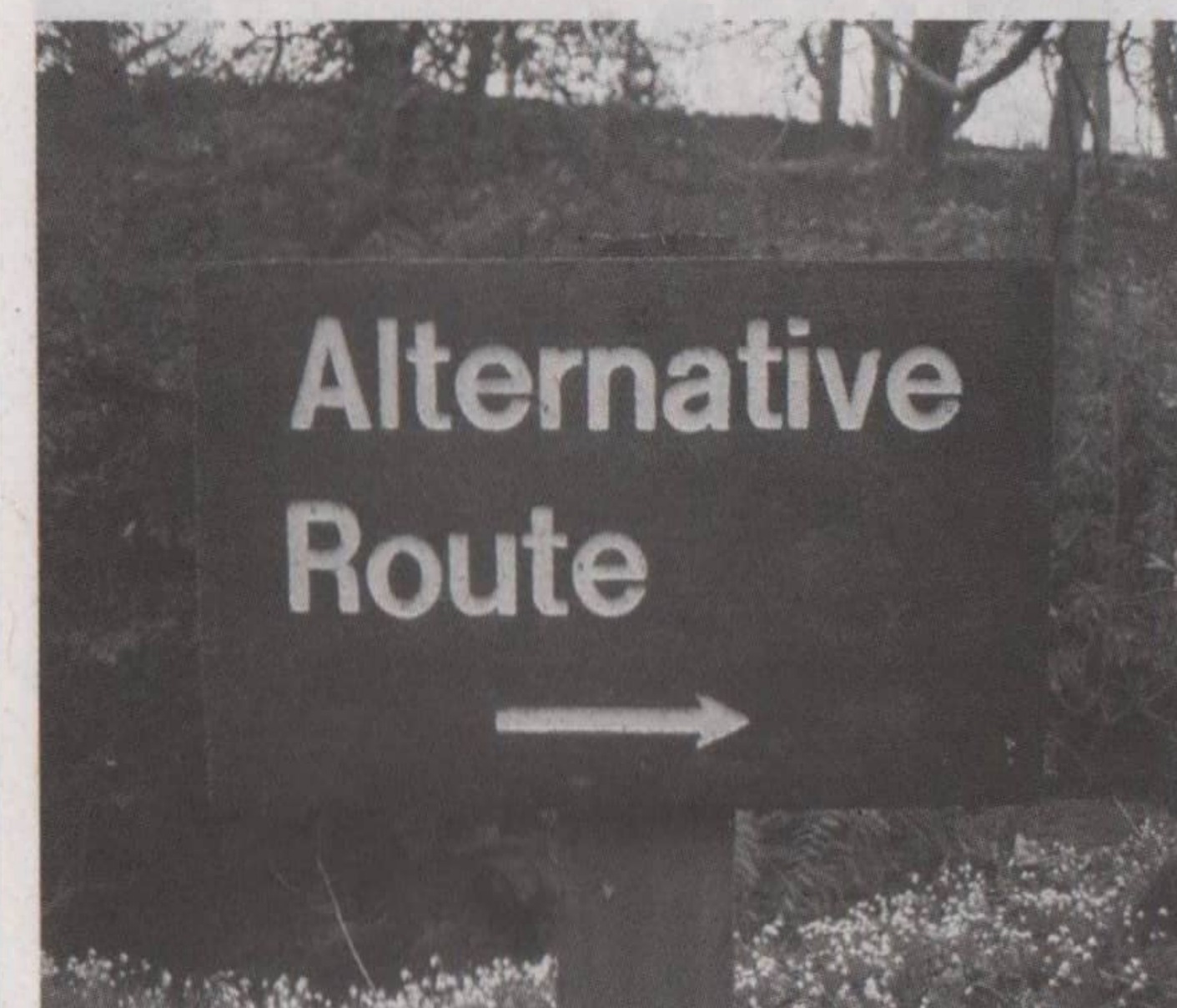
Reclaiming the earth

Ultimately, no alternative economic practice is meaningful if people have no control over land itself, because systematic enclosure of land is what enabled capitalism to become the dominant system. Therefore, a handful of inhabitants of Morgan County, West Virginia, USA, came together on the 22nd February this year to declare their county an 'International Water Heritage Site'.

The occasion was the exploitation of their land by various companies conducting hydraulic fracking – a method used to extract natural gas under the ground – which has been proved to be an extremely poisonous and dangerous practice. The declaration was made under the auspices of the grassroots environmental group Morgan County Frack Ban.

This extraordinary declaration is possibly the first of its kind in the western world. The written declaration, read out in front of the county court, draws from several sources, including the state and federal constitutions. It states unashamedly that its context and purpose are "revolutionary." But rather than refer to Washington or Jefferson, it quotes that great rebel of his times, Thoreau.

In fact, the text of the declaration is worth reading and re-reading. It says, "by strictly adhering to the systems of power rather than working outside of them when necessary, we are treating the symptoms of disease rather



than its underlying cause." It is decidedly not anti-state, but it is openly anti-capitalist: "we recognise that capitalism is not democracy and that democracy is not capitalism. These are radically opposing ideas, and we must take care not to confuse them."

The text affirms the sovereignty of the people and makes protection of the environment a moral matter, to be upheld with civil disobedience if necessary. It recognises that life trumps economy: "Ecology is the only economy that really matters. One cannot make a living on a dead planet; and one cannot drink money." Amen.

Remembering Sue Richardson

The remarkable life of a political activist

Three days after Christmas, on one of those clear winter days during which the dark clouds are pierced by a sunlight that turns the water to silver, a group of friends gathered at Bull Island in the heart of Dublin city to say goodbye to Sue Richardson. Sue died in October in 2011, aged seventy, sitting at her kitchen table, waiting for the kettle to boil. At her funeral a former housemate said, “Sue had an uncanny knack of turning the conversation away from herself”. She had an extraordinary life, yet spoke very little about it. The story here cannot be anything but incomplete.

She was born Sarah Fenwick Owen in 1941. At 23 she became Sarah Poulíkous on marrying Dimitris Poulíkakos. Dimitris later became a radical actor and Greek rock star. Though they didn’t stay together, almost fifty years later she met him again to discover that both had in the intervening years followed similar political paths. In 1972, it was Sarah Poulíkous who Scotland Yard said they were anxious to interview about the activities of the British anarchist group the Angry Brigade. In the previous year, one member of the brigade had received a 15-years prison sentence and four others were sentenced to ten years for involvement in a series of bombings. So it was that Sarah Poulíkous came to Ireland and Susan Richardson was born, a new name, a new birthday, a new date of birth, a new passport.

She moved to Dublin’s inner city, was involved in the burgeoning Irish feminist movement and joined the Dublin Anarchist Group. Her life changed once more, when on 22nd February 1978, a man entered the Bank of Ireland on Drumcondra road and passed a note to the teller saying ‘I am armed, push out all the money to me. Hurry. No delay. Return note’. He left with a bag of money and disappeared. Sue was found nearby, holding the bag, and was arrested. At her trial, at the Special Criminal Court she refused to identify the robber and so was sentenced to three years in jail on a charge of receiving money knowing it was stolen.

Conditions at Mountjoy Women’s prison were harsh. It had changed little since Victorian times. There were only two toilets for the 16 women prisoners, both open to those around, including male prisoners. For washing there were two small basins with only cold water. Once in their cells, the women had to use pails and slop out every morning – often in the same basins. Sue, ever the fighter, took a case to the Irish High Court arguing that the state had failed in its duty to protect the health of the prisoners. She said to the judge “I don’t know what your stomach feels like in the morning, but it can be

very unpleasant to go to wash your face and teeth to find the basin filled with human waste”. Justice Barrington upheld her complaints and directed the authorities to improve facilities at the prison.

She was released in 1980 after serving 16 months, but was told by the prison authorities that she was not to communicate with newspapers, radio or television or to engage in public controversy. If she did, she would be considered in breach of prison discipline and returned to jail. Sue went to the High Court and contested the gagging order. Once more she was successful. The judge Mr Justice Barrington prohibited the Minister for Justice and the prison governor from attempting to restrict her freedom to express freely her convictions and opinions, through newspapers, radio and television. On release she remained active in Prisoners Rights Organisation and supported other prisoners, when she could, organising friends to visit prisoners when she could not.

The Dublin she returned to was beginning to see the corrosive effects of heroin addiction spreading through inner city communities. The threatened destruction of the inner city families led to the rise of a grassroots anti-drug campaign known as Concerned Parents Against Drugs. Mass meetings were held to expose dealers; mass pickets were placed on their houses. With Noreen O’Donohue, Sue wrote *Pure Murder: a book about drug use*, which detailed the effect of addiction on the area she lived in. It was groundbreaking as it contained interviews with addicts themselves,

giving voice to a group who were often demonised. It was published by the Women’s Community Press, which she helped to set up, in 1983.

The house she lived in was a reflection of her personality. Trish described it as “a communal space and numerous individuals who needed support and a place to stay were made welcome there over the years”. A former house-mate remembered the dinner parties and political arguments around the kitchen table. When I visited her house I always left with ideas, the name of a new book I needed to read, a film I should watch, a radical economist worth listening to. She loved her garden and her cat. She had a wicked sense of humour and was quick to laugh. Sue was one of those rare individuals that are always worth listening too but who share their wisdom in a gentle unassuming way. She could be strong without being forceful – though young male activists would often find themselves at the butt of her questions. She had contempt for those in authority, “assume nothing” she said. In the last few years she cared for her terminally ill sister Jane, went wooffering in the Lebanon and travelled throughout the Basque country with her friend Rose Dugdale. It’s hard to believe that she is dead, because she lived so well.

Sue is survived by her two nieces, and missed by friends, comrades and house-mates.

Aileen O’Carroll
Workers Solidarity Movement



Photograph: Derek Speirs

THE IRANIAN THREAT

Tom Walton explores the actuality of Iran's military risk to the 'international community'

There has been a steady flow of rhetoric in mainstream media about the apparent menace of Iran. It is urgent that this be countered and that people understand the true nature of this crisis before being swept into another major conflict.

Inflammatory rhetoric about Iran has taken place since the 1990s when Russia announced that it would support Iran in restoring its nuclear reactor. Iran has had nuclear capabilities since the 1970s when the United States supplied the country with a nuclear reactor and nuclear fuel. Henry Kissinger augmented this deal in 1975. This was four years before the Iranian Revolution; Iran was then in the hands of a US/UK-installed dictator. "No country in the world has a worse human rights record than Iran", said Amnesty International in 1975. Yet its human rights record was of course irrelevant. It supported US interests and so long as that was the case, it could be as hideous a regime as its rulers liked. A parallel can be seen today in the US relationship with Israel.

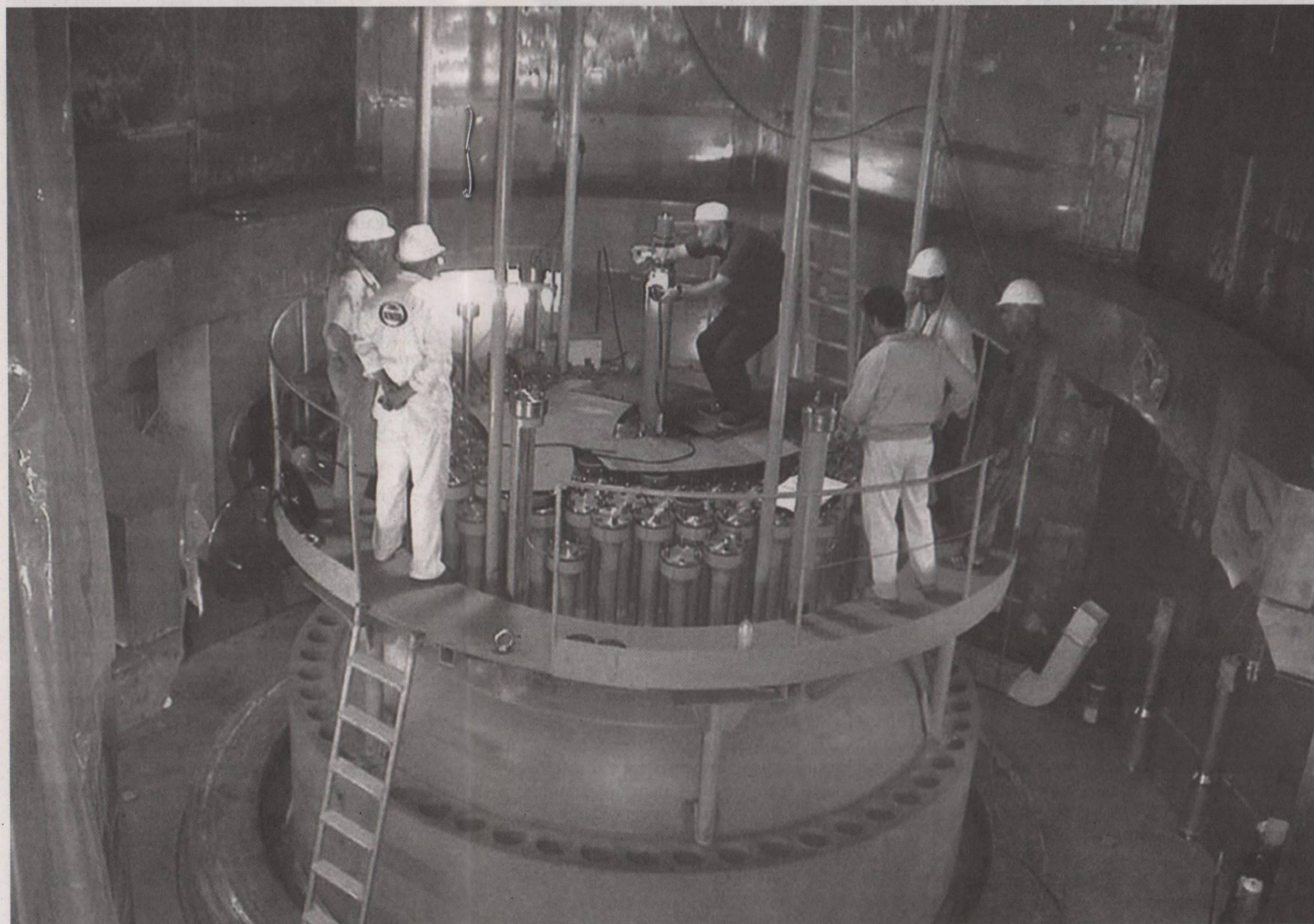
This brings us to a serious question: What actually is the Iranian threat? Fortunately, we have an authoritative answer to that question, provided by an intelligence report to the US Congress in April 2010. The report explained three important facts:

1) Iran's military spending is "relatively low compared with the rest of the region" and incomparable to that of the United States or Israel. 2) Its military doctrine is "defensive... designed to slow an invasion and force a diplomatic solution to hostilities". 3) It has

"limited capacity to project force beyond its borders". The report then came to Iran's nuclear ambitions. It describes the nuclear programme as "a central part of its deterrence strategy". To serious scholars of the region, this is common sense. Reuel Marc Gerecht, then head of the CIA Middle East division pointed out as early as 2000 that, having been vanquished by a technologically superior Iraq at the cost of 500,000 people, Iran knows better than anyone the need for a deterrence strategy. Martin van Creveld, also regarded as a conservative commenter, said in the *International Herald Tribune* that if Iran was not developing nuclear weapons they "would be crazy".

So the problem is that Iran has a deterrence strategy. This is a serious problem for Western powers because it limits US freedom of action in the area that President Truman described as 'a stupendous source of world power and one of the greatest material prizes in world history'. Guardian of US interests is Israel – a 'strategic asset', to quote the internal technical nomenclature, emerging as such from the collapse of the Eisenhower doctrine in the late 1950s.

The Eisenhower doctrine is worth recalling briefly. In order to assert US primacy in the Middle East, it was hoped that it would be possible to cultivate the 'Northern Tier' states (Egypt, Iraq, Turkey, Pakistan) into pro-western regimes. This became known as the Baghdad Pact – the effort to encompass these states within CENTO (Central Treaty Organisation). Yet US efforts began to wither. Nasser aligned himself to China, Iraq overthrew their British-imposed despot (in addition to uprisings in Jordan and Lebanon), and Egypt and Syria merged into the UAR (United Arab Republic). In 1958, Eisenhower discussed this problem with his Security Council. There is a campaign of hatred against us, said Eisenhower, not by govern-



Above: an Iranian nuclear facility, photographed by UN inspectors; below left, Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

ments but by the people. The Security Council reported that there is a perception among the peoples of the region that the United States supports brutal and corrupt regimes that prevent democracy from developing. Furthermore, continued the Security Council, it is difficult to counter that perception because it is correct and moreover it should be correct because those regimes are necessary to maintain the status quo.

As successive states succumbed to Arab nationalism, Israel presented itself as the ideal local policeman. A National Security Council planning board drew up a paper called *Factors Affecting US Policy in the Near East*. In this paper it was explained that if Arab nationalism was to be crushed and Persian Gulf oil maintained, by force if necessary, "a logical corollary" would be to "support Israel as the only strong pro-West power left in the Near East".

With its victory over Egypt and Syria in 1967, Israel proved its worthiness beyond all doubt. Levi Eshkol, then Israeli Prime

study points out that there has never been a successful example of the use of economic sanctions and that "economic coercion reduces political freedom" invariably. It is the general population, wholly innocent in such affairs, who suffer the consequences. Such was the severity of sanctions against Iraq in the 1990s that Denis Halliday, the UN Humanitarian Coordinator in Iraq, resigned saying that the policy was "genocide". The Iraqi population, far from overthrowing Saddam Hussein (which they were on the verge of doing in the late 1980s) became dependent on state food parcels for their survival and opposition to their tyrant melted away. The same will happen in Iran.

If the United States was serious about ending Iran's nuclear weapons programme, there happens to be a very easy way to do it. There has long been a proposal for a Nuclear Weapons Free Zone in the Middle East. This proposal goes back to the 1990s and advances recommendations from the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT). The suggestion was put forward in September 2009 at a meeting of the United Nations Security Council and at the same time, the IAEA (International Atomic Energy Authority) put forward a resolution calling on Israel to join the NPT. The United States attempted to block this and having failed to do so, promptly assured Israel that the resolution could be ignored. As recently as May 2010 at a conference of the NPT, the United States ensured a protracted conflict by insisting on Israeli exemption from the NPT. By protecting the only global powers who remain non-signers of the treaty, they ensure that the most obvious and effective way to diffuse the crisis remains an impossibility.

Much of this is contrary to the more common image of Iran as irrational, maniacal and potentially suicidal. President Ahmadinejad has been extremely useful to the West in this regard, making wildly crass, vulgar and wanton statements about wiping Israel from the page of time and so forth. This is ideal fodder for bellicose journalism, which can ignore statements on the country's official position, given by the person with real power in Iran, namely the Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei. On the question of Israel, for example, Ali Khamenei repeatedly asserts that Iran's position is in line with that of the Arab League – recognising Israel within the pre-1967 borders as determined by the two-state settlement unilaterally blocked by the United States for over forty years. Much to the disappointment of many, Iran is as rational and calculating a state actor as any other.

The importance of the campaign against Britain's involvement in the project of US global dominance has never been more important. Activism can and does make a difference. It is no exaggeration to say that action now could save millions of lives.

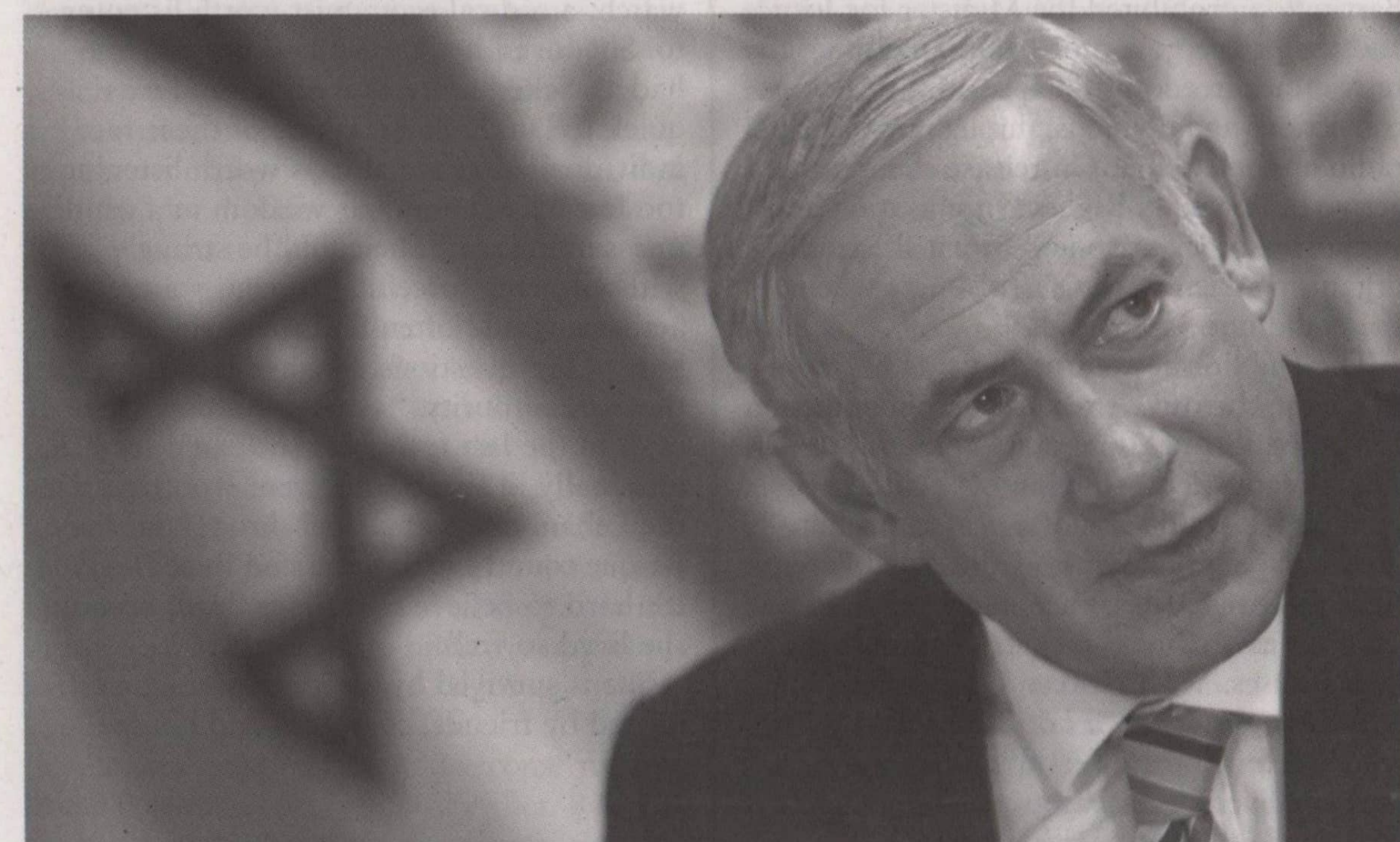
Minister, commented at the time that Israel's influence would be out of all proportion to its size. So it was. In the beginning of the 1970s, the Nixon-Kissinger doctrine re-asserted US goals, explaining that unilateral intervention by the United States was expensive and at times impractical. Israel would be guaranteed what the *New York Times* describes as a "margin of technical superiority" to ensure its continued role as protector of the US foreign policy objectives.

To this day there has been no shift in the basic position of the United States. The figures for 1998–2008 (the latest available so far as I am aware) show that the United States supplied Israel with a third of its defence budget throughout that decade (out of a total of \$75 million spent by Israel, \$25 million came from US Foreign Military Financing). The United States is not doing this because it feels kind.

What possibilities do we face in the coming months and years? The obvious and

most alarming possibility is a military strike, the effects of which would be catastrophic and must be vigorously discouraged by any sane individual. For one, as an Oxford Study Group report suggests, an attack would be unlikely to prevent Iran from developing nuclear weapons anyway. Furthermore, it would galvanise the loyalty of the population around the regime in Iran and increase support for its nuclear deterrent. This was obvious enough to be identified by General Petraeus and it is a view widely shared by specialists on the region as well as notable peace activist and Nobel laureate Shirin Ebadi.

The second on-going effect is that of sanctions. The use of sanctions is generally advocated on the grounds that it will bring pressure to bear on the regime and encourage the population to overcome it. In reality the opposite is true. An important study on the effects of economic sanctions can be found in the journal *Human Rights Review* (Volume 10, Number 3, by Peksen and Drury). The



INTERVIEW

Nik Górecki: the radicals' bookseller

Freedom interviews the driving force behind the Alliance of Radical Booksellers

Who are you and what do you do?
Nik Górecki, bookseller at Housmans Bookshop.

What kind of books do you sell?
Housmans was set up to promote and provide literature for the post WW2 peace movement, but the shop has grown over the years to take in a broad spectrum of leftist writing. I think we're unique in the range of stock that we have.

Where did you get the idea of the Alliance of Radical Booksellers (ARB)?
In the seventies and eighties you could find a radical bookshop in any major town in the UK, and these like-minded booksellers formed the Federation of Radical Booksellers (FRB). With over 100 members, they did a lot of good work to support and promote radical bookselling. When I heard about the FRB it struck me that a similar organisation was needed now more than ever. So the idea isn't new: the ARB is for all intents and purposes a resurrection of the FRB.

What are the main objectives for the ARB and is there a specific criteria for being included as a member?

To provide a mutual support network for member booksellers, and to raise awareness of the valuable work radical booksellers do. There is an official criteria (posted on the website). It is interesting to compare it to the criteria for the old FRB, which was much stricter about who could and couldn't join – a reflection of the more hard-line politics of the period. For example, Housmans wasn't allowed to join the FRB as it wasn't a workers' co-op. The spirit of the ARB is to be as inclusive as possible, so long as the bookseller is working towards 'progressive' ends.

In the seventies radical bookshops thrived, yet now there's maybe a handful left in the UK, what do you think caused the decline and why is there such a deficit of radical bookshops today?

A proper analysis of what caused the decline needs more space than there is here. Key factors are the tearing up of the net book agreement, increased competition from chain bookstores and internet retailers. I think the general decline of all small businesses points to a shift in the overall economy to one increasingly dominated by concentrated capital. On a more positive note, I agree with those that make the case for the Left having winning many of the cultural battles of recent times; there are many books which only radical bookshops would've stocked in the seventies which are now readily available in chain stores. Access to the internet further



breaks down the barriers of accessibility.

The prospect of opening a new radical bookshop today must be daunting, but two opened in the last year [Hydra in Bristol, People's Bookshop in Durham], and there are two more planned this year. It can be done, and it can be made to work. One of the roles of the ARB is to help give support to anyone considering doing so.

What are your thoughts on the monopoly of online bookselling, especially Amazon?
Amazon are bad news for a whole host of reasons [check out <http://www.housmans.com/boycottamazon.php>], but perhaps the most worrying aspect is their drive to monopolisation not just of bookselling, but of all online purchasing. Amazon is working to be the one-stop site for everything, from food shopping to gardening equipment. To achieve this they are following the Walmart model of loss-leading undercutting to kill off all competition. As of today there is only really one book chain-store left in the UK, Waterstones, and that is far from secure. If all chains go it may have a devastating effect on the whole supply chain, meaning that even independent bookshops won't be able to get stock.

Is new technology going to eventually kill the printed book form?

I think there's room for both print and digital, but then again I still buy music on vinyl! Books offer an experience that lots of readers still value. I spend far too much time looking at screens so I'm relieved to not being doing so when I read.

I would expect most anarchists would be positive of the digital revolution taking place, and the many opportunities for autonomous publishing it allows for. It is hard to say if this has yet created a real shift in the power balance over cultural dissemination. Leftist publishers are only now slowly starting to

make their books available for e-readers, so we'll see how that plays out. It's not good news for radical booksellers, but we're not here to sell books but to spread ideas, so if e-books take over, as long as this can be done more effectively then so be it. Personally, I'll be holding on to the end.

What are Housmans current best sellers?

The bestseller at the moment is Paul Mason's *Why It's Kicking off Everywhere*, which Housmans is selling on a special offer when bundled with the movement's response to Paul's book *Occupy Everything!*, edited by Alessio Lunghi and Seth Wheeler. Both well worth reading.

Where did the idea of Bread and Roses prize come from?

As part of the forming of the ARB, we thought it would be a good activity for us to collectively organise a book prize, born from the grassroots of the bookshops. To my knowledge this is the only book prize in the UK with what could be described as an explicitly left-wing entry criteria. It is only in its first year, but I think it could grow into something of real significance.

Anything else Freedom readers should know?

Please support your radical bookshops! Most radical bookshops are no different to campaign groups, and deserve your backing in much the same way. Please visit www.radicalbooksellers.co.uk to see who is out there, and do get in touch if you'd like to find out how you can help us to grow.

The Bread and Roses Award is an independent annual award for the best radical book published each year. The winners will be announced on Mayday. For information on the shortlist and so on, see www.bread-and-roses.co.uk/ or <http://breadandrosesprize.wordpress.com/>

INSIDE NEWS

John Bowden writes...

The changed role of probation officers, and in Scotland social workers, from 'client centered' liberal professionals into 'criminal justice workers' focused essentially on 'public protection' and 'managing risk' has in many cases led to serious abuses of power as what were once considered vocations of social conscience have been transformed into little more than the revenge of the middle class...

This was again illustrated in February of this year before another scheduled parole hearing to consider my release, when the Parole Board asked a community based social worker in Edinburgh, Brendon Barnett, to prepare a post release supervision plan report. Told by the prison authorities that I was refusing to co-operate with an assessment for psychology based behaviour modification programmes, Barnett wrote a report clearly intended to influence the parole board to deny my release indefinitely...

Under a heading he terms 'Compliance' he writes: "Bowden's time in custody has been characterised as a sustained and deliberate war of attrition with the prison service. It is reported that earlier in his sentence he often began riots, dirty protests and hunger strikes. As his sentence progressed, Bowden developed a strategy of intellectual analysis of the system he is subject to. He appears to conceptualise his activities in the light of a particular ideological awareness and as part of a wider struggle."

Brendon Barnett is supposedly a social worker employed by the Criminal Justice Services in Edinburgh who last year was instructed by his employers to prepare a post release supervision plan for me and present its features in a report for the Parole Board. Instead he abused his position by collaborating with the prison system to prejudice the parole process and sabotage my release. Rather stupidly, instead of basing his disgusting allegations on historical fact and official record, he obviously regurgitated lies from Michael Mansfield's *Memoirs Of A Radical Lawyer*, that Mansfield himself has now publicly admitted were completely untrue. Brendon Barnett should be sacked.

Please write letters of complaint to:

Michelle Miller, Chief Social Worker Officer,
Grindlay Court Social Work Centre, Criminal Justice
Services, 2-4 Grindlay Court, Edinburgh EH3 9AR
Fax: 0131 2298628

Please send letters of support to:

John Bowden 6729, HMP Shotts, Canthill Road,
Shotts, Lanarkshire, Scotland ML7 4LE

Prison and privatisation

With the recent announcements of yet another series of market testing and potential privatisations across the entire 'justice' sector, the Prison Industrial Complex continues to get its metaphorical thumbs in ever more pies of the burgeoning Corporate State, courtesy of Cameron's so-called 'Big Society'. So, in addition to the 14 prisons in England and Wales, the four Secure Training Centres (i.e. child prisons), a number of prison visitor centres, the prisoner and immigration detainee escort services and most immigration detention facilities, these multinational security outsourcing firms are to compete for contracts worth £2.5bn over 15 years to run a further eight public prisons (plus HMP Wolds, currently managed by G4S but whose contract is due to end), plus parts of the probation service; the various 'Rehabilitation Revolution' schemes supposedly designed to cut re-offending rates; and the £135m contract for managing asylum seeker social housing.

Now they are making inroads into the sharp end – policing – with, in addition to the G4S contract to build and staff new custody suites across Lincolnshire, West Midlands and Surrey police forces are planning (on behalf of a private company called ACPO) to tender out a £1.5bn contract potentially outsourcing the investigation of crime, street patrols and the detaining of suspects – a potential model that could be rolled out across the whole of the country. Who said there's no future in a career in crime?

Currently 11,450 or 13% of prisoners in England and Wales are held in private prisons, and this could rise by nearly 50% (5,700) if Ken Clarke has his way. And amongst the usual suspects fighting to grab a slice of this latest lucrative step in the progressive privation of the public sector are G4S, Serco, Reliance and Sodexo, along with 'voluntary sector' players such as Nacro and Working Links. Even the Prison Service itself,

once staunchly opposed to these outsourcing firms having any form of involvement in the running of prisons, has bitten the bullet and formed a partnership with MITIE in a desperate bid to win the contracts to manage all of the prisons currently involved in the latest prison privatisation round.

One amusing side-effect (though possibly not if you are a prisoner currently due for release) is that the governors of the to-be-privatised Lindholme, Moorland and Hatfield prisons in South Yorkshire have locked out probation staff from their premises (taking away their keys and ID badges) in order to 'protect the commercial confidentiality of the Prison Service's bid to run the prison cluster contract. Unfortunately for South Yorkshire probation trust, they had formed a partnership with G4S in order to bid for the contract themselves (though Serco, who already run nearby HMP Doncaster, would be favourite to manage what would be a four-prison cluster) – the best laid plans... and all that.

Of course, the only financial sense all this privatisation makes (other than the chance of a nice lucrative consultancy or even directorship in the post-ministerial future) is the short-termist sense that is the be all of any politician in a representative democracy – get it on the books in this parliament and screw the generations to come. The bottom line is that private prisons, for example, are not cheaper to run than public sector one (they are more expensive in four out of five comparable categories, and that is despite being consistently more overcrowded – 40% more) nor do they really save money in the long term. HMP Altcourse is the classic example. Built under PFI and opened in 1997, the companies involved recovered all their costs within two years, leaving 23 years of clear profit. The Home Office saved a mere £1m in building costs but will be left with liabilities of £62m (based on 2001 figures) when the contract ends.



COMMENT

ABOUT FREEDOM

ANGEL ALLEY

In a shock move, we've finally got around to changing the rickety lock on the front door after several 'trappings'. 'We' of course in this case means the Advisory Service for Squatters who, for some reason, seem to be best at that sort of thing – cheers folks.

Congratulations to them also on their 'Dissident Dinosaur' benefit on the 10th March. Apologies to anyone who's hasn't heard and couldn't get in while we waited for new keys.

As always, meetings abound and the daily patter of little feet of folk coming to buy expensive books cheers the cockles of our hearts.

In the February and March issues of *Freedom*, we featured Tracey Moberly's experiences and photographs from Port-au-Prince, Haiti, where she was a participating artist in the Ghetto Biennale just before the earthquake and again two years later. We will be holding an exhibition of her work at the Autonomy Club, Freedom Press, 84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1 7QX, with a private view and book signing on Thursday 5th April from 6.30pm until 9.30pm. The show then continues daily until 2nd May during shop opening hours (from 12 noon to 6pm Monday to Saturday, 12 noon until 4pm Sundays). Give us a call 020 7247 9249 for details.

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It's now even easier to work out when your subscription is up for renewal. The number above your name on the address label now tells you the year and month when your subscription runs out. There's a renewal form on page 16 of this issue if you need it, or you can subscribe online at freedompress.org.uk/news/subscribe. Don't forget that donations are always extremely welcome, or you may like to take out one of our supporter subscriptions.

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NEXT ISSUE DEADLINE

The next issue will be dated May 2012 and the last day to get copy to us for that issue will be Thursday 12th April. You can send your articles to us by email to copy@freedompress.org.uk or by post to 'The Editors', Freedom, 84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1 7QX.

A sideways look

by SVARTFROSK

As I write it looks like the Tories will get their wish and accelerate the dismantling of the NHS. Hatred of the NHS runs through the nasty party. In 2004, Oliver Letwin claimed that the "NHS will not exist" within five years of a Conservative election victory. Cameron pledged "no top down reorganisation" before the last election. Speaking last year, Michael Portillo said of this, "They did not believe they could win an election if they told you what they were going to do."

In addition, many MPs from all parties receive funding from the sort of private companies expected to make a killing. Privatisation is promoted by the most neo-liberal wing of the capitalist class because they are interested solely in profit. Privatisation usually results in a worse service for more cost, but one thing is guaranteed – higher profits. That no professional health body thinks these reforms are a good idea shows the plans are not medically justified. It is also telling that Conservative Party activists think it will re-toxify them as the nasty party. Tim Montgomerie of the Conservative Home blog said "every problem over the next three years could be blamed on the bill." Typically they are more concerned with their image than the actual survival of the NHS.

Labour are as bad. If they seriously wanted to stop the government's plans, they would pledge to undo them if elected. This would kill the current privatisation stone-dead. Given Labour's role in pushing it since 1997, though, you can understand why they are not making more political capital. Labour massively expanded the Tories' flawed PFI scheme so that many NHS Trusts are collapsing under unsustainable debts taken on merely to bend accountancy rules. Other Labour plans, like attacking the Blood

Service or introducing private treatment centres to cherry pick easy operations, have all undermined the NHS.

Now as an anarchist I think there's quite a bit wrong with the NHS. Some bits of it are, frankly, a bit crap and it has an appalling culture of secrecy that allows bad practice to flourish while targeting whistleblowers. I also think that institutionalising health care is not a good idea. Hospitals should be there for things that are not possible elsewhere, but overall, they're not pleasant. Some things are better treated in GP surgeries or even at home. Part of the "rationalisation" intended by this bill (and by Labour beforehand) is that the government thinks there are too many hospitals. They may be right, but most people think of hospitals as a local service and are against them being closed down. The politicians say that we should "choose" the best, but that's not how most people operate. For most hospital visits, your local one is probably the "best choice" when you factor in how you get there and support. Some things are rare enough that only some hospitals specialise in them. So you want to go to the regional centre. It's all very well being told about a wonderful hospital in Hull if you live in Kent. Maybe we are being deliberately misled here.

The whole concept of choice, promoted by all the different political parties, is the real problem. If you can choose your hospital, it implies that some are poor. Why not concentrate on getting them all to be good, rather than use the failed market. Do we really need a Railtrack for Health? The profit motive in health will lead to US style costs and US style outcomes, where the wealthy receive the best treatment and the poor die off quietly.



Celebrate the Luddites' 200th anniversary!

This year is the 200th anniversary of the Luddite uprisings, in which textile workers from the Midlands and North of England smashed machinery they decided was 'hurtful to Commonality'. The uprising was put down with thousands of troops and at the cost of 50 lives, making way for 200 years of industrial wage slavery and environmental destruction. The 'history written by the victors', that the Luddites were against technology and progress, was only invented in the 1950s by technocrats aiming to legitimate the new industrial revolution and the globalisation associated with it.

A group of activists based in Huddersfield are organising a festival celebrating the 200th anniversary on 28th April. It will include political debates (featuring Dave Douglass, plus workshops on anti-GM food, anti-nuclear, etc., campaigns), poetry, theatre, exhibitions, music (Red Sky Coven), frame-smashing re-enactment, hands-on low technology and children's events. For more see www.luddites200.org.uk and <https://www.facebook.com/events/295701293828114/>

On 24th March Luddites 200, along with *The Land Magazine*, ETC group and Ecnexus, organised a teach-in on this summer's Rio+20 global summit and associated plans for a 'green economy' (i.e. corporate commodification of nature plus techno-fixes for climate change such as synthetic biology and geo-engineering). For a report plus audio from the event see <https://network23.org/invite/>.

Catalyst #29 – Blacklist blues

Dave Smith, a union activist and blacklisted construction engineer, is not entitled to legal protection against blacklisting because he was employed through an agency. This is despite Carillion, the firm who ultimately employed Smith, admitting in a signed statement that their managers had supplied the blacklist with information about Mr Smith.

The blacklist is maintained by the Consulting Association and contained Mr Smith's photograph, address, national insurance number, work history, car registration, information about his family, and pages of documentation detailing his union activity, including his raising concerns about asbestos on building sites. Evidence from Mr Smith's file also shows that company spies had been attending union meetings and gathering information on Smith's activities outside work.

The blacklist, which has long been known about and has even been the subject of parliamentary discussion, was shared by 44 of the UK's largest construction firms before being exposed and shut down. Companies paid a fee to the Association each time they checked up on a prospective or current employee.

Catalyst #29 is the current free quarterly newspaper of the Solidarity Federation and is out now available at Freedom Press bookshop or directly from Solfed. Contact them for your copy: <http://www.solfed.org.uk/>

1831 – Squat down

Bristol West MP Stephen Williams claimed that the riots on and around Bristol's Cheltenham road last April were somehow caused by squatting law. Mr Williams was being interviewed about the 14 squatters who had recently moved into a luxury house in Clifton. He cited Cheltenham Road as being an area "where you more often find squatting" and went on to claim squatting is usually linked "with antisocial behaviour – in this case a riot".

If Mr Williams had bothered to read the first issue of *1831*, he would have understood that the riots last April were about the Police invading a community that did not want them there. He seemed to be referring to the fact that it kicked off when the cops turned up gung-ho and blocked off this major thoroughfare on a bank holiday Friday – backed up by their mates from

other forces – to arrest *one* person living in a squat.

As for the 14 squatters, here's the lowdown: They're not 'Occupy Bristol', but a few ex-occupiers live there. Even at the knock-down price of £2.9m, the house was taken off the market recently as nobody can afford to live in it. It's not a privately owned home. It's owned by RBS, and WE own RBS, so go figure.

New issue of *1831*, Bristol's radical news-sheet from Bristol Anarchist Federation out now! Hotter than a coffee shop in Athens: <http://bristolaf.wordpress.com/>

Heckling in Hereford

Just when Herefordshire's rich and powerful had breathed a sigh of relief, convincing themselves we were finished, we return from the dimly-lit, underground meetings to declare... We're back! Although in truth we never really went away. The *Heckler* is changing and over the past few months we've been taking a leisurely break to plan the next step; a desire to be something more than a four-page, bi-monthly newsletter meant thinking about new formats, options and this was best without the pressures of a deadline.

So here we are, in our fifth year, launching a new website – www.herefordheckler.co.uk – which will see the publication move from a bi-monthly printed newsletter to a more regular online magazine. As well as the usual anarchist news and views from around the county, we will be expanding our sport coverage and introducing a new culture section, featuring film, music and Herefordshire life in general.

We also welcome a new batch of writers to the *Heckler* – some of the county's best and most influential – to add to our usual group of malcontents. So expect to see the *Heckler* less often in print, but keep your eyes on the new website for regular updates, news and views from around the county. *Hereford Heckler* #21, final printed edition. Brand new website: <http://herefordheckler.co.uk/>

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GETTING ACTIVE

WHAT'S ON

MARCH

■ **28th** Zero Books presents *Capitalist realism: is there no alternative?* with Mark Fisher from 7pm at Housmans Bookshop, 5 Caledonian Road, London N1 9DX, see www.housmans.com for details.

■ **30th to 1st April** The eighth annual Anarchist Bookfair in Zagreb at Galerija Nova, Teslina 7, Zagreb, Croatia, see www.ask-zagreb.org for details.

APRIL

■ **1st** Down the Drones Conference, from 1pm until 6pm at Arc Cafe, Bristol BS1 2HG, for further details see <http://bristolagainstarmstrade.wordpress.com>.

■ **1st** Breaking the Fences, a film night fundraiser to support action against deportations, at OARC, East Oxford Community Centre, Princes Street, Oxford OX4 1DD from 7pm until 11pm, see <http://films.oximc.org.uk/> for details, proceeds from the night will be split between Oxford Action Resource Centre (<http://theoarc.org.uk/>) and the Stop Deportation Network (<http://stopdeportations.wordpress.com>).

■ **3rd and 17th** Practical Squatting Evening at Offmarket, 68 Dalston Lanes, London E8 3AH from 7pm to 8pm, contact offmarket@riseup.net or call 07583870733 for details.

■ **5th, 12th, 19th and 26th** London group of The Anarchist Federation meets weekly on Thursday evenings at Freedom Bookshop 84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1 7QX. If you would like to attend please email london@afed.org.uk beforehand.

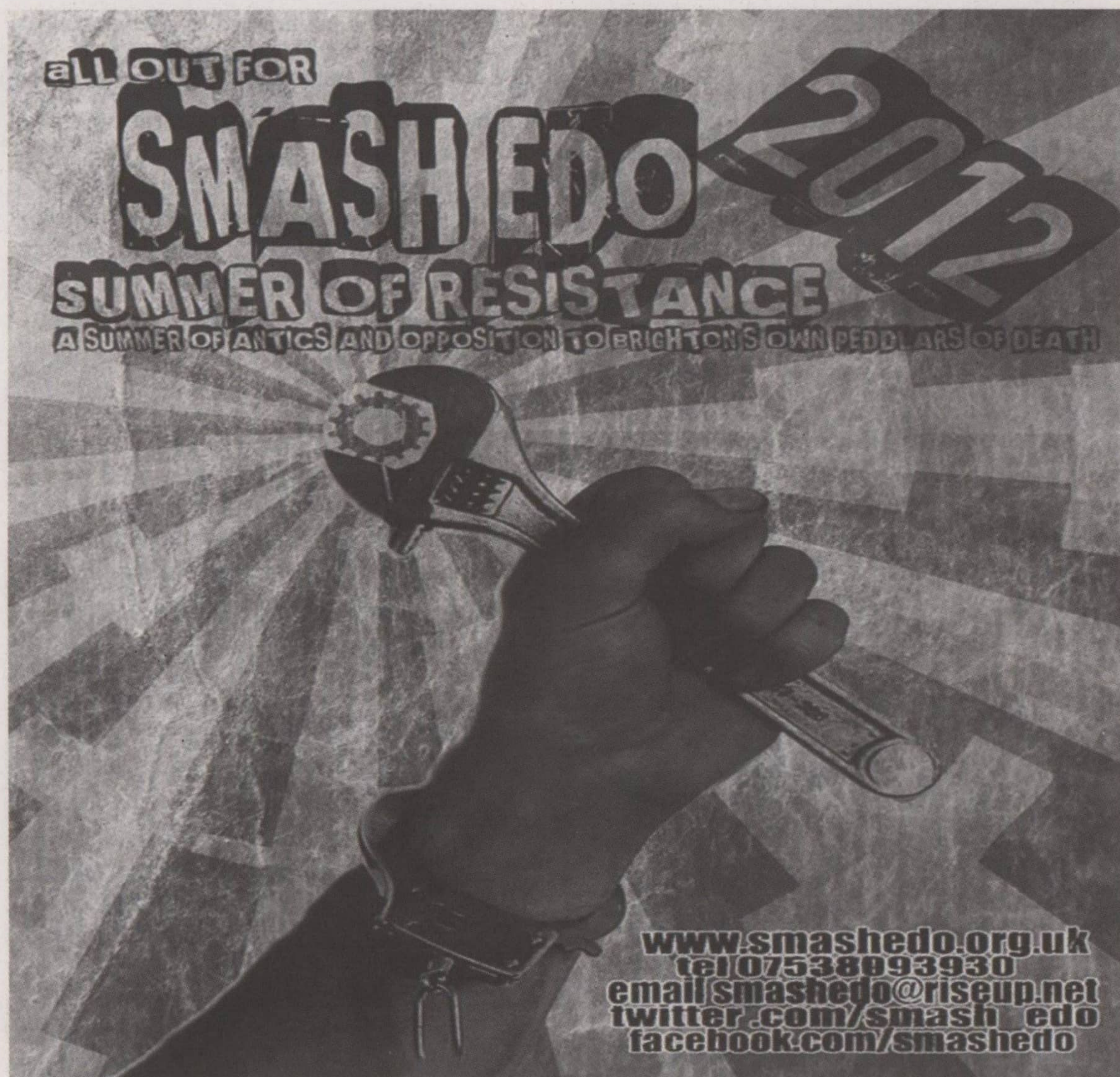
■ **5th** MK Libertarian Socialists will meet from 11.30am until 1pm at Squeaks Organic Eatery, Brunel House, Swanwick Lane, Broughton, Milton Keynes MK10 9LD, see <https://www.facebook.com/events/334085566643310/> for details.

■ **10th and 24th** Practical Squatting Evening at 56a Infoshop, 56a Crampton Street, London SE17 3AE from 7pm to 8pm, see <http://www.56a.org.uk/> for details.

■ **14th** News from Nowhere Club presents Guerilla Gardening with Richard Reynolds at The Epicentre, West Street, Leytonstone E11 4LJ, buffet 7.30pm, talk starts 8pm, see <http://www.newsfromnowhereclub.org/> for more information.

■ **20th** The Red & Black Club at LARC, 62 Fieldgate Street, London E1 1ES from 8pm, Dissident Island Radio will be broadcasting live as the local anarchists host a traditional east end knees-up.

■ **20th to 22nd** Brighton Punx Picnic 2012 at The Hydrant, 75 London Road, Brighton BN1 4JF and Saturday's picnic in the park, see <http://punxpicnic.wordpress.com> for latest details, line-up, etc.



● Smash Edo the anti-arms campaign group based in Brighton is having a **Summer of Resistance** starting on 1st May with a big noise demo outside the EDO factory and continuing with actions and demos throughout the summer months.

Bank holiday Monday 4th June will be the big demo. If you have been to any of their previous demos, such as the carnival against the arms trade or the 2009 Brighton Mayday, you know is going to be a good day out! And since 5th June is also a bank holiday on account of the diamond jubilee, this is the perfect time to make it down to Brighton.

Check the website for full list of summer actions see <http://smashedo.org.uk/>

● **ALARM**, the London based anarchist group, has published its strategy document for the forthcoming year. In it they lay out where they will be concentrating their political energies over the next 12 months. Separated out into definable areas of activity – workplace, community, anti-fascism, etc it gives a breakdown of what we can expect from the group. Workplace strategy, for example, involves supporting and working with Solfed, IWW as well as grassroots and autonomous campaigns and struggles. It also outlines their ongoing cultural activities – Black Rose martial arts co-op, Circled A and Dissident Island radio shows, as well as committing to organising public meetings and public speaking workshops.

Anyone who wants be a part the various ALARM activities should contact them via the website <http://www.soundthealarm.org.uk/>

● **Swindon Anarchists** organised a solidarity demo in support of the cleaners and other staff at GWH hospital who have been on strike against the bullying and racism of their bosses at Carillion plc. The workers, mostly Goan, have held six days of strike action over a two week with more planned in the future – they have already picketed the hospital, held mass rallies, blockaded Carillion HQ and various other demos and pickets. Swindon's anarchists decided to show solidarity with the striking workers by holding a demo against Carillion strikebreaking at the Swindon Zurich offices on 24th February. With support from comrades in Bath and Bristol, the demo attracted a good number of people who leafleted cleaning staff, Zurich workers and passersby. People who want to get involved should e-mail swindonanarchists@riseup.net

● Nottingham will be playing host to the nationwide two day **Anti-Prison Gathering** on the weekend of 28th and 29th April. The intention of the gathering is to bring together those of an anti-state and anti-capitalist position in order to share common experiences and understandings of the current situation.

Discussions and presentations will include: Solidarity actions, What do they mean? What are they for? How will they spread? How are anti-authoritarians to engage with the intensification of social struggle means greater numbers will be imprisoned this? Why is anti-prison analysis so much more prevalent in mainland Europe? What can the movement in the UK learn from elsewhere? For more information and to book your place contact e-mail antiprisongathering2012@riseup.net

Shooting hoops in Somalia

The Somali women's basketball team finished fourth in the recent pan Arab Games in Qatar, beating the host nation and just missing out on a medal place. The result, remarkable as it is for a country that has no formal state infrastructure and continues to be torn apart by civil war, internal political factions and religious fundamentalism, is not as remarkable as the journey these women have taken just to be able to play the sport they love.

Basketball is the second most popular sport in Somalia after football, and along

with football and handball the only sport played by women there. With no financial assistance or conventional sports management and little in the way of training facilities the women's basketball team has had to struggle to simply exist, so to qualify for the Arab Games was an achievement in itself.

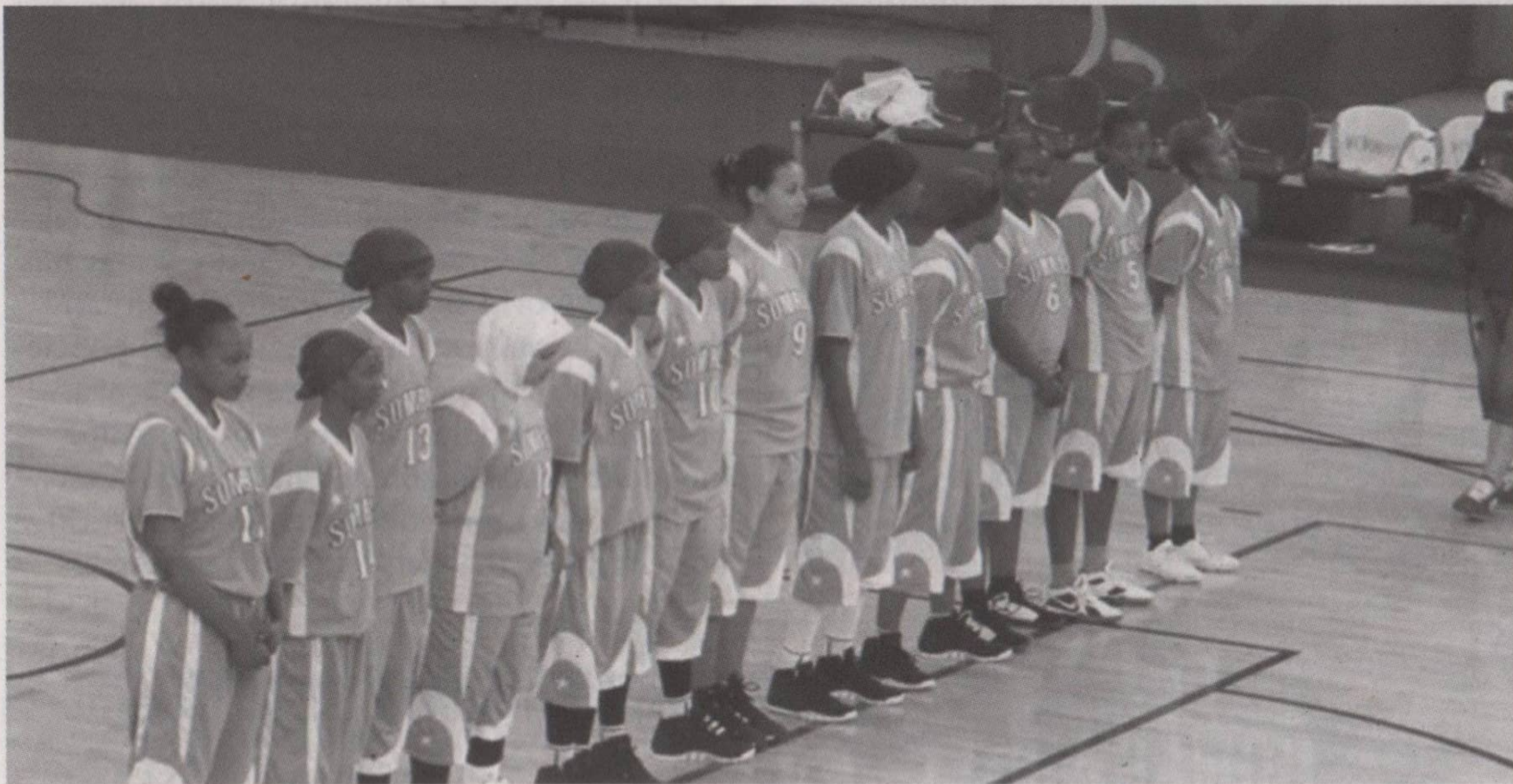
They even had to draft in players from across the globe, including the United States, Canada, UK and Germany to ensure a full squad, many of whom hadn't even met their teammates before the competition, let alone played in a match with them.

After qualifying for the Games, team captain Suweys Ali Jama was contacted by the militant Islamist group Al-Shabaab, which until recently controlled much of the southern part of the country and large areas of the capital Mogadishu, and was issued with an ultimatum to either stop playing basketball or face execution. As a result the team had to train in secret and under constant protection behind the bullet-ridden walls surrounding the central police academy for fear of reprisals.

Somalia is almost exclusively a Muslim country and in 2006 the Somali Islamic Courts Union (ICU), part of Islamist ruling elite that briefly controlled the country, imposed a ban on women playing all sports which they labelled a 'satanic act' and 'un-Islamic' as part of a strict sharia administration.

Al Shabaab, initially an armed wing of the courts, emerged as a religious and political force in its own right and has since reinforced the directive prohibiting sports, especially women's sport, in large parts of the country.

Despite the death threats and ongoing hardships, the women's basketball team has unexpectedly become a symbol of aspiration and progressive ideas in defiance of the severe moral laws imposed by the fundamentalist political groups, and with each game they play signal the way forward for greater female liberation throughout the region.



Justice for the 96

◀ page 24


that has caused the most controversy and suffering through a catalogue of lies, cover ups, misinformation, along with appalling acts of intimidation and intrusion by the authorities as they sought to blame the fans themselves for the tragedy.

Perhaps the most telling aspect was that of

a young PC who was forced to change his testimony under instruction of a senior officer. In his original statement he wrote "I saw several officers wandering about in a dazed and confused state. Some were crying and some simply sat on the grass. Members of the public were running about with boarding

ferrying people from the pitch to the far end of the ground."

The officer was ordered to amend that passage as "This shows they were organised and we were not". A line that rings out in stark admission that goes to the real truth behind the events of that day.



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REVIEWS

FICTION

Investigations

The Hurstbourne Anarchist Group was in a sorry state, effectively down to three, one of whom wasn't answering his phone. Dave wanted to throw in the towel, exhausted by infighting and rumours. Connie wanted a local anarchist group, it was a big part of her life. There'd been ups and downs before and would be again. She would carry on, battling away. She decided she needed to find out what Pete was up to and keep Steve in the loop.

Her first point of call was Steve. His mobile was dead, so she tried the land line. Disconnected. She walked over to the Main Road shops, where he lived, and climbed the stairs to the flats at the back. She knocked on number 4, Steve's flat. Eventually, a short woman in her fifties with pinched features opened the door.

"I was looking for Steve," said Connie.

"There's no Steve here," said the woman, folding her arms.

"Are you sure?"

"Course I'm sure. D'you think I'm an idiot? I know who lives in my flat." Connie suspected the woman did know more, but she closed the door.

Heading back, she saw Pete. He tried to avoid her but she bore down on him.

"So, Pete, how's things?" she asked.

"Err, okay," he replied.

"Or perhaps you're Jack today? Jack Hughes?" she watched him as he shifted. She pushed a bit more.

"It's a poor joke, you know."

"It's not meant to be a joke – that's your game," spluttered Pete. "There's a mole, and we both know who it is!"

"Well, I thought it might be you," replied Connie with a smile. Pete turned red and started to huff.

"Hold on, now..." he said.

"I spoke to Kenny from AFA. About all those actions you claimed you were on. He had a very different recollection of them to you," she was coolly enjoying herself.

"What is this? The Anarchist Police? You're just doing the filth's work for them with all this."

"Pete, you're the one who brought a mole into it. What are we meant to do, ignore you?"

"No, I just thought the mole was obviously Dave, I mean, he works for the Dole Office, he's part of the enemy."

"So all you have is prejudice about his job – at least he's open about the contradictions involved. You're all mouth, as a lot of your former associates have made clear."

At that, Pete stormed off, shouting obscenities about "anarchist coppers".

Martin H.

To be continued...

THINGS WE HAVE

Iain McKay on a recent clinical dissection of neo-liberal capitalism

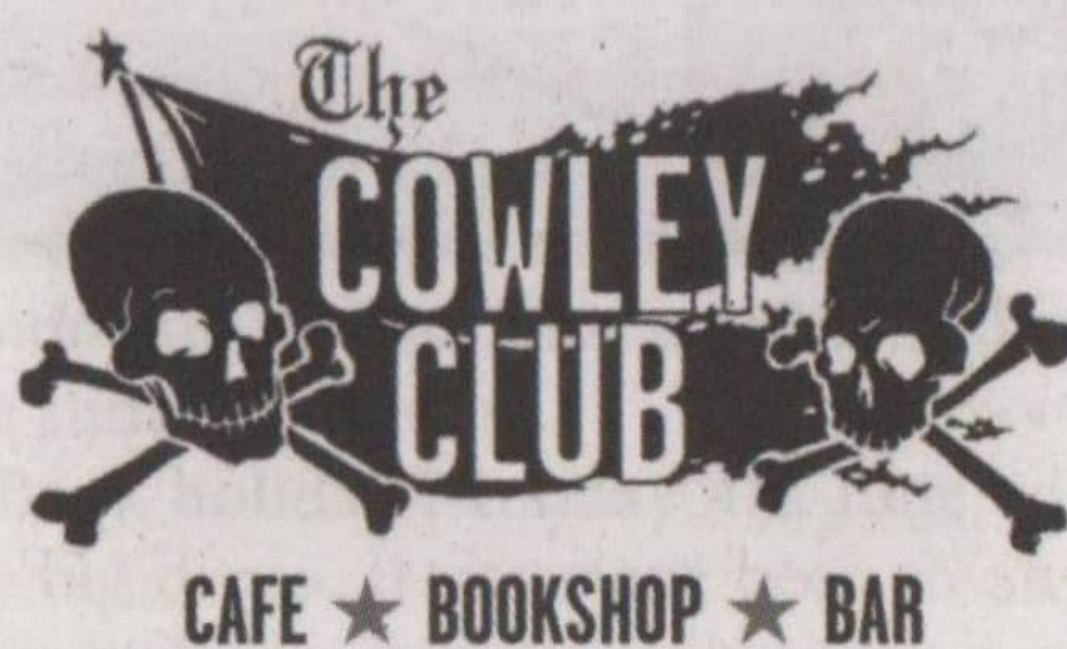
Ha-Joon Chang, while an economist, is not of the mainstream neo-classical brand. This becomes very obvious reading his extremely useful book *23 Things They Don't Tell You About Capitalism*. It also becomes very clear that Chang is no socialist, stating that his book is "not an anti-capitalist manifesto" and that being "critical of free-market ideology is not the same as being against capitalism." Rather, he aims to "tell you some essential truths about capitalism" and argues that free-market capitalism "is not the only way to run capitalism, and certainly not the best." (xv)

He discusses various myths used by the defenders of neo-liberalism and debunks them by a devastating combination of facts and logic. While it would be easy to dismiss his book as being pro-capitalist and, consequently, of little interest to libertarians,

that would be a mistake. First, because he gathers together evidence which anti-capitalists can use and, second, because he reminds us that our modern world "was no accident or the outcome of an irresistible force of history" (xvii) but the product of conscious political decisions.

As such his book is a welcome alternative to the "free-market ideology that says that whatever exists must be there because it is the most efficient" (155). Capitalism has changed, will change again and, hopefully, this book will encourage more people to view it (to quote Proudhon's words) as "inadequate and transitory" and seek "the negation of political economy and the end of property."

Chang does not pull his punches, stating that the current crisis "has ultimately been created by the free market ideology that has ruled the world since the 1980s" (xiii) and that the "result of these [neo-liberal] policies have been the polar opposite of what was promised" namely "slower growth, rising inequality and heightened instability" (xiv). He provides numerous facts to support this. For example, the rich countries have seen



The Cowley Club is a collectively-owned, volunteer-run libertarian social centre in Brighton soon to be celebrating its 10th anniversary.

The Club contains a bar, vegan cafe, bookshop and library as well as hosting a constant programme of talks, films, discussions and gigs and providing welfare rights advice and free English lessons for migrants.

The Cowley Club functions as a base for a variety of local activist groups from Smash EDO to SchNEWS and Brighton Anarchist Black Cross.

12 London Road, Brighton, BN1 4JA
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WWW.COWLEYCLUB.ORG.UK

BRIGHTON'S LIBERTARIAN SOCIAL CENTRE

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We welcome donations of anarchist and other related materials - either new publications or historical archive materials.

Contact the library at:
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BOOKSHOP

The bookshop is open in the daytime, stocking anarchist, feminist and other radical literature. As well as the latest publications from publishers such as AK and PM Press, we also stock a variety of magazines, T-shirts, postcards and badges as well as a ton of free info.

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QUIZ ANSWERS

1. The Smurfs. Surely they should be red rather than blue?
2. Finance Smurf was fascinated by the use of money by humans and introduced it into the Smurf village. It was abandoned when money created poverty and corruption in their society.
3. 'Imagine' by John Lennon. The opinion of Edward Heathcoat Amory did nothing to stop the popularity of this song about

communism, which was named the second best single of all time in a 2002 UK poll.

4. According to a joint investigation by *Private Eye* and the Bureau of Investigative Journalism, a small locked room, occupied for half a day a month. Due to its tax-dodging operations, Switzerland is Vodafone's most profitable country even though it doesn't operate a network there.

WE NO NEED OF

per capita income growth dropping from 3.2% in the 1960s and 70s to a mere 1.4% during the 1990s and 2000s (61).

In America, while per capita growth has more than halved, the top 1% “more than doubled their share of national income,” from 10% to 22.9% between 1979 and 2006, while the top 0.1% saw it more than triple, from 3.5% to 11.6% (144–5). Wealth has flooded upwards. The top 10% “appropriated” 91% of income growth between 1989 and 2006 in the USA, with the 1% taking 59% (146). This allowed the perverse situation to arise when a CEO in America now gets 300–400 times what the average worker gets, up from 30–40 times in the 1960s. Meanwhile, the average worker has seen their hourly wage rate increase by 13% in 33 years, a 0.4% growth per year. So worker pay has “been virtually stagnant since the mid 1970s” and, while family income *has* risen more, this was only because “more and more families have both partners working” (150–1). This rising inequality has also harmed equality of opportunity, with Scandinavian countries having “higher social mobility than the UK, which in turn has higher mobility than the US. It is no coincidence that the stronger the welfare state, the higher the mobility” (220). To use an obvious analogy, it is easier to climb a hill than a mountain.

His account is also useful for skewering some basic assumptions. “If some markets look free,” he reminds us, “it is only because we so totally accept the regulations that are propping them up that they become invisible” (3). Most obviously, from a libertarian perspective, this includes state defence of capitalist property rights – which most defenders of capitalism simply do not recognise as state intervention at all. He rightly notes that “saying that the domain of the market should be expanded” means “that those who have money should be given more power in that area, as the market is run on one-dollar-one-vote principle” (10).

To provide another example, Chang makes the valid point that, even if America does have a higher average income, it “does not necessarily mean that all US citizens live better than their foreign counterparts.” This, because it depends on inequality and as the US has a worse income distribution than average, “overstates the actual living standards of more of its citizens than in other countries.” Moreover, as US workers have “much less job security and weaker welfare supports” and “work for lower wages and under inferior conditions” for “longer hours,” then the higher average income looks less appealing (107–9). Proudhon springs to mind: “There is no such liar as an average.”

This relates to “Thing 2”, which discusses the negative impact of top-level managers



running companies in the interests of share-owners (and giving them incentives, such as share-options, to ensure it). While this ensured that CEOs and the major share-owners became extremely wealthy, it was “financed by squeezing” workers who could “share in the (apparent) prosperity only through borrowing at unprecedented rates.” Worse, “the ever-increasing share of profit in national income since the 1980s has not been translated into higher investment” and has seen a lower growth rate of per capita income. In America, it fell from around 2.6% in the 1960s and 70s to 1.6% during 1990–2009, while in Britain it fell from 2.4% to 1.7%. In short, “running companies in the interest of the shareholders does not even benefit the economy in the average sense (that is, ignoring the upward income redistribution)” (18–9).

He also has some choice words for mainstream economists, noting how they “played an important role in creating the conditions of the 2008 crisis (and dozens of smaller financial crises...) by providing theoretical justifications for financial deregulation and the unrestrained pursuit of short-term profits” and advancing policies “that have led to slower growth, higher inequality, heightened job insecurity and more frequent financial crises.” They “supplied arguments that insist that all those economic outcomes that many people find objectionable in this world” are “really

inevitable, given (selfish and rational) human nature” (247–8). In short: “economics has been worse than irrelevant. Economics, as it has been practised in the last three decades, has been positively harmful for most people” (248).

It is rightly noted that neo-liberalism has been “geared towards the interests of the holders of financial aspects” (60) and that inflation was “the bogeyman that has been used to justify policies that have mainly benefited the holders of financial assets, at the cost of long-term stability, economic growth and human happiness” (61). Chang, in contrast, wishes state policies to bolster industrial capital rather than finance capital with the (unstated) assumption that such a focus will help working class people more. Perhaps this is true to some degree, but while unregulated finance capital may be parasitic on both industrial capital and the working class, it is the exploitation of the latter that enables industrial capital to exist and grow.

Ultimately, it is the case that state-managed capitalism is better than the unregulated neo-liberal version (it would not be hard), but it is still *capitalism*. Increasing the role of bureaucrats and politicians at the expense of CEOs and large share-holders (or vice versa) does not get to the root of the problem – that both the state and capital are authoritarian and hierarchical systems which exist to benefit the few rather than the

THE ARTS

"GET THE BAN

The history of the political banner goes as far back as political protest itself

If we exclude trade union banners (whose design and production were dominated by the firm of George Tutill and thus remained largely unchanged throughout the years) which were beautifully crafted and highly decorative, ordinary political banners sought to express as directly as possible a grievance, cause, idea or slogan.

For example the only surviving banner from the 1819 Peterloo Massacre is simply inscribed with the words 'Liberty and Fraternity' on one side and 'Unity and Strength' on the other. Indeed the Chartists extensive use of banners and flags was a deliberate move to give their demonstrations a coherence and unity rather than being merely an angry rabble or mob.

Although early banners were just extended



flags carried on a single pole they were used in exactly the same way we use them today – to identify the cause you were

marching under or fighting for, to express a political message and to act as a point of focus to rally round, and later on as a physical barrier defining your boundaries and to block any intrusion by the police.

The Haymarket anarchists excelled in the use of banners. Often accompanied with red flags and black flags, their messages were clear, succinct and uncompromising. As Paul Avrich recounted in his book *The Haymarket Tragedy*: "Two thousand workmen with their wives and children marched through the centre of the city to the music of three bands... and innumerable banners carried by the organisations comprising the procession. On the banners were such mottoes as 'Poverty is a Crime', 'Exploitation is Legalised Theft', 'Anarchy'."

I've been making banners for the movement for over 10 years now. The idea is that we should be able to produce our own professional looking banners without having to rely on commercial companies to do it for us. These are just some of the more recent ones.

Anyone wishing to get in touch about political banners can do so through *Freedom*, email copy@freedompress.org.uk



Review

◀ page 21

many. That one version makes surviving under capitalism easier than another should not make us forget the key issue, namely that we are still *surviving* under the (economic and/or political) rule of others rather than *living* as free individuals working together as equals within a universal association.

Which brings us to the issue of getting the reforms he wishes, a major topic he seems to forget. The New Deal or the (so-called) Keynesian capitalism of the post-war period was not a gift of enlightened politicians and

intellectuals. It was a product of social movements, workplace and community organising and struggles, of working class self-activity on an often epic scale. This would need to be reproduced today to secure the reforms he wishes, yet why go through all those battles to repeat the same mistake of reforming capitalism rather than abolishing it?

So an interesting book, filled with useful facts and arguments. Yet in this day and age, simply stating the facts and suggesting that free market capitalism is not the best

possible form of that system is enough to get you labelled radical and anti-capitalist. However, while Chang is keen to stress his support for capitalism, actual socialists will gain something from his book. Unsurprisingly, though, it does not address the most important "thing" you need to know about capitalism – that it can, and must, be replaced!

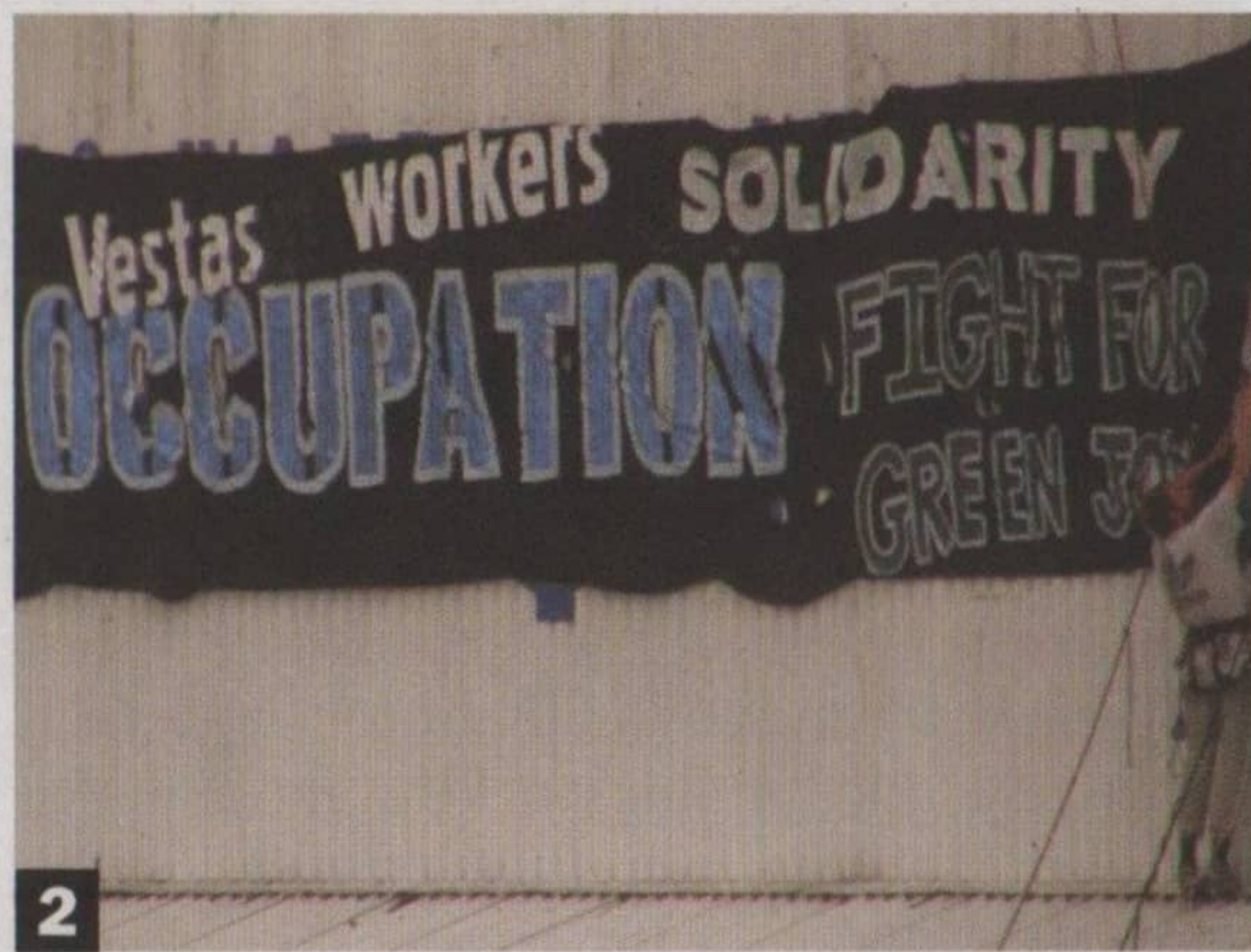
23 Things They Don't Tell You About Capitalism by Ha-Joon Chang, published by Penguin Books 2011, £9.99.

INNER"



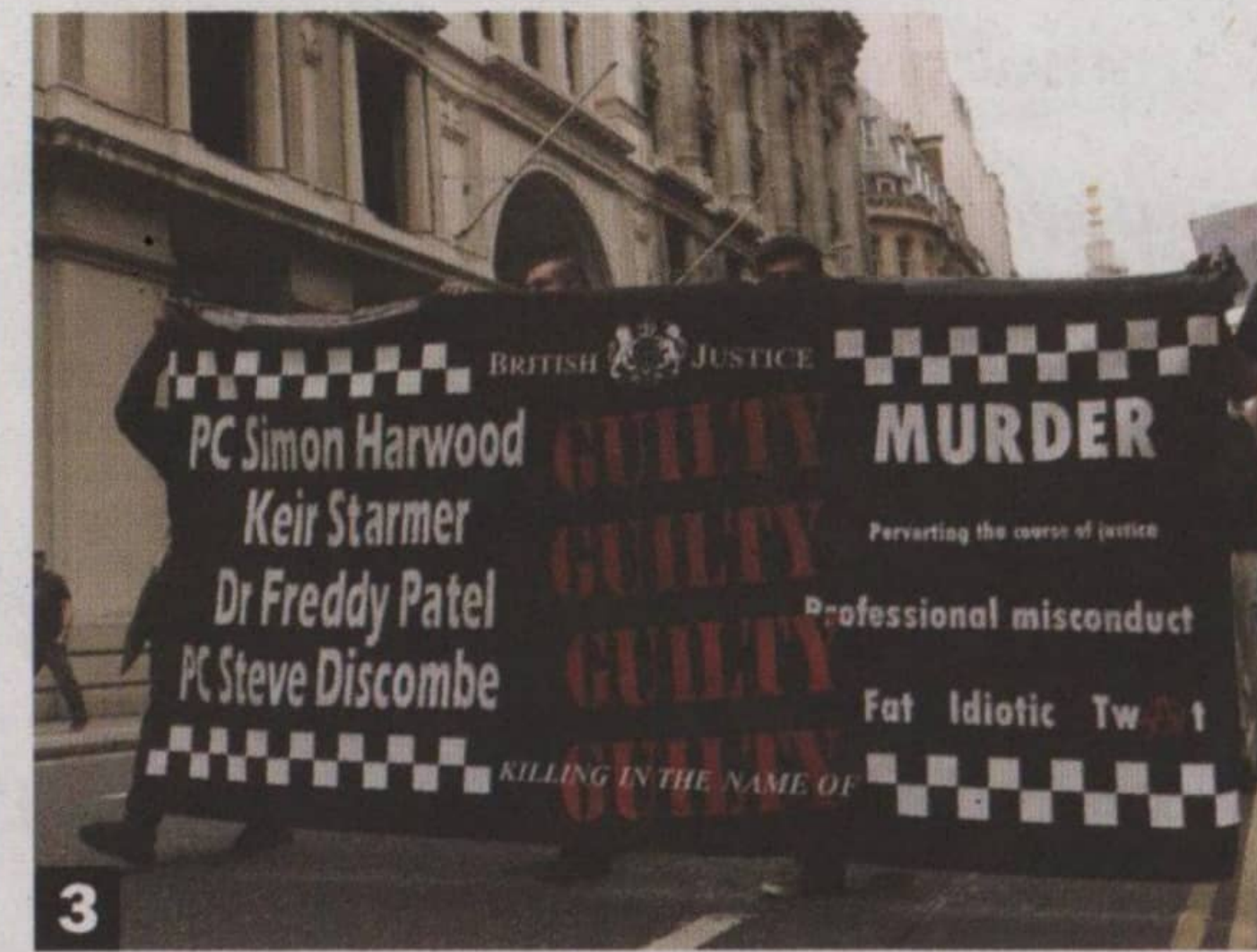
1. Existence is Resistance at Heathrow Climate Camp, 2007

photo: thealmightyprophetgitboy



2. Vestas Occupation banner drop on Venture Quays dockside building, East Cowes, 2009,

photo: Tim Dalinian Jones



3. Guilty Guilty Guilty Guilty, Justice for Ian Tomlinson demo, 2010

photo: Rikki at Indymedia

4. Up Against The Wall, Put People First march, 2009

photo: Rikki at Indymedia

5. Militant Workers Bloc, the anarchist bloc on the Put People First march, 2009

photo: Maqui at Indymedia

6. This is Anti-Fascism memorial for Nikita Kalin, 2012

photo: ALARM

7. Hackney Alliance to Defend Public Services demo, 2010

photo: HADPC



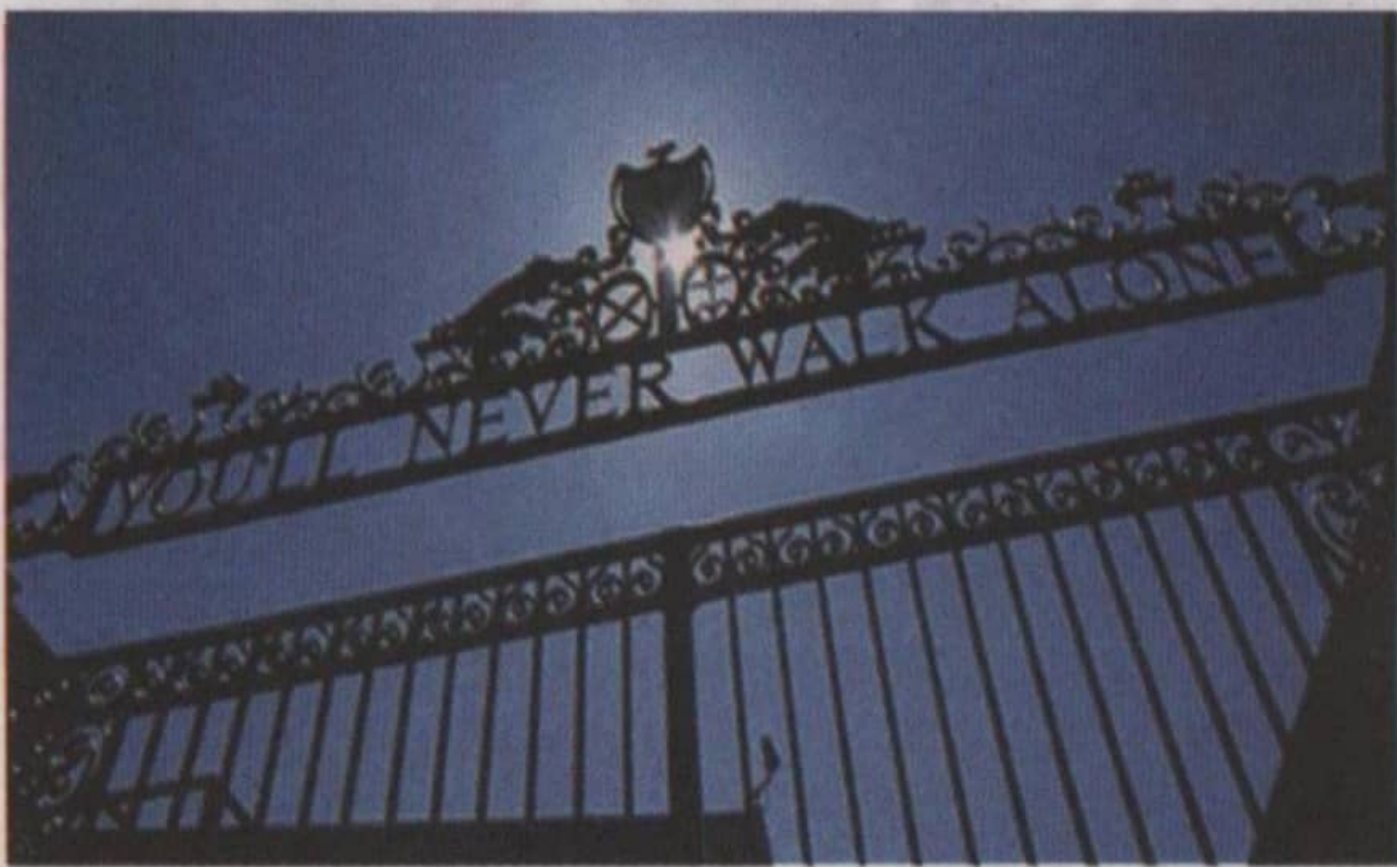
SPORT

Justice for the 96

Families of the Hillsborough tragedy still seeking answers

They'll walk down Anfield road, as they have done each year for the past two decades, family and friends, with quiet resolve and in silent anger, often together in groups, carrying flowers, scarves, handwritten messages and the burden of 23 years' waiting for answers to questions nobody in power seems to want to answer.

The family and friends of those who died – the 96 men and women, football fans, Liverpool supporters, some as young as 14 years old, 96 ordinary people from very ordinary backgrounds who went out to see a football match one Saturday afternoon and never came back home again.



Leppings Lane end

April 15th marks the 23rd anniversary of the Hillsborough tragedy and campaign groups continue to demand justice for those who lost their lives at the UK's worst ever footballing disaster. And this year they may finally get the answers they deserve.

Saturday 15th April 1989 was an FA cup tie between Liverpool and Nottingham Forest at Sheffield Wednesday's Hillsborough ground. Just before the 3pm kick-off the gates at one end of the stadium were opened by police to allow the backlog of Liverpool fans outside the ground to enter. This caused a massive crush as fans became trapped behind the steel fencing in an already overcrowded part of the stand. It took several crucial minutes before there was any police attempt to rescue the suffocating fans, and ever longer to administer help and first aid.

All dead by 3.15pm

There has been a recent parliamentary debate on the issue, where it was agreed ministers should release in full all government documents relating to the Hillsborough disaster, including confidential Cabinet minutes. There are also demands for a new inquest as the findings of the original are strongly disputed by the families and campaign groups.

What is undisputed is that the police were at fault in causing the tragedy but to date no-one has ever been properly held to account for what happened despite an official report concluding "the main reason for the disaster was the failure of police control".

The Truth

And it was the behaviour of the police during and after the events of 15th April
page 19 ►►

THE QUIZ

1. Which comic book characters live under communism, with everyone in the village contributing according to their abilities and taking what they need?
2. What happened when money was introduced into their village?
3. What song was described by the *Daily Mail* as "no hymn to peace, but a deliberate exercise in nihilistic, revolutionary propaganda"?
4. If you visited Vodafone's Swiss offices, what would you find?

Answers on page 20

WILDCAT

If the police did not engage with the press, *
they would be in danger of losing public trust.

If the press did not pay police for information,
the public would never learn anything.

Anyone who accuses police of providing *
"salacious gossip" is in Contempt of Court.



* Actual words from the Leveson inquiry.

Police are not angels. They are ordinary people
who take an interest in crime

But don't take the risk of
committing crimes.



ROOM



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Freedom Feedback

Dear Subscriber/Comrades

It's been six months now since Freedom changed from a fortnightly to a monthly publication and we are asking for your feedback as to what you think so far and in what ways we can improve the monthly editions.

We recognise Freedom has a unique place within the anarchist movement - the oldest and only regular non-aligned UK anarchist newspaper in circulation, and we are looking to improve the way we communicate anarchist ideas and report on what anarchists are up to. To that end we are asking for your ideas, suggestions, thoughts and criticisms about the new monthly edition.

What would you like to see more of in the paper? Are there specific issues we should be focusing on? Are there areas we are neglecting? And more broadly speaking how would you like to see an anarchist newspaper develop for the future? What's its role, purpose and function? We want to know what it is you want from your anarchist paper.

Ultimately we envisage Freedom as a paper by the movement for the movement, which both reflects and informs what's going on in the world today from a radical perspective. So we are encouraging you as a subscriber to tell us your opinions - hopefully we will feature people's responses in a future issue of the paper. We look forward to hearing from you.

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