

ANARCHISTS DETAINED

Counter-terrorist police arrest anarchists at Heathrow airport

For the past week, thousands of anarchists from across Europe have been converging in St Imier, Switzerland, to celebrate the 140th anniversary of the founding of the Anarchist international.

The gathering (held from 8th to 12th August 2012) took the form of a festival and educational, with music, films and entertainment as well as workshops and discussions.

On returning from the St Imier gathering, two anarchists, one a member of the UK Anarchist Federation, were detained for nearly two hours at Heathrow by SO15 (counter-terrorist) police. During the detention, the anarchists were told that their normal rights did not apply, and had their names, addresses, email addresses, DNA and fingerprints taken. The detained anarchists were also forced to sign forms – which may or may not be legal – waiving their rights to silence and a solicitor. Police also conducted a thorough search of personal possessions, photocopied literature and passports and took information from phones and cameras.

During the detention, the police constantly accused the anarchists of lying about involvement in criminal activity and alleged that

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LENS CAP TOWER BRIDGE BANNER



Climate Siren activists scaled Tower Bridge to drop a massive banner above the Paralympic symbol which read 'Climate Change our Next Challenge'. After the drop Tower Bridge was evacuated for "safety reasons" and the activists later arrested. See <http://climatesiren.wordpress.com/>

WILDCAT WALKOUT WINS

Late July saw a brief and successful wildcat action by posties at Bridgwater delivery office in Somerset. The strike was triggered when a post worker with 25 years' experience on the job was suspended for allegedly swearing at another worker, despite the fact that the second worker had asked for the case to be dropped.

In response, 100 Royal Mail staff walked out on Friday 20th July, claiming the suspension was part of a wider culture of bullying and harassment by management, and pointing to a number of other grievances, including a new policy that would take away their right to paid time off for medical appointments.

They stayed out throughout the weekend, only returning to work on the Monday after management reinstated their suspended

colleague and agreed to further negotiations on other issues, such as the medical appointments policy.

Dave Wilshire, Bristol Branch Secretary for the Communications Workers' Union, said: "Royal Mail can say what it likes but the fact is they would not talk to us about lifting this suspension until the strike went into its second day: that's a fact.

"The tremendous solidarity shown once again by 110 Bridgwater postal workers has, we believe, forced Royal Mail to show some common sense: we hope this approach continues."

This swift victory won by the Bridgwater posties is an inspiring example of how powerful industrial action can be when it's controlled directly by the workers themselves.

Cautiously Pessimistic

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NEWS

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LENS CAP RECLAIM THE LIBRARY



On the 5th September, occupiers and members of the local community in North London reclaimed Friern Barnet Library after it had its doors closed in April by the council due to public spending cuts. The squatted library has now reopened to the public.

Freedom of your information

If you had in any doubt as to the extent of the state's control freakery and paranoia, then you need not be any longer.

A newly processed request under the Freedom of Information Act has revealed that the police national database (PND) has over 300 million intelligence records that relate to around 15 million people. This means that the police hold records on one in four people in the UK. Many of the records relate to individuals who have never been convicted, charged with a crime, or any direct dealings with the police whatsoever.

The database contain over 40,000 images, information on people who have attended demonstrations, un-convicted "persons of interest", associates of criminals, and those deemed to be extreme left or right wing.

All new intelligence does not go directly onto the police national database. It first has to pass through a separate database run by the Met, called 'Crimint Plus', which is said to be the largest law enforcement intelligence system in the world. 'Crimint Plus' was started in 1994 and has grown steadily in size since. Yet in the last five years alone, its contents have more than doubled.

The records are allegedly only kept on the database for six years, and apart from a small number of 'highly sensitive' hidden records, each item is accessible to all 40,000 employees of the Met, and around 12,000 others from forces around the country.

The police national database (PND) originated out of recommendations on record keeping and data sharing from an inquiry into police handling of the Soham murders. Yet just like anti-terrorism legislation, the police will use it however and whenever they see fit, and rarely for the purpose for which it was created.

The Metropolitan Police Authority website describes much of the data held on the database as, "capturing information while carrying out one activity which is likely to prove useful in a future policing activity."

It will come as no surprise to people to find that tools such as 'Crimint' and the police national database are being used against activists. All footage gathered by FIT teams, information resulting from trawls of social networking pages, and tit-bits from informants and the like, will feed into these databases.

The occurrence of activists being snatched from their beds at dawn on the day of a protest, as was the case on the day of the Royal wedding, will become the rule rather than the exception.

The disproportionate growth of police databases and the use of 'big brother' powers against activists, show that the government intend on attaining total control over people's lives, movement, and communications, in order to stifle any opposition – militant or otherwise.

Matthew Black



picture from Indymedia

Empty house seized

A homeless action group in Birmingham challenges the city council

A group calling themselves the 'Birmingham Tenants and Homeless Action Group', frustrated at the council's lack of action regarding Birmingham's massive homeless population, have seized an empty house.

In a statement they say that, "We have taken over this abandoned council-owned house which we wish to become the first in a new stock of homes in Birmingham. We plan on making this property liveable and handing it on to a homeless victim of the government's and council's uncaring incompetence. We will then defend this property and its resident; we will take the council to court if they apply for eviction. In court we will demand that the council take over operation of the house, add it to their council housing stock and allow its

resident to stay. If this fails we will peacefully resist any bailiffs should they be sent to evict the resident."

Birmingham has a massive homeless population that has risen by 25% in just three years. Despite so many families being without a home, the council refuse to use their powers to seize empty properties and make them available for those that need them. There are currently 11,000 empty properties in Birmingham, which equates to 2.8% of the entire housing stock.

An activist involved in the Birmingham Tenants and Homeless Action Group, said that, "Homelessness is on the rise and the council is effectively doing nothing – worse, homeless charities have been cut by 29%. Birmingham already has the highest rate of homelessness in the UK and with the incoming housing benefit cuts; even more people are going to be at risk of becoming homeless."

Not being content with just ignoring the problem of homelessness, the authorities in Birmingham are actively targeting the homeless.

The Birmingham Food not Bombs group, who distribute food to the homeless, recently noticed a dramatic drop in people attending their weekly food distribution by around 75%. It then came to light that the police had been following around individuals they suspected of being homeless, and arresting them. The action was part of an on-going operation against begging in the city centre.

The council do not seem to grasp the fact that reducing funding to homeless groups by 29% may have a direct correlation to the homeless population rising by 25%. Their only response to the deepening crisis is to use the police to either arrest and imprison people, or to intimidate them out of city centre areas.

As of the first of September, a new law comes into force (S144 LASPO 2012) that makes it illegal to squat in residential properties. The new law has been condemned by the group as. "Targeting and marginalising society's most vulnerable".

Matthew Black

Anarchists detained

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they would be conducting follow-up police action against one of the detained anarchists. In addition to this, SO15 officers asked a number of inflammatory, irrelevant and offensive questions, including 'what would you do if someone raped your mother?', evidently in an attempt to cause emotional upset and elicit angry or violent responses. One member (28) who did not want to be named for fear of reprisals from the police, said "We were treated like criminals. I told them I went to the congress as I am an amateur journalist and I write articles about activism. They saw my notebook, camera and Dictaphone but they said I was lying. One officer said 'You said you are an anarchist, I've seen anarchists on the news, they are violent, throw molotov cocktails and disrupt people's lives not write articles'."

The counter terrorist officers either didn't know or chose to ignore that, during the first day of the gathering, the International of Anarchist Federations (of which the UK Anarchist Federation is a member) had issued a statement rejecting all terrorist tactics as a means of achieving an anarchist society.

In contrast to the actions of the UK security forces, the local press and residents in St Imier reported very positively on the anarchist gathering.

With this incident, we are seeing a further slide towards political policing and the criminalisation of political ideologies. The two detained anarchists have not had any involvement in any illegal or violent activity, or any activity that would concern the counter-terrorist police. As in the past, when Metropolitan police called on people to give

information about local anarchists (<http://www.guardian.co.uk/uk/2011/jul/31/westminster-police-anarchist-whistleblower-advice>), anarchists suffered harassment for their political viewpoint.

As class-struggle anarchists, we believe that the state does little except serve the interests of the rich and powerful at the expense of ordinary people. This is seen clearly when people who hold views critical of the state are treated as criminals and terrorists. We seek to create a classless society, based on freedom, equality and co-operation. We believe in the capacity of ordinary people to run society themselves, without the interference of bosses or politicians. This incident was not in response to any crime and constitutes repression and criminalisation of a political ideology.

Anarchist Federation

THE BIG PICTURE

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Image courtesy of Seth Tobocman

It's not just the tuition fees...

Outsourcing and privatisation in higher education

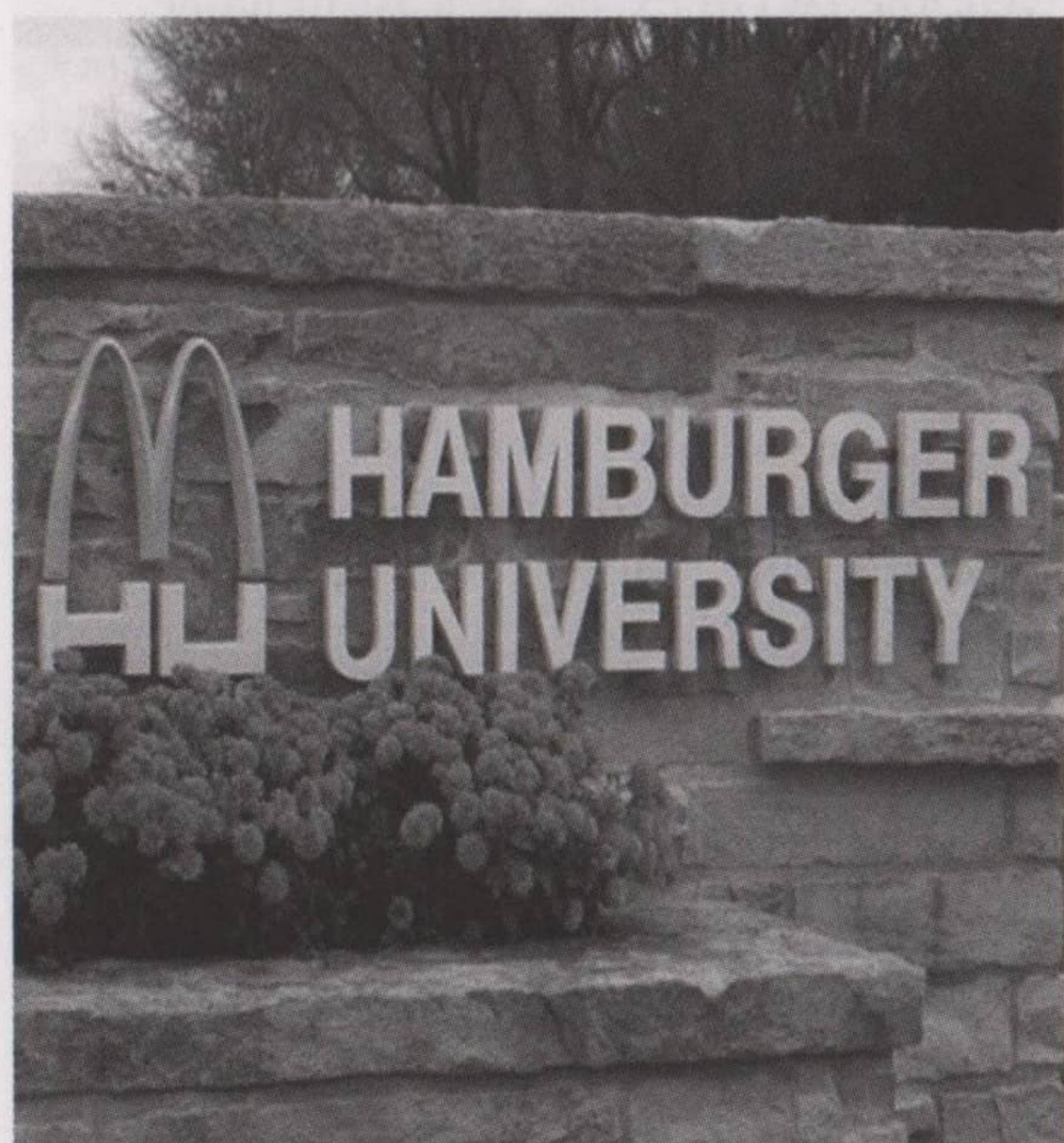
This week, London Metropolitan University announced that it would be hawking off services such as IT and libraries to the private sector. A bidding war will now take place between various companies that are salivating at the prospect of getting their grubby hands on such a lucrative cash cow.

Against the backdrop of the Health and Social Care Bill and creeping privatisation in the NHS, the potential privatisation and dismantling of our universities has, in the main, passed the general public by. Ask people what they think the single biggest issue facing higher education is, and they are likely to tell you it is tuition fees. However in the not too distant future that may change.

Whether we like it or not, tuition fees are here to stay. Although university applications are down by around 10%, on the whole people are accepting the fees. In a similar way to gas, electric and petrol, as long as people continue to put their hands in their pockets, the ruling elite will continue to increase prices.

The timescale of the wholesale privatisation of the university system may be impeded or interrupted by changes in government, but ultimately it will happen. Whilst not clinging to the ridiculous and outdated notion that nationalised industries are some kind of panacea, as many of the dinosaur left do, I would agree that whilst all state run services are far from ideal, they should be left to the mercy of the 'market'.

You only need to look at the complete failure of the privatisation experiment that was conducted on the railways, water, gas, and electric, to see what lies ahead should the 'market' get hold of higher education. Just as the water companies have failed to upgrade a Victorian pipeline network in over twenty years of private ownership, in order to cream off profits and pay large



dividends to shareholders, higher education will suffer a similar fate.

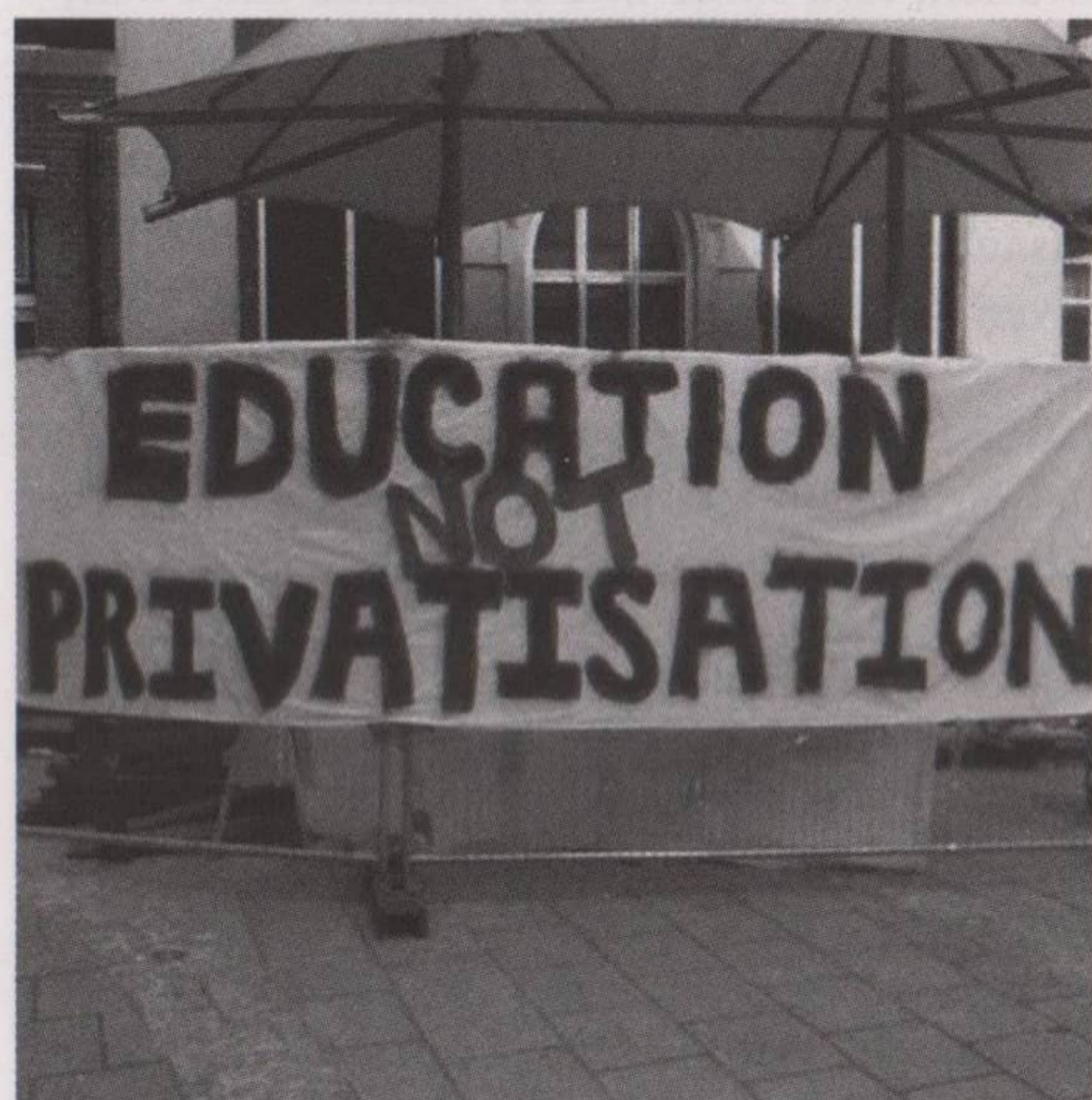
We can expect years of under-investment, asset stripping, and then when the inevitable financial difficulties arise, they will beg the state for a hand-out.

Higher education will suffer immeasurably through privatisation, but what will the changes actually look like for students and staff?

Well, courses that are not deemed to be 'necessary', i.e. profitable, will be scrapped, student to staff ratios will increase, and there will be the dumbing down of academic standards, and to staff qualifications and experience.

Academic staff will see teaching hours rise, and time for research and scholarly activity shrink, and pastoral support will only exist 'on paper'.

Administration staff will be slashed, which will lead to teaching staff undertaking extra responsibilities. Competition between universities will lead to 'creative'



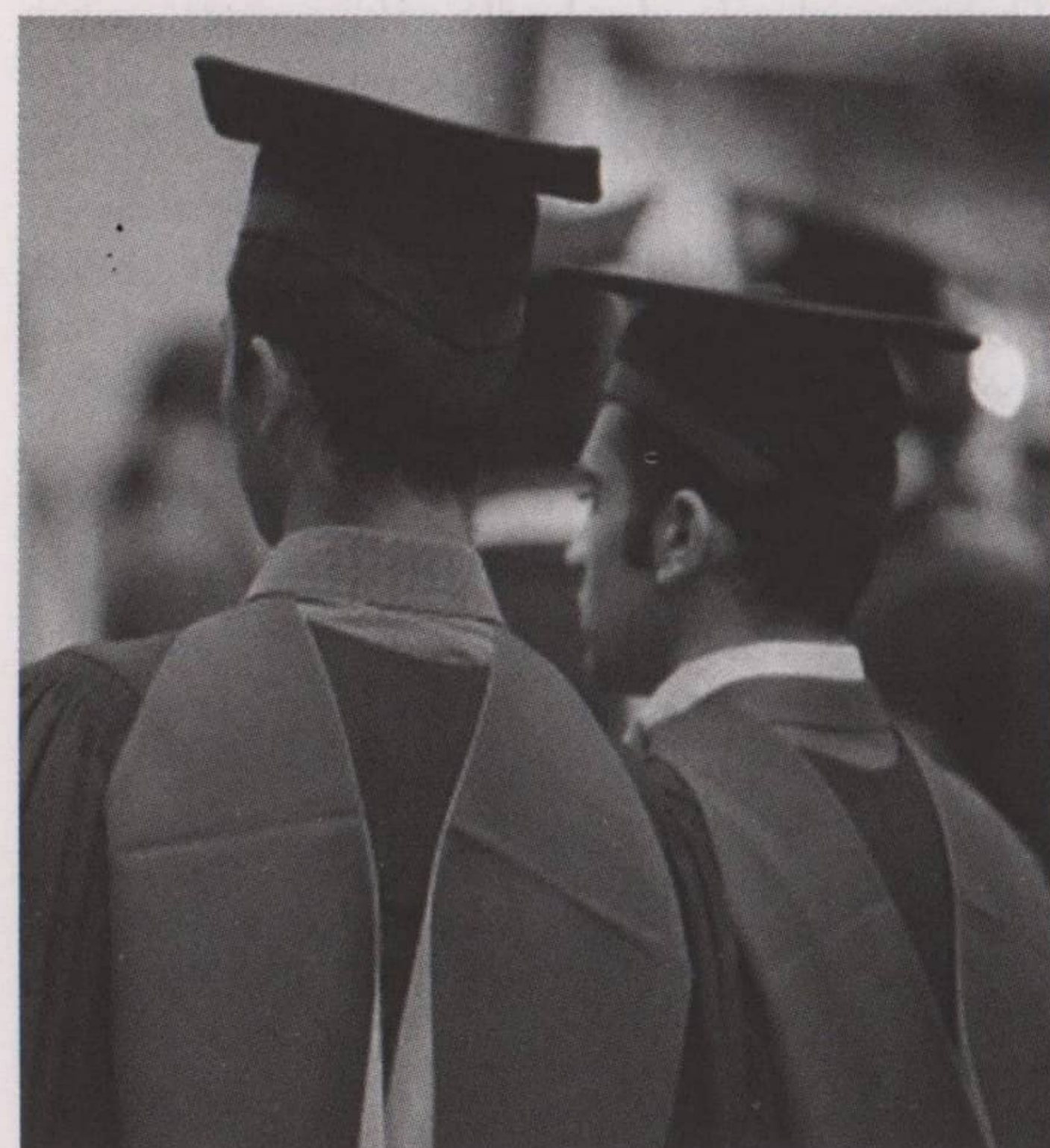
presentation of results, and 'cooking of the books', in order to entice new students.

Buildings and land deemed to be superfluous or that are in premium locations will be sold, and any monies will be creamed off rather than being re-invested. This will lead to fewer buildings, and long-term problems such as overcrowding, and facilities that are no longer fit for purpose.

Libraries will close or downsize, and will rarely stock new books. Halls of residence will be sold by the new owners to another set of profiteers, who will increase capacity by making conditions even more cramped, whilst at the same time increasing already extortionate prices.

Student support services, counselling, and subsidies to various student run initiatives such as newspapers, elections and student unions will disappear, and support for students with extra needs will be stripped back to a token level.

Staffing levels across the board will be reduced, pay will be slashed, hours increased, holidays reduced, sick pay



reduced, professional development will disappear and pensions will be attacked even further.

As in the health service, the largest expense in Higher Education is that of staff. Therefore the obvious way that a private company will reduce its expenses is to sack staff, and to attack the terms and conditions of the staff that remain.

The government of the day will care little for the issues highlighted. They do not measure the success of privatisation by such trivial indicators. David Willetts, or whoever follows him will only be interested in whether higher education is off the government books, and if the new owners are making a profit.

We can expect those individuals from government who worked on the privatisation project to join the University Chancellors and Deans who so welcomed it, into new highly paid consultancy roles and directorships within the upper echelons of the new private owners. No doubt a peerage or two will follow.

The management at London Metropolitan University have refrained from using terms such as, 'outsourcing' or 'privatisation'. Instead, they talk of, 'shared ownership', 'shared service models', and 'partnership', in a laughably transparent attempt to mask the real agenda.

Privatisation will mean that many universities will cease to exist. This in turn will mean the cost of going to university will rise, as students will have to travel further or even move away from home in order to study. Coupled with the massive hike in tuition fees, it will mean that a university education will once more be the preserve of the rich and privileged.

You may hear from time to time the ruling elite talking about the need for increased social mobility. The truth of the matter is that they want nothing of the sort. After all, there is only room for so many pigs at the trough.

Matthew Black

ANALYSIS

The politics behind the London IWW split

There can be no doubt that the gains achieved by the London cleaners branch of the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) – together with those won by the Sparks rank-and-file electricians – have been a beacon of light in a year of otherwise deepening austerity gloom. But in mid-August, the branch announced it was breaking away from the IWW, to re-launch under the long-forgotten name of the Industrial Workers of Great Britain (IWGB). Initial statements from both sides hinted at little more than personality clashes, but I can now reveal the political schism which has fed into this split.

As many will know, the IWW is an international, grassroots-controlled organisation aiming for ‘one big union’ of all workers, which will – so the theory goes – be able to abolish the wage system. Whereas corporate unions have well-heeled bureaucracies which negotiate with the bosses and eventually sell out their memberships, the IWW operates on the basis of recallable delegates, and all decisions are taken by the membership as a whole. The Wobblies, as they are often known for reasons lost in the mists of time, have an extremely colourful history and at their 1920s peak could boast 100,000 members. Although many members identify as anarchists, this is not a condition of membership.

Nowadays the membership figures are far smaller, but the successes of the London cleaners were beginning to demonstrate the

potential of rank-and-file organising to a new generation. As Chris Ford’s IWGB (re)founding statement declared with justifiable pride:

“Over the last year, starting with the wildcat actions at Guildhall in August 2011 up to the seminal strikes of cleaners at John Lewis – the IWW Cleaning & Allied Industries London Branch have co-ordinated with bus-drivers, TfL [Transport for London] workers and others in the London Regional Committee in an organising campaign. We have engaged in disputes, which have resulted in major gains by workers in defeating cuts, and securing significant pay rises. These achievements are not minor – they are almost unheard of in the current period of austerity.”

But the document went on: “... we have found ourselves in one conflict after another with elements inside our own union. Through our own self-organisation, we have sought to overcome this hindrance. However, the conduct of a small number of members in and around the London General Members Branch, and some bodies outside the IWW, during the recent dispute at John Lewis was the straw that broke that camel’s back.”

There were also claims of “deeper political disagreements”, although few details were given, beyond references to “hubristic anarchists” contributing to the original IWW-IWGB split over a century ago. When he initially agreed to an interview, I asked Chris Ford a series of questions via email. After asking what publication the article was

for, he declined to answer further, citing concerns over spreading “hysteria”. However, the IWW were more forthcoming, and several members offered their help.

One individual in particular, who does not wish to be named, told me that: “We think it is a personal project of Chris Ford (CF). I think CF reckons we are not worthy of him. At a special conference we held in the spring, CF attended and failed to have his submission accepted. He misjudged the meeting. I think he hoped to be met with acclaim, but the dominant current in the membership was anarchist and he failed to allow for it. I think at that point he realised we were not going to adopt his programme.”

According to IWW documents, Chris Ford proposed the establishment of an “Executive Committee” within the union, which would have been a radical break with its long-established federal structure. Though the Executive would be recallable, it would have powers to convene an “extraordinary delegate conference”, as well as elect a “Disputes Committee” and three “National Organisers” representing English, Scottish and Welsh members. There would also be “a dedicated worker on a part-time/full-time basis to be employed by the union to administer membership”.

So it appears there was a springtime dispute over organisational structure between Chris Ford – who describes himself as a communist – and the majority of IWW delegates, who saw his proposals as tending towards the introduction of a hierarchy within the union. Over the past few months this dispute has become personalised, to the extent that my IWW correspondent described Ford as having “messianic tendencies”, and Ford made that “hubristic anarchists” jibe. Furthermore, if Ford is to be believed – and there doesn’t seem to be any reason to doubt his word on this – the rancour has impacted on the effectiveness of the cleaners’ campaigns.

So where does all this leave us and, perhaps more importantly, the cleaners? Well, the IWGB exists, at least in name, though the IWW are concerned that “many of the ‘members’ of the IWGB do not realise that there is no IWGB union registered. So they are not able to benefit from the meagre advantages that a registered union has”. The IWGB is organising protests, including against the Société Générale bank for cutting hours and making contradictory statements on the London Living Wage. And the IWGB has a website, which bizarrely claims that someone with the name of a prominent Glasgow member from its original incarnation in the run-up to World War One is “Asst. General Secretary”.

Much about the IWGB is still a mystery, but time will tell just what sort of organisation it is.



Picture the scene... You are a government minister and you have spent the last two and a half years imposing vicious cuts and austerity measures on a country whilst simultaneously bombing and running military operations in three others. Unemployment is rising, homelessness is rising, poverty is rising, and disabled people are being labelled as scroungers and having their benefits cruelly snatched away.

Despite alleged bankruptcy, you have no problem in finding money for vanity projects such as the Queens Diamond Jubilee celebrations, the Royal Wedding and the Olympics.

With all those issues considered, imagine receiving an invite to present medals at the Paralympics. The medals you are to present have been produced by exploited Rio Tinto miners, and the games themselves are being sponsored by the gangsters and government hired death squads at ATOS.

Immediately before handing out the medals you are introduced to an 80,000-strong crowd. As soon as your name is heard each and every person in the stadium boos and jeers.

What would your response be? Would you all of a sudden start to develop a modicum of insight into what you and your policies are having on ordinary working people? Would you walk off in embarrassment? Or would you hang your head in shame, make the best of a bad job and present the medals in as dignified a manner as you could?

Well, this is the situation that George Osborne recently found himself in – and yes, you guessed it, he chose none of the above. Instead, he decided to let out a huge belly laugh as if you had just heard the world's funniest joke.

Boos for the minister tasked with the creation of a police state, Theresa May, soon followed, as did they did for the man recently chosen to dismantle the NHS, Jeremy Hunt. Whilst not replicating Osborne's imbecilic laughter, these creatures could not resist a typical tory toff sneer.

A bizarre twist followed as Gordon Brown was introduced to a packed crowd at the Paralympic swimming. Expecting to receive similar treatment to Osborne and co., Brown was astounded (as was I) that he received a standing ovation from those attending... Whatever next?

CORRECTION

In the history article on Clara Gilbert Cole featured in our August issue we mistakenly included a picture of Sylvia Pankhurst by Herbert Cole. We'd like to apologise to Nick Heath for this error, and also for not mentioning that he originally wrote the article for Libcom (see <http://libcom.org/history/cole-clara-gilbert-1868-1956>).

Fit for work?

Atos and Remploy: all roads lead to the dole queue

The welfare system is currently going through some major changes, which are designed to force as many people as possible into work, or at least into competing for jobs. This is hitting a lot of people hard, but it's having particularly harsh effects on those who are physically or mentally unable to hold down a job, since anyone without a paid job is in danger of being classified as 'workshy' and punished.

Groups such as Black Triangle and Disabled People Against Cuts have been formed to oppose these attacks on the disabled, and the end of August saw a big burst of activity to coincide with the Paralympic Games. Controversially, the Paralympics have been sponsored by Atos, the company which carries out tests to classify people as being 'fit for work', and so no longer eligible for disability benefits.

Outraged at the hypocrisy of Atos trying to promote its brand by sponsoring disabled athletes while pushing disabled people into poverty and misery, disabled people and other claimants and workers targeted the company with a week of action, including protests in 20 different cities, a phone, fax and email blockade, a vigil for the many people who've died or committed suicide after being found fit for work, and a mass 'die-in' blocking a road in Cardiff.

The week of action climaxed with the Closing Atos Ceremony, a protest at Atos's

main office, while 30 people also invaded the headquarters of the Department for Work and Pensions and blockaded the entrance, in recognition of the fact that the huge contracts awarded to private companies like Atos are just by-products of the attacks on claimants promoted by both Labour and Tory politicians. They were only driven out by serious police violence, which led to one protester being hospitalised with a fractured shoulder, and another being tipped out of their wheelchair.

At the same time as disabled people are being forced off benefits and into the workforce, one of the only routes available for them to actually find work is disappearing, as Remploy, a government-owned company which provides an accessible environment for disabled people to work in, has just closed 25 of its 54 factories, and the future looks bleak for the remaining ones.

Remploy workers weren't willing to take this lying down, and took two days of strike action against the closures in July, but a third planned strike was called off by the GMB and Unite unions in favour of lobbying, which the unions claimed would have more effect. Remploy workers and union reps also occupied the company's head offices, but left after a few hours when more talks were promised.

It remains to be seen whether Remploy workers at the remaining sites will be able to take any more effective action, or whether they'll also soon have to face the maze of Atos tests and workfare schemes that make up the modern benefits system.

Cautiously Pessimistic



INTERNATIONAL

NEWS IN BRIEF

BRAZIL: Faced with 1,840 redundancies, GM workers in Brazil, not happy with the union's feeble response, organised a wildcat strike. They then occupied and blockaded a stretch of the busiest and most important highway in the country, causing a 15 mile long tailback. The bosses subsequently caved in and scrapped the redundancy plans.

CHILE: A year-long campaign by students for educational reform has led to violent clashes. Several schools in the capital, Santiago, have been occupied by both school-children and university students. The government and security forces are taking a hard-line against any dissent, utilising water cannons, rubber bullets and tear-gas. Students claim their campaign will continue until their demands have been met.

COLOMBIA: Over 11,000 prisoners have gone on hunger strike, demanding an end to overcrowding, appalling and unsanitary conditions, and that the government declare a state of emergency across the prison system. Prisoners are expected to defecate in plastic bags, only have access to running water for 20 minutes a day and are given food unfit for human consumption. Political prisoners are often kept in solitary confinement, prevented from receiving letters or visits and are given regular beatings by prison staff.

FRANCE: The new, supposedly 'socialist' government has escalated the previous 'right-wing' government's agenda of targeting and deporting members of the traveller community. Travellers in Paris and Lyon have been forcibly removed from their homes and the camps subsequently destroyed and flattened. The travellers have then been put onto 'one-way' flights to Bucharest.

SUDAN: Over the last month a leaderless and decentralised protest movement has emerged in Sudan. Crippling austerity measures have seen salaries slashed, electricity prices tripled, and gas prices doubled. The final straw has been the scrapping of fuel subsidies which has led to a doubling of the price of petrol. Students and workers have taken to the streets in a series of protests around the country. To try and avoid a repeat of the uprisings that have spread throughout the Arab world, the state has attempted to peacefully contain the protests. However, within the last week, security forces have used live rounds and tear gas against protestors, killing many people, including children.

USA: Following a bitter dispute with bosses from some of the biggest companies in the world, janitors in Houston have achieved a significant victory. They have won a pay settlement that is double what the bosses offered and have secured 'health' and other benefits that were set to be snatched away. Despite scores of arrests, the janitors pushed on with a campaign of direct action and civil disobedience to achieve their aims. Janitors in San Francisco have taken inspiration from Houston and now engaged in a similar campaign of direct action.

LENS CAP GULABI GANG



The Gulabi Gang is an extraordinary women's movement formed in 2006 by Sampat Pal Devi in the Banda District of Uttar Pradesh in Northern India, one of the poorest districts in the country. The area has a deeply patriarchal culture, rigid caste divisions, female illiteracy, domestic violence and many other issues. Popularly known as Gulabi or 'Pink' Gang because the members wear bright pink saris and wield bamboo sticks, the group was initially intended to punish oppressive husbands, fathers and brothers, combat domestic violence and desertion, although increasingly they now challenge not only male authority over women but all human rights abuses inflicted on the weak.

Spanish supermarket sweep

Hundreds of workers from Andalusian Union of Workers (SAT) walked into two supermarkets in Andalucía, filled up their trollies, and left without paying.

Juan Manuel Sanchez Gordillo, one of the instigators of the action, said that, "At this moment of crisis, when the town is being expropriated, we want to expropriate the expropriators, the landlords, banks, and the big supermarkets who are earning money in the middle of an economic crisis."

The police and security attempted to block exits, but they managed to leave with around twenty trollies of produce.

Prior to the action, participants had agreed that there would be no damage to property, and they would not take items such as chocolate, yoghurt or desserts. They would only take essential items such as pasta, sugar, oil, bread and milk.

All items 'liberated' from the supermarkets

were then given to the poor and to local charities to distribute.

Several of those involved have been arrested and charged with robbery, violence, and public disorder.

Typically, the action has led to mainstream Spanish politicians making reference to, "The rule of law", and to "Common criminals", displaying little or no appreciation or analysis of the underlying causes.

Regardless of the attitudes displayed by the political classes, polls suggest that over 50% of Spaniards agree with and support the actions of the Andalusian workers.

Unemployment in the region is now over 40%, and close to 60% for those between the ages of 18-65. Poverty levels are rising fast - there are over 300,000 households with no income and many families who literally cannot afford to eat.

Matthew Black

Notes from the US

Police are finally facing allegations of murder and brutality after they shot dead two Latino men over one weekend in July, then they fired rubber bullets at crowds of protesters.

First, 24-year-old Manuel Diaz apparently tried to run away from a group of officers who confronted him in the street; he was unarmed. The very next day Joel Acevedo was shot dead by police in the same area.

On the other side of the country, video footage emerged in July of a New York City police officer assaulting a young man after stopping and searching him on a subway platform. The policeman first accosts the young man then slams him to the ground.

Freedom has reported before on the same authority's project to spy on Moslems in New York and New Jersey, which of course they denied. An audiotape which was recently made public - after the NYPD fought to block its disclosure - contains the dialogue of a telephone call to the emergency services:

Caller: "Came across an apartment where there's some suspicious activity."
Dispatcher: "What's suspicious?"
Caller: "Suspicious in the sense that the apartment has about... has no furniture

Massacre at Marikana

The fight continues in South Africa

Mineworkers of the Marikana diamond mine in South Africa are continuing their strike. Their perseverance comes after violent police efforts to suppress the strike, efforts culminating in a horrendous bloodbath on 16th August, when police machine-gunned protesting miners, killing 34 and arresting at least 250 of them.

On 10th August, 3,000 of the 28,000 Marikana miners went on strike to support a wage demand. The strikers belonged to a category of very low-paid miners doing arduous, and risky work.

The National Union of Miners (NUM), belonging to the mainstream union federation COSATU, neglected these workers and their needs. Another union, the Association of Mineworkers and Construction Union (AMCU) took a more militant pose and tried to make itself into the voice of the angry miners.

Soon the strike was accompanied by violence between strikers on the one hand, police, security, and NUM supporters being attacked by strikers on the other.

However, it would be wrong to blame it all on 'inter-union rivalry'. The AMCU appear more militant and are more in touch. Yet the battle line is not AMCU versus NUM; the frontline is angry workers pressing a wage demand against management that refuses. A violent impasse followed. Then, police – encouraged by NUM and COSATU – moved into action.

They attacked the strikers who had assembled on a nearby hill, some of them armed with knives. They encircled them and tried to disperse them with teargas. A group of strikers refused to move and, according to the police version of events, attacked their attackers. Police opened fire with automatic



weapons, killing 34 miners in the most ferocious repression against protesting workers in post-apartheid South Africa. It reminded people of the violence the apartheid regime meted out against protests, for instance in Sharpeville, 1961, and Soweto, 1976. The skin colour of the state-funded murderers had changed, but not much more.

Since the massacre, government-linked progressives like the South African Communist Party (SACP) have supported the police repression, calling the event "not a massacre" but "a battle" and the police operation "admirable". Defending capital, the state and the police is more important

to these so-called leftists than defending workers in struggle.

Different reactions are coming from poor people in struggle against the authorities, as a solidarity declaration of a slum dwellers organisation shows. Meanwhile, Lomnin, the mine owning company, tried to force the miners back to work with an ultimatum that they later softened. However, at the moment of writing, the strike is still continuing, while reports of arrested workers having been mistreated by police are now surfacing. The angry miners have not been defeated by the massacre. There is more resistance to come.

Peter Storm

Notes from the US

◀ page 8

except two beds, has no clothing, has New York City Police Department radios."

Caller: "There's computers in there."

Dispatcher: "There's what?"

Caller: "There's computer hardware, software, you know, just laying around. There's pictures of terrorists. There's pictures of our neighbouring buildings that they have."

Dispatcher: "In New Brunswick?"

Caller: "Yes."

Alongside such official racism, the FBI is also being accused of targeting political activists in the north west of the United States. At least three homes have now been

raided in Portland, Oregon; and grand jury subpoenas handed out in Seattle and Olympia (Washington) to activists involved with the Occupy movement, and members of anarchist groups.

A spokesperson for the 'Committee Against Political Repression', Tabatha Millican, said, "People are being targeted based on their political beliefs. ...[s]pecifically in the search warrants they're listing anarchist literature, black clothes and computers."

Just being an immigrant, of course, is enough to get you into trouble: a group of undocumented immigrant activists (seven organisers with the National Immigrant

Youth Alliance) apparently infiltrated a detention facility in Broward, Florida, last month; they allowed themselves to be placed in deportation proceedings in order to organise with detainees at the Broward Detention Center.

There they found dozens of immigrants who qualify for release under the Obama administration's own policies. There were at least 60 detainees who had neither criminal records nor deportations against them. Some, for instance, were detained as passengers in vehicles. Others should have received vital medical care; but had not... blood clot in the leg, bullet in the spine.

Louis Further

ECONOMICS

What's wrong with Libor?

Donald Room looks at the background of the Libor rate, something most people had never heard of until recently

Near the end of June 2012, it was reported that Barclays Bank had been fined £2,000 for manipulating the Libor rate. The scandal dominated the British media for several weeks, until it was shoved out by the Diamond Jubilee and the Olympic Games, and now looks set to return. But before June, most people had never heard of Libor. This is an attempt to understand the background.

Libor deals are intended to arrange massive bank loans for projects like railways, airports and hydro-electric dams, for which massive capital is needed upfront. Libor is an acronym for London Interbank Offer Rate, which is defined as "The rate at which an individual Contributor Panel bank could borrow funds, were it to do so by accepting inter-bank offers of reasonable market size, just prior to 11am London time".

Every morning at 11am, Contributor Panel banks report to the British Banking Association (BBA), how much interest they charge on loans for fifteen different repayment periods, overnight, one week, one month, and so on up to fifty-years, on ten different currencies. From these reports, actuaries at BBA calculate 150 Libor rates every day. Shortly after 11.45 they are all published on the World Wide Web, and anybody with access to the internet can read them.

The basic bank rate in Britain currently stands at 0.5%, which means that if you deposit £100 in your bank account (i.e. lend the bank £100) and leave it there for a year, the bank pays you interest of 50 pence, and lends your £100 on to a borrower, at a higher rate. For a small borrower, such as a mortgagee or a small business loan, the interest charge is whatever the bank can get away with. If the loan is very large, the 'investment arm' of the bank invests it at the Libor rate, which is only a little more than the basic bank rate. If it is 0.51000%, for instance, after the bank has paid you 50p a year for your £100, its own cut is only one penny per year on every £100. But if the investment is a 'reasonable market size' hundred million pounds, the annual return, a hundred million pence, is not inconsiderable.

The money involved in Libor trading may be contrasted with the value of ordinary trading. Most adults are involved in trade, one way or another – exchanging a day's work for a day's pay, selling useful fragments picked from a rubbish dump, giving alms, buying groceries – at a rough guess, perhaps to the value of a thousand dollars per person per day. The world population is seven billion, so the total daily trade in goods and



services may be roughly valued at about seven trillion US dollars (\$7,000,000,000,000). Average daily trade in the Libor market is three hundred and fifty trillion US dollars (\$350,000,000,000,000), which is fifty times the trade in discernible value if our guess is right. If you think our guess is wrong, work out another total for yourself; the ratio of Libor trade to real trade is huge by anybody's guess.

Large loans need not be on large capital projects. Small loans may be bought up and accumulated. The world recession, currently causing so much world poverty, resulted from a huge accumulation of 'sub-prime mortgages', loans made to people who did not have the means to repay them, or even keep up the interest payments. Banks, which were incompetent enough to invest in such junk, have gone bankrupt, and governments have bought them out of bankruptcy, using wealth collected from taxpayers.

The recession has caused a decline in investment banking, but not in the other Libor activity, 'casino banking', in which traders buy, sell and swap loans in the hope of making profits for their employers and bonuses for themselves.

If everybody plays by the rules, most banks make a steady profit, in the way that bookies, insurance companies, and roulette-wheel operators make a steady profit. Punters consent because they know what is happening; the system is 'transparent'. But it seems fairly easy to break the rules, increasing profits and bonuses by submitting false reports to

the BBA, and so falsifying the Libor rates. The percentages may be very small, such as reporting a rate of 0.512346% when the real rate is only 0.512345%, but the amounts are so large that pickings are at least big enough for traders to buy each other bottles of Bollinger.

Anarchists, striving to get as close as possible to a gift economy, may think that making money by dealing in money is dishonest anyway. But even money-bags disapprove of jiggery-pokery outside of the rules. Barclays Bank has been fined a total of £2,900 million by British and American regulators (\$2,000m by the Commodity Trading Commission, \$150m by the Department of Justice, and £59.5m by the Financial Services Authority). Royal Bank of Scotland, one of the banks which went bankrupt and was bailed out, has been fined a total of £150m.

The Prime Minister and the Governor of the Bank of England have denounced the falsification of Libor as "criminal dishonesty". Bob Diamond, Chief Executive Officer of Barclays Bank until the fiddling came to light and he lost his job, says it is "reprehensible" and makes him "physically ill". Four traders of Royal Bank of Scotland have been sacked (with at least one of them suing for unfair dismissal). The Financial Services Authority has no power to bring prosecutions, so it has called on the Serious Fraud Office, and the government has promised to pay for the SFO investigation.

A storm in a teacup, no doubt, but it might be fun to watch.

The Rand rebellion

The Marikana mine massacre in South Africa is one awful incident in a history of vicious repression of striking miners in the country

The 1922 rebellion in the Rand was defined for years by the infamous photograph of a banner reading, 'Workers of the world unite for a white South Africa' and by the very real and vicious attacks on black workers that denoted the early stages of the strike. More recently diverse voices from the ANC to Zablaza (the south African anarchist organisation) have chosen to take a different view of the rebellion – in turn aided by Jeremy Krikler's excellent *White Rising: The 1922 insurrection and racial killing in South Africa* and research by Lucien Van der Walt and others.

In 1922 white workers in the goldmines around Johannesburg went on strike against efforts by the mine owners to replace white workers with black workers on far lower wages. A struggle that began with racial killings – albeit a stage that quickly ended – developed into all out syndicalist insurrection against the South African state. Krikler writes: "I realised that the white working class communities of the Witwatersrand in 1922 did not look very different from the black working class communities that fought apartheid in the 1980s."

The strike leader was Percy Fisher, an Englishman from County Durham who had fled to South Africa in 1915 to avoid conscription. Very little is known of Fisher before he arrived in South Africa, but he is certainly the only Englishman in the last century to have led a working class army. A miner and syndicalist, Fisher had been jailed several times for leading strikes and by the end of the Rand rebellion he and his fellow strike leader were dead by their own hands in a shoot-out with the army – keeping true to the suicide notes they wrote at the onset of the strike.

For months strike commando units had been blowing up mines and derailing trains. Strikers had started organising on military lines – including many veterans of the First World War. During the early parts of 1922 these commandos formed the basis of a workers army across the Rand. Many of the commando units were over 1,000 strong and, on 10th March 1922, they launched a full-on insurrection.

Police stations across the Rand were attacked by armed commandos on horseback. The strike leaders were committed to the violent overthrow of the South African state, or to die in the attempt. Town after town



fell to the rebels, establishing well fortified trenches to resist counter attack. After a week the rebels were triumphant across the Rand. Krikler muses that if their strategy had been bolder and they had pushed on to take the government buildings in Pretoria, then victory could have been won. But, after winning control of the Rand, the rebels rested on their laurels and did not press home their advantage. The text book syndicalist insurrectionary general strike had won but the question of seizing power remained unanswered and in the vacuum the state was able to recover its nerve.

At this point – new in the suppression of an uprising – the availability of air power to the government proved crucial. The newly formed South African air force was able to bomb rebel positions with impunity – and did so, regardless of the killing of women and children. The lull in fighting enabled the army to bring up its heavy artillery weapons and they shelled rebel positions from a safe distance. The whole of the Rand looked like a First World War scene with trenches, shelling and air attacks. It had become a war of attrition which only the army could win. It was as if Churchill had bombed the miners during the general strike or Guernica had happened in 1922.

Town by town, planes bombed rebel positions and 15,000 troops were brought into action. The miners fought heroically with the limited firepower they had.

Eventually Fisher, and his comrade Spendiff, were surrounded in Fordsburg market hall. With pistols in hand they fought like a scene from *Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid*, before retreating to an inner room, and blowing their brains out.

Krikler writes of Percy Fisher that his

road, which he had followed without halting or turning, ran straight to class war, to the furious rising of 10th March, to his commanding role at rebel HQ in Fordsburg and to the end of his short life. Many other brave miners went to the gallows shouting 'workers of the world unite'.

The state exacted heavy retribution – executing many of the strikers and imprisoning thousands.

The strike by AMCU in the platinum mines owned by Lonmin is similarly heroic. Over forty miners shot dead in an ambush and still AMCU fights on against the ANC, COSATU and the NUM. Ninety years earlier Fisher and thousands of miners wage a similar struggle. This time AMCU may win.

The platinum miners are some of the poorest people in the world, working in horrific conditions – even the best paid rock drillers get only £400 per month. Many live in shacks with no water or electricity. Many are too poor even to work. One man told a South African TV crew "we are not workers, we are too poor to work, and we have no food or clothes".

AMCU is led by the charismatic Joseph Mathinjwa, a Salvation Army trumpet player who is like a Desmond Tutu with an armed wing. The Salvation Army motto is 'Blood and Fire', and the miners are accompanied into struggle by magic doctors. It's not the model of revolutionary struggle we are used to, but AMCU is truly reflective of its membership of ordinary miners – we must support them in any and every way we can. A victory for the proletariat in South Africa would embolden workers throughout the continent and Percy Fisher would smile again.

Ian Bone

FEATURE

HOUSING AND ASYLUM

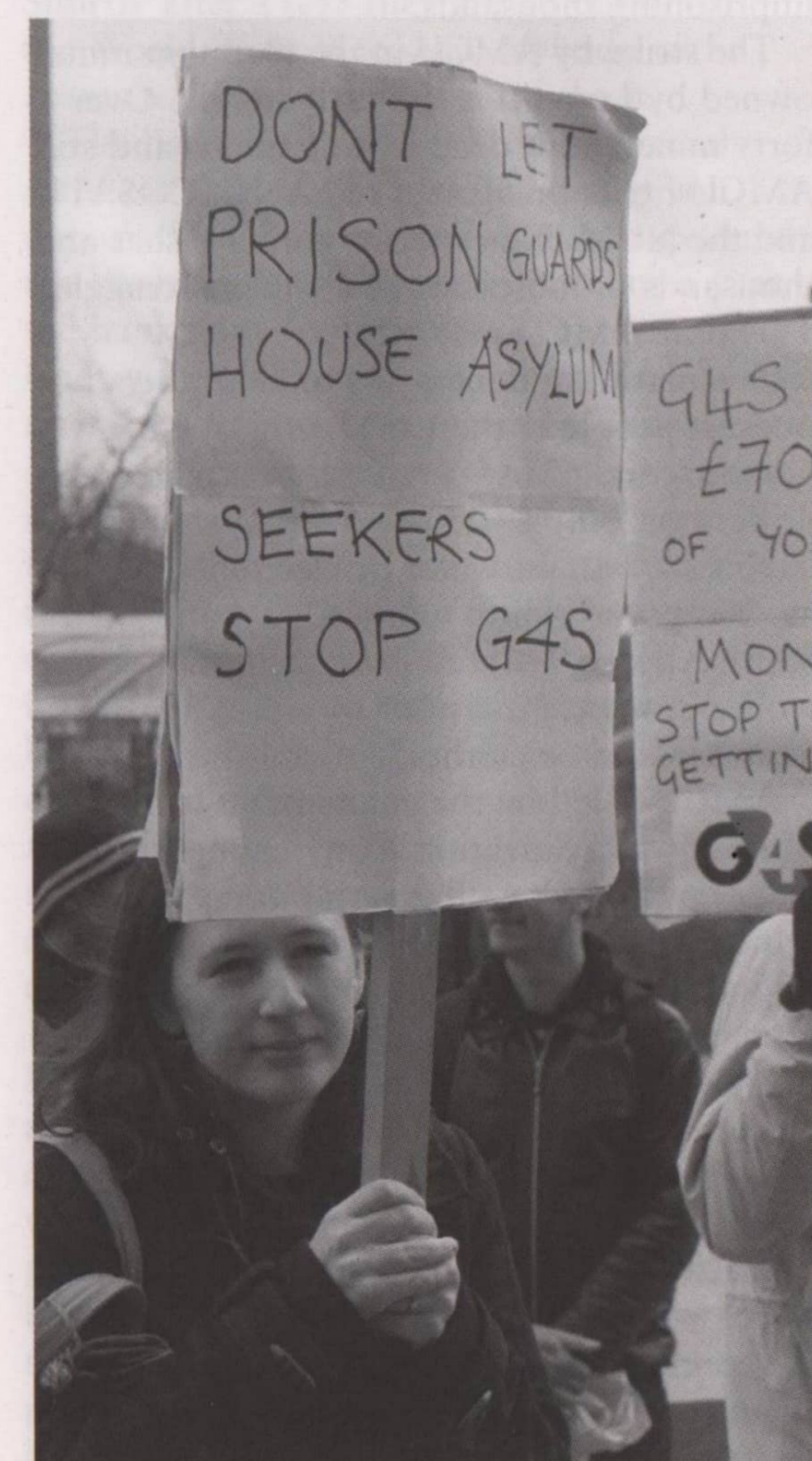
FEATURE

As chaos and confusion dominate the transition to the new G4S asylum accommodation contracts in Yorkshire and the Humber, John Grayson from the South Yorkshire Migration and Asylum Action Group (SYMAAG) explains how the new delivery model works (or doesn't), drawing on recent cases from the region

Private accommodation shortage

We already know that G4S and its sub-contractors cannot simply find enough Private Rented Sector accommodation in West and South Yorkshire to place families moved from council housing and council-contracted housing. This desperate search for PRS accommodation means some appalling properties are being brought into service to fulfil the new contracts.

All dispersals are now being made to the North East via Clare House in Huddersfield. The latest information suggests that single people may be moved under the new COMPASS contracts to Halifax (Calderdale) and the North East. All 'social cohesion' requirements on concentration of accommodation and risks of racial harassment and hate crime seem to have been ignored. The Barnsley asylum team, whose contract runs out on the 12th November, are now suggesting that moving families with school-age children may well be postponed to the October half-term holidays.



The new delivery model

Information gleaned from meetings and correspondence with government and private agencies suggests that the new contracts include inferior 'space' standards in accommodation. For example:

- 1) A lone woman with children can be housed together with other lone women with children. This 'hostel view' of the housing needs of lone women and children could be extremely damaging and stressful, particularly where different languages, nationalities and religious practices are involved. There is indeed evidence of the effects on the well-being of children exposed to the stress and distress of mothers going through the asylum process. In hostel conditions, the situation for children and parents is obviously worse.
- 2) A relatively large number of young children can be accommodated in one bedroom with parents in another bedroom in a two-bedroomed terrace. A recent case of four children aged between six months and seven years, who were threatened to be moved to a two-bedroomed house with their parents, was described by one worker as "probably just within the UKBA space standards".

The new delivery model, with various tiers of subcontracting and an even more complicated chain of contractors, further undermines the housing standards and dramatically reduces accountability.

In a recent case in Barnsley, a landlord contracted by United Property Management (UPM) under the Target contracts had provided flats for asylum seeking families. The flats were spacious and of reasonable quality but none of the families had been supplied with washing machines (a UKBA contract requirement). After campaigners raised the issue, the landlord provided, within a few days, a washing machine to one of the families who had been in their flat without one since their arrival in December 2011. He had previously suggested September as the earliest date for doing so, when Live Management took over the property from UPM.

The Barnsley landlord also claimed that his flats were subcontracted from UPM / Live Management, with a three months' notice clause, so that he could "get rid" of "unsatisfactory asylum seeker tenants".

Thus, in Barnsley at least, there are four tiers of subcontracting for the privatised asylum housing falling under the G4S contracts, building in permanent problems in ensuring decent accommodation for asylum seekers, and permanent uncertainty about being constantly moved. These tiers are: the UK Border Agency, G4S, Live Management, and small private landlords with three months notice clauses.



Transition chaos

A Sheffield case last week exposed major failings in the way G4S and its private landlords (in this case Live Management) approach the transition to the new contracts and the moving of asylum seeking families with children to new accommodation.

The family with four children aged between six months to seven years were given a two weeks' notice to move to another property on 6th August. The family had been moved from the South Coast only on 7th June this year, to a poor-quality, three-bedroomed terrace house. The house was filthy and extremely damp, with dirty carpets and mattresses and dangerous electrical wiring. Even the family's UKBA case worker in the South intervened to get a few improvements.

The parents spent months cleaning and making the house habitable, though major problems remained. In an email dated 18th August 2012, the father wrote to supporters:

"I hope they come and change the carpets and do all other work on the property. There are slug trails on the carpets and there is also something that keeps stinging you from the carpet as well, do not know what it is."

Soon after the family were told they were to be moved to another terraced house by G4S. The father went to look at the outside of the property and all he saw an overgrown, rubbish-strewn back yard. Neighbours said it had been empty for a long time and had only two bedrooms. The family feared an exact repeat of their appalling housing experience of the past three months. In addition, after touring local schools, they had just found a school for their two school-age children for September, three miles away from their house. They feared the move would put the school places in jeopardy.

And so they appealed to UKBA and G4S, who rejected their appeal, and were told the property was a four-bedroomed property and would be thoroughly cleaned by Live Management before their move.

The family contacted SYMAAG on 10th August by email. SYMAAG raised the issues about the move with G4S, Live Management and the Council. As late as Friday 17th August, with the move scheduled for 20th August, the G4S management was saying the new address was a four-bedroomed property "according to Live Management."

A SYMAAG volunteer had seen the property on Wednesday the 16th and confirmed that

it was in poor condition externally and "certainly looked like a two-bedroom terrace." These facts were confirmed by an internet property search, where the property was described on www.mouseprice.com as having two bedrooms. On the same street: "Some of these properties are relatively old, as at least 10 of them were built 112 years ago in 1900. The average value of the properties ... is £53,220, which makes it one of the least expensive places to live in ... Sheffield."

When Live Management was contacted in Leicester early on the 17th, they said their 'area manager' would be urgently contacted. Later that morning, all the parties involved (the UKBA, G4S and Live Management) confirmed with the family that the move had been cancelled, and urgent replacement carpets and improvements would be made to their existing accommodation.

Some lessons for campaigners

When SYMAAG contacted the G4S 'help line' number, the response was very professional and friendly. But it later emerged that G4S was simply passing on totally inaccurate information from its subcontractors without checking its accuracy.

It also emerged that an appeal to the UKBA and G4S, as per the 'rights' given to asylum seekers, were dismissed out of hand, without any checks whatsoever of the claim of Live Management to have provided a four-bedroomed property in good condition.

The Sheffield case also demonstrates the total inaccuracy of the claim in the Stakeholders' FAQ's that the UKBA is involved and fully informed of private contractors' actions and the dire effects they are having on the well-being of children and families. The FAQ's state:

"UKBA will be working with current accommodation providers to identify any special requirements that service users may have and will be sharing this information with new providers so that the most appropriate accommodation can be provided. UKBA will oversee the current providers' Exit Plans and new providers' Transition Plans to ensure that the provision of services is seamless during the transition period."

As campaigners have previously argued, there are no procedures or proper consideration given to "identify any special requirements of service users" (that is, asylum seekers and their children), prior to moves carried out by the UKBA or G4S under COMPASS transition. The Sheffield case is further evidence of this.

The Sheffield case also casts doubt on whether the UKBA is actually involved in ensuring contract compliance. On 1st August, Anita Bell, UKBA Project Manager for COMPASS Transition, stated:

"UKBA are working closely with G4S to ensure properties utilised for transition purposes are contractually compliant and will take appropriate steps to ensure any properties not meeting the required standard are either brought up to standard within the required time frame or taken off line."

We are working closely with G4S to ensure that the majority of people will continue living in their current properties. Where people do need to move, proper consideration will be given to any special requirements to ensure minimum disruption."

The Sheffield case suggests that is simply not true. SYMAAG has said all along that the appeal procedure is inadequate. The group is now advising asylum seekers to challenge appeal decisions and seek legal action via SYMAAG and Public Interest Lawyers. The group has produced an advice leaflet about this, which can be found on its website (www.symaag.org.uk).

The threat of legal action against both G4S and Live Management on 17th August in the Sheffield family's case seemed to resolve the matter incredibly quickly. However, the conditions of the family's existing accommodation, with four young children living there, is still a major concern.

[This article originally appeared at <http://www.corporatewatch.org/?lid=4494>]

INTERVIEW

Visiting modern anarchism's birthplace

Rob Ray talks to two AF members about St Imier, Switzerland, which recently hosted the biggest anarchist conference of recent times – 140 years after the same town hosted the founding of the first anarchist international.

How did the conference get put together?

French anarchists were instrumental in setting up the St Imier event and organised the International of Anarchist Federations conference (IFA)¹ at the same time with the idea of integrating it with the wider anarchist movement.

What was the level of organisation like?

The French AF are big on showing anarchism in practice.

The people who did food for IFA also did it for the St Imier event and did a great job providing breakfast, lunch and dinner for 4,000 people – they even had their own baker! People did their own washing up and it was actually a very good example of self-organisation.

The main problem for us at the conference was that the French didn't know how stretched they were going to be. They were really stressed particularly when it came to translation – in the wider St Imier events I did wonder how much of the talk was being translated.

In the end we had different tables with different languages and informal translations going on, which is difficult because it's actually terribly hard to translate if you're not trained.

The standard of debate was quite high, but some people didn't have any easy way to express themselves. When we had a round table for example there wasn't much time for the audience to debate, which would be the usual place for unaligned individuals to have their say. For some people not having a mandate sidelined them to a certain extent.

The social experience was excellent, we went to a concert by Serge Rayo and concerts were going on every night. There was exhibition space for old anarchist posters and a bookfair held in a huge hall which is actually for ice hockey.

What was the local reception?

It was wonderful over there and really couldn't be under better circumstances. St Imier is at the end of a long, wide green valley full of sunshine and the locals were very welcoming, keeping things open for us – for many of them, their grandparents were probably anarchists. They were actually quite pleased to find they were the founding town of an international!

One article in the local paper reckoned that God must be on the side of the anarchists because the weather was so nice – generally the press was very positive about us.



What sort of people attended? What were your impressions from the event?

It seems the movement is on the up and growing. There was a previous anniversary meet in 1972 which barely pulled in a hundred people, compared to 4,000 this time and that's a barometer of how we're doing.

What we now call the "social anarchist" tendency in particular seems to be growing – the main group was made up of people from IFA affiliates, syndicalists and platformist groups – particularly around Anarkismo.²

We did a meeting on platformism, trade unionism, centralism etc and thought there would be about 10 people but we ended up sitting in this basement in the St Imier anarchist centre Espace Noire, talking to at least 80 people who were really thirsting for ideas and making interesting comments.

More than that, in one well-attended meeting with Croatian comrades we ended up with Slovenians and Macedonians getting together to talk for the first time, in Switzerland!

We made a lot of progress breaking down barriers, that was part of why we did it, it was a shame there weren't many IWA members in that sense, as it would have reinforced the social anarchist tendency.

Also a lot of good things happened outside of the St Imier event. The IFA conference paid for people to come out and that meant we had a much wider range of people there. We had comrades from North America, South America and Japanese people who talked about Fukushima, which prompted their version of Occupy.

We got a new Slovenian Section, and a grouping from Latin America who had a special meeting there, there's talk of groups in the Balkans and Australia forming.

I think St Imier will be remembered as a major event about the beginning of the resurgence of organised anarchism.

There was some talk about a public statement released for the event, what happened there?

Various groups wanted to make a public statement, which was complicated when Organisation Social Libertarie, which is connected to the platformist tendency, produced a four-page summary for the end of the conference – which they presented five days before it actually happened!

Everyone was very dubious about this and we had to translate it, bring it back – and the Germans and Italians both threw their hands up at it. In the end an AF member wrote an entire new document and got that translated instead. We eventually came to the conclusion that there would be a statement for the event, but how do we sum up an event like St Imier in one document?

In the end it was a plurality of voices and it was better that this was the case.

1 The IAF is the international grouping which the Anarchist Federation in Britain belongs to and incorporates anarchist-communist groups across Europe.

2 Anarkismo is a relatively broad international collaboration of groups which identify or agree with the editorial line of platformist website anarkismo.net.

NEWS IN BRIEF

- Nine prisoners at Georgia's massive Diagnostic and Classification prison began a hunger strike on 11th June demanding medical care, more nutritional food, an immediate end to solitary confinement, torture and other basic human rights. The nine were among the 37 singled out by corrections officials in late 2010 and early 2011 after the peaceful strike by Georgia prisoners of December 2010. They were rounded up, many severely beaten, and transferred to close confinement and constant lockdown at Jackson, where they have remained ever since.

- A 20-day prison rebellion in Venezuela at the Cepra penitentiary in Merida state ended on 21st July following extensive negotiations. The protest was sparked when the authorities announced the forced transfer of prisoners to other already grossly overcrowded prisons, many holding three times their original capacity, around the country. The revolt left at least 22 inmates dead in a country notorious for the brutality of its prison system – 560 prisoners were killed and nearly 1,500 injured as a result of violent activity within detention facilities in Venezuela in 2011, up 17.6% on the previous year.

- Prisoners all over Colombia have been on hunger strike since the second week of August in protest against the all-pervasive overcrowding and unbearable conditions in the country's prisons. Initially started by inmates in Bogota's Buen Pastor and La Modelo prisons, enraged by overcrowding, increasingly poor conditions and inadequate access to basics such as healthcare and water, the protests, which include refusing to allow head counts and to be locked in cells, have spread to most of the other prisons across Colombia.

- Tripoli's al-Fornaj prison witnessed the third prison disturbance in as many months on 10th August, which just happens to be Prison Solidarity Day, when an armed assault managed to free eight prisoners, leaving at least one prisoner dead, two other prisoners and three guards wounded. Parts of the prison, which like much of Libya itself has different armed factions controlling different sectors, were also set on fire. Guards trying to put out the flames were pelted with rocks and some had their weapons stolen by inmates.

- In Syria opposition fighters have launched three separate and unsuccessful attacks on the main prison in the west of Aleppo, trying to free prisoners, since they took over much of the eastern half of the city. This follows a series of prison riots across the country including the Aleppo and Homs central prison. The authorities have responded by cutting off water, food and electricity supplies and attempting to re-take the prisons using tear-gas and live rounds.

Social impact bonds

There's money in them thar prisons

Or at least investment banking giant Goldman Sachs appears to think. It's a no-brainer really, to coin an American phrase; the Coalition's 'payment by results' model for "cutting offending behaviour" (sic) is largely designed to be a massive money spinner for the private sector first and foremost, irrespective of the propaganda surround the cutting of recidivism, costs to the economy of crime and savings to the tax bill.

And so assured of this, as well as a decent return on their money, are Goldman that the Americans have made an investment loan of around \$9.6m to finance a four-year "social impact bond" for 16 to 18-year-old prisoners held in the notorious New York prison on Rikers Island.

If the scheme manages to cut the recidivism rate by 10% or more, which is currently running at 50% reconvicted within a year, they will earn a healthy return of \$2.1m. Anything less than 10% could cost them up to \$2.4m and make them regret that New York mayor and billionaire hobby politician Michael Bloomberg talked them into financing the scheme in the first place.

The latest neo-Liberal economic panacea, the 'social impact bond', is catching on across the globe, especially where the Prison Industrial Complex has already made inroads such as Australia and in ripe virgin territories like Canada which has a new Conservative government displaying a scary evangelical zeal for the sort of failed bang 'em up prison-expansionist policies that the US and UK governments are already trying to turn their backs upon as they have proved too much of a drain on State finances.

However, the notion of 'social impact bonds' is barely out of its nappies and the first 'social impact bond', a £5m six-year pilot covering 3,000 prisoners, was only officially launched as recently as September 2010.

Based on the idea that existing voluntary sector organisations already involved in working with prisoners, plus the inevitable social entrepreneurs who see a good opportunity to create a well-paid job for themselves and begin their climb up the greasy pole of capitalism, will use the private-sector financing to operate not-for-profit schemes where all the profits will be returned to their financiers.

Yet because of the relative novelty of 'sib' schemes, no one has the slightest idea if they will succeed in any meaningful sense, let alone if 'payment by results' will generate any of the estimated £8m potential profit for investors. But that's the murky world of high finance for you.

Interestingly, the *modus operandi* of the 'sib' is an interesting mixture of the mirror image of 'nanny state', what they like to term 'tough love', allied to a sort of personalised programme of 24-hour human CCTVs cum tags – people employed to constantly be on the newly released prisoner's case, some of whom are ex-cons themselves, whose job it is to make it so bloody difficult for someone to escape post-release scrutiny that it will be that much more problematic for the ex-prisoners to find the time and space to commit crime (let alone get away with it).

And this is why the model is being expanded into areas other than crime, taking on the 'problems' of rough sleeping and those in foster care – basically trying to keep the poor in their place and stop them from being a problem for the nice middle class-voting share-owning public.



COMMENT

ABOUT FREEDOM

ANGEL ALLEY

September dawns bright and sunny over Angel Alley. We are still awaiting the re-flooring of the alley which was planned for mid August, but hopefully by the time you get this we will have a shiny new easy to clean and not so easy to trip over surface outside the shop. On the old Alley surface we had a very successful William Blake based evening and the annual post Bookfair party will be the christening for the upgraded pavement

As reported elsewhere, the new law on squatting came into force on 1st September. Our comrades at the Advisory Service for Squatters have been rushed off their feet preparing for this. Check their website for all the latest info.

This will be our last issue before the London Anarchist Bookfair, so here's a reminder that we will be having a meeting on the future of the newspaper. Thanks to everybody who's come forward with offers of help, and if donations continue at the current rate we should have enough to guarantee the paper for another year. However there has been less response on the key issue of selling the paper, on which its long term future depends. See you at the meeting – check the bookfair website or the programme for time and room number.

Finally congratulations to Grace who to the surprise of all didn't end up in jail, yay!

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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 19 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 special supporter subscriptions.

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Freedom Press, 84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1 7QX
Tel/fax: 020 7247 9249
www.freedompress.org.uk
Enquiries: info@freedompress.org.uk
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NEXT ISSUE DEADLINE

The next issue will be dated October 2012 and the last day to get copy to us for that issue will be Wednesday 12th September. 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, the Olympics have thrown up an argument over school sports as part of the legacy to the 2012 games. The original bid included a big chunk of infrastructure investment, a portion of gentrification and the cherry of "legacy", both in terms of new sports facilities and getting people to be more active and participate in sport. The latter ought to be a no-brainer as there are clear health benefits, hence savings for the NHS and so on, as well as being linked to sport, which is what the Olympics are supposedly about under all the marketing.

The facilities do look pretty good, though how West Ham are going to feel in a half-empty athletics stadium is another matter: it's almost as if it was planned by a Millwall fan. Nor are there other serious bids to take over the stadium.

But the other side of the legacy has translated into a spat between the government and Labour over who has sold off the most playing fields. It is interesting that it was Lord Moynihan, Minister for Sport under Thatcher, who was intensely relaxed about selling playing fields in 1988, who led the charge about legacy. He also said it was unacceptable that so many British medallists at Beijing had been educated at public school. Well, I guess even ex-Tory ministers can change their mind. Cameron has argued that it requires a more "competitive ethos." Which, as usual, misses the point while acknowledging the *Daily Mail* myth about "lefty schools" where "no one loses".

The problem for the government is that Michael Gove has recently decided that physical education is no longer compulsory. Fine by me, I don't think anything should be compulsory at school, but it does rather

shoot a big hole in this idea of getting kids to do sport as legacy. Gove took PE out of the curriculum because he wants to allow his pet "free schools" to concentrate on academic subjects and thus justify the extra dosh he's giving to his mates to run them. I think all sides miss the point of education in general and sports in particular – it's surely about making rounded people. Sport can play its part in that, particularly if we get away from the idea that there are only four sports which is all I can remember from school (and I hated almost all of them).

Some kids are going to excel at sport and should be encouraged and supported. Others are going to just make up the numbers and it's important that what they are doing is enjoyable, which means widening the range of sports, to include things like dance and indoor racquet sports, that can be easily continued after leaving school. Or swimming, which is also relatively easy as long as your local council aren't shutting the pool.

The golden age of school sports that older folk look back to was before league tables and Ofsted and targets and ridiculous workloads for teachers. I remember non-PE teachers doing sports training at school because they enjoyed it. They wouldn't get a look in now as the pressures are so different. Which means sports can only function in schools with the help of coaches brought in to do just that, as long as they have the space, the pitches, and the equipment. But all of this costs money, which the government cut just two years ago. There's a reason it's been run down so much over the years – faced with hard choices schools will prioritise things which impact on league tables before sport. Until politicians find money for it, the whole debate is just hot air.



The article, 'The snake eats itself' [*Freedom*, August 2012] "Explaining the panic surrounding a banking system which cannot lend", describes the current predicament of the money system operated by the commercial banks, without reference to or comment on the fundamental nature of this system, which has led inevitably to this state of affairs.

Modern society has come to rely for its money supply almost entirely (over 97%) on interest-bearing 'loans' from banks of 'credit' that banks create as they lend it.

This gives the banks huge power over us – power to decide who can get first use of the money/'credit' they create, and also huge profit, from the interest they charge on this, which is used in part to buy influence on politicians and public media.

However, it also makes them vulnerable. They have to balance their books; initially, the loan is a bank's 'liability', but is balanced as an 'asset' by the borrower's debt to it. Fine, as long as debts continue to be 'serviced', but to allow ongoing repayment, which cancels money out of circulation, yet more money must continually be loaned, to cover these repayments plus the interest on the outstanding loans. This has led, over the last several centuries, but much faster since the 'deregulation' of the banks by Reagan and Thatcher, to growing levels of debt, to the point that many are now unpayable.

This leaves the banks vulnerable, and liable to fail; hence the recent 'bailouts' and their reluctance to lend.

This system is at root the driving force of most of the growing problems, of pollution, 'over-production' and waste, grossly unequal distribution of wealth, social breakdown and destruction of the environment. It can, and urgently needs to be changed.

While we have a government (theoretically) responsible for creating and maintaining the common resources and infrastructure of roads and public utilities, it, and not private profit-seeking banks, should be creating all the money needed by society and issuing it into circulation, by spending it on such 'public goods' (which could include basic incomes to all citizens) without creating any matching debt in the process. This would leave the money as a permanently-circulating medium-of-exchange, and with little need for people, businesses, or governments to be in debt.

In the 1930s the 'Chicago plan' produced by leading economists proposed just this, but it was not implemented.

It has been estimated that, on average, almost half of the prices we pay for goods and

services is accounted for by interest charges. Get rid of debt-based money, and virtually all of this would disappear.

As a measure of the panic among the financial powers: a committee of the IMF has just issued a report of their re-examination of the 'Chicago plan', and found its analysis valid, with even more benefits than originally claimed for it!

Brian Leslie

As someone who was closely involved with *Freedom* and Freedom Press for 18 years (1965–1983), the last 12 of these as one of the group responsible for the bookshop, an observation or two concerning 'Our constitution' [*Freedom*, August 2012].

Firstly I find it a document to which it is hard to object – except perhaps as a 'constitution'; 'articles of association' would have been better perhaps. I have somewhere similar articles for 'Friends of Freedom Press' dating back to my involvement.

Incidentally all the original 'Friends' are now dead – are there actual named 'Friends' now? (I do *not*, of course, ask who they are!) Do they meet? (They never did in my time.)

Lastly I trust that the penultimate sentence about "an election" was a joke. I certainly hope so. Beware lest someone takes you seriously over stuff like that. I trust that *Freedom* will *not* shortly go exclusively on line and that I may have the pleasure of reading it in the future. (I have been a subscriber since 1962!)

Jim Huggon

I was very sorry to read of your financial troubles [*Freedom*, July 2012] and downright furious to hear they originated in such a flagrant betrayal of basic solidarity. Who does this Hoffman character think he is? And what has become of the radical left that such characters are allowed to operate with impunity within our milieu? I sincerely hope that as a result of his actions (however foolish you may have been in using photos that were still under copyright, a comrade should be a comrade) his name will forever be mud, and that any protection that may have been extended to him in the past is immediately withdrawn. No anti-fascist should feel they can trust him.

It is not often that I am able to make it down to London these days but, when I have been able to, I've been very impressed with the way *Freedom* – the paper and the organisation – has developed over recent years. The shop is a far cry from the dark,

dingy, unwelcoming lair it used to be, lurking at the top of a dusty flight of stairs. And to judge by the impressive spread of organisations you list as represented in the collective, it sounds like it is making a much needed contribution to bringing our often too fragmented and sectarian movement together.

It's good to know all that will be able to continue, but I can't help feeling the paper must have had a role to play in that – in allowing such a varied mix of voices to rub together within its pages. (Although it would be a rare treat if, just once, it fell through my letter box on time!) It's terrible to think that such positive steps might be jeopardised by the grubby, petty-minded profiteering of a parasitical faux lefty – or perhaps even "foe" lefty, if you'll forgive the pun.

Keep up the good work, don't let the bastards grind you down and see you at the bookfair.

Jim Bartlett

Charlotte Wilson, the founder of Freedom Press, wrote (anonymously) about what anarchists believe, in the first issue of *Freedom*: "...Therefore, we reject every method of enforcing assent, as in itself a hindrance to effectual co-operation, and further, a direct incentive to anti-social feeling."

Anarchism is opposed to all intimidation, or influencing behaviour by means of threats. Against chattel slavery: 'Do as I say or you will be beaten or deprived of food'. Against wage slavery: 'Do as I say or you will be reduced from poverty to destitution'. Against military conscription: 'Join up to kill the subjects of other rulers, or you will be imprisoned or shot'. And of course against what is sometimes described as government at its most primitive level, mugging: 'Give me what you have, or I will bash you'.

The ideal of anarchism is a society where all relationships are of voluntary co-operation, and nobody ever makes threats to anybody. But we recognise that we do not live in an ideal society, and therefore that some threats are regrettably necessary. People who drive cars without regard for the safety of other road users face the threat of being deprived of their cars. People who go in for raping, killing people, or (not to put too fine a point upon it) mugging, face the threat of various social sanctions.

And there are even cases where anarchists might approve of threats against expression of ideas. Those who organise propaganda campaigns, in favour of racial discrimination and oppression, face the threat of being hit on the head with beer bottles.

Donald Room

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GETTING ACTIVE

WHAT'S ON

SEPTEMBER

■ **1st Juke Joint Saturday Night**, a blues night benefit for Anarchist Federation (London) at LARC, 62 Fieldgate Street, London E1 1ES from 7.30pm, with a fine selection of the best of rocking, jumping, swinging blues in all styles from a seasoned and refined connoisseur at the decks, plus live music is also being looked into.

■ **4th and 18th Practical Squatting Evening** at LARC, 62 Fieldgate Street, London E1 1ES from 7pm to 8pm, for more see <http://www.squatter.org.uk/>

■ **6th, 13th, 20th and 27th** 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.

■ **8th** News from Nowhere Club presents 'Making a living as an artist craftsman', with speaker Marshall Colman at The Epicentre, West Street, Leytonstone E11 4LJ, buffet 7.30pm, talk starts 8pm, for details see <http://www.newsfromnowhereclub.org/>.

■ **9th** Bloomsbury Radical History Walk, meet at 3pm outside the café in the middle of Russell Square, London WC1B 5EH, this Past Tense walk will last about an hour and a half to two hours and end in a decent pub, it's free and also interactive, so bring your own tales and memories of the area.

■ **11th and 25th** Practical Squatting Evening at 56a Infoshop, 56a Crampton Street, London SE17 3AE from 7pm to 8pm, see <http://www.56a.org.uk/> for details.

■ **15th** Save South London Hospitals, no hospital closures, no cuts to services, assemble at 1pm at General Gordon Square, Woolwich, called by Greenwich & Bexley Trades Council.

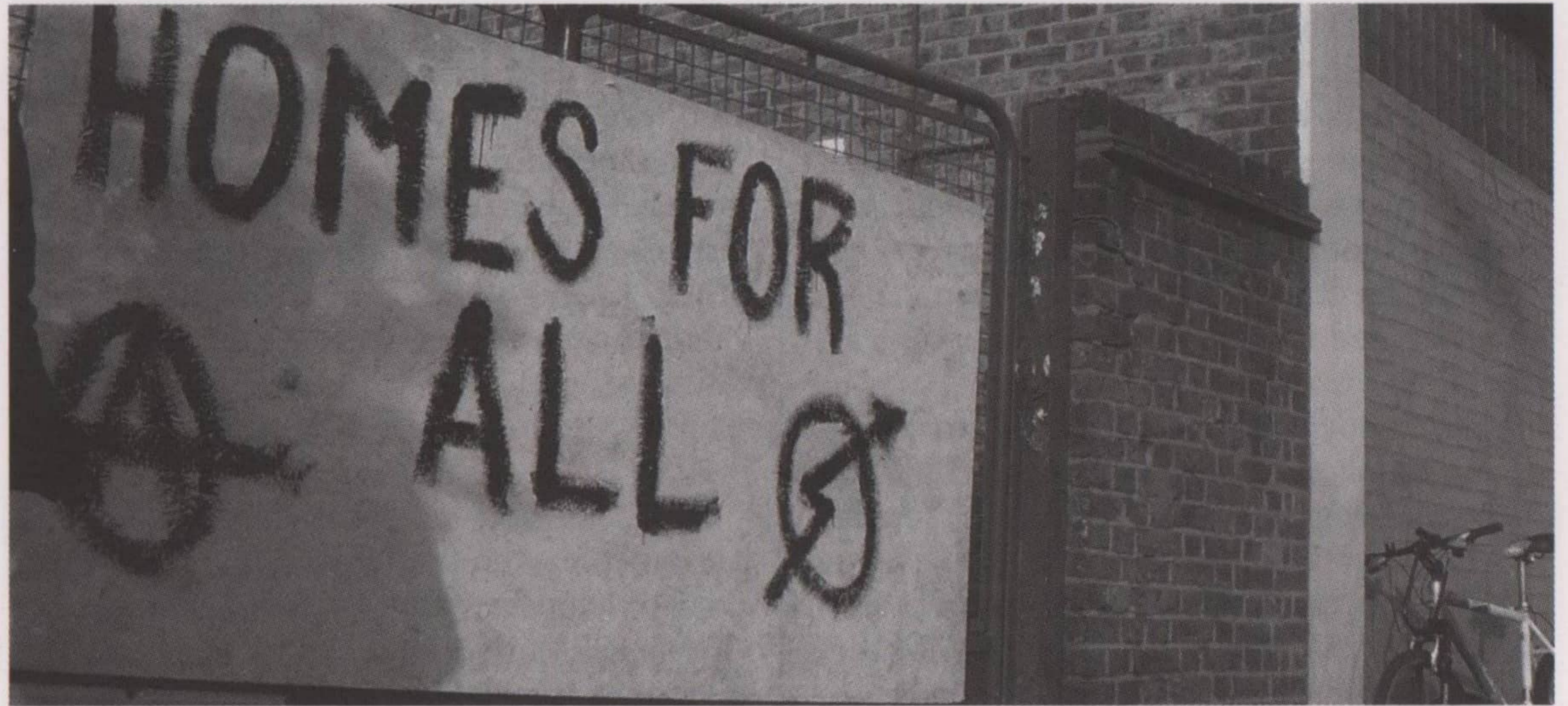
■ **18th** Radical Anthropology talks, *The science of mythology* with Chris Knight at St Martin's Community Centre, 43 Carol Street, London NW1 0HT from 6.15 to 9 pm, £10 waged, £5 low waged, £3 unwaged, see www.radicalanthropologygroup.org

■ **21st** 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.

■ **25th** Radical Anthropology talks, *The revolution which made us human* with Chris Knight at St Martin's Community Centre, 43 Carol Street, London NW1 0HT from 6.15 to 9 pm, £10 waged, £5 low waged, £3 unwaged, for further details see www.radicalanthropologygroup.org

OCTOBER

■ **7th** Rare Doings at Camberwell, radical history walk featuring rioting Chartists, Leninist artists, general strikers, anti-fascists, squatted streets and centres, the fight for the right to live, and the mad and proud, meet at 2pm, on Camberwell Green by the corner of Camberwell Church Street, London SE5.



● **Earth First!'s** annual summer gathering took place late last month, with around 200 people camping at a site near Shrewsbury in Shropshire.

The main discussion was around preparing for the next G8 meeting, due to take place on the shores of Ullswater in the Lake District in 2013.

Callouts have been going out to mobilise against the famously expensive and paranoid government bigwigs pow-wow, which is expected to have a theme of "saving the Middle East" (sadly not from the West).

More discussion is expected to take place in Birmingham later this month to sort out ideas for keeping pressure up on the event, which seems to be starting to fall out of favour with even David "yes to circuses, but hold the bread" Cameron questioning in July what it actually achieves other than putting an unwelcome spotlight on international ruling class collusion.

Other themes over the five-day event included saw a strong focus on gender with good meetings both mixed and not, Luddite workshops on bio-technology, social networking and computer technology and a useful anti-fascist meeting to build links in the wake of more violent forms of far-right organising that have emerged in the last couple of years.

Earth First! was founded 20 years ago in Brighton as a non-hierarchical ecological protest and resistance group.

At its height was a major force in the fight against the mega road building projects of the 1990s, while in more recent years it has been influential in green campaigns against polluting and dangerous industry from nuclear to coal and most recently shale gas fracking. For more on EF! and to find local groups, go to <http://www.earthfirst.org.uk>

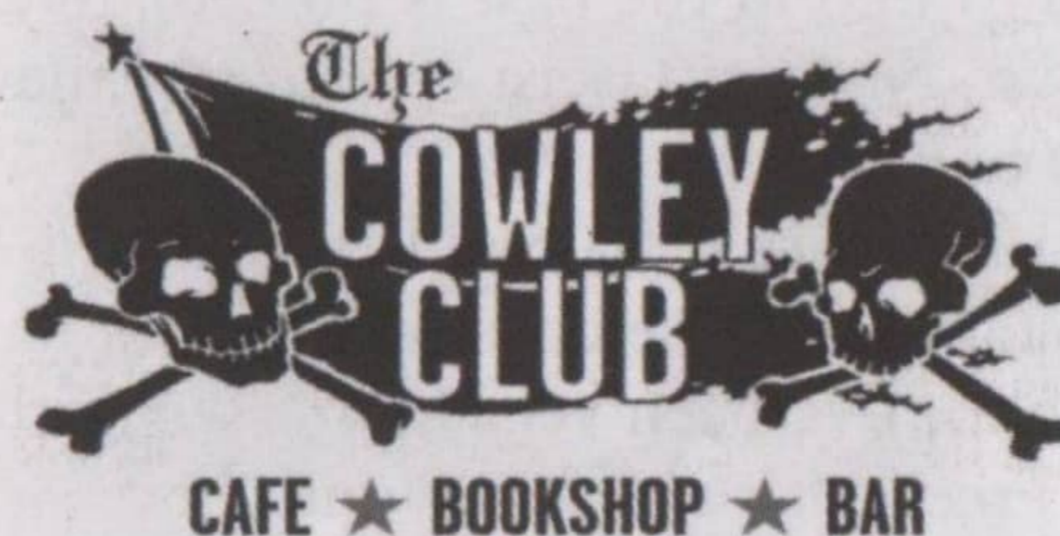
● **The Advisory Service for Squatters** is currently looking at the full implications of changes made to the squatting laws, which came into force on 1st September and effectively render it illegal to squat unused residential buildings (though retail and industrial properties seem to remain unaffected).

The group notes on its website: "We expect that the next few months will see a spate of challenges and test cases, which will draw lines between what can and what can't be done."

"We at ASS, along with others, have been going through what's actually in writing, to work out how we can help people to be as safe as possible. Unfortunately we can't be as reassuring as we would wish."

"What is clear is that we should take down our old much-loved Legal Warnings, as these will be read as an admission of committing a criminal offence."

If you're worried that you or people you know might be affected by the changes, advice is being updated on the ASS website, <http://www.squatter.org.uk>, or you can ring 020 3216 0099.



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
cowleyclub@riseup.net

WWW.COWLEYCLUB.ORG.UK

BRIGHTON'S LIBERTARIAN SOCIAL CENTRE

LIBRARY

The Cowley Club Library is both a lending library open to all and an archive/research library for anarchist and other associated movements.

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

Contact the library at: cowleylibrary@gmail.com
And check our online catalogue on the website.



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.

We host regular author talks and discussions. In the last year we have hosted Kate Evans, John Zerzan, David Graeber and Clive Bloom.

We are always looking for interesting new stock and new authors to host.

For more info check the website or email: cowleybooks@gmail.com

Soccer vs The State

With the football season upon us once again, perhaps it's time to remind ourselves of the perennial ambivalence of the Great Game:

"[I]n intellectual circles football has often been described as nothing but a circus in which 'twenty-two adults run after one ball.' Especially among Marxists, the 'opiate of the masses' argument has had a very secure place for a long time. The gist of the argument is simple: you give the masses something to be passionate about, and it keeps them from being passionate about political change.

"Arguably, the history of soccer confirms this. Fearing the unruliness of the game, the upper classes realised that it could work to their own advantage as a controlled working-class distraction, as a time to forget the hardships of work, and as something to look forward to while toiling away in the factories.

"Perhaps even more troubling is the false sense of unity that soccer victories produce. Graciela Daleo remembers celebrating with 'the guy who had tortured you with electric drills' after Argentina's Men's World Cup victory in 1978. She says: 'The football thing becomes the dominating thing even in the concentration camp. The torturer who had

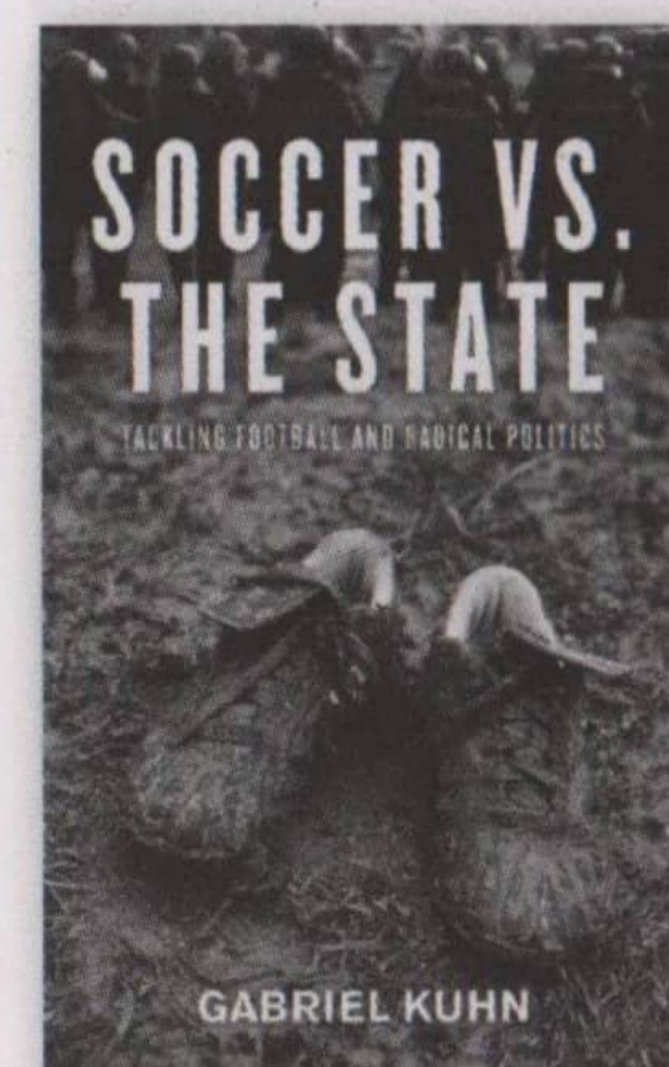
tortured you when you were kidnapped, if he supported the same club as you did, this terribly mad ghostly bond would be established ... I hate World Cups because they dissolve the class struggle. In a way, during the World Cup it seems we are all the same. We are not all the same.'

"[...] However, while many aspects of football politics give reason to the 'opiate of the masses' argument, football is too complex a phenomenon for such a reduction. The game retains many rebellious aspects as well as genuine elements of working class culture. In a 1998 article, Austrian Marxist Eric Wegner states that: 'It has become necessary to partially partake in different forms of capitalist mass culture in order not to become completely isolated and to avoid psychological breakdown. Football has historically not only served the distraction from political and social problems, but also the creation of collective pride and class consciousness [...] with a more than average progressive potential.'

"In July 2010, Portsmouth Socialist Party branch posted a text expressing similar sentiments, entitled 'Workers of the World

Unite: Football and Socialism'. Among other things, the authors claimed: '... it would be patronising in the extreme, to the millions of working class people who watch and play, to declare that they've simply been conned or duped, that their love of the sport as entertainment is simply a form of crowd control 'brainwashing' [...] Outside of the trade union movement there are very few areas of modern society where thousands of working-class people can gather under a common banner, in support [of] a common cause. While some may cast this aside as

mere tribalism, there exist clear feelings of inter-fan solidarity, which if promoted can have a positive great impact on promoting working-class consciousness."



An extract from *Soccer vs. The State - Tackling Football and Radical Politics* by Gabriel Kuhn, PM Press, £16.99.

Hidden victims of the NHL lock-out

◀ page 24

that during a period of such unprecedented prosperity within the sport they are being told to receive a 10% pay cut, so that the bosses can snaffle a bigger share.

It seems that neither the billionaire club owners nor the millionaire players care too much about what the average working class fan who buys the tickets, the shirts, and who travels around the country supporting their team thinks of the situation.

The dispute has predictably attracted widespread media attention across the US and

Canada, with plenty of attention focused on how the fans will suffer. Yet there is no mention of the real victims of the dispute and how it impacts on them.

For as long as the lock-out lasts, the arena workers, the hot dog and burger vendors, the cleaners, the pop-corn sellers, the many buskers who work outside the stadiums, the merchandise vendors, the hotel workers, the bar and restaurant workers who rely on tips earned during match night and the countless other workers whose jobs depend on the

NHL being operational, will not get paid.

There have been suggestions by the NHL bosses that should the dispute continue past the short term, then they will consider bringing in scab players to enable teams to complete their league season. This move would not be for the benefit of the fans, or the workers whose livelihoods are dependent on hockey, it would just enable the NHL to fulfil their bloated television contracts and to keep the dollars rolling in.

Matthew Black

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REVIEWS **ACTIVE****FICTION**

Self-doubt

Things hadn't turned out too bad after the EDL demo. There had been a five arrests, and a benefit to pay the fines. A lively exchange of letters in the local papers followed, with Connie able to put across the anarchist point of view. Within the Hurstbourne anarchist group people were getting on okay and Pete and Dave had buried the hatchet. Everything was looking up, but Connie couldn't work out why she was feeling so deflated.

They hadn't met in August, everyone knew it was pointless as people were away. Was that it? She still saw the others socially if they were around, she began to worry that all of her life was concentrated in these same few actions. She'd tried to talk to Dave about this, she considered him her closest comrade. All he'd said was that she needed a holiday.

The idea of spending two weeks on a beach was not her idea of fun. But even hardened anarchist activists have to have a break sometimes so she arranged to visit her friend Rachel in Edinburgh.

After meeting Rachel, they ended up sampling single malts till the early hours. Connie surfaced with a sore head and found Rachel in the kitchen with some strong coffee.

"So what's up then, Con?" she asked. "I can tell something is."

"I dunno," Connie replied. Rachel had known her for ten years and regarded Connie as a sort of anarchist superhero.

"I guess I'm having doubts that anything I do makes a lot of difference," Connie went on. "This last year, with the splits and so on has been really tough. I kept going through all that, and we saw off the EDL, but now I just feel... just kind of empty."

"Everyone has these moments, you know," said her friend.

"Not me, not until now."

"Well maybe you've just taken longer to arrive," said Rachel.

"But I don't know that what I'm doing makes sense any more. I spend loads of time working on different campaigns, linking up with people in other towns and in London, trying to make things better in people's lives and for the planet. And it all just seems so hopeless."

"Connie, you're one of the most rooted people I know. You've stayed in the town you grew up in where most folk our age end up living in a big city. Your activism is based on your life and experiences, not just something abstract. You weren't against the EDL because they are nasty people but because their presence would hurt people in your town that you care about."

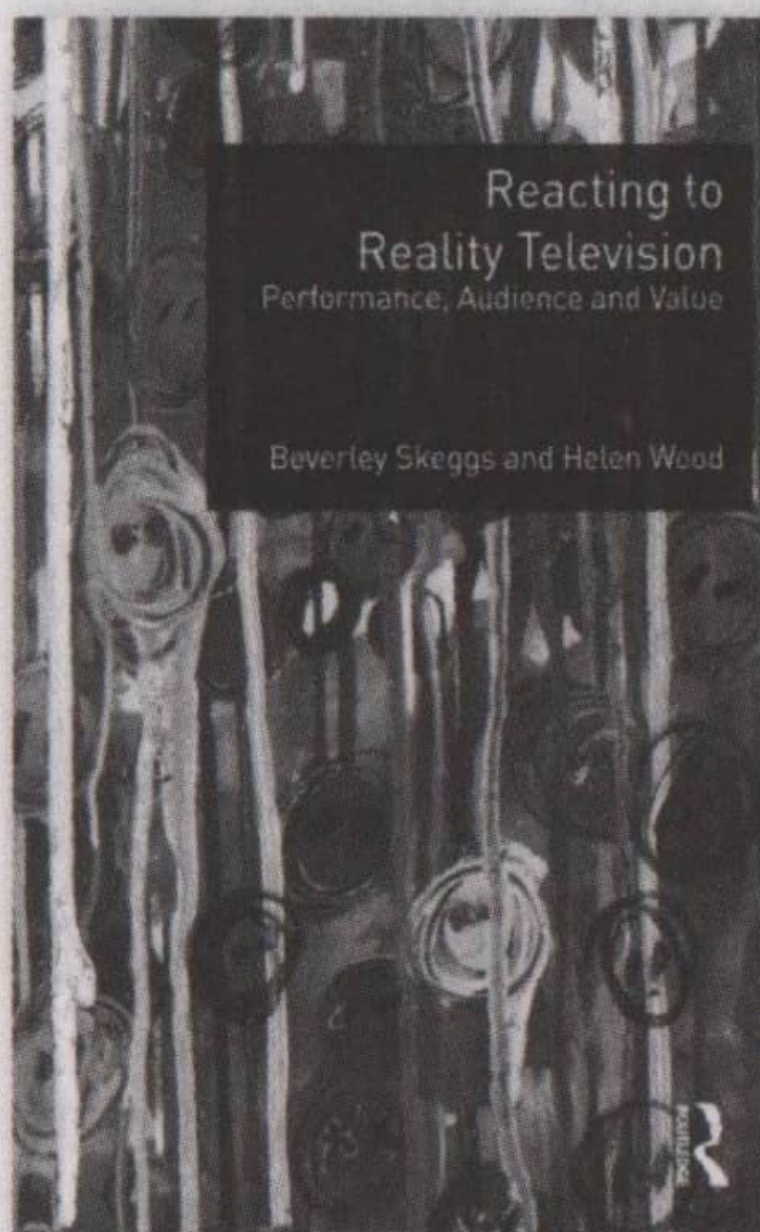
"I don't know..." Connie said.

"Maybe you need a break?" said Rachel. Connie grimaced. "You don't want to be a martyr now, do you?"

"No," said Connie.

Martin H.

To be continued...

BOOK

Reacting to Reality Television: Performance, Audience and Value

by Beverley Skeggs and Helen Wood, Routledge, £23.99

This intriguing study follows its authors' comprehensive international collection of academic research in *Reality Television and Class* (Palgrave Macmillan 2011), showing that the genre quintessentially recycles – in melodramatic excess but fitting contemporary neoliberal ideology – the governmental disciplining of the lower orders. The latter enthusiastically display, commodify and cultivate their inadequate conduct – yet with scant chance of benefiting – in formulae with ubiquitous global appeal to media producers massively profiting from an apparently insatiable appetite among audiences to passively consume cheap spectacles of the shaming devaluation of their peers. Austerity agendas of cuts in welfare and social provision may help explain more blatant demonisations of the undeserving,¹ whereas objectification, judgement and punishment for failing bourgeois exhortations has a longer pedigree. But what seems genuinely new – along with the popular acceptance of Reality TV as a legitimate, even entertaining, enterprise – is the narcissistic clamour among its targets to offer themselves wholesale to the sacrificial slaughter of self-respect.

However, such compelling interpretations imply that lower-class agency and resistance is already successfully closed down – also accommodating the blaming of victims for their abjection and chiming with traditional snobbish prejudice as well as current material assaults on the poor. Unwilling to so collude, the authors drew on Beverley Skeggs' *Formations of Class and Gender: Becoming Respectable* (Sage 1997) and *Class, Self, Culture* (Routledge 2004; reviewed in *Freedom*, 11th February 2006), which offer manifold insights into the middle-class

prudent investment in social and cultural capital that others are excluded from access to. Except now the analysis prioritises 'affect' – immediate visceral responses only later overlain with individualistic connotations of psychological and emotional nuance more easily skewed by the oppressive weight of superior education, taste and distinction to hence favour privileged perspectives. The researchers solicited working- and middle-class viewers' explanations of their undeniably strong reactions to Reality TV narratives, exploring how this lived experience became coded in discourse in ways which might correspond or conflict with the presumed efficacy of biopolitical domination as represented in degraded form by these sadistic scenarios.

Morality Plays

Gratifyingly, the focus groups consistently rejected the mocking ministrations of the programmes' 'experts' and 'mentors' in reforming recalcitrant charges. Nonetheless, middle-class viewers preferred moral criteria and patronising liberal sentiment in sympathising with the plights of lower-class subjects – but emphatically condemned anyone succeeding without knuckling down to improving themselves in the prescribed manners. Whereas working-class viewers empathically registered contextual restrictions, valuing humility, concern for others and perseverance over vanity, pretension and piety – only incompletely succumbing to capitalism's colonisation of the depths of the soul which widespread seduction by Reality TV (and other trivia) might signify. This more contradictory mulling over, rather than mere surrender to, the unpleasant 'reality' of everyday life – the surveillance society's fracturing, monitoring and instrumentalisation of intimacy amid deteriorating conditions of precarity and intrusive management – hints at abiding sociocultural resources still beyond the reach of unequal exchange.²

www.tomjennings.pwp.blueyonder.co.uk
<http://libcom.org/blog/tom-jennings>

1 See, for example, Owen Jones' *Chavs* (Verso, 2011).

2 See also: 'Imagining Personhood Differently: Person Value and Autonomist Working-Class Value Practices', *Sociological Review*, 59, 2011, pages 496–513 (www.hum.aau.dk/~proj-forsk/beverley_skeggs/articleskeggs.pdf).

QUIZ ANSWERS

1. It's a hunting bow. From the US, of course.
2. He was one of the founders of the California Soccer League and was inducted into the US Soccer Hall of Fame in 1971.
3. The 1968 mens 200 metres was the race won by Tommie Smith, who made a black power salute from the podium with John Carlos. Norman wore a human rights

- badge in support of the two Americans. Australian authorities banned him from running for two years and didn't send any sprinters to the 1972 Olympics. He was also excluded from the Sydney Olympics until the American team invited him. Smith and Carlos were pallbearers at his funeral in 2006 and gave eulogies.
4. Clara Thalmann.

Punk's dead

Julie Goldsmith on an exhibition and book that resurrect punk's past

When Simon Barker, aka SIX, arrived from Prague last June to install his show and launch his book *Punk's Dead* at the Divus gallery in London, he was astonished to witness the magnitude of Queen Elizabeth's Diamond Jubilee extravaganza. Just over twenty-five years earlier, the teenage Barker brought himself one of the "cheapest pocket cameras available, a simple point and shoot, no controls or settings, requiring just a slot in film cartridge." For economic reasons he had to count every shot. The films were processed at the local chemist, and printed onto cards with rounded corners. On the back of each was a template so that it could be sent as a royal souvenir postcard for the Queen's Silver Jubilee. SIX never did. He took spur of the moment portraits of his friends sleeping, talking, reading, playing. Until recently they lay untouched in a lock-up, but then – lovingly and painstakingly restored – they were shown in an exhibition and book called *Punk's Dead*. He calls the book a family album.

The St James Hotel in Buckingham Gate, London SW1, was the less documented London equivalent of the Chelsea Hotel in New York or the Paris Beat Hotel. The photographs span the two years that Barker lived there, between 1976 and 1978. Located in a high security area (due to the

IRA bombings of the preceding three years) and surrounded by The Home Office, Buckingham Palace, New Scotland Yard and Westminster Cathedral, the notorious Room 1016 at the St James Hotel under the tenancy of his friend Linda Ashby was, extraordinarily, "home, refuge and halfway house to major protagonists of what was to become known as 'Punk' in London". Barker's photographs and essay, full of rare, intimate portraits and stories, document a legendary subculture.

Through the centre of the gallery flowed ceiling to floor silk banners reminiscent of medieval pageants. Printed with beautiful almost fairytale images of black and golden horse-drawn carriages lined in pink satin, with liveried servants riding atop, and plumed horses and helmets. It was in fact a military procession, a display of wealth and power. Soldiers in khaki uniform line the streets. On closer inspection we saw the Queen waving out to us from her open-top carriage. Seated at her side, her travelling companion through the Westminster streets, was the brutal tyrant, President Ceaucescu. Prince Phillip rode in another carriage, with Madame Ceaucescu.

The photographs lining the gallery walls were naturalistic, intimate portraits of youth: joyful, audacious, posing, at play, creating, performing, or inward-looking, kissing, sleeping.

Shot in colour, with stunning composition that brings to mind recent work by Martin Parr and Matthew Stone as well as early Nan Goldin, they document and define a transformative time.



Individualistic, rebellious, feminist, openly gay, dissenting, nihilistic, artistic, the punks are captured here challenging the status quo of the day through their confrontational behaviour, performance and dress.

Unlike the moody black-and-white art photography of the time, in the music press and tabloids, these vivid colour pictures fully convey the vibrance and loudness of punk music itself. The portraits tell of legends born in bedsits, gigs and dressing rooms. Jordan (the original punk muse, not the supermodel), Siouxsie and the Banshees, Poly Styrene, The Slits, The Sex Pistols, Generation X, Malcom McLaren, Nico, Adam Ant, Slaughter and the Dogs...

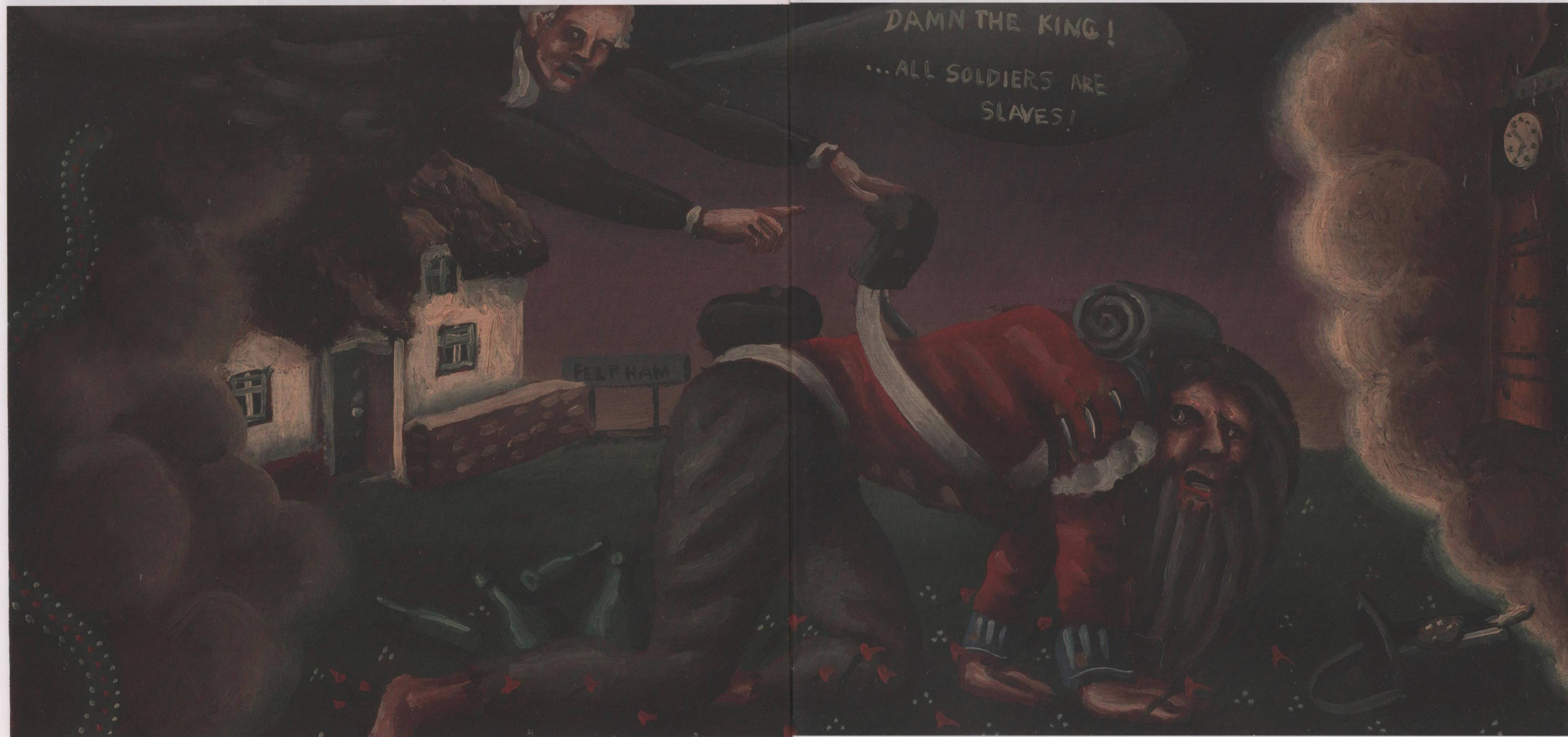
The women in particular were brave pioneers, turning received notions of repressive English dress code and behaviour upside-down. Jordan, featured on the cover of the book and exhibition poster, travelled daily for two years from a seaside town to work at Seditonaries in King's Road, the shop belonging to Vivienne Westwood and Malcom McLaren. She always wore her tribal make up and subversive punk dress. Mothers complained that their children had to see this; someone once tried to push her off the train. The kind British Rail staff let her sit in first class so that she would not get into trouble.

Interestingly, Barker realised only as he worked on the recovered portraits that they were mainly of women, "strong, independent, creative women. Not the styled mannequins and puppets that had preceded them."

The show and book, although documenting the past, feel very current. Anarchy, art and even Dickens are still felt in the ether today; repression too and the military presence in the background of the London Jubilee



BLAKE AND THE DRUNK SOLDIER



Detail from painting by Michael Couper

Review

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Olympic year. Barker's photographs were not taken in order to be exhibited or shown to anyone but friends. It was the untimely deaths in 2010 of Malcolm McLaren and Ari Up, lead singer of The Slits, that prompted Barker to unearth this treasure trove and create the show and book. It was born not of nostalgia but of a conviction that the work still holds relevance and power. The stories and anecdotes in the book are

truly romantic and fascinating. Life in the St James Hotel with toast in the morning from the hotel bread delivery; Sid and Nancy living for two weeks in the kitchen and Sid's Mother paying early morning visits in full motorbike leathers; Barker's friend Linda Ashby in her pink womb-like room holding court for days to various friends including the flamboyant Vicky de Lambray, trans-vestite prostitute lover of the head of MI6,

Sir James Dunnet; The Sex Pistols' Anarchy in the UK tour, with the famously ill-fated Jubilee river cruise; Derek Jarman's parties in Butlers Wharf; Seditious and more.

A series of 'Afterwords' from illustrious contributors such as Michael Bracewell are a further delight.

Punk's Dead by Simon Barker is published by Divus. His website can be found at: www.six.cz

William Blake and the Drunk Soldier
In this ex-voto painting, which was specially commissioned for the William Blake inspired exhibition currently showing at the Freedom Press Gallery, Matthew Couper represents a momentous occurrence in Blake's life.

In August 1803 Blake kicked a drunk soldier, John Scofield, out of his garden in Felpham.

Scofield later claimed that Blake "damned the King and said that soldiers were all slaves." Blake was charged with high treason and put on trial at Chichester.

Fortunately he was acquitted. According to the local paper "The invented character of [the evidence] was ... so obvious that an acquittal resulted."

Scofield was later depicted wearing "mind forged manacles" in an illustration to Jerusalem.

Human thought is crush'd beneath the iron hand of Power

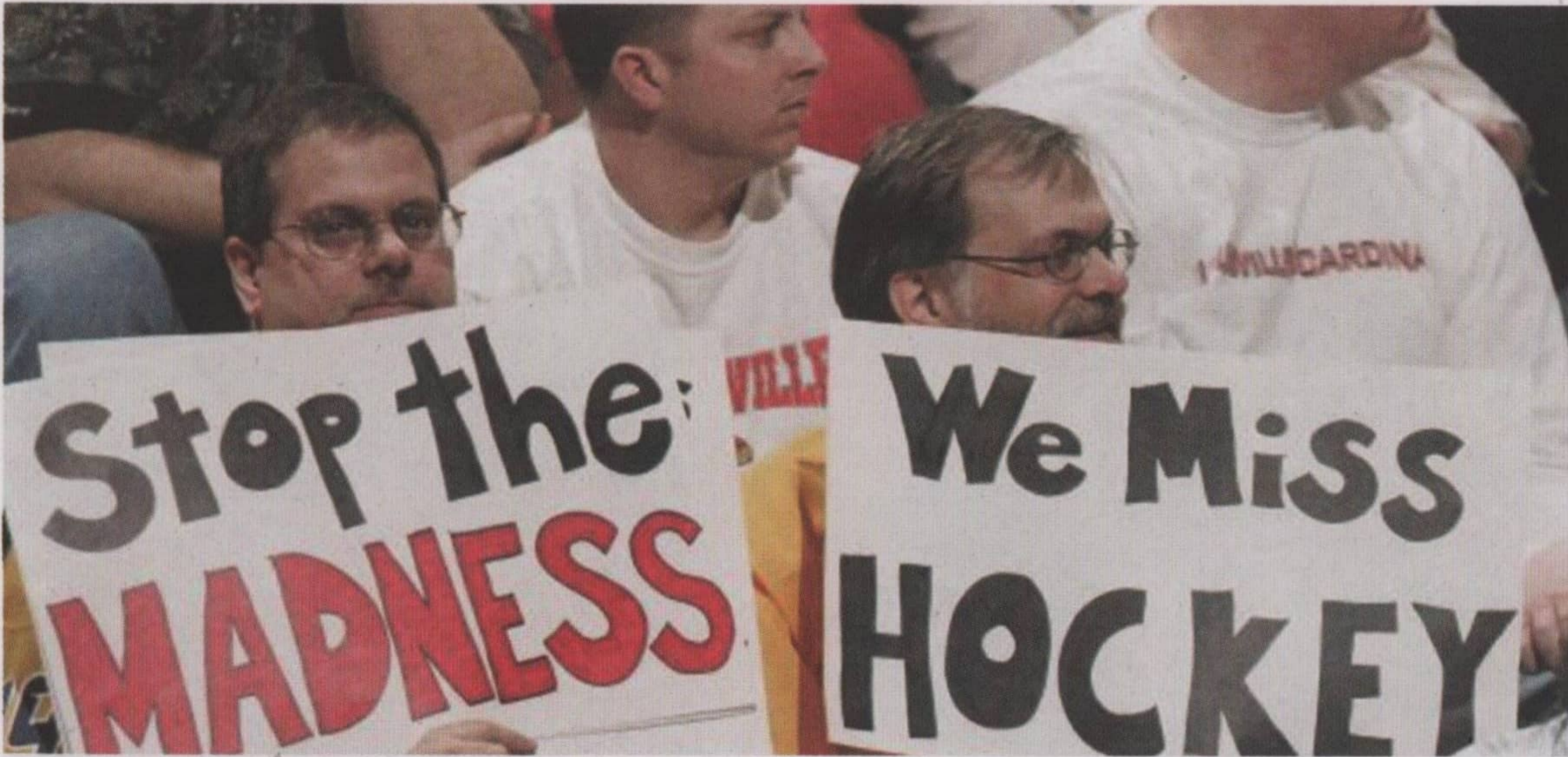
The group show at the Freedom Press Gallery includes work inspired by William Blake. Artists include: Matthew Couper, Ben Seymour,

Matthew Hyland, Marlowe Chan-Reeves, Yvette Byrd, Max Reeves, Niall McDevitt, Lois Olmstead, Micallef, Helen Elwes, Joel Tomlin, Felicitas Aga, Adam Grey, Peter Bond, Cameron Bain, Nicolai Kozin, Julie Goldsmith, Howard Grange, G O D photography, Zoe Young, Mark Rathnall, Tracey Moberly, John Riordan, Ben Watson, Leigh Martin, Denise Kum, David Beales, Adam Dant, John Crow, Katie Kaos, Jill Rock, Heathcote Williams, David Mitchell and found stuff on William and Catherine's tombstone...

The show is open during shop hours (12 noon to 6pm on Mondays to Saturdays, 12 noon to 4pm on Sundays) until 30th September.

SPORT

Hidden victims of the NHL lock-out



Following the failure to reach a consensus on a new collective bargaining agreement between NHL (National Hockey League) bosses and the players union, all 750 players registered with the NHL have been locked-out as of Sunday 16th September.

For the duration of the lock-out all players are free agents and can play for any team or in any league in the world – many of whom have already jumped ship and moved to leagues across Europe.

This is the third occasion that players have been locked-out in the last seventeen years.

In 1995 the season was drastically shortened following a dispute, and a major trophy (Stanley Cup) was not awarded for the only time in its 100 year history.

In 2005 the season in its entirety was cancelled due to a dispute, and subsequent lock-out.

The NHL is a multi-billion dollar industry that stretches across the US and Canada. Last year the league's total earnings were \$3.2 billion, which is an increase from around \$2.2 billion the previous year. Despite this huge increase in revenue, the

bosses are trying to reduce the percentage of total revenue that is allocated to pay players' wages.

Gary Bettman the NHL commissioner has said that, "the players overall share of the pie is far too high, and the owners deserved a more equitable split".

The players, whilst accepting that they are very highly paid for their work, are unhappy
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THE QUIZ

1. What kind of item is a "Bear anarchy compound"?
2. Nicolaas Steelink was an IWW member jailed in the criminal syndicalism trials of 1920. What is his other claim to fame?
3. Australian sprinter Peter Norman won silver for the 200m at the Mexico Olympics in 1968. His time of 20.06 seconds is still an Australian record. Why did he not race again at any future games?
4. Who travelled to Barcelona in 1936 to take part in the People's Olympiad (a counter to the Berlin olympics) as a representative of the Swiss Workers Swim Clubs, and ended up joining the Durruti Column?

Answers on page 20

